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Forests in Pyongyang’s web of life: trees, history and politics in North Korea

Abstract

Kim Jong Un in 2015 asserted North Korean institutional desire for the generation of “Forests of Gold.” Forestry practice has been a vital element in North Korean developmental culture since its foundation in 1948. This paper will recount the forest histories of North Korean political and developmental culture. It will consider the interplay between nationalism, identity and narrative and the nation’s forests, especially the role they have played within North Korea’s sense of the authenticity of its own topography. The paper will consider Pyongyang’s forest present, and contemporary focus on afforestation and arboreal practice in today’s North Korea.

Keywords: Central Planning, Development, Forest History, North Korea.

Whether North Korea²³ has ever been the ‘people’s paradise’ envisaged by its future first leader, Kim Il Sung in 1946 is intensely debatable and not something this paper aims to explore or consider. North Korea’s forests are known in global public, political and media discourses to be anything but dense. They are instead renowned for being barren, denuded and destroyed; images of tree-less hills and degraded landscapes are as much cyphers for its terrain

1 Visiting Fellow, University of Leeds; Lecturer, Bath Spa University; Managing Editor, *European Journal of Korean Studies*.

2 Romanisation strategies are considerably different between the two Korean nations. For ease of use and objectivity, the author uses the current North Korean Romanisation style when referring to names, quotations and places sourced from within North Korea. However, this paper both makes quotations from documents derived from historical texts published earlier in North Korea which may not conform to the current North Korean style. This paper also uses material published by the Government General of Chosen and which uses colonial era spellings of places on the Korean Peninsula. For the purposes of authenticity and objectivity the author retains these variations when used in direct quotation.

3 The research for this paper has received generous support from the Australian Research Council project FL120100155 *Informal Life Politics in the Remaking of Northeast Asia: From Cold War to Post-Cold War* and the Academy of Korean Studies (AKS-2010-DZZ-3104) during the author’s Post-Doctoral Fellowship with the Beyond the Korean War Project (University of Cambridge). The author also wishes to thank the University of Leeds and the Brotherton Library in the United Kingdom for the many hours of archival research in the Brotherton Annex collection of North Korean materials and the Owen Lattimore collection during his doctoral studies from which he constructed the historical periodisation of North Korean environmental and forestry history.

in the eyes of external viewers as the frequently used satellite images of the nation at night portraying it as a void; dark and opaque in between the energy of both China and South Korea.⁴ While far less of a composite construction, visual examples from the huge sub-genre of images of North Korea as entirely destitute in terms of timber and forest resource are no less political.⁵ It matters in the weaponised practices of North Korea's de-legitimation that it has no trees, that as a state it has debased its environment so that not even the barest stands of timber survive. For North Korea, however it is absolutely vital that its national landscape has abundant numbers of trees, that it is somewhere and somehow verdant. Kim Il Sung's focus in 1946 on the importance of forests in the frameworks and practices of state building in what was to be the new North Korea is in this sense perhaps even more vital to the sustainability of that state than at its foundation.

Given their importance and vitality this paper will explore the historical arboreal landscapes of North Korea, termed "Forests of Gold" by Kim Jong Un's 2015 New Years' Address and repeatedly referred to since then.⁶ While it cannot hope to be exhaustive, the paper will outline the developmental imperatives and context which drove Pyongyang's initial focus on forestry matters, including both the generation of new socialist landscapes and the reconfiguration of the timbered spaces of Japanese colonialism. It will then suggest a periodisation of North Korean forest history which maps both onto and around Pyongyang's developmental strategy and past adherence to classical modes of central planning familiar to analysis of other seemingly communist states. Finally, it will encounter North Korean forestry policy as it exists in the present, in opposition to external narratives of de-legitimation, and deeply embedded in Pyongyang's claims to political and governmental authenticity and functionality.

This paper is primarily a work of historical geography, however its theoretical frame incorporates much recent work in the fields of political and critical geography as well as more thoughtful philosophical analysis of North Korean politics and ideology. It is most important for the reader to understand that this will not be a history of a passive resource or Nature in North Korea, material which is done to, Nature which is simply out there. Instead the author of this paper holds North Korea's forests as active participants and agents in that history, a Nature which is with us and in us, or in this case, within its politics, culture and ideology, a key part of the nations' 'web of life.'

4 Shim 2013.

5 Smith 2015.

6 Rodong Sinmun 2015.

This nature in North Korea is part of a political/ideological web of life considered by the work of Cumings,⁷ Scalapino and Lee,⁸ Park⁹ and Myers,¹⁰ but ultimately best conceptualised by Heonik Kwon and Byung-ho Chung¹¹ and their reconsideration of Clifford Geertz¹² and Max Weber's¹³ political analysis, reframing North Korea's own politics as a theatric, charismatic space. Such a space requires development and exploitation of national landscape to serve as a stage for North Korea's politics. Timber, Forests and other arboreal resources are very much part of this performance, very much actors on the stage. The work of Sonia Ryang¹⁴ and Suk-young Kim¹⁵ on the cultures and performances of North Korean politics, social organisation and space also inform this author's conception of the stage on which both human and non-human actors interact under Pyongyang's rule. Cultural Geographers such as Denis Cosgrove¹⁶ and Noel Castree¹⁷ analyse such as stage as symbolic and socially or politically constructed. Erik Swyngedouw¹⁸ and Winstanley-Chesters,¹⁹ also explore the scaling processes of that construction which North Korean forests are part, particularly at moments of foundation and generation. The action of non-human materials and their "thing power" in such moments is best considered by Jane Bennett²⁰ and Sarah Whatmore,²¹ and the notion of the wider web of life in which these materials act, by Jason Moore.²² This paper also utilises Thongchai Winichakul's articulation of ecological and material spaces and topographies as forming part of a national eco-body.²³ Finally this paper holds in mind scholarship derived from the field of Historical Geography which specifically addresses the forested landscapes of the region. In particular the landmark writing of Conrad Totman, particularly *The Green Archipelago*, gives a fascinatingly detailed examination of the place of the tree and forest in Japanese history.²⁴ Towards the end of his career Totman briefly focused on Korea and the interplay between Japanese political prerogatives

7 Cumings 1981.

8 Scalapino and Lee 1972.

9 Park 2002.

10 Myers 2010.

11 Kwon, and Chung 2012.

12 Geertz 1980.

13 Weber 1967

14 Ryang 2012.

15 Kim Suk-young 2014.

16 Cosgrove 2004.

17 Castree 2001.

18 Swyngedouw 2015.

19 Winstanley-Chesters 2015: 116-138.

20 Bennett 2010.

21 Whatmore 2005.

22 Moore 2015.

23 Winchikaul, 1994.

24 Totman 1989.

and energies and Korean national sensibilities.²⁵ While Totman would never fully explore this, David Fedman's recent doctoral dissertation *The Saw and the Seed*²⁶ and John Lee's analysis of Chosŏn as a Kingdom of Pines,²⁷ continue the spirit of Totman's analysis both during the Chosŏn dynasty and the colonial period, bringing Korean forest history and its place within national and political development almost to the North Korean present.

Colonial Pre-Histories of North Korea's Forests

Before this paper moves to the forest history and arboreal web of life of North Korea, a little historical context is required. The first *Annual Report on Reforms and Progress in Korea*, published in 1907 by the Japanese Resident General (predecessor to the Governor General), in Seoul is a revealing summary of Japanese views of the forestry management practices of the peninsula, prior to its co-option by colonial institutions.²⁸ Coupled with later statements that Korea has "no forestry law to speak of,"²⁹ the conceptual difference between the bureaucratic legalism of Imperial Japan and Tokyo's perception of forestry practices under the Chosŏn dynasty is fairly clear. At the earliest moment of the colonial project, Japan sought to extract value from Korean forestry resources and terrains, capitalising on this element of the peninsula's web of life.³⁰

Given all of this, the Resident General records that a "joint" enterprise was "negotiated" with the Korean government which built a new forestry coordination and trans-shipment centre at Antung (present day Dandong in China), opposite the Korean town of Sinuiju (which the document names, Wiju), on the mouth of the Yalu River. This centre served to coordinate and develop timber shipments along the river from the northern interior forests of North Pyongyan and Chugging provinces. The annual report notes the lengthy journey made by the timbers. This project in total extracted some 71006 cubic "shaku" of timber from these ancient forests.³¹

Further to these efforts, the Resident General sought in these early days to reorganise Korea's forestry institutions wider strategy and approach. In a section of the 1908 Annual Report marked as "Agricultural and Industrial Encouragement" the Resident General describes a series of new forest projects

25 Totman 2004.

26 Fedman 2019.

27 Lee 2017: 319-332.

28 His Imperial Japanese Majesty Residency General 1907.

29 Government General of Chosen 1910.

30 His Imperial Japanese Majesty Residency General 1908.

31 Shaku is a Japanese measurement of length formulated in its modern form in 1891. A Shaku corresponds to 10/33 of a metre.

guided by the logics of Capital and colonialism, which were to be the core institutions for new approaches to timber and forest management. They were to cover 83,300 acres and include the planting of a number of new species imported directly from Japan. Along with these practical projects, the landscape of research had also to be remodelled and reframed.³²

Beyond developments at specific vanguard sites and within the structures of academic research, the Resident General also suggested changes to the landscapes of forestry education, and institutional changes which moved forest administration responsibilities from the agricultural section of the Department of Agriculture to a new Forest Bureau – itself employing “several Japanese experts in forestry.” Finally, legal frameworks surrounding forest ownership, use and conservation were to be reworked to support the impending arrival of ‘modern’ practice.

Before this new forestry legislation was brought in,³³ and the outline plans for extensive surveying of private forest resource were unveiled, there were a series of cadastral surveys during the spring and summer of 1910. By August the peninsula’s entire forest stock (other than on Jeju), had been surveyed and was found to be some 16,000,000 Cho.³⁴ The wider national forest landscape was found to be in similarly denuded and degraded conditions as the initial State Forest stock and more extensive afforestation strategies were to be undertaken. By 1910 of course the Government General had assumed political sovereignty on the Peninsula and “model afforestation” centres under the careful control of Japanese experimental institutions were no longer necessary. Forestry management was thus devolved back to the provincial administrations now coordinated by the Government General, and afforestation strategy undertaken through the propagation of a number of seedling bed’s in different Provincial territories. The Government General also sought to encourage other, private sector, stakeholders to begin afforestation projects.³⁵

Having gained sovereign control of the Korean Peninsula, its institutions and forest resources, reviewed those resources and begun a series of afforestation projects, wide-scale legal reconfiguration was enacted with *Serei* (Imperial Decree number 10), issued through the Governor-General in July of 1911. Its stipulations came into force at the end of the year and both asserted the Government General’s overall control of natural and forest resources at the same time as the new colonial administration’s ability to open up State Forests to both preservation and exploitation by private or non-state actors.³⁶

32 His Imperial Japanese Majesty Residency General 1908.

33 Government General of Chosen 1910.

34 Cho is a Japanese measurement of area. A Cho is equivalent to 0.9917 of a hectare.

35 Government General of Chosen 1911.

36 Government General of Chosen 1912.

This transfer of responsibilities sought to break the bounds of reverence between local communities and their sacred or customary forests, in a similar manner as the colonial Japanese administration would seek to break the cultural and linguistic connections between the Korea and Koreans of the Imperial present and historical Korea and Koreans. The forest web of life of historical Korea was to be completely reconfigured by new logics and processes; Chosŏn's eco-body reimagined.³⁷ Korean Forestry management and resource was to be catapulted into colonial modernity by a quasi-free market in forest management, one in which the institutions of Japanese power would make deep inroads.

Government General reports are subject to statistical dispute, as well as any later dispute and rejection by North Korea on ideological grounds. Andrew Grajdanzev for example in 1944 utilising a later set of data points provided by the Government General of Chosen asserts that comparisons and reportage made by the Annual Report of 1938 "...are of doubtful value..." owing to the failure to correctly account for different methods of forest stock assessment in the later years of the colonial government.³⁸ Further to this Grajdanzev asserts that in later years the Government General undertook large scale privatisation of forest resources, utilising the revised legal frameworks to deliver Korean arboreal landscape into the hands of companies such as the *Chosen Ringyo Kaihatsu Kabushiki Kaisha* (Korea Forestry Development Company.) In fact, Grajdanzev notes that this particular organisation was granted for no charge some 500,000 *cho* of forests in Korea (a quarter of the remaining "good" forest).³⁹ This ownership transfer was not to allow the Corporation to engage in afforestation or forest protection, but for whole scale deforestation. Accordingly, Grajdanzev and the Government General recount an increase in cubic meterage of timber felled across the peninsula from some 700,000 in 1910 to 2.8 million in 1939.⁴⁰ This wholesale denudation of Korean landscape during the final decade of Japanese rule would be the contribution of its forests to lively matters of its imperial project, timber burnt in enormous quantities to support industrial and military production. Just as countless Japanese Imperial subjects would sacrifice their physical bodies for the good of the Emperor, so innumerable Korean trees would be immolated. The desecration of Korea's ancient forest landscapes would prove an extreme provocation for Korean nationalists, in particular for those that would form the elite of that future polity whose later historiography sited its foundational moments deep within the forests of its north. For North Korea these arboreal terrains could be characterised as 'tainted topographies.'

37 Winichakul 1994.

38 Grajdanzev 1944: 123.

39 Grajdanzev 1944: 126.

40 Grajdanzev 1944: 124.

Encountering the Tainted Topography of Colonial Forests

Kim Il Sung on the second page of the first volume of his collected *Works*, as a young man, before the Korea's Liberation and his ascent to power describes the impact of the Japanese colonial period on the peninsula's topography, from his perspective.⁴¹ It is clear that colonisation's impact on the physical material of the land and its resources was felt as keenly by those resisting it under Kim's control as was Japanese institutional control. During the pre-Liberation period this may have been down to the particular geographic orientation of Korean nationalist resistance to the Japanese, as it is remembered by North Korean historiography as generally having been focused on the mountainous spaces towards and beyond the Chinese/Manchurian border. Regardless of the reliability of this extremely contested history, upon attaining power late in 1945, Kim Il Sung would find himself primarily responsible for the rehabilitation of Japan's apparently nefarious colonial developmental approach on the peninsula's landscape.

Aside from Kim Il Sung's many assertions of his capabilities so far as correcting the many "plunderings" and "robbings" of Korean resources by the Japanese, the first important statement of future arboreal strategy that would reconfigure this colonialisised topography came in April 1947. In contemporary North Korea *Let us Launch a Vigorous Tree Planting Movement Involving All the Masses* serves as the foundational moment in the forestry sector. In the North Korea of the late 1940s however, the document seemed more focused on both generating a level of political legitimacy and charismatic authority for the relatively new government, and served as a statement of intent focused on reversing the impact of Japanese power on its territory.⁴²

The document recounts a general sense of the tainting of Korea's natural landscapes by the colonial period, describing it as a "plundering" and a "devastation," however the text also becomes more specific on arboreal and forestry matters, declaring that: "...they robbed our country of forests..."⁴³ This denudation would have to be restored, the pre-colonial web of life restored, the vibrancy of the peninsula's forest matter regained, and this reconfiguration would require a model example. North Korean political process and developmental strategy has been configured it seems to always require a model, not just during the period post the Chinese Great Leap Forward, but throughout its entire institutional history. Topographic tainting when it came to North Korea's forests therefore would have its model, its exemplar at Munsu Hill in Pyongyang itself. According to Kim "...as the name signifies, the hill

41 Kim Il Sung 1930: 2.

42 Kim Il Sung 1947: 171.

43 Kim Il Sung 1947: 171.

used to be as beautiful as a piece of embroidered silk...⁴⁴ However during the colonial period “It lost this beauty and became ugly, denuded by the Japanese imperialists...there is not a decent tree on this hill and there is nothing there except the old barracks used by the Japanese imperialists aggressor troops...”⁴⁵

For North Korea’s developing historiography and institutional memory, Munsu’s denuded landscape as a revolutionary model would stand in more generally for the wider forest stock on the Peninsula.⁴⁶ According to Kim Il Sung it follows that North Korea’s more general forestry strategy should correct this colonial-era denudation.⁴⁷ While in other economic sectors removing the impacts of Japanese colonialism would take many forms – from land reform, to education, culture, linguistic structure and even architecture – so far as North Korea’s Nature was concerned it would be forestry policy that would remove the taint of colonial modernity. Forests and timber would contribute extensively to the construction of a new North Korea, their lively energies and vibrant materiality becoming enmeshed and entwined with the future national ambitions.⁴⁸ Beyond simple measures of capacity, forest development would contribute metaphysically in the integration of North Korean political charisma and historical mythology.

Forests of the North Korean Socialist Modern

These initial efforts of North Korea to reconfigure the impact made by the Japanese colonial period and its attendant Imperial and Capitalist logics, on the nation’s forests are in fact foundational to its history.⁴⁹ The theatric politics of contemporary North Korea⁵⁰ sources its political energy and authority from the struggles of national pre-history and the moments of national foundation, both of which as the reader will have seen, include forestry. The necessity of ridding national forest topographies of Japanese influence however was soon overcome by both a greater historical challenge, and the diplomatic and geo-political triangulations presented that North Korea has always attempted. While Japanese colonial influence was certainly dramatic on the Peninsula, its landscapes were generally greatly degraded, even annihilated by the Korean War of 1950-1953.⁵¹ Enormous levels of environmental rehabilitation, including to national forestry stock would be required, an effort that could not be achieved by Pyongyang on

44 Kim Il Sung 1947: 171.

45 Kim Il Sung 1947: 171.

46 Kim Il Sung 1947: 171.

47 Kim Il Sung 1947: 171.

48 Kim Il Sung 1947: 172.

49 Kim Il Sung 1946: 172.

50 Kwon and Chung 2012.

51 Cumings 1981.

its own. External support would be required and it would be from this support network, rooted in the political landscape of the early Cold War politics that North Korea's particular vision of environmental modernity would derive.

Classical socialist central planning was initially fundamental to North Korean developmental strategies, even in forestry matters. The Soviet Union under Lenin had sought to reconfigure its industrial and agricultural sectors through a rigorous and ambitious policy of central planning.⁵² Such an approach to planning may ultimately have been more about political and ideological narratives than practical reality and its application and theoretical underpinning would lose some legitimacy and coherence during periods of revolutionary urgency such as China's Great Leap Forward, the later Stalinist period and radical developmental policy under Khrushchev.⁵³ In spite of these disruptions North Korea would at least until 1980 continue to organise wider national strategy along these lines. North Korea's announcement in September 1953 of a "Three Year Plan" for the reconstruction of the country was however little concerned with forestry rehabilitation. The 1953-1956 plan undertaken with credit lines from the Soviet Union was primarily focused on the rehabilitation of core transport and industrial infrastructure.⁵⁴ It would not be until after 1956 following the plan's completion, Stalin's death and the destalinisation period under Khrushchev that North Korea's lively forest matters could again come to the forefront of the national political mind.

This would be a North Korea changed by new geo-political realities. Khrushchev's 1956 "Secret Speech" and his critique of Pyongyang's political ideologies and strategies of April 1956, *On the Personality Cult in North Korea* required a shift in North Korea's position.⁵⁵ Following the Sino-Soviet split, Pyongyang would seek Beijing's support and Maoist influence can be felt on North Korea's developmental approach. China's Great Leap Forward and its harnessing of the energy and power of mass politics would have a great impact generally on the next period of North Korean planning, but more specifically on its forestry policy. North Korea's First Five-Year Plan (1957-1961), for example, sought to utilise the energies of the mass movement. Thus *Tasks of the Party Organisation in Ryanggang Province* declared that tree planting "should be carried out through a mass movement."⁵⁶ This application of the ideologies of mass politics and revolutionary energy to forestry policy clearly reflects the Great Leap Forward's ideological influence. While perhaps connection

52 Davies 1988.

53 Davies 1988.

54 Kim Il Sung 1954.

55 Szalontai 2005.

56 Kim Il Sung 1958: 222.

could be made with collective bouts of “energetic tree planting” on Munsu Hill remembered by Kim Il Sung,⁵⁷ unlike China’s radical adoption of landscape focused *Yundong*,⁵⁸ whilst it would adopt mass movement rhetoric, North Korea sought a different path. Forest planning outlines by Kim Il Sung and institutions in Pyongyang focused on detail, technical aspects and execution of forest strategy with less emphasis placed on more utopian possibilities. *Tasks of the Party Organisation in Ryanggang Province* from 1958, for example, sets out a highly organised pyramidal or hierarchical approach to forestry policy for the province, demanding that organisational responsibility rest primarily with official afforestation stations rather than the energetic desires of a mass movement.⁵⁹

The early phase of North Korean forestry policy however would not really survive the first planning period. By the end of the decade North Korean sovereignty had a sense of solid permanence and its developmental institutions echoed this in their organisation. North Korea would also begin a process of triangulation with its political allies and friendly neighbours, and new developmental strategies would derive from this. North Korean narratives record the early 1960s as a changed era so far as central planning was concerned, one more focused on new realities of production and capacity increase, than previous efforts at post war and post-colonial rehabilitation. Forestry development continued to play an important role, but the sector was to be primarily concerned with the development of orchards and other fruit production. Much less consideration was to be given to the eradication of the last vestiges of colonial taint in forest land. Instead forestry policies under the First Seven Year Plan were to focus on the construction of an authentically North Korean socialist modernity.

Foremost during this period in North Korea, modern landscapes were to be productive spaces. Forestry strategy prioritised orchard development, stressing their role in both increased production and the generation, through the entwining of their lively matters and political imperatives, of utopian terrain. Kim Il Sung in 1960 for example was particularly concerned with the generative energy for output of such enterprises.⁶⁰

Forestry policy during the First Seven-Year Plan with its focus on politically charismatic, ideologically utopian and developmentally productive processes

57 Kim Il Sung 1947.

58 Transformative mass campaigns during the Great Leap Forward were known as *Yundong*. For more information see *Mao’s War on Nature*, Shapiro 2001. Such campaigns sought to utterly transform landscapes and the social relations of those connected to them.

59 Kim Il Sung 1958: 222.

60 Kim Il Sung 1960: 21.

such as fruit growing would soon have it foundational text. *On Planting Orchards through an All-People Movement*, of spring 1961 ostensibly seeking to consolidate existing forestry policy, reconfigures the sectors' goals, asserting the need for forest institutions, practices and strategies to focus on producing economic output. Forest landscapes would certainly have to transformed to fit this focus. The sectors' goals were thus aligned with wider planning goals and policy in industrial and agricultural sectors. Forested areas therefore rather than being seen as peripheral, were deemed central to food production. They were also later envisaged as a key area in which utopian "mass line" principles appropriated by North Korea from Maoist China, could be healthily and safely reconfigured to suit local political frameworks and ideologies.

Even with its focus on productivity and economic utility, the First Seven-Year Plan did not apply all the classic tenets of Socialist central planning policy to the developmental culture of North Korean forestry. Initially there were no specific goals set for either production levels or developmental capacity as had been common in planning policies and strategies of the Soviet Union. However, towards the end of the planning period statements of productive intent within the forestry sector acquired new quantitative indicators. Kim Il Sung states for instance in *On Developing the Successes Achieved in the Rural Economy* from 1963, that: "we have planted 120,000 Chongbo of orchards in different parts of the country."⁶¹ Kim's focus on the achievement of quantitative gains is then also coupled with demands for infrastructural and technical improvement within these productive forests: "We must establish an effective system of orchard management so as to improve fertilisation and cultivation."⁶²

The incorporation of forestry policy within the framework of developmental planning and that framework itself appears to have become disrupted in the final years of the First Seven-Year Plan. Scheduled to last until 1967, the plan was extended to 1970 and similar to the case of the First Five-Year Plan, appears not to have achieved its outlined goals⁶³ This failure perhaps reflects the disruption caused by incorporating both Maoist "revolutionary models" and "revolutionary speeds" into North Korean policy. These drove a more overtly utopian approach into an economy whose structure and practice was organised on institutionally technocratic and productivity-driven lines. In spite of considerable evidence to the contrary and the reorganisation of planning frameworks in 1967 and 1971, Kim Il Sung and North Korea's official political narrative maintained that the Plan was ultimately successful. This success is

61 A 'Chongbo' is a traditional Korean measurement of area equivalent to 9.2 hectares.

62 Kim Il Sung 1963: 403.

63 Chung 1972: 527-545.

suggested by Pyongyang to have moved North Korea closer to a utopian reality, to the socialist modern which was entirely distinct from its colonial past.⁶⁴

The final period of the First Seven-Year Plan saw forestry policy come to be directed more closely by Pyongyang's central institutions in order to achieve as much growth in output and productivity as possible. This drive for productivity however was itself disruptive to institutional and developmental processes. Given the counterproductive or irrational imperatives of revolutionary urgency driven through the previous planning period, during the next, the First Six-Year Plan institutions sought to rework productive forestry development so that it was more practically and institutionally cohesive. Forest landscapes and productive cultures during this period would exist under the second of "three major objectives for the technical revolution." This objective directed North Korea's developmental institutions to "continue to accelerate the technical revolution in the rural areas, to reduce the difference between agricultural and industrial labour."⁶⁵ Although the core directional text for forestry during this planning period did not appear for a further year with the publication of *Let us expedite the Introduction of a Supply of Running Water in the Rural Communities and Press Ahead with Afforestation*,⁶⁶ institutions of local and provincial government level were already exposed to new developments in forestry strategy.

Absent both from the First Six-Year Plan as a whole and forestry strategy more specifically, was a focus on grand utopian national targets, such as targets for forestry and afforestation. A profusion of specific goals continued to be set for particular localities and institutions, but national targets, such as the 400,000 Chongbo of afforestation demanded under the First Seven-Year Plan, were not outlined in the new plan. In the place of any aggregate national target for forest reconfiguration or afforestation, the new plan set a series of smaller goals for particular agencies and institutions; the People's Army, for example, "must plant 15,000 hectares of forests every year, of which 5000 hectares should be planted with oil-bearing trees... the Ministry of Public Security should plant 5000 hectares every year."⁶⁷ Cooperative farms were also given detailed instructions.⁶⁸

North Korea again appears to have found the implementation of the goals of the First Six-Year Plan difficult and disruptive. In 1976 Kim Il Sung announced that "The Party Central Committee has defined the new year 1977,

64 Kim Il Sung 1971: 326.

65 Kim Il Sung 1972: 31.

66 Kim Il Sung 1973.

67 Kim Il Sung 1973: 276.

68 Kim Il Sung 1973: 276.

as a year of readjustment for easing the strain created in certain branches of the economy in the course of carrying out the Six-Year Plan, and for preparing to embark on a new long-term plan.”⁶⁹ However, efforts made to fulfil the goals of the First Six-Year Plan in the developmental sector were not wasted. This planning period contains perhaps the most overtly utopian or charismatic environmental strategy advanced during North Korea's developmental history, the “Five Great Nature-Remaking Tasks.” “The Tasks” were dramatic, sought to reconfigure topographies wholesale and to harness the liveliness of their materialities for political and ideological gain. “The Tasks” would go on to influence North Korea's political and ideological agenda, even when its own realities and possibilities have seemed far from utopian. “The Tasks” in a sense are a key moment in the construction of a North Korea identifiable in our present, replete with theatric political energies, grand narratives and a tendency to include all life within its ideological and social matrix. “The Tasks,” more prosaically would also contribute to the formulation of specific targets for forestry sectors during the next planning period, the Second Seven-Year Plan which was to run from 1978 to 1984.

The Second Seven-Year Plan was introduced in December 1977 and its goals appear similar to those defined by previous plans. The first paragraph of the plan is even similar to that of the First Six-Year Plan.⁷¹ In practice, however, policy during this period proved to be less overtly utopian than during earlier periods. Previous planning periods had emphasised the requirement for: reconstruction (the Three-Year Plan); capacity building (the First Seven-Year Plan); diversification and consolidation (the First Six-Year Plan). The Second Seven-Year Plan in contrast was to focus primarily on modernisation, mechanisation and the building of research capacity.

In words very familiar to contemporary analysts of North Korea, a “scientific” approach to economic development would become a key goal of the Second Seven-Year Plan.⁷² Ryanggang Province was suggested as a priority area for the realisation of the plan's goals. Ryanggang in particular would be required to diversify its production of timber and forest products. In spite of the suggestions and requirements of the plan, subsequent critical comments from Kim Il Sung indicate a local failure to engage it.⁷³ The plan was, however, clear that none of the strategies for productive development

69 Kim Il Sung 1977: 5.

70 Chung 1972: 527-545.

71 Kim Il Sung 1977: 519.

72 Kim Il Sung 1977: 519.

73 Kim Il Sung 1979: 290.

within the forest sector should exist in isolation. In an echo of other ideological elements within North Korean politics, instead it called for the dissolution of differences between industrial and agricultural sectors, which would have had important implications for forestry policy and culture. The plan not only urged greater connection between forestry and other sectors of industrial production, but also that afforestation should become a goal shared by all members of the wider socio-economic community and the population.⁷⁴

Contemporary North Korean Forests

This paper truncates its historical view of North Korean forestry policy and culture here, in 1979, which is some four decades from the present at the time of writing. The author of the paper does so not because this where the historical narrative ends, but as far as North Korean forest matters are concerned this where the concrete lines of developmental ambition and connection which lead from the colonial past and reconfigurations of its forest landscapes and arboreal matter dissipate. This is where ambitious plans to create a beacon of socialist modernity under North Korean institutional and developmental control end. The Fifth Party Congress of the Korean Workers Party was held in 1980, an event at which North Korea's more charismatic and theatric aspirations for a utopian landscape as well as practical policy goals were finally checked. Environmental development and specifically, the forestry sector had concrete, structured goals and complex frameworks of priorities abandoned and national targets for the reconfiguration of forestry have been neglected ever since. History recounts that from 1980 onwards North Korea was faced by the challenges and troubles which beset its allies and supporters across the world which would lead to the collapse of the Warsaw Pact, the famine period of the mid 1990s, the conflicted muddling through of its later years, and its complicated present. In North Korea's recent history and during the famine period, far from respecting its forests and arboreal landscapes and including them within its national web of life, its eco-body, Pyongyang appears to have been as destructive to these forest spaces as the imperatives of Japanese colonialisation.

However, in the very recent present North Korea's current leader Kim Jong Un has incorporated extensive focus on forest and arboreal culture within his New Year's Addresses of 2015 and 2016. In 2015 Kim, as recounted at the beginning of this paper, asserted a key developmental priority for the year to be the generation of "forests of gold" in North Korea.⁷⁵ In 2016 forests and the lively matters of arboreal culture were framed in the New Year's Address

74 Kim Il Sung 1979: 287.

75 Rodong Sinmun 2015.

within the wider ecosystem of state responsibilities and aspirations that included a “forest of arms.”⁷⁶ In common with a number of figures of political authority throughout Korean history, including most Governor Generals of the colonial period, Kim Jong Un has even been seen planting trees (sometimes in the company of his wife Ri Sol Ju), on March 2nd.⁷⁷ The “thing power” of North Korea’s forest past and present is projected through the authoritative power of Kim Jong Un, bestowed, embedded and enmeshed in the wider network of national politics and institutions.

