

**2014**

# Understanding North Korea



Ministry of Unification  
Institute for Unification Education

The Institute for Unification Education, which constitutes the Ministry of Unification of the Republic of Korea, has published annual editions of *Understanding North Korea* since 1972, as an endeavor to promote greater understanding of North Korea for South Korean readers.

*Understanding North Korea* depicts the reality faced by the Northern regime in areas of politics, diplomacy, military, economy, society, culture, and many more. The May 2012 publication has been translated into English, with the aim to help the international community better understand the northern half of the Korean peninsula. English translations of the referred editions will be published on an biennial basis.

We hope that this book enables readers around the world to better grasp the reality of North Korea.

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# I

## How should we view North Korea?

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**Section 1.** Nature of the Northern Regime

**Section 2.** North Korea's Dilemma

## Key Points

### 01

The regime in North Korea exhibits three characteristics: it is a totalitarian dictatorship governed by the sole leadership of the *suryǒng*, who stands above the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) and the state; the regime, as one of the world's most highly centralized and planned economies, has advocated self-reliance and the monopoly of all means of production by the state and cooperative organizations; and the state uses the concept of Grand Socialist Family which requires absolute obedience of people to the *suryǒng*, who is considered the father of a family. These traits engendered a peculiar form of social structure unprecedented in any other socialist country.

### 02

As it had to do under Kim Jong-il, North Korea under Kim Jong-un must engage in some degree of reform and opening to improve its economy and ensure the regime's survival. Such a path, however, also brings with it the risk of regime collapse. The regime thus faces the difficult task of maintaining stability while at the same time reforming and opening up.

## Section 1. Nature of the Northern Regime

The surrender of Japan in August 1945 led to the presence of Soviet forces in the northern region of the Korean peninsula. The policy of the Soviet occupation directly affected the nature of the North Korean regime. In 1948, a one-party state was established in the North under Soviet leadership, which claimed to advocate the Stalinist system, and soon it declared itself as a country founded on socialism. The socialism adopted by the regime, however, was not the one inspired by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the 19th century, but the Stalin-style socialism formed in the Soviet Union. By accepting the Soviet Union's Stalin-style system, North Korea established a one-party dictatorship, state ownership, and a planned economy. Later, the country's socialist system evolved into its own unique system, incorporating various factors created throughout its history. However, the regime still claims that it is based on a typical socialist system.

The regime in Pyongyang exhibits two sets of traits: those common to socialist states of the 20th century and those unique to North Korea. The state-run planned economy, which was also implemented by other socialist countries, and the concept of party supremacy belong to the first category, whereas its system centered on the *suryŏng*, or leader, and the dynastic succession of power from Kim Il-sung to his son Kim Jong-il and grandson Kim Jong-un are unique to North Korea.

For a general understanding of North Korea, one must grasp political,

economic and social factors unique to North Korea, by comparing its system with those of the Soviet Union, China and East European socialist states prior to their transformation and reform.

### *Suryŏng* Dictatorship

The regime is a one-party dictatorship under the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK). Based on the governing principles of so-called *juche*, or self-reliance ideology, the *suryŏng* takes the helm. North Korea was first established as a Marxist-Leninist state like other socialist countries. In November 1970, however, the fifth Party Congress was held to establish *juche* as the WPK's guiding philosophy. The socialist constitution of North Korea, which was adopted in December 1972, also declared that it "adopts *juche*—a creative application of Marxism-Leninism—as the guideline for state activities." In October 1980, the sixth Party Congress introduced rules stipulating that "Kim Il-sung's *juche* ideology is the official guiding philosophy of the WPK." Through these changes, North Korea finally established its own unique governing philosophy, which later became the foundation of the regime's distinctive *suryŏng*-centered dictatorship.

Amendments made to the constitution in April 1992 also stated that "every individual shall uphold the revolutionary philosophy of *juche*." Further constitutional revisions in April 2009 introduced the *songun* (or military-first) policy. Subsequently, amendments to the WPK rules in April 2012 declared the ultimate goal of the WPK to be the "indoctrination of all of society with *Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism*", and declared the nature of the WPK to be "a party that advocates *Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism* as the sole guiding doctrine", as well as a "revolutionary party that upholds *juche* ideology".

In North Korea, the concept of the *suryŏng* is the core essence of *juche*, and the WPK is the political institution that rallies around the supreme leader. A political system of this kind is unprecedented in other socialist countries.



Given this, North Korea is a totalitarian dictatorship governed by the *suryŏng*'s monolithic leadership. According to Kim Jong-il's thesis titled *On the juche Idea* which was published in 1982, the theory of a *suryŏng*-centered system is underlined as follows:

“Without the *suryŏng*'s philosophy and leadership, we could hardly think of the WPK as a guiding political institution, and unless we work together with the masses, we won't be able to achieve the victory of the revolution and the building of a socialist state. If the *suryŏng*, WPK, and popular masses work together with the *suryŏng* at the center, this makes for the most stable and powerful agent of revolution, and the greatest impetus for revolution and the establishment of a socialist state. Therefore, the party of the working class must belong to the *suryŏng*, serving as a political institution that realizes his philosophy and leadership, in addition to working with the masses the WPK's sole ideology is the ideology and leadership of the *suryŏng*. establishing a single governing ideology is the basic means to build the WPK as the party of the *suryŏng*. The party of the working class must be whole and complete, ideologically pure, completely colored with the *suryŏng*'s ideology, and must act in unison under his single leadership.”

As mentioned above, the *suryŏng* is defined as the center of national unity and leadership and the supreme leader of the WPK, as well as the supreme brain of the socio-political body, who plays a pivotal role in shaping the destiny of the masses. North Korea argues that a “socio-political living body<sup>1</sup> is an organism that achieves everlasting life when the masses unite as one ideology and institution in order to serve as an independent main force of the revolution under the leadership of the WPK with the *suryŏng* at its center.” Society in North Korea perceives the *suryŏng* as the manifestation of organized will and supreme leader of the WPK, and so grants him absolute control as well as the role that “structures and guides in unity all activities of the socio-political body.”

In North Korea, the title *suryŏng* was exclusively reserved for Kim Il-sung. After his death in 1994 and subsequent to the launch of the Kim Jong-il regime in 1998, North Koreans have referred to Kim Il-sung as the eternal *suryŏng*. He holds this title to this day, even after the death of his son Kim Jong-il and transfer of power to grandson Kim Jong-un in 2011. When Kim Il-sung passed away,



North Korean people paying respects to the statues of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il

Kim Jong-il invoked his father's last wishes in establishing his own authority as the supreme leader. Likewise, based on the last instructions of the late Kim Jong-il, efforts are underway to establish the supreme leadership of Kim Jong-un by emphasizing the need for

unflinching loyalty over generations.

### Centrally Planned Economy

Like other socialist countries in the 20th century, North Korea has for decades practiced the socialist system of public ownership, whereby means of production are owned by the state and cooperative organizations. The North has also pursued a planned economy in which the state controls the distribution of resources. The regime has defined the concept of socialist ownership as a system in which “products and the means of production, which are the basis for socialist production relations, are owned collectively by the society and state.”<sup>2</sup> In other words, the core essence of socialist ownership is based on the ownership of the means of production, which are, in principle, to be possessed by the state or cooperative bodies.

Nonetheless, North Korea has long recognized private ownership in a restricted sense.<sup>3</sup> This is referred to as private ownership within socialism, for private ownership is founded on the principle of social ownership of the means of production. This is applied to such things as wages or living expenses, rations based on quality and quantity of labor, and purchased consumer goods. It also includes earned income and savings, household items, and daily necessities. Personal possessions can be freely disposed of by owners or passed on to their heirs. Various procurement agencies and general

markets serve as institutional mechanisms enabling individuals to dispose of such personal belongings.

North Korea has traditionally been a highly centralized economy driven by a single line of command, also known as a centralized command economy. Accordingly, the central authority has dominated the flow of information and determined the direction of planning and other economic activities. Subordinate authorities have been subject to absolute command. North Korea was the most highly centralized economy among socialist states in the 20th century. Every detail was planned and executed by the central authorities. Such a high degree of economic centralization was not found even in China in the 1950s or 1960s or even in the Stalinist system of the Soviet Union in the 1930s.

North Korea's centralized command economy is a system in which economic plans are devised by the State Planning Committee (SPC). These plans are implemented and supervised according to uniform standards throughout individual plants and enterprises at provincial, municipal and county levels. The SPC is responsible for establishing comprehensive plans for every sector of the national economy based on the WPK lines and policies, and supervises relevant departments in their implementation of such plans. The principles of Uniformity and Specification in Planning<sup>4</sup> began to be emphasized in 1964. Accordingly, the Regional Planning Commission and planning divisions of plants and enterprises were placed under the direct control of the SPC, thus reinforcing the centralized planning system.

No state planning agencies or supervisory/control agencies in North Korea were allowed to arbitrarily alter state plans or deviate even slightly from activities of the planned economy. WPK instructions were to be strictly followed on every project, ranging from planning to implementation. The economic crisis and famine of the 1990s, however, caused the collapse of the North's planned economy, leaving the population with no other choice but to rely on self-sustained markets such as the *jangmadang* and black markets for their survival.

North Korea introduced the *Economic Management Reform* on July 1, 2002 while cutting state rations, which had been a key component of its planned economy. From this point on, people in North Korea were instructed to go to markets and shops to purchase their daily necessities. This brought about some elements of a market system into the centrally planned economy. In March 2003, more than 300 general markets opened in cities and counties nationwide. In 2004, the *pojeondamdangje*, or *Team-based Management System*, was introduced in some local districts, permitting families to cultivate their own lots.

In October 2005, subsequent to the introduction of a food monopoly system, North Korea made repeated efforts to reverse the spread of market elements, including cracking down on private farming and market activities, announcing that general markets would be closed and bringing about a currency reform. Such measures reinforced the regressive state of the centrally planned economy. This disposition became more evident following 2007.

Another drastic measure aimed at containing the expansion of market activities was North Korea's currency reform of November 2009. In the following months, the authorities continued trying to reassert market control and reinforce the planned economy, but these efforts backfired, resulting in greater poverty and protests. Starting in February 2010, the regime once again eased restrictions, resulting in a revival of markets, but immediately after Kim Jong-il's funeral in December 2011, it reverted to heightening control on the use of foreign currency. Since 2013, Pyongyang has been tolerant of the use of foreign currencies in a bid to absorb them from residents.

### Grand Socialist Family

The social nature of North Korea is set in the collectivist principle of a totalitarian society in which the Grand Socialist Family<sup>5</sup> regards the *suryŏng* as the father. This characteristic engendered a peculiar form of social structure unprecedented in any other socialist country, and was used as the

logic for enforcing people to worship the *suryŏng* and pledge unconditional allegiance to him.

The rights and responsibilities of North Koreans are based on the “one for all, all for one” principle of communal life. An ideal person in North Korea is someone who champions communal values, aligns his individual fate with that of the group and puts collective goals before personal gain.

In North Korea, two concepts of family are recognized: the ordinary family comprising parents and siblings, and the so-called Grand Socialist Family with the *suryŏng* at the head. Members of the latter family learn to trust, love, respect and serve their father figure, the *suryŏng*, as they would their parents. As Confucian norms and traditions are relatively strong in North Korean society to this day, the concept of this Grand Socialist Family is the most definite link uniting the WPK and the masses with the supreme leader.

In order to instill such values into the people’s minds, the regime carries out political and ideological education, including political training and routine self-criticism sessions. The populace, however, doesn’t necessarily derive its values from such norms; it is only on the surface that society in North Korea regards itself as a grand family made up of the *suryŏng*, WPK and the masses. In reality, strong discrimination in terms of social treatment, public ration, income, etc. exists between Party members and non-members, as well as between senior officials and rank-and-file members.

The socialist convictions that had once helped sustain North Korea’s society are gradually waning. The economic crisis and famine of the 1990s have especially affected the North’s caste system, which used to confer privilege based on birth and social class. Now there are growing signs that the social system revolves more around the exchange of money and information. Moreover, authorities increasingly collude with entrepreneurs for personal gain, so bribery has become endemic.

## Section 2. North Korea's Dilemma

So far, the specifics that pertain to North Korea have been reviewed. These particular aspects have made it the world's most exclusive and rigid regime since the mid-20th century, and have induced utter crisis for the nation and its economy. North Korea has been almost completely isolated since the collapse and transformation of socialist states in the late 1980s. Since the mid-1990s, it has suffered from widespread food shortages due to the unremitting economic crisis.

North Korea has continued to face similar external and internal circumstances in the new century, which has heightened pressure for change and reform. In particular, while the regime deals with the isolation resulting from the collapse and dissolution of the Soviet Union and the East European socialist bloc, it must also watch anxiously as other socialist countries such as China and Vietnam align with market-oriented international order by reforming and opening their respective systems.

Ironically, North Korea remains steadfastly opposed to any reform or opening despite its unceasing crisis. Rather, the regime has sought to overcome economic hurdles and assure its survival by consolidating the existing system under the banner of the strong and prosperous nation campaign. In this manner North Korea is struggling to emerge from isolation and regain its economic stride, but it is well aware of how desperate the situation is, and knows that failure could mean losing everything.

Although North Korea is well aware that it cannot overcome multiple crises, including food shortages, scarcity of energy and lack of foreign exchanges, by means of its socialist planned economy and self-reliance policies alone, this does not necessarily mean that the regime will open up or pursue reform. It seems that the same applies to the Kim Jong-un regime. In the New Year's joint editorial published in 2012, he clearly displayed his determination to "follow the path of independence, military-first policy, and socialism to the very end." He also emphasized in the New Year's address in 2014, the policy of simultaneous development of the economy and nuclear weapons, saying that "the stronghold of revolutionary political ideology must be further solidified." This seems to illustrate the state's resolve to hold fast to the current policy rather than opt for reform and opening.

Meanwhile, North Korea realizes that in order to maintain its regime and achieve economic recovery, it must receive aid from the Republic of Korea and western countries. It may also realize that to this end, it has no choice but to comply with the changes underway in the world around it. So far, however, North Korea has kept its closed and rigid system intact, thus evincing a contradictory stance towards overcoming these challenges.

Therefore, the quickest way to understand North Korea is to recognize the fundamental dilemma its leadership now faces. The regime is faced with the necessity of conducting fundamental changes in its socialist system in order to reverse the deterioration of the economy and assure the survival of the regime. However, it seems that the regime has not made any move towards change, fearing that the implementation of any such reform would endanger the leadership and the regime itself.

It can be inferred that despite the utter crisis, North Korea has not attempted to introduce any policies of active reform or opening. Instead, it has remained complacent; sticking to the strategies that have until now isolated it from changes in the larger world. In dealing with external and internal pressure for change, North Korea can be seen to have muddled through by simply shifting its policy

priorities, all the while sticking to the basic framework of its socialist system. North Korea's dire situation, however, shows that the strategy of maintaining the status quo only limits its ability to overcome the crisis, preventing the regime from actively responding to the changing environment.

To secure assistance from the outside, the regime in Pyongyang has occasionally applied pressure to neighboring states, and at other times, has displayed signs of reconciliation. With this two-pronged strategy, the North has so far been able to obtain a certain amount of economic assistance. However, it would be impossible for it to overcome the ongoing crisis in such a manner, and as time passes, the situation is only getting worse which is putting more pressure on the regime to carry out fundamental changes.

Why then, is North Korea hesitant to take the path towards policies of active reform and opening?

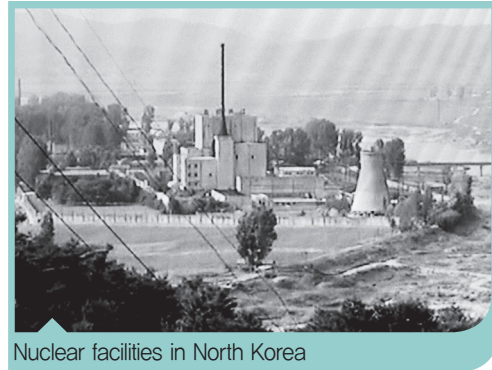
First, the regime rejects any alternative measure or policy that may weaken its hold on power or even slightly increase the risk of collapse. It also believes that reinforcing the existing system may be sufficient for resolving pending problems.

Second, the North greatly fears the uncertainty and instability that may arise from a policy of reform and opening, even if external and internal environments were to allow easy implementation of such measures. The regime has taken every opportunity to express its negative stance toward a new direction. Kim Jong-il, for example, is known to have stated: "Do not expect any changes"; "We must never toy with the idea of reform"; "As long as I live, no reform or open-door policy shall be allowed." Kim Jong-un, who abruptly succeeded to the throne after Kim Jong-il's death, has also been shying away from reform and opening policies that might result in the regime's collapse, placing top priority on securing a stable transition of power and sustaining the regime.

Third, North Korea appears to be strongly convinced that it can overcome the current



crisis by playing the nuclear weapons card. This puts it in a dilemma. In other words, the regime appears to have believed that merely by engaging in negotiations over its nuclear weapons, it could receive food and fuel aid from the outside



Nuclear facilities in North Korea

world, thus enabling it to achieve national objectives without having to reform or open up. Nuclear tests conducted in October 2006, May 2009, and February 2013, however, moved the United Nations and the international community to pass resolutions calling for practical and effective sanctions against North Korea. By being sanctioned instead of aided, the regime has seen the economic situation worsen. The situation deteriorated even further as the country claimed itself to be a nuclear state in the constitutional amendment in April 2012, and formally adopted the policy of simultaneous development of the economy and nuclear weapons at a plenary session of the WPK Central Committee held in March 2013.

As discussed above, a fundamental solution to North Korea's serious economic challenges lies in the introduction of reform policies like those implemented by other socialist states in the post-Cold War era. Nonetheless, North Korea has heightened its control over society due to its fear that reform policies may lead to the collapse of the regime. This has forced North Korea to choose between regime survival and reform policies. Time will tell which direction the regime will ultimately choose to go. In the meantime, it is necessary to observe how this dilemma will affect the regime in the near future, considering that the process to consolidate the Kim Jong-un regime after Kim Jong-il's death is still underway, and that the country has not yet climbed out of economic recession even though two years have already passed since 2012, the year that North Korea publicly declared to open the gates to a strong and prosperous nation.

# Endnotes

- 1 Socio-political Living Body, which was adopted by the North in 1986, is a governing theory to control the masses under the leadership of the *suryǒng* and the party. According to the theory, although each individual is mortal in terms of his physical life, he will become immortal in his socio-political life will if the *suryǒng*, party and masses are united into one socio-political organism. The North used this theory to solidify its totalitarian dictatorship under the *suryǒng* and justify the power succession plans of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il.
- 2 Encyclopedia vol. 3, Pyongyang: Science Encyclopedia Publishing Co., 1983, p.530.
- 3 Economic Dictionary vol. 2, Pyongyang: Science Encyclopedia Publishing Co., 1970, p.118.
- 4 Uniformity and Specification in Planning is a concept on a hierarchical planning system in which the state uniformly takes command of planning work at the center down to the enterprise level to produce specific outcomes. Uniformity in planning means that plans in all sections and units must be in compliance with the state's plans. Specification in planning is about formulating detailed plans so that the business operations of all economic sectors and enterprises are interconnected organically under the unitary plan of the state.
- 5 In the concept of Grand Socialist Family, the North Korean society is regarded as one family, and the *suryǒng*, party and masses are considered the father, mother, and children, respectively. North Korea uses this concept to emphasize that if the *suryǒng* shows an act of virtue, all members of society must rightly show their loyalty and filial piety for him. The notion was introduced in an attempt to stabilize the regime and secure legitimacy of the socialist system by adding a social meaning to the traditional concept of family.



## II

# Political System and Governing Principles

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**Section 1.** History of the North Korean Regime and Establishment of its Political System

**Section 2.** Formation of Governing Ideology and its Changing Nature

**Section 3.** Power Structure and Form of Government

**Section 4.** Hereditary Succession of Power and the Kim Jong-un Regime

## Key Points

### 01

Immediately after Korea gained independence from Japan, different political factions vied for power in the northern half of the peninsula. Eventually, Soviet-backed Kim Il-sung and his followers prevailed over other factions to emerge as the dominant political force in North Korea. Kim Il-sung solidified *suryŏng*-centered one-man control through a series of political purges and changes in the party's power structure in the 1950s and 1960s, and made the power succession to his son official at the sixth Party Congress held in 1980. Kim Jong-il, after taking over the leadership, revised the constitution in 1998 and reorganized the power structure centered on the Chairman of the National Defense Commission (NDC). Since the formalization of power succession to the third generation of the Kim family in 2010, the regime has been strengthening the one-man control of the new leader, Kim Jong-un.

### 02

Not only has the *juche* ideology had a significant impact on every aspect of North Korea, including politics, economy, society and culture, but it has also served as a political means to promote a personality cult and strengthen the one-man control through monopolization of power. Having its origin in the *juche* ideology, *songun*, or the *military-first policy* was proposed as the ruling ideology to build a strong and prosperous great socialist state, and it became the official governing principle of the country through the 2009 constitutional amendment and the 2010 revision to the rules of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK). After the hereditary power transition to the third generation, North Korea once again revised the party's rules at the fourth *Conference of Party Representatives* in 2012, presenting Kimilsungism and Kimjongilism as the guiding principle of the Kim Jong-un era.

### 03

North Korea is governed by a ruling system in which the WPK and the military take the lead in every aspect of society. According to the constitution, the president of the Supreme People's Assembly (SPA) represents the state, and the Premier takes charge of administrative enforcement and management. However, it is known that actual power is vested in Kim Jong-un, who controls the WPK and the NDC. A constitutional revision in 2009 stipulated the status of the NDC Chairman as supreme leader and supreme commander, and further revisions in 2012 proclaimed Kim Jong-il as "eternal Chairman of the NDC." Additionally, the creation of the NDC First Chairman post and election of Kim Jong-un to that position allowed the young leader to assume all the authority held by the former NDC Chairman, the highest position in the regime.

### 04

Amid the critical economic downturn, the Kim Jong-il regime was able to maintain a power base for one-man control under the banner of the military-first policy. After the death of Kim Jong-il, his son Kim Jong-un was elected First Secretary of the WPK, Chairman of the Central Military Commission, and First Chairman of the NDC, completing the dynastic transfer of power. Since then, the young leader has been devoting all his energy to solidifying his grip on power.

# Section 1. History of the North Korean Regime and Establishment of its Political System

## 1 Soviet Occupation and Establishment of the North Korean Regime

### (1) Formation of the Communist Party and Sovietization of the North

The creation of communist-backed North Korea in the northern side of the 38th parallel was mainly influenced by the occupation of the Soviet military forces in the region after Japan's surrender on August 15, 1945. Subsequently, a new political situation under the Soviet occupation started to be developed on August 17 with the launch of the South Pyongan Province Chapter of the National Establishment Preparatory Committee headed by Cho Man-sik and the South Pyongan Local Committee for the Korean Communist Party led by Hyun Joon-hyuk. They were, however, under the control and supervision of the Soviet Union, which, as part of the victorious alliance, had stationed troops in the northern half of the Korean peninsula. The establishment of the Soviet-style regime in the region was spearheaded by Kim Il-sung and other communists who belonged to the Soviet Union's 88 Special Brigade. To facilitate this process, the Soviet Union began organizing a central administrative body to govern the Northern half of the peninsula and a party apparatus to render support.

Around that time, the Korean Communist Party (KCP) had already been set up in Seoul by Pak Hon-yong, and its branches were being organized in each province. Following the Soviet military administration's decision to acknowledge the KCP in Seoul as the headquarters and organize its North Korean branch in Pyongyang, the Conference of KCP Members and Enthusiasts in the Five Northwestern Provinces was convened on October 13, 1945. During the conference, the creation of the North Korean Branch Bureau of the KCP was agreed on among the KCP members in charge of five provinces in the northern region of the 38th parallel. Kim Il-sung was soon elected Chief Secretary at the third Extended Executive Committee of the Bureau held on December 17-18 of the same year.

On November 19, 1945, the Soviet authorities also created the Five North Korean Provinces' Administrative Bureau. This apparatus functioned as a central governing body under the Soviet military administration, issuing unified orders to the people's committees at all levels. In this way, the Soviet Union established the basis for North Korea's governing organization within just three months after the division of Korea into two occupation zones, and laid the initial groundwork for a one party state which placed Kim Il-sung at the center of the power structure.

In February 1946, The Soviet military administration organized an Interim People's Committee for North Korea, which was developed later into a central administrative body, and the committee served as a de-facto government. Although the committee was the supreme enforcement body in North Korea, its authority was very limited, considering that its draft legislations and decisions submitted to the Soviet authorities were approved only when they were not against the Soviet authorities' decree or statutes. Meanwhile, around April 1946, the North Korean Branch Bureau of the KCP was renamed the North Korean Communist Party and was officially launched as the Workers' Party of North Korea in August 1946 after merging with the New People's Party led by Kim Tu-bong.

## (2) Establishment of the Communist Regime in North Korea

In February 1947, the North Korean People's Assembly was formed by the Soviet military administration as a legislative body, whereupon it executed various preparations for regime establishment, including measures to create the North Korean People's Committee, draft the constitution, and establish the Korean People's Army. The North Korean People's Committee is today described by the country as the first body of proletarian dictatorship that led the socialist revolution on the peninsula.

Finalizing the establishment of a state governed by a communist party, a total of five People's Assembly sessions were convened from February 1947 until the inauguration of the North Korean government in September 1948. In particular, a draft constitution written by a provisional constitutional committee was submitted to the fourth plenary session of the People's Assembly on February 7, 1948, and a draft provisional constitution was announced on February 10. In February 1948 the Korean People's Army (KPA) was created by Kim Il-sung, while the weakened influence of domestic factions at the second Party Congress in March 1948 created a favorable environment for him to maintain his power.

Against this backdrop, the North Korean People's Assembly approved a draft constitution for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) at a special session held on April 29, 1948. On August 25 of the same year, elections were held to appoint the first 212 members of the Supreme People's Assembly (SPA). North Korea also announced that 360 more members to the SPA had been elected at the conference of the South Korean People's Representatives. The first plenary session of the SPA of 572 members was held in Pyongyang between September 2-10, during which time the constitution was officially approved and promulgated (September 8, 1948). Finally, the government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was proclaimed on September 9, 1948 with Kim Il-sung at its head as Premier.

## 2 Establishment of North Korea's Political System and its Characteristics

### (1) Establishment of North Korea's Political System

The North Korean government is a peculiar regime that has continued for almost 70 years under the dynastic rule of the Kim family, which has been maintained through hereditary power succession over three generations. Since the era of Kim Il-sung, North Korea continuously created tension on the Korean peninsula by creating a warlike atmosphere; promoted internal unity by emphasizing the importance of revolution and nation-building efforts; and monopolized political power. Its *suryŏng*-centered dictatorship was formed mostly between 1956 and 1967, putting emphasis on the centralization of power onto the supreme leader and his role in the revolutionary battle.

Immediately following liberation, North Korea had become an arena for intense competition among various political factions. Domestic factions, including right-wing nationalists led by Cho Man-sik and left-wing communists headed by Pak Hon-yong, expanded their influence, while overseas factions, including the pro-Soviet Union clique centered on Alexei Ivanovich Hegay and the pro-China Yunan faction led by Kim Tu-bong and Mu Chong, struggled to take center stage. Kim Il-sung and his so-called anti-Japanese partisans or guerilla fighters also joined the struggle for dominance. In this fierce competition to establish a political regime in the north of the 38th parallel, Kim Il-sung, backed by the Soviet Union, defeated all other factions to emerge as a leading force.

In 1950, the North's invasion sparked the Korean War. Three long years of fierce fighting left the entire peninsula in ruins. After the war, factional conflicts broke out within North Korea's political elite over issues of reconstruction and national development strategies. These conflicts led to the so-called August Factional Strife<sup>1</sup> in 1956, through which Kim Il-sung was able to purge his political rivals and achieve the strategies he supported for



socialist national development, which placed top priority on the development of heavy industries. Throughout the Sino-Soviet split that followed Khrushchev's de-Stalinization of the USSR, Kim Il-sung advocated building an independent socialist nation, and took this time to purge both pro-Soviet and pro-China factions on charges of relying on external forces. Having vanquished all his rivals, Kim Il-sung was able to consolidate power, and his emphasis on independence paved the road to establishing the *juche* ideology.

From the mid to late 1950s, North Korea underwent a period where post-war reconstruction of the devastated economy was conducted, and foundations were laid to ensure the North's transition into a socialist economic system. The Korean War had a far-reaching impact on North Korea, and the need to streamline economic and social conditions provided a favorable environment for developing a socialist system. Collectivization was identified as the basis for such a system, and it was introduced to agriculture, commerce, and the handicraft industry. By implementing this method simultaneously in all of the three areas, North Korea had nationalized all means of production by the end of the 1950s. In the meantime, the North adopted a policy of mass mobilization as a way to overcome labor shortages and support post-war reconstruction. Mass mobilization attempts to encourage voluntary participation of the general public with the rationale that they are masters of socialism. This not only reflects socialist values, which condemn selfish motivations for labor, but also manifests the dismal reality of North Korea's post-war economy, where the simple cause of improving the economy did not serve as the right motivation to engage the public in this kind of labor. Typical examples of mass mobilization campaigns during this period include the Chollima Movement, which started in 1956, and the Chongsanri Spirit and Chongsanri Method,<sup>2</sup> both proclaimed in 1960.

The 1960s in North Korea was a period when foundations for heavy and chemical industries were built. During this time, Kim Il-sung strengthened his one-man control through a series of political purges, and reinforced

the *juche* ideology to put his god-like absolute power above all challenges. The fifteenth plenary meeting of the fourth WPK Central Committee was convened in May 1967 to grant absolute authority to Kim Il-sung, providing a foundation for the regime's *suryŏng*-centered dictatorship. Since then, the country has been maintaining its totalitarian system in which the party and the masses are united under the sole leadership of the *suryŏng*—the unquestionable authority. Though this system of excessive one-man rule brought stability to North Korea, it also resulted in the regime's isolation and rigidity, two key factors behind North Korea's inability to cope with the changing times and environment.

The watershed event that affected the establishment of the regime's hereditary power succession and the *suryŏng*-centered dictatorship was the adoption of the Socialist Constitution in 1972, which formalized Kim Il-sung's one-man rule over the country. The Socialist Constitution reflected a profound change from the Premier-led cabinet system based on the 1948 constitution to the one-man control established through purges of political opponents. After solidifying the one-man dictatorship through this process, Kim Il-sung set his priority on centralizing and strengthening political power by creating the State President post in the Socialist Constitution, which introduced the *juche* ideology in parallel with Marxism-Leninism. As a result, the President of North Korea came to hold absolute power, directly commanding the Central People's Committee (CPC) and acting as Supreme Commander of the KPA and Chairman of the NDC. The constitution of 1972 stipulated the President to be the head of the nation who represents sovereignty of the state and a man of absolute power who is elected by the SPA but cannot be summoned.

Meanwhile, after building the sole leadership structure, Kim Il-sung embarked upon a process to lay the groundwork for the succession of power to Kim Jong-il. Prior efforts had already been made for this purpose: the party's power structure was drastically changed at the second Conference of Party Representatives in October 1966 and the fifth WPK Congress in

1970, and the issue of power succession to Kim Jong-il was reviewed during the third plenary session of the fifth WPK Central Committee in November 1971. In the seventh plenary meeting of the fifth WPK Central Committee convened in 1973, Kim Jong-il, who had been serving as the Deputy Director of the Propaganda and Agitation Department and had also been in charge of the Organization and Guidance Department since 1969, was elected as the Secretary of Organization and Propaganda. Subsequently, in the eighth plenary session of the fifth WPK Central Committee held in February 1974, Kim Jong-il was elected to the Political Bureau of the Central Committee (Politburo), finally emerging as the only successor to Kim Il-sung.

At that point, it was imperative for him to go beyond Marxism-Leninism, which was the conventional guiding principle and ideology, as he was striving to establish *suryŏng*-centered absolutism and lay the groundwork for his succession to the throne. On that account, Kim Jong-il formalized the *juče* ideology by calling it Kimilsungism and presented the indoctrination of the entire society with Kimilsungism as the general mission of the party's ideo-theoretical activities. In April 1974, he proclaimed the Ten Principles for the Establishment of a Monolithic Ideological System as he gained full control over all of society via the Organization and Guidance Department. He also promoted the *juče* ideology through the indoctrination of all of society with Kimilsungism campaign and purged his political opponents to establish the power base necessary for securing the position of leader.

It was not until the sixth WPK Congress held in October 1980 that power succession to Kim Jong-il was officially proclaimed. This announcement was not only to solidify the position of Kim Jong-il as the only successor, but also to formalize the continuation and development of the country's revolutionary traditions. During the organizational reshuffle at the meeting, only Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il were elected to the three most powerful bodies within the party: the Politburo, Secretariat, and Military Commission. Having emerged as the successor, Kim Jong-il monopolized the right to interpret the

*juče* ideology by presenting *suryōng* Theory or the Revolutionary *suryōng* Theory. This was to theoretically justify the power structure of his father's monolithic one-man control and secure a stable power succession with the purpose of perpetuating the Kim dynasty's grip on power. The interpretations of the *juče* ideology suggested by him in the 1980s include his theories on *Leader's Revolutionary View and Socio-political Living Body*. By viewing himself as the only interpreter of the *juče* ideology, Kim Jong-il followed the example of his father who indicated himself not only as the only interpreter of Marxism-Leninism but also as the founder of the *juče* ideology. Such efforts also allowed him to justify his taking over of the leadership and, at the same time, left ideological tasks to deal with.

The Kim Jong-il regime started to take its form as part of a risk management system after his father's death on July 8, 1994. While going through the transition period described as the Arduous March, his regime focused on ruling the country according to his father's last wishes, building up military power, securing regime safety, and reorganizing government structure, thereby gradually developing its own features. His regime had a different political system compared to that of the Kim Il-sung era as it abolished the President post and the Central People's Committee through the constitutional amendments in 1998, which centralized power onto the NDC Chairman instead to promote the military-first policy. This system aimed at building a strong and prosperous great socialist state based on *Songun*, or the military-first policy, which is characterized by independence, unity and love for the nation and the people. This idea of giving prominence to the military was bolstered through the constitutional amendments in 2009, when efforts were underway to secure the succession of power to Kim Jong-un, with a more strengthened legal and institutional basis for the military-first policy and a clause prescribing the NDC Chairman as the supreme leader of the country.

Kim Jong-un made his first official appearance when he was named Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC)—a newly created post—

at the third Conference of Party Representatives on September 28, 2010. After the formalization of the dynastic power succession to the third generation, North Korea has been seeking to stabilize the Kim Jong-un regime by ruling the country based on his father's last wishes, securing regime legitimacy, controlling the military, regulating society, and calling for solidarity. For instance, Kim Jong-un was declared as "supreme leader of the WPK, military and people" at the memorial service for Kim Jong-il on December 29, 2011. Following the late leader's instructions made on October 8, 2011, Kim Jong-un was also elected Supreme Commander of the KPA at the Politburo meeting held on the following day. The announcement of the Central Committee-Central Military Commission Joint Slogan on December 31, 2011 emphasized rule in accordance with Kim Jong-il's testament: the sole leadership of Kim Jong-un; protection of Kim Jong-un's military-first sovereignty by organs of military and security; economic resuscitation and enhanced public livelihood; the importance of light industry and external trade; independent national unification; and removal of anti-unification forces.

In the New Year's joint editorial of 2012, the rule by legacy was declared with a statement that said "the dear respected Kim Jong-un is precisely the great Kim Jong-il", and the hereditary succession was completed through the fourth Conference of Party Representatives on April 11, 2012 and the fifth session of the twelfth SPA on April 13, 2012. Afterwards, Kim Jong-un dismissed Ri Yong-ho at the Politburo meeting held on July 15, 2012 and ascended to the throne of Marshal of the DPRK on July 18, 2012, gaining full control over the party, military, and state. Since then, he has been struggling to solidify his regime and establish his sole leadership structure through various efforts, including the execution of Jang Song-taek, who acted as his guardian, on December 12, 2013.

## (2) Characteristics of North Korea's Political System

North Korea can be described as a totalitarian regime with the supreme

leader, or *suryŏng*, at its center, reigning over the party and state. In politics, a regime refers to the *entirety of all institutions and political organizations that form a society where its political authorities maintain stable governance based on widespread obedience within the society*. The concept of politics here includes interrelations regarding the distribution of power, wealth and resources within the society, and regime means the system of rule that continues regardless of changes in the government. In light of this, the North's political regime can be defined as a combination of one-party rule, which is common to other socialist countries, and one-man control, which is characterized by the dictatorship of the unchallengeable supreme leader of the party, or *suryŏng*.

In general, to determine the characteristics of a political regime and the form of government established in it, one needs to analyze the constitution reflecting the national identity and the party rules containing the monopolistic status and leading role of the party. When viewed in terms of ideology based on this framework of analysis, the current Kim Jong-un regime can be defined as *juche and songun-oriented socialism* or *Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism*. The grounds for this argument are the following clauses in the constitution and party rules: "The DPRK Socialist Constitution is the Kim Il Sung constitution, in which the great leader Comrade Kim Il-sung's *juche*-oriented idea of state building and his achievements in state building have been made into law" (Preamble, Constitution of 2009); "The DPRK considers the *juche* ideology and the military-first idea ... as the guiding principles of its activities" (Article 3, Constitution of 2009); and "The only guiding idea of the WPK is the great *Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism*, and the indoctrination of the entire society with *Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism* is the party's supreme doctrine" (WPK Rules, 2012).

This interpretation is actually nothing new, considering that previous analysis on the constitution of 1998 and the WPK rules, which were amended at the sixth WPK Congress held between October 10-14, 1980, already defined

the Kim Jong-il regime as a socialist regime based on the *juche* ideology or Kimilsungism. Here are the specific clauses which serve as the basis for such an analysis: “The DPRK Socialist Constitution is the Kim Il Sung constitution, in which the great leader Comrade Kim Il-sung’s *juche*-oriented idea of state building and his achievements in state building have been made into law” (Preamble, Constitution of 1998); “The DPRK considers the *juche* ideology... as the guiding principles of its activities” (Article 3, Constitution of 1998); “the WPK is guided only by the great leader Comrade Kim Il-sung’s *juche* ideology and his revolutionary idea” (WPK Rules, 1980). The last clause in particular describes well the characteristics of the North Korean regime. Judging from this, it is clear that the North Korean regime is basically a totalitarian dictatorship built on a hierarchical structure that comprises the *suryŏng*, party and state, where the *suryŏng*, the god-like leader, rules over the party and state.

Meanwhile, an analysis on the regime’s power structure reveals that the *suryŏng*, who is at the core of the *juche* idea, holds the absolute power over the party, government and military. This is because the *suryŏng*, being placed at the top, assumes more power over the President or the WPK General Secretary, both of which are institutionalized positions. Attention should be directed to the fact that these characteristics have been continuously appearing throughout the history of North Korea and the party has been incessantly obliged to establish a system of one ideology and one-man rule to support this regime. As a result, the leadership and infallibility of the party, which is institutionally guaranteed in modern socialist states, appears in the North Korean regime in the form of the leadership and infallibility of the *suryŏng* and absolute loyalty to him. In this respect, it would be more accurate to describe North Korea as a country governed by the *supreme leader* of the party or a nation of *suryŏng*-centered dictatorship than viewing it as a state governed by the party or ruled under the party’s dictatorship.

## Section 2. Formation of Governing Ideology and its Changing Nature

Marxism-Leninism and Stalinism were the ruling principles of the early Kim Il-sung regime. But in the process of power struggle after the death of Stalin, Kim Il-sung presented the *juche* ideology to eliminate flunkeyism and factionalism, and the ideology was declared as the guiding idea of the party in the fifth WPK Congress held in 1970. However, it later degenerated to the oppressive means of justifying Kim Il-sung's one-man control and *suryŏng*-centered dictatorship. After the *juche* ideology was defined as the sole doctrine of the party at the sixth WPK Congress in 1980, it was backed by new interpretations such as the *suryŏng* Theory and the Leader's Revolutionary View, which were provided by Kim Jong-il to perpetuate the Kim dynasty. He also promoted the *juche* ideology after 1974 through the *indoctrination of the entire society with the Kimilsungism* campaign, and he justified power succession by calling himself the only interpreter of the *juche* ideology.

However, after the late 1980s, the North reinterpreted the *juche* ideology as “*our style of socialism*” for the sake of the regime's survival amid crisis resulting from the fall of the Soviet Union and East European socialist states at the end of the Cold War.” As Kim Jong-il emphasized the military-first policy by centralizing power onto the NDC, the *songun* idea, which had its roots in the *juche* ideology, was presented as the ruling philosophy for building a strong and prosperous great socialist country. Through the constitutional amendment of 2009, the military-first idea formally became the regime's guiding principle.



After completing succession of power over three generations, Kim Jong-un revised the WPK rules at the fourth Conference of Party Representatives held in 2012 to present *Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism* as the governing ideology of his era. The amended constitution stipulated that “*Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism* is the only guiding idea of the party, and the indoctrination of the entire society with *Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism* shall be the supreme doctrine of the party.”

## 1 *Juche* Ideology

### (1) Formation of the *Juche* Idea

In North Korea, the *juche* ideology pervades politics, the economy, society, culture, values and daily life. The WPK rules and North Korea’s constitution have long defined *juche* ideology as the sole doctrine and guideline for the country. Constitutional revisions in 2009 prescribe that along with the military-first policy, North Korea “shall uphold the *juche* ideology as its guideline for activities.” The preamble of the 2010 WPK rules states that “the Workers’ Party of Korea is a revolutionary party which upholds the revolutionary philosophy and the *juche* ideology of the Great Leader Kim Il-sung as its sole guiding doctrine.”

Lively debates on *juche* began in the mid-1950s and attempts followed suit to make theoretical foundations for this ideology. *Ideological Independence* was declared in 1955, *economical independence* in 1956, *political independence* (internal affairs) in 1957, *national defense independence* in 1962, and *diplomatic independence* in 1966. The term *juche* started being formulated in 1967. The fifth WPK convention adopted *juche* as its official ideology in 1970, enabling it to stand shoulder to shoulder with Marxism-Leninism. Ten years later, at the sixth WPK convention in 1980, the *juche* ideology superseded Marxism-Leninism as an independent governing principle.

Research into the formation of *juche* reveals that in its early days, the ideology strongly reflected a nationalistic response to the infiltration of imperialistic

or cultural elements. The focus was on enhancing the people's awareness of the need to secure independence from outside forces. As Khrushchev's de-Stalinization campaign encouraged revisionists in China and the Soviet Union to denounce one-man dictatorship, Kim Il-sung and his followers sought to defend their dictatorial system by blocking such criticism from entering North Korea. During this time, Moscow and Beijing were locked in a fierce ideological debate between dogmatism and revisionism. The *juche* ideology was thus also a political manifestation of North Korea's diplomatic strategy to assure its independent survival by maintaining a neutral stance between the two communist giants.

Table 2-1 Development of *Juche* Ideology

Development	Occasions	Background
Self-reliance in ideology	WPK conference for agitprop agents (December 28, 1955)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Death of Stalin</li> <li>• Purge of the South Korean faction in the WPK</li> </ul>
Economic independence	Plenary meeting of the WPK Central Committee (December 11, 1956)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in foreign aid (A setback in 5-year economic plan)</li> <li>• Rise of anti-Kim Il-sung movement within the WPK</li> </ul>
Autonomy in politics	Extended meeting of the WPK Central Committee (December 5, 1957)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expansion of movement against personality cult in the socialist bloc</li> <li>• Overthrowing of pro-China and pro-Soviet factions from the WPK</li> </ul>
Self-reliance in national defense	The 5th plenary meeting of the 4th WPK Central Committee (December 10, 1962)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intensification of Sino-Soviet conflict</li> <li>• Drive for US-Soviet co-existence</li> <li>• May 16 military coup in South Korea (1961)</li> </ul>
Autonomy in foreign affairs	The 2nd WPK Conference (October 5, 1966)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expansion of Sino-Soviet conflict</li> <li>• Growth of non-aligned movement</li> </ul>
Establishment of monolithic ideology	The 15th plenary meeting of the 4th WPK Central Committee (May 28, 1967) The 8th plenary meeting of the 5th WPK Central Committee (February 12, 1974)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of one-man rule by Kim Il-sung</li> <li>• Promotion of Kim Il-sung's personality cult</li> </ul>
Reinforcement of the <i>juche</i> ideology in overall society	The 6th WPK Convention (October 10, 1980)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consolidation of hereditary succession of power</li> </ul>
Stipulation of <i>juche</i> and <i>songun</i> as sole governing ideology	The 3rd WPK Conference (September 28, 2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formalization of power succession to the third generation</li> </ul>
Stipulation of <i>Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism</i> as sole governing ideology	The 4th WPK Conference (April 11, 2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launch of the Kim Jong-un regime</li> </ul>

## (2) Changes in the Nature of *Juche*

After the 1960s, North Korea embarked upon its transition into a *suryŏng*-centered monolithic ideological system. The monolithic ideological system disregards all ideas except for *juche*, asserting that the guidance of the *suryŏng* and the WPK is imperative for helping the masses become main agents of revolution. North Korea declared the *juche* ideology as the guiding principle of the party at the fifth WPK Congress held in November 1970 and began to degrade the ideology into a theoretical means to justify the absolute authority of Kim Il-sung by combining it with the concept of sole leadership structure and Leader's Revolutionary View.

After grasping de facto power, Kim Jong-il started to purge his opponents from 1974 and promoted the *juche* ideology through campaign called the indoctrination of the entire society with Kimilsungism, laying the foundation for consolidating his future status as *suryŏng*. In this process, he presented the *suryŏng* Theory, or Revolutionary *suryŏng* Theory, based on Leader's Revolutionary View to justify the power structure of Kim Il-sung's one-man control and to perpetuate the Kim dynasty through the completion of dynastic power succession. According to Leader's Revolutionary View, no party or working class can exist without the supreme leader of revolution. The working masses therefore must be under the leadership of the party and *suryŏng*. The core logic of the *suryŏng* Theory lies in that the masses' fight for independence will be instigated, advanced and accomplished only under the leadership of the *suryŏng*, and therefore, the masses must express their loyalty to the *suryŏng* by upholding his successor who will carry on the revolution and complete his feats. However, the so-called *suryŏng* Theory is clearly the centerpiece of the personality cult.

The changes in the nature of the *juche* ideology began with new interpretations and elaborations provided by Kim Jong-il in the 1980s. Having emerged as the official heir to Kim Il-sung at the sixth WPK Congress, he monopolized the right to interpret the *juche* ideology, and developed the

concepts of Leader's Revolutionary View and the socio-political living body, which served as strong catalysts for advancing the *juche* ideology into a more organized theory. At the heart of Leader's Revolutionary View, which defined the basic relationship between the *suryŏng* and the masses, is the absolute fidelity to the *suryŏng*, and it thus emphasizes that all the lines and policies provided by the party and *suryŏng* must be fulfilled without fail and with no exception. According to Kim Jong-il's interpretation, a concept that embraces the whole structure of the party, state and society built on this Leader's Revolutionary View is called the socio-political living body.

The underlying principle of the socio-political living body, which was created in the late 1980s as the main theory of the *juche* ideology, is that only the revolutionary loyalty and comradeship towards the *suryŏng* should be considered absolute and unconditional. This logic comes from the view that the socio-political living body is sustained through exchanges of benignity, fidelity, and filial piety. By connecting the logic of the *juche* ideology with Confucian virtues, which put importance on filial piety, the theory of socio-political living body emphasizes the unity between the *suryŏng*, party and the masses.

From the late 1980s, the Soviet Union and East European socialist states collapsed one after another. Regarding these events as threats to the regime, North Korea endeavored to emphasize the superiority of North Korean socialism, by reinforcing the logic behind the *juche* ideology. Henceforth, the North came up with an alternative rationale to protect the regime, which was to reinterpret *juche* as '*our style of socialism*'. With this, the regime stepped up its efforts to explain how North Korean-style socialism differs from the East European socialism that had fallen apart, thereby hoping to vanquish fears of a regime collapse.

However, North Korea also called for an expansion of pragmatic thinking in the wake of Kim Il-sung's death in 1994 and the serious economic crises that followed. This has undermined the ideological power of *juche*.

At the onset of the 21st century, the cohesive power of *juče* in North Korean society further weakened as the regime raised the banner of the military-first policy in frontline politics. After Kim Jong-il's death and Kim Jong-un's takeover of power in December 2011, the preamble of the WPK rules was revised in April 2012 to set forth *Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism* as North Korea's sole guiding principles.

### (3) Limitations of *Juche* Ideology

North Korea, through means of education and edification, required its people to comply with the *juče* ideology in their daily lives. The regime asserts that *juče* is what forms the foundation of a revolutionary society, and that applying this ideology in their daily lives will help them overcome challenges, which will eventually lay the groundwork for the ultimate victory of 'our style of socialism'. Moreover, *juče* was stressed to be "a theory of communist revolution that fully systemized and perfected the premises of liberation of the nation, class and the people as well as the transformation of society, nature and the people. As such, North Korea noted that *juče* was a flawless ideology that could be applied in reality.

This acclaimed ideology, however, was affected by North Korea's dire economic performance since the mid-1990s, and is being mentioned less and less as its practical use diminishes. After Kim Jong-il succeeded his father, North Korea introduced a set of political slogans that resembled codes of conduct to revive the economy and stabilize the system. These include the red flag ideology, strong and prosperous nation, and military-first policy. This implies that *juče*, apart from constituting the regime's sole guiding principle, has become less practical as a policy guideline, exerting a less important influence on society.

As this acute economic situation in North Korea drags on, confidence in *juče* has begun to falter. Occasionally, there are occurrences when those excluded

from public distribution rely on the concept of *juche* to justify their new sought ways of securing daily necessities for survival. However, the public slogan of *juche* continues to ring hollow, and therefore distrust and criticism of the ideology are bound to surface.

The most notable critique of *juche* is that North Korea has abused its socialist ideology as a political tactic to monopolize power and build a personality cult around one man. According to this view, amid political, economic, military and diplomatic crisis in North Korea, *juche* ideology strayed from its original goal of helping the masses realize that they are the main agents of revolution whose thoughts and actions can overcome plights. Instead it was manipulated to maintain and reinforce one-man dictatorship. The problem of the theory of *suryŏng* is that the masses failed to become true masters due to the bureaucratization of the party, and must obey the absolute authority of the *suryŏng*, failing to check the legitimacy of the *suryŏng*'s leadership.

## 2 Songun Ideology

The top priority of *songun*, or the military-first policy is to build military capacity to underpin all national affairs. Rodong Sinmun, a North Korean newspaper, defined the military-first policy in an article on October 9, 1998 as “a unique style of politics that applies maximum force to reinforcing the KPA and propels overall undertakings of revolution and construction based on the KPA’s strength.” The military-first policy was first introduced for internal discussions when the Kim Jong-il regime geared up for full operation following Kim Il-sung’s death. By 1998, it was established as North Korea’s core governing principle. Emphasizing the military’s role of leading the socialist revolution and social progress, the policy made the military exercise its influence not only on politics and the economy but also on education, culture, arts and all other areas of North Korean society. Under the banner of

the military-first policy, which politically institutionalized the military, the armed forces have solidified their status as the central institution that defends the socialist regime and its leader. The WPK rules amended in 2010 defined the military-first policy as a basic political method of socialism.

The most direct cause leading to the introduction of the military-first policy was the need to assure regime survival amid the Arduous March that continued during the rule by legacy period after Kim Il-sung's death, which forced Kim Jong-il to depend on the military, not the WPK, as his power base. North Korea's severe economic conditions brought down the socialist patronage system, under which the WPK used to ensure the basic livelihood of the population in return for public support and regime legitimacy. The military-first policy was implemented to overcome this crisis and resuscitate the economy by bringing the resources and capacity of the military into play, and was also an attempt to supplement the weakening WPK's control of North Korean society with military institutions. In other words, the North, faced with the attenuation of WPK functions underlying the internal legitimacy of socialism, strove to overcome the crisis and restore its legitimacy by enhancing the military's status and role.

Kim Jong-il chose to rely on the military and emphasize ideo-theoretical activities to protect the regime and solidify his power, even when the crisis the country faced was caused by the political system that deified a specific individual. Recognizing that the infiltration of imperialistic ideologies and cultures into the state was more dangerous than a nuclear attack, Kim Jong-il elevated the status of the military for the safety of the regime and suggested the idea of prioritizing military affairs and the Red Flag Ideology to protect the regime and prevent deterioration of social order.

This expanded role of the military creates a direct link between the military and the people's daily activities, resulting in more dependence on military institutions. However, North Korea argues that the military-first policy does not just aim at strengthening military power, but rather intends to find a

central link to more strengthened revolutionary forces and seek a turning point in building socialism through the revolutionary soldier spirit. This revolutionary soldier spirit consists of the spirit of defending the *suryŏng* unto death, the spirit of carrying out his instructions at any cost, and the spirit of self-sacrifice. Helping the masses learn this revolutionary soldier spirit and fulfill the role of being the main agents of the state, society and revolution is what the military-first policy is all about.

Another cause for the military-first policy is anxiety resulting from the diplomatic isolation in which North Korea was left after the collapse of the Soviet Union and East European socialist states. The regime also took steps to reinforce its self-defensive military forces amid sharpening confrontations with the new George W. Bush administration in Washington. On the other hand, the existence of the enormous military forces, which have been built up for years, was internally backing the manifestation of the military-first policy. Moreover, North Korea's pride and fixation on its military, perhaps the only area in which it retains competitiveness with South Korea, is another reason for the continuation of this policy.

While the *juche* ideology was the governing doctrine for the Kim Il-sung era, it was the newly introduced military-first policy that guided the country throughout the Kim Jong-il period.

While overcoming the overall national crisis in the wake of the collapse of socialist countries in the 1990s and filling the power vacuum after the death of Kim Il-sung who had been at the center of the country's revolution, North Korea had to find alternative logic to justify the legitimacy of the Kim Jong-il regime. To maintain the existing system and supplement the *juche* ideology's role of justifying the *suryŏng*-centered sole leadership structure, Kim Jong-il proposed the military-first idea, which was rooted in the *juche* ideology, as a new philosophy to overcome the crisis through solidarity and unity under the supreme leader.



Kim Jong-il's military-first idea emphasized the implementation of the military-first revolution to build a strong and prosperous great socialist state, coping with the rapidly changing international environment. North Korea explains that the military-first revolution is a principle based on the so-called philosophy of the gun barrel, which promotes the idea that revolution is pioneered, advanced, and completed by the barrel of a gun. In particular, the military-first idea sets forth the principle of prioritizing military matters as a basis to win a victory in the military power competition. This military matter-first principle places its foremost priority on strengthening and developing the military and the national defense industry when establishing and realizing the lines and policies of the party and the state.

Furthermore, the military-first idea serves as the fundamental principle that further advanced leadership structure, which is the essential element of the revolutionary leadership method, by creating an organizational structure centered on national defense. The military-first idea designated the NDC as the central state organ through which the party and the *suryŏng* can organize and mobilize the masses for revolution and construction. As a result, the NDC has become the central authority that leads and manages all national activities in a unified manner based on the military matter-first principle under the sole leadership of the *suryŏng*. In addition, the military-first idea emphasizes that the revolutionary military should become the main forces of revolution, given its status in revolution and construction, revolutionary spirit, organizational power and combat capability.

In the meantime, North Korea, in the process of preparing for the hereditary power succession, deleted all references to communism when revising its constitution in 2009 and the WPK rules in 2010. The regime stipulated *juche* as the sole guiding principle and the military-first idea as the ruling ideology of the Kim Jong-il era. It is assumed that such changes were made to theoretically justify the totalitarian rule of Kim Il-sung and his successors.

After the North Korean regime introduced the concept of reinforcement of the military-first idea in overall society on December 22, 2003, it strove to build a strong and prosperous great nation, which was the goal of the military-first policy, by creating a principle that highlighted the superiority of our *suryŏng*, our ideology, our military and our institutions. Through this principle, the regime emphasized solidarity among the party, military and masses based on the military-first ideology. In particular, by specifying our ideology, one of the four superior areas, as Kim Jong-il's ideology, the regime endeavored to secure internal unity and identity. In addition, the state emphasized patriotism and national fraternity based on civic duties to fill the uneasy vacuum of the North Korean leadership. In September 2011, North Korea also presented the Spirit of the September 28 Party Conference, calling for the spirit of solidarity, relentless march and ongoing revolution. With this motivation, the regime directed efforts to strengthen the leader's control over the WPK while securing Kim Jong-un's hereditary succession and stabilizing the regime.

After all, the adoption of the military-first policy was a political decision to stabilize the regime and secure its legitimacy in the midst of economic crisis and diplomatic isolation, with its underlying governing philosophy being the military-first idea. It seems inevitable that the Kim Jong-un regime, which inherited the political legacy of his father, will also have very limited options when it comes to political choice.

### 3

### *Kimilsungism–Kimjongilism*

Reflecting the changes in governing ideology, the North Korean regime revised the preamble of the constitution in April 2012 after Kim Jong-il's death, naming "Kim Il-sung as eternal President and Kim Jong-il as eternal Chairman of the National Defense Commission." The WPK rules were also revised to make *Kimilsungism–Kimjongilism* the guiding principles.

Before adopting *Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism* as the WPK's guiding principle at the fourth Conference of Party Representatives on April 11, 2012, Kim Jong-un made it clear that *Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism* had its root in the *juche* ideology, asserting in his speech on April 6 that "*Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism* is an integral system of the idea, theory and methods of *juche*, and a great revolutionary philosophy representative of the *juche* era." This point was reiterated in the party newspaper *Rodong Sinmun* on April 24, 2014, which stated that "*Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism* is a revolutionary theory whose quintessence is the *juche* ideology" and "it is a revolutionary philosophy that embraces the mass-centered revolutionary theory and leadership method, in which all the related ideas and theories are organically structured to constitute an integral system."

According to the North's argument, *Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism*, in its essence, is a people-oriented doctrine and a revolutionary philosophy aiming to achieve self-reliance of the masses. The doctrine includes both the framework and substance for social reform and leadership methods for enhancing the benefits of the masses, who are the main agents of such reform. In particular, the country asserts that *Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism* is the governing ideology for the era of independence. It advocates the idea of the military-first revolution, which describes the gun barrel as an all-powerful sword in the revolutionary struggle to achieve the masses' independence, and presents a creative theory for building a strong and prosperous socialist state. The necessity for a new guiding philosophy for solidifying the Kim Jong-un regime made the country further elaborate the idea of *juche* and *songun* into *Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism* through the amendment to the WPK rules. This effort was based on the idea that successful continuation of ideology and revolutionary thoughts was vital in strengthening the regime's legitimacy.

The question was how to realize *Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism*. As the solution to this question, Kim Jong-un provided Kim Jong-il Patriotism. He formalized Kim Jong-il Patriotism for the first time in his speech entitled "Let us Step Up

the Building of a Thriving Country by Applying Kim Jong Il's Patriotism," which was made in front of the senior officials at the Central Committee of the WPK on July 26, 2012. In this speech, which was referred to as the 'complete guide to the Kim Jong-il Patriotism', he put emphasis on placing the entire state under *Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism* by implementing Kim Jong-il Patriotism based on the late leader's thoughts on the country, the people and the coming generations. As part of promoting this idea, Kim Jong-un amended the WPK rules at the fourth Conference of Party Representatives. At the extended plenary meeting for the Cabinet held on October 22, 2012, he also called for a thorough application of Kim Jong-il Patriotism while speaking in relation to the strengthening of the party's role in securing the regime's solidarity and sole leadership structure.

Based on that, in June 2013 the regime amended the Ten Principles for the Establishment of a Monolithic Ideological System, which for 39 years served in practice as the supreme law of the country that superseded the national constitution or the WPK rules, into Ten Principles for the Establishment of a Sole Leadership System. Those changes were intended to prevent the formation of factions consisting of core power elites, their wielding of power, or other causes that may threaten the regime's power base. At the same time, they were aimed at solidifying Kim Jong-un's one-man control by absolutizing his authority and stipulating the eternal continuation of the Mount Paektu bloodline. In this way, Kim Jong-un, following in his late father's footsteps in the 1970s, solidified his position as a sole interpreter of North Korea's governing ideology.

## Section 3. Power Structure and Form of Government

### 1 Power structure

A general trait of socialist nations is that state power is centered in the ruling party, enabling a party-dominant system. In most socialist countries that declare themselves as proletarian dictatorships, an enormous state edifice serves as a means to rule the populace and transform the society for the benefit of its communist party.

Several common traits are observed in the political systems of socialist states. First, a party that exercises de facto power governs the nation and society eternally. Second, only one type of value system is injected, creating one absolute ideology to educate and unite the society. Third, no political or social subsystem is vested with autonomy as all political procedures and media outlets are in the hands of a Marxist-Leninist party. Fourth, the country is founded on Democratic Centralism, which embodies the leading role of the Marxist-Leninist party, the important element of power monopoly of the communist party. The principles of Democratic Centralism form the basis of political decision-making processes and organization of the communist party. Therefore, as a country that clearly declared itself as the state of proletarian dictatorship, North Korea is no exception in that all the sources of power come from its party, which is accorded the highest status and authority to

stand above all other institutions and organizations. All state policies are implemented under its guidance and control.

While the WPK oversees all policy decisions, the SPA performs legislative functions, the NDC and Cabinet assumes executive functions, and the courts and prosecution service administer judicial functions, the three organs are thus responsible for the making, enforcement and interpretation of laws respectively. Despite this three-way division of power, fundamental principles of democratic politics such as separation of power and checks and balances have hardly any meaning in North Korea which is controlled by a regime characterized by one-party dictatorship. This owes to the fact that principles of plural democracy, which presumes conflicts among factions that reflect partial interests in society, are hard to square with a totalitarian state in which society is seen as one organic body.

## (1) Power Structure of Kim Il-sung Regime

### Power Structure before the 1972 Socialist Constitution

In general, politics in reality aims to obtain, maintain, and recreate political power. Therefore, solidifying the power structure is a prerequisite for maintaining the supreme leader's status and command earned through power struggle. The North Korean regime defined its power structure based on its political lines that mirrored its political circumstances. The political power structure in 1945 was defined by Kim Il-sung's concept of Democratic Base Line, and after the Korean War, Revolutionary Democratic Base Line was reiterated to emphasize the continuity of the revolution.

North Korea's first constitution, inaugurated at the time of government establishment in 1948, adopted the cabinet system to justify the foundation of the government in the northern region of the 38th parallel. Having defined itself as a divided and incomplete nation, the regime selected a political line that left the overall political process in the hands of a revolutionary party

rather than creating a law-governed country. This led to the development of its distinctive characteristic—sole leadership of the WPK, which still constitutes an important aspect of North Korean politics.

Furthermore, starting from 1956, North Korea began to establish the *suryŏng*-centered dictatorial system, which put its highest importance on the power monopoly of the supreme leader and his role in the revolutionary battle. At the fifteenth plenary session of the fourth Central Committee held in May 1967, the regime established a power structure that gave the *suryŏng* absolute authority based on the doctrine of independence. In this power structure, the *suryŏng* organized the party to lead the revolutionary battle of the masses, and the party functioned as the vanguard for the implementation of the leaders' revolutionary ideology. This, after all, made the party come under complete control of the *suryŏng*. In the process, the party's power structure underwent big changes, especially between the second Conference of Party Representatives in May 1966 and the fifth WPK Congress in November 1970. More specifically, the adoption of the 1970 WPK rules, which stipulated that “the WPK makes the establishment of a monolithic ideological system within the party the basic principle in implementing national revolution and building the party”, had a great influence on solidifying the *suryŏng*-centered system in the country.

### Power Structure in the 1972 Socialist Constitution

After solidifying Kim Il-sung's dictatorship and building the foundation for the power succession to Kim Jong-il, North Korea abolished the SPA Presidium and created the state presidency system by adopting its new Socialist Constitution at the first session of the fifth SPA of 1972. Until the early 1970s, the regime's power structure was modelled after that of the former Soviet Union, with the General Secretary of the party concurrently serving as the Premier, and the President of the Presidium of the SPA, which was the supreme body of state sovereignty, acting as the nominal head of the state.

However, under the new constitution of 1972, the head of the state, or the President, was in full control of all national powers. The ratification of the new constitution and the reshuffle of the national organizations put the President at the apex of the political power structure. He came to directly lead the Central People's Committee (CPC), which was the supreme guiding agency organized under the principle that the party guides the country, State Administration Council, which was the policy enforcement agency, and judicial agencies such as the courts and prosecution service. The President also assumed full power, simultaneously holding the posts of Supreme Commander of all armed forces and the NDC Chairman. In short, the key element of the 1972 constitution was the leading role of the President. Based on this Socialist Constitution, Kim Il-sung secured absolute authority as the *suryŏng*, representing both the party and the state sovereignty as General Secretary of the WPK and President of the state. Therefore, North Korea's power structure during this period can be defined as an institutional framework for interpreting the *suryŏng*'s intention and executing his directions.

### Power Structure after the Sixth WPK Congress of 1980

Much of North Korea's power structure that exists today has its origins in the amendment of the WPK rules at the sixth WPK Congress held in October 1980. Through this amendment, North Korea streamlined and strengthened the central organs of the party, creating the Political Bureau and the Standing Committee. Except for the existence and status of the *suryŏng*, the structure looks very similar to that of China, given that the Communist Party of China reigns over the military, administrative, legislative and judicial bodies under the inalterable principle of the party's guidance. All these changes were made to lay the groundwork for the power succession to Kim Jong-il. During the election of party leadership in the first plenary meeting of the sixth Central Committee, 248 Central Committee members, who were elected at the sixth



Party Congress, elected only Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il to the three most powerful organs of the WPK—the Standing Committee of the Politburo, the Secretariat and CMC—finally formalizing Kim Jong-il as Kim Il-sung’s chosen successor.

## (2) Power Structure of the Kim Jong-il Regime

### Power Structure in the 1998 Constitution

North Korea, which was ruled in accordance with Kim Il-sung’s testament after his death in 1994, reorganized its power structure through the amendments to the constitution at the first session of the tenth SPA held in September 1998, abolishing the CPC and the state presidency system of the Kim Il-sung era and strengthening the authority of the NDC Chairman.

In addition, the functions of the President and the CPC were added to the SPA Presidium, and the Cabinet was reorganized to inherit the State Administration Council’s role of the executive enforcement organ, also exercising authority as a general state management body. Three key changes were observed during this period of power restructuring. First, the system before 1972 was restored and the status of the NDC Chairman was elevated to the highest position of the state. Second, the old generations retired from the front lines of power and a generational shift to professional technocrats was completed, seeking balance between the new and old generations. Third, the facade was collective leadership based on distribution of functions, but the reality was a one-man dictatorship by the NDC Chairman.

### Power Structure in the 2009 Constitution and the 2010 WPK Rules

While focusing its energy on the institutionalization of the military-first policy, the regime started to lay the foundation for the power succession to Kim Jong-un upon the deterioration of Kim Jong-il’s health condition in 2008. First of all, the constitutional revision in 2009 elevated the authority

of the NDC and its Chairman by newly stipulating that the NDC Chairman is the supreme leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and supervises all state affairs, thereby strengthening the legal and institutional foundation for the military-first policy. These changes were very similar to those made at the time of ratifying the Socialist Constitution in 1972 when the country devoted itself to solidifying Kim Il-sung's dictatorial system and preparing the power transfer to Kim Jong-il.

However, the power succession to the third generation of the Kim family was not formalized until the third party conference of 2010. To make the succession official, North Korea elected Kim Jong-un to Central Committee member and the newly created post of the CMC Vice Chairman at the third Conference of Party Representatives and the plenary session of the Central Committee held on September 28, 2010. Similar actions were taken in 1980 when Kim Jong-il was elected to the Politburo Standing Committee and the Central Military Commission.

### (3) Power Structure of Kim Jong-un Regime

After the death of Kim Jong-il, North Korea revised the WPK rules at the fourth Conference of Party Representatives in April 2012 to inaugurate the party system centered on Kim Jong-un and set up his political status. Constitutional amendments were also made at the fifth session of the twelfth SPA held in April 2012 to establish a political system centered on Kim Jong-un and create a new status for Kim Jong-il. During the session, Kim Jong-il was venerated as "eternal General Secretary of the party and eternal *suryŏng*," and also as "eternal Chairman of the NDC of the DPRK." Meanwhile, Kim Jong-un was elected to WPK First Secretary and First Chairman of the NDC, the top post of the state.

During the first session of the thirteenth SPA, which was held after the execution of Jang Song-taek, Kim Jong-un was re-elected as First Chairman

of the NDC. It is assumed that this was to maintain the status and role of the NDC and stabilize the regime's power structure. Unlike the Kim Jong-il era, during which the military-first policy was led by the NDC, the Kim Jong-un regime emphasized the status and role of the WPK leadership. Accordingly, the Central Military Commission of the WPK organizes and guides all military projects at the party level, as stipulated in Article 27 of the WPK rules.

As shown above, North Korea has been governed by three leviathans of state bureaucracy. Constituting the basis of the regime are the WPK and the military, which are the twin pillars, and government bodies, including the executive, legislative and judiciary branches. Among these organizations, the key apparatus that has sustained the regime is the WPK, which is characterized as a dictatorial organization. This is evidenced by the fact that the nature of the North Korean military forces, which is a primary base of the North Korean regime, is defined in the party rules as the “revolutionary armed power of the Workers Party of Korea which inherited revolutionary traditions.”

## Workers' Party of Korea

### (1) Establishment of the WPK

#### North Korea Branch Bureau of KCP and North Korean Communist Party

Right after Korea's independence, the Korean Communist Party (KCP) was set up in Seoul by Pak Hon-yong, and its branches were being organized in each province. Considering these circumstances, the Soviet authorities decided to “acknowledge the KCP in Seoul as the headquarters and organize its North Korean branch in Pyongyang.” Subsequently, based on the Decision on the Strengthening of Political lines and Organization adopted at the Conference

of KCP Members and Enthusiasts in the Five Northwestern Provinces, the Soviet military administration decided on October 13 to create the North Korean Branch Bureau of the KCP and established the Bureau in mid-October in concert with the KCP members in charge of five provinces in the northern region of the 38th parallel. In the following second Extended Executive Committee of the Bureau held on November 15, 1945, Kim Il-sung, criticizing domestic communists such as Pak Hon-yong, presented the idea of “creating a provisional central organ of sovereignty” based on widespread support of the masses and Democratic National United Front to build a genuine people’s government. He also emphasized securing the party’s leadership over the government and the working class.

Since the Bureau did not have the capability to lead the united front and manage relations with the masses in North Korea, it elected Kim Il-sung, who was emphasizing the communist party cells, the mass line and united front line, to the Chief Secretary at the third Extended Executive Committee of the Bureau held December 17-18, 1945. In his inaugural address, Kim Il-sung also presented the Democratic Base Creation Line, which asserted the first reform, then unification, as the party’s principal political doctrine. The basic notion of this line was that North Korea should serve as a base for carrying out the revolutionary process and this position accorded with the policies of the Soviet leadership.

### Creation of the Workers’ Parties in the North and South

The North Korean Communist Party and the New People’s Party of Korea held a joint plenum of the Central Committees of both parties on July 28-30, 1946, and agreed to merge into a single entity. Afterwards, the Workers’ Party of North Korea was officially launched at a founding conference on August 28-30. The doctrine and rules of the party were adopted and the leadership structure was formed at this founding conference, which is also considered as the first WPK Congress. At that time, various factions, including the pro-

China Yunan faction, Anti-Japanese partisan, pro-Soviet Union clique, and domestic factions, were quite fairly represented in the Politburo and Standing Committee. However, this seemingly united political front was actually being dominated by Kim Il-sung.

Following the launch of the Workers' Party of North Korea through the aforementioned process, South Korea also embarked upon the merger of the so-called three left-wing parties, that is, the South Korean Communist Party, the People's Party of Korea led by Lyuh Woon-Hyung, and the New People's Party of South Korea led by Baek Nam-un. As a result, the formation of the Workers' Party of South Korea was completed in November 1946.

### Establishment of the Workers' Party of Korea

Sovietization was already taking deep root in North Korean society as the Soviet authorities organized a legislative organ in February 1947, set the stage for the establishment of a government, and created the KPA in February 1948. Meanwhile, the second WPK Congress was held on March 27-30, 1948, a politically very important period that can have a critical bearing on the establishment of a government. The second Congress resulted in the weakening of home-grown communists, further solidifying the status of Kim Il-sung within the WPK. Since the second Party Congress had laid the essential groundwork for the upcoming establishment of a government and the merger between parties, the predominance of Kim Il-sung's side over the waning domestic factions was apparent in the composition of the party leadership.

Subsequently, in an effort to establish a government, the Workers' Party of North Korea formed the United Central Committee with the Workers' Party of South Korea led by Pak Hon-yong in August 1948. After the establishment of the government, the two Workers' Parties, dispensing with a party congress, held the first joint plenum on June 24, 1949 and merged to create

the Workers' Party of Korea as we know it today. During the plenum, Kim Il-sung was elected as Chairman, and Pak Hon-yong and Ho Ka-i as Vice Chairmen.

## (2) Status and Nature

The WPK was described as having the nature of a private party of the *suryŏng* in the 2010 WPK Rules, which stipulated it as “the party of the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il-sung.” Conversion of the WPK’s nature from the party of the working class to that of Kim Il-sung definitely goes against the international trend, given that ruling communist parties of today are rapidly changing their identities from the parties of the working class to the parties of the masses.

Kim Jong-il defined this personalized WPK as the “only guiding force for revolution in a socialist state” and stressed that no political organization can replace the status and role of the party. This was based on the view that “turning over the leadership of a socialist state to any other party than the party of the working class means giving up on socialism after all.” In this respect, the WPK is in the vanguard of guiding the masses upon receiving orders from the supreme leader within the framework of the *suryŏng*-centered dictatorship.

The Communist Party of China (CPC) is very similar to the WPK except that there is no *suryŏng*. The “guidance by the CPC” has been the unchangeable principle since the country enacted its constitution in 1954. There are legislative, judicial, and administrative bodies in China, but there is no separation of the three powers, which is evidenced by the fact that the Communist Party reigns over the People’s Liberation Army, State Council (the executive), National People’s Congress (the legislature) and judicial bodies. In particular, the country institutionalized the state’s control over the military by creating the Central Military Commission in the constitution revised in 1982, which also stipulated in Article 29 that “The armed forces of the People’s Republic of China belong to the people.”

The WPK rules revised in 2010 changed the objectives of the party to reflect North Korea's domestic circumstances. Immediate goals were revised from "achieving complete victory of socialism in the northern half of the Republic" to "establishing a strong and prosperous socialist nation in the northern half of the Republic." Meanwhile, ultimate objectives changed from "placing the whole of society under the *juche* ideology and creating a communist society" to "realizing the complete independence of the masses by placing the entire society under the banner of *juche*." The new rules also institutionalized the succession of power at the party level, by prescribing the basic principles of uniqueness and inheritance of ideology and leadership for the WPK.

In an effort to establish Kim Jong-un's sole leadership structure after his father's death, the party preamble was further revised at the fourth WPK Conference on April 11, 2012 to proclaim that the WPK is the party of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il, and that *Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism* is the WPK's sole guiding doctrine along with *juche*. The rules also stated that monumental feats of the *juche* revolution will be achieved under Kim Jong-un's leadership. With regard to the status of the WPK, the North Korean constitution clearly states, "the DPRK will carry out all its activities under the WPK's leadership." This clause makes it clear that the WPK is the cradle of all power in North Korea, and reaffirms the party's stance above all other institutions. Accordingly, the WPK is "the highest form of revolutionary body among all institutions of the working masses" and "the primary agent that leads the three branches of government and all other organs."

In the meantime, the party's role as a proletariat vanguard advocated by Marxism-Leninism is in fact restricted by the *suryŏng*'s sole leadership. As mentioned above, theories of the *suryŏng* and socio-political living body, both of which are introduced by *juche*, are based on the idea of organic society and assign overly extended roles to the leadership of the father-like *suryŏng*. This places the *suryŏng* at the center of leadership, where he exercises political power to raise the awareness of the masses, and organizes

and unites them into a single entity, as well as to lead to the victory of the revolutionary struggle. As the *suryǒng*'s leadership expands, however, the party's autonomy becomes restricted, and the WPK's dictatorship of the majority which represents the working class is replaced by the *suryǒng*'s one-man dictatorship.

In this sense, the WPK, in reality, is simply a subordinate institution under the *suryǒng*'s guidance although it is seemingly a higher institution that oversees the masses. In short, the party exists as a link between the supreme leader of organic body and the masses, and its key task is to organize and mobilize the public to accomplish the *suryǒng*'s policies and political directions and implement them through the state institutions.

