The Paradox of North Korea’s Ideological Radicalism: Shaky Social Basis of Strengthening Ideological Campaigns
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Aie-Rie Lee, Hyun-chool Lee,
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Abstract

North Korea is a socialist “dynasty” shrouded in secrecy. The regime’s inconsistencies leave even the best of North Korean specialists and commentators befuddled as the country’s actions invalidate their predictions. One must, however, understand North Korea’s sociopolitical ideology in order to appreciate its inconsistencies as a regime. This paper will discuss the impact of North Korea’s ideology in historical and sociopolitical context, as well as show the depth of ideological penetration into every layer of its society. The Juche ideology that has characterized the regime is a peculiar

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combination of nationalism, Marxism, and Confucianism. Since Kim Il-Sung's death, however, and the succession to power of his son, Kim Jong-Il, North Korea's ideology has metamorphosed into a series of sub-ideologies. The purpose of this paper is to elaborate on the process by which North Korean ideology changed and the paradox between the rise in ideological rhetoric and the weakening legitimacy of the regime under Kim Jong-Il.

Key words: North Korea; Juche; Kim Jong-Il; nationalism; Songun Jungchi (Military-first politics); Kangsong Daekook (Strong and Prosperous State); state-society relations

Introduction

North Korea, the most isolated state in the world, regards itself as a “socialist dynasty” and embraces a unique ruling ideology. The North defines itself as a Kim Il-Sung nation: the leader is worshipped as a deity and political power has been passed from the regime's founding leader (Kim Il-Sung) to his son (Kim Jong-Il). The political leader has absolute power over the entire society.

Events that occur in the country often make no sense to outsiders. Indeed, North Korea's policies often seem hopelessly backward. Nevertheless, the regime has persisted, even under the devastating economic crisis of the 1990s.

What, then, is actually happening in North Korea? Can the regime continue to survive in the future? Although it is difficult to evaluate the country's internal dynamics, due mainly to a lack of accurate information, this paper will show that signs of potential change have emerged within the Pyongyang regime. In particular, we will examine a seemingly paradoxical link between ideological change, stepped-up propaganda campaigns, and the shaky social foundation of state-society relations.

Contemporary North Korea may be characterized ideologically as a social institutionalization of Juche ideology, which then shifted to the far-right Songun Jungchi (Military-first politics) and Kangsong Daekook (Strong and Prosperous State). Politically, it relies on a single stratum of leadership and rigid social management and control. The Juche ideology launched by Kim Il-Sung has long penetrated into every aspect of North Korean life, primarily via the bombardment of propaganda campaigns. The ideology has further radicalized into militarism during Kim Jong-Il’s era, driving the country into a retrogressed garrison state.

North Korea is a totalitarian state that intervenes and exerts control down to the family unit. There is no room for freedom or openness in the society. Despite the North’s recent attempt to revamp its economy, a series of economic development plans have failed to achieve their goals.

When comparing the Kim Jong-Il regime with that of his father, the main differences involve the ruling ideology and state-society relations. This paper focuses on the relationship between the ideological radicalization of the regime under Kim Jong-Il and the weakening of the regime's legitimacy. To put it differently, we are inter-
ested in examining a puzzle: Specifically, why has this ideological radicalization, designed to bolster popular support for the leader and his policies, ironically weakened Kim's political legitimacy?

North Korea had built a unique nation-state, separate from the former Soviet bloc and founded on its own ruling ideology. The North distanced itself from other socialist regimes during the collapse of the Soviet Union by focusing on the strength of that ideology. However, signs of a crumbling regime are emerging, with the weakening of ideology towards the garrison state and the far-right nationalism, on one hand, and the failure of the regime's ability to provide goods to its people, on the other.

North Korea’s Ruling Ideology and Its Metamorphosis

The polity of North Korea is based on *Juche* ideology. The origin of *Juche* doctrine is historically associated with the consolidation of Kim Il-Sung’s regime. Since the Kim Il-Sung era, the *Juche* doctrine has become deeply institutionalized, has exerted a very distinctive form of influence on society, and has pervaded every level of North Korean life. Thus, to understand the country’s behavior, *Juche* ideology must be elaborated in detail.