In this enmeshing there is also a mirroring both of Kwon and Chung’s conception of North Korea’s politics as charismatic and theatric⁷⁸ and Cosgrove’s socially or politically constructed landscapes.⁷⁹ Forests and forested landscapes in North Korea thus become an activated, lively, energetic, charismatic and politicised terrain. They were such terrains in the history presented within this paper and continue to be in the contemporary North Korea, though are perhaps marked by changed or diminished geopolitical circumstance and developmental possibility. Whatever changes and challenges have been encountered by North Korea and its politics or development in more recent history, what has not diminished or been negated is the charismatic energy required to underpin its politics and ideological and historiographic relations with its physical and material terrains and territory. This importance of this energy is of course not unique to North Korea and this utilisation of and connection with Nature or natures is also not unique. The usage of similar political energies and interactions with material objects and forces are to be found in the political frameworks and eco-bodies of many nations. In Pyongyang’s case however such energy and exchanges dominate the place of environment and ecological materials in national historiography and North Korea’s wider web of life in which forests and arboreal culture play a key role.

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76 Rodong Sinmun 2016a.

77 Rodong Sinmun 2016b.

78 Kwon and Chung 2012.

79 Cosgrove 1984.

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* These articles are no longer online due to North Korea's habit of removing old content from Rodong Sinmun and the KCNA's online archive. However the author of this piece retains a copy of every Rodong Sinmun and KCNA article he uses for reference purposes and will gladly share specific articles with interested parties.

Russia's position on Korean conceptions of reunification

Abstract

The article is devoted to analysis of the Russian position on this issue of Korean reunification and how it is conceptualized on the divided peninsula. It uses a comparative analysis of North and South conceptions of the reunification process and posits that the conceptions of both sides are moving closer to each other by step to step. The USSR authorities supported all North Korean ideas on methods for Korean reunification, but did not approve of North Korean plans to escalate tensions in South Korea. In contrast, authorities of the Russian Federation prefer to conduct a pragmatic policy and pursue a policy of supporting peaceful and democratic processes towards Korean reunification. The Russian authorities are also attentive to the steps taken by South Korea regarding the North. Such a policy helps the Russian Federation preserve peace and the status quo on her Far Eastern frontiers.

Keywords: Korea, Korean reunification, peaceful process, Russia.

Introduction

One of the essential factors in maintaining the security of the countries in North-East Asia is a peaceful, constructive development of the inter-Korean dialogue. Considering the central geopolitical position of Korea in North-East Asia, it can be assumed that any changes in the regional balance of power strictly depend on the military and political situation in the Korean peninsula. It's highly likely that close political and economic cooperation between the great powers and a unified Korea would continue and strengthen since the new government could help establish a more stable balance of power in North-East Asia.

The main task of the countries neighboring Korea is to create favorable conditions for continuation of the inter-Korean dialogue, to facilitate a trustworthy atmosphere and to cooperate in prevention of conflict situations on the Korean peninsula. Russia, as a neighboring country, is particularly interested in the peaceful evolution of events on the Korean Peninsula and

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ensuring thereby the security of its Eastern frontiers, as well as the economic development of the Far Eastern territories.

Therefore, the aim of the article is to make a comparative analysis of North and South Korean conceptions of the reunification of the Motherland and explain the motives behind the Russian position on this issue. Soviet and Russian historiography on the Korean reunification is not large, a problem that interested Soviet party bureaucrats and diplomats, many of whom wrote papers and monographs on the plans for Korea's reunification and gave their recommendations to the Soviet authorities. Prof. Valery Denisov is the author of key research papers. He was formerly a high-ranking Soviet diplomat and ambassador in Pyongyang and was closely involved with Soviet/Russia-North Korean relations. He provides a review of how the Korean unification problem emerged and evolved and remains unresolved to this day.² He is fairly optimistic about the prospects of settling this issue.

Prof. Vadim Tkachenko, another Soviet/Russian researcher, was a party bureaucrat and the focus of his research interests lies in the plane of studying Russian-Korean relations. He believes that the problem of Korean reunification remains relevant for all neighbours of Korea, and they should help the Korean people reunite their country.³ Younger Russian scientists – Igor Gorely, Natalia Kuznetsova, Anatoly Torkunov, et., look at the solution to the issue of Korean reunification as a distant future and suggest making economic ties between North and South Korea more closely.⁴ They suggest that only after that will it be possible to unite Korea politically. This article attracted the research works of South Korean historians.⁵ Based on concepts from their work it can be concluded that Russian and Korean historians are united by one opinion on the need to return Korea into a single state. The works of Kim Il Sung were also used, in which he expressed his point of view on the issues of the unification of the Motherland.

Kim Il Sung's plans for Reunification

How to unify Korea was among the most urgent issues discussed in relations between Russia and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (the DPRK), since it was directly related with security issues in North-East Asia. Since the beginning of the 1960s, in all negotiations between the Soviet Union and North Korean leaders, possible routes towards Korean unification were sought and

2 Denisov 2009; Denisov 1988.

3 Tkachenko 2000.

4 Gorely 1997.

5 Baek 1993; Kan 1999.

the future role of a unified Korea in the international politics of North-East Asia was taken into account. The Soviet Union repeatedly expressed the idea that the process of Korea's unification must be on a socialist basis and the united state must preserve allied relations with the USSR.

The Soviet leaders paid great attention to the Korean unification issue because they had concerns about a possible escalation of the process, which could turn into a new bloody war on the Korean peninsula. On the other hand, the unification process seemed doubtful because the North Korean leaders, presenting the program for the unification of the country, were focused on organizing a revolutionary situation in the South and the forceful overthrow of the "anti-people's government in Seoul".⁶ In February 1965, North Korean leader Kim Il Sung in a conversation with Soviet Prime Minister A. N. Kosygin outlined his plan to create a revolutionary situation in the South. In this plan, it was particularly noted that there was a need for the "accumulation of revolutionary forces, nominations for official positions... of politicians, able to come to power and declare the neutrality of South Korea".⁷ Additionally, Kim Il Sung didn't exclude a conflict situation, which could turn into guerrilla warfare in case of the break out of war situation in Korea or World War III.

Along with the intention to intervene in the internal affairs of the Republic of Korea, North Korean leaders attempted unsuccessfully to form a Communist Party in the country. Such plans from the North to intervene into the internal political situation of the Republic of Korea (the ROK) challenged the military regime of President Park Chung-hee and triggered a wave of repression against pro-democratic politicians of the South. It was obvious that such tactics didn't lead to a revolutionary situation in the South, as hoped for in Pyongyang.

However, Kim Il Sung sought to convince the Soviet leaders, insisting on the need to form a "People's Revolutionary Party" in South Korea, which could actively take part in "unanimous anti-American activities". In Pyongyang it was believed that a war on the Korean peninsula "could break out at any time, regardless of the desires of the North".⁸ In December 6, 1969, during a conversation with the top Soviet leaders, the DPRK Foreign Minister Park Seun Chul said: „We would like to achieve reunification through peaceful means... but this can't be achieved as long as the Americans are present in South Korea and continue their provocations... War can break out if revolution takes place in South Korea. The Americans, of course, will seek to suppress it forcefully. The South Korean people will turn to us for support, and we, as

6 Tkachenko 2000: 76.

7 Tkachenko 2000: 76.

8 Tkachenko 2000: 78.

a nation, will not be able to refuse such assistance. The war in Korea would not be such as in Vietnam, it will outgrow the scope of a local war, it can spillover rapidly on the Soviet Union and China, which we have treaties of alliance with”.⁹ In other words, North Korean leaders relied on escalating tensions in South Korea and this was not approved by the USSR.

Additionally, the North Korean leaders viewed the presence of U.S. forces in the South of the Korean peninsula as a major obstacle to unification of the country. Kim Il Sung described US policy as „double-dealing.” In his opinion, the United States, on the one hand, was „talking about peaceful unification,” and on the other, it was inciting the South Korean military to „confront in dialogue, compete in dialogue and insidiously try to perpetuate a split in the country”.¹⁰ In 1985, in an interview with Japanese correspondents, Kim Il Sung explained his vision of US policy: „The Americans maintain a split in Korea in order to rule over it... The United States does not want South Korea to get rid of their dominance and go their own way”.¹¹

Apparently, Pyongyang had a clear understanding of the main tasks of Soviet policy towards the Korean Peninsula as a way of preventing a new war. That’s why the North deliberately placed emphasis on the “inevitability of repetition of war” in order to obtain additional Soviet military and economic aid, political support in the international arena and, of course, the approval of Moscow in fulfilling the North’s unification plans of the North and the South. However, the Soviet leaders were cautious about this issue, and didn’t openly criticize Kim Il Sung’s program about the unification of the Motherland by pointing out that the unified Korea should remain a socialist state.

At the beginning of the 1970s, North Korean leaders, under the influence of international détente, revised their plans for the reunification of Korea, bringing them almost closer with the position of South Korean opposition politicians. In July 4, 1972, Kim Il Sung put forward three principles of national reunification, which presumed for a “peaceful, democratic, without external interference,” unification of the country. Simultaneously with this, North and South Korea issued a joint statement in which, both agreed to take steps to reduce tensions on the Korean peninsula, and expressed the need to adhere to the following policy principles in relation to each other:

- to stop military incidents;
- to undertake an extensive exchange in many areas;

9 Tkachenko 2000: 78–79.

10 Kim Il Sung 1973: 6.

11 Kim Il Sung 1987: 18-19.

- to cooperate with each other under the Red Cross;
- to set a telephone hotline between Pyongyang and Seoul;
- to establish the Coordinating Committee of the North and South to address bilateral issues.¹²

A new constructive approach of the North Korean leaders to the complex unification issue of the country and the beginning of the inter-Korean dialogue was approved by the Moscow.

In the same period, the North and the South began negotiations through the Coordinating Committee and the Red Cross. During the meetings of the Coordinating Committee the two sides discussed ways of communication, exchange of information such as mail correspondence between members of separated families and organising meetings with relatives. The Soviet government appreciated the development of peaceful dialogue between the two Koreas, envisioning the prospects for reconciliation of the both sides and establishment of mutual trust.

The most complete North Korean plans for reunification of the country were presented in October 1980, in the agenda of the VI Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK), in which a ten-point program of creating a Democratic Confederal Republic of Koryo (the DCRK) was presented and adopted. It was assumed that the North and the South would form part of a unified state – the DCRK, retaining over a long period time parallel state regimes, ideologies and social systems. Unified in this way, Korea could have a single government and parliament, which would engage in political, military, foreign policy and other issues, including first of all, the interests of the Korean nation. In the North Korean program of creating a unified state, it was stated that the DCRK would become a non-aligned, neutral nation-state, “it will not threaten its neighbors, ... will not participate in military actions, prevent allocation or deployment of foreign troops and bases on its territory, prohibit the manufacture, import and storage of nuclear weapons, turn the Korean peninsula into a nuclear-free zone”.¹³ It was also pointed out that the DCRK could become a member of the United Nations (UN) on the basis of a single nation state.

The neutrality of a unified Korean state was explicit in the North Korean project of unification, which was justified by the need for conducting a policy of non-alliance with any military political blocs, and the unification process on the basis of the national idea and the principles of independence, based

12 Gorely 1997: 23.

13 Denisov 1988: 118; Tkachenko 2000: 80–81.

on the slogan of “recognition and respect for the ideas, ideologies and the systems of each other”.¹⁴ As one can see, the North Korean leaders listened to the recommendations from the Soviet authorities and officially declared the neutrality of a united Korea. However, it was not mentioned that a united Korea would become a socialist country.

The contents of the North Korean program for reunification of the country through the establishment of the DCRK meant that the DPRK would need to be ready to abandon attempts for a radical change in the internal political situation in the Republic of Korea and quit the policy of creating a revolutionary situation for the furtherance of the unification of the country. Nevertheless, the Soviet leaders were reluctant to fully accept and approve the North’s such new plans for the reunification of Korea, seeing them as a threat to socialist gains in the North and believing that the unification process of Korea should occur on a socialist basis, and not on the basis of a consolidating national idea. Later, however, Soviet leaders adopted the North Korean plans for reunification of Korea.¹⁵ This happened because Soviet leaders feared China would support North Korean plans, and so Sino-North Korean relations would improve significantly. In this event, the USSR would remain in isolation.

In the early 1990s, due to the change in the international situation in North-East Asia, and the fact that the South Korean leaders perceived the North’s proposal of creating a confederative republic of Korea as an act of propaganda, which was meant to push the withdrawal of U.S military troops from the South and a significant reduction of the South Korean armed forces, the North attempted to change its plans for reunification of the two countries. On the 6th April, 1993, Kim Il Sung put forward the “Program for the Great Consolidation of the Whole Nation for the Reunification of Korea”, which also consisted of ten points, widely covering the issues of reunification of the Korean nation and the creation of a single nation state. In this new plan for unification, it was stated that the united Korean nation-state would have a neutral position and it specified the need for no alliances with any military and political blocs, unifying the Korean people on the basis of national ideas and the principle of self-reliance, and pronounced the slogan of “the recognition and respect for the ideas, ideologies and the systems of the two countries”.¹⁶

Furthermore, in this draft of unification program, the principle of tolerance with the political structure of the other country was proclaimed and it was suggested political struggles, slander and insinuation be halted (part 4), as well

14 Tkachenko 2000: 84.

15 Tkachenko 2000: 83–84.

16 Tkachenko 2000: 84.

as the prevention of inadmissible threats of attack, suppression or imposition of one's political system on the other side, pointing out the necessity of building strong mutual trust (part 5). Additionally, rather than dissent, the principle of reconciliation and the need for "rehabilitation of political differences" were strongly promoted (part 6).

The new approach to the reunification process was remarkable as it presumed the provision of protections not only for state and cooperative property, but also "private property, preservation of social status and the merit of the individual's contribution in society" (part 7).¹⁷ The unification program was comprehensive in that it did not only promote consolidation of the Korean people of North and South, but also overseas Koreans (part 9), which made it look more universal and covering the national interests of the DPRK and the ROK.

That the North Korean reunification program demonstrated the evolution of views in Pyongyang on foreign policy, it could become a platform for searching for a ground point for common understanding between the North and the South. It is noteworthy that there was no mention of the timing of the stages of the unification process or sequence of periods for certain progress level, which prompted the conclusion that the document was declarative and thus raised doubts about the real success of unification once put into practice.

The Russian government responded positively to Kim Il Sung's proposed path towards Korea's reunification. In contrast to Soviet leaders, who were strictly of the view that the re-unified Korea would remain a socialist commonwealth, a declaration of neutrality didn't cause any trouble for the Russian Federation. On the contrary, Russia was interested in maintaining peace in North-East Asia, and a neutral, peacefully unified Korea, which would not ally to any military-political blocs, would be an essential guarantor of maintaining the regional balance of power. The declaration of neutrality would allow a unified Korea to take advantage of a neutral state in the event of hostilities by other parties. The status of a neutral state would contribute to its avoiding being drawn into military conflicts.¹⁸ A future unified Korea conducting a neutral, non-aligned policy could be an important backbone in establishing a system of collective security in North-East Asia.

In the second half of the 1990s, Kim Jong Il, becoming the de facto head of the state after the death of his father, did not address the problem of unification of the country, and focused on inter-Korean trade, economic and humanitarian

17 Torkunov, Denisov, Lee: 337.

18 Lee 1998: 10–11.

issues. In turn, his son and heir Kim Jong Un focused on strengthening the security of his country and did not touch on the question of the unification. Nevertheless, in his New Year message (January 2018) he proclaimed his willingness to improve relations with the ROK. Then, North and South Korean athletes marched together behind the Unified Peninsula Flag at the opening ceremony to the Pyeongchang 2018 Winter Olympics Games. This can be regarded as the first positive step in changing relations between the North and the South.

During the process of holding three inter-Korean summits in 2018, the parties limited themselves to discussing the issues of denuclearising the Korean peninsula and creating trust between the two parts of Korea. The Pyongyang Joint Declaration of 2018 proclaimed an end to the hostilities between North and South Korea. It was the first step in the settlement of permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula in the 21st century.

The South Korean projects for Reunification of Korea

Looking from the position of the South, it is obvious that South Korean leaders put forward their own programs for reunification of Korea, which tended to be rather pragmatic and not as detailed as those from the North a step-by-step, gradual process of inter-Korean rapprochement as well as pointing out the difficulties of reconciliation of the divided nation and creation of mutual trust and harmony between the two states.

Unlike North Korea, where there was a common approach to unification of the country, the Republic of Korea presented different views on how to conduct inter-Korean dialogue and methods of Korean unification. Furthermore, both conservative and liberal circles of South Korean society were unanimously in favor of the need for cooperative dialogue with North Korea, especially developing bilateral trade, exchange of information, organizing visits to the relatives of divided families from both countries, etc. The South's views on tactical issues such as political concessions to Pyongyang, the volume and frequency of providing humanitarian aid, forms and methods of inter-Korean consultations on current politics and economics, were significantly different. Concerning the matter of reunification of Korea by strengthening either conservative or liberal views was dependent on what type of elite was at the head of South Korean political system.

In the 1980s, the conservatives were in power in South Korea, whose plans for unification were quite restrained. In the same period, liberal opposition figures offered a more ambitious program. For example, in the 1980s, Kim Dae-jung

proposed a three-stage plan for the unification of North and South, advocated the development of a broad dialogue with the DPRK and the formation of a “federation of two independent republics”, their peaceful coexistence, creating diverse two-side exchanges and, finally, a peaceful reunification¹⁹, which was close to the concept of Kim Il Sung. In the same period, another opposition leader, Kim Young-sam, proposed a program of “five steps” which included bringing about “democratic reforms” in the territory of North and South, extensive exchange and cooperation in non-political spheres as well as joint actions in foreign policy.²⁰

The common matching points in the programs of reunification of Korea suggested from both sides were calls for frequent, preferably annual, meetings between the leaders of the South and the North to address the current issues of inter-Korean dialogue. For example, the South Korean president Chun Doo-hwan, who was the first to propose a meeting of the top leaders of the South and North and adopting a constitution for a unified Korea, pointed out the Korean nation's desire for unification and peaceful development.²¹ In addition, it was proposed to establish a programme of liaison offices in Pyongyang and Seoul, and to delegate the functions of diplomatic missions, which was critically viewed by North Korean authorities because it was perceived by the North as further fixating the position of the South in their territory. For the same reason, official Pyongyang was against a separate participation of the two Korean states in the United Nations (UN). The Soviet leaders fully supported the DPRK in this regard, believing that a separate UN membership would complicate the process of peaceful reunification of Korea.²²

In July 7, 1988, shortly before the Seoul Olympic Games, the South Korean president Roh Tae-woo developed the most prominent and conceptually clear program. The program of reunification was presented in the form of a special declaration and was called “*National Pride, Reunification and Prosperity*”. It was composed of several basic elements of a new approach to the problem of South Korean ideas for Korea's unification. The program of president Roh Tae-woo emphasized the freedom of mutual visits between people from the North and the South as well as on the politics of “open doors” in trade with the North, carrying out joint actions in international forums.²³ Such a special declaration of president Roh Tae-woo was intended to pursue the goal of attracting the DPRK to participate in the Seoul Olympic Games, which was

19 Denisov 1988: 105, 108.

20 Denisov 1988: 109.

21 Denisov 1988: 109.

22 Denisov 1988: 115.

23 Baek 1993: 127.

assumed to initiate a national understanding and rapprochement, and a path out of confrontation in inter-Korean relations and the development of “cooperation and common prosperity”.

Along with the extension of its program to conduct a dialogue with North Korea, South Korean authorities made a number of conciliatory measures. For example, in early 1988 the abolition of prohibiting South Koreans to read periodicals and other publications published in the DPRK and other socialist countries was announced. In subsequent years, the government of the ROK increased the range of materials about the life in North Korea available to South Korean citizens. In May 1989, the Government Centre of Documentation of the DPRK was established in Seoul. Simultaneously, the South Korean authorities lifted the ban on the publication of works by authors who moved from South to North or turned out to have been left behind on North Korean territory during the Korean War.²⁴

In addition, in August 1990, the South Korean government passed a law to establish a “Fund for Cooperation between North and South”, which was directed at promoting inter-Korean exchange and rapprochement. In 1991, the fund stood at 25 billion won; by 1992, it had risen to 40 billion won and in subsequent years increased to 1 trillion won.²⁵ The South Korean authorities were considering undertaking the above measures as a prerequisite for constructive dialogue between North and South Korea, and counting on the support of its population, as it was believed that true information about the daily lives of North Koreans would play a positive role in building trust between the divided nation.

On August 15, 1988, in a speech on the celebration day of the liberation of Korea, President Roh Tae-woo again addressed the topic of unification of the country and proposed a meeting of the leaders of the DPRK and the ROK to discuss the terms of reunification. He noted that the inter-Korean summit would help to accelerate the process of rapprochement between the two sides. However, this proposal was rejected by Pyongyang.

Later, on September 11, 1989, President Roh Tae-woo presented an expanded version of his program of reunification of Korea at a meeting of the South Korean parliament, stating his “fundamentally new approach, a formula of reunification of the Korean nation”.²⁶ Roh’s plan called for an intermediate stage in the process of reunification of North and South, which

24 Baek 1993: 129.

25 Baek 1993: 131.

26 Baek 1993: 129–131.

was necessary because of deep-seated mistrust, confrontation and antagonism between the two parts of Korea. The transitional phase would allow the parties to recognise each other, despite the differences of political systems, and continue to seek opportunities of peaceful coexistence, and then the creation of a “Korean national community, its development based on the principles of self-determination, peace and democracy”.²⁷

It was strongly reaffirmed again in president Roh's program that there was a need for regular meetings and summits in order to develop the “Charter of Korean National Community”, the creation of the Council of Presidents, ministers and parliamentarians, the establishment of a general secretariat, and then adopting a constitution and organizing general elections, followed by the declaration of the Unified Democratic Republic of Korea – a democratic state, which would guarantee freedom, equality and prosperity for all its citizens. Unlike the program of Kim Il Sung, in president Roh's program, the nature of the foreign policy of unified Korea was not mentioned.

Modern South Korean researchers appreciate president Roh's policy efforts of „northern diplomacy”, which resulted in the ROK's establishment of diplomatic relations with the USSR, China, Korea, and opening the possibility of becoming a member of the UN. They believe that this policy became the „momentum behind resuming inter-Korean dialogue and the development of trade and economic relations between North and South Korea”.²⁸

In turn, the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between the USSR and the ROK had, in their opinion, a positive impact on the foreign policy of North Korea, which reflected the North's assurance of perceiving a change in the balance of power in North-East Asia, and the recognition of its inability to address the issues of Korean reunification on its own terms” which led North Korea to sign with the South two important documents: “Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-aggression, Exchanges and Cooperation between North and South Korea from December 13, 1991”, and the “Declaration on the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula from December 31, 1991”.²⁹ It was the first formal agreement between North and South Korea after the separation, and it marked the beginning of the process of deideologisation between the two parts of the divided country. Both sides considered them as a guarantor of peaceful coexistence and cooperation during the long process of the reunification of the Korean nation. Such important documents, which were signed between the DPRK and the ROK, were treated with approval in

27 Baek 1993: 130.

28 Baek 1993: 148.

29 Baek 1993: 138–139.

Moscow, since the new Russian government was interested in the peaceful development of inter-Korean relations and reduction of military aggression and political tension on the Korean peninsula.³⁰

Since the beginning of the 1990s, amid improved relations between the DPRK and the ROK, the military and political views of the latter have changed, which has resulted in a paradigm shift from seeing the North as its “main enemy” to a partner in the negotiation process. In this context, the representatives of Russia, China and the U.S. have begun to speak out for the creation of a multilateral mechanism for consultations on security in North-East Asia that would help unleash the military-political “nodes”, remaining after the Cold War, thereby reducing military tension and strengthening cooperation in various fields of politics and economics. In turn, the formation of multilateral talks on security issues in Northeast Asia could help create favorable conditions for further development of inter-Korean dialogue and prevent an uncontrollable arms race in the region.

After the presidential elections in December 1992, a new president, Kim Young-sam, became the head of the state of the ROK. He put forward his own program, which provided for a three-stage plan for the unification of Korea by creating a community, then a federation, and finally, a Unified Korea. According to South Korean scientists, Kim Young-sam’s program was aimed at “mitigating possible uncontrollable developments and increasing tension during the process of the reunification of Korea.”³¹ In president Kim Young Sam’s program, the significant differences in economic potential and the life standard of the population of the North and South were taken into consideration, and the purpose underlined in this program was not a “radical reunification but a wise re-creation of unity of the Korean nation as well as the surmounting of political and economic contradictions”.³²

It was also highlighted in the Russian research literature that the program of president Kim Young Sam was a response to the “Program of the Great Consolidation of the Whole Nation for National Reunification” put forward by Kim Il Sung on April 6, 1993, and the personal meeting of the leaders of the North and the South.³³ The program of Kim Young-sam testified about Seoul’s cessation of the utilization of military pressure on the DPRK and desire to develop a mutually beneficial relationship between the two parts of the divided states.

30 Denisov 1988: 12.

31 Baek 1993: 132.

32 Baek 1993: 133.

33 Torkunov, Denisov, Lee 2008: 338.

The administration of the ROK was aware at this time of political will to force ahead the process of unification. In 1998, President Kim Dae-jung announced a “Sunshine policy” which was the direct policy of South Korea towards North Korea until Lee Myung-bak’s election to presidency in 2007. The three major points of the “Sunshine policy” stated that “the South was not going to suppress the North and was planning relations on the principles of politics separated from economics” in a manner and would fully promote inter-Korean exchanges and cooperation.³⁴

During the periods of the presidencies of Roh Moo-hyun and Lee Myung-bak, the South pragmatically approached the formation of relations with the DPRK with an emphasis on the development of trade and economic ties. The situation began to change during the presidency of Moon Jae-in. On June 12, 2019 he explained the peace process on the Korean Peninsula during the Oslo Forum, and said: “Real peace is one that is mutually beneficial”.³⁵ Besides, President Moon Jae-in emphasised his opinion in German newspaper “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung”: “From now on, the North-South issue should not be misused for ideological or political purposes; rather, it must be expanded into an issue of life and existence for ordinary people. The North and South represent a community of life in which coexistence is a must”.³⁶ At present, the South Korean president does not see the need to discuss ways to unite Korea. North Korean leaders also stopped discussing this issue.

In general, the approaches of North and South politicians towards the reunification of the country have much in common and could serve as a platform for further negotiations on this crucial issue for both sides. At present, when there are still mutual grievance, it is highly possible that the North and the South, if strong economic interests in each other were absent, could opt for an arms race and militarisation, and that would be dangerous to enforce the process of unification, could lead to the escalation of conflict and destroy the existing balance of power in North-East Asia. The long-term peaceful coexistence of the two states could lead to confrontation and bringing all types of military armaments to the Korean peninsula.

The Russian Position

After the Cold War was over, international tension reduced and a more favorable atmosphere arose for seeking solutions to the long-standing regional conflicts in a peaceful way. In this regard, the inter-Korean dialogue received

34 Lee 1998: 25; Tkachenko 2000: 87.

35 President Moon 2019.

36 The Greatness of the Ordinary 2019.

a new impetus, which resulted in the holding of two Korean summits (in 2000 and 2007) and the leaders of North and South Korea signed the political declarations. In these circumstances, Russia had a particular interest in the unification of Korea, which would allow it to acquire an economically strong partner in North-East Asia and expand business contacts in the region, since it expected that a unified Korea would have economic potential of global importance.³⁷

The Russian point of view on the unification of Korea is more pragmatic and discreet compared to the Soviet era. Russia's position is reflected in the joint Russian-South Korean statement, issued in November 1992, after President Boris Yeltsin visited Seoul. The statement mentioned that the "National Reunification of Korea should take place peacefully through dialogue between North and South Korea".³⁸

In February 2001, the Russian president V. Putin made a speech in the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea, and emphasized that Russia's interest is in "the positive changes of situations on the Korean peninsula". Pointing out the position of Russia on the Korean Reunification problem, he drew attention to the following important aspects of this process:

"First: Peaceful process and cooperation between North and South Korea should be developed on the principles agreed by the Korean nations themselves and Korean leaders, without external interference.

Second: All problems should be resolved peacefully through diplomatic means in the spirit of the Joint Declaration of South and North, dated in June 15, 2000.

Third: We will welcome the process of creating a peaceful unified Korean nation-state, friendly to Russia and other countries. We are convinced that reliable security can be achieved by non-military means, through the development of relevant international legal rights.

Fourth: Reduction of tension is impossible for the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the world in general, and the region in particular, and on the Korean peninsula even more so. Russia is ready to contribute to these processes. We will support the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula...".³⁹ Russia's support for peaceful solution of the problem remains unchanged over the last two decades and is particularly relevant in relation to the events on

37 Kuznetsova 2005: 25.

38 Kan 1999: 42.

39 Rech' V.V. Putina... 2001.

the Korean peninsula, such as the sinking of a South Korean corvette (marine guard ship) “Cheonan”, which led to aggravation of inter-Korean relations.

Remarkably, during the expansion of inter-Korean dialogue and the transition stage from ideological confrontation to cooperation, Russia – unlike the Soviet Union – ceased unilateral support of North Korea’s program of Reunification of Korea, and pursued a balanced policy towards the two Koreas, maintaining good neighborly relations with both of them, developing mutually beneficial cooperation ties, and participating in international actions to reduce the military and political tensions on the Korean peninsula.

On May 29, 2019 South Korean National Assembly Speaker Moon Hee-sang gave a speech at the Russian Federation Council in Moscow. He praised the policy of Russia on the Korean Peninsula and said: “Russia understands North Korea’s policy and situation and can have deep talks with the North... Russia will build a positive diplomatic environment to resolve North Korea’s nuclear issues... Mutual cooperation between (South) Korea and Russia will be a full-fledged flare that will signal trilateral cooperation among the two Koreas and Russia”.⁴⁰

Conclusion

The lengthy division of Korea into two states has complicated the problem of reunifying the country. In the 1970-1980s, the leaders of the two countries set and specified their conditions for reunification of the country, and in subsequent decades the leaders of the two states refused to declare reunification programs and took the path of small steps. They have sought to establish a permanent peace regime and trust to allow the two countries to coexist peacefully and gradually move closer, first economically and then politically. In this case, the best approach is that of President Moon Jae-in, who suggested, “to start with what is easy” and go to the reunification of the country in small steps.⁴¹

The opening of a liaison office in Kaesong means establishing a venue for regular dialogue between North and South Korea. During the last two years both Korean states have stopped all hostile military acts, removed the nearby the Demilitarised Zone guard posts for preventing armed conflict and eased military tension. Thanks to deals reached by Korean leaders, inter-Korean relations have improved to a de facto “end-of-war” level. The year 2018, which saw three inter-Korean summits held, has revived hope that the long-standing deadlock can finally be broken.

40 Parliamentary speaker stress... 2019.

41 The Greatness of the Ordinary 2019.

Russia took an active part in reducing military tensions on the Korean Peninsula. For Russia, it is important to provide a “soft” and gradual process regarding reunification and avoid “collapsing” the path with negative implications for regional security. The constructive and balanced policy of Russia towards the Korean peninsula could become an important part in the overall regional system of inter-relations. After unification, Russia would not have to maneuver between Pyongyang and Seoul. The military-political situation would improve and the threat to the Far Eastern regions of Russia would disappear. Therefore, the unification of Korea is in the interests of Russia. Hence, the Russian government on its policy agenda towards the Korean peninsula should put Russian national interests first, namely maintaining regional security and ensuring the peaceful development of the Far Eastern territories of the Russian Federation.