### (3) Structure and Functions of the WPK

The organizational and operational system of the WPK is based on Democratic Centralism, which is the fundamental principle of the socialistic governing structure. As described in the North's Grand Korean Dictionary, "democratic centralism embodies an important aspect of compliance, which requires the submission of individuals to organizations, the minority to the majority, lower authorities to higher authorities, and all institutions and members to the central party." Vladimir Ilyich Lenin used democratic centralism to purge his opponents by branding them as "enemies of the people," strengthening his dictatorial status. North Korea continues in much the same tradition, as democratic centralism has established an extremely hierarchical decision-making structure in the WPK to promote perfect conformity. This serves as an institutional framework to sustain the *suryǒng*'s one-man leadership.

The WPK sticks to the top-down system of democratic centralism for its operation since the party places importance on its role of implementing the *suryǒng*'s directions. Such a role comes with two responsibilities: guiding the party's life and guiding the party's policies. The former, which is a core



responsibility of the party, is again categorized into guiding organizational life and ideological life, which is conducted by the Secretariat's Organization and Guidance Department and the Propaganda and Agitation Department, respectively.

Since the supreme leader gains full control over the WPK's activities of guiding party life, he can monitor and control activities of senior government officials through daily group meetings for self-criticism and reports from secretaries of party cells. This ultimately allows him to have complete control over the party, military, and government, which is vital in establishing his absolute power. Considering the importance of a single governing ideology highlighted in the party rules, the superiority of the party General Secretary, and the control over party activities through the Organization and Guidance Department, it can be concluded that the WPK displays a nature of a private party that works under the mandate of the supreme leader's absolute authority.

### Party Congress and Conference of Party Representatives

The official supreme body for the WPK's decision-making is the Party Congress. The same applies to the former Soviet Union. The highest social and political body within its Communist Party was also the Party Congress, which convened every five years. In the case of China, the CPC National Congress, which is also convened every five years, is the highest organ of the Communist Party. The 2,270 delegates of China's National Congress review political lines of the party and elect members of the Central Committee. The same goes for North Korea. As defined by the WPK rules, the Party Congress makes basic decisions on party lines, policies, strategies, and tactics. In truth, however, the Party Congress plays only a perfunctory role of rubber-stamping the decisions made by the Central Committee or Political Bureau.

Until the party rules were revised at the third Conference of Party

Representatives held on September 28, 2010, the Central Committee was required to convoke a Party Congress once every five years, but this was rarely enforced. The first Party Congress was convened in 1946 and six more were held until 1980, followed by a hiatus for 30 years. Later, North Korea scrapped the clause regarding five-year intervals at the third Conference of Party Representatives, the first of its kind in 44 years, thereby enabling the Central Committee to convoke a Party Congress at its own discretion, on the condition that it announces the date at least six months in advance.

Table 2–2 History of WPK Congress

Event	Date	Main Agendas
1st Congress	Aug. 28, 1946	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report on the creation of the party</li> <li>• Report on doctrine, rules, and the party newspaper</li> <li>• Election of the Central Committee and the Central Inspection Commission</li> </ul>
2nd Congress	Mar. 27, 1948	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation of the work of the Central Committee</li> <li>• Amendments to the party rules</li> <li>• Election of the party's central organs</li> </ul>
3rd Congress	Apr. 23, 1956	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation of the work of the Central Committee and the Central Auditing Commission (Declaration titled "For the Peaceful Unification of the Fatherland" adopted)</li> <li>• Amendments to the party rules</li> <li>• Election of the party's central organs</li> </ul>
4th Congress	Sept. 11, 1961	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation of the work of the Central Committee and the Central Auditing Commission</li> <li>• Seven-Year Plan for the Development of the National Economy (1961–1967)</li> <li>• Amendments to the party rules</li> <li>• Election of the party's central organs</li> </ul>
5th Congress	Nov. 2, 1970	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation of the work of the Central Committee and the Central Auditing Commission</li> <li>• Six-Year Plan for the Development of the National Economy (1971–1976)</li> <li>• Amendments to the party rules</li> <li>• Election of the party's central organs</li> </ul>
6th Congress	Oct. 10, 1980	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation of the work of the Central Committee and the Central Auditing Commission (Ten objectives to build a socialist state and the Democratic Confederal Republic of Koryo unification formula proposed)</li> <li>• Amendments to the party rules</li> <li>• Election of the party's central organs (Election of Kim Jong-il as member of the Politburo Standing Committee)</li> </ul>

The Conference of Party Representatives is a platform held between Party Congresses to discuss and decide important issues, including party lines, policies, strategies, and tactics. At this time, members of central organs are summoned, and by-elections held to fill vacancies. Key issues discussed at the third Conference of Party Representatives include the creation of the CMC Vice Chairman post and the subsequent appointment of Kim Jong-un to the new position, the re-election of Kim Jong-il as Party General Secretary, the revision of WPK rules, and the election of central organ members. As a result of this conference, the hereditary transfer of power to Kim Jong-un became official, and the top positions at the Central Committee, Political Bureau, Secretariat, and Central Military Commission underwent a reshuffle. Meanwhile, the WPK rules were revised to mandate rights to the Conference of Party Representatives, regarding the election of members of supreme guiding organs and the authority to revise the party rules. This revision also stipulated the status of General Secretary, which simultaneously serves as the CMC Chairman, and expanded the WPK's authority, for example, by reinforcing its control over the armed forces.

Table 2–3 History of the Conference of Party Representatives

Event	Date	Main Agendas
1st Party Conference	Mar. 3, 1958	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First Five-Year Plan for people's economy (1957–1961)</li> <li>• Reinforcement of party unity</li> <li>• Party organization</li> </ul>
2nd Party Conference	Oct. 5, 1966	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current situation and tasks for the party (simultaneous development of national defense and the economy)</li> <li>• Urgent tasks in building a socialist economy (three-year extension of the Seven-Year Plan)</li> <li>• Adoption of a statement on matters related to Vietnam</li> <li>• Party organization (abolishment of CC Chairman post and introduction of General Secretary, other elections)</li> </ul>
3rd Party Conference	Sep. 28, 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-election of Kim Jong-il to General Secretary</li> <li>• Appointment of Kim Jong-un as Vice Chairman of the CMC</li> <li>• Revision of party rules (right to revise given to WPK Conference)</li> <li>• Election of central organs and the Central Committee</li> </ul>
4th Party Conference	Apr. 11, 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Election of Kim Il-sung as eternal <i>suryŏng</i> and Kim Jong-il as eternal General Secretary</li> <li>• Stipulation of <i>Kimilsungism–Kimjongilism</i> as a sole ideology</li> <li>• Creation of WPK First Secretary post</li> <li>• Appointment of Kim Jong-un to WPK First Secretary, member of the Politburo and the Standing Committee, and CMC Chairman</li> </ul>

## Central Committee

During the interval period, the Central Committee assumes the role of North Korea's supreme governing body to supervise all party activities, and all of its members are required to convene at least once a year. When the plenum of the Central Committee is out of session, however, the supreme governing role is transferred to the Political Bureau and its Standing Committee. The Central Committee comprises members and alternate members elected at the Party Congress, and they all participate in plenary sessions to discuss and make decisions on the internal and external issues of the WPK.

These plenary sessions also conduct elections for members of the Political Bureau and its Standing Committee, Secretaries of the Central Committee, and Central Inspection Committee, in addition to having the authority to organize the Secretariat and Central Military Commission. Nonetheless, such plenary sessions were also suspended from the 21st session of the sixth Central Committee in 1993 up until September 2010. Then, the third Conference of Party Representatives and the plenary session of the Central Committee were held in September 2010 to make the hereditary transfer of power official and to underpin this with an institutional foundation. During the 30-year interval period, the Central Committee had consisted of only 60-something members, but a total of 124 members were newly elected at the third Conference of Party Representatives. North Korea also filled the long vacant seats of the Politburo Standing Committee and organized the Secretariat and CMC.

## Political Bureau and Standing Committee

While the Party Congress and Central Committee plenum remained closed for years, the most powerful apparatus in the WPK's decision-making structure were the Political Bureau and its Standing Committee, which were newly organized at the sixth Party Congress in 1980. The same was true in the Soviet Union as its own Political Bureau was the highest decision-making

body of the Communist Party. However, the Political Bureau of North Korea during the Kim Jong-il era once almost ceased to operate. This started to change with the beginning of the power succession process in the country. It was the Political Bureau that decided to hold the third Conference of Party Representatives, which was held on September 28, 2010. In particular, after Kim Jong-un took power, the Bureau's status was restored to the extent that its sessions and extended meetings made decisions on major issues such as to purge Ri Yong-ho and Jang Song-taek.

The Standing Committee of the Politburo was also reorganized at the Central Committee plenum with five new members, namely Kim Jong-il (deceased), Kim Yong-nam, Choe Yong-rim (dismissed), Jo Myong-rok (deceased), and Ri Yong-ho (dismissed). In China, the supreme authority also goes to the Politburo Standing Committee, but the big difference lies in that its power is distributed among seven Standing Committee members. The membership of the Politburo Standing Committee of China is currently being transformed into an institutionalized authority that holds a term of ten years after the first plenary session of the sixteenth CPC Central Committee, which was held in the year 2002 when Hu Jintao took the leadership of the party from Jiang Zemin.

### Secretariat of the Central Committee

The Political Bureau and the Standing Committee were vested with the right to make all decisions within the WPK. After the deaths of Kim Il-sung and O Jin-u, however, the Standing Committee virtually ceased to function, since it became a one-man system with only Kim Jong-il remaining. This gave rise to the Secretariat, which had de facto control over the Central Committee in lieu of the Standing Committee during Kim Jong-il era. The Secretariat was newly organized at the 14th plenary session of the fourth Central Committee held on October 12, 1966.

The Secretariat has become a key WPK institution that discusses and makes decisions on internal and other working-level issues, and supervises the implementation of such matters. As of July 2014, it has comprised WPK First Secretary Kim Jong-un and nine Secretaries: Pak To-chun, Kim Ki-nam, Choe Tae-bok, Choe Ryong-hae, Kim Yang-gon, Kim Pyong-hae, Kwak Pom-gi, Kang Sok-ju, and O Su-yong. However, the organization that holds more power than the Politburo or Secretariat is the Organization and Guidance Department commanded by Kim Jong-il himself, which is the largest organ among the 19 professional departments under the Secretariat.

### Central Military Commission

The Central Military Commission took on important responsibilities during the Kim Jong-il era, dealing with personnel matters of KPA officers, exercising military command, and engaging in issuing directions, orders and decisions on military policies. However, the commission did not attract much attention until September 2010. After the appointment of Kim Jong-un to Vice Chairman of the CMC at the third Party Congress, the CMC was promoted to become a permanent supreme military guiding organ. When Xi Jinping, who was then the Vice President of China and a member of the Politburo Standing Committee, was appointed as Vice Chairman of the CMC on the last day of the fifth plenary session of the seventh CPC Central Committee on October 18, 2010, it was assumed that he would become the next supreme leader of China. This precedent implies the important relationship between taking the Vice Chairman post of the Central Military Commission and securing a position as the successor to the throne.

The CMC of North Korea discusses and makes decisions on measures to implement the party's military lines and policies, and directs all defense programs at party level, including projects for strengthening revolutionary armed forces and promoting the munitions industry. The commission also organizes and supervises all military activities at the party level during the

interim period between Party Congresses.

North Korea established a military commission after the fifth session of the fourth Central Committee held in December 1962, which adopted the Four-point Military Guideline proposed by Kim Il-sung to strengthen its national defense capabilities. The commission was established under the Central Committee, and was renamed the Central Military Commission in 1982 as its status was further elevated. The CMC played a key role in implementing the Four-point Military Guideline, which calls for the militarization of the whole country, and had provincial, city, and county military commissions throughout the nation.<sup>3</sup>

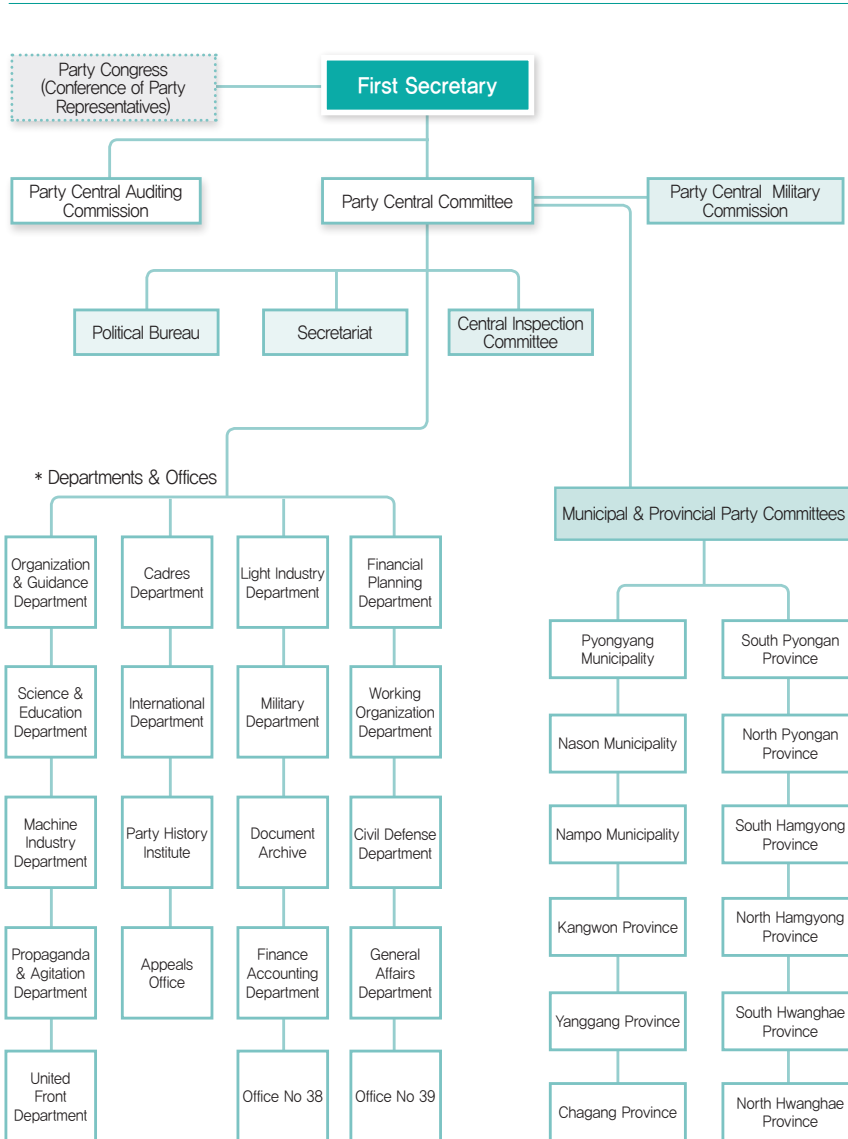
### WPK' s Regional Organizations

Also established across North Korea are the WPK's regional organizations, which provide a multi-layer governing apparatus, structured by a combination of horizontal and vertical dominant-subordinate relations. In other words, party committees at different levels abide by a strictly hierarchal structure vis-à-vis committees of higher and lower levels, and exercise absolute control over other agencies and civil organizations of equal status. This hierarchy gives efficiency to reinforcing party organizations, but at the same time creates inflexibility.

Under the Central Committee are provincial, city, and county committees; further down the ladder are primary and sub-primary committees, sector committees and party cells of 5-30 members, which are the lowest substratum of the hierarchy. These party committees at each level are microscopic structures of the Central Committee, in which organizational management is conducted and absolute power is exercised. In general, the line of authority for each region is concentrated in the hands of the Chief Secretary of the local party committee.

Figure 2-1 Organization of the WPK

\* Party Congress 1st – Aug. 1946    2nd – Mar. 1948    \* Party Conference 1st – Mar. 1958    2nd – Oct. 1966  
 3rd – Apr. 1956    4th – Sept. 1961    3rd – Sept. 2010    4th – Apr. 2012  
 5th – Nov. 1970    6th – Oct. 1980



Source: Ministry of Unification, Organizational Chart of North Korean Leadership, May 2014



## (4) Relations with the Government, Military and Other Organizations

### Relations between the Party and Government

With North Korea's power structure built around the concentrated authority of the WPK, government organs simply take charge of the enactment, implementation and assessment of party-decided policies. In general, the WPK is able to maintain control of the administration using systems that give party officials concurrent administrative posts and establish parallel organs in the WPK to monitor and keep the government in check. North Korea emphasizes that reinforcing the WPK's administrative guidance underpins the continuation and development of socialism. To this end, party organs direct and implement policies that are in close association with party activities.

### Relations between the Party and Military

The WPK also exerts control over the military based on its party rules. In September 2010, the WPK rules were revised to enable the CMC to organize and guide all military programs, as well as direct all defense programs at the party level during the interim period between Party Congresses. Moreover, the rules state that "the General Political Bureau is recognized as an executive organ of the KPA Party Committee, and is therefore entitled to the same authority as that of the Central Committee in conducting its activities." In order to control the armed forces, the WPK established a party apparatus for every military unit and assigned political officers for active duty. The General Political Bureau oversees the various party committees and organs within the KPA, assuming the role of command and management of their political activities. Meanwhile, the Kim Il-sung Socialist Youth League further reinforces the WPK's control over the armed forces, as it lies within the KPA but is under the effective jurisdiction of party leadership.

Changes occurred in this relationship between the party and military upon the inauguration of the Kim Jong-il regime. North Korea's constitutional revisions in 1998 and 2009 reinforced the status of the NDC, which was led by Kim Jong-il himself, and military influence accrued as Kim Jong-il continued propagating the military-first policy. There have been claims that the party's hold over the military weakened when the Ministry of People's Armed Forces was placed under the NDC. However, the party's control over the military is still effective as all the armed forces in North Korea are being directed and controlled by the party through the General Political Bureau.

### Relations between the Party and Social Institutions

The WPK also exercises guidance and control over other social institutions and organizations. According to North Korea's constitution, "the state guarantees freedom of activity for democratic political parties and social institutions," but in reality, most of these entities exist in name only, or are essentially quasi-state bodies under the WPK's direct guidance and control. So-called minority political parties, such as the Korean Social Democratic Party and Cheondoist Chongu Party, are also nothing more than titular, and are thus considered to be satellite parties at best.

North Korea also has several organizations that represent the working masses, including the Kim Il-sung Socialist Youth League, the General Federation of Korean Trade Unions, the Korean Agricultural Workers Union, and the Korean Democratic Women's Union. They, too, as external organs of the WPK, bind the populace to the party by means of leading education in ideology and striving to become faithful vanguards of the WPK. Other de facto quasi-state organizations under the WPK's command include the Committee for Peaceful Unification of the Fatherland, the Korea Asia-Pacific Peace Committee, the Democratic Front for Reunification of the Fatherland, and the National Council for Reconciliation. They too carry out activities within the limited scope of party guidance.

North Korea's central institutions implement the government's codes of conduct stipulated in the constitution under the party leadership. These institutions include the NDC, which is the supreme guiding organ of national defense, the SPA, the legislature and the supreme institution of state sovereignty, the Cabinet, which is the supreme sovereign institution that executes administrative work, and judicial institutions.

The NDC tasks and mandate include the establishment of key state policies to carry out the political line of the military-first revolution, and the commanding of the armed forces and defense constructions. In particular, the First Chairman of the NDC commands and reigns over all armed forces, and directs all national undertakings and NDC projects. The SPA is the official supreme institution of state sovereignty that retains legislative power, but in truth, plays only a perfunctory role of rubber-stamping the decisions made by the WPK. The Cabinet directs and oversees most of administrative work, with the exception of national defense. The prosecutor's offices are judicial bodies that protect the regime and conduct judicial surveillance for law-abiding socialism. Meanwhile, the courts are responsible for enforcing the WPK's judicial policies. As these courts are under the full control of the party, it is hard to expect them to issue independent and neutral judgments.

### (1) National Defense Commission

Based on the Socialist Constitution adopted in December 1972, the National Defense Commission was created along with four other commissions under the Central People's Committee, which was the highest guiding organ of the state sovereignty. Each of the four commissions was in charge of domestic policies, foreign policies, judicial security and economic policies, respectively. The constitution stipulated that the President of the state could concurrently

hold the post of the NDC Chairman. At that time, the President directed the CPC, the highest guiding organ of the state sovereignty, the State Administration Council, an organ that enforced administrative works, and the courts and prosecution service, which are judicial bodies. This system of granting full authority to the President was an institutional measure to protect the *surŏng*-centered dictatorship, and the leading role of the President was at the core of the Socialist Constitution.

However, the NDC came to hold higher status than the CPC when Kim Jong-il was elected First Vice Chairman of the NDC at the first session of the ninth SPA held in May 1990. Afterwards, in 1992, North Korea's constitution was revised to establish and expand the role of the NDC as a separate entity from the Central People's Committee. Subsequent revisions in 1998 elevated the NDC's status to a "supreme military guiding organ of national sovereignty and general management body of national defense," and further amendments in 2009 resulted in the NDC's rise as the "supreme defense guidance organ of national sovereignty." The commission's status was elevated to the current level when the system centered on the NDC Chairman was proclaimed with the launch of the Kim Jong-il regime. While the Kim Il-sung era was led by the President of the state, the Kim Jong-il era was a period predominated by the NDC Chairman who assumed full power.

Membership in the NDC, with Chairman Kim Jong-il presiding, used to include one First Vice Chairman (vacant), four Vice Chairmen, and five regular members, all of whom were to serve a five-year term. This layout, however, underwent changes when the fifth session of the twelfth SPA convened on April 13, 2012 at the Mansudae Assembly Hall. With Kim Jong-un attending, this session moved to revise the constitution in order to elect his late father as the eternal NDC Chairman, create the post of First Chairman, which assumed all authorities of the former Chairman position, and abolish the station of First Vice Chairman. Meanwhile, the first session of the thirteenth SPA held on September 9, 2014 elected Choe Ryong-hae along

with two incumbents as Vice Chairmen of the NDC, and Jang Jong-nam, Jo Chun-ryong, and three incumbents as members of the commission.

The NDC tasks and mandate include the establishment of key state policies, command of the armed forces and overall defense constructions, execution of the First Chairman's orders, monitoring of decisions, instructions and enforcement of the NDC, as well as creation and removal of central organs in national defense. The First Chairman, as the supreme leader of North Korea, commands and reigns over the all armed forces, directs all internal and external undertakings, decides the ratification or abolition of key treaties with foreign nations, and exercises the prerogative of mercy.

## (2) Supreme People's Assembly

The Supreme People's Assembly, which is equivalent to the South's National Assembly, is the official supreme institution of state sovereignty that retains legislative power. However, its real authority falls far short of its official status as it serves as a mere rubber stamp for the decisions, mostly on general state affairs, handed down by the WPK. The SPA holds regular and extraordinary sessions and its members serve a term of five years. Regular SPA sessions are convened once or twice a year by the SPA Presidium. Extraordinary sessions are held when called by the Presidium or by at least one-third of the Assembly delegates. For the SPA to convene, at least two-thirds of its delegates must be in attendance.

Comparisons with the legislatures of the Soviet Union and China reveal similarities in their statuses and systems. The constitution of the USSR stipulated that the Supreme Soviet, the legislative body of the USSR, was held twice a year, and special sessions were convened by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet at its discretion or on the proposal of a Union Republic, or of not less than one-third of all deputies. Meanwhile, the National People's Congress (NPC), which is the national legislature of China, is the highest organ of state power under the constitution and directed by the Communist

Party. The NPC is elected for a term of five years and holds one annual session every March.

According to Article 91 of the constitution, the SPA assumes the authority to enact, amend, and supplement constitutions and laws, establish basic principles for internal and external policies, and elect and summon the First Chairman of NDC and members, the President of the SPA Presidium and members, the Premier, and the President of the Supreme Court.

Furthermore, the SPA, upon the recommendation of the Premier, appoints Cabinet members and appoints or dismisses the head of the Supreme Public Prosecutor's Office. The SPA is also vested with the right to examine and approve national budgets and plans for the development of the national economy, and ratify or abrogate treaties. A majority vote by a show of hands is required to adopt the agenda for discussion and decide on the issue at hand. Revisions to North Korea's constitution also need a two-thirds' majority of SPA delegates.

On April 13, 2012, SPA delegates convened at the fifth session of the twelfth Supreme People's Assembly to amend North Korea's socialist constitution and elect Kim Jong-un to North Korea's supreme post. As a result, the preamble of the revised constitution depicts the achievements of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il, enshrining the former as eternal President and the latter as eternal Chairman. Rules applying to the position of the NDC First Chairman were also adopted at this time, enabling the new post to assume all state powers of the former NDC Chairman. Meanwhile, at the sixth session held on September 25, 2012, the SPA adopted a revised education law, extending the compulsory education period to twelve years.

As a follow-up to the plenary session of the Central Committee held on March 31, 2013, the seventh session of the twelfth SPA was convened on the following day to discuss and make decisions on a total of eight agendas, including constitutional amendments, creation of new laws, and personnel reshuffle. Aside from adopting official lines of the constitution and the

party, the session strengthened the capabilities for realizing simultaneous development of the economy and nuclear forces by adopting the Law on Consolidating the Position of Nuclear Weapons State for Self-defense, enacting the Law on Developing Space, creating the DPRK State Space Development Bureau, and reappointing Pak Pong-ju as Cabinet Premier. At the same time, by adopting the Law on the Kumsusan Palace of the Sun, the country legislated the idolization of the palace and the late leaders.

The first session of the thirteenth SPA held on April 9, 2014 dealt with issues related to the future operations of the Kim Jong-un regime. The meeting elected Kim Jong-un to First Chairman of the NDC, conducted elections for national guiding organs, and reviewed the previous year's expenditure and state budget for 2014. The reelection of Kim Jong-un to First Chairman of the NDC and the absence of major changes in the SPA and the Cabinet on the personnel front clearly shows that the North Korean regime is placing importance on the stabilization of the current power structure.

The SPA Presidium, which is the highest sovereign organ in North Korea while the SPA is in recess, consists of the President, Vice Presidents, secretaries, and other members. The Presidium retains the authority to convene sessions of the SPA, examine and adopt draft amendments and supplements to acts and regulations, interpret the constitution, statutory laws and regulations in force, newly establish or abolish commissions and ministries of the Cabinet, ratify and abrogate treaties signed with foreign states, decide or publish the appointment or recall of diplomatic envoys dispatched to foreign countries, and oversee external activities such as projects with foreign parliaments and international parliamentary organizations. The President of the SPA



Mansudae Assembly Hall in Pyongyang

Presidium represents the state, and receives credentials and letters of recall of diplomatic representatives accredited by foreign states.

The SPA Presidium was created in 1948 when the one-party state was established in the North, and was modelled on the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, the nominal highest organ of power of the USSR. According to the Stalin Constitution adopted in 1936, the Supreme Soviet was a mere symbolic organ, and the Presidium, as a permanent body, interpreted statutes and exercised the right to promulgate edicts, which had the same effect as laws. For this reason, the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet Presidium was ranked just a notch below the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union even though all the activities of the Presidium were under the control of the Communist Party. Accordingly, the same status and authority were given to the SPA Presidium of the Sovietized North Korea.

### (3) Cabinet

North Korea's Cabinet is a supreme sovereign institution that executes administrative work and state management. It consists of the Premier, Vice Premiers, Chairmen, Ministers and other members, who generally serve for a period of five years. As of July 2014, the Cabinet has been composed of a total of 42 departments and offices, that is, 7 committees and commissions, 31 ministries, one academy, one bank and two bureaus. All the departments and offices are accountable to the SPA for all their activities.

Since the establishment of the government, the Cabinet of North Korea has played the role of the administrative and executive body. Changes in its status arose with the inauguration of the Socialist Constitution of 1972. As then Premier Kim Il-sung was promoted to the newly created post of President of the state under the constitution, the ensuing political circumstances demanded a change in the name of the Cabinet before an election of a new



Premier. Subsequently, the Cabinet was renamed as the State Administration Council. Later, Kim Jong-il replaced the council with the Cabinet again in the constitution of 1998. At this time, a part of duties and authorities of the abolished President post and the Central People's Committee were transferred to the Cabinet, adding a new function of a general state-management organ to its original role as the administrative and executive body.

To elaborate, the Cabinet directs and oversees most undertakings of the administration and economy, with the exception of national defense. The Premier is at the head of the Cabinet, a position elected and sworn in by the SPA to organize and administer Cabinet businesses on behalf of the regime. Every committee, commission and ministry within the Cabinet is an executive and managerial organ that takes charge of respective branches of North Korea, and they govern, command, manage and promote relevant programs and projects in compliance with Cabinet instructions.

#### (4) Judicial Institutions

##### Prosecution Service

North Korea's constitution stipulates the specific rules and regulations on institutions of prosecution, including the structure, responsibility and internal relations. Such details are enshrined in the constitution due to the special functions they have in socialist states. In the North, these prosecutorial bodies are key pillars of the governing apparatus that serves to protect the regime and conduct judicial surveillance for law-abiding socialism.

At the top level of North Korea's prosecution system is the Supreme Public Prosecutor's Office (SPO), and below that exist the provincial, city, county and special prosecutor's offices. The SPO, which supervises public prosecution, places emphasis on a unitary prosecution system that requires absolute obedience of lower to upper ranks. The system is used to assure consistency and promptness in prosecution tasks that are conducted to build

a law-abiding socialist state, while also reinforcing the WPK leadership and establishing conformity in judicial policies and the interpretation of law. The appointment and dismissal of SPO heads are decided by the SPA, and in turn, the SPO has the jurisdiction to appoint and dismiss public prosecutors at other various levels. Moreover, the SPO directly answers to the SPA.

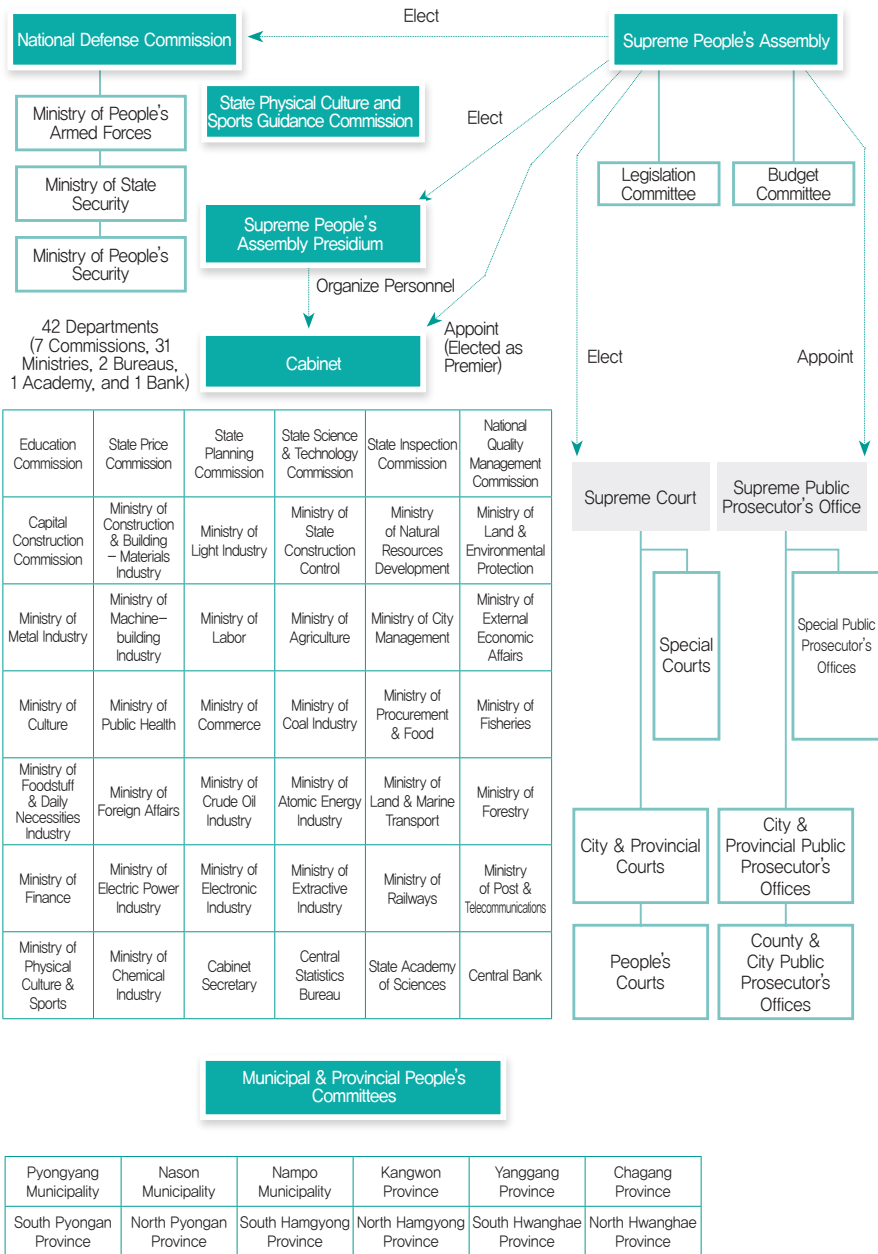
### Court Institutions

The Supreme Court, as in the case of public prosecutor's offices, is placed at the top to oversee various special, provincial, city and local people's courts. Trials often take place comprising 1 presiding judge and 2 people's assessors, but at times, special cases can require up to 3 judges to make a decision.

The Supreme Court consists of a President, who is elected by the SPA, and judges and people's assessors appointed by the SPA Presidium. As the highest court in North Korea, it presides over all judicial and administrative activities of lower courts and reviews emergency appeals of lower court decisions and verdicts as well as appeals from provincial, military and railway tribunals. In addition, the Supreme Court is also accountable to the SPA.

Court institutions in the North are responsible for enforcing the WPK's judicial policies. As these courts are under the full control of the party, it is hard to expect them to issue independent and neutral judgments. Unlike normal criminal cases which are heard in two instances within the tri-level court system, special trials, which are conducted based on the judgment of the military and the National Security Planning Agency, proceed expeditiously through a single instance as shown in the case of Jang Song-taek. He was sentenced to death penalty at a special military tribunal of the Ministry of State Security for his subversion attempt, which is punishable by Article 60 of the DPRK Criminal Code, and immediately executed on December 12, 2013, which was just four days after an extended Politburo meeting's decision to purge him.

Figure 2–2 Power Institutions



Source: Ministry of Unification, Organizational Chart of North Korean Leadership, July 2014

## Section 4. Hereditary Succession of Power and Kim Jong-un Regime

### 1 History of Hereditary Power Succession

#### (1) Establishment of Hereditary Succession System

The North Korean regime can be summarized with two characteristics: *suryŏng*-centered dictatorship and hereditary power succession. To build this unique system, Kim Il-sung established a single monopolistic regime in the late 1960s and embarked upon the father-to-son power transition in the 1970s by selecting his eldest son Kim Jong-il as his successor. In this process, Kim Il-sung continuously purged his opponents under the cause of eliminating anti-party and counter-revolutionary forces. Arguments suggested to justify the purges were based on the concept of ongoing revolution and successor theory, which originated from the *juche* ideology and the *suryŏng* theory, respectively. Such theories, while defending the purges and power struggles surrounding hereditary succession, gave birth to a political system that legitimized the establishment of a monolithic ideological system and the solidification of the successor's position.

After graduating from college, Kim Jong-il started his career in the Organization and Guidance Department of the WPK Secretariat, gaining experience in the Cabinet before being appointed as the department head

at the age of 31. Along with spearheading the Three-Revolution Team Movement,<sup>4</sup> he was also elected to assume greater authority at the sixth Party Congress in 1980, assuming powers over both the WPK and the military by attaining full membership of the Central Committee and acquiring roles in the Political Bureau and its Standing Committee, Secretariat and Military Committee. In due course, Kim Jong-il exercised substantial leadership in most areas of the regime except for key issues of foreign policy as an official successor.

Kim Jong-il also led various campaigns that steered the North Korean society throughout the 1980s, including the Speed Creation Campaign, Promotion of the *juche* Ideology in the WPK, Enhancement of Law-abiding Ethos, and Production of People's Consumer Goods. He is also known to have been the mastermind behind the theories of Socio-political Living Body of 1986 and the *Our Style of Socialism* of 1991.

In the 1990s, Kim Jong-il directed efforts to consolidate his status in military leadership. Subsequent to being elected as First Vice Chairman of the NDC at the SPA in May 1990, Kim Jong-il became the Supreme Commander of the KPA at the plenary meeting of the Central Committee in December 1991. He was also given the title of Marshal in April 1992 and was promoted to NDC Chairman in an SPA session held in 1993, thus taking full command over North Korea's armed forces.

Upon Kim Il-sung's death in July 1994, Kim Jong-il reorganized the North's ruling structure in accordance with his elevated status as the Supreme Commander of the KPA. Such efforts for regime restructuring took three years, and at the end of 1997, Kim Jong-il was elected General Secretary of the WPK. In September next year, Kim Jong-il took the post of NDC Chairman, which was vested with more authority after the constitutional amendments, and proclaimed the beginning of his era. From the mid-1990s, Kim Jong-il maintained his regime on a relatively stable power base, in spite of severe

economic troubles and conflicts with the international community regarding nuclear development. Until his death, Kim Jong-il focused his endeavors on laying the groundwork for stable succession of power to his son Kim Jong-un.

## (2) Political System of Kim Jong-il Regime

After graduating from college in 1964, Kim Jong-il built his ruling capability as the successor by accumulating experience through party activities for 30 years. The regime under Kim Jong-il's reign was distinguished by characteristics that were unlike those found in any other socialist nation. The first unique feature was Kim Jong-il's one-man rule. As General Secretary of the WPK and the NDC Chairman, he commanded the twin pillars of socialism, the ruling party and the military. The main tool used to justify his sole grip on power was the *juche* ideology, which demands that all the populace, political organizations and institutions move in perfect order under the *suryŏng*'s instruction and command.

Another particular aspect of North Korea is its military-first policy, according to which "the regime places its top priority on military affairs and devotes all its energy to reinforcing military power, among all other state affairs." As reflected in the claim that "the military is the party, state, and people," the theory of the military-first policy perceives the armed forces as the main force in revolution and nation-building efforts. The message is further conveyed by political slogans such as "military first, workers second," and "our family is our gun barrel."

The military-first policy also encourages society to learn from military forces. The movements of Our Sentry Post, Our School and the Winning Model Army Award for Civil-military Unity are examples of public campaigns that promote unity between society and the military. Slogans in line with the military-first policy include "civil-military unity," which demands the two to be at one in mind and mission, "officer-soldier unity," which calls officers and

soldiers to band together and share their joys and sorrows, and “government-military merge,” which requires the military and administration to jointly lead state projects under the leadership of the supreme commander.

By placing the military-first policy at the forefront, North Korea has enabled the armed forces to expand their activities into various civil areas and exert greater influence over society. Military troops have thus been employed to take the initiative in major construction projects such as the Chongryu Bridge, Gumrung Cave No. 2, the Taechon Electric Power Plant, the Kaechon-Lake Taesong waterway, and the Pyongyang-Hyangsan tourist roads. The military-first policy can also be recognized as the leadership’s attempt to use the well-trained and reliable military workforce to revive the depressed economy. Under circumstances in which prolonged economic destitute resulted in undermining the people’s will to work, it was up to the military to set examples that would mobilize the public for industrial development.

Pyongyang’s military-first rhetoric grew stronger at home and abroad following the first nuclear test that escalated tension with the United States. Kim Jong-il had many times stressed the importance of the military, as in his statement, “More important than rebuilding the economy is reinforcing the military. Strong gun barrels make a strong nation.” The banner of the military-first policy is thus effectively empowering the military to wield ever more influence.

A third characteristic of North Korea is its propagation of a campaign to build a “strong and prosperous nation.” The introduction of this objective was to implant new hope in the minds of the North Korean people, upon the launch of the Kim Jong-il regime which sought to overcome the deepening crisis of the Arduous March in the mid-1990s.

North Korea’s pledge to build a strong and prosperous nation functions as a political message calling for unity and reconciliation of the populace. The regime claims that attainment of this goal “begins with establishing a strong

nation based on ideology, then by consolidating the military as integral pillars of revolution, and is finally attained when such military strength is harnessed to make great strides in economic growth.” This, in other words, means that North Korea aspires to build a nation fortified with ideological and political strength, military prowess and economic vigor. North Korea had professed that main targets in ideology, politics and military had already been met, and by 2012, endeavors in economic development would add the final touch to this ambition.<sup>5</sup>

Haunted by the fear that reform and open-door policies could threaten regime stability, North Korea has further stressed the importance of the principle of “our style of socialism.” This unique phrase corresponds to *juche*, but it can also be recognized as a reactionary slogan reflecting the leadership’s fear of change. By saying that “the new century demands innovative insight, original ideas and progressive business practices,” but then at the same time advocating the Seed Theory that requires all policies to be rooted in the proper ideological soil of “our style of socialism,” North Korea is expressing ambivalence in regard to reform and opening.

### (3) Political System of the Kim Jong-un Regime

With the launch of the Kim Jong-un era, North Korea suggested three ways to expedite the process of building a strong and prosperous socialist state under the banner of *Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism*. These were: unifying the masses around the party to secure solidarity and consolidate the regime’s political and ideological position as well as strengthening political and military capabilities in all aspects; establishing revolutionary leadership, military spirit and discipline to strengthen military power as well as intensifying combat training for military personnel of the Korean People’s Internal Security Forces and the Worker-Peasant Red Guards; and directing the national defense industry to manufacture more state-of-the-art military hardware. Detailed plans for carrying out these three methods include the strengthening of the



party's control over the military and the fostering of regime-loyal armed forces. A thorough implementation of Kim Jong-il Patriotism was also emphasized in relation to a more strengthened role of the party organs.

Continuous emphasis on the role of the party has been one of the characteristics of the Kim Jong-un regime, and this tendency has been reinforced since the amendments to the WPK rules and the constitution in April 2012. Various conferences were held in 2013 to strengthen the party cells, the lowest unit of the party, in an effort to make a great leap forward in building a strong and prosperous socialist nation. They include the fourth Meeting of Party Cell Secretaries held between January 28-29, the Meeting of Officials Guiding Party Lectures in the Whole Army on February 22, and the National Meeting of the Squad for the Three-Revolution Team Members on February 27.

North Korea is currently seeking an elusive solution to the survival of the regime through internal and external efforts. To strengthen the solidarity of the regime and internal capability, the country is promoting the unity under the leadership of Kim Jong-un based on Kimilsungim-Kimjongilim and the policy of simultaneous development of the economy and nuclear weapons. On the external front, the regime is exploring room for improvement in its foreign relationships, especially with the US and South Korea. The inability to overcome the current economic crisis through its own effort made the country seek extensive external support. Under the circumstances, finding a way to improve the diplomatic environment is a huge task that North Korea must deal with, and how the country will navigate through diplomatic isolation and economic impasse became a matter of great concern to all.

## 2 Establishment and Stabilization of the Kim Jong-un Regime

### (1) Three-Generation Power Succession and Emergence of Kim Jong-un

The establishment of the new Kim Jong-un regime went through several stages, from designation as successor to preparation and formalization of power transfer. During the process, Kim Jong-un has consolidated inherited power by gaining control over the party, monopolizing the right to interpret ideologies and purging military leaders. The process of grooming Kim Jong-un to take over leadership started when the health condition of the Kim Jong-il deteriorated in August 2008. Soon, Kim Jong-un was appointed as the official successor, and after his father's death, the hereditary power succession was completed, solidifying the power base for the new leader. Efforts to secure third-generation hereditary succession and build a personality cult around Kim Jong-un began in earnest from 2010. The regime has publicly circulated the song "Footsteps," which is known to praise Kim Jong-un, since early 2010 and at the centennial celebration of Kim Il-sung's birth on April 14, 2010, a slogan that had fallen into disuse, "Defend the Central Committee to the death," was reintroduced.

Kim Jong-un was promoted to four-star general on September 27, 2010, and the following day, he was appointed to Vice Chairman of the CMC at the Conference of Party Representatives. These steps were necessary to formalize the power succession to Kim Jong-un by laying the institutional foundation that would enable the young leader to assume roles in both the WPK and military. The reshuffling of the Party leadership and the amendments to the WPK rules at the third Conference of Party Representatives further solidified the power base for his new regime. As Vice Chairman, Kim Jong-un presented himself at a military parade on October 10, 2010 to celebrate the 65th anniversary of the WPK, and this image as a competent figurehead of North Korea's armed forces thus served to enhance the military's allegiance.

Kim Jong-un made his first public appearance at the third Conference of Party Representatives on September 28, 2010. Throughout the rest of that year, he made a total of 38 public appearances, such as visiting soldiers in joint exercises on October 5, 2010, thus taking further action to secure his successive line to power. Meanwhile, North Korea presented the “spirit of the Party Conference” upon the first anniversary of the third Conference of Party Representatives, calling for the spirit of solidarity, relentless march and ongoing revolution. Based on such motivation, the regime directed efforts to achieve various political goals, including those that would consolidate Kim Jong-il’s leadership and his control over the WPK while securing Kim Jong-un’s hereditary succession.

For the North, maintaining regime stability has been the top priority of the post-Kim Jong-il era, so all efforts and resources have been directed to solidify the leadership for Kim Jong-un based on his father’s last wishes, securing legitimacy of the regime, controlling the armed forces, tightening control over the society and promoting solidarity. Accordingly, the North upheld Kim Jong-il’s dying wishes made on October 8, 2011 by declaring Kim Jong-un to be the “supreme leader of the WPK, military, and people,” at the memorial mass on December 29, 2011, as well as electing him Supreme Commander of the KPA at the Political Bureau meeting on the following day. Moreover, the regime adopted a resolution to achieve great success throughout the construction of a strong and prosperous nation in honor of Kim Jong-il’s last wishes in addition to announcing the Central Committee-Central Military Commission Joint Slogan on December 31, 2011, which emphasized rule in accordance with Kim Jong-il’s testament, the sole leadership of Kim Jong-un, protection of Kim Jong-un’s military-first sovereignty



A political poster emphasizing loyalty to the WPK

by military and security organs, economic resuscitation, enhanced public livelihood, the importance of light industry, improvement of the four preceding sectors as well as external trade, independent national unification and the removal of anti-unification forces.

In order to maintain stability for the Kim Jong-un regime, the Political Bureau meeting adopted a series of decisions that included an overarching ethos, of which the ultimate focus was to lay the groundwork for April 2012. This was reflected in the New Year's joint editorial of North Korea, which declared that "the dear respected Kim Jong-un is precisely the great Kim Jong-il" in compliance with the dying wishes of the late leader. Accordingly, the fourth Conference of Party Representatives and fifth session of the twelfth Supreme People's Assembly were held on April 11, 2012 and April 13, 2012, respectively, and Kim Jong-un was elected to top posts in the WPK, military, and administration. This completed the third-generation hereditary succession in North Korea. Moreover, at a Politburo meeting held on July 15, 2012, the regime announced the decision to relieve Ri Yong-ho of all his post and promote Kim Jong-un to Marshal of the DPRK (July 18, 2012). With Kim Jong-un already taking the top posts of the WPK, government and military, the announcement finally ushered in the Kim Jong-un era founded on a solid power base.

The hereditary power succession over three generations has never been observed in any other dictatorial regime. Through the dynastic power succession, North Korea has proven itself to be a country of hereditary monarchy. Although the state propagates itself as the people's regime built by the people and operated by the people, the country will remain only an autocracy where one-man control and one-party dictatorship are mixed together if it continues to approve the hereditary succession of the *suryŏng* status and keeps a tight rein on the masses.<sup>6</sup>

## (2) Current Political Landscape under the Kim Jong-un Regime

The current power structure with Kim Jong-un at its center was formed at the fourth Conference of Party Representatives and the fifth session of the twelfth SPA held in April 2012, during which the official launch of the Kim Jong-un regime was announced. The WPK rules were amended at those meetings to make sure that “*Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism* becomes a unitary guiding ideology, and the indoctrination of the entire society with *Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism* serves as the supreme doctrine of the party.” Furthermore, government structure and offices were reorganized, and even the constitution was revised to put the necessary institutional and ideological foundation in place.

In North Korea, power is concentrated in various WPK organs, including the Central Committee, Political Bureau, Secretariat and Central Military Commission as implied in its distinctive party-led power structure, and also in National Defense Commission, which is a state organ. In general, this bedrock of authority can be categorized with different generations of power elites: the first generation of revolution or anti-Japanese partisans, the second generation of revolution or guidance officers of Three-Revolutions Teams, and the third generation of revolution or college students of Three-Revolution Teams. At present, members of the first generation in their eighties are retiring from their top posts, while the third generation of revolution—those in their fifties and sixties with higher educational backgrounds—has emerged as a new group of core elites that will lead the Kim Jong-un era.

The key figures in the power base, which was reshuffled at the end of the Kim Jong-il regime, were Kim Jong-il’s close associates who are equipped with expertise. Most of them were in their fifties and sixties, and included Kim Jong-il’s college peers, work colleagues from the Organization and Guidance Department and those who had helped secure his power succession. These associates had been alongside Kim Jong-il since the late 1960s, and have

held key posts in the Political Bureau, Secretariat and National Defense Commission. As part of an ongoing generational shift, Kim Jong-un recently replaced high officials in the party, government and military with executives in their forties and fifties, further solidifying his one-man control.

The indicators that help to assess North Korea's power elites are the order of appearance on the leader's platform, position and title, frequency of accompanying the leader on his on-the-spot guidance tours, and relationship to Kim Jong-il and son Kim Jong-un. Among these, the most indicative is the order of appearance on the podium. Surveys of the leader's podium at major public events clearly show that military leaders have made remarkable ascensions in the leadership hierarchy ever since North Korea promoted the military-first policy, while the WPK elites seem to have undergone a decline in the pecking order. The Central Committee did not convene to hold plenary meetings until the third Conference of Party Representatives in 2010, so the delay in personnel shifts in the Political Bureau since 1993 may have resulted in this weakening status of Politburo members. However, it is perceived that the key cause is the military's rise in accordance with the military-first policy, which came upon the initiation of the Kim Jong-il regime.

The third Conference of Party Representatives held on September 2010, however, undertook to reshuffle the Political Bureau as well as the Central Committee, Secretariat and Central Military Commission. This restored the status of WPK elites to a level once enjoyed back when the sixth Party Congress was held in 1980. Accordingly, North Korea is considered to have finally normalized its leadership structure. This can be observed on the leader's platform, as most members and alternate members of the Political Bureau are seen standing within the twentieth rank. In particular, citing that Kim Jong-un was made a four-star general and Vice Chairman of the CMC, along with membership granted to crucial WPK and military members, it can be understood that the CMC has assumed key authority.

It is assumed that Kim Jong-un, who has marked his second year in power, has so far successfully secured the stability of his regime, by presenting simultaneous development of nuclear weapons and the economy as the regime's new strategic line at the Central Committee plenum on March 31, 2013 and the seventh session of the twelfth SPA on the following day, and also by reshuffling organizational structure and adopting laws to implement decisions made on such occasions. It is noteworthy that unlike in the past, the party witnessed a change in its status during the process. Also notable is the fact that the regime, to consolidate a monolithic ruling system centered on Kim Jong-un, is focusing on the strengthening of the military power through generational shifts, through which it replaced 44 percent of senior cadre.

In order to secure legitimacy of this hereditary succession, North Korea is taking steps to exploit the Kim Il-sung cult. In particular, the regime is making attempts to give Kim Jong-un the image of a supreme leader by fashioning him to remind the public of Kim Il-sung's youthful days. Moreover, the SPA Presidium President Kim Yong-nam introduced the expression the "Kim Il-sung race" during his speech on September 28, 2010 that re-nominated Kim Jong-il to General Secretary of the WPK at the Conference of Party Representatives. Ever since this initial use, the phrase has made frequent appearances in North Korea's official media. Revision of WPK rules in 2010 also stipulated the expressions "Kim Il-sung Chosun" and "Kim Il-sung Party," followed by the designation of *Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism* as being the sole guiding principles in the revised preamble of WPK rules in 2012.

Based on this, in June 2013 the regime changed the Ten Principles for the Establishment of a Monolithic Ideological System, which for 39 years served in practice as the supreme law of the country that superseded the national constitution or the WPK rules, to the Ten Principles for the Establishment of a Sole Leadership System. Those changes were intended to prevent the

formation of factions consisting of core power elites, their wielding of power or any other causes that may threaten the regime's power base. At the same time, they were aimed at solidifying Kim Jong-un's one-man control by absolutizing his authority and stipulating the eternal continuation of the Mount Paektu bloodline.

In this respect, the execution of Jang Song-taek and his two close allies, Lee Yong-ha and Jang Soo-gil, was the result of directly applying the Ten Principles for the Establishment of a Sole Leadership System to the criminal charges of anti-party and counter-revolutionary activities. It is notable that after the bloody purges, the Rodong Sinmun, in its edition of December 6, 2013, gave Kim Jong-un a new title, "Great Leader," instead of "Supreme Leader." Furthermore, delivering an address calling for allegiance at the memorial service for the second anniversary of Kim Jong-il's death held on December 17, 2013, Choe Ryong-hae said that Kim Jong-un is "creating a new history in the remarkable feat of realizing the immortality of the *suryŏng*."

The regime also emphasizes Kim Jong-un's equivalence with his predecessors, stating that he is "another Kim Jong-il." It is also demanding the public to pledge their absolute loyalty to him as they had sworn allegiance to Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il, repeatedly chanting, "we will follow you only," which is the hymn dedicated to the country's leader. Through this loyalty competition, North Korea is seeking to consolidate the leader's power base and stabilize the regime.



# Endnotes

- 1 August Factional Strife refers to an incident of August 1956, where a group of political leaders led by Yun Gong-hum, a member of the Yunan faction, conspired to expel Kim Il-sung from the WPK on the occasion of a Central Committee meeting, but were arrested when their plot was discovered. Taking advantage of this incident, Kim Il-sung conducted a massive purge of pro-China and pro-Soviet factions, thereby gaining complete control of the WPK to consolidate his rule.
- 2 The Chongsanri Spirit and Chongsanri Method originated from the instruction of Kim Il-sung at a plenary session of the Central Committee held in December 1959 when he ordered “to improve the work system and methods so that they can benefit the new environment where socialistic changes in production relations have been completed.” In February of 1960, he instructed, during his on the spot guidance at the Chongsanri Cooperative Farm in Gangseo County (currently Gangseo district, Nampo Special City), South Pyongan Province, that this spirit and these methods should also be generally applied in other sectors as well. The Chongsanri Spirit and Chongsanri Method were named after the place where the idea was first shaped up. While the Chongsanri Spirit emphasizes an ideological aspects, the Chongsanri Method focuses on detailed implementation methods of implementation. In general, the two concepts are not defined separately, but used together. Although the Chongsanri Spirit and Chongsanri Method were first introduced to the agricultural sector, it they came to be used as a the basic guideline for all economic fields.
- 3 Institute for Unification Education, North Korea Knowledge Dictionary, 2013. p.178.
- 4 In 2013, the Three-Revolution Team Movement was first initiated in 1972, when Kim Jong-il had just emerged as the heir apparent, to promote revolution in areas of ideology, technology, and culture. College graduates were required to join the movement for two to three years, and members were deployed to various levels of local institutions and production sites to provide local executives and engineers with technical consultations. In addition, they assumed the role of faithful vanguards who paved the road to a successive Kim Jong-il regime.
- 5 The theory of a strong and prosperous great nation appeared in earnest with the inauguration of the Kim Jong-il regime in 1998. North Korea boasted that it would open the door to a strong and prosperous nation by 2012, the year of 100th anniversary of Kim Il-sung’s birthday. Nonetheless, the term “a strong and prosperous great power” was reduced to “a strong and prosperous state” in 2011 amid ongoing economic difficulties. In the New Year’s joint editorial in 2012, the term “powerful reconstruction” appeared for the first time.
- 6 Institute for Unification Education, Ambivalence of North Korea, 2013. pp.18-20.





# III

# External Policies and Relations

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**Section 1.** Goals and Directions of Foreign Policies

**Section 2.** Changes in Foreign Policy

**Section 3.** Foreign Relations

## Key Points

### 01

North Korean diplomacy during the Cold War was focused on improving ties with socialist and non-aligned countries, as part of a greater effort to bring the entire peninsula under the Communist banner and gain the upper hand over South Korea. Since the end of the Cold War, however, North Korea's need to focus on regime survival has compelled it to diversify its diplomatic efforts and improve relations with Western countries.

### 02

North Korea has striven to improve bilateral relations with the United States, having evidently concluded that the normalization of a relationship with the country is crucial to regime survival. It has also attempted to improve ties with Japan, in the hope of such practical benefits as reparation for colonial rule. Despite such efforts, however, North Korea's relations with the two countries remain in deadlock due to the regime's passive attitude regarding nuclear issues, including the North's reluctance to comply with the agreements reached at the Six Party Talks.

### 03

North Korea is undertaking efforts to strengthen ties with China and Russia, not only to counter international pressure, but also to secure economic assistance and political support. Particular attention is being directed, in the form of mutual visits by senior officials, to maintain bilateral cooperation with China, its traditional ally.

### 04

*North Korea has long used brinkmanship tactics that involve its development of nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles and other weapons of mass destruction. The North resorts to these tactics vis-à-vis the international community, especially the United States, in order to secure regime sustenance and economic support. They are, however, not only escalating military tensions on the Korean peninsula and in the international community, but also furthering North Korea's isolation from the rest of the world.*

## Section 1. Goals and Direction of Foreign Policy

### 1 Basic Ideas and Goals of Foreign Policy

#### (1) Basic Ideas

North Korea identifies independence, peace and friendship as the basic ideas underpinning the North's foreign policy. Article 17 of the Constitution of 2009 stipulated that "Independence, peace, and friendship are the basic ideas of the DPRK's foreign policy and the principles of its external activities. The state shall establish diplomatic and political, economic, and cultural relations with all countries which treat our country in a friendly manner, on the principle of complete equality and independence, mutual respect and noninterference in one another's internal affairs, and reciprocity."

This point is also prescribed in the WPK rules: "... based on independence and proletarian internationalism, we strive to strengthen bonds with socialist countries and attain solidarity with international communist movements, develop friendships and cooperative relationships with the people of all emerging powers, support the people in Asia, Africa and Latin America in their revolutionary fights, create a broad-based united front to oppose imperialism and hegemonism headed by the United States, and endeavor to achieve victory in the collective feats of peace, democracy, ethnic independence and socialism."

The basic ideas of the North's foreign policy show the regime's intention to

actively build diplomatic relations with its allies while holding the imperialist nations in check under the principle of equality, independence, mutual respect, reciprocity and noninterference in internal affairs.

## (2) Goals

North Korea asserts that the basic goals of its external policy are the strengthening of solidarity with the anti-imperialist self-reliant forces, expansion and development of non-aligned movement, and the securing of unity between socialist forces and the international communist movement. During the sixth WPK Congress held in October 1980, Kim Il-sung described the international situation of the time as “a fierce battle between revolutionary forces and anti-revolutionary forces, and anti-imperialist forces and imperialist forces.” He also suggested several goals of the regime’s diplomatic policy, which were: building solidarity with all people around the world who uphold independence; opposing foreign invasion and interference in domestic affairs; and realizing independence and national/class liberation.

International order started to be reorganized in earnest as the Soviet Union and East European Socialist states collapsed and the post-Cold War era arrived in the early 1990s. Under the circumstances, North Korea dropped all references to Marxism-Leninism and the principle of Proletarian Internationalism in the revised 1998 constitution. However, the regime has further strengthened its emphasis on the goal of a collective struggle against imperialistic and hegemonistic forces. This shows that the country is, based on its diplomatic principles of independence, friendship, and peace, putting its foremost priority on protecting the regime from the imperialist forces and focusing its diplomatic activities on creating international conditions and environments necessary to achieve this goal.

## 2 Policy Directions

The ultimate goal of North Korean diplomacy during the Cold War era was to bring the entire peninsula under the Communist banner, as well as to gain the upper hand over South Korea. After the post-Cold War era, the country changed its diplomatic policy to give more emphasis on regime stability and survival, engaging in diplomatic efforts to secure practical benefits. The prioritization of these goals has become especially apparent in North Korean diplomacy since Kim Il-sung's death.

During the Cold War era, the North's diplomatic activities were focused on socialist countries, the third world, developing countries and non-aligned nations. Due to the bipolar structure of the Cold War and ideological conflict centered on the United States and the Soviet Union, Pyongyang considered it imperative to establish ties with socialist nations. Competition with South Korea also triggered the regime to expand diplomatic relations with non-aligned states by promoting the anti-imperialist movement.

This changed after the Cold War. The disintegration of the Soviet Union and collapse of the East European socialist bloc further isolated North Korea from the rest of the international community, plunging it in the mid-1990s into a severe economic crisis now remembered as the Arduous March. Under such difficult circumstances, the regime had no choice but to try to diversify foreign relations and improve ties with Western countries with these efforts being focused on regime stability and survival. Having witnessed transitions in other socialist states, North Korea is making efforts to improve ties with the United States and Japan while reinforcing its once-estranged relationship with its traditional allies, China and Russia. This change in Pyongyang's foreign policy resulted from its need to emerge from international isolation, enhance regime stability and overcome economic troubles.

Believing that normal relations with the United States are critical to preserving

the regime, North Korea has for the most part pushed for better ties with Washington, even during times of confrontation. By engaging in direct dialogue with the United States, the North has sought to receive food, fuel and other economic support crucial for regime sustenance. In the meantime, relations with South Korea and Japan were deemed ancillary, and therefore used mainly as a means to create a more favorable environment for Pyongyang's diplomatic ties with other countries, primarily the United States.

Expanding foreign relations with members of the European Union and other Western countries allowed North Korea to introduce advanced technologies and secure more economic assistance. Pyongyang has also been stepping up other diplomatic endeavors, including its resource diplomacy towards Southeast Asian countries and non-aligned nations, all as part of the greater effort to secure regime survival and other practical benefits.

Since the 1990s, North Korea has actively engaged in brinkmanship,<sup>1</sup> deliberately creating confrontations and alternating missile launches and nuclear tests with requests for concessions. Such tactics not only escalated tension on the peninsula and in the international community, but also furthered North Korea's isolation. Over the last two decades, the United States and the world at large have made various attempts to get the North to abandon its nuclear ambitions. In addition to the Agreed Framework, which the United States and North Korea concluded in 1994, Six Party Talks have convened sporadically since 2003, producing the September 19 Joint Statement in 2005 as well as the February 13 and October 3 Agreements in 2007.

In spite of these endeavors, North Korea conducted a series of provocations including its first nuclear test in October 2006 and long-range missile launches, in the hope of strengthening its hand in negotiations. In May 2009, a second nuclear test was carried out, eliciting strong condemnation from the international community and resulting in heavier sanctions that worsened the regime's isolation. Undaunted, North Korea launched a torpedo attack in March



2010 on the Cheonan, a South Korean naval vessel, followed in November of the same year by the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island, which claimed the lives of South Korean civilians and soldiers. Despite concerns raised in the international community, North Korea launched a long-range missile again in December 2012, and pushed ahead with the third nuclear test in February 2013.

These attacks hardened the international community's perception of North Korea as a belligerent and dangerous regime. The regime has exploited the tension to enhance domestic unity while blaming South Korea or the United States for the deterioration of inter-Korean relations. This recurring cycle of negotiation and provocation is partly motivated by a desire to pressure change in ROK-US policy towards Pyongyang as well as to divide South Korean society.

Meanwhile, North Korea has sought to reinforce relations with China, its traditional ally, with the aim of curbing international criticism and pressure. In particular, Kim Jong-il visited China on four occasions subsequent to the Cheonan sinking, in May and August of both 2010 and 2011. The country used three of those occasions (May and August 2010, May 2011) to participate in summit meetings with the Chinese leaders. These visits demonstrated the importance that Pyongyang places on the improvement of relations with Beijing. Thereafter, North Korean senior officials have made additional trips to China, in order to secure economic aid and other assistance. As of 2014, the Sino-North Korean relationship remains somewhat estranged.

The current relationship between the US, China and Russia is unlike that which prevailed during the Cold War, as these three countries are interested in cooperating for mutual interest despite occasional conflicts and confrontations. Following Pyongyang's second nuclear test in 2009, the launch of a long-range missile in 2012, and the third nuclear test in 2013, China and Russia, which are permanent members of the UN Security Council, also consented to a UN Security Council resolution imposing sanctions on North Korea.

However, China and Russia are taking ambivalent stances on North Korean issues. Following the Cheonan sinking and shelling of Yeonpyeong Island, the United States and Japan lent active support to South Korea's stance. They strongly condemned North Korea, rendering their support both to joint investigations and sanctions against it, urging the UN Security Council and other international organizations to issue condemnations of its behavior. On the other hand, China and Russia continued to voice their hope that a resumption of the Six Party Talks would help to preserve peace and stability on the Korean peninsula. The two countries expressed doubts regarding the scientific results of the Cheonan investigation that had been presented by South Korea, and sided with Pyongyang in opposing the joint military exercises and other measures pursued by the ROK and United States to counter further belligerence. The completely different attitudes of the countries surrounding the Korean peninsula are evidently derived from the conflicting interests of the concerned parties in regard to the competition for influence in Northeast Asia.

### North Korea's Foreign Policy-making Structure

The North Korean constitution identifies independence, peace and friendship as the principles underpinning the North's external policy and activities. As presented in the constitution, foreign policy is carried out to promote the following objectives: equality and independence among friendly nations; mutual respect and non-interference in domestic affairs; improvement in political, economic and cultural relations based on the principle of reciprocity; opposition to invasion and interference; and support of the international endeavor for national and class liberation.

With these principles, North Korea's foreign policy, reflecting the party-dominant state system, has been devised and implemented under the guidance of the Worker's Party of Korea (WPK). The party guidance is being executed

by the secretary of international affairs and the international department of the Secretariat. These entities are commanded and supervised under the supreme leadership.

More specifically, there are two methods in which foreign policies are made and carried out: top-down and bottom-up. In the top-down system, key policy lines are decided by the supreme leader and subsequently implemented by relevant departments and agencies. The bottom-up system, meanwhile, enables working-level elites in the WPK, Cabinet and the Korean People's Army to formulate, review, and discuss policies. These are later reported to top policymakers such as WPK Secretaries and Directors, Cabinet Premier, Minister of the People's Armed Forces and the Foreign Minister, to be implemented after obtaining the supreme leader's approval and endorsement.

Foreign policies in North Korea are executed on different levels of party, state and non-government sectors, which are supervised by the WPK International Affairs Department, the Foreign Ministry and party-affiliated organizations, respectively. The Foreign Ministry is mostly responsible for government-to-government diplomacy, while the WPK Department of International Affairs, Supreme People's Assembly (SPA) Presidium, and Korea Asia-Pacific Peace Committee take charge of party, parliamentary, and people-to-people diplomacy, respectively.

In detail, the Foreign Ministry, which comprises a minister, several vice ministers and over thirty regional and functional offices, undertakes the tasks of establishing diplomatic relations, concluding treaties with other nations, operating diplomatic missions abroad, and so forth. The ministry is also affiliated with a think tank known as the Institute for Disarmament and Peace. Meanwhile, non-government diplomacy is often promoted by the WPK-affiliated Korea Asia-Pacific Peace Committee and the Committee for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries. The General Federation of Korean Trade Unions and other labor organizations are also involved in carrying out external

activities in their respective areas. In short, various agencies join the WPK, Cabinet and SPA Presidium to share the responsibility of managing foreign affairs.

Contrary to this reality, however, the constitution stipulates that establishing foreign policy is the responsibility of the SPA Presidium. When the constitutional revision in 1998 abolished the post of state president, the President of the SPA Presidium assumed the role of receiving diplomatic credentials and letters of recall of diplomatic representatives accredited by a foreign state on behalf of the North Korean regime. The amended constitution further gave the SPA the mandate to ratify and repeal treaties signed with other countries, in addition to the decision-making and announcement regarding the appointment and recall of diplomatic envoys dispatched to foreign countries.

At the twelfth SPA meeting held in April 2009, North Korea revised its constitution once again by inserting a new clause: “The Chairman of the National Defense Commission (NDC) of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) is the supreme leader of the DPRK.” Later, the constitutional amendment in April 2012 changed the clause again to “The First Chairman of the National Defense Commission is the supreme leader of the DPRK.” Accordingly, the constitution states that as the topmost leader, the NDC First Chairman has the responsibility and right to supervise overall state affairs, including rights to grant special amnesty and ratify or repeal major treaties signed with other countries.

## Section 2. Changes in Foreign Policy

### 1 Foreign Policy during the Cold War Era

During the Cold War era when countries were engaged in competition and confrontation under the bipolar structure led by the United States and the Soviet Union, North Korea's foreign policy went through four different periods according to the changing focus of its foreign relations, such as: diplomacy with the socialist camp led by China and the Soviet Union from 1948 to the early-1950s; diplomacy toward non-aligned states from the mid-1950s to the 1960s; independent diplomacy in the 1970s; and a practical approach toward Western countries in the 1980s.

#### (1) Diplomacy with the Socialist Camp from 1948 to the Early-1950s

North Korea made intensive efforts to establish diplomatic relations with socialist countries from the establishment of its regime in September 1948 until the signing of the armistice agreement in July 1953. During this time, North Korea desperately needed diplomatic relations with countries to provide political and economic protection for it and thus sought to establish diplomatic ties with the Soviet Union, China and other socialist states. Among them, the Soviet Union was the most important partner for the North as it was leading the whole socialist bloc. Meanwhile, China did not have any major influence

on the North because China itself was engaged in a civil war between the Communists and the Nationalists, receiving support from the Soviet Union.

Such efforts paid off. Through mediation by Moscow, North Korea established diplomatic ties with 12 satellite states of the Soviet Union, including China and other socialist states in Eastern Europe. Afterwards, China dispatched about 1 million soldiers to North Korea during the Korean War, forging a blood alliance between Beijing and Pyongyang, which brought a major change in the North's foreign policy. Despite the deepened relationship with China, North Korea strived to strike and maintain a balance in its diplomacy toward China and the Soviet Union, thereby securing economic assistance from both countries.

## (2) Diplomacy toward Non-aligned States from Mid-1950s to the 1960s

North Korea placed the highest priority of its diplomacy on obtaining economic assistance for post-war recovery after the armistice agreement was signed. Accordingly, it focused on improving cooperative relations with China and the Soviet Union to receive grants from them. Such foreign policy, however, had to be modified as peaceful coexistence rose as a new policy goal in the Soviet Union after Nikita Khrushchev took power upon the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953 and a 10-point declaration on promotion of world peace and cooperation was adopted at the Bandung Conference in April 1955.

North Korea shifted the focus of its foreign policy from the socialist bloc to non-aligned states, including developing countries. The shift was clearly expressed by Kim Il-sung at the third Party Congress in April 1956 by saying, "We need to strive to establish political and practical relations with all countries in the world which advocate peace under the spirit of mutual respect for each other's right to independence and equality based on Lenin's principles for peaceful coexistence with countries with different social institutions."<sup>2</sup> Another indication of strengthened efforts for diplomacy towards non-aligned states was the establishment of the Committee for Cultural Relations with

Foreign Countries as a WPK-affiliated organization to conduct people-to-people diplomacy with non-aligned states. Based on these efforts, Pyongyang established diplomatic relations with Algeria, Guinea and others in 1958.



### Ten-point Declaration for of the Bandung Conference

The Bandung Conference was a meeting of 29 independent states in Asia and Africa, which took place from April 18–24, 1955 in Bandung, Indonesia. The conference was aimed at creating an Asian–African network, declaring the participating countries' neutrality, and calling for an end to colonialism. The conference was organized by Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, India and Pakistan.

A ten-point declaration on promotion of world peace and cooperation was adopted at the conference by incorporating the principles of the United Nations Charter and the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence advocated by Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai and Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in June 1954. The ten principles are as follows.

1. Respect for fundamental human rights and for the purposes and principles of the charter of the United Nations
2. Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations
3. Recognition of the equality of all races and of the equality of all nations large and small
4. Abstention from intervention or interference in the internal affairs of another country
5. Respect for the right of each nation to defend itself, singly or collectively, in conformity with the charter of the United Nations
6. Abstention from the use of arrangements of collective defense to serve any particular interests of the big powers; Abstention by any country from exerting pressures on other countries
7. Refraining from acts or threats of aggression or the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any country.
8. Settlement of all international disputes by peaceful means, such as negotiation, conciliation, arbitration or judicial settlement as well as other peaceful means of the parties own choice, in conformity with the charter of the United Nations
9. Promotion of mutual interests and cooperation
10. Respect for justice and international obligations

The 1960s saw changes in the international political environment such as the ideological conflict between China and the Soviet Union, the May 16 military coup in South Korea, the Cuban missile crisis, the US involvement in the Vietnam War, and increased participation by newly independent states in the United Nations. Amid such changes, the issue of simultaneously inviting the South and North to the fifteenth session of the United Nations General Assembly was raised in 1960. Then, North Korea stepped up its efforts to strengthen its ties with non-aligned countries to gain the upper hand over the South.

At the fourth WPK Congress in 1961, Kim Il-sung emphasized solidarity with socialist states, opposition to and struggle against the imperialist bloc, and approaching newly independent states. He also created de-facto military alliances with the Soviet Union and China by signing the Soviet-North Korean Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance in June 1961 and the China-North Korean Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance in July the same year, respectively.

Border conflicts between the Soviet Union and China escalated in 1962. At first, North Korea stood in favor of China, but it soon decided to remain neutral between the two allies after the Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin visited Pyongyang in February 1965. China and the Soviet Union viewed the change as the North's attempt to play double, and sharply reduced the size of their economic aid to the North while converting the type of aid from grants to loans. Then, Pyongyang, which had pursued to take superiority over the South and to increase its international presence to bring the whole peninsula under communism, declared independence as its new policy objective, opposing to intervention in each other's internal affairs and advocating mutual equality in August 1966.<sup>3</sup> Diplomatic efforts towards non-aligned states, including developing countries were further strengthened from then on.

### (3) Independent Diplomacy in the 1970s

In September 1971, the People's Republic of China was admitted to the United Nations. In the following year, US President Richard Nixon visited China, and Japan and China normalized their relations. Amid such changes, North Korea began pursuing diplomatic independence while trying to gain practical benefits from diplomatic relations for economic development. The change in diplomatic position came after an agenda titled "On several questions about the international political circumstances" was discussed at the third plenary session of the fifth WPK Central Committee in November 1971.<sup>4</sup> To be specific, North Korea began establishing diplomatic ties with Western capitalist states which



had remained favorable towards the North to obtain advanced technologies and knowhow while respecting the *juche* ideology and the principle of political independence it had emphasized since the mid-1960s.

At the same time, North Korea fervently improved its relations with non-aligned states, especially bringing about fruitful results after the fifth Party Congress in 1970. By the time it held the sixth Congress in 1980, the number of countries it had established diplomatic ties with rose to 66. The efforts helped it lay the foundation to conduct diplomatic activities in the third world independently without resorting to China or the Soviet Union. North Korea joined the Non-Aligned Movement at the foreign ministers' conference of the non-aligned nations held in Lima, Peru in August 1975. Also, the North exerted influence in the United Nations as well, as demonstrated by the time when the communists' proposal to deal with the Korean issue was passed along with the Western countries' proposal at the 30th UN General Assembly in 1975. However, its diplomatic offensive faced limitations in the end-1970s as its international presence was undermined by problems such as armed provocations against the South, repayment of foreign debt, counterfeiting and smuggling by diplomats.

#### (4) Practical Approach toward Western Countries in the 1980s

In the 1980s, North Korea's economy entered a protracted recession caused by operational problems within its socialist economic system in addition to the inefficiency of its economic policy, which was focused on building a self-reliant national economy, putting heavy industry before all other industries, and simultaneously developing the economy and nuclear weapons program. Moreover, China's adoption of the reform and open-door policy in 1978 as well as the reform and openness policy pursued by the Soviet Union and East European socialist countries in the mid-1980s demonstrated the reality that the socialist economic system had inherent problems and limitations,

dealing a heavy blow to North Korea. Against this backdrop, Pyongyang began expanding relations with Western countries and intensified efforts to obtain practical benefits from them to overcome the recession.

North Korea's foreign policy from that time was focused on building friendly relations with Western capitalist countries as well as socialist, non-aligned and third-world developing countries based on the diplomatic principles of "independence, friendship and peace," declared at the sixth WPK Congress in October 1980. A higher priority was placed on friendly relations and economic cooperation with Western capitalist countries. Nonetheless, the Rangoon bombing in Burma (now Myanmar), which was masterminded by North Korea in October 1983, undermined its international reputation and prompted Western countries to shun North Korea.