The *Juche* idea emerged as a reaction to external and internal ideological disputes surrounding the Soviet Union and China, particularly the de-Stalinization of the Soviet Union after Stalin’s death. Kim Il-Sung rejected de-Stalinization, mainly because his own ideological rhetoric and, thus, political legitimacy, were based on Stalinism. Meanwhile, North Korea increased its autonomy from Chinese intervention and Chinese influence on its domestic politics.¹

The North’s leadership in its early era was composed of various factions supporting either China or the Soviet Union. Naturally, each faction struggled to provide its own interpretation and application of Marxism-Leninism to justify its power and to gain political legitimacy. The power struggle came to an end when Kim Il-Sung pushed for the idea of self-reliance, ultimately purging his opponents.

*Juche* emerged for the first time in a speech Kim Il-Sung delivered to the Korean Worker’s Party (KWP) in 1955. The ideology was summarized in four slogans: “*Juche* in ideology,” “sovereignty in politics,” “self-support in economy,” and “self-protection in defense.” Within a decade, *Juche* became the ruling ideology of North Korea.² However, *Juche* ideologues began gradually to replace the importance of nationalism with the “greatness” of Kim Il-Sung himself, and it was a turning point when the “*Juche* ideology” transmuted into “Kimilsungism.”

*Juche* ideology fundamentally differs from Marxism in that its core idea is founded in spiritual determinism, as opposed to Marxism’s reliance on historical materialism. *Juche* doctrine stresses the importance of people overcoming socio-economic obstacles under the direct guidance of the Great Leader, first Kim Il-Sung and now Kim Jong-II. *Juche* theory views society as a sociopolitical organism: At the cen-
ter is the Great Leader who is considered the “cerebral core” (noesu) of the regime. It is on this basis that the leader’s absolute power is rationalized and justified. As a result, Kimilsungism, along with Juche ideas, came to substitute for Marxism-Leninism in North Korea.

Both the formation and consolidation of Juche ideology account for two important political events in North Korean history. First, when the North was founded, various factions (e.g., Kapsan, Yonan, the Soviet) appeared deeply divided along ideological lines, with each faction having its own input into building the newly established state. Kim Il-Sung used Juche, which stresses self-reliance and political independence from super-powers, to triumph over rival factions and obtain absolute political power in the North. Kim Il-Sung particularly emphasized the Juche ideology in taking an independent stance during the Sino-Soviet dispute.

Second, the regime took full advantage of Juche principles when North Korea withstood the collapse of its communist neighbors and patrons during the period from 1989 to 1991. The regime has invoked “North Korean exceptionalism” when confronting foreign superpowers (whether communist or democratic) by taking a staunchly independent position in politics, economics, and ideology. In addition, the North has been able to secure its sovereignty and independence by taking advantage of the international tensions over the Korean Peninsula.

As the regime emphasized the North Korean exceptionalism, Juche ideology metamorphosed into a unique brand of North Korean nationalism. The North has come to reject its initial notion of nationalism as a means of bourgeois ideology, with Kim Il-Sung’s emphasis on “sahwejuui ekukjuui (socialist patriotism)” over “minjokjuui (nationalism).” It is notable that the concept of nation has come to refer to a specifically socialist nation.

The idea of socialist patriotism as an alternative to nationalism had come to dominate North Korean ideology by the 1970s. A nation, for instance, was defined in a North Korean dictionary as “a consolidated group of those who have been historically formed with commonality in language, region, economic boundary, culture and psychology,” which provided an ideological justification for nationalism. North Korea’s perception of nationalism gradually changed during the 1980s. According to the Hyundai Chosunmal Sajun (Dictionary of Modern Korean), published in 1988, nationalism is also defined as the following:

1) “in bourgeois societies, a reactionary idea that encourages conflicts and antagonism amongst nations ... as if the exploiting class’ interest is equal to that of whole nation.

