

Double-sidedness of North Korea

Chang Yong-seok

(Senior Researcher, Institute for Peace and Unification Studies
of Seoul National University)

Jeong Eun-mee

(Humanities Korea Research Professor, Institute for Peace
and Unification Studies of Seoul National University)



Ministry of Unification
Institute for Unification Education



CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: WHY DOUBLE-SIDEDNESS?	5
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CHAPTER 2: DOUBLE-SIDEDNESS IN POLITICS·MILITARY

1. People's democracy and hereditary dictatorship	10
2. A powerful and prosperous country and backwardness	24
3. Independence line and dependency on foreign countries	40
4. National cooperation and provocations against South Korea	52

CHAPTER 3: DOUBLE-SIDEDNESS IN ECONOMY·SOCIETY

1. Planned economy and private economic activity	66
2. Distribution system and the market	80
3. Egalitarian society and discrimination by Songbun (North Korea's social classification system)	91
4. Pyongyang, the "capital of the revolution," and the provinces	102

CHAPTER 4: DOUBLE-SIDEDNESS IN PEOPLE'S LIVES·VALUES

1. Collectivism and individualism	118
2. Official media and informal information	126
3. Social control and aberrations	137
4. Socialism centered on the popular masses and human rights violations	146

CHAPTER 5: CONTINUATION AND CHANGE OF DOUBLE-SIDEDNESS OF NORTH KOREA

157



CHAPTER 1

WHY DOUBLE- SIDEDNESS?

In any society, there is an official or dominating value, ideology and system that serve as a mechanism to integrate the society. At the same time, however, there is a reality that is different from such an official or dominating value and ideology. As the reality changes rapidly, the official or dominating value, ideology and system face pressure to change and in fact must change according to the relationships between a variety of groups and powerful forces in the society. Therefore, in order to have a clear understanding of the society, we need to examine the real state that exists behind the official value, ideology and system which are produced by the governing group and that is a concrete, changing reality. This is also necessary to check the direction in which the society is changing.

Regarding North Korea, we have to investigate the specific real world that exists behind the value, ideology and system described by its official propaganda. Otherwise, we might misunderstand the country which is being propagandized according to the political intentions of the governing group as an “existent North Korea.”

In particular, North Korea is constantly enlarging and reproducing its official propaganda discourse to maintain its undemocratic, oppressive system and regime while rejecting the global trend of growing international cooperation through improving democracy and human rights and opening doors. A case in point is the so-called “our style” discourse that Pyongyang began voicing in the face of the collapse of

socialist countries and the pressure for regime change. This is because, although “our style” reemphasizes traditional self-reliance, it is, in fact, simply ideological rhetoric employed to maintain the current system and regime while rejecting the internal and external pressures to change.

On the other hand, North Korea is going through various changes in the course of attempting to survive. These changes are occurring behind its official value, ideology and system. The resulting situation is one in which the North’s propaganda discourse on the official value, ideology, and system is mismatched with the country’s reality. This situation is also serving as a factor to enhance the double-sided nature of North Korea. Accordingly, if we fail to grasp the reality of North Korea, which is changing in the process of surviving, we will mistakenly assume that “the North Korea of the past” has continued as “the North Korea of today,” thus causing us to overlook the double-sided nature of the country.

Therefore, we should focus on the double-sided aspects of North Korea, which are appearing across a variety of fields, in order to have a clear understanding of the real North Korea. Considering these points, this book looks at the official value, ideology and system against the reality of North Korea by category, such as politics · military, economy · society, and people’s lives · values, as part of the efforts to better understand the reality of the country that exists in the northern part of the Korean Peninsula.



DOUBLE- SIDEDNESS IN POLITICS· MILITARY

1. People's democracy and hereditary dictatorship
2. A powerful and prosperous country and backwardness
3. Independence line and dependency on foreign countries
4. National cooperation and provocations against South Korea

1

People's democracy and hereditary dictatorship

1) Dictatorship of people's democracy and socialist democracy

North Korea defines itself as a “dictatorship of people’s democracy” and argues that it is realizing “socialist democracy” through a democracy of “the masses of the people.” In fact, however, the North Korean regime, characterized by a hybrid dictatorship¹⁾ that combines a single party dictatorship by the Workers’ Party of Korea (WPK) with a personalist dictatorship by the Suryong (the supreme leader), is nothing but a dictatorial regime in which the people are governed by the Suryong and bureaucrats.