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Vindicating the USS Swordfish

Abstract

In response to the North Korean seizure of the U.S. spy ship *Pueblo*, an armada of ships and subs were sent into the Sea of Japan, including the USS *Swordfish*, a nuclear-powered submarine. Unfortunately, while conducting a covert surveillance operation off the coast of Vladivostok, *Swordfish*'s mast struck a block of ice. So she departed the area for the U.S. Naval Base at Yokosuka, Japan for repairs. When the Russians saw a photo of the damaged *Swordfish* in a Japanese newspaper, they (wrongly) assumed the damage resulted from a collision with their nuclear-armed submarine K-129.

Keywords: Cold War, K-129, North Korea, *Pueblo* Incident, Soviet Union, USS *Pueblo*, USS *Swordfish*.

Introduction

The USS *Pueblo* (AGER-2) was a U.S. Navy reconnaissance vessel disguised as a light cargo ship. On January 23, 1968, while on her maiden voyage, the *Pueblo* and her crew were seized by the North Koreans off the coast of Wonsan, North Korea, in an action known in Navy parlance as a “cutting-out” operation. The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) responded by directing the Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Pacific Fleet (CINCPAC) to deploy three attack aircraft carriers, an anti-submarine carrier, numerous destroyers, and auxiliary vessels. By early February, a Task Force had formed in the Sea of Japan consisting of three aircraft carrier Task Groups—led by the USS *Enterprise*, USS *Ranger*, and USS *Yorktown*.²

In a desire to increase submarine posture in the Sea of Japan and Yellow Sea for the purpose of enhancing U.S. surveillance capability and ready combat presence, the JCS also recommended deploying up to nine diesel (SS) and nuclear (SSN) submarines into the Korean area for surveillance and patrol “as early as practical.”³ However, the Commander, Submarine Force, U.S. Pacific

1 Bill Streifer is an independent scholar in Florida (USA). Irek Sabitov is a freelance journalist in Ufa, Bashkiria, South Urals (Russia).

2 Mobley, 2003: 52; Mobley 2001.

3 Joint Message from JCS to CINCPAC, Info: CINCPACFLT, “Deployment of Submarines to Vicinity of North Korea,” Jan. 27, 1968; NSF, Country File, box 263, “Korea, *Pueblo* Incident, Military Cables, Vol. 1, LBJ Library.

Fleet (COMSUBPAC) considered such deployments redundant, which he said might lead to “prohibitive confusion in the ASW [Anti-Submarine Warfare] picture,” aware that ASW might not have been the basic motivation behind the redeployments.⁴

In the end, COMSUBPAC cancelled the out-chop from the 7th Fleet of two submarines (Segundo and Volador), deploying an additional four from Pearl Harbor: Flasher, Greenfish, Blueback, and Swordfish, as soon as possible, chopping to the Commander of the 7th Fleet no later than February 8.⁵ By the first of the month, however, the USS Ronquil was the only submarine presently in the Sea of Japan on Search and Rescue (SAR) station off North Korea.⁶



With this proposed gain in submarine assets, the 7th Fleet would have a total of seventeen submarines in the area, capable of manning nine stations for at least three months. However, this would mean sacrificing nearly all other theatre patrol commitments including the ongoing Vietnam War. As seen in the accompanying Chief of Naval Operations chart, by March 1, 1968, the U.S.

4 “Deployment of SS/SSN’s to Vicinity of North Korea,” 1968 CNO Briefing Notes, Jan. 29, 1968.

5 “Deployment of SS/SSN’s to Vicinity of North Korea,” 1968 CNO Briefing Notes, Jan. 29, 1968.

6 “Sea of Japan Operations,” 1968 CNO Briefing Notes, Jan. 31, 1968.

had six submarines in the Sea of Japan and along the Japanese coast. All but one was diesel-powered; the sole nuclear submarine in the area was the USS *Swordfish*.⁷

In response to this naval show of force, the Soviet Pacific Fleet, commanded by the “strong-willed and competent” Admiral Nikolay Amel’ko, was transferred to full combat readiness. All available combat-capable surface warfare ships sailed into the sea. And into the depths of the Sea of Japan, about 25 to 27⁸ Soviet diesel and nuclear submarines were deployed. In particular, all first-line nuclear submarines of the 26th Division took up their positions in their “allotted” areas.⁹

The Sea of Japan is relatively small, comprising an area of 1,062 thousand square kilometers, or about 400 thousand square miles; that’s 2.5 times smaller than the Mediterranean, but deep-water with an average depth of 1536 meters, or over 5,000 feet. According to Captain I rank (Post Capitan) Aleksandr Samokhvalov (Ret.), a veteran Soviet submariner and participant in this naval confrontation, the Sea of Japan literally “boiled” from the propellers of warships and auxiliary vessels of the American and Soviet Pacific Fleet there. Underwater, while observing secrecy, Soviet submarines prowled about their areas in low-noise mode, while everyone on board waited for a signal to deploy their weapons. Though this naval confrontation under the sea is now long forgotten, Samokhvalov said, “the world stood on the brink of thermonuclear war.”¹⁰

Edward “Stu” Russell, a former Pueblo crewman and the ship’s historian, recalls meeting a retired submariner a few years back who was on a “boomer [a ballistic missile submarine] off the coast [of North Korea] soon after we were tagged.” He said his sub had to stay 200 miles offshore so they could launch if so ordered. “He thought their goal would have been to sink us to keep the secret stuff from the [North] Koreans,”¹¹ Russell said.

The damage to *Swordfish* based on first-hand accounts

Skate-class nuclear submarines like the *Swordfish* might have been the first specifically designed to conduct covert missions, a task aided greatly by her nuclear powerplant that gave both the sub and her crew underwater endurance.

7 1968 CNO Briefing Notes (chart), Mar. 1, 1968.

8 Given the Sea of Japan’s relatively small size, naval experts agree that “25–27” is a gross exaggeration.

9 Samokhvalov 2013.

10 Samokhvalov 2013.

11 Edward “Stu” Russell e-mail to author (Bill Streifer).

Some details of Swordfish’s mission following the Pueblo seizure—from the time she departed Hawaii, through her covert surveillance mission off the coast of Vladivostok, until the time she arrived at Yokosuka, Japan for repairs—were obtained from former members of the Swordfish crew.

IC2(SS) George Hudson, an electrician aboard the Swordfish at the time of the Pueblo Incident, recalled receiving a letter from the Navy, dated June 1971, authorising the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (AE, Spring 1968) for Korean service. “Specifically, our Korean service was for deployment off the coast of North Korea after the hostile seizure of the USS Pueblo (AGER-2) by the North Koreans.” He said the letter also contained the medal and a corresponding ribbon. The Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal was only one of the many medals the Swordfish received during her three decades of service.¹² Although he said he couldn’t speak for the Navy, “all of us who were on the Swordfish during this 1968 operation,” Hudson said, “are eligible for the medal.” At that time, “most of us thought we were going to war over the incident.”¹³

Some aspects of the Swordfish incident remain in dispute. According to Hudson, the Swordfish had to abort her assigned mission when, on March 2, 1968, about a month after departing her home port in Hawaii, she suffered damage to her mast when it struck a block of ice in the Sea of Japan.¹⁴ The Navy, however, contends the damage to Swordfish’s masts did not prevent the submarine from completing her assigned mission. According to some, the damage occurred off the coast of North Korea. Others, including Norman Polmar and Michael White, the authors of *Project Azorian: The CIA and the Raising of the K-129*, believe the Swordfish was “*probably* damaged on an ice floe off the Soviet port of Vladivostok [Soviet Union].”¹⁵

According to QM1 Gary Cox, the Swordfish’s Quartermaster, er destination was the “near vicinity” of Vladivostok where she was to perform a covert

12 A page from OPNAVNOTE 1650 dated March 9, 2001 details the various awards the USS Swordfish (SSN-579) received, including the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (code AE). The period of the award is specified only as “Spring 1968.” At that time, the AE was only awarded for service in the Korean Theatre (code “J”). Although no specific dates are specified for the AE medal (which could indicate that the dates of this operation were still classified when the OPNAVNOTE was created), we can somewhat narrow down “Spring” to exclude the period when she was awarded the Vietnam Service Medal (code VS) from March 31 to April 1, 1968. [OPNAVNOTE 1650, March 9, 2001]

13 Facebook Group (Closed): USS Swordfish (SSN 579) – Ship’s Crew (Officer & Enlisted), 2018.

14 Facebook Group (Closed): USS Swordfish (SSN 579) – Ship’s Crew (Officer & Enlisted), 2018.

15 Polmar, White 2010.

surveillance mission related to the worsening Pueblo hostage crisis.¹⁶ Following her collision with ice, the *Swordfish* remained in the vicinity of Vladivostok for about ten days before traveling to Yokosuka, Japan for repairs.¹⁷ The following first-hand account, which describes the extent of *Swordfish*'s damage when she arrived at Yokosuka on March 17, 1968, is from Doug Chisolm, a weapons officer aboard the *USS Redfish* (AGSS-395), who witnessed *Swordfish*'s entry into port. While conducting nighttime signals intelligence (SIGINT) operations at periscope depth, Chisolm said, *Swordfish* struck a chunk of ice that had broken loose from a glacier to drift undetected along the coast. The collision threw the standing officer of the deck off his feet, sheared off the submarine's electronic countermeasures (ECM) mast as well as a Special Operations mast, and bent back the attack periscope at a 45-degree angle.¹⁸

In a letter to Senator Robert C. Smith (R, New Hampshire)—thirty years after the fact—Admiral Perry M. Ratliff, Director of Naval Intelligence, stated that on March 2, 1968, *Swordfish* “struck an iceberg while operating in the Sea of Japan, and as a result sustained damage to one of her periscopes.” Since the damage didn't require immediate return to port, Ratliff said the *Swordfish* “completed its previously assigned operations prior to arriving in Yokosuka.”¹⁹

The *Swordfish*'s initial response to the *Pueblo* seizure was recalled in some detail by two former members of the crew: QM1 Gary Cox, Quartermaster, whose recollections of the incident were described as “vivid,” served as assistant navigator aboard the *Swordfish* between 1967 and 1970. Lt. Cdr. Jerry A. Koebel, the Quartermaster of Watch (QMOW) aboard the *Swordfish* when she suffered damage to her “sail, periscope, and masts,” said he was aboard the *Swordfish* when it departed Pearl Harbor in February 1968. “[We] basically did flank speed all the way to North Korea. Was hoping we were going to nuke the crap out of those aholes,” he said.²⁰

As Koebel recalls, the Officer on Deck (OOD) at the time of the accident was Lt. Dave Copley. On periscope at the time,²¹ Copley “ended up with a black eye when we hit an ice pack. It really impacted our abilities since whenever we increased our speed, it shook the heck out of the whole boat... We

16 Sewell, Preisler 2008: 242.

17 CNO Briefing Notes, March 1–17, 1968 (Parts A & B).

18 Sewell, Preisler 2008: 32.

19 Rear Adm. P.M. Ratliff, USN, Director of Naval Intelligence, letter to Sen. Robert C. Smith, Dec. 13, 1999.

20 Facebook Group (Closed): *USS Swordfish* (SSN 5790...; Sewell, Preisler 2008: pp. 26–27, 242; Polmar, White 2010, xvi (acknowledgments)

21 George Hudson (who recalls the incident differently) thinks “Lt. Byers was on the scope when we hit.”

put wood under the [periscope] to stop the scope from breaking off and being pushed down and flooding the boat.” Later, when the Swordfish pulled into Yokosuka, Koebel (as the sub’s Signalman) said he “stood on top of the sail to try and hide [the damage].”²²

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 NAVPERS 3100/1 (1-66) (Formerly NAVPERS 710) 1/24/65-04-100



DECK LOG BOOK

OF THE

U.S.S. SWORDFISH SSN 579

SSN 579
IDENTIFICATION NUMBER

Attached to:

11	Division,
1	Squadron,
V	Flotilla,
PACIFIC	Fleet,
14	Naval District,

Commencing 0000 I 1 MARCH, 19 68,
(Time, Date and Year)
 at SPECIAL OPERATIONS
(Location)
 and ending 2359 I 31 MARCH, 19 68,
(Time, Date and Year)
 at SPECIAL OPERATIONS
(Location)

Approved by: J. J. Sigala
J. T. RIGSBEE Commanding
CDR USA

TO BE FORWARDED DIRECT TO THE BUREAU OF NAVAL PERSONNEL AT THE END OF EACH MONTH

Koebel said the crew was not even sure what they had hit at first. “We just went deeper and headed south to get out of the area. A couple days later, we came back into the area and saw ice pack everywhere...Was pretty scary at the time...” Ironically, Koebel said they were “actually testing some under-ice

22 Facebook Group (Closed): USS Swordfish (SSN 579)...; Sewell, Preisler 2008: pp. 26–27, 242; Polmar, White 2010, xvi (acknowledgments)

detection sonar that failed to alert us to the ice.” Cox recalls how the collision had sheared off one of the ECM masts, “and it rained all over the periscope station the rest of the run. Vibrated like hell, too.”²³ The damage to Swordfish’s masts would have also prevented her from submerging, which would have run the risk of taking on more water. In 1969, the USS *Guittaro* (SSN-665) sank while at pier in a matter of five minutes as water poured into a forward compartment.²⁴

The details of Swordfish’s preparation for sea, prior to her departure for Vladivostok appear in the sub’s deck logs. On January 30, 1968, one week after the *Pueblo* Incident began and three days after the Joint Chiefs of Staff’s demand for increased submarine posture in the Sea of Japan, the *Swordfish* was stationed at West Loch, the weapons pier at the U.S. Naval Submarine Base in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. At 1:30pm that afternoon, one Mk 45 exercise torpedo was offloaded and three Mk 37-1 warshot torpedoes were on-loaded.²⁵ All Mk 37-1 torpedoes were conventional, not nuclear tipped.

By 4:30 that afternoon, after *Swordfish* had returned to berth S-10 at the U.S. Submarine Base at Pearl, her reactor was shut down. This was the normal cycle as *Swordfish* prepared to set out for sea; but it would be another three days—on February 3, 1968 at 9:00am that morning—before her “Special Operations” would begin.²⁶

Officially, the nature of *Swordfish*’s Special Operations, and her destination when she departed Pearl Harbor, remain classified. In fact, *Swordfish*’s deck logs for March 1-17, 1968 consist of a single page—with the boxes that would normally indicate her position three times each day were left blank. The following deck log remark of March 1, however, suggests that *Swordfish* was operating under submarine orders out of Yokosuka: “Underway on Special Operations in accordance with COMSUBFLOT SEVEN Operation Order (OPORD) 315-68 as before.” As Lloyd M. “Pete” Bucher, the captain of the *Pueblo*, recalls in his first-hand account of the *Pueblo* Incident, he met Rear Admiral Frank L. Johnson, who would later be Bucher’s OTC (Officer in Tactical Command) when Bucher served on the staff of COMSUBFLOT SEVEN in Yokosuka.²⁷

23 Facebook Group (Closed): USS *Swordfish* (SSN 579)...; Sewell, Preisler 2008: pp. 26–27, 242n; Polmar, White 2010, xvi (acknowledgments)

24 “Nuclear Submarine Sinks in 5 Minutes at Coast Yard; Crew Safe,” *New York Times* (UPI), May 17, 1969, p. 1.

25 *Swordfish*’s deck log, 30 January 1968, 3–29 February 1968.

26 *Swordfish*’s deck log, 30 January 1968, 3–29 February 1968.

27 *Swordfish* deck log, 1–17 March 1968; Bucher 1970, p. 126.

Swordfish's Special Operations, which would continue throughout the month of February, ended at 6:00am on March 17, when she arrived at the U.S. Naval Base at Yokosuka, Japan (at the entrance channel of Tokyo Bay) for repairs. By 8:00am that day, she was moored starboard side to Pier No. 7 at the U.S. Naval Ship Repair Facility at Yokosuka. As was customary, standard 2-inch mooring lines were doubled. The Senior Officer Present Afloat (SOPA) was from Amphibious Squadron Eleven. Other ships present included various units of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, yard, and district craft.²⁸ Swordfish departed Yokosuka nine days later.

The Loss of K-129 and Soviet Suspicions

On April 10, 1963, while the USS Thresher was conducting routine deep-diving tests in preparation for future deployments (at roughly 300 meters below the surface of the water), she sprung an internal leak due to a faulty pipe joint. The leak, in turn, caused an internal cascade failure including electrical shorts and an engine shutdown. Because of this, the Thresher was unable to blow her ballast, and was lost at sea with all hands. This tragedy put a spotlight on the problem of submarine safety, resulting in months of analysis to determine the root cause of the failures and how to prevent them. The result was a series of testing and documentation initiatives which came to be known as SUBSAFE. The point of SUBSAFE was to ensure that a Thresher-style disaster would never happen again.²⁹

SUBSAFE covers all aspects of sub design and construction, with a series of rigorous tests and checks at every step in the process; but SUBSAFE is more than a one-time certification. Whenever a sub is repaired or reworked, it must undergo the same rigorous checks to ensure seaworthiness. The level of testing and certification is expensive and time-consuming, but necessary. More importantly, it worked. Since the full rollout of the SUBSAFE program, not a single SUBSAFE-certified vessel was lost in non-combat situations.³⁰

After Swordfish had undergone repairs at Yokosuka, it too must have undergone SUBSAFE certification. This and the fact that Swordfish was back in service so quickly (after only 9 days) suggests the damage was not severe, particularly since even minor hull damage to a submarine can be potentially

28 "Special Operations," USS Swordfish deck log, 1-17 March 1968.

29 "How the SUBSAFE Certification Program Contributes to Submarine Safety," Busby Metals, May 17, 2019; <https://busbymetals.com/subsafe-certification-program-contributes-submarine-safety/>

30 "How the SUBSAFE Certification Program Contributes to Submarine Safety," Busby Metals, May 17, 2019; <https://busbymetals.com/subsafe-certification-program-contributes-submarine-safety/>

deadly at depth. According to Rear Admiral Anatoly Shtyrov (Ret.), a former Vice-Chief of Intelligence of the [Soviet] Pacific Fleet, however, the damage might have been more severe than had previously been reported. In 2005, Shtyrov wrote³¹:

“Intelligence data indicate that during the K-129 submarine is going to patrol in the Avachinsky Bay, the U.S. Navy multi-purpose nuclear-powered submarine *Swordfish*, which, quite possibly, could establish covert surveillance of [our] submarine, was on duty...It is known for certain that on March 11-12 [sic], that is, 3-4 days after the K-129 submarine was out of communication, the *Swordfish* submarine arrived at Yokosuka Naval base (Japan) at night [sic] with a crumpled hull of the conning tower. During the night, in the mode of heightened secrecy, the conning tower was urgently repaired (straightening, patching, painting), and at dawn the *Swordfish* submarine, hastily left the base. Later it became known that the entire crew of the submarine signed a non-disclosure agreement of a certain secret.”³²

Shtyrov said it can be assumed that the *Swordfish* submarine conducted a covert surveillance of the K-129 submarine, and that the latter was inadvertently rammed by a tracking American submarine. “The collision was unintentional, of course,” Shtyrov said, since “the Americans are not fools; they also want to live.” According to Shtyrov, as a result of the collision, it’s possible that a U.S. submarine struck K-129 in the area of the 3rd compartment (central post) with the frontal part of the sub’s conning tower. Taking in a huge mass of water, he said K-129 “could not cope with the rapid loss of buoyancy and sank at a depth of over 5,200 m [over 3 miles]...”³³

At the conclusion of a Government Commission, held at the headquarters of the Pacific Fleet (Vladivostok) in June 1968, Leonid V. Smirnov, Vice Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union and head of the Commission, said bluntly that the Commission should have indicated the culprit in the sinking of K-129. When Smirnov asked Admiral Amel’ko who he thought the culprit was, and Amel’ko replied he did not know, Smirnov said the guilty had to be found.³⁴

However, once Rear Admiral Igor Razumovsky, the Chief of Intelligence of the Soviet Pacific Fleet, brought Admiral Amel’ko a copy of a Japanese newspaper that reported *Swordfish* had “urgently returned from the sea before

31 Shtyrov’s comments contain numerous factual errors concerning the USS *Swordfish*.

32 Shtyrov 2005.

33 Shtyrov 2005.

34 Amel’ko, 2003.

the set time because of the broken periscope,” something that had never happened in the press before, Amel’ko said he was “firmly convinced” that the American submarine discovered K-129 as it left its base at Petropavlovsk, on or about March 1, 1968. Amel’ko said “American ships had carried out intelligence about our bases. More than once we determined that they had tracked the passage of the K-129, and at a moment of inaccurate maneuvering rammed the K-129.”³⁵

The Russians have since suggested numerous possible explanations for the loss of K-129. Some former high-ranking Soviet naval officers believe the damage resulted from the intentional ramming of K-129 by the Swordfish; other say the collision might have been accidental. A third group believe Swordfish is innocent; the damage caused by a collision with ice in the Sea of Japan, far from where the K-129 sank. Mikhail Voznesensky,³⁶ a Russian TV and print journalist, and the author of *The Stolen Submarine K-129* (perhaps the only Russian-language book dedicated to the topic), offered twenty possible scenarios. Down the list at position 7 is the possibility that Swordfish had intentionally rammed K-129. Voznesensky’s eighth version—quoting R. Golosov, the former Chief of Staff of the 15th Submarine Squadron of Kamchatka Flotilla—is rather interesting. According to Golosov, in 1974, a U.S. Navy surface officer informed the Soviet consulate (allegedly in Boston) that in 1968, his ship hit a submarine (supposedly a Soviet one) causing her to sink. A Boston newspaper then published a story on the subject.³⁷

Other possible explanations have included a main engine explosion (rejected by Russian Naval experts as “absolutely groundless technically,” though it should be noted that 37D diesel engines “had a tendency to explode”) and a battery explosion, although the explosive energy of hydrogen would not have been sufficient to destroy the pressure hull of K-129. Human error was also considered.³⁸

Even if Swordfish’s innocence could be proved, the U.S. Navy might still not be off the hook. According to Capt. Peter Huchthausen, a former U.S. Naval attaché in Moscow, until 1997, the identity of the U.S. vessel involved in the

35 Studies in Intelligence 1978.

36 Voznesensky worked as a TV journalist in Vladivostok. In 1990s, he moved to Moscow where he worked for the newspaper *Moscow News*, then on television, and then on the Pravda.ru website.

37 The Library of Congress (Serial and Government Publications Division – Newspaper and Current Periodical Room) was unable to locate a 1974 “Boston” newspaper article concerning the accidental sinking of a Soviet submarine. Further searches of electronic newspaper indices have not located an article of this type.

38 Voznesensky 2005.

K-129 incident was “closely guarded as a politically sensitive and potentially damaging secret.” In October of that year, a witness, who wished not to be named, told Huchthausen that the loss of K-129 had indeed resulted from either a collision or an accidental weapon launch by an unnamed U.S. Navy ship.³⁹

In the CIA’s view, K-129 sank due to an accident—cause unknown.⁴⁰ Some former Soviets including high-ranking Soviet naval officers, however, believe that Swordfish sank K-129. Others, mainly Ed Offley, a U.S. Navy Vietnam War veteran and military-reporting specialist, believe the Russians later sank the USS Scorpion (SSN-589), a Skipjack-class fast attack submarine, to revenge the alleged intentional sinking of K-129 by Swordfish. Incidentally, the Swordfish sailed from Naval Station Pearl Harbor, Hawaii bound for the Sea of Japan following an overhaul and refueling, and refresher training for her crew. This was on February 3, one day after the Scorpion had received her orders.

Offley’s conspiracy theory was spread in August 2007 with the publication of his book ‘Scorpion Down: Sunk by the Soviets, Buried by the Pentagon.’ Russian authors and former Soviet high-ranking naval officers do not unanimously argue that K-129 was deliberately sunk by a U.S. submarine, nor do they all agree that the Soviet Navy sank the Scorpion in retaliation.⁴¹

In Russia, the plot: “Scorpion was sunk in retaliation for the sinking of K-129” has been used in several articles, but only in a *review* of Offley’s discussion of his book on the topic; a presentation that took place a day earlier in Fairfax, Virginia. One such review appeared on the website of the RIA Novosti News Agency. The text of that review included a commentary by former Soviet Vice Admiral Vyacheslav Popov (Ret.)⁴² who concluded: “This is a purely journalistic fiction about the alleged clash of two submarines and the wreck of one of them as a result of a torpedo attack of the other.” Another article, based on a review of Offley’s book, was published on the website of the Russian online newspaper *Vzgliad* (“View”), the last paragraph of which describes Offley as a conspiracy theorist⁴³:

39 Huchthausen, Sheldon-Duplaix 2009: 172.

40 Studies in Intelligence 1978.

41 Offley 2007; Waddell 2013.

42 During Soviet era, Popov was not yet assigned to Commander of the Northern Fleet, a post he was promoted to on January 26, 1999. That same year, he was promoted from Vice Admiral to Admiral. After retiring in December 2001, Popov worked briefly at the Ministry of the Russian Federation for Atomic Energy, and between 2002 and 2011, he was a Senator from the Murmansk Oblast (Russia). Incidentally, Popov is the elder of three brothers each of whom became the commander of a submarine.

43 RIA Novosti News Agency, June 2007.

“Meanwhile, several veterans of the Russian submarine fleet, who were interviewed by the journalist of the newspaper *Viev*, gave nearly identical comments on the ‘Offley version,’ which boil down to two points: “The author is a conspiracy theorist who wants to ‘cut down the cabbages’ [a Russian expression] on long-standing tragedies. [And] the reasons for the wreck of the Soviet and American submarines can only be speculated.”⁴⁴

The Russians became convinced that K-129 was lost as the result of a collision with a U.S. submarine following the arrival of the damaged USS *Swordfish* at Yokosuka; this, plus the fact that K-129 had stopped communicating with its base only days earlier. According to Voznesensky, the Americans took unusual security measures when the damaged *Swordfish* arrived in port. For one, only American personnel were involved in the repairs. This practice Voznesensky called “routine.”⁴⁵

As for the “special” measures of secrecy, all documents related to U.S. nuclear submarines are marked NOFORN (“Not Releasable to Foreign Nationals”). Also, under no circumstance could a non-U.S. citizen approach the hull of the *Swordfish*. A Japanese staff worked part-time at the Naval Base at Yokosuka, of course, but none were ever allowed to set foot on the pier, let alone board the U.S. nuclear submarine.⁴⁶ While suspicions of the guilt of *Swordfish* continued for decades among some former Soviet/Russian officials, the U.S. Navy believed that K-129 had suffered a catastrophic internal explosion.⁴⁷

U.S. intelligence and naval officials have long denied U.S. involvement, and in 1975, after U.S. K-129 salvage efforts became public, the CIA denied having anything to do with the accident. According to Pentagon sources, the U.S. Navy brass did not even become aware of the accident until a massive, but apparently unsuccessful, search by Soviet vessels was observed in the area. U.S. officials later provided the burial-at-sea videotape for the six Soviet crew members whose remains were recovered during those salvage efforts. The videotape, parts of which were later broadcast on Russian television, reportedly was shown to the relatives of K-129 crew at an earlier date.⁴⁸

In 1975, the CIA announced the recovery of “part” of a sunken Soviet submarine that yielded military secrets that they thought might have “significant

44 Nechayev 2007.

45 Voznesensky 2005.

46 Voznesensky 2005.

47 Alpern 1975: 24.

48 Alpern 1975: 24.

national security implications.” The recovery was the culmination of a six-year intelligence effort involving construction of two huge vessels, ostensibly to pioneer commercial ocean mining of manganese nodules on the ocean floor, but whose actual purpose would be the recovery of the Russian submarine at a depth of several miles.⁴⁹

An analysis of the recovered wreckage supplied evidence confirming the Russians had been arming conventional undersea craft with Polaris-style nuclear missiles and also with nuclear-tipped torpedoes. In the CIA’s view, the discovery held great significance for the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT). What CIA agents learned also led them to believe they were on the verge of breaking the Russian code.⁵⁰

Swordfish Prompts Soviet Suspicions

About ten days before *Swordfish* arrived at Yokosuka for repairs, K-129, a Soviet G-II class nuclear-armed submarine, called by its side number, PL-574,⁵¹ sank with all hands in the Pacific Ocean, 1,560 miles northwest of Oahu, Hawaii. Retired Captain 1st Rank Pavel Dementyev said the captain of K-129, Vladimir Kobzar, and his commanding officer, Rear Admiral Viktor Dygalo, were both experienced and talented naval officers. With K-129 out of contact and overdue, the Soviets undertook “a massive two-month search effort covering a broad area from Petropavlovsk to the patrol area northeast of Hawaii.” Their search, however, was fruitless.⁵²

Russian suspicions of *Swordfish*’s involvement in the sinking of K-129 began when records indicated that the sub underwent nighttime repair of a bent periscope at Yokosuka. However, it is not known for certain how the Russians learned of this damaged U.S. nuclear submarine. According to one theory, KGB port watchers observed the arrival of the *Swordfish* in broad daylight at the U.S. Naval port of Yokosuka on March 17, 1968;⁵³ but did KGB port watchers exist in Japan?

During hearings before the U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services in the mid-1970s, Vice Admiral Daniel Murphy, Director of ASW [Anti-Submarine Warfare] and Ocean Surveillance programs in the Office of the Chief of Naval

49 Cohen, Reason 1975.

50 Cohen, Reason 1975.

51 “Investigation into 1968 Sinking of Submarine K-129,” *Izvestia*, July 3, 1992 (morning edition), p. 8 in JPRS Report: Central Eurasia, Military Affairs, Issue 28, FBIS (Foreign Broadcast Information Service), 1992.

52 Eckelb2007.

53 Murphy 2011.

Operations, discussed Soviet ocean surveillance systems, the purpose of which was to detect, locate, identify, and target U.S. surface ships. “They do have some submarine surveillance, but not much,” Murphy said. “They used electronic intelligence; that is, listening to our radars and our communications. [deleted] human intelligence is also employed—by that I mean port watchers, people who are watching our ships come and go.”⁵⁴

The prevailing theory, however, is that the Russians became aware of an article in a Japanese newspaper showing the *Swordfish* with bent mast docked at Yokosuka. A small article, with the heading “US Nuclear Sub Docks at Yokosuka, 21st time,” appeared on the front page of *Asahi Shimbun* (morning edition). Below a photo of the damaged sub, the caption reads: “The U.S. nuclear submarine *Swordfish* entered port with a bent periscope at wharf #7 of U.S. Navy Yokosuka Base.”⁵⁵

In an effort to convince the public that the damage to *Swordfish* was unrelated to the sub’s response to the North Korean seizure of the *USS Pueblo*, the Japanese article—quoting the U.S. Naval Command at Yokosuka—failed to mention “ice.” Instead, the article said the “damage was likely caused by *hyoryubutsu* [漂流物],” meaning flotsam or wreckage.⁵⁶ Beyond a mention of the *Swordfish*’s bent mast and her supposed collision with “flotsam or wreckage,” the article neglected to mention the real reason for *Swordfish*’s arrival at Yokosuka or her subsequent repair.⁵⁷

Following the *Swordfish*’s departure from Yokosuka, *Reuters* in Tokyo reported: “The Americans nuclear powered submarine *Swordfish* today left the United States Yokosuka Naval Base south of here after a nine-day visit for rest and supply.” Similarly, a small article in the *Cincinnati Enquirer* said the *Swordfish* arrived at Yokosuka for a “rest and recreation visit” for her 98-man crew.⁵⁸

In August 2000, in “Russians Suspicious of US in Sub,” AP reporter Robert Burns described Russia’s continued suspicions that *Swordfish* had played a role in the loss of K-129. When Moscow requested a copy of *Swordfish*’s deck logs to trace its movements, Burns said the Pentagon refused. Their refusal to turn over the deck logs to the Russians must have only further raised suspicions. Instead, the Americans would only say that the *Swordfish* was actually 2,000 miles from K-129 when it sank to the ocean floor. According

54 U.S. Senate 1975, 1976.

55 *Asahi Shimbun*, 1968.

