THE INFLUX OF OUTSIDE INFORMATION AND REGIME STABILITY IN NORTH KOREA

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the following question: Does the influx of outside information threaten the social control and regime stability of North Korea? After the opening of China’s economy in the 1980s, information of South Korea and Western world began to reach North Koreans through the border between China and North Korea. Despite the public perception that North Korea is a closed society, it has become increasingly exposed to outside information. This influx of outside information poses new challenge to the social control system of North Korea.

Many North Koreans have learned of South Korean economic prosperity thanks to smuggled South Korean tunable radios and DVDs of movies and television shows.

However, North Korea’s total regulation on the flow of information has successfully prevented the dissemination of discontent. Two case studies on the Cuba and East Germany show that information influx alone cannot produce the process of democratization or regime change of authoritarian regimes. Cuban regime has successfully eliminated political competition and made civil society weak and ineffective. On the contrary, East Germany failed to maintain information monopoly, and it failed to deter the civic organization’s activities.

Current social and political situation of North Korea is similar to that of Cuba rather than East Germany. North Korea does not have institutions that can convert mass grievance into political protests. Therefore, although the influx of outside information weaken the social control
of North Korea, it does not appear to be a threat to North Korean regime due to the absence of democratizing agent such as civil society. In addition, along with the strict social control system, North Korea’s strong ideological indoctrination has also influenced the North Koreans’ acceptance of Kim Jong-Il’s legitimacy.

However, information influx happening in North Korea seems to be not just transitional. Advances in information technology would make it difficult for Kim Jong-Il regime to seal off its people from outside information in the long term. Therefore, to change the totalitarian North Korean regime, and to ensure East Asia’s peaceful stability, the United States and South Korea should collaborate to induce the North Korea’s change.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The research and writing of this thesis is dedicated to everyone who helped along the way.

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Many thanks,

Sunghak Ha
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“Prisoners who have been chained and held immobile in the cave since childhood would take the shadows on the wall to be real things and the echoes to be real sounds, since they are all they had ever seen or heard.”

- Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave” (The Republic, around 380 B.C.)

North Korea is most repressive regime in the world, and maintains its regime mostly through the strict social control systems and psychological coercion. In Western terms, North Korea is the most closed and tightly controlled communist society in the world. Apart from at the highest levels of the Communist Party, it is difficult to access information other than that propagated by the Kim Jong-Il regime. For example, all legal radio receivers are sold fixed so they can tune only to channels approved by the government. North Korea jams both South Korean broadcasts and international radio services, and they are jamming cell phone signals as well. Most people have no access to external print media, and only authorized books are available to North Korean people.

Moreover, the regime has strictly controlled travel, requiring a pass for any movement outside one’s home village. In addition, the regime issues special visas for foreign travel only to officials and trusted artists, athletes, and academics.¹ However, the emergence of a food crisis in the mid-1990s triggered massive defections across the North Korea-China border. This enabled many North Koreans to get outside information and experience with the outside world that may have conflicted with information they had received from official North Korean propaganda.²

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Authoritarian leaders in the information age are confronted with a dilemma. On the one hand, information and communication technologies offer economic potential for developing countries. On the other hand, information revolution poses new challenges for regimes that rely on centralized political control. Conventional wisdom may suggest that dictators are doomed to downfall in the information age, but authoritarian regimes do not give up so easily, and few accept the inevitability of their decline. Most have sought to control the information in some way, minimizing harmful use of the new information technologies while extracting tangible benefits.3

Therefore, this thesis will answer the following question: Does the influx of outside information threaten the social control and regime stability of North Korea? This research project assumes that a large amount of outside information would increase the burden of state-sponsored information censorship in North Korea. The development of information technology allows more outside information to flow into North Korea than it did when Kim Jong-Il succeeded his father.

The hypothesis of this research project is as follows: Despite the public perception that North Korea is a closed society, it is increasingly exposed to outside information. This influx of outside information poses new and grave challenge to the social control system and regime stability of North Korea. The introduction of information technologies in any authoritarian country may present new challenges to the regime, but its impact will be adjusted by intervening social control factors—the ways that the government chooses to regulate the technology.4

4 Ibid., p. 65.
There are some scholars who try to explain the relationship between the information environment in North Korea and regime stability. Ralph Hassig and Kongdan Oh (2009) pointed out that North Koreans live in two information environments.\(^5\) The regime has made the public environment of party speeches, propaganda banners and communist-inspired culture for maintaining totalitarian regime. However, there is the hidden information environment of news and entertainment that seeps in from outside North Korea’s borders. For example, video cassette tapes and DVDs smuggled in from South Korea played on recorders (VCRs) brought on the black market in China.

As for the social control in North Korea, as Roland Bleiker (1992)\(^6\) and Daeyu Yoon (2009)\(^7\) insisted, communist leaders are generally reluctant to extend telecommunication networks, believing that there could be no better means to weaken regime stability than outside information. Nicholas Eberstadt (1999)\(^8\) and Rebecca Mackinnon (2005)\(^9\) also pointed out that the developments of information technologies certainly have the potential to undermine complete regime control of information.

There have been also theoretical approaches on information and social changes. As described by Jürgen Habermas (1989), communicative action lies at the heart of regime


\(^{6}\) Bleiker, Roland, “Unification from Below?” Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, 1992.

\(^{7}\) Yoon, Daeyu, “Economic Reform and Institutional Transformation,” in The Dynamics of Change in North Korea by Phillip H. Park (Kyungnam University Press, Seoul, Korea, 2009)


transformation. In addition, some social scientists refer to a dynamic called the “spiral of silence”, that is operative in environments such as North Korea where there is strict control of information and heavy indoctrination reinforced by people’s fear of the consequences of publicly challenging or questioning the official line. Elizabeth Noelle-Neumann (1984) pointed out that once someone speaks out publicly with their doubts, the spiral of silence is broken. The results can be especially dramatic once people realize they can escape punishment for speaking out. In that situation, authoritarian regime can be seriously threatened, or can even collapse as in the revolutions of 1989 in Eastern Europe. As Roland Bleiker (1992) pointed out, West Germany’s propaganda strategies toward East Germany before Germany’s 1990 reunification can give us useful implications on the information influx strategy. On the other hand, articles on Cuba’s stable information control during the economic reforms in 1990s also give us meaningful implication on the limited influences of outside information.

It is important to discuss this topic because North Korea has endured the threat of structural destruction due to the strong social control to the citizens. One of the central mechanisms constraining North Korean society is censorship on information. However, despite such significance, data on North Korean people listening to the outside radio or using mobile phones is sparse. Although collecting enough data on North Korea is restricted due to the inaccessibility, this thesis intends to describe a general picture of current information environment of North Korea and Kim Jong-Il regime’s information censorship.

For that purpose, first, this thesis will scrutinize the routes and measures by which outside information enters North Korea. This paper focuses on the information influx, such as international broadcasts (radios), mobile phones, and smuggled CDs / DVDs. For this investigation, I will use the data from the South Korea’s Ministry of Unification and statistics from non-governmental organizations and policy institutes like the Korea Institute for National Unification (KINU). In addition, survey results of North Korean defectors in South Korea (20,000 people as of January 2011) will help to explain the current situation of information influx in North Korea.

Second, I will analyze North Korea’s information censorship system as a constraining factor for information influx. By analyzing North Korea’s information censorship system, this thesis aims to show that North Korea has tried to block outside information that could threaten the decade-long cult worship of its leader, which has played a key role in keeping the troubled country afloat despite communism’s global collapse. Until now, North Korea has succeeded in maintaining the rigid social control of the communist party. The movement of information, material goods, and the people in North Korea is highly constrained.