In general, a political regime may be thought of as a formal or informal central organization of political power and of its relations with the broader society. A regime determines who has access to political power and how those who are in power

1. Park Hyung-joong et al., Nature of Dictatorial Regime and Political Change: Implications Regarding North Korea, Korea Institute for National Unification (KINU), 2012, pp. 189-190.

deal with those who are not.²⁾

That is, the nature of a regime depends on who has power and how those who are in power exercise their power.

Regimes can be divided into two categories: democracy and dictatorship. In the case of democracy, there must be a democratic election system and the potential for a change of power as a result of an election. To be defined as a democracy, at least, 1) the sovereign ruler must be elected, 2) a legislative institution must be created through elections, 3) there must be more than one political party competing in the elections, and 4) a change of government is possible.³⁾ On the other hand, non-democratic regimes, such as in totalitarianism and authoritarianism, which are defined in various ways, can be considered dictatorships.

Now, we will examine the North Korean regime based on these points, First, North Korea defines itself as a dictatorship of people's democracy. The North states in Article 12 of the Constitution of North Korea that "The State shall adhere to the class line, strengthen the dictatorship of people's democracy and firmly defend the people's sovereign power and socialist system against all subversive acts of hostile elements at home

2. Robert M. Fishman, "Rethinking State and Regime: Southern Europe's Transition to Democracy", *World Politics*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (Apr., 1990), p. 428.
3. Jennifer Gandhi, *Political Institutions under Dictatorship*, Doctoral Dissertation, New York University, 2004, p. 13.

and abroad.” “The dictatorship of people’s democracy” here means the broad masses’ dictatorship against hostile forces, including the exploiting class, and it is established after the broad-based people, including farmers, come into power under the leadership of the working class. This dictatorship of people’s democracy exists during the whole period in which a communist government is established and maintained.⁴¹ In theory, the dictatorship of people’s democracy considers granting a wide range of political freedom and rights and guaranteeing materially and culturally affluent, happy lives to the masses as its fundamental method of self-activity. However, in reality, the regime is based on mercilessly suppressing the anti-revolution scheme by the exploiting class and its remaining elements, spies and subversive elements, and strengthening legal control over those who still hold onto old ideas or violate law and order. The political organization which realizes the dictatorship of people’s democracy includes the revolutionary Party with the guidance capacity as the general staff of the revolution; the “transmission belt” that connects the Party with the masses; the people’s government which is the most comprehensive political organization; and the workers’ organizations which represent the broadest masses of the people.

4. As for North Korea’s description of the dictatorship of people’s democracy, see Chosun Encyclopedia Vol. 28, Encyclopedia Publisher, 2001, pp.653-654

North Korea also describes “socialist democracy” as a form of democracy of the masses. According to the North,⁵⁾ socialist democracy is based on collectivism and its highest goal is to advocate for the social-political life of social groups and the common interests of society. In such a society, members enjoy freedom, equality and self-reliant lives based on comradeship and mutual cooperation. On the other hand, Pyongyang argues that as the highest goal of bourgeois democracy in a capitalist society is to advocate the profits of individuals, freedom and equality are always accompanied by conflicts and mutual checks among members of the society.

North Korea says that the essence of socialist democracy lies in that 1) policies are established in line with the intentions of the working class; the masses themselves implement the policies suitable for their own good; and 2) the society substantially guarantees the working class genuine freedom and rights and a happy life in all aspects of social life. Furthermore, to this end, the North claims that it has to 1) allow the working class to participate in government projects; constantly increase their roles in the State’s political life; make every effort to strengthen the leadership of the Party and the unitary guidance of the State; 2) actively fight against a wide

5. As for socialist democracy, see Politics and Law Compilation Committee of the Chosun Encyclopedia Compilation Committee, Kwangmyong Encyclopedia, Vol. 3, Encyclopedia Publisher, 2009, pp.180-181.

range of hostile acts that infringe upon the self-reliance of the working class; 3) construct a socialist economy and culture; and 4) completely eliminate bureaucracy, a relic of the old society.

