NORTH KOREA: ON THE PATH TO REVOLUTION?

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ABSTRACT

The Korean Peninsula is home to the last remaining Cold War division along its Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). To its north is the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) which has been ruled by a dynastic Soviet-Communist regime since the state’s founding over 60 years ago. The Kim regime’s record is one of human rights violations, mass famine and hunger-related deaths, rampant defection of its citizens, economic instability, and hostile relations with its neighbor to the south. And yet, despite what appears to be a country spiraling into decline, some analysts believe North Korea to be immune from the vulnerabilities that often serve as preconditions to revolution.

This thesis contends that the conditions undermining North Korea’s ruling regime and foreshadowing its collapse do, in fact, exist. In building this case, it draws on theories from political science and psychology, particularly theories of political violence, revolution, and frustration-aggression. In analyzing the make-up of North Korea’s autocratic regime, the weakness of the political infrastructure, and the mass frustration that has resulted in nonconformist behavior, I argue that such conditions are becoming increasingly evident. Furthermore, the thesis shows that popular discontent
and mass frustration may lead to resistance and rebellion that can bring about the demise of the Kim regime.

These assessments provide a basis for recommendations for new policies by the U.S. and other key countries to help the North Korean people bring about political change for their state. North Korea is on the path to revolution and substantial support must be considered to assist its people to realize human freedom and dignity.
DEDICATION

To J. C.
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INTRODUCTION

“We declare solemnly and confidently that the foolish politicians around the world, including the puppet group in South Korea, should not expect any change from us.”

-North Korea National Defense Commission, December 2011

The Korean Peninsula is home to the last remaining Cold War division along its Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). To the south lies the Republic of Korea (ROK), with one of the world’s fastest growing economies; to its north is the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), a country of oppression and isolation. The dynastic Soviet-Communist Kim-regime, which has ruled the DPRK since the state’s founding in 1948, stands as the world’s longest lasting totalitarian regime.

In an authoritarian state such as North Korea, there is no doubt that the internal condition of the country is the direct outcome of decisions and policies of the government. For over sixty years the Kim-regime has maintained authority in North Korea through its own political philosophy of Juche Sasang, simply translated into an ideology of “self-reliance,” and the isolation such rule has sanctioned over the people. It is through such self-imposed seclusion that the regime has been allowed to foster its personality cult through propaganda and misinformation, giving it room to act freely without internal checks or balances.

A record of human rights violations, broken treaties and ineffective sanctions have shown the DPRK to be unwilling to cooperate with its international neighbors.

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North Korea has proven its disregard for international agreements as it withdrew from the Military Armistice Commission (MAC) in 1994, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 2003, and several human rights related agreements. Additionally, the Armistice which ended the Korean War has been broken, by Seoul’s count, 410,000 times since it was signed in 1953. With the recent death of North Korean dictator, Kim Jong-Il, in December 2011, uncertainty is increasingly prevalent. The ascension to power of his young son, the ambiguous Kim Jong-Un; rumors of Jang Song Thaek acting as the country’s Regent on behalf of his young nephew; the continuation of famine; and the defection of elite citizens\(^3\) have made North Korea’s political future all the more obscure.

Despite what appears to be a country spiraling into decline, some analysts believe North Korea is far “from developing the kinds of vulnerabilities that have proved to be the downfall of other authoritarian governments.”\(^4\) Daniel Byman and Jennifer Lind believe that regime stability in the DPRK will prevent it from falling to popular revolt. Laying out an authoritarian “toolbox,” Byman and Lind depict the apparatus employed by the Kim regime in securing its power to include:


1. Social policies which prevent civil demonstrations;

2. Internal control of information to boost legitimacy of the regime and its ideology;

3. Threat of severe force to be used on anyone deemed to be a menace to the regime; and,

4. The “co-opting” of the elite.\(^5\)

This thesis sets out to dispute such claims by contending that the conditions undermining North Korea’s ruling regime and foreshadowing its collapse do, in fact, exist. By examining theories and trends of revolution, and addressing Byman and Lind’s authoritarian toolbox within the context of state strength and psychological theories of mass frustration, I will argue that popular discontent may lead to resistance and rebellion against the regime. Accordingly, this thesis will delve into the history and culture of North Korea, use social science theories to analyze and interpret recent trends in state vulnerability and popular nonconformist behavior to bring about broad understanding of North Korea and its people, and to make a credible estimate of the probability of anti-regime revolt.

Despite North Korea’s long-standing repression of its people and reckless aggressive international behavior, the international community’s means of choice in dealing with this pariah regime has been limited mainly to diplomacy and aid. These methods have not proven successful as millions of North Koreans starve, and an erratic ruling regime continues to threaten others with nuclear weapons. My assessments will

\(^5\) Ibid., 5-17, 40-41.
provide a basis for recommendations for new policies by the U.S. and other key countries to bring about political change for the North Korean people. These changes, and the international community’s responses to them, carry important implications for the policy choices of the United States and other major international actors.

Through this thesis, it is my intent to show that the North Korean people have the potential to change their oppressive government and enjoy the human rights and freedoms that have been denied them for so long. In doing this it is my hope that policy makers will take meaningful concrete steps to reach out to the people of North Korea and support them in their just cause.
CHAPTER I
THE AUTHORITARIAN TOOLBOX

There are two ways in which an authoritarian regime will fall by internal means: revolution or coup d’état. In their paper, “Understanding Regime Stability in North Korea,” Daniel Byman and Jennifer Lind present the argument that the Kim regime has maintained its power and will not succumb to either a popular revolution or internal coup because of its use of an “authoritarian toolbox.” Through implementing social policies which prevent civil demonstrations, controlling information which comes in to the country, threatening the use of severe force to state menaces, and “co-opting” elites,¹ Byman and Lind reason the Kim regime in North Korea to be indomitable:

The Kim regime has wielded these tools [of the authoritarian toolbox] to protect itself both from popular revolt and from internal coups. Its social policies have stunted the development of social classes critical to the onset and success of revolution, and have abolished any sort of independent civil society. The regime inculcates in the people an elaborate set of ideas and ideology, paired with information control, to build legitimacy and popular support. If the populace is dissatisfied with the regime in spite of these tools, the regime’s heavy use of force (or threat of force) insures that any individual disloyalty or popular mobilization will be suppressed.

Another set of tools protects the regime from coups d’état. Elites are co-opted with perks, jobs and – significant in famine-stricken North Korea – food. The regime funds this largesse in part by its manipulation of its foreign adversaries, who provide generous amounts of aid. The regime has also carefully “coup-proofed” government and military institutions. It exploits family loyalties, has built rival security agencies, and has cultivated the military’s support through increased budget and prestige – and a nuclear weapons

program. Should these tools fail, the regime has created a parallel military force to protect it from the Army.²

As such, they reason the Kim regime has safeguarded its position and “will remain secure for decades to come.”³ This chapter presents Byman and Lind’s arguments for regime stability and security in North Korea, which this thesis will directly contest.

**Social Policy**

To protect themselves against domestic challengers, Byman and Lind claim that authoritarian regimes purposefully create a social system which deters civic organization, if not making it outright impossible.⁴ Two ways in which this is accomplished is through the strict control of social groups and by preventing the creation of an independent civil society. Scholarly literature has discussed the importance of specific social groups in the mobilization of regime opposition which can lead to revolution. Misagh Parsa’s findings of four groups – clergy, workers, students and businessmen – who influence revolution are referenced.⁵ All of these groups have the ability, if permitted to organize, to pose a challenge to the regime, hence authoritarian regimes must “stunt the development of [these] potential challengers.”⁶

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² Ibid., 2.
³ Ibid.
⁴ Ibid., 5.
Clergy members include all those who are employed by or administer a religious institution. According to Patrick Van Inwegen, the importance of the clergy in revolutions is three-fold: they are organized and have a mass of resources at their disposal to include land, social institutions such as hospitals and schools, and loyalty from a congregation; as the work of a cleric is associated to the Divine, the social status of the clergy is one of elite respect; and, clergy members are generally spared repression by the regime as radicals are typically pursued first, and because of the taboo nature of repressing clergy.\(^7\) Clergy members are generally esteemed by their communities and authority is attributed to their messages which, if they are in opposition to the state, may be harmful to the ruling regime.

Van Inwegen states that, “Compared to the rest of society, students have tended to be much more radical – whether they were nationalists, liberal, or socialist,” and, indeed, most revolutions of the twentieth century had active student participation.\(^8\) The radicalism of students is attributed to the university environment and to an absence of societal bonds. During the course of their academic pursuits, intellectuals, according to Inwegen, are exposed to progressive ideals and practices of modern states\(^9\) and, thus, “are more likely to be critical of what they perceive as inadequacies of the existing


\(^9\) Greene, *Comparative Revolutionary Movements*, 23.
regime. If intellectuals, en masse, latch on to a competing ideology, this is usually one of the first indications that a revolutionary situation is emerging.\textsuperscript{10}

The work force also poses a potential threat to a regime. Workers are those who work for their wages,\textsuperscript{11} and have the potential to influence revolutionary behaviour due to the resources at their disposal. As workers play a direct role in the production and distribution of goods and services, any activity which halts these things can affect a tremendous number of things.\textsuperscript{12} Parsa identifies workers as “opportunistic revolutionaries” because “when it is likely that they will not be repressed, they are open to collective action. When their actions are likely to be met with retribution, they are more likely to be good workers.”\textsuperscript{13} Additionally, capitalists who own the means of production and employ workers,\textsuperscript{14} have a great deal of influence in a state as they control the production (and withholding) of goods and services. Through this power of goods, workers and capitalists could, potentially, coerce a government by threatening the economy.\textsuperscript{15}

As authoritarian regimes are the antithesis of democratic regimes, it stands to reason that authoritarian leaders would build their states in contrast to a trademark of

\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{10} Van Inwegen, \textit{Understanding Revolution}, 105.
\item\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 112.
\item\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 113.
\item\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 114.
\item\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 120.
\item\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 122.
\end{enumerate}
democratic states: a free civil society. In a civil society where individuals can freely organize and enjoy free speech, the importance of the political leader wanes in comparison to the importance of the individual. Thus, authoritarians prevent free mobilization of the masses in any capacity and place restrictions on free speech. The idea of this level of state control is “to prevent the emergence of anti-regime activity, and to direct agendas in ways that benefit the regime.” As long as civil society is constrained, the leader can remain as the centripetal force of the state.

The Kim regime in North Korea has inhibited the development of these classes that have been identified as important to the advancement of revolutionary activity. As the state legally controls the production of goods, the creation of a capitalist class has been effectively blocked. Religion has also been restrained by the state. The North Korean Dictionary of Philosophy states that religion is being “used by imperialists as an ideological tool to invade underdeveloped countries.”

Academic pursuits and the development of an intellectual class have also been hindered by the regime. Education in North Korea is granted on the basis of one’s social

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19 Byman and Lind, “Understanding Regime Stability,” 64.

class and not on merit.\textsuperscript{21} Kim Il-Sung University in Pyongyang is the state’s only four-year university, and most students who are permitted to attend college do so at a two-year college or technical school.\textsuperscript{22} Curriculum is limited in scope and content, as compulsory education is required by the state to place an emphasis on courses which teach of the Kim family and the state’s official ideology of Juche Sasang.\textsuperscript{23} According to Byman and Lind, “One study estimates that 35 per cent of elementary school education is political education; this ratio rises to 40 per cent at the university level.”\textsuperscript{24}

\textit{Ideas and Information}

Authoritarian regimes also control information and ideas in order to “increase their own legitimacy in the eyes of the governed and inhibit the formation of opposition.”\textsuperscript{25} Information is highly controlled by the regime to ensure that the


\textsuperscript{22} Byman and Lind, “Understanding Regime Stability,” 20.

\textsuperscript{23} Hyok Kang and Philippe Grangereau, This is Paradise, trans. Shaun Whiteside (London: Abacus, 2007), 56-57. According to North Korean defector Hyok Kang, “Some subjects were considered minor, like gymnastics (which we performed collectively to revolutionary music), Chinese and English. On the other hand, marks in mathematics, geography, the history of Korea and the Party were very important indeed. There were also morality classes, in which we were taught politeness and respect. Two subjects that we swotted up on every day were particularly choice: ‘Era of childhood (I) and ‘Era of childhood (II).’ The first class dealt with the childhood of Kim Il-Sung, and the second with the childhood of his son Kim Jong-II. We had to learn the lives of these two great men of Korea by heart, down to the smallest detail. . . .”

\textsuperscript{24} Bradley K. Martin, Under the Loving Care of the Fatherly Leader: North Korea and the Kim Dynasty (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2006), 167.

information they endorse is the only information being shared in the state. Byman and Lind discuss three ways in which this is typically accomplished: through cultivating nationalism, creating an ideology, and by building a cult of personality.

Authoritarian leaders cultivate nationalism and “nation-building” to join a nation together.\(^{26}\) As rivalrous people can stir contention and create problems for the regime, the removal of factions in society is important to the authoritarian leader. A well-established means to minimize factions is to proclaim a common enemy. Because of this, xenophobic nationalism is not uncommon amongst authoritarian states\(^ {27}\) as xenophobia gives the regime a scapegoat when crisis hits the state.

According to Max Weber, leadership must validate itself in order to be sustained.\(^ {28}\) Ideologies, a blending of mythology and nationalism, can help rally the people around the leadership. A cult of personality also builds popular support: “when charisma is accepted, the charismatic leader can break all rules and norms.”\(^ {29}\)

Additionally, reverence to one leader or one family can weaken the opportunity of

\(^ {26}\) Ibid., 8.


\(^ {29}\) Ibid., 215, 241-254, 1112-1115.
others who seek to undermine the regime. In coming up against a foundation of popular support, rivals will find it difficult to build an opposing force.  

All media in North Korea are controlled by the government, whose propaganda machine prevents outside information from refuting internal claims. Only select members of the elite are permitted access to outside information, and even then their usage is monitored. Because of this media isolation of the state, the Kim regime has been able to build up nationalism and a sense of identity, create an ideology, and build a personality cult to ensure its power.

Ethno-nationalism has become a defining characteristic of North Koreans. Past experiences of invasion, colonialism, and the division of the peninsula have shown North Koreans they need not associate with or depend upon non-Korean infidels. In 1965, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) issued the following in a report on observations of North Korea’s ethno-nationalist behavior:

On 28 March [1965], there was a serious incident at 6:00 p.m. while the Cuban ambassador, his family, and a delegation of physicians from Cuba were touring the city . . . . A Korean passerby called to Korean residents in the vicinity to act against the Cuban delegation. A large crowd of people gathered quickly.