56 *Asahi Shimbun*, 1968.

57 *Chicago Tribune*, 1968.

58 *Cincinnati Herald*, 1968: 16.

to Roger Schumacher, the Washington-based deputy director supporting the 2007 U.S.-Russian Joint Commission on POW/MIAs, a Commission created 15 years earlier to help account for U.S. military personnel who disappeared during the Cold War, the Americans had turned over “excerpts” from the deck logs of two U.S. nuclear submarines to the Russians in 1995: the Swordfish and the USS Halibut (SSGN/SSN-587),⁵⁹ a Special Operations platform capable of ASW (Anti-Submarine Warfare) operations, that was in the area of K-129 at the time. Unaware of the Swordfish’s role in the U.S. response to the Pueblo Incident, Burns could only speculate: Swordfish “apparently had a hand in some highly sensitive operations before and after the K-129 incident,” he said.⁶⁰ Little did he know that the Swordfish was actually sent in response to the North Korean seizure of the USS Pueblo, and that her mission was to conduct surveillance on the Soviet Fleet of ships and subs out of Vladivostok.

When Cdr. John Taylor Rigsbee, the captain of the Swordfish, heard about the Soviet interest in his damaged submarine, he said he was surprised to learn that anyone even noticed Swordfish’s bent periscope, or how the damage might have resulted from a collision with a Soviet submarine. At the time, it seemed all eyes were on Mount Fuji, he said, which looked especially magnificent the day Swordfish pulled into port. Soviet intelligence, it seems, wasn’t gazing at the horizon after all.⁶¹

Could the USS Swordfish have sunk K-129 and still managed to arrive at Yokosuka, Japan on March 17, 1968? No. When Swordfish departed Pearl Harbor in early-February, in response to the Pueblo Incident, she headed straight to the Sea of Japan post haste. There, she conducted surveillance along the North Korean and/or Soviet coasts. And on the day of the K-129 disaster, a chart in a 1968 CNO Briefing Note shows her parked just south of Vladivostok, some 2000 miles from the spot where the wreckage of K-129 was later discovered: QED.

Only recently, a show on Russian television (“Mysteries of the Century with Sergei Medvedev: The Mystery of the Sinking of the K-129”) again addressed the possibility that Swordfish sank a Soviet submarine. First broadcast on September 2, 2019 at 20:25 (Moscow time) on Russian TV’s *Zvezda* (“The Star”),⁶² a channel associated with the Russian Ministry of Defense, the show’s

59 In February 1965, the USS Halibut became a unique nuclear-powered guided missile submarine turned Special Operations platform capable of ASW (Anti-Submarine Warfare) operations.

60 Burns 2000, Eckel 2007.

61 Sontag, Drew 1998: 79–80n.

62 <https://tvzvezda.ru/schedule/programs/content/201608171125-c7qn.htm/2019921748-S0ljQ.html>

experts expressed a wide range of opinions, including the long-standing rumor that Swordfish had rammed K-129, either intentionally or accidentally.

Although Sergei Medvedev, a Russian journalist, filmmaker, and host of the TV show, rejects all notions of Swordfish's guilt, he repeated a suggestion by others that Swordfish may have shadowed K-129 since it departed Krasheninnikov Bay. This scenario, too, however, is simply not possible since at the time of K-129's demise the USS Swordfish was preoccupied with responding to the Pueblo Incident.

Our Consultants

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Discourse on motherhood and childrearing: the role of women in North Korea

Abstract

The implementation of socialism in North Korea required the large-scale involvement of women in economic relations. In order to align the rights of women and men in social life, the government pursued a policy of gender equality, conducting extensive advocacy among the female population aimed at a transformation of the understanding of women's social roles and the nature of femininity. In the original context of women being encouraged to be workers and passionate contributors to the construction of the socialist state, the traditional stance on women as caring mothers and wives was supplemented with internationalist rhetoric on womanhood. However, with the transition to the Juche-oriented socialism, the discourse on women was modified, increasing the emphasis on motherhood and childrearing and reducing internationalism. Based on an analysis of the women's magazine *The Korean Woman* (*Joseon Nyeoseong*), the present study analyses discourses on motherhood and childrearing in 21st century North Korea. The preliminary results of the research show that, while motherhood remains an essential component of the discourse on women, it is formulated in terms of building a powerful socialist state.

Keywords: childrearing, discourse, Juche, motherhood, North Korea parenting, socialism.

Introduction

Since the early stage of state building, the development of women's rights has been one of the urgent tasks of domestic North Korean policymaking. Soon after the liberation from Japanese colonisation, the North Korean leadership began to implement social-democratic reforms under the influence of the Soviet Union aimed at the elimination of Korea's postcolonial heritage and semi-feudal economic structure. In 1946, two laws were adopted that significantly affected the social status of Korean women, contributing to the formation of a new discourse on women that contrasted sharply from the previous views on femininity. The Law on Labour (24 June 1946) and the Law on Equal Rights for Men and Women (30 July 1946) specifically promoted women's involvement in the unfolding process of nation building. Regarding the emergence of a new gender discourse, these laws facilitated the construction of a new image of

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Korean women as socially active and equal subjects of social relations. The new image of women was imposed on the mass consciousness both through the enactment of actual policies and media propaganda. Since gender equality was an essential component of the labour policy, it was largely through an alignment of women and men in labour relations that the government could make its policies on gender equality more effective. No less important here was transforming people's minds to ensure they embraced the new values such as gender (social) equality and civic activism.

The Labour Law established uniform labour standards, wages and social benefits irrespective of gender. In particular, it introduced an 8-hour working day, a minimum working age of 14 years and compulsory annual 2-week leave, as well as various social benefits (e.g. due to temporary loss of the ability to work, illness, loss of a breadwinner, pregnancy, etc.). Moreover, for the first time in Korean history, the Labour Law introduced compulsory maternity leave, which was initially set at 77 days – 35 days before full term and 42 days after. During this time, the woman was paid an allowance, which was equivalent to the average salary for the last 6 months (Art. 14-15). Working women with children under the age of one year were also given the legal right to leave twice a day for 30 minutes to feed their baby.

The Law on Equal Rights for Men and Women gave Korean women equal rights to men in all areas of economic and political life, including to work and rest, to receive equal pay for equal work, to receive social benefits and education. The Law also prohibited polygamy, prostitution, concubinage, as well as the buying and selling of women generally. Korean women were granted the same rights as men in respect of marriage, divorce, the selection of a spouse, assignment of alimony rights and inheritance. The long-standing Korean practice of forced marriage was strictly forbidden.² According to the Law, the emancipation of women was interpreted in terms of class liberation or liberation from class exploitation. Thus, the social liberation of women was seen as a necessary basis for the implementation of the socialist stage of the Korean revolution.³ At the same time, Korean women were deprived of privacy and coerced into public positions. In this way, women began to be considered as an integral part of the Korean proletariat and, as such, could be mobilised for any tasks of the governing Labour Party of Korea.

Along with the adoption of new legislation ensuring the implementation of gender equality policy, a new discourse on women started to develop. In this study, we will consider “discourse” to comprise “a particular way of

2 Kim Il-sung 1980: 334–336.

3 Kim Il-sung 1980: 210.

talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)”⁴ The analysis of the discourse on women presented here, which is based on a social constructivist approach⁵, theoretically implies that there is a link between knowledge and social process and between knowledge and social action. In private, since the main domain of forming the discourse consists in texts that can take many forms (written documents, terminology, verbal statements, signs, gestures, etc.)⁶, the discourse on women is constructed not only through governmental policies on women, but also through propaganda disseminated via the media. Discursive practices produce meanings of social actions and identities. As discussed by Mark Hearn and Grant Michelson, “these constructive processes help to further reveal and illuminate underlying power relations in social structures as dominant meanings associated with particular discourse emerge by way of contestation. The dominant meaning occurs as alternative discourses are marginalised or subverted”⁷.

In this study, the main source for the analysis of the discourse on women in North Korea consists of a women’s magazine *The Korean Woman*. I examine how motherhood and childrearing are presented in the narrative of the magazine and what this might mean from the point of understanding the social reality of North Korea in the 21st century. The study aims to demonstrate the basic discursive practices on motherhood and childrearing that are continuously reproduced on the pages of *The Korean Woman* through specific language and images. By comparing the latest editions of *The Korean Woman* with issues published during the 1960s, I show what new elements have been introduced in the discourse on women despite relative similarities between the discursive practices of the 1960s and the 2000s.

***The Korean Woman* as a political instrument of the Socialist Women’s Union of Korea and the Labour Party of Korea**

In November 1945, the Democratic Women’s Union of Korea (*Joseon Minjujuui Yeoseong Dongmaeng*⁸) was established in North Korea.⁹ Since 1946, it has published a monthly magazine *The Korean Woman* (*Joseon Nyeoseong*) aimed at educating and informing Korean women about different

4 Jorgensen, Philips 2002: 1.

5 Fairclough 1992; Burr 1995.

6 Hearn, Michelson 2006.

7 Hearn, Michelson 2006: 9.

8 With the exception of the personal names of the three North Korean leaders – Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il and Kim Jong-un, Revised Romanisation of Korean is used for transcribing Korean words throughout the article.

9 In 2016, at the VI Congress of the Women’s Union, it was renamed into the Socialist Women’s Union of Korea (*Joseon Sahojujuui Nyeoseong Dongmaeng*).

aspects of life (political, economic, psychological, family etc.). The magazine is distributed among the members of the Women's Union for free but is also available for other women – i.e. non-members – to read. It focuses mainly on the political consciousness of women and their moral image as citizens and labourers of the socialist state. *The Korean Woman* is the only monthly magazine published by the Women's Union.

When carrying out this study, I analysed available editions of *The Korean Woman* published during 2018 and the first half of 2019. For a better understanding of the evolution of the discourse on women, I compared the latest editions of the magazine with its issues from the 1940 to the 1970s.¹⁰ The number and titles of sections in the magazine varied from time to time. In the issues for 2018-2019, the following regular sections appear: Eternal Sun of Juche (*Jucheui Yeongwonhan Taeyang*), Eternal Sun of Songun (*Yeongwonhan Seongun Taeyang*), The Extraordinary Hero (*Huiseui Cheonchur Wiin*), Woman General of Paektusan (*Baekdusanui Nyeojanggun*), Comments on Principles of Juche (*Juche Sasang Wolli Haeseol*), History Reports (*Ryeoksaneun Gobalhandanda*), Socialist Morale and Life (*Sahoejuuidodeok-gwa Saenghwal*), Everlasting History and Folk Customs (*Yuguhan Ryeoksa-wa Minsok*), Common Sense (*Sangsik*), Information Industry and Building the Powerful Technological State (*Jeongbosaneop-gwa Gwahak Gisul Gangguk Geonseol*). As can be seen from the titles of sections, they focus mainly on political aspects of female life, especially ideology and morale. Articles are written by members of the Women's Union, the magazine's correspondents and the editorial team. With the exception of a few articles (on humour, Korean food, sayings) most of them begin by quoting Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il and Kim Jong-un's speeches. Although all the articles are addressed to North Korean women, motherhood and child-rearing issues are primarily discussed in the History Reports and Common Sense sections.

The magazine, which is predominantly printed in black and white, has a 4-page colour tab. The cover, which has not been changed in over 20 years, is printed in red and white and features the image of three Korean women, behind whom are represented the Tower of Juche and the flying Korean flag. In the foreground stands a woman in traditional *hanbok* Korean dress holding a book (the image of a scientist). On her left stands a woman who is visually representative of the image of a mother and a worker. On the right stands a woman resembling a sportswoman.

10 This study is based on analysis of the following issues of *The Korean Woman*: 2018 – № 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7; 2019 – № 4, 5, 6; 1947 – № 2, 3; 1953 – № 3, 7, 8, 9; 1965 – № 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10; 1976 – № 1, 5-6, 7, 10, 11-12.

Considering the content and external appearance of *The Korean Woman*, it clearly does not conform to the image of the women's magazine that is familiar to the European reader. However, in order to analyse the discourse comprising the magazine's content, it is necessary to go beyond one's ideological and cultural prejudices to better understand the essence of Korean women's life which is significantly influenced by mass propaganda. In this study, the task of explaining practical aspects of maternity or childrearing in North Korea is not attempted since it is difficult to objectively verify the governmental policies towards these matters. Rather, I set out to examine the discourses on women, which are still cultivated by the state through various instruments (mass media, public campaigns, education). *The Korean Woman* was selected for this purpose since it is one of the instruments used to continuously generate and disseminate a discourse on women in North Korea with the definite aim of standardising women's consciousness and mode of life.

Childrearing issues in the discourse on women

The Korean Woman raises issues connected with the psychological (moral, emotional), intellectual and physical development of children. Although a mother is considered the first pedagogue for her children¹¹, in the narrative on childrearing gender roles are often not divided and the editorial addresses itself to both parents, i.e. mother and father. In any case, it is assumed that the responsibility of the mother for a child's education is higher than that of the father. In 1998, as a means of increasing the responsibility and strengthening the role of women in childrearing, a Day of the Child's Education (*Janyeo Gyoyang-ui Nal*) was established, which continues to be celebrated on 14th October. On this day, members of the Union of Socialist Women distribute materials on exemplary methods for motherhood and education, as well as arranging seminars and meetings on child's education. Through the organisation of public movements of the exemplary kindergartens and nurseries, the North Korean leadership aims to increase women's awareness of the childhood education methods and reinforce the strong belief that parenting is the main duty of women.¹² *The Korean Woman* often publishes articles with headlines such as "Strengthening the Role of Mothers in Children's Education", "Strengthening the Role of Members of the Union of Socialist Women in Children's Education and Upbringing", "Strengthening the Role and Responsibility of Mothers" which focus on women's obligations as mothers and children's primary educators.

11 The editorial addresses to Kim Il-sung's words "A talented mother stands behind a talented child, and an outstanding teacher stands behind a talented mother". *The Korean Woman*, 2019 (6): 5.

12 *The Korean Woman* 2018 (6): 14.

In an article entitled “A Child’s Smile”, it is asserted that mothers should consider the emotional state of a child during childrearing. According to this article, from the second month onwards, a child begins to react to and imitate the emotions of adults. Therefore, during childrearing, a mother should show positive emotions towards a child in order to raise him or her in an atmosphere of love and joy. A smile expresses the different emotional states of the person – joy, satisfaction, love. If a mother rarely caresses and smiles to a child, then when he grows up he will rarely smile too. The article concludes with the idea that cultivating positive emotions in a child from the first days of his life is one of the key tasks of childrearing.¹³

From the point of view of the emotional development of the child, it seems worth mentioning the article *Patriotism Begins with the Family* that refers to the words of Kim Jong-il about the necessity of celebrating children’s birthdays. It is stated that, through celebrating a birthday, receiving toys and eating delicious food, a child experiences positive emotions and absorbs parental love, with this love then being transformed into devotion to the motherland. The authors cite the Korean proverb “Only if the water is clean from above it is clear below”, which means that if children love their parents, they will love their country too. Thus, love for the motherland is to be gradually instilled in children by parents from early childhood¹⁴ and one of the ways to implement this task is by arranging birthday parties for children. Some other ways for raising a psychologically healthy child are described as giving moderate praise¹⁵ and keeping promises that were given to children by their parents.¹⁶

In the state-approved North Korean discourse, psychological health implies instilling such character traits in the child that will help him to become a socially active, goal-oriented, credible person with solid moral principles. One of the articles raises the question “What should we do to instill a love for comrades in a child?”. Here it is stated that parents have an obligation to encourage sympathy for others in their children. Thus, a child should not be allowed to focus solely on his or her needs but should also express concern for others. Parents should permit children to spend time at the playground so that they can communicate with their peers; moreover, they should not concern themselves too much with conflicts and tensions that arise between children. Rather, parents should demonstrate by their own examples to children how to behave decently.¹⁷

13 The Korean Woman 2018 (1): 31.

14 The Korean Woman 2018 (1):10.

15 The Korean Woman 2019 (4): 53.

16 The Korean Woman 2018 (7): 37.

17 The Korean Woman 2018 (1): 54.

For a child's mental development, it is important to place him or her in complicated life situations so that they are able to make decisions, express their own points of view, taking the attitudes of others into account. An article entitled "What should we do to teach children to think?" stresses that parents should read poems, help to solve puzzles and talk about scientific topics with their children at home. In stimulating a child's craving for knowledge, parents should teach them to clearly express their point of view.¹⁸ *The Korean Woman's* editorial emphasises that experience-based education (*gyeongheom gyoyug*) facilitates the development of a better understanding of the corresponding situation, while invention-based education (*chagsang gyoyug*) teaches people how to produce new knowledge.¹⁹

While a great deal of attention is paid to psychological health (emotional, moral), *The Korean Woman* also raises the issue of physical growth and the role of parents in raising tall children. It states that since parents know their children's character and psychological and physical state better than anyone else, they should take more responsibility for their children's growth. Recently, North Koreans have not hesitated to consult specialists (it is not specified what kind of specialists) on how to achieve physical growth.²⁰ The editorial describes some methods that are thought to stimulate physical growth. The first of these consists of doing sports that include running, since it is believed that running causes immediate muscle contraction that stimulates the growth of bones. Through repeating these physical exercises, the cells responsible for the growth of bones are invigorated, thus accelerating the growth of bones and joints.²¹ The editorial advises doing sports in the evening two hours after dinner and to wipe ones' feet and body with a damp towel moistened with cold water after finishing physical exercises.²²

The articles related to the physical health of children provide recommendations for women about what to do if a child has a cold (it is advised to give an antipyretic, to avoid bathing babies and to maintain a room temperature of 20 °C) or a runny nose.²³ The parents should carefully administer medicine to children following a doctor's recommendations. According to the articles, one should not be reckless when giving an antipyretic to a sick child. In addition, it is forbidden to give aspirin to children. Although paracetamol is a good antipyretic, it can cause some complications, so it should only be used

18 The Korean Woman 2019 (5): 53.

19 The Korean Woman 2019 (4): 55.

20 The Korean Woman 2019 (5): 53.

21 The Korean Woman 2019 (5): 52.

22 The Korean Woman 2019 (6): 49.

23 The Korean Woman 2018 (4): 43.

temporarily. It is also advised not to be reckless by giving a cold medicine because it may not be clear for what reasons a child has a cough, whether this is because of a cold or asthma. In such cases, it is recommended to follow doctor's instructions.²⁴

Thus, it can be seen that the narrative on childrearing is structured around the mother's moral obligations as the first pedagogue for her children and in carrying out other parental duties. It is clearly believed that how a person has been educated in childhood significantly affects his or her behaviour in adulthood. Since the moral image of a woman is of utmost importance for the successful construction of a powerful socialist state, the psychological education of children, including their moral, emotional upbringing, also becomes of key importance.

Of course, the recommendations for raising physically healthy children may sound a bit naïve and primitive from the point of view of 21st century medicine. It could be concluded that North Koreans are still using medicines sent from the Soviet Union in a previous era. Since *The Korean Woman* does not mention any new approaches that could be applied by parents in rearing their children, its overall narrative would appear to retain a conservative, old-fashioned stance on childrearing.

Exemplary motherhood under Juche-oriented socialism

From the end of the 1960s, the cult of Kim Il-sung's mother Kang Pan-sok and his first wife Kim Jong-suk began to develop in North Korea. These two women were presented as exemplary mothers, daughters-in-law and wives. Without exaggeration, it can be said that they form a collective image of an ideal woman, who is both a mother and a wife, as well as a passionate contributor to the Korean revolution. Besides Kang Pan-sok and Kim Jong-suk, who still remain at the apogee of the ideal Korean womanhood, the official propaganda also counts as outstanding women former members of the women's unit operating within the guerrillas led by Kim Il-Sung in 1930s (Choi Hui-sung, An Sun-hwa, Han Ju-ae), as well as many ordinary women held up as heroines of labour who were able to succeed professionally at the same time as bringing up talented children.

As a rule, foreigners are rarely mentioned as exemplary women. Analysing the early editions of *The Korean Woman* from the end of the 1940s–early 1950s I found a mention of Nadezhda Krupskaya, one of the Bolshevik leaders and wife of Lenin²⁵; also, a female representative of the Stakhanov's movement

²⁴ *The Korean Woman* 2019 (4): 37.

²⁵ *The Korean Woman* 1947 (3): 55.

in Romania²⁶; and of Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya, a Soviet partisan and one of the most revered heroines of the Soviet Union. Although *The Korean Woman* narrated a history of women's movements in socialist countries (in Czechoslovakia, the USSR), and even the development of women's rights in the West²⁷, these were relatively random publications aimed at enabling Korean women to act in solidarity with the international women's movement. Through these texts, Korean women were gradually taught to perceive themselves as an integral part of the working class without national borders and to go beyond their local, traditional views on female behavior and occupational roles. Initially, celebrating motherhood as a trait of femininity seemed less significant for the young North Korean leadership than developing women's professional skills and political consciousness. The magazine depicted an idealised Korean woman as a strong, passionate and socially active person. This may help to explain why the editors appealed to the images of famous females of the socialist world who were known more as outstanding citizens of the respective socialist states than as mere mothers, or might not even be mothers at all. The awakening and internalisation of the political consciousness of Korean women was an essential part of gender politics throughout the 1950s and early 1960s.²⁸ However, the adoption of Juche as a state ideology at the end of the 1960s significantly influenced the political discourse, along with the editions of *The Korean Woman*, which became more nationalistic in their approach to portraying women's social duties and roles. The initial portrayals of the idealised woman began to include notions such as caring, moral virtue and modesty, which referred to the traditional image of "the wise mother and good wife" (*hyeong-mo-yang-cho*).²⁹ However, this should not be seen in

26 *The Korean Woman* 1953 (9): 62.

27 *The Korean Woman* 1947 (2): 21; 1953 (7): 17.

28 Charles Armstrong, Adam Cathcart and Charles Kraus extensively wrote on internationalism in the cultural policies of the DPRK in the end of 1940s–1950s. Armstrong Charles K., 'The Cultural Cold War in Korea, 1945–1950', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 2003, 62 (1), pp. 71–99; Adam Cathcart and Charles Kraus, 'Internationalist Culture in North Korea, 1945–1950', *The Review of Korean Studies*, 2008, 11, pp. 123–148.

29 In one of her articles on motherhood in North Korea, Suzy Kim argued that motherhood as a concept should take on a very broad interpretation soon after the liberation of Korea from Japanese imperialism. This reconfiguration of women's duties occurred at the early stage of the state-building in North Korea. Suzy Kim, 'Revolutionary mothers: women in the North Korean revolution, 1945–1950', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 2010, 52 (4), p. 760. I agree with her, but with some reservations. While Kim examines only the first five years of North Korean statehood, in my research I analyse the discourse on women in its development from the end of 1940s. Although for all this time the discourse was politicised and aimed to form an image of woman who sacrifices for everyone, not only for her family but also for society as a whole, there are some nuances in representation of women's image and in the narrative on women that could not be discovered by Kim due to the limited chronological scope of her study.

terms of a straightforward return to the traditional image of the ideal woman, whose role was primarily that of a housekeeper rearing children and caring for her parents-in-law and husband, since the traditional image was supplemented with a new vision of a woman's role under Juche-oriented socialism. Whereas previously it had been a behaviour-based model focused on the socioeconomic and political behaviour of Korean women, the primary model for a woman from the 1970s onward became the image of a revolutionary mother dedicated to the Party and its leader. The state encouraged women to be feminine superheroes, who excel in all areas of life both social and personal. Motherhood has become significantly important for a woman as a citizen of the DPRK.

The large-scale implementation of the Juche ideology resulted in the virtual elimination of internationalist rhetoric from gender discourse since the early 1970s. Analysing the latest editions of *The Korean Woman* for 2018 and the first half of 2019 I found only one mention of a foreign woman: the famous Polish (and naturalised French) physicist and chemist Marie Skłodowska-Curie (1867-1934). The article entitled "The Role of Home and Parents in Children's Education" is about the family Marie Skłodowska-Curie grew up in and how her parents influenced her life choices. The father of Marie taught mathematics and physics in middle school. Marie's mother was also an educated woman. "Being surrounded by such people, from early childhood Marie loved to learn and read a lot of books in spare time".³⁰ The article emphasises that Marie and her husband Pierre raised their children in love for learning so that later the eldest daughter Helen was also awarded the Nobel Prize (jointly with her husband Frédéric Joliot-Curie, in 1935). The second daughter "was brought up in the spirit of self-reliance and with the idea that it was important not to earn money but to improve oneself".³¹ In conclusion, the editorial opined that it is through outstanding family education, such as experienced in Marie Skłodowska-Curie's family, that parents determine the life goals of their children, influence their life choices and thereby form the basis for their further achievements. "Parents have to bring up creditable children, who can contribute to the revolution and the socialist state. Moreover, they have to create a healthy environment for children at home, which is capable of showing them the shortest way to success".³²

The editions of *The Korean Woman* are full of images of ordinary Korean women who raise children in the name of the greatest future of the socialist state. In this regard, the discourse on women retains most of the ideas that were initially expressed in the 1950-60s, such as revolutionary consciousness, loyalty to the party and its leadership, exemplary motherhood and exemplary

30 *The Korean Woman* 2018 (1): 54.

31 *The Korean Woman* 2018 (1): 54.

32 *The Korean Woman* 2018 (1): 54.

citizenship. It is evident that the ideas of total devotion to building socialism still dominate the discourse on women. This is demonstrated by numerous articles calling on women-members and non-members of the Union of Socialist Women to display patriotism, which is necessary for building a powerful socialist state (*sahoejuui ganggug geonseol*). In principle, this translates to the continued importance for the North Korean leadership of the political consciousness, civic activism and patriotism displayed by women retaining significant traits of an essentially feminine character and idealised womanhood, including motherhood.

However, there are some nuances that make the current discourse on women different from that of the mid-1960s. For example, by contrast with the latest issues of *The Korean Woman*, the editions published during the mid-1960s contained more visual images of fashionable Korean women, hairstyles and clothes design. Perhaps what is most surprising is that none of the older editions referred to Kim Il-sung's speeches on feminine beauty. Unlike the current discourse on women, which contains many references to Kim Il-sung's speeches concerning the correlation between women's appearance and the successful construction of a socialist state, the discourse of the mid-1960s did not mention women's appearance as a premise for the successful implementation of socialism in Korea. In this regard, the narrative on women's fashion (clothes and hair) has been de-ideologised. In the mid-1960s, although the discourse on women's fashion reflected the practical aspects of wearing clothes as it does today, it was more expressive in terms of production of stylish and colourful women's clothes. This is evidenced by the colour tabs in the magazine, on which the models demonstrate summer clothes: dresses of traditional and European style, skirts (no trousers), blouses, etc.³³ Moreover, in the magazine's section "Love, Marriage and Family" (*Sarang, Gyeolhon, Gajeong*), the gender discourse was more intimate and emotive than it is today. It may seem hard to imagine that 50 years ago *The Korean Woman* openly discussed issues of infertility, feminine attractiveness, excessive weight, as well as complications in relationships between mothers-in-law, sisters-in-law and daughters-in-law. Nevertheless, a woman's happiness was seen in terms of being at the same time a mother, a wife and a worker, who could greatly contribute to the public production so that not only her family would be proud of her, but society as a whole. As Gim Seonok, the head of the production department of a winery in Ganggye, recounted – having worked in the factory for six years, she understood that even as a mother and a wife, if a woman cannot contribute to society she is conducting an empty life and cannot be completely happy.³⁴

33 *The Korean Woman* 1965 (6): 129–130; 1965 (2): 122.

34 *The Korean Woman* 1965 (2): 34.

The notion of “happiness”, however, is no longer directly referred to in the discourse on women. Reading the articles of *The Korean Woman* of 2018-2019, the reader is left to indirectly infer what could make a woman happy from descriptions of what one should do to in order to be an ideal woman. By comparing the narrative on women’s happiness of the mid-1960s with the contemporary one, it can be seen that they use similar notions such as “contribute” (*ibajida*), “revolution” (*hyeongmyeong*), “wife” and “mother” (*anhae, eomeoni*) but instead of a narrative developed in terms of “active contributing to a building of the powerful socialist state” as it sounds today, they spoke about “making one’s contribution to society”. This means that the concept of “the powerful socialist state” was not so massively imposed on North Koreans in the 1960s. Moreover, an appeal to Kim Il-sung’s views on women’s beauty was not deemed necessary to explain why Korean women should concern themselves about their appearance. In both cases, the source of women’s happiness was considered to not only be found in private life, but collective social life too.

The latest magazine’s issues focus substantially on the moral education of women and children, since the mother is thought to be the first pedagogue for a child. The fourth issue of *The Korean Woman* in 2019 opens with excerpts of Kim Jong-un’s speech on the moral spirit (*dodeog gipung*). “We have to make great efforts for educating socialist morale”. “The members of the Union of the Socialist Women must play a pioneering role in establishing a socialist spirit of life and morale in the whole society”. “Weakening of morale leads to spiritual illness and the impossibility of defending the socialist ideology, system and tradition”. “We must install moral rectitude in the women – not only members of the Union of the Socialist Women, but all other women. If we cannot do this, then they and their families and children can easily get sick. The members of the Union and women have to hold moral obligations and responsibility in front of society and family as wives and daughters-in-law, they have to respect neighbours and teachers, as well as to revere the revolutionary elders”.³⁵ Although Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il also emphasised the significance of moral discipline for building a powerful socialist state, *The Korean Woman* typically refers to the words of the current leader of the DPRK in the aspect of moral education.