What's more important, however, is the existence of the Suryong, "the supreme leader who leads the dictatorship of people's democracy." Under the dictatorship of people's democracy, the masses of the people constitute a self-reliant socio-political organism with the Suryong at the center, acting as its highest brain and core. That is, the dictatorship of people's democracy cannot be created nor exist without the Suryong, and its power is defined by the greatness of the Suryong. Therefore, in order to strengthen the dictatorship of people's democracy, North Korea maintains that the masses have to respect the Suryong with loyalty, organize and unite themselves around the Suryong's political ideology barricade and try every possible means to strengthen the Juche, or self-reliance, of revolution.

In this regard, the dictatorship of people's democracy that North Korea advocates is characterized by democracy of the masses, dictatorship against and control of hostile forces and the existence of the Suryong, the highest brain and core of revolution.

Provisions related to people's democracy are included in the Constitution of North Korea. First, Article 8 stipulates that,

“The State shall defend and protect the interests and human rights of the workers, peasants, soldiers, working intellectuals and all other working people who have been freed from exploitation and oppression and become masters of the State and society.” Regarding the sovereignty of the people, Article 4 specifies that, “The sovereignty of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) resides in the workers, peasants, soldiers, working intellectuals and all other working people. The working people exercise power through their representative organs – the Supreme People’s Assembly and local People’s Assemblies at all levels.” Article 6 provides that the organs of State power at all levels, from the county People’s Assembly to the Supreme People’s Assembly, are elected on the principle of universal, equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot. Article 7 defines that deputies to the organs of State power at all levels have close ties with their constituents and are accountable to them for their work, and the electors may recall the deputies they have elected if the latter are not to be trusted. This means that, as the North argues, the system in which the people exercise their sovereignty exists, albeit formally.

2) Dictatorship by the Suryong-Party and Hereditary Succession

However, the reality matters. Although the people’s

democracy is propagandized, the dictatorship against hostile forces or the control of various elements of society that are considered to be related to it are considered to be as important. In this situation, the leadership of the Party and the unitary guidance of the State are emphasized, and most of all, loyalty to and unity with the Suryong, the highest brain of revolution, are considered to be the highest of normative values in reality. Against this backdrop, all provisions concerning democracy are no more than rhetoric or propaganda. Instead, the North Korean regime, which stresses the leadership of the Suryong and the Party in reality, is just a kind of non-democratic regime or dictatorship.

This clearly comes to the fore if we investigate who rules North Korea according to the definition of the nature of the government mentioned above. The groups who seize and hold power in the North are bureaucratic, consisting of the Party, the cabinet and the military. Among them, the Party bureaucrats are an especially important group.

Formally, North Korea is a society where the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) rules. The regulations of the WPK define the Party as "the core and advance guard of the working class and all other working masses," the highest form of political organization among all political organizations of the working masses and the leading political organization and the general staff of the revolution which leads all fields, including politics, military, economy and culture, in a unified way. In addition,

according to the regulations, the Party mobilizes the broad masses of the people in the struggle to construct a powerful and prosperous socialist country. The leading status and role of the Party are also specified in the Constitution. The North states in Article 11 that, “The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea shall conduct all activities under the leadership of the Workers’ Party of Korea.” Besides the WPK, there are the Chondoist Chongu Party and the Korean Social Democratic Party in the North. However, it is doubtful that these parties have party organizations. This is because most of their activities include the announcement of statements criticizing South Korea and the proposal of joint meetings between the Party and social organizations. That is, it is safe to say that these other parties remain in name only.⁶⁾

In this regard, North Korea is a bureaucratic society⁷⁾ where the group who rules is made up of bureaucrats centered on the Party, and the North’s regime is characterized by a single-party dictatorship. Under this single-party dictatorship, the Party basically controls access to policy and political status. The Party seizes and controls not only most of the national agencies, including the military, but also dominates almost all political domains, including local governments, society and

6. Korea Institute for National Unification (KINU), Overview of North Korea 2009, KINU, 2009, p.53.

7. Chang Yong-seok, “Dynamics of State Class Domination in State Socialist Society: Implication on the Study of the North Korean Governing System”, The Journal of Unification Studies, Vol. 21, No. 1 (2009).

the press. In this situation, any change of power to another party does not occur⁸⁾. In the case of the North, the WPK, as the actual and only political Party, exercises its authority over human resources in the government and the military, organizes and mobilizes society through all kinds of workers' organizations and even controls the media. The Party also controls the elections. The Party determines the candidates and the election campaigns are full of only propaganda and incendiary speeches. There is no competitive activities to win votes and a 100-percent vote of confidence is guided toward the candidate recommended by the Party.⁹⁾