In January 1984, Pyongyang proposed to hold a trilateral meeting involving the United States and the two Koreas and to conclude a peace treaty to the US at the united congress of the Central People's Committee and the Supreme People's Assembly Permanent Council in addition to deciding to promote external trade as a means to revive its economy. This was followed by the legislation of the Equity Joint Venture Law to attract foreign investments in the same year. The details for the promotion of external trade and the joint venture act were specified in the third seven year plan released in April 1987.

Despite fresh efforts to diversify its foreign relations in the 1980s, Pyongyang's foreign policy during this time dealt a heavy blow to its foreign relations overall. North Korea was declared to be in default by Western creditor banks in October 1987 and its drive to open itself aimed at obtaining advanced technologies and foreign capital produced only minor results.

## 2 Foreign Policy after the Cold War Era

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the resultant end to the world's bipolar structure brought a new order to global politics. The overarching goal of Pyongyang's foreign policy in this post-Cold War period was to normalize relations with all countries across the globe. The focus placed on the US and Japan in the 1990s was broadened to the rest of the world after 2000 to secure wider support from the international community.

### (1) Normalization of Relations with the US and Japan in the 1990s

In the early-1990s, North Korea had to deal with rapid changes in the external environment, its isolation from the international community, and domestic economic slump. The bipolar structure where countries were engaged in hostile competition around the US and the Soviet Union was transformed into a multipolar regime where they compete with each other while co-existing with each other, a period known as *détente*. In addition, with the fall of the communist bloc leaving the US as the world's sole super power, countries which had been allies of North Korea during the Cold War period improved their ties with South Korea. All of these required a change in the North's foreign policy.

In addition, the internal situation got even worse for the North's regime after the death of Kim Il-sung (July 8, 1994) as the issue of power succession emerged and the economic slump deepened. Against this backdrop, North Korea initiated a crisis management system enforced by the military to tackle internal troubles on one hand and embarked on efforts to normalize relations with the US and Japan and then with other Western capitalist countries to overcome international isolation on the other.

As part of its efforts to improve relations with the US, North Korea had 28 rounds of councilor-level contact with the US in Beijing between 1988 and 1992, resulting in the conclusion of the Geneva Agreement in October 21, 1994.

In March 1999, it received 600,000 tons of food aid from the US in return for its agreeing to allow US inspectors to visit a suspected underground nuclear weapons facility in Kumchang-ri to determine what it actually was being used for. The Berlin Agreement on the North's missile program reached in September 1999 and other progresses provided North Korea with a way to normalize relations with the US.

North Korea also pursued normalization of relations with Japan by holding meetings with the country eight times between 1991 and 1992. The North's Worker's Party and the ruling coalition party of Japan agreed to resume normalization talks in March 1995 and North Korea received 500,000 tons of food aid from Japan in 1995-1996. This mood for normalization was facilitated by two rounds of hometown visits by Japanese wives in the North and a visit by Japan's Liberal Democratic Party delegation to Pyongyang in March 1998.

The bilateral relations turned sour however due to the North's missile launch in August 1998. Relations broke down even further as North Korea more aggressively demanded for Japan to come forward in paying compensation for its past wrongdoings and improving the bilateral relations in August 1992. Afterwards, North Korea announced that it agreed to resume normalization talks with Japan in a joint press statement when a Japanese party delegation visited Pyongyang, a turnaround achieved thanks to the Berlin agreement between the US and North Korea made in September 1999. Subsequently, Japan-North Korea Red Cross talks were held on December 19, 1999, during which time the two countries reached a four-point agreement, including hometown visits by Japanese wives in North Korea.

North Korea actively sought improvement in its relations with China and Russia while making efforts to normalize relations with the US and Japan. China-North Korea relations became strained soon after South Korea and China formally established relations in August 1992. However, they were restored by the conclusion of the China-North Korea Economic and Technology

Cooperation Agreement in May 1996, a visit by President of the SPA Presidium Kim Yong-nam to China in June 1999, and a visit by Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan to North Korea in October 1999. Also, North Korea sought to change its relations with Russia to one between normal states by replacing the Soviet-North Korean Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance with the Russia-North Korean Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighborly Relations and Cooperation in February 2000.

## (2) Multidirectional Diplomacy in the 2000s

The Kim Jong-il regime was officially launched in September 1998 following the period of ruling by instructions of the late Kim Il-sung which had lasted from July 1994 to August 1998. The new regime sought a multidirectional foreign policy with the focus on economic recovery, escaping international isolation, and gaining aid from the international community. Pyongyang remained steadfast in its efforts to improve relations with the US to ensure regime survival and stability on one hand and bolstered diplomacy towards China and Russia, its two traditional allies, through summit meetings on the other hand. Such diplomatic efforts were expanded to include not only Japan and the EU but also Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and other Southeast Asian countries.

Since 2000, North Korea has used brinkmanship tactics, creating tension with a series of missile launches and three nuclear tests in 2006, 2009 and 2013. Such tactics prompted the US to freeze North Korean accounts in Macao's Banco Delta Asia (BDA) and the UN Security Council to adopt resolutions 1718, 1874, 2087 and 2094, which increased sanctions against North Korea.

In October 2000, North Korean special envoy Jo Myong-rok visited Washington and announced a joint statement which called for an end to hostility between the two countries and an anti-terrorism joint statement. In return, US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright made a trip to Pyongyang and had discussions

with Kim Jong-il on the normalization of bilateral relations. These US policies were reassessed when the George W. Bush administration came to power in January 2001. In his State of the Union address in 2002, President Bush condemned North Korea, referring to it as a member of the “axis of evil,” and then began imposing strong sanctions on Pyongyang for its nuclear development. To deal with such a harsh environment, North Korea tried to further improve relations with its traditional allies, including China and Russia while establishing diplomatic ties with Japan and others.

North Korea’s attempts to ensure regime security and economic assistance from the US by leveraging the nuclear issue have failed to meet its goals. Although the so-called September 19 Joint Statement on the resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue was signed at the Six Party Talks during the Bush administration, its implementation has been stalled due to the North’s failure in meeting its obligations. The nuclear dispute has continued even after the new Barack Obama administration took power in 2009 as Washington continued to call for denuclearization of North Korea while the North wanted the US to acknowledge it as a nuclear state. Since 2000, North Korea has held summit meetings with China and Russia as a way to counter pressure from the US as well as to secure aid from more diverse channels. North Korea’s relations with China show a slight difference these days. Previously, Kim Jong-il made a number of visits to Beijing (May 2000, January 2001, April 2004, January 2006, May 2010, August 2010, May 2011 and August 2011) and Chinese Presidents Jiang Zemin (September 2001) and Hu Jintao (October 2005) visited Pyongyang, apparently indicating that the friendship between China and North Korea was restored. However, China has joined the international community in imposing sanctions on North Korea after Xi Jinping took office in 2012 and Kim Jong-un has made no visits to China since he succeeded his father in the same year. Before Kim Jong-il died, the traditional bilateral relations of friendship between Russia and North Korea was maintained by summit meetings that took place when Russian President Putin visited Pyongyang in July 2000 and Kim Jong-

il visited Russia in July 2001, August 2002 and August 2011. Russia, however, supported the UNSC sanctions against North Korea when the Kim Jong-un administration conducted the third nuclear test and no summit-level visits have been made since Kim Jong-un took power. Still, economic cooperation projects between the two countries are underway, resulting in the completion of the Rajin-Hassan railway construction in 2013.

North Korea opened diplomatic relations with EU member states by establishing full diplomatic ties with Italy in January 2000, with the UK in December of the same year, and with Germany in March 2001. Since then, it has established diplomatic ties with 26 EU member states, excluding France and Estonia. North Korea places importance on the EU in implementing its foreign policy. This is demonstrated by its choice of the euro instead of the US dollar as the currency to settle its foreign transactions in December 2002, and the holding of three workshops on EU-North Korea economic cooperation and modernization of the North Korean economy in Pyongyang in August 2004, October 2005 and October 2007. Nevertheless, EU-North Korean relations still remain lukewarm due to the unresolved North Korean nuclear and human rights issues.

In addition, Kim Yong-nam, President of the SPA Presidium visited Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia in July 2001 and Thailand and Malaysia in March 2002 and Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri (March 2002), Vietnamese President Tran Duc Luong (May 2002), and heads of other Southeast Asian countries visited Pyongyang. In 2009, North Korea tried to secure practical benefits from military and economic cooperation projects by making intensive diplomatic efforts toward the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). North Korea's nuclear tests, however, prompted ASEAN countries to re-examine their attitudes toward Pyongyang. An example of this change is a press statement condemning North Korea for its nuclear ambitions adopted at the ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit on June 2, 2009.

The Kim Jong-un regime which officially took power in 2011 adopted the policy of simultaneous development of the economy and nuclear weapons at the plenary session of the WPK Central Committee in March 2013 and reiterated its position on “non-abandonment of nuclear weapons” whenever the opportunity arises. Such a policy causes a significant hurdle for Pyongyang’s endeavor to improve its foreign relations. A look back on North Korea’s foreign relations in the past shows that although it has tried to strengthen diplomatic ties to overcome international isolation and to facilitate economic recovery after 2000, the country has failed to do so due to its repeated nuclear tests and missile launches.



## Section 3. Foreign Relations

### 1 US–North Korea Relations

North Korea first began approaching Western countries in the 1970s, a point in time when President Nixon had visited Beijing and a desire for rapprochement was growing between the United States and the Soviet Union. During this period, Pyongyang approached Washington for the first time to discuss the replacement of the existing armistice agreement with a peace treaty.

In the 1990s, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the European socialist bloc undermined North Korea's diplomatic base. When Beijing and Moscow finally established ties with South Korea, the regime in Pyongyang encountered almost complete diplomatic isolation. Consequently, North Korea made its best efforts to improve relations with the United States, which had emerged as the sole superpower of the post-Cold War era.

North Korea at this time attempted to force the United States into direct negotiations by declaring its intent to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)<sup>5</sup> in March 1993 and refusing to receive nuclear inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). As a result of this brinkmanship, the North succeeded in reaching an Agreed Framework with the United States in October 1994.<sup>6</sup> The provisions of the agreement specified that the United States would supply two light-water reactor power plants and pursue normalization of relations, in exchange for North Korea's

promise to freeze its nuclear programs. In this way, the regime was able to craft a platform for further improvement in its relations with the US.

Thereafter, North Korea maintained the posture of wanting to improve relations with the United States, as highlighted by the regime's cooperative efforts to excavate and repatriate the remains of American soldiers lost during the Korean War, along with its assent to participating in four-party talks involving the two Koreas, China, and the United States in April 1996 in order to peacefully settle issues regarding the peninsula.

In September 1999, the United States and North Korea met in Berlin to sign a missile accord, thereby creating a favorable climate for the improvement of bilateral relations. The United States then partially lifted economic sanctions against North Korea, and the North announced its missile moratorium.

Throughout these endeavors, former US Secretary of State William Perry functioned as the Clinton administration's North Korea Policy Coordinator. In addition, the United States decided to provide diplomatic and economic benefits to North Korea in cooperation with South Korea and Japan, provided that Pyongyang abandons its ambitions to develop weapons of mass destruction such as nuclear warheads and ballistic missiles. In October 2000, North Korean special envoy Jo Myong-rok visited Washington, and US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright made a trip to Pyongyang which involved in-depth discussions on various pending issues such as the establishment of diplomatic missions, identification of the remains of missing American soldiers from the Korean War, and specific measures to ease tension on the Korean peninsula.

When the George W. Bush administration came to power in January 2001, these US policies toward North Korea were reassessed. This resulted in greater emphasis on verifying the status of North Korea's nuclear and missile development programs, as well as on the reduction of its conventional weapons. In response to this hard-line stance, the regime in Pyongyang first urged Washington to abide by previous agreements made to improve bilateral ties, but later resorted to taking a tougher approach.

In his State of the Union address in 2002, President Bush condemned North Korea along with Iraq and Iran, referring to them as the axis of evil. This came after the September 11 terrorist attacks in 2001, as part of an endeavor to foster international cooperation in the war against terrorism. The Kim Jong-il regime reacted strongly to this stigmatization, denouncing President Bush's statement as a declaration of war. The situation worsened in October 2002 when US special envoy James Kelly visited Pyongyang, where his counterpart made remarks which appeared to admit to the existence of a North Korean uranium enrichment program. Subsequently, the United States proclaimed that it would resume bilateral talks with North Korea only after the regime abandoned its nuclear aspirations.

The North responded with strong measures. In December 2002, North Korea lifted the freeze on its nuclear facilities, which since the Agreed Framework had been under the auspices of the IAEA and deported IAEA inspectors. Furthermore, it declared its withdrawal from the NPT on January 10, 2003.

The United States argued that North Korea's uranium enrichment program constituted a violation not only of bilateral agreements such as the Agreed Framework of 1994 and the Joint Declaration of Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula of 1992, but also international agreements, including the NPT and the IAEA safeguards agreement. Washington also reasoned that no compensation would be paid to North Korea, since North Korea was bound by the basic obligations to give up its nuclear weapons programs as a member of the international community.

As tension escalated between Washington and Pyongyang, the governments of China and South Korea assumed mediator roles. Subsequently, three-party talks were held in Beijing during April 23-25, 2003 between the United States, North Korea, and China. During the talks, the United States demanded that North Korea should first renounce its nuclear programs, while North Korea insisted on engaging in direct dialogue with the United States before multilateral talks resumed.

By expanding diplomatic efforts such as partaking in the G8 and other summits with South Korea, Japan, China, and Russia, the United States pressured North Korea to carry out a “complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement (CVID)” of its nuclear programs. At the same time, Washington further increased pressure on Pyongyang by promoting the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI),<sup>7</sup> designed to prevent proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It was also argued that North Korea’s nuclear development had to be addressed within the framework of multilateral talks participated in by all concerned countries, because it constituted a provocation against the international community.

In contrast, North Korea claimed that its nuclear development issue originated from Washington’s hostile policy towards Pyongyang, stating that only the United States has the capability and the responsibility to resolve the situation. Moreover, it threatened to “continue reinforcing its nuclear deterrence,” arguing that the United States refuses to engage in bilateral dialogue and insists on multilateral talks only because it has no intention of resolving the issue.

After all these twists and turns, including the exchange of fierce accusations between the United States and North Korea, China and other concerned parties came together to create a new multi lateral platform. Launched as the Six Party Talks, they involve six countries—the two Koreas, the United States, China, Japan, and Russia. The key developments of the Six Party Talks have been as follows.

The first round of the Six Party Talks took place in Beijing on August 27-29, 2003. At this time, the United States specified that North Korea would first need to abandon its nuclear program in order to discuss matters of ensuring regime security and other political and economic benefits. It was also argued that various issues, including missiles, conventional arms, counterfeiting, drug trafficking, terrorism, human rights and abduction would have to be discussed before normalizing relations. For its part, Pyongyang protested that Washington needed to end its hostility against Pyongyang and implement necessary measures for denuclearization under the principle of simultaneous action.

During the second round of the Six Party Talks held on February 25-28, 2004, the United States emphasized that North Korea needs to end the highly enriched uranium program it had pursued with Pakistan's assistance and must conduct



Six Party Talks

“complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement.” As the first step towards this goal, the United States said that it would not oppose energy assistance to North Korea provided by South Korea, China, Japan and Russia. The North, however, entirely denied the existence of its uranium program, indicating that although nuclear development for military purposes might be suspended, it intended to continue pursuing a peaceful nuclear program. North Korea also insisted that any nuclear freeze must be compensated with economic benefits.

At the third round of talks that took place on June 23-26, 2004, the United States proposed a more flexible two-phase solution. The first phase required North Korea to spend the initial three months discussing an agreement on the principle of complete dismantlement of all nuclear programs, including its enrichment of uranium. Upon freezing these programs based on the agreement, North Korea would receive from South Korea, China, Japan and Russia, monthly supplies of heavy oil amounting to tens of thousands of tons. Meanwhile, Washington would give temporary security assurances, ensuring that no efforts would be undertaken to invade North Korea or overthrow the regime. In the second phase, provided that North Korea completely dismantled all nuclear programs, the United States would offer assurances of permanent security, normalize bilateral relations and expand economic assistance.

Yet, North Korea continued to deny the existence of a uranium program while insisting on receiving compensation for its nuclear freeze. Pyongyang asserted that if the United States supplied energy assistance equivalent to 2 million

KW, removed North Korea from the list of states sponsoring terrorism, lifted economic sanctions and agreed to offer other compensations, it would freeze all nuclear facilities and reprocessed products, and might even dismantle them if necessary conditions were met.

The second session of the fourth round of Six Party Talks held on September 13-19, 2005 announced a joint statement (the September 19 Joint Statement), which presented principles and objectives to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue. This opened a door to resolving the problem, but implementing the joint statement turned out to be no easy task. To prevent North Korea from counterfeiting dollars and laundering money, the United States froze North Korean accounts in Macao's Banco Delta Asia (BDA). The North strongly reacted to this measure and test-fired a Taepodong 2 missile on July 5, 2006, followed by its first nuclear test on October 9 in the same year. In response to this, the UNSC adopted Resolution 1718,<sup>8</sup> which called for the international community to impose economic sanctions against North Korea.

The Bush administration decided to take a different approach to North Korea as the BDA impasse was protracted and the North conducted its first nuclear test. The United States and North Korea held a series of bilateral discussions, finally agreeing to resume the Six Party Talks. Accordingly, the third session of the fifth round was held on February 8-13, 2007 and on the premise that the BDA issue would soon be resolved, the parties reached an agreement on the initial implementation measures of the September 19 Joint Statement (February 13 agreement). From this, an institutional basis was established to fully implement the September 19 Joint Statement, which was devised in order to realize denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, establish a peace regime on the peninsula, and create a peace structure in Northeast Asia.

In the first session of the sixth round of the Six Party Talks held on March 19-22, 2007, reports presented by the five working groups were reviewed, including those regarding the normalization of US-North Korea and Japan-North Korea relations, economic and energy cooperation, peace and security

mechanisms in Northeast Asia, and denuclearization of the peninsula. Discussions also took place on the implementation of the initial measures and action plans for the next stage.

The BDA issue, which had been a great obstacle in executing the agreements reached at the Six Party Talks, began to make progress towards resolution. This induced North Korea to invite a group of IAEA inspectors in June 2007 and embark on freezing its 5MWe reactor and other facilities in Yongbyon in compliance with the February 13 agreement.

In the second session held on September 27-30 of the same year, the six parties agreed on the joint statement for second phase denuclearization (October 3 Agreement) in accordance with the September 19 Joint Statement and February 13 Agreement. According to these provisions, North Korea had agreed to disable three nuclear facilities in Yongbyon by December 31, namely the 5MWe reactor, plutonium reprocessing facility, and nuclear fuel rod manufacturing plant. In addition, it promised not to transfer nuclear materials, technology or know-how.

However, North Korea submitted its declaration of nuclear programs on June 26, 2008, well past the agreed deadline of December 31, 2007. Furthermore, the North announced on August 26, 2008 that it would suspend disabling its nuclear development, on the grounds that the United States had not yet removed the regime from its list of states sponsoring terrorism. On October 11, 2008, a hundred days before the end of the Bush administration, the United States finally removed the North from the list, but no breakthroughs ensued. At the head delegates meeting that took place in Beijing on December 8-11 that year, North Korea refused to adopt a verification protocol that would include scientific sampling. This resulted in failure to reach an agreement. Subsequently, the problem of North Korea's denuclearization was passed down to the Obama administration.

**Table 3–1 Key Agreements in the Six Party Talks**

Name of Agreement	Key Points
September 19 Joint Statement in 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dismantlement of North Korea’s Nuclear Programs and Removal of North Korea’s Security Concerns               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– North Korea committed to abandoning all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs.</li> <li>– The United States affirmed that it has no nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula and has no intention to attack or invade North Korea.</li> <li>– North Korea stated that it has the right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The other parties expressed their respect and agreed to discuss, at an appropriate time, the subject of the provision of light water reactor to North Korea.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Normalization of Relations               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– North Korea and the United States undertook to respect each other’s sovereignty, exist peacefully together and take steps to normalize their relations.</li> <li>– North Korea and Japan agreed to take steps to normalize their relations.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• International Assistance to North Korea               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The six parties agreed to promote economic cooperation in the fields of energy, trade and investment.</li> <li>– China, Japan, ROK, Russia and the US stated their willingness to provide energy assistance to North Korea.</li> <li>– The ROK reaffirmed its proposal of July 12, 2005 concerning the provision of 2 million kilowatts of electric power to North Korea.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Vision for Peace and Stability on the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The directly related parties will negotiate a permanent peace regime on the Korean peninsula at an appropriate separate forum.</li> <li>– The six parties agreed to explore ways and means for promoting security cooperation in Northeast Asia.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Principles for Implementation               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The six parties agreed to take coordinated steps to implement the aforementioned consensus in a phased manner in line with the principle of “commitment for commitment, action for action.”</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
February 13 Agreement in 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action Plans for Initial Phase: Within first 60 days               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– North Korea will shut down and seal existing nuclear facilities, including the reprocessing facility, and invite back IAEA inspectors.</li> <li>– North Korea will discuss with other parties a list of all its nuclear programs.</li> <li>– North Korea and the US will start bilateral talks aimed at moving toward full diplomatic relations.</li> <li>– The US will begin the process of removing the designation of North Korea as a state–sponsor of terrorism and terminating the application of the Trading with the Enemy Act with respect to North Korea.</li> <li>– North Korea and Japan will start bilateral talks aimed at taking steps to normalize their relations.</li> <li>– The parties agreed to the provision of emergency energy assistance equivalent to 50,000 tons of heavy fuel oil to North Korea.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Establishment of Five Working Groups: First WG meetings within next 30 days               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, Normalization of North Korea–US Relations, Normalization of North Korea–Japan Relations, Economic and Energy Cooperation, Northeast Asia Peace and Security Mechanism</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Action Plans for the Next Phase: After completion of the initial phase               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– North Korea would make a complete declaration of all nuclear programs and disable all existing nuclear facilities.</li> <li>– The other parties would provide economic, energy and humanitarian assistance equivalent to 950,000 tons of heavy fuel oil to North Korea.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ministerial Meeting: After the completion of the initial phase</li> <li>• Peace Regime on the Korean Peninsula: The directly related parties will negotiate a permanent peace regime on the Korean peninsula at an appropriate separate forum.</li> </ul>
October 3 Agreement in 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Korea agreed to disable all existing nuclear facilities by the end of the year.</li> <li>• North Korea agreed to declare all its nuclear programs by the end of the year.</li> <li>• North Korea reaffirmed its commitment not to transfer nuclear materials, technology, or knowhow.</li> <li>• The United States would begin the process of removing North Korea from its list of state sponsors of terrorism.</li> <li>• The United States would advance the process of terminating the application of the Trading with the Enemy Act with respect to North Korea.</li> <li>• The United States and Japan would make sincere efforts to normalize their relations with North Korea.</li> <li>• The five parties would provide economic, energy and humanitarian assistance equivalent of one million tons of heavy fuel oil.</li> </ul>



North Korea reacted promptly to President Obama’s inauguration in January 2009, expressing expectations of achieving progress in the Six Party Talks and the improvement of bilateral relations under the new administration. Yet, the Obama administration made it clear that without the North’s complete dismantlement of nuclear weapons and clearing of all suspicions, a normalization of relations would be impossible. Then, North Korea took a tougher stance against the United States, claiming that the new administration’s North Korea policy was not different from the hostile policy of the former Bush administration.

It was against this backdrop that North Korea launched a long-range missile on April 5, 2009, leading the UN Security Council to adopt a presidential statement and to designate three North Korean enterprises for sanctions. In response, North Korea’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a statement, saying that the regime would no longer participate in the Six Party Talks and resume reprocessing of spent fuel rods.

Table 3–2 Major Progress in the Six Party Talks

Round	Period	Major Progress
First	Aug. 27–29, 2003	• Formation of a consensus on denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and principle of peaceful resolution through dialogue
Second	Feb. 25–28, 2004	• Reaffirmation of a consensus on denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and principle of peaceful resolution
Third	June 23–26, 2004	• Formation of a consensus on a need for initial actions for denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and phased process based on the principle of “commitment for commitment, action for action”
Fourth	Session 1 July 26–Aug. 7, 2005	• Adoption of the September 19 Joint Statement
	Session 2 Sept. 13–19, 2005	
Fifth	Session 1 Nov. 9–11, 2005	• Affirmation of willingness to fully implement the September 19 Joint Statement
	Session 2 Dec. 18–22, 2006	• Reaffirmation of willingness to fully implement the September 19 Joint Statement and agreement on taking coordinated steps in its implementation
	Session 3 Feb. 8–13, 2007	• Agreement on the initial–phase actions for the implementation of the September 19 Joint Statement (The February 13 Agreement)
Sixth	Session 1 Mar. 19–22, 2007	• Agreement on the second–phase actions for the implementation of the September 19 Joint Statement (The October 3 Agreement)
	Session 2 Sept. 27–30, 2007	

North Korea took further actions to conduct a second nuclear test on May 25, 2009. The test further isolated Pyongyang from the rest of the international community as the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1874,<sup>9</sup> which called for stronger sanctions. Nonetheless, the North continued pushing Washington by reinforcing its nuclear capabilities. The regime announced that it had completed reprocessing of nuclear fuel rods in 2009 and disclosed its uranium enrichment facilities in 2010.

In July and October 2011, the United States and North Korea held two rounds of high-level meetings to discuss various issues, including possible US food aid and a temporary suspension of North Korea's uranium enrichment program. At this time, the United States demanded that North Korea take initial steps such as measures to halt its uranium enrichment and allow the return of IAEA inspectors. North Korea, however, insisted that the Six Party Talks should resume without pre-conditions.

Upon Kim Jong-il's sudden death on December 17, 2011, the third round of the high-level talks was postponed from December to take place in Beijing on February 23-24. On February 29, Washington and Pyongyang simultaneously released the details of their agreement. According to the provisions, North Korea was required to take initial steps towards denuclearization by declaring a moratorium on its missile launch and uranium enrichment and enabling IAEA officials to return to Yongbyon facilities. In return, the United States agreed to provide 240,000 metric tons of food aid.

In spite of this agreement, however, North Korea fired a long-range missile on April 13, 2012. Responding with unprecedented promptness, the UN Security Council adopted a presidential statement that strongly condemned the missile launch. The statement consisted of nine points, which included the addition of new items and organizations that would fall under sanctions, as well as corresponding measures to counter further missile or nuclear provocations. Accordingly, the UN Security Council singled out three additional North

Korean companies for sanctions. Meanwhile, the foreign ministry in Pyongyang fully rejected the UNSC's presidential statement and announced that the regime would no longer be bound by the February 29 agreement. The United States, for its part, regarded the missile launch as a provocation in violation of North Korea's international obligations and in defiance of UN resolutions, and thus suspended food aid to North Korea.

North Korea went further by launching another long-range missile on December 12 the same year. Pyongyang's intention was to be recognized as a nuclear state in the international community while securing advantages to use at the negotiating table for a peace treaty. The UNSC responded with Resolution 2087,<sup>10</sup> warning that it could take "significant action" in case of additional missile or nuclear provocations.

Strongly opposing to Resolution 2087, North Korea conducted the third nuclear test on February 12, 2013 in spite of repeated warnings from the international community. On March 7, the UN Security Council then unanimously passed Resolution 2094,<sup>11</sup> calling for even harder sanctions. Thereafter, China took a mediating role between the United States and North Korea to resume the Six Party Talks. However, Washington and Pyongyang have failed to handle differences of opinions until now.

## 2 China–North Korea Relations

There have been ups and downs in China–North Korea relations over the sixty-something years since the regime in Pyongyang was established. Nonetheless, in political, economic and military areas, the two countries have generally maintained a relationship described as being "as close as teeth and lips." Even after the collapse of the socialist bloc, China has maintained its support for North Korea on the basis of ideology, which leaves it as the only ally the North can rely on among the few remaining socialist nations.

Amid its post-Cold War transformation, however, China adopted policies that place greater weight on economic benefits rather than ideology. This has led to substantial trials and tribulations in China-North Korea relations. In 1991, China abandoned a system of barter trading it had maintained with the socialist bloc, and started to demand payment in hard currency in its trade with North Korea. Furthermore, the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and South Korea in August 1992 became a catalyst for rapid deterioration in relations between Beijing and Pyongyang.

Though the two sides maintained all surface signs of an alliance, their relations remained slightly strained. After Kim Il-sung visited China in October 1991 and Chinese President Yang Shangkun made a trip to North Korea in 1992, the traditional exchange of state visits was suspended for eight years.

With the official inauguration of the Kim Jong-il regime in September 1998, North Korea expended great effort to improve its relations with China, because it needed Chinese assistance to overcome international isolation and economic hardship. Accordingly, Kim Jong-il made his first trip to Beijing in May 2000 and six more visits to China thereafter until the end of 2010, in order to find ways to expand cooperation between the two countries.

Reportedly, on his informal visit to China on January 15-20, 2001, Kim Jong-il reached an agreement with the Chinese leadership on enhancing their friendly and cooperative relationship. Having toured high-tech factories as well as banking and commercial facilities in the Fudong district of Shanghai during his visit, Kim expressed high praise for what China had achieved through its reform and open-door policy.

A subsequent visit by Chinese President Jiang Zemin to Pyongyang on September 3-5, 2001 provided an opportunity for the two countries to restore their relations, which had undergone strains after China's normalization of relations with South Korea. China pledged to provide rice, oil and fertilizer to North Korea, and the two sides agreed to advance their political relations by

strengthening ties between their communist parties.

Inaugurated in 2003, the Hu Jintao government stressed the importance of strategic cooperation with Pyongyang and affirmed its North Korea policy aimed at upholding tradition, building future-oriented endeavors, maintaining friendly ties, and expanding bilateral cooperation. Moreover, Hu Jintao's visit to North Korea in October 2005 raised the bilateral relations to a more practical level. During his meeting with Kim Jong-il, Hu reiterated the four principles for the improvement of China-North Korea relations. The four principles were upholding the tradition of exchange of high-level officials, expanding the area of cooperative exchanges, targeting joint development through economic and trade cooperation, and pursuing common interests through active cooperation between the two countries.

On January 10-18, 2006, Kim Jong-il again visited China, where he had meetings with Hu Jintao. During his visit, Kim toured businesses and laboratories in economic hubs such as Beijing, and Shenzhen in the Guangdong Province. Kim Jong-il was accompanied by a group of his top economic officials, including Prime Minister Pak Pong-ju, as well as WPK directors Pak Nam-ki and Ri Kwang-ho in charge of planning and finance, and science and education, respectively.

However, when North Korea conducted its first nuclear test in October 2006, China condemned Pyongyang more strongly than ever before, and did not object to the adoption of a UN resolution imposing sanctions against it. Even under these circumstances, Beijing maintained its position that the North Korean nuclear issue had to be resolved through dialogue and negotiation, and opposed full-scale economic sanctions that would have forced Pyongyang into a corner.

In celebration of the 60th anniversary of establishing diplomatic ties, China and North Korea designated 2009 as the "Year of Friendship," in the course of which visits of high-level officials were exchanged. On the Chinese side,

Director of the International Department of the Central Committee Wang Jiarui visited Pyongyang on January 22-24, and Premier Wen Jiabao met with Kim Jong-il on October 4-6. On the North Korean side, Premier Kim Yong-il visited Beijing on March 17-20 to attend the commemoration ceremony of the 60th anniversary. Amid such friendly exchanges, however, North Korea's second nuclear test in May 2009 led to renewed strain in the bilateral relations. Immediately after the test, China expressed its regret in an official statement and even joined UNSC sanctions against North Korea.

Kim Jong-il visited China four times between May 2010 and August 2011. Three summit meetings with Chinese counterparts during these visits demonstrated North Korea's strong desire to expand cooperation with China. The Chinese government announced that Kim Jong-il visited Dandong, Dalian, Beijing and Shenyang between May 3-7, 2010 and engaged in a meeting with President Hu Jintao. During the meeting, the two leaders reportedly agreed to reinforce "strategic communication" while continuing efforts to exchange senior officials and expand economic and trade cooperation. Kim also toured Jirin, Changchun and Harbin from August 26 to 30, 2010, and met again with Hu Jintao in Changchun. It is believed that at this Changchun summit, the two leaders continued the discussion begun at their May meeting in regard to the Six Party Talks, the Changjitu (Changchun-Jirin-Tumen) development project and other forms of economic cooperation and assistance. Kim Jong-il's two consecutive visits to China were unprecedented, and it is presumed that North Korea was seeking improved relations with Beijing as a way out of the isolation in which it found itself after the sinking of the South Korean corvette Cheonan.

In the bilateral summit held during Kim Jong-il's visit to China on May 20-27, 2011, the two sides agreed on preserving their friendship across generations. The two leaders also recognized both sides' efforts to implement the Changchun agreements and agreed on the need to seek denuclearization on the Korean peninsula, and the peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue through the Six Party Talks. According to a North Korean report, President

Hu had emphasized the importance of enhancing friendly relations between China and North Korea and indirectly expressed his support for North Korea's hereditary succession of power by stating that China "highly respects the spirit of the Conference of Party Representatives." It was presumed that Pyongyang sought cooperation with China to create a favorable economic environment for building a "strong and prosperous nation" by 2012, while on the political front, it endeavored to resume Six Party Talks and dialogue with the United States to ease international sanctions.

On December 19, 2011, two days after Kim Jong-il's death, the Chinese government made an official statement according to which China and North Korea would continue strengthening relations between their two parties, states and peoples, and actively contribute to peace and stability on the Korean peninsula and Northeast Asia. This reflected the need for closer cooperation between the two sides. China had an interest in maintaining stability in North Korean politics in the wake of Kim Jong-il's death and, for its part, North Korea strongly needed Chinese support to ensure stability under the newly-launched Kim Jong-un regime.

Under the Kim Jong-un regime, North Korea has maintained its efforts for closer relations with China according to the principle of "goodwill, friendship and cooperation between China and North Korea." In July 2012, a delegation of North Korea's Ministry of People's Security visited China and on July 30-August 3, Director of the International Department of the Central Committee Wang Jiarui and his delegation visited North Korea. In August 2012, The Director of the WPK Central Committee Jang Song-taek visited China to attend the third meeting of the China-North Korea Joint Steering Committee. The meeting produced basic agreements on joint development and management of the Rajin-Sonbong area and the islands of Hwanggumpyong and Wihwa as well as on investment into ports and industrial districts in the Rason Economic and Trade Zone. A letter of understanding on the establishment of the Hwanggumpyong Special Economic Zone Management Committee was also signed at the

meeting. In the first half of 2013, exchanges of visits by senior-level officials between the two countries continued to maintain their friendly and cooperative relations. These endeavors, however, have somewhat weakened in 2014.

Believing that it has an interest in maintaining the status quo on the Korean peninsula for economic growth and national security, China has taken a two-pronged approach toward North Korea. Beijing has condemned the North for its provocations and has expressed regret, but at the same time it has been reluctant in posing sanctions that might cause instability of the regime in Pyongyang. China supported the UN Security Council's presidential statement condemning North Korea's launch of a long-range missile in April 2012 on one hand, but on the other hand, it claimed that the United States and North Korea should abide by the provisions of the February 29 Agreement and resolve the nuclear issue through dialogue and negotiations.

The Xi Jinping leadership which took power in November 2012, a month before the North's missile launch in December, consented to the UNSC Resolution 2087 while urging all concerned parties to refrain from taking any actions that could escalate tension in the region in response to the North's nuclear threats. Still, Beijing sided with the US Security Council in passing a new resolution upon the North's third nuclear test in February 2013. Furthermore, at the ROK-China summit talks in July 2014, China agreed to maintain strategic cooperation and communication with South Korea to see substantial progress toward denuclearization.



### 3 Japan–North Korea Relations

It was in the mid-1950s when North Korea first engaged in economic exchanges with Japan through indirect trade. At that time both countries had touched on the matter of normalizing ties, but it was not until the early 1970s that they embarked on formal discussions to address the issue.



Against the backdrop of international detente in the 1970s, Japan and North Korea made greater efforts to improve bilateral relations, particularly driven by the expansion of friendship and cooperation between the United States and China, along with developments in inter-Korean dialogue.

Nonetheless, talks on normalizing relations did not commence until January 1991. They were held eleven times altogether until November 2000. Throughout these discussions, the two sides displayed sharp differences of opinion on various issues, including compensation for Japanese colonial rule, the inspection of North Korea's nuclear facilities, and the fate of Japanese abductees. Consequently, little progress was made despite numerous rounds of contact and talks.

However, Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's visit to Pyongyang on September 17, 2002 produced a breakthrough in the bilateral relations. During his visit, Prime Minister Koizumi had a summit meeting with Kim Jong-il, which was aimed at reaching comprehensive resolutions for major issues. The summit results were announced as the Pyongyang Declaration.<sup>12</sup>

On October 15, 2002, North Korea gave the five surviving Japanese abductees the authorization to visit their hometowns in Japan. The Japanese government, however, did not return them to North Korea, announcing on October 24 that they would remain permanently in Japan. It also demanded the repatriation of their families remaining in North Korea.

As agreed in the Pyongyang Declaration, Japan and North Korea resumed normalization talks for the first time in two years on October 29-30, 2002 in Kuala Lumpur. Japan insisted that North Korea abandon nuclear development and the two sides could not compromise their differences on abduction issues. The talks thus concluded without a date having been set for another meeting. On May 22, 2004, a year and eight months after their first summit, Koizumi and Kim Jong-il held a second meeting, where they agreed to resume the normalization talks that had remained suspended since October 2002. The

two leaders also agreed that five of eight surviving abduction victims would return to Japan accompanied by the Japanese prime minister, while Charles Jenkins' family would later be allowed to meet the American runaway soldier in a third country. They also confirmed that the investigation into missing Japanese citizens would start again from scratch. In return, Japan agreed to provide humanitarian assistance to North Korea and avoid passing any laws imposing sanctions against the North, as long as the regime complied with the Pyongyang Declaration.

Despite this progress, however, it proved difficult for Japan and North Korea to improve relations. In December 2004, North Korea handed over the remains of Japanese abductee Yokoda Megumi to Japan, but controversy over the authenticity of the remains grew, contributing to the rapid hardening of Japanese public opinion over North Korea. The regime in Pyongyang reacted strongly to this, insisting that the abduction issue had been completely resolved.

At the thirteenth normalization talks held in Beijing on February 4-8, 2006, Japan and North Korea were only able to confirm the two sides' differences. The talks quickly fell through, and the deadlock in Japan-North Korea relations continued thereafter.

North Korea conducted a missile launch on July 5, 2006, followed by a nuclear test on October 9 in the same year. Japan subsequently led calls for international sanctions against Pyongyang, imposing additional sanctions of its own by prohibiting the landing of chartered planes, the entry of North Korean government officials and crew, and the import of all North Korean products.

Nevertheless, the agreement reached in the Six Party Talks on February 13, 2007 produced a breakthrough for improved Japan-North Korea relations. According to Article 2, Clause 4 of the agreement which required Japan and North Korea to start bilateral talks on normalizing their relations, the two countries held a working-level meeting in Beijing on June 11-12, 2008, where issues of normalization were discussed. During this meeting, North

Korea modified its position on the issue of Japanese abductees and pledged to reinvestigate the matter. The North also expressed a willingness to cooperate on extraditing the Red Army Faction members who had hijacked Japan Airlines Flight 351 (referred to as Yodo-go in Japan) and their families. In return, Japan agreed to lift some of the sanctions it had imposed on North Korea, to allow North Korean ships to enter Japanese harbors when they are transporting humanitarian goods, and also to allow the exchange of people between Japan and North Korea.

However, the Aso cabinet, which came into office in September 2008, made a strong demand for the resolution of the abductee issue. Consequently, Japan-North Korea relations once again froze. When North Korea launched a long-range missile in April 2009 and conducted its second nuclear test in May of the same year, Japan actively participated in adopting the UNSCR 1874 on June 12, 2009. Japan also heightened pressure on Pyongyang by reinforcing bilateral sanctions, which included a blanket ban on exports to North Korea.

When a Democratic Party cabinet came to power in Japan in September 2009, North Korea expressed hopes of normalizing relations. Unfortunately for Pyongyang, Japan's new Prime Minister Hatoyama adhered to the old position that North Korea must first abandon its nuclear programs and resolve the abduction issues. North Korea, for its part, condemned Japan that Tokyo had no right to participate in the Six Party Talks because it had refused to join other countries in providing energy assistance to the North under the pretext of unresolved abductee issues. The two sides remained in confrontational mode even after Naoto Kan was inaugurated as Japan's new prime minister in June 2010. With the sinking of the South Korean navy ship Cheonan in March 2010 and the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island in the following November, Tokyo took an even tougher stance towards Pyongyang. Since the inauguration of the Noda cabinet in August 2011, Japan has stressed the importance of the US-Japan alliance as well as continued close cooperation with the United States and South Korea with regard to dialogue between the two Koreas, talks between the

United States and North Korea, and the Six Party Talks.

Talks between Japan and North Korea were resumed in Beijing on August 9, 2012 after being stalled for four years following the discussion on the abduction issue in August 2008. During the renewed talks between the two countries' Red Cross societies, the two sides discussed the return of the remains of the Japanese in North Korea. Subsequently, director-level preliminary talks were held on August 29, followed by Director General-level talks on November 15-16 in Ulan Bator. However, little progress was made during the two rounds of talks as North Korea adhered to its old position on the abduction issue.

Since the Abe cabinet came to power in 2012 in Japan, North Korea has expanded efforts to improve relations with Tokyo. The two sides discussed the abduction issue when Japanese Cabinet Secretariat Advisor Isao Iijima visited Pyongyang in May 2013. A series of Director General-level talks were subsequently held in March, May and July 2014. At the second round of talks held on May 26-28 in Sweden, North Korea and Japan agreed to establish a special investigation committee to deal with a complete reinvestigation into Japanese abductees, including missing citizens and the remains of Japanese citizens in North Korea. For its part, Japan promised to lift such sanctions as the ban on exchanges of people between the two countries, ceiling on the amount of remittances and physical shipments of funds from Japan to North Korea, and prohibition on North Korean ships from entering Japanese harbors as long as they were transporting humanitarian goods, upon beginning the reinvestigation. On July 4, on the North's side, the Special Investigation Committee was officially launched, initiating its investigative activities and, on the same day, Japan officially lifted sanctions as agreed upon previously by the two countries.

Until the end of the Cold War, a friendly alliance was maintained between the Soviet Union and North Korea. Moscow backed the establishment of the regime in Pyongyang in the spirit of ideological unity. After the Korean War, the USSR helped North Korea's postwar reconstruction and armament, while keeping a check on Beijing–Pyongyang relations. With the signing of the Soviet–North Korean Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance in July 1961, the Soviet–North Korean Treaty of Military Assistance in May 1965, and the treaty on technology and economic assistance in June, 1966, North Korea received military and economic assistance from the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, during the era of detente in the 1970s, Kim Il-sung claimed to be pursuing an independent path, siding with neither Beijing nor Moscow.

Since the end of the Cold War, Moscow has exercised a balanced diplomacy on the peninsula, leaving Pyongyang with little choice but to adjust its relations with Moscow. When the Soviet Union fell in December 1991 and a Commonwealth of Independent States comprising eleven republics was launched, North Korea quickly established diplomatic relations with each and every republic.

The first meeting of the Russian–North Korean Commission for Trade, Economy and Science Cooperation (the so-called Russian–North Korean joint economic committee) was held in April 1996 in Pyongyang, where the two sides eventually signed a treaty on investment protection. The aim was to increase Russia's investment in the Rajin–Sonbong area and to expand bilateral trade through the supply of crude oil and the exchange of metalworking products.

As economic cooperation between the two countries expanded, political relations also gradually recovered. The first round of talks on a new security treaty began on January 21, 1997. Both sides agreed to leave out a clause on automatic military intervention, which had been a key issue in negotiations,

as well as a clause expressing Russia's support for Pyongyang's unification formula, known as the Koryo Confederation. The two sides initialed the Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighborly Relations and Cooperation on March 17, 1999 in Pyongyang, and this was officially signed on February 9, 2000.

The new security treaty transformed bilateral ties between Russia and North Korea from an ideologically-based political and military alliance to an economic partnership. After the signing of this treaty, Russian President Vladimir Putin became the highest ranking Russian or Soviet Union leader to visit North Korea in July, 2000, where he laid the foundation for strengthening cooperation between the two countries. Kim Jong-il and Putin took part in one-on-one and expanded summit meetings, finally signing a joint declaration regarding mutual cooperation and North Korea's missile launch.<sup>13</sup>

Returning Putin's visit, Kim Jong-il made an official trip to Russia from July 26 to August 18, 2001. The exchange of state visits brought bilateral relations back on track, enabling the two countries to expand cooperation in a full range of areas. The Moscow Declaration, jointly announced by the two heads of state on August 4, 2001, included agreements on the restoration of bilateral cooperation, the connection of the Trans-Siberian Railway with the inter-Korean rail line, consultation regarding policy toward the United States, and sharing the same views on situations on the Korean peninsula.

Kim Jong-il visited Russia once again on August 20-24, 2002. A third summit meeting was held with President Putin in Vladivostok, where the two agreed to make efforts to promote peace and stability on the Korean peninsula. They also concurred on expanding economic cooperation between Russia and North Korea, including the issue of linking the inter-Korean rail line with the Trans-Siberian railway.

In March 2007, the fourth Russian-North Korean joint economic committee meeting was held, the first such meeting in six years. In October of the same year, Vice-Ministerial talks between the two countries also took place for

the first time in four years to discuss practical ways to expand economic cooperation. During the Six Party Talks, Russia accommodated North Korean positions to a certain extent when making agreements on the initial implementation actions for the September 19 joint statement on February 13, 2007, as well as on second-phase implementation actions for the joint statement on October 3, 2007. Evidently, Russia needed to counterbalance the United States and Japan by supporting Pyongyang, while the Kim Jong-il regime needed Russia in order to help preserve its rule.

Close cooperation between Russia and North Korea continued. In Moscow in April 2008, the two countries signed an agreement on modernizing railways between Rajin and the Tumen River along with Rajin port. Moreover, Russia signed a contract to lease the Rajin-Tumen River railway in early August in Pyongyang. Celebrating the 60th anniversary of their bilateral relations, the two countries held a ground breaking ceremony on the Rajin-Hassan railway and Rajin port on October 4.

The Russian Vice Foreign Minister's visit to Pyongyang to attend a joint economic committee meeting led to further bilateral exchanges in 2009. Nonetheless, Russia openly condemned North Korea after its second nuclear test on May 25, and also supported the adoption of UNSC sanctions against it. Though the bilateral relations suffered a certain setback in 2010, Kim Jong-il paid a visit to Russia on August 20-25, 2011, upon being invited by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev. The two leaders held a summit meeting at an army base in Ulan-Ude, where they agreed on the resumption of the Six Party Talks, the expansion of economic cooperation, and the construction of a natural gas pipeline across Russia and the two Koreas. In addition, Russia's Federal Air Transport Agency delegation and its North Korean counterpart reached an agreement on bilateral cooperation for air search and rescue in Pyongyang on December 13, 2011.

The Kim Jong-un regime has stressed the importance of the bilateral relations,

too. In September 2012, Pyongyang and Moscow agreed to write off 90 percent of the debt amounting to 11 billion US dollars North Korea owed to Russia due to the loans it had received from the USSR.<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile, Russia supported the adoption of UNSC sanctions against the North after the third nuclear test in February 2013. Nevertheless, the bilateral relations have remained intact as highlighted by the North's First Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye-gwan's visit to Russia in July 2013 and President of the SPA Presidium Kim Yong-nam's visit to Russia in February 2014, during which times the two countries discussed matters concerning development of their friendly relations and issues of mutual interest.



Modernizing railways between Rajin, North Korea and Hassan, Russia

A 54-kilometer cross-border railway line was opened on September 22, 2013, offering a direct link between Rajin port in the North's Rason Special Economic Zone and Hassan in the Russian Far East Primorsky Krai. The two countries remain committed to promoting economic cooperation in other areas, as well. In May 2014, President Putin ratified the agreement to write off North Korea's debt and, in June, the two sides concurred on paying in Russian rubles in bilateral trade at their joint economic committee meeting.

Through trilateral cooperation projects such as the Russia-North Korea-South Korea gas pipeline construction, Russia stands to gain practical benefits in its endeavor to develop the Russian Far East. Moscow also seeks to assume the role of mediator between the two Koreas. With regard to the North Korean nuclear problem, Russia aims at enhancing its status by mediating between the United States and China, at the same time checking their dominance in the region. Also, it is believed to be striving to exert its influence on North Korea and



create a new political and economic order that would serve its own interests in Northeast Asia.

## **5** Relations with the EU and Other Nations

### (1) EU–North Korea Relations

Just before the 54th session of the UN General Assembly in September 1999, North Korea proposed to the United Kingdom and most other members of the European Union a foreign ministers' meeting, the first such proposal it had ever made, in an apparent hope of expanding its relations with European countries. On January 4, 2000, North Korea established full diplomatic ties with Italy, a member of both the European Union and the G7, thereby securing a foothold from which to approach other West European countries. In the following September, Pyongyang proposed establishing diplomatic ties with seven other EU member states with which it had until then not had any diplomatic relations with.

The EU member states responded positively to North Korea's initiatives. Following the third Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in October 2000 in Seoul, the United Kingdom, Germany and Spain expressed their desire to establish diplomatic ties with Pyongyang, accelerating bilateral negotiations on the process. As many member states had at the ASEM expressed their willingness to form bilateral ties with North Korea, an EU delegation headed by Swedish Prime Minister Goran Persson, then chairman of the EU, visited Pyongyang on May 2, 2001. Prime Minister Persson thus became the first head of state from a Western country to meet with Kim Jong-il. During this meeting, Persson received Kim Jong-il's confirmation of a moratorium on missile launches and discussed with him North Korea's human rights conditions. The two leaders agreed that North Korea would send an economic delegation to Europe. On May 14, immediately after Persson's return from the trip, the

European Commission announced its decision to establish diplomatic ties with Pyongyang. At the same time, North Korea also made efforts to improve its relations with individual European states. North Korea established diplomatic relations with the United Kingdom on December 12, 2000, and Germany on March 1, 2001. By 2013, it had established ties with all 26 members of the European Union except for France and Estonia.

Pyongyang also strove to expand economic relations with European nations. A North Korean economic delegation headed by Minister of Trade Ri Kwang-kun visited Belgium, Italy, Sweden and the United Kingdom in March 2002 to study the capitalist economic system. Furthermore, in December 2002, the North decided to replace the means of foreign payment from the US dollar to the euro.<sup>15</sup>

What is notable about the EU-North Korean relations is that the EU and the North have held joint workshops on economic reform since 2004. These workshops were cosponsored by Germany's Friedrich Naumann Foundation, the EU delegation in Seoul and North Korea's foreign ministry and were attended by a number of economists and diplomats from EU member states. The first one was held in August 2004 to explore ways to develop EU-North Korean economic cooperation and to achieve economic modernization of North Korea. The second workshop, which took place in Pyongyang in October 2005, dealt with topics such as the state's role in economic management, strategies for attracting foreign investment, and restructuring of state enterprises and agriculture. At the third one held in Pyongyang two years later, discussions were focused on advancing the agricultural and light industries, expanding trade and investment, and building a financial settlement system.

The European Union has continued political dialogue with North Korea and addressed human rights issues as one of the key agendas. However, as there was no sign of improvement on the North Korean side, the EU has since 2003 repeatedly introduced resolutions on North Korean human rights to the UN

Human Rights Commission. The Commission adopted a series of resolutions condemning human rights abuse in North Korea, and urged its government to make efforts to improve the situation. Since 2005, renewed efforts have been made to adopt a North Korean human rights resolution in the UN General Assembly every year. The European Union has taken the initiative to introduce the resolutions in the General Assembly. Although they are not legally binding, they undoubtedly put pressure on North Korea, because they provide legal grounds for ongoing measures regarding the issue of human rights.

Political dialogue between the European Union and North Korea was severed when a human rights resolution introduced by the EU was adopted by the United Nations in November 2005. Talks did not resume until 2007, when certain progress was made in the third session of the fifth round of the Six Party Talks.

However, North Korea's long-range missile launch in April 2009 and its second nuclear test in May quickly led to another freeze in relations. Following the sinking of the South Korean navy ship Cheonan in March 2010, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the situation on the Korean peninsula on June 17.

Thereafter, the SPA Chairman Choe Tae-bok visited the United Kingdom in March 2011 and parliamentarians of EU member states and EU Parliament delegations made return visits to Pyongyang. In spite of these exchanges, however, EU-North Korean relations have remained strained until the present day.

## (2) Relations with Other Nations

North Korea has strived to develop relations with third world countries along with its relations with the European Union. At the third WPK Congress held in 1956, North Korea set forth a principle of its foreign policy to expand its diplomatic relations beyond China, the Soviet Union and other socialist

countries to non-aligned states in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America. These efforts continued throughout the 1960s and well into the 1970s.

In the 1980s, North Korea presented “independence, friendship and peace” as its basic principles of foreign policy while making all-out efforts to develop relations not only with Western capitalist countries but with other states. The collapse of the Soviet Union along with European socialist states and the subsequent shift of the world’s power to the United States in the early-1990s left the North with no choice but to resort to non-aligned states for regime survival. Moreover, it needed the backing of other countries to take advantage over South Korea in its diplomatic offensive towards the United Nations

North Korea’s drive to develop relations with non-aligned states was intended to create a “common front against colonialism and the United States” while rallying support for its own unification formula and to take advantage of non-aligned states which outnumbered the rest at the United Nations. After 2000, Pyongyang further expanded its relations with such countries in order to hold the United States responsible for the deadlocked six-country talks, insisting that its nuclear development was for self-defense.

From 2001 to 2005, North Korea’s diplomatic efforts towards non-align states were concentrated on making visits to such countries, including Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Libya and Syria.

Diplomatic activities between North Korea and non-aligned states subdued for some time after the North’s missile launch and nuclear test in 2006. However, after an agreement to deal with the North’s nuclear issue was reached on February 13, 2007, they rebounded to the previous level. North Korea’s diplomatic visits to Southeast Asia, Africa and Latin America represented more than half its total cross-border visits in the first half of 2007. Also, Singaporean Foreign Minister and Prime Minister of Laos paid visits to Pyongyang in 2008 and North Korean delegates visited Singapore, Iran and other Asian and Middle East countries in 2008.

Although the UN Security Council passed sanctions against the North for its missile launch and second nuclear test in 2009, creating an unfavorable external environment for Pyongyang, the North's diplomatic approach toward non-aligned states did not weaken. In 2010, North Korea received delegates from Gabon, Gambia and Senegal in Africa and from Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar and Indonesia in Southeast Asia. This was followed in 2011-2012 by delegates from Mongolia, Vietnam, Laos and Indonesia as well as the North's visits to Mongolia, Tanzania, Namibia and Mozambique.

Such exchanges of visit have continued thereafter. Upon another UNSC resolution condemning its third nuclear test in February 2013, Pyongyang doubled its efforts to draw support from non-aligned states. Chief of the General Staff Kim Kyok-sik visited Cuba in June 2013, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Pak Ui-chun and his delegates visited the 20th ASEAN Regional Forum to strengthen friendships with countries with which North Korea had established relations. Moreover, in August of the same year, President of the SPA Presidium Kim Yong-nam attended the inauguration ceremony of Iranian President-elect Hassan Rowhani while Pak Ui-chun visited Guinea, Benin, DR Congo and Cameroon to maintain Pyongyang's cooperative relations with those countries. In September, North Korea and Mongolia signed a protocol on consultation on economy, trade, science and technology during the visit by Mongolia's economy and trade delegation to Pyongyang and, in the following month, Mongolian President Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj paid a visit to the North at the invitation of Kim Yong-nam. The Mongolian president left the North without a meeting with Kim Jong-un.

The following year began with a visit of the North's Foreign Ministry delegation to Iran in February. This was followed by visits by economic delegations to Nigeria and several other African states in April and by Foreign Minister Ri Su-yong and his delegates to eight Middle East and African states in May. North Korea also received a Mongolian delegation in March. All of these demonstrate that Pyongyang still has interest in maintaining friendly relations with non-aligned states.

As of 2012, North Korea established relations with a total of 162 countries as shown in Table 3-3.

Table 3–3 Diplomatic Ties (as of Dec. 2012)

Region	No. of Countries with Ties		No. of Countries with Ties with Both Koreas	No. of Countries with Ties with Only	
	South Korea	North Korea		South Korea	North Korea
Asia	36	26	26	10	0
Americas	34	24	23	11	1(Cuba)
Europe	53	49	48	5	1(Macedonia)
Middle East	20	17	16	4	1(Syria)
Africa	46	46	46	0	0
Total	189	162	159	30	3

Note: Out of 191 United Nations member states, excluding both Koreas, South Korea established diplomatic ties with 188 countries and the Vatican City State, a non-UN member. Relations with Macedonia, Syria, Kosovo and Cuba, have not been established.

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013 Diplomatic White Paper, p. 358.

# Endnotes

- 1 Brinkmanship is a set of tactics of posing threats or creating a sense of crisis to achieve maximum possible outcomes. The tactics were first used by the Soviet Union and the United States during the Cold War era. Today, it is often used to describe North Korea's provocations, including nuclear tests and missile launches as well as its attitude at negotiations.
- 2 Collection of Major Documents from the Third WPK Congress. Pyongyang: WPK Publications, 1956, p. 358.
- 3 "Let us Advocate the Spirit of Independence," Rodong Sinmun, August 12, 1966.
- 4 Chosun Central Yearbook, 1972, pp.269-270
- 5 The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, also referred to as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, is an international treaty that prohibits non-nuclear weapon states from possessing nuclear weapons or nuclear states from transferring these weapons to non-nuclear states. The treaty was signed in July 1968 and entered into force in March 1970. South Korea acceded to the treaty in 1975 and North Korea, in 1985. Pyongyang announced its intention to withdraw from the NPT in March 1993, suspended this decision in following June, and once again declared plans to withdraw from the treaty in January 2003.
- 6 The Agreed Framework between the United States and North Korea was adopted in October 1994, after the North had declared its intent to withdraw from the NPT in March 1993. The main components of the agreement stated that North Korea would comply with the IAEA safeguards agreement, accept ad hoc IAEA inspections, seal the spent fuel rods extracted from the 5MWe reactor, and transfer them to a third country. Meanwhile, the provisions stipulated that the United States would provide light water reactor power plants and 500,000 tons of heavy oil per year until the completion of the first LWR power unit. This agreement eventually fell apart when North Korea violated its signatory obligation and pursued alternative nuclear programs using enriched uranium in October 2002.
- 7 The Proliferation Security Initiative is an international cooperative regime launched in May 2003 to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The participating member states share relevant information to prevent proliferation and carry out joint exercises when necessary. South Korea joined the PSI on May 26, 2009.
- 8 UN Security Council Resolution 1718 was adopted unanimously by the UN Security Council on October 14, 2006. In compliance with the resolution, the

international community imposed various forms of sanctions on North Korea, including control over materials—conventional arms, WMD-related materials, and luxury goods—financial assets, entry and exit, and inspection of cargoes.

- 9 UN Security Council Resolution 1874 was adopted unanimously by the UNSC on June 12, 2009 in response to North Korea's second nuclear test on May 25. On top of sanctions imposed under resolution 1718, the new resolution imposed strong additional measures against North Korea. These include reinforcing cargo inspection at sea, intensified financial and banking control, and extended arms embargo.
- 10 UN Security Council Resolution 2087 was adopted unanimously by the UNSC on January 22, 2013 in response to North Korea's missile launch on December 12, 2012. In addition to sanctions imposed under resolution 1718 and 1874, resolution 2087 called for expansion of the target of sanctions, tighter control on North Korea's banking activities, and strengthening of restrictions on exports to the country.
- 11 UN Security Council 2094 was adopted unanimously by the UNSC on March 7, 2013 in response to North Korea's third nuclear test on February 12, 2013. The scope of sanctions of the new resolution was expanded to include five obligatory clauses and exports control, regulation on aircrafts and vessels, financial pressure, and so forth. Under Article 41 Chapter 7 of the United Nations Charter which stipulates non-military actions, the Security Council reaffirmed its no tolerance principle towards North Korean nuclear development, strengthened sanctions to force the North to give up its nuclear and ballistic missile programs completely, and introduced additional measures. The latest resolution was considered as posing the strongest sanctions against North Korea.
- 12 In the Pyongyang Declaration between North Korea and Japan, Japan expressed self reflection and an apology in regards to colonial rule, and agreed to provide North Korea with economic cooperation, including grant aids and humanitarian assistance. North Korea, on the other hand, apologized for the abduction of Japanese citizens and promised that such a thing would not recur. The North also agreed to abide by international agreements, and extended a moratorium on missile launching until after 2003.
- 13 The key points of the Russian-North Korean joint declaration were as follows. The two parties shall affirm the spirits of the new treaty aimed at expanding mutual cooperation and collaboration; contact each other without delay in case either party is invaded or its security is threatened; respect the purpose and principles of the UN Charter and oppose the use of force or threats that



threatens the Charter; uphold the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty; emphasize the peaceful nature of North Korea's missile program; oppose the construction of a theatrical missile defense system in the Asia-Pacific region; expand global economic cooperation; actively link their trade, economy, science and technology.

- 14 On September 18, 2012, the Korean Central News Agency reported, "In Moscow on the 17th, the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the federal government of Russia signed an agreement to adjust the amount of debt the DPRK owes the Russian Federation in regards to the loans received during the USSR era."
- 15 On December 2, 2012, the Voice of Russia reported, "North Korea's Foreign Trade Bank has declared that foreign citizens working in North Korea have to move their dollar accounts and exchange all cash in US dollars into other foreign currencies within next few days." According to the report, "all banks in North Korea would switch dollar accounts into euro accounts."



# IV

## Military Strategy and Capacity

**Section 1.** Characteristics and Functions

**Section 2.** Military Policy and Strategy

**Section 3.** Structure and Institutions

**Section 4.** Military Capacity

**Section 5.** Military Relations and Provocations against the South

## Key Points

### 01

North Korea's military takes on an internal role as the armed forces of the WPK, revolution and the *suryŏng*, and is committed to guarding the regime and defending its ruler. On the external front, it is the military means that enables the WPK and *suryŏng* to work towards achieving the political objectives of independence and the communization of the Korean peninsula.

### 02

North Korea's claim to build a strong and prosperous nation has been accompanied by efforts to develop strategic weapons such as nuclear warheads and ballistic missiles as well as reinforce its capability to stage special warfare, including Special Forces Units and electronic attacks. North Korea's development of nuclear and other strategic weapons underpin its extreme tactics of brinkmanship, and achieving superiority in military prowess has been exploited to extort concessions from the international community. This has posed significant threat to peace in Northeast Asia and the world at large.

### 03

To revive its weak economy, North Korea has long mobilized its troops in the construction of buildings, bridges, harbors and roads in addition to consignment management and other agricultural projects. The North Korean military also secures operating funds by means of business activities, including panning for gold and projects that earn foreign currency. Consequently, some sectors of the armed forces have been transformed as viable economic units for the survival of the military.

### 04

North Korea has the world's largest military compared to the size of its population, counting its reserve forces. With a quantitative advantage in conventional forces, the North retains the capacity to stage a limited war that involves terrorist methods or surprise attacks against the South to assure the quick capture of key regions, as well as military strategies that would achieve occupation of the entire Southern region before reinforcement arrives.

## Section 1. Characteristics and Functions

### 1 Establishment of the KPA

Immediately after Korea was liberated from Japan in August 1945, the Soviet Union stationed its troops on the Korean peninsula and worked to establish North Korean military forces as one of the three pending tasks, along with the establishment of a communist party and nation building in the Northern region. First of all, the Soviet's North Korea Command had Kim Il-sung create a communist party as a device to carry out its political agendas. Then it announced on October 12, 1945 a statement that demanded to “disband all armed forces in the Northern region, present all weapons, munitions, and war supplies to the Military Police Commander, allow city and provincial party committee members to form security guards which consist of members chosen from the general masses with the number being determined at consultations with the Soviet Command in order to maintain public order.”<sup>1</sup>

According to the statement, the Self-defense Guards and the Police Guards, created right after the national liberation by the Nationalists and the Communists, respectively, to bring security to the Northern region, were dissolved. On October 21, the Security Guards was established mainly based on the Red Guards which consisted of more than 200 Korean soldiers who had previously served as Soviet troops. At the same time, Pyongyang Institute (November 1945), the Security Cadre Academy (June 1946), and other military

academies were opened to train political and non-political officers.

As the size of the Security Guards grew, the Security Cadre Training Battalion was established in Pyongyang to guide local security guards in an integrated manner on August 15, 1946, which was renamed the General Command of the Korean People's Collective Forces in May 1947. Meanwhile, the National Security Bureau, which preceded the Ministry of People's Armed Forces, was created within the People's Committee on February 4, 1948. On February 8, seven months before the establishment of the Northern regime, the People's Collective Forces was renamed the Korean People's Army (KPA) and the establishment of regular forces was declared. North Korea moved the day of establishment of the KPA to the day when the anti-Japanese guerrilla unit was created, which was April 25, 1932.

North Korea's Navy came into existence as the Command of the Maritime Security Guards established in Wonsan in June 5, 1946—the East Sea Maritime Security Guards was established in Wonsan and the West Sea Maritime Security Guards, in Nampo. The Command was expanded and relocated to Pyongyang in August 1946 and renamed the Coast Guards in December of the same year. In June of the following year, the Coast Guards Cadre Academy was founded in Wonsan, which later became the Navy Academy. On August 20, 1949, the Ministry of National Security took direct guidance and command of the Coast Guards from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and launched the North's first regular Navy force by establishing the Torpedo Corps on August 28. North Korea had designated August 28 as the Day of the Navy under the Supreme People's Assembly (SPA) Presidium order on June 3, 1972 and henceforth had celebrated that day until 1992 before moving it to June 5 in 1993 when the Maritime Security Guards was established.

Sinuiju Aviation Academy which was established as a civilian organization on October 25, 1945, was incorporated into the Pyongyang Institute as an air squadron on June 7, 1946, the first step to form an air force in the Northern region. On August 20, 1947, some 300 pilots from the former Sinuiju Aviation

Academy who had completed studies in the Soviet Union were assigned to the air squadron, which was later expanded to an air force battalion upon the establishment of the KPA on February 8, 1948, signifying the beginning of North Korea's regular air force. Accordingly, the North designated the day of establishment of the air squadron on August 20, 1947 as the Day of the Air Force under the SPA Presidium order on May 20, 1972. However, since 2012, the North has been celebrating Aviation Day on November 29 instead of the Day of the Air Force to commemorate the date when Kim Il-sung delivered a speech in 1945, titled "Let us establish an aviation academy of new Chosun."

## 2 Nature and Status

The preamble revision of the WPK rules in September 2010 stipulates, "the pressing objective of the Workers' Party of Korea is to build a strong and prosperous socialist nation in the northern half of the peninsula, and achieve the tasks of national liberation and a democratic revolution on a nationwide scale. Meanwhile, the ultimate objective is to place all of society under the banner of *juche* ideology and fully realize the independence of the general masses."

In accordance with this, the internal role of the KPA is to become the armed forces of the Worker's Party of Korea (WPK), the revolution and the *suryŏng*, and is committed to defending its ruler. On the external front, the KPA serves to realize political objectives of both the WPK and *suryŏng*, which is to achieve "unification of the Korean peninsula under communism," by means of "independence" and "revolution and liberalization of the South."

Constitution in North Korea states that "the mission of the Republic's armed forces is to carry out the political objectives of the military-first policy, thereby defending the leadership of the revolution and safeguarding the interest of the working masses, in addition to protecting from foreign invasion the socialist

system, accomplishments of the socialist revolution, freedom, independence and peace on the fatherland.”

As the constitution stipulates that the key mission of the North Korean army is to defend the leadership of the socialist revolution, the supreme leader of North Korea considers the military as the only means to ensure his own survival and to sustain the regime and, based on this belief, pays special attention and gives privileges to the military to gain its support and obedience.

With the collapse of the East European communist bloc, the status of the KPA was further consolidated under the ideological banner of the military-first policy. As described by the party newspaper *Rodong Sinmun*, the military-first policy is “a unique mode of politics that dedicates maximum effort to reinforcing the KPA, in which military power becomes the basis that propels general tasks in the vanguard of the socialist revolution and construction of a socialist nation (October 9, 1998).” As such, this political mode gives top priority to reinforcing the armed forces and places the military at the center of all state affairs. Subsequent to Kim Jong-il’s death, Kim Jong-un was equated with his late father, along with being idolized as the military figurehead, eternal center of national unity, and supreme leader. This presentation of the young ruler further underscored the importance of establishing his sole leadership.

### Functions and Characteristics

North Korea created the KPA in February 1948, seven months before than the establishment of the regime in September. The North continues to give the highest priority to the KPA, addressing it as the revolutionary armed forces of the *suryōng* and the basis to carry out unification of the peninsula through revolution. This indicates that the regime, which maintains its power base in the military, will not abandon its desire to take over by force and unify the Korean peninsula under communism.



The Four-point Military Guideline is the bedrock of North Korea’s military policy that promotes such objectives. The North’s constitution states that “on the basis of politically and ideologically arming the military and populace, the state shall realize a self-defensive military force built on the following objectives: a cadre-based army, modernization of the entire forces, militarization of the populace, and fortification of the entire country.”

**Table 4–1 Four–point Military Guideline**

Military Guideline	Policy Objectives
Transformation of the entire forces into a cadre army	To train all soldiers politically, ideologically and technically, and enable them to handle upgrade tasks in case of emergency
Modernization of all forces	To equip the troops with modern arms and combat skills, to train them to handle advanced weapons competently, and to help them learn modern military science and skills
Armament of the entire population	To arm the entire working class, including workers and peasants, politically and ideologically along with the People’s Army
Fortification of the entire country	To construct extensive defense facilities across the country to turn it into an impenetrable fortress

Source: Korea Institute for National Unification, North Korea Overview 2009, p. 89.

In 1992, a constitutional revision in North Korea gave the Chairman of the National Defense Commission (NDC) the right to command and control all military forces. Further revisions in 1998 reinforced the NDC’s role, granting rights to create and abolish central organs of national defense, and to supervise all defense projects. The aggregate military power referred to in North Korea’s constitution encompasses 1.19 million regular troops and 7.7 million reserve troops, which includes 600,000 Reserve Military Training Units (RMTU), 5.7 million Worker-Peasant Red Army (WPRA), 1 million Red Youth Guards (RYG), and 400,000 para-military troops (i.e. Military Security Command, Ministry of People’s Security, and the Speed Battle Youth Shock Brigades). Overall management of the national defense implies the positional advantage of having control and command over all areas of political, military and economic capabilities.

In September 2010, the Conference of Party Representatives convened to revise the preamble of the WPK rules, which established the military-first policy as the basic political mode of socialism and stipulated that the state shall, under the banner of the military-first policy, induce socialist revolution and realize the construction of a socialist state. The same conference elected Kim Jong-un as Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), thus validating the legitimacy and basis for his control over the military. Shortly after the death of Kim Jong-il on October 8, 2011, a meeting of the Political Bureau was held on December 30 of the same year at which Kim Jong-un was elected Supreme Commander of the KPA, ostensibly to honor his father's dying wishes. Other titles soon followed. He was elected as First Secretary of the WPK, CMC Chairman at the fourth Conference of Party Representatives held on April 11, 2012 and First Chairman of the NDC at the SPA meeting held on April 13, 2012.

As shown above, the armed forces in North Korea are critical in achieving socialist revolution and national liberation, and play a key role in sustaining the regime and system. In his masterpiece *On War*, Carl von Clausewitz said, "the relation between military and diplomatic power is similar to that of cash and check," and it just so happens that North Korea has concentrated on maintaining foreign relations and growing its influence based on the security of its military capabilities.



North Korea soldiers at work

Recently, the North is mobilizing a large portion of its military to achieve economic development and maintain public order. These troops were deployed to various sites of economic construction such as large buildings, cultural centers, highways, power plants, canals, ranches and fish farms, as well as to areas of farming, fishing and inspection.

This militarization of the economy has become a vicious cycle for the regime, however, as it finds it difficult to break free from the system of having a military presence in the national economy. The concept of a militarized economy was first introduced by Stalin upon his denouncement of capitalism.

The militarization of part of the economy has had several effects on the national economy. First, the populace has had to bear more taxes to meet military expenditures. Second, increased economic dependence on the military causes distortions in the allocation of human and material resources, causing cutbacks in resource supplies needed for civilian purposes. Third, a majority of finished goods and raw materials have to be channeled to support non-productive military armament. Fourth, it hampers rational investment and constructions of new civilian facilities. Fifth, instilling conformity to military discipline and ethos in all aspects of the economy impedes the development of liberal and cooperative social relations and order.

In China, which had also experienced this phenomenon, the government raised the proportion of goods for civilian purposes produced at its munitions factories from 8.1 percent in 1979 to 62 percent in 1990.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, a militarized economy has become a typical phenomenon in North Korea.

## Section 2. Military Policy and Strategy

### 1 Basic Objective

The basic objective of North Korea's military policy is to achieve self-reliant national defense while attaining military strength superior to that of the South's and maintaining readiness for general mobilization at war at the front and rear. Article 60 of the North Korean constitution stipulates, "the country arms its troops and populace politically and ideologically and, based on this, carries out self-defensive military objectives under the guideline of transformation of the entire forces into a cadre army, modernization of the entire forces, armament of the entire population and fortification of the entire country."

Kim Il-sung defined self-reliant national defense as "a universal guiding instruction that the party and state of the working class which secured dominant power shall uphold in national defense construction." He emphasized military self-reliance by saying, "The essence of self-reliance is to inspire revolutionary spirits which enable one to achieve self-reliance with one's own efforts, thereby defending the country with armed revolution from within and to take the initiative in resolving all military issues according to the actual reality of the country with one's own forces."<sup>3</sup> North Korea, which had resorted to China and the Soviet Union, began to put such emphasis on the principle of self-reliance in the construction of military power due to changes in the international political situations such as the Cuban missile crisis and the

ideological conflicts between China and the Soviet Union. At the fifth plenary session of the fourth WPK Central Committee in December 1962, the North emphasized, “We need to strengthen military power first and foremost even if it partially limits the development of the people’s economy,” to show a firm commitment to the principle of national self-defense.<sup>4</sup>

The four-point military guideline—transformation of the entire forces into a cadre army, modernization of the entire forces, armament of the entire population and fortification of the entire country—was formulated as a concrete action plan to implement the national self-defense principle. The North has vigorously pushed ahead with the guideline since 1963.

At the fifth Party Congress in November 1970, Kim Il-sung assessed the progress in implementing the guideline, saying “By pushing for the four-point military guideline, the entire population is now capable of firing weapons, wearing one each. We have built impenetrable fortresses in all areas and fortified important production facilities. Self-sustainable industrial bases of national defense have been established, which produce modernized weapons and combat gear and materials needed for national security without external assistance.”<sup>5</sup> The four-point guideline implies that the North’s military policy is basically aimed at achieving rapid military build-up. Since the guideline was adopted, North Korea has been establishing different military policy goals over time as shown in Table 4-2 below.

Table 4–2 Focus of North Korea’s Military Policy by Times

Times	Focus	Results
1960s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carrying out economic construction and military construction simultaneously</li> <li>• Having the whole party and entire population be ready for mobilization at war</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dependence on China and the Soviet Union was reduced.</li> <li>• The 8th Special Corps was established in 1969.</li> </ul>
1970s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving self–defense strength to a higher level by completing self–sustainable industrial bases of national defense</li> <li>• Developing doctrines focused on combinations of regular and irregular forces and small– and large–scale military units</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The capability to wage a war independently was enhanced.</li> <li>• Underground tunnels were built across the DMZ for invasion of the South</li> </ul>
1980s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completing combat readiness for mobilization</li> <li>• Upgrading reserve forces to the level of regular troops</li> <li>• Enhancing their capability to wage modern warfare</li> <li>• Developing and deploying SCUD missiles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Mechanized Corps, District Commands, and Civil Defense Department were established.</li> <li>• SCUD missiles were developed and deployed.</li> </ul>
1990s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancing conformity between the military and people</li> <li>• Building a national defense system covering the entire nation and populace</li> <li>• Establishing an independent strategic weapons system</li> <li>• Advocating the military–first policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A positive atmosphere was created toward the military and provision of compensation for those who joined the military service.</li> <li>• Rodong missiles were developed and deployed and test–firing of Tadpodong–1 was conducted.</li> <li>• Long–range artilleries, including multiple rocket launchers were deployed to the front.</li> </ul>
2000–	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making concentrated efforts on the national defense industry</li> <li>• Adding the military–first ideology to the constitution</li> <li>• Stating itself as a nuclear state in the constitution</li> <li>• Carrying out economic construction and nuclear capability construction simultaneously</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three nuclear tests conducted (Oct. 9, 2006, May 25, 2009, and Feb. 12, 2013)</li> <li>• A number of long–range missiles launched, including the test–fire of Tadpodong–2 in 2006</li> </ul>

Source: Korea Institution for National Unification, Overview of North Korea 2009, p. 90.