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32 Yuk-Sa Li, ed., *Juche! The Speeches and Writings of Kim Il Sung* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1971), 267. From a speech given by Kim Il-Sung titled, “Let us Intensify the Anti-Imperialist, Anti-U.S. Struggle,” on August 12, 1967: “To fight imperialism, it is important above all to concentrate the attack on U.S. imperialism, the ringleader of world imperialism. By stretching outs its tentacles of aggression all over the world, U.S. imperialism has become the common enemy of all peoples of the world. There is no country on earth whose sovereignty is not violated by U.S. imperialism; there is no country which is free from the menace of U.S. imperialist aggression.”
including 100 children, and the crowd pounded the car with their fists, ordered
the occupants to get out, and hurled insults, especially against the Cuban
ambassador as a black man. It should be added that the Cuban ambassador is
currently the only ambassador who has a relatively good basic knowledge of the
Korean language and . . . [when he] identified himself as the ambassador of
Cuba, both in Korean and in Russian, this had no effect on the crowd’s actions.\(^{33}\)

Propaganda against foreigners continues to be prevalent in present-day North Korea, yet
only the “Japs and Yankees”\(^ {34}\) are subject to routine condemnation\(^ {35}\) as they are
“condemned as an inherently evil race that can never change, a race with which Koreans
must \textit{forever} be on hostile terms.”\(^ {36}\) Young children are taught in school to “speak of
Yankees as having ‘muzzles,’ ‘snouts’ and ‘paws,’ and ‘croaking’ instead of dying,”\(^ {37}\)
in an effort to dehumanize Americans.

\textit{Juche Sasang} is the political ideology which drives much of the activity in the
DPRK. In short, \textit{Juche Sasang} is self-reliance, manifested more specifically as,
independence in the political, economic, and military spheres, and supports the idea of a
systematic social hierarchy. This ideology is reinforced by the idea of isolation from
North Korea’s international neighbors (see Chapter 3).


\(^{34}\) B. R. Myers, \textit{The Cleanest Race: How North Koreans See Themselves – And Why It Matters}
(New York: Melville House, 2010), 135.

\(^{35}\) Ibid., 131.

\(^{36}\) Ibid., 135.

\(^{37}\) Ibid., 135-6. Myers cites his source as \textit{Sŏ, Inmin I sanŭn mosŭp} which translates to: \textit{How}
People Live.
To garner the support of the people during the Soviet occupation following World War II, Kim Il-Sung appealed to North Koreans and convinced them that “their virtue had made them as vulnerable as children to an evil world [and their] litany of suffering and humiliation at foreign hands”\(^{38}\) could only change if they entrusted him as their *obo suryongnim* or “Parent Leader.”\(^{39}\) As the Parent Leader of the DPRK it was stated that Kim Il-Sung was acting on the best interest of his people as any parent for his or her child. The Embassy of GDR issued a report in 1961 on the DPRK to the Socialist Unity Party’s Foreign Policy and International Department and stated the following:

The cult of personality surrounding Comrade Kim Il Sung has been growing steadily for some time. Everything the Party and the Korean people earn is attributed to Comrade Kim Il Sung. There is no room, no classroom, no public building in which a photo of Kim Il Sung cannot be found . . . . The history of the revolutionary war and the formation of the Communist Party of Korea are not correctly portrayed. The decisive role of the Soviet Union in the liberation of Korea is completely downplayed. Its role is addressed on only a single panel. This is also expressed in the materials as well as in films and depictions. Thus, a legend of Kim Il Sung has been created that does not correspond to the actual facts if one considers what Comrade Kim Il Sung has actually done. Party propaganda is not oriented toward studying the works of Marxism/Leninism, but rather is solely and completely oriented toward the “wise teachings of our glorious leader, Comrade Kim Il Sung.”\(^{40}\)

\(^{38}\) Ibid., 34.

\(^{39}\) Ibid.

Displaying their Confucian roots, North Koreans have continued this outward act of allegiance to Kim Il-Sung’s son, Kim Jung-II, and grandson, Kim Jung-Un.

Mythology surrounding the lives of Kim Il-Sung, Kim Jung-II and Kim Jung-Un is ever-present in the lives of North Koreans. In creating this persona many stories were changed or omitted, such as Kim’s involvement in China’s Anti-Japanese Allied Army and World War II (he is noted to have “defeated the Japanese and Americans without foreign assistance”\textsuperscript{41}); his involvement with the Chinese Community Party was never mentioned; and his activities in the USSR during the Pacific War were avoided entirely.\textsuperscript{42} The propaganda machine that facilitated the task of building up the Dear Leader went so far as to remove and destroy reference works and school books that contradicted these claims.\textsuperscript{43} South Koreans claim the Dear Leader of the DPRK was actually born Kim Song-Ju, and was a fraud who stole the identity of a war hero.\textsuperscript{44}

The idea of the \textit{oboi suryongnim} exploited the Confucian tendency of North Koreans to revere elders and those in leadership positions, and Kim Il-Sung continually nurtured this reverence for his authority through the state’s propaganda machine and

\textsuperscript{41} Bruce Cumings, \textit{Korea’s Place in the Sun: A Modern History} (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 160.


\textsuperscript{43} Myers, \textit{The Cleanest Race}, 44.

\textsuperscript{44} Cumings, \textit{Korea’s Place in the Sun}, 160.
mandatory indoctrination of each citizen.⁴⁵ Years after Kim Il-Sung’s death, the power of the personality cult he built shows through the pilgrimages made to his birthplace, the celebration of his birthday on April 15, massive portraits displayed in public places, and a calendar created by Kim Jung-Il which dedicates Year 1 in 1912 - the year of Kim Il-Sung’s birth.⁴⁶

_Coup d’État_

Authoritarian regimes depend upon their armed forces and leaders in government to maintain social order, ensure the public’s adherence to laws, deliver punishment and operate the gulags, and serve as a representation of the regime’s power. This dependence is a two-edged sword, but by building a strong force the regime can also face the potential threat of being overthrown by a _coup d’état_. Byman and Lind write, “Even a small group within the army can successfully seize power by killing or neutralizing the existing leadership and preventing any rival from taking power.”⁴⁷

According to V.P. Gagnon, Jr., “The views of the elites are crucial to political

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⁴⁵ “From a very early stage, in some cases at three months or so, children attend institutions for long periods at a time, returning to their families late at night or sometimes only at weekends. Whatever the purpose, indoctrination certainly happens. Visitors to baby homes, orphanages, boarding schools and ordinary schools soon become aware of the all-pervading cult of personality that surrounds the children who sing of the benevolence of ‘Grandfather’ Kim Il-Sung and ‘Father’ Kim Jung-II, whose photographs appear in all rooms and whose care and interest in children are often shown in wall paintings in classrooms or corridors.” J. E. Hoare and Susan Pares, _North Korea in the 21st Century_ (Kent, UK: Global Oriental, 2005), 7.


⁴⁷ Ibid., 13.
To ensure their loyalties, the regime must ensure they are secure. It is because of this that authoritarians must “coup-proof” their regime by co-opting these individuals with perks of monetary rewards, privileges, and titles of position.49

In December 1958, Kim Il-Sung began the massive state venture of categorizing every North Korean citizen based on personal and family background to catalogue everyone’s degree of loyalty to the regime.50 The Basic Class, at 45 percent of the population,51 is the largest class group in the DPRK. Individuals in this class are not members of the Korean Worker’s Party (KWP) but may be considered for social promotion into the Core Class if they are not of the group to have been demoted to the Basic Class from the Core Class because of laziness and corruption.52 As technicians, farmers, office workers and teachers, members of this class do not receive regular wages or food rations, and live in small cities or rural areas.53 Including small merchants and artisans, those with families in South Korea, and people who were


51 Ibid., 220.

52 Ibid., 223.

53 Ibid.
previously locally influential figures, this middling class claims individuals of various backgrounds.\textsuperscript{54}

The Core Class, comprising approximately 28 percent of the population, includes those with patriotic backgrounds, and those seen to be harmless to the state. Because of this, individuals with family members who died in the Korean War as a combatant or noncombatant, are active service members of the People’s Army, and wounded People’s Army veterans are eligible to receive the same treatment as those who come from families of laborers, poor farmers, and hired peasants (farm servants).\textsuperscript{55} Members of the Core Class are eligible to become party, government, or military staff, and can receive education, rations, residence, and judicial privileges above those of other North Koreans.\textsuperscript{56}

Within the Core Class are members of the high-level elite who account for 200,000 individuals or about 1 percent of the population, and mid-level elites who account for approximately 26-27 percent of the population.\textsuperscript{57} In North Korea where

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{55} Ministry of Unification, \textit{An Overview of North Korea} (Seoul, Korea Institute for National Unification, 2000), 420.
\item \textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 219.
\end{itemize}
food is scarce due to famine, many elite members are co-opted with the perk of food.\textsuperscript{58} The equation of buying loyalty by granting favoritism and gifts to those close to power demonstrates the Kim regime’s attempt to protect itself against a coup. Any change to the hierarchy would threaten officers and government officials of their “unfair advantages.”\textsuperscript{59}

\textit{Use of Force}

Use of force is a tactic used to maintain dictators’ power. The Kim regime employs the threat and use of force to thwart opposition from its citizens. If one is suspected or accused of disloyalty to the state, punishment is harsh. The Complex Class, also known as the hostile or wavering class, includes individuals whom the government has identified as dangerous to the state along with three-generations of their families. Considered “national enemies,” this class contains “religiously active persons and the descendants of those who owned land or businesses prior to the communist takeover, those who were public officials under Japanese rule, and those who collaborated with the advancing South Korean forces during the Korean War.”\textsuperscript{60} The class also includes government workers and elites who have been expelled from the party, former Core

\textsuperscript{58} Byman and Lind, “Understanding Regime Stability,” 2; Korea Institute for National Unification, \textit{White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2011}, 220. In addition to food, elite members enjoy other luxuries such as nice homes, access to good education, and modern goods.

\textsuperscript{59} Eva Bellin, “Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective,” \textit{Comparative Politics} 36, no. 2 (January 2004): 145-149.

\textsuperscript{60} Korea Institute for National Unification, \textit{White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2011}, 221.
Class members, and the family members of those arrested or imprisoned, people released from concentration camps, economic offenders, and those who speak out against the ruling party.  

Within the Complex Class, which includes 27 percent of the national population, are three target categories: dictatorship targets, isolation targets, and inclusive education targets. As this class is made up of those deemed dangerous to the Kim regime, individuals who find themselves categorized as a member of the Complex Class receive special government attention for the betterment of the state. Dictatorship target group members are those seen as trying to overturn the current North Korean regime. To deflate their potential influence, they are sent to so-called “safe zones” such as the mountains where they are removed from the bulk of society. Isolation target group members are deemed “very dangerous people” as they may support South Korea. Unlike the dictatorship target group members, isolation target group members are left in society so they can be observed in close proximity. Lastly, inclusive education target group members are those who have committed minor misdemeanors. Inclusion in this

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group is unsolidified as “people who show possibilities of returning to the fold after intense ideology education” can potentially be reassigned to a new class.63

As enemies of the state, Complex Class members cannot become Party members, are discriminated against in civil and political liberties, and are limited to hard, manual labor.64 Gulags are the most prevalent places for punishment, and they exist in three levels of punishment: jipkyeolso (collection center), kyohwaso (re-education camp), and kwanliso (re-education through labor camp, or gulag).

**Summary**

Jennifer Gandhi and Adam Przeworski state, “If rulers counter the threat with an adequate degree of institutionalization, they survive in power.”65 Byman and Lind have shown the Kim regime’s utilization of the authoritarian toolbox and have explained the regime’s longevity and seeming immunity from revolution or coup d’état. Social policies in the DPRK are preventing civic organization, social group distinctions are very defined and heavily enforced, information is strictly controlled, ideology and the Kim regime’s personality cult lend support to the regime’s legitimacy, the threat of force is a serious reality, and elites are co-opted.

Notwithstanding these tools, there are forces at work within North Korean society and its regime which are undermining them. The remainder of this thesis will

63 Ibid., 221.

64 Ibid., 221-223.

explore these forces and their role in generating revolutionary conditions. Specifically, I will examine and evaluate the susceptibility of this regime type to revolution, the waning strength of the state, and mass frustration. Supported by defector testimony, and the history and culture of North Korea, I will argue that North Korea is unable to wield the tools of its authoritarian toolbox because of recent trends in state vulnerability and popular nonconformist behavior and will succumb to anti-regime revolt.
CHAPTER II
THEORIES OF REVOLUTION

It is an oversimplification to state that a revolution is a phenomenon which occurs when a government is weak and an opposition group is strong, or that economic weakness alone is responsible for revolution. The processes which bring about revolution do not spontaneously occur. Theorists of revolution have identified trends and preconditions that allow one to determine if a state is headed towards revolution. Despite Byman and Lind’s argument that North Korea will not experience revolution because of its use of the “authoritarian toolbox,” additional factors that need to be considered in the calculus for determining North Korea’s potential for revolution. Through analyzing theories of revolution, this chapter will identify preconditions for revolution in order to build a case for revolution in North Korea.

Revolution as a Function of Regime Type

According to state-centric theorists, a significant factor in forecasting internal conflict within a state rests in regime type.¹ A system of closed government has proven itself liable to revolution, and when unyielding government systems do not provide a place for citizens to dissent or to actively participate in government itself, revolution becomes likely. Goldstone observes:

The great revolutions of history have taken place either in highly centralized traditional monarchies (France, China, Russia), or in narrowly based military

dictatorships (Mexico, Bolivia, Guatemala, Cuba), or in colonial regimes (Vietnam, Algeria). All these political systems demonstrated little if any capacity to expand their power and to provide channels for the participation of new groups in politics.  

In short, autocratic and other unresponsive states that disenfranchise groups from the political system are at risk for experiencing revolution.

Democratic regimes, defined as states which engage in “open, competitive elections,” and subscribe to “substantial checks and balances on the discretionary powers of the chief executive,” are shown to be the most stable. This type of political system has the ability to absorb and incorporate new groups into the system and, thus, have not experienced revolutions. Additionally, the presence of citizens voicing their dissent, and demanding change of their government, is necessary to maintain peace amongst the citizenry. Nations with such governance include Australia, Canada, and the

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3 Ibid.


5 “... the absence of successful revolutions in democratic countries remains a striking fact, and suggests that, on the average, democracies have more capacity for absorbing new groups into their political systems than do political systems where power is equally small but more concentrated.” Huntington, “Revolution and Political Order,” 45.
United States, states which can conduct conflict management because of their political inclusivity.  

Autocratic regimes are characterized by “sharply restricted or suppressed” citizen participation in government and authoritarian rule by an executive who is “selected according to clearly defined (usually hereditary) rules of succession from within the established political elite” and acts with no means of checks or balances.  