At the same time, the power succession over three generations clearly shows the personal dictatorship nature of the North Korean regime. According to North Korea,¹⁰⁾ the Suryong, as the “center of life of a socio-political group,” is the “highest brain” of a socio-political group, and has a status as the “center of commanding the activities of life in a unified way.” This means that the Suryong, as the “center of ideological unity,” “creates the revolutionary ideology that rightly reflects

8. Natasha M. Ezrow and Erica Frantz, *Dictators and Dictatorship: Understanding Authoritarian Regimes and Their Leader*, The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011, pp. 191-200; Barbara Geddes, “What Do We Know about Democratization after Twenty Years”, *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 2 (June, 1999), pp. 121-122.
9. Kim Il-gi, et.al, *Unification · North Korea Issue 100 to Share with the Generation of Unification*, The Institute for Peace Affairs, 2012, pp. 51-53.
10. *Politics and Law Compilation Committee of the Chosun Encyclopedia Compilation Committee, Kwangmyong Encyclopedia Vol. 3, pp. 224-229.*

the self-reliant need and direction” of the masses, and as the “center of organizational unity,” “proposes right lines and policies to construct a revolutionary organization and carries them out, and can build the revolution, organization and regulation among people.” The Suryong plays such critical roles in the revolution and construction as: 1) creating the right leadership ideology by reflecting Gesetzlichkeit of historical development and the demands of the times; 2) presenting a revolutionary theory and scientific strategies and tactics; and 3) uniting the working masses with one political capability, thus leading the revolution to victory. Therefore, the Suryong is 1) an “outstanding ideology theorist” who creates, develops and enriches the idea of guidance; 2) a distinguished leader and politician with sophisticated skills in guidance and rich experiences; and 3) an endlessly loving father of the people, displaying a devoted spirit of service and the highest level of moral virtue.

North Korea argues that, “The revolutionary feats of the working class pioneered by the Suryong must be passed down to and guided by his successor who has the same leadership status and plays the same role as the Suryong.” Therefore, the successor to the Suryong, “an outstanding leader of the revolution who will succeed and complete the revolutionary feats of the Suryong,” must be selected properly. North Korea propagandizes that only the leader who “embodies the ideological appearance and character of the Suryong; achieves immortal, revolutionary feats; has the Suryong’s

confidence and affection; and gains the absolute support, trust and love of the masses,” is eligible to become the successor to the Suryong. In fact, North Korea has carried out a third hereditary succession from former Chairman of the National Defense Commission Kim Jong-il to Kim Jong-un, the First Chairman of the National Defense Commission.

A third hereditary transfer of power is unprecedented in any kind of dictatorship. In this hereditary succession of power, the Suryong of the previous generation carries a very important status. Most of all, in order to justify the hereditary succession itself, the last will and testament left by the Suryong of the previous generation is considered important, and the key logic to justify hereditary succession is that the successor needs to carry on the legacy and the work left unfinished by the Suryong of the previous generation. This is identified in the process of the Kim Jong-un regime’s succeeding to and cementing power. In accordance with the “October 8th Last Will and Testament” of Kim Jong-il, Kim Jong-un succeeded the position of the supreme commander by the decision made by the Political Bureau¹¹⁾. Before that, right after the death of Kim Jong-il, the WPK’s Central Committee, the Central Military Commission, the National Defense Commission, the standing committee of the Supreme People’s

11. “Report on the Meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea,” KCNA, [Dec. 31, 2011].

Assembly and the Cabinet jointly declared the succession of the last will and testament and the work left unfinished by Kim Jong-il, announcing their resolution to uphold the last will and testament, and honor the “revolutionary feats.”¹²⁾

The Kim Jong-un regime, which inherited power according to the last will and testament of Kim Jong-il, is aggressively pushing for the idolization campaign of Kim Jong-il in order to secure the legitimacy and justification for the hereditary succession of power. In 2012, North Korea made Kim Jong-il the commander-in-chief; designated his birthday, February 16th, as the Day of the Shining Star, a national holiday; and specified the so-called “Kim Il-sung-Kim Jong-il-ism” as the idea of guidance in the regulations of the WPK. In addition, the North even defined its Constitution as the “Kim Il-sung-Kim Jong-il Constitution which legislates the idea of national construction and feats of national construction” and idolizes Kim Il-sung as the founding father of socialist Korea and Kim Jong-il as an unsurpassed patriot, who upgraded the dignity and national power of the nation to the highest level, and as a guardian of socialist Korea. Pyongyang erected bronze statues of Kim Jong-il at the State Security Department, the Ministry of People’s Security, Kim Il-sung Military University, and the Mansudae Assembly Hall.