Third, I will conduct two case studies on the information influx and regime stability. The selected two cases are (1) East Germany’s social control policy before the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, (2) Cuba’s social control policy during the period of economic reforms in the 1990s. By conducting these case studies, I will answer the following questions: If these three countries were sharing important political, economical, social peculiarities of authoritarian system, then, what might explain the different results—East Germany’s collapse, Cuba’s sustainability, and North Korea’s muddling through?
CHAPTER 2

INFORMATION INFUX INTO NORTH KOREA

1. Background: China-North Korea Border and Information Influx

The concept of a fortress or bulwark state is an expression that can best explain the characteristics of North Korea. The fortress state can be defined as one that is isolated from the international society. The stronghold of North Korea has in part been made by topographic features (see Appendix 1): the Yellow Sea, the East Sea, the Yalu and Tumen Rivers, Mt. Baek-doo and its surrounding high-elevation areas, and the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between South and North Korea function as a barricade that protects the bulwark of North Korea.\(^\text{12}\)

However, North Korea and China have sixteen border entrances along the Yalu and Tumen Rivers. The porous 880-mile North Korea-China border follows the length of the Yalu and Tumen Rivers—separating the two countries by a stretch of water but allowing for relatively easy interaction. This is particularly true in winter when sub-Siberian temperatures cause the rivers to freeze over and North Koreans and Chinese can walk across the narrower river channels.\(^\text{13}\) Moreover, China is North Korea’s biggest trading partner; and main source of food, and fuel.


Table 2.1 North Korea’s Growing Economic Dependency on China

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>1997</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>China</td>
<td>73.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td></td>
<td>India</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: KOTRA (Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency, 2009)

In addition, the China-DPRK border is largely devoid of an overt security presence with few guard posts or manmade barriers like fences, barbed wire emplacements or surveillance positions that might inhibit trans-border activities. The most visible security is at the major border crossing between Sinuiju (DPRK) and Dandong (China), but other crossings at Hyesan (Ryanggang province, DPRK), Tumen, and Namyang (North Hamgyong province, DPRK) possess only a few small-scale military presence.

Moreover, after the opening of China’s economy in the 1980s, the news of South Korea’s economic development began to reach North Koreans, instigating defection to South Korea. Such a phenomenon of North Koreans escaping the country has increased since the mid 1990s as North Korea’s economic and food crises has deteriorated and information from the outside world has penetrated North Korean society. According to the Ministry of Unification of South Korea, as of January 2011, the total number of North Korean defectors who arrived in South Korea exceeded 20,000 people.

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Figure 2.1 Number of North Korean Defectors (Who Arrived in South Korea)

![Graph showing the number of North Korean defectors who arrived in South Korea from 1998 to 2009.]

Source: Ministry of Unification of South Korea

The main means of information acquisition for North Koreans are international broadcasts (the Voice of America, Radio Free Asia, and the Korea Broadcasting System), mobile telephones, televisions, smuggled video tapes/CDs/DVDs, and cross-border traders—all exposing North Koreans to new ideas and aspirations.\(^\text{15}\)

Moreover, South Korean President Lee Myung-bak said South Korea would launch psychological warfare on the North Korea after the sinking of the Cheonan warship by North Korea’s torpedo attack last year. The South Korean military is preparing strategies to switch its propaganda radio from FM to AM, and also is preparing tactics to send radios in the North Korea’s territory.\(^\text{16}\) In addition, the Joint Chiefs of Staff headquarters has been restructured, adding a new department that will handle propaganda operations against North Korea. The department consists of a civil-military operations section, psychological warfare section, martial law section, and a overseas dispatch section.\(^\text{17}\)

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\(^\text{17}\) The Chosun Ilbo, “Joint Chiefs of Staff Get New Propaganda Department,” Jan 6, 2011.
2. International Broadcasting (Radio)

Listening to international radio is evaluated not only as a public action against censorship but also as a meaningful phenomenon in its relation to the North Koreans' change in consciousness. North Korean people acquire uncensored information by listening to outside radio broadcasts, and it can function as the driving force to change not only the people's consciousness but also North Korean society as a whole.

Based on a survey of 208 North Korean defectors in South Korea, of the 208 surveyors, 64 reported listening to the radio while residing in North Korea, which represents about 30.7% of the total surveyors. Therefore, one in three defectors arriving in South Korea has listened to the radio while they were in North Korea. Those having listened to the outside radio started out of curiosity about the set channel (53.1%) and mostly listened to the Korea Broadcast System, Voice of America (VOA), and Radio Free Asia (RFA) between 11 p.m. and 1 a.m.18

The fact that 30.7% of defectors who were fully aware of the severe penalties of listening to the outside radio still listened means that they have a stronger desire for the new world rather than the ideological justification. In addition, the fact that 93.7% of the listeners acquired information from the outside radio (and that 90.6% responded that the information acquired from the broadcasts had influenced their defection) shows that the outside radio broadcasts served as "information" and have been the driving force to change the North Korean people’s

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consciousness. In addition, North Korean defectors in South Korea themselves have also created three stations, led by Free North Korea Radio (FNK Radio). According to Peter beck, it is not unreasonable to surmise that there are more than a million surreptitious listeners in a population of 24 million.

Table 2.2 International Broadcasting Listening Channels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Korea Broadcasting System (South Korea)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>29.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keuk-dong Broadcasting (South Korea)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice of America (VOA)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Free Asia (RFA)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China international</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia international</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHK (Japan)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chosun Jungang Radio</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pyung-yang Broadcasting</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etc.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>100 (%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.3 Correlation between radio listening and defection from North Korea

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did radio listening affect your decision of defection?</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>100 (%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey results of Ewha University, 2007

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19 Ibid, pp. 64-80.
The North Korean Human Rights Act (NKHRA, October 2008) has called on the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) to “facilitate the unhindered dissemination of information in North Korea” by increasing the amount of Korean-language broadcasts by RFA and VOA. The hours of radio broadcasts in North Korea were modestly increased beginning in 2006. The BBG currently broadcasts to North Korea ten hours per day: RFA broadcasts three and one-half hours of original programming and one and one-half hours of repeat programming, and VOA broadcasts four hours of original and one hour of repeat programming with daily news updates. In FY2008, the BBG’s budget request included $8.1 million to implement the 10-hour broadcast schedule, and the FY2009 request includes $8.5 million to maintain this schedule.\(^{21}\)

Content includes news briefs, particularly news involving the Korean peninsula, interviews with North Korean defectors, and international commentary on events happening inside North Korea. The BBG cites an *InterMedia* survey of defectors that indicates that North Koreans have some access to radios, many of them altered to receive international broadcasts. The BBG continues to explore ways to expand medium wave broadcast capability into North Korea. VOA is broadcast from BBG-owned stations in Tinian, Thailand, and the Philippines, and from leased stations in Russia and Mongolia. RFA is broadcast from stations in Tinian and Saipan and leased stations in Russia and Mongolia.\(^{22}\)


\(^{22}\) Ibid.
3. Mobile Telephones

One of the most striking developments in recent years has been the spread in the borderland areas of mobile phones, which are serviced by Chinese network operators. Mobile phone use in authoritarian North Korea comes with restrictions, however. Phones do not allow contact with outside world, or with the special telephone networks that foreigners are normally permitted to use inside North Korea. Mobile phones in North Korea were introduced in 2002, and by December 2003 the number of subscribers had reached twenty thousand (about 0.08% of total population). Until the summer of 2003, mobile phone signals could be accessed only on the high slopes fronting the border with China.

In late 2003, however, more relay stations were built on the Chinese side of the border, greatly increasing mobile phone coverage in the borderlands. Increasingly popular among the more rich North Koreans living in these areas, mobile phones use prepaid phone cards, which can be purchased in China. These phones are reportedly popular among smugglers who would otherwise be unable to trace the activity of border guards, as well as among “defection brokers” who specialize in arranging defections to South Korea. They are also used for chatting with relatives in South Korea as well as overseas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.4 China’s Subscribers of Mobile Phones</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subscribers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile phones (million)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>penetration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: BuddeComm based on MIIT, ITU and CNNIC data

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23 CIA, the World Fact Book, North Korean Total Population: 24,457,492 (2011 est.)