In a report presented at the sixth Party Congress in October 1980, Kim Il-sung said, “Strong national defense capabilities have been secured by carrying out self-defensive military lines,” and declared as pending tasks for the WPK in the 1980s, the establishment of the monolithic ideology within the military, strengthening of combat and political training, advancement of military

technologies, and improvement of combat strength and readiness.<sup>6</sup>

In the 1990s, Kim Jong-il presented a “military construction by instilling the *juche* ideology into the entire military force.” He also advocated further ideological militarization given the changes in international political situations, including the fall of the East European socialist bloc, saying “troops are the people, nation and party.” By doing so, he emphasized the role of the military as a stronghold to achieve armed revolution for unification and to protect the socialist regime in the North. Although conventional military build-up came to a standstill due to economic setbacks after 2000, the military-first policy has been further emphasized in the North and its crisis management system has been reorganized around the military based on strategic weapons. At the same time, the North has made intensive efforts to secure advantages in asymmetric capabilities over the South.

## 2 Military Strategy

North Korea’s military strategy, given its war capacity and specific geographical conditions on the Korean peninsula, is to engage in preemptive surprise attacks and simultaneous strikes on South Korea’s front and rear. In essence, the North means to stage a quick and decisive war by proceeding to create panic in enemy camps, take the initiative in the war from the start, while at the same time deploying its mechanized corps equipped with tanks, armored vehicles and self-propelled artilleries deep into South Korea’s rear in order to overtake the entire peninsula before US reinforcements arrive.

Since the mid-1970s, North Korea has continued to expand its military capacity, focusing on conventional arms and equipment, with greater weight placed on quantity than quality. Special efforts were made to improve the ability to stage simultaneous strikes against the South’s front and rear, make swift attacks deep into enemy territory, and initiate preemptive surprise attacks. By the end of the

1980s, it was noted that North Korea was capable of conducting warfare on its own for two to three months by taking advantage of its forward deployment of additional forces, formation of mechanized corps, establishment of large special operations forces, and deployment of additional long-range artilleries near the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ).

Despite protracted economic difficulties, North Korea has not wavered from efforts to modernize its arms and pursue the development of strategic weapons for mass destruction, such as biochemical and nuclear weapons and long-range missiles, all with the objective of building a strong and prosperous nation. This implies that North Korea intends to unify the peninsula under communism by means of an aggressive military strategy and present itself as a military power, while at the same time developing an asymmetric deterrence against the world's military powers with its weapons of mass destruction.

The North's strategy of preemptive surprise attacks based on its four-point military guideline involves a wide range of warfare, from large-scale preemptive attacks by regular armed forces to detour surprise attacks by irregular troops such as special operations forces. Given that North Korea's military potential is relatively lower than South Korea's, there is the possibility of North Korea staging limited warfare to accomplish a quick takeover of the Southern metropolitan area which has a population similar to that of all of North Korea, and a gross domestic product tens of times larger than that of the North's. At present, the North Korean military has positioned some 70 percent of its ground forces in the forward area south of the Pyongyang-Wonsan line, and the sizeable number of these forces in underground tunnels poses a significant threat to South Korea.

The North has deployed and fortified a large number of long-range artilleries that could pose direct threats to South Korea's capital and other metropolitan areas near the front line; including 170mm self-propelled guns with a range of over 50km and 240mm multiple rocket launchers with a range of over 60km.



The North has also dispersed a few dozen air bases across the Northern part of the peninsula. This concentration and forward-deployment of offensive and maneuver equipment along the front line indicate that North Korea remains steadfast in its basic military strategy of preemptive surprise attacks.

Blitzkrieg strategies based on quick and decisive battles or lightning war are often called speed battles. To this end, North Korea has made all-out efforts to expand its mechanized, highly mobile and lightweight forces, in addition to obtaining and maintaining an offensive weapons system needed for quick attacks, including the production of SCUD missiles, increased firepower of ground and air forces, and the build-up of high speed landing ships and fire support crafts.

**Table 4–3 Missions and Roles of Special Operations Forces**

Types of SOF	Missions and Roles
Objectives	To attack and destroy targets, to disturb the enemy’s rear area, to launch terrorist attacks, to neutralize major strategic and tactical facilities such as communication stations, missile bases and air fields
Sniper Brigades	To breach the enemy’s major defense lines, to strike strategic targets with 82mm mortars and multiple rocket launchers, to disguise as ROK troops and infiltrate, to organize pro–North Korean sympathizers
Seaborne Sniper Brigades	To launch a surprise attack on naval vessels, radar bases and supply bases, to start a guerilla war using high–speed boats and Landing Craft Air Cushions
Air Force Sniper Brigades	To strike equipment and facilities in air bases
Airborne Infantry Brigades	To destroy logistics bases, to block reinforcement, to secure strategic strongholds
Army Corps Reconnaissance Battalions	To open a secret passage, to kidnap key figures, to reconnoiter, to destroy enemy facilities
Light Infantry Brigades	To secure key points, to launch an attack on the enemy’s command posts, to support main units with a total of 6 battalions, each with 6 companies which consist of 120 troopers equipped with 60mm mortars and portable missile launchers

Source: Compiled from data provided by various institutions.

North Korea is thought to pursue a blitzkrieg strategy for two reasons. First, the North would be unable to sustain a war for a long time, since its economic

capacity is much smaller than that of South Korea. Second, it fears that South Korea holds great potential for military power, which can be acquired once its modes of domestic productions are converted to wartime modes and human and material resources are mobilized in earnest.

In North Korea, military orders have been given to construct tunnel bases since the end of 1970, followed by instructions to build the Grand Corridor for Unification (underground tunnels) across the DMZ in September 1971. It is presumed that, as in the case of the Vietnam War, the North Korean military means to join the invasion troops with underground forces, making it difficult for South Korea to counter any surprise attacks. At present, there are more than 8,200 underground facilities across North Korea, including mines, tunnels, and underground shelters. More than 300 units of tunnel boring machinery (South Korea has around 20 units) imported from Switzerland and Sweden since the late 1970s are being used to build such facilities.

At the fifth Party Congress on November 12, 1970, Kim Il-sung presented a report on the issue of reinforcing North Korea's national defense power. He emphasized that "North Korea has many mountains, rivers and streams, in addition to a long coastal line. If such topographical advantages are put to good use and combinations of large and small-scale operations and regular and guerilla warfare are effectively conducted, even enemies equipped with state-of-the-art military technologies can be destroyed."<sup>7</sup>

The combinations referred to above are part of the *juche* strategy, which merge Mao's guerilla tactics with old Soviet military strategies in a way that suits the actual situation on the Korean peninsula. The key essence is to combine large-scale regular warfare with guerilla attacks, which will enable the North Korean forces to strike the enemy from every direction. This would turn the whole peninsula into a battleground without a distinction between the front and rear. With such tactics, North Korea would be able to strike key facilities and instigate rebellions from the rear with asymmetric capabilities, while holding the enemy forces at the front.

This kind of military strategy can be applied on the Korean peninsula in theory, but in reality and in light of modern war doctrines it has numerous limitations. North Korea may have the military capacity to make provocations or to trigger conflicts, but attaining its ultimate objective would be a difficult task, given that North Korean forces lack the capability to sustain warfare. Number of troops, political indoctrination and topography are not the only factors that dictate the outcome of a war; other elements come into play, including the overall environment of battlefields, educational level of troops, quality of arms, level of military science and technologies, uncertainties, unpredictable conflicts, contingencies, and so forth.

In the meantime, it raises concerns that North Korea, turning a deaf ear to the international community, has gone beyond conventional weapons to focus on the research and development of nuclear, ballistic, and chemical weapons of mass destruction while reinforcing asymmetric capabilities such as seaborne capability and regular troops. Taking lessons from the Gulf War and the Iraq War, the North has doubled the number of special operations troops from 100,000 to 200,000. Also, in case of emergency, it plans to launch preemptive attacks against the South and neutralize its key military areas with artilleries and missiles and by deploying special operations forces to the front and rear simultaneously. In addition, it is believed that North Korea has created a cyber army to conduct cyber attacks against the South during peacetime. This implies that North Korea is preparing for the fourth-generation warfare<sup>8</sup> to complement its inferior fire power and military technologies in comparison with those of the ROK-US combined forces.

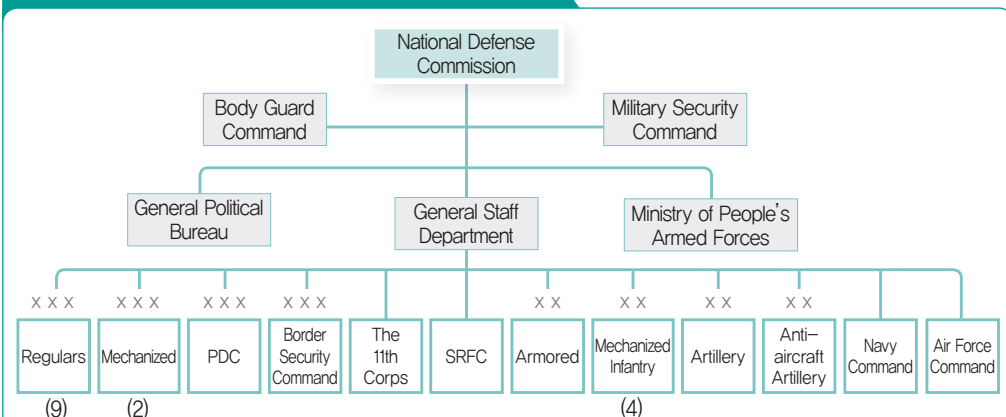
## Section 3. Structure and Institutions

### 1 Military Structure

#### (1) Command Structure

The supreme guiding organ of North Korea's armed forces is the National Defense Commission (NDC). According to the constitution in the North, the NDC makes decisions and gives guidance on overall matters of national defense. Kim Jong-il held control over the aggregate armed forces of North Korea as Chairman of the NDC and Commander-in-Chief, and Kim Jong-un does so as First Chairman of the NDC and Commander-in-Chief.

Figure 4-1 Military Command Structure



Note: 1. xxx is Corps, xx is Divisions.  
 2. PDC is the Pyongyang Defense Command.  
 3. SRFC is the Strategic Rocket Force Command, previously known as the Missile Guidance Bureau.  
 4. The control of the Anti-aircraft Artillery Division was handed over from the PDC to the GSD.

Source: Ministry of National Defense, 2012 Defense White Paper, p. 25.

In compliance with Kim Jong-il's last wishes, Kim Jong-un was elected Supreme Commander of the KPA at the General Political Bureau meeting on December 30, 2011. The responsibility of the Supreme Commander is to command and control military organizations, including the General Political Bureau, General Staff Department, and Ministry of People's Armed Forces, and to issue direct orders to the Body Guard Command and the Military Security Command.

The Body Guard Command is designed to guard key facilities in the city of Pyongyang and protect Kim Jong-un, his family and top WPK officials, while the Military Security Command acts as the secret police that cracks down on regime dissidents. While the General Political Bureau oversees the KPA's personnel matters and political and ideological campaigns through the WPK apparatus established within the military, the General Staff Department commands military operations. The Ministry of People's Armed Forces takes charge of military-related foreign affairs, industry, finance and other administrative works, and represents the military at home and abroad.

## (2) Military Organs

### National Defense Commission

Key military organs in North Korea include the National Defense Commission (NDC), the WPK Central Military Commission (CMC), the General Political Bureau (GPB), the General Staff Department (GSD), and the Ministry of People's Armed Forces (MPAF). Among them, the NDC was established along with the adoption of the socialist constitution in 1972. In 1992, it became the supreme guiding organ of the armed forces when the constitution was revised to build institutional support for Kim Jong-il's military control. To reinforce the Commission's functions, further amendments followed which authorized the management of overall national defense in 1998. At the first plenary session of the twelfth SPA on April 9, 2009, its status was further promoted and its functions were expanded.

The responsibilities and authorities of the Commission include the following: establishing important national policies to carry out the military-led revolution; giving guidance on projects for the overall armed forces and national defense construction; acting on the orders from the First Chairman of the NDC and decisions and instructions from the NDC; nullifying decisions or instructions from other state agencies which go against the orders from the First Chairman of the NDC and decisions and instructions from the NDC; establishing/abolishing central organs in the area of national defense; and establishing military titles and granting general or higher level titles.

The NDC Chairman is Supreme Leader of North Korea and commands and controls the North's aggregate armed forces as Commander-in-Chief. The 2009 revision of the constitution granted the Chairman the authority to guide overall state affairs as Supreme Leader, which made it clear that the NDC Chairman was not only the head of national defense, but also the actual supreme ruler of North Korea. The revised constitution at the fifth session of the twelfth SPA on April 13, 2012, established Kim Jong-il as Eternal Chairman of the NDC and Kim Jong-un as First Chairman a title accompanied by the same responsibilities and authorities that the NDC Chairman had held previously.<sup>9</sup>

### Central Military Commission

Since the adoption of the Four-point Military Guideline proposed by Kim Il-sung at the fifth plenary session of the fourth WPK Central Committee in December 1962, North Korea established the Military Commission under the Central Committee to push for the Guideline, which was renamed the Central Military Commission in November 1982. The CMC discusses and makes decisions on ways to implement the WPK's military policy, organizes and gives guidance on campaigns to reinforce all armed forces, including the KPA and develop war industry, and also commands the military.

North Korea's power and decision making structure makes the WPK an

entity with supreme power which makes the final decisions on all state affairs and the CMC plays the same role on matters related with the military. The Korean Central News Agency implied that military build-up was discussed by reporting, “Issues to further increase the armed forces of revolution and to strengthen national defense capabilities in all possible ways were discussed and decisions were made” - at the CMC plenary session held on February 3, 2013. Nine days after the meeting, North Korea conducted its third nuclear test on February 12.

### General Political Bureau

With the same authority and power of the WPK Central Committee, the General Political Bureau conducts the WPK’s political activities and enhances its control over the military. Its functions include arming the whole military with the *juche* ideology, establishing monolithic ideology in the military, organizing and giving guidance on the party life of military officers and party members, conducting communist education, carrying out propaganda activities vis-a-vis party and youth league organs in the military, planning and carrying out campaigns such as the Three Revolution Red Flag as well as measures to boost morale, and managing the assignment, supplementation, transfer, promotion and discharge of officers, and other matters. Also, the Bureau holds the authority to block and correct orders from commanders which go against the Party policy. Political departments are established at battalions or at larger units, and political commissars are deployed to regiments or larger units while political directive officers to battalions or smaller units. Through political officers, the WPK adjusts and controls the activities of commanders at each level and the results are reported to the Central Committee.

## General Staff Department

As the highest executive body of the KPA, the KPA General Staff Department controls all armed forces of North Korea under the strict leadership of the WPK. Renamed from the General Command of the Korean People's Collective Forces on February 8, 1948, the Department commands, controls and manages general operational plans for the KPA army, navy and air force. Taking the post of Supreme Commander after early-1970s, Kim Il-sung took direct command and control over the KPA through the GSD, bypassing the MPAF. Such direct control over the military has remained intact until now after Kim Jong-un succeeded his father. North Korea's armed forces are organized into a mixed system formed according to the type of military force and service under the Chief of the General Staff, and all political and military echelons and departments of the KPA receive orders and guidance from the GSD.

## Ministry of the People's Armed Forces

The MPAF came into being as the Ministry of National Security when the regime was established in 1948 to take charge of military-related foreign affairs, industry, finance and other administrative works. After being renamed the Ministry of People's Armed Forces, it was separated from the State Administration Council (former cabinet) according to the decision made at the first session of the seventh SPA in April 1982. Four years later, the WPK Central People's Committee took direct control of the Ministry, but constitutional revision in 1998 relocated the MPAF under the direct guidance and command of the NDC.<sup>10</sup>



## 2 Military Institutions

### (1) Conscription System and Army Life

All men in North Korea are required to register for enlistment at the age of 14. Two rounds of physical examination are conducted when they reach the age of 15 during the final year of middle school, thus allowing them to join the service after graduation. The minimum requirement for check-up used to be 150cm in height and weight of 48kg, but as youths in North Korea began to grow smaller in size due to food shortages, the requirement was adjusted to 148cm and 43kg in August 1994. Yet, even such criteria are relaxed due to the lack of eligible candidates and the decline in the proportion of female soldiers.

Excluded from military service are those who fail physical exams, who have families from the hostile class, and other delinquents who do not fit in the *songbun* system (families within the second parental cousin or first maternal cousin range of those who partook in anti-communist activities or defected to South Korea, families of defectors from South Korea or political prisoners, ex-convicts, etc.). Meanwhile, exempt from military service are those who engage in particular lines of work or beneficiaries of political consideration (i.e. security officers, scientists, industrial engineers, artists, instructors, administrative officers, college students who pass military science exams, students of special or elite schools, only sons of aged parents, etc).

North Korea presented the terms of military service in 1958 issued as Cabinet Decision No. 148 and mandated army service for three and a half years and navy service for four years. In actuality, however, this was often extended to a period of five to eight years, and in April 1993, North Korea adjusted mandatory service to ten years upon Kim Jong-il's instructions. The sixth session of the tenth Supreme People's Assembly also passed a military service law in March 2003, which specifies ten years of obligatory service for all male candidates, whereas the terms were curtailed for female volunteers to seven

years. Yet, this does not include the Special Forces (e.g. light infantry units, sniper units, etc.), who are required to serve for more than thirteen years or for an indefinite period under special instructions if they are equipped with special skills.<sup>11</sup>

Meanwhile, the percentage of female soldiers in units varies from ten to thirty percent. They are often assigned to transport and administration, or become medics, signalers or sentries at bridges or tunnels. Coastal artilleries, anti-aircraft guns and small air defense batteries are also often managed by female soldiers.

Regardless of rank, those who break military discipline face various disadvantages at the workplace after discharge. During their time in the barracks, all soldiers must follow a ten-point guideline,<sup>12</sup> which Kim Jong-il himself took part in and gave orders to devise.



Female North Korean gunners in training

In North Korea, the GPB promotes various competitive campaigns to enhance internal control and unity in the military. The most representative campaigns include winning the following titles: the Three Revolution Red Flag (at company level), the O Jung-hup Seventh Regiment (at regiment level), and the Gold Star Elite Guard (at division and brigade level). Those who perform well are awarded WPK membership, field trips, prizes, vacations and preferential treatment in resource supplies.

According to military rules, soldiers are also entitled to fifteen days of leave per year and special leaves of ten to fifteen days upon events such as family weddings, the death of a parent, or commendation awards. The rules, however, are rarely observed, and only around ten days are granted to soldiers when

they need to attend their parent's funeral or obtain military supplies. It has been found that only about 20 percent of soldiers are allowed on leave to visit parents, and one-third to half of military service in North Korea on average is dedicated to non-military activities such as public construction and farming.

Army units in North Korea provide soldiers with the staple food of the meal, but it is up to each unit either to purchase or obtain side dishes in ways that are suitable to each geographical location such as farming, fishing or gathering. In the past, troops were provided with three basic meals a day, and served rice and two or three side dishes including cooked or pickled vegetables. In the 1990s, however, the food situation in North Korea became so severe that military divisions had to set up temporary sanatoriums. Foreign aid since the 2000s somewhat alleviated this food shortage, but things turned for the worse when the international community withdrew aid in response to the North's development of weapons of mass destruction. North Korea therefore took actions to supplement the military diet, raising livestock such as goats and pigs at individual units ranging from independent platoons to division headquarters.

When cases of disease occur in North Korean troops, treatment is performed as follows: Those who require less than seven days of treatment are sent to regimental clinics staffed with eight to ten army surgeons and around ten nurses; patients that require treatment up to fifteen days or less are transferred to divisional hospitals staffed with twenty to twenty five surgeons and over fifty nurses; those who need more than fifteen days to six months of treatment or surgery are transported to general hospitals at army corps which have sixty to seventy army surgeons and around one hundred thirty military or civilian nurses; meanwhile, long-term patients are discharged from service on the pretext of family hardship.<sup>13</sup> More than half of all inpatients are known to suffer from malnutrition.

The above internal military conditions and North Korea's introduction of the July 1 Economic Management Improvement Measures in 2002 caused the

KPA to face problems of its own. Military authorities, therefore, have allowed a considerable number of army units to engage in foreign trade, commercial activities, labor mobilization, and various other profit-making projects. This being the case, soldiers prefer posts that enable extra income, such as border guards under the Ministry of State Security. Shortages in supply and daily necessities within the military are generating aberrations and other offenses that damage civil-military relations.

## (2) Military Ranks and Party Organization

Military ranks in North Korea are called military titles and there are fifteen different levels for officers and six for those enlisted.

The officers are grouped into four categories: marshal grade (Grand Marshal, Marshal, and Vice Marshal); general grade (General, Colonel General, Lieutenant General, and Major General); field grade (Brigadier, Colonel, Lieutenant Colonel, and Major); and company grade (Captain, Senior Lieutenant, Lieutenant, and Junior Lieutenant).

The enlisted ranks are grouped into two different categories: non-commissioned officers (Warrant Officer, Sergeant First Class, Staff Sergeant, and Sergeant) and those who choose to remain in service after their mandatory period (Sergeant First Class, Staff Sergeant, and Sergeant-in-Initial Service), and enlisted personnel (Corporal and Private), which are divided into four sub-categories (Lance Sergeant, Corporal, Lance Corporal, and Private) in order to boost morale and enforce discipline between ranks.

Until the early 1990s, the KPA hierarchy listed six general-grade ranks in the following decreasing order of authority: Marshal, Vice Marshal, General, Colonel General, Lieutenant General, and Major General. On April 13, 1992, the KPA added another rank by granting the title of Grand Marshal upon Kim Il-sung two days prior to his 80th birthday. Kim Jong-il was also granted the title of Grand Marshal on February 14, 2012 after he had died on December 17, 2011.

In the meantime, every unit level of the KPA has its own staff, political and security departments. The WPK apparatus is also represented at every military unit to engage in political activities vis-a-vis the military. This implies that the WPK, in practice, exerts control over the KPA. To be specific, the KPA Party Committee takes center stage, while there are individual party committees for each regiment and larger military unit as well as party cells or sub-groups for each company and platoon. Each battalion or larger military unit also has political departments, which are distinct from party committees.

Table 4–4 Training Program for Military Officers

Rank	Training Program	Remarks
Draftees	Transferred to the military mobilization agency (first to special forces unit, then in the order of the Navy, Air Force, and Army)	Special forces units and special branches of service take the priority.
Recruits	Recruit training center at each unit (3 months for general troops and nine months for special forces)	Due to economic difficulties, the period of training for new recruits was curtailed.
Privates	Private → Lance Corporal → Corporal → Lance Sergeant	5–7 years
Non-commissioned Officers	Non-commissioned Officers Academy (3 months) Sergeant → Staff Sergeant → Sergeant First Class → Warrant Officer (Chief Sergeant) * After servicing 3 to 5 years, light Infantrymen and snipers can be promoted to the rank of sergeant within 5 years when recommended on their merits.	In general, men are discharged from the army as staff sergeant after 10 years of military service.
Second Lieutenants	Two years at the Military Officers Academy (Commanders class: Top graduates in the class are commissioned as the lieutenants). Four years (College class for lieutenants)	The ratio between political and military education in the Military Officers Academy is 5 to 5, while it is 3 to 7 in the Military College.
Lieutenants	Promoted after 2–3 years	
Company Commanders	Promoted to commander after 4–6 years	
Battalion Commanders	Graduated from Kim Il-sung National War College (3 years) after 3–7 years	
Regiment Commanders	Completed the tactics study class at Kim Il-sung National War College	Generals are promoted at the supreme leader's order

Source: Compiled from data provided by various institutions.

As such, political organs deploy political commissars to military divisions and regiments, in addition to political directive officers<sup>14</sup> to battalions or smaller units. From these placements, political personnel coordinate and supervise all military activities, including operation and training, along with all political activities that take place within corresponding army units. Moreover, a co-signing system is used, which requires the political commissar's signature for military directives to take effect. Political commissars of regiments or larger units, on the other hand, are under the direct control of the WPK Secretariat and are thus managed separately from other KPA political organs. At present, around 20 percent of ordinary soldiers are estimated to be WPK members, while about 40 percent in Special Forces are considered to have party status.

The Kim Il-sung Socialist Youth League is another entity organized in each KPA unit, which works to bind non-party members under the guidance of the WPK and its political organs. To reduce possible internal conflicts, however, KPA authorities also emphasize the importance of unity between officers and soldiers, party members and non-members, and superiors and subordinates.<sup>15</sup>

The reason for such multiple layers of surveillance and control and the emphasis of ideological education in North Korea lies in the changing nature of the KPA. Its role now extends beyond its commitment to secure the Northern territory and regime under wartime management to include such tasks as achieving socialist revolution and defending the supreme leader as the troops of the ruler and the WPK. From the perspective of the commander-in-chief, this policy of divide and rule provides advantages in preserving power and command over the military. In short, the KPA's tightly crisscrossed lines of political, security and military apparatus are institutionalized in such a way that resistance against the one-man dictatorship would not come about easily.

## Section 4. Military Capacity

### 1 Standing Forces and Equipment

As of January 2012, the size of North Korea's standing troops is estimated to be 1.19 million in total, which is thought to consist of 1.02 million in the army, 60,000 in the navy, and 110,000 in the air force. This is 1.9 times that of South Korea's military, which consists of 639,000 troops (See Table 4-6).

#### Ground Forces

North Korea's ground forces consist of fifteen army corps or equivalent units, including nine regular corps at the front and rear, two mechanized corps, Pyongyang Defense Command, Border Security Command, Strategic Rocket Force Command (formerly known as the Missile Guidance Bureau), and the 11th Corps (formerly known as the Light Infantry Training and Guidance Bureau).

In the frontline, existing light infantry battalions under the command of four army corps were expanded to regiments while an extra light infantry



Soldiers in Firing Training with Field Guns

division was added to each corps. About 70 percent of North Korea's ground forces were forward deployed in frontline areas south of the Pyongyang-Wonsan line. This deployment of troops reflected a blitzkrieg concept based on penetrative assaults. Since South Korea's capital Seoul is located only a short distance from the DMZ, the forward deployed North Korean troops have been a major cause of tension on the peninsula.

One of the distinctive features of North Korean ground forces is that they are organized around mechanized, armored and special operations forces. In recent years, believing that mechanized units and tank divisions were suitable for operation in the topography of the peninsula, North Korea has restructured these forces into brigades, and reorganized troops by creating new tank, mechanized, and missile units to carry out modern warfare more effectively. In addition, North Korea boasts the world's largest special operations force. With more than 200,000 special operations troops trained for unconventional warfare, it is known to be capable of simultaneously infiltrating tens of thousands of troops across enemy lines by air and water.

North Korea also turned most of its army corps and reserve forces under the Ministry of People's Armed Forces into mechanized, maneuver and tank units, which will be deployed to reinforce its regular troops upon initiating an attack. Furthermore, the military has over vast regions installed camouflaged camps and disguised facilities several times greater in scale than existing camps, in addition to building an extensive network of invasion tunnels across frontline areas. It is perceived, therefore, that North Korea has the capability to launch surprise attacks against the South without needing additional preparations or forward deployed reinforcements.

Another characteristic of North Korea's ground forces is their large quantities of combat equipment combining new and old-style arms. Among T-series tanks, new T-62 and T-72 lines are their primary equipment and old T-54 and T-55 lines are no longer used. Still, they own other old-style tanks in addition to light tanks.



**Table 4–5 Regular Exercises and Other Activities of Ground Forces**

Months	Type of Training and Activities
Jan.–Feb.	Preparation for field tactical training, field maneuvers exercise by each branch, engineer reconnaissance, deployment exercise
Mar.	General shooting exercises with live ammunition at each battalion and division
May–	Repairing of barracks and roads, planting seedlings in the fields for side dishes
Mid–June–	Summer exercise begins. Collective training: political education, lining drill, physical training Field training: by each branch in semi–underground tunnel lodging
Mid–July–	River–crossing during the rainy season, combat swimming, march, offense and defense exercise, shooting exercises with live ammunition
Oct.	Preparation for the winter: harvest, storage of vegetables, collection of firewood, barracks repair
Nov.	Preparation for winter exercises: checking of combat gear
Dec.	In the morning: focused on indoor exercises, including shooting practice In the afternoon: long march with full combat gear, physical training, lining drill, field shooting exercises

Source: Compiled from data provided by various institutions.

North Korea possesses about 1.8 times more tanks than South Korea, which has around 2,400 battle tanks in total. Considering the relative superiority of South Korean tanks and anti-tank weapons, there are doubts about the efficiency of North Korean tanks. Nonetheless, given the short length and breadth of the South’s capital terrain, the sheer number of new and old model tanks in North Korea can pose a threat to South Korea.

North Korea has more than 8,600 pieces of howitzers (of 76.2/100/122/132/170mm caliber), 4,800 pieces of multiple rocket launchers (of 107/122/132/240mm caliber), and 11,000 pieces of anti-aircraft guns and other air defense weapons.

Performance-wise, various weapons found in North Korea’s ground forces, including Cheonma-ho (“Heavenly Horse”) tanks, M-1973 armored vehicles, various self-propelled guns, multiple rocket launchers, AT-3/4 anti-tank missiles and modified SCUD missiles, are modernized weaponry. North Korea is currently making concentrated efforts to modernize its military equipment by building Pokpung-ho (“Storm Tiger”) tanks, which are reproduced designs of Soviet-made T-72s, along with introducing, manufacturing, and deploying 23mm anti-aircraft guns.

## Navy

North Korean naval forces have a total of over 810 battle ships, including principal surface combatants, submarines, and support ships with 60 percent of them deployed to the frontline. The principal surface combatants include over 420 patrol ships, guided missile boats, torpedo boats and fire support boats, 90 or more high-speed amphibious ships, over 130 air-cushion vehicles, and around 70 submarines and midget submarines. A large number of North Korean ships are old models and separate operation in the East and West Sea is inevitable due to the geography of the peninsula. Furthermore, many vessels are small in size, limiting their maneuverability in bad weather or may not operate well on the open sea.

Nonetheless, given that North Korea possesses a large number of forward-deployed midget submarines and small speed boats, including torpedo boats and guided missile patrol boats as well as long-range coastal artillery pieces, it appears capable of launching surprise attacks on enemy troops and ships from near the points of contact with the enemy. Also, the North has deployed the Samlet and Silkworm surface-to-ship missiles with ranges of 80-95km on the west and east coasts. It is observed that South Korea's Deokjeok Island in the West Sea and the cities of Sokcho and Yangyang on the east coast are within the reach of Silkworm missiles.

In the meantime, the North Korean navy has built its own hovercraft to deploy for operation. With a speed of 40-52 knots, these high-speed landing craft have excellent mobility and can be used for landing troops and cargo. North Korean naval forces consist of one naval command, two fleet commands, thirteen squadrons, two naval sniper brigades, and more than forty naval bases. In particular, North Korea has continued to improve its submarine capabilities and develop new torpedoes and mines, and as observed in the case of the Cheonan sinking, they pose a serious threat to the South Korean navy.

## Air Force

North Korean air force consists of four air divisions, two tactical transport brigades, two sniper brigades and an air defense unit, and possesses more than 820 fighter aircrafts, over 30 reconnaissance aircrafts, over 330 transport aircrafts, some 300 helicopters, and more than 170 trainer aircrafts. About 40 percent of these aircrafts are forward deployed in the bases located south of the Pyongyang-Wonsan line, maintaining the capability and posture to carry out surprise attacks. Using the Antonov An-2 cargo and utility aircraft, along with helicopters that maneuver at low speeds and altitudes, North Korean air forces have the ability to deploy special force agents effectively behind the South Korean front lines.

Among these, MIG-15/17s produced in the 1950s are used as trainer aircraft, which boast a high rate of operation since parts are domestically produced and maintenance and repair are easily performed. They can be useful in carrying out air interception and air-to-surface strikes on the peninsula, due to the short length and breadth of the battlefields. In addition, North Korean air forces operate more than 20 air operation and reserve bases, some of which have underground runways.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and East European socialist bloc in 1990, North Korea came to the conclusion that its survival would henceforth depend primarily on its own military capability. In order to overcome the crisis it faced, the regime has since promoted a military-first policy, regulating its entire society in a military manner.

In 1997, despite severe economic difficulties, North Korea reinforced maneuverability training for mechanized corps in rear areas as well as infiltration exercises for special operation forces, while greatly bolstering joint tactical exercises between the air force and navy. The North also monitors wartime readiness and the training of its troops in all areas. In March 1998, for instance, the regime publically issued a nationwide wartime mobilization order for the purpose of an integrated exercise, involving the public, regime and military. This was meant to rehearse a shift to a war footing. Intensive energy-saving

map exercises were conducted afterwards for landing and take-off drills at sea for AN-2s, hydroplanes equipped with boats. In 1999, the regime deployed a large number of field guns with large caliber and multiple rocket launchers in underground facilities near the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). The regime also created an electronic warfare unit and started to train military hackers.

**Table 4–6 Comparing Military Forces of South and North Korea (as of Jan. 2012)**

Classification			South Korea	North Korea	
Troops (in peace time)	Total		639,000	1,190,000	
	Army		506,000	1,020,000	
	Navy		68,000	60,000	
	Air Force		65,000	110,000	
Major Combat Strength	Army	Units	Corps	12 (including Special Wartime Command)	15
			Divisions	46 (including Marines)	88
			Mobile Brigades	14 (including Marines)	72 (excluding Reserve Training Units)
		Equipment	Tanks	2,400 (including Marines)	4,200
			Armored Vehicles	2,700 (including Marines)	2,200
			Field Artilleries	5,300 (including Marines)	8,600
	MLRS/MRL		200	4,800	
	Ground-to-Ground Missiles		30 (Launchers)	100 (Launchers)	
	Navy	Surface Ships	Combatants	120	420
			Amphibious Ships	10	260
			Mine Warfare Vessels	10	30
			Support & Aux. Vessels	20	30
		Submarines		10	70
	Air Force	Combat Aircrafts		460	820
		Surveillance & Reconnaissance		50 (including those belonging to the Navy)	30
		Transport Aircrafts		40	330
		Trainers		190	170
	Helicopters (Army/Navy/Air Force)		680	300	
	Reserve Troops			3.2 million (including military cadets, those subject to wartime mobilization, and those providing alternative/ substitute military service)	7.7 million (including the Reserve Military Training Unit, Worker–Peasant Red Army, and Red Youth Guards)

- Notes: 1. The number of troops in the South Korean Navy includes 28,000 Marines, and South Korea's ground units and equipment includes those of the Marine Corps.  
 2. The number of North Korean field artillery does not include 76,2-mm guns deployed at the regiment level.  
 3. The table above provides a quantitative comparison for public discretion as qualitative assessments are limited.

Source: Ministry of National Defense, 2012 Defense White Paper, p.289.

Following the general officers' talks held between the two Koreas in June 2004, North Korea suspended propaganda broadcasts against South Korea along the DMZ. At the same time, however, it strengthened the political and ideological education of its troops. The Korean People's Army reduced the number of large-scale military exercises, but increased drills for special operation forces and communication units, while placing unusual emphasis on the importance of exercises. Following the Iraq war, North Korea started to train a large number of military hackers in preparation for cyber war, expanded light infantry units, and reinforced capabilities for special warfare such as nighttime combat, mountain combat and street battles. The North Korean forces are also known to have improved their electronic jamming skills as a means of dealing with electronic warfare as well as defense against precision guided missiles.

## Reserve Forces

According to one of North Korea's four military guidelines, "to arm the entire population," the regime has mobilized around 30 percent of the population between the ages of 14 to 60 to acquire over 7.7 million reserve forces. Every member of the reserve forces is given a variety of combat gear, including personal arms, equipment and crew-served weapons. These forces respond to emergency calls and enter boot camps to receive 15 to 30 days of military training at least once a year.

Upon the departure of the Chinese army in 1958, North Korea organized its reserve forces and civil defense corps called the Worker-Peasant Red Guards (WPRG) in January 1959, in addition to reorganizing discharged soldiers among the WPRG members into the Reserve Military Training Unit (RMTU) in 1963. The Red Youth Guards (RYG), a military organization for senior middle school students, was created in September 1970.

The RMTU, the core of North Korea's reserve forces, consists of men between

the ages of 17 and 50, as well as unmarried female volunteers between the ages of 17 and 30. Its local units are organized into either divisions or brigades depending on the size of the administrative unit or workplace. College students who join the RMTU are not allowed to graduate unless they complete their training program, and once they have completed 6 months of training over the summer vacation of their second and third years in college, commensurate to that of regular troops, and are commissioned as second lieutenants. The RMTU members are given 100 percent of personal arms and equipment as well as 70 to 80 percent of crew-served weapons, and are required to complete as much as 500 hours of training each year. The intensity of their training is equivalent to those taken by active-duty soldiers. As the RMTU is organized, equipped with firearms and carries out an intensity of training similar to that of soldiers in active duty, they can be immediately mobilized to defend rear areas or called up as reserve forces in case war breaks out. At present, the RMTU accounts for over 600,000 troops.

Meanwhile, the WPRG was renamed as the Worker-Peasant Red Army (WPRA) at the Conference of Party Representatives that convened on September 28, 2010. The WPRA consists of men aged between 17 and 60 who can be mobilized and of women aged between 17 and 30, both of whom not belonging to the RMTU and they are organized at each administrative unit or workplace. Along with the civil defense corps, the WPRA's basic responsibilities include guarding the workplace and other important facilities, as well as regional and anti-aircraft defense. They are supplied with all personal arms and equipment and some crew-served weapons. A total of 160 hours of training is required a year. Their current numbers stand at 5.7 million.

In addition, the Red Youth Guards (RYG) consists of male and female senior middle school students aged between 14 and 16. Organized into companies or battalions at each school, RYG members are subject to a total of 160 hours of on-campus drills every Saturday and seven days of training during vacations, including shooting exercises using live rounds at RYG field drill camps. As the

royal guards of the regime, the RYGs are mainly responsible for removing anti-revolutionary elements and playing a leading role in improving North Korea's combat capabilities. In an emergency, they would perform the duties of rear guards or suicide squads to supplement those of junior army officers. They are supplied with all personal arms and equipment and some crew-served weapons. They undergo a total of 450 hours of training (substantially increased from 270 hours in the past) a year. Their current number stands at one million.

Table 4-7 North Korea's Reserve Forces

Type	Strength	Remark
Reserve Military Training Unit	600,000	Subject to combat mobilization
Worker-Peasant Red Army	5.7 million	Equivalent to South Korea's Homeland Reserve Forces
Red Youth Guard	1 million	Military organization of boys and girls aged between 14-16 who attend middle schools
Paramilitary Units	400,000	Ministry of People's Security, Speed Battle Youth Shock Troops
Total	7.7 million	

Source: Ministry of National Defense, 2012 Defense White Paper, p.29.

North Korea also has about 400,000 reserve troops affiliated with other paramilitary forces, including the Ministry of People's Security, the Logistics Mobilization Guidance Bureau, an agency responsible for providing and managing war supplies, and the Speed Battle Youth Shock Troops, a team that is often brought into public work projects. They are on constant alert for immediate mobilization.

### 3 Development of Nuclear and Other Strategic Weapons

For strategic reasons, North Korea has continuously improved its weapons of mass destruction such as nuclear warheads, ballistic missiles, and chemical and biological weapons. The development of asymmetric capabilities seems to serve three objectives: to secure military superiority over others, to have an effective

bargaining chip, and to promote internal unity.

Until now, North Korea has repeatedly conducted nuclear tests and launched long-range missiles. This has caused serious instability in the international community, also triggering angry backlashes and sanctions. The world has considered North Korea's three nuclear tests as a particularly serious challenge to the international non-proliferation regime.

### Nuclear Weapons

As early as in the 1960s, North Korea sent its nuclear scientists to the largest nuclear research institute in the Soviet Union, the Joint Institute for Nuclear Research in Dubna. The number of professionals currently working in the North Korean nuclear industry is known to be about 3,000, including over 200 top-class experts.<sup>16</sup> North Korea is also known to have about 4 million tons of recoverable uranium reserves. Pyongyang gave an impetus to its nuclear weapons program at the beginning of the 1980s.<sup>17</sup> Over 300 scientists and engineers are reported to have been stricken with radiation-related diseases during the course of their work.

Having imported a 2MW IRT-2000 research reactor from the Soviet Union in the mid-1960s, North Korea strove to develop reactor design technology. By the 1970s, the regime had succeeded in expanding the output of its research reactor using homegrown technology. Henceforth, North Korea has concentrated its efforts in acquiring a complete nuclear fuel cycle from supplying nuclear fuel to reprocessing spent fuel.

On October 21, 1994, the United States and North Korea signed the so-called Agreed Framework. According to the agreement North Korea pledged to suspend the construction of a graphite moderated nuclear reactor and accept inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In return, the United States pledged to provide two units of light-water reactors, establish liaison offices between Washington and Pyongyang, and supply 500,000 tons



of heavy fuel oil to North Korea each year until completing the construction of the light-water reactors. Later, North Korea had additional negotiations with the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) and finally concluded an agreement on the provision of light-water reactors on December 15, 1995.

Although it had announced that it would accept ad hoc and general inspections by the IAEA in January 1996, North Korea continued to refuse inspections of undeclared facilities and the collection of soil samples. Pyongyang also refused to join the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty on February 11, 1997 and to participate in the annual United Nations nuclear disarmament conference that convened on February 25 in the same year.

After the outbreak of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States, North Korea dragged its feet on nuclear issues, citing differences in opinion and pressure from the United States. In October 2002, US special envoy James Kelly visited North Korea, where he voiced suspicions of a uranium enrichment program. In response, the Kim Jong-il regime declared the suspension of its nuclear freeze and restarted its nuclear development on December 12, 2002. North Korea also withdrew from the non-proliferation treaty on January 10, 2003. When the United States discussed presenting the North Korean nuclear issue to the UN Security Council, a spokesman for the foreign ministry in Pyongyang issued a statement on October 2, 2003 claiming that North Korea would convert plutonium extracted from reprocessed spent fuel for the purpose of reinforcing its nuclear deterrence. On February 10, 2005, North Korea again challenged the global community by reiterating its claim of possessing a nuclear deterrent.

At the second session of the fourth round of the Six Party Talks held in Beijing from September 13 to 19, 2005, a six-point joint statement (September 19 Joint Statement) was adopted, containing the principles for the dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear weapons program. This signaled a possible resolution of the nuclear issue. However, with the future of the Six Party Talks in doubt due to the issue of the US sanctions against Banco Delta Asia, North Korea defied

the international community by launching a long-range missile on July 5, 2006 and conducting its first nuclear test on October 9, 2006.

Subsequently, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 1718 on October 14, imposing sanctions against the North and the fifth round of the Six Party Talks, held from December 18 to 22, 2006, was stymied by disagreements between Washington and Pyongyang in regards to nuclear issues as well as the Banco Delta Asia problem. The two countries later held a series of meetings in Berlin from January 16 to 18, 2007 and discussed the resumption of the Talks. Finally, the third session of the fifth round of the Talks was held in Beijing from February 8 to 13, where an agreement was reached on initial actions for implementation of the September 19 Joint Statement.

Unlike the Agreed Framework signed between the United States and North Korea in 1994, the agreement reached on February 13 was also signed by the other four parties to the Six Party Talks, and clarified that the burden of compensating North Korea would be borne equally by the United States, South Korea, Japan, China and Russia. According to this agreement, these five countries pledged to provide economic assistance of up to 1 million tons of heavy oil upon North Korea's declaring all of its nuclear weapons programs and disabling all nuclear facilities as the first step toward denuclearization. The United States also promised to begin the process of removing North Korea from its list of states sponsoring terrorism as well as exempting it from the Trading with the Enemy Act.

For its part, North Korea agreed at the sixth round of the Six Party Talks on October 3, 2007 not to transfer nuclear technology and to declare all its nuclear programs by the end of 2007. In accordance with the agreement, North Korea shut down three key nuclear facilities, including a 5MWe research reactor, a radiochemical laboratory, and a nuclear fuel-rod fabrication plant in Yongbyon. Despite this progress, however, the North failed to submit a declaration on its nuclear facilities until June 26, 2008, almost six months after the original deadline.

A head delegates' meeting was held on December 20, 2008 to confirm this declaration, and verification procedures including the collection of samples were discussed. North Korea, however, refused to allow the collection of samples and the meeting ended without result. Moreover, it announced to restart its nuclear facilities through a foreign ministry statement in April 2009 and subsequently conducted the second nuclear test on May 25, in defiance of UNSC Resolution 1718, which had prohibited any additional nuclear tests. Following this second nuclear test, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1874 on June 12, 2009. The resolution consisted of 34 points, calling, among other things, for the imposition of a strict arms embargo and financial sanctions against North Korea, as well as closer inspection of cargo going in and out of the country.

At present, it seems North Korea is currently pursuing a nuclear weapons program based on highly enriched uranium. In 2009, North Korea announced that it succeeded in uranium enrichment tests in September 2009 and then disclosed the enrichment facilities to the US nuclear experts visiting the country in November 2010. The preamble of North Korea's constitution revised on April 13, 2012 stipulates that North Korea is a nuclear state with an intention to solidify internal unity and strengthen the legitimacy of the Kim Jong-un regime. However, South Korea and the United States do not acknowledge its nuclear state status while adhering to the position that North Korea must dismantle all nuclear weapons and programs in accordance with its pledges to the international community.

Afterwards, North Korea conducted its third nuclear test in Punggye-ri, Gilju-gun, North Hamkong Province on February 12, 2013. In response, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2094 on March 8, 2013, calling for even harder financial sanctions. Nonetheless, in 2014, North Korea has continuously hinted at an additional nuclear test, saying, "A new type of nuclear test that will enable us to increase nuclear deterrence won't be excluded."<sup>18</sup>

## Missiles

After many years of relying exclusively on imported missile technology, North Korea had by 1986 succeeded in producing missiles based on its own technology. The regime is currently estimated to have the ability to produce about 100 units of SCUD B and C missiles a year. These self-developed missiles have been exported to several Middle East countries, including Iran and Libya.

In the 1970s, North Korea embarked on developing ballistic missiles. By the mid-1980s it had deployed SCUD-B and SCUD-C missiles to deploy in front regions. By the 1990s, the regime had succeeded in deploying Rodong missiles with a range of 1,300km and, in 2007, it deployed medium-range Musudan missiles in front areas, thus placing Japan and Guam as well as other areas within its 3,000km striking range.

On July 5, 2006, North Korea test fired multiple missiles, including Taepodong 2, SCUD, and Rodong. On May 25, 2007, when South Korea was celebrating the launching of its own Aegis destroyer, North Korea test-fired its new short-range ground-to-ground missiles, known as KN-02, which require only five minutes from installing to firing.<sup>19</sup> The North also fired a long-range missile on April 5, 2009<sup>20</sup> and, from May 25 to June 1, six short-range missiles from the east coast. Three years later, on April 13, 2012, it launched a long-range missile before an invited group of major foreign journalists, but the launch ended in failure. On December 12 in the same year, it again fired a three-stage long-range missile, boasting an estimated range of 10,000km in defiance of the international community's efforts to prevent it. The purposes are apparently believed to solidify internal unity, show off its military strength, and improve its bargaining power at negotiations.

In a report submitted to Congress on March 3, 2008, the US Office of the Director of National Intelligence expressed its concern over North Korea's export of nuclear and missile technology to Iran and other actors. The agency stated its belief that North Korea had reached a point where it is almost self-

sufficient in supplying the parts needed to develop and produce ballistic missiles.

Table 4–8 Specification of North Korean Missiles<sup>21</sup>

	SCUD–B	SCUD–C	Rodong	Musudan (IRBM)	Taepodong 1	Taepodong 2
Range (km)	300	500	1,300	Over 3,000	2,500	Over 6,700
Warhead Weight (kg)	1,000	770	700	650	500	650~1,000 (est.)
Remarks	In operational deployment	In operational deployment	In operational deployment	In operational deployment	In operational deployment	In operational deployment

Source: Ministry of National Defense, 2012 Defense White Paper, p. 292.

### Biochemical Weapons

North Korea also has research and production facilities for biochemical weapons, the result of concerted efforts dating back to the early 1960s. Though overshadowed by the nuclear issue, North Korea’s biochemical weapons program should also be recognized as a serious military threat.

Many believe that the regime is currently operating several research centers in Kanggye and Yongsong, as well as production facilities in Hungnam, Manpo, Aoji and Chongjin.<sup>22</sup>

North Korea is known to possess an estimated stockpile of 2,500 to 5,000 tons of 17 different types of toxic gases, including blister, nerve, choking and blood agents as well as mustard gas. Biological agents in its possession include cholera, anthrax and smallpox. The regime is known to have the ability to culture these biological warfare agents and operate production facilities for such weapons in Chongju and Munchon.

## Section 5. Military Relations and Provocations against the South

### 1 External Military Relationship

Since the end of colonial rule, North Korea's external military relations had focused on its two main patrons, the Soviet Union and China. In the aftermath of the Korean War, the regime had to concentrate efforts on rebuilding devastated industries, but military reinforcement resumed in the beginning of the 1960s. On July 6, 1961, Kim Il-sung visited Moscow, where he signed a Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance with the Soviet Union, and on July 11, he visited Beijing to conclude a similar treaty with China.

The Sino-North Korean treaty stipulated that in the event of the contracting party's involvement in war, the other party would render immediate military and other assistance. The treaty also prescribed that unless both parties agreed to amend or terminate the treaty, it would remain in force in spite of objections raised by the other party.

In the case of the Soviet-North Korean treaty, former Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Rogachev visited Pyongyang in January 1992 as President Yeltsin's special envoy. At this time, he readdressed the need to review the automatic military intervention clause in Article 1 of the Soviet-DPRK Treaty of 1961. On September 7, Russia notified North Korea of its intention not to extend the treaty, which was thus allowed to expire on September 10, 1996.

In March 1999, Russia and North Korea initialed a new friendship treaty similar to those Russia had signed with Mongolia and Vietnam. Instead of providing “immediate military intervention and assistance,” Russia agreed to “make immediate mutual contact upon security emergencies.” This Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighborly Relations and Cooperation between the Russian Federation and the DPRK was formally signed in Pyongyang on February 9, 2000.

In April, 2001, a North Korean military delegation visited Russia, where it signed a bilateral agreement on cooperation in the areas of the defense industry and military equipment. In a summit meeting held in Moscow on August 4, Kim Jong-il and Vladimir Putin announced an eight-point joint statement calling for faithful abidance by the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, expansion of bilateral cooperation in economic and military areas, and the withdrawal of US troops from South Korea.

In October 2002, a North Korean army and air force delegation visited Russia and reinforced bilateral ties by agreeing to expand exchanges and cooperation between the two countries. On his way to Russia in August of the same year, Kim Jong-il stopped off at a training center for the Russian Far Eastern forces, where he observed their military exercises. In August 2011, Kim Jong-il and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev agreed on search and rescue training between the two countries and a military delegation headed by Russian’s Eastern Military District Commander Admiral Konstantin Sidenko visited North Korea. In August the following year, KPA Commander of the Air and Anti-Air Forces Ri Pyong-chol and his party visited Russia and discussed cooperation between the two countries’ air forces.

However, the most important country in North Korea’s military diplomacy remains China. In accordance with a bilateral agreement on military exchanges signed in August 1971, the two countries have exchanged military delegations two to three times a year thereafter.

In October 2000, for instance, a Chinese military delegation headed by Minister of National Defense General Chi Haotian visited North Korea to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Chinese People's

Volunteer Army's assistance in the Korean War. The ceremony was attended by all top leaders of the Workers' Party and North Korean government as well as the KPA. This presented a striking contrast with the welcoming ceremony held in the same month for US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, which was attended only by military generals.

Following the Director of the General Political Bureau Jo Myong-rok's visit to Beijing in April 2003, a high-level Chinese military delegation visited North Korea in May to discuss ways to improve the bilateral military relationship and to exchange their positions on nuclear issues. In January 2006, accompanied by senior military leaders, Kim Jong-il visited Guangzhou and other industrial areas in China before having a summit meeting with Chinese President Hu Jintao. In the following April, Chinese National Defense Minister General Cao Gangchuan visited Pyongyang, where an agreement was reached on expanding friendship and cooperation in the military area between the two countries.

Moreover, in August 2007, a Chinese goodwill delegation visited North Korea. In December, Chinese Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Wu Dawei visited Pyongyang to meet with North Korean Foreign Minister Pak Ui-chun and convey China's position as the host of the Six Party Talks. On December 12, 2008, Chinese Defense Minister General Liang Guanglie met with North Korean officials in charge of external affairs and underlined the importance of expanding exchanges and cooperation between the militaries of the two countries. Around the 50th anniversary of the China-North Korean Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation in August 2011, Jon Chang-bok Director of the General Logistics Bureau of the Ministry of People's Armed Forces and his delegation visited China and agreed to improve bilateral military relations.

In the meantime, a North Korean air force delegation made an inspection of



an aviation complex in Pakistan in May 2001. In the following month, a high-level North Korean delegation visited Myanmar to discuss bilateral cooperation in the defense industry. One unusual visitor to Pyongyang during this period was Nong Duc Manh, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam, the highest-ranking official from that country to visit North Korea in more than 50 years in October 2007. North Korea had sent more than 200 pilots to Vietnam during the Vietnam War, in the course of which eleven of them are known to have been killed in action. In July 2008, a North Korean military delegation visited Mongolia to discuss issues related to agricultural development and, in May 2012, a high-level military delegation, including former Chief of the General Staff Ri Yong-ho, visited Laos. In addition, the Vice Minister of People's Armed Forces Kang Pyo-yong and his delegation visited Indonesia in September 2012 and also made a trip to Africa in April 2013. Chief of the General Staff Kim Kyok-sik and his delegation visited Cuba in June 2013, whereas a Vietnamese military delegation made a visit to North Korea in May 2014.

North Korea has long spent efforts to strengthen its ties with countries in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America. These efforts have been motivated not just by diplomatic considerations but also by the need to find markets for North Korea's arms and to transfer its military technologies. In addition, North Korea has maintained military cooperation with Iran Syria, and other Arab states. Of particular concern to the international community has been its dispatch of nuclear and missile engineers to Iran.

Since the first inter-Korean summit in 2000, a series of military talks between South and North Korea was conducted, including those between the respective defense ministers and working-level contacts. In the general officers' talks held on June 3-4, 2004, the two Koreas adopted and put into effect an agreement on the prevention of accidental clashes in the West Sea, suspension of propaganda broadcasting, and removal of propaganda devices from the areas near the

Military Demarcation Line (MDL). Accordingly, both sides restrained their naval ships from possible confrontations, prohibited any unprovoked actions against each other, ceased propaganda activities, and removed all propaganda devices from the MDL.

Later, a working group meeting of the third round of general officers' talks was held on July 20, 2005, culminating in an agreement to establish correspondence offices to prevent accidental clashes in the West Sea. The construction of these offices on August 13 enabled the two Koreas to make urgent calls using radio or wireless communication. An agreement was also made to enable inter-Korean communication between North and South Korean vessels, based on communication networks shared among international merchant ships. Both sides also agreed to exchange information regarding ships engaged in illegal fishing activities.

During the third and fourth round of general officers talks held on March 2-3 and May 16-18, 2006, respectively, South Korea proposed to prevent confrontations and establish joint fishing grounds in the West Sea. These talks, however, failed to reach an agreement as the North insisted on drawing a new maritime West Sea border. Later, in the seventh round of general officers' talks held on December 12-14, 2007, the two Koreas adopted an agreement to provide military guarantee for passage, communication and customs clearance in areas jointly administrated by South and North Korea in the East and West Seas. Of the 12 agreements produced at the military talks held since 2000, however, few have been effective in addressing matters directly relevant to the building of inter-Korean trust. The 39th round of working-level military talks held in the truce village in Panmunjom on February 8-9, 2011 was intended to deal with procedures to hold high-level inter-Korean military talks to discuss the torpedo attack on the South Korean corvette Cheonan and the artillery shelling of Yeonpyeong Island, but ended without results.

As long as the stand-off between South and North Korean military forces

continues, they could face a serious crisis or irrevocable catastrophe resulting from a misunderstanding or misjudgment caused by voluntary or involuntary factors. Subsequently, the importance of accurately estimating the situation, maintaining readiness for all contingencies and preventing military collision between the two Koreas cannot be overemphasized.

## **2** North Korea's Provocations against the South

Over the last half century, North Korea has made 2,953 military provocations against South Korea.<sup>23</sup> Even taking into account the fundamental instability of the divided peninsula where two opponents conflict sometimes and cooperate at other times, North Korea's military attacks, infiltrations and other provocations against the South must be seen as the most fundamental cause of the dysfunction in inter-Korean bilateral relations. Even before the Korean War, the North Korean military pursued national unification by use of armed forces as their top policy priority, while at the same time implementing a typical communist mix of carrot-and-stick tactics. On the surface, North Korea may seem to want reconciliation and peace, but in reality, it remains faithful to the doctrine calling for the accomplishment of its goals even by the means of war and violence. North Korea has advocated military action along with united front tactics throughout the last decade or so. What is notable is that the North has adopted carrot-and-stick tactics and especially military attacks and infiltrations as a means to deal with matters related to national unification and inter-Korean relations, too.

Even during peaceful dialogue or institutional negotiations, North Korea has often engaged in unreasonable actions such as provocations, violence and terrorism when situations do not proceed according to plan, in order to force its counterparts to change their stance to make concessions. At other times, the regime has made peace overtures or launched charm offensives in the form of

dialogue or token cooperation, only to resort to military force and pressure to obtain its objectives.

Looking back on inter-Korean relations over the last half century, one can see this pattern in the North's various attacks, infiltrations and provocations against the South. The most typical example of all is the invasion that set off the Korean War in 1950. Pyongyang had proposed peace talks shortly before mobilizing its mechanized units, artilleries and a 200,000-strong infantry in a surprise attack across the Southern border at daybreak on a Sunday. North Korea also drilled invasion tunnels while announcing a historic joint statement for peaceful unification on July 4, 1972. There was also an assassination attempt on then South Korean President Chun Doo-hwan while he was visiting Rangoon, Myanmar with his entourage in 1983. Earlier that same year, North Korea had proposed a three-way dialogue of the two Koreas and the United States to discuss the possibility of a US-North Korea peace treaty and an inter-Korean non-aggression pact.

Around the 2000s, while economic cooperation between the two Koreas as well as South Korea's economic assistance to the North was in progress, the North carried out a series of provocations against the South, including an infiltration of the South with its midget submarine, three nuclear tests (2006, 2009, and 2013), and four test firings of long-range missiles (1998, 2006, 2009, and 2012). Other examples include the Second Battle of Yeonpyeong in 2002, which was sparked by North Korean vessels that had intruded the Northern Limit Line in the West Sea. At this time, the North fired at a South Korean patrol boat on the day when a match between South Korea and Turkey was played during the Japan-Korea World Cup; the torpedo attack on the South Korean corvette Cheonan in March 2010, just after the resumption of South Korea's humanitarian assistance to the North, including rice and cement; and the artillery shelling of Yeonpyeong Island in November 2010, just before Red Cross talks between the two Koreas were scheduled to take place.

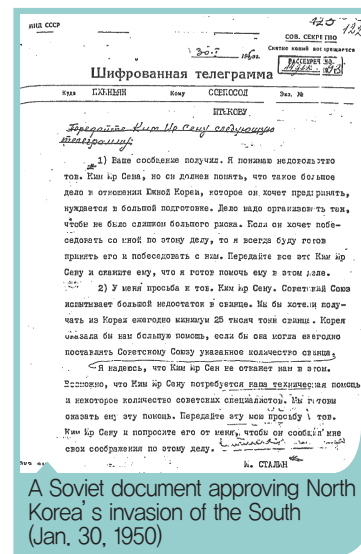
The root of this provocative behavior can be found in North Korea's belligerence, which originates from Stalin's plan to communize Asia. Another cause can be also found in the regime's revolutionary doctrine, which calls for the use of any tactical methods necessary to achieve a desired end.

## (1) The Korean War

The first and most typical example of North Korea's provocation is the invasion that sparked the Korean War of 1950-53. During the Soviet military occupation (1945-48) Kim Il-sung and other North Korean leaders had reached the conclusion that forced unification would be the surest and fastest way to bring the entire peninsula under the communist banner. Accordingly, the invasion was prepared with elaborate plans, based on a carrot-and-stick strategy and the theory of communist revolution. The

ensuing war caused over three million deaths in both South and North Korea, resulting in over 100,000 orphans and the separations of ten million families, along with tremendous property damage in North and South. Military conflict on the peninsula eventually took on international dimensions, thus launching the Cold War in earnest and further solidifying Korea's division.

Immediately before the outbreak of the war Kim Il-sung made clandestine visits to Moscow and Beijing to sign secret military pacts with Joseph Stalin and Mao Zedong. These pacts enabled North Korea to concentrate its energy on reinforcing its invasion capabilities. At the same time, Pyongyang launched a series of disguised peace offensives against South Korea and the international community, calling for political negotiations between the leaders of the two Koreas and submitting to the UN Secretary General a declaration of its desire for peaceful unification.





Kim Il-sung visits the Soviet Union in March 1949

Under such circumstances, North Korean troops intruded into the DMZ without declaring war, and at dawn on June 25, 1950 began an all-out surprise invasion of the South. Seoul fell in three days' time as the Northern forces dominated the war, needing only a few days to push the battlefront as far down as the Nakdong River.

This early domination of the fighting had much to do with the fact that half the North Korean troops deployed along the frontline were former members of the Korean Volunteer Army or Allied Anti-Japanese Forces of the Northeast Region, with rich combat experience acquired from fighting Japanese troops in continental China. Meanwhile, the South Korean army, having only recently been established, was under-trained and under-equipped.

Upon the outbreak of the war, the United Nations convened a Security Council meeting, during which it condemned North Korea's attack as an illegal act of invasion. UN forces, consisting of a total of sixteen nations, including the United States, entered the war, recapturing Seoul after a successful landing at Incheon. The Republic of Korea (ROK) forces also succeeded in crossing the 38th parallel to reach the Amnok (or Yalu) River by the end of October 1950, but were later pushed back by the Chinese army, resulting in a standstill. The Soviet Union then proposed a ceasefire to the United Nations. This proposal was accepted by the UN forces, leading to ceasefire negotiations in July 1951. After more than two years of repeated combats and negotiations, the two sides finally signed an armistice agreement on July 27, 1953.

Table 4–9 South and North Korean Forces at the Beginning of the Korean War

South Korean Forces		North Korean Forces
103,827	Troops	201,050
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Army (94,974): 8 divisions and support units</li> <li>• Navy and Marine Corps (6,956): guard units and Marine Corps units</li> <li>• Air Force (1,897): one flight wing and seven bases</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Army (182,680): 10 divisions and support units</li> <li>• Navy and Marine Corps (15,570): three waters defense commands and Marine Corps</li> <li>• Air Force(2,800): one air division</li> </ul>
0	Tanks (Armored Vehicles)	242
(Armored Vehicles: 27)		(Armored vehicles : 54)
1,051	Artillery Guns	2,492
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-propelled artillery: 0</li> <li>• 105mm M3 howitzers: 91</li> <li>• 81mm, 60mm mortar launchers: 960</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-propelled artillery (SU-76): 176</li> <li>• 122mm, 76mm howitzers: 552</li> <li>• 85mm, 37mm anti-aircraft artillery: 36</li> <li>• 120mm, 82mm, 60mm mortar launchers: 1,728</li> </ul>
2,040	Anti-tank Artillery	550
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2.36" anti-tank guns: 1,900</li> <li>• 57mm recoilless rifles: 140</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 45mm anti-tank guns: 550</li> </ul>
36	Naval Ships	110
Patrol boats: 36		Patrol boats: 30, auxiliary vessels: 80
22	Aircraft	226
L-4: 8, L-5:4, T-6:10		YAK-9, IL-10, TU-2, trainers, reconnaissance aircraft

Source: Ministry of National Defense, 2010 Defense White Paper, p. 242.

Three years of war provoked by the communist side reduced the Korean peninsula to ashes. Over 140,000 South Korean soldiers were killed and more than 450,000 were wounded, while North Korean forces suffered about 1.8 million casualties. In addition, the South Korean economy was almost paralyzed due to the destruction of over 40 percent of its production facilities. North Korea, too, suffered an economic setback, because most of its key industrial foundations and production facilities were also burnt to the ground. South and North Korea, both new nations established in 1948, lost most of their key industrial facilities as well as human and material resources during the three years of war that ravaged the peninsula.

## (2) North Korea's Provocations against South Korea

Even after the ceasefire, North Korea engaged in numerous military provocations against the South, albeit changing tactics according to the times. The communist regime has intentionally created tension by strategically implementing a wide range of provocations, including aggressive military actions, nuclear tests and missile launches, in order to take the initiative in inter-Korean relations and pursue its own interests. In addition, since the end of the Korean War, the North has conducted a total of 2,953<sup>24</sup> provocations based on stick-and-carrot tactics, including 1,959 infiltrations of South Korea by land and sea, and over 994 cases of shooting incidents, shelling attacks, assaults, naval skirmishes, sea-jacking, violation of airspace and missile-firings.

North Korea has used military action as a tool or means to deal with inter-Korean issues over the past few decades. The communist regime has also relied on carrot-and-stick tactics, mixing violence and negotiations in order to achieve its goals. Pyongyang seems to have aimed its sights at reaping profits in various areas by drawing the international community's attention to North Korea, putting pressure on the South Korean government, demanding economic assistance and inducing conflicts within South Korean society. However, due to such actions, North Korea has been branded as a rogue state which violates universal norms and values, receiving criticism from the international community.

Table 4-10 Korean War Casualties among ROK and UN Forces

(Unit: persons)

	KIAs and those who later died as a result of wounds received in action	KIAs	MIAs and POWs	Total
ROK Forces	137,899	450,742	32,838	621,479
UN Forces	40,670	104,280	9,931	154,881
Total	178,569	555,022	42,769	776,360

Source: Ministry of National Defense, 2010 Defense White Paper, p.249.



Table 4-11 Civilian Casualties of the Korean War

(Unit: persons)

Massacred or killed	Wounded	Kidnapped or missing	Total	Other victims
373,599	229,625	387,744	990,968	Refugees: 3.2 million War widows: 300,000 War orphans: 100,000

Source: Ministry of National Defense, 2010 Defense White Paper, p.249.

### Provocations by land and air

These provocations can be classified into several categories according to the time period. As post-war reconstruction was coming to an end in the 1960s, North Korea embarked on a series of limited military attacks on the South aimed at bringing about a communist revolution there. The first attack was made in January 1968, when a squad of North Korean armed spy agents infiltrated into the South and made a raid on the Blue House, the presidential residence in Seoul.

In the 1970s, North Korea promoted a two-pronged strategy. As rapprochement between East and West led to change in the international situation, North Korea called for inter-Korean dialogue while continuing efforts to bring about a communist revolution in South Korea. North Korea's sporadic provocations during this decade were aimed at creating conflict within South Korean society. The most distinctive attempt made by North Korea during this period was the axe murder of American soldiers, which took place on August 18, 1976 in the Panmunjom area. Following the assassination of President Park Chung-hee on October 26, 1979, North Korea made further attempts to exploit the confusion roiling South Korean society. While proposing working-level talks aimed at holding a prime ministers' meeting at the beginning of 1980s, the Northern regime also carried out provocations against the South in an effort to prevent it from restoring social stability.

During this period, North Korea embarked on a new pattern of provocation involving terrorist attacks by bomb blasts, a change from the guerilla infiltrations

of the past. On October 9, 1983, North Korean agents exploded bombs at the Aung San National Cemetery in Rangoon, Myanmar in an attempt to assassinate President Chun Doo-hwan and his entourage, who were then on a goodwill visit to the Southeast Asian country. Although President Chun himself was unhurt, the vice prime minister and 16 other members of the entourage were killed, while 14 others were wounded. Furthermore, on November 29, 1987, Korean Airlines Flight 858 flying from Abu Dhabi to Seoul exploded over the ocean near Myanmar, killing all 115 passengers and crew members on board. It was later disclosed that two North Korean agents, Kim Hyun-hee and Kim Sung-il, had conducted the bombing mission on orders from Pyongyang in order to disrupt preparations for the upcoming Olympic Games in Seoul.

During the Cold War, North Korea had relied mostly on military provocations such as infiltration by armed spy agents, Special Forces and guerilla troops in addition to limited attacks in the Panmunjom and DMZ area and the bombing and hijacking of civil airliners. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, even while developing various types of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear, biological and chemical types, North Korea continued infiltrating the South using asymmetric capabilities such as Special Forces and undersea warfare capability.

### Provocations by sea

The most notorious provocation at sea by North Korea is the First Battle of Yeonpyeong. On June 15, 1999, ignoring warnings issued by the South Korean navy, six North Korean patrol boats crossed the NLL,<sup>25</sup> entering South Korean territorial waters at a point 10km west of Yeonpyeong Island. These North Korean boats then launched a preemptive strike on South Korean naval vessels, sparking an exchange of fire. This skirmish was the first sea battle fought between the two sides' navies since the Korean War.

On June 29, 2002, the second naval skirmish between the two Koreas took

place near the NLL off the coast of Yeonpyeong Island in the West Sea. Determined to avenge their defeat in the first battle of Yeonpyeong three years earlier, the North Korean navy made a surprise attack from behind on a South Korean patrol boat, leaving six South Korean sailors dead and eighteen wounded. North Korea also suffered more than 30 casualties.

On November 10, 2009, another skirmish between the two Korean navies broke out in waters 2.2 km west of Daecheong Island, near the NLL. While North Korean patrol boats were being driven out of South Korean territorial waters, the two sides exchanged fire. Though the South Korean side suffered no casualties, there were heavy casualties on the North Korean side, which also sustained severe damage to one of its vessels. A series of military attacks against South Korean military and even civilians ensued, such as the torpedo attack on the South Korean corvette Cheonan on March 26, 2010 and the artillery shelling of Yeonpyeong Island on November 23 in the same year.

North Korea argues that the Northern Limit Line (NLL) was established unilaterally by the United States, and must therefore be repudiated and re-established. Since its first violation of the maritime boundary in 1973, North Korea had repeated infiltrations and military attacks in the NLL area from the end of the 1990s to the early 2000s.

There are several reasons behind North Korea's insistence that the NLL is an unlawful boundary drawn unilaterally by the United Nations Forces. First, it bolsters Pyongyang's demand for a peace treaty with the United States that would replace the current armistice agreement. Second, by turning the waters around the NLL into a disputed area, North Korea wants to establish a new maritime boundary to its advantage. Third, a heightened crisis around the NLL in the West Sea would provide greater economic profits to North Korea through an increased harvest of marine products, including blue crabs. Fourth, through military provocations and infiltrations, North Korea may also secure additional political benefits.

Although North Korea has recently disputed the NLL, it had for over more than

fifty years recognized the maritime boundary and abided by it. For instance, it had agreed to meet on the NLL in 1984 to receive South Korea's assistance for flood victims. Stranded North Korean vessels were returned to North Korea on the NLL in 2002 and 2003. Additional clear evidence for Pyongyang's acceptance of the NLL is that it had also recognized it in the Basic Agreement signed between the two Koreas in 1992 as well as other bilateral agreements.

The NLL is the maritime boundary between South and North Korea; and the area south of it is clearly South Korea's territorial waters. North Korea's denial of this validity constitutes a clear violation of the Armistice Agreement of 1953 and international law, as well as the South-North Basic Agreement of 1992. Ever since the armistice agreement was signed, South Korea has respected the NLL as a line sustaining the stable enforcement of the agreement. The NLL has long played the role of a maritime military demarcation line. Both the Armistice Agreement and the Basic Agreement clearly state that the NLL must be respected. North Korea's provocative actions ceased for a time due to the signing of the South-North Basic Agreement and a Follow-up Agreement on Nonaggression, which define the areas under each side's jurisdiction. Despite these agreements, however, North Korea has repeatedly violated the NLL.



#### Agreements on Demarcation Line for Non-aggression between South and North Korea

Article 11 of the South-North Basic Agreement stipulates that "The demarcation line between the two Koreas and the areas for nonaggression shall be identical to the Military Demarcation Line provided in the Military Armistice Agreement of July 27, 1953, and the areas that each side has exercised jurisdiction over until the present time." Article 10 of the Follow-up Agreement on Nonaggression also stipulates that "The South and North shall continue to discuss a nonaggression line on the sea. Until a new maritime non-aggression demarcation line is established, the areas for non-aggression on the sea shall be those that each side has exercised jurisdiction over until the present time."

Furthermore, on March 26, 2010, North Korea sent a Yeono class miniature submarine into South Korea's territorial waters south of the NLL and sank the Cheonan. The submarine torpedoed the South Korean corvette while it was on a surveillance operation off the coast of Baengnyeong Island. 46 of its 104 crew members were killed in the sinking.

**Table 4–12 Major North Korean Provocations in the West Sea since 1999**

Jun. 15, 1999	The First Battle of Yeonpyeong broke out after six North Korean patrol boats had violated South Korea's waters at a point 10km west of Yeonpyeong Island, ignored the warning and started to shoot at ROK patrol boats. Nine South Korean crew members were minorly wounded. North Korean casualties were significant.
Jun. 29, 2002	The Second Battle of Yeonpyeong broke out after a North Korean patrol boat had violated South Korean waters and intentionally attacked a ROK naval ship, killing six and wounding eighteen among the ROK crew. North Korean casualties were about 30.
Nov. 10, 2009	The Battle of Daecheong broke out after a North Korean patrol boat had crossed the NLL at a point 9 km east of Daecheong Island and launched a surprise attack on ROK's naval ships, ignoring their warnings. After an exchange of fire, the North Korean boat was destroyed and sent back to the North.
Mar. 26, 2010	A North Korean mini submarine that had infiltrated into South Korean waters sunk the ROK corvette Cheonan by a surprise torpedo attack, resulting in the deaths of 46 South Korean crew members.
Nov. 23, 2010	North Korean forces fired artillery guns and multiple rocket launchers at civilian houses and military facilities on Yeonpyeong Island. The exchange of fire lasted for 50 minutes as the South Korean troops fired back. Two ROK Marine soldiers and two civilians were killed. Eighteen soldiers and civilians were wounded. The North suffered damages to its regions as a result of South Korea's return fire.

Source: Ministry of National Defense, 2010 Defense White Paper, pp. 252–267.

On November 23, 2010, North Korea bombarded military facilities and private houses on Yeonpyeong Island. Using as its pretext a South Korean artillery exercise which had taken place in waters south of the NLL, the North fired multiple rocket launchers. In response, South Korean forces returned fire. The exchange continued for fifty minutes, resulting in the deaths of two civilians and two soldiers. The shelling of Yeonpyeong Island was the North's first attack on South Korean territory since the signing of the armistice agreement in 1953. The fact that the shelling claimed the lives of innocent civilians makes it an especially serious provocation that cannot be ignored.



The South Korean corvette Cheonan being salvaged after having been sunk by a North Korean torpedo attack



Private residence destroyed by North Korea's bombardment of Yeonpyeong Island

The South Korean government imposed bilateral sanctions against the North following an announcement on results of investigation into the sinking of the Cheonan. The May 24 sanctions were aimed at making Pyongyang realize that misbehavior would bring punitive consequences. The South Korean government also demanded that Pyongyang apologize for the provocations and punish those responsible. In addition, the government reiterated to North Korea that the NLL is the maritime boundary between the two Koreas, and that additional provocations would be countered with retaliatory strikes.