These regimes maintain political order through their rigid and austere governance. However, as the number of autocratic regimes continues to decrease worldwide due to shifts towards democratic governance, more nations have experienced transitional periods of “anocratic” leadership which, statistically, have proven to be unstable for the state. Anocracies combine elements of both democratic and autocratic practices and “are much more vulnerable to new outbreaks of armed societal conflict; they have been about six times more likely than democracies and two and one-half times as likely as autocracies to experience new outbreaks of societal wars. . . they are four times more

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9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid., 10-12. The number of democratic nations has increased since 1946 (20 nations) to 48 nations in 1989, 77 in 1994, and 95 in 2011. Autocratic nations peaked in number in 1977 (89 nations) and have steadily declined, as 22 existed in 2011. Anocratic nations have almost doubled in number between 1994 (29 nations) and 2011 (48 nations).
likely than democracies to experience coup plots and about one and one-half times more vulnerable to coups than autocracies.”\textsuperscript{12} As such, one can see the instability of non-democratic regimes.

Jeff Goodwin also draws similar conclusions through his analysis of regimes on a spectrum that includes type of state organization, type of political regime, and infrastructural power. On the x-axis of state organization, liberal/inclusive (democracies) to exclusive/repressive (dictatorships) are represented; the y-axis of political regime includes bureaucratic/rational regimes to patrimonial/clientelistic. States that are extremely exclusive/repressive and patrimonial/clientelistic are shown to be susceptible for revolution, while the opposite holds for liberal/inclusive and bureaucratic/rational states.\textsuperscript{13} When the z-axis of infrastructural power ranging from strong to weak is added to the spectrum, Godwin shows that states that are exclusive/repressive, patrimonial/clientelistic, and weak, are the most likely to succumb to revolution,\textsuperscript{14} and explains this occurrence as follows:

Exclusion, especially violent exclusion or repression of certain social groups, tends to “push” these oppressed groups into revolutionary movements, and the state’s weakness prevents the state from destroying such movements. By contrast, more liberal and inclusionary regimes may confront considerable opposition, but it tends to be less radical in its ends and means; and especially

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 9, 12-13.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 28-29.
powerful states are generally able to repress their opponents, even if political repression provides them with an incentive to rebel.\textsuperscript{15}

Therefore, one can see that non-democratic nations are generally susceptible to revolution, the risk of which increases when patrimonial rule coexists within a weak state (see more on weak states at Chapter 3).

It is an uncontested fact that the DPRK is a non-democratic state. Political inclusivity is nonexistent, the Kim regime rules the country without checks or balances, and political elections are a farce. Hence, as shown by comparative studies of regime vulnerabilities, such political conditions in North Korea can be regarded as structural preconditions for revolution. As shown in Chapter 1, North Korea’s systematic class system is constructed not upon merit but on the basis of nepotism and patrimony. This class structure, in which all citizens are given a \textit{song-bun} from the state, affects all aspects of daily life, including political participation. The state’s only political party, the Korean Worker’s Party (KWP), is the solitary political arm of the DPRK, presided over by the state’s dictator. Only those of the Core Class, an underwhelming 28 percent of the population, are privy to KWP membership.\textsuperscript{16}

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[15] Ibid., 31.
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Theories of Revolution

Revolutions are uncommon occurrences\(^{17}\) which lend to the belief that they are complex and require many factors to be present before they manifest. In order to understand these complexities of revolution, three generations of scholarship emerged in the 20\(^{\text{th}}\) century to study the root causes of revolution: the natural histories, the general theories of political violence, and the structural theories.

Historians and sociologists who studied revolutions during the 1920s and 1930s contributed to the genre of the study of revolution known as the natural histories. Studying the most prominent revolutions of the West, to include the English Revolution of 1640, the American Revolution of 1776, the French Revolution of 1789, and the Russian Revolution of 1917, these scholars sought to identify common patterns of revolutionary behavior. According to Jack A. Goldstone, the observations made through the natural histories perspective on revolutions “have been valid so often that they appear to be law-like empirical generalizations.”\(^{18}\) In regard to preconditions of revolution, natural histories state:

Prior to a revolution, the bulk of the “intellectuals” – journalists, poets, playwrights, essayists, teachers, members of the clergy, lawyers, and trained members of the bureaucracy – cease to support the regime, write condemnations, and demand major reforms.\(^{19}\)


\(^{19}\) Ibid.
For example, the abandonment of the regime by intellectuals is clearly shown through the writings of Voltaire in France and Thomas Paine in the American colonies.

General theories of political violence emerged mid-century, branching out into three approaches of state institutions, psychology, and resource mobilization by dissenters, all of which focus on opposition movements and their resort to violence. Chalmers Johnson and Neil Smelser developed a general theory which argued that one needed to study a state’s institutions to determine the onset of revolution. According to them, a state becomes unstable when its institutions change independently of each other. When this disequilibrium is drastic, individuals in the state can become unnerved and look for solutions outside of the status quo, which challenges the state’s legitimacy, making the state easier to rebel against.

John L. Davies and Ted Robert Gurr’s psychological approach to understanding political violence argued that violence was a result of discontent and conflict between value expectations and value capabilities. Dissenters may then, upon identifying the perceived target of their discontent, manifest their discontent towards that target (see more at Chapter 4). Lastly, Charles Tilly developed the approach which emphasized the mobilization of resources by dissenters. Using both the psychology and state institution approaches, Tilly concluded that the factor of popular dissent in revolution was void if

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20 Ibid., 5-7.

21 Ibid., 5.

mobilization of supporters and resources did not occur. Only if dissenters can mobilize in a way that effectively challenges the regime will revolution occur (see more at Chapter 4).

Structural theories of revolution incorporate external stresses on a state in the calculus for revolution. These theories affirm that revolutions are a result of state weakness, conflicts between states and elites, and popular uprisings, all due to policies initiated by the state in response to the external pressure. One of the most prevalent factors of revolution, according to structural theorists, is in the presence of a “relatively backward and unproductive” economy. Although a weak economy in and of itself does not lead a country to revolution, it does increase internal and external pressures. In the case of North Korea, it is an overt fact that the state’s economy has been in critical condition, especially since the fall of its ally, the Soviet Union, two decades ago.

The relationship between elites and the state is another structural theory factor for revolution. According to Goldstone, “the probability of an internal collapse generally depends on the relationship of the state to members of the elite, whether they

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26 Ibid.
are hereditary nobles, local landlords, or clergy.\textsuperscript{27} Byman and Lind articulate the need for an authoritarian to gift perks to the elite in an effort to prevent the emergence of a coup d’état. As such, a sign of revolution would be resounding disdain by these same individuals towards the regime because of the failure of these perks.\textsuperscript{28} The desertion of the regime by the elite is a sign of dissatisfaction, which may result in their assisting popular uprisings or in forming an elite revolt themselves.\textsuperscript{29} When the perks disappear, loyalties wane as well.

Another decisive factor is the relationship between the state and its military. A regime depends on the allegiance of a reliable military. According to structural theorists, the isolation of officers from civilians, no matter the class background of the officers, typically provides a regime with the most loyal army. Conversely, when soldiers are permitted to associate with civilians, the bond between soldier and civilian will often override the allegiance of a soldier to his or her superior officer. And, when officers come from the elite class, they will generally give allegiance to their class in a conflict between the regime and the elite class.\textsuperscript{30} A critical component to the French

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 3.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.
Revolution rested in the military’s refusal to stifle resistance among dissenters, which resulted from French soldiers marrying working-class women.31

All three theories of revolution speak to current conditions in North Korea, and point to the state’s vulnerability to revolution. As shown through current events and defector testimonies, intellectuals and the elite are ceasing to support the regime and are defecting, the relationships between the regime and its elites and military are weakening, state institutions are out of sync, and external stresses including nuclear proliferation and North-South relations, are all placing pressures on the DPRK.

The Kim regime has reigned in the abilities of its intellectuals through self-reliance from *Juche Sasang*, stating North Korean intellect alone can solve the state’s problems.32 Despite the regime’s encouragement of education, it also holds extreme suspicion against its educated people, and monitors their activities to ensure they do not participate in activities considered to be a threat to the state.33 North Korea has also extensively restricted the right of free speech and media which would allow intellectuals to voice their criticisms and concerns of the government. This act of censorship


32 “’Every machine and piece of equipment in the factory was produced in our own country,’ [Ju-Son] Hong said proudly. With a million ‘intellectuals,’ including engineers, North Koreans ‘can solve our problems.’” Bradley K. Martin, *Under the Loving Care of the Fatherly Leader: North Korea and the Kim Dynasty* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2006), 159.

33 Ibid., 291. Kim Young-Song’s father was an elementary school teacher, and his 5 older brothers all attended university.
demonstrates the state’s understanding of the power this right has in bringing about the demise of the regime.

Although censorship has silenced public displays of intellectual dissent, a number of these individuals have shown their disdain of the regime by defecting. In 2008 approximately 15,000 defectors resided in South Korea, about 600 of whom were graduates of four-year colleges with professional work experience, a number which has continued to grow. Hyun In-Ae, a former professor at Chongjin University and current defector living in Seoul, is head of the North Korean Intellectuals’ Society, a group of North Korean intellectuals who have defected to South Korea as she has. Dr. Hyun’s society is just one of several intellectual defector groups. North Korean Intellectual Solidarity is led by Dr. Kim Heung-Gwang, recipient of the North Korean


36 Kim, “NK Intellectual Solidarity.” In addition to educating the public about North Korea, these intellectual defector groups help defectors of various disciplines transition into their new lives and find employment that utilized their skills and benefit their new country. Dr. Kim Heung-Gwang is quoted as saying, “While working on supporting the settlement project for defectors with the Association for North Korean Defectors, there were several points facing defector intellectuals in South Korea which earned my sympathy. Notably, some defector intellectuals are talented and highly ambitious, but the opportunity for them to demonstrate their skills is slim in South Korea. I have seen a former female scientist who was a researcher in the North but now works helping the elderly at a social welfare organization, and another former college professor who pumps gas. I feel that there is the need to work together with other defectors for common information, efforts and goals. I feel the sense of duty to actively participate in the task to spread the reality of the situation in North Korea.”
National Doctoral Degree in Computer Operation Systems and a former university professor who defected to South Korea in 2004.\textsuperscript{37}

Since the death of Kim Jung-II, it appears as if the elite are abdicating their state. Reports have emerged from South Korea in regard to North Korean officials in China refusing to return to the DPRK. Do Hee-Yun, Secretary General of the Citizens’ Coalition for Human Rights of Abductees and North Korean Refugees, has “predicted that some high profile figures abroad may seek ways to defect to Seoul as Pyongyang appears reluctant to take strong action against them during the mourning period for Kim.”\textsuperscript{38} Professor of North Korean Studies at Korea University, Kang Sung-Kyu, has also spoken on the changes among North Korean elites, stating that even among military members, legitimacy in the Kim dynasty is waning, and “conflicts among military top brass would result in political persecution and a change of heart among those who had enjoyed a vested interest in maintaining the failed system of central planning.”\textsuperscript{39} The elite will not stand by the regime should it become compromised.

Furthermore, North Korea’s state spending shows disequilibrium within the state as state funds are budgeted to two primary institutions: the military and the Kim regime’s personality cult. As North Korea’s economy continues to decline, employment, education, and food rationing services are deteriorating as well, yet the

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.
military and personality cult continually received support. Kim Jung-Il’s military-first policy placed priority on feeding the soldiers over that of civilians. According to defector Nam Chung who was a railroad guard, rationing for many North Koreans was stagnant for years – except for the military:

Fifty percent or more of the rations went to the military. There were a couple of bases in the area. It was the county distribution center. You are supposed to ration to the rest of the distribution centers, but there wasn’t any left. It was mainly rationed to the military. . . . There was nothing we could do. The military has the highest priority. Especially since Kim Jong-il became head of it, you can’t fight it. If a soldier comes up and hits you, you can’t do anything. They have all the authority.

Nam Chung’s testimony represents the government treatment to its military. In 1996, during famine, Kim placed orders on Korean Worker’s Party (KWP) officials to make the guarantee of rice for soldiers a priority. He stated, “If the U.S. imperialists know that we do not have rice for the military, then they will immediately invade us.”41 A propaganda campaign ensued, featuring Kim Jong-Il appealing to food producers in the state: “Who is going to supply food to your sons and grandsons in the army? If we cannot give them rice, then when the Yankees invade us we cannot defeat them and your sons and daughters will become imperialist slaves once more.”42

Defectors have testified that despite the aid from the international community, “official grain rations are offered on a priority basis to select groups of people” such as

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40 Martin, Under the Loving Care of the Fatherly Leader, 623-624.
41 Ibid., 517.
42 Ibid.
the military and KWP members. Despite this attention to the military, they have started to turn as food for them is running out. Military personnel are underfed as shared in the testimony of a former North Korean soldier from Kangwon Province who received 100-150 grams of rice per meal and had to steal from civilians to keep from starving. A former second lieutenant with twenty-two years of military service testified that his ration had to be supplemented with edible field grass.

To emphasize its legitimacy and supplement the state’s propaganda machine, the Kim regime relies on its personality cult and continual worship by North Koreans. All North Korean are required by law to wear lapel pins with portraits of Kim Il-Sung and Kim Jong-II. According to a North Korean Defector, portraits of the Kims are treated as follows:

…a framed portrait of Kim Il-sung hung on an otherwise bare wall. People were not permitted to put anything else on that wall, not even pictures of their blood relatives. Kim Il-sung was all the family you needed – at least until the 1980s, when portraits of Kim Jong-il. . . were hung alongside those of his father. . . .

The Workers’ Party distributed the portraits free of change along with a white cloth to be stored in a box beneath them. It could be used only to clean the

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44 Ibid., 344.

45 Ibid.

portraits... About once a month, inspectors from the Public Standards police would drop by to check on the cleanliness of the portraits.47

In 1990, 19 percent of the DPRK’s budget was designated for Kim-family deification; in 2004, in a time of famine and poverty, it had doubled to 38.5 percent to pay for ideology schools, 30,000 Kim monuments, films and books, billboards, murals, and worship events to name a few.48

External stresses on the state have fared no less. North Korea has antagonized relations with its neighbor to the south. In addition to defying the 1953 Armistice a staggering 410,000 times,49 North Korea continues to abuse South Korean POW’s, threaten war,51 and indoctrinate its people against South Koreans who are a “disgrace because of their dependence on the United States.”52 Tensions remain high along the DMZ where armed guards from both the DPRK and ROK stand continual watch. Additionally, the 2010 bombing of Yeonpyeong Island and sinking of a South Korean naval vessel in the Yellow Sea near Baeknyeong Island display the animosity of the

47 Barbara Demick, *Nothing to Envy: Ordinary Lives in North Korea* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2010), 46. Demick includes the description of portrait maintenance in her story of Mrs. Song (a pseudonym given by Demick), a defector who shared her testimony for inclusion in the book.