The magazine encourages Korean women to have many children. In the article by Baek Mihwa, it is said that “women open up great prospects for the nation, ensure the prosperity of the state and make it stronger by delivering many children and raising them commendably”.³⁶ Baek Mihwa says that

35 The Korean Woman 2019 (4): 3.

36 The Korean Woman 2019 (6): 50.

today there are many women who believe that delivering many children and raising them is the true duty of women. She quotes the words of Kim Jong-il who once said that “By giving birth to many sons and daughters, women implement a patriotic affair that ensures the future of the motherland”.³⁷ Baek Mi-hwa points out that “Our Mother-Party and motherland award with a title of mother-heroine those women who give birth to many children and excellently raise them, thus they highly evaluate these women as patriots and make their lives inestimable”.³⁸ In conclusion, she encourages Korean women to bear more children and raise them decently following the patterns of those women who patriotically committed their lives to the prosperity of the country and nation. As if arguing with Baek Mihwa, however, Jo Jeongae, a member of the Mangyeongdae district unit of the Union of Socialist Women, says that a woman who raises one child deserves the same degree of trust and respect as a woman who raised 10 children if she devotes all her energy to child rearing. To support this position, she tells her own story of life in which she, a mother of two children – a son and a daughter – has often felt boundless pride and confidence for herself and family since both her children joined the army. Jo Jeongae concludes her story by appealing to Korean women: “The future of the motherland is a future of our children. If we cherish the future of our children, let us take up our responsibilities and fulfil our duties as mothers by caring for our precious families through generations”.³⁹

The labour legislation of the DPRK protects the interests and rights of working mothers of many children (more than three). Moreover, the legislation provides measures that stimulate women’s working activities and delivering children. In 1969, in order to encourage continuity of employment of mothers with three and more children, the government reduced their working hours from eight hours per day to six. The Law on Socialist Labour adopted in 1978, in accordance with the principle of socialist distribution, provided equal payment for men and women for equal work and annual paid leave from seven to 21 days, in addition to 14 days off on public holidays. In 1986, maternity leave was increased from 77 days to 150 days: 60 days before the child’s delivery and 90 after. Since 2015, maternity leave in the DPRK has been increased to 240 days: 60 before childbirth and 180 days after.⁴⁰

37 The Korean Woman 2019 (6): 50.

38 The Korean Woman 2019 (6): 50.

39 The Korean Woman 2019 (6): 52.

40 Jo Jeonghun 2016.

North Korean sayings on childrearing and parenthood

North Korean sayings on motherhood and childrearing reflect a modern approach of the state to the family as a social institute. Motherhood is analysed in terms of a nuclear family. *The Korean Woman* never mentions single mothers rearing children. Mothers are always presented as a part of the nuclear family, which consists of a husband, wife and children (as well as grandparents or parents-in-law). As I mentioned above, mothers having more than three children are the object of special honour and respect from the state and society. However, the issue of a large family rearing many children is not raised in North Korean sayings, at least not in *The Korean Woman*. This once again confirms that motherhood is understood as a universal phenomenon, which does not depend on the number of children and living conditions. No matter how many children a woman has and under what conditions she lives, she is obliged to be an exemplary mother for her children according to the Juche-style socialist value system.

The sayings describe behaviour patterns that women and children should follow in social life. As a rule, the editorial explains in detail the meaning of each saying. In some cases, they are accompanied by short instructive stories, which clarify the meaning and explain the origins. The proverb “Reverent parents bring up reverent sons” (*bu-hyo-ja-hyo*) means that if parents themselves are reverent sons and daughters, then their children will also become reverent sons and daughters.⁴¹ The magazine refers to the origins of the saying thus: Once upon a time in one family lived a daughter-in-law who was very disrespectful towards her mother-in-law. She blamed the mother-in-law for not working and eating all day long, so she put food for her on the smallest plate. One day, a grandson who looked at disrespectful behaviour of his mother every day deliberately broke the grandmother’s plate but did not tell about this to his mother. When his mother asked him whether he knew where the plate was he lied to her answering: “I have hidden the plate to put food into it for you when I get married.” The son’s words made his mother, the daughter-in-law, realise that she, too, would soon have to experience what her mother-in-law was facing up to now. Thus, the story tells how the daughter-in-law conceived her misbehaviour and from the next day began to treat her mother-in-law respectfully in order to become an example for her children.

Although this story teaches North Koreans, both men and women, to revere their parents, nevertheless, as we see, in the centre of the narrative is not a man, but a woman, a daughter-in-law who disrespects her mother-in-

41 *The Korean Woman* 2018 (2): 43.

law. Traditionally, Korean women after marriage had to treat their parents-in-law with special honour and loyalty because disrespectful behaviour towards them was a major sin and a reason for divorce. Since a divorced woman was doomed to loneliness and social isolation until her death, she unquestioningly obeyed her parents-in-law. The liberation of Korea from Japanese colonialism and further ideological changes that occurred in North Korean society after 1945 did not much affect the patriarchal structure of family relations. Socialist ideology did not eradicate the Confucian heritage but instead reinterpreted existing rules of family relationships under the new theoretical framework. The current official discourse on motherhood and childrearing in North Korea does not refer to Confucianism at all. Rather, it states that caring for parents (parents-in-law) is a moral imperative in socialist ethics. If a person does not care for his/her parents it means that he/she does not care for the state. In North Korean ideology, familial relations are similar to relations within the whole state. For this reason, the party is compared with the mother and the great leader Kim Il-sung, i.e. with the father of the nation.⁴² In other words, reverence as a category of Confucian ethics is explained in the framework of the socialist ideology as a concern for the collective, a state which cannot be prosperous if the younger ones do not respect the older ones.

There is a Korean saying “Treasure is not the wife who has a lot of money, but one whose heart is full of love” (*don manh-eun an-hae-bo-da jeong manh-eun an-hae-ga bo-mul-i-da*).⁴³ In traditional Korean society, women were taught to be modest, kind and humble. In the current discourse on women in North Korea, kindness and modesty as fundamental traits of women’s character are not mentioned. Instead, the discourse reference such a notion as *jeong*, which means devotion, love, affection and sincerity.

There are many proverbs related to rearing children according to moral principles and rules. The proverb “Do not think about how to save money, but rather teach your children to read and write” (*don mo-a-jul saeng-gag-mal-go ja-sig-e-ge geul-eul ga-leu-chi-la*) instructs Koreans not to think about saving money, rather educate their children in good faith, because it is not money that makes one succeed in life, but knowledge and skills. The proverbs “The good child is the pride of a family and the bad child is its misery” (*joh-eun ja-sig-eun jib-an-ui ja-lang-i-go ag-han ja-sig-eun jib-an-ui bul-haeng-i-da*), “If you did

42 The article “Parental Love for Workers” (*Lo-dong-ja-leul wi-ha-si-neun eo-beo-i-sa-lang*) tells how the great leader Kim Il-sung took care about ordinary workers like their father. In Korean, it is used a term “eobeoi” which literally means parents, that is, the father and mother together. The image of a caring father was subsequently applied to all leaders of the DPRK – Kim Jong-il, Kim Jong-un. *The Korean Woman*, 2018 (5): 7; 2018 (3): 11.

43 *The Korean Woman* 2018 (2): 43.

not farm well, then you will lose a year; if you have not properly raised your children you will suffer for all your life” (*nong-sa-leul jal jis-ji mos-ha-myeon han-hae-leul mang-chi-go ja-sig-eul jal ga-leu-chi-ji mos-ha-myeon il-saeng hae-leul ib-neun-da*) emphasises how it is important to raise children properly in order to avoid problems in the future and succeed in life.⁴⁴ In this regard, it seems that in the 21st century North Korea retains the basic Confucian idea of the Joseon era (1392-1910), in which the child’s social success was one of the main criteria for assessing a woman’s personal success. If a child or a husband succeeded in social life it meant that he had been excellently brought up by his mother or remarkably cared by his wife so that a woman could be awarded a title of *yeolbu* (virtuous / chaste wife).

All arguments about the welfare of the family in North Korea are associated with children. The saying “Children fill the house with happiness” (*a-i-deul-i iss-neun jib-e haeng-bog-i gis-deun-da*) stresses that children make a family happy. Those families who do not have children cannot be truly happy. “Children’s bravery makes their mother younger” (*a-i-deul-ui yong-gam-seong-eun eo-meo-ni-leul jeolm-ge han-da*) states that those children who strive for their goals transfer this energy to parents, making them younger.⁴⁵ Children are the core of the family. It is obvious that, within the current approach to the definition of a happy family in North Korea, marriage implies having children, while in the West child-free marriages are becoming popular.⁴⁶ In South Korea, the number of newlyweds preferring not to have children is also growing.⁴⁷ However, in North Korea, the child-free concept as a socio-cultural phenomenon is not discussed in the discourse on women since it is officially assumed that married women must have children. If a woman does not have her own children she can look after orphans as if they were her own children. Korean women are encouraged to enjoy any form of maternity and, by this means, to express their femininity.

44 The Korean Woman 2018 (4): 41.

45 The Korean Woman 2018 (4): 41.

46 For example, in the US a percentage of childless American women (ages 15-44) increased from 35% in 1976 to 47 % in 2010 // Matthew D. Johnson. Want to Save Your Marriage? Don’t Have Kids: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/may/24/marriage-kids-children-relationship-suffers-research> (accessed 20.07.2019).

47 According to the Korea Statistics, in 2017 37,5% of newlyweds did not bear a child, and this number has increased up to 1.2% since 2016. [sikkeurikkeul] honja salgido beogeounde.. teai wae omnyagoyo? (It’s tough to live alone...why don’t have children?): <http://news.zum.com/articles/52694927> (accessed 20.07.2019).

Concluding remarks

In the current discourse on women in North Korea, femininity implies both the traits that are traditionally cited as feminine such as kindness, modesty, empathy and caring, as well as those traits that relate to civic activism – patriotism, devotion to the party and its leadership, as well as economic and political participation. Femininity and motherhood are interchangeable or complementary concepts. Whenever we speak about femininity regarding North Korean women, we imply maternity so that semantically these notions seem to be inseparable in the dominant (official) discourse. In most articles of *The Korean Women*, women are encouraged to dedicate themselves with their whole hearts to the party's instructions and the directions of the great leaders. Motherhood does not release a woman from these social obligations. The revolutionary duty extends to mothers, thus increasing their burden of daily chores. "Today among our women there are many of those who do not only kindly care for parents, actively help their husbands and brothers in work and raise children excellently, but also look after orphans and the old men who have nobody to take care of them as if these children and old men were their own children and parents. Thus, they take the path of the glorious soldiers and cause the flower of revolution to blossom forever. All women have to become possessors of the remarkable socialist morale and behave as gracefully as those who are publicly honoured. All women have to carry out their duties at family, hometown and working place vigorously and passionately, as well as to take initiative in turning society from a large socialist family into a harmonious and united large family".⁴⁸ This politicised narrative on female social commitments has not changed for decades in the publications of *The Korean Woman*. For half a century, the editorial has been reproducing the same ideas on the socio-political commitments of Korean women using the above-mentioned nuances.

The most surprising aspect of this is that it occurs against the backdrop of a changing economic reality, in particular, the strengthening of market elements in the North Korean economy and the growing role of women in supporting the family since the beginning of the 2000s.⁴⁹ This means that the discourse on women in *The Korean Woman* expresses in a concentrated form what is only partially affirmed by the socio-economic reality of modern North Korea. Officially, the DPRK remains a socialist economy based on state, cooperative and individual forms of property. However, this completely coincides with a structure of political power, which is based on the dominance of males and clan affiliation. This causes us to rethink the correlation between gender

48 *The Korean Woman* 2018 (7): 34.

49 Branigan 2012.

and power – especially, between gender and political power. As a working hypothesis, it can be suggested that as long as it supports a Juche-oriented socialistic regime⁵⁰ with all its peculiarities, whose details are beyond the scope of this research, the discourse on women will keep on reproducing a conservative stance on femininity in North Korea.

50 In her study on North Korean women's gender awareness, Lee Mi-kyung called the political regime of the DPRK the "patriarchal socialism" [Lee Mi-kyung 2002: 155–178], while in a collective study of South Korean scholars on North Korean women's policy under Kim Jong-un's rule the regime was called the "state patriarchy" (*gukga gabujangje*) [Kim Kyunghye, Kang Eun-Ae, Son Myung-Ah 2006: 131–164].

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Parallel development and humanitarian crisis in North Korea, a case of extremes

Abstract

North Korea often tries to hide the results of decades of communist authoritarian leadership and economic mismanagement. The military-first policy has caused a lack of economic development and half of the population is living in miserable conditions, suffering an acute humanitarian crisis. The UN has called for urgent aid, but to avoid it from being diverted into the military sector and the elite, it should be channeled directly to the vulnerable population and flow independently of the denuclearisation talks. There is a need of active diplomacy, international cooperation and engagement to enhance the standard of living of the North Korean people.

Keywords: *Byungjin* policy, humanitarian assistance, humanitarian crisis, North Korea, parallel development.

Introduction

North Korea (the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, DPRK) effectively closed itself to the outside world when Kim Il-sung took control after World War II.² Under its leadership, a military-first policy, *Songun*, was introduced in the country and it was intensified during the Kim Jong-il government. It guides political and economic life in North Korea and controls the allocation of resources. It gives priority to the military and elites over the general population, plays a major role in the implementation of foreign policy and maintains a fiercely defensive posture to outside forces. The *Juche* doctrine was also introduced as the official state ideology, based on the self-reliance of the regime. It permeates every aspect of North Korean life and is firmly rooted in the ideals of sustainability and a lack of dependency.³

Throughout these decades of military-first policy, there has been a disproportionately high spending on armaments and on the development of a nuclear programme as an instrument of pressure in negotiations with the international

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2 The country remains outside most international or regional forums, as well as outside the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

3 French 2015: Part 1: 2

community.⁴ On October 9, 2006 the DPRK announced it had successfully conducted its first test of a nuclear weapon. Chairman Kim Jong-il calculated that a nuclear-armed North Korea could better induce the United States (US) to direct bilateral negotiations. However, this test led to the adoption of the United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 1718, aimed at punishing North Korea through economic sanctions, and was rejected by the DPRK.⁵ This chain of events has been repeated over the years⁶ and the negotiations for the dismantling of the North Korean nuclear programme has become faced multiple obstacles. Despite efforts, the country has continued with the development of its programme to become a *de facto* nuclear state.⁷

Since Kim Jong-un came to power at the end of 2011 the same strategy of promoting a nuclear programme has been continued, although in 2013 North Korea adopted the *Byungjin* policy, or parallel development, both military and economic, as a new strategic policy guideline to maximise economic development and the standard of living of the population.⁸

North Korea has always tried to hide the results of decades of communist authoritarian leadership and economic mismanagement, but the military-first policy has led to a lack of economic development and half of the population is living in miserable conditions. The launchings throughout the years 2016 and 2017 of numerous ballistic missiles, some of them long range and able to reach the US, and several nuclear tests, including a hydrogen bomb, have led to the imposition of multiple sanctions by the UN Security Council.⁹ The “maximum pressure” campaign against North Korea enabled by president Trump seems to be achieving its objective, harming the country through preventing its economic development, a pillar of the *Byungjin* policy.¹⁰

Kim Jong-un is aware that economic recovery is fundamental to legitimise himself in power, as he is committed to implementing his promise of

4 North Korea is pursuing the nuclear programme, either to hedge against the uncertainties surrounding Pyongyang’s future or to deter a plausible US pre-emption. It has been blocking the progress of peace and prosperity policy in the region. Northeast Asian countries, except the DPRK, have had remarkable economic growth. As security interests grow with growing national wealth, security as a viable concept becomes more compelling. See Han 2007

5 Joo, Kwak 2007: 2–13.

6 A list of resolutions and sanctions imposed to North Korea can be seen at the UN Security Council web site: <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/dprk-north-korea/>

7 Revere 2010.

8 Cheon 2013; Kang, Cha 2018.

9 Sanctions, once applied, are not easy to lift since it requires unanimous acceptance by the five permanent members of the Security Council of the UN (China, France, Russia, United Kingdom and United States). See: Lankov 2019.

10 Reiss Waldron 2018.

development.¹¹ Probably this is the reason why since early 2018, once the ballistic and nuclear tests considered necessary for its nuclear programme had been completed, he started a diplomatic strategy of approaching the US, China, South Korea and Russia. However, until now, it has not given the desired results, the lifting of sanctions imposed in 2016 and 2017.¹²

The critical situation of the country's most vulnerable people has led us to carry out this analysis of the current situation in North Korea, particularly after Kim Jong-un came to power and the *Byungjin* policy was adopted. One can raise the question as to whether the "maximum pressure" campaign against North Korea is affecting the deep humanitarian crisis that the country is going through and if the lifting of sanctions would change Pyongyang's strategy and release resources that could be used to improve access to food and healthcare for the people of North Korea. To answer it, we undertake an investigation based on the study of articles, books, official documents and news. We will first provide an overview of the *Byungjin* policy and will continue with an analysis of North Korean regime expenditure in its economic growth, followed by an outlook of the humanitarian situation as a contrast. It will be a descriptive and explanatory investigation aimed at drawing attention to the real human situation, in an attempt to contribute to find solutions to alleviate it.

An overview on the *Byungjin* policy

On March 31st, 2013, North Korea adopted the *Byungjin* (parallel development) policy of 'economy and nuclear weapons' during a plenary session of the Party Central Committee. Kim Jong-un called the *Byungjin* policy a new strategic policy guideline 'essential given the current world order' and stressed that it was crucial for the construction of a strong and prosperous nation. By making economic development a key element of state ideology, Kim has signalled a break from the past.¹³ As detailed by Cheon Seong-Whum,¹⁴ the North Korean leader laid out its meanings as follows:¹⁵

- A deepening and improvement of the inherited policy of 'economic and national defence capability'.
- A strategic guideline for the construction of a 'strong and prosperous nation'

11 Kang, Cha 2018.

12 Rodrigo 2019.

13 Kang, Cha 2018.

14 Cheon Seong-Whum, Director of the Center for the North Korean Studies at the Institute for National Unification (KINU) in 2013. See: Cheon S-W 2013.

15 See the Concluding Speech of Kim Jong-un at the March 2013 Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee of the Worker's Party of Korea https://www.ncnk.org/resources/publications/kju_march2013_speech.pdf/file_view (Accessed: 5 July 2019).

where the people can enjoy the wealth and splendour of socialism' through strengthening defensive capacity and focusing on economic construction.

- A precious sword that will advance 'the construction of a socialist strong and prosperous nation and Korean unification' and a 'banner' of safeguarding the autonomy and dignity of the people.
- A realisation of the firm belief and will of the Party to accomplish the 'revolutionary cause of Juche through a path of self-reliance, military-first, and socialism'.
- A pragmatic guideline to maximise the efficiency of economic development and strengthen national defence 'in accordance with the state of affairs'.
- A measure to promote economic construction and raise living standards of the people while strengthening national defence capabilities 'without increasing the defence budget'.
- A rational guideline towards solving energy problems based on an 'independent nuclear energy industry while strengthening nuclear weapons capabilities' at the same time.

The plenary session laid out several measures to carry out the *Byungjin* policy and insisted on working towards preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, to secure the peace and stability of Asia and the world, and to realise global denuclearisation as a responsible nuclear weapons state. North Korea would no longer differentiate its nuclear energy for peaceful use from military use. That does not symbolise peaceful use or military use as two separate entities, but rather one enhancing both its economic and military capabilities by using so-called 'dual use technologies' that can have both civilian and military applications. The message was that while North Korea would never give up its nuclear weapons, it intended to use nuclear weapons for defensive purposes only and to manage them with maximum safety.

The North Korean regime's expenditure in economic growth

Since Kim Jong-un came to power and after the adoption of the *Byungjin* policy, North Korea has been able to make some economic progress, despite being subjected to severe sanctions by the UN Security Council. Pyongyang has regularised bureaucratic processes and instituted reforms to expand the scope of the private economy.¹⁶ Its total trade continued to increase to a peak in 2014, when it reached 10 billion dollars, with China its largest trading partner, followed by South Korea. Foreign direct investment reached a maximum of 227

¹⁶ Kang, Cha 2018.

million dollars in 2013.¹⁷ Because of the regime's secrecy, reliable economic data is scarce, although it seems that the nascent market forces are beginning to remodel North Korea. Economists estimate the North Korean economy has grown 1.24 per cent on average since Kim Jong-un took power, expanding by 4 per cent in 2016, the fastest growth in 17 years.¹⁸ The annual GDP per capita is \$1,800, making it 197th in the world and only 2 percent of South Korea's. That cannot be considered miracle growth, but according to these data, the DPRK is now better than before.¹⁹

North Korea now is not the same as it was fifteen years ago; its political institutions, economy and society have all experienced major and possibly enduring changes. The economic development has been driven by domestic policy decisions, thanks to better economic frameworks and a greater space for private production and trade. The regime has also developed alternative channels to improve its trade and other transactions to circumvent sanctions that are not well known, but that play a significant role for its economy. All these actions have probably stopped the total collapse of the economy.²⁰

The North Korean economy is still theoretically run under a centrally controlled and state-planned system that directs economic life from top to bottom. For decades, the regime used a Public Distribution System (PDS) to provide people with food and basic necessities. However, after the devastating country-wide famine in the 1990s and the end of external support from the Soviet Union, the PDS system collapsed and the North Korean people turned to trading in informal black markets and exchanging goods to survive.²¹

According to The Heritage Foundation (2018), almost all the property belongs to the state and there is no functional, modern and independent judiciary. Bribery is widespread and corruption is endemic at all levels of the state and the economy. Kim Jong-un has cracked down on smuggling and on foreign media sales on the country's markets, but also institutionalised the market system and allowed it to expand.²² His commitment to the *Byungjin* policy has led him to a limited acceptance of market forces. Dozens of markets have opened in cities across the country and a growing class of merchants and businessmen, the *Donju*, is thriving under the protection of the ruling party's officials.²³ Much

17 Silberstein 2019.

18 Carney 2018; Choe 2017.

19 Parker 2018.

20 Kang, Cha 2018: Chapter 7; Silberstein 2019; Smith 2015: Chapter 11.

21 Cha and Collins 2018; Kang, Cha 2018: Chapter 7; French 2015: Part III; Smith 2015: Chapter 7.

22 Silberstein 2019.

23 Rodrigo 2018.

of this activity is done through officially registered marketplaces but a lot of trade falls in a gray zone of quasi-illegal or unofficial trade and a considerable amount of market activity remains illegal and suppressed.²⁴

According to data, there are at least 436 officially sanctioned markets across the country located in rural and urban areas, deeply integrated into both the economy and society. Their number and geographic distribution indicate that they have become an institutionalised part of North Korean society.²⁵ These markets, the *Jangmadan*, germinated in the 1990s, are now one of the major channels of distribution and have become a critical value chain that can lead the country's economy to potential prosperity.²⁶

As North Korea's biggest trading partner and only ally, China has expressed support for Kim's change in national policy, and official exchanges have increased since Kim's first meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing last year.²⁷ Busy trade on the border between the two countries supports the growth of the *Jangmadang* which has significantly impacted social, political, and economic conditions inside the country and therefore, has improved the quality of life of North Korean people. The government, from time to time, also cracks down on these markets to repress their activity or enforce policies to stifle their growth.²⁸

Throughout these years, there has been a construction boom in Pyongyang and multi-story apartment buildings standing in rows along impossibly broad streets can be seen.²⁹ Now there are many vehicles and electric bikes from China and Japan on its once empty streets.³⁰ To the upper classes and those who can pay, the city affords a measure of material comfort, despite the recent tightening of sanctions. The Pyongyang restaurant scene is nowadays large and varied.³¹ Only those considered loyal to the regime are allowed to live in the capital. Life outside is far worse; electricity and proper plumbing are rarities. Most homes are heated by open fireplaces, and many have no flush toilets.³²

In Pyongyang, people buy smartphones, Tablets and high definition TVs and, despite a deficient service, there are now 1.5 million mobile phone users. North Korean smartphones have similar capacities to those in other countries

24 Grover 2019; Kang, Cha 2018.

25 Cha, Collins 2018.

26 Choe 2019; Grover 2019.

27 Zhou 2018.

28 Cha, Collins 2018.

29 French 2015: Part I; Lankov 2013: Chapter 3; 2015: Chapter 5.

30 Choe 2017.

31 Lankov 2013: Chapter 2; 2015: Chapter 3; The Economist 2018.

32 French 2015: Part I; Parker 2018.

but, in place of the internet, citizens use a state-controlled intranet and there are North Korean versions of Google, Facebook or chat rooms.³³

In his new economic policy, Kim Jong-un has granted state factories more autonomy over their production, including the authority to find their own suppliers and customers, as long as they meet a state quota. Likewise, Pyongyang has now assigned farmers to a set amount of land called *pojeon* and allows them to keep anything they produce that is above their government-set quota.³⁴ This incentive has led to greater production as farmers keep up to 70 per cent of their harvest³⁵, similar to the Chinese style reforms of the 1980s. But North Korea has a logic of its own, so the regime has refrained from describing them as market-oriented reforms, preferring the phrase “economic management in our own style”.³⁶

There is a high budget dedicated to the Pyongyang underground and to big department stores reform. Access to high-end luxury goods for North Korean elites continues to grow, including products which some UN member states have determined constitute sanctioned luxury goods.³⁷ Increasingly cheap solar panels are giving a boost to consumer consumption and industry as Pyongyang tries to limit the impact of the tough international sanctions. Electricity is unreliable, shortages have always been a concern for North Korea, and Kim Jong-un has called for greater use of renewable energy as part of his drive for self-sufficiency, so private use of solar panels has gone from being officially banned, to tolerated, to encouraged by the government.³⁸

But as private enterprise is allowed to expand, the central argument of the government based on socialist superiority over the capitalist system is undermined. There are signs showing that market forces are weakening government control over society. As people sustain themselves and get what they need out of the state economy, they are less committed to, and more disappointed with the authorities.³⁹ The young North Koreans, the “*Jangmadang* Generation”, grew up audacious as a result of the famine, so they are very different from their elders, they love luxury, are less respectful to established authority and have emerged as the greatest force for change that North Korea has ever seen.⁴⁰

33 Parker 2018.

34 Choe 2017.

35 Grover 2019.

36 Carney 2018; Silberstein 2019; Smith 2015: Chapter 5.

37 Zwirko 2019.

38 Shin 2019.

39 Choe 2017; Corrado 2017; Smith 2015: Chapter 10.

40 Fifield 2017b; Lankov 2015: Chapter 10.

Humanitarian situation

North Korea often tries to hide from the world the results of decades of communist authoritarian leadership and economic mismanagement. The consequences of the regime's military-first policy have been devastating on a human level. The disproportionate high expenses on armament has caused a lack of economic development in the country where half of the population lives in miserable conditions and is suffering an acute humanitarian crisis.⁴¹ On the 1990s, North Korea suffered a horrific famine, during which the PDS collapsed, the economy shrank by a third and up to five per cent of the population died.⁴² Since then, and according to The World Bank, life expectancy at birth has increased from 64,493 years at its lowest point in 1998, to 71,887 in 2017.⁴³

However, for nearly three decades a chronic food shortage has affected North Korea and Kim Jong-un does not want another crisis to be repeated. He knows marketisation is needed to avoid it, but he doesn't want to allow in ideas that would cause North Koreans to be further dissatisfied with their lives and lose power.⁴⁴ That's why he is attempting a delicate balance in reforms, something scholars have termed "decentralised socialism" or "marketisation without liberalisation." The elite ruling class enjoys the benefits of modern life and the middle class receives enough food and occasional new clothes. For everyone else, daily living is harsh and severe micro-famines still occur, most people must struggle to survive; for them meat is an unaffordable luxury and they subsist on fermented cabbage, rice, corn and porridge. Half of the nation's 24 million people live in extreme poverty.⁴⁵

Humanitarian activities by the UN World Food Programme (WFP) and private relief groups constitute the longest ongoing engagement between the DPRK and the international community. The UN Development Program (UNDP) has recently published the annual report on the North Korea Needs and Priorities Plan for the year 2019.⁴⁶ An estimated 11 million people in the DPRK, out of a total population of approximately 25 million, lack enough food, potable water or access to basic services such as health and sanitation, with women, children, the elderly and people with disabilities most vulnerable. According to this report, the number of targeted people to receive any kind of humanitarian assistance during 2018 was 6 million, though the number of

41 UNDP 2019.

42 Reiss, Waldron 2018.

43 See The World Bank at <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.LE00.IN?locations=KP> (Accessed 30 June 2019).

44 Smith 2015: Chapter 10.

45 Parker 2018.

46 UNDP 2019.

people reached has been only 2 million (Figure 1). However, in many cases the full package of required assistance per person was not provided due to insufficient funding.

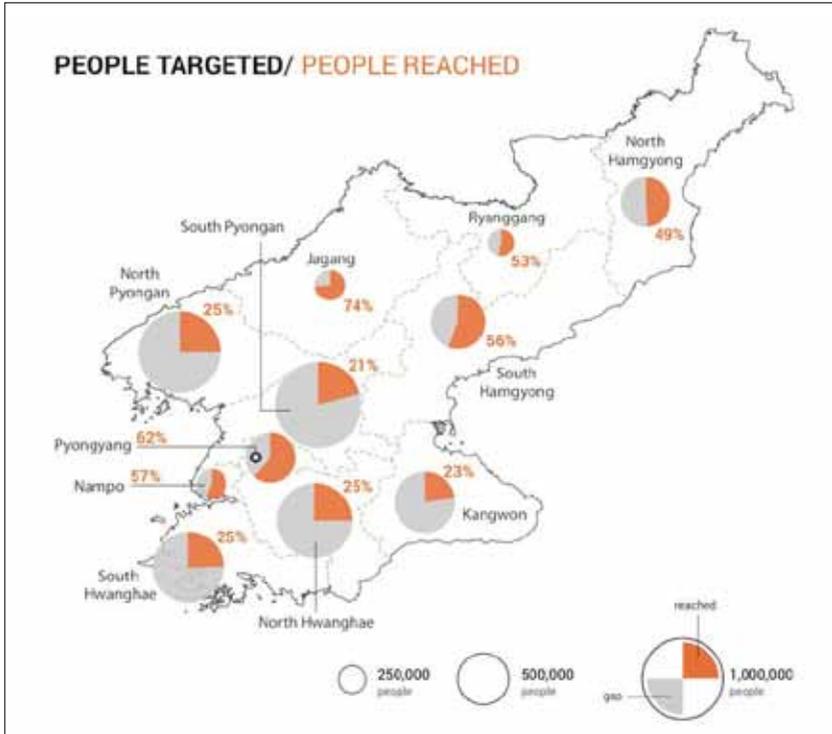


Figure 1. Percentage of people reached for humanitarian assistance in the different provinces with respect to the total people targeted⁴⁷

Generalised malnutrition threatens an entire generation of children, with one in five suffering from delays in their development due to chronic malnutrition. Stunting of that degree at that age is irrecoverable and confers a lifetime of physical and mental challenges. Children are also at risk of dying from diseases that are perfectly curable or avoidable in other conditions. The UN, therefore, has made a call to urgently provide aid of 120 million US dollars that is considered vitally important for 3.8 million people who need humanitarian assistance.

Tuberculosis and malaria are two of North Korea's major public health problems and have been the focus of the country's health policy since the 2000s.⁴⁸ Their prevalence has decreased over the years but, now they are being affected by Trump's "maximum pressure" policy, which is keeping lifesaving medicines and supplies away from thousands of patients. To help North Korea control this problem, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, has given more than \$100 million in grants since 2010. However, the Global Fund has ended all its North Korea-related grants, a situation that is going to harm the peninsula for generations.⁴⁹

After decades of poor agricultural practices and despite Kim Jong-un's commitment to the country's economic development, the lack of adequate investments has contributed to decreased agricultural production. Agriculture in North Korea has inherent problems because it is a very mountainous country and arable land is insufficient. As cited in the memorandum of the UNDP, other causes of food shortages in the DPRK are natural disasters such as high temperatures, droughts and heavy rains.⁵⁰

North Korea still does not produce enough food to feed itself. It is worrying that total food production in 2018 was more than 9% lower than in 2017 and has been the lowest production in more than a decade.⁵¹ Pyongyang has warned that it is facing a food shortfall of some 1.4 million tons in 2019 and has been forced to almost halve rations, blaming high temperatures, drought, floods and UN sanctions. The UN annual report claims that North Korea's food production last year was 4.951 million tons, 503,000 tons down on 2017, including rice, wheat, potatoes and soybeans. North Korea said it would import 200,000 tons of food and produce about 400,000 tons of early crops, but that it would still be left with a gap and from January would cut daily rations to 300 grams per person from 550 grams.⁵² This has opened the door to a possible deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the DPRK and the increase of malnutrition and diseases.