However, in 2004, North Korean authorities began to reverse the changes that had taken place in the previous decade. The first sign of this backlash was a ban on the private use of mobile telephones in May 2004. The decision to ban the private use of mobile phones fits the general pattern of North Korean politics that has been emerging since 2004: the spread of mobiles constituted the opening up of a new avenue of communication for many North Koreans, a development that was most unwelcome to the government.\textsuperscript{25}

Nonetheless, the North Korean regime could not give up the development of information technologies, because information infrastructure has been expected to stimulate economic growth, increase productivity, and create jobs. According to Javier Corrales, not all authoritarian regimes are intolerant of information technologies. Accordingly, high-income, market-oriented autocratic states such as China are less draconian. Such states value the economic payoffs, although such regimes fear the political consequences of Internet expansion.\textsuperscript{26}

In December 2008, North Korea reintroduced a mobile phone network in a joint venture with Cairo-based Orascom Telecom.\textsuperscript{27} Orascom has since been providing subscribers with third-generation W-CDMA\textsuperscript{28} mobile service. Mobile phones in use in Pyongyang are made in neighboring China.\textsuperscript{29} According to the Chosun Sinbo, a pro-North Korean newspaper published

\begin{flushright}


\textsuperscript{27} Orascom, an Egyptian telecom firm, and the North Korean government established a joint venture named Koryolink in December, 2008.

\textsuperscript{28} W-CDMA (Wideband Code Division Multiple Access) is a standard found in 3G mobile telecommunications networks.

\textsuperscript{29} AFP, “Rapid rise in North Korea mobile phone use,” April 19, 2010.
\end{flushright}
in Japan, the number of mobile phone subscribers in North Korea surpassed 120,000 in April 2010. Equipment for mobile service has been set up in more than half of the North Korean cities and counties.

Using wireless capability in North Korea is an expensive luxury. Press reports put the cost of a phone anywhere from $300–500 plus a start-up fee of up to $750, with higher fees ($2,000) charged to foreigners. There are additional charges to make and receive calls. However, in 2003, Chinese firms began building relay towers along the China-North Korea border leading to an explosion in the use of prepaid phones on the North Korean side. A significant consequence of Sino-North Korean contact has been the increased flow of information via pre-paid Chinese cell phones. The phones, which sell in China for $50-$100, are necessary for doing business along the border, but also give separated families and guide a way of staying in touch and passing along information.

4. Smuggled Video Tapes and CDs / DVDs

As is often the case, technology has played a prominent role in fomenting this change. In the USSR and other countries of the former Communist bloc, the constructed vision of the world was largely supplied by short-wave radios; in North Korea this alternative vision has manifested itself through videotapes. Video-cassette recorders (VCRs) were present in the North beginning

---

30 The Bangkok Post, “Rapid Rise in North Korea Mobile Phone Use,” April 19, 2010
in the late 1980s and early 1990s, but initially could only be bought in hard-currency shops for a price beyond the reach of even relatively affluent North Koreans: in the early 1990s, the cheapest VCR cost about the equivalent of US$250, while the average monthly salary was a mere $5.

The situation changed dramatically, however, when cheap DVD players and newer VCRs began to flood into northeastern China. Owners sold their old machines at bargain prices, and then smuggled into North Korea through its porous border with China. In North Korea, these used VCRs are resold at a large premium for around the equivalent of $50-60—a price certainly within the reach of a North Korean family. These VCRs are largely used for copying and viewing tapes of South Korean television dramas, many of which have become a major hit in North Korea over the last few years. It seems that South Korean soap operas, and the occasional American movie with South Korean subtitles, form the staple of video consumption in North Korea. As a result of the spread of such technology, South Korean actors and actresses are now well known in North Korea, and Pyongyang youth eagerly imitate their hairstyles and fashions. 

There have been reports of competition among them to see who is best able to reproduce the fashions and mannerisms from recent South Korean shows.

Around the year 2000, VCRs began to be sold in North Korea in increasing numbers. Soon afterward, DVD players also became affordable to more affluent North Korean families. According to Chinese customs statistics, 350,000 DVD players were brought to North Korea in 2006. Unlike radio sets with free tuning, DVD players and VCRs are legal in North Korea, though it is assumed that they will be used to watch North Korean or other officially endorsed media. Since smuggling networks have begun to flood the country with foreign, and especially

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South Korean, videos, however, this is not the case. Such videos have had a significant impact on people’s way of thinking.  

North Koreans, particularly those in border areas, have had more exposure to China and contacts with relatives in China and South Korea. South Korean television programs and movies have also penetrated the North as smuggled videos and DVDs, inspiring dreams of moving south. Many defectors estimate that more than half of all North Koreans have watched banned South Korean entertainment. Moreover, many North Koreans have learned of South Korean prosperity thanks to smuggled South Korean DVDs.

Table 2.5 Comparison of Gross Domestic Product between South and North Korea

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>North Korea (A)</th>
<th>South Korea (B)</th>
<th>B / A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>$1,800</td>
<td>$28,500</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CIA, *the World Fact Book*

Therefore, as long as the black markets in North Korea provide Chinese televisions, videos, radios, and cell phones to those that can afford them, external information will continue to erode the isolation of the North Korean people, despite the social control efforts by the Kim Jong-Il regime. Furthermore, such information will pose an increasingly challenging domestic environment for the regime.

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CHAPTER 3

NORTH KOREA’S INFORMATION CONTROL

For the analysis of North Korea’s information control system, this paper will divide North Korea’s information control into three categories that are mutually complementary: ideological control, information monopoly, and physical enforcement.

1. Ideological Control

In 1995, North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il insisted in his article “Giving Priority to Ideological Work is Essential for Accomplishing Socialism” that without ideological work, it would be impossible for socialism to emerge, exist, and develop. He also argued that the collapse of socialism in some countries was a consequence of the poverty and degeneration of scientific, revolutionary ideas and theories, as well as the outcome of disregard for the popular masses’ ideological education and the abandonment of ideological work among them.\(^\text{36}\)

Before the 1990s, North Korea’s social controls and indoctrination had proven effective.\(^\text{37}\) According to the Ministry of Unification of South Korea, the total number of defectors to South Korea from 1953 to 1989 was only 607, and there were only some clandestine cross-border remittances or trade with relatives in China. Little information flowed in or out of the country. It


\(^{37}\) For example, the e-library of Kim Il Sung University in North Korea offers access to multimedia about activities of the three commanders of Mt. Paektu -- President Kim Il Sung, General Secretary Kim Jong Il and anti-Japanese war hero Kim Jong Suk (KCNA, March 3, 2011)
was not until the economic collapse and ensuing famine of the 1990s that a wave of North Koreans moved into China. All schools use common textbooks that are filled with pictures, stories, and musical compositions about the Great Leader, the Dear Leader, and the Party. At the same time, the textbooks are filled with contents condemning imperialists and puppet regimes, the U.S., South Korea, and Japan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.1 Contents of Korean Language Textbook in North Korea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher middle School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ko, Sung-ho, 1998

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.2 Contents of Music Classes Textbook in North Korea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher middle School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ko, Sung-ho, 1998

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The North Korean government has recently made efforts to indoctrinate its people through official broadcasting and newspapers. North Korea has attempted to strengthen its orthodox socialism through propaganda. The number of Korean Central News Agency in DPRK (KCNA) articles with the terms “Socialism,” “Juche (independence),” and “Songun (Military-first)” increased during 1997-2009.

Figure 3.1 Terms of “Socialism,” “Juche,” and “Songun” in KCNA (1997-2009)

Source: Rüdiger Frank (2010)\textsuperscript{41}

Recently, among the 1101 articles in KCNA during January ~ February 2011, 287 articles were related with the praise of Kim’s family (26.1%), 171 articles were about the blaming South Korea and the United States (15.5%), 6 articles were related to Cuba, and 17 articles dealt with information technologies and counter-intelligence.