52 Demick, *Nothing to Envy*, 44.
North to the South. As a result of these provoking actions, the United States has maintained a military presence on the peninsula to defend its South Korean interests for over half a century.\(^5^3\)

For almost twenty years North Korea has used its nuclear program to obtain concessions from its international neighbors, but it is of note to remember that the range of its leverage is finite. High-level talks with North Korean leadership and aid in the form of food and energy will eventually require a show of action and decisionmaking on the part of the inexperienced Kim Jong-Un, whose decision may or may not be agreeable to the weathered veterans of his political staff or other elite members.\(^5^4\)

Pressure from the international community to alleviate these tensions through ceasing provocations will continue to mount, as shown through the DPRK’s recently announced plans to launch a satellite between April 12 and 16 of this year to celebrate the 100\(^{th}\) birthday of Kim Il-Sung.\(^5^5\) Aid from the United States to North Korea, in the form of 24,000 metric tons of food, which was promised in February 2012, has been


placed on hold because of this act. The U.S. State Department has stated, “If they were to go forward with this launch it is very hard to imagine how we would be able to move forward with a regime whose word we have no confidence in... We need more reassurance now.” Experts and academics outside of North Korea see the launch as a long-range missile test, similar to the failed test of April 2009, as the technology for satellite launching is similar to missile launching. Professor Andrei Lankov, who was a Russian exchange student at Kim Il-Sung University in 1985 and now teaches at Kookmin University in Seoul, has stated, “They’re trying to remind the world they are dangerous and working hard to develop a delivery system.” Members of the international community, including Russia, France, the United States, South Korea, Japan, and China have spoken out against this, as it is a breach of U.N. Security Council resolutions that ban ballistic missile launches.

Summary

By observing North Korea through the lenses of multiple theories of revolution—state-centricity, natural histories, general theories of political violence, and structural


57 Reuters, “US Warns North Korea Satellite Launch Could Scrap Nuclear, Food Deals.”

58 Schwartz, Mullen, Hancocks and Labott, “North Korea's Planned Launch Puts Food Aid On Pause.”

59 Ibid.

60 Reuters, “US Warns North Korea Satellite Launch Could Scrap Nuclear, Food Deals.”
theories – it can be seen that the DPRK exhibits attributes and conditions that presage revolution. As non-inclusive governments which disenfranchise groups from political participation have proven their predisposition to revolution, the mere fact that North Korea is ruled by a dynastic Soviet-Communist regime which severely restricts political involvement makes it susceptible to revolution. The patrimonial nature of North Korea’s rule intensifies its risk of revolution, as does the weakness of the state – a sign that the state is unable to maintain command. Further, specific manifestations of regime vulnerability are increasingly evident. Intellectuals are showing their disdain of the regime through defecting, state institutions are imbalanced, external stresses are increasing, and important relationships between the regime and its elites and military are weakening – all factors of a state headed towards revolution.
CHAPTER III
STATE STABILITY

In addition to observing the regime of a state and the characteristics associated with regime type, the condition of the state also weighs heavily in the calculus for forecasting internal conflict. Research has shown that so-called “weak states” are inclined to experience internal conflict as their resources to combat insurrections are weak as well. This view coincides with Goodwin’s observation that “there would be no revolutions to study (or to emulate, or to denounce) if states did not at least occasionally break down or were otherwise incapacitated.”¹ Various studies have identified specific characteristics of the economy, population, ethnic diversity, religion, terrain, and problems amongst elites in politics that raise the risk of internal conflict. Although such considerations may be antecedent to conflict, they fail to provide a comprehensive model.

For our purposes, the more inclusive set of relevant determinants of state stability employed in the Failed State Index provides a reasonably comprehensive, comparative, and diachronic tool by which to assess the condition of the DPRK state. Through the use of the Failed State Index, a project of the Fund for Peace in Washington, DC, this chapter will show the autocratic rule of the Kim-dynasty has caused state decline through its political philosophy of *Juche Sasang* which at its best

has prolonged the problems that have pushed the DPRK in decline; at its worst it has created them.

**Juche Sasang**

As a coping mechanism following the fall of Japanese colonialism and the end of World War II, Koreans turned to their history in order to rediscover being Korean. After years of disregard, an ancient, mythological Korean creationism legend resurfaced at the end of Japanese colonialism: the legend of *Dangun Wanggeom*. As the story is told, *Dangun Wanggeom*, the son of a princess and the god Kwon-ung, was born on *Baekdu San* (*Baekdu Mountain*) in 2333 B.C.; his remains were found in a tomb in Pyongyang. Dangun Wanggeom was the father of the Choson people, one of the three kingdoms which came together in the 7th Century when the Korean peninsula was unified. North Koreans continue to refer to themselves as Choson; South Koreans use the name *Hanguk* – both translate to mean “Korean.” Koreans believe themselves to be descendants of *Dangun Wanggeom* and, as shown through their homogeneous populace, have kept *Dangun Wanggeom*’s blood line pure. Through the eyes of Koreans, they were the world’s cleanest race and superior to all others.

When Kim Il-Sung came to power in North Korea he exploited these postwar emotions for the advantage of his own power. Speaking on the vulnerability of the

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Korean child race in an evil world that needed the protection of the *oboisuryongnim* and using the story of *Dangun Wanggeom*, Kim Il-Sung claimed superiority over not only foreign nations, but also South Koreans who were without Pyongyang and the sacred *Baekdu* Mountain. In one move Kim Il-Sung had championed the isolation of the DPRK and elevated himself to the role of Parent Leader. As the Parent Leader of the DPRK it was implied that Kim Il-Sung was acting on the best interest of his people.

China’s Cultural Revolution, which began in 1966 under Mao Zedong, influenced the creation of Kim Il-Sung’s *Juche Sasang*. Afraid Mao’s influence would infiltrate North Korea and undermine his autocracy, Kim Il-Sung worked to build himself up to be a leader to revere and trust, a “pure Korean – the most Korean-Korean – who has ever lived.” When Mao Zedong presented his original Chinese adaptation to communism, Kim Il-Sung created a Korean variation to follow suit. Kim Il-Sung expressed the principles of *Juche Sasang* as *chaju*, *charip* and *chawi*. A speech entitled, “Let Us Defend the Revolutionary Spirit of Independence, Self-Reliance, and Self-Defense More Thoroughly in All Fields of State Activities,” delivered on 16 December 1967 to the Supreme People’s Assembly, explains the three principles:

… the Government of the Republic will implement with all consistency the line of independence, self-sustenance, and self-defense to consolidate the political independence of the country, build up more solidly the foundations of an

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5 Myers, “Ideology as Smokescreen,” 168.
independent national economy capable of insuring the complete unification, independence, and prosperity of our nation and increasing the country’s defense capabilities, so as to safeguard the security of the fatherland reliably by our own force, by splendidly embodying our Party’s idea of *Juche Sasang* in all fields.\(^6\)

Ergo, the legs on which *Juche Sasang* stand are political independence, economic independence and military independence.

The first written explanation of *Juche Sasang* from the DPRK was issued in 1972. Hwang Chang-yop, an advisor to Kim Il-Sung and 1997 defector to South Korea (ROK), claims to have convinced the Dear Leader to expand on his idea to strengthen the status of the DPRK and the Dear Leader himself. According to Hwang, he was given the task.\(^7\) His first essay, titled, “Juche Thought,” appeared under Kim Il-Sung’s name and describes *Juche Sasang* as follows:

In short, the Juche idea is the idea that the masters of the revolution and construction are the masses, just as the power to actuate revolution and construction lies with the masses. In other words, it is the idea that one is the master of one’s own fate and that the power to develop that fate lies with oneself.\(^8\)

Here lies another explanation of the philosophy which maintains a *Juche Sasang* mindset involves North Koreans problem solving abilities through self-enterprise.

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\(^7\) Myers, “Ideology as Smokescreen,” 169.

\(^8\) Ibid., 169. Author’s Citation: “Uri tang ŭi chuch’e sasang gwa konghwaguk chŏngby ŭi taenaeoe chŏngch’aek ŭi myŏt’ kaji munje e taehayŏ,” 27:390-391 (Translation: I endorse Juche Šasang and the republic government’s [DPRK’s] mission to share the following tenants of the philosophy with the world.)
However, given the nature of North Korea’s communist-collectivism, self-reliance is not meant for the self, but is for “guaranteeing the unity of the collective.”9

Observing the derivation of the word, however, gives a different interpretation. *Juche Sasang* is made up of three Korean words: *ju* meaning lord, master, leader; *che* meaning a sifter or sieve; and *sasang* meaning an ideology, philosophy or sound-thinking. In essence, *Juche Sasang* also means the Sound-Thinking of the Master’s Sieve. When combined with the legend of *Dangun Wanggeom* and the understanding of the Parent Leader’s power, it is not difficult to see how this philosophy can translate into the Parent Leader’s authority to separate people into groups.

**State Failure**

Created by the Fund for Peace, the Failed State Index offers a comprehensive view and comparative assessment of the condition of the state. The Fund for Peace defines a failing state as follows:

A state that is failing has several attributes. One of the most common is the loss of physical control of its territory or a monopoly on the legitimate use of force. Other attributes of state failure include the erosion of legitimate authority to make collective decisions, an inability to provide reasonable public services, and the inability to interact with other states as a full member of the international community.10

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## Table 1. Failed State Index North Korea Comparison for the Years 2005 – 2011

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<th>Indicators</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>Rank*</th>
<th>2011 Number of At-Risk States For The Year**</th>
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* Shows how North Korea ranks as a failed state (1 being the most failing) for each of the 12 indicators, over the total number of states in the study.

** Shows North Korea’s overall rank as a failed state (1 being the most failing), over the number of at-risk states (Warning through Alert)
The Index ranks United Nation member states on twelve indicators as shown on Table 1. Using a scale of 0 to 10 (lowest to highest respectively), states are graded on each indicator; states closer to a total score of 120 are more susceptible to failure than states with a score closest to zero. The indicators are not designed to forecast when states may experience violence or collapse, but are meant to measure a state's vulnerability to collapse or to experience conflict. As shown on Table 1, North Korea has maintained an overall poor rating since the inception of the Failed State Index in 2005.

**Chaju: Political Independence**

*Chaju* has shown itself to secure the Kim regime’s power hold over the DPRK. Kim Jung-II predicted that “dependence on foreign powers will cause the failure of the socialist revolution in North Korea,” and has used *chaju* to prevent this from occurring. The outward display of *chaju* is an extension of the state’s ethno-nationalism attitude in that North Koreans are to rely upon their own ingenuity and through rejecting the notion that a pure race should be bound by the dictates of an impure world.

Internally, the effects of mismanagement can be felt through the suspension of the rule of law and violations of human rights, and the progressive deterioration of public services.

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11 Li, *Juche!*, 157-158.
In a country that places emphasis on the group over the individual, it is not difficult to understand that individual rights do not exist. The Fund for Peace measures the suspension of the rule of law and widespread violation of human rights through the “widespread abuse of legal, political and social rights, including those of individuals, groups and institutions.” Aspects of these measures include the denial of due process, the use of torture, freedom of religion, access to information.

Gulags are the most prevalent places for punishment, and they exist in three levels of punishment: jipkyeolso (collection center), kyohwaso (re-education camp), and kwanso (re-education through labor camp, or gulag). People found guilty of eating more than two meals a day, hoarding food, engaging in conversation which does not support government policy, being accused of suspicious behavior, forcibly returned asylum seekers from China, and a host of other “crimes,” are punishable by Gulags or labor camps and detention centers where conditions and punishments are reported to be extremely harsh. A report from the Seoul-based human rights NGO, Good Friends, describes camp conditions as follows:

The accused are severely tortured to admit their crimes. This frequently happens in detention centers where non-convicted prisoners are also taken in. Non-convicted prisoners are treated the same as the convicted prisoners in many

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14 Ibid., 16-17.
cases... Moreover, the inhumane condition of the prisons is also serious. It was considered as a death sentence to be sent to prison during the Food Crisis in North Korea. Given the fact that even ordinary people starve to death, the people in detention centers are hardly provided with food. They are susceptible to malnutrition and various kinds of infectious diseases in the unsanitary prisons. The longer sentences are equated with higher mortality rate.

The people who are taken to the forced labor camps suffer from double burden of malnutrition and heavy forced labor. The people of the forced labor camps prey on wild beasts and consume grass... People in the camps die unless their families visit and feed them.15

Years of such human rights abuses were defended to the international community by the regime as exercises of “North Korean style” human rights.16 Others see these atrocities as acts of genocide.17

Religion in North Korea has been restrained by the state.18 Kim Il-Sung spoke against organized faith in 1962:

(We) cannot carry such religiously active people along on our march toward a communist society. Therefore, we have tried and executed all religious leaders higher than deacon in the Protestant and Catholic churches. Among other religiously active people, those deemed malignant were all put to trial. Among


16 Ibid., 9.

17 “What is indisputable is that North Korea has employed each of the five acts characterized as genocidal in the [U.N.] Convention [on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide] and [Article 6 of the Rome] Statute [of the International Criminal Court] through (a) executions and state-sanctioned murders, (b) the systematic use of torture, (c) state-induced mass starvation in political prison camps and elsewhere, (d) forcible abortions and infanticide, and (e) the forcible transfer and enslavement of children.” Robert Park, “Genocide in North Korea,” World Policy Blog, entry posted February 6, 2012, http://www.worldpolicy.org/blog/2012/02/06/genocide-north-korea (accessed February 8, 2012).

ordinary religious believers, those who recanted were given jobs while those who did not were held in concentration camps.\textsuperscript{19}

Since the inter-Korean talks in the 1970s, North Korea has reinstated religious institutions, though not for the purposes of religious practice. According to the 2011 White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea, defectors have consistently testified that persecution was a guarantee for personal religious practice, and religious structures only exist in Pyongyang where they are used for “external propaganda and political purposes by allowing foreign religious leaders and other occasional visitors to these religious facilities.”\textsuperscript{20}

The Kim regime depends on isolation in order to have full control on information within the borders of the DPRK. Without this, outside information and radical ideas may permeate the state and prove to be the demise of the regime. All media is state-controlled, including televisions and radios which are fixed to government stations.Speakers are mounted into apartments in Pyongyang and broadcast propaganda into homes, and only selected members of the elite are allowed internet access and cell phone usage.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{19} Tae-Woo Koh, \textit{North Korea’s Policy on Religion} (Seoul: Minjok Cultural Pub. 1989), 79.


Following the Korean War, North Korea grew at a rate much faster than that of South Korea. The fall of the Soviet Union quickly altered the trend as the DPRK lost its biggest political ally and economic benefactor. There are limited public services available to North Koreans, and basics such as maintaining its government-operated food rationing, education, and health care systems are inadequate.

The famine which began in the mid-1990’s resulted in hunger-related deaths of between 600,000 and three million people. According to the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), over half of North Koreans ate only two meals a day, and two-thirds of the population were dependent on government food distribution. The irregularity of the food supply eventually resulted in the suspension of distribution in many parts of the country.