Therefore, despite natural disasters and climatic difficulties, an inadequate response to deal with these problems has been evident. Pyongyang, throughout these years, has not carried out adequate investment in agricultural infrastructure and necessary supplies, and has failed in its obligation to improve the living conditions of the weakest.⁵³

48 Smith 2015: Chapter 11.

49 Talmadge 2018.

50 King 2019.

51 UNDP 2019.

52 Nichols 2019.

53 King 2019.

North Korea has declared that sanctions are affecting access to the food imports its population urgently needs. However, there are experts who consider this is not a valid statement since the sanction's regime focuses on limiting Pyongyang's access to the goods and funds needed to improve its military capabilities and the export to North Korea of luxury goods.⁵⁴ It could not even be considered that the sanctions on oil products would have any impact on agricultural production since the level of mechanisation is very low and agricultural technology remains primitive.⁵⁵

As reported by the Associated Press (2019), after the UN's call to provide urgent aid to the North, South Korea started to move quickly on plans to provide \$8 million worth of medical and nutritional aid for North Korean children through the UN. The government wants to discuss its plans with the WFP and the United Nations Children's Fund, through which the aid would be provided, to reach children and pregnant women quickly.

Much of the foreign aid to North Korea has been diverted into the military sector or used to retain the loyalty of the elite⁵⁶ and wasted in various ineffective governmental development programmes that would only benefit a few.⁵⁷ It is therefore important to press North Korea for strengthened monitoring and to link aid to long term reforms designed to achieve sustainable results. There is donor fatigue; aid to North Korea has been going on for a long time, so voices are being raised about ending it.⁵⁸ However, the vulnerable population remain; they are the most direct victims of the regime, and we know from nutritional data that lack of good food in early years means that many will be permanently affected. The WFP should be helped to continue its North Korean programme. To attract donors, North Korea will need to devote more of its own resources to agricultural reforms, incentives for food production, ending market restrictions, and improving its health structures.

Providing aid may inadvertently help the very regime that keeps its own people hungry. Under the political context of failed politics, it is highly likely that the developmental impact of aid is severely limited and demonstrates the state's failure to provide for the basic needs of the people. There has been no movement on Pyongyang's side, suggesting that the lifting of sanctions would change the country's strategy and release resources that could be used to improve access to food and healthcare for the most vulnerable population.

54 King 2019.

55 The Economist 2018.

56 French 2015: Part IV:13.

57 Kim 2014.

58 The Guardian 2014.

Moreover, the “maximum pressure” campaign against the country seems to be stopping the urgent delivery of the needed humanitarian aid. Humanitarian action should, thus, flow through direct channels, independent from the sanction’s regime by means of specialised agencies, to avoid the government funnelling money into its nuclear and missile programme.⁵⁹ Only through active diplomacy, dialogue and international cooperation, can approaches that enhance the standard of living of the North Korean people be developed.

In addition to the humanitarian crisis and, according to the UN⁶⁰, North Koreans live under systematic and widespread human rights violations. When Kim Jong-un became the leader of the DPRK in 2011, many North Koreans thought their lives were going to improve. But although he has allowed greater economic freedom, he has also sealed off the country more than ever, tightening security along the border with China and increasing punishments for those who cross it.⁶¹

The UN report mentions numerous human rights abuses, including murder, enslavement, torture, imprisonment, discrimination, forced abortions and sexual violence.⁶² The government demands obedience through public executions, arbitrary detention, forced labour and religious persecution. Citizens have no basic freedoms. The coercive practice of punishing entire families for the alleged crimes of individuals is one means of keeping the population in line. The UN estimated in 2014 that between 80,000 and 120,000 people were held in camps, where torture and starvation are commonplace. The number seems to have stayed constant since then.⁶³

After decades in political isolation, North Korea started last year diplomatic activity to obtain a partial lifting of UN sanctions. Nevertheless, while all the focus has been directed mainly toward denuclearisation, the subject of the human situation inside the country has been overlooked and it is disturbing to hear so little about the lives of ordinary North Koreans. Both the president of South Korea, Moon Jae-in, and the US, president Donald Trump, have avoided directly raising such issues with Kim Jong-un, eager as they were to achieve their own key objectives.⁶⁴

However, as the report of the International Study Group on North Korea Policy⁶⁵ explains, the pursuit of immediate disarmament has not only

59 King 2019.

60 UN 2014.

61 Fifield 2017^a.

62 UN 2014; Parker 2018.

63 UN 2014.

64 Lim 2018.

65 FAS 2019.

distracted from a range of pressing challenges, but it has exacerbated them. It has generated incentives for Pyongyang to expand, diversify, and conceal its nuclear arsenal. In its current form, the international sanctions regime has contributed to the suffering of the North Korean people from privation and infectious diseases.

The US and its allies need a new strategy towards a nuclear North Korea that can not only manage the risks posed by the regime, but that will also help to shape its transformation over time to provide economic development and a sustainable foundation for security in the region.⁶⁶ Their support could move North Korea in the direction of engagement and encourage improvements in the human rights situation through economic investment and other activities, as well as initiate approaches to enhance the standard of living of the North Korean people.

Conclusions

Since coming to power in at the end of 2011, Kim Jong-un has fulfilled North Korea's historical imperative by officially declaring, in the spring of 2018, that the country had a nuclear deterrent capable of striking the US. Since the adoption of the *Byungjin* policy, the country has been undergoing substantial military, economic, and social change, has increased the regime's stability and is allowing the lives of their people to improve. However, only the military and the elite ruling class are clearly benefitting from the new situation while a high percentage of the population still live under miserable conditions.

For decades, the world has been donating aid to help the North Koreans but has in effect been subsidising Pyongyang's choice to invest massively in the military at the expense of economic development. To date, sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council have been quite ineffective at restraining the excesses of the elites and have further harmed half of the population living in poverty. Donor fatigue has already emerged, as Pyongyang has been diverting this aid and spending it mainly on the nuclear programme, while, in contrast, around 3.8 million people need urgent food aid and medical assistance. Humanitarian aid is critical and, thus should flow independently from the denuclearisation talks. Therefore, assistance should be re-coordinated and channeled directly to the most vulnerable by means of specialised agencies, applying enough monitoring mechanisms to reassure potential donors.

Last year, Kim Jong-un initiated intense diplomatic activity seeking the lifting of the sanctions in order to boost economic development in his

country. However, talks have been directed mainly toward denuclearisation and important issues related to the lives of ordinary people or the human rights situation have been widely overlooked. To address these problems, it is important to find a more realistic strategy, different to the demand of a one-step denuclearisation of North Korea that would also help to seek for economic development and benefit all the population.

There is an extreme gap between the military, the privileged elite and the rest of North Koreans that should be narrowed. Parallel development should benefit all the population, so it is important that the US and its allies, through economic investment and the coordination of other different projects, helps the North Korean regime to improve its human rights practices and develop approaches to better healthcare and nutrition for the most vulnerable and enhance the standard of living of the population. There are hopes that aid and cooperation could help revive diplomacy and engagement with North Korea to address this decades long problem.

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List of acronyms

DPRK, Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

PDS, Public Distribution System.

UN, United Nations.

UNDP, United Nations Development Programme.

US, United States.

WFP, World Food Programme.

A historical approach to the leadership of the Organisation and Guidance Department of the Workers' Party of Korea

Abstract

North Korean political organisations have produced a system which is automatically connected to the cult of the Kim family. The paper assumes that North Korea is ruled by an alliance of people affiliated with Kim Il-sung family and two political organisations – the Organisation and Guidance Department and the Personal Secretariat, both of which are sub-branches of the Party Central Committee.

Keywords: Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il, Kim Jong-un, Kim Kyong-ok, North Korea, Organisation and Guidance Department, Workers' Party of Korea.

Introduction

North Korean² political organisations have produced a system which is automatically connected to the cult of the Kim family. Starting from the 1970s the system began to focus on the needs and wants of the Kim Royal Family³ by reorganising the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK). One of its key political structures is the Organisation and Guidance Department (OGD) of the Central Committee of the Korean Workers Party (CC WPK).

The thesis of this paper is that the OGD is the most important department of the Korean Workers Party Central Committee and that it was significantly changed after the nomination of Kim Jong-il as its head in the mid 1970s. The OGD runs North Korean policy behind the political scene. It is responsible for organising and managing the WPK. The hypotheses of this article concern 'doubles'. Firstly, North Korea is ruled by a coalition composed of people belonging to the Kim family and by two political structures: the OGD of the WPK CC and the Personnel Secretariat (PS). Secondly, the role of the WPK

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2 North Korea is officially the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

3 The Kim family is the family of Kim Il-sung, the "eternal" North Korea President. Kim Il-sung was born in 1912 and passed away in 1994.

was never subordinated to the North Korean Army, the Korea People's Army (KPA).

This paper is organised into three substantive chapters, following this introduction. It begins with a chronological approach to the development of the OGD. The second deals with the organisational structure of the OGD. The third examines the controlling nature of the OGD. The paper concludes with an epilogue that discusses the future of the OGD in the context of the Kim Jong-un era. In order to understand the nature of the North Korean regime, there is also an annex to this text which includes 'propaganda vocabulary', which is considered as necessary by the Author to understand the nature of the political system of North Korea. The names of North Korean politicians are indicated following the North Korean version in the Korean language.

Aim of the article

According to the author's knowledge, there are no papers in Western languages dedicated to the OGD, and especially summarising the latest cadre changes within this department of the WPK. In order to fill this gap, the author proposes a historical approach to changes which occurred within this political structure of the North Korean political apparatus. The author also aims at providing a list of people who were or are at the head of the OGD.

Hypotheses

The paper proposes two hypotheses. The first assumes that North Korea is ruled by an alliance of people affiliated with Kim Il-sung family and two political organisations – the Organisation and Guidance Department and the Personal Secretariat, both of which are sub-branches of the Party Central Committee. The second hypothesis postulates that the WPK is no longer a subordinate of the KPA.

1. An historical approach to the OGD

Following the defeat of Japanese imperialism (1910-1945), North Korea was established on the 9th September 1948. Starting from this date North Korea struggled to build a model socialist state under the guidance of the WPK, a communist party which was organised according to the Soviet model. In the Soviet Union, at the 8th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) held in March 1918, two structures of the Central Committee were created. These were a Politburo of five members and an Organisational Bureau (Оргбюро/Orgburo) for matters related to Administration and Personnel.⁴

4 Bruno 2007: 180.

Stalin was an original member of both bodies.⁵ As in the Soviet era, the OGD was one of the first political substructures which were created in the WPK in 1946. Every communist country has a Party Organisation or Organisation Secretariat. The Soviet Union had an Organisation Bureau, which Stalin abolished in 1951, because these two organisations were interconnected. In European Communist Parties, there were some Organisation Departments, which were subordinated to Central Committees. This is the same for China. Regarding North Korea, the OGD became a kind of authority which has had an enlarged role in comparison to the Politburo.

Originally the North Korean OGD was part of the General Affairs Department (GAD) of the WPK. As in the case of the CPSU, the OGD eventually spun-off from the GAD.

From 1946 to 1981, the OGD address was the headquarters of the WPK. Since 1982 The OGD has been localised on the ground of the Namsan School, a former school for children of party officials, which was demolished in the same year. The OGD is settled in front of the main offices of the WPK.

2. The structure of the OGD

The OGD is composed of three sections and 130 substructures. The three main sections are in charge of the Organisation of the WPK (당지도), the WPK headquarters (간부), the military (군부), and the last one focus on other political structures. There was also an administration section (행정부) until 2007, which was led by Jang Sung-thaek (장성택) since November 2005, and which has fulfilled some of the functions of the OGD.⁶ After his removal in 2010, the duties of the Administrative department were switched to the OGD under the auspices of the 7th group.

The WPK headquarter section is responsible for the ideological education and party life of all senior officials⁷ or members of the CC WPK (with approximately 3,500 members⁸). Interestingly this section is also responsible for the “information network” dealing with the military life of the KPA and other military structures of the DPRK. According to Hwang Yang-yop, a former North Korean WPK secretary who defected to South Korea in 1997, these reports consist of straight facts: “who did what and where”.⁹ Important reports go directly to deputy directors.

5 Bruno 2007: 180.

6 Lee Sang-yong 2015.

7 Cheong 2008a: 25; Kim Seongnam 2008: 25.

8 Cheong 2008a: 10.

9 Cha, Sohn 2012: 62.

The OGD military section has controlled the Ministry of People's Armed Forces and WPK organisations in the KPA since the 1970s.¹⁰ However, historically speaking, there was always a policy to place a priority on the party over the army. During an inspection of KPA Unit no. 324 on the 8th February 1958, Kim Il-sung said that, "The KPA is the revolutionary armed force of the party because it was organised by the Party".¹¹ During the same year the KPA held a plenary session on the 8th of March and decided to create a WPK committee in the KPA. In order to subordinate the KPA under the OGD, in the late 1960s Kim Jong-il applied a gift policy. Kim Jong-il and his OGD cadres started in effect then to corrupt the KPA leadership. Military officials started to receive their instructions from OGD instructors. This section also began to be responsible for assignments and promotions in the KPA and other military structures. Any criticisms regarding relations between the KPA and the OGD were accepted, apart from that of O Jin-u, a long term friend of Kim Jong-il, who considered that the KPA should be independent from the OGD. In 1987, O Jin-u was involved in an accident and saved only by the financial efforts of Kim Jong-il. Only after their relations improved did O Jin-u soften his critical approach to the OGD. However, they kept a certain distance until the death of O Jin-u in February 1995. This incident was due to the following fact. Starting from the 1970s, the OGD became the primary means of security of the Kim Jong-il regime. The OGD took the place of the KPA regarding security issues and this led to internal conflict in the KPA and the WPK. The OGD was also responsible for the career of Kim Il-sung in the 1980s and 1990s. OGD cadres decided which meetings Kim Il-sung would have with foreign leaders.¹²

Regarding the former administration section, this was responsible for some civilian organisations such as the Ministry of People's Security, the Ministry of State Inspection and the State Security Agency, among others, until its dismantlement in 2007. All these organisations were subordinated to the Administration section and now to this department. It's important to note that the military section was conjointly managed by a team of North Korean officials and not by a single person. Those in the 2000s who were at the head of this structure were Jang Sung-thaek's brothers Jang Sung-gil, Jang Sung-u and Ri Yong-chol (리용철). Jang Sung-u was working in the Ministry of Public Security (an organisation ruled by the Administration section of the OGD and later by the Administration Department). He later became the director of the Kim Jong-il guard command. Regarding Jang Sung-gil, he was also involved in the Ministry of the Public Security. Therefore, we can deduce that Kim

10 Cha, Sohn 2012: 62.

11 Suh 1996: 169.

12 Jang 2014: 197.

Jong-il was, to a certain extent, confident of the loyalty of the Jang family, who supervised the internal security in order to ensure the survival of the North Korean regime.

The latest section is devoted to local WPK structures and other WPK structures not included in the headquarter section.¹³ This section is also responsible (partially with the headquarters) for the Party economy (the SEC and the Office No. 39) and Party companies. In North Korea all companies and workplaces are governed by an OGD committee.¹⁴ These committees were created in order to ensure that policy and orders from Pyongyang are implemented. We can therefore deduce that the number of persons who are directly or indirectly subordinated to the OGD is very high. This section manages entities which can generate foreign currencies, such as companies dealing with the export of some specific goods (e.g. ‘abalone and shiitake’ mushrooms). One can assume that the biggest North Korean companies are partially managed by OGD cadres or people affiliated to the OGD. As an example, Cha Chol-ma (차철마), a son-in-law of the former senior deputy director Ri Jae-kang, was running an important OGD import-export company.

Each section of the OGD is divided into subsections, which deal with specific issues such as censorship, the ten principles section, foreign issues, economic issues, the WPK central committee, unification issues,¹⁵ the cabinet, and cadres’ nominations. The main cells are classified with numbers from 1 until 130. Some of these cells consist of two people. For example, the daily propaganda managed by the OGD was under the supervision of just two people. This subcell verifies the policy of the OFA in accordance with the Kim ideology. The OGD is also involved in the foreign policy of the DPRK. According to a North Korean defector, there are about 600 OGD spies abroad, mainly in China and South Korea.¹⁶ It’s important to underline that the OGD is responsible for nominations in each of the structures of the North Korean system. In the OGD there are subcells dedicated to these nominations, which are later accepted or refused by cell managers and OGD structures directors.

The OGD is the most crucial department concerning the nomination of directors and WPK members. Recruitment is under the direction of the OGD and its local branches. In spite of some formal procedures for judicial

13 Cheong 2008b: 25.

14 Madden 2009: 48.

15 Interview with Lee Duk-haeng, Senior Policy Cooperation Officer from the Ministry of Unification (South Korea) realized on the 2nd July 2015.

16 Interview with a senior North Korean defector, who was a WPK member. The interview was realised in Europe in 2014. For safety reasons, the identification of the defector is not provided.

nominations, judges are ultimately nominated by the OGD. The OGD is also responsible for the nomination of KPA generals and for the nomination of non-military cadres to the Army. Until 2004, the OGD had an administration structure which was powerful enough to vet personnel appointments. The OGD verifies also the nomination of North Korean citizens to key-positions. For instance, Professor Kim Yong-nam of Kim Chaek University of Technology and his vice- chancellor Ryu Si-hyun, worked with Kim Jong-il on IT and economic issues respectively. Both of them were selected by the OGD.¹⁷

It also worth mentioning that the OGD also has a cell responsible for the private life of Kim Jong-un. This section called the fifth one (5과) is totally responsible for the *kippeumjo*, a ‘pleasure squad’ of women from North Korea and abroad who provide varying forms of ‘entertainment’ to some members of the Kim family and North Korean elites.¹⁸

Historically speaking the OGD implemented two large-scale indoctrination movements. Both campaigns were aimed at purging North Korean society from disloyal and disobedient citizens who may have threatened the regime. The first was known as the ‘Three Revolutions Teams’, with the second referred to as the Songun policy (also known as the Military First Policy). The Three Revolutions movement was inaugurated in February 1973. It was a movement which managed the ‘loyalty’ towards Kim Jong-il and Kim Il-sung through three pillars: cultural, technical and ideological. Based on China’s Red Guards movement, this movement aimed at testing the loyalty of the North Korean population towards the WPK.

The Three Revolutions Movement also led to changes in the KPA. The Political Bureau of the KPA finally became an entity entirely subordinated in structure to the OGD. The Three-Revolution Movement was a significant contributor to the WPK power in the 1970s. The ability of Kim Jong-il to lead a purge against his own family and the former wife of Kim Il-sung proved that his structure (and himself) ruled supreme over North Korea. Around the same time Kim Jong-il, through the OGD, not only manipulated his father but also exercised strict control and prevented him from being in touch with his family members. Kim Il-sung lived like a king but ‘a king in a golden cage’ from the mid 1970s onwards. The OGD and the PAD still depicted him as a leader, but in reality power was already in the hands of Kim Jong-il and the OGD.

17 Kim 2008.

18 Jang 2014: 168.

3. The leadership of the OGD

Starting from the Kim Jong-il's era in 1970, the first director of the OGD was Kim Yong-ju (김영주 born in 1920), the younger brother of Kim Il-sung. In the 1940s he studied in Moscow and in 1954 became an instructor in the OGD. He became a deputy director in 1957, closely working with Choe Yong-rim (최영림), a former NK Prime Minister in the 2000s, nominated as an OGD director in 1956.¹⁹ Kim Yong-ju was appointed as head of the OGD in September 1960.²⁰ In 1966 he became the secretary of the Political Committee of the WPK. He became one of the strongest potential successors of Kim Il-sung at that time. In the same year, another relative of Kim Il-sung was recruited by Kim Yong-ju: Kim Jong-il (김정일), who later became the successor of Kim Il-sung. Kim Yong-ju taught Kim Jong-il and provided him his first political education in the early 1960s.²¹ Kim Jong-il graduated from the Kim Il-sung University in March 1964. Kim Jong-il, who previously worked as an executive of the Cabinet was moved to the section "Leader-on-Duty, Central Headquarters, Instruction Section" of the OGD in June 1964.²² Interestingly, his father Kim Il-sung also worked in this department in the Korean communist Party in the 1940s²³ and it was through this department that he came to power. Already in this period, the power of the OGD was very strong but not comparable to its current strength. In this period the OGD was mainly related to personal matters and the execution of Party policies. In September 1973, Kim Jong-il was appointed deputy director of the OGD under the supervision of Kim Jong-ju.²⁴

Even if Kim Jong-il was only a deputy director, Kim Jong-il was already more powerful than his uncle for the following four reasons: firstly, Kim Jong-ju was frequently abroad for professional duties and health issues and therefore Kim Jong-il had to replace him during official meetings. Secondly, being the first deputy director of the OGD, Kim Jong-il was therefore naturally the leader of this structure. This also concerns the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the WPK, which was mastered by Kim Kuk-tae (김국대), who was also frequently abroad. Thirdly, Kim Jong-il took advantage of the frequent absences of his uncle and Kim Kuk-tae by promoting his followers and counterparts such as Choe Ik-kyu (최익규), Choe Thae-bok (최태복), Choe Ryong-hae (최령해), Han Sung-ryong (한성련), Jon Pyong-ho (전병호), Kang Song-an (강성안) and Kye Ung-thae (켄웅대) among others.

19 북한 주요인사 -인물정보 2017: 583.

20 북한 주요인사 -인물정보 2017: 137.

21 Cha, Sohn 2012: 24.; 북한 주요인사 -인물정보 2017: 731.

22 북한 주요인사 -인물정보 2017: 25.

23 북한 주요인사 -인물정보 2017: 124.

24 Bruno 2007: 25.

Starting from the 1970s, Kim Jong-il took institutional measures aiming to intensify the power of the WPK and the OGD WPK over the structures of the North Korean Army. This can be seen as the result of competition among more than two groups, namely the pro-party group led by Kim Jong-il, and the anti-party group led by Kim Yong-ju. According to Cheong Seong-chang, a distinguished fellow from the Saejong Institute in Seoul, in the 1970s the military personnel management was transferred from the Army to the WPK.²⁵ Furthermore, the information section of the OGD was responsible for providing information to Kim Jong-il on any Army developments. According to Professor Cheong Seong-chang, in the late 1960s the WPK assigned a political officer, called a “commisar” (комиссáп) to each of the divisions and regiments in the army and placed all senior officials of the KPA under the control of the PS and the OGD.²⁶ Through the OGD Kim Jong-il had the opportunity to develop a comprehensive knowledge of political life in North Korea and the issues involved in running the country.

Since 1972, the constitution restricted the North Korean cabinet to the simple execution of the WPK’s decisions. In North Korea, no attempt was observed to distinguish between the party and the government, although there could be a variation of policy preferences among the leading party elites.²⁷

Meanwhile, Kim Jong-il organised the Second Economic Committee (SEC-제2경제위원회) and established Office No. 39 (39 오실) in the WPK, responsible for the private funding of the Kim family.²⁸

Both institutions are related to economic matters and are directly under the management of the OGD. The SEC is responsible for military-economic matters and the Office No. 39 is responsible for a foreign currency fund. In order to ensure the security of the WPK, Kim Jong-il established the ministry of Social Security (renamed Ministry of State Security in 1993) in 1973.²⁹ In 1973, Kim Jong-il ordered an intense songbun (성분)-based investigation (an assessment of the loyalty of the North Korean population toward the WPK) after becoming Director of the OGD.³⁰ Kim Jong-il also enforced the nomination of Ri Jae-kang (리제강 1930-2010), who started his career as an

25 Bruno 2007: 24.

26 Cheong 2015: 12.

27 Suk 1982: 567.

28 Hong Min 2014: 35.

29 Suh 2015: 29. 10% of agents have a background from families who fought during the Japanese Occupation, Interview with Kim Byeong-ro, an Assistant Professor at the Institute for Peace and Unification Studies of the Seoul National university. The interview was conducted on the 8th July 2015.

30 Cheong 2008a: 3.

instructor in the OGD in 1973³¹ and of Pak Song-bong (박송봉), a former DPRK orphan educated in Romania.³² Ri Jae-kang assisted Kim Jong-il in his rise in the OGD. Ri Jae-kang was named deputy director of the OGD in October 1982 (but also a member of the personal secretariat of Kim Jong-il),³³ and became a 1st director in July 2001³⁴ until his mysterious death in 2010.³⁵ At the end of his political career he was responsible for the headquarters section of the OGD.

Starting from 1973, the OGD became the main hub of power in North Korea as new created organisations were affiliated to the OGD and key counterparts of Kim Jong-il led these organisations. In 1974, Kim Jong-il was designated successor to the supreme leader (*suryong*) Kim Il-sung. Meanwhile, Kim Jong-il orchestrated the *Ten Principles for the Establishment of a Monolithic Ideological System* (노동당 유일사상 10대 원칙), known also as the “Ten Principles”, aiming at magnifying the Kim Il-sung cult.

In order to maintain and strengthen his power, in the early 1970s, Kim Jong-il expelled his uncle from the OGD during a larger purge that will be explained more precisely later in this paper. During the same time Kim Jong-il nominated KPA Colonel Jang Sung-u (장성우) as a deputy director of the OGD in 1973.³⁶

In the 1980s, due to the growing influence of the North Korean Army, Kim Jong-il ordered the creation of a civilian OGD office focusing on military issues. The long-term idea was to put civilians at the head of the Army, which was realised in the 2000s with the appointment of Jang Sung-thaek, Kim Kyong-ok (김경옥) and others as generals. At the end of the 1960s/beginning of the 1970s a fierce battle started between Kim Yong-ju and Kim Jong-il. This had its roots in the fact that Kim Jong-il didn't appreciate the Kim Yong-ju entourage.³⁷ In order to prove his loyalty to Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il prepared different acts to idolise his father. Later, Kim Yong-ju stepped down because he was ill, and was sent for treatment abroad (probably to Romania). Thereafter, Kim Jong-il was appointed head of the OGD in September 1973 (succeeding his uncle Kim Yong-ju) and held the position until his death.³⁸ In February 1974 he removed his uncle to the Ryanggang Province.³⁹ In the same year,

31 북한 주요인사 -인물정보 2017: 756.

32 북한 주요인사 -인물정보 2017: 770.

33 북한 주요인사 -인물정보 2017: 756.

34 북한 주요인사 -인물정보 2017: 756.

35 Cheong 2008a: 27.

36 Madden 2009: 35; 북한 주요인사 -인물정보 2017: 756.

37 Levi 2014: 48.

38 Levi 2013: 74.

39 Levi 2014: 51.

Kim Jong-il rewrote the ten principles proposed originally by Kim Yong-ju in 1967. The 10 principles is a ‘benchmark’ set which establishes standards for governance in North Korea.

The management of the OGD was secured in the 1970s within a group of people who were comrades of Kim Jong-il when he was a pupil at the Namsan Primary School. Among them were Kye Ung-thae, Kang Chong-san, Jon Pyong-ho and Choe Thae-bok as well as some of his classmates of the Kim Il-sung University, including his sister Kim Kyong-hee and her husband Jang Sung-thaek. In the mid 1970s, Kim Jong-il increased the OGD powers by involving it in the nomination of ministers.⁴⁰ Starting from the 1970s and according to the new North Korean Constitution of 1972, the North Korean political system was no longer a dual system (WPK-government) and was solely managed by the WPK. In this period the system was already under the control of Kim Jong-il. According to the defector Jang Jin-sung, in this period even the children of the Guerrilla fighters were removed from the CC WPK and exiled to distant provinces from Pyongyang, despite the opposition to this from of Kim Il-sung’s comrades.⁴¹ Meanwhile Ri Su-yong (리수용, also known as Ri Chol: 리철) was appointed director of the OGD and worked with Ri Hwason (리화선), a deputy director in the OGD. Ri Su-yong also cooperated with another former director of the OGD, Ri Myong-jae (리명제)⁴², who is the father of Ri Yong-ho (리용호), the current DPRK Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Interestingly, at certain periods, 84% of OGD cadres have had a background related to people and soldiers who were killed during the Korean War.⁴³

Therefore, those who generally accompany Kim Jong-un on his public inspections also appear to belong or belonged to the OGD, as trusted advisors of the Kim family. These are likely to include Kim Ki-nam (김기남), Jo Yong-won (조용원), Kim Kyong-ok, Ri Su-yong, and others. All of them are or were deputy directors of the OGD. Kim Kyong-ok was nominated in 2008 to the OGD and Jo Yon-jun in January 2012.⁴⁴ Kim Kyong-ok was made a director of the WPK CC in 1991⁴⁵ and thus was revoked in 2019. Kim Yo-jong, a sister of Kim Jong-un, is also thought to be an OGD senior deputy director.

40 Jang 2014: 100. This was done through the cell 9 of the OGD (9과 내각).

41 Jang 2014: 174.

42 Ri Myong-jae passed away in 2018. Ri Myong-jae was also the former director of. Kim Jong Il’s Secretariat (1982–1992). Lee, Lim, Cho, Song 2013: 35.

43 Interview with Kim Byeong-ro, associate professor at the Institute for Peace and Unification Studies of the Seoul National university. The interview was conducted on the 8th July 2015.

44 북한 주요인사 -인물정보 2017: 521.

45 북한 주요인사 -인물정보 2017: 37.

Regarding the leadership of the OGD, there are believed to be at least seven deputy directors⁴⁶, divided into two groups. The first group are senior deputy directors who deal with the aforementioned sections. The next group comprises of deputy directors who are employed in the OGD in accordance to their connections with the Kim family and their political experience.

Table 1. Senior Deputy Directors of the OGD as of the 1st September 2019

Identity	Position	Year of nomination
Ri Man-gon	1 st senior deputy director	2019
Hwang Pyong-so	2 nd senior deputy director for military affairs	2018
Kim Jo-guk	3 rd senior deputy director for military issues	2008
Jo Yon-jun	4 th senior deputy director for WPK headquarters issues	2012

Source: own research

All of them are faithful followers of Kim jong-il and OGD instructors of the Three Revolutions Team. The Three Revolutions Team was a movement dedicated to the ideological indoctrination of the North Korea population in the mid 1970s. This movement implements the ideological indoctrination in three major fields, referred to as Ideological, Technological and Cultural. Kim Kyong-ok⁴⁷ is a '4 star' KPA general. Other deputy directors are supposedly involved in the Personnel Secretariat of Kim Jong-un. Members of the family also work in the OGD, such as Kim Jong-chol between 1999 and 2000.⁴⁸ Several rumours suggest that Kim Jong-chol was even a deputy director of the OGD, but these are hard to verify.⁴⁹ Some reports confirmed that Kim Jong-chol and Kim Jong-un were at least partially educated and trained by OGD officials. Both of them also worked on the PAD.⁵⁰ There are also some rumours that the Guidance Department is supposed to have adopted the expression, „Let us set up a business system for brethren Kim Jong Cheol". From 1999 to late 2000, there were talks circulating about Kim Jong Cheol from the Party down to the provincial party sections.⁵¹

46 Madden 2009: 67.

47 Kim Kyong-ok was a senior deputy director of the OGD till 2019.

48 Cheong 2008a: 3.

49 Cheong 2008a: 25.

50 Madden 2009: 69.

51 Kim 2008.

There are two groups of deputy directors in the OGD. The first is composed of “senior deputy directors” and the second group of ordinary deputy directors. Some of the deputy directors of the OGD are trustees’ counterparts of the Kim family. Among others we can notice the presence of Choe Thae-bok, Hyon Chol-hae, and Kim Ki-nam. All of them are semi-retired and are rarely seen in public. This second list was even larger in the past before some of these deputy directors passed away, such as Jon Pyong-ho, Kim Jung-rin and Kim Kuk-tae, and were apparently not replaced. This may have led to internal friction in the OGD.