Table 3.3 Indoctrination through Official Media, KCNA (Jan - Feb 2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2011.1.1-2.28</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Kim’s Family Idolization</th>
<th>Blame South Korea / U.S.</th>
<th>Relation with Cuba</th>
<th>Information Technology / Intelligence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KCNA</td>
<td>1,101</td>
<td>287 (26.1%)</td>
<td>171 (15.5%)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Korean Central News Agency of DPRK\textsuperscript{44}

In addition, North Korea has regarded Cuba as both its closest ally and its role model, and North Korean regime continuously introduced Cuba’s tight social control system as the ideal policy.\textsuperscript{45} Currently, North Korea is reinforcing its ties with Cuba. For example, in March 2011, an annual meeting of the Korean Committee for Solidarity with Cuba took place.\textsuperscript{46} Therefore, North Korea will make Cuba a role model for the long-term adoption of information technologies.

The defectors testified that although they had listened to the outside radio of their own free

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\textsuperscript{44} KCNA, http://www.kcna.co.jp/index-e.htm

\textsuperscript{45} KCNA broadcasted that “on Feb. 24, the Cuban government filed against Gross a preliminary charge of infringement upon the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Cuba. He was accused of spying and supporting counter-revolutionary forces in Cuba.”

\textsuperscript{46} According to the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA, http://www.kcna.co.jp, March 3, 2011) of North Korea, the meeting reviewed the work done by the Committee last year for friendship and solidarity with the Cuban people advancing along the banner of socialism while protecting the country’s sovereignty and revolutionary gains under the leadership of the Communist Party of Cuba.
will, they could not have shared the experience with others and they feared unexpected inspections. This can be seen to mean that the North Korean people do not agree with the justification on censorship, but still share a silent consensus on the government’s censorship. Thus, North Koreans still recognize the rejection of the existing structure and the attempt to change it as extremely reckless and impossible. The North Korean surveillance system operates on the assumption that every adult has a proper job with a state-run enterprise; thus, indoctrination and police surveillance are central in the workplace. Although sending people back to the state-run factories and offices does not make much economic sense, this policy makes perfect political sense for the government. According to the survey data collected from 225 North Korean defectors who escaped from North Korea in 2007-2009, 83.77% of informal economy activities in North Korea involved transactions in markets, while 33.12% and 22.73% engaged in cultivating private-plots and stock breeding.

Figure 3.2 Types of Informal Economy Activities of North Korean

Note: Multiple answers were allowed and thus the sum of each share exceeds 100 percent

2. Information Monopoly and Fabrication

According to the international NGO Freedom House, North Korea remained the most repressive media environment in the world. The one-party Kim Jong-Il regime monopolizes media through KCNA, attempts to regulate all communication, and limits the ability of North Koreans to access information. All journalists are members of the ruling party, and all media outlets are mouthpiece for the regime.\(^{49}\) Most television program is made in reverence of the Great Leader (Kim Il-sung) and the Dear Leader (Kim Jong-Il).

The North Korean regime has strengthened the restraint on international radio broadcasts, and has sensitively responded to the U.S. move of expanding the broadcast to North Korea. North Korea has strictly controlled access to outside information and has fixed the tuning controls of radios and televisions to official stations. Moreover, North Korea jams both South Korean broadcasts and foreign short-waves, and they are jamming cell phone signals as well. North Korea will make every effort to develop its intra-net service “Kwangmyong”\(^{50}\) and will block the Internet to the extent possible. This indicates that the North Korean regime views the public listening to the outside radio as not only a censorship issue, but also a threat to maintaining the North Korean structure.

Rodong Sinmun (“Newspaper of the workers”) is a North Korean official newspaper of the Workers’ Party of North Korea. It is the most widely read newspaper, and usually contains six pages. However, most articles in the newspaper deal with Kim’ family idolization propaganda.


\(^{50}\) Through this intranet, the Central Information Agency for Science and Technology of North Korea offers a nationwide online information service.
In the era of globalization, absolute control over information and economic activity is not possible. The North Korean regime has developed methods that allow it to guide political discourse, selectively suppressing or reshaping news and information of political consequence. However, the formation of telecommunications policy poses a difficult challenge for authoritarian regimes: While improvements in telecommunications can contribute to material prosperity, and by extension, political legitimacy, they may also contribute to a loss of control over information flows and enhance challengers’ ability to organize against the incumbent regime. 51

Like most other new developments, the government is keenly aware of the proliferation of mobile phones, and has undertaken periodic efforts to crack down on their use—even to the extent of purchasing radar equipment from Japan in an attempt to locate illegal mobile phones and their owners. Because the phones can be used only within a relatively narrow strip of land

along the border, the significance of their presence should not be exaggerated. Nonetheless, the point is that some people in the borderland areas have access to Chinese phones, and can talk to people in China and even further abroad.

North Korean policies reveal a contradictory attitude, driven by conflicting goals of modernization and control. According to Glyn Ford, the Kim Jong-Il regime, after seeing China’s rising, wants to leapfrog several technological stages of development and jump straight to information technology. However, considering the closed nature of the North Korean society, in which information flows are strictly controlled, the strategy may prove overambitious. Therefore, regarding information technologies, North Korea faces a fundamental dilemma. While the state is limiting and controls contact with the outside world, it is also being compelled to pursue increased interaction with foreign states to obtain technologies as well as economic benefits in order to cope with domestic problems that it has been unable to manage on its own and to pursue modernization. As a result, actions taken by the Kim Jong-Il regime can appear to be contradictory at times.

3. Physical Enforcement and Punishment

The social control of North Korea is maintained largely by the State Security Department (SSD) and Ministry of People’s Security (MPS). Especially, the duties of the MPS can be listed as protecting the “great leader,” and maintaining the social order. In safeguarding the regime, the


MPS puts top priority on surveillance of anti-state, anti-revolutionary acts such as propaganda against the state. In addition, the MPS focuses on checking people’s ideological consciousness. The MPS conducts political classification of the people, and controlling and directing people’s relocation and change of residence.\(^{54}\)

\[\text{Table 3.5 The Personnel Size of the Ministry of People’s Security (MPS)}\]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Security Personnel</th>
<th>80,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Korea People’s Guard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 7(^{th}) General Bureau</td>
<td>80,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 8(^{th}) General Bureau</td>
<td>40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guard training Bureau</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Workers (civilian personnel)</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>310,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Chon, Hyun-joon, 2004

There are believed to be some 150,000 to 200,000 political prisoners in total throughout North Korea.\(^{55}\) According to the South Korea’s Ministry of Unification, there are approximately 150,000 prisoners in 6 political prison camps such as Gaechun (No. 14), Yoduk (No. 15),

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\(^{55}\) The 200,000 figure comes from a former guard, Ahn, Myong-Chol, who previously worked at four different prison camps. Yoon, Dae-II, a former official of the National Security Agency, the police organization that administers the prison camps, says the 200,000 figure is the minimum. See, David Hawke, The Hidden Gulag: Exposing North Korea’s Prison Camps: Prisoners’ Testimonies and Satellite Photographs (Washington: U.S. Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2003) http://www.krnk.org/hiddengulag/toc.html , 2003.
Hwasong (No. 16), Bukchang (No. 18), Hoeryong (No. 22), and Chongjin (No. 25). Over the past 30 years, more than 400,000 prisoners have died in the prison camp system.

In addition, travel by North Koreans within and outside of their country is strictly controlled, and violators who are caught are subject to punishment. Any movement outside an individual’s home village requires a travel pass, although in recent years the government has tended to turn a blind eye toward those violating the travel rules in search of food. Officials and trusted celebrities, such as athletes and artists, are the only people granted exit visas.

Although North Korea amended the Constitution (Article 75) in September 1998: “All citizens have the freedom of residence and travel,” except for special cases approved by the authorities, North Koreans are not allowed to travel for personal reasons. Even when they do so, they are required to carry various documents such as an ID card, letter of confidence, and travel permit to “prevent spies, and other negative elements from disrupting the society” or “for the safety of the nation,” according to the authorities.