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22 "As late as the mid-1960s some scholars still wrote as if South Korea were more or less a basket case. Even specialists on East Asia had trouble seeing South Korea’s future in this period, so wrapped up were they in the previous two decades’ perception of economic stagnation and dislocation. . . . meanwhile, North Korea was growing and industrializing rapidly, with its people better fed and housed than ever before." Bruce Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun: A Modern History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 310.


As the food crisis remains, North Korea’s free public education system continues to break down. A Good Friends questionnaire revealed that 75.5 percent of respondents had children who missed school due to hunger and hunger-related health conditions.27 A former North Korean school teacher who defected to South Korea via China, recalls how the number of her students dropped:

Always the same progression: first, the family wouldn’t be able to send the quota of firewood; then the lunch bag would disappear; then the child would stop participating in class and would sleep through recess; then, without explanation, the child would stop coming to school. Over three years, enrollment in the kindergarten dropped from fifty students to fifteen.28

Good Friends also received the following testimony:

My two children went to school, and came back home soon. I asked them why, and they said that their teachers were not there or there were only less than ten students. Their textbooks were even worse. They were using worn-out papers, and the instruction was terrible.29

As more children and teachers fail to attend school, the system will fail. The remaining 25 percent of the population in the hostile class are given almost no rights and are routinely mistreated by the government and its agents.30

The state of health care fares no better. North Korean doctors are required to make their own medicine. In communist fashion, each doctor has a quota to fill.31 Some


29 Good Friends, “Human Rights in North Korea and the Food Crisis,” 27. The quote is a transcription of a testimony from a 43-year-old female from Kyungsung County, Northern Hamkyung Province, DPRK.

30 Ibid., 42.
doctors also grew cotton to make their own bandages. Although there is some availability of medicine, doctors are not able to correct the health problems of many North Korean children: the effects of starvation. Hospitals did not have food to give to their patients, so they just died. According to Dr. Kim, the hospitals provided less and less. The hospital furnace ran out of coal so there was no heat; electricity across the country became a rarity so hospitals couldn’t operate their machinery; and, around the time of Kim Il-Sung’s death, there was no gasoline for the few ambulances in Chongjin so patients had to be carried piggyback or wheeled on wooden carts to the hospital.

Charip: Economic Independence

Charip calls for self-sustenance in the economy. According to Kim Jung-II, building an independent national economy involves freedom from dependence on and service to others, and a development of strengths of both resources and efforts of one’s

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31 “Making one’s own medicine is an integral part of being a doctor in North Korea. Those living in warmed climates often grow cotton as well to make their own bandages. Doctors are all required to collect the herbs themselves… each had a quota to fill. They had to bring their haul back to the hospital pharmacy, where it would be weighed, and if the amount was insufficient, they would be sent out again. Often, the doctors had to hike far into the mountains because the more accessible areas had already been scoured by ordinary citizens who sought to sell the herbs or use them for themselves.” Demick, Nothing to Envy, 106-107.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid., 113.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid., 103
country and people.\textsuperscript{36} Kim Jung-II, as his father, has a stronghold on the DPRK economy in order to lead it in the ways of \textit{Juche Sasang}. It can be shown that vehement adherence to the political philosophy has caused what the Failed State Index calls Severe Economic Decline, Mounting Demographic Pressures, Intervention of External Actors, Chronic and Sustained Human Flight.

Kim Jung-II views capitalism as an enterprise reeking of the United States and one that will weaken his power. As the DPRK has struggled economically since the fall of its primary Cold War benefactor, the Soviet Union, the regime has insisted that North Koreans repair their economy by their own ingenuity in maintaining centralized control, per \textit{Juche Sasang}, instead of establishing trade zones like China, or engaging the international community. In 2002, the government allowed private farmers’ markets to sell a wider range of food and has authorized the temporary allowance of some private farming, an effort to assist in ending the food crisis. Three years later, however, the government, fearful of too much economic freedom for the populace, shut down the private farming operations of 2002 and reinstituted centralized food rationing.\textsuperscript{37} It is this very control which caused the food crisis in the 1990’s. Although natural disasters such


as floods were attributed as the source, “several experts have found the root causes of the famine in decades of economic and agricultural mismanagement”\textsuperscript{38}

To say there are demographic pressures relative to food supply in the DPRK is an understatement as approximately 5 to 10 percent of the population has died from hunger-related deaths.\textsuperscript{39} Reports of corpses on streets and widespread cannibalism\textsuperscript{40} remain common. The Republic of Korea Ministry of Health and Welfare issued a height-weight comparison of North Korean children and South Korean children in 2002 to show the physical effects of malnutrition in the DPRK. At the time, the average 14-year old North Korean weighing 31.2 kg was the same as a South Korean child of 8 years of age. An average 18-year old North Korean had a height of 151.3 cm, about 25 cm shorter than their average 18-year old South Korean counterpart.\textsuperscript{41} In her testimony, Dr. Kim Ji-Eun, a former North Korean doctor from Chongjin Province, recalled the children, born in the late 1980s and early 1990s, as being small and suffering from


\textsuperscript{40} Myers, The Cleanest Race, 53. Author cites the biography of Chang-yŏp Hwang titled Hoegorok, 349. Hoegorok translates to: “Lamentations.”

wasting and pellagra.\textsuperscript{42} Furthermore, a 2010 survey from North Korea shows a rise in infant mortality and a fall in life expectancy.\textsuperscript{43}

The international community has given tremendous food and energy assistance to the North Koreans since the 1990’s. The United States alone has given 2.2 million metric tons of food assistance to the North Korean people since 1996, and over $400 million since 1995 to 2002 in energy assistance.\textsuperscript{44} The DPRK has reluctantly accepted food and energy aid from neighboring countries such as Japan, South Korea and China and Kim Jung-II has used the propaganda machine to explain the aid as being “right and proper that inferior races should pay tribute by sharing some of their ill-gotten gains.”\textsuperscript{45} Despite the charity of the international community, the DPRK is still unable to provide for its citizens. Conditions remain at a level where people are illegally fleeing to neighboring China and South Korea. Choi Seung-Chan, a former Sergeant in the North Korean army defected in 1996. In an interview with Bradley K. Martin he shared his reasons for fleeing:

\begin{quote}
I had been in the military for ten years and afterward worked to supply a factory. I came via Kangwha Island, near Inchon. The main reason [for defecting] is, I was watching people starve. While people starve in North Korea, Kim Jong-il only prepares for war. He visits military camps, not the ordinary people. I
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{42} Demick, \textit{Nothing to Envy}, 113. Wasting is when a body eats away at its own muscle tissue due to starvation.


\textsuperscript{44} Manyin and Nikitin, “Foreign Assistance to North Korea,” 5, 14.

\textsuperscript{45} Myers, \textit{The Cleanest Race}, 49.
thought, ‘This country is not for the people, only for the military.’ … The main trouble I had was starvation. I thought it was better to come to South Korea than to get shot while stealing.\(^{46}\)

An estimated 400,000 illegal refugees left the DPRK in the first 10 years of famine,\(^{47}\) a number that has only continued to increase.

For those who have stayed in North Korea, many are sustaining themselves economically through black market trading with China. Goods obtained on the black market such as cellular phones, VCR’s and DVD players, rice, fruits and vegetables, alcohol, and pirated movies\(^{48}\) were sold at street markets along with other wares and foodstuffs.\(^{49}\) According to John Everard, the United Kingdom Ambassador to the DPRK from 2006-2008, “Even during periods of economic difficulty, the markets seemed to keep supplied.”\(^{50}\) This illegal behavior was addressed in a speech given by Kim Jong-II at Kim Il-Sung University in December 1996:

> In a socialist society, the food problem should be solved by socialist means. If the party lets the people solve the food problem themselves, then only the farmers and merchants will prosper, giving rise to egotism and collapsing the social order of a classless society. The party will then lose its popular base and will experience meltdown as in Poland and Czechoslovakia.\(^{51}\)

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\(^{46}\) Martin, *Under the Loving Care of the Fatherly Leader*, 528.


\(^{48}\) Demick, *Nothing to Envy*, 181.


\(^{50}\) Ibid.

\(^{51}\) Wolgan Chosun, April 1997, quoted in Ibid., 5.
As individuals have had to choose between loyalty to Juche Sasang and starving to death, or abandoning a lifetime of indoctrination to survive, capitalism has found its way into North Korea.

**Chawi: Military Independence**

Under *chawi* the DPRK has amassed one of the largest armies in the world at 1.2 million, outnumbering that of the ROK 2 to 1.\(^{52}\) Approximately 20 percent of males between the ages 17 and 54 are in the regular armed forces which receives an estimated 25 percent of the Gross National Product (GNP).\(^{53}\) An indicator from the Failed State Index that falls under *chawi* is the presence of a Security Apparatus that Operates as a “State within a State.”\(^{54}\) This tenth indicator of state failure includes a military that “serves the interests of the dominant military or political clique” is certainly applicable to the DPRK’s use of secret informers to obtain information on one’s neighbors or co-workers.\(^{55}\) According to defector Young-Song Kim, “Everybody’s watching each other in North Korea.”\(^{56}\) Former KWP Party Secretary, Hwang Jang-Yop states that “one out of every five [university] students was a secret agent of the security branch.”\(^{57}\)

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\(^{53}\) Ibid.

\(^{54}\) The Fund for Peace, *Conflict Assessment Indicators*, 18.

\(^{55}\) Ibid., 11.

\(^{56}\) Martin, *Under the Loving Care of the Fatherly Leader*, 291.

\(^{57}\) Ibid., 263.
In addition to having an armed service acting without consideration of the international community (see Chapter 2), Kim Jung-Il’s Military First Government also acts without consideration of its citizens at home. As food continues to remain scarce in the country, those given the authority to uphold the law have become corrupted to stealing from the citizens they are supposed to protect:

Some of these starving soldiers formed gangs to look houses and steal chickens and other domestic animals. They worked at night. People were so frightened of them that the soldiers didn’t even have to get their weapons out. Being highly esteemed in North Korea, they had a kind of immunity, and it wasn’t hard for them to abuse their status. At first they only attacked private properties, little plots of land, individual supplies or family farmyards. But later they moved on to animals: pigs and even cattle.58

**Sound-Thinking of the Master’s Sieve**

The Master’s Sieve approach to *Juche Sasang* is a double-edged sword: it applies to both foreigners and North Korean nationals. The Great Leader has the authority to sieve the populace, whether Japanese, Chinese, American, or even North Korean. The DPRK has shown its commitment to external sieving through its acceptance of isolation. The most obvious display of internal sieving is in the DPRK’s three distinct class tiers. Class antagonisms through exploitation by the ruling class on the working classes is visible in the DPRK. The intricate social hierarchy which determines one’s opportunity for education, one’s living location and condition, the amount of food one is rationed, and even whom one can marry, are adhered to and

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enforced. The Master’s Sieve also accounts for three indicators from the Failed State Index: Uneven Economic Development along Group Lines, the Rise of Factionalized Elites and Group Paranoia, and the Criminalization and/or Delegitimacy of the State.

A North Korean’s *song-bun*, or rating, takes into account the backgrounds of one’s parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and even second cousins, and places them in one of three main classes (Core, Basic, and Complex classes) and fifty-one sub-classes. According to defector testimonies, the DPRK’s class system directly impacts the lives of North Koreans in political involvement, social status, opportunities in education and employment, marriage, and receiving of rations. One’s treatment by the government, including but not limited to housing, location, education, employment, and civil punishment is dependent upon the target group to which one is assigned. The testimony of a defector is as follows:

North Korea assigns housing to people according to their background and forcibly relocates people from place to place. The North Korean authorities fear the possibility that people with bad backgrounds, primarily those from South Korea or those who once belonged to the landlord or capitalist classes, might escape from North Korea because they secretly admire South Korea…. For example, people having bad backgrounds are not allowed to live in Pyongyang, in Nampo, near the coast, or in other sensitive areas.


60 Ibid., 219.

61 Ibid., 223.

62 “Defector XXX was born in Pyongyang, but his father was originally from South Korea. He was accused of some mistakes at work and had to relocate to Shinuiju. Testimony of defector XXX during an interview in Seoul on Feb. 4, 2003.” Korea Institute for National Unification, *White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2011*, 241.
North Korea’s illegitimacy is also visible through its class hierarchy. Those who are given the authority to uphold the law antagonize through their abuse of power. In addition to theft, many soldiers have turned to bribery. Hyok Kang, a defector who left North Korea in 1998 said,

In 1996 the government decided to have the army guard the fields against looting by the starving population. The plan was one of deterrence. A sentry box holding three soldiers was set up at each corner of the collective fields. There were also patrols day and night. The soldiers, it goes without saying, were happy to exploit the situation. These conscripts gladly accepted bribes – bottles of soju, pieces of bread, money – and then turned a blind eye to thefts. But it was very dangerous to venture into the fields without their say-so, since they had orders to shoot on sight.63

Despite the large amounts of food aid the DPRK continues to receive, North Koreans are suffering and dying from hunger and malnutrition. Without government permission to improve the land and farm, law-abiding North Koreans are at the mercy of international aid. North Korean defector Hyok Kang recalled:

Shortly after the start of the famine, international food aid destined for the nursery schools and kindergartens of Onsong began to arrive. For a while, a few months, I think, everyone was able to take advantage of it. There was rice in the dining-hall, and all the children started to get their strength back. But then the cadres decided to reduce the rations. First the children had to make do with soup, then with nothing. . . .

The UN must have heard that the aid was not being distributed, because an inspection was organised in January 1998 (in theory, the United Nations, via the World Food Programme (WFP), feeds six million North Koreans, or a third of the population.) The Party cadres, who had been alerted in advance, had rice delivered to the dining-halls of the kindergartens and nursery schools. . . . The children and workers in the nursery schools were told that they would soon be able to enjoy a good meal, but that they would have to put the UN inspectors off the scent by telling them that this diet was perfectly normal. . . .

63 Kang and Grangereau, This is Paradise, 93.
The atmosphere changed completely once the UN team set off again. The cadres took back all of the food stores in the dining-hall kitchens, even removing uneaten food from the tables where the children were still sitting.64

And, of course, the most elite of the elite, the Kim family, had no need to worry about food or rationing, even during periods of famine. According to Kenji Fujimoto (a pseudonym), Kim Jung-II’s personal sushi chef since 1988, Kim maintained a 10,000-bottle wine cellar and hosted banquets which “often started at midnight and lasted until morning. The longest lasted for four days.”65

Participation in government, either through a civil position or party involvement, is also dependent upon one’s class and song-bun. Although North Koreans do partake in voting, the process itself is hardly democratic. Article 6 of North Korea’s Constitution states, “All levels of sovereign office from the County People’s Assembly to the Supreme People’s Assembly shall be elected through secret ballot based on universal, equal, and direct suffrage principles.”66 All North Koreans over the age of 17 who are not serving in prison camps are expected to vote, and election officials will go to the ill and elderly to obtain their vote; those who do not participate are suspected of not supporting the state and may face punishment.67 Candidates are personally selected by the state, and it is seen that a vote against the candidate is a vote against the regime.