2) in colonies, a patriotic as well as progressive thought and its contention for national liberation to which pioneers gave rise before the working class in order to take revolutionary power.”

This definition is, in its essence, no different from Stalin’s. Furthermore, Kim Il-Sung eventually claimed that “nation” takes priority over “class.” The strengthening of the North’s nationalism was accelerated by the fall of communism in Eastern Europe. Obviously, the North had to manage the moral crisis caused by the
collapse of most socialist regimes, and did so by leaning on nationalism ("Korean Greatness" as a nation) rather than socialism. The "nation" in this context refers to the "Kim Il-Sung nation," which had been ideologically shaped by Kimilsungism. Kim Jong-Il first made reference to the term "Kim Il-Sung nation" in 1994, right after his father's death.

Subsequently, the Supreme People's Assembly of North Korea added a preface in the amended DPRK constitution in 1998. The preface describes North Korea: "The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is a socialist fatherland of Juche which embodies the idea of and guidance by the great leader Comrade Kim Il-Sung ... the founder of the DPRK and the socialist Korea ... [who] built a solid foundation for a sovereign and independent state in the fields of politics, economy, culture and military, and founded the DPRK." This solidified North Korea as a Kim Il-Sung nation. Furthermore, since North Korea was founded on the Juche ideology created by Kim Il-Sung, its socialism was Kim Il-Sung's socialism, Kimilsungism.

It did not take long after Kim Il-Sung's death for the North to forge another concept of the nation, specifically the Kim Jong-Il nation (or Sun-Nation). The North declared itself a Kim Jong-Il nation as well as Kim Il-Sung nation. The North's propagandists fabricated a set of symbols to make Kim Jong-Il a deity like his father. For example, they insisted that there is a "Kim Jong-Il Peak" in the Baekdu Mountain; they referred to the younger Kim as a "Kwangmyongsong (Bright Star)," "Great General," "Genius," and "the Greatest Man"; and they even created a flower called "Kimjongilia."

In sum, while the political leadership during the era of North Korea's founding made use of one form of nationalism (socialist patriotism) as a means to obtain and sustain political power, the nationalism initiative since the early 1990s has been used to differentiate North Korea from the collapsing communist regimes of the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The Kim Il-Sung Era:
Social Bases of Kimilsungism

Kimilsungism is a mixture of socialism, nationalism, and Kim Il-Sung worship. North Korean propagandists have forged Kim Il-Sung as the world's greatest nationalist, enabling Korea to emancipate itself from the imperial powers of Japan, the U.S., the Soviet Union, and China. Prior to Japanese annexation, Korea, which was ruled for six hundred years by the Chosun dynasty, knew only a hierarchical authority pattern which was deeply institutionalized over the whole society. Post-Japanese rule, it was easy for Kim Il-Sung to exploit power in a society that did not have the sociopolitical experience of democracy, but rather deep-rooted historical legacies of feudalism and colonialism, by having people worship him as if he were an absolute king. According to Confucius, whose wisdom has long been internalized in Korean society, a king is like a father and citizens are like his children; that is, children (citizens) must respect and obey their father (king), and all members of society are under the king's power.
Kim Il-Sung also garnered substantial popular support when he launched land reform during the initial stage of the North Korean socialist government. Back then, the agricultural sector consisted of 72 percent of the country's total industry, and over 70 percent of farmers were peasants. Furthermore, the GDP of North Korea in 1958 had increased 594 percent compared with that of 1946. The average growth of industrial production had also increased 38.4 percent from 1954 to 1965. Grounded on relatively high legitimacy and personal authority, Kim Il-Sung had gradually made all members of society believe in the Kimilsung nation. The unique doctrine of Kimilsungism eventually was embedded in every level of the society through the education system, the social control system, and the state-owned mass media.