All North Korean border crossers, irrespective of their reasons for leaving their country are

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considered to have committed the crime of treason and are accused of “betraying the motherland,” punishable under Article 117 or 47 of the North Korean Criminal Code. After the captured border crossers are returned to North Korea, they are usually detained for 10 days to 2 months by the State Security Bureau where they are subject to interrogation. The Criminal Law article 233 (Illegal Border Crossing) dictates that “A person illegally crossing the national border faces less than 2 years of labor discipline. In serious circumstances, the person faces less than 3 years of reform through labor.61

Upon return to North Korea, if border crossers’ motivations for leaving are thought to be in any way political, the punishment is certain to be severe. Actions that are considered political include meeting with any South Korean, NGO, media representative, religious group, or having converted to any religion. Returnees consistently report that they are most thoroughly interrogated about two key questions: whether they encountered Christians and whether they met South Koreans.62 It is understood that a positive response to either of these questions will lead to the most severe penalties: either a life sentence at a political prison camp or execution.

According to the Delphi survey of 100 South Korean experts on North Korea’s social control conducted by Korea Institute for National Unification (KINU) in 2009, North Korea still has some level of capacity for social control.


Table 3.6 Evaluation of North Korea’s Social Control Ability (100 experts)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Control Ability</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological Control</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s Morale and Loyalty</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Enforcement</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Integrity</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Korea Institute for National Unification (KINU, 2009)\(^{63}\)

In sum, the DPRK government’s total regulation of the flow of information, along with its broader mechanisms for social control, has prevented the dissemination of discontent. Marcus Noland asserts that “the state has near perfect monopoly of mass media and completely regiments everyday life.”\(^{64}\) The control over information within the country means that it is impossible for people to communicate with other regions’ citizens for coalitions.


CHAPTER 4

CASE STUDY: CUBA AND EAST GERMANY’S SOCIAL CONTROL

The three authoritarian regimes, North Korea, East Germany, and Cuba, have some common characteristics, including: (1) One party has the monopoly on political activity. (2) The ideology does not admit competing interpretations; it represents the “absolute official truth of the state,” which gives the government total authority. (3) The state has a monopoly on the means of coercion and mass persuasion, including formal education. (4) The economy is subservient to the state, so that most economic activities and institutions become part of the state, and are thus influenced by its reigning ideology. (5) Social life tends to be politicized, so that all social behavior becomes subject to political interpretation and state regulation.65

Even after the Soviet Union’s collapse, Cuban regime still persists, although Cuba experienced an enormous economic crisis in the 1990s. The system has also succeeded in reducing people’s conceptual sophistication about the ideologies of resistance, their knowledge of these alternative ideologies, and their awareness of governmental abuse.66 On the contrary, East Germany’s regime suddenly collapsed after the Soviet regime’s disappearance in 1989. Therefore, in this chapter, I will examine the information control system of Cuba and East Germany as a critical determinant for a regime’s stability.

66 Ibid., p. 67.
1. Cuba's Information Control

a. Background: Cuba's Exposure to Outside Information in the 1990s

The economic reforms of 1993–95 transformed Cuba into a state-capitalist economy. The continuity of the Cuban political regime in the 1990s has amazed most scholars. Despite the demise of dictatorships in Latin America and Soviet Bloc, Cuba’s regime has remained unabashedly authoritarian. Between 1993 and 1996, Cuba opened new sectors to foreign direct investment (FDI), liberalized farm markets, and legalized the possession of U.S. dollars.67

Table 4.1 Cuba’s Principle Economic Indicators, 1990-2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GDP per capita</td>
<td>96.0</td>
<td>86.1</td>
<td>77.1</td>
<td>66.1</td>
<td>66.4</td>
<td>67.9</td>
<td>72.8</td>
<td>74.3</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>79.3</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1989=100)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP growth rate (%)</td>
<td>-4.0</td>
<td>-10.3</td>
<td>-10.5</td>
<td>-14.2</td>
<td>+0.4</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment (%)</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Naciones Unidas (Ritter 2004)68

Pressure from the United States, Europe, transnational human rights and democracy groups, and regional economic crises have induced information influx in Cuba. The United States exerts overwhelming pressure on Cuba by sending endless propagandas.69 The Central


Intelligence Agency (CIA) began clandestine radio broadcasting to Cuba in 1960s, and U.S. Information Agency (USIA)-affiliated Radio Martí has broadcasted politically oriented program toward Cuba since 1985. Policymakers of the 1990s began to focus on opening up Cuba by improving the country’s telecommunications linkages to the outside world. This new thinking led to the passage of the Cuban Democracy Act (CDA) of 1992. While maintaining firm opposition to the Cuban government and tightening certain aspects of the economic embargo, the CDA also sought to provide support for the Cuban people by facilitating humanitarian donations from U.S. NGOs, and increasing the information flow between the two countries. A major component of these provisions was the promotion of telecommunications services.70

b. Ideological Control

Cuba has total command of the island’s formal education and the mass media and a near-monopoly on the information and interpretations. Moreover, the government thoroughly provides explanations and norms to shape people’s beliefs about the exercise of political power. Such explanations become the “officially imagined worlds” that lend the government political legitimacy. Both types of control enact and are legitimated by an ideology, a system of symbols and meanings employing rhetorical devices, used by the government “to establish and sustain relations of domination.”71

Regime unity was extremely high in Cuba. The Cuban regime entered its economic crisis in 1989 with high levels of legitimacy. Unlike other Latin American authoritarian regimes, Cuba

did not possess an independent business sector that broke with the regime in times of crisis. Nor did Cuba possess the moderate opposition groups who became key allies of regime dissenters in other Latin American countries.\(^72\)

In addition, the Cuban revolution (1959) established four principal mass organizations, all of which function within the framework of the Cuban approach to social control as a means of mobilizing the public to carry out centrally determined objectives. They include the CDR, the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC), the Confederation of Cuban Workers (CTC), and the National Organization of Small Agriculturists (ANAP). Since the revolution, the CDR has provided vigilance against counter-revolutionary activity and crime in neighborhoods and workplaces.\(^73\) The FMC’s initial objective was to incorporate women into the realm of productive labor. The CTC, described as “representative of the entire working class of Cuba,” works to further Cuba’s post-1959 political, social, and economic agenda, often through legislative proposals and initiatives.\(^74\) The ANAP has sought to incorporate peasants and small farmers into the efforts to fulfill the objectives of the revolutionary project.

While the initiative process encourages participation, it also monitors and surveys persons as they interact. Members of the security services are ever-present at the officially approved gatherings, obtaining information on individuals that becomes part of the official records. Their


presence, whether real or assumed, overt or covert, informs the participants’ behavior. Thus, the school and municipal assemblies and the national congress are all gatherings controlled by the Cuban Communist Party (CCP) and related mass organizations of the state.\textsuperscript{75}

c. Information Monopoly and Fabrication

The Cuban government owns all traditional media, and all content is determined by the government. Moreover, Cubans have no right to own or disseminate foreign publications. The Cuban regime constantly reinforces the images of a miserable pre-revolutionary life through the media and the educational system. Period in Cuban history before the Cuban Revolution in 1959 was described as uneven economic development, especially widespread disparities between rural and urban areas. Socialist authoritarianism, on the other hand, has produced social equality and a higher standard of living. To the extent that the Cuban Revolution has improved their lives, they are less interested in social changes.\textsuperscript{76}

The government managed to create the illusion in 1993–95 that Cuba was indeed committed to market-oriented change. This was necessary to alleviate the mounting pressure for change at home and abroad.\textsuperscript{77} In the 1990s, Cuba’s official media primarily broadcasted bad news from Eastern European countries: the breakup of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia, and the increase in unemployment and inflation. The message to Cubans was

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., p. 70.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid, p. 10.
that the transition to capitalism is long and painful.\textsuperscript{78} The preemptive repression helps to account for the nature of Cuban politics in the 1990s. It is one of the most intrusive ways in which the Cuban state routinely controls its citizens. Because markets become irrepressible once they achieve a certain size, the state must always act preemptively, disbanding them before they prosper. If the Cuban state continues to act preemptively against such markets, it may be successful in prolonging its life.\textsuperscript{79}

In telecommunications, the government created a special Ministry of Computing and Communications (Decree Law 204). Yet, electronic mail access is only permitted in the workplace, users typically share a single account, Internet cafes or connections in public libraries are restricted, and no Internet service providers exist. Only nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that are neutral or loyal to the regime are allowed access. \textit{Resolution No. 383/2001} prohibits the sale of computers, printing equipment, photocopiers, or any other means of mass printing to any Cuban association or citizen without a permit granted by the Ministry of Foreign Trade. Cuba thus has one of the lowest levels of Internet connectivity in the Americas today (Corrales 2002).