64 Ibid., 98-100.
65 Martin, Under the Loving Care of the Fatherly Leader, 577.
67 Ibid., 331, 334.
Even though 100 percent of eligible North Koreans vote in each election, no one votes against the state-chosen candidate. According to two nameless defectors, voting officials “were watching so closely” that it was not an option to vote against the candidate,68 and “if you scribbled or placed a mark on the ballot you would be locked up in a security agency jail, and depending on the result of the trial you might be sent off to a correctional center (penitentiary).”69

Summary

Patrick Van Inwegen states that a strong state will be able to repress dissenters and withstand attacks, but a weak state is “unlikely to be able to stop radical change.”70 Not only is it clear that North Korea is in a state of decline and weakness, but the political ideology created by Kim Il-Sung, Juche Sasang, is responsible.

North Korea’s highest (worst) rating on the Failed States Index, Legitimacy of the State, places it at the top of this category in relation to the other states in the index, followed by Chad and Somalia.71 In regard to another highly scored indicator, Violations of Human Rights and Rule of Law, North Korea ranks third, below Sudan

68 Ibid., 335.
69 Ibid.
71 The Failed State Index, “The Failed State Index 2011.”
and Somalia.\textsuperscript{72} The magnitude of North Korea’s extreme weaknesses, as measured by multiple indicators which have remained relatively consistent over a period of time, show that the state is unable to provide basics for its citizens and maintain its legitimacy.

Given North Korea’s weakened state, it will be unlikely that it will be able to stop any drastic changes that may come about. Those changes, and the factors that contribute to their manifestation, will be examined next through discussion of Ted Robert Gurr’s synthesis of the frustration-aggression theory and civil violence.

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid.
CHAPTER IV
CIVIL DISCONTENT

Understanding the psychology of why and how people act is as important to the study and analysis of revolution as the examination of the state. In as much as trends of government policy and social infrastructure allow for parallels to be made from situation to situation, all acts of revolution require one thing – human agency. In this study it is important to consider this human component for revolution in North Korea and to understand what could drive its people to engage in acts of revolution. By synthesizing Ted Robert Gurr’s civil violence model, supported by psychological models of needs and aggression, and applying it to present day North Korea, it is possible to explore discontent, strength of aggression, and mobilization in order to see what drives men to act out in violence.

Relative Deprivation and Discontent

In 1939, John Dollard and colleagues proposed a hypothesis which stated “aggression is always a consequence of frustration.”¹ Aggression is a “sequence of behavior, the goal-response to which is the injury of the person toward whom it is directed,” and is triggered by frustration.² According to frustration – aggression theory, people become frustrated when they develop an awareness of a discrepancy between their value expectations and value capabilities.


² Dollard et al., 9.
Ted Robert Gurr’s civil violence model applies the frustration – aggression theory to the study of civil violence and rebellion through a series of propositions. The aim of his model is to bringing understanding to the causes of civil violence and unrest. According to the first proposition of Gurr’s theory, “The occurrence of civil violence presupposes the likelihood of relative deprivation among substantial numbers of individuals in a society; concomitantly, the more severe is relative deprivation the greater are the likelihood and intensity of civil violence.”

Relative deprivation (or discontent or frustration), is the “perception of discrepancy between their value expectations and their environment’s apparent value capabilities,” where value expectations are what people believe they are entitled, and value capabilities are what social means makes available to the individual. A perceived discrepancy only exists when one becomes aware of the conflict between the two.

Values are the “desired events, objects, and conditions for which men strive,” derived from basic needs, which include those that directly contribute to physical well-being and self-realization. The basic needs, from which values are derived, are best described by Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. All individuals have the same

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4 Ibid., 250.


needs, though the degrees of importance given to each need may vary. These universal, instinctual needs, listed in the order of priority, as assumed by Maslow, are:

1. Physiological: food, water, etc.;
2. Safety: freedom from fear;
3. Affection and belongingness: intimacy and affection by friends and family;
4. Self-Esteem or Dignity: respect of self and others; and,
5. Self-Actualization: the sense that one is fulfilling one’s potential.\(^7\)

According to Maslow, needs are graduated from 1 to 5; therefore, if an individual has achieved satisfaction in his need of self-esteem or dignity, it can be inferred he has already achieved satisfaction for his physiological, safety, affection and belongingness needs as well. As theorized by Gurr, relative deprivation occurs when one or more of these values are expected and are perceived to be in conflict with the state’s consent to achieve them. The larger the gap between one’s value expectations and value capabilities, the deeper the discontent.\(^8\)

One factor that contributes to individuals’ deciding their value capability and value expectation is inequality. All societies have inequality, yet they generally do not

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give rise to the outbreak of revolution or other internal insurrection.\(^9\) Claude E. Welch states:

> It is inequality perceived as inequality, I suggest, that gives rise to collective action, including collective political violence. Inequality (real or imagined; individual or group) becomes the basis for resentment when differences are perceived as unjust. . . . Whatever degree of earlier acceptance may have existed fades away. Justifications for such differences . . . lose their validity as indigenous persons challenge justifications for minority control. Inequalities in power, status, and wealth must be presented as inequities to lead to collective political violence.\(^10\)

Not all inequalities will result in insurrection as individual perceptions will vary. As a general observation, however, knowledge of one’s inequality as compared to another may accentuate the perceived disconnect between value expectations and value capabilities, resulting in severe relative deprivation and conflict with one’s attitude, which may manifest itself through aggression.

The DPRK has faced severe economic difficulty since the fall of its ally, the Soviet Union. As the state has been unable to provide basic necessities to its people, such as food, North Koreans have had to rely upon their own ingenuity for survival. One way in which North Koreans have sustained themselves economically is through the black market where electronic media and communication devices, among other things, can be obtained. Although individuals engaging in illegal transactions face the danger of being shot by soldiers who are “ordered to shoot on the spot anyone illegally

\(^9\) Ibid., 33.

\(^10\) Ibid., 33-34.
crossing the border in search of food and work in China,” they continue to work in this manner, trusting only themselves in improving their economic conditions. As observed by Dr. Andrei Lankov, there is an entire generation of North Koreans who have had to rely upon themselves, and not the state, to survive. Black market trading has infiltrated the state as North Koreans have created an illegal capitalist economy to support themselves. In addition to providing North Koreans with money, the goods themselves have made an impact in revealing the outside world and redefining value expectations.

Prepaid Chinese cell phones, using cellular relay stations constructed along the Chinese side of the border with the DPRK in 2003, are allowing many to “communicate to an unprecedented degree with the outside world,” as an estimated 800,000 cell phones are in North Korea. At a human rights conference in Seoul in February 2005,

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12 Andrei Lankov, “New Breed of N. Koreans,” *Korea Times* March 11, 2012, http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2012/03/304_106685.html (accessed March 11, 2012). According to Dr. Lankov, “The majority of older North Koreans still see the state as the natural giver of things. But for the younger generation the state and its bureaucrats are more likely to be viewed as a swarm of parasites.” Prior to the state rationing system collapsing and the death of Kim Il-Sung in 1994, the state provided everything and controlled everything, and one’s “success and prosperity was determined not by one’s ability to generate a large income but by one’s ability to ingratiate oneself with the state.” The younger generation has seen that money has power, as it can purchase foreign goods and buy oneself out of trouble with the government.

defectors estimated about “one-third of the defectors to South Korea talk to family members back in North Korea, calling owners of prepaid Chinese cell phones at a prearranged time.”\(^\text{14}\) The potential for massive information infiltration into the country is limitless as cell phones now have open access to the internet, a significant marvel as an estimated 5% of the population has legal access to a computer which uses the government controlled intranet system for electronic communication.\(^\text{15}\)

Videocassettes of South Korean soap operas, and VCRs castoff following upgrades to DVDs in China, have become increasingly popular in North Korea. Some have imitated the hair styles and fashions sported abroad,\(^\text{16}\) to the chagrin of the Kim regime that has arrested men with long hair and forced them to get haircuts.\(^\text{17}\) Aside from the pop-culture aspect of these videocassettes, the images of modern-day Seoul provide a severe contrast to the “paradise” of North Korea indoctrinated by the state’s propaganda machine. Defector Kang Chol-Hwan writes:

> As we were quite close to the Chinese border, we were able to pick up the Beijing channels. That was totally and utterly forbidden, but we did it anyway, at night, with the curtains drawn. Chinese television gave us an absolutely incredible view of the world. There were cars everywhere, rich people who ate all the time and delicious-looking food, buildings that looked like mirrors,


\(^\text{16}\) Ibid.

lovely homes piled high with household appliances and electric gadgets. That said, we were suspicious of these pictures, because North Korean television also produced pseudo-documentaries that showed us as prosperous and happy, which we certainly weren’t. Was this the same kind of artificial propaganda? I heard my parents wondering about that. Chinese television looked a hundred times truer than our one channel though. . . .

Two of my father’s friends who were in the police force used to drop by in secret to take a look at the Chinese broadcasts. But as a general rule we had to keep all the forbidden things we saw on television strictly to ourselves. The slightest reference, the slightest word could have given us away. If that had happened, our whole family would have risked being deported to the special penal labour colonies, the ones you never come back from.

Dr. Lankov says, “They are gradually learning about South Korean prosperity . . . . This is a death sentence to the regime. North Korea's claim to legitimacy is based on its ability to deliver the worker's paradise now. What if everyone sees that it is not delivering?”

The power of education away from the propaganda machine has already proven its ability:

The knowledge that foreigners, even Chinese, are living a better life than North Koreans is becoming a major impetus for defection. Some defectors don’t intend to go to SK; they simply cross the border into China to make a living for a few months, and once there watch South Korean television and learn that what they had been told about the South is totally false. At this point, they become curious (and sometimes angry about having been fooled all their lives) and decide to go to South Korea to see for themselves.

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18 Hyok Kang and Philippe Grangereau, This is Paradise, trans. Shaun Whiteside (London: Abacus, 2007), 43.
19 Ibid., 44.
21 Hassig and Oh, The Hidden People of North Korea, 223.
The awareness of others living “a better life than North Koreans” is a small component of a larger whole. By seeing how the “shamefaced South chafing under the Yankee yoke” lives, it will become easier for North Koreans to question other myths and policies which were all created by the Kim regime. Through such observations and reflections, individuals will see how their values are not being met by their government, as they continue to experience the lack of freedom of religion, proper health care services, running water and dependable energy and heat in homes, adequate clothing, an adequate food supply to escape hunger and malnutrition, as well as a

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23 French, North Korea: The Paranoid Peninsula, 22. Despite the building of new churches, worship is strongly discouraged and is punished as “superstition,” along with fortune telling. North Koreans who publicly worship anyone other than Kim Il-Sung, Kim Jong-II or Kim Jong-Un can expect to be sent to prison.

24 French, North Korea: The Paranoid Peninsula, 27. Healthcare in Pyongyang is a growing problem, with a lack of antibiotics and basic medical equipment such as stethoscopes and bandages. Although hospitals are reported to be generally clean, supplies are low and equipment is antiquated. Power shortages affect hospitals, too: the Red Cross estimates that only 50 per cent of essential operations are carried out during the winter months, when temperatures in Pyongyang can reach -20 degrees Celsius.

25 Hassig and Oh, The Hidden People of North Korea, 33; French, 12-13. Kim Jung-II’s homes are the only ones in the state with running water available 24 hours day. The rest of the country only has a few hours of running water per day, if they have running water at all. Keeping warm is also problematic for most North Koreans. Apartment buildings are largely heated by boiled water, houses by charcoal briquettes. However, if the electricity supply is suspended then no heat is available. Apartments cut off from power use candles, carbide and kerosene lights, though many families are too poor to afford these alternative power sources, which are anyway in short supply and relatively expensive. Some apartments and houses have no problem with regular power cuts such as those of the more senior party cadres (defines as above primary party secretary level), leadership’s guards and senior army personnel. On the other hand, the power never gets cut to the Juche Tower or to the numerous propaganda signs on top of buildings.

26 French, North Korea: The Paranoid Peninsula, 16. Clothing, including socks and underwear, remain in short supply. Socks have been a perennial problem, with foot wrappings often substituted to save socks for the best of occasions, such as Kim Il-Sung’s birthday.
host of human rights abuses. At present, the majority of Koreans (those in the hostile and meddling classes) do not even have their first universal need, physical (according to Maslow’s hierarchy), met, which is a clear indicator of the degree of their deprivation. And, as foreign media and cell phones continue to enlighten North Koreans, increase their value expectations, and shake the repression of generations of state propaganda, and individuals begin to uncover their needs and values, they will become increasingly aware of the discrepancy between what they want for themselves and what the state is willing to allow.

**Strength of Aggression**

Psychologists define aggression as “any behavior directed toward another individual that is carried out with the _proximate_ (immediate) intent to cause harm.”

Frustration-aggression theory follows the course that aggression is an “innate response activated by frustration.”

The General Aggression Model (GAM), an amalgam of psychological theories on aggression, defines frustration as “the blockage of goal attainment. Most provocations can be seen as a type of frustration in which a person has

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27 Hassig and Oh, *The Hidden People of North Korea*, 118. In the last stages of hunger, people went into the woods and fields to pull up grass and peel bark off trees, then ground this material up and mixed it with a little grain. These alternative foods wreak havoc on the digestive system while supplying little nourishment.


been identified as the agent responsible for the failure to attain the goal.”30 The GAM definition of aggression coincides with Gurr’s contention that frustration occurs when there is a discrepancy between one’s value expectations and value capabilities and his idea that “the disposition to respond aggressively when frustrated is considered part of man’s biological makeup; there is an innate tendency to attack the frustrating agent.”31

Gurr continues in his series of propositions to establish a general theory for determining the strength of aggression or anger, and show that violence is a manifestation of that aggression.32 The essence of these propositions is that the strength of anger is determined by various factors such as commitment to the goal, legitimacy of deprivation, interference in achieving a goal, and the threat of punishment, whereas the magnitude of anger is dependent upon the legitimacy of deprivation and the availability of outlets to express discontent.

Proposition 1.2 states “The strength of anger tends to vary directly with the intensity of commitment to the goal or condition with regard to which deprivation is suffered or anticipated.”33 An individual with a profound passion for their goal will have more anger towards the source of deprivation than will an individual with less of a desire for the same goal. GAM posits that a social encounter will stimulate person

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30 Anderson and Bushman, “Human Aggression,” 37.
31 Ibid.
32 Gurr, “Psychological Factors in Civil Violence,” 251.
33 Ibid., 259.
factors and situation factors, which combine to influence cognition and arousal.\textsuperscript{34} One such personal factor that coincides with Gurr’s Proposition 1.2 is the factor of belief. According to GAM, “Those who believe that they can successfully carry out specific aggressive acts (\textit{self-efficacy}) and that these acts will produce the desired outcomes (\textit{outcome efficacy}) are much more likely to select aggressive behaviors than those who are not so confident of the efficacy of aggressive acts.” It stands that those who are committed to a goal believe they can attain it. In North Korea, where basic necessities are scarce and human rights are violated, the common thread is shown to be \textit{Juche Sasang} and the Kim regime. Although individuals in famine-struck North Korea may have a goal of eating one meal a day, it can be assumed that a larger goal of eradicating the cause of the state’s problems will be adopted. Passion for this goal can differ on several variables such as age, class status, and group association.