Table 2. Assumed directors of the OGD

Identity	Direction period
Choe Ryong-hae	2018–2019
Kim Jong-un	2011–2018
Kim Jong-il	1974–2011
Kim Yong-ju	1960–1973
Pak Yong-bin	1952–1959
Kim Il-sung	1949–1951
Ho Ka-i	1945–1948

Source: own research

4. The controlling role of the OGD

The OGD not only controls the loyalty of the North Korean population but also the degree of security risks potentially posed by this population. According to James Pearson, a researcher based in Seoul, the OGD has files on WPK members containing details on their private lives (habits, travels...). The controlling role of the OGD is connected to the Songbun policy, which prevents disloyal elements from becoming members of the WPK.⁵² The OGD is also responsible for purges in the WPK. According to Professor Cheong Seong-chang the OGD controls not only party organisations, but also all other power institutions existing in North Korea, including the military, the SPA presidium, the state administration council,⁵³ and the orchestre Wangjaesan.⁵⁴

⁵² Pearson, Tudor 2015: 98.

⁵³ Cheong 2008a: 33.

⁵⁴ Jang 2014: 115.

The OGD also controls some structures of the KPA. Starting from 1991, all generals were supposed to follow “Party Lectures” led by instructors from the OGD ‘Sub-section 13 (13과)’⁵⁵ under the auspices of the of the Organisation of the WPK section (당지도). Section 13 is also responsible for KPA guidance. Interestingly, the Section 13 is located in the buildings of the Ministry of People’s Armed Forces. A corresponding Section 4 is responsible for KPA nominations. After enrolling in lectures, the generals live communally on OGD premises, where they undergo sessions of ideological indoctrination. During this time military appointments and promotions are decided upon. Interestingly, directors and deputy directors of the OGD also participate in the global policy of the DPRK. During the Kim Jong-il era, OGD deputy directors were ordered to attend all meetings of central WPK secretaries.⁵⁶ The senior deputy directors of the OGD also do not often accompany the North Korean leader during his ‘on-the-spot’ guidance, and do not sit on the President’s platform of the WPK. Sometimes they are visible, but their positions are clearly indicated in the North Korean media. There is, however, a new trend in which these senior and deputy directors are increasingly visible in the North Korean media than was the case in the past.

The controlling nature of the OGD underlines that there are some risky issues regarding the nature of the WPK. The more the OGD controls, the more the WPK is jeopardised by external factors. The power of the OGD may have been put in question in the past, especially in the late 1990s and the 2000s. In the late 1990s, in order to prove his loyalty, Jang Sung-thaek and his brother Jang Sung-u were responsible for a major purge in the OGD and the Ministry of Public Security.⁵⁷ They purged many KPA officials and Mun Sung-sul, the deputy director of the OGD responsible for the Headquarter structure. He was beaten to death⁵⁸ within the Simhwajo purge. Jang Sung-thaek also ordered the suicide of Kim Yong-ryong, the deputy director of the Ministry of State Security in 1998. In exchange Jang Sung-thaek was apparently nominated as a WPK secretary and placed at the head of the Administration Department of the WPK. This also led to the transfer of the Secret Police and the Prosecutors’ Office to the Administration Department,⁵⁹ which was previously managed by

55 Pearson, Tudor 2015: 98.

56 Cheong Seong-chang 2008: 9.

57 Madden 2009: 67.

58 The Simhwajo purge was started by the establishment of an identification system, which included work experience, and a list of relatives and their political history. So Kwan-hee, the agriculture secretary of the WPK, was executed in public and was the most significant high ranking official killed during the Simhwajo purge. This purge was co-organised by Kim Jong-il and Jang Sung-thaek.

59 Young 2011: 91.

the Administration structure of the OGD. A second wave of purges took place in the 2000s. The most recent ‘dust-up’ in the OGD occurred in 2004 when Jang Sung-thaek was removed from the department for his “factional behaviour”,⁶⁰ under allegations he had gathered too much power in the department, and was constantly feuding with Ri Jae-gang, another deputy director.⁶¹ Until 2004, Jang Sung-thaek was the head of the Administration Department, which was in reality a structure affiliated to the OGD.⁶² His closest allies were also removed such as Choe Chun-hwang, the first deputy director of the Propaganda and Agitation Department, Foreign Trade minister Ri Kwang-gun, Choe Ryong-su the minister of People’s Security was also dismissed, and finally Ji Jae-ryong who was demoted to work as a labourer in a local community.⁶³ Interestingly, Jang Sung-thaek returned to the political scene and was named head of the WPK department in charge of workers ‘organisations and construction projects’ in 2007. In 2010, two OGD senior directors passed away. A mysterious car accident led to the death of Ri Jae-kang, a deputy director of the OGD. Interestingly around the same time in April 2010, Ri Yong-chol (1928-2010), another OGD deputy director responsible for the military section of the OGD, also called the 13th Bureau⁶⁴, also passed away after being purged by Jang Sung-thaek. Ri Yong-chol became a director of the OGD in June 1993 and its first director in 1994. Ri was nominated with Hom In-beom (홍인범) in march 1993.⁶⁵

Table 3. The main purges of the OGD department

Leader of the Purge	Period	Main OGD cadres purged	Other persons purged
Kim Jong-il	1974–1977	Kim Yong-ju	Lateral branch of the Kim family (Kim Pyong-il, Kim Sung-ae, Kim Yong-il,)
Jang Sung-thaek	1997	Mun Sung-chun	KPA officials
Kim Jong-il/ OGD direction	2003&2010	Jang Sung-thaek	Pak Pong-ju, WPK officials
OGD direction	2010	Ri Jae-kang/Ri Yong-chol	WPK officials

Source: own research

60 Cheong, 2008b: 58.

61 Cheong, 2008b: 52.

62 Cheong, 2008b: 56.

63 Cheong 2008a: 30...Ji Jae-ryong is the current DPRK ambassador to China.

64 Kim 2006: 3.

65 북한 주요인사 -인물정보 2017: 752.

The power of Jang Sung-thaek in the OGD could be also compared to one Yun Sung-kwan, who partially dominated the OGD at the beginning of the 1990s. Yun Sung-kwan was probably expelled because he was blamed for the aborted putsch against Kim Il-sung in 1993.⁶⁶ As was the case with Jang Sung-thaek, who wanted to undertake deep reforms of the North Korean economy and was released from his duties and dismissed.

In conclusion, it should be stressed that in trying to determine who is actually at the head of North Korea, we cannot merely rely on public appearances by the North Korean leadership as providing a significant indicator. There are also important power brokers who operate behind the scenes, especially younger people who manage the OGD. Many people are trying to assess the potential of the OGD in terms of the North Korean political model. However, there are some limitations concerning the potential significance of these analyses. There could be certain disagreements between the core management of the OGD and the PS. We cannot forget that Ri Jae-kang and Ri Yong-chol, both heads of the OGD, mysteriously passed away in “car accidents”. According to Cheong Seong-chang, the director of Inter-Korean relations Studies Program at Sejong Institute, both were purged because they played a relevant role in relieving Jang of his duties in 2004.⁶⁷ There could also be some conflicts or internal rivalries inside the OGD.

Conclusion

From an organisational perspective, I think that Kim Jong-un may launch a movement similar to the Three Revolutions Team in order to determine the future leaders of the OGD. Otherwise we could also speculate that those who led the Songun movement in the mid-1990s may become the new leaders of the OGD. From a different perspective, changes in the OGD leadership may also result from the North Korean policy of regularly switching elites within one political structure, in order to avoid any kind of factionalism. Therefore, the OGD leadership is also regularly assessed, demoted and updated.

Finally, it is important to note also that the OGD is not the sole department responsible for North Korean Propaganda. The PAD implements some propaganda tools, however the roots of North Korean propaganda stem from the Soviet Union. The cult of Kim Il-sung also did not start with the nomination of Kim Jong-il to the OGD and PAD. Already by the 1950s, the Kim Il-sung personality cult was strongly indoctrinated into the North Korean psyche, having already started in 1946 with the anthem *The Song of General*

66 Madden 2009: 67.

67 Cheong 2009: 14.

Kim Il-sung.⁶⁸ In a nutshell, the OGD is definitely responsible for the top-management of North Korean affairs, in spite of being at its inception merely a structure affiliated to the WPK. Now it appears to be the WPK that is affiliated to the OGD.

Annex – Vocabulary

Term in English	Term in Korean	Romanized version
Department of the Organization and Guidance of the Korean Workers' Party	조선로동당 조직지도부	Choson Rodongdang Jojikjidopu
Department of the Propaganda and Agitation of the Korean Workers' Party	조선로동당선전선동부	Choson Rodongdang Seonjeonseontongpu
New Thought	새관점	Sae Kwanjom
Paektu Bloodline	백두혈통	Paektu Hyoltong
Party Direction	지도핵심	Chido Haeksim
Personnal secretariat	서기실	
Social Stratification	출신성분	Chulsin Songbun
The Song of General Kim Il-sung	김일성장군의 노래	
Songun Policy	선군정치	Songun chonchji
Supreme Leader	수령	Suryong
Three Revolutions movement	삼대혁명	Samdae hyokmyong

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Juche ideology in Africa: its origins & development

Abstract

During the decolonisation of Africa between the 1950s and 1960s, the newly independent countries looked for state-building ideas. Africa in this period of history was also a battleground of ideologies, which were represented by the Global Powers – the US and western states; the USSR and its allies, such as North Korea.² Due to some aspects of socialism, like anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism, these kind of ideologies found fertile ground. One of them was also the Juche, which was promoted by North Korea. During many years until today many offshoots of this ideology have taken root in Africa.

Keywords: Africa, ideology, Juche, North Korea, politics.

Introduction

The second half of the XXth. century was the particular period in African history. After a long period of domination by European colonial powers in Africa, the long-awaited decolonisation process took place. It was possible for many reasons, which have been widely researched by political scientists and historians. First, the political activities of educated, new, young African elites, political parties and national or liberation movements of Africans.³ In some cases this was preceded by a combination of, on the one hand, armed struggle and on the other by the political activity of Africans. Second, post-war changes inside the colonial powers and as a consequence their gradual retreat from their African possessions.⁴ Third, the new world order built after the Second World War, in which world domination were divided between new powers: the United States of America (USA) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Fourth, the creation of the United Nations (UN) and its international

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2 In this research paper, I use the term “North Korea”. Exceptions are only quotes and proper names, in which is used the term “DPRK”.

3 Milewski 2002: 44.

4 Milewski 2002: 44.

activity. The proclamation of the Charter of the United Nations in 1945, whose regulations indicate the rights of all nations to equality and self-determination.⁵ In later activity, the UN proclaimed decolonisation as one of its primary goals.⁶

Finally, the decolonisation process began in the 1960s, which for many years was dubbed as “The Decade of Africa”. In this decade most of the former European colonies gained independence. The majority of them declared independence in the 1960s, the rest in the mid-1970s, and the latest, like Zimbabwe, in 1980 or like Namibia in the 1990.⁷ Power has been taken over by the marginalised African majority and new African power elites emerged.

The post-war period up to 1989 was characterised by the aforementioned rivalry of the world powers – the US and the USSR and their allies, also known as the “Cold War”. Consequently, it was also an ideological competition between the capitalist and socialist political, social and economic systems. The object of this rivalry and one of the main foci of the global powers was newly emerging, independent African countries seeking ideas for their newly established states and how to develop. Following with the anti-imperialist and anti-colonial elements of socialism or, more broadly, Marxism-Leninism, left-wing ideologies were interested in Africa at that time. The choice of such a development path was also dictated by aid considerations (especially military and economic assistance) flowing from the Eastern Bloc. One of the examples of interest and popularity of left-wing ideology at that time in Africa was African Socialism. One of the variants of Marxism-Leninism, which reached to Africa was the North Korean ideology of Juche.

This paper analyses the theory of Juche ideology itself, then the background of Juche ideology in Africa, and finally its origins and development in Africa. Finally, the paper seeks to answer the question about the future of Juche ideology in Africa. In my analysis, I have used methods and theories widely circulated in political science. According to the character of research conducted in this paper, I have decided to use the historical method or more precisely, its genetic and materialist subtype.

5 Prokopczuk 1983: 14.

6 Prokopczuk 1983: 14.

7 Milewski 2002: 46.

Theory of Juche ideology⁸

Juche (in Korean: 주체) as a term in simple translation literally means “self-identity”, “subjectivity”, “self-reliance” and / or “autonomy”.⁹ The term Juche consists words: *Ju*¹⁰ (주) – power, but also owner or master¹¹ and *Che* (체) – physique, integrity or essence.¹² The term Juche was used for the first time on 28 December 1955 in Kim Il Sung’s speech to the Workers Party of Korea (WPK) and propagandists and agitators officially translated it as “On Eliminating Dogmatism and Formalism and Establishing Juche in Ideological Work”.¹³ In this ground-breaking speech, Kim argued that North Korea should adapt Marxism-Leninism applicable to Korean realities, thus laying the ideological framework for North Korea’s philosophy of Juche.¹⁴ The aforementioned point of view is closer to the notion of the creation of national versions of communist ideologies like Leninism / Stalinism in USSR, Maoism in China or later Titoism in Yugoslavia, Castroism in Cuba.¹⁵ But also it is a result of the changes in the Kremlin after Stalin’s death and the subsequent search for new strategies by Kim Il Sung or simply as an ideological tool to distance Pyongyang from Moscow.¹⁶

In the available literature the term Juche as translated into the language of political practice is understood as: a state of mind and position of a person capable of carrying out policies by himself without outside influence.¹⁷ The Juche ideology grew out of “Kimilsungism” – from the name of the creator of Juche ideology Kim Il Sung, which is also a base for the Juche ideology; sometimes these terms are used interchangeably. In the second way of understanding, the Juche ideology is simply a statement that the hosts or owners of Korea are Koreans and the host of the revolution is the Korean nation.¹⁸

8 The classic positions about Juche ideology are North Korean books wrote by Kim Il Sung e.g.: Kim Il Sung (1975): *On Juche in Our Revolution*, Foreign Languages Publishing House; Kim Il Sung (1972): *Juche! The Speeches and Writings of Kim Il Sung*, Foreign Languages Publishing House; Kim Il Sung (1972): *The Selected Works of Kim Il Sung: Volumes 1 – 5*, Foreign Languages Publishing House; and also many more.

9 Byun 1991: 21.

10 In this research paper, I use the most popular Korean language romanization system called McCune–Reischauer romanization.

11 Landlord or householder too.

12 Dziak 2000: 322.

13 David-West 2007: 138, Kim 1972a: 28.

14 Kim 1972a: 19.

15 Hale 2002: 289-290.

16 Kim 1972a: 19.

17 Kim 1987: 6.

18 Dziak 2000: 322.

It should be emphasised that the Juche ideology was not created at once. It was a fairly long-term process as a result of which the specific elements of this ideology were crystallised. The main foundations for the creation of subsequent elements were mainly the speeches and ideological works of Kim Il Sung, as well as studies by North Korean researchers on the basis of the above-mentioned works of Kim. Researchers distinguish the following stages in the development of the Juche ideology. As an embryonic concept: 1930-1945 – when Kim Il Sung, as a young revolutionist and guerrilla leader, accumulated experiences and learnings from the Chinese and the Soviets.¹⁹ An important factor in this point are also growing nationalist resentments due to the Japanese occupation of the Korean peninsula and later as post-liberation nationalism called *minjokjuui*.²⁰ 1945-1955 – The learning stage, when the aforementioned *minjokjuui* was still present, but additionally some elements were added. In this period Kim Il Sung developed his own ruling skills through exposure to the USSR and the Korean War.²¹ Especially during the faction wars inside the WPK, which resulted in the confirmation of Kim's full and independent leadership, he could afford to stray further from the Soviet line to guarantee his political power base.²² As an ideology of North Korea, but unofficial and not fully formulated: 1955-1962, when the Juche concept itself appeared and became part of the political circuit. At the same time, under the slogan of Juche policies an independent and separate North Korea was formulated, as was the autonomy of the WPK in external relations alongside critiques of the Great Power tendencies of the USSR.²³ In later years Kim Il Sung began to cautiously step ahead with his independent policies and finally implemented them in all areas of the state's activities on his own terms. During the years 1967–1972: As an official ideology of North Korea and the WPK. In this period the Juche ideology became the basis for all national policies and in the theoretical domain, Juche began to constitute a coherent ideological system.²⁴ Juche was officially recognised as the application of Marxism-Leninism to North Korean reality. During the period 1973-1980: The Juche ideology was recognised as a comprehensive system of ideas, theories and methods of Kim Il Sung, also as the canon of the whole: nation, state, party and society.²⁵ The last period after 1980 can be described as the expansion and development stage. It is worth noting that in 1982 there took place a figurative event, namely, the construction

19 Byun 1991: 59.

20 Hale 2002: 287.

21 Byun 1991: 59.

22 Hale 2002: 288.

23 Dziak 2000: 284.

24 Dziak 2000: 284.

25 Kim (J.I.)1984: 1.

of the Tower of the Juche idea in Pyongyang as a symbol of the ultimate codification and dominance of Juche ideology in the life of North Korea. In 1992, the Juche concept's remaining connections to Marxism were completely removed from the North Korean Constitution, and Juche was elevated to the status of a kind of religious and moral system, which ultimately defined the purpose of people's lives, thereby providing the ideological justification for the hereditary succession of power of Kim dynasty.²⁶ So, Juche became a kind of political tool towards maintaining power and influence.

The ideology of Juche is very wide and sometimes a little bit complicated, so a brief explanation is needed. The Juche ideology consists of several elements, which condition it. These are: *jaju* (자주) – independence in politics, *jarip* (자립) – self-sufficiency in the economy, *jawi* (자위) – self-reliance in national defence, later to this set was added *suryeong* (수령) – leadership and in particular that the WKP and masses represent one organic body, but the brain and the main representation of their will, needs and interests is the Leader or Commander.²⁷ The main rule of Juche ideology is the statement that man is the master of everything and decides everything, in consequence this principle underlies all the principles and propositions elucidated by the Juche idea.²⁸ So in this point of view, a human is simply an independent entity in Korean - *Chajusong*. However, these features cannot develop immediately in the process of social development.²⁹ Therefore man must become a conscious social being and when that does not happen he simply cannot be called man anymore, according to the words of Kim Il Sung: “Man is a being with *Chajusong*, that is, an independent social being”.³⁰ If man is a social being, besides biological life, he can live also by the rules of socio-political life, even it is more important than the biological one, which has its end, in contrast to socio-political life, which is eternal through its achievements.³¹ Because immortality is an unparalleled value for man, it can only be achieved through socio-political life together with the full devotion of man to social and political life. It is impossible for a man to do it alone. It is possible only through political parties or other socio-political organisations. It is a honour and glory for man. The essence of human life is therefore a collectivist life. As Waldemar Dziak points out, the main aspiration of Kim Il Sung was the transformation of North Korea into a fully collectivist state on the basis of the Juche idea.³² So the

26 Park 2014: 6.

27 Park 2014: 6.

28 Kim 1984: 26.

29 Kim 1984: 77–79.

30 Kim 1984: 65–67.

31 Dziak 2000: 324–325.

32 Dziak 2000: 326.

main core of Juche ideology is collectivism. This is how people's masses are created. In Juche ideology people's masses are the main force of revolution, creation and progress, but only and exclusively when they are led by the party, because only the party can be the force of revolution and the nucleus of the masses.³³ As we have already noted, a socio-political organism with party and masses created in this way needs *suryeong*, that is independent leadership. As Park Yong Soo points out, only *suryeong* itself is at the apex and core of the system, because the whole society is mobilised with the aim of replicating his power.³⁴ Only under *suryeong*: can the whole nation act as one body under his guidance.³⁵ Further, *suryeong* drives the masses, party and state by enforcing the routine instillation of the military and revolutionary spirit at all times and at all levels of society, so in consequence the power of the *suryeong* is developed along with a wide range of social organisations to reproduce certain patterns of behaviour³⁶. This process can be carried out only by cult of personality, because Juche must be absolutely overwhelming.

The first part of Juche ideology outside of the widely analysed features above is *suryeong* is *jaju* (자주) – independence in politics. Man should be a master of his own destiny, cognately the principle of political independence is obligatory if the state wants to shape its own destiny. Every state has equal rights and possibilities to self-determination, and what's more every state must have rights to chart its future in order to assure freedom and prosperity for its people.³⁷ *Jaju* demands complete equality and mutual respect among states, as well as rejects subjugation and thus opposes enslavement.³⁸ To conduct *jaju*, the state should accommodate a national adaption of Marxism-Leninism; second, it should maintain independence in shaping guidelines and policies by staunchly opposing dogmatism; third, it should insist upon complete equality in foreign relations, because only this line differs from national egoism in that it strengthens proletarian internationalism.³⁹ This point is particular in the subject of this article. To conclude, *jaju* as political independence is the basic provision and guarantee for economic self-sustenance and military self-defence. The second element of Juche ideology is *jarip* (자립) – self-sufficiency. This element of Juche ideology refers directly only to the economic relations of the state. According to Kim Il Sung, economic independence is

33 Dziak 2000: 327.

34 Park 2014: 5–6.

35 Park 2014: 6.

36 Park 2014: 6.

37 Byun 1991: 76.

38 Byun 1991: 76.

39 Byun 1991: 76–77.

a key factor in achieving the political independence.⁴⁰ *Jarip* should mean the pursuit of autarchy and intensive expansion of the national economy, whose symbol is the *Chöllima* movement established to achieve self-reliance in the economy⁴¹. The last element of Juche ideology is *jawi* (자위) – self-reliance in national defence. Similar to the previous elements, in order that achieve political independent and confirmation of power, it is important to implement fully militarisation. Because military power is the basis of all power, so without true independence in military affairs, the state cannot exercise its sovereignty.⁴² It requires fortification of the entire country, to militarise all society and to develop a strictly national army, also in the case of the arms industry.⁴³

Juche ideology in Africa – the principles

Probably most important, from the North Korean view, is the question of the ideological war between the US and USSR in Africa during the decolonisation period or even wider – Africa as a battleground for capitalism and socialism. African states became an object of ideological and political measures of the US and USSR, mainly to attract each of these countries to one of the global camps. The main world powers used a variety of tools to attract African countries, ranging from political ones: military assistance, consultancy, through economic: preferable loans, investments, economic consultancy, to humanitarian aid.

With its various diplomatic engagements in the 1950s like support for Egypt in the Suez Crisis and many guerrilla or rebel groups in the Third World or appealing for international aid to North Vietnam, North Korea gained confidence in itself and its strength. This was intensified by faith in their own political and economic success after the Korean War. On the other hand, Kim Il Sung, according to Juche ideology and in detail to *jaju*, allowed himself to openly criticise the international activities of the USSR and China, calling their actions “hegemonism”.⁴⁴ The co-option of new African countries through the development of Juche ideology was for North Korea another source of international support to counter Sino-Soviet influence.⁴⁵ *Jaju* understand as political independence allows North Korea to conduct its own international relations. So, developing Juche ideology in Africa became for North Korea an attempt to build independence and prestige. North Korea wanted to match

40 Byun 1991: 72.

41 Byun 1991: 72.

42 Byun 1991: 73.

43 Byun 1991: 74–75.

44 Byun 1991: 44.

45 Byun 1991: 44.

Cuba, which took active part in the wars in Angola and Namibia, sending its soldiers.

According to the spirit of the Bandung Conference⁴⁶ in 1955 and aforementioned actions, North Korea decided to have an extensive, multi-faceted presence in Third World states, especially in Africa, which was then experiencing the process of decolonisation. Juche ideology became as a tool in conducting North Korea's foreign policy in Third World and therefore in Africa. North Korea tried to present Juche as a model of politics, economic development and foreign relations.⁴⁷ Certain aspects of Juche ideology seemed to be interesting or even worth implementing for many African countries, which had liberated themselves from long-time colonial domination and exclusion, the Juche component ideas held a powerful allure.⁴⁸ Implementation of Juche ideology by newly independent African states was aimed to prevent them from recolonisation. Moreover, this attitude was shared and represented by North Korea's leaders, who did seem to believe their country was an example for the Third World, which was worth following, even Kim Il Sung tried to present himself as a leader of the Third World, and a number of Third World governments, particularly in Africa, seemed to find aspects of the North Korean model both relevant and attractive.⁴⁹ Simply, for Africans Juche ideology was a visible example of fast (socialist) modernisation, which took place in North Korea after the Korean War and which Africans so greatly expected.

Juche ideology belongs to the set of leftist ideologies built on the basis of Marxism-Leninism. These kinds of strategies were quite popular among newly independent African states and their political elites at that time. In particular, due to such elements like: anti-imperialism or / and anti-colonialism. Therefore the USSR and its allies, China, North Korea became the main partners for African states. Very often also as an exemplar, how to build and organise the state. Furthermore, according to Juche ideology, newly independent African states in the 1960s and 1970s were in developing socio-historical movements, as such their struggle for *Chajusong*.⁵⁰ Juche ideology seemed to be the main driving force and great help for Africans to organise their societies and state life.

The main strength of the construction of a modern state – according to the example of North Korea – seemed to be precisely the Juche ideology. The North Korean propaganda line was consistently in favour of anti-colonial

46 Conference for Afro-Asian Solidarity held in Bandung, Indonesia, which effectively launched the Non-Aligned Movement.

47 Armstrong 2009.

48 Armstrong 2009.

49 Armstrong 2009.

50 Kim 1984: 240.

nationalism and independence throughout the Third World.⁵¹ According to the Juche ideology and words of Kim Il Sung, American imperialism was presented as the main enemy of the Third World peoples and Juche as the very embodiment of anti-imperialism.⁵² Clear evidence of this case was supposed to be North Koreans' struggle against the US and South Korea as identical with the struggle of Third World peoples for independence, and completely compatible with proletarian internationalism.⁵³ This view was confirmed and publicly pronounced by Kim Il Sung himself in a speech, entitled "On Socialist Construction in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the South Korean Revolution", which took place in 1965 at Ali Archam Social Science Institute in Jakarta, Indonesia.⁵⁴ Besides issues which concerned Juche, Korean unification and the development of North Korea, Kim Il Sung also called for strengthening of the anti-imperialist movement in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.⁵⁵ Juche ideology became North Korea's instrument of "fraternal help" for African states. The development of Juche ideology in Africa aimed to prevent the still possible plot of imperialism to undermine Communism and world revolution.

Developing Juche ideology among African states by North Korea was undertaken with practical and political precision. Namely, new African states were joining the UN around the time when the Korean question was being tabled, and what's more between 1945 and 1961 African membership in the UN increased nearly sevenfold, meaning Africa had a controlling vote in the UN.⁵⁶ In turn, the main aim of Pyongyang was to recognise the North Korean regime as the legitimate government of Korea.⁵⁷ To achieve this North Korea strived to cast its net as wide as possible of countries in order to capture loyalty before South Korea could.⁵⁸ Newly independent African states were targeted because of similar developmental ideologies to gain votes in the UN and to increase support for Pyongyang's goal of removing US military troops from South Korea.⁵⁹ This support was also gained through the sending of weapons or by providing military training to select African countries. In addition to ideological similarities, North Korea wanted through the development of Juche ideology to bring African countries closer to its own interests and to

51 Armstrong 2009.

52 Armstrong 2009.

53 Armstrong 2009.

54 Armstrong 2009.

55 Armstrong 2009.

56 DuPre, Kasprzyk, Stott (2016).

57 DuPre, Kasprzyk, Stott (2016).

58 DuPre, Kasprzyk, Stott (2016).

59 DuPre, Kasprzyk, Stott (2016).

pursue its political goals. The development of Juche ideology in Africa once again appears as an instrument of North Korea's political aims. Since the turn of the 1960s and 1970s, a race between the two Koreas began with seeking the support of African countries and support in the UN General Assembly. In establishing relations with other countries, Pyongyang relied on cultural diplomacy, while Seoul relied mainly on trade diplomacy.⁶⁰ From 1965 to 1973 South Korea focused on concluding trade agreements, giving aid and sending trade missions, while North Korea focused on concluding cultural agreements, establishing friendship associations and exchanging cultural missions to which could be included as activities associated with the development of Juche ideology.⁶¹

Juche ideology in Africa – development

Study groups, but also meetings, so-called institutes, conferences and workshops were the main instrument of developing Juche ideology in Africa. These organisations worked to promote Juche ideology, North Korea's and Kim Il Sung's greatness through research and discussion on ideology issues and Kim Il Sung's works among pro-North Korean politicians, scholars in African countries with the assistance of North Korea.⁶² At the same time, in line with the increasing political, military and economic interest of North Korea in Africa and the presence in some of the countries from the continent, and analogous to the adopted strategy, there took place the first initiatives concerning Juche ideology.

The first international Juche idea study group was established in Africa. It took place in April 1969 as the Juche Idea Study Group in Bamako, Mali, which was formed by teachers and students of the Mali Senior College of Education.⁶³ The Juche Idea Study Group in Bamako was the first step in the rapid spread of Juche initiatives almost all over Africa. Mali was an interesting case of animated relations with North Korea and a particular object of North Korean interest. For example it was the first African country with which North Korea established full diplomatic relations (1958) and became partners in mutual cooperation, which the result was a joint communiqué on "Afro-Asian solidarity against US imperialism".⁶⁴

Many African leaders, officials, and intellectuals briefly began to experiment with Juche ideology. All African initiatives which concerned Juche ideology

60 DuPre, Kasprzyk, Stott (2016).

61 DuPre, Kasprzyk, Stott (2016).

62 Yonhap 2003: 536.

63 Yonhap 2003: 536.

64 Armstrong 2009.

were operated by the International Research Centre for the Juche Idea in Tokyo,⁶⁵ which was formally set up in 1978.⁶⁶ The 1970s became a decade that saw most Juche ideology initiatives. By its end, North Korea had established diplomatic relations with many newly independent African states, while Juche ideology initiatives were created, especially Juche Idea Study Groups. As follows: in 1972: Cameroon, Madagascar, Rwanda, Senegal, Uganda, Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso) and Zaire (DR Congo); in 1973: Angola, Benin, Gambia, Mauritius, Togo; in 1974: Botswana, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Libya, Niger; in 1975: Cape Verde, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Tunisia, São Tomé and Príncipe; in 1976: Nigeria and Seychelles; in 1980: Lesotho and Zimbabwe.⁶⁷ Also, participants of Juche Study Groups very often were expedited to North Korea for Juche idea scholarships, training, meetings or simply to discover the land of Juche and Kim Il Sung. Juche Idea Study Groups were not an artificial product of North Korean propaganda. In fact, these groups did really exist and Pyongyang widely disseminated its propaganda across Africa, simply in order to gain more admirers.⁶⁸ The strategy adopted by North Korea to acquire African countries through Juche Ideology Study Groups was effective, and the groups themselves, despite their very small number of members, were initially relatively popular, despite the US Embassy issuing an official protest, in which it complained to Zambian officials that the dissemination of North Korean propaganda in the country needed to be stopped since it contained anti-American statements.⁶⁹ A similar situation also took place in Ethiopia. South Korean and US officials worried about North Korea's ideological appeal to Africans eager to develop their newly independent nations.⁷⁰

The 1970s also saw an important event, a conference on the Juche ideology in Africa. This conference covered the Juche ideology its role and place in the new African states, anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism, and international and North Korean issues. Statements which praised Kim Il Sung – his leadership and genius - were an important point of similar conferences. First was the Pan-African Seminar on Comrade Kim Il Sung's Juche Idea, which was held from 18th to 20th December 1972 in Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone.⁷¹ This seminar gathered about 50 delegates from 16 African countries, which

65 It was led by Kenishi Onishi, who has ruled over this Centre during the last 30 years. The headquarters of this organisation is located in Tokyo, instead of no diplomatic ties between North Korea and Japan.