It may be reasonable to say that Juche ideology has been institutionalized in the North as a value and norm through education and the influence of social organizations. North Koreans are systematically indoctrinated with the ideology from early ages in pre-elementary schools through state collective child care. Since North Koreans have no experience in actively engaging in the political process, a highly centralized, hierarchical, and coercive political culture can be deeply embedded in the society and accepted by the people. In addition, an extremely isolated social environment, due primarily to lack of information from the outside world, allows the radical ruling ideology to function well across the whole society.

The system of ideological education and control is intertwined with the party system. The KWP, with three million party members, is organized hierarchically and wields power in such basic social units as workplaces, schools, and villages. The party transmissions play the role of “transmission belt,” linking the party with people not only by keeping watch over people but also by educating them in ideology.

![Diagram](Image)

**Figure 1. State-Society Relationship in Kim Il-Sung's Era**

The regime's ideological bombardment has had a lasting impact on social norms, culture, and authority patterns. Although it is safe to say that the public does not necessarily consent to the ideology as their true inner value, it is also true that the
ideology has been deeply institutionalized within the society. The Kim Il-Sung regime established a strong party-state based on the Juche idea, economic development, a recovery from the Korean War, and a political consolidation of Kim Il-Sung's monolithic rule. Consequently, there was no significant report of opposition politics during the Kim Il-Sung era. In this respect, the relationship between the state and the society can be described as congruent, as shown in Figure 1. The figure illustrates that the ruling ideology penetrated into the society with well-functioning party organizations during the Kim Il-Sung era.

The Kim Jong-Il Era: Ideological Radicalism and Changing State-Society Relations

From the 1980s to the 1990s, North Korean nationalism evolved beyond the standard sense of socialism. The North began to stress nation and nationalism when it realized that North Korea's experiment in socialism could not compete economically with capitalistic South Korea. Although the North attempted to revamp its economy by introducing the Hapyoung Law in 1984 in an attempt to attract foreign investment, its series of economic plans have done nothing but clearly show the limitations of its economic system.

Economic development requires an open economy, which North Korea's leaders could obviously not afford, because openness may produce social fracture and threaten the regime's stability. To make matters worse, North Korea's principle of economic self-reliance is not conducive to reform. The Third Seven-Year Economic Plan of 1987 to 1993 failed to achieve its goal, and North Korea finally and publicly admitted to the failure of the plan in 1993. North Korea's economy recorded negative growth throughout the 1990s. Figure 2 on page 53 shows the widening gaps in economic growth between the North and the South since the 1980s.

The North could not overcome socialism's limitations, such as inefficiency, underdevelopment, and the continuing failures of developmental projects. Likewise, Kim Jong-Il has faced regime crisis, presumably caused by a mixture of challenges to his succession after Kim Il-Sung's death, the collapse of the former Soviet bloc, and economic devastation in the 1990s. These factors have conspicuously weakened the legitimacy of the ruling ideology. Eventually, the regime had to create a counter ideology.

By transmuting to a far right ideology wrapped in both traditional values and national emotion, Kim Jong-Il has engaged in ideological propaganda campaigns to cope with the double jeopardy of domestic crises and the collapse of international communism. Two ideological assertions have emerged: one was a metamorphosis of socialism represented by Urisik Sahwejuui (Our own style of socialism), and the other was a revival of nationalism declared in Chosun Minjok Jeiljuui (Korean Greatness) and the “Kimilsung nation.”

Kim Jong-Il also began to rely on the military to overcome crises and to keep strict control over the society. The need for securing the regime resulted in Kim Jong-
II's new doctrines, *Songun Jungchi* (Military-first politics)\(^{25}\) and *Kangsong Daekook* (Strong and Prosperous State). These doctrines emphasize the importance of ideology and military power and also put weight on “self-reliant national economic construction.”\(^{26}\)

The emergence of “Military-first politics” can be understood in two contexts: leadership change and the weakened function of the Korean Worker’s Party. First of all, the old cadres who were aging and had not changed with the times could not deal with the new challenges stemming from the crisis brought about by the decline of communism. Nevertheless, Kim Jong-Il could not easily address the problems deeply embedded in the party due to his political position, relatively weak compared to that of his father.