**Table 4–13 The Cheonan Sinking and Shelling of Yeonpyeong Island**

	Sinking of the Cheonan	Shelling on Yeonpyeong Island
Type of North Korean Attack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Torpedo attack from a mini submarine</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 170 shots by multiple rocket launchers and coastal artillery guns</li> </ul>
Development of Situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On March 31, a civilian–military Joint Investigation Group (JIG) was established with 59 active service members, 17 government officials, and 6 civilians.</li> <li>• On April 12, the JIG was reorganized to include 49 Korean and 24 foreign experts.</li> <li>• On May 20, the JIG made an official announcement that the Cheonan had been sunk by North Korea’s torpedo attack.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 14:47–15:15 ROK Marine Yeonpyeong unit responded to the attack by firing 50 rounds of K–9 self–propelled artillery.</li> <li>• 15:12–15:29 North Korea launched the second attack with 20 rounds of MRLs and coastal artillery.</li> <li>• 15:25–15:41 The ROK Marine unit responded to the second attack with 30 rounds of K–9 artillery.</li> </ul>
Damages Caused	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 46 out of 104 crew members were killed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two ROK marines were killed and 18, wounded.</li> <li>• Two South Korean civilians were killed and many, wounded.</li> <li>• In addition, a total of 133 buildings (33 completely destroyed, 9 half destroyed, and 91 partially destroyed) and power and communications facilities were damaged, Wildfires broke out at ten different sites.</li> </ul>
Result of Investigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Cheonan was split and sunk due to a shockwave and bubble effect generated by the underwater explosion of a torpedo.</li> </ul>	
North Korea’s Position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Korea denied its involvement and insisted that the whole incident had been fabricated by South Korea.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Korea insisted that it was acting in a rightful self–defense against a South Korean provocation.</li> </ul>
Measures Taken Against North Korea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ROK government announced the May 24 measures, which completely suspended trade and exchange between the two Koreas, prohibited navigation of North Korean vessels in South Korean waters.</li> <li>• On June 17, the European Parliament adopted a resolution condemning North Korea.</li> <li>• The G8 Summit Meeting also adopted a joint statement condemning North Korea.</li> <li>• On July 9, the UN Security Council condemned the sinking of the Cheonan in a presidential statement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ROK government strongly demanded that North Korea take responsible measures. The South Korean National Assembly defined it as an act of armed provocation and strongly condemned it.</li> <li>• The United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, Germany and other countries around the world were outraged by North Korea’s blatant provocation and condemned it.</li> </ul>

Source: Compiled from data provided by various institutions

Several provocations were conducted by North Korea in 2014 as well. North Korea fired two Rodong missiles in the East Sea on March 26 without prior notifications. The UN Security Council concluded that the firing was in violation of the UNSC resolutions and expressed “serious concerns, while condemning it” in the form of a verbal statement to the press. Moreover, the North launched short-range missiles in the East Sea and launched fires on Baengnyeong Island in the West Sea south of the NLL with its coastal artilleries and multiple rocket launchers. South Korean navy fired back immediately.

# Endnotes

- 1 “Statement by the Commander of the 25th Corps of the USSR” (October 12, 1945), Chosun Central Yearbook, 1949, p.58.
- 2 The National Defense University, Chinese Views of Future Warfare, 1998.
- 3 Institute for Unification Education. North Korea Knowledge Dictionary, 2013, p.178.
- 4 Collection of Kim Il-sung’s Writings vol. 28, p.534.
- 5 Chosun Central Yearbook, 1963, pp.157-163.
- 6 Rodong Sinmun, October 11, 1980.
- 7 People’s Army. Pyongyang: KPA Publishing Co., 1987, pp.43-47. North Korea has recently modified the concept of Operational Maneuver Groups, which was developed by the Soviet Union in order to penetrate NATO rear areas using swift maneuvering of tank units, in view of the topography of the Korean peninsula. However, it has also been argued that the applicability of such tactics would still be limited on the peninsula, except in the western region where there are vast areas of open terrain.
- 8 According to William S. Lind, fourth-generation warfare is any war waged by irregular combatants of small- and medium-sized states or terrorist groups with asymmetric war capabilities. The warfare includes not only asymmetric combats, but new forms of insurgency, guerrilla war, bloodshed, and information warfare.
- 9 Institute for Unification Education, North Korea Knowledge Dictionary, 2013, p.76.
- 10 Institute for Unification Education, North Korea Knowledge Dictionary, 2013, p.473.
- 11 In North Korea, the term of military service is determined by Cabinet Decision No. 148. However, the WPK’s military policy and the Ministry of People’s Armed Forces’ policy precede the cabinet decision.
- 12 The Ten-point guideline includes the following: abiding by military rules; gaining full knowledge and strict management of arms; strictly executing military orders; completing assignments by the Party and other political units; keeping state, military and party secrets; observing socialist laws and orders; participating in military and political trainings; having affection toward the people and not



breaching people's property; protecting and making efforts to save national property and military supplies; and achieving unity and solidarity and establishing good customs in the military.

- 13 Since 1995, the North Korean army has discharged those soldiers whose families have economic difficulties or whose parents have no other provider in the family.
- 14 Company political directive officers keep themselves informed on their company's formal and informal state by interviewing an average of twenty soldiers a month.
- 15 The unity between officers and the ranks is of course a matter of harmony between officers and soldiers, while the unity between party members and non-members is a matter of concord between WPK members and those in the Kim Il-sung Socialist Youth League who have yet to gain party membership.
- 16 Ministry of National Defense, Q&A on Weapons of Mass Destruction, 2004, p.54
- 17 Ministry of National Defense, How Much Do You Know on Atomic, Biological and Chemical Weapons and Missiles?, 2001, p.95.
- 18 North Korean Foreign Ministry Statement, March 30, 2014.
- 19 In a report published by the Strategic Studies Institute of US Army War College on February 3, 2008, Daniel Pinkston, senior researcher at the International Crisis Group, pointed out that North Korea has almost reached a point where it can produce ballistic missiles on its own but still relies on the outside for advanced technology and parts.
- 20 On April 13, 2009, the UN Security Council condemned North Korea's launching of long-range rocket, regarding it as a violation of the UNSC resolution 1718 which demanded North Korea to suspend additional nuclear tests and the firing of ballistic missile. The Council unanimously adopted a presidential statement calling for reinforced implementation of sanctions against North Korea, including the freezing of North Korea's assets supporting its ballistic missile program.
- 21 North Korea is known to have acquired advanced nuclear and missile technologies from Pakistan, Iran, and other Islam states as well as from the old Soviet Union in the course of the fall of the former socialist bloc in East Europe.

- 22** The February 2007 issue of *Popular Mechanics* warned that North Korea possesses 5,000 tons of chemicals and operates 32 biochemical plants, 20 biological weapons-related facilities and 12 chemical weapons-related facilities, while 30 percent of its missiles and field guns are capable of carrying chemical weapons. According to US Army's NATO Handbook on the Medical Aspects of NBC Defensive Operation, it costs 2,000 dollars to kill one enemy combatant with a conventional weapon and 80 billion dollars with a nuclear weapon, but only 1 dollar with a biological weapon.
- 23** Ministry of National Defense, 2012 Defense White Paper, p.306.
- 24** Ministry of National Defense, 2012 Defense White Paper, p.306.
- 25** While negotiating the armistice agreement of July 27, 1953, the United Nations Command and the Communist bloc established a demarcation line on land, but failed to reach an agreement on a maritime boundary. On August 30, UNC commander General Mark Clark promulgated the NLL as a military control line in the West Sea, restricting patrol activities of the ROK navy and air force in order to prevent accidental crashes in the waters off the Korean peninsula. The NLL in the East Sea was drawn based on a maritime extension of the Military Demarcation Line on land. In the meantime, the NLL in the West Sea was established based on a line equidistant from five islands under the control of the UNC commander on one hand, and the North Korean coast on the other, and by connecting twelve sets of coordinates in the area northwest of the mouth of the Han River. When armistice negotiations began the UNC had control over most islands off the coast of Hwanghae Province as well as the coastal areas, but conceded all but five of them to the North upon conclusion of the agreement.



V

# Economic Structure and Policy

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**Section 1.** Characteristics of Economic System and Basic Economic Policy

**Section 2.** Economic Status by Sector

**Section 3.** Changes in Economic Policy and Outlook for Reform and Opening

## Key Points

### 01

Ownership by the general masses is dominant to cooperative ownership in North Korea, and this tendency is particularly evident in comparison with other socialist countries. Besides this, the most orthodox form of Stalinist-style centrally planned economy has long been upheld in the country. However, the economic crisis brought major changes to the North Korean economy and there are now pseudo-property rights being created and enterprises make up their own plan indicators.

### 02

North Korea has pursued socialist-style industrialization based on the traditional policies of self-reliance, heavy industry-first development, and parallel development of the military and economy. These basic policies have been passed down to the Kim Jong-il regime in the form of the military-first policy and then to the Kim Jong-un regime as parallel development of the economic development and nuclear capabilities.

### 03

North Korea devised five economic development plans after the 1960s, but failed to implement them fully, and thus had to put in place a buffer period each time. The North Korean economy experienced low growth, recession, and then negative growth after the late-1970s before registering positive growth for six consecutive years in the 2000s. Following the first nuclear test in 2006, economic growth had seemed to slip into a recession once again, but entered a positive state in 2011 and has stayed there since.

### 04

Since 2000, to overcome the economic crisis, North Korea has expanded its scope of opening up, alternating between partial use of market functions and control over them while emphasizing socialist principles. The Kim Jong-un regime, which came into power in 2012, set forth the policy of parallel development of economic development and nuclear capabilities and announced the implementation of “economic management systems of our style” on a pilot basis and the establishment of fourteen economic development districts. The policy is highly unlikely to succeed in the long-term given that it is being conducted along with efforts to build nuclear weapons.

## Section 1. Characteristics of Economic System and Basic Economic Policy

### **1** Basic Characteristics of Economic System

Socialist countries in the world which have based their economy on a central planning system when building their nations have gradually resolved the inefficiencies of their economic systems, but North Korea has been an exception. In general, a centrally planned economy displays three distinctive features. First, only collective or state ownership is recognized. Second, the central planning authorities play a key role in allocating resources for each economic activity. Third, guidance and orders from the central planning authorities provide major criteria for making decisions on activities at final economic units.

Such features caused economic inefficiencies and short supplies in almost all socialist countries. Recognizing this, they adopted market functions for some parts of their economy from the 1960s, beginning to gradually transform their economic system to socialist market economy. In the beginning, they experimented with market functions within the strict boundaries of their existing system to a limited degree, but after the end of the Cold War, they eventually started to convert the whole system to a market economy.

Unlike most other socialist countries, North Korea maintained the most orthodox form of Stalinist-style centrally planned economy until the end of the 1980s. Although it faced difficulties operating the system after the

economic crisis in the 1990s, Pyongyang has adhered to socialist principles and not officially made any meaningful changes to its economic system. In the meantime, markets have spread across the country as its planned economic system ceased to serve its purpose. The regime then took economic management improvement measures, which fell short of resolving the systematic problems. As a result, the gap between North Korea's economic system and the economic reality has continued to only widen.

### (1) Socialist Ownership Centered around State Ownership

The essence of socialist economic system lies at social ownership of the means of production. With regard to this, the 1998 constitutional revision in North Korea stipulated that the means of production was owned by the state and social cooperative organizations (Article 20), meaning that social ownership of the means of production was classified into ownership by the state (Article 21) and ownership by social cooperative organizations (Article 22). According to the revised constitution, state ownership is equivalent to the ownership by the general masses and the subjects have actually no limits—the country's whole natural resources, railways, air flights, roads, postal networks, major factories, enterprises, ports, and banks are all subject to the ownership of the general masses. In the meantime, ownership by social cooperative organizations indicates collective ownership by workers of an organization and the subjects include lands, agricultural machinery, ships, smaller factories, and enterprises. A prime example of cooperative ownership is cooperative farms in the agricultural area.

North Korea recognizes private ownership, but the subjects are strictly limited to possessions for consumption since, according to Article 24 of its revised constitution, ownership comes into existence based on social ownership of the means of production. Examples include profits from private financial activities, income earned from legal financial activities, workers' wages and rations for their labors, goods purchased with the income and rations. The means of production is not subject to private ownership.

North Korea emphasizes that the ideal ownership of a socialist country is state ownership or ownership by the whole masses. According to Article 23, cooperative ownership is “an incomplete form of ownership which develops in a transitional phase between private ownership based on petty commodity production and ownership by the whole masses,” and thus “cooperative ownership shall be gradually transformed into ownership by the whole of the masses at the voluntary will of the members of cooperative organizations.”

As such, socialist ownership relations in North Korea were mainly composed of state ownership from the beginning and the share of cooperative ownership was relatively lower than in other socialist countries, as is shown in Table 5-1. Cooperative ownership in North Korea actually was not different from ownership by the masses given that it was also brought under strict control of the central planning authorities. Moreover, the country eliminated petty commodity production completely, allowing only earned income and daily necessities for private possession. This way, it was able to build the most orthodox form of production relations of socialism among all socialist countries.

Table 5-1 Gross Industrial Output by Ownership Form

Classification	1946	1949	1956	1959	1960	1963
Socialist ownership (%)	72.4	90.7	98.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
State	(72.4)	(85.5)	(89.9)	(89.5)	(89.7)	(91.2)
Cooperative	(0.0)	(5.2)	(8.1)	(10.5)	(10.3)	(8.8)
Petty commodity production (%)	4.4	1.5	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
Capitalist ownership	23.2	7.8	1.3	0.0	0.0	0.0

Source: Chosun Central Yearbook, 1964, p.171.

Cooperative ownership represented 20 to 40 percent of all ownership relations in Eastern Europe’s socialist countries in the past. In Poland, private land accounted for more than 70 percent of the country’s all arable land in the 1980s and in China, petty commodity production took a significant portion of the country’s handicraft and small industries prior to the reform and openness policy. North Korea too recognized private ownership and inheritance of “income from legal financial activities” through the 1998 constitutional revision.

This was intended to add small land lots, income earned in daily markets, profits from intellectual property, including inventions, and so on to its list of subjects of private ownership, all of which had been on the rise since the severe economic hardship. Still, the action was quite limited in effect and state ownership has been maintained until today.

North Korea's socialist ownership based mainly on state ownership has lost its firm grip over the people as a growing number of individuals has been increasingly engaging in wealth accumulation activities in markets since the economic crisis. They possess income earned from private economic activities such as merchandising and running a bistro in the form of currency and unofficially make investments into small factories, enterprises, or other commercial entities whose operation had come to a halt. This demonstrates that in some parts of the economy the means of production has become the subject of private ownership. Stands in general or daily markets are now available for sale or transfer. Some people even engage in home transactions by bribing relevant authorities to turn a blind eye to changing registered names on state housing permits. This phenomenon shows that housing too is now subject to private ownership among certain groups of people.

According to the accounts of North Korean refugees, the people in the North now recognize small land lots, housing, and selling stands in markets as three main items for property rights. This shows their recognition of private property rights has been broadened to include even real estate. Socialist-style state ownership still does exist by institution in the North. In reality, however, a phenomenon called "concealed property rights" has appeared as diverse items are being added to the list of subjects of private ownership.

## (2) Centrally Planned Economy and Collective Economic Management

North Korea created socialist relations of production on lands and its means of production in 1958, thereby laying the groundwork to operate a centrally



planned economic system. The North's regime defined the system as "a centralized socialist economy which advances according to a single national plan in a systematic and balanced manner"<sup>1</sup> and also defined it as "an economy under a unified guidance and management regime," and then set out to realize the centrally planned economic system in its territory. Consequently, a centrally planned economy was created in the North in the early 1960s. Under the system, the State Planning Commission (SPC), the North's central planning agency, drew economic plans at the national level according to the guidance of the Worker's Party of Korea (WPK) and gave orders on production, spending, demand, and supply to economic units in each industrial area so as for them to execute the orders.

North Korea's economic system was an order-based system in which the state implemented uniformity and specification in planning principles more thoroughly than other socialist countries. The uniformity in planning means that the SPC takes command of planning work at the center and lower industrial units such as factories, enterprises, and cooperative farms perform their respective jobs from formulation and execution of plans within a single unified structure. The Cabinet ministries which play the roles of government ministries and agencies of South Korea, commissions, and provincial people's committees all draw up their own plans, too, but they must submit specific figures to the SPC, which then controls and makes necessary adjustments to the figures.

North Korea created such a unified planning system because it believed that without the system, it could not avoid the self-centeredness of individuals, provinces, and organizations which tended to put their own interests before those of the nation or party and did not guarantee the exclusiveness of plans. The regime viewed the SPC (which was supposed to set plan indicators in light of political projects and economic policy decided at the WPK Central Committee) as an apparatus to make single, unified planning possible under the guidance of the *suryŏng* and the party.

Specification in planning means setting plan indicators not only for broad classifications of plans, but for specific elements so as to make plans for each industrial unit closely linked together and prevent the possibility of unexpected events from happening at every level of the industrial units, including enterprises and factories. According to this account, diverse elements ranging from capacity utilization rate and quality of products to prices and specifications are all used as plan indicators.

North Korea's planning mechanism was stricter than those of other socialist countries by all standards—the degree of centralization, scope of autonomy given to lower economic units, and the WPK's firm control. In contrast, plan indicators functioned as “guidance” rather than as “order” and their influence did not reach internal operations of factories in most other socialist countries.

For instance, China had eight broad indicators at the central level prior to reform and openness while North Korea had over 10,000 indicators at the same level at the end of the 1960s. Such tight planning, however, had to be gradually relaxed and was not executed effectively after the 1970s as the economy became increasingly sophisticated, and after the 1980s it underwent modifications due to economic difficulties. In other words, the central planning system based on the principle of uniformity and specification in planning became totally inoperable because of strained budget conditions resulting from economic troubles.

Today, order-based central planning does not work as it did in the past in North Korea. Instead, since the mid-1990s, the SPC has been devising and managing only major indicators in such areas as the defense industry, infrastructure, and leading economic sectors which are strategically important and thus need to be handled at the national level. Other indicators are left in the hands of relevant institutions, factories, and enterprises so that they make up their own under the “modified” planning system.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, industrial units in non-strategic areas are given “amount (or value)” indicators, not “quantity” indicators. This caused a phenomenon where

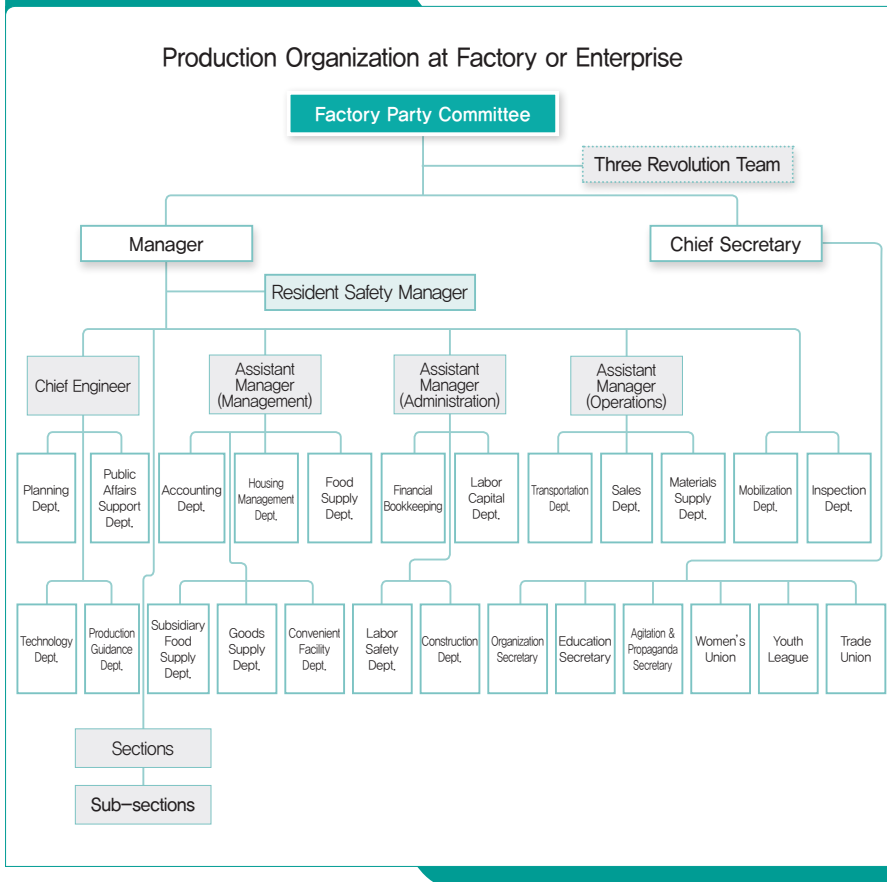
the industrial units work to meet given targets through market activities regardless of their main functions. They are engaged in illegal activities in markets in the name of legitimacy of performing national plans. The North Korean regime turned a blind eye to this reality though. In 1999, it enacted the People's Economic Planning Law, which stipulated, "It is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's consistent policy to manage and operate the people's economy under the central, unified guidance of the state" in Article 3. This was an indication of the regime's steadfast adherence to the institution of the centrally-planned command economy.

Together with centralized economic planning, North Korea introduced unique management practices to factories, enterprises, and cooperative farms. There are examples of East European socialist countries which devised their own economic management practices such as the Sole Responsibility of Managers in the Soviet Union and the Self-Management by Workers under the Workers' Council in Yugoslavia. North Korea adopted the *Chongsanri Method*<sup>3</sup> and *Dae'an Work System*<sup>4</sup>—its unique collective management systems governed by Party committees since 1960.

North Korea explains that the collective management systems combine collective guidance and a single line of control, enabling economic projects to be carried out under the political ideologies and single guidance of the WPK and state as well as making thorough planning possible. Under the system, production and other economic activities at factories or enterprises are conducted in accordance with the collective guidance and responsibility of the factory Party committees which consist of the chief secretary, manager, chief engineer, assistant managers, section chiefs, section party secretaries, sub-section chiefs, and a small number of field workers. On the face of it, representative members of a factory or enterprise are allowed to participate in the management process. In essence, however, the systems ensure all managerial activities are conducted according to the intent and decisions of the WPK Central Committee.

North Korea imported the Soviet Union's Sole Responsibility of Managers in the 1950s which granted enterprise or factory managers appointed by the WPK with the right to make final decisions on all management-related matters and held them solely responsible for the results. The system had side effects such as bureaucracy and self-centeredness of institutions. In addition, the establishment of the sole leadership of the *suryŏng* created the political need to create a management system which put the *suryŏng* at the head of industrial units solely guided by the WPK. This unique economic management practice has remained until today since it is closely associated with the *suryŏng* leadership.

Figure 5-1 Daean Work System



## 2 Basic Economic Policy

### (1) Traditional Basis of Economic Policy

North Korea pursued socialist-style industrialization in earnest in the 1960s under Kim Il-sung's leadership. In the process, it followed three basic policies for economic development: self-sufficient national economy, heavy industry-first development, and parallel development of the military and economy.

#### Self-sufficient National Economy

By “self-sufficient national economy,” North Korea means to create “an economy which is free from the control of others and walks on its own, and serves its own people while making progress based on its own resources and the capacity of the people.”<sup>5</sup> According to the North, a self-sufficient national economy basically secures the means of production and capacity to produce final products within its own country to meet domestic demands, and prepare the appropriate conditions for expanded reproduction using its own resources.

The policy is aimed at creating a self-sufficient economic mechanism that completes itself without external help. Also, it is a socialist-style import substitution policy which seeks to develop an economy through the mobilization of internal resources. This idea refuses the comparative advantage theory. However, no country in the world can obtain all factors needed for economic development completely from within. If there are factors of superiority for production in a country, there will be factors of inferiority, too. Thus, it is more efficient and productive for a country to produce goods for which it has a comparative advantage and forge trading relations with other countries for exchange of goods than attempting to meet all economic demands on its own.

The import substitution policy resulted in a huge waste of resources while causing high economic inefficiency in China under the reign of Mao Zedong.

During the Great Leap Forward movement which began in 1958, Iron Rice Bowls were installed in every town throughout the country to produce iron under the banner of self-reliance, but to no avail. In the end, China adopted reform and openness in 1978 and applied the comparative advantage theory for economic development, being actively integrated into the international order of economy.

In contrast, North Korea raised its rate of internal supply of raw materials from 60 percent to 70 percent in the mid-1960s. Besides this, while adhering to the self-reliance doctrine even after the economic hardship, it has refused the comparative advantage theory, blaming it as an imperialist attempt to exploit resources. However, expanded reproduction based on the self-reliance principle did not work any longer in North Korea after the economic crisis. The self-sufficient national economy principle is thus applied today in a modified form to embrace partial opening. Cases of the modified version in application is the North's first special economic zone established in Rason (or Rajin and Sonbong) in 1991 where the country began operating joint ventures with foreign capital and the drive to induce foreign direct investments. Besides this, along with the July 1 Economic Management Improvement Measures in 2002, North Korea expanded special zones, announcing the designation of the Shinuiju Special Administrative District in September 2002, the Gaeseong Industrial District in October the same year, and the Mt. Geumgang Tourism District in the following November. Among them, the Shinuiju project was canceled due to China's unwillingness to cooperate, whereas the Gaeseong and Mt. Geumgang projects were executed with South Korea's exclusive capital investment. In June 2011, North Korea designated the islands of Hwanggumpyong and Wihwa as the second special economic zone following the Rason Special Economic Zone and began a partnership with China for joint development.

The recently established Kim Jong-un regime enacted the Economic Development District Law and announced that it would establish thirteen special economic development districts at the provincial level and one district

at the national level on May 29, 2013.<sup>6</sup> This shows that North Korea seeks to expand special economic zones segregated from its domestic economy on one hand while still claiming, “Self-reliance provides for the underlying security for the victory of our revolution”<sup>7</sup> on the other.

### Heavy Industry–First Development

The heavy industry-first development policy was adopted to fully realize the so-claimed “self-sufficient national economy” in the North. North Korea argued, “At the center of socialist-style industrialization lies advanced development of heavy industries. Without highly developed heavy industries built on machinery manufacturing, it is impossible to secure a self-sufficient industrial structure and reconstruct the national economy using technology in full scale.”<sup>8</sup> The policy was based on the imbalanced growth strategy which puts priority on heavy industries. The Soviet Union, China, and other socialist countries had long applied the strategy, calling it “the socialist development theory.”

Facing competition with capitalist rivals, socialist countries sought rapid growth in production under such slogans as “Let us overtake the US” and “Let us overtake the UK.” To this end, they suppressed distribution of resources for consumption purpose, encouraged savings, and directed resources accumulated at the center to specific areas, including the defense industry and those related with the means of production.

North Korea which had also strived to secure superiority over its capitalist rivals adopted the same growth strategy and continuously allocated more than 70 percent of its investment expenditure to the heavy industries. This resulted in an industrial structure built around the heavy industries as was the case in the Soviet Union in the past, and produced relatively high economic growth until the early 1970s. However, imbalanced growth across industries created a distorted economic structure in the late 1970s, which had already been witnessed in the Soviet Union. To be specific, North Korea failed to

convert its growth mechanism from a quantity-based to quality-based process and experienced underdevelopment in the light industry and shrinking consumption as well as short supply.

The heavy industry first-development policy requires economies of scale to generate tangible profits. Thus, it takes a long time for investments to generate profits, which tend to be very low unless there are huge consumption markets. Furthermore, consumption cannot create a strong demand under such policy but triggers imbalanced development across industries. North Korea belied that advanced development in the heavy industries could lead to development in the light and agricultural industries. However, the reality turned out to be quite different.

### Parallel Development of the Military and Economy

Parallel development of the military and economy is aimed at achieving economic development and military buildup at the same time. The parallel development policy was first introduced by China and the Soviet Union with the intention to build superior military strength over capitalist rivals. North Korea, which wanted to go an independent route within the socialist bloc and hold military superiority over the South, adopted the policy at the WPK Central Committee meeting in 1996.<sup>9</sup> At that time, Kim Il-sung argued that self-reliant national defense could be achieved only when economic development and national defense policies were rightly combined, justifying the policy of parallel development of the military and economy. Parallel development was inappropriate for North Korea given the small size of its economy (unlike that of China or the Soviet Union), but this fact was simply ignored.

Following the adoption of this two-track policy, the share of North Korea's national budget allocated to defense expenditure climbed rapidly from about 10 percent in 1967 to over 30 percent in 1971. Since then, the rate of the budget allocated to the defense sector has been between 14 to 17 percent. Still, many



experts presume the regime actually spends about 30 to 50 percent of its gross domestic product on the defense industry, pointing that, despite its seemingly steady expenditure on defense, its military capabilities, including troops, weapons, and military equipment has continued to grow, and now the North even develops long-range missiles and reinforces its nuclear capabilities.

The parallel development of the military and economy is a fundamental cause of the distorted economic structure in North Korea, which has resulted in a number of side effect. First, the heavy industries were affiliated to the defense industry led by the machinery and chemical sector, thereby creating the military-industrial complex in the North Korean economy. This also blurred the line between the defense industry and the civilian industry. North Korea reshuffled production systems of the metal, machinery, and chemicals industries into weapons production-oriented systems, claiming that heavy industry-first development is a tool to realize the parallel development of the military and economy.

Moreover, the regime established sub-factories or job sections even in enterprises under the Cabinet as well as in factories which belong to the people's economy to produce military supplies. Dubbed as daily sub-factories or daily job sections, they are dedicated to the production of weapons and military equipment as well as manufacturing associated parts in collaboration with other sections. They sometimes exclusively produce day-to-day necessities for the army. The daily sub-factories are known to exist across the country, being involved in projects of diverse scales from infrastructure to local campaigns, and are estimated to be over 300. These facilities produce goods for civilian consumption, but can be readily converted to munitions plants in case of emergency.<sup>10</sup>

Second, the policy of putting military production before the people's economy severely undermined the development of the civilian industries and the people's economy in North Korea. According to the party order, daily sub-factories

under the Cabinet are supposed to first produce military supplies with allocated electricity and resources even at the cost of production of goods for civilian use. Following the adoption of the parallel development policy, the North let the Second Economic Committee,—directly controlled and supervised by the *suryŏng* and the WPK Central Military Commission,—draw up plans for the defense industry, thereby establishing the military economy as an independent second economic sphere,—a phenomenon unprecedented in any other country in the world. The Second Economic Committee deals with the second economic sphere independent from the Cabinet-controlled national economy and supervises about 130 munitions factories and enterprises as well as about 60 weapons repair and parts manufacturing facilities. The Committee sometimes directly delivers orders for production activities to daily sub-factories.

Third, after the economic hardship, the defense industry expanded its influence beyond the defense sector, securing its own stake within North Korea's national economy through profit-seeking activities in the market. This resulted in the emergence and expansion of a privileged “military economy.” In the mid-1990s, when North Korea was struggling with severe economic contraction, the national economy was almost paralyzed, while the military economy maintained a certain size thanks to its investment resources, export sources, and labor. Against this backdrop, Kim Jong-il instructed the military to play a leading role in normalizing the country's economy under the banner of military-first revolution and allowed trading with external partners, which gave rise to the growth of the privileged military economy.

## (2) Military-first Economic Development

The aforementioned three traditional economic policies have undergone slight changes and modifications in accordance with changes in the internal and external circumstances facing North Korea, but the basic framework has remained intact to the present day. The Kim Jong-il regime set up military-first economic development as its key economic policy based on the three traditional policy lines.

North Korea defines military-first economic development as “a policy to develop the defense industry first and then develop the light and agricultural industries together.” Therefore, the military-first economic development policy can be viewed as a moderated version of the traditional heavy industry-first development policy in reflection of the severe economic conditions in the Kim Jong-il era. In 1998 when Kim Jong-il officially took power, North Korea was hit by the worst economic crisis in its history resulting from a series of natural disasters. Poverty ravaged the people and the capacity utilization rate at factories for civilian consumption plunged to about 20 percent according to data obtained from research institutions.

Besides this, the regime had repetitively expressed its nuclear ambitions since the first nuclear crisis in 1993, worsening its relations with the international community. Against this backdrop, the Kim Jong-il regime set forth the military-led revolution line as a means to survival on one hand and overcome the worst-ever economic crisis on the other. In this sense, the military-first economic development policy was primarily intended to secure regime survival.

Defense industry-first development pursued under the military-first economic development policy brought more serious distortions to the economic structure of North Korea than the heavy industry-first development did, and thwarted efforts to recover North Korea’s national economy even further. This was because the defense industry tended to contract the national economy more than the heavy industries. Regarding this, the Kim Jong-il regime argued that it could lay the groundwork for an economic recovery more quickly by putting priority on the defense industry since the defense and heavy industries were already established to play major roles in its economy as a result of the previous policy of parallel development of the military and economy. Also, the regime insisted that advanced science and technologies achieved through the development of the defense industry would fuel development in other economic sectors.



A North Korean poster emphasizing the importance of the military-first economic development policy

The military-first economic development policy further excluded the national economy in resource distribution than the traditional parallel development policy did, which created a need for the national economy to

depend on market functions at certain sectors. North Korea's economic authorities were tied to setting plan indicators which place more importance on military production than anything else. The people were thus left to create their livelihoods by themselves.. At that time, the economic mechanism supporting the North Korean people's livelihoods was already working in markets which had sprung up on their own since the early-1990s. The North conducted the July 1 Economic Management Improvement Measures to facilitate markets, which actually facilitated the expansion of markets. However, wary of possible relaxation of control over them, the regime rolled back the measures after three years of experimentation.

### (3) Parallel Development of the Economy and Nuclear Weapons

The Kim Jong-un regime presented an expanded version of the military-first development policy to pursue nuclear armament and economic development in parallel. The new policy was formally adopted at a plenary session of the WPK Central Committee on March 31, 2013. About the new policy, the regime explains it “builds on the parallel development lines advocated by former grand marshals and develops them to an even higher level.” This description shows the regime's determination to continue with nuclear armament as it is “a legitimate demand for revolutionary development” as well as to pursue economic development at the same time.<sup>11</sup> The argument is based on the conviction that nuclear weapons buildup will prompt progress in science and

technology, which will then fuel development in other areas in the end, which is illogical and irrational.

Besides this, the regime claims that the new parallel development policy can “decisively reinforce its deterrence against war and national defense capabilities without additional spending on defense, and thus channel more resources into projects to improve the people’s livelihoods.” This disguises the policy as something that pays greater attention to the improvement of the people’s wellbeing than those pursued under the preceding regimes did. However, the Kim Jong-un regime’s parallel development of the economy and nuclear weapons is nothing but the same as the previous regimes’ parallel development of the military and economy, except for slight modifications made as demanded by the conditions of his time. In this sense, the development policy of the Kim Jong-un regime will inevitably aggravate the dilemma facing the North Korean economy for two reasons.

First, with the parallel development policy, the Kim Jong-un regime excluded the people’s economy in the allocation of national resources, and thus had to depend on market functions in some parts. At present, because markets have become an entrenched part of the North Korean economy, partial improvement measures will fall short of reinvigorating the people’s economy. The regime therefore needs to adopt a fundamentally different economic development policy as China did in the 1980s so as to revive its economy to improve the livelihoods of the people as it has claimed.

Second, the parallel development policy caused the international community to heighten its sanctions against the North, posing hurdles to capital inflows into the country. The so-called



A North Korean poster emphasizing the importance of parallel development of nuclear armament and economic development

“poverty trap” North Korea is in cannot be overcome without capital injection from the outside world. As long as the regime sticks to parallel development, it cannot but depend on internal resources to revive its economy. Then the regime will inevitably face limitations in the long-term due to sheer lack of resources.

### **3** Establishment and Implementation of Economic Plans

North Korea began mapping out economic development plans in the late-1940s when socialist relations of production had yet to take firm root in the country. Five one- to five-year economic plans were implemented during the 1947-1961 period with the goals of converting the existing semi-feudal colonial economy—the vestiges of Japanese colonial rule—into a socialist economy of the people, laying the material basis to wage the Korean War, and establishing the foundation for post-war recovery and socialist-style industrialization. These short-term economic plans provided for the material basis for the regime to create socialist relations of production in the Northern part of the peninsula.

After 1960, North Korea pushed forward economic plans to achieve socialist-style industrialization and economic development based on socialist relations of production. Until it was stricken by the economic crisis in the early-1990s, North Korea had implemented four economic plans: the first seven-year plan (1961-1970), the six-year plan (1971-1976), the second seven-year plan (1978-1984), and the third seven-year plan (1987-1993). Throughout these periods, North Korea intended to advance from a phase described as transitional according to the socialist economic development process to a state of full communism. However, it had difficulties carrying out the plans and had to repetitively set a buffer for each term as is shown in Table 5-2.

The first seven-year plan was focused on the heavy and defense industries. According to the North, its industrial production jumped 3.3 times during the period with its industrial structure being reorganized around the heavy

industries. After the mid-1960s, however, the economic strategy based on internal mobilization of resources caused several side effects and, at the same time, the execution of the plan itself faced obstacles as the regime began pursuing parallel development of the military and economic development in full swing. As a result, North Korea failed to meet its goals by 1967 as planned, and extended the period by three years.

The six-year economic development plan which began in 1971 was focused on technological leaps and modernization of industrial facilities. North Korea hoped to alter its growth model from the one based on quantitative growth of labor to the one based on technological innovations and increased capital productivity. In the meantime, the regime tried to secure loans from Western countries to overcome the limits of its self-sufficient economic growth policy, but soon had serious difficulties repaying them. Moreover, the capacity of its infrastructure, including energy and transportation became insufficient in supporting the country's growing economy and the inefficiencies of the centrally planned economic system became increasingly apparent. North Korea thus announced an end to the six-year plan in 1975 and again established a two-year buffer period.

North Korea embarked on the second seven-year plan in 1978, establishing visions such as increased economic self-sufficiency, economic modernization, and the use of scientific methods in dealing with economic matters, and setting the improvement of productivity as a goal. A number of practical factors stymied the plan once again, and the North put a buffer for two years. One of the factors was the North's failure to secure support and aid from the Soviet Union and other socialist states as had been already incorporated into the plans. In the 1980s, the regime realized that it could not turn a blind eye any more to the people's economic situation where their consumption significantly contracted and added improvement of the people's livelihoods to its economic goals list. A campaign to promote savings was carried out and the Equity Joint Venture Law was enacted in 1984. Despite all these efforts, however, North

Korea began facing difficulties in causing economic reproduction to take place from the mid-1980s.

**Table 5-2 North Korea's Economic Plans since the 1960s: Goals and Results**

구분	Basic Tasks	Major Goals	Results
1st seven-year plan (1961-1970)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of heavy industries</li> <li>• Simultaneous development of the light and agricultural industries</li> <li>• Parallel development of defense and economy</li> <li>• Nationwide technology innovations</li> <li>• Achievement of cultural revolution and enhancement of the people's wellbeing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing the national income 2.7 times</li> <li>• Increasing the gross industrial output 3.2 times</li> <li>• Harvesting 6-7 million tons of grain</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The gross industrial output grew 3.3 times.</li> <li>• The machinery and metal works industries grew 18.4 percent.</li> <li>• Labor productivity jumped 147.5 percent.</li> <li>• The period was extended by three years.</li> </ul>
Six-year plan (1971-1976)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solidifying the material basis for socialist-style economic development</li> <li>• Modernization of industrial facilities and promotion of technology revolution</li> <li>• Letting the people free from arduous labor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing the national income 1.8 times</li> <li>• Increasing the gross industrial output 2.2 times</li> <li>• Harvesting 7-7.5 million tons of grain</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The national income grew 1.7-1.8 times.</li> <li>• The gross industrial output grew 2.5 times.</li> <li>• The machinery industry and metal works grew 19.1 percent.</li> <li>• Labor productivity jumped 155 percent.</li> <li>• Eight million tons of grain was harvested.</li> <li>• A buffer was established from 1967 to 1977.</li> </ul>
2nd seven-year plan (1978-1984)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accomplishing higher self-sufficiency and modernization in the people's economy and using scientific methods in resolving economic issues</li> <li>• Modernization of transportation</li> <li>• Expansion of external trade</li> <li>• Improvement of the people's quality of life and calls for more savings</li> <li>• Reduction of production costs and bolstering independent accounting system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing the national income 1.9 times</li> <li>• Increasing the gross industrial output 2.2 times</li> <li>• Harvesting 10 million tons of grains</li> <li>• Conducting four "natural reconstruction" projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The gross industrial output grew 2.2 times.</li> <li>• Power generation rose 178 percent.</li> <li>• Ten million tons of grain was harvested.</li> <li>• Sixty percent of rail lines were electrified.</li> <li>• A buffer was established from 1985 to 1986.</li> </ul>
3rd seven-year plan (1987-1993)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accomplishing higher self-sufficiency and modernization in the people's economy and using scientific methods in economic matters</li> <li>• Expansion of external trade and technology cooperation</li> <li>• Technology innovations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accomplishing higher self-sufficiency and modernization in the people's economy and using scientific methods in economic matters</li> <li>• Expansion of external trade and technology cooperation</li> <li>• Technology innovations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The gross industrial output grew 1.5 times.</li> <li>• The gross regional industrial output grew 1.7 times.</li> <li>• Power generation rose 1.3 times</li> <li>• A buffer was established from 1994 to 1996.</li> <li>• North Korea acknowledged the plan was a failure.</li> </ul>

Source: Korea Institute for National Unification, North Korea Overview 2009, p. 124.



The third seven-year plan was commenced in 1987, but it was thwarted before full implementation even began. The North stated advancement of economic cooperation with the outside world as its goal of the third economic plan. However, the goal was not able to be met as the socialist bloc, the partner with which the North intended to develop its economic relations, rapidly fell apart in the late-1980s. Despite such difficulties, Pyongyang pushed through the thirteenth World Festival of Youth and Students in 1989 in a bid to equal the achievement of South Korea which held the Seoul Olympic Games in the year before. To prepare for the festival, the North Korean regime poured resources into unproductive construction projects such as large stadiums, apartment complexes for athletes, and roads in its capital Pyongyang, which inevitably posed major hurdles to the implementation of the third seven-year plan.

As almost all socialist countries entered the process of regime transition by 1990 and trading with them based on friendship ceased as a result, North Korea's inter-industry linkages disintegrated. North Korea reluctantly admitted its failure in implementing the third economic plan at the twenty first plenary session of the sixth WPK meeting on December 8, 1993. Soon, an economic crisis hit the country, leaving it no room to think about forging another long-term economic plan.

Looking back, the North Korean economy already entered the low growth stage in the mid-1970s, and moved on to recession and then crisis stages. Hints of the gradual worsening of the economy are found at Kim Il-sung's instructions on the lowered capacity utilization rate, suspended production, and shortage of resources made during his tours to industrial sites or collections of his remarks. The overall declines in target figures of economic plans in Table 5-2 also allude to the downward spiral of the North Korean economy.

## Section 2. Economic Status by Sector

### 1 Macroeconomic Status and Tasks

No official indicators of North Korea's overall macroeconomic conditions have been published since 1965. From time to time, the regime presents bits of various data at international platforms, but they contain inconsistent statistics that reflect different political motives. Economic figures published by North Korea are not considered trustworthy, since they are used for propaganda purposes to promote the regime.

For this reason, the Bank of Korea (BOK) has since 1990 applied capitalist methods of estimation to assess North Korea's macroeconomic indicators, and these may be the only meaningful figures for reference. There are certain limitations, however, to understanding the North's real economy based on these numbers. This is because the BOK estimates the gross national income (GNI) and per capita GNI by applying South Korean prices and exchange rates to various production approximations of North Korean industries.

The BOK tends to overestimate such macroeconomic indicators, since the added value and currency value of the North are considerably lower and the dichotomized variables of state and market price cause volatility in the price structure. In spite of such limitations, these BOK estimates are perceived to be helpful in understanding the North's macroscopic trends, and they have been used to determine its macroeconomic conditions as below.

## (1) GNI and Economic Growth

### GNI Trends

Study of North Korea's trends in economic growth rate since the 1990s based on the BOK estimates of the North's gross domestic product (GDP) has produced results as described in Table 5-3.

**Table 5-3 Trends in North Korea's Economic Growth** (Unit : %)

Year	1990	1995	1998	1999	2000	2002	2003	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
North Korea	-4.3	-4.4	-0.9	6.1	0.4	1.2	1.8	3.8	-1.0	-1.2	3.1	-0.9	-0.5	0.8	1.3	1.1
South Korea	9.3	8.9	-5.7	10.7	8.8	7.2	2.8	4.0	5.2	5.1	2.3	0.3	6.3	3.7	2.3	3.0

Source: The Bank of Korea, The Results of Estimating North Korea's Economic Growth Rates, each year.

Table 5-3 shows that since the collapse of the socialist economic bloc in 1990, North Korea recorded an annual growth rate of -3.8 percent on average from 1990 to 1998. As a result, its total production was reduced to less than half of what it was at the end of the 1980s. Only around 20 percent of factories are known to have been in operation in the 1990s, while most plants such as those in rural districts suspended all operation—except for the few remaining in the munitions and key industries. Factory operations in all industries except for the munitions industry ceased during this period, which was later called a period of “arduous march” by the North Korean people.

North Korea's economic crisis in the 1990s was triggered by the Soviet Union's declaration that it could no longer supply oil and other raw materials to the North as a socialist trade partner. When import of oil and other raw materials was halted or reduced, there was an immediate adverse effect on production in key industrial sectors, and this soon triggered a chain reaction across all industries, severing the linkages between them. As a result, North Korea's economy went into an unprecedented decline as if in wartime, plunging the populace into poverty.

The North Korean economy began to recover from the severe contraction in 1999, but economic troubles continued with no virtuous cycles at hand. Specifically, the economy recorded a positive growth rate of about 2.2 percent on average from 2000 to 2005, but growth has stagnated since the late 2000s.

As of 2013, the North's nominal GNI stood at 33.8 trillion won (in South Korean won), only 1/42 of the South's 1,441.1 trillion won; and for GNI per capita, 1.38 million won, which is just 1/20 of South Korea's 28.70 million won. These figures draw a striking contrast to the gaps recorded at one eleventh and one fifth in 1990, respectively. Such wide economic gaps between the two Koreas would remain unresolved unless the North deals with the "poverty trap" and escapes the recession.

### Growth Trends

In the meantime, rates of growth for individual industries as shown on Table 5-4 demonstrate a small imbalance in North Korea's real industrial production in the 2000s. To be specific, from 2004 to 2008, mining production recorded an annual average growth of 2.3 percent, while the heavy and light industries posted 2.5 percent and 0.42 percent, respectively. This indicates that North Korea's real industrial production had registered marginal improvement since the mid-2000s, and there are four reasons.

Table 5-4 Growth Trends in North Korea's Key Industries

(Unit : %)

Industry	1990	1992	1994	1997	1999	2000	2002	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Agriculture, forestry, and fishery	-10.5	-3.3	2.8	-2.7	9.2	-5.1	4.2	4.1	5.3	-2.6	-9.1	8.0	-1.0	-2.1	5.3	3.9	1.9
Mining	-5.6	-5.7	-5.2	-15.8	14.2	5.8	-3.8	2.5	3.1	1.9	1.5	2.4	-0.9	-0.2	0.9	0.8	2.1
Manufacturing	-3.2	-18.3	-3.9	-18.3	7.9	1.4	-1.5	0.3	4.8	0.4	0.7	2.6	-3.0	-0.3	-3.0	1.6	1.1
Light	0.9	-7.6	0.1	-14.2	2.9	6.3	2.7	-0.2	3.8	-0.6	-2.2	1.3	-2.1	-1.4	-0.1	4.7	1.4
Heavy	-4.1	-21.3	-5.5	-20.3	10.4	-1.0	-3.9	0.6	5.4	1.0	2.2	3.2	-3.5	0.1	-4.2	0.2	1.0
Construction	5.9	-2.4	-26.9	-10.0	24.4	13.5	10.5	0.4	6.1	-11.5	-1.5	1.1	0.8	0.3	3.9	-1.6	-1.0
Service	0.7	0.8	2.3	1.1	-1.7	1.1	-0.2	1.3	1.3	1.1	1.7	0.7	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.3

Source: The Bank of Korea, The Results of Estimating North Korea's Economic Growth Rates, each year.

First, North Korea was provided with large amounts of foreign assistance such as food and fertilizer, which enabled the regime to uphold its defense industry-led policy, while at the same time allocating financial resources to strategic and key industries. This is thought to have restored inter-industry relations in North Korea. Throughout this period, Pyongyang did not devise long-term economic plans as it had done previously, but instead set forth mid-term plans to provide expenditures aimed at normalizing industries in strategic and key sectors. The economic plans introduced for selected industrial sectors include four sets of the Five-year Plan for Science and Technology Development (1998-2013), the Three-year Plan for Energy Supply and Demand (2003-2005), and the Three-year Plan for Key Industries (2006-2008).

Second, the strategy to build a dichotomized military-first economy is deemed to have briefly taken effect. With the July 1 Measures in place, North Korea introduced market elements to improve the civilian economy, and diverted the generated added value to the planning sector.

Third, the following factors are also considered to have contributed to recovery: abundant rainfall due to global warming, successive completion of medium and large hydroelectric power plants that had been under construction since the late 1990s, partial recovery of coalmines damaged by floods in the mid-1990s, and the resultant annual increase of 5 percent in power generation from 2003 to 2008.<sup>12</sup>

Fourth, large amounts of aid annually provided by South Korea and others since 1999 are thought to have played a part, as well as expanded inter-Korean economic cooperation, including Mt. Geumgang tours and the Gaeseong Industrial Complex. Consequently, the overall operation rate of plants rebounded to about 30 percent, a slight increase from the 1990s.

As shown in Table 5-4, North Korea's manufacturing production contracted 1 percent from 2009 to 2013 on an annual average basis. It is presumed that the negative growth was caused by reduced aid from the international community

after the second nuclear test, weakened inter-Korean economic cooperation, strengthened market control, and lopsided investments of resources into large-scale construction projects in Pyongyang as part of efforts to solidify the power succession over three generations to Kim Jong-un.



Essential foodstuffs factory

A slight improvement in the manufacturing sector stands out in the same table. Specifically, the light industry has showed a steady recovery, growing 4.7 percent in 2012 and 1.4 percent in 2013. The regime in Pyongyang has made intensive investments

into the chemical industry which has played a key role in normalizing the light and agricultural industries since 2008. In line with this, the North Korean regime designated the two industries as the “main industrial fronts” for its economic policy in 2010 and has slightly increased expenditures in the two sectors.

In March 2013, the Kim Jong-un regime held the first national rally of the light industry in ten years. In a speech at the event, Kim Jong-un emphasized normalization of production in the light industry, saying “Light manufacturing plants have failed to fulfill the wishes of the late General to normalize production. Plants and enterprises should make it clear normalization of production is their first and foremost mission.”<sup>13</sup> The regime accordingly has made investments to replace facilities at commodity, textile, and food factories located in a few pilot sites. However, given the continued shortage of power, a key to normalization of industrial production, it still seems a long way to go for the North to restore its industrial production to previous levels.

## (2) Industrial Structure

North Korea's industrial structure has distinctive features when compared to those of other countries: the agricultural sector has continuously taken up about a quarter of the country's whole industrial output although the industrial structure itself became sophisticated due to industrialization.

As shown in Table 5-5, the portion of the mining sector in North Korea's industrial output which peaked at 60 percent in 1980 continued to exceed 40 percent before the 1990s. The agricultural, forestry, and fishery sector continuously represented an average 25 percent while the share of the service sector was on a decline. These patterns which draw a vivid contrast to that of capitalist-style industrialization process are attributable to the North's pursuit of socialist-style industrialization and self-sufficient economic policy. In general, industrialization in a capitalist market economy comes with structural sophistication, contraction in the agricultural sector, and growing service industries. South Korea may be provided as an example as in 2013, its agricultural, forestry, and fishery sector accounted for just 2.3 percent, the mining sector, 31.3 percent, and the service and social overhead capital sector, the remaining 66.4 percent. North Korea's industrial structure of today is the result of the implementation of the heavy industry-first policy and parallel development of the military and economy as well as the emphasis of self-sufficiency in economic development projects.

North Korea's industrial structure went through slight changes after the economic crisis in the 1990s. During that period, capacity utilization rates of factories producing goods for private consumption slid to the 20-percent range. At the same time, the mining sector suffered a serious contraction to account for 25.4 percent of the total industrial production in 2000, but the agricultural, forestry, and fishery sector and the service and other sectors registered growths, taking up 30.4 percent and 44.2 percent, respectively in the same year. These divergent trends are a sign of regression in industrial structure, which is

believed to be attributable to the suspension of the rationing system and food shortages.

Since 2001, the share of the mining sector has slowly increased and that of the agricultural sector rebounded to the pre-1990s level while the share of the service and other sector has been on the rise. This reflects continued economic difficulties and expansion of markets in North Korea while proving uneven, partial improvements in its production capacity.

Table 5–5 Trends in North Korea’s Industrial Make-up

(Unit : %)

Sector	1960	1970	1980	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2012	2013
Agricultural, forestry, and fishery	28.9	21.5	20.0	26.8	27.6	30.4	25.0	20.8	23.4	22.4
Mining	41.3	57.3	60.0	42.8	30.5	25.4	28.9	36.3	35.9	35.7
Service, SOC, and others	29.8	21.2	20.0	30.4	41.9	44.2	46.1	42.9	40.7	41.9

Source: Ministry of Unification, Korea Development Institute, and the Bank of Korea.

## 2 Economic Status and Tasks by Sector

### (1) Production of Basic Raw Materials

One of the main reasons why North Korea has not been able to recover its industrial production is due to shortages in basic raw and subsidiary materials. In fact, the production of these materials plummeted in the 1990s and has never recovered to its normal level. The origin of the problem, however, lies in the shortage of power, as plant operations had to be suspended due to insufficient energy. A decline in power supply reduced the production of steel, cement, chemicals, fertilizer, and other basic industrial output, which in turn hampered the production of manufacturing intermediary goods. Eventually, North Korea also experienced a drop in production of finished consumer goods.



The production of basic raw materials in North Korea can be inferred from the supply of several key materials as shown in Table 5-6. It can be observed that supplies of iron ore, nonferrous metal, steel, cement, fertilizer, and other key materials had continued to decline since the 1990s. There was slow recovery in the early 2000s, but this fell back to stagnation since 2009.

Table 5-6 Trends in Production of Key Basic Materials

(Unit: 10,000 tons)

Year/Type	Iron ore	Nonferrous metal	Steel	Cement	Fertilizer
1991	816.8	22.7	316.8	516.9	80.4
1993	476.3	16.4	185.9	398.0	90.1
1996	344.0	11.8	120.8	379.0	53.6
1998	289.0	9.7	94.5	315.0	39.2
2001	420.8	9.2	106.2	516.0	54.6
2003	443.3	9.4	109.3	554.3	41.6
2005	491.3	10.7	116.8	593.0	45.0
2006	504.1	8.6	118.1	615.5	45.4
2007	513.0	9.2	122.9	612.9	45.4
2008	531.6	9.4	127.9	641.5	47.9
2009	495.5	9.1	125.5	612.6	46.6
2010	509.3	9.2	127.9	627.9	45.9
2011	523.2	9.1	122.5	645.2	47.1
2012	519.0	9.0	122.2	644.6	47.6
2013	548.6	9.2	121	660	48.5

Source: The Bank of Korea, The Results of Estimating North Korea's Economic Growth Rates, each year.

A closer look also reveals that in 2013, production of iron ore stood at 67.1 percent of the production in 1991, steel, 38.1 percent, nonferrous metal, 40.5 percent, and fertilizer, 60.3 percent. Cement was the only exception of this downward trend with the output growing 27.7 percent during the same period. This growth was made possible due to the small size of capital investment needed for production of cement and the inflow of foreign capital into the Sangwon Cement Complex, one of the North's major cement factories. North Korea placed priority on facilities investment into cement factories to carry out

large-scale construction projects such as the Pyongyang-Nampo expressway, the 100,000-household apartment complex in Pyongyang, and the Heechun Power Plant, despite its dire economic situation.

## (2) Production of Energy

Energy shortages in North Korea are a direct cause of the country's slowing industrial production and, along with food shortages, are considered to be a main impediment to economic recovery. Even in the 2000s, the North's overall supply of energy could not meet half the demand, making it difficult for the country to recover its industrial production to the levels it had enjoyed in the 1980s. Table 5-7 shows the fluctuations in North Korea's energy supply.

### Import of Crude Oil

North Korea imported 3.83 million barrels of crude oil in 2012, only 20.7 percent of its import at 18.47 million barrels in 1990. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union supplied about 80 percent of the North's total import of crude oil in the form of barter trade, with a price metric for socialist partners much lower than in the international market. After the USSR's collapse, however, North Korea could no longer import at this price level and had to pay international prices in hard currency, which it lacked. As a result, its crude oil imports dropped substantially. From the 1990s, North Korea mostly relied on China for crude oil. Since China too began demanding payments in hard currency in 1992, North Korea has purchased only a minimal level.

Table 5-7 shows that North Korea has imported three million barrels of oil from China annually since the late 1990s, which are believed to be used to supply basic industries and sectors related to the military economy, along with transport and transportation sectors and thermoelectric power plants that utilize coal. The amount used for heating and cooking in general households is perceived to be extremely small. According to a survey of North Korean

refugees conducted by the Korea Energy Economics Institute, general households in the North accounted for a meager 8.6 percent of its total energy consumption in 2011. The largest source of energy was wood, which was followed by unprocessed coals such as anthracite and brown coal, the same survey showed.

Table 5-7 Trends in Energy Supply (Unit: 10,000 tons, 10,000 barrels, 100 million kWh)

Type	1990	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Coal	3,315	2,920	2,540	2,100	1,860	2,250	2,190	2,280	2,468	2,506	2,550	2,500	2,550	2,580
Imported crude oil	1,847	1,114	667	686	369	285	437	390	384	387	379	385	384	383
Power generation	277	247	231	213	170	194	190	206	225	255	235	237	211	215

Source: Statistics Korea, Key Statistics on North Korea, each year

### Coal Production

Faced with these challenges to the import of crude oil, North Korea has striven to normalize its coal production to promote inter-industry linkages and restore its economy to normal levels. To this end, coal has been emphasized as being “food for industry and the lifeline of the people’s economy.”<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, Table 5-7 shows that coal production in North Korea has rebounded to 25.8 million tons in 2012, a level equivalent to only 77.8 percent of the 33.15 million tons recorded in 1990. This is due to a structural problem in the coal production sector that cannot be easily resolved.

Since the early days of socialist industrialization, North Korea adopted an industrial energy policy which places greater emphasis on coal over oil, in compliance with the self-rehabilitation policy. In other words, its industrial production system was built on coal energy. Consequently, North Korea was already suffering from resource exhaustion in the 1980s, and the superannuation of mining equipment, shortage of new facilities and insufficient supply of materials have led to a gradual reduction in coal production since the late 1980s. In addition, three consecutive years of massive floods in the mid-

1990s destroyed many coal mines located along the west coast region; most of them have not yet recovered their former production levels.

## Power Generation



Satellite view of the Korean peninsula

The sharp drop in crude oil imports and coal production led to a serious shortage of electricity. Power generation in the North has barely recovered the late 1980s levels. As shown in Table 5-7, North Korea's power generation increased by an annual average of 5 percent from 2003 to 2008, but declined sharply thereafter, recording only 77.6 percent of the amount produced in 1990) as of 2012. Faced with severe power shortages, North Korea carried out small- and medium-sized power plant construction projects on its rivers and streams in the late 1990s. Around 20 medium-sized or larger hydroelectric power plants were built after 2000 as a result, which included the Wonsan Youth Power Plant in Kangwon Province and Heechun Power Plant. These power plants, however, have not been in normal operations, and thus could not contribute to boosting the country's power production.

To overcome the energy crisis, the North Korean regime formulated the Three-



Heechun Power Plant

year Plan for Energy Resolution (2003-2005), which set forth measures to replace and repair obsolete equipment in key coal-based thermoelectric power plants, such as those in Bukchang and Pyongyang; allocate resources including

year Plan for Energy Resolution (2003-2005), which set forth measures to replace and repair obsolete equipment in key coal-based thermoelectric power plants, such as those in Bukchang and Pyongyang; allocate resources including

capital, labor, and transportation to power generation and mining projects; improve mining technologies and modernize equipment; and identify methods to utilize alternative energy sources such as methane, wind, solar, and tides. All these attempts, however, cannot provide fundamental solutions to the North's energy crisis. Massive investment from the outside world is a must for the North to raise its power generation to normal levels.

### (3) Food Production

North Korea's food crisis was triggered around the mid-1980s due to the failure of the "*juche* method of farming" that had been introduced in the mid-1970s, along with stagnation in agricultural production under the socialist system of collective farms. Throughout the 1980s, food production in North Korea remained at a mere 4.15 million tons per year on average, which resulted in a 2 million-ton shortfall each year for the rationing system. Accordingly, North Korea reduced the average amount of public rations per person by 22 percent, from 700 grams to 546 grams. Yet, there was no serious food shortage during this time thanks to various reasons, including food aid from the Soviet Union and other socialist states and measures allowing limited activities for individuals to supplement their income.

In the 1990s, however, North Korea's food production plunged below 4 million tons per year, resulting in a serious famine. This was due to the reduction in aid from socialist countries and barter trade, decline in raw materials for agriculture due to economic hardship, and a series of natural disasters. Table 5-8 shows that from 1995 to 1997, the worst years of the famine, food production barely reached 3.54 million tons on average. This decline in yield resulted in a shortfall of an average of 1.64 million tons to the amount needed for the ration system, which had been already distributing a reduced amount of 546 grams of food per person per day.

Table 5–8 Trends in Food Supply and Demand

(Unit: 10,000 tons)

Year	1995	1996	1997	2000	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Food demand	534	529	530	518	536	542	548	545	560	543	540	548	546	534	540	543
Last year's production	413	345	369	422	395	413	425	431	454	448	401	431	411	425	445	484
Amount of shortage	121	184	161	96	141	129	123	114	106	95	139	117	135	109	95	59

Note: Demand for food was estimated by the Rural Development Administration based on the reduced ration of 546 grams per day for a male adult for the period 1995–2010 and by the World Food Programme / the Food and Agricultural Organization (WFP/FAO) based on the daily minimum requirement of food of 458 grams per person.

Source: Rural Development Administration (1995–2010 with the base term of Jan.–Dec.) and WFP/FAO (2011–2013 with the base term of Nov.–Oct.).



Fertilizing at a collective farm



Rice planting

After 2010, North Korea's food production increased to an average of 4 million tons a year, thanks to various factors such as favorable weather conditions, a continuous supply of fertilizer by South Korea, and agricultural assistance from the international community, along with domestic policies promoting food production. With the country's annual food production averaging 4.5 million tons from 2011 to 2013, the food shortage fell to 59,000 tons in 2013, reaching a new low since 1990. In addition, considering imports of commercial foods amounting to 200,000–300,000 tons per year, production from private farming on small land plots, and food transactions in markets, it would seem that North Korea's food crisis has been resolved to some degree.

Nevertheless, food shortages still ravage some provinces of the country and certain groups of people due to such factors as distorted rationing, crackdown on market activities, widespread corruption, and worsening economic inequality. In particular,

in the wake of the currency reform on November 30, 2009 food prices surged, driving more people into the poverty trap. In the State of Food Insecurity in the World 2013 report, the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) presumed that an average of 7.6 million North Korean people or 31 percent of its total population suffered from malnutrition every year from 2011 to 2013.

To cope with the chronic food crisis, the North Korean regime took a number of measures. For instance, it revamped the Subgroup Management System in 1996; reclaimed lands of 200,000 jungbo (or about 200,000 hectares) in 1999-2005; modified *juche* farming methods which emphasized food crops and high density planting; increased agricultural expenditure in accordance with the Consecutive Three-year Plan for the Basic and Agricultural Industries in 2006-2008; allowed partial decentralization at collective farms and private farming on an expanded area of lands through the July 1st Measures; conducted the Team-based Management System on a pilot basis; and implemented the Six-month Farming System.<sup>15</sup> However, all these efforts fell short of inducing reformation of the North's collective farming and ownership systems, and thus were not able to prompt any major progress in agricultural productivity. Moreover, the regime retracted the July 1st Measures within just three years after implementation, returning to its traditional economic policies.

Resolved to pursue “economic management of our style,” the Kim Jong-un regime introduced incentives to collective farms to increase production. Also, the regime implemented the Team-based Management System which reduced the size of subgroups in collective farms to three or four people, while providing them with the right to dispose of any surplus yield exceeding their individual target and distributing rations in kind on a pilot basis. Again, these



Terraced fields in North Korea

measures were not enough in bringing fundamental changes given that the surplus yields were purchased by the regime and the underlying system of collective farms were sustained. North Korea's chronic food shortages will only be able to be resolved by reforming its ownership system as was the case with China which abolished the people's commune system and introduced the household contract responsibility system in the early 1980s.



#### Subgroup Management System and Team-based Management System

The Subgroup Management System was introduced to all cooperative farms in 1966. Under the new system, basic working units of subgroups (10 to 25 farmers) were provided with certain areas of farmland and production tools. These subgroups were assigned with target amounts of yield per unit area of land and distribution was conducted according to their achieved target. When food shortages worsened in 1996, the North Korean authorities tried to induce an increase in grain production by reducing the size of subgroups to 7 to 8 people and providing them with the right to dispose of any surplus yield exceeding their individual target amount. However, the measures were not that effective because the assigned targets were unrealistic in the first place and the rations distributed to farmers were always insufficient.

The Team-based Management System was a pilot program introduced in 2004. The system reduced the size of minimum working units of subgroups in collective farms from 7–8 people to 3–4 people, making family-based farming possible. The system was believed to be abolished in 2006 when the North Korean regime reinforced its central command system, but seems to have been revived after 2012.

#### (4) Size of Government Budget

The key functions of North Korea's government budget can be summed up as allocation of resources for operation of its planned economy, control over various economic actors, and redistribution of income. Up to date, North Korea's government budget has accounted for a much larger portion of the gross national product (GNP) than those in capitalist countries. This is because in the case of socialist countries like North Korea, the state is responsible for operation costs as well as capital formation and investment for state-run corporations. In addition, it has to fully bear even the costs for "social consumption," including medical care, education, and housing. In the case of the Soviet Union, the portion was about 65 percent in 1980. In North Korea, the portion was unusually high even compared to other socialist countries, staying at around 90 percent from 1996 to 2001.



Table 5-9 shows that North Korea's government budget had expanded for decades to reach 19.17 billion dollars in 1994, when a serious famine broke out. The budget contracted thereafter until hitting a low in 2003, whereupon it began to bounce back. As of 2014, the planned size of North Korea's budget stands at 7.1 billion dollars, 16.9 times larger than that of 1994. Nevertheless, the portion of North Korea's government budget out of its GNP has stayed at the high 20 percent range since 2009 after falling sharply after 2002. The reduced government budget has hampered the operation of the North's command economy while causing distortion of the system or modified operations.

Table 5-9 North Korea's Government Budget

Year	Amount in US dollars (100 million)	Amount in North Korean won (100 million)	Won/dollar exchange rate
1990	165.9	355	2.14
1994	191.7	414	2.16
1995~1997	–	–	–
1998	91.0	200	2.20
1999	92.2	200	2.17
2000	95.7	210	2.19
2001	98.1	217	2.21
2002	–	–	–
2003	22.3	3,234	145
2004	25.1	3,488	139
2005	29.0	4,057	140
2006	29.7	4,193	141
2007	32.6	4,406	135
2008	34.7	4,510	130
2009	35.9	4,815	134
2010	51.3	5,210	101.6
2011	57.7	5,669	98.3
2012	61.2	6,217	101.5
2013	66.2	6,563	99.2
2014	71	6,990	98.4

Note: The figure for 2014 is the planned budget. All figures are estimates since North Korea announces only growth rates for its budget and accounts. Figures in US dollars are based on North Korea's official exchange rates, which may differ from actual exchange rates.

Source: Ministry of Unification.

To address its budget constraints, North Korea introduced the July 1st Measures in 2002 and reformed the budget system at the same time. The regime also switched its fiscal management from an expenditure-oriented to a revenue-oriented system, and launched efforts to strengthen its financial standing. The North abolished compensation for price differences and subsidies for corporations and curtailed the budget for social security systems and rations to reduce spending. To increase revenue, it newly introduced land use fees and other taxes and first issued ten-year lottery-type People's Livelihood Bonds in May 2003. Other measures followed thereafter such as the introduction of real estate use fees which replaced land use fees, and having enterprises pay social insurance premiums. In November 2009, a currency reform was implemented, allowing the North Korean people to convert their old currencies to new currencies in a 1 to 100 ratio. The effects of these measures were limited however in raising the relative size of the North's budget to its economy to the previous levels. The problem will not be resolved easily unless the regime restores its industrial production to normal levels.

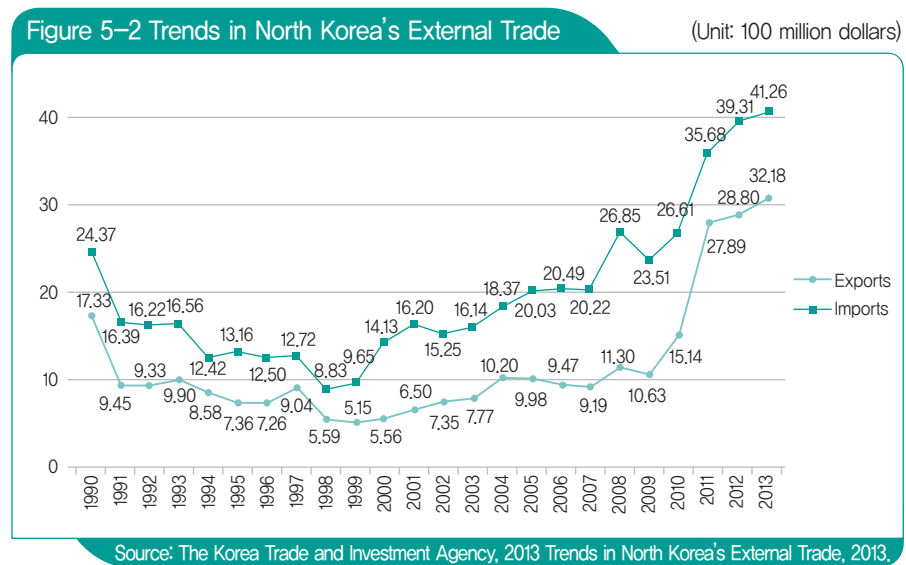
Today, a large portion of North Korea's planned economy relies on activities in non-planned sectors. Economic units in the planned sectors meet their indicators through market-associated activities and make payments in diverse forms to the government with profits made from such activities. Moreover, the regime bears the costs for public goods, school operations, and living necessities for the Armed Forces with quasi-taxes collected from the people, calling them "social assignments," although such costs are supposed to be financed by the government itself.

## (5) External Trade

### Exports and Imports

North Korea's dependence on external trade had long remained under 10 percent of its total GDP due to its development policy of self reliance and

practice of engaging in barter trade with the Soviet Union for the import of strategic materials such as crude oil. Even the largest trade volume for North Korea, registered in 1990 just before its economic crisis, stood at a mere 4.2 billion dollars. The structure, however, faced changes when the socialist economic bloc collapsed in the 1990s with the trade volume plummeting 1.44 billion dollars in 1998 as is shown in Figure 5-2.



When North Korea's GNI began to record positive growth in 1999, signs of recovery were also observed in its external trade. Its trade volume for four years between 2010 and 2013 recorded an annual growth of 13.2 percent on average, unlike the fluctuations in economic growth rates during the same period. The differing pattern was particularly evident after 2006 from which the North Korean economy has almost stagnated while trade has registered sharp growth. Trade statistics of North Korea are estimated by South Korea's Trade and Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA), based on data on trades North Korea has with countries, excluding South Korea. If data on inter-Korean trade is included, the annual growth rate of the North's foreign trade would rise up to 12.2 percent for the same period.

## Structure of External Trade

A closer look, however, reveals that this quantitative expansion in North Korea's external trade throughout the 2000s was based not on the recovery of economic productivity, but rather on increased trade dependence on China, and its trade structure became increasingly similar to that of underdeveloped countries. Careful consideration of North Korea's external trade discloses the following phenomena.

First, it exhibits a simultaneous expansion of trade volume and trade deficit. The North's trade deficit has more than doubled from an average of 490 million dollars in 1990-1999 to 1 billion dollars in 2000-2013, due to a widened gap between exports and imports; imports expanded substantially in response to the slight economic recovery while exports lagged behind due to overdependence on primary resources.

Second, North Korea's trade volume has expanded as its dependence on South Korea and particularly China rapidly increased. In 1999, North Korea's trade with China stood at 370 million dollars, representing 20.4 percent of North Korea's total external trade of 1.81 billion dollars, and that with South Korea, 330 million dollars, accounting for 18.4 percent. The North's trade with China soared to 6.55 billion dollars with the portion jumping to as much as 77.2 percent of the country's total external trade registered at 8.48 billion dollars in 2013. During the same 1999-2013 period, inter-Korean trade expanded to 1.14 billion dollars, but the portion slid to 13.4 percent. North Korea's dependence on China has further increased thereafter as South Korea's portion in the North's total external trade began falling after 2010 when North Korea conducted military provocations against the South. Excluding inter-Korean trade, China represented 25 percent of the North's external trade in 1999, which rose precipitously to over 89 percent in 2013.

There are four key factors that might have contributed to a rapid expansion in trade between North Korea and China since the mid-2000s. First, as its demand

for raw materials started to expand, China increased its investment in North Korea's mineral resources from 2005. Accordingly, North Korea's export of mineral resources to China grew rapidly. Second, as North Korea endeavored to improve obsolete industrial



facilities, its demand on import of Chinese factory equipment and raw materials increased. Third, an expansion of markets in North Korea led to a more extensive dominance of Chinese industrial products in those markets. Four, reinforced international sanctions on North Korea following its provocations created an environment in which Pyongyang had no other option but to concentrate its trade on the sole trade partner. In response, China implemented a policy to invigorate its trade with North Korea.

Table 5-10 Share of Trade with China in North Korea's Total External Trade

Year	1999	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Share (%)	25.0	32.5	32.7	42.8	48.5	52.6	56.7	67.1	73.0	78.5	83	89.1	88.3	89.1

Note: Figures are based on the North's total external trade, excluding inter-Korean trade.  
Source: The Korea Trade and Investment Agency, Trends in North Korea's External Trade, each year.

Third, North Korea's external trade has gradually retarded into a mode typical for underdeveloped countries, in which its imports mainly consist of basic raw materials, finished industrial goods, energy, and food; while it exports commodities, including minerals and animal and marine products as well as goods processed on a commission basis. Such a trend becomes evident when one takes a close look at the changes in the composition of North Korea's exports to and imports from China. Minerals, including mineral and non-metallic products, accounted for less than 50 percent of the North's exports to China in 2000, but they occupied 72.6 percent in 2013. When agricultural,

forestry, and fisheries products are taken into account, commodities make up as much as 76.3 percent.

In contrast, North Korea's imports from China in 2013 ranged evenly from commodities to industrial products and electronic goods with high added value such as mineral fuel, including crude oil (20.6 percent), petroleum products (17.5 percent), plastic and other chemical products (11.2 percent), machinery (7.2 percent), and electrical and electronic products (6.9 percent). Moreover, the composition of the North's imports from China is quite rigid as every year North Korea has met one third of its total need for mineral fuel, food, and fertilizer with imports from China. More recently, import of textile goods used as subsidiary materials for commission-based processing has escalated. As such, unless North Korea aggressively promotes its export industries, overdependence on trade with China, an underdeveloped mode of external trade, and a chronic trade deficit will continue to haunt the North Korean economy in the future.

## Section 3. Changes in Economic Policy and Outlook for Reform and Opening

The economic crisis in North Korea severed inter-industry linkages and contracted production in all industrial sectors. Nonetheless, the regime has concentrated its resources into the munitions industry and the associated basic industries while leaving the people's livelihoods in their own hands. The traditional economic policy of parallel development of the military and economy was maintained in the name of the military-first policy in the Kim Jong-il era and has been upheld in the name of the simultaneous development of the economy and nuclear weapons in the current Kim Jong-un era. Against this backdrop, the regime's policy toward markets went back and forth somewhere between partial utilization of market functions, control of markets, and condoning of markets while not allowing genuine reforms to take place.



### Utilization and Control of Markets

#### (1) Expansion of Markets

After the North Korean regime left the matter of people's livelihoods in their own hands, markets started to grow steadily, raising their share in the economy in quantity and quality in the early-2000s. In the late 1980s, farmers' markets that had been held every ten days started to transform into jangmadang or

daily markets. In the mid-1990s when the operation of the state rationing system came to a halt, the North Korean people began conducting transactions of foods, industrial products, and other daily necessities in jangmadang, which was prohibited by the regime.

Figure 5–3 Well-known General Markets in North Korea



The North Korean people first appeared in the farmers' markets as traders involved in simple transactions for foods as they were not able to obtain foods through the rationing system. As more foods, daily necessities, and other items flowed into jangmadang through increased border trade and the appropriation, looting, and deprivation of state property, they came to know how to gain added or trade-in value and began accumulating capital to initiate businesses. The individuals who themselves became a part of the market system started their businesses as peddlers, but gradually entered the reselling business which depends on price differences between regions. Some even progressed into the wholesale business using trains or motor vehicles.



By the late-1990s, selling in fixed stands in general markets became a stable form of business. Figure 5-3 shows that typical general markets in cities and provinces have grown into massive wholesale markets from which distribution networks have extended down to small local towns.