As the United States began to implement the CDA in the first half of the decade, and as it began to appear that it would incorporate the Internet into this policy, the Castro regime became more concerned about the subversive potential of full Internet access. According to the founder of \textit{Cubaweb}, the official government website, most officials considered the Internet “an

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influence coming from the North,” the land of “the enemy.”

When a direct link was finally established in 1996, therefore, it was accompanied by a law that sought to establish strong centralized control over any use of the Internet within Cuba. Access to the Internet would be selective, the law stated, and would be granted “in a regulated manner … giving priority to the entities and institutions most relevant to the country’s life and development.”

In the years since, such prioritization of Internet access has been central to the government’s strategy for reaping positive returns from the medium while guarding against the possibility of subversion.

In response to the threat of Internet use by the opposition, Cuba has been particularly cautious in its strategy for Internet regulation. Rather than allowing widespread, market-driven access and trying to control Internet content through censorship, Cuba has promoted Internet access only where it directly benefits the regime and has restricted it everywhere else. Consequentially, official secrecy limits the availability of information in many aspects of the economy and society.

As a result, Internet users constitute only a tiny minority. E-mail or Web access is permitted only through the workplace, and users share a single account much more frequently than they are allowed individual access. Outside of the workplace, access is unavailable, even for the lucky few with enough hard currency to afford it. Cuba has no Internet cafes or connections in public libraries. The few that are granted Internet access in Cuba enjoy uncensored access;


there is no evidence that the regime burdens itself with the technologically challenging task of purifying the content of a global medium.

In the area of migration, Cuba is one of the few countries in the world requiring exit visas—eligible to politically safe citizens for a fee of approximately $300. The Cuban telephone company ETECSA, a joint venture between the state and an Italian firm, has a regulation stating that only friends of the Communist party and volunteers in Committees for the CDR receive access to telephone and Internet services.84

d. Physical Enforcement and Punishment

According to the Freedom House, Cuba has the most repressive laws on free speech in the Americas, and the constitution prohibits private ownership of media. Cuba government allows journalism only if it “conforms to the aims of a socialist society.” Cuba’s legal structures are under the control of the executive branch. The Cuban laws criminalize “enemy propaganda” and the dissemination of “unauthorized news.” The 1997 Law of National Dignity, which provides for prison sentences of 3 to 10 years for “anyone who collaborates with the enemy’s media,” is aimed at independent news agencies.85

In Cuba, concerns over U.S.-led subversion have strengthened the hand of hardliners within the regime who invoke frequent national security threats to justify the quashing of reform,

attacks on internal opposition, and minimal opening to the outside world. Crackdowns on Cuban dissidents have increased since the active promotion of the CDA. In February 1996, the government arrested 100 members of the human rights group *Concilio Cubano*; further arrests have followed in the years since. In 1999, Cuba passed an “anti-subversion” law that mandates lengthy jail terms for independent journalists and others who are considered accomplices in U.S. efforts to undermine the regime.\(^{86}\)

Cuba’s security systems used means to repress the members of dissident organizations, including: house arrest, surveillance or its threat, misinformation, public discredit, illegal procedures, forced exile of dissident organizers and leaders, limiting the mobility and communication of perceived dissidents inside the country, banishment to or from areas of the country, physical force, verbal threats, warnings, economic injury, and infiltration of groups and organizations by security agents, conflict, and distrust among participants.

Moreover, Cuba’s Ministry of the Interior (Minint) continues to work closely with the CDR throughout the island to repress all opposition to the regime.\(^{87}\) Partly through its use of the CDRs, partly through its own agents, Minint can obtain information on the daily activities of every person in Cuba. Minint is divided into three departments: the Department of Technical Investigations (DTI), the National Revolutionary Police, and the Department of State Security, which handles political crimes. Each department has units operating throughout the country.


There are 266 prisons; 167 are correctional institutions and 45 are high-security prisons.\textsuperscript{88}

In addition, there are both primary and “surrogate” subjects of social control. The surrogate subjects are family members, friends, or other persons who are or can be sanctioned by the security systems to make the primary subject of the repression recant. Not only activists but also their spouses and other kin are fired from their jobs, or requested to divorce the dissidents.\textsuperscript{89} The system of social control in Cuba cannot contain mass parallel behaviors by individuals who share similar goals but act independently and without a clear, formal agreement among one another, but who nevertheless react in similar ways to shared collective symbols, rumors, experiences, and mass media information.\textsuperscript{90} In sum, the Cuban regime has been characterized by an intrusive state whose elites have atomized society, and channeled participation vertically through a host of mass organizations. This process has eliminated political competition, destroyed economic society, and rendered civil society weak and ineffective.\textsuperscript{91}

2. **East Germany’s Information Control**

a. **Background: Exposure to Outside Information before the Fall of the Berlin Wall**

Contrary to other countries in the Soviet bloc, East Germany was the only country whose citizens were able to receive Western radio and television broadcasts in their native language.

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., p. 92.

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., p. 77.


\textsuperscript{91} Eusebio Mujal-Leon, “Regime Change and Democratization in Cuba: Comparative Perspectives,” Georgetown University, Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association (September 3-5, 2009) in Toronto, Canada.
Most of the individuals were able to receive West German broadcasts, which is why Germany’s General Secretary Ulbricht was quoted saying “the enemy of the people stands on the roof,” referring to the antennas that allowed East Germans to pick up Western stations.\textsuperscript{92}

\textit{Table 4.2 East Germany’s Personal Property Status (%)}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Car</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>54.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>86.5</td>
<td>91.9</td>
<td>99.0</td>
<td>99.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>69.1</td>
<td>88.1</td>
<td>96.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


West Germany continuously acted to penetrate East Germany. When East Germany adopted a color TV system that was incompatible with West German broadcasts, West Germany began broadcasting on the East German standard. West German television could be received in most of East Germany. It was so popular that the East German government was compelled to install cable around Dresden, the one part of the country that could not directly receive Western broadcasts. The development of direct-broadcasting satellites (DBS) posed more substantial challenges to national control. Initially, DBS, like radio, appeared to be a technology that could circumvent state control, because any individual with a television receiver could access transmissions from other countries.\textsuperscript{93}

The most consequential external influence on the formation of hegemony in East


Germany’s civil society must be ascribed to the constant presence of outside audio and visual media sources. Western long-, medium- and short-wave radio broadcasts had always been available throughout East Germany and since the 1970s about 90% of the population was able to regularly tune in to West German television programs.94

b. Ideological Control

The East German government tried to impose its dogmatic and distorted vision of what was somewhat paradoxically called Realsozialisrismus (real-existing socialism). Coercive methods were widely used to ensure the SED regime’s survival. Among the tactics employed were the control and intimidation of the population through societal infiltration by the Stasi and other repressive elements of the state. For examples, school curricula and media coverage were entirely geared toward the political education of the masses, serving as instruments for disseminating the ideology used by the ruling class to justify its dominance. Compulsory education began at the age of six, and the primary stage provided children with their first knowledge and understanding of socialist society. Virtually all domestic sources of information (e.g., newspapers, journals, radio, and television) were under the direct and harshly censored control of the state apparatus.95

It was primarily though the Stasi, the Ministry of State Security Service, that people were drawn into the machinery of the oppressive state system. Alongside the Stasi’s full-time employees, it was estimated that approximately ten percent of the population worked in some