The economic collapse in the mid-1990s, then, was the turning point at which Kim Jong-Il chose the military for his political power base. Under the defunct North Korean economy, the party lost, in large part, its functions and influences on society, especially because the party could neither provide the bare necessities of life for its people nor be effective in preventing the breakdown of its distribution systems.\(^{27}\) Kim Jong-Il publicly blamed the party’s inability to carry out its role in coping with the economic hardship in front of the party officials in 1996.\(^{28}\) His complaints about the poor performance of the party illustrated the party’s weakness and moribund state.

Given the fact that the military was the only functioning organization in North Korean society, it was likely that Kim Jong-Il had no choice but to look to the military for the survival of the regime. Furthermore, he had a firm grasp on the military, which allowed him to manage the crisis by mobilizing it. Intentionally or uninten-
tionally, these effects resulted in strengthening the military’s influence. For example, only one military official was a member of the Politburo in 1994, but more than five members of the military were elected to the Politburo in 1998. Consequently, it is clear that the military is not only politically stronger but also wields enormous power in the post–Kim Il-Sung era.

North Korea is still a party-state. Yet, the society’s trust in the party rapidly weakened as its role began to deteriorate, and the party began to lose its firm grip on the people. Likewise, the collapse of the economy and the failed delivery system of goods and services via the party-state weakened party authority in its function and discipline. Once the state was incapable of providing basic needs and paying wages for workers, such basic party organizations like workplaces became dysfunctional, impeding their ability to control the populace.

According to North Korean defectors, party discipline rapidly weakened as local party officials faced the problems of providing their communities with basic provisions. The weakened party discipline led to the party’s sub-organizations, like the local people’s unit, party cells, and workers’ organizations, becoming inoperative. Furthermore, many party officials and rank-and-file members did not attend mandatory propaganda campaigns. Cases of corruption and criminal behavior of party officials became widespread, exacerbating people’s distrust of the party. Failure of the party as an intermediary institution was grave for the regime in terms of state-society relations, given the fact that the party in a one-party communist country plays a crucial role as a conduit between the government and its citizens.

The socialist regimes impose control over their people by ideological campaigns, material resources, and enforcements. The ideological campaigns are then closely linked to the party which is in a position to exercise control over material resources. The KWP’s failures ultimately alienated the public from the party. The issue of food shortage is a clear case in point. Since 1995, there has been an annual food deficit of about a million tons of cereals—that is, maize and rice. Consequently, malnutrition rates have increased since the early 1990s. As Figure 3 on page 55 shows, North Korea has continued to suffer widespread food shortages and about 35 percent of North Koreans have been chronically malnourished (below minimum level of food allocation) since the late 1990s.

Consequently, North Korean defectors, as many as 200,000 to 300,000 have fled the country and sought asylum or worked in China since the mid-1990s. The socio-economic backgrounds of these defectors have varied from farmers to medical doctors to high government officials. North Korea’s socio-economic crisis was so bad that even the privileged chose to flee the country.

The North’s disaster was the occasion for the leadership to launch yet another policy. The North Korea government introduced a kind of comprehensive economic adjustment measure called the “July 1st Economic Adjustment” on July 1, 2002, which brought a partial market economic system to North Korea. The government cut down social welfare and began to levy taxes on the people. It was revolutionary for North Korea to take on the market economic system, and there have been some reports of economic success. Unfortunately, it also exacerbated the income gap between the
upper class and others. Even after the new policy was implemented, the general public no longer expected material benefits from the party-state. Meanwhile, the partial price liberalization created high inflation relative to a low increase in income, driving down the people’s living standard and increasing income disparity. Increasingly, the people lost faith in the North’s Urisik Sahwejuui.37