In addition, state-run enterprises or industrial units in the planned economic sectors began operating based on their own indicators instead of plan indicators while using amount (or value) indicators, not quantity indicators for their activities to meet centrally-planned targets. For example, they were involved in trade or other commercial activities unrelated with their organizational functions to make payments to the government, or began production activities with money from private investors known as donju. This expanded legal and illegal non-planned activities within the planned economic sectors.

Such quantitative growth of market functions within the North Korean economy was believed to be a direct result of Kim Jong-il's instruction to let each plant, enterprise, or institution support themselves on their own in 1995. Following this instruction, they each set out to create a trading company to earn foreign currency and were engaged in commercial activities or external trade. This was one of the factors that prompted the expansion of distribution channels in North Korea.

In the mid-1990s, non-planned activities by military-economic institutions increased as the military rose as a new player in all economic sectors, including cooperative farms, plants, railways, transport, and the postal service. Meanwhile, privileged economic institutions of the military or the party also increased their non-planned economic activities in association with private

investors. These all helped market functions spread further, allowing the market to become an entrenched part of the North Korean economy. By the late-1990s, the phenomenon went beyond the distribution sector into the production sector, and not only the general masses but the party, political, and military institutions took part in market operations.

## (2) Partial Utilization of Market Functions

The growth of markets in quantity and quality pressured the North Korean authorities to look for ways to decentralize the functions of its planned economy and partially utilize market functions for several reasons. First, due to fiscal constraints, North Korea had no other choice but to concentrate the state's resources on the defense industry, heavy industry and other related industries and inevitably leave the remaining industries to the operation of market mechanisms. Second, to develop the defense industry first, North Korea needed to transfer surplus values from other economic sectors to that industry. To this end, however, it first needed to improve productivity and invigorate the economy through partial introduction of market functions. Third, the regime was no longer able to condone markets, which had already become an entrenched part of the economy and thus resolved to manage them through institutions and central planning.

Accordingly, in 2002, North Korea introduced the July 1st Measures to improve economic management by allowing room for some market functions. The measures were devised according to a pragmatic socialist line which deemed it important to assure maximum benefits in economic activities while adhering to socialist principles. According to the line, the North Korean authorities expressed an intention to keep the munitions production sector under state control and central planning, while at the same time invigorating the civilian production sector through the introduction of decentralization measures and some market functions.

The July 1st Measures can be set forth as follows: decentralization in economic activities carried out by individual economic units, such as state enterprises and collective farms; modification of economic indicators based on earned income; adjustment of state prices to better reflect market prices; reduction of the size of working units in collective farms and the enlargement of private plots; permission of general markets for all kinds of consumer goods and foods for the general masses (2003), socialist markets for raw and intermediary goods for enterprises (2002), and import markets for imported goods (2004); and introduction of material incentives. North Korea experimented with these and supplementary measures until October 2005.

Nonetheless, the measures could not fulfill their original purpose of “partially permitting markets within the framework of planned management.” Eventually, they contributed to an expansion of markets and gradually created cracks in the inner workings of the North Korean system. Accordingly, the authorities retracted the measures after October 2005, reinforcing control over market activities.

### (3) Market Control and Currency Reform

#### Market Control

In 2006, North Korea adopted its old economic policy of controlling markets and emphasizing the role of central planning again because after partial permission of market functions markets had advanced by leaps and bounds to a point which the regime considered it to be a threat. Evolution of markets in North Korea from a mere means of subsistence to a means of accumulating wealth gave rise to a new middle-income group. As various private economic activities have expanded, such as wage labor, peddling, private farming, private tutoring, bistros, and lodging houses, an increasing number of workers have strayed from the centrally planned economy. The more the planned economy was infringed upon by the market economy, the more dependence on the latter increased.

At the same time, privileged economic sectors such as the party and military economy accounted for an increasing part of the planned economy. Taking advantage of their power, privileged economic institutions illegally accumulated wealth under the pretext of legitimacy. This led to an extreme polarization of the economy and widespread corruption in society. Most North Koreans had to rely on street markets to make a living.

Regarding the expansion of markets as a serious threat to the regime, the North Korean authorities started tightening control over them. At first, they placed a limit on business hours for general markets, the age of merchants allowed in the markets, and the number of items permitted to sell. They also cracked down on so-called “grasshopper vendors” who did not own a fixed stand in the market. In 2008, they took further steps to abolish all general markets for good. These measures, however, encountered strong public resistance since markets had already become such an irreversible part of the North Korean economy. At that time, most North Koreans’ official wages were so low as to be insignificant, so that they had to make their living through private business activities involving the use of markets. In addition, even the planned economic sector had to rely on a “modified” system of supplying raw materials based on the markets due to the continuing fiscal constraints.

Nonetheless, North Korea disregarded such a reality and closed the Pyongsong Market in 2009, the best known wholesale market in the country, saying “Markets are breeding grounds of non-socialism and strongholds of capitalism. Taking a step further, it implemented a currency reform on November 30, 2009 to restore its systems of a planned economy.

### Currency Reform

Through a currency reform of 2009, the North Korean authorities forced its people to exchange their old currency to a new one in a 1 to 100 ratio. Had the North Korean authorities merely exchanged old currency for new, the measure

would, like currency reforms in other countries, have been viewed as a way of controlling inflation. Along with such a measure, however, the regime set a ceiling of 100,000 (later raised to 500,000) North Korean won per household on the amount of currency that could be exchanged; at the same time it closed down general markets and prohibited the use of foreign currencies in all transactions. This suggests that the currency reform was part of an effort to restore the centrally planned economy. Furthermore, the authorities sought to recover their ability to issue legal tender and expand government finance by retrieving all currencies circulated in the private sector, and allowing only the use of new currencies issued by the state. In addition, they wanted to prevent trading companies from inundating the military and party economy as well as to keep such privileged economic agencies under control by keeping them from accumulating untraceable foreign currencies.

Immediately upon its imposition, however, the currency reform created confusion in the North Korean economy, resulting in a serious deadlock in many policies the authorities had implemented since 2008 as part of its “strong and prosperous nation” campaign. First of all, the value of North Korean currency plunged, accelerating the economy’s dependency on Chinese and US currencies. Second, market prices in North Korea fluctuated violently. As of November 2013, the price of one kilogram of rice was about 2.5 times that before the currency reform. Third, although the currency reform might have helped the North Korean authorities to briefly expand their financial capabilities, it eventually had an adverse effect on them too, by causing a recession in the street market economy and a setback in economic activities even for state enterprises and other parts of the planned economy that had been muddling along.



North Korean currency

Although the reform was imposed to put a halt on market expansion and restore the planned economy, it was bound to fail because in North Korea's current economic reality it could not be backed up by strong supply. Instead, the reform served to confirm that when market functions are restricted, the economy will experience serious side effect. In the end, the North Korean regime could not but allow the operation of general markets, foreign currency transactions, and activities of trading companies under some privileged institutions in early February of 2010. Thereafter, markets had been allowed tacitly until the launch of the Kim Jong-un regime.

#### Currency Reform of 2009

- The old currency was exchanged to a new one at the rate of 1:100 (Savings were exchanged at the rate of 1:10)  
Each household was allowed to exchange up to 100,000 won, but later the ceiling was known to be raised to 500,000
- Measures taken simultaneously with the currency reform:
  - ① Closing of general markets and their forced conversion into farmers markets
    - Goods and currencies possessed by merchants were either transferred to state shops or paid to state agencies
  - ② Prohibition of the use of foreign currency
    - Individuals were prohibited to use foreign currencies in transactions and were forced to donate all foreign currencies to the authorities
    - All enterprises and trading companies were required to deposit their foreign currency income in the bank within 24 hours
  - ③ Payment of the same wages as before to workers and farmers
    - 500 won in special care allowance was paid to each person and 150,000 won in cash was distributed to each farming family

#### (4) Attempts at Partial Utilization of Market Functions

Currently, there are several economic issues for the Kim Jong-un regime to resolve.

First, it needs to restore the country's industrial production capability, which was undermined by the severed inter-industry relationships in the 1990s, to the late-1980s level.

Second, the serious polarization of the economy and devastated livelihoods of

the people have to be addressed. The military-first economic policy and market controls conducted by the Kim Jong-il regime worsened the people's livelihoods and the currency reform made the situation even more serious. Also, the "strong and prosperous nation" campaign which started in 2012 had a negative impact on the economic conditions of the people by concentrating resources on programs to build recreational facilities and massive structures in Pyongyang.

Third, the economic crisis will only get worse unless the North Korean authorities reform their economic management systems. As stressed above, the regime has controlled or just condoned markets instead of institutionalizing them although markets have already become an irreversible part of the North Korean economy. Accordingly, the general people have to face difficulties partaking in economic activities in markets whereas some privileged groups of individuals and institutions have earned rents, and corruption has become widespread in the economy. This means that regular channels have not been created so that added and surplus values produced from markets can be flown into the state finance to contribute to the normalization of industries, but black markets out of the state control have sprung up.

Against this backdrop, the Kim Jong-un regime appeared to have introduced "economic management systems of our style" at the plenary session of the WPK meeting on March 31, 2013 when it presented the policy of parallel development of the economy and nuclear weapons. This suggests that the regime has been following the suit of the Kim Jong-il regime in upholding the country's traditional parallel development of the military and economy while allowing a portion of market activities, which have already taken firm root in its economy, in order to boost industrial production.

Unlike the July 1st Measures, the details of "economic management systems of our style" have not been disclosed officially. Only a bit of information is available through articles in the *Rodong Sinmun* and *Chosun Sinbo*<sup>16</sup> or North Korean economists' interviews with foreign news media.

According to them, *pojeondamdangje* or the team-based management system was introduced, which formed the basic working units of three to five farmers within the existing subgroups of 15-20 farmers responsible for 50 *jungbo* (approx. 50 hectares) of farmland. Furthermore, state factories and enterprises were given greater autonomy. They were allowed to sell some of their products at market prices and dispose the earnings at their will after submitting an allocated amount of the profit to the government.

It is not appropriate to assess the effects of these measures for now as the details have yet to be unveiled. It is presumed that the North Korean authorities have felt the pressure to address the gap between its economic reality and systems especially after the cessation of the July 1st Measures and to re-institutionalize at least some market functions. North Korea has not given up its persistent emphasis of the socialist principles or the desire for the minimal use of market functions while adamantly adhering to the policy of parallel development of the military and economy. Therefore, whether the regime will be able to achieve the desired results through the renewed measures to improve the economic management system remains uncertain.

## Limited Opening

### (1) Mosquito Net-type Opening and Establishment of Four Special Districts

North Korea's inter-industry relationships were severed in the aftermath of the fall of the socialist bloc in 1990. Then, the country could no more depend on the Soviet Union for crude oil, coke, and other raw materials to support its industrial production but had to secure them from the international market through normal trade relations. Thus it had to explore the possibility of opening to the outside world. At that time, even the Chinese model of reform and opening up was regarded as a potential threat to regime stability for North Korea, a country which placed preservation of the socialist systems



and principles formulated by Kim Il-sung before all others. The country consequently adopted the “mosquito net method” as its basic rule for opening up, which implied “opening the door under the protection of a mosquito net.” According to the rule, North Korea designated an area spanning Rajin and Sonbong, the northernmost port cities in North Hamgyong Province for its first special economic district in December 2012 and allowed its operation as an independent economic zone based on a newly established foreign investment-related law.

The North Korean regime planned to promote the Rajin-Sonbong or Rason district as an international trade hub offering comprehensive services for intermediate trade, export processing, tourism, and financial brokerage. To make this happen, it held two rounds of investment forum in September 1996 and 1998 to attract foreign investments of 4.7 billion dollars for 119 programs under a plan to funnel 3.6 billion dollars into industries, 900 million dollars into infrastructure, and 100 million dollars into the service sector. However, the plan ended in a failure with investments received until December 2000 amounting to a mere 120 million dollars.<sup>17</sup> Investments were concentrated into the service sector such as hotels, restaurants, casinos, transport businesses, and merchandising and two thirds of the funds came from the Chinese, about 20 percent, from pro-North Korean residents in Japan, and less than 10 percent, from Western investors.

An open-up policy is more likely to succeed when it is executed along with internal reform. However, North Korea did not take reform measures for its internal economic systems even partially nor allowed participation by the South Korean capital. The North intended to separate the Rason district from the rest of its economy in accordance with its “mosquito net method” for opening up and thus could not but fail.

After experiencing negative economic growth for nine consecutive years in the 1990s, North Korea finally recognized that it could not normalize its industries

without external help. This recognition spurred the regime to expand special districts in the border areas of Shinuiju, Gaeseong, and Mt. Geumgang and move on to enact the Shinuiju Special Administrative District law, the Gaeseong Industrial District law, and the Mt. Geumgang Tourism District law.

North Korea planned to grant legislative, judicial, and executive powers to the administrative body in the Shinuiju Special Administrative District while maintaining the district as a special administrative unit under the central government. The regime intended to adopt the Hong Kong system politically and model the project after the Shenzhen special economic zone in China which introduced market systems on the basis of a socialist-planned economy. However, the plan did not even take off due to China's unwillingness to cooperate. In the meantime, the other two districts in Gaeseong and Mt. Geumgang were developed with the sole investments of South Korea.

Today, the Gaeseong Industrial Complex and the Mt. Geumgang Tourism District are under the influence of the North's changing strategies toward the South and fluctuations in inter-Korean relations as opposed to what was agreed between the two Koreas and the Gaeseong Industrial District law and the Mt. Geumgang Tourism District law. Visits to Mt. Geumgang have been suspended since 2008 when a South Korean tourist was shot dead by a North Korean sentry. The operation of the Gaeseong Industrial Complex has been on and off after the North's second nuclear test in 2009 with the longest suspension lasting for as much as 166 days in the first half of 2013.

## (2) Greater Opening to China

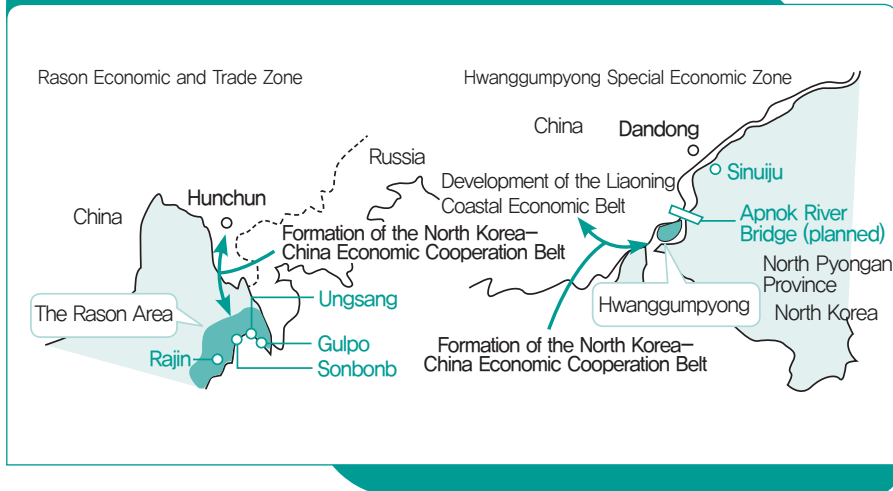
Facing lackluster economic cooperation between the two Koreas in the wake of its provocations against the South, including the sinking of the South Korean naval vessel Cheonan, the North Korean regime shifted its economic policy toward further opening to China in order to obtain foreign currency. Accordingly, the regime has newly designated Hwanggumpyong and Wihwa

Island as a new special economic zone and set out to develop it in cooperation with China along with the Rason Economic and Trade Zone which had shown scant progress since its launch in 1991. To this end, the North has agreed to connect infrastructures such as bridges, roads, and railroads in its northern border region with China's three northeastern provinces.

Political reasons may have been behind North Korea's pursuit of the joint development of the special economic zones with China, but internal economic reasons may have played a greater role on both sides. First, Beijing had already announced its eleventh five-year plan for economic development for 2005-2010, which identified three northeastern provinces as an engine for its economic growth. To this end, China desperately needed to develop the border regions in connection with Mongolia, Russia, and North Korea. It was particularly imperative for China to secure an East Sea route via North Korea's Rajin port in order to construct its Changjitu Development and Opening-up Pilot Area, which was identified as a national strategy in September 2009. Therefore, it can be said that China's economic needs coincided with North Korea's necessity to build a strong and prosperous nation, creating an environment favorable for the joint development of the border regions.

However, it is known that progress has failed to live up to what was agreed between the two sides at the joint groundbreaking ceremony in June 2011 as the international community escalated sanctions against the North following the third nuclear test in February 2013. Development has been insignificant in the Hwanggumpyong Special Economic Zone, in which China and North Korea agreed to invigorate the information, light, and agricultural industries as well as commerce. In the Rason Economic and Trade Zone, much of the Chinese investments have been concentrated in service areas such as bistros, karaokes, and logistics, rather than in the manufacturing sector in which North Korea wanted to receive investments. The mismatch may be attributable to the Chinese investors' unwillingness to take a risk in a situation where North Korea remains under international sanctions due to the unresolved nuclear issue.

Figure 5–4 Rason and Hwanggumpyong Special Economic Zones



Joint development in the border regions between China and North Korea is expected to induce the North to open further. Still, it is hard to expect Chinese investors to make massive investments in North Korea as long as markets do not take firm root within the North's economy and international sanctions remain in place. Progress in the joint development of special economic zones will thus be gradual at best.

### (3) Establishment of Economic Development Districts

Recently, North Korea launched efforts to establish provincial special economic zones in addition to the existing zones in Rason, Hwanggumpyong, Gaeseong, and Mt. Geumgang. To this end, it passed the Economic Development District Law on May 29, 2013 and announced the creation of thirteen special economic zones at the provincial level and one at the national level<sup>18</sup> with the former being administered by provincial people's committees and the latter by the central committee.

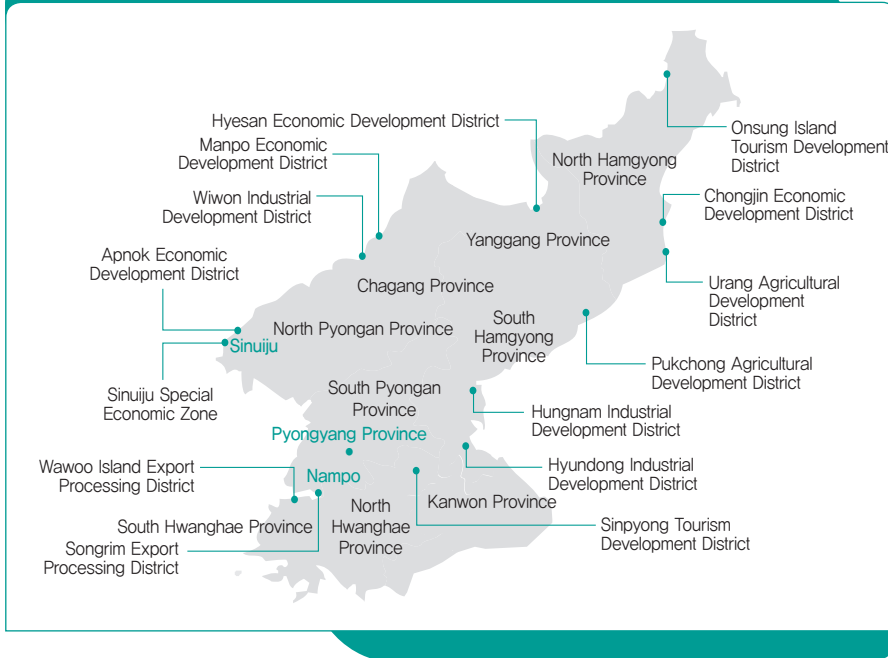
Examples of provincial economic zones include the Hyesan Economic Development District in Bukcheong County, South Hamgyong Province, the Onsung Island Tourism Development District in Onsung County, North

Hamgyong Province, and the Wiwon Industrial Development District in Nampo City. These are small in size and will be developed according to the strategies tailored to their local characteristics. For this, North Korea reshuffled and expanded the General National Economic Development Bureau into the National Economic Development Commission and newly established the Chosun Economic Development Association as a private entity to induce foreign investments.

North Korea aims at attracting a total of 1.59 billion dollars in foreign investments for its special economic zone development plan which assigns 1.5-8 square kilometers (450,000 pyeong to 2.4 million pyeong) to each district. However, there are daunting challenges for the North to surmount to reach its goals, such as international sanctions, stalled market reform, the negative precedent set by the Gaeseong Industrial Complex, short supply of power and underdeveloped infrastructure, obsolete logistics facilities, and the lack of experts and desire for a market economy.

China was able to grow its economy based on the special economic zone development plan because the government made it clear that it was willing to pursue reform and openness. Also, it devised systems to link the special districts with its domestic industries and markets and created an environment favorable to foreign investments before implementing the plan. The key to attracting foreign investments is to gain the trust of potential investors toward the government and preparing appropriate conditions, including infrastructure. In this sense, North Korea may need to first set forth a master plan to show how to simultaneously pursue opening up and reform while abstaining from its nuclear ambitions.

Figure 5–5 14 Economic Development Districts under Construction (as of June 2014)



### 3 Prospects and Tasks for Reform and Opening

A major challenge for the Kim Jong-un regime at the moment is to overcome the economic hardship which has plagued North Korea for over two decades. To do so, it needs a strategy that will enable the country to take an active role in the global economy and leverage foreign capital for economic growth. In addition, the regime must tackle the dilemma of the economy—the expansion of markets in reality and the institutional maintenance of a command system—and channel the added value created from markets into economic development projects.

However, instead of pursuing opening up and reform, the Kim Jong-un regime is working to implement “new economic management methods” and the special economic zone policy, emphasizing the policy of parallel development of the economy and nuclear capabilities under the banner of “economic management

of our style.” The methods and policy are extended versions of the July 1st Measures and the establishment of four special economic districts pursued by the Kim Jong-il regime.

On December 30, 2011, the National Defense Commission, which has pledged its allegiance to its new leader Kim Jong-un, declared, “No changes should be expected.” Kim Jong-un then proclaimed, “We should strive to develop the national defense industry first and foremost as demanded by the military-first economic development policy” in a statement on April 6, 2012. This was followed by a series of actions, including the firing of long-range missiles in December 2012, a third nuclear test in February 2013, and the announcement of parallel development of the economy and nuclear weapons in the following month.

In the meantime, Kim Jong-un reiterated his determination to simultaneously develop the economy and enhance North Korea’s nuclear capabilities through diverse channels. He said, “The people’s purse strings should not be tightened any more” in a speech during a ceremonial military review on April 15, 2012. He also said, “Providing support for the people is neither incidental nor practical for the military. Doing much good for the people has become a politically critical task for our military” in an editorial to *Rodong Sinmun* on November 9, 2012.

Considering its perennial emphasis on nuclear buildup, North Korea is likely to inevitably pour its limited resources into nuclear arms programs and the national defense industry. It is known that the “new economic management methods” are still pilot programs carried out in selected areas only and the country has yet to build an institutional basis before full implementation. The special economic zone policy designed to create specialized districts at the city/provincial/county levels is an attempt to facilitate opening-up. However, the policy is highly likely to be another limited opening-up measure given that the North’s authorities emphasize “not to view the policy from the reform

and openness perspective.”<sup>19</sup> For an opening-up policy to take effect, it should be implemented together with internal reform. North Korea is pursuing its opening-up policy while not expressing the will to give up its nuclear ambitions and refusing internal reform. This in turn lowers its possibility to induce foreign investments.

When compared to the opening-up policy of China in the early-1980s, the Kim Jong-un regime’s dual strategy exposes its own limitations. When announcing the opening-up policy, Beijing modified its ideology based on the judgment that the country was in the primary stage of socialism, and then adopted the comparative advantage theory and the East Asian model for economic development. Beijing also hammered out a long-term master plan aimed at modernizing its economy and promoting market systems while aggressively using the terms “reform” and “opening-up.” Besides, it conducted reform of its ownership system to allow pluralized possession.

Unlike China, North Korea has carefully approached “routes of changes of the North Korean style” on and off after the fall of the socialist bloc. By alternating between limited opening and partial application of market functions, the regime has further aggravated its economic dilemma. Kim Jong-un is highly likely to follow the suits of his predecessors, adopting the same double-sided policy, which put the country into a catch-22 situation—reform and opening-up are inevitable for surmounting its economic crisis and promoting economic development, but at the same time they could impair the endurance of the North Korean-style socialism and accelerate the process toward regime change. The North Korean regime is a dictatorship built on power succession, which thus puts the sustenance of regime before economic recovery. In this sense, it will be difficult for the regime to resolve its economic dilemma.



# Endnotes

- 1 Chosun Encyclopedia vol. 4, Pyongyang: Encyclopedia Publishing Co., 1996, p.433.
- 2 Korea Institute for National Unification, North Korea Overview 2009, p.183.
- 3 The Chongsanri Method refers to a collection of ideas for economic management shaped up by Kim Il-sung during his visit to Cheongsanri Cooperative Farm in Gangseo County, South Pyeongan Province in February 1960. The method was first used in the agriculture area and later spread to the rest of the economy. The ideas include assistance by higher organizations for subordinate entities and by senior individuals, for junior individuals in order to carry through the party lines and policies; visiting the fields to have a closer look into issues in question and devising the right solutions; putting political and personnel-related campaigns before all other campaigns and galvanizing the passion and creativity of the awakened masses to have them take on revolutionary missions; mixing general guidance and individual guidance in the right manner; prioritizing projects and concentrating energy into a central project; and marching through all projects based on complete planning.
- 4 The Daean Work System refers to a collectivism-based industrial management system unique to North Korea, which came from Kim Il-sung's instruction made during a visit to Daean Electricity Factory in the Daean District, Nampo in December 1961. The system supports collective guidance on planning, production, and technologies by party committees which hold the highest decision making authority within a factory or enterprise.
- 5 Economic Dictionary vol. 2, Pyongyang: Social Sciences Publishing Co., 1985, p.208
- 6 The Supreme People's Assembly political order, November 21, 2013.
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- 8 Economic Dictionary vol. 2, Pyongyang: Social Sciences Publishing Co., 1985, p. 715-716.
- 9 Rodong Sinmun, October 8, 1966.
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- 12 See Comprehensive Assessment of the North Korean Economy in 2008 and the Prospects for 2009, Korea Institute for National Unification, 2009, pp.21-24.
- 13 Rodong Sinmun, March 19, 2013.
- 14 “Let’s Realize Fatherly *Suryŏng*’ Aspirations to Build a Strong and Prosperous Nation,” Minju Chosun, July 5, 2011.
- 15 Under the system, collective farms lease parts of their land for cultivation by other institutions and enterprises.
- 16 Chosun Sinbo reported that the new Subgroup Management System was introduced to Samjigang Cooperative Farm in Jaeryong County, South Hwanghae Province on April 11, 2013 and attempts at the new management system were made in the Pyongyang Essential Foodstuff Factory on November 6, 2013.
- 17 “2002 Outlook for North Korea’s External Relations: Economic Relations-centered,” Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency, [www.kotra.or.kr/main/info/nk](http://www.kotra.or.kr/main/info/nk).
- 18 Rodong Sinmun, November 23, 2013.
- 19 “Intention of the Establishment of Provincial-level Economic Development Districts and the Development Prospects,” Chosun Sinbo, November 29, 2013.

# VI

## Education and Culture

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**Section 1.** Education System and School Life

**Section 2.** Literary Art Policy and Current Status

**Section 3.** The Media and its Functions

## Key Points

### 01

Although North Korea claims to provide free compulsory education, the reality is very different. Free education exists in name only; school materials, for example, must be purchased by the students themselves. As witnessed by damaged equipment and tools, outdated school facilities, and low class attendance, the education system is facing a severe crisis.

### 02

Rather than providing for personal development, education in the North is aimed at molding the young into revolutionaries, members of the working class, and communists. This is in accordance with the overall objective of carrying out a socialist revolution, building a socialist nation, and nurturing loyal and obedient subjects of the leader. The core curriculum in North Korean education consists of political thoughts, science and technology, and physical education. Of these three basic constituent elements, political thoughts education, which focuses on the revolutionary history and activities of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il, is emphasized the most.

### 03

Literature and art in North Korea does not manifest the creativity and free will of individuals, but is used as a propaganda conduit for the official ideology. Being under the complete control of the state, the North's writers and artists advocate not beauty, but loyalty to the party, people and working class.

### 04

The primary role of the media in North Korea is to propagate and advocate the WPK policies and revolutionary campaigns and to organize and mobilize the people to carry out the tasks of revolution set by the Party. The North's media serves as an important tool to sustain the regime by inculcating the general masses with the Party lines and making organizational mobilization possible.

## Section 1. Education System and School Life

### 1 Education Policy and School System

#### (1) Educational Objectives

Education is one of the major tools used to preserve and reproduce social systems. Based on this insight, North Korea has emphasized the importance of education to the socialist system, and developed its educational system accordingly from the start. This has resulted in an education policy that prescribes pre-school education and free schooling, which are touted as representative of the superiority of the regime.

Since the North's economic crisis, however, the free compulsory education system has survived in name only. Though there are no tuition fees, students need to pay for school materials such as textbooks, class supplies, and uniforms. They even bear the costs of school maintenance, including educational equipment, fuel, and so forth. As a result of the economic crisis, various forms of illegality and corruption such as illicit admissions and grade tampering became endemic in education as in the rest of society.

Unable to carry out its purpose and functions, the North Korean education system faces overall crisis, entailing damaged equipment, obsolete school facilities, low attendance, deteriorating quality of education, the diminishing authority of teachers, and so on. The regime has thus reinforced political

and ideological education in a bid to prevent further deterioration of public education and to reverse the general weakening of ideological morale across society.

The primary objective of the education system in North Korea is to foster young elites necessary for the preservation of the North Korean style socialist system. This is clearly stated in education-related laws as well as in the Theses of Socialist Education - a compilation of basic policies and guidelines in the education field.

According to educational objectives, the North Korean regime has devised laws stipulating details on how to implement its education policy. The education-related laws prescribe the details of the school system, educational objectives, the curriculum and content, school administration and operation, and so forth for all stages of education from pre-school and primary school to secondary, higher, and adult education. After 1990, in reflection of changes in the North Korean society, the regime announced a series of new legislations and revisions. Examples include the Education Law in 1999, the Common Education Law in 2011, the Higher Education Law in 2011, and the legal order of the Supreme People's Assembly (SPA), titled "On the Implementation of the Universal Twelve-year Compulsory Education" in 2012. All these are based on the Theses of Socialist Education announced on September 5, 1977.

Table 6–1 Education–related Laws in North Korea

Law	Theses of Socialist Education	Education Law	Common Education Law	Higher Education Law
Adoption/ Legislation	The 14th plenary session of the 5th WPK meeting on Sept. 5 1977	The SPA Presidium political order No. 847 on July 14, 1999 (revised and supplemented on Dec. 13 2005 and Dec. 11, 2007)	The SPA Presidium political order No. 1355 on Jan. 19, 2011	The SPA Presidium political order No. 2036 on Dec. 14, 2011
Contents	5 chapters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic principles of socialist pedagogy</li> <li>• Contents of socialist education</li> <li>• Methods of socialist education</li> <li>• Socialist education systems</li> <li>• Duties and roles of educational institutions, guidance and assistance for educational programs</li> </ul>	5 chapters and 52 articles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The basis of the Education Law</li> <li>• Universal free compulsory education</li> <li>• Educational institutions and teaching staff</li> <li>• Educational contents and methods</li> <li>• Guarantee of educational conditions</li> <li>• Guidance for and control of educational projects</li> </ul>	6 chapters and 53 articles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The basis of the Common Education Law</li> <li>• Implementation of free compulsory education</li> <li>• Establishment and operation of common educational institutions</li> <li>• Training of teaching staff for common education</li> <li>• Guidance for and control of educational and cultural programs</li> </ul>	7 chapters and 68 articles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The basis of the Higher Education Law</li> <li>• Implementation of higher education</li> <li>• Organization of higher educational institutions</li> <li>• Teaching staff for and students on higher education courses</li> <li>• Organization of cultural programs for teaching staff as well as science and research programs</li> <li>• Guarantee of conditions for higher educational programs</li> <li>• Guidance for and control of higher educational programs</li> </ul>
Key points	A compilation of speeches, instructions, and orders Kim Il–sung gave on the matters of education, which set forth the basic policies and guidelines for North Korean education	Regulations on the principles of special education for the gifted and the Establishment of Educational Funds which emphasize exchanges and cooperation with foreign countries and international organizations	A series of regulations for the normalization of North Korean education, which was crippled by the economic crisis: production and supply of textbooks and educational equipment (Article 16), educational administration projects and improvement of educational environment (Article 26), punishments to strengthen control over non–socialist phenomenon (Article 52, 53), emphasis of basic science and technology and foreign language education (Article 40, 48), matters regarding special education for the gifted (Article 11, 23)	Organization of cultural programs of teaching staff as well as science and research programs for the implementation of special education for the gifted (Article 42), operation of small student groups for science research (Article 43), inviting experts for lectures (Article 44), organization of practice sessions and academic field trips (Article 45), exchanging students with foreign countries (Article 46), and emphasis of special education for high–achieving students, enabling anyone with extraordinary ability to have access to higher education regardless of their age (Article 9)

The objective is also expressed in Chapter 1, Article 3 of the Education Law, which states that education is to “foster young and physically fit talent with sound ideological attitudes and extensive knowledge of science and technology.” This model student is described in greater detail in the Theses of Socialist Education:<sup>1</sup>

“The objective of socialist education is to train people to be revolutionary elites equipped with independent minds and creativity... The basic principle of socialist pedagogy is... to arm people with communist ideology and help develop their extensive scientific knowledge and bodily health.”

The educational objective is also described as being “to foster the next generations into robust revolutionaries who struggle for society and the people, and turn them into a new sort of communist men and women equipped with integrated knowledge, virtue, and physical strength” according to Article 43 of the North Korean Constitution of 1972.<sup>2</sup> North Korea thus strives to foster talented young people who equip themselves with revolutionary philosophy and good physical training to serve the struggle for socialism and communism.

Meanwhile, the most emphasized merit required for ideal communists in North Korean education is revolutionary thought. The key contents of education on revolutionary thought include the *juche* ideology, WPK policies, revolutionary traditions, communist conviction, and revolutionary optimism. Meanwhile, education in science and technology focuses on allowing students to experience achievements in advanced science and technology. The objective of physical education is to physically train for duties in labor and national defense. In essence, North Korean education is aimed at fostering individuals into communist members, who are active in labor, armed with ideology, and have a revolutionary optimism for the construction of a communist society.

Rather than providing for personal development, education in the North is aimed at molding students into revolutionaries, members of the working class, and communists. This is in accordance with the overall objective of carrying

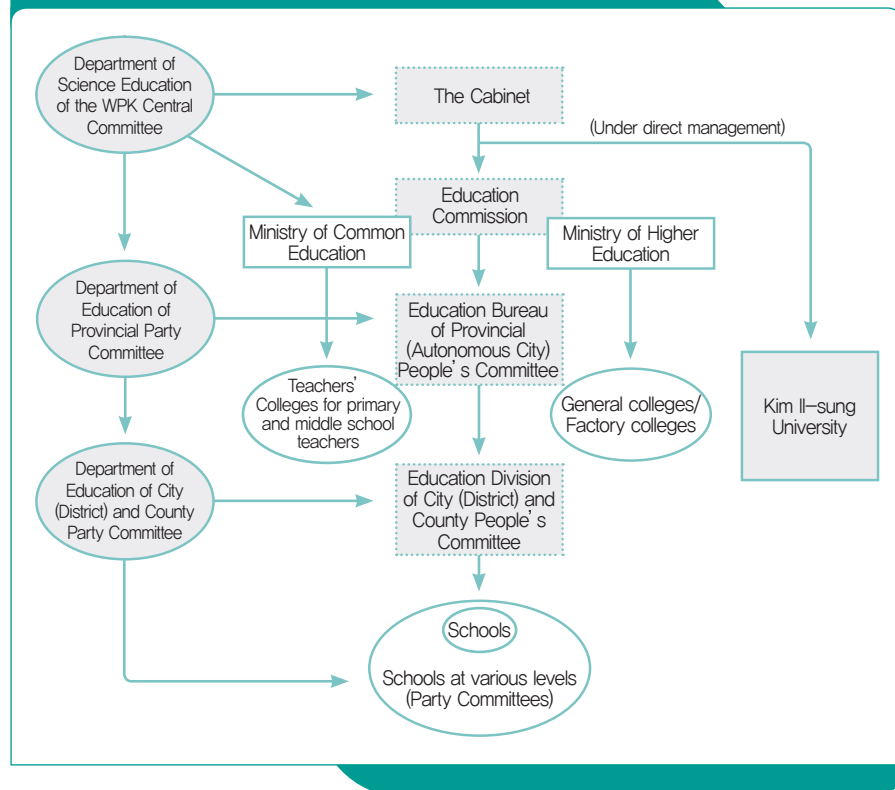


out a socialist revolution, building a socialist nation, and nurturing loyal and obedient subjects of leaders such as Kim Jong-il and Kim Jong-un.

## (2) Educational Administration System

Education is administered under the guidance of the WPK, which in the North's party-state socialist system, has the highest authority over all state apparatus and social organizations. State and social institutions have been degraded into mere tools for the enforcement of party lines and policies. Accordingly, the Central Committee's Science and Education Department is responsible for policy development and general guidance, whereas the Education Commission within the Cabinet is in charge of policy implementation and overall educational administration. Educational institutions at various levels provide education for students under the guidance of the WPK and Cabinet.

Figure 6-1 Educational Administration System in North Korea



In short, North Korea's educational administration has a tripodal structure which comprises the WPK, the Cabinet and schools. The Party instructs and supervises; the Cabinet complies with the WPK to administer specific educational policies; and schools deliver education to the students. The relationship between these entities is described in Figure 6-1.

### The Workers' Party of Korea

The WPK Central Committee makes decisions on education which are then passed down to lower party committees and the Cabinet. One of the peculiarities of the North Korean system is that the WPK has overriding authority over the Cabinet and local schools in dealing with personnel and education issues. The principal of each school may appear to be responsible for school administration and finances, but real authority is vested in vice principals, who also assume the chairmanship of schools' party committees. These vice principals are sent to schools to oversee the organizational activities of faculty members and to administer their ideological and cultural education.

### The Cabinet

Educational administration and working-level tasks are dealt with by the Education Commission of the Cabinet. Under the commission are the Ministry of Common Education and the Ministry of Higher Education. The former oversees education in kindergartens, primary and middle schools, and teachers' colleges, while the latter is responsible for general universities and colleges of education. Educational guidelines devised by the education ministries are delivered to the educational bureaus of each municipal and provincial people's committees, which in turn convey them to the people's education division in corresponding cities, counties, and districts. Only when they finally reach local schools at various levels are these guidelines put into practice.

## Schools

Schools conduct education for students under the guidance and control of the WPK and Cabinet. The administration of these learning institutions is conducted by principals, vice principals (who also chair the primary party committees established at each school unit), heads of departments, and accounting office managers. The departments established at this level are distinguished by subject in middle schools and by grade in primary schools. Moreover, a party committee exists in each school, under which there are social and political organizations for teachers and students.

Under this party-dominant system, the WPK's authority is exercised in all aspects of school operation. This means that vice principals who take the chairmanship of the party committee at each school often have greater authority than that of the school principals. This way, the party's intervention in education is institutionalized, making North Korea's educational administration system peculiar.

### (3) School System

#### 1) Changes in Education System

##### Establishment of Socialist Education System

From the establishment of the regime to the present day, the education system in North Korea has been reorganized according to the needs of the regime and society.

During the period from the national liberation in August 1945 to the early days of the establishment of the regime in June 1950, North Korea introduced a socialist education system. The school system was reshuffled in accordance with a single curriculum which started from people's school (elementary school), which led to junior and senior middle school and ended at college.

A series of institutional revisions to construct a socialist regime were also conducted in sponsorship by the Soviet Union before the outbreak of the Korean War. Among them, those announced in the area of education included the Provisional Outline for the North Korean School Education (October 1945). In addition, institutions of primary education were renamed from “national school” to “people’s school” and the schooling system was built around four years of people’s school, three years of junior middle school, three years of senior middle school, and four years of college. North Korean education at this period was characterized by a transition toward socialist education and the provision of education for illiterate adults who had missed learning opportunities during Japanese colonial rule.

During the post-war recovery period from June 1950 to October 1959, North Korea strived to rise from the ashes of the war and construct a socialist nation. Education at this period was focused on crafting a school system which encouraged both working and learning to help recovery efforts. Students were mass mobilized under the slogan “Learn while working and work while learning.” In the meantime, four-year primary compulsory education was implemented starting from 1956, which was extended to seven-year compulsory education to middle school in 1958. This was designed to make it easy to mobilize students for labor and further strengthen their ideology education.

Technical education was highlighted from October 1959 to December 1966 with the drive behind post-war recovery and construction of a socialist nation being promoted consistently. Advanced special technical schools were opened to train technical experts to work in post-war recovery projects. Senior middle schools were closed down and two-year technical and advanced technical schools were established instead. This was the beginning of the technical education system in North Korea, which encouraged each student to acquire at least one set of technical skills. The North Korean school curriculum at this period was thus a process of four-year people’s school leading to three-year

middle school, two-year technical school, and two-year advanced technical school followed by three- to five-years of college.

With technical education being emphasized, nine-year compulsory technical education was initiated in 1967. The curricula of the three-year middle school and the two-year technical school were integrated into a five-year middle school system, and then the four-year people's school and five-year middle school curricula became compulsory. The North also tried to combine general education and technical education by opening two-year high schools.

### Establishment and Changes of the *juche* Education System

With the rise of the *juche* idea as North Korea's official governance principle in the 1970s, efforts were accordingly made to base the country's education system on the *juche* ideology. The fourth plenary session of the fifth Worker's Party of Korea (WPK) meeting in 1972 passed the phased implementation of a ten-year compulsory education and one-year compulsory pre-school education. As the result, universal eleven-year compulsory education comprising one year of upper kindergarten class, four years of primary school, and six years of middle school came into practice in full swing from September 1975. The school system was thus reorganized into two years of kindergarten, four years of people's school, six years of middle school (renamed senior middle school in 1978), and four years of college. The Theses of Socialist Education, a compilation of basic policies and guidelines in the education field and the Law on Children's Education, Nursing, and Culture were enacted at this time.

The trends of globalization and advancement of information technologies in the mid-1980s prompted North Korea to take reform measures in the area of education. Foreign language education was emphasized and special education for the gifted was conducted. First Middle Schools were created in every city and province to nurture students with excellent academic performance into professionals in the areas of science and technology, and several institutions were designated for

computer education for talented middle school students. Additionally, special courses for high-achieving students were also established at colleges, and primary school students were required to attend computer and foreign language classes for one hour per week for each subject from the fourth grade.

Eleven-year compulsory education comprising one year of kindergarten, four years of primary school, and six years of middle school was provided up until September 2012 when the compulsory period was extended to twelve years. North Korea adopted the legal order, “On the Implementation of the Universal Twelve-year Compulsory Education” at the sixth session of the twelfth SPA meeting on September 25, 2012. The order was aimed at helping stabilize the regime through the reorganization of the country’s free compulsory education system which has been crippled in the wake of the economic crisis. The order prescribed the new system to take effect in 2014 with the goal of full implementation after two to three years of preparation which started in 2013. Along with the extension of the compulsory education period, people’s school for primary education was renamed ‘primary school,’ and senior middle school for secondary education was renamed ‘middle school.’

Table 6–2 Changes in North Korea’s Compulsory Education System

Year	Contents
1950	Five-year primary education (ceased by the Korean War)
1956	Four-year primary education
1958	Seven-year secondary education (four years of people’s school plus three years of middle school)
1967	Nine-year technical education (four years of people’s school plus five years of middle school)
1975~2012	Universal eleven-year education (one year of kindergarten, four years of primary school, and six years of middle school)
2013~	Universal twelve-year education (one year of kindergarten, five years of primary school, three years of junior middle school, and three years of senior middle school)

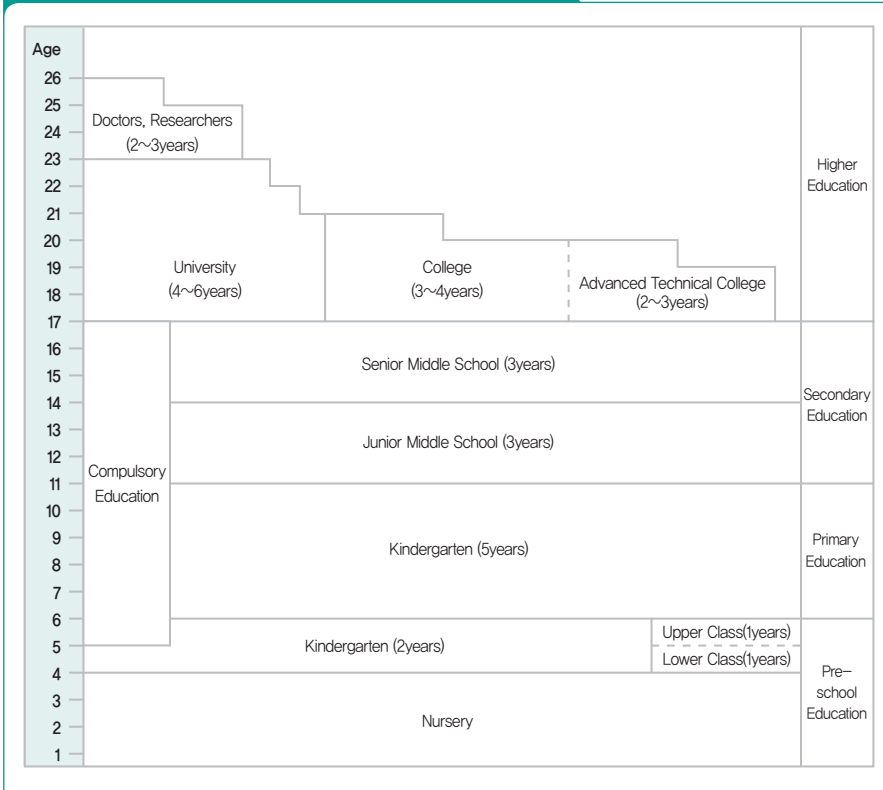
## 2) School Systems

As described in Figure 6-2, North Korea's school system is currently built on a 5-6-4 (6) basis, which is to say, five years of primary school, six years of middle school, and four to six years of college. Previously, it was a 4-6-4 (6) system: four years of primary school, six years of middle school, and four to six years of college, which comprised the eleven-year compulsory education period together with one year of upper kindergarten class. This was reshuffled into five years of primary school, three years of junior middle school, and three years of senior middle school in 2013 in accordance with the SPA legal order on September 25, 2012 on the implementation of the universal twelve-year compulsory education as explained above. This extended compulsory education was stipulated as the country's basic school system in Chapter 3, Article 45 in the partial revision of the North Korean Constitution in April 2013.

Apart from this basic school system, there are various types of institutions for special education, including schools for gifted students, foreign language schools, learning institutions specializing in sports and art, and so-called revolutionary academies for children from privileged families.

Special and higher education have a wide range of systems in place depending on the type of school and department. For instance, teacher's colleges and junior colleges offer three-year undergraduate programs, while general colleges and universities provide four- to six-year courses depending on the department. Colleges of education offer four-year undergraduate programs. In the case of Kim Il-sung University, the faculty of humanities is a four-year program, while the faculties of social sciences and natural sciences are five-year and six-year programs, respectively. Recently, the minimum years required to graduate from the faculty of natural sciences is known to have been curtailed by one or two years.

Figure 6–2 North Korean School System



Since 1969, North Korea’s school semester had started on September 1, but in 1996, the first day of school was moved to April 1. Students enjoy vacations in the summer (August 1-31), winter (January 1-February 16), and spring (1 week at the end of March). Final exams take place in March.

### Common Education

Common education in North Korea is general education to teach the most fundamental and basic knowledge, which comprises pre-school, primary, and secondary education. Upon national liberation, North Korea enacted the Law on Measures to Implement North Korean School Education, in accordance with which institutions of primary education were renamed from “national school” to “people’s school,” with the ostensible goal being to eliminate vestiges



of Japanese colonial rule. The new state then embarked on a six-year program through people's schools, including one-year preparatory course.

Several changes ensued thereafter, and the present-day education in North Korea offers twelve years of compulsory schooling comprising one year of an upper kindergarten program, five years of primary education, three years of junior middle school, and three years of senior middle school. The North claims that “compulsory education is implemented to provide holistic education that molds all members of society into communist men and women, which is achievable only in socialist societies.” In this sense, North Korea's compulsory education serves as a tool aimed at the systematic study of communist revolutionary ideology needed to foster communist members of society. This is based on the belief that organized, systematic education from a young age will maximize the inculcation of communist values.

The regime's much-touted free education is of little significance in actuality because the state owns and distributes all resources and products. Students are mobilized for various construction projects, which are considered as a form of production labor combined with education under the pretext of the need for holistic human development. Such mobilization is an integral and formal part of the regular curriculum and has eclipsed the merits of free education.

Primary school students are not only engaged in school-related labor but also lend a helping hand during the busy farming season. Meanwhile, middle school students are sent to various farms during the busy seasons to work from four weeks (in the case of students in grades 1-4) to ten weeks (in the case of students in grades 5 and 6); and they are also mobilized for construction projects. Student mobilization for “weeding battle” activities is particularly intense during the whole month of July. In early May, twenty to thirty days are set aside for the “spring battle” of rice planting and the “fall battle” of harvesting takes place at the end of September.

Students also shoulder various costs for buying textbooks and class materials,

school repair and maintenance, and so forth. Such financial burden has grown since the economic crisis, so that more and more students from poor families are effectively excluded from the official education system. This in turn has led to a rise in absenteeism and a drop in enrollment as well as the general deterioration of academic performance.

North Korea used to base its education system on egalitarian principles, but these gave way in the 1990s due to harsh new economic realities. Schools began emphasizing practical education such as foreign languages and computers, even at primary school level, and offered special courses for gifted students. Regional differences were reflected in middle school curriculums, with mathematics and physics being taught to students in urban and industrial districts, and biology and chemistry to those in rural regions. Not being immune to the world trends of globalization and the spread of information technology, North Korea founded elite institutions in the area of information technology from the mid-1980s. Such institutions were expanded to other cities and counties in the 1990s.

Presumably, the introduction of this sort of specialized education was dictated by the economic hardship that had left the regime short of resources. This approach, however, is creating a greater divide among students. Only students from the privileged class in certain regions have access to opportunities to learn computer skills, foreign languages, and an advanced curriculum, while most others are left behind to face poor educational environments and mismanaged schools. Besides, mobilization for various kinds of work projects and heightened non-tax burden play their own parts in further excluding them from the official educational system.

Such realities were reflected in the SPA legal order in September 2012, which extended the period for compulsory education by one year to twelve years. The legal order prohibited reckless mobilization of students for labor projects except for those included in the school curriculum and assignment of burdensome social projects to schools as part of an effort to strengthen administrative guidance and statutory control for the effective implementation of compulsory education.

## Higher Education

Higher education was commenced in North Korea on September 1, 1946 by way of decision by the Provincial People's Committee of North Korea to establish the Kim Il-sung University in Pyongyang. Thereafter, colleges for political and economic studies were built during the post-Korean War period of reconstruction (1954 to 1956). During the subsequent five-year planning period from 1957, teachers' colleges and colleges of education were opened to train teachers to deliver compulsory secondary education.

In 1960, the North moved on to open factory and evening colleges, having perceived the necessity to secure a steady supply of engineers to carry out its economic plans. Factory colleges were later expanded throughout North Korea's first seven-year economic plan (1961 to 1970), and further expansions and additions of factory colleges, telecommunications colleges, and junior colleges followed during the second seven-year economic plan (1978 to 1984) to meet the shortage of schools at various levels. As a result, institutions for higher education included three universities—the Kim Il-sung University, Kim Chaek University of Technology, and Koryo Songgyungwan University—and general colleges, along with on-site colleges of different industries such as agriculture, fishery and industrial plants.

Gaining admission to college involves a different process and procedure from those required for common education. Since common education is compulsory, students do not take entrance exams to complete their middle-school education. However, students aspiring to enter a college should follow certain procedures, including preliminary exams to receive recommendations, and an entrance examination conducted by individual colleges in each province.

The Education Commission of the Cabinet provides each province with the number of candidates for the entrance exams of individual colleges. Based on this allotment, students who pass the preliminary exam are notified by the college recruitment division of each people's committee. The number

of students recommended to college is about 20 percent of the total middle school graduates in any given year. Among them, those who enroll in college immediately upon passing the entrance examination are only 10 percent a year on average. They are the so-called “direct-track students,” because they have not only done well at school but also come from good family backgrounds. Boys who fail the examination join the army, while the girls are assigned to a workplace. Students are not given a second chance, but after they are assigned to military duty or work, they can reapply for college as adult members of society.

Eligibility to colleges and universities is determined by the score the student receives on the preliminary examination. Yet, the schools also place importance on the applicant’s character and talents, so a special admission is also offered to those who are considered qualified. Being conscious of academic discrepancies among secondary schools, colleges and universities apply a ranking system that adjusts qualifications according to the applicant’s middle school or region. As economic hardship has worsened, the number of students admitted to colleges and universities illegally (i.e., through bribing or grade tampering) has increased. Successful applicants must thus have not only good grades and a good family background, but also the financial ability to bear the cost of textbooks, uniform, room and board as well as the operation costs of repairing and maintaining school facilities. Consequently, it has become common for applicants with rich and powerful parents such as high-ranking party and government officials or supervisors of external trade businesses to gain admission to top-notch institutions through illicit means.

### Special Education

In North Korea, special education is provided to students with special status or talents. The most famous institutions for special education are First Middle Schools, Pyongyang Foreign Language Institute, and the Mangyongdae Revolutionary Institute. In addition, there are several top-notch institutions for

students with extraordinary talents in dance, music, plastic arts, sports and circus. These include Kumsong Institute, Pyongyang Music School, Nampo Central Athletic Institute, and Kim Jong-il Art Institute.

Having realized the need for elites in science and technology to resolve slowing economic growth, Kim Jong-il issued an instruction to “select students with outstanding aptitude and talents and provide them with systematic training.” North Korea thus opened First Middle School in Pyongyang in 1984. Such schools spread to special cities and cities where provincial capitals are located, including Nampo, Gaeseong, Chongjin, and Hyesan. With further expansion in 1999, there is now a First Middle School in every city, county, and district across the country. These schools mainly provide education needed to foster experts in the field of natural sciences, including physics, science, and mathematics. Therefore, successful applicants to these schools are required to have superb academic grades in mathematics and sciences, as well as a good family background. Using a set of junior-college level textbooks different from those used in average middle schools, first middle school students study natural sciences, computer science, and English. Upon graduation, they are admitted to the Kim Il-sung University or Kim Chaek University of Technology, where they are trained on a one-on-one mentoring basis. They also enjoy exemption from rural community support activities and military service. After graduation they work in the key areas of science and technology.

North Korea had since the 1980s attempted to train elites through special education for the gifted. This was fueled in the late 1990s particularly in the area of science and technology under the slogan “promoting the vision for a strong and prosperous nation.” Behind the reinforcement of special education was a strategy to simultaneously promote economic development and nation building by fostering highly skilled human resources in advanced science and technology. The authorities believed that, “In the age of information technology, science and technology has become a critical factor determining the rise and fall of a nation and a people.” To sum up, North Korea’s continued emphasis

on the importance of special education for the gifted in the fields of science, technology and information despite its crippled general school system was motivated by its need to concentrate insufficient educational recourses in select areas and its desire to find ways to overcome the economic crisis.

Special education in foreign languages is provided by the Pyongyang Foreign Language Institute and by foreign language institutes in other cities and provinces. The Pyongyang Foreign Language Institute offers a six-year middle school curriculum and intensive training in eight different languages, including English, Chinese, Japanese, and Russian. Admission is offered to children of recipients of the title of hero, of deceased revolutionaries, and of decorated soldiers, who have completed primary education and display a talent in foreign languages.

**Table 6–3 North Korea’s Special Education Institutions for the Gifted**

Area	School	Curriculum
Arts and sports	Music school Dance school Plastic arts school Special arts school and so forth	Primary to middle school curriculum Established in 1960
Natural sciences	First Middle Schools Advanced computer science class at the Kumsong Institute	Middle school curriculum Established in 1984
Foreign languages	Foreign language institutes	Middle school curriculum Established in 1958
For children of deceased revolutionaries	Mangyongdae Revolutionary Institute Haeju Revolutionary Institute Kang Ban-sok Revolutionary Institute	Primary to middle school curriculum offering programs to train senior military, political, and female officials Established in 1947



Class at the Mangyongdae Revolutionary Institute

North Korea’s recent enactment of the Common Education Law on January 19, 2011 and the Higher Education Law on December 14 of the same year emphasized the need to train human resources to carry out the strong and prosperous nation

campaign as well as to enhance education in basic science and technology and foreign languages. This view was passed down to the Kim Jong-un regime as witnessed by its introduction of universal twelve-year compulsory education to train talented young professionals who will help “develop the country into a knowledge-based economic powerhouse based on industrial revolution of the new century.” Along with this, a renewed school system was launched and science education was further reinforced.

Revolutionary institutes were created to take the children of those who made distinguished contributions to the nation and raise them into men and women who would serve it in like manner. They include the Mangyongdae Revolutionary Institute, the Kang Ban-sok Revolutionary Institute, the Nampo Revolutionary Institute, and the Saenal Revolutionary Institute. The Mangyongdae Revolutionary Institute, a special school providing eight years of education, was established in October 1947 under the Ministry of People’s Armed Forces. Children of deceased revolutionaries or high-ranking party and military officials are qualified to apply. They are admitted upon graduation from primary school, whereupon they must reside in the dormitory and receive compulsory education under a strict military organization. Upon graduation, they are assigned to key military or other special posts, where they receive the best treatment under privileged conditions.

## 2 Educational Curriculum and Methods

### (1) Educational Curriculum

#### Primary Educational Curriculum

As described in Table 6-4, primary education requires that students complete 13 subjects, including Korean language over four years of study in primary school.<sup>3</sup> In particular, since September 2008, primary schools have provided



Primary school students

English and computer classes for students in the third grade and above. The primary school curriculum is made up of six subject areas: political thought, science and technology, physical education, music, arts and crafts, national defense, and

foreign languages. Weekly class hours for these subjects can be listed as follows in decreasing order: Korean language, mathematics, natural science, physical education, music, and arts and crafts. Korean language accounts for one-third of total class hours, while mathematics makes up a quarter of them. These two subjects account for 57 percent of the total hours.

Table 6–4 Education Curriculum for Primary Schools

	Subject	Class Hours Per Week For Each Grade			
		Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4
1	Childhood of Great Leader Grand Marshal Kim Il-sung	1	1	1	2
2	Childhood of Great Leader Kim Jong-il	1	1	1	2
3	Childhood of Anti-Japanese Heroine Kim Jong-suk				1
4	Socialist Morality	2	2	1	1
5	Mathematics	6	6	6	6
6	Korean	6	6	7	8
7	Science	2	2	2	2
8	Health				1
9	Music	2	2	2	2
10	PE	2	2	2	2
11	Drawing & Crafts	2	2	1	1
12	English			1	1
13	Computer			1	1

Note: 1. The above table was produced based on the curriculum proposed by the North Korean Ministry of Education in March 1996. The curriculum revised upon the school system reorganization in 2012 has not been disclosed.

2. Students have a 16-week summer vacation after the first term and 18-week winter vacation after the second term. In addition, there is a one-week spring break at the end of March.



## Secondary Educational Curriculum

In the case of secondary education, as described on Table 6-5, students are required to take 23 subjects during their six year study in middle school. Except for a few certain details, the middle school curriculum is generally similar to that of primary schools.

The options to choose educational contents or subjects were not available for individual schools and students in North Korea since education was under the management and control by the state and party. However, upon the beginning of a new semester on April 1, 2001, elective courses tailored to the features of the schools' area of location were introduced to secondary education. For instance, farming-related sessions were opened at schools in rural areas and fishery- and forestry-related sessions were introduced in fishing villages and mountainous areas, respectively. Classes on the light industry were created at schools located in areas concentrated with light industry factories. In accordance with this change, six kinds of textbooks were published on the subjects of mining, machinery, forestry, foods, clothes, and light electricity (or telecommunications engineering).

## College and University Curricula

Although it varies depending on school and major field, college and university curricula are generally divided into five areas: political thought, general subjects, introductory general subjects, major subjects, and introductory major subjects. All students are required to take political thought and general subjects such as foreign language and physical education regardless of their major. Introductory general subjects are divided into two groups: those that are selected to meet the needs of each major field and those that are common to all majors. Introductory major subjects are designed to prepare students for particular major fields, and their composition is determined by each major. Major subjects, too, are divided into two categories: mandatory and elective.

Table 6–5 Education Curriculum for Middle Schools

	Subject	Class Hours Per Week For Each Grade					
		Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
1	Revolutionary Activities of Dear Leader Grand Marshal Kim Il-sung	1	1	1			
2	Revolutionary History of Great Leader Grand Marshal Kim Il-sung				2	2	2
3	Revolutionary Activities of Great Leader Kim Jong-il	1	1	1			
4	Revolutionary History of Great Leader Kim Jong-il				2	2	2
5	Revolutionary History of Anti-Japanese Heroine Kim Jongsuk				1		
6	Socialist Morality	1	1	1	1	1	1
7	Present Party Policies				1week	1week	1week
8	Korean	5	5	4			
9	Literature				4	3	2
10	Chinese Characters	2	2	1	1	1	1
11	Foreign Language	4	3	3	3	3	3
12	History	1	1	2	2	2	2
13	Geography	2	2	2	2	2	
14	Mathematics	7	7	6	6	6	6
15	Physics		2	3	4	4	4
16	Chemistry			2	3	3	4
17	Biology		2	2	2	3	3
18	PE	2	2	2	1	1	1
19	Music	1	1	1	1	1	1
20	Art	1	1	1			
21	Drafting				1	1	
22	Computer				2	2	2
23	Practice (Boys/Girls)	1week	1week	1week	1week	1week	1week

Note: 1. The above table was produced based on a curriculum proposed by the North Korean Ministry of Education in March 1996. The middle school curriculum was divided into three years of junior middle school and three years of senior middle school by the school system reorganization in 2012, but the whole curriculum has not been disclosed.

2. Students in Grade 1–3 go to school 50 weeks a year while those in Grade 4–6 go to school 40 weeks a year.

The number of class hours also varies depending on the founding purpose and characteristics of a college or university. In general, political thought accounts for 25 percent of the total hours taught; general subjects, including foreign languages and PE, 10-15 percent; introductory general subjects, 10-40 percent; major subjects, 10-15 percent; and introductory major subjects, 10-40 percent.

Keeping pace with the development of information technology, North Korea created departments of computer engineering and information engineering and opened information engineering programs at universities to reinforce information and communication, and computer science education as part of its drive to promote practical education. This was intended to make information technology-related departments play a leading role in its colleges and universities. Besides, North Korea abolished, integrated, or established college departments and teaching subjects in a bid to reinforce education of information engineering, life science, and nanoscience and nanotechnology. College and university curricula were realigned accordingly.

## (2) Education Contents

According to the Theses of Socialist Education, the important parts of the North Korean school curriculum are political thought, science and technology, and physical education. In political thought classes, students learn Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il's revolutionary history and activities, while science and technology classes teach general sciences and professional skills. Physical education aims to improve students' physical conditions to meet the demands of public labor and national defense. Foreign language and computer education has been promoted more recently.

Of the three constituent elements of curriculum, political thought is considered the most important. The objective of political and ideological education is to foster loyalty to Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il. Primary and middle school students are thus compelled to take subjects idolizing the "Three Generals of

Baekdu Mountain (i.e., Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il, and Kim Il-sung's first wife Kim Jong-suk)." The contents of these classes based on this cult of personality include the childhood and revolutionary activities of the three supreme leaders. In colleges and universities, all students, regardless of their major, are required to take classes on *juche* ideology, revolutionary history, and *juche* political economics.

Though the key objective of political and ideological education in North Korea is to foster loyalty to the supreme leader, the inculcation of such forms of class consciousness as anti-Americanism and spirits for struggle was added to it in response to the influx of capitalist elements after the economic crisis, as well as in response to escalating tension between Pyongyang and Washington over North Korea's nuclear and missile development. North Korea's hostility against the United States continues to inform the education system. Anti-Americanism is being whipped up to warn against the infiltration of imperialist thoughts and culture as well as to encourage young people and students to join the army.

North Korea has recently reinforced education in political thought as well as emphasized the importance of practical education. Keeping pace with international trends of globalization and progress in information technology, it has also started to reinforce education in foreign languages as well as science and technology. By 2000, English and Chinese had become the two most popular foreign languages, replacing Russian as North Korea's first foreign language. The popularity of English in particular is so high that most middle schools now offer English classes. In the meantime, the Pyongyang University of Foreign Studies has substantially increased the maximum number of students who can major in English, and even requires those who major in other languages to take English as a mandatory class.

With the reinforcement of English education, the focus of foreign language training has shifted from grammar to conversation in order to improve students' practical language abilities and conversation skills. To this end, some colleges

have adopted foreign books written in the original language as standard textbooks for major subjects, and hold a foreign language contest among the faculty members in the natural science area in order to promote lecturing in foreign languages. Such attempts are aimed at improving the national economy through the training of diplomats and managers for external trade.

Reinforcement of computer training began at the end of the 1990s. In 2001, computer classes were newly created in such places as Mangyongdae Student and Children's Palace,<sup>4</sup> Pyongyang Student and Children's Palace, and Kumsong



First and Second Middle School. A small group of gifted students selected among primary school graduates are provided with computer training in these classes.

In the light of its composition and contents, North Korea's educational curriculum can be summed up with several features. First, politics and education are closely linked based on the belief that education is a critical tool in accomplishing an ideological revolution. Second, education is directly associated with production activities as demonstrated by the inclusion of basic skills education, on-the-job training, and productive labor in the school curriculum. Third, the contents and methods of education are standardized and issued down by the state, so that students have no right to choose their curriculum.<sup>5</sup>

### (3) Teaching Methods

Education in North Korea is based on the five teaching methods described in the Theses of Socialist Education.<sup>6</sup>

The first method is education by enlightening. This method highlights the development of the creative mind of students by helping them understand the contents of classes through their own thinking. Teaching techniques used for this method include exposition, discussion and debate, question and answer, intuition, realia, affirmation and influence.

Education by exposition works in the form of discourse. Education by discussion and debate allows students to develop a wide spectrum of views through exchanging opinions with other students. The question and answer technique encourages the asking of questions between classmates sitting around the same table. For instance, if teachers compile sample questions for various examinations and distribute them to students in advance, students make answers to the questions and share them with classmates to prepare for the examinations.

Education by intuition and realia emphasizes harmony between theory and practice by helping students understand the contents of the class while utilizing various practical tools. For instance, field trips to factories are to help students learn by experience what they have already learned from textbooks.

Education by affirmation and influence provides education on political thoughts and encourages students to present exemplary cases of implementation in their daily life, so that they can reflect on themselves and make greater efforts to advance. A good example is to make students “emulate” a role model, which is one of the most typical tools to mobilize the public in the North.

The second teaching method combines theory with practice and education with productive labor. This method is thought necessary in training students into communist revolutionaries. The method helps students expand their knowledge in real life through the encouragement of study tours to historic battlefields and revolutionary places as well as participation in productive labor.

The third method reinforces students’ organizational life and social and political activities. These activities are aimed at training students politically

and ideologically, and infusing them with the spirit of revolution. Accordingly, students in North Korea are required to join a students' and children's corps or youth league and participate in supporting various socialist campaigns such as afforestation and socialist construction.

The fourth method combines school education with social education. Education is carried out not only at schools but also through social relationships. Therefore, education for future generations must be a comprehensive social project. In this sense, education in North Korea is provided through various forms of small group activities such as lectures on political thought and debates, and presentations on science at such venues as students' and children's palaces and halls, the children's corps campgrounds, and libraries in addition to schools.

The fifth method advances pre-school, school, and adult education side by side. This method is based on an assumption that an individual's thoughts and personality are formed during childhood and consolidated throughout life. The advocates of this belief argue that a comprehensive and continuous education must thus be provided to all members of society throughout their life. North Korea claims that it has a well-established life-long educational system under which all its members can receive a full range of education from pre-school to adult education tailored to each member's level.

As discussed above, the objective of North Korean education is to train the kind of people required by the regime, which is something quite different from fostering individuals who can actively cope with rapidly changing domestic and international environments in the era of information technology and globalization.

North Korea has recently emphasized the importance of intelligence education to improve students' intellectual capacities and ways of questing for knowledge as opposed to merely acquiring it. To this end, it has switched from memory-based education to a kind that reinforces creative thinking. Examinations are no longer given in the form of a memory test. The new exams are rather based

on practical skills. At the same time, field practice using computers is also being expanded. For the sake of so-called intelligence education that improves one's ability to think, every school has compiled intelligence questions in each subject, written short papers, hosted intelligence problem solving contests, developed multimedia materials, provided lessons on teaching techniques, held presentations on teaching experiences in each subject, and had discussions on teaching methods.

In addition, to encourage teachers to study efficient teaching methods and develop teaching materials, North Korea has awarded those who have developed a new teaching method a certificate of registration of a new teaching technique, and bestowed the title of October 8 Exemplary Teacher to outstanding teachers. This title was created in commemoration of Kim Jong-il's on-the-spot guidance to Mubong Middle School in 2003. Also, since 2006, the Campaign for the Title of Exemplary Educational District has been waged in a bid to improve the material basis and quality of education through competition between educational districts.

Nevertheless, these efforts to improve the quality of education are unlikely to achieve the desired goals so long as the basic objective of North Korean education is to foster the faithful members of society that the North Korean regime demands.

### School Life

#### (1) Classes and Extracurricular Activities

In North Korea, school hours vary from school to school. The average school hours for primary schools are five hours a day. In principle, each class lasts 45 minutes, and there is a ten-minute break between classes. The number of daily school hours is six for junior middle school students and seven for senior



middle school students. College and university students take four lectures a day on average, each of which lasts 90 minutes.

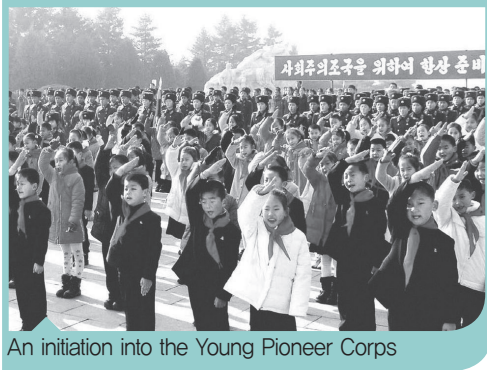
Classes usually start at 8:00 am. In primary schools, the first period begins at 8:00 and the fifth period ends at 12:35 pm. There are 20 minutes of stretching exercise between the third and fifth periods and a one and a half hour of lunch break after the fifth period. Middle schools are different from primary schools in that there are one or two additional periods in the afternoon after the lunch break. The rest of their curriculum is similar to those for primary schools.

In the case of college, there is a half-hour long recitation when students arrive at school. This is followed by an inspection before classes which start at 8:30. There are three lectures in the morning before lunch break starts at 13:30. Afternoon classes begin at 16:00, and all regular lectures end by 17:30. In case any class is cancelled due to support activities for rural villages or voluntary labor, an additional lecture may be given until as late as 19:00.

In principle, North Korean students do not receive private tutoring after school. However, some students illegally receive tutoring on arts and athletics subjects from schoolteachers and the rate of such students greatly varies depending on their social class and region. The nearest thing to South Korea's after-school program is small group activities—supplementary lessons students receive from their teachers after school. These lessons often focus on particular subjects and last two to three hours every day. The most popular subjects for small group activities are mathematics, foreign languages, art, and physical education.

For North Korean students, the most distinctive forms of extracurricular activities are voluntary labor and organizational life. As mentioned above, education in North Korea is combined with productive activities in which every student has to participate. Labor has been required from students as part of their regular education since 1959. Primary school students are required to perform 2 to 4 weeks of voluntary labor a year while middle school students have to contribute 4 to 10 weeks, and advanced technical college students, 10

weeks a year. College and university students are required to participate in labor for 12 to 14 weeks. The length of mobilization increases as students move to a higher educational institution.



An initiation into the Young Pioneer Corps

All North Korean citizens are required to take part in organizational life. Children have to join the Young Pioneer Corps at the age of seven. When they reach fourteen years old, students leave the Corps and join the Kim Il-sung Socialist

Youth League (KSYL). Instead of a red scarf, a famous symbol for the members of the Corps, they wear the Youth League button on their left breast. Upon becoming members of the Youth League, they also join the Red Youth Guard, a military organization on campus. Military education and training is mandatory for both male and female students. Upon entering college, students receive six months of military training in a paramilitary organization known as the College Military Training Unit. Without a certificate of completion issued by the Unit, one cannot graduate from the college. North Korean colleges are organized like military units. For instance, although there may be some differences depending on size, colleges are organized like regiments, schools are like battalions, departments resemble companies, and each class is equivalent to a platoon.

## (2) Student Deviations and Punishments

Although North Korean students are under strict control by school regulations and organizational life in the Young Pioneer Corps and the KSYL, they, too, occasionally buck the rules and break away from their daily routine in various ways. Their deviations often take the form of missing classes, violating various school rules, breaking school dress codes, smoking and drinking, and

entering dating relationships. Since the economic crisis, two new features have emerged in student deviation: violation of regulations such as theft, drug use and dealing, and emulating capitalist culture known as “liberalism” or “yellow wind,” including long hair, tight pants, and shirts displaying foreign characters. Violations of school regulations became serious particularly after the economic difficulties in the 1990s, perhaps due to disintegration of families and the general relaxation of control across society.

The authority to punish students who have violated school regulations lies in the hands of the Youth League. Of course, a teacher can punish those students who are chatting during the class or those who have not done their homework, but the Young Pioneer Corps and the Youth League have the right to punish them outside the classroom. The violators are often required to attend a self-criticism session after or during school. Serious violators are sometimes forced to attend a collective session held at the city, county, or district level.

### (3) Teaching Staff

A collective name for schoolteachers and college professors in North Korea is “teaching staff.” General teaching staff are paid wages similar to those for upper level laborers. College teaching staff are paid wages almost similar to those paid to army generals. Both groups of teachers were respected and treated well by students and parents, and their social status was high in North Korean society. Since the economic crisis broke out, however, there has been a considerable reduction in the benefits the state provides for them. At the same time, a substantial portion of the responsibilities of school management as well as payments of their operation costs were transferred to the parents. Subsequently, public perception as well as treatment of teachers has deteriorated.

In the meantime, schoolteachers themselves started to grow disenchanted with their profession because of endless work and hardship caused by the suspension of rationing. With schoolteachers viewed as professional

revolutionaries, theirs is a profession that requires a high standard of social responsibility and morality. They thus cannot back out freely from organizational life or start a business or retire for good. As economic difficulties grew larger, they were barely able to make ends meet with their paltry wages and subsequently, teaching has become one of the least popular occupations.

Wives of most of the male teaching staff in urban areas engage in business to make ends meet. In rural areas, they barely manage to stay alive by growing crops in their kitchen garden. Single female teachers take a leave of absence from their work under the pretext of illness to start businesses. Married female teachers, too, are staying away from work to engage in business. Subsequently, classes often cannot be taught properly. Furthermore, unbeknown to the city or county party department of education, teachers divide themselves into several groups and take turns every seven to ten days, to engage in business to find food while the remaining teach several additional classes to fill in for the absentees.

In the meantime, a few teachers are known to supplement their income through such illegal activities as tampering with academic records, helping students cheat on the college entrance exam, or secretly providing private lessons. As such, it is known that among the graduates of teachers' training colleges, those with a good family background are assigned to the State Security Department, the Ministry of People's Security, city and county education agencies, or county party guidance bureaus.

To have a teaching profession, one must graduate from a teachers' training institute. There are two kinds of teachers' training institutes in North Korea: college of education and teachers' college. There are one or two such institutions in each province. The college of education is a four-year course, training middle school teachers while the teachers' college is a three-year college which trains primary school and kindergarten teachers. To supply the teaching staff, these colleges provide online evening classes, as well as various reeducation programs

for practicing teachers. Major teachers training institutes in North Korea include Kim Hyong-jik University of Education and Kim Jong-suk University of Education.

Teachers' key task is of course teaching the students. They also provide extra lessons after school for underachieving students or those with outstanding talents. In addition, they have to attend a self-criticism session every Monday and subgroup discussions every Tuesday and Thursday. The rest of the week is spent preparing teaching materials. Teachers are often divided into nine subgroups depending on subject areas, including revolutionary history, and history and geography. During subgroup discussions, middle school teachers prepare and debate the contents of their classes. Furthermore, teachers are mobilized for labor on various occasions, including constructing railroads, assisting neighborhood farms, planting trees, and redesigning the landscape. They are also mobilized to school initiated campaigns every spring and fall.