66 Yonhap 2003: 536.

67 DuPre, Kasprzyk, Stott (2016).

68 Young 2015.

69 Young 2015.

70 Young 2015.

71 The Preparatory Committee... 1973: 5.

consisted of students, politicians, academics, journalists, representatives of many organisations, members of African liberation movements and especially representatives of Juche Study Groups and Societies of North Korea Friends, notably from Africa and from other parts of the World.⁷² Namely these were: Algerian representatives; Angola – MPLA; Congo – ACAP; DR Somalia – representatives of government; Equatorial Guinea – African Student Group for the Study of the Revolutionary Philosophy of Comrade Kim Il Sung; Guinea – representatives of government; Mali – Mali Association for Friendship with the People of the DPRK, Mali Youth, Peace Movement of Mali, representatives of government; Mauritius – CPM and Mauritian-Korean Friendship Society; Namibia (then under South African occupation) – SWAPO; Nigerian representatives; North Korea – Academy of Social Sciences of DPRK; São Tomé and Príncipe – MLSTP and ST&P group for Study of the Juche Idea; Sierra Leone – Association of Sierra Leone’s Women, Freetown University, Sierra Leone-Korea Friendship Society; Sierra Leone’s Youth, representatives of government, especially from the ruling party APC; a Sudanese delegation; Tanzanian representatives and probably more African states than mentioned in the sources.⁷³ The slogan of the conference in Sierra Leone was: “The Great Idea of Juche Radiates over the Revolutionary Struggle of the African Peoples”. The main aims of the seminar were: comparing and deepening of Juche ideology knowledge, revolutionary ideas, exchanging experience between participants and projecting ways in which the revolutionary struggle of the African people against colonialism and racism would be possible.⁷⁴ In spite of the fact that there were only a small number of participants, it was undoubtedly an important propaganda tool for North Korea. To illustrate that North Korea meant something in Africa (especially for internal use) and is an inspiration for African people and states. An interesting testimony was the quoted book that summarised this conference. Except for all the documents, speeches and statements, there were full of pictures of Kim Il Sung giving directions on the spot surrounded by Koreans, Korean achievements and cheering participants of conference, like e.g.: “standing and hailing <<Long live Comrade Kim Il Sung >> and shouting revolutionary slogans”.⁷⁵

As Benjamin Young points out, the 1970s saw the total development of Juche ideology in Africa, which besides aforementioned initiatives included the inspirations of Juche ideology for some African politicians. They praised publicly Juche ideology, like the Malian head of state, who called North Korean achievements and experiences a model for developing countries or Moges

72 The Preparatory Committee... 1973: 5, 9–11.

73 The Preparatory Committee... 1973: 9–10.

74 The Preparatory Committee... 1973: 5.

75 The Preparatory Committee... 1973: 17.

Wolde-Michael, the chairman of the Economic Committee of the Ethiopian Provisional Military Administrative Council, who said that: “the Juche idea that had enabled the DPRK to perform miracles, which is attributable to the genial guidance of President Kim Il Sung, the great and excellent leader, and to the diligent work of the Korean people”.⁷⁶ In the case of inspirations from Juche ideology, we can find “Horoya”, created by Ahmed Sekoutoure, former President of the Republic Guinea, which had similar principles as Juche.⁷⁷ Another example is the ideology of “Umuganda” created by former President of Rwanda Juvenal Habyarimana, which means “coming together for a common purpose”, according to the words of the Rwandan president, who added that it had similar viewpoints as Juche.⁷⁸ At the end of this section it is worth noting that many African politicians criticised both Juche ideology as inapplicable in the postcolonial reality of Africa and dangerously radical and the way in which North Korea had tried to promote it, describing it as aggressive.⁷⁹ As Kenyan politician Tom Mboya at a Pan-African Conference in 1970 described Juche ideology: “I accept the slogan of self-reliance. The man in the bush has always been self-reliant and that is the reason why he is still in the bush”.⁸⁰ It is worth noting that at the end of the 1970s North Korea operated approximately about 1,000 Juche Idea organisations in various countries.⁸¹

The 1980s and 1990s saw the total eclipse of the development of Juche ideology in Africa, which was influenced by several factors. First, a crisis of the socialist camp and as a consequence its complete downfall, which eliminated the USSR and its allies from Africa. Second, the crisis and the economic failure of North Korea itself, which led to a lack of interest in the Juche ideology and North Korea in Africa. Due to internal problems of North Korea, there was a lack of funds for Juche ideology initiatives in Africa. In fact, Africans were already witnessing the rapid development and success of South Korea and in effect blatant differences in the development and level of life between them. Simply, Africans saw the reality of the practice of Juche ideology and how its implementation ended up. Third, numerous crises in Africa in the 1980s caused a retreat from experiments with various ideologies and optimism related to de-colonisation and hope for change expired. Also, many African states were governed by authoritarian, one-party regimes, which suppressed all other political activities including Juche Study Groups. Fourth, when in the 1990s “the third wave of democracy” hit Africa, new opposition

76 Young 2015.

77 The Preparatory Committee... 1973: 8.

78 Young 2015.

79 Young 2015.

80 Young 2015.

81 Yonhap 2003: 536.

parties were not interested in Juche as an ideology with its roots in a totalitarian regime. Fifth, the final end of the decolonisation process in Africa through the independence of Zimbabwe (1980) and Namibia (1990). Sixth, the final exhaustion of the formula of winning over African countries by Juche Idea Study Groups. Seventh, a noticeable lack of interest on the part of Africans in Juche ideology on the one hand and on the other cooperation with Africa became unprofitable for North Korea. So, due to the mentioned-above factors the development and presence of Juche ideology in Africa all but disappeared. The majority of Juche Idea Study Groups, which in most cases were small and marginal, were dissolved.

The 1980s were the last period of some Juche ideology developments in Africa. In 1981 the African Committee for Friendship and Solidarity with the Korean People was established in Nigeria.⁸² An important event was the establishment of the Juche Idea Study Institute in Africa in Sierra Leone in April 1985.⁸³ In the 1980s North Korea tried new form of development of Juche ideology in Africa. These were visits of earlier selected students in North Korea, the main aim being the study of the Juche idea at special courses.⁸⁴ In the 1980s, approximately 200 students from Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mali, Tanzania and Zambia attended such Juche Idea courses in North Korea.⁸⁵ However, as a result of certain factors, North Koreans decided to end this form of scholarship. Africans were no longer interested in it, because during these trips they experienced racism, propaganda, exclusion and permanent invigilation.⁸⁶ On the other hand North Koreans did not want to continue this idea because of ideological and racial frictions represented by the African students, and also lack of trust and fear of espionage and penetration of this sheltered state.⁸⁷

In this point, it is worth noting that the presence of Juche ideology in Africa was also an inspiration for the creation of works of science, culture and art. For example, Fred Agbobli, who was the chief of Ghana National Institute of the Juche Idea, painted and gave as a gift to Kim Jong Il the oil painting "Sunlight of Juche in Africa".⁸⁸ Another example is a Cameroonian professor who wrote his doctoral dissertation on Juche and its application to Africa.⁸⁹ The professor explained that the main aim of his thesis was to adopt measures to embody the

82 *African Committee for Friendship and Solidarity with the Korean People* 2019.

83 Yonhap 2003: 536.

84 Young 2015.

85 Young 2015.

86 Young 2015.

87 Young 2015.

88 Boundless Reverence and Admiration of World Progressive Mankind for the Juche Idea 2017.

89 Young 2015.

Juche philosophy in Africa and thus have it disseminated widely and taught at African universities and in the African intellectual world so that intellectuals from African countries could have a deep understanding of the developed civilisation of Korea in the East.⁹⁰ The latest doctoral dissertation “Study on Overcoming Crisis and Development of Africa By Applying the Juche Idea” was prepared in 2017 by Roland Vele Mukelenge, chairman of the Group for the Study of Songun Policy and defended it at the Bandundu University of DR Congo.⁹¹

According to the aforementioned factors and total failure of the North Korean state in 1990s, the development and presence of Juche ideology in Africa were eclipsed. This resulted in a significant reduction of all initiatives concerning Juche ideology in Africa. The situation has improved in recent years more widely since Kim Jong Un took power.

Currently, Juche ideology is present in Africa in its typical forms like: Juche Idea Study Groups, which can be found also under the name connected with the personage of North Korean leaders; other organisations and committees; conferences about the Juche idea, which are held in Africa, North Korea, other countries of World with the representatives and/or participants of African Juche Idea Study Groups; also visits of Africans in North Korea.

In Benin there is the *Comité National Béninois d’Etude des Idées du Juche* (Beninese National Committee for the Study of the Ideas of Juche) – leader: Hessou Kohovi – in the capital Cotonou, which organised a March 1st 2017 meeting under the title: “Praising Great Persons of Mount Paektu”.⁹²

Other currently active Juche Idea Study Groups have operated in DR Congo: the National Committee for the Study of the Juche Idea and newly established on February 8th 2018: Group for the Study of the Juche Idea for Independence in Democratic Congo in Kinshasa.⁹³ In Ethiopia: Ethiopian Youth Study Group of the Juche Idea; in Egypt: Egyptian Committee for Study Juche Idea; in South Africa: Group for the Study of Progressive Idea, The South African National Committee for the Study of Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism (formed in November 2018, but according to the provided information only in the Mfomalanga province) and many others, like small Juche Idea Study Groups; in Guinea: the National Committee for Study Juche Idea.⁹⁴ There are probably

90 Young 2015.

91 DPRK Doctorate in Socio-politics Conferred on Followers of Juche Idea 2017.

92 DuPre, Kasprzyk, Stott (2016).

93 New Juche Idea Study Groups Form 2018.

94 DuPre, Kasprzyk, Stott (2016); *Africa Regional Committee for Study Juche Idea – Board of Directors* 2019; *S. African National Committee for Study of Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism Formed* 2019.

more Juche Idea Study Groups in other African countries, but according to the provided information many groups were not active because of communication, financial, infrastructure problems or there was lack of any liaison with them.⁹⁵ As Alhassan Mamman Muhammad (chairman of the Nigerian National Committee on the Study of the Juche Idea), said that in every African state there exists a Juche Study Group, in most cases these groups⁹⁶ are independent with their own leadership structure.⁹⁷

The most powerful and active Juche Idea Study Groups in Africa are located in Nigeria, Tanzania and Uganda. In Nigeria, there is the Nigerian National Committee on the Study of the Juche Idea and the Nigeria-DPRK Friendship Association.⁹⁸ The Nigerian National Committee on the Study of Juche Idea is managed by Alhassan Mamman Muhammad, prof. at the FCT in Abuja. The Nigerian Committee was formed in the late 1970s and currently is thought to be the biggest in Africa, with approximately 2,000 to 2,500 registered members of Nigeria's Juche study group, organised in numerous branches across the country and a further 10,000 unregistered followers exist across Nigeria.⁹⁹ Alhassan Mamman Muhammed is famous for his many visits to North Korea (6–7 times) and close relationships with North Korean officials and even got North Korean orders of merit in recognition of his works.¹⁰⁰ The main activities held by the Nigerian Committee concern the functioning of the Juche Idea Study Groups and participation in African seminars, which are related to Juche Ideology and also produce support statements for North Korean policies.¹⁰¹ This Committee also runs a webpage, which has pure propaganda purport, and is full of aforementioned statements and information about North Korean policies, positions, and news.¹⁰² In Tanzania, is the National Coordinating Committee on the Juche Idea Study Groups, which manages the Juche Idea Study Groups scattered in many places in Tanzania. The last report concerns activities in 2009. The number of Juche Idea Study Groups has been decreasing, so active groups existed only in regions: Dar es Salaam (13 groups), Morogoro and Coast (in each 1 group).¹⁰³ Juche idea activities in Tanzania comprised meetings, seminars and lectures – also for special anniversaries and

95 DuPre, Kasprzyk, Stott (2016).

96 According to the words of Alhassan Mamman Muhammad: “I know of least one person in every African country who represents a branch” in: Byrne 2014.

97 Byrne 2014.

98 *Nigerian National Committee on the Study of Juche Idea* 2019.

99 Byrne 2014.

100 Byrne 2014.

101 *Nigerian National Committee on the Study of Juche Idea* 2019.

102 *Nigerian National Committee on the Study of Juche Idea* 2019.

103 Kamwiziku 2010.

events of great importance to the Juche and North Korea.¹⁰⁴ The Tanzanian Committee also is responsible for a website “Africa Juche”, which is in both English and French, similar as in Nigeria this webpage is full of statements and support for North Korean policies and leaders and interesting poems like “*O Corée, Terre promise*”¹⁰⁵ or “*Songun et la paix mondiale*”.¹⁰⁶ In Uganda is the Ugandan National Committee for the Study of the Juche Idea, which is led by Mayambala Lawrence, but here also exists a quite important institution, which coordinates all Juche Idea Committees and Study Groups in Africa, namely the Juche Africa Headquarters, which is located in the capital of Uganda – Kampala.¹⁰⁷ The main objectives of Juche Africa are: To intensify the study and dissemination of the Juche idea in Africa for social, economic and political transformation; To strive for the advancement of the revolutionary cause of Juche in Africa’s quest for a better and organised status of human kind; To promote and strengthen Africa’s solidarity with North Korea and other socialist establishments in the world; To promote African integration and international cooperation.¹⁰⁸ So, Juche Africa acts as African regional committee for Juche ideology. Juche Africa as a central institution of Juche ideology in Africa is managed by a Board of Directors, which currently consists of representatives of some national Juche Idea committees, organisations, universities from many parts of Africa, which currently consists: Henry Masiko (president) from Uganda, Alhassan Mamman Muhammad from Nigeria; Eddie Kekana from South Africa; Francis Lyimo from Tanzania; Hessou Kohovi from Benin; Lohekele Andre from DR Congo; Mayambala from Uganda; Nigatu Dagnachew from Ethiopia; Riad Chaloub from Guinea; Yehia Khairollah from Egypt; Youssef Marouani from Tunisia.¹⁰⁹ Finally, it should be mentioned that funding and information materials needed for the functioning of Juche Idea Study Groups are provided by North Korea through its embassies in Africa.¹¹⁰

Others current developments of Juche ideology in Africa concern conferences, seminars and visits in North Korea. For example on 3rd of November 2018 in Conakry (the capital of Guinea) there took place the African Regional Seminar on Juche Idea. Most speeches concerned the Juche ideology and praised Kim Jong Un and 70th Anniversary of North Korea.¹¹¹ Also representatives of Juche Idea Study Groups from Africa have visited

104 Kamwiziku 2010.

105 *Africa Juche: Etude et diffusion des Idées du Juche (Etre maître de soi): Poems* 2019.

106 *Africa Juche: Etude et diffusion des Idées du Juche (Etre maître de soi): Poems* 2019.

107 *Juche Africa* 2019.

108 *Juche Africa* 2019.

109 *African Regional Committee for Study Juche Idea* 2019.

110 DuPre, Kasprzyk, Stott (2016).

111 *African Regional Seminar on Juche Idea* 2018.

North Korea many times to participate in special events devoted to North Korean national anniversaries or simply Juche ideology. On 3rd September 2018 there was an international seminar on “The Juche Idea and 70 Years of the DPRK” in which took part Nigatu Dagnachew, chairman of the Ethiopian National Committee for the Study of Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism, who made a speech on the “Immortal Exploits of President Kim Il Sung Performed and Great Achievement of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea Made for African Revolution Will Remain Forever” and Alhassan Mamman Muhammad, chairman of Nigerian National Committee for the Study of Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism, made a speech on “Democratic People’s Republic of Korea; Seventy Years on the Spirit of Juche Idea”.¹¹² Representatives of Juche Idea Study Groups from Africa in many Juche Idea around the world and some of them are active in the worldwide Juche Idea community. Directors and members of Juche idea study groups from Africa took part in 40th Founding Anniversary of the IJI,¹¹³ which was held in the capital of Mongolia, Ulan Bator, on April, 7th 2018.¹¹⁴ All these activities in reality had a pure propaganda overtone and were simply an instrument for North Korea to prove the importance of the Juche Idea and North Korea at the international arena and its supposed superpower position thanks to Juche idea.

Conclusions

At the first sight, the presence of Juche ideology in Africa can make quite an impression, especially when we see how quickly it developed on this continent. However, the reality is completely different.

Since the very beginning, the presence and development of Juche ideology in Africa was not intended as a kind of North Korean mission for African countries that had recently gained independence and were looking for an idea for the rapid development of their state. On the contrary, from the beginning, the main aim of the idea of Juche mission in Africa was a political instrument of North Korea. First, to get full membership in UN before South Korea. Second, to build their own, sovereign zone of interests among newly independent states in Africa, according to the principle of *jaju*. North Korea wanted to be level with other socialist countries, which were active in the Third World like the USSR or Cuba. Fourth, presence and development of Juche ideology in Africa was the easiest and cheapest way to establish North Korean presence on the continent, especially due to the interest and fascination of Africans in fast recovery of North Korea after the Korean War. Fifth, the

112 International Seminar... 2018.

113 International Institute of the Juche Idea.

114 Functions Hold in Celebration of the 40th Founding Anniversary of the IJI 2018.

presence and development of Juche ideology in Africa was not a result of the aforementioned “mission” or help in the anti-colonial struggle. Simply, Juche activities in Africa were necessary for North Korean propaganda to construct the illusion of North Korea’s important worldwide position and role in international politics for itself and its citizens. Also, to create the personage of Kim Il Sung as the leader of worldwide revolutionary movement and anti-colonial, anti-imperialism struggle of African people. In addition, it helped create the cult of Kim’s personality and legitimacy.

Most activities which concern the presence and development of Juche ideology in Africa are conferences, guest visits (also in North Korea), seminars and Juche Study Groups. Even if these groups operate in most African countries, they are in fact marginal, as well as sensitive and dependent on problems related to financing and organisation. As a consequence, the strength of their influence is actually very low. As Bernard Young points out, in fact, Africans were not fascinated in the idea of Juche, but were interested in the fast development of North Korea after the Korean War and how North Korea had done it.¹¹⁵ So, the main force in the development of Juche ideas in Africa were citizens, who created from the grassroots most of the Juche organisations in most of cases. Especially thanks to the Juche theses about social development and solidarity, also independence from foreign political influence. But on the other hand, in some cases Juche organisations were the result of lively relations between African states and North Korean authorities, politicians, for example the case of Mali.

Currently, most of the coordinators and important personages of Juche ideology in African began their career in the 1970s or 1980s yet and there is lack of information about their successors or active members. It is possible that these groups gradually disappeared, but on the other hand new groups (often in the place of old groups) are still being created. One might suggest that as long as North Korea has an interest – mainly propaganda – in the presence and development of Juche ideology in Africa and there will be funds for its maintenance, all related initiatives will continue to function for some time. However, in general the final end of the presence of Juche ideology in Africa certainly arrived earlier than it seems.

115 Young 2015.

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BOOK REVIEW

Grażyna Strnad. *Korea. Polityka Południa wobec Północy w latach 1948-2008, Zmiana i kontynuacja*. Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 2014, 600 pages, ISBN: 978-6361736-49-3

Up to the end of World War II and for more than 1280 years the Korean Peninsula had usually been a territory of a single unified country. Modern times have brought significant changes. After 35 years of Japanese occupation and US victories in Pacific arena, in 1945 Korea was divided into two occupation zones controlled by US in the South and Soviet Union in the North. Three years later, during the Cold War and increasing rivalries between the Eastern and Western blocs, these two zones were proclaimed two states: the Republic of Korea (South Korea) and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea). During this period, peaceful interactions between the two Koreas were limited and a double political identity dominated the single ethnic identity. Two armies speaking the same language started a long war.

This book by Grażyna Strnad does not reconstruct this disastrous story but is a critical review of the profound changes since the end of Cold War that have shaped the politics of South Korea towards the North, shifting from a policy of confrontation to a policy of dialogue with confrontations elements. Such evolutionary elements are carefully studied across nine chapters, completed by a broad but wisely selected bibliography (pp 518-582), several maps and some important indexes. Over its 600 pages we find a critical account of barriers and lost possibilities preventing the unification of two countries – missing opportunities used in the case of Germany and other divided territories.

The main research hypothesis of this study is the assertion that the character of South Korean policy towards North Korea has been conditioned by the changing identity of the South Korean state. The author of this monograph points at growing democratisation of the South, together with a growing totalitarian system in the North. She recognises that identity plays a decisive role in shaping the policy of the South towards the North. In order to analyse

the policy changes in this work, a state-centered paradigm and a nation-centered paradigm establish two distinctive points of view and are very useful for studying two perspectives of change.

Because South Korean policy towards the North exhibits a conflict between the two identities, ethnic and political, the author employs a concept of identity dualism. Both paradigms are certainly not mutually exclusive. Significant changes in the political system of South Korea and the collapse of a trend that aimed at continuity of policy, combined with domestic economic problems, suggest that author's approach has been useful, even today.

The state-centered paradigm emphasises that relations consists of mutually antagonists identities, and therefore South Korea's alliance with the US, based on anti-communist ideology, is underscored. It assumes that relations between the two Koreas should be conceptualised as relations between the two sovereign states. As a consequence such relations consist of mutually antagonist identities.

In turn, the nation-centered ideology assumes that the relationship between two Koreas constitutes a single character predicated on shared ethnic identity. Such an approach emphasises the priority of policy of reconciliation, dialog and cooperation because inter-Korean policies are primarily an internal problem as the two Koreas constitute a single and ethnic homogeneous nation.

The account of the status quo of two Koreas today consists of three parts seen from the direction of the South. The first is concerned with historical identity determinants, mythology, history and culture. Mixed up with the sociopolitical situation of Korea prior to liberation in 1945, and prewar conditions, such a multidisciplinary approach helps the author explain the main dilemma of independence for the two countries. Particular emphasis has been posed on categorical net, especially the notions of national identity, nation and nationalism.

The second part of the book has been concerned with the politics of confrontation in the period of authoritarian rule. The author examines the origins of anti-communist policy in the South Korean state under the Japanese occupation then during the period 1948-1988, during the rule of Syngman Rhee, Park Chung Hee, Chun Doo Hwan. Those trends were based on an antagonistic orientation towards the North built up after the Korean War. The first overtures of the dialogue started during the rule of Park Chung Hede with the signing the July 4 Agreement in 1972. Doo Hwan continued diplomatic steps of peaceful dialogue prior to 1988 Olympic Games, in order to build up the international position of South Korea.

In the third part of the book the author undertakes a critical analysis of the politics of dialogue and reconciliation during the period of democratisation, paying special attention to the presidential administrations of Roh Tae Woo, Kim Young Sam, Kim Dae Jung and Roh Moo Hyun. This is the period of the post-Cold War and South Korea's democratic transition and consolidation. Such a situation enabled the increasing politics of dialogue, cooperation and economic exchange between the two Koreas. As the final result, in 1994 the Roh government proclaimed the National Community Unification Formula built on the foundations of Geneva Framework Agreement of the US and North Korea. It was followed by exports of south Korean goods to the North and economic exchange, iron, coal, crude oil from the North and so on.

The last but not least analysis of the book is connected with events such as the North Korean food crisis and the crash in the rapid development of some Asian Tigers. As a result, North Korea built up some very modern military equipment and made experiments with atomic bombs and long distance missiles.

Such a strategy increased the role of the North Korean Army in the economy of the country and built up the international role of Kim, meeting with such important people as Donald Trump, which was also one cause of a cooling in good relations between the South and North. The continuation of recent trends such as military threats in the last decade of the 21st Century are not been the object of Strnad's research. Her line of scientific inquiry stopped some years ago, in 2010. But the questions posed in this book are as valid as ever. For those and many other reasons I strongly recommend this lecture, with its comprehensive reflections.

Stanisław Tokarski

BOOK REVIEW

**Ra Jong-yil. *The Rise and Sudden Fall of JANG SONG-THAEK*,
Albany: Suny Press, 2019, 200 pages. ISBN: 978-143847372-7**

Since Kim Jong Il passed away in December 2011, concerns about the stability of the North Korean leadership have been numerous, but so far the smooth continuation of political and economic affairs has been a key priority. The North Korea-watching community has therefore been taken aback by the rumoured removal of Jang Song-thaek, a figure with deep connections to the Kim family and involvement in maintaining administrative and economic matters. Two years after Jang Song-thaek was removed as Vice Chairman of the National Defence Commission in November 2013 and, according to North Korean media, executed in December 2013 after a quick military trial. The personality of Jang Song-thaek, including his drinking habits, was never deeply analysed in the Western literature and the publication of Ra Jong-yil can be considered a pioneer here. The author also provides some insights related to intrigues, politics and relationships within the Kim family, including the thesis that Kim Jong-il was not interested in his own succession (p. 139).

The author is Ra Jong-yil, born in 1940, a former South Korean ambassador who has authored books on politics concerning North Korea. After studying Political Science at Seoul University he obtained a PhD. in Political Science at the University of Cambridge. After the election of President Kim Dae-jung in 1997, he joined the Presidential Transition Committee and became the Executive Director of the Presidential Transition Committee. In March 1998 he became the first deputy head of the National Safety Planning Department and second vice president. In 1999 he was appointed the first chief of the NIS. Meanwhile he became a professor of political science at the University of Kyunghee in 1999. He served as ambassador to the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in the United Kingdom between 2001 and 2003. Between 2004 and 2007, he served as the ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Japan. Since 2016, he has been a professor at the University of Gachon and since 2019.

The book *The Rise and Sudden Fall of JANG SONG-THAEK*, written by Ra Jong-yil was published by Suny Press in 2019. Excluding the preface, notes, bibliography in English and Korean, and the Index, the book consists of a classic structure: eight chapters presenting the life of Jang Song-Thaek in chronological order.

Chapter one is on state power and Kim Jong-il's youth. The author looks also at selected moments of the history of the DPRK, such as the famine of the 1990s (p. 6), but also frivolous events such as Kim's dinner parties (p. 9). The author also claims that Kim Jong-il said there wouldn't be a repeat of the father-to-son succession (p. 20).

Chapter two describes the early life of Jang Song-thaek including his academic life at Kim Il-sung University and Wonsan University of Economics (p. 25–40).

Chapter three discusses, from one side the relationship between Jang Song-thaek and Kim Kyung-hee, and from the other, the main and side branches of the Kim family. Later the chapter continues with a description of the life of the previously mentioned couple in Moscow, where they studied (pp. 48–49), including their culinary (p. 50) and cultural habits (p. 51).

Chapter four focuses on the first year after their wedding in 1972. The author posits the thesis that his wife Kim Kyong-hui was more important than Jang Song-thaek (p. 62) in the North Korean leadership as she was a princess and Jang only a princess's husband (p. 62). This chapter also contends with the idea that Kim Kyong-hee was the number two in North Korea, insisting that in the 2000s Jang Song-thaek reached the position of number two under Kim Jong-il (p. 95) but was an outsider with no blood connection to the Kim family (p. 107). The next chapter entitled "The Dark Side of Success" explains the various construction projects managed by Jang Song-thaek (p. 79) including preparations for the 1989 World Festival of Youth. This project was the most rewarding for Jang Song-thaek, as described in chapter six (p. 91). Later we learn that Jang Song-thaek was interested in the North Korean nuclear programme but more so in reforming his country, especially social infrastructure and the energy industry (p. 148 and 151).

Chapter six explains also the relation between Kim Jong-il and Song Hye-rim, his second wife (pp. 99–100). This chapter also emphasises the negative opinion of Jang Song-thaek on the economic policy of his country: "The fatherland is in an abominable state right now. People are dying of hunger by the tens and thousands!" (p. 103).

Chapter seven discussed the role of Jang Song-thaek in the development of the economy, mentioning his visits to South Korea in October 2002 (p. 119) and his revolutionising episodes (p. 126). This chapter provides also glimpses into the life of Jang Kum-song, the only child of Jang Song-thaek (p. 129).

Chapter eight focuses on the death of Jang Song-thaek. The author notes that Jang Song-thaek was responsible for Security Organisations (p. 147) and the atrocities committed against his men, such as “the bodies of Jang’s men were torn to pieces” (p. 165) and purges after Jang’s death (p. 167).

The relationship between Jang Song-thaek and Kim Jong-il reminds me of the relation between Kim Jong-il and his step-mother, Kim Song-ae. Kim Jong-il accepted her in the 1970s until she was considered in some quarters as more important than her husband Kim Il-sung. When this happened in the mid-1970s, Kim Jong-il’s was very angry. A similar thing happened in the framework of the relations with Jang Song-thaek. On page 124, Social Security Department agents are said to have relied more on the power of Jang Song-thaek than Kim Jong-il, adding to Kim Jong-il’s infuriation. He forced Jang Song-thaek to come back from a trip to Europe and put him under house arrest (p. 125). The constant anxiety of Kim Jong-il combined to the forced administration of Jang due to his skills forced Kim Jong-il to accept, tolerate, but control the person of Jang Song-thaek. The fact that Jang regularly visited non-communist European countries, a dream never fulfilled by Kim Jong-il, was also a driver for the ambiguous relation ship between both leaders.

From a different perspective, several elements demonstrate the limitations of this book. On page 114 we read that “Nearly all of the executed were secretaries, including Choe Ryong-hae”, who as of 2019, was still alive. Also on page 168, there is a list of officials executed for the same list of crimes as Jang Song-thaek such as Jang Song-thaek’s brother-in-law and ambassador to Cuba Jon Yong-jin, Jang Song-thaek’s nephew an ambassador to Malaysia Jang Yong-chol. From my perspective, I have heard from several sources that these people were not executed but put under house arrest in North Korea. Unfortunately, it’s impossible to tell where the truth is.

Another weak point of this publication is the troubled image painted of Kim Song-ae’s family, which excludes their relationship with Kim Jong-il, after being theoretically removed from the top North Korean leadership. The fictional aspect of the book is confirmed by the author who acknowledged that he reconstructed some situations (p. xviii of the introduction), which may provide a subjective view of the North Korean leadership. The reader is also misled as he does not always clearly now where reality finishes and fiction starts.

Still, for such a concentrated work -- a little under two hundred pages -- this book covers a good deal of ground related to the history of Jang Song-thaek. As a kind of precursor (only a handful of books related to the North Korean leadership have been published in western languages), its content provides an original approach to the network of Kim Jong-il and the leaders of the North Korean economy. The book also defends the thesis that only close people to Kim Jong-il were allowed to travel all over the world. His cook, Kenji Fujimoto, went to countries such as Germany and the Czech Republic in order to satisfy the needs of his boss. Regarding Jang Song-thaek, he went several times to Europe, including long trips to northern Europe, in order to find new business partners for North Korea, but also discovering red districts such as Pigalle in Paris (p. 103).

In spite of the previously mentioned remarks, I definitely consider this book to be an important contribution to the field of North Korean studies. I may suggest the author make a second edition by correcting mistakes and providing more data values regarding the impact of Jang Song-thaek on the North Korean economy. I highly praise the author for this book. I definitely recommend it as a key source to better acquaint oneself with the North Korean leadership.

Nicolas Levi

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