Kim Jong-Il blamed the party for the failure of government functions. However, North Koreans clearly knew that such failures were mainly due to the Kim Jong-Il regime. For example, about 69 percent of respondents (defectors) to a 2003 poll stated that North Korea’s economic devastation was due to the North’s lack of political leadership.38 This implies that the political leadership, especially the Kim Jong-Il regime, has visibly lost its legitimacy from the people’s viewpoint; popular support for Kim Jong-Il has clearly decreased since the mid-1990s.39 According to a survey conducted in 2003,40 a significant number of the respondents chose “yes (7.70)” in the early 1990s to a question about “support for Kim Jong-Il’s leadership,” but that figure dropped to “fair (5.43)” and then fell further to “no support (3.92)” in 1997.41 Not only does this result show how North Koreans distrust the current Kim Jong-Il regime, it also casts doubts on the degree to which Kim Jong-Il’s ideological propaganda campaigns had any effect at all.

As shown in Figure 4 on page 56, the “top-down” expectations of the Military-first ideology in Kim Jong-Il’s era are hardly viable without substantial compliance from the bottom. As Kim Jong-Il currently engages in militarism and nationalism, the manipulation of ideology and exaggeration of external threats have obvious limitations. Furthermore, the weakened functions of the party indicate that no significant “party organizations” between the state and society are available to effectively con-

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**Figure 3. North Korea’s Food Deficit and Population Undernourished**

Figure 4. Ideological Radicalization and State-Society Relationship in Kim Jong-Il Era

trol ideology and information, to provide propaganda materials, and thereby to bend people to the regime. Even though the North coercively mobilizes people by militarism, it is highly doubtful that the military can play a major role, not only because of the different organizational cultures of the military and party organizations, but also because of the former being hardly interchangeable with society. Consequently, while Kimilsungism appealed to the public with its historical legitimacy and developmental achievements, it is doubtful that Kim Jong-Il’s doctrine will continue to attract the North Korean people when the economy deteriorates and his legitimacy is on the wane.

Conclusion

North Korea has developed a unique ideology. The ideology has been deeply institutionalized across the entire society. It was initially shaped as a combination of Marxism-Leninism and Korean nationalism. Then Kim Il-Sung created Juche ideology in the wake of domestic power struggles and external forces affecting North Korea. This ideology evolved gradually into Kimilsungism, differentiating itself from Marxism-Leninism. Eventually, the North’s ruling ideology transmuted to militarism, represented by Kim Jong-Il’s doctrine of Songun Jungchi and Kangsong Daekook.

Table 1 on page 57 presents, as a summary of our discussion, the changes the North has coped with by forging an ideological justification for specific events in its history. The ideology has shifted from Marxism and Leninism, to Stalinism, to Kimilsungism, to, currently, an extreme version of militarism (Songun politics). Nationalism has been strongly associated with North Korea’s socialist ideology throughout the metamorphoses. The current ideological trend under Kim Jong-Il’s rule is best characterized as nationalism and militarism.

The course of ideological transformation under Kim Jong-Il’s rule has been moving toward more extreme nationalism than any other period in North Korea’s modern history. Ironically, though, the ideological evolution reflects the significantly
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Weakened political and economic grounds of the Kim Jong-II regime vis-à-vis Kim Il-Sung's. While the socialism-oriented ideology of the Kim Il-Sung era was justified by the public's consent, thanks mainly to its substantial economic achievements and stable material basis, the current ideology of militarism-cum-nationalism has been steadily weakening its justification and its legitimacy.

It is noticeable that Kim Jong-II particularly emphasizes the importance of ideology to overcome the socio-economic crisis. Likewise, he has actively engaged in ideological propaganda campaigns. While Kim Jong-Il's era may be characterized as a period in which North Koreans have been bombarded with propaganda, paradoxically, these efforts have coincided with a process of weakening authority of the regime. The changes in the state-society relationship during the Kim Jong-II era, intended to help the regime survive economic meltdown, have instead significantly imperiled regime's legitimacy.