95 Ibid., p. 25.
capacity for the agency that kept “subversive” East Germans under surveillance. A substantial part of the population had reasons to support the status quo, because they either profited personally from the oppressive system or were in one way or another dependent upon it.\footnote{Bleiker, Roland, “Nonviolent Struggle and the Revolution in East Germany,” The Albert Einstein Institution, 1993, p. 23.}

However, the decline in the public’s attention to propaganda was a general phenomenon in GDR society. Even those people who aimed for a political career were not necessarily able to explain the meaning of some fundamental Marxist-Leninist concepts. Moreover, the FDJ (Freie Deutsche Jugend or Free German Youth), whose task it was to bring up future communists, was not known for dealing with young people’s questions.\footnote{Madarasz, Jeannette, “Conflict and Compromise in East Germany, 1971-1989,” Palgrave, New York, 2003, p. 144.}

Moreover, East Germans could own and sell cars, and houses as well. They lived in monetized societies, and were able to obtain bank loans. Owners of hard currency lived better than their neighbors. Therefore, socialist dogmas were diluted in East Germany. Even East Germans could travel to the West Germany to meet their families in special circumstances. They watched Western television and listened to Western radio. In short, after decades of peaceful coexistence, it became increasingly difficult to maintain an effective siege mentality.\footnote{Rüdiger Frank, “The European Experience with Socialism: Implications for North Korea,” 11th World Korean Forum – Brussels, May 10, 2010.}

c. Information Monopoly and Fabrication

Before 1990, the information monopoly of East Germany was very weak, and information fabrication was difficult due to West Germany’s television and radio broadcasts. Of all the
Eastern bloc states, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) faced the most exposure to the capitalist West. This was due to its geographical positioning in the heart of Europe, on the front line of the Cold War. Due to the fact that the GDR had been steadily leaking its population to the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) since its official creation in 1949, the erection of the Berlin Wall was ordered for August 1961, with the Soviet Union’s full support. The closing of the border and the construction of the Berlin Wall by the GDR in August 1961 can be viewed as an attempt not only to stop the citizens of the GDR from emigrating to the FRG as mentioned above, but also as an attempt to stop the FRG and their citizens from influencing the people of the GDR, and consequently undermining the socialist system in East Germany.  

On the other hand, censorship was a taboo subject in the GDR. Even after 1989, Honecker, General Secretary of GDR, insisted that there had been no censors in his country, at least not within an institutional setting. In reality, various agencies kept a tight grip on what was published. In addition, the political system of the GDR had been created as a means to indoctrinate its people.

However, preventing the free movement and travel of GDR and FRG citizens between the East and West, the GDR leadership still had to endure the problems posed by the availability of West German TV and radio such as AFN (American Forces Network) and RIAS (Radio in the American Sector). In addition, television programs and ownership would have become a larger problem for the GDR leadership as time went on. In 1970, 70 percent of East Germans owned a television, on which they could watch West German television programs every day. This figure rose to 91 percent in 1983 and by 1988, 52 percent of these owned a color television.

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d. Physical Enforcement and Punishment

There were two distinct penal systems in East Germany. One, operated by the Ministry of the Interior, was for criminal offenses and accepts person convicted and sentenced by the court system. The other one was operated by the Ministry of State Security (MfS or Stasi). Little is known of it since it had been operated outside the jurisdiction of the legal system.\(^\text{101}\) The East German government tried to tighten its social control and physical enforcement through the Ministry of State Security Service. It was illegal for GDR citizens to view West German television or radio programs, and anyone found with their television or radio aerials directed towards the West could be liable to interrogation and imprisonment by the Stasi. Even so, this deterred relatively few from tuning in to Western programming.\(^\text{102}\)

The Ministry of State Security operated as the secret police of the GDR. It watched over and fought against opponents of the Party dictatorship and those it held to be such. The Stasi strove to bring all of society under its control, which made it by far the most frightening and, at the same time, the most grotesque part of the GDR state’s power apparatus. By the time East Germany collapsed in 1989, the Stasi payroll had grown to 91,015 full-time employees. Unofficial informers probed every aspect of citizens’ lives, carried out concrete assignments for their control officers, made their homes available for meetings or observations, searched homes and workplaces, and shadowed suspects with bugs and cameras and through telephone, radio,


and postal surveillance.\textsuperscript{103}

The Stasi closely monitored behavior among GDR people, and is known to have used torture and intimidation to mute dissent. Without exception, one tenant in every apartment building was designated as a watchdog reporting to area representatives of the Stasi and full-time officers were posted at factories and important installations and facilities. The GDR’s vast apparatus of surveillance and repression was unprecedented in scale and depth: proportionally, it was by far the most extensive state security service in history. For every 1,000 GDR citizens, there were approximately 5.5 state security personnel and another 11 unofficial informers. About 1 in 50 of the country’s adults were working for the Stasi and enabled the ministry to conduct an almost blanket surveillance of society.\textsuperscript{104}

However, the GDR failed to deter the civic organizations’ activities. Therefore, the relatively prosperous and exceptionally well-policed GDR, where late-blooming civic organizations combined with images and information from West German television, led to an unexpected and uncontrollable emigration crisis in the summer and fall of 1989 to bring Communist rule to a sudden end.\textsuperscript{105} A massive number of visits, phone calls, television and radio broadcasts led to the frustration of East Germans, which accumulated silently and in the end broke out suddenly in the form of mass defections and the fall of the Berlin Wall.

\textsuperscript{103} Jacobs, Marcus “The Legacy of Surveillance: An Explanation for Social Capital Erosion and the Persistent Economic Disparity Between East and West Germany,” European Business School Oestrich-Winkel and Harvard University, June 2010, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., p. 5.

\textsuperscript{105} Eusebio Mujal-Leon, “Regime Change and Democratization in Cuba: Comparative Perspectives,” Georgetown University, Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association (September 3-5, 2009) in Toronto, Canada.
3. Lessons Learned: Case Comparison

Table 4.3 Comparison of Social Control: Cuba, East Germany, and North Korea

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparison</th>
<th>Cuba</th>
<th>East Germany</th>
<th>North Korea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics</td>
<td>Some notable reforms</td>
<td>Uncontrolled defections</td>
<td>Stable, but defection continues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regime remains in a holding pattern</td>
<td>Large scale protests</td>
<td>Increase of outside information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaknesses</td>
<td>U.S. pressure on regime change</td>
<td>Increased civic organizations</td>
<td>Economic hardship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>U.S.S.R.’s collapse</td>
<td>West Germany’s prosperity</td>
<td>South Korea’s economic prosperity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Porous borders to the West</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>U.S.S.R.’s collapse</td>
<td>Long and vulnerable border to China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Economic hardship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Conflicts among elites</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengths</td>
<td>Lack of civil society</td>
<td>Surveillance on people</td>
<td>Absence of civic organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strong information control</td>
<td></td>
<td>Monopolized media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prohibition of private media</td>
<td></td>
<td>No Internet service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strict Internet access</td>
<td></td>
<td>China’s support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Political solidarity</td>
<td></td>
<td>Strict surveillance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Topographical benefit (Island)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Strong ideological control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Political solidarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Result</td>
<td><strong>Stable Regime</strong></td>
<td><strong>Regime collapse</strong></td>
<td><strong>Maintaining regime</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
a. Causes of Successful Social Control in Cuba

During the economic reform period, Cuba does not have independent social groups that could take advantage of the international pressures. In many other authoritarian countries, international actors have simply neglected the authoritarian regime to work directly with opposition groups. Those groups have magnified international pressure by squeezing the regime from below. The absence of independent social groups in Cuba impedes that process and suggests a crucial condition under which international pressure works.\textsuperscript{106}

Therefore, the absence of social groups may be seen as a permissive factor that facilitates stable authoritarian rule. Before 1990, only a small number of civic organizations existed beyond Cuban government restriction. Although the number of Non Governmental Organizations was increased in the first half of the 1990s, most of those civic organizations had quite small members and many were front groups under Cuban government control.\textsuperscript{107}