Next, Gurr writes of the importance of legitimacy in Proposition 1.3 that states, “The strength of anger tends to vary inversely with the extent to which deprivation is held to be legitimate.”\textsuperscript{35} If individuals believe their discontent is legitimized by needs of the state, such as rationing during a time of war, they are less likely to exhibit aggressive acts than those who do not believe their discontent to be legitimimized. Isolation and propaganda have given the Kim regime internal legitimacy for decades, allowing its people to be deprived of food through programs such as “eat two meals a

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\textsuperscript{34} Anderson and Bushman, “Human Aggression,” 34. \\
\textsuperscript{35} Gurr, “Psychological Factors in Civil Violence,” 260. \\
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and its military first policy, and indoctrination so the people believe North Korea to be powerful and prosperous due to the leadership of the regime. As technology opens up the world to North Koreans and shatters the isolationist bubble created by the regime, the propaganda machine will lose its effectiveness. Dr. Lankov writes:

The younger generation also has a fuller, more complete understanding of the world outside North Korea. No one believes anymore that the nation is rich. A majority realize at least that South Korea is ahead of the North and China’s economic success is widely known and much admired.

So we have a new generation. These people are much less respectful of the state, less afraid to speak their minds, and make a living outside the state-controlled economy. They are somewhat less afraid of police spooks and spend their spare time watching South Korean movies or listening to foreign music. They might be more capable of organizing independently of the state, even though they are markedly more individualistic. In short, they constitute a potential force for revolution.

GAM disagrees with Gurr’s proposition, stating instead that “Even frustrations that are fully justified have been shown to increase aggression against the frustrating agent and against a person who was not responsible for the failure to attain the goal. More recent work has shown that displaced aggression . . . is a robust phenomenon.”

This seems to suggest that some frustration is able to trump cognitive reasoning in

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37 Kang and Grangereau, This is Paradise, 93.


39 Lankov, “New Breed of N. Koreans.”

40 Anderson and Bushman, “Human Aggression,” 37.
scope and direction of aggression. It would also make one believe that discontent which is not justifiable through legitimate means would carry stronger to cues of aggression because of the personal factor of attitudes where “more specific positive attitudes about violence against specific groups of people also increase aggression against those people.”\(^{41}\) Anger and aggression are targeted and focused and, therefore, stronger and more deliberate.

Gurr also discusses the effects of interference in goal attainment. Proposition 1.4 states, “The strength of anger tends to vary as a power function of the perceived distance between the value position sought or enjoyed and the attainable or residual value position.”\(^{42}\) Evidence used to formulate this proposition shows that the closer one comes to attaining a desired goal without interference, the more intense their anger becomes. This idea coincides with the premise that a weak state will readily fall to revolution because its political infrastructure does not have the capability of instituting effective deterrence to the dissenters: with no deterrence or interference the force of dissent has no motivation to weaken its attack. Consequently, the opportunity may be viewed as appropriate, per GAM. As North Korea’s political infrastructure is failing, its political deterrence may not dissuade frustrated citizens.

As noted in Chapter 3, characteristics of a state’s regime can influence chances of experiencing revolution. When governments disenfranchise the majority of their

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\(^{41}\) Anderson and Bushman, “Human Aggression,” 36.

\(^{42}\) Gurr, “Psychological Factors in Civil Violence,” 261.
population by being politically exclusive or by not providing avenues for citizens to voice their dissent, they have been shown to be prone to revolution. States that are politically inclusive and provide citizens with outlets for their frustration are less inclined, but are not invulnerable, to revolution. When citizens of a politically inclusive state resort to violence against the state, it is because they “do not perceive expected changes from their government and feel they have exhausted all constructive, non-violent means available . . . .” Violence is not a primary means of action, but one of last resort; when avenues to peacefully express frustration are unproductive or even not available at all, violence is likely to occur. These all support M.3 which states “The likelihood and magnitude of civil violence tend to vary inversely with the availability of institutional mechanisms that permit the expression of nonviolent hostility.”

This also coincides with Proposition 1.5: “The strength of anger tends to vary directly with the proportion of all available opportunities for value attainment with which interference is experienced or anticipated.” If a goal is achievable through means other than violence the strength of anger is diminished. As democratic states allow for open participation in government and give citizens outlets to express and/or remedy their dissonance, their likelihood of experiencing civil hostility is greatly

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44 Ibid., 5-6.

45 Gurr, “Psychological Factors in Civil Violence,” 269.

46 Ibid., 263.
reduced. When individuals are not afforded outlets to vent their dissonance, they seek out the cause of their frustration to target their anger. The presence of alternative avenues for frustration is what GAM terms “situational factors.” These factors “include any important feature of the situation, such as presence of a provocation or an aggressive cue . . . situational factors influence aggression by influencing cognition, affect, and arousal.” With more paths to take into consideration, the more cognition becomes a contributor to aggression and the more likely aggression will weaken.

Time is also a factor of interference. According to Gurr, when aggression is delayed in the short term, anger and aggression have a period to intensify; however, when aggression is delayed over a long period of time the individual, in his pursuit of cognitive consonance, will reduce his anger. Hence, Proposition M.2 states, “Inhibition of civil violence by fear of external retribution tends in the short run to increase the strength of anger but in the long run to reduce it . . . . The duration of increased anger under conditions of inhibition tends to vary with the intensity of commitment to the value with respect to which deprivation is suffered.” In short, people will either act out of their anger, or reduce their anger to ease cognitive

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48 Anderson and Bushman, “Human Aggression,” 37.
49 Ibid.
51 Ibid., 267.
dissonance. Under the premise that men strive for psychological order and comfort, Cognitive Dissonance Theory proposes that men will act in ways to reduce the presence of dissonance, whether through the passing of time or through exploring alternate avenues for closure.\textsuperscript{52}

Societal retribution, particularly punishment, has an effect on individuals’ decisions to engage in civil violence. Gurr’s first mediating variables proposition states, “The likelihood and magnitude of civil violence tends to vary curvilinearly with the amount of physical or social retribution anticipated as a consequence of participation in it, with likelihood and magnitude greatest at medium levels of retribution . . . any decrease in the perceived likelihood of retribution tends to increase the likelihood and magnitude of civil violence.”\textsuperscript{53} Opportunity is critical in aggression. GAM acknowledges that frustration needs an appropriate opportunity to manifest into aggression as “some situations restrict opportunities to aggress; others provide good opportunities.”\textsuperscript{54} A situation which poses the possibility of tremendous retribution or punishment would not be an appropriate opportunity, whereas a situation that does not present those objects of deterrence, or at least not to a high level of degree, may be suitable.


\textsuperscript{53} Ibid. 265.

\textsuperscript{54} Anderson and Bushman, “Human Aggression,” 43.
The growing number of defectors shows North Koreans’ willingness to overcome obstacles, including punishment by the state, to attain a situation where their value expectations and value capabilities are not disjointed. It is difficult at this juncture to determine the intensity of commitment by North Koreans to achieving their value expectations through internal means, as defection continues to be a way for North Koreans to achieve their goal externally. Involvement in illicit activities such as defecting show that North Koreans are putting their survival and needs ahead of state policy and can potentially direct that spirit towards supporting their own attainment of value capabilities.

Gurr also points out that the more motivated individuals are to achieve a desired goal, the more they resent interference and are likely to display acts of civil violence. Civil violence is defined as “violent acts by nongovernmental constituency on political people and institutions with a purposeful intent to cause damage and inflict harm.” GAM describes long term goals in similar fashion, as attainment of the goal is what is important. When one is focused on a goal and is motivated through anger, priming can occur. Priming is a cognitive phenomenon in which “frequent activation of a concept results in its becoming chronically accessible, whereas an immediate situational

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55 Ibid., 257-258.
57 Anderson and Bushman, “Human Aggression,” 36.
activation results in making the concept accessible for a short time.”

It is this vein of observations that leads in to mediating variables which “determine the likelihood and magnitude of overt violence as a response to anger,” in order to observe when anger exhibits itself through acts of violence.

**Mobilization**

It is when a group of individuals in a situation of continually declining value capabilities decides they have the ability to alter their situation that conflict may occur between citizens and their state. Welch states that uprisings against the state stem from “A shared sense that something was grievously wrong, that those grasping political power were culpable, and that no means other than insurrection might offer rectification resulted in violence.”

Ideology is central to all popular uprisings as it establishes an identity for dissenters, a justification for their cause, and benefit mobilization through polarizing the population. Ideological validation of revolution “is especially important when sustained violence is a principal technique employed by the movement.”

According to Thomas H. Greene:

> . . . an ideology that appeals to national identity is the most powerful symbolic means of mobilizing revolutionary support. Nationalism alone has the greatest

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58 Ibid., 38.

59 Gurr, “Psychological Factors in Civil Violence,” 251.

60 Welch, *Anatomy of Rebellion*, 133.


62 Greene, *Comparative Revolutionary Movements*, 55.
potential for cutting across all the society’s classes. It can unite young and old, male and female, peasant and landowner, industrialist and worker, businessman and intellectual, the religious faithful and the nonbelievers, rich and poor, and people in the villages and in the cities.  

The Kim regime’s institutionalization of Juche Sasang has shown North Korean’s propensity to adhere to ideology and the power of cohesion from ideology. Without both of these characteristics, the Kim regime would probably not have withstood reconstruction following the Korean War, succession of power or famine.

Neil Smelser refers to ideology as a “generalized belief among the deprived.” Acknowledging that relative deprivation leads to anger, it is said that ideology clarifies the source of discontent where it may otherwise not be obvious. Ideology, like mythology, allows anyone to understand the problem at hand, its source, and how to remedy the situation. Likewise, Gurr’s Proposition M.4 reads, “The likelihood and magnitude of civil violence tend to vary directly with the availability of common experiences and beliefs that sanction violent responses to anger.” GAM refers to this idea as shared motivation. Furthermore, just as rumors exist in more than one variation, the circulation of more than one ideology is typical. A corollary of Proposition M.4 states, “Given the availability of alternative experiences and beliefs,

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63 Ibid., 52.
65 Gurr, “Psychological Factors in Civil Violence,” 271.
66 Ibid.
67 Anderson and Bushman, “Human Aggression,” 44.
the likelihood that the more aggressive of them will prevail tends to vary with the strength of anger.” ⁶⁸ If anger indeed is the driving force behind aggressive action and ideology encapsulates The Cause of dissenters, it stands to reason that an aggressive ideology will be able to speak to the masses. ⁶⁹

Stephen Walt argues that ideologies convince individuals to become involved in revolutionary movements through polarization and belief in the inevitability of success for The Cause. Revolutionary ideologies render an “us-versus-them” mentality through demonization of the government and depicting The Cause as virtuous and upright and offering tangible benefits to participants once the revolution has reconstructed the state. ⁷⁰ As in most myths and stories where good triumphs over evil, ideologies attempt to persuade dissenters of all classes that The Cause is certain of its success. ⁷¹

Ideologies should attempt to speak to the “critical mass of most or all of the major classes in the society” as a means of drawing in participation and support, as a successful revolutionary movement needs participation from a diverse group of individuals. ⁷² This idea of diverse participation is reflected in Proposition M.5: “The likelihood and magnitude of civil violence tend to vary directly with the extent to which

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⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Hobsbawm, Social Bandits and Primitive Rebels, 31.


⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.; Greene, Comparative Revolutionary Movements, 39.
the deprived occupy organization and/or ecological settings that provide (1) normative support through high levels of interaction, (2) apparent protection from retribution, and (3) congruent models for violent behavior.”73 Relating back to Gurr’s Propositions M.1 and M.2, deindividuation of the group can also be a draw as support and protection may entice an otherwise reluctant individual dissenter to participate in aggression against the source of dissent. Groupthink may also contribute to violent behavior by dissenters through mobilization. Gurr explains:

Laboratory studies of imitative behavior repeatedly document the significance of aggression-releasing cues provided by social models. The act of punishing aggression itself can serve as a model for imitation by the person punished. Aggression-releasing cues need not necessarily originate with high-status persons.74

GAM describes aggression facilitators as being present in opportune situations.75 An individual can learn from the aggressive cues of others and imitate behavior; when this phenomenon is multiplied over the size of the group, mass aggressive behavior ensues. North Koreans would benefit from acting within a group of other dissenters. In a state where every person is placed into a rigid class structure based upon their background, and where all committed acts are known by the government, anonymity may assist individuals in feeling safe to vent their anger and aggression.

73 Gurr, “Psychological Factors in Civil Violence,” 274.
74 Ibid., 273.
75 Anderson and Bushman, “Human Aggression,” 43.
Summary

As outside information continues to penetrate the state, it is reasonable to assume value expectations and value capabilities to draw further apart, thus increasing discontent. The more North Koreans learn about the world outside the borders of their state, and of the lies from their own leadership, the greater their frustration will grow. Consequently, in accordance with Proposition 1.1, “the more severe is relative deprivation the greater are the likelihood and intensity of civil violence.”⁷⁶

Maslow’s hierarchy of needs proposes that all humans, regardless of culture or time, require basic needs to be achieved before more complicated needs are addressed. The state has shown itself to be unable to meet the first need, therefore being unable to meet any of the needs. The people, however, seeing how the state has failed them, are making sure their needs are met via measures deemed illegal by the regime. The world of North Korean black market trading is showing that North Koreans are achieving the first four levels of needs: physiological, safety, and belongingness. As black market trading provides money, foodstuffs and clothing are able to be purchased at privately-operated markets, in addition to various items that may be used to bribe officials from punishing individuals for infractions of the law. As more and more North Koreans participate in these behaviors, a camaraderie is established which builds esteem.

The process of discovering a disconnect between one’s value capabilities and value expectations shows an attainment of self-actualization. As defector testimony and

⁷⁶ Gurr, “Psychological Factors in Civil Violence,” 254.
current events have shown discontent to exist in all levels of North Korea’s class hierarchy, the potential exists for self-actualization among a vast group of dissenters. Coupled with shared motivation, ideology, and the power of groupthink and anonymity, the path to revolution in North Korea appears to conform to theory and the observable behavior of its long-suffering people.
CONCLUSION

Revolution is the manifestation of man’s belief that he has, within his power, the ability and right to change his social and/or political situation.

- Samuel P. Huntington

In its nearly two thousand years of recorded history, the Korean peninsula has experienced nine hundred invasions in addition to periods of foreign occupation by the Chinese, Mongols, Japanese, Americans, and Soviets. Years of forced servitude and mistreatment, especially during the period of Japanese colonialism from 1905 to the end of World War II, have left a significant impression upon Koreans. In addition to a past of atrocities committed by foreign powers on Koreans, a great harm has been inflicted by one of their own.