## Section 2. Literary Art Policy and Current Status

### 1 Literary Art Policy

#### (1) Objectives

In North Korea, the term “literary art” covers all genres of art, including literature, music, fine art, and the performing arts. Based on a utilitarian view of literature and art, North Korea defines literary art as “a means to edify the working masses politically and ideologically” as well as “a means serving [us] in revolutionizing the whole of society and turning all of its members into a working class.” Accordingly, North Korea’s policy on literary art does not emphasize its artistic value, so much as its role as a means to convey the official ideology. In other words, North Korea puts greater emphasis on the functions of literature and art in promoting public relations and propaganda to preserve the regime rather than on creativity in which an individual’s free will is manifested. Subsequently, while artistic values reflecting individual creativity—values appreciated in free countries—are denied, literary art has degenerated into a mere political tool.

Through the promotion of literature and art, the authorities aim at accomplishing several goals: to ensure the legitimacy of the socialist system and build a socialist country, and to motivate people to participate in socialist revolution and construction; to legitimize its supreme leader and secure people’s loyalty to him; and to obtain justification for national unification under North Korea’s banner.

## Ensuring the Legitimacy of the Socialist System

Since the country was liberated from Japanese colonial rule, literature and art in North Korea have provided the justifications for the foundation of the socialist regime. At the same time, they have been used as a means to facilitate people's active participation in the regime's foundation. Writers and artists have complied with the WPK lines to produce and distribute works reflecting the success of socialist construction. Their works, for example, praised the land reform in the early days of the regime and intensively played up the "Heroes of Chollima Movement" in the late 1950s.

Amid economic hardship in the 1980s, North Korean writers and artists focused on producing works that discovered and glorified those hidden heroes who had been faithfully devoted to the party and the supreme leader. In the 1990s, when the socialist bloc was undergoing rapid changes with the collapse of the Soviet Union and transition of East European countries, they produced various works aimed at uniting the North Korean people ideologically and advocating the justification for socialism. The major works published during this period include: "Let Us Guard Socialism," "Mother is with a Red Flag," and "In the Spirit of the Arduous March."

## Securing People's Loyalty to the *Suryŏng*

North Korea's literary art policy aims at securing justifications for its supreme leader or *suryŏng* and bolstering people's loyalty to him. By the end of the 1960s, Kim Il-song's sole ruling system had been consolidated. During this period, the members of the Korea Proletarian Artist Federation (KAPF)<sup>7</sup> who had been pursuing aesthetic values in their own ways were mostly purged, and only works built on a theme of Kim Il-song's anti-imperialist, anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle were considered legitimate. The works thus created were so-called five masterpieces of revolutionary opera—"The Sea of Blood," "A True Daughter of the Party," "The Flower Girl," "Tell O' the Forest!" and "The Song of

Mt. Geumgang”—and five revolutionary plays—“The Shrine for a Tutelary Deity,” “Resentment at the World Conference,” “A Letter from a Daughter,” “Three Men One Party,” and “A Celebration Meeting.” The Immortal History series of novels was also published during this period.

In the early 1980s, as the succession of power to Kim Jong-il became official, North Korea started to actively promote his personality cult. A new Immortal Leader series of novels and other literary works known as the “embodiment of the leadership” were published during this period. The publication of works focused on justifying his rule further increased in the 1990s, when the regime was in utter crisis, including continuing economic difficulties. Some of the well-known eulogies to the succession of power by Kim Jong-il published during this decade include “I am the First Generation,” “Please Accept People’s Acclamation,” and “We Have Waited for This Day.” In the 2000s, North Korea promoted “military-first revolutionary literary art,” which reflected the military-first politics that had been advocated since his inauguration and praised the accomplishments of his military-first leadership. This trend was in compliance with Kim Jong-il’s instruction, in which he stated that, “Literary art works ought to suit the spirit of the times and embody the breath of the age.”

In the meantime, subjects and themes for literary arts began to diversify in the late 1980s. A lyrical trend started to emerge in North Korea’s poetic literature at that time. Literary art started to describe a wide variety of real life issues, including conflicts between urban and rural communities, those between generations, women’s issues, and love affairs.

### Obtaining Justification for National Unification under North Korea’s Banner

Another objective North Korea wants to accomplish through literary art is to secure justification for “revolutionizing South Korea.” Since the 1960s, North Korea’s literary art works have criticized the reality in South Korea and advocated anti-capitalist ideology in earnest. In fact, the trend began with Kim



Il-sung's criticism that "literary art works have not given much attention to people's lives and struggles in the southern half of the Korean peninsula." "Our literary art works... should assist the struggle of the entire Korean people to accomplish a revolution in South Korea and reunify the fatherland," he argued. Since then, North Korean literary art works have concentrated entirely on addressing the corruption in South Korean society and maladies of American and Japanese imperialism, particularly those of US forces in South Korea.

As described above, the top objective of North Korea's literary art policy lies in agitprop. Aiming at "establishing people-oriented and revolutionary socialist national culture," North Korea pursues the development of revolutionary literature and art that contributes to the socialist revolution and construction centered on its leader.

## (2) Literary Theory

Having succeeded the early KAPF-line literature, North Korea placed emphasis on creative techniques based on socialist realism. According to North Korea's Grand Korean Dictionary, "socialist realism is a creative technique of revolutionary literature and art that embodies socialist contents in national conventions." Rather than putting stress on pure art, socialist realism aims at reflecting the realities of society through close linkage with the real world. In other words, its creative forms are firmly based on realism while its contents emphasize the importance of such socialist tendencies as party loyalty, class consciousness, and the spirit of the people.

### Theory of *Juche* Literature and Art

North Korea's literary policy is directly related to three important theories: the Theory of *Juche* Literature and Art, the Seed Theory, and the Theory of Mass Art. In addition, it is also influenced by the theories of speed battle, exemplarization, eternal life, and popularization. The Theory of *Juche*

Literature and Art,<sup>8</sup> which is based on Kim Il-sung's *juche* ideology, finds the view of socialist realism, basic ideology, creative techniques, and all other basic principles of literary art in monolithic ideology. Because the essence of monolithic ideology lies in justifying the single ruling system of Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il, and Kim Jong-un, the basic principles and techniques of literary art based on this theory should create exemplars of unquestioned loyalty to the leaders.

All literary works must satisfy three elements: party loyalty, class consciousness, and the spirit of people. This implies that all literary and art works must deliberately implement the *juche* ideology on the basis of Kim Il-sung's revolutionary philosophy; reflect the working class' interests from a perspective of revolutionary struggle, and be equipped with revolutionary thought to suit the popular masses' sentiments. Recently, mass appeal has become another necessary condition of literary and art works, taking their popularity and public responses into consideration.

### Seed Theory

The other key element in North Korea's literary policy is the Seed Theory,<sup>9</sup> a kind of creed of conduct requiring artists to make their creative works on the basis of the Theory of *Juche* Literature and Art. According to the North Korean Literature and Art Dictionary, it is a "new concept of literary theory ingeniously discovered by the Workers' Party during the process of creating and practicing Kim Il-sung's self-reliant (*juche*) literary philosophy." The dictionary also stipulates, "the seed, which forms the core of any literary and art work, is a fundamental element that determines the value of the work and the authors and artists must hold the seed straight in order to convey clearly his thoughts and aesthetic intention and assure the philosophical value of their work."

The dictionary defines the seed to be the foundation and core of the work that unites its subject matter, theme, and ideas into close correlation. It prescribes

that the most important factors in selecting a seed are “the *suryōng*’s teachings and demands by the Workers’ Party policies, which are embodiments of his teachings.” In addition, “the core of a seed lies in complying with the *suryōng*’s teachings and the demand of the party’s policy, which is an embodiment of his teachings.” Accordingly, North Korean literary and art works based on such an idea are a significant means to realize the leader’s teachings as well as the party’s policies.

### Theory of Mass Art

The Theory of Mass Art<sup>10</sup> asserts that the important factor in the creation of literature and art is not one’s innate talents but participation of the public. The theory emphasizes that the principal agents of creative activities are the masses or groups of individuals and encourages public participation in them. According to the theory, art is created and enjoyed not by the originality or creativity of an individual but by the masses. In line with this, North Korea argued, “We should raise our guard against the tendency to promote literary activities focusing on professional writers and artists, while smashing mysticism in creative works and encouraging the widespread advancement of literary art among the public.”

### (3) System for Creative Works

To match its collective society, North Korea promoted group efforts even in the creation of literary art works. Collective creation has been promoted under a “trinity” system; the idea was introduced by Kim Il-sung and its implementation initiated by Kim Jong-il. This refers to a system under which the Workers’ Party, administrative agency, and writers and artists—or their organizations—jointly participate in the creative process.

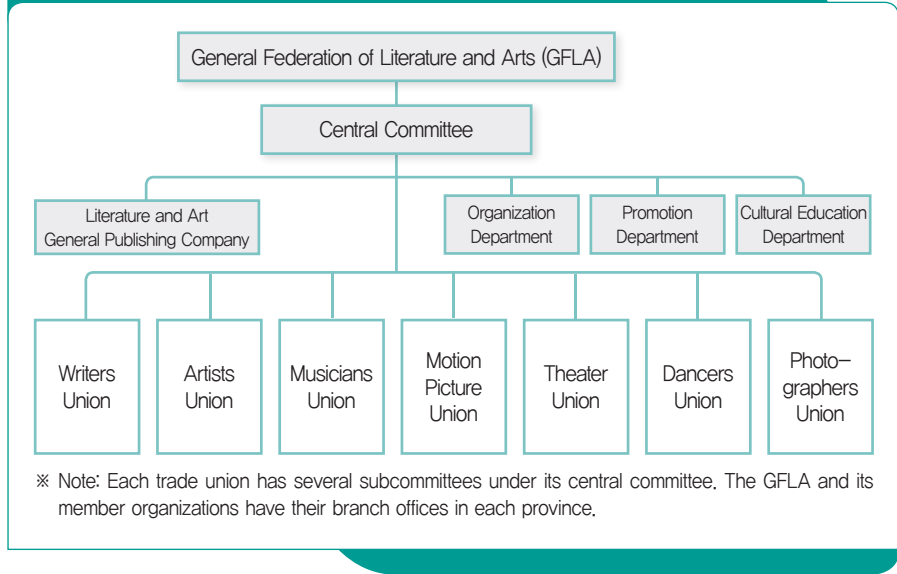
The party oversees the contents of the work and artists’ activities while administrative agencies such as the Ministry of Culture play the role of creating

a favorable environment for creative activities in which writers and artists create works as members of the General Federation of Literature and Arts (GFLA). In other words, instead of creating their works voluntarily and independently, the writers and artists are subordinate to the political agencies and have to comply with party instructions issued to them through the Ministry of Culture as well as unions affiliated to the GFLA. The party is involved in the entire process of creative activity, ranging from the conception of an artistic work to the selection of subjects and themes, from the determination of duration and amount of work to the evaluation of it.

The GFLA is an organization representing collective creation. All North Korean writers and artists must join the union in order to be treated as such. As shown in Figure 6-3, under the GFLA are a number of member organizations representing different groups of writers and artists, including the writers' union, artists' union, and musicians' union.

In North Korea, art teams are established at every factory, enterprise, and cooperative group and working people's artistic activities are promoted through them. Art teams are peoples' groups independent of the GFLA, but their members can publish their works in the unions' publications. Some team members are selected as associate members by various unions. After a probation period of a certain length, they become full members and start their careers as professional writers or artists. Others may enter prize contests and start their career in art by winning prizes. About 40 percent of full-time North Korean writers were literary correspondents who used to be ordinary workers before they won prizes in literary contests and became professional writers.

Figure 6-3 Organization of the General Federation of Literature and Arts (GFLA)



## 2 Current Status of Literature and Art

### (1) Literature

In North Korea, literature is considered as the basis for all other genres of art. This is because literature creates stories, which form the basis for all other genres. North Korea explains that literature “instills revolutionary optimism and collectivist heroism in the minds of people, arms the party members and workers with monolithic ideology in line with each stage of revolutionary development, and contributes to revolutionizing the entire society and transforming all of its members into a working class.” Subsequently, literature is not a product of creativity originated from individuals’ free will, but merely a means to sustain the North Korean system and defend its regime. Instead of its artistic value, the literary value of works is evaluated based on how much it contributes to the attainment of these two objectives.

Since the early 1970s when the Theory of *Juche* Literature and Art emerged,

many works originally performed as plays during the period of anti-Japanese resistance were adapted into full-length novels. These included *The Sea of Blood*, *The Flower Girl*, and *The Fate of a Self-Defense Corps Man*. In the late 1970s, North Korean writers focused on depicting new types of desirable human characters in various fields such as flag bearers of the three-revolution movement, members of three-revolution teams, and other unsung heroes. This implied that with the emergence of improving productivity as a key issue, the old dichotomy of categorizing people into landlords and peasants or good and evil was replaced by the idealization of “Labor Heroes” as exemplary and positive men and women.

The subjects and themes in North Korean literature have changed since the 1980s. Up until then, at the dictation of the “Party Central Committee (or Kim Jong-il),” North Korean literary works had mostly been devoted to promoting unilateral allegiance to the leader using Kim Il-sung’s family tree as their main subject and theme. However, the works published in the late 1980s started to use people’s daily lives as their subjects. The main theme was still loyalty to Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il as well as to the Workers’ Party, but the story was built around such new plots as love affairs. Nam Dae-hyon’s *Ode to Youth* (1987) would be the most famous work from this period.

In the late 1990s, four new literary concepts appeared in North Korean literature: cherishment, Tangun, the Race of the Sun, and military-first revolution. Memorial literature commemorated Kim Il-sung’s death and an example would be Kim Man-yong’s epic poem “The Great Leader is Always with Us.” Tangun literature emerged in the 1990s during the process of excavating and reconstructing King Tangun’s tomb and aimed at reinforcing North Korean people’s superiority and national legitimacy.

The “Race of the Sun” literature was a literary concept introduced in 1995 when Kim Jong-il was described as the “Sun of *Juche*.” The concept embodies the so-called greatness of the “Three Generals of Baekdu Mountain—Kim Il-sung, Kim

Jong-il, and Kim Jong-suk—in an ideological and artistic realm. The military-first revolution literature, which appeared in 2000, succeeded the concept of embodying the *suryōng*'s image in literature and aimed at reflecting Kim Jong-il's achievement in facilitating the military-first revolution in literary works. Accordingly, literary works following this trend played up comradeship, or argued, in order to legitimize the military-first policy, that the military must lead the construction of a strong and prosperous great nation. In addition to the novels *The Gun Barrel*, *The Hot Blast of Ranam*, and *The Song of Korea* contained in the series *Immortal Leader*, epic poems such as “Even If One Hundred or One Thousand Years Pass,” “Fatherland, Be Proud of the Youths,” and “The Gun Barrel of Baekdu Mountain,” and a lyric poem “I Talk to the *Juche* Idea Tower” are the most well-known works from this area. Two exemplary novels of this concept embodying the greatness of the three Generals of Baekdu Mountain were published in 2009 as part of the *Immortal History* series, namely *The Age of Prosperity* and *Daebak Mountain Ridge*.

More recently, easy readings written on a theme of not only individual daily life and humor but also sexual love have also appeared. Good examples of stories written on North Korean daily life are Kim Sung-uk's *My Chic Style* and *At the Edge of*



Hwang Jin-yi

*Kindergarten Ground*. Various works of humor are found in the humor section of periodicals such as *Chosun Art*. Meanwhile, Hong Sok-jung's *Hwangjini* contains explicit descriptions of sexual love.

## (2) Music

In North Korea, music serves a strong functional role as a means of cultural education, and propaganda and agitation to enhance people's class

consciousness and communist revolutionary spirit. Accordingly, North Korean music consists mostly of epic opera, vocal music, realist music, folk music, and simple part music.

Unlike Western countries, North Korea does not distinguish between popular and serious music. Half of the songbooks published in North Korea present songs with melodies resembling those of Russian and Chinese folk songs. Many North Korean songs focus on lyrics and melody rather than chord and rhythm. Their chords are so simple and constant that they are easy for the general public to learn. North Koreans often use a nasal voice in their unique singing style.

There are several types of pop songs in North Korea: songs for advocating party policies, lyrical songs, revolutionary songs, and Korean folk songs. Hymns praising Kim Il-sung and his son make up a large part of North Korean songs. For instance, 52 out of 76 songs (or 68 percent) included in the Choson Literature and Art Almanac 1998, most of which were composed by major music groups such as the Pochonbo Electronic Ensemble, the Wangjaesan Light Music Band, the KPA Concert Troupe, and the Mansudae Art Troupe, are pieces praising Kim Il-sung and his son. In addition, these groups play their music with modern Western instruments, as well as instruments modified from traditional Korean ones, thus displaying a strong tendency to combine traditional and Western music.

While apolitical songs have recently been on the increase, many of those meeting the demand of the military-first policy have also been created. In particular, pieces have been composed that emphasize nationalism while unearthing traditional folk melodies. The songs introduced in 2003, including “The Hwanghaesan Song,” “The Bird’s Song,” and “The Sluggard’s Song,” fall under this category. Since the Arduous March of the mid-1990s, the North Korean Musicians Union has discovered and compiled songs from the enlightenment period, saying, “Songs are an echo of an age. The songs from the Enlightenment Period give people great inspiration.” In 2000, it published



a Book of Songs from the Enlightenment Period, which contained over 190 pieces of songs. North Korea wrote new arrangements of songs that were popular during the Japanese colonial period and distributed them to the public, claiming “those songs played a certain role in the emotional life of Korean people who had to go through that difficult period.” These included “Spring of My Hometown,” “Half Moon,” and “Duman (or Tumen) River Drenched with Tears.”

As emphasis was placed on the concepts of military-first politics and a strong and prosperous great nation, relevant musical pieces were created. Two of the most famous songs composed during this period were folk song-style “Powerful and Revival Arirang” and “The Path of *Songun* Long March,” which depicted the process from the death of Kim Il-sung, through the Arduous March to the realization of military-first politics. In addition, when tension with the United States intensified over North Korea’s nuclear programs, songs with patriotic themes became popular among the people. Good examples of such wartime songs are “Blue Sky of My Country” and “The Day of a Decisive War.”



In short, music in North Korea has served as a vital means of strengthening solidarity of the regime as shown in Kim Jong-il’s emphasis on “politics based on music” and his statement that music “must contribute to politics and music without politics is like flowers without scent.”

### (3) Dance

North Korea has long regarded dancing as a mere part of operetta. Accordingly, compared to other fields of arts, dancing lacks an identity as an independent genre and is inserted in small parts of musical programs accompanied only by music or gags. Children’s dances make up the bulk of dancing in North Korea.

Traditional dance moves form the basis of North Korean dancing. In its form however, North Korean dancing shows off strength, scale, and organization rather than physical and rhythmic beauty or poetic messages. Dancers often use guns or workers' tools to aid their performance. North Korean dancing thus has a strong tendency to emphasize militant and sensational moves.



Dance notation of North Korea

Since the end of the 1970s, North Korea has focused on creating and discovering traditional folk dances such as “Clinking Dance” and “Sword Dance.” The country has also started to emphasize the importance of moves, tunes, and steps. Nonetheless, four

masterpiece dances North Koreans are proud of are all modern ones known as revolutionary dances. They include “It’s Snowing,” “Azalea of the Fatherland,” “Winnowing Basket Dance,” and “Good Harvest for Apples.”

In addition, North Korea has transformed the so-called mass games into a form of artistic performance. During a national holiday or welcoming ceremony for a state guest, North Korea mobilizes tens of thousands of people to perform an extravagant form of collective art. The most grandiose of them all is the grand mass-gymnastics and artistic performance “Arirang” which was performed nine times for 12 years from 2002 to 2013. “Arirang” was first designed to rally people around the regime on the occasion of Kim Il-sung’s 90th birthday in 2002. The performance was presented in the Rungrado May Day Stadium from April 14 to August 15. This mass performance features music, dance, and various other artistic elements, including mass games, card stunts, gymnastics, and circus performed by more than a hundred thousand participants, and allegedly consists of an opening act, four main acts with ten scenes and a final act.

In particular, the Arirang presented in August 2010 was made up of seven acts

and fourteen scenes, including a new fifth act, titled “Friendship Arirang” commemorating the Korean War and the 60th anniversary of the Chinese volunteer army’s participation in it. In 2011, one act and five scenes were further added,



Arirang performance in 2013

expanding it to a total of eight acts and nineteen scenes. The new additions focused on justifying the hereditary succession of power over three generations by displaying a three-dimensional image of Mt. Baekdu and such images as fruit trees and carps to boast of advances in the people’s economic sector. The Arirang performance in 2012, which also consisted of eight acts and nineteen scenes, embodied the beginning of the 100 year-old *Juche* North Korea and its prosperity in commemoration of the centennial of Kim Il-sung’s birthday. To boast of Kim Jong-un’s leadership, the performance featured splendid stage settings, flashy lightings, diverse music, and splashy colors. The performance in 2013 celebrated the 60th anniversary of the victory in the great fatherland liberation war—or the 60th anniversary of Korean War armistice—and the 65th anniversary of the regime’s foundation.

The Arirang performance is used as a means to show the image of a strong and prosperous great nation, tout the superiority of military-first politics, and pursue practical economic profits by including foreigners as well as locals in the audience. In particular, mass performances are promoted as a way of mobilizing the public to enhance the personality cult around Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il. However, it has also been criticized as a form of human rights abuse, because young students have been forced to participate and endure months of harsh training to prepare for it.

#### (4) Art

In North Korea, traditional art is repudiated while art that praises the anti-Japanese revolution allegedly led by Kim Il-sung is recognized as true art. North Korea argues that traditional art reflects only the ideas and tastes of the exploiting class, and thus does not resolve the problem of class struggle in an artistic way. Meanwhile, it claims that anti-Japanese revolutionary art is a genuine form of people's art since it realizes the principles of party loyalty, class consciousness, and the people's spirit. Kim Il-sung argued, "Art must be true people's art, agreeable to people's lives, feelings, and sentiments. It should also become revolutionary art serving the interests of the party and the revolution."

For this reason, there are many works of art in North Korea that have gained the title of "monumental work." These works depict laborers working with hammers in their hands or farmers beaming with smiles while holding ears of rice. It is extremely difficult to find an abstract painting or free-form of sculpture in North Korea because its people believe that "Abstraction is death."

Furthermore, art in North Korea is categorized into painting, sculpture, and crafts according to the materials and techniques used. North Korean painting includes Korean painting (*chosonhwa*), oil painting, murals, and illustrations for books. Korean painting carries on the legacy of traditional art while combining it with Western-style coloring and techniques.

Sculptural processes include carving, relief, and bratticing. North Korea advertises that people sculptures that adorn the graves of patriotic and revolutionary martyrs are masterpieces of realism vividly reflecting the martyrs' rage, anguish, and fighting spirit. There are various forms of crafts made of metal, wood, and mother-of-pearl. North Korea is also proud of its unique form of craft known as "paintings that last for ten thousand years (*mannyeonhwa*)."

This is a kind of shell work that decorates everyday objects with a mosaic of seashells. This art technique has often been used in producing sculptures related to Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il. The "216 Peaks of Heaven Lake (*Chonji*)

in Baekdu Mountain,” an artistic work resembling a gigantic folding screen, was produced by Mansudae Art Studio in 2004 to play up Kim Jong-il’s alleged greatness.

## (5) Cinema, Plays, and TV Series

### Cinema

North Korea treats cinema as the most important artistic genre, ascribing such importance to cinema that a *Cinema Almanac* was published separately from the *Choson Central Yearbook*. In February 2009, the SPA passed an ordinance to establish a National Cinema Committee for more effective and systematic management of movie-related businesses. Lying behind these measures was the view that as a genre of total art that combines music, fine art, and theater, cinema has a strong appeal to the public and far-reaching power. The measures were also affected considerably by Kim Jong-il’s personal interest in cinema. Kim Jong-il once argued: “Cinema is a strong tool in educating political thoughts and a powerful weapon in enhancing cultural education. We should provide ideological as well as cultural education to the workers through cinema.”

According to Kim Jong-il’s work *On the Art of Cinema (1973)*, which all North Korean movie producers follow as basic guidelines of film making, “Based on the *juche* ideology, films must emphasize an in-depth description of the general mass’ typical daily life. The directors must focus on stimulating people’s emotions rather than on the logical connection of events, and lay emphasis on collective creation based on unity and cooperation among a large number of people.” Accordingly, actors are required to play out the role of working-class artists embodying and reproducing communist ideas, emotions, and life experiences on screen with their aesthetic and creative talents instead of simply being performers.

Most North Korean films have a similar plot that presents a struggle between the protagonist and antagonist, with the final victory always going to the former. Villains are often American soldiers, Japanese imperialists, anti-party elements, landlords, and capitalists. Complying with Kim Jong-il's emphasis on "influence by positive example," recent films also introduce stories where characters rectify their mistakes under the influence of the positive protagonist.

North Korea has concentrated on producing blockbuster films since the Chollima Movement in the 1960s. Some of the films were made in a series of up to 20 parts. However, when these series did not attract attention in international film festivals, North Korea in 1984 began reducing the scale of the films and reinforcing lyricism and realism. For instance, *The Assurance*, produced in 1987, broke the existing mold of North Korean films by depicting widespread corruption and authoritarianism among party and government officials as well as discrimination based on family background. One may say that it was such efforts to make changes that helped *Sogum* (Salt), directed by Shin Sang-ok, win a prize at the fourteenth Moscow International Film Festival in 1985.

When the socialist bloc disintegrated in the early 1990s, North Korea emphasized the importance of maintaining independence and the decadence of capitalist society. At the same time, it began shooting the *Nation and Destiny* series of so-called art films in 1992 in order to vaunt Kim Jong-il's benevolent and all-embracing politics. North Korea initially planned to produce the series in ten parts, but later increased it to 50 parts at Kim Jong-il's order, and eventually to 100 parts in 2002. By 2006, North Korea had already produced as many as 70 parts of the series.

Recent North Korean films often reflect military-first politics, complying with guidelines proposed in *On Literature and Art of Military-First Revolution*. Most of them are military-themed movies. The most typical one produced in 2003 was *Genuine Life Goes On*, which depicted the son of a North Korean soldier killed

during the seizure of the US Navy spy ship USS Pueblo in 1968 and people around him growing up socially. Other representative films of 2003 included *They were Dispatched Soldiers* and *Memoirs of a Female Soldier*.

In 2004 and 2005, films were produced which depicted the life of exemplary soldiers who embody revolutionary military spirit in accordance with the military-first policy. The most well-known films in this period were *He was a Senior Colonel* and



A poster of *School Girl's Diary*

*Young Brigade Commander*. In 2006, films like *School Girl's Diary* were produced as a means of reinforcing ideological education. They dealt with the relaxation of ideological firmness due to the influx of capitalist elements that had followed the economic crisis.

In 2009, North Korea produced a series of documentary films on Kim Jong-il's life story as a form of tribute to his achievements in promoting a military-first revolution. *The Military-First Sun Shining over the World* is a series consisting of three parts: "Bringing Honor to Korea" (Part I), "Bringing Honor to the Revolutionary Tradition" (Part II), and "Realizing *Juche* Ideology in the Entire Society" (Part III). The production of documentary films about Kim Jong-il's life, along with such works as "Bringing Honor to Thousands of Years of History," Part 21 of *The Great History series*, which eulogizes the so-called Generals of Baekdu Mountain, is closely related to the ongoing process of legitimizing the hereditary succession over three generations. These films emphasize unswerving loyalty to the leader "through successive generations." Production of documentary films idolizing the leadership continued even after Kim Jong-un took power. *One Year under the Banner of the Supreme Leader* was produced in 2011 to glorify the achievements of Kim Jong-un.

Among various films shown in North Korea to date, ones that were popular among the public included *Sogum*, *Love, Love, My Love*, *The Emissary Who Did Not Return*, and four other pieces produced by the abducted South Korean film director Shin Sang-ok and his ex-wife Choi Eun-hee. Other popular films were based on the scenarios written by Lee Hun-gu. They include *Nunseok of Spring Day*, *Traces of Life*, and *Ask the Nature*. Their popularity seems to be based on the fact that they are realistic and display a liberal coloring with less of an explicitly political and ideological message.

### Plays

In North Korea, plays remain obscure, because greater emphasis is placed on operas. North Korean plays resemble a kind of operetta with dance and songs. Starting in the 1980s, North Korea has focused on staging such canonical works as “The Shrine for a Tutelary Deity,” “Resentment at the World Conference,” “A Letter from a Daughter,” and “Three Men One Party.” All these are so-called “revolutionary plays” with Kim Il-sung’s anti-Japanese guerilla period as their backdrop.

Since June 1978, following Kim Jong-il’s instruction to add music and dance to the play “The Shrine for a Tutelary Deity” and re-create it to fit a larger stage, North Korea has developed revolutionary plays in such a style. “Chosik” and “Mother and Son,” for example, combined a majestic and glamorous stage with music and dance and, at the same time, deepened the theme and philosophy of the work based on the fundamental principles of the *juche* ideology.

Nonetheless, the most popular form of theater among North Korean people these days is light comedy, such as one-act plays. Comedies are being actively performed in North Korea to counter the depressed social mood and bring laughter to the people. The most typical of all is “We,” a comic play produced in 2005 by the April 25 Film Studio of the Korean People’s Army to inspire a collectivist spirit in the public.



Recently, TV soap operas have become more popular than films in North Korea. North Korean TV dramas comprise TV novels, novel series, play series, and one-act plays. In the meantime, TV movies are films produced especially for TV viewing. Compared to general art films, they have fewer characters and a shorter running time. In many cases, they are made in series.

## Drama

The main theme of North Korean TV drama is the depiction of how the leader, his family and their fellow veterans of the anti-Japanese struggle carry out the socialist revolution. Recently, however, a new type of soap opera is being produced in which the theme is combined with episodes from daily life such as a marital discord or generational conflict. *Don't Wake Up Mom* (2002), a three-part soap opera dealing with a working couple's conflicts, and *The Family* (2001), a nine-part soap opera dealing with marital conflict and divorce, are works displaying a distinctively different trend from conventional TV dramas. Such production of TV series dealing with North Korean daily life has continued and the number of TV dramas is constantly on the increase. Examples of such works include the two-part series *Our Warm Home* (2004), eight-part series *The Class Continues* (2006), three-part series *Spring of Love* (2009), and three-part series *Our Women's Soccer Team* (2011).

This trend is intended to strengthen the art works' function of ideological education by adding reality to them in order to create empathy among the people, as was stressed by Kim Jong-il's "New Thinking" initiative, which emphasized, "all things should be considered and implemented from a new perspective to build a strong and prosperous great nation." As a result of this initiative, literature and art works became more diverse and entertaining, sometimes encouraging breakaways from traditional works in terms of contents, subjects, or formality.

## Section 3. The Media and its Functions

Media of North Korea is founded on communist theories of journalism, according to which its role is “to educate the general public, explain the policies of the party and state, mobilize the people under the cause of building a communist nation, and encourage mutual and self-criticism.” In other words, media is supposed to function as a means for political socialization.

The country stipulates that media should “serve to explain, propagate, uphold, and realize Kim Il-sung’s teachings and Kim Jong-il’s words, further bolster the proletarian dictatorship, and strengthen political and ideological unity and solidarity of the people.” The regime propagates that the state guarantees freedom of the press, by prescribing that “Citizens have freedom of speech, publication, assembly, demonstration, and association” in Article 67 of the constitution. However, the country also set the limitation by stating that the freedom of the press in North Korea is protected “only when it contributes to driving the general public to participate in the construction of socialism.”<sup>11</sup>

In this respect, it can be said that media in North Korea is being used as a means of sustaining the regime. Its role is also clearly indicated in Kim Jong-il’s handwritten letter sent to media outlets in November 1995. In this letter, Kim Jong-il called on media outlets to strengthen their functions of educating and controlling the people’s political thoughts, thereby leading the effort to enhance solidarity of the regime. After all, the value of the media is recognized only when it is dedicated to leading and guiding the general public. The primary

responsibility of all media outlets in the North, therefore, is to propagate and uphold the party's policies and revolutionary activities.

## 1 Newspapers

Publications, including newspapers, are the most important media source in North Korea. The country says that “publications are essential tools for connecting the party and the masses and they are strong weapons used to organize and rally the working masses for the implementation of political, economic, and cultural tasks advocated by the party.<sup>12</sup> This emphasizes the role of publications in the North in educating the general public collectively and organizing and mobilizing them for the party's activities.

North Korean newspapers mainly engage in propaganda and agitation, organize the people, and promote culture and education. For the effective implementation of those functions, *Sinmun* Theory, which is the country's theoretical basis for journalism, adopts Marxism-Leninism that suggests the following traits for journalism: class consciousness and party loyalty; people-centeredness and mass appeal; and veracity and combat spirit.<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, the country emphasizes that its newspapers should promote class consciousness and party loyalty to serve the benefit of the working class and implement the party lines and policies; be equipped with people-centeredness and mass appeal to uphold the interests of the general public; and foster veracity and combat spirit to realize the party's policies.



Newspapers in North Korea

All the newspapers in North Korea are official organs of the party, the Cabinet, or various organizations and institutions that promote culture and art. They are monitored and supervised by the newspaper section of the party's Propaganda & Agitation Department and published under the administrative guidance of the Newspaper Division of the General Bureau of Publications of the Cabinet.

Major newspapers of the North include three central newspapers and ten local ones. The former consists of *Rodong Sinmun*, (the WPK), *Minju Choson*, (the Cabinet), and *Youth Avant-Garde* (the Kim Il-sung Socialist Youth League). The latter include newspapers published by the party's municipal or provincial committees such as *Pyongyang Sinmun*, *Hambuk Daily*, *Chagang Daily*, and *Kaesong Sinmun*. In addition, *The Pyongyang Times*, an English-written weekly magazine, is circulated for overseas promotion of the country. Other newspapers include the ones issued by each ministry of the Cabinet, including: newspapers on the railroad industry, construction, education, and transportation; public newspapers of plants or enterprises; and newspapers issued by universities.

The three central newspapers—*Rodong Sinmun*, *Minju Choson*, and *Youth Avant-Garde*—and local newspapers issued by the party’s municipal or provincial committees are published daily. Newspapers issued by other organizations are published every other day or weekly and have only a small circulation.

### *Rodong Sinmun*

*Rodong Sinmun* is an official organ of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea and it is the most influential newspaper in the country. The paper was first published on November 1, 1945 under the name *Jung-Ro* (“righteous paths”), which later absorbed *Jun-Jin* (“march”)—the official newspaper of the New People’s Party—on September 1, 1946 to be renamed to today’s *Rodong Sinmun*. The basic responsibilities of the paper are to “achieve a revolutionary transformation of society and the people as demanded by revolutionary ideology and *juche* idea of the great *suryŏng*, hold the entire party and people firmly around Kim Jong-il, and fight to secure political and ideological unity of the party.”<sup>14</sup>

*Rodong Sinmun* plays the role of the general headquarters of the North’s press with its opinions or editorials representing the state’s official stance when external and internal major issues arise or important occasions occur. This is a morning newspaper consisting of a total of 6 pages. There is one editor-in-chief, an advisory deputy editor-in-chief, and three to seven associate editors. The paper has an editorial bureau and various departments in charge of such subjects as party history education, party life, revolution education, science/culture, South Korea, and international matters. Another characteristic of *Rodong Sinmun* is that it highlights the names of the Kim family or the quotes of their teachings using a large bolded gothic font.

### *Minju Choson*

*Minju Choson* is the official newspaper of the SPA Presidium—the North’s legislature—and the Cabinet. The newspaper was first issued in June 4, 1946 and began as *Pyongyang Daily*, the organ of the South Pyongan People’s Committee, on October 15, 1945. The paper changed its name to its current one on June 4, 1946 as it became the organ of the North Korean Interim People’s Committee. The newspaper has maintained its current position as the official newspaper of the SPA Presidium and the Cabinet since September 1948.

The official mission of *Minju Choson* is to “arm the workers of the government agencies and economic institutions with Kim Il-sung’s revolutionary thoughts and *juche* idea and to greatly help the entire society in accomplishing *juche* exploits by forcefully organizing and mobilizing them in implementing the party’s policies.”<sup>15</sup> The paper is issued six times every week in broadsheet. Being an organ of the Cabinet, it mostly handles administrative matters and deals with details of decisions, orders, and laws adopted by the authorities. The paper is managed by an editor-in-chief and deputy editors-in-chief, and consists of several departments in charge of various areas, including editorial, people’s administration, industry, education and culture, international, finance and accounting, etc.

Like *Rodong Sinmun*, the first and second pages of the paper mostly run the news on political leaders, photos of Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il, and Kim Jong-un, foreign congratulatory messages or letters to the Kim family, or poems and essays dedicated to idolization or propaganda. The paper is an organ of the Cabinet, but it is supervised and controlled by the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the party. The paper depends on the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) and various departments of *Rodong Sinmun* such as the press department and the international department for a great deal of its news reports. *Minju Choson* prints four pages except for Tuesdays, Fridays, and special occasions, when it prints six pages. The paper is the second most powerful newspaper in the country following *Rodong Sinmun*.

### *Youth Avant-Garde*

*Youth Avant-Garde* (or *Cheongnyeonjeonwi*) is the official organ of the Kim Il-sung Socialist Youth League and was first issued on January 17, 1946 under the name of the Democratic Youth upon the establishment of the North Korea Democratic Youth League. On May 12, 1964, the league's name was changed to the Korean Socialist Working Youth League at the fifth congress of the Korea Democratic Youth League, resulting in the changing of the paper's name to *Working Youth*. On January 17, 1996, the league changed its name again to the current one, *the Kim Il-sung Socialist Youth League*, at the conference of the representatives of the Korean Socialist Working Youth League held in Pyongyang. Accordingly, *Working Youth*, the league's official organ was renamed *Youth Avant-Garde*.

The paper's missions include: explaining and promoting the immortal *juche* philosophy to the youth; training the youth so that they are completely loyal to the party and the supreme leader and become reliable successors who can carry on the *juche* and revolution exploits; and forcefully organizing and mobilizing them in implementing the party's lines and policies."<sup>16</sup> In other words, the paper educates the youth on the *juche* ideology, promotes the WPK's principles and policies among the youth so that they devote themselves to the successful implementation of those policies, and make them pledge unconditional obedience to Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il, and Kim Jong-un.

*Youth Avant-Garde* usually illuminates various issues reported in *Rodong Sinmun* from the perspective of the youth. There is an editor-in-chief and deputy editors-in-chief, and the paper has the editorial bureau in which there are departments in charge of several areas: youth affairs, students, the mass and culture, photography, etc.



## Broadcasting

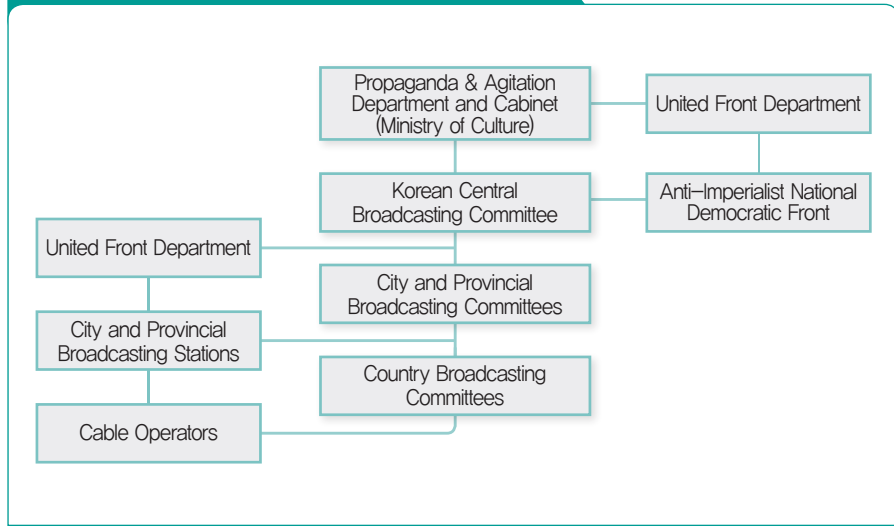
Like newspapers, broadcasting in North Korea propagates or reports internally and externally the party's policies and domestic and foreign affairs, and it is operated under the guidance of the Korean Central Broadcasting Committee (KCBC) of the Cabinet. The broadcasting system of the North works on two mechanisms: the contents and broadcasting work are directed and coordinated at the party level through the WPK's Propaganda and Agitation Department and the United Front Department, and facilities and equipment of broadcasting stations and administrative work are managed at the Cabinet level.

The KCBC is in charge of planning and handling everything that has to do with broadcasting work, functioning as a broadcasting body and regulatory authority, simultaneously. The committee is, in terms of organizational structure, under the Ministry of Culture of the cabinet, which is responsible for managing facilities and equipment as well as administrative work of each broadcasting station. However, the contents or personnel matters such as the appointment of the head of each broadcasting station are directed and supervised by both the party and the Cabinet. In short, although the committee belongs to the Cabinet in terms of the organizational structure, its head is appointed by the WPK and the contents for broadcasts are under the direction and control of the party's Propaganda and Agitation Department and the United Front Department.

The KCBC is placed at the top of the North Korean broadcasting apparatus and its central organs include the General Bureau of Radio, the General Bureau of Television, and about ten directly-controlled bureaus and departments. Under the KCBC are city and provincial broadcasting committees in charge of local broadcasts and their subordinate committees at a county and village level that oversee cable radio transmissions known as the third broadcasts and cable operators.



Figure 6–4 Media Structure of North Korea



Source: Korea Institute for National Unification, North Korea Overview 2009, p.419.

### (1) Radio Broadcasting

Radio broadcasters in the North include the Korean Central Broadcasting Station (KCBS) and the Pyongyang Cable Broadcasting Station, whose target audience is the North Korean people, and Pyongyang Broadcasting Station (PBS) that airs propaganda to the South. There are also stations for overseas broadcasts in several languages, including Russian, English, French, Chinese, Japanese, and Arabic. As the main domestic radio network of North Korea, the KCBS broadcasts programs for the North Korean residents. The station officially inaugurated programming with a live broadcast of the welcome home mass gathering for Kim Il-sung which was held at Pyongyang on October 14, 1945. The origin of the KCBS is traced back to a broadcasting station established in Pyongyang under the Japanese colonial rule which was divided in December 1967 into the Central Broadcasting Station 1 for domestic broadcasting, and the Central Broadcasting Station 2 which targets South Korea and foreign countries. Their names were changed to their current ones in November 1972, the first station becoming the KCBS, and the second one the PBS, respectively.

Sources of the news reports aired by the PBS usually come from state-run media outlets such as the KCNA or *Rodong Sinmun*; it uses quotes from their reports, editorials, commentaries, or articles on the party lines. Radio FM Pyongyang, which began broadcasting in 1989, targets the South, airing propaganda songs and art music that promote North Korea's revolutionary ideologies as well as classic pieces of Beethoven, Brahms, and Vivaldi.

In North Korea, there is a unique cable broadcasting system called the third broadcast, which is different from the cable television network of South Korea. The North's cable broadcasting system connects every household nationwide with its cable network and unilaterally delivers messages to the residents via tanoids. In other words, the cable system connects every province, city, and county with Pyongyang, with its central programs transmitted through the cable broadcasting studios of plants, enterprises, and collective farms to ultimately reach each household via tanoid. This is a type of in-house broadcasting system of companies or broadcasting networks of universities with its scope expanding across all areas of the country.

## (2) Television Broadcasting

TV stations in North Korea include Korean Central TV, the Korean Educational and Cultural Network, Mansudae Television, and Kaesong Television. Korean Central TV is the country's main TV broadcasting station and its basic mission is to "contribute to inculcating *juche* ideology in all across society and making the ideology prevail in every aspect of society by upholding the *juche* ideology and the philosophy of *juche*-oriented publication and reports as the sole guiding principles." The station was launched as the Pyongyang Broadcasting Network in March 1963 and was renamed to Korean Central TV in April 1970. Afterwards, it began its first color broadcasts on April 15, 1974 in commemoration of Kim Il-sung's 62nd birthday and started its satellite broadcasting on October 10, 1999, celebrating the 54th anniversary of the establishment of the WPK.

Kaesong Television, which targets South Korea, started broadcasting at a studio located in Kaesong on April 15, 1971 and officially began color broadcasts in October 1991. The Korean Educational and Cultural Network was created to commemorate the 55th birthday of Kim Jong-il on February 16, 1997 and it is available to viewers in Pyongyang.

Mansudae Television began operation in December, 1983. The station mostly broadcasts art performances, movies, and sports games for Pyongyang residents and foreigners and is available only on Saturdays, Sundays, and national holidays. This broadcaster is gaining huge popularity among Pyongyang citizens and has become their most favored channel.

As shown above, the contents aired through North Korean TV stations have the nature of propaganda and agitation, reflecting the regime's necessity for the ideological education of its citizens. However, several changes have been witnessed recently. In particular, soap operas, which draw much attention and interest of the public, are broadcast during the so-called prime time from 20:30 to 21:30 and they not only propagate the superiority of the regime, party, and *suryŏng* but also deal with more diverse issues and subjects, including romance, daily life, and the settling of social conflicts.

# Endnotes

- 1 The Theses on Socialist Education is the basic framework of the education system of North Korea and the guiding principles of its educational work published at the fourteenth plenary meeting of the fifth Central Committee of the WPK held on September 5, 1977. The Theses is a compilation of speeches, teachings, and orders given by Kim Il-sung about educational issues and is a comprehensive work that combines the overall directions and principles of North Korean education. The Theses consists of a preamble and five chapters: basic principles of socialist pedagogy; contents of socialist education; methods of socialist education; socialist education systems; and duties and roles of educational institutions, guidance and assistance for educational programs.
- 2 “A new kind of communist men and women” was changed to “new *juche*-type people” in the 2009 constitution.
- 3 The period for primary school was extended from four years to five years after the reorganization of the school system, but data contained in this book is based on materials from before reorganization due to the unavailability of the data on the changed educational curricula.
- 4 Mangyongdae Student and Children’s Palace is located in the Mangyongdae area of Pyongyang and is dedicated to children’s after-school activities. The term “children’s palace” is used for the largest students’ halls built for the extra-curricular activities of primary and middle school students. The palace has a 2,000-seat theatre, a library, about 200 group work rooms and practice rooms for various fields—science and technology, sports, culture and art, etc.—as well as a gymnasium, a swimming pool, and an exhibition room for scientific and technological products. The palace is the most well-known facility for the youth along with the Pyongyang Student and Children’s Palace and it functions as a special educational organization focused on cultivating brilliant minds in diverse sectors.
- 5 Cho Jung-ah, *Education in North Korea: System and Culture*, collection of papers published at the Korean Association of North Korea Studies academic conference summer 2005, pp.330-32.
- 6 Kim Il-sung, “The Thesis on Socialist Education,” *Collection of Kim Il-sung’s Writings* vol. 32, pp.389-98.
- 7 The Korea Artista Proleta Federatio (KAPF) or the Korea Proletarian Artist Federation was a left-wing literary organization organized by such writers and artists as Park Young-ryol, Ahn Suk-young, and Kim Ki-jin in the 1920s when communist theory was first introduced to Korean society. The members of KAPF were faithful to socialist realism and displayed a strong nationalist tendency at the same time.

- 8 The theory of *juche* literature and art asserts that principles of realism should be applied to literature and art and all problems must be solved on the basis of *juche* ideology. The theory puts the *suryŏng* at the heart of *juche* and embodies the ideology in a creative form of art. The *juche*-oriented theory views the literature and art as a means of arming the general public with ideological weapons and securing a monolithic ideological system.
- 9 A seed means the core or the things that should be at the heart of creating any literary or art work. The most important thing to be considered with regard to the seed is that it needs to reflect the regime's ideology—the *suryŏng*'s teachings and the party's policies. The Seed Theory thus emphasizes the necessity of literature and art to embody the leader's teachings and the demand of the party's policies as well as to advocate the ideological exclusiveness of the *suryŏng* system and the power succession of Kim Jong-il.
- 10 The Theory of Mass Art is a literary policy which emerged in the 1950s—when the construction of socialism was in full swing—to encourage the working masses to participate in literary and art activities. The policy is in pursuit of implementing the *juche* ideology and revolutionary mass line by popularizing the literary arts and making them a part of people's daily routine. The concept of popularization of literature and art originated from a letter sent by Kim Jong-il to the participants of the “enthusiasts meeting” of the national literary correspondents in 1982, in which he stressed that “literary correspondents should take more responsibility in implementing the party's policies for the popularization of literary and art activities.” This letter resulted in putting more emphasis on the party's policy of the “mass-oriented creation,” helping the general public to learn ideology more easily through art. This also led to the emergence of various forms of collective literary and art works.
- 11 Rodong Sinmun, an editorial commemorating the publication of its 10,000th issue, (December 1, 2001).
- 12 Collection of Kim Il-sung's Writings vol. 10, Pyongyang: WPK Publishing Co., 1980, p.296.
- 13 Bae Soon-jae and Ra Doo-rim, Sinmun Theory, pp.25-26.
- 14 Chosun Encyclopedia vol. 7, Pyongyang: Encyclopedia Publishing Co., 1998, p.489.
- 15 Chosun Encyclopedia vol. 10, Pyongyang: Encyclopedia Publishing Co., 1999, p.97.
- 16 Chosun Encyclopedia vol. 21, Pyongyang: Encyclopedia Publishing Co., 1999, p.31.



# VII

## Society and Life

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**Section 1.** Class Structure

**Section 2.** Value System and Everyday Life

**Section 3.** Religion in North Korea

**Section 4.** Deviations and Social Control

**Section 5.** Human Rights in North Korea

## Key Points

### 01

North Korea's social structure is based on three classes—core, wavering (ordinary), and hostile (impure)—and 45 categories. One's social category is determined based on their family background and loyalty to the WPK. The structure is a closed, inequitable system where there is practically no mobility between the categories. Gender inequality is also institutionalized, so that women are seriously discriminated against, both inside and outside the home.

### 02

North Koreans are forced to uphold the values of egalitarianism, collectivism, uniformity, and *suryŏng*—centrism. In real life, however, they display a double-sided approach by pursuing the values that coincide with their own interest. North Koreans' lives and routines can be described as extremely uniform and all people should mandatorily take part in organizational life by joining the bodies affiliated to the party for their entire lives. They can no longer rely on the central distribution system to obtain food, clothing or shelter, and can hardly enjoy leisure activities even on holidays and Sundays.

### 03

Although the constitution stipulates the freedom of religious belief, it is impossible for the North Korean people to engage freely in religious activities in reality since the country defines religion as opium or superstition. Religious organizations in the North exist in the form of bodies affiliated to the WPK and have been utilized for propaganda to the outside world or served as a means of securing foreign aids.

### 04

Since the mid-1990s, as North Korea's social order has relaxed over the previous decade, social deviation and crime such as petty larceny for living, power-related irregularities, and violations of public order increased in frequency and diversified into many forms. The authorities have made attempts to encourage voluntary conformity by means of group studies and organizational activities, while the military and other interventions have been applied to strengthen social control.

### 05

As far as human rights are concerned, North Korea is an underdeveloped country where not only civic and political rights but also economic, social, and cultural rights are systematically violated. Although the international community is continuously raising concerns on the human rights situation in the country, North Korea denies the universal value of human rights and has refused to heed the international community's call to improve conditions, arguing that human rights are already guaranteed for all its citizens.



## Section 1. Class Structure

A social structure is a standardized order emerging from interactions among the members of society. When daily interactions take place regularly and repeatedly, these interactions form a certain pattern and create a predictable order. A social order may originate naturally in accordance with the values and lifestyle shared among members of society. In the case of North Korea, however, it was greatly influenced by the country's institutional objectives. There, the class structure is the typical institution that determines the social order.

The presence of social classes implies institutionalized inequality in society stemming from discrimination in the provision of physical or symbolic compensations in accordance with a particular set of criteria. Although the term “class” is often used to describe such criteria, there is no clear consensus on its definition. Nonetheless, following Max Weber's concepts of class, it is common to categorize the economic dimension (income and wealth) as “class,” the political dimension (influence) as “power,” and the social dimension (education and occupation) as “status.”

### Social Classes

Upon completion of post-war reconstruction at the end of the 1950s, North Korea rushed to strengthen its socialist institutions in earnest. The first action it

took to this end was a survey of the entire population's family backgrounds and social activities. The purpose was to establish a North Korean-style caste system by studying every citizen's political inclinations and to exert effective control over the people. Table 7-1 shows the summary of the family background survey.

Table 7-1 Surveys on North Korean Citizens' Family Background

Title of Project	Period	Contents
Central party's intensive guidance	Dec. 1958 –Dec. 1960	Tracking down, punishment, and deportation of rebellious elements
Re-registration of residents	Apr. 1966 –Mar. 1967	Categorization of residents to unite the one million strong Worker–Peasant Red Guards under one ideology (The authorities carried out an internal investigation into three generations of direct descendants, up to second cousins on the maternal side.)
Categorization into 3 classes, 51 subgroups	Apr. 1967 –June 1970	Based on the results of residents' re-registration, all citizens were divided into three classes—core, agitating, and hostile—and further into 51 subgroups.
Survey on residents	Feb. 1972–1974	With the opening of inter-Korean dialogue, the North Korean authorities investigated and grasped citizens' movements and classified all citizens into three categories: reliable, wavering, and renegade
Inspection of resident's card	Jan. 1980 –Dec. 1980	At Kim Jong-il's order, the North Korean authorities hunted down rebellious elements through check and renewal of citizen's cards and reinforced control over the public.
Survey on naturalized citizens and defectors from the South	Apr. 1980 –Oct. 1980	Defectors from South Korea and other countries were categorized into 13 subgroups and placed under systemic control.
Survey on immigrants from Japan	Jan. 1981 –Apr. 1981	Data on immigrants from Japan were produced in detail and used for systemic surveillance over them.
Renewal of citizen's card	Nov. 1983 –Mar. 1984	Renewal of citizen cards and organization of resident documents
Re-registration of residents	Oct. 1989 –Dec. 1990	Updating of residents' register and creation of personal information cards for members of separated families
Adoption of the citizen registration law	Nov. 1997	Birth certificate, citizen's card, and Pyongyang resident's card were issued.
Renewal of citizen's card	Feb. 1998 –Oct. 1998	Replacement of pocket book-type cards with vinyl-coated, credit card-type cards
Replacement of citizen's card	Apr. 2004	Replacement of vinyl-coated, credit card-type cards with pocket book-type cards

Source: Korea Institute for National Unification, North Korea Overview 2009, p.332.

Following the completion of the survey in 1958, North Korea established its official class policy as it started to categorize the public according to family

background. The backbone of the North Korean- style class structure was finally established through three stages: an intense guidance project of the central party from 1958 to the end of 1960; re-registration of citizens from April 1966 to March 1967; and categorization into 3 classes and 51 subgroups from April 1967 to June 1970. The regime has continually made thorough investigations into citizens' family backgrounds in various forms since then, including a public survey, an inspection of resident identification cards, a survey of naturalized citizens and defectors from South Korea, a survey of immigrants from Japan, and renewal of resident identification cards.

The discriminatory class policy is implemented under the control of the National Security Planning Agency and the Ministry of People's Security. Most individual North Korean citizens have a rough idea which class or subgroup they belong to, but they have no right to confirm it. There is no official procedure to do so either. Only the two security agencies have information on individual class affiliation and they reserve the right to adjust it. After the mid-1990s, a large number of North Korean citizens went missing or violated social norms and regulations by illegally crossing the national border as well as wandering or running away from their place of residence. Subsequently, the regime had to re-categorize the public into 3 classes and 45 subgroups.<sup>1</sup>

Upon its establishment, the North Korean regime claimed to stand for gender equality and women's liberation. Following national division, North Korea passed and announced a law on equality between men and women in the form of the Interim People's Committee for North Korea Decision 54 in 1946, and enacted a Socialist Labor Law thereafter. As a result, female participation in economic activities has constantly increased. Recent economic difficulties have contributed to a further increase in female participation in the economy. Female social participation is now taken for granted in North Korea.

An increase in female economic participation is only a superficial phenomenon, however. Women are seriously discriminated against in entry to and exit

from the labor force as well as in regard to the types of jobs they can have and positions they can hold. Their social participation also results from mobilization for such political and economic purposes as “transforming women into self-reliant (or *juche*) communists and members of the working class and revolutionizing the family,” rather than ideological causes such as gender equality or women’s liberation. Upon national liberation in 1945, the Democratic Women’s Union was founded, and a large number of women were mobilized in various political and ideological campaigns, including the *Chollima* movement and the Winning the Three-Revolution Red Flag Movement. From an economic perspective, North Korean women have played the role of “industrial reserve” that provided a buffer in the case of a mismatch between labor supply and demand.

When the North Korean economy was doing relatively better in the 1960s and 1970s, a massive entry of women into the labor pool helped fill a labor shortage. Women were laid off, however, as the economy slipped into a recession and demand for labor declined in the 1980s. As the economic situation worsened, some factories expanded cottage industries and moonlight jobs to which a large number of idle female workers were mobilized. In this respect, an expansion of so-called “rice factories” and “side dish factories” or day care centers and nursery schools should be viewed as a system to mobilize female labor rather than one for promoting liberation of women or the protection of mothers.

North Korean women have suffered from the double torture of having to participate in formal labor while being fully responsible for household chores. They are expected to live life as “passionate *juche*-style revolutionary communists” in society, while at the same time playing the role of “wife and mother of a revolutionary husband and son” at home. In addition, North Korea is still a patriarchal society. In a culture where wives must be absolutely obedient to her husband, they often suffer from domestic violence.

As the contribution of women to the domestic economy has increased recently,

their status within the family seems to have also improved to a certain extent. According to North Korean refugees, an increasing number of North Korean husbands, who had been treated “like gods” in the past, have started to cook rice or do the dishes. However, considering that North Korea has long maintained a strict patriarchy, one should not hastily jump to the conclusion that such changes indicate a meaningful improvement in the status of women.

Such observations seem to demonstrate that North Korean women are discriminated against both formally and informally in their society and the extent of discrimination is extremely severe. This is because North Korea uses its gender policy merely as a means to exploit female labor and to preserve the regime rather than to encourage female participation in society as equal human beings. Moreover, patriarchal authoritarianism which is rampant all across society is impeding the advancement of the social status of women.

## Social Mobility and Class Structure

Social mobility refers to the movement of individuals or groups from one social status to another. Vertical mobility refers to a rise or descent in status. Horizontal mobility refers to a movement between regions or occupations without a change in status. Social mobility among the North Korean populace mostly takes the form of the latter.

In North Korea, horizontal movement does not necessarily involve a meaningful change in social status. This is because social mobility is artificially controlled by the family background policy and the places of residence and occupations are also assigned by the same policy in North Korea.

As private economic activities expanded in the 2000s, class change took place in some parts of the society. For instance, a member of the “impure” class could climb to an upper economic class by using his business skills to accumulate

wealth. The separation between rent-paying tenants and contract farmers and the emergence of donju (private money lenders) are also good examples that show the possibility of class mobility in North Korea. This created complications in the class structure and made one's economic status become an important indicator of his or her social position. Nonetheless, it is still difficult to say that moving up in social class through a change in economic status is a widespread phenomenon. Ascension in economic status remains dependent on one's political background, private network, level of skills, and desire for a rise in material status, many of which are greatly influenced by the existing policy on family background.<sup>2</sup>

North Korea's class structure has the following characteristics:

First, classes are artificially structured according to family background and loyalty to the Workers' Party. In general, social classes in a capitalist country are differentiated by objective elements such as level of income, occupation, and level of education. In the case of North Korea, however, the inequalities in such elements result simply from an artificial policy. In other words, those belonging to a higher class have greater chances to receive higher or special education. Moreover, the higher the class to which one belongs, the greater the chances one will be assigned to a position with higher social status and more authority and receive preferential treatment in various kinds of distributions.

Second, because the North Korean class structure is a closed system based on ascribed status, the chances of an individual obtaining an opportunity for moving up the social class ladder through his or her own efforts are considerably limited. Those who belong to the core class are unlikely to lose their status, which, barring some political offence or felony, is passed down to their offspring. In contrast, those who have a poor family background are not easily allowed to join the upper class regardless of their abilities. Occasionally, some members of the wavering (ordinary) class are re-categorized into the core class, and those of the hostile class into the wavering class. Such changes are

determined by the political criterion of one's loyalty to the party.

Finally, North Korea's class structure was established to create, sustain and reinforce its socialist system and tighten control over its society. The landlord class completely disintegrated as a result of the early land reform. Lands were first distributed freely to tenant farmers, impoverished peasants, and contract farmers, only to be nationalized a few years later. Clothing, food, housing, and other daily necessities have since been distributed under the control of the party agencies, forcing the people to obey the party and faithfully implement its instructions in order to survive.

North Korea's rigid family background policy is the most critical means of social control. The policy protects the vested rights of a few to the detriment of the majority. Since North Korea's class structure was artificially established and expanded for ideological and historical reasons, it is difficult to expect any fundamental change. Former Korean War prisoners who recently escaped North Korea testified that they had always been watched over and that their status was passed down to their children. Given this, a meaningful change in North Korea's class structure is unlikely unless there is a fundamental shift in its political objectives and policy lines.

## Section 2. Value System and Everyday Life

In promotion of social development, every society faces the dilemma of allowing for change while maintaining stability. In general, the ruling class endeavors to maintain stability in society. They strive to stabilize the society by recruiting voluntary sympathizers to their cause through the embodiment of institutional norms. In the case of North Korea, everyday life and leisure activities are uniform and this uniformity is used as an effective means of control over society.

### **1** North Korean Citizens' Values

North Korea has developed political justifications first for the establishment of a socialist regime, then for the reinforcement of Kim Il-sung's power, for the succession of power by Kim Jong-il and Kim Jong-un, and for overcoming the ongoing crisis. Efforts were also made to spread these justifications to the public through political education. Subsequently, North Korean citizens have developed a set of values either explicitly or implicitly in accordance with the authorities' intention.

In general, the justifications of values developed by North Koreans can be divided into three: justifications for socialist revolution (or construction), justifications for social stability, and justifications for overcoming the crisis



(refer to Table 7-2). The justifications for socialist revolution criticize the old regime of feudalism and capitalism, a target to be overthrown, and emphasize the importance of the creation of a communist (or socialist) society. According to these justifications, the feudal system is a “rotten” society and the capitalist system is unequal and exploitative. Both of them are targets for revolution. The communist society, on the other hand, is an egalitarian society without social classes and an ideal society that should be established through the collective efforts of working people.

**Table 7-2 Value System of North Korea**

Category	Objective	Key points
Justifications for socialist construction (revolution)	To criticize capitalism and feudalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploitative, “rotten,” and unequal society</li> <li>• Targets for revolution</li> </ul>
	To praise communism (socialism)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Egalitarian society with no social class, collectivism</li> </ul>
Justifications for social stability	To idolize the <i>suryŏng</i> (Kim Il-sung)	Creation of <i>juche</i> ideology and its variations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revolutionary view of the <i>suryŏng</i></li> <li>• Socio-political living body</li> <li>• Great socialist family: unity among the <i>suryŏng</i>, party, and people</li> </ul>
	To idolize Kim Jong-il	Emphasis on Confucian values <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benevolent politics/broad-minded politics</li> <li>• Loyalty and filial piety</li> </ul>
Justifications for overcoming the crisis	To justify the North’s socialism	Our style of socialism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Korean people-first policy</li> <li>• Scientific socialism</li> </ul>
	To justify the leadership (Kim Jong-un)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kim Il-sung’s royal family: “the Day of the Sun,” “allegiance through generations”</li> <li>• Absolute loyalty: guarding the <i>suryŏng</i> with the spirit of self-sacrifice</li> <li>• Sun of the 21st Century, successor to carry on the military-first revolution</li> </ul>

When Kim Il-sung was consolidating his power at the end of the 1960s, the North Korean regime mostly propagated justifications for social stability. The country justified Kim Il-sung’s power through the *juche* ideology and demanded the public pay unquestioning loyalty to him. Several theories based on totalitarianism have been created to justify the rule by Kim Il-sung: the revolutionary view of the supreme leader or *suryŏng* which considers the leader

as the brain that controls the party (the body) and public (the arms and legs); the theory of a great socialist family comprised of the *suryǒng* (the father), party (the mother), and public (the children); and the theory of a socio-political living body that demands absolute loyalty to Kim Il-sung who allegedly grants the socio-political life to the masses.

When Kim Il-sung finished consolidating his power and confirmed the power transfer to Kim Jong-il, North Korea also developed justifications for the hereditary succession and the creation of the young Kim's personality cult. Although the North Korean authorities denigrated Confucianism as an exploitative ideology, they adopted its core concepts of loyalty and filial piety as well as patriarchal values. North Korean people were required to show their continuous loyalty and filial piety to the *suryǒng* and allegiance to the Kim family through generations. When Kim Jong-un took over the leadership, North Korea stepped up justifications for this hereditary succession as well.

As social development stagnated after the mid-1980s and eventually threatened the existence of the regime, North Korea introduced a new theory justifying the legitimacy of its regime. Through the introduction of such new concepts as the Korean people-first policy and scientific socialism, North Korea emphasized the legitimacy of what it calls "our style of socialism." At the same time, it played up Kim Jong-il as the "Sun of the 21st Century," who could put Kim Il-sung's last wishes into practice, and as a figure whom North Koreans must guard to the death, armed as "living bullets and bombs" with the spirit of self-sacrifice. Now, Kim Jong-un is also being praised as the "Sun of the 21st Century."

Consequently, North Korean citizens had to develop the values of egalitarianism, collectivism, uniformity and the *suryǒng*-centeredness within the totalitarian system where the Kim family reigns over the whole society. They are considered ideal values in the sense that they coincide with the characteristics of the regime that the authorities aspire to. Yet, that does not necessarily mean that citizens have internalized them fully or embodied them

in their lives. On the surface, they have accepted the values the authorities pursue. Internally, however, they have developed practical values consistent with their own interests. In short, the average behavioral patterns of North Koreans represent a compromise between ideal and practical values. For this reason, their values are characterized by a certain duality.

In particular, the North Korean people's attitudes and values started to change as rations were cut off and private economic activities increased from the mid-1990s. A market-oriented mindset focused on money and profits is expanding among the citizenry. In addition, more North Korean people are showing their inclination towards familism or individualism than collectivism. An inflow of information from other countries led to changes in the people's perception of the outside world.

### (1) Egalitarianism and Discrimination

Having established a socialist regime, North Korea nationalized the means of production such as land, capital and factories and emphasized the importance of egalitarianism. Consequently, North Korean citizens have developed egalitarian values.

However, the concept of equality North Korea proposed was nothing more than a rhetoric justifying a socialist revolution and the concentration of power in one man. In reality, discrimination and a general sense of inequality are rampant in North Korean society. In other words, the country is a viciously unequal society, a product of artificial policies based on family background. Citizens now take for granted both the abuse of power by high-ranking officials and discrimination against those of politically suspect family backgrounds, women, and social minorities. The hereditary succession of power over three generations is a particularly flagrant example of inequality in power.

Although North Korea claims that it is a socialist egalitarian society, in fact it is a society in which inequality is institutionalized. Not only the education

and occupation of individuals, but also their marriage and place of residence are determined by their family background, not their abilities. In particular, there is a considerable difference in terms of opportunities and quality of life between the members of the privileged class residing in Pyongyang and ordinary citizens living outside the capital. The difference is felt in various areas: conditions of everyday life, including the availability of clothing, food, housing, education, and the kind of economic activities pursued, and aspects of organizational life such as opportunities for promotion or social advancement.

## (2) Collectivism and Social Loafing

North Korea views collectivism as a desirable value. Collectivism is the foundation of socialist and communist social life and a value pursued in all areas, including political, economic, social, and cultural. The North Korean constitution stipulates the principle of collectivism: “One for all, and all for one.” Competition is not so fierce in a collectivist society that puts camaraderie and fidelity above an individual’s ability and productivity.

Because collectivism is based upon a premise of collective efforts and collective reward, North Korean citizens display a tendency to “social loafing” in their daily life. Social loafing refers to a phenomenon that each individual’s contribution diminishes proportionally as the size of a group increases. Although citizens seem to work hard on the surface, their actual production rate is low. Accordingly, social loafing has been one of many factors that have caused low productivity within the North Korean economy.

## (3) Uniformity and Disguised Preference

In the name of revolutionary goals, North Korea restricted the freedom, rights, and interests of the individual and required that all citizens pursue a uniform life under a monolithic ideology. To support such uniformity, it has relied on various means of control, including control over thoughts and organizational

life as well as physical control by the party, government, and military. The fact that all North Korean citizens speak with one voice is a typical indicator of the extent of conformism achieved.

Pressure for uniformity and social control has resulted in a “disguised preference” in the daily lives of North Koreans. In other words, there is a disjunction between individual public and private preferences. Individuals often display ambivalent values by complying with the state’s demand in the public sphere, but pursue their own interests in the private sphere. Although North Korean society may look united and shows perfect conformity on the surface, the internal workings are shaky. The phenomenon of disguised preference would explain the gap.

#### (4) *Suryŏng*–Centeredness and Collective Thinking

North Korea is a society under patriarchal authoritarianism. At the pinnacle of authority is the *suryŏng* or supreme leader. North Koreans are required to be with the *suryŏng* in their daily life. They take the “*suryŏng*’s teachings” or the “leader’s words” as being of the highest value. They wear a *suryŏng* badge (or “portrait badge”) on their chest and live with him in all aspects of their daily life, whether at home, at work, and in society. Every home and office must have the portraits of Kim Il-sung and his son hanging on the wall and treat them as most valuable items. Every textbook in North Korea presents the “*suryŏng*’s teachings” or the “leader’s words” in each chapter. Teachers give a cult of personality lecture on the two leaders before the class starts. Even in daily reviews, criticisms must be made by quoting the “*suryŏng*’s teachings” or the “leader’s words.”

The *suryŏng*-centeredness eventually resulted in collective thinking. This means that decision-making processes by members of groups are conducted by disregarding any information or alternative that is irrelevant to the original nature of the group. The rigidity of North Korean society derives from the fact

that its members raise neither uncomfortable nor controversial issues in order to stay loyal to their *suryŏng* and the regime.

## 2 Daily Life and Life Cycle

### (1) Daily Life

Though there might be slight variations depending on age and occupation, North Koreans in general evince a considerably uniform daily life. They usually wake up at around 6:00 in the morning. Despite the differences existing between social groups, most average people have mixed grain or corn for breakfast. Their typical diet includes a vegetable soup, pickled cabbage, and shredded daikon radish. Those who are better off may have an addition of fried egg or sausage.



Pyongyang residents commuting to work by streetcar

With slight variations depending on occupation, most North Koreans report to work at 7:00 or 7:30 in the morning. In Pyongyang and other big cities, they commute by subway or trackless trolley while many in the countryside walk 30 to 40 minutes to work. Upon arriving

at work, they have to participate in several political activities, including a reading session, announcement of the party guidelines, and lecture. During the daily reading session, workers read the *Rodong Sinmun* and discuss various issues for about 30 minutes.

North Koreans generally work eight hours a day. The regular work hours are from 08:00 to 12:00 in the morning and 14:00 to 18:00 in the afternoon.

General workers have a 10 minute break for every fifty minutes of work. Farmers, on the other hand, rest for 20 minutes after every 100 minutes of work. When the morning session ends at 12:00, they take an hour off for lunch. In general, North Koreans bring a lunch box from home when they come to work in the morning. Many eat their lunch on the spot and some visit colleague's houses near the workplace. Those who live nearby may even go home for lunch. They often have mixed grain or corn for their main meal, but those who are relatively better off might have dried seaweed rolls with stir-fried potato and sausage.

A large number of women go home during the lunch hour and prepare foodstuffs they later sell at the street markets. They often prepare rice cakes, steamed bean curd, bread, twisted bread sticks, and bootleg liquor. In rural areas, women collect wild herbs, vegetables, and greens on their way home and feed them to animals they raise, including dogs, pigs, chickens, goats, rabbits, and ducks. They also do chores in their kitchen gardens before reporting back to the collective farms for the afternoon's work.

After lunch, most office clerks and other types of white-collar workers take an hour's nap between 13:00 and 14:00. The afternoon session of work begins at 14:00 and ends at 18:00. In the case of collective farmers, the nature of their work prevents them from leaving the farm until the day's tasks are completed.

When the afternoon session is over, North Koreans take part in daily life reviews, with an extra session once a week. These sessions provide time for self-criticism, during which each worker repents his or her mistakes, and time for mutual criticism, allowing participants to criticize each other. Criticism at this time are required to quote the teachings of Kim Il-sung or Kim Jong-il's words, which are used as the basis for critical logic. Workers often have to do additional labor or attend study groups after such daily review sessions, which makes it difficult for individuals to enjoy any private moments on the weekdays.

Since the mid-1990s, however, the daily lives of North Koreans are known to have changed substantially. Because of the low rate of industrial operation, a considerable number of workers either lounge around or leave work early. Some just punch the clock in the morning and leave the factory to engage in a market business. Overtime work exists in name only and study groups do not meet regularly. At some workplaces, daily life reviews are held in the morning.

After work, North Koreans enjoy private time. However, because of the energy shortage, they finish dinner as early as possible. What they have for dinner is similar to what they have for breakfast, but sometimes noodles, potatoes, and sweet potatoes are served. After dinner, men often do home repairs or spend time with colleagues while women do the laundry and clean the house before going out to street markets to engage in business. Farmers weed their kitchen gardens or go to mountains to collect firewood.

## (2) Life Cycle

### Early Childhood

When a child is born, the head of the household must pick up a birth registration form at a local police station, fill it out, have it certified by the head of the people's neighborhood unit, register the birth with a local town (or dong) office, and finally submit it to the police station. Later, the child's birth registration needs to be confirmed by the city (district) or county security department and submitted to the person in charge of food rations at the workplace. The certificate of birth registration records the child's name, sex, date and place of birth, residence, and nationality. In the past, children over three months were sent to nurseries, but many families these days handle childcare at home. At the age of four, children are enrolled for kindergarten and upon turning five, they advance to an upper kindergarten class, which is part of the compulsory education provided by the state.



## Childhood and Adolescence

When children reach the age of six, they enter primary schools for five years of education. At the age of eleven, middle school education is provided for six more years. The twelve years of education, from the upper kindergarten level (at five years old) to sixth grade in middle school, is referred to as a “period of universal compulsory education.” Moreover, young students start to receive political education by joining the Young Pioneer Corps at the age of seven and the Kim Il-sung Socialist Youth League when they turn fourteen.

## Adulthood

Upon graduating from middle school, one faces three career options: joining the army, going to college, or being assigned to a workplace. Most men join the army and women are assigned to work. Only 13 percent of middle school graduates are so-called “direct-track students,” namely, those who enter college or university immediately after graduating from middle school. Many others enter college upon recommendation from their organizations while working or serving in the army. Middle school graduates are assigned to jobs almost regardless of their own preferences.

North Korea does not recognize common law marriage. Most North Koreans start a family based on love, but in the countryside the tradition of arranged marriages remains strong. As an individual’s own opinion has become a more important factor in searching for a spouse, greater attention is given to love and economic ability than to family background. The bride is often responsible for preparing home furnishings. There is no separate wedding hall, and wedding ceremonies often take place in public centers or at the groom’s house. After the ceremony, newly wedded couples take commemorative photos in a park or in front of Kim Il-sung’s statue before visiting their relatives. Newlyweds do not go on a honeymoon, but generally spend their first night at the house of groom’s parents. Though entitled to a week of vacation, they usually report to work after a three-day break.

## Old Age

As Kim Il-sung advocated the slogan “[Man is] a youth at 60 and [should celebrate his] 60th birthday at 90” in the 1990s, the tradition of celebrating one’s 60th birthday had disappeared in North Korean society until it was revived in the 1970s. Yet, to reduce waste, the North Korean authorities have recommended the streamlining of such events as weddings and 60th birthdays. Meanwhile, the elderly want to continue working as long as possible, because more than half of the rations they are getting will be reduced if they stop working. When there is no work, they often spend time in parks or look after their grandchildren. The elderly have been one of the groups most affected by the suspension of public rationing.

The average life expectancy of North Korean citizens rapidly declined in the late 1990s, but gradually recovered throughout the 2000s to reach around 69 years recently. Like their counterparts in South Korea, women in the North are expected to live seven years longer than men on average. Funerals usually last three days, but with a prolonged economic crisis and increased death rate since the mid-1990s, one or two-day funerals have become common. During the funeral period, men wear black armbands and women wear white ribbons in their hair. The people were forced to cremate the body in the 1970s, but burial has once again become common since the 1980s.