In addition, the Cuban government has been extremely successful in its system of social control. Cuba combines formal and informal systems of control that emphasize openness and rigidity. The formal system is contributed to crush all anti-hegemonic acts, particularly those that could be triggers that the Cuban authority regards undesirable. Therefore, the absence of a key democratizing agent such as independent civic groups as well as the strict social control ability was a key factor in the stability of Cuban authoritarianism.\textsuperscript{108}


\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., p. 20.

b. Causes of Failed Social Control in East Germany

Despite this strong imposition of the coercion, the SED was unable to eliminate the sphere of civic organizations. At least two factors undermined the state’s attempt to annihilate civil society: The porous borders to the West, and the existence of institutionalized structures that provided a forum. The wide availability of Western media not only robbed East Germany’s harsh domestic censorship practices of their purpose, it also made them counterproductive. Since Western television tried to expose the dark side of East Germany such as corruption and bureaucratic despotism, East Germany’s propaganda increased people’s disbelief on the East Germany government.109

Outside information played role of trigger for East Germans to take the risk of engaging in the “exit” wave. Because of West Germany’s television programs and visiting West Berlin, East German citizens became attracted to the economic wealth and political freedom of West Germany. This made the East German people’s royalty to the GDR to fade. In addition, East Germans could watch on West German television how barbed-wire installations were removed from the Austro-Hungarian border. For example, a West German radio station, even broadcasted the departure times of the refugee-trains leaving East Germany for the Prague in the Czech Republic.110 Therefore, the spontaneous civil organization’s activities and weak social control as well as the influx of outside information from West Germany served as driving forces for the fall of Berlin Wall.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATION

The current information influx in North Korea seems to be more than transitional. For example, listening to the outside radio and using mobile phones are ways for North Koreans to receive information directly, and they can be seen as a significant act against the strict censorship in North Korea. In addition, advances in information technology would make it difficult for Kim Jong-Il regime to seal off its people from outside information in the long term.\footnote{Andrew Scobell, “Kim Jong Il and North Korea: The Leader and the System,” in The Kim Jong-Ill Regime in North Korea by Charles W. Tarrington, Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2008, p. 22.} Increasing outside information has weakened the effectiveness of ideological control. Some scholars argue that the iron curtain shutting North Korea off from the outside world is beginning to crack due to a massive inflow of information.\footnote{Andy Sennitt, “North Korea: Information control crumbling rapidly,” Chosun-Ilbo, December 18.} Moreover, the market activities have brought a great deal of information from abroad, leading to the deterioration of ideological control.

As I investigated in the two case studies, economic and political reforms would be impossible without some level of relaxation of the information blockade and surveillance. Foreign investment and technology are necessary preconditions for growth; therefore if reform were to be instigated, a large number of North Koreans would be exposed to dangerous knowledge of the outside world and, above all, of South Korea. Economic decline, coupled with the energy and food crisis, has particularly weakened the legitimacy of the North Korean regime.
This has resulted in an increasing number of North Korean food refugees crossing the North Korea-China border line in Manchuria. A considerable reduction of the regime’s administrative control would be unavoidable as well. Such reduced control would entail information flowing within the country, and the dissemination of information would become much easier.\textsuperscript{113} 

However, it would be premature to interpret the current information influx as a sign of North Korean regime’s instability. Despite a series of crises in the 1990s caused by the collapse of socialism and isolation from the international community, the Kim Jong-Il regime has continued to survive until today, because Pyongyang has been able to adjust its social control mechanism to social changes. That is, despite the powerful causal forces for weakening the social control system, the Kim Jong-Il regime has displayed a remarkable degree of stability in the post-Cold War era.

It is also incorrect to assume that no authoritarian regimes like international communication technology. In some cases, they tend to encourage technologies that they can control, such as television, while strengthening the barriers to adopting the Internet. This is exactly the same phenomenon that has been occurring in North Korea. In fact, North Korea is utilizing televisions for ideological education.

In addition, North Korea does not have institutions that can convert mass grievance into political protests. From the perspective of regime stability, North Korea is still stable, and there is little probability of regime collapse in the near future. Although limited networks of civic association exist in the country, society is heavily infiltrated by the state as both a means of

social surveillance and indoctrination. That is, there are numerous civic organizations, but all of them are operated by the government. Therefore, we cannot evaluate North Korea’s ability to maintain regime stability by information influx factors alone. There should be a trigger, such as domestic civil organization to make a meaningful change in a totalitarian regime. Moreover, North Korea’s ideological indoctrination in the juche ideology has also influenced the North Koreans’ acceptance of Kim Jong-II’s legitimacy as a successor to the nation’s founder.

As I examined the case studies on Cuba, I found many similarities between Cuba and North Korea: (1) The departure and exile of many opponents who chose “exit (defection)” over “voice (protest)” (nearly 15 percent of Cubans live outside of the country, and over 20,000 North Koreans have defected to South Korea). (2) The utilization of mobilization, education, and intimidation rather than mass violence as instruments for control and consolidation. (3) The destruction and subordination of nearly all of the independent civic organizations. (4) The salience of nationalism and anti-Americanism in a country. (5) The reality of enduring the “coercive diplomacy” of the U.S. which reinforced militarization of society, and justified extending controls and repression. Therefore, although the influx of outside information weaken the social control of North Korea, it does not appear to be a threat to North Korean regime due to the absence of democratizing agent such as civil society.


115 Eusebio Mujal-Leon, “Regime Change and Democratization in Cuba: Comparative Perspectives,” Georgetown University, Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association (September 3-5, 2009) in Toronto, Canada.
Therefore, it is still early to determine the effects of the information influx. Information technology can be a double-edged sword for totalitarian North Korean regimes. The economic gains of information technology can be helpful to the legitimacy of regime, while they can foster civic activities. Dictators try to maintain strong control over all kinds of information sources. Through this control, they could engage in indoctrination and idolization. If North Korea is eventually successful in increasing the level of social control and raising the economic level for their citizens, it will be a stable authoritarian regime like Cuba. If, on the other hand, the leadership of North Korea fails to control the speed and quantity of outside information, then it can face a tragic end like East Germany.

**Table 5.1 North Korea’s Regime Stability Diagram**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kim Jong-Il Regime</th>
<th>Leadership &amp; Legitimacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Control &amp; Loyalty of people</td>
<td>Regime stability (Current situation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>“Exit” Large scale of defections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the case of North Korea, South Korea aggravates the situation. Although its possibility is very low, South Korea economic prosperity could cause a psychological agitation among North Koreans as we watched at the East German case. Gauging the extent to which outside information impacts North Koreans’ perception is difficult. Nevertheless, as people acquire additional information about life outside, the legitimacy of the North Korean regime will be reduced.
Therefore, to change the totalitarian North Korean regime, and to ensure East Asia’s peaceful stability, the United States and South Korea should collaborate to induce the North Korea’s change. One of the effective means is to increase the cost of social control of dictator. For this purpose, we can pump outside information into the North Korean people. If North Koreans can acquire uncensored information, it will function as a driving force to change the public’s consciousness. Along this line, international society’s favored policy is to target the North Korean people with information about the outside world and to let them decide how to act on that information. If North Koreans were to learn just how desperate the country’s situation is, and also feel less intimidated by the police and ideology, they would not remain as docile as they have been for decades, quietly accepting an authoritarian dictatorship.

What information might be communicated to them and how it will be delivered is suggested by the steps that Kim Jong-II regime has already taken to block outside information, for example, by outlawing videos and unfixed radio sets and railing against propaganda transmitted by the Voice of America, Radio Free Asia, and South Korea radio stations. Therefore, the South Korea and U.S. should significantly expand information engagement with North Korea in a variety of areas that are independent from military interests and capabilities. Until recently, South Korea and the U.S. government have not invested sufficiently in information assets as leverage for changing North Korean society. They can provide much more support for the gradual, bottom-up approach to social change in North Korea.

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