12. “Announcement to All Party Members, People’s Army Soldiers, and People’s KCNA”, KCNA, December 19, 2011.

The reason for such hereditary succession of power can be found in the interests between the dictator and the power elites. The hereditary succession of power is not irrelevant to the North's political system, called the Suryong system. However, from a real political perspective, such succession carries much significance as a way to maintain the continuity of the political system by preventing a power struggle between power elites after the death of a dictator, especially when one of the power elites is designated as a successor, while also preventing a power vacuum and addressing a potential crown-prince problem resulting from concern about the possible assassination of the incumbent dictator by a successor.¹³⁾

Meanwhile, the people excluded from the process of selecting a supreme leader are simply subject to the guidance and control of the Suryong and the Party. Therefore, the essence of the North Korean regime is not “people’s democracy” but “dictatorship over the people by the Party and the Suryong.” This is reaffirmed in the emphasis on establishing the unitary leadership system centered on the Suryong. The unitary leadership system of the North is a “system in which the revolution and construction are carried out with the ideology of the Suryong as a guiding principle,

13. Jason Brownlee, “Hereditary Succession in Modern Autocracies”, *World Politics*, Vol. 59, No. 04 (July 2007), pp. 604-605.

and the entire Party, nation and people move as one under the ideology, order and instruction of the Suryong.”¹⁴⁾ It is, in fact, impossible for North Korean society to function as a unitary system. However, at least, from the aspects of the system and norms that the North Korean regime officially represents, the unitary system shows the North Korean regime’s will to control the people and its nature of dictatorship more clearly than anything else.

In the end, even if Pyongyang propagandizes that “the people’s government is a genuine people’s government which is established and operated by the people themselves;” “the owner of the government is the masses of the people; and the fundamental principle of constructing the people’s government is to serve the masses of the people,” the North Korean regime is simply a hybrid dictatorship that combines a personalist dictatorship with a single-party dictatorship insofar as the State conducts a unitary “guidance function” over all areas of social life and all regions of the country;¹⁵⁾ the Party and the Suryong exist at the center of the unitary guidance; the position of the Suryong is succeeded; and it strengthens suppressive control over the people as an excuse for the dictatorship over hostile forces in terms of class.

14. The Academy of Social Science Philosophy Institute, *The Dictionary of Philosophy*, Social Science Publishing House, 1985, p.388.

15. Jin Moon-gil, “Our People’s Organization of Political Authority is the Head of the Household in Charge of Taking Care of People’s Lives,” *Gazette of Kim Il-sung University: History and Law*, Vol. 58, No. 3, (2012), p. 96.

2

A powerful and prosperous country and backwardness

1) Our-style socialism centered on the masses of the people and a powerful and prosperous country

North Korea defines itself through the so-called “our-style socialism centered on the masses of the people” and proposes the theory of a powerful and prosperous country as a specific national vision and strategy to realize it. However, the reclusive country still remains undeveloped and at a less advanced level in all areas and is engrossed in the survival of the regime and the system amid tension and instability at home and abroad.

North Korea’s “our-style socialism centered on the masses of the people” has the nature of a discourse in response to a crisis. This emerged at a time when the old socialist bloc in Eastern Europe began to collapse in the late 1980s and China, one of the two pillars for the socialist block along with the Soviet Union, was shifting away from classical socialism due to reforms and opening which began in the late 1970s. At that time, “our-style socialism” was formalized by Kim Jong-

il in the early 1990s.¹⁶⁾ This indicates that when “our-style socialism” was declared as the identity of the system, the North was being driven into international isolation due to the collapse of the socialist bloc, and was thus facing a serious sense of crisis over the survival of its system. Kim Jong-il expressed a strong sense of wariness about sudden system transformation in the old socialist countries of Eastern Europe and gradual change in China, saying that the firmness and invincibility of North Korean socialism lies in the fact that this is “the masses-centered socialism which regards the people as the genuine owner of society and all things in society serve the people,” pointing out that the survival of the regime and the system depends on the people. He added that “Firmly sticking to the principle of socialist economic construction has become much more important under the circumstances in which imperialists force a capitalist market economy on other nations by offering economic cooperation and aid and use a clever scheme to ensure economic penetration.” Furthermore, he stressed the unity of the Suryong, the Party and the masses to maintain the regime and the system at such a time of crisis, adding that the power of “our-style socialism” in which the Suryong, the Party and the masses are single-heartedly united cannot be destroyed by anything.