There are substantial reports that such basic units of the North Korean society as the party and administration, venues of social welfare as well as control systems, have collapsed, revealing the limitations of ideological control of society. Regarding the potential of a regime change, it implies that cracks in the leadership stratum may not come from within the regime but, more ominously, from within society itself. Accompanied by a lack of material benefits, extreme versions of ideological doctrines, and militarism, people of North Korea may have become alienated from ideology as well as from the regime.

Notes

1. North Korea depended on China financially as well as on the Soviet Union because of the complete destruction of North Korea's social infrastructure during the Korean War. By 1955, the People's Liberation Army of China was stationed in North Korea.


5. For the definition, see Dictionary of Philosophy (Pyongyang: Social Science Press, 1970), 256.


14. The North introduces the “Kimjongilia” as “the new strain that was developed by Kamo Mototeru, a Japanese horticulturalist, after 20-odd years of painstaking efforts. He named it after Kim Jong-Il out of his lifelong dedication to the greatest man who ever lived and his sensitivity to the trend of the times, and presented it to him on his February birthday in 1988.” See North Korea’s official website, Kcckp.net (Naenara), http://www.kcckp.net/en/event/2005-02-16/article.php?3.


17. See O-Yun Kwon, Bukhan Cheje Byunhwaron (On transformation of North Korea) (Seoul: Dadamedia, 1998), 281, 324.


28. Jong-II Kim, “Urinon Jigum Sikrang-demune Mujunghusangtae-ga Doiugago Ita (We are now going to a situation of anarchy due to food shortage),” Monthly Chosun. April, 1997.


32. The economic hardship had resulted in rampant cases of corruption. According to a North Korean defector, bribery was widespread, from hiring a new cadre even down to buying a train ticket. Another defector who was a KWP cadre stated that party cadres avariciously sought money because of their doubts about the regime’s future. The party’s crisis created the marked slackening in party discipline. See Jae-Jin Seo, 7ffil Jochi Yhu Bukhanui Cheje Byonhwa (Change of the North Korean Regime After 7ffil Policy) (Seoul: Tongilyonguwon, 2004), 26–27.


35. Based on an interview with a North Korean defector, Seo estimates that about 1,800,000 North Koreans may have died of starvation in the deepening economic crisis from 1996 to 1998. See Jae-Jin Seo, 7ffil Jochi Yhu Bukhanui Cheje Byonhwa (Change of the North Korean Regime After 7ffil Policy), 40–41.


37. North Korean defectors, especially those who were upper class, like the former KWP cadre or medical doctors, stated that North Koreans call the North’s Socialism "Socialism at daytime, capitalism at night." Another said, "North Korea has already passed through the last stage of historical development, communism in 1950 when the North government had not yet been established because the economic situation before the regime was much better than now." See Jae-Jin Seo, 7ffil Jochi Yhu Bukhanui Cheje Byonhwa (Change of the North Korean Regime After 7ffil Policy), 101–105; 115–117.


39. A North Korean defector who was a chairperson of Kimilsung Socialist Youth League at a natural slate factory stated that North Korean youngsters did not want to join the KWP anymore because there was little incentive to be a party cadre. Nor did most of them believe the regime’s propaganda, as they secretly listened to South Korean radio broadcasts. They just pretended to consent to the authority of the Kim Jong-II regime. See Mu-Cheol Lee, “Kimilsungsahwejuuichongnyundongmaeng-kwa Chongnyundului Sanghwal (Kimilsung Youth League and Life of North Korean Youngsters),” Wolgan Tongilhankuk (Monthly Unification Korea), April, 2000.

40. The survey was conducted with 250 North Korean defectors in 2003. On the ten-point scale, 10 = strong support; 7 = support; 5 = fair; 3 = no support; 1= strong lack of support. For more detail, see Young Ho Park et al., Tongilyechukmowyungyongu (A Model for the Estimation of Reunification) (Seoul: Tongilyonguwon, 2003), 178–193.

41. Park et al., Tongilyechukmowyungyongu (A Model for the Estimation of Reunification), 114.

Biographical Statements

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