The mechanisms of autocratic statecraft employed by the Kim regime gave it an upper hand for several decades and helped the regime successfully transition power not just once, but twice. Retrospective studies of how the Kim regime has maintained power have sought to explain this unique phenomenon that has not occurred anywhere else in world history; and yet, however true a study on this extraordinary retention of power may be, it is not the same as a study of the same regime’s ability to sustain that

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3 Bruce Cumings, Korea’s Place in the Sun: A Modern History (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 89, 177-183.

stronghold into the future. The unexpected and sudden demise of other long-lasting autocracies within recent decades, e.g., the Iranian and Ethiopian monarchies and the Soviet Union, reminds us that such regimes do not last forever.

Daniel Byman and Jennifer Lind’s “authoritarian toolbox” is one such study that seeks to explain the Kim regime’s longevity, to include social policies that weakened civil society, the internal control of information, the threat of force, and the “co-opting” of elites.\(^5\) However, their historical explanations do not constitute a reliable forecast, much less a prediction, of the regime’s future immunity from internal rebellion directed against the state. This thesis has not attempted to explain the perpetuation of the Kim regime, but rather to apply theories of revolution, state failure, and civil violence to the changing conditions and human actions in contemporary North Korea, in order to assess its future vulnerability to popular revolt.

In forecasting revolution, a state’s regime-type has been shown to be a strong indicator. As non-inclusive governments which disenfranchise groups from political participation have proven their predisposition to revolution, the fact that North Korea is an amalgamation of authoritarianism with a patrimonial/clientelistic political regime and weakened state system\(^6\) shows a pronounced vulnerability to revolution. In addition to the obvious observations of these factors at their face value, the combination of these


elements illustrates the importance of recognizing changes in key variables and how they affect the political system. Changes in any of these variables can affect the state’s proneness to revolution at that time. In this context, the thesis has highlighted recent occurrences and changes in social behaviors and trends that are consistent with state fragility, deflated legitimacy, and susceptibility to anti-regime violence.

North Korea’s distinction as a failed state shows that its weaknesses are due to 
*Juche Sasang* which it created and to which it adheres. In following the ideology of “self-reliance” in matters of politics, the military, and economics, North Korea’s political infrastructure is failing its people and showing increasing signs of weakness and vulnerability. North Korea’s weaknesses show that the state is unable to provide for the basic needs of its citizens or to maintain its legitimacy. Even the military, protected under the “military first” program of Kim Jung-II, has experienced food shortages. Given North Korea’s weakened state, it is unlikely to be able to withstand popular dissent and demands for change.

Dissent in North Korea is likely to grow. North Koreans are using their own ingenuity to secure their needs and relying less and less on a government which has failed them, which reaffirms their sense of personal self-reliance. North Koreans are becoming bolder, smuggling contraband goods into the country that allow for contact with and information from outside of the state. The more North Koreans learn about the world outside the borders of their state, and of the lies from their own leadership,
coupled with their boldness, the greater their relative deprivation and subsequent frustration will become.

Revolutions are social movements which employ extraconstitutional means\(^7\) to bring about drastic changes in social, economic, and government functions, personnel, political institutions,\(^8\) and employ the use of force.\(^9\) Force, as defined by Max Weber, is the “ability of one actor within a social relationship to carry out their will despite resistance,”\(^10\) such as fear and punishment. An important component of revolution, force is necessary as “governments do not want to relinquish power.”\(^11\) Actions outside of statutory guidelines, or illicit actions, are telling of a citizenry’s proclivity to incite revolution.

Byman and Lind argue that North Korean civil society is non-existent, and that mobilization of any form is impossible:

The Kim regime has reduced the chances of a popular revolt by stunting the development of societal groups whose role is often significant in revolution. At the most basic level, North Korean communism stripped the possessing class of ownership of the factors of production, thus preventing the development of a

\(^7\) Patrick Van Inwegen, *Understanding Revolution* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2011), 4. By “extraconstitutional means,” Van Inwegen means an irregular change, one that is extraconstitutional or noninstitutionalized.

\(^8\) Ibid., 5-6. “If the group in control of the state is not forced to give up power, a revolution has not occurred.” James Defronzo, *Revolutions and Revolutionary Movements*, 2nd edition (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), 8.

\(^9\) Van Inwegen, *Understanding Revolution*, 4, 15. Although revolutions are typically violent, a number of recent revolutions have been nonviolent such as with velvet revolutions. Originally used just for the Czechoslovak revolution, the phrase came to include all Eastern European revolutions which were nonviolent.

\(^10\) Ibid., 5-6.

\(^11\) Ibid.
bourgeoisie. Communism also eliminated the clergy: another group that often provides important leadership during revolution. The activities of students and intellectuals, and all other social groups, are tightly restricted because the government has quashed the development of any independent civil society. All organizations are created, operated, and monitored by the KWP.\textsuperscript{12}

North Korea has stunted societal groups as the clergy is non-existent, workers and business-owners do not have the power of their capitalist-society counterparts because of the state’s involvement in industry, and students are kept loyal to the regime through their selection to attend university and by fear of government informants. Although these groups have proven to be powerful forces behind revolutions throughout history, their absence does not dismiss the ability of others to inspire and to aim for necessary measures to achieve change. Kim Il-Sung was none of these, yet was able to arouse people in creating the state of North Korea.

Mobilization is a prerequisite for revolution, and Byman and Lind argue that this is impossible due to North Korea’s denial of individual rights and civil society. On a surface level, the rules and regulations of the North Korean state prohibit civic organization. However, closer inspection of North Korean society reveals that not all North Koreans adhere to this state policy. The formation of underground churches\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{12} Byman and Lind, “Understanding Regime Stability,” 20.

group defections, and people coming together to listen to illegal radio broadcasts and watch illegal television shows and movies on manipulated sets show that many disregard state policy. Psychologists speak of people having an innate “need to belong,” and of our complex sense of self that is developed through social identity. As conditions in North Korea continue to deteriorate, individuals will come together in mutual empathy and dissent, despite state mandate, eventually mobilizing in numbers large enough to be a serious threat to the regime.

Byman and Lind also speak of the “The Kim regime’s control of information, and the elaborate set of ideas it has crafted about itself, [to] justify its legitimacy and inhibit anti-regime activity.” North Koreans’ hunger for outside information is defeating the Kim regime’s propaganda machine, as “more than half the population [is]

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15 “Starting in the 1990s lots of radios got into North Korea from China. You could buy them in the dollar stores. . . . When you bought one, the government person would fix it so that only one frequency could be listened to. . . . As for a radio stuck on one frequency, of course you can reverse that. However, they check it periodically. . . . A lot of people later their radios, listen, then change them back before the next inspection.” Bradley K. Martin, Under the Loving Care of the Fatherly Leader: North Korea and the Kim Dynasty (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2006), 431-432.


17 Ibid., 394-395.

listening to foreign news,” and that “grass-roots cynicism [is] undercutting state myths and discontent is rising even among elites.” Kim Jung-Il showed his realization of the power of infiltration of information to undermine his authority by allocating generous funding for ideology schools, 30,000 Kim monuments, films and books, billboards, murals, and worship events. Orders have also been made to “arrest people who deal in South Korean goods,” and police routinely cut off electricity to neighbourhoods and inspect homes to find the contraband items. The fear of being caught has not dissuaded North Koreans as stories from reporters reveal their contacts in the DPRK “only make calls from their private garden plots in the hills, burying the cell phone in the ground after each call.”

Cult worship and the concept of the oboi suryongnim or “Parent Leader” resulted from and grew in strength from the state-controlled media. However, illegal activities such as black market trading, and skillful hands able to manipulate radios and television sets, have removed the information void from North Koreans and, as a result, weakened the people’s reverence towards cult worship and the oboi suryongnim. As


20 Ibid.


23 Ibid.
cult-worship of an authoritarian leader will thwart efforts to undermine the regime,\textsuperscript{24} its reciprocal of weakened popular support allowing state attack is true. The continued importation of illegal media devices and absorption of received information contribute to the weakening of popular support for the regime and allow opposition forces to emerge.

The co-opting of elites was seen as critical to Byman and Lind in staving off rebellion as “…the health of the overall economy is less important than the regime’s ability to bribe elite supporters.”\textsuperscript{25} Granting favoritism and gifts to selected, trusted elites and formations like the party and military protected the Kim regime against a coup through buying loyalty. As economic conditions have continued to deteriorate, however, food rationing has become more problematic, even for the once protected military,\textsuperscript{26} and what once was is no more. Autocracies that give perks to elite members are naturally vulnerable to revolution as “the chief executive maintains his or her position not with a strong bureaucracy which enforces the law but with the support of elites and bureaucrats secured through an extensive and informal system of personal

\begin{footnotes}
\begin{itemize}
\item [\textsuperscript{25}] Byman and Lind, “Understanding Regime Stability,” 30.
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rewards.”

In times of economic stability and growth, these regimes are able to maintain their network of elite supporters, but economic decline disrupts this system and may compromise elite loyalty to the regime. When this occurs, even a small uprising has the potential to result in the fall of the regime as strains in the bureaucratic infrastructure are unable to hide. Waning loyalty to the regime was shown when nine wealthy members of North Korea’s elite class were found in a boat in the Sea of Japan in September 2011. Even more recently, eight North Korean border patrol agents, members of the military themselves, fled across the Yalu River into China.

Use of force in North Korea does not have the effect it once had. Desperation, dissent, frustration, and a host of other emotions have driven North Koreans to commit illicit acts for their own survival. Acts such as stealing food from collective fields, defecting, insincere reverence to the Kim regime, tampering with state settings on

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28 Ibid.


televisions and radios to see or hear outside information34 and a host of other “crimes” are being committed even though being caught could mean execution or sentencing to a gulag for ideological education. The state’s efforts to punish lawbreakers through re-education in gulags is gruesome but self-defeating. According to one North Korean defector who spent ten years in a prison camp:

A couple of years was all it took for the camp to utterly change a child. Instead of turning us into stalwart admirers of our Great Leader’s regime, as it was intended to do the camp taught us how to rebel, jeer, and mock anything vaguely whiffing of authority. Within a year or two of arriving, a prisoner lost every scintilla of respect he might have had for the Party. Our disdain spread like gangrene, beginning with the guards, then slowly, inexorably, making its way up to the great leaders.35

Such a reaction to state punishment shows its ineffectiveness, as well as the potential for a segment of the population to completely unsubscribe from the heavy-handed regime.

The current policy of the United States towards North Korea focuses almost exclusively on denuclearization. On April 5, 2009, President Barack Obama delivered a speech in the Czech Republic following North Korean rocket testing:

Rules must be binding. Violations must be punished. Words must mean something. The world must stand together to prevent the spread of these weapons. Now is the time for a strong international response . . . and North Korea must know that the path to security and respect will never come through threats and illegal weapons. All nations must come together to build a stronger,


34 Kang and Grangereau, This is Paradise, 43.

global regime. And that's why we must stand shoulder to shoulder to pressure the North Koreans to change course.\textsuperscript{36}

The U.S. State Department echoes the President, stating the “goal of the United States and our allies and partners remains a stable, peaceful Korean Peninsula free of nuclear weapons,” for “regional stability and global security.”\textsuperscript{37} This policy needs to change. The peace and stability that the U.S. State Department wants to achieve for the Korean peninsula will not result from denuclearization – other goals and measures must be considered in the calculus.

North Korea is on the path to revolution. The essence of the formula for revolution that this thesis presents is a weak, autocratic state, combined with a population that is significantly frustrated due to deprivation which they view to be the fault of the regime. Denuclearization will not correct North Korea’s instability as demonstrated through the Failed State Index, nor will it solve the relative deprivation of North Korean as information they have cannot be taken away.

The Kim regime and \textit{Juche Sasang} are impeding peace and stability in North Korea and the region. Tremendous advances have been made by the North Koreans as they persevere for survival, but opposition against the Kim regime must continue to build as the more powerful the opposition, the sooner will be the demise of the


oppressive Kim regime. Until this regime and its political philosophy are removed from authority, peace and stability will not be a reality for the peninsula or the region.

Patrick Van Inwegen wrote, “Change in government must be domestically orchestrated.”\(^{38}\) Any actions to remove the Kim regime from power must allow the North Koreans to take the lead on the ground. One way to facilitate this movement is through the sharing of information. North Koreans have opened up to the information discovered through illegal media wares obtained via the black market, and “more than half of refugees who have fled North Korea since 2006 said they listened or watched foreign news reports regularly.”\(^ {39}\) By placing information directly in the hands of the North Koreans, it is possible to challenge and undermine the oppressive indoctrination to which they have become subjected, raise their value expectations, and weaken the state by exposing its vulnerabilities.

Defectors have asked for the international community to continue feeding information into North Korea. Information on the regime, state policies, international conflicts between North Korea and its neighbors, and other information that can counter the propaganda machine and state-run media outlets are what defectors recommend in aiding their kinsmen.\(^ {40}\) One North Korean defector stated, “What’s needed is to report


\(^{39}\) Blaine Harden, “Resistance Against N. Korean Regime Taking Root, Survey Suggests.”

\(^{40}\) “Instead of looking at the big picture, take a more micro approach. Start reporting on North Korea’s lifestyles, crime and so on. Then, later, tune it up a bit and talk about the state of economics and politics. You would have to interpret this for people, in a way, or they wouldn’t be able to understand. Make it simple.” Martin, *Under the Loving Care of the Fatherly Leader*, 526.
on what happens in North Korea.”\textsuperscript{41} Another defector, who spoke in regard to Radio Free Asia, said it was a “very good idea. . . If people could listen to this kind of broadcast the regime would have collapsed years ago.”\textsuperscript{42} Accordingly, the United States should exploit these openings in North Korean society by undertaking or expanding existing programs to provide material and informational support to its people. Other measures should be considered and planned, and deployed in a timely way to support popular resistance as it grows and mobilizes.

Above all else, the primary goal of the actors involved, whether regional neighbors, NGOs, or the international community as a whole, should be the removal of the Kim regime and its destructive \textit{Juche Sasang} philosophy. To stop the human rights atrocities, to have peaceful diplomatic relations with a sensible government in the DPRK, and to stop decline and complete state failure, \textit{Juche Sasang} and the Kim regime need to be removed from power. When all is said and done, all of the efforts at peace and rescue and food aid from the international community will not provide a permanent solution to the problems suffered by North Koreans if the Kim regime and \textit{Juche Sasang} persists. The North Korean people, the Korean peninsula, the Asia-Pacific region, and the international community desire change for North Korea, and an end to \textit{Juche Sasang} and the Kim regime power in the DPRK via domestic means is how such a goal will be achieved.

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\item\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 601.
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