## 3 Organizational Life

North Korean society is based on the principle of collectivism, which emphasizes “One for all and all for one.” Participating in organizational life is one of their ways of implementing collectivism. It is no exaggeration to say that organizational life becomes routine for all North Korean people from the moment of their birth and it continues until the end of their life. They start to learn organizational life by entering nurseries three months after birth and

mandatorily join official organizations such as the Young Pioneer Corps and the Kim Il-sung Socialist Youth League once they begin their regular school curriculum. Even after they become adults, they are required to join the WPK or party-affiliated organizations such as the General Federation of Trade Union and the Union of Agricultural Workers of Korea. Full-time housewives are obliged to become members of the Democratic Women's Union.

Table 7-3 Major Social Organizations in North Korea

Name of Organization	Membership Eligibility	Number of Members	Qualification and Activities	Foundation Day
Democratic Women's Union (DWU)	Women aged 31-60	About 200,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Women not affiliated with other organizations</li> <li>Mobilizing a rear line of the WPK for ideology, education, and labor</li> </ul>	Nov. 18, 1945
Union of Agricultural Workers of Korea (UAWK)	Members of collective farm aged 31-65 (60 for women)	About 1.3 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agricultural laborers</li> <li>Providing guidance on ideological education and agriculture</li> </ul>	Jan. 31, 1946
General Federation of Trade Union (GFTU)	Laborers and office workers aged 31-65 (60 for women)	About 1.6 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Laborers, office workers, organized at each workplace</li> <li>Nine trade unions</li> <li>Providing guidance on ideological education, technical learning, and work competition</li> </ul>	Nov. 30, 1945
Kim Il-sung Socialist Youth League (KSYL)	Students, soldiers, and others aged 14-30	About 5 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People aged 14-30 who are not members of the party</li> <li>Engaging in ideological education, activities of the WPK rear line, economic development, assistance for reunification and policy toward the south</li> </ul>	January 17, 1946

Source: The Board of National Reunification, North Korea Overview 1995, p.84; Korea Institute for National Unification, North Korea Overview 2009, p.53.

### (1) The Young Pioneer Corps and the Kim Il-sung Socialist Youth League

The organizational life of North Korean citizens in effect starts from the time of their birth, but it officially begins when they move to the second grade in primary school at the age of seven. They are all required to join the Young Pioneer Corps without exception. When they turn 14, they have to leave the Corps and join the Kim Il-sung Socialist Youth League.

Every student has to go through a so-called initiation process to become a member of the Young Pioneers Corps. Although all second grade students in primary school are required to join the Corps, their enrollment dates can differ depending on whether they met certain criteria or not. The initiation ceremonies occur three times every year. The first and second ceremonies are scheduled on the two most important national holidays: the first on February 16, the birthday of Kim Jong-il, and the second on April 15, the birthday of Kim Il-sung. The third enrollment date falls on June 6, which is the foundation day of the Young Pioneer Corps. Until all second graders become members of the Corps, there is a clear distinction between those who have been admitted and those who have not yet. Students who become members on the first enrollment date share a sense of pride, but they sometimes have to endure the jealous behavior of their friends who failed. Primary school students make all out efforts to be accepted as members of the Young Pioneer Corps from the moment they become second graders. Joining the Corps on the first enrollment date takes more than brilliance, a strong sense of responsibility, or reliability. A decent family background is another key factor.

Initiation ceremonies for those who join the Corps earlier are of larger scale and are more impressive than the ceremonies held for late comers. During the ceremony, the young pioneers take an oath before the flag of the Corps and read their pledge with many spectators present. Then, they wear a red tie and insignia that symbolizes the Corps. High ranking officials of the city (district) and country, and the elderly who received decorations for participating in anti-Japanese movements or other patriotic behaviors attend this ceremony to help the newly initiated wear the tie, boosting their sense of pride. Students who attend this initiation ceremony take great pride in becoming part of a social organization. Not only are they eager to enhance their academic achievements, but they also make a firm resolution to dedicate themselves to the country and its people by doing their best in their organizational life.

After being initiated, the students should get used to organizational life,

following and implementing the directions from the Corps' board of each school. There are student executives in each school, including the chair of a committee on organizational matters and the head of a committee on organizational life. The board directs each class to conduct certain tasks, and the students are divided into several groups to implement them. Raising rabbits, helping farming work, gathering pebbles, and collecting scrap iron and waste papers are the most typical tasks assigned by the board. Every Saturday—which is the Day of the Young Pioneer Corps—they march in file and attend self-criticism sessions held by each class. The life in the Young Pioneer Corps continues until they graduate from primary school at the age of 13.

When they become 14 years old, they join the Kim Il-sung Socialist Youth League (KSYL). The process of joining the KSYL is similar to that of the Young Pioneer Corps, but it is more complicated and meticulous; here too, candidates recommended by each class are subject to initial level reviews of an evaluation board belong to the school, but they additionally need to be approved by the student department of the KSYL in each city (district) and county.

Only when they pass this second review process can they untie the red scarf, a symbol of the Young Pioneer Corps, and attend the initiation ceremony of the KSYL and receive membership cards. Students are educated to believe that the membership card is a symbol that proves his socio-political life, which should be cherished more than his physical life. Students, therefore, wrap the card carefully with a plastic cover to prevent it from getting wet or ruined, and put it into a purse and wear it around their waist.

Students who participate in organizational life by joining the Young Pioneer Corps or the KSYL of each school should get positive reviews from their class teachers. More importantly, however, they should be well-received by instructors who, based on the directions from the league's board in each city (district) and county, educate them to thoroughly follow and implement the WPK's ideology and policies from their early childhood.

The instructors are responsible for lectures, study meetings, self-criticism sessions, story-telling meetings, action plans, and other organizational activities for students. They sign the evaluation reports of students<sup>3</sup> at the time of their graduation and issue various certificates when they are transferred to other organizations. Throughout organizational life, instructors play an important role of inculcating students with loyalty toward the WPK.

## (2) The WPK, General Federation of Trade Union, and Union of Agricultural Workers of Korea

When the students graduate from middle school and turn 18, they are qualified in terms of age to join the WPK. While joining the Young Pioneer Corps and the KSYL is mandatory, they can choose whether to apply for party membership or not. Since the WPK holds higher status than the state and thus is vested with powerful authority, every North Korean citizen wants to join the party. However, membership is granted to only a select few.

One must go through a one-year probationary period as a candidate member before he gains full party membership. Becoming a candidate member requires several procedures. An application and letters of endorsement written by two party members should be submitted to a party cell. Then, the plenary session of the party cell will discuss and make a decision, which is subject to ratification by a city or county-level party committee. People under “special circumstances,”<sup>4</sup> including those who made huge contributions during the war or favored by the supreme leader, will become full members without going through the mandatory one-year probationary period.

Members of the WPK form party cells based on locations of their workplaces and living areas, with each party cell consisting of five to thirty members. They conduct various activities required as members of the party under the guidance of party cell secretaries. As the lowest-level unit of the WPK, the cells serve as the most basic unit for the party’s organizational life and policy implementation.

If the number of party members is less than five in one workplace, they are absorbed into one of the other cells in nearby workplaces rather than forming a separate party cell. Sometimes a party cell is created by combining members in two workplaces.

When one joins the WPK, he should leave the KSYL and start his organizational life in the party. If one fails to join the party, he should continue organizational life in the league until the age of 30. Those who have reached the age of 30 but have failed to gain a party membership should enter other organizations based on their occupation; laborers join the General Federation of Trade Union (GFTU) and farmers join the Union of Agricultural Workers of Korea (UAWK). Under the GFTU are several trade unions organized according to each occupation. If a woman gets married without party membership and becomes a full-time housewife, she has to join the Democratic Women's Union (DWU) regardless of her age.

No one is exempted from organizational life although its intensity in the aforementioned three unions is not as high as that of the party cells. People working in the same workplace take part in different organizational activities depending on where they belong among the party, the KSYL, and the GFTU. Those who live in rural areas should join the UAWK and engage in its activities.

Organizational life consists of lectures, study meetings, and self-criticism sessions. Lectures are part of propaganda and agitation to bolster the WPK's monolithic ideological system and implement the party's policies. Lecture meetings are also known as "Wednesday lecture sessions" since they are usually given on Wednesday evenings as part of an event called "culture day." Study meetings are categorized into the executive class, member class, and laborer class based on the level of participants. The member class and laborer class are again divided into basic and advanced classes and they study the policies of the WPK and the teachings and revolutionary masterpieces of the supreme leader. Every study class has a time for evaluating academic progress of its class members at the end of each study course.

During self-criticism sessions, people reflect on their lives, confessing the flaws and wrongdoings of themselves, and engage in mutual criticism and discussions to explore ways to improve themselves. Each organization holds the session once a week. During the sessions, people should quote the Ten Principles for the Establishment of a Sole Leadership System as well as the teachings and words of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il for their mutual and self-criticism.

### (3) People's Neighborhood Units

North Korean people have no choice but to take part in organizational life from the moment they are accepted to the Young Pioneer Corps to the end of their lives. Those who have no jobs, including the elderly or full-time housewives, join the organizations such as the WPK, the DWU, and the people's neighborhood units. It is hard to find members of the party cells in the neighborhood units because only a few of the unemployed elderly or full-time housewives have party memberships. While those who joined the WPK conduct the organizational activities of the party and full-time housewives become members of the DWU, neither of them can neglect their duties at the neighborhood units. Senior citizens participate in group-based activities of the unit and most full-time housewives have to participate in the activities of both the DWU and the neighborhood unit.

A people's neighborhood unit usually consists of 20 to 40 households, but one unit covers more than that in city areas since it is formed on an apartment building basis. In principle, all residents in a village should become members of the unit, but usually the duty of participating in the unit activities is left to the elderly or full-time housewives since children join organizational lives in their schools and men participate in the activities of the WPK or trade unions at their workplaces.

Like other organizations, the people's neighborhood unit organizes study meetings, lectures, and self-criticism sessions under the guidance of its head



and each unit conducts a task assigned to it. It is not easy to disregard the order of the unit's head considering the authority vested in him. However, his order is no longer effective as it once was as people simply don't show up or neglect their duties necessary to complete tasks. In particular, as money became a major means of living, there has been an increase in the number of people who buy their way out of such tasks.

Organizational life of the North Korean residents has been strictly enforced due to the characteristics peculiar to the regime. Those who don't participate in organizational life are officially subjected to regulations to the extent that they cannot sustain their lives. The urgent necessity for avoiding any inconvenience or hardship in their lives thus forces them to participate in organizational activities. For example, to travel or move to other residence they should get a permission from the head of the people's neighborhood unit and their workplace, not to mention from an official regulatory body. They can move to better work places only when they receive high average grades for their organizational activities, and the same applies to promotion within the workplace. If they are unfaithful to their organizational activities, they will be stigmatized as "liberal elements," treated as outcasts, and subject to criticism at the self-criticism sessions. This shows an unavoidable reality in which North Korean people have to accept organizational life as a fact of life whether they want it or not.

## **4** Clothing, Food, and Housing

### (1) Dietary Life

North Koreans obtain food in two ways: through rations or by purchasing it in markets. Rationing has been a traditional and institutional way of supplying food. According to their age and occupation, individual North Koreans are assigned different ration grades, and food is supplied to them accordingly. There are nine different grades in total. Table 7-4 describes the amount of daily ration

provided to each grade of people. The people with the lowest grade, grade 9, receive 100 grams of food a day. This is the amount provided to infants. The group with the highest grade, grade 1, receives 900 grams a day—laborers working in hazardous occupations and miners excavating coal and other minerals belong to this group. Nonetheless, due to food shortages, the ration system has remained practically defunct except for a few privileged groups. Even when rationing is resumed, the standard amount for each grade is barely met.

The vouchers for elderly parents with senior citizen's security, children before being assigned to a workplace, and dependent full-time housewives, are distributed to the head of the household at his work. Farmers in collective farms receive a ration once a year through the "distribution of settlement." The amount of ration each farmer receives depends on the achievement rate of his working unit. For instance, if the unit has achieved 80 percent of its initial production target, each member would receive 80 percent of the fixed ration. Accordingly, the amount of distribution could vary from one working unit to another, but the members of the same unit receive the same amount of ration.

Table 7-4 Amount of Daily Food Ration by Group Grade

Group Grade	Amount of Ration	Recipients
Grade 1	900g	Workers in the hazardous industry, heavy workers
Grade 2	800g	Miners & mine workers, heavy equipment operators
Grade 3	700g	Ordinary workers
Grade 4	600g	College students, senior men of merit with social security, patients
Grade 5	500g	Middle school students
Grade 6	400g	Primary school students
Grade 7	300g	Senior men on social security, full-time housewives, kindergarten students
Grade 8	200g	Children aged between 1 and 4, prisoners
Grade 9	100g	Infants under age of 1

Of course, food is supplied neither in a fixed amount nor on a fixed day. As early as in the 1980s, authorities took away 10 percent of the ration under

the name of “patriotic rice” and an additional 12 percent in the name of “war reserve.” Subsequently, the amount of ration has continually diminished. In addition, although public rations were supposed to be provided twice a month, they had often been distributed once a month or sometimes skipped altogether for one or two months. Finally, at the end of 1995, rationing was suspended except for a few privileged groups.

As the food shortage continued and the public distribution collapsed except for the residents of Pyongyang and some military soldiers, most North Korean citizens had to find food on their own. In rural areas, an increasing number of people collected herbs and vegetables in the mountains. Those stealing food from farms also increased. The number of farmers tending private farmlands such as kitchen gardens or small patches of paddy also increased and more farmers are raising pigs or goats. The urban dwellers may also have kitchen gardens, but they often buy food from street markets. These markets have sprung up everywhere since the mid-1990s and continue to serve as places for trading most daily necessities. Most are black markets that sell various goods in great abundance, but prices are beyond reach for many.

North Korean citizens faced another difficulty in their dietary life when a currency reform was abruptly implemented at the end of November 2009. Currencies in their pockets turned into mere scraps of paper as their purchasing power quickly declined. Faced with strong public resistance, the authorities had no choice but to allow the re-opening of markets that had remained closed since the currency reform. Nonetheless, severe inflation once again caused the deterioration of dietary life in North Korea.

## (2) Clothing

Clothing has long been rationed as well. When the system was intact, most people received through their people’s neighborhood units a ration voucher, which they could present at shops to buy fabrics and clothes at state prices.

Like food, clothes are also distributed by the state. The authorities distribute clothes to people according to their ration grade. People are divided into two grades: those entitled to central rationing and those entitled to general rationing. The former are provided with luxury woolen clothes. In particular, expensive fabrics and clothes are supplied to members of special groups such as artists, journalists, and teachers, as well as to high-ranking officials in the party and the Cabinet. However, people in the lower grade receive clothes made of semi-wool or even lower-quality fabrics. Items such as woolen hats, cotton gloves, shirts, blouses, stockings, and shoes are not subject to rationing, but are bought freely by individuals at shops.

During economic difficulties in the 1990s, the supply of clothes had been in fact suspended before the supply of food was cut off. North Koreans have since become used to buying their own clothes rather than expecting to be supplied through rationing. Occasionally, however, school uniforms are still provided by the state. In the past they had been provided free of charge once every two years, but more recently, they are being provided at a state-set price. Parents still prefer state-provided uniforms, because the state price is much lower than that of street markets. However, because the supply is limited, parents often have no choice but to buy the uniforms at the markets.

North Koreans' fashion life, too, has changed over time. Until the 1970s, most citizens wore a standardized style of clothing: a Mao suit for men and a traditional white jacket and black petticoat for women. This kind of fashion can be attributed to the socialist lifestyle and the Chollima spirit.

By the late 1970s, Western-style blouses, jumpers, and skirts were introduced. These clothes became especially popular among residents of large cities such as Pyongyang, Wonsan, and Chongjin, which are regularly visited by foreigners and Koreans living abroad. In the 1980s, such clothes appeared in party bulletins and the media, and in the 1990s, Western-style also influenced hairstyles and makeup in North Korea.

The thirteenth World Festival of Youth and Students (commonly known as the Pyongyang Festival) held in Pyongyang in 1989 provided a turning point in North Korean fashion history. Foreign visitors' slick, chic, and lively outfits and hairstyles



A North Korean newscaster with a perm

came as a shock to the locals. Many of them started to imitate foreign fashions and hairstyles. Their dress became more assertive and colorful. They put on more makeup and started to care more about their appearances. A variety of hairstyles also appeared on the streets of Pyongyang.

Since the 1990s, the North Korean authorities responded by emphasizing the importance of national tradition, and official media praised women's traditional Korean dresses and other traditional wear. Although women's fashion in North Korea has shown more diverse trends in recent years, it has not been easy for North Korean women to buy several dresses due to economic hardship. Average people often wear jumpers, sweaters, Mao jackets, or boiler suits. They tend to wear clothes of dark colors. Young women usually wear their hair up and put on light makeup, while old women do not care much.

### (3) Housing

In North Korea, houses are collectively owned properties built using the state budget, and individuals in principle can neither construct nor own them. Accordingly, people live in rental houses assigned to them by the state and pay monthly rent.

People are divided into five groups, from 1 to 4 and the privileged, to which they are assigned according to their occupation and status. For instance, Group 1 is made up of the lowest-ranking laborers, office clerks, and members of

collective farms, who are assigned to a public condominium with one to two bedrooms and a kitchen, or a modern dwelling in a rural village with two bedrooms, a kitchen, and a storage room. Group 2 is made up of school teachers and average workers, who are assigned to ordinary apartments with one or two bedrooms, a living room with wooden floors and a kitchen. Group 3 is made up of managers of enterprises, counselors in central government agencies, and deputy directors at provincial governments, who are assigned to medium-sized one family dwellings with two bedrooms, a kitchen, and storage space. Group 4 is made up of directors in the central party departments, director generals in the Cabinet ministries, college and university professors, and general managers of enterprises, who are assigned to apartments with more than two bedrooms with heating and air conditioning systems, a bathroom with a flush toilet, and a veranda. Finally, the privileged group is made up of vice directors and higher-ranking officials of central party, directors and higher-ranking officials of cabinet ministries, and major general and higher-ranking officials of the KPA, who are assigned to luxurious multiple-story houses with their own gardens, flush toilets, and heating and air conditioning systems. Since the assignment of housing is affected by the distance one has to travel to his work, new housing is assigned upon change of work.

The housing distribution rate among the high-ranking officials of the party, government, and enterprise is almost 100 percent. In particular, athletes who have won gold medals in such international competitions as the Olympic Games or World Championship are provided with a cylindrical apartment in Palgol-dong in the Mangyongdae District of Pyongyang and a private passenger car. In the meantime, the housing distribution rate among average citizens is a mere 50 to 60 percent. Usually, individuals have to wait four to five years after applying for housing until they get the residence ticket.<sup>5</sup> These days, people find it difficult to get housing even after ten years of waiting. Subsequently, even newlyweds have to live with their parents until their residence ticket is issued. There are many cases where two households share a single apartment.

One of the problems in North Korean housing is obsolescence. The houses have hardly been renovated or remodeled since the mid-1990s. Neither have they been repainted, creating not only aesthetic problems but also vulnerability to natural disasters.



Rural cultural houses

The North Korean authorities prohibit private ownership and trading of housing, but since the housing shortage worsened in the mid-1980s, houses have been traded under the table. Because it takes too long to get housing with an official residence ticket, people are using various ruses to trade houses. For instance, the potential seller first registers a potential buyer as his housemate, and then changes the head of household. To move into a new house, people must secure the current inhabitant's consent, usually for a price. Accordingly, although North Koreans do not have the right to own a house, they can move to better housing as long as they can pay for it.

As for household furniture, North Koreans often say, "A man needs the five viscera and six entrails to live. Likewise, a household must have five cabinets and six electronic appliances." The five cabinets refer to a blanket chest, wardrobe, bookshelf, shoe rack, and cupboard, and the six electronic appliances include a TV, refrigerator, laundry machine, sewing machine, electric fan, and camera or tape recorder. Individuals have to obtain all of this on their own. In addition to such furniture and equipment, the rich and powerful have foreign furniture and appliances. Since it is difficult for average people to possess all of the above, brides are often satisfied to have only two pieces of furniture and three appliances at the beginning of their marriage.

## 5 Leisure and Holidays

### (1) Leisure Activities

North Korean people have to participate in both production and organizational activities, and they are busy even after daily work, engaging in side jobs or operating their own business. Therefore, it is very hard for them to find time for leisure in their daily lives. Moreover, they have to go to bed early due to the poor electricity situation, which makes their free time even shorter. Nonetheless, if a much broader definition is applied to the concept of leisure to include every activity except production and sleep, it seems that North Koreans too enjoy a lot of leisure time. For instance, a comparatively low workload in the office enables them to play sports games or chat with colleagues during regular working hours.

Although institutionally guaranteed leisure time is not long enough, North Koreans find their own way of enjoying the time by engaging in typical leisure activities, which are explained below.

Traveling is still limited in North Korea. The North Korean people should gain travel permission to go beyond the borders of the city, county, or district and it has been very hard to get such permission especially for private visits. Restrictions on traveling have been somewhat mitigated recently due to the food crisis, with permission being issued more easily and illegal trips being tolerated. Increased travel among the North Korean people facilitated information diffusion in the country. However, North Koreans can hardly have any time for rest or relaxation through traveling because most of their trips are related to their business.

Seeing movies or plays is the traditional way of enjoying leisure time among North Korean citizens. Actresses such as O Mi-ran and Hong Young-hee receive monthly living expenses almost equal to the amount received by generals, and each of them is assigned a house with two rooms. They also get extra benefits

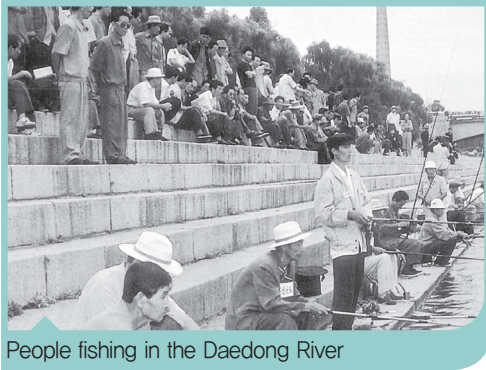


such as expenses for cosmetics and clothing. Some of the youth living in the Pyongyang area send them fan letters to compliment them on their successful performances. Although group viewing at the cinema was common in the past, the frequency has sharply decreased recently.

The most frequently enjoyed leisure activity in North Korea is television viewing. Since the TV penetration rate is not high, people are gathered in one place to watch TV together. Some upper class people keep storage batteries in preparation for blackouts. South Korean dramas have been secretly circulated among the North Korean people since the turn of the millennium.

North Korean people are no exception to enjoying drinking, singing, and dancing, which have been known as traditional leisure time activities of Korean people. They sing songs especially on special occasions such as friends' weddings. Songs popular among North Korean people include those praising the political leadership such as "Song of General Kim Jong-il," original sound tracks of soap operas such as "Love Love My Love," and lyrical music such as "Whistle." South Korean Songs such as "The Person of That Time" and "Maze of Love" are popular mostly in informal meetings. Oldies such as "Tumen River," "Wild Rose," and "Don't Cry Hongdo," which are also popular among South Koreans, are frequently sung by North Koreans as bans on those songs were lifted under the pretext of promoting "songs of the enlightenment period." Even Karaoke parlors have started business in Pyongyang.

With the distribution of alcoholic drinks suspended, only the people with power and wealth can get national liquor made in regular factories. Ordinary people usually drink home-made bootleg liquor, which is called "*Minju* (private liquor)." There is an alcoholic beverage similar to South Korea's *Makgeolli* (rice wine) called "Nong-tae-gi," which means it is made in farmhouses. Most male adults in North Korea smoke cigarettes, making the country rank first in the world in terms of smoking rate among males. However, it is hard to find females who smoke or drink alcohol.



People fishing in the Daedong River

North Korean people enjoy doing pastime activities, including fishing and sports games such as soccer and volleyball. Fishing is one of the major leisure activities of the North Korean people. They often serve fish they caught as side dishes with alcoholic beverages. Volleyball is the typical sports game they play with colleagues during break time at workplaces. Sometimes, they swim in rivers or at the beach. Although golf clubs were established near Pyongyang recently, playing golf is allowed only by foreigners and people belonging to higher classes. Leisure activities enjoyed by ordinary citizens include reading and playing cards. The number of people playing go (Korean chess) is on a gradual rise, but it has not been established as a common leisure activity yet.

## (2) Holidays and Anniversaries

According to *Grand Korean Dictionary* published in the North in 1992, holidays in North Korea are generally categorized into national holidays, anniversaries for celebration, international anniversaries, and traditional festive days. National holidays are “very joyous and meaningful days in terms of prosperity and development of the country and people.” The state stipulates April 15, Kim Il-sung’s birthday, as “the biggest national holiday of the North Korean people.” Anniversaries for celebration fall on days of significance for social or economic sectors. These holidays include June 6 (the foundation day of the Young Pioneer Corps), Education Day, and Miners’ Day.

International anniversaries are celebrated for “the social and class liberation of the international working classes and people in the world as well as for the strengthening of their militant solidarity.” These anniversaries include Labor Day (International Workers’ Day) on May 1 and International Women’s

Day on March 8. Traditional holidays include lunar New Year's Day, *Jeongwol Daeboreum* (the day of the first full moon of the lunar year), and *Chuseok* (Korean Thanksgiving Day).

### National Holidays and Anniversaries

The birthdays of Kim Il-sung (April 15) and Kim Jong-il (February 16) are called the “the biggest national holidays” in North Korea. Kim Il-sung's birthday was first celebrated in 1962 when the day was declared as a temporary holiday to commemorate his 50th birthday. However, the day was not designated as an official holiday until 1968 when it marked the 56th birthday, and from 1972 (the year of his 60th birthday), it was stipulated as “the most important holiday” in North Korea. After Kim Il-sung's death, his birthday was promoted to the “Day of the Sun” in 1997 and the “*juche* calendar” was introduced, with 1912 (the year of his birth) as *Juche* year 1. Meanwhile, Kim Jong-il's birthday began to be celebrated in 1975 when it was declared as a temporary holiday. In 1976, the country stipulated the day as a “national holiday” and in 1995 as “the biggest national holiday” of North Korea.

Unlike other holidays, various events such as “relay of letters of loyalty” take place and special rations are distributed on the birthdays of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il. As the birthdays approach, the North Korean media airs the news that congratulatory letters and flower baskets are coming from many countries every day, emphasizing that the whole world celebrates the day together. The media also propagates that all sorts of mysterious natural phenomenon occur on this day, saying that “raging snowstorm on Mt. Baekdu abruptly stopped and even the forest fell silent by the time of sun rising, presenting an overwhelming sunrise over it.” Since sugar, cooking oil, and other special rations are distributed on these days, the North Korean people think that the two holidays are very special compared to other “empty holidays” on which no special rations are distributed.

Table 7–5 Holidays and Anniversaries of North Korea

Date	Name
Jan. 1	New Year's Day (solar)
Jan. 1 (lunar)	New Year's Day (lunar)
Feb. 16	Kim Jong-il's Birthday (the Day of the Shining Star)
Jan. 15 (lunar)	<i>Jeongwol Daeboreum</i> (the day of the first full moon of the lunar year)
Mar. 8	International Women's Day
Apr. 5	Chungmyung Day
Apr. 15	Kim Il-sung's Birthday (the Day of the Sun)
Apr. 25	KPA Foundation Day
May 1	Labor Day (International Workers' Day or May Day)
June 6	Foundation Day of the Young Pioneer Corps
July 27	Armistice Day (the Day of Victory in the Great Fatherland Liberation War)
Aug. 15	National Liberation Day
Sep. 9	National Independence Day (the Foundation Day of the DPRK)
Aug. 15 (lunar)	<i>Chuseok</i> (Korean Thanksgiving Day)
Aug. 25	Day of <i>Songun</i>
Oct. 10	Foundation Day of the Workers' Party of Korea
Nov. 16	Mother's Day
Dec. 27	Constitution Day

Source: Ministry of Unification, Major Events Schedule of North Korea for 2014

Other national holidays include KPA Foundation Day, Armistice Day (the Day of Victory in the Great Fatherland Liberation War), National Liberation Day, National Independence Day (Foundation Day of the DPRK), Foundation Day of the Workers' Party of Korea, Constitution Day, and Foundation Day of the Young Pioneer Corps (June 6). The country started celebrating Mother's Day and *Songun* Day from 2012 and 2013, respectively. International anniversaries include International Women's Day (March 8) which was created commemorating women's protests in Chicago in 1909, and Labor Day (International Workers' Day or May Day) which was created based on the Chicago workers' strike in 1886.

### Traditional Festive Days

Traditional festive days include solar and lunar New Year's Day, the day of the first full moon of the lunar year, Chungmyung Day, and *Chuseok* (Korean Thanksgiving Day). These holidays were once all abolished except the solar New Year's Day in 1967 following Kim Il-sung's order to "root out the vestiges of feudal society." However, the country revived several traditional holidays

from 1972 by allowing visits to ancestral graves on the occasion of *Chuseok*. By 1989, the nation added Lunar New Year's Day, *Hansik*(the 105th day after the winter solstice), and *Chuseok* to its traditional holidays. Several days before Lunar New Year's Day in 2003, Kim Jong-il ordered the people to celebrate the Lunar New Year's Day instead the solar one, to take a day off on the day of the first full moon of the lunar year, and to call *Dano* (the fifth day of the fifth month of the lunar calendar) and *Chuseok* by their traditional names, *Surinal* and *Hangawi* respectively. In 2012, the state also designated Chungmyung Day, April 5, as a national holiday.

Traditional festive days, however, are not institutionalized holidays and their status changes every year according to the decisions of the authorities. The Cabinet officially announces its decision to designate a specific festive day, for instance, Lunar New Year's Day or *Chuseok*, as a holiday several days before it comes. Otherwise, the Cabinet may just skip a traditional festive day without making such announcements.

On traditional holidays, the authorities hold various events nationwide, including a game of *yut*, farmers' music and dance performances, and traditional food shows; and spice up the holidays with sports games such as Korean wrestling (*ssireum*). However, traditional holidays do not bear much significance to the majority of the North Korean people. Most North Korean defectors say that they have never given any meaning to traditional holidays and have no memory of playing special games on those days. According to them, North Koreans exchange greetings such as "Happy New Year!" on the New Year's Day, hold memorial services for their ancestors, and visit ancestral graves. They have to give a bow to portraits of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il on the wall before they start memorial services.

## Section 3. Religion in North Korea

At the time of the country's liberation from Japanese rule, religious activities in the North were carried on more actively than in South Korea. There were many famous temples around the nation, and Christianity and the Catholic Church were introduced in the North earlier than in the South with followers outnumbering those in South Korea. According to *Chosun Central Yearbook* published by North Korea in 1950, at the time of liberation, there were about 1.5 million believers in Cheondogyo, about 375,000 Buddhists, about 200,000 Protestants, and approximately 57,000 Catholics with the total number of religious people reaching about two million. The figure accounted for 22.2 percent of the North's population of that time.

However, religious activities of the North Korean people diminished upon the establishment of a socialist regime in the country. Most religious people defected to South Korea and some of them died or went missing during the war. Those who remained in the North faced severe oppression. It seems that even today North Korean believers cannot freely follow their religion due to such harsh conditions.



### 1 View on Religion

The North Korean authorities' view on religion is similar to that of Karl Marx. He believed that religion displays a different nature depending on the

society it belongs to; religion in a capitalistic society is under the control of the bourgeoisie and thus unconscionably justifies the role of the ruling bourgeoisie and weakens the revolutionary spirits of the exploited class.

When Marx said “Religion is the opium of the people,” he meant that it paralyzes the working people’s revolutionary spirits against the social structure exploiting them. The North Korean authorities also see religion as opium and consider it to be mere superstition and a vestige of antiquated feudalism. Kim Il-sung also said, “Religion is a reactionary and unscientific outlook on the world. If people start to follow religion, their class consciousness will be paralyzed and their enthusiasm for revolution will disappear. After all, religion can be likened to opium.”<sup>6</sup>

The Dictionary of Modern Korean Words published by the North in 1981 provides the following definition for “religion.”

“Religion means a reactionary outlook on the world, or organization of such nature that insists on the existence of supernatural and superhuman beings or forces such as divinities and God who govern nature and humans. Religion enforces blind faith, makes people live in total reliance on it, and preaches to them about dreaming of a ‘happy’ life in the so-called afterlife. Religion was historically used by the ruling class as a means to deceive, suppress, and exploit people, and in modern times, as an ideological tool of imperialists to invade countries that lag behind. Religion is opium that paralyzes the general public’s revolutionary spirits and promotes the principle of nonresistance, which even causes people to totally succumb to exploitation and oppression.”

The authorities’ negative stance on religion was also well reflected in the Dictionary on Philosophy published in 1985. Quoting Kim Il-sung’s remarks that religion is “a reactionary and unscientific outlook on the world,” the dictionary argues that the substance of religion is “false in its entirety,” and every form of religion, whether it be Buddhism, Christianity, or Islam, is a distorted reflection of a fantasized reality in one’s consciousness. Furthermore, while admitting that traces of religion can comparatively remain longer, it asserts, “religion will disappear after all when a society that exploits people is brought down and a socialist system is established.”

Considering several amendments to the constitution, it seems that the authorities' perspective on religion is gradually changing on the surface. The 1972 constitution stipulated, "citizens have freedom of religious belief and anti-religious propaganda," although this phrase gave more weight to freedom of anti-religious propaganda than religious freedom. The constitution revised in 1992 said, "Citizens have freedom of religious belief. This right is granted through the approval of the construction of religious buildings and the performance of religious rituals. Religion must not be used as a pretext for drawing in foreign forces or for harming the State or social order." Despite the change in the wording of the constitution to a more lenient tone with regard to religion, it is hard to find practical grounds supporting the claim that freedom of religious belief is allowed in North Korea.

The reason why North Korea is disingenuously showing a tolerant attitude towards religion while denying such a right in reality is because the country is aware that revealing the absence of religious freedom does no good to the country and only makes the regime subject to derision and criticism of the international community. On the other hand, it wants to utilize religion in particular to gain political and economic benefits from its exchanges with South Korea. For instance, during the country's food crisis in the 1990s, North Korea placed its religious organizations at the head to ask for humanitarian assistance from South Korean and foreign religious organizations.

## Actual Conditions of Religious Beliefs

Major religious organizations in North Korea today such as the Korean Christian Federation, the Korean Buddhist Federation, and the Cheondogyo Central Guidance Committee of North Korea were established with the start of the South-North talks in 1972. New religious organizations such as the North Korean Catholic Association and the Korean Council of Religionists (KCR) were



created in the 1980s when the country started to invite overseas North Korean adherents to visit the country. The Changchung Catholic Cathedral and the Bongsu Church were constructed in Pyongyang in 1988 and Chilgol Church was established in the following year in the same city.

Since the first ceremony for the Buddha's birthday which took place at Bohyun Temple in Mt. Myohyang in May 1988, the Buddhists have been holding ceremonies for three Buddhist anniversaries every year, including the Day of the Buddha's Nirvana and the Day of the Buddha's Enlightenment. Buddhist activities were especially outstanding in 2004. They finalized the restoration of the Yeongtong Temple in Kaesong, which have been going on since 1999; began a new project to restore Singye Temple on Mt. Kumgang; and worked on traditional decorative coloring of 59 temples.

The Russian Orthodox Church has also been attracting the attention of the North Korean authorities. Kim Jong-il visited an orthodox cathedral in Russia during his tour of Russian Far East in August, 2002 and discussed the matter of building a cathedral in North Korea. In January 2003, a Russian orthodox priest visited Pyongyang to hold a Christmas mass. In June of the same year, the Jeong Baek Russian Orthodox church in Pyongyang had a groundbreaking ceremony.

So, one might wonder if any true religion has ever existed in North Korea. Kang Ji-young, permanent member of the KCR once claimed, "the constitution guarantees freedom of religious belief and many people are practicing religious activities in reality." However, external religious organizations or human rights bodies not only argue that there is no freedom of religion in the North, but also describe the nation as the world's most vicious religious persecutor. According to Open Doors, a Christian charity within the US, between 50,000 and 70,000 adherents are interned and being tortured in labor camps.

Some even argue that, if there is a religion in North Korea, it is only the cult around Kim Il-sung. Adherents.com, a US site that collects religion-related

statistics, said that in North Korea there are about 19 million adherents of *juche* ideology and this figure makes the ideology one of the top 10 religions along with traditional religions such as Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism.

People in North Korean cannot practice their religious activities freely. There are only a strictly limited number of believers in the country. Adherents who have been there for religious purposes said that North Korean believers do not know how to sing hymns and even the clergy has only fragments of religious knowledge. North Koreans still have a tendency to associate most religious leaders such as ministers, priests, and monks with images of brutality or cruelty. This is because the North Korean authorities have long described religious leaders negatively through its political education.

Articles exhibited at the Sinchon Museum in South Hwanghae Province describe Christian missionaries as puppets of imperialists who persecute the people, and the authorities still use them to educate the general public. In 2004, upon the news that the Underwood family—which was dedicated to the development of Christianity in Korea throughout their four generations by establishing Yeonhee College, the Saemunan Presbyterian Church, and the YMCA in the late 19th century—was returning to the United States, the regime criticized them saying that they conducted “espionage activities to help the US infiltrate Korea, putting on the mask of religion to lay the foundation for invasion.”

## Section 4. Deviations and Social Control

A society can maintain order because most of its members abide by social norms. A considerable number of its members, however, have the tendency to break away from the existing order. Actions divergent from the prevailing social norms are called social deviations. Because every society aspires to maintain existing order, it rewards those obedient while imposing sanctions on those who deviate. Efforts to restrain social deviations are known as social control. In North Korea, a greater part of people's daily lives is subject to control through various means, including the suppression of human rights.

As the country came to a turning point in the 1990s, social deviation and crime rapidly increased while social control was slightly eased. Nonetheless, North Korea has never disclosed information on crime; its TV and newspapers have not said a single word on the issue. Accordingly, it is extremely difficult to find out, let alone quantify, the extent and causes of social deviations and crimes in North Korea.

### **1** Social Deviation and Crime committed by North Koreans

#### (1) Types of Crime Stipulated in North Korea's Criminal Law

North Korea's criminal law is based on the principles of socialist revolution and the working class. The specific purpose of its enactment was "to guard

the national sovereignty and socialist system and guarantee the people's independent and creative lives through the fight against crime" as well as to accomplish the socialist revolution "by adhering to the principles of the working class in the fight against crime."

**Table 7–6 Types and Names of Offenses Stipulated in Criminal Law**

Category	Sub-category	Name of Offense
Crimes against state and people	Crime against state	Subversion, treason against state, espionage, hostility against foreigners, etc.
	Crime against people	Treason against people, suppression of Korean liberation movement, hostility against Korean people, etc.
	Harboring, misprision, and neglect	Harboring or misprision of those who committed a crime against state or people, etc.
Economic infringement	Infringement on state or social cooperative organization's property	Stealing, extortion, blackmailing, deceit, embezzlement, robbery, collaborative greed, purposeful damage to property, accidental damage to property, etc.
	Violation of economic management	Counterfeiting, forgery of security, trading of foreign currency, tax evasion, engagement in private commercial activity, infringement of trademark, smuggling, loan-sharking, illegal earning of foreign currency, failing to guide in accordance with <i>juche</i> farming methods, etc.
	Violation of national land management and environment protection	Misuse of land, loss of land, deforestation and illegal felling of trees, illegal cultivation of mountains, accidental setting of forest fire, etc.
	Violation of labor administration	Traffic accident, arbitrary dismissal from work, violation of distribution order, etc.
Cultural infringement		Import and distribution of decadent culture, listening to hostile broadcasting, illegal excavation of historic remains, drug smuggling and trafficking, etc.
Violation of administrative management order	Violation of general administrative order	Group sedition, illegal crossing of border, bribery, etc.
	Crime by managing officials	Abuse of authority, negligence of duty, etc.
Violation of public order		Gang fight, prostitution, usurpation of title, impersonation, illegal marriage, failing to distribute gratuities or profits, etc.
Infringement on life and property	Infringement on life, health, and character	Murder, infliction of serious injury, assault, abduction, defamation and libel, rape, sex with minors, etc.
	Infringement on personal property	Stealing, extortion, blackmailing, deceit, embezzlement, robbery, destruction, etc.

Note: North Korea's criminal law categorizes criminal offenses into 7 groups. The "crime of violating defense management order" is not listed in this table.

Source: DPRK Code: For Public Use, Pyongyang: Law Publishing Co., 2004, pp.784–840.

Criminal law was completely revised in 2004 and has been partially modified several times since. The law classifies all crimes into seven categories, including crimes against the state and crimes against the people. Table 7-6 summarizes the seven categories and specific crime types in each category.

The criminal law revised in 2004 was different in that the basic principles and a large number of new crimes were newly added. The revision introduced the principle of *nulla poena sine lege*, the prohibition of analogical interpretation, and non-retroactive application of penalty. Accordingly, it stipulates stricter principles on the punishment of criminal acts. Of course, whether these principles are faithfully observed is another matter.

There seems to be several reasons behind the addition of new crime types in the revised criminal law. First, it is possible that the existing types are further broken down and specified into a larger number of categories. In fact, terms like “demonstrations” and “ambush” were newly introduced in the section for crimes against the state. In addition, the provision on narcotics, which was one of the provisions related to crimes of infringing on socialist culture, were further divided into three provisions, each covering a specific crime, including the illegal cultivation of poppies and production of narcotics, use of illegal drugs, and the smuggling and trafficking of narcotics.

Second, there seems to have been a practical concern that the law should reflect new types of crime. In the past, North Korean society was relatively stable and remained under effective social control. Since the 1990s, however, North Korean society has undergone several changes and new kinds of crime has emerged, particularly economic crimes, including tax evasion, engagement in commercial activities, loan sharking, and bootlegging, as well as crimes violating public order such as prostitution, indecent sexual activities, and gambling.

## (2) Types of Deviation and Offenses

North Korea had maintained a stable social order in a relatively efficient way

based on its highly organized social structure. However, since the second half of the 1980s, crime rates have rapidly increased, and social deviations and crimes became a “fact of life” by the mid-1990s. This became a concern for the North Korean authorities as early as the 1990s. For instance, the authorities responded by designating as “internal maladies” the rampant anti-party and counter-revolutionary developments, the spread of corruption and irregularities among high-ranking officials, the materialism sweeping across the society, and the growing number of ideologically vulnerable adolescents. This implies that crimes and social deviations in North Korea are no longer kept secret.

### Economic Offenses

Economic offenses mainly refer to illegal economic activities carried out for the purpose of earning a living or monetary profits. In North Korean criminal law, activities that violate the existing economic order such as larceny, smuggling, and loan sharking fall under this category. Until the early 1980s, when North Korean society was still maintaining stability, economic offenses did not draw social attention, but their frequencies have increased rapidly since the mid-1990s.

Larceny is a typical economic crime that occurs more frequently. State properties such as grains stored in state granaries, various daily necessities in local distribution centers, parts and materials at factories, crops, telephone and electricity lines, and cultural assets are common targets of larceny. Crime against individuals often takes place in street markets, railway stations, and trains, with merchants and tourists being the most common victims.

Smuggling across the China-North Korea border is also on the rise. North Korea’s exports to China include primary commodities such as medicinal herbs, wild greens, clams, and squid, as well as compact and expensive products of the secondary industry. The latter includes copper extracted from severed electricity and telephone lines, factory parts, and illegally excavated

antiques. North Korea's imports, on the other hand, mostly consist of grains such as rice and corn, shoes, clothes and garments, daily necessities such as salt and toothpaste, and other items of personal preference, including glasses and films.

Other types of crimes and social deviations committed for economic purposes are also widespread in North Korean society. Blackmailing and fraud, too, have rapidly proliferated across society. Illegal trading has become so rampant that a cycle of crackdown and acquiescence has become part of North Korean life. Bootlegging is so common that people can now readily distinguish between state liquor and moonshine. Some criminals even steal electricity using an electric condenser. Loan sharking is prevalent among some high-ranking officials and the newly rich.

### Social Offenses

Social offenses in North Korea refer to crimes against life, body, and social norms. Typical offenses in this area are crimes against individuals and culture. The former include murder, infliction of injury, assault, abduction, defamation and libel, and rape. A typical infringement of culture is the import and dissemination of foreign cultural materials. When North Korean society was stable, social offense was not a serious issue. However, as the society underwent rapid changes in the 1990s, social offense became diversified and increased in frequency.

In particular, as the social order deteriorated, North Koreans have become more involved in fights. Brawls also frequently break out over monetary disputes, occasionally leading to injury and even murder. Human trafficking is another serious crime that makes the North Korean authorities anxious, as it is carried out by a highly organized network of traffickers. Using marriage as bait, the traffickers frequently hand over North Korean women to their Chinese or Korean-Chinese clients for profit.

Meanwhile, the most representative cultural crimes are importing and

disseminating “decadent” cultural materials and listening to external broadcasts. A large number of North Koreans are known to sing along to South Korean songs and watch soap operas from South Korea. According to a survey conducted among refugees, almost half of the respondents acknowledged that they had directly accessed South Korean radio while in the North. In particular, more than half of male defectors replied that they had listened to South Korean broadcasts.<sup>7</sup>

### Violations of Public Order

Violations of public order are crimes that involve sexual and moral conduct. They include prostitution, gambling, drug addiction, violence under the influence of alcohol, traffic violations, and corruption of public morals. They are sometimes called “victimless crimes,” because it is difficult to pinpoint specific victims. According to North Korean criminal law, these offenses also include violation of order in public life, brawling, prostitution, lascivious acts, impersonation, gambling, superstitious activities, illegal marriage, and appropriation of compensations or profits.

As North Korean society went through a period of drastic change in the mid-1990s, prostitution became more rampant, often taking place in street markets or around train stations. In street markets, young women sell themselves to merchants for money. Motels and inns around stations collude in this prostitution business. They are themselves new illegal businesses providing board and lodging for those, mostly merchants, waiting for trains.

Common law marriage has become increasingly common since the mid-1990s in accordance with an increase in the floating population. De facto marriage is not recognized by North Korea’s family law, as it stipulates, “a couple cannot live a married life without registering their marriage. The increase in adultery and de facto marriage eventually led to an increase in divorce and the dissolution of families.



Gambling and superstitious activities, too, have exploded since the mid-1990s. Gambling is popular among merchants, and organized gambling is also known to be on the increase. Meanwhile, the authorities strictly suppress superstition. Since the mid-1990s, however, the number of people visiting fortunetellers for luck, health, and business matters has risen substantially, and even includes those in power.

### Power-abusing Offenses

Power-abusing offenses are crimes committed by those who exploit their power or authority granted for the performance of their duties. They include bribery, appropriation of materials, and embezzlement of compensation.

Bribery is so widespread that North Koreans say that “there’s nothing that can be done without money, and nothing that cannot be done with it.” Bribery is received in return for privileges involving various activities: issuing travel permits or medical certificates, accepting admission to higher schools, jobs assignments, promotion at work, assignment of housing, and overlooking illegalities such as black market trade, unauthorized travel, and traffic violations. High-ranking officials in the WPK, National Security Planning Agency, and Ministry of People’s Security are surreptitiously involved with smuggling activities at the border, and soldiers often steal crops and daily necessities from farmers. Those with power also appropriate state properties or rations and some even accumulate personal wealth through loan sharking.

Appropriation of remuneration is another new type of crime in North Korea. Though people are obliged to report all gifts and other types of material compensations they have received from outsiders, a considerable amount of informal monetary compensation is left unreported and misappropriated by individuals.



## Social Control

North Korea has made every effort to maintain effective control of its society. Such efforts include encouraging voluntary agreement through the internalization of ideological confirmation of the regime, regulating organizational life, and maintaining physical control over society through the Workers' Party and other power institutions. As part of this effort, North Korea is striving to improve its image by opening large scale recreational facilities and amenities for the citizens, including Rungna People's Pleasure Ground and Yookyungwon (public bath with cultural facilities), and by featuring American characters such as Mickey Mouse on many TV shows and programs. Meanwhile, the country is striving to prevent a slackening of the regime and tighten its control over the people. The national meeting of the heads of police stations and the National Judicial and Prosecution Workers Enthusiasts' Conference are typical examples that show the regime's will to strengthen physical control over its people.

### (1) Ideological Confirmation of the Regime

#### Collectivism and Organizational Life

North Korea is a society in which collectivist ideas are fully realized in every aspect of social life, including the areas of politics, economy, society, and culture. Emphasizing the importance of collectivism, Kim Il-sung stated that "while an individualist view on life takes personal objectives and pleasure as first priority, a collectivist view on life finds true reward and happiness by binding one's fate with that of the group and endeavoring for group objectives."

On the political and economic front, North Korea's collectivist ideas appear in the form of "mass line policies," while they take the form of "communist customs" on the social front. Public campaigns such as the *Chollima* movement, *Chongsanri* Method, Speed Battle,<sup>8</sup> and Three Revolutions Unit movement have been used as a means of mobilizing the workforce in collective ways, while

promoting the socialization and politicization of the masses to preserve social order. In addition, the regime promotes “beautiful” communist customs as a way of exhorting individuals to translate their ideological confirmation of the regime into action. These customs include the adoption of orphans, marriage with disabled veterans, and, for those who have studied abroad, volunteer service in their hometowns.

Collectivist values are studied and promoted throughout one’s entire life, starting from his or her childhood and continuing into school and work thereafter. In North Korea, babies as early as three months old are sent to nurseries and, from that time onward, they are controlled in accordance with collectivist principles.

Social organizations that integrate the life of an individual into a collective one include the Kim Il-sung Socialist Youth League (KSYL), General Federation of Trade Union (GFTU), Union of Agricultural Workers of Korea (UAWK), and Democratic Women’s Union (DWU).

### *Juche* Ideology

Collectivism repeatedly indoctrinated in the North Korean society has been systematized in the form of *juche* ideology. Demanding constant loyalty to Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il, the *juche* ideology can be viewed as an ideological means of controlling people’s lives.

Upon the proposition that “the principal agents of social movement are the working class, its party, and the *suryŏng*, *juche* ideology has evolved into a binding relationship of the *suryŏng*, party, and general masses.<sup>9</sup> This gives rise to a vertical relationship between the *suryŏng* and the people, demanding unconditional allegiance to the supreme ruler. The people are forced to equip themselves with a kamikaze-type spirit that entails “defending the *suryŏng* to the death,” “becoming bullets and shells for the *suryŏng*,” and “guarding him with suicidal explosions.”

By invoking *our style of socialism* and *Korean people-first policy*, North Korea also endeavors to implant pride in the people and thus maintain stability in society. These efforts have become more necessary due to the disintegration of the Soviet Union and East European socialist regimes. Faced with severe food shortage and economic difficulties, North Koreans developed a defeatist mentality and skepticism in regard to the socialist system and their state's future. In response, the authorities felt the need to bolster indoctrination with regard to the superiority of the system. The regime thus argues that "our style of socialism has been problem-proof in the construction of the nation."

It was in this context that North Korea restored King Tangun's tomb, thereby bestowing recognition on what it had once criticized as a "historical fiction." The regime also excavated ruins buried in the Taedong River basin, eventually claiming the existence of a Taedong River culture. In order to claim superiority of its history, the regime argues that the Taedong River basin has been "home to Koreans from time immemorial and is a sacred historical place where the earliest human civilization was born." Regardless of the truth, North Korea is using this version of history for propaganda purposes, arguing that it would not collapse like the Soviet Union and East European socialist countries due to the superior strength of North Korean-style socialism.

Parallel with this effort, the regime began calling North Koreans "the people of Kim Il-sung," also introducing the year of Kim Il-sung's birth, 1912 AD, as year one in its new *juche* calendar and marking his birthday, April 15, as the "Day of the Sun." Furthermore, the constitution was revised in 1998 and 2009 to recognize it as a "Kim Il-sung constitution." WPK rules were revised in 2010 to define the party as "Kim Il-sung's party." These undertakings imply that North Korea is virtually the personal property of the Kim Il-sung family.

These measures too are presumed to have been aimed at underscoring the superiority of the system to any other (whether socialist or capitalist). By using propaganda to posit the "great" Kim Il-sung and his son Kim Jong-il at the helm of the system, the regime seeks to bolster public allegiance to the supreme

leader as well as faith in the socialist system. Ultimately, North Korea has sought to preclude any unrest that might have been elicited by the collapse of the Soviet bloc.

## (2) Social Control Agencies

Traditionally, the party and administrative agencies, such as the National Security Planning Agency and Ministry of People's Security, had been responsible for maintaining social control in North Korea. However, when social order became less certain and the military-first policy was introduced in the late 1990s, the military took a leading role in maintaining control over society. Eventually, the party, government, and military comprised a ternary structure in social control.

### Workers' Party

Article 11 of the North Korean constitution stipulates: "The Democratic People's Republic of Korea carries out all its activities under the leadership of the Workers' Party of Korea." Accordingly, the WPK is the supreme institution taking precedence over the constitution and is a pivotal agency with the power to organize every area of society. The party organs are established in every institution and they follow party instructions in perfect unison. The party has a local committee in each city and county that deals directly with the general public. Lowest in the hierarchy are party cells, each of which has control over 5 to 30 people. Party members are required to report to these party organs of any problems found in administrative agencies and the daily lives of local residents. This gives authority to party members to control the people's lives.

### Administrative Agencies

Political surveillance agencies responsible for monitoring and supervising the movements of North Korean citizens include the National Security Planning

Agency, Ministry of People's Security, and Judicial Life Guidance Commission. These agencies watch over people's actions and thoughts and crack down on so-called anti-party and counter-revolutionary forces.

The National Security Planning Agency, the highest political surveillance agency operating independently of the criminal court system, has the right to monitor, detain, arrest, and execute political prisoners at its discretion without legal procedures. It is also responsible for escorting Kim Jong-un, investigating administrative agencies at various levels, watching over social organizations, factories, and enterprises, monitoring repatriated Koreans, inspecting mail, wiretapping telephone and radio communication, managing classified documents, monitoring the movements of soldiers, consolidating the hereditary succession of power and eradicating resistance against various issues that may rise throughout that process. The agency has its agents everywhere from Pyongyang to local cities, districts, counties, towns, and villages. They are also dispatched to all agencies, enterprises, and company-level army units.

The Ministry of People's Security not only maintains and reinforces public order, but also plays a role in protecting state properties. It monitors the movements of citizens and exposes violations of social order. It also runs security checks on relevant individuals and watches over their private lives. The ministry is headquartered in Pyongyang but has a security station in every province, city (district), and county. At the lowest end of its organizational structure are local police stations. Agents are drawn from servicemen on active duty and from veterans, while selection is based on the candidate's family background and loyalty to the party.

The Judicial Life Guidance Commission is an agency created in response to a point raised during the sixth Supreme People's Assembly (SPA) held in December, 1977 in regard to the need for reinforcing control over citizens. The commission is responsible for promoting a law-abiding spirit by encouraging individuals, agencies, and institutions to fully comply with party lines and policies as well as for monitoring and supervising them during the process.

On top of all this, North Korean citizens are placed under layers of additional surveillance systems, including the five-family system and various study groups. Under the five-family system, entire households are divided into groups of five and assigned one loyal family to each group to monitor and regulate potential misdeeds. This system was operated from July 1958 to 1973, and was later renamed upon Kim Il-sung's order to the 'people's neighborhood units' in urban areas and 'subgroups' in rural areas. Each people's neighborhood unit often consists of 20 to 30 households, which are monitored and supervised by the unit chief and instigation agent. They meet twice a month to review their lives. All details become topics for discussion and self-criticism, including daily activities like raising children, mobilization for labor, cleaning, maintaining order in neighborhood parks, preventing accidents, taking baths, and getting haircuts.

### Military Agencies

Kim Il-sung once said, "Socialism and peace exist on the basis of guns and spears." Accordingly, military agencies had long focused on communizing South Korea under the guidance of the party. However, with economic difficulties and an increase in social aberrations and other elements of the regime in crisis, the military, invoking the military-first policy, began intervening in domestic society to enhance social control. Military agents are dispatched to every administrative unit, enterprise, and cooperative farm. They reside in colleges and universities to keep an eye on the movements of students. Since the end of the 1990s, the Ministry of People's Armed Forces has taken direct action to track down and punish "anti-socialist elements." This reflects the sense of crisis that has gripped authorities while also implying that it became no longer possible for administrative agencies to maintain effective control over such elements.

## Section 5. Human Rights in North Korea

Human rights today are recognized as universal rights for all humankind. As prescribed in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights,” each and every individual is entitled to inalienable human rights without unwarranted interference or discrimination from the state. This includes civic and political rights of life, liberty, freedom of expression, and equality before the law, in addition to economic, social, and cultural rights that ensure rights to participate in cultural activities, receive respect and dignity, to work, and to receive education.

North Korea is considered an underdeveloped nation in rights terms, given that it neglects to meet minimum human rights standards required by UN members. As a *suryŏng*-centered one-party system, the North suppresses people from political participation, and its collectivism and planned economy deny individual rights to autonomy and choice. Moreover, it undertakes discriminatory policies against various groups of people in accordance with an artificial social caste (or *songbun*) system. In short, it is no overstatement to say that North Korea’s totalitarian society, in which social diversity is denied, violates an extensive array of human rights.



Civil and political rights consist of diverse entitlements, such as rights to life, freedom of movement, freedom of press and publication, freedom of assembly and association, freedom of thought and religion, and the prohibition of torture. Based on the human rights standards prescribed in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), North Korea infringes on human rights in almost all areas. Violations receiving particular international attention include: public executions, the operation of gulags for political prisoners, restrictions on freedom of movement, on freedom of press, publication, and assembly, religious oppression, discriminatory songbun policies, demanding the forced repatriations of refugees, etc.

North Korea's right to life is violated through public executions, illegal executions of repatriated refugees, unlawful detention and arrest, torture, human rights abuse in prison, kidnapping and disappearances, and unfair trial. Meanwhile, infringements of equality rights that draw global concern include discrimination against the so-called hostile class in its songbun system and against religious people and families of defectors to South Korea, in addition to gender inequality and sequestration of the handicapped. In the case of freedom infringement, issues are restrictions on freedom of residence, movement, and information and communications technology, on top of limited freedom of press, publication, assembly and association. As for violations of political rights in North Korea, limitations on political activities and infringement of voting rights are cited as concerns.

### (1) Public Execution

The act most typical of the regime's disregard for the sanctity of life is public execution. Although such executions took place even in times of social stability, their frequency has increased since the food shortage worsened and loyalty

to the regime and sympathy with the ideology weakened in the 1990s. In 1995, for instance, seven actors and film executives were executed in front of 300,000 onlookers in the Hyongjesan District of Pyongyang under charges of making pornography. In Shinuiju in 1997, a citizen who had stolen electric and telephone wires made of copper was publicly executed. The WPK secretary for agricultural affairs Seo Kwan-hee was also publically executed in the same year.<sup>10</sup>

Public executions continued into the 2000s.<sup>11</sup> They were carried out on those who committed such trivial crimes as selling to the Chinese “slogan-bearing trees” of revolutionary significance, selling pornographic video recordings, slaughtering a cow for food, and stealing corn from a labor training camp. Bingdu (drug) smugglers and dealers, embezzlers of state exports, and timber smugglers have also been executed in public. This shows that public executions in North Korea have been carried out for a wide range of reasons.

In general, they take place in front of large crowds. Schools, enterprises, farms and other institutions are notified in advance of when the execution will take place. Once people are assembled, the convicted are identified and their crimes disclosed, whereupon a summary public trial takes place. Once a verdict is reached, the death sentence is immediately carried out.

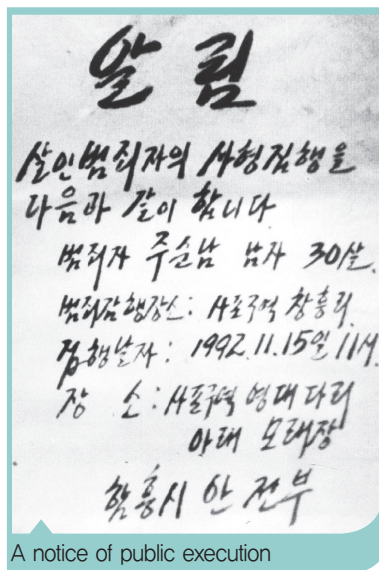
Public execution is inhumane in itself, and it is doubtful whether the execution system strictly follows North Korea’s own laws.<sup>12</sup> First, North Korean criminal law clearly stipulates the crimes that are subject to death penalty. The authorities, however, conduct public executions even for general crimes, thereby infringing on the right to life. Second, public execution in North Korea seems to violate the code of criminal procedure in many cases. According to the code, the death penalty must be carried out by the execution agency with a public prosecutor present, subsequent to receiving certified copies of the written order of supervision and ruling. The execution must also be approved by the SPA Presidium. Nonetheless, such procedures are often ignored.

## (2) Prison Camps

Prison camps, or so-called “management centers,” are typical examples of human rights infringement in North Korea. Starting in 1956, the North accused political prisoners of being anti-revolutionaries and either imprisoned or executed them, or banished them to remote mountainous regions. Since April 1966, however, North Korean authorities started confining political prisoners in concentration camps located in certain regions. Especially beginning in 1973, when the Three Revolutionary Teams Movement was launched to establish Kim Jong-il’s hereditary succession, and up until the official introduction of the heir at the sixth Party Congress in 1980, all critics and political rivals of this new leadership were ferreted out and sent to prison camps with their families.

North Korea is known to have confined 80,000 to 120,000 political prisoners in five gulags nationwide (Kaecheon and Bukchang in South Pyongan Province, Yodok in South Hamgyong Province, Hwasong and Chongjin in North Hamgyong Province).<sup>13</sup> Most prisoners in these camps are accused of having conspired against the state, violated the monolithic ideological system, or attempted to escape from North Korea. Some of the imprisoned also include abductees from South Korea, anti-revolutionaries, members of discredited factions, non-conformists, and offenders against some WPK policy or another.

Once prisoners arrive at the special detention district, they are deprived of identification cards, stripped of all basic rights, banned from meeting or exchanging letters with family or relatives, and forced to work more than twelve hours a day, only to end the day of labor with over an hour of self-criticism and mind-reforming classes.



A notice of public execution

The daily routine in these camps varies slightly from district to district. But in general, prisoners awake at 04:00 and arrive at the workplace by 06:00 after finishing up breakfast or seeing to other personal needs. The morning session for work is from 07:00 to 13:00, and afternoon labor continues until 21:00. Most work in these prison camps is hard labor such as mining for coal and other minerals, logging, and cultivating lands. More importantly, camp life is strictly based on self-sufficiency. Because prisoners are not supplied with food, most suffer from malnourishment and various types of unknown illnesses, and a main source of nourishment is understood to be wild snakes, frogs, rats, and birds native to the area.

Within these prison camps are maximum security areas, where those who violated camp rules, stole from others, engaged in sexual activities, and disobeyed superintendents are detained.<sup>14</sup> Escape from this section is almost impossible due to its tightly guarded security. Concentrated in mining areas or mountainous regions near the border with China, they are surrounded by barbed-wire fences 3 to 4 meters high. Mines and various other traps are placed at camp outskirts. Patrol guards with their dogs are also on watch around the clock. Prisoners placed in these camps are detained indefinitely unless granted amnesty.

### (3) Violation of Civic and Political Rights

The North Korean regime is a *suryōng*-oriented totalitarian society where freedom for individuals is hard to come by. Civic and political freedom is restricted so widely that it is difficult to specify any particular infringement. For instance, although freedom of residence, movement, and travel is stipulated in North Korean laws, a lot of restrictions are imposed in practice. Limited cases including change of job are permitted, but since job assignments are decided by the authorities, the scope of this freedom is effectively determined by the regime.

In principle, individuals are able to travel freely within a city, district, or county. However, to travel beyond set boundaries they need permission from local authorities, ranging from the head of people's neighborhood unit to the head of the people's committee. In particular, to visit border provinces such as North Pyongan, Chagang, Yanggang, and North Hamgyong, North Koreans must have an approval number, which is rarely issued especially regarding private visits to Pyongyang.

North Korea argues that it guarantees religious freedom by law, but in practice this has not been the case. Following Karl Marx's view on religion, North Korea has suppressed religious activities, defining religion as "opium" or regarding it at best as superstition without scientific evidence. Subsequently, all religious facilities and religious people have disappeared in North Korea. Although a few religious facilities such as the Bongsu Church and the Changchung Catholic Cathedral were established in the 1980s, they are propaganda facilities maintained to counter international pressure rather than to guarantee the freedom of worship.

Political suffrage is the right to vote and participate in the political process in order to express one's opinion or hold a public office. Everyone enjoys the freedom of choosing between whether to vote or not and the freedom of voting for candidates of one's choosing. North Korea claims that, by law, it promotes secret voting based on the principle of general, equal, and direct suffrage. In reality, however, North Korean voters are only allowed to say yes or no to sole candidates nominated by the WPK. Consequently, 100 percent of eligible voters cast ballots in elections, all of whom say yes to the sole candidates.



An SPA election poster

The freedom of press in North Korea is practically non-existent. The regime exhaustively regulates the press and media to prohibit any expressions of political views that differ from the authorities. It also controls all means of communication to prevent the inflow of information from the outside. When North Koreans obtain radios, TVs, or tape recorders, they are obliged to report them to the authorities within a week and have them sealed. Every radio in North Korea has its frequency fixed on the central broadcasting station. If the seal is found to be broken, one is deemed to have illegally listened to foreign broadcasting and is punished as a political offender.

## **2** Violation of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

Economic, social, and cultural rights include: the right to survival or to receive basic clothing, food, and housing; the right to social security, work, rest, and possession; the right to enjoy a healthy environment; the right to choose a job; and the right to education. In light of the human right standards stipulated in the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the situation in North Korea is one of the worst in the world.

### **(1) Violation of the Right to Life**

Due to chronic food shortages, North Koreans' basic health and survival are at risk. The food crisis first began in the 1980s, but became known worldwide only in 1995 when the regime openly pleaded to the international community for food aid. It is reported that North Korea's food production increased to a certain extent in the 2000s, but food shortages still continue. Nevertheless, North Korea has been reluctant to resolve the food shortage issue while concentrating its disposable resources on political purposes such as laying the groundwork for hereditary succession of power and military ends such as developing nuclear materials and missiles.

In North Korea, available food is first distributed to high-ranking party officials, along with members of the National Security Planning Agency, and the military and defense industry. Subsequently, vulnerable members of society suffer from chronic malnutrition and starvation. As witnessed by a great number of people who died from starvation in the mid to late 1990s, the right to life of North Koreans is under serious threat.

In 2002, the July 1st Measures were introduced, and the public distribution system was virtually abolished. People subsequently needed to purchase foodstuffs at state-run shops. This measure resulted in a rise in wages, but food prices in markets increased 40 to 50 times. Such circumstances made it practically impossible for North Koreans to make ends meet with average household incomes. A currency reform conducted at the end of November 2009 also deprived North Koreans of the opportunity to accumulate wealth through market activities. High inflation caused by this measure made living conditions more miserable.

Food production has been on the rise recently, reaching almost five million tons as of 2013. Despite such improvements in overall food conditions, people who belong to the lower class or are living in poor neighborhoods are still struggling due to a distorted distribution system which employs discriminatory practices and methods.

Currently, aid from the United States and the international community has been suspended or reduced due to the lack of transparency in the North's distribution system and the increase of the so-called "donor fatigue"—a certain feeling of powerlessness that causes donors to lose interest in the problems of poor nations. In response, North Korea has to allow a level of monitoring that meets international standards and make efforts to resolve its food shortage issue. It is also imperative for the North to take the initiative in assuring the right to life for vulnerable groups in society, including infants, the weak and elderly, and pregnant women.

## (2) Violation of the Right to Choose Jobs

Although the North Korean constitution affords individuals the right to choose jobs according to their wishes and talents, the reality is different. Jobs are instead assigned based on the WPK's plans for the labor supply. When assigning jobs, the party conducts a review of one's family background and loyalty to the party, rather than considering individual aptitude or ability. Meanwhile, those with parents working in the party, government, or military are assigned preferred jobs regardless of their ability. Those with undesirable family backgrounds are unlikely to get into college and are often assigned to jobs requiring physical labor.

The so-called "group assignment" is clear evidence that there is no freedom to choose one's occupation in North Korea. This refers to the party-ordered practice of assigning a group of people to workplaces such as factories, mines, and various construction sites where an additional supply of labor is needed. This is done without regard to the individual's desire, aptitude or ability. Of course, children of high-ranking officials are given the opportunity to graduate from college as well as the privilege to express their wishes before being given such an assignment.

Citizens who do not report to work or miss work without notice are punished by way of forced labor. A day of absence from work or three days of tardiness is punished by a reduction in one day's portion of food rationing. However, this penalty has become meaningless since the suspension of food rationing. Those who do not go to work due to their personal business or agricultural activities are also punished by way of forced labor. Of course, those who cannot report to work due to starvation are left unpunished. Also, the rich are known to bribe their way out of trouble.

## (3) Violation of Other Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

As a way of preserving the system, North Korea has maintained tight control



over its people's minds. The regime advocates the *juche* ideology while prohibiting all other political views. The WPK also has complete control over literary, art, and other cultural activities. The party exercises direct censorship and control over all publications. Most of the publications are used to justify the hereditary power succession of the Kim family, reinforce the family's power, and preserve the regime. Literary and art activities are controlled by a party-affiliated organization called the General Federation of Literature and Arts (GFLA). Every literary and art work produced in North Korea must be censored by the GFLA at every stage, from the selection of theme to the description of contents. Anything that describes South Korea positively is forbidden.

In North Korea, a social security system is applied only to certain privileged groups of society, excluding the general public. When people become ill, hospital treatment is a rare luxury for average citizens. Even if a doctor happens to examine a patient, medicine needs to be purchased using one's own resources. There are two types of hospitals: one for high-ranking officials and the other for the general public. Even hospitals for average citizens have special rooms for officials.



### Response to Criticism on Human Rights

The abuse of human rights in North Korea originates from the peculiarities of the regime. North Korea is a totalitarian society with a political system based on *suryŏng*-centered one-party rule, a centrally planned economy, an institutionally controlled society, and a culture based on the unique philosophy of *juche* ideology. In such a society, basic rights are bound to be restricted.

Nonetheless, North Korea claims that no human rights problem exists because the people were the ones who chose the socialist system in the first place, and that system is in place to serve them in return. The regime insists, "human rights are only guaranteed in socialist systems in which exploitation and

oppression are removed, and people are masters of the nation.”<sup>15</sup> Meanwhile, North Korea counters international criticism by claiming that it upholds its own type of human rights.

North Korea rebuts international criticism of its human rights record based on two grounds: the relativity of human rights originating from cultural differences, and exclusiveness of human rights based on national sovereignty.<sup>16</sup> First, North Korea argues that because its “socialism of our style” advocates a socialist system based on principles of collectivism, its human rights conditions cannot be assessed from Western perspectives. The regime even claims that true rights and freedom are only enjoyed in its people-centered society, where the *suryōng*, party, and public are united as one.

Second, North Korea asserts that because of their exclusiveness, human rights are internal issues and other countries should not interfere with North Korea’s internal affairs. The regime also contends that because state sovereignty precedes human rights, which cannot be guaranteed if there is no state, Western countries should not impose their own standards of human rights on other countries. In other words, Pyongyang contends that the international community’s humanitarian intervention harbors the political aim of overthrowing the regime rather than the goal of protecting and improving North Korean lives.

However, North Korea’s view on human rights denies the universal values of humanity. As a result people’s civic and political rights as well as economic, social, and cultural rights are seriously violated there. The international community has thus continually urged North Korea to rectify its human rights conditions. Since 2003, the UN has repeatedly adopted resolutions on North Korean human rights in the UN Commission on Human Rights and General Assembly. In particular, the UN in 2004 appointed a Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. The core responsibility of the Special Rapporteur is to examine human rights

situations in the North and report the results and recommendations to the UN.

The first Special Rapporteur Vitit Muntarbhorn (2004-2010) submitted a comprehensive report on the human rights situation in the North to the 63rd UN General Assembly in 2008. The report concluded that the situation in North Korea is serious based on six grounds: unequal distribution of profits from development, discrimination in access to food and other necessities, the instability of rights and freedom, serious violations of the human rights of North Korean refugees, unequal treatment of women, children, and other vulnerable groups, and impunity for human rights violations. The Special Rapporteur reported to the tenth UN Human Rights Council (former UN Commission on Human Rights) in 2009 that the human rights situation in North Korea was “still miserable and despairing.”

Special Rapporteur Marzuki Darusman who was appointed in 2010 has been paying attention to the country’s oppressive institutional mechanisms, including political prisoner camps and the criminal law of North Korea. Based on his recommendations, the UN Human Rights Council established the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the DPRK in March 2013, granting it the authority of comprehensive investigation on crimes against humanity, including torture and forced labor.

The South Korean government has also expressed its interest in North Korean human rights issues. In particular, South Korea has jointly proposed a North Korean human rights resolution since the 63rd UN General Assembly in 2008, more actively engaging in efforts to improve human rights in North Korea. The North Korean human rights resolution submitted to the 64th UN General Assembly in 2009 expressed concern over organized and serious violation of human rights in the country, and suggested that North Korea cooperate with the Special Rapporteur’s activities, urging it to respect human rights and basic freedom. In 2010, a few more points were added to the resolution, including a requested increase in the size and frequency of reunions of

separated families of South and North Korea and the expression of regret over the lack of implementation of recommendations proposed by the UN Human Rights Council in its universal and regular human rights review in December 2009. The resolution adopted in the UN General Assembly in 2011 criticized widespread human rights violations in North Korea, including torture and execution based on political or religious reasons, and urged North Korea to improve its human rights situation. In 2012, the UN Human Rights Council passed a resolution condemning human rights violations in the North without calling for a vote and urged the Special Rapporteur to investigate the situation in the country. The council adopted a resolution without voting also in 2013, and in March 2014 decided to open a UN office on Human Rights of North Korea based on another resolution.

As external interest in its human rights problem has increased, North Korea has promoted a human rights policy condignly mixing two criteria, the security of the regime, and practical needs. From the perspective of the regime's security, North Korea dismissed external interest in its human rights situation as a "human rights offensive" and "commotion over human rights," summarily rejecting the recommendations of the international community. For instance, North Korea argued that the resolutions adopted by the UN Human Rights Council and General Assembly were initiated only with an ulterior political intention to pressure its regime, and that Western countries are simply taking advantage of them to "isolate and crush the regime to death," thereby damaging the UN's claim to fairness. Accordingly, North Korea has refused to recognize the authority of the UN Special Rapporteur and has repeatedly denied his requests to visit the country.

North Korea has also taken a strong stance against South Korea's call for improvements in human rights, calling it a "blatant challenge to our national dignity and regime." For instance, Pyongyang criticized South Korea's co-sponsoring of the 2008 UN resolution on North Korean human rights as a complete denial of the June 15, 2000 joint statement and October 4, 2007

declaration between the two Koreas, threatening that the South would “pay dearly.”

Nonetheless, as its isolation in the international community deepened, North Korea started to recognize the external concern to a certain extent. While trying to improve relations with the European Union, North Korea partially accepted its demand for bilateral talks on human rights issues. In addition, North Korea submitted the results of implementing the provisions of the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights, of which it is also a member. Pyongyang submitted a state report out of practical reasoning that it needed to reduce international pressure by making a show of guaranteeing human rights.

In response to such external pressure, North Korea has revised relevant laws and made some efforts, which have remained merely perfunctory. In 1998, it stipulated the freedom of residence and movement as well as the freedom of religion in its constitution. The criminal law and code of criminal procedure were also revised in 2004 and 2005, respectively, and the regime introduced the principles of *nullum crimen sine lege* and the prohibition of analogical interpretation. Furthermore, Article 8 of the constitution revised in 2009 stipulated that human rights should be “respected and protected.” This is a desirable result, but how well the revised provision will be enforced still remains in question.

In short, North Korea does not consider human rights as universal values of mankind and downplays their importance due to characteristics peculiar to its regime. In fact, North Korea is one of the most underdeveloped countries in human rights terms, for not only civic and political rights, but economic, social, and cultural rights are also being seriously violated. Despite international concern, the North argues for the relativity and exclusiveness of human rights and remains reluctant to improve its situation.

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- 4 People under "special circumstances" include those who are highly praised for their achievements in the course of building socialism. They are given the special advantage of attaining full membership of the WPK without complicated procedures. This privilege is granted mostly to those who made great contributions during the war, dedicated themselves to the construction of socialism, or achieved great results in international competitions.
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