16. Kim Jong-il, “Our-style socialism based on the masses of the people is victorious and invincible” (Talks with leading officials of the Central Committee of the WPK on May 5, 1991), Collection of Kim Jong-il’s Works, Vol. 11, (Pyongyang: Workers’ Party of Korea Publishing House, 1997). pp. 40-80.

Even in the Kim Jong-un era, the discourse of the so-called “our-style socialism centered on the masses of the people” continues. Right after the death of Kim Jong-il, North Korea declared it would continue with “our-style socialism”, saying that everyone must become faithful revolutionaries who devote their lives to advocating “our-style socialism” and constructing a powerful and prosperous country by keeping their pledges in honor of the Great General (Kim Jong-il).¹⁷⁾ In addition, Pyongyang uses the discourse of “our-style socialism centered on the masses of the people” as a mechanism to justify hereditary succession through the last will and testament of Kim Jong-il.

In reality, North Korea’s theory of a powerful and prosperous country is a national development strategy to realize “our-style socialism centered on the masses of the people.”¹⁸⁾ This theory originated in the idea of a great, powerful and prosperous country.¹⁹⁾ The North faced a serious crisis, called the march

17. “Editorial: Let us Keep Glorifying the Feats of Comrade Kim Jong-il of Constructing a Powerful, Socialist Country,” *Rodong Sinmun*, December 27, 2011.

18. Jeong Woo-gon, “The Kim Jong-il Regime’s National Development Strategy: Centered on a ‘Powerful and Prosperous Country,’” *Korea and World Politics*, Vol. 20, No. 4, p. 37

19. North Korea seems to have lowered its goal from becoming a great, powerful and prosperous country to becoming a powerful and prosperous country considering its reality. In fact, the North even showed signs of lowering its target level of becoming a great, powerful and prosperous country in consideration of realistic conditions. For instance, although Pyongyang set as the indicator of becoming a great, powerful and prosperous country the recovery of its economy to the 1986-87 level (GNP per capita of USD 2,700) by 2012, afterwards, it seems to have set as its target the establishment of the “prospective foundation” to achieve it. (Kim Byung-ro, “North

of hardships, from 1995 to 1997. At that time, Pyongyang was thrown into serious international isolation due to the collapse of the old socialist bloc that bottomed out in the early 1990s and the establishment of diplomatic relations between Seoul and Beijing.

In particular, in July 1994, a political crisis was added as a result of the death of Kim Il-sung. In addition, a recession across industries resulting from a sudden drop in foreign trade and a lack of energy, compounded by natural disasters such as floods and droughts beginning in 1995, caused a serious food crisis, thereby threatening the survival of the North Korean regime and system. As a result, the North had to save itself through its own efforts while enduring these hardships.

Korea Lowered the Goal of Becoming a Great, Powerful and Prosperous Country by 2012," IPUS of SNU, Unification column, September 22, 2011, <http://tongil.snu.ac.kr/index.html> [searched on August 29, 2012]). North Korea also maintained in a New Year's joint editorial in 2012 right after the death of Kim Jong-il in December 2011 that "By registering a brilliant success in this year's struggle for opening the gates of a powerful and prosperous country, we must enter a new, high stage of building a great, powerful and prosperous socialist country in an overall way," indicating that the target of emerging as a great, powerful and prosperous country in 2012 had been lowered to the level of opening the gates of a powerful and prosperous country: The joint New Year Editorial by Rodong Sinmun, Joeson Inmingun and Chongnyon Jonwi, "Glorify This Year 2012 as a Year of Proud Victory, a Year When an Era of Prosperity is Unfolding, True to the Instructions of the Great General Kim Jong-il," KCNA, January 1, 2012.

Table 1 North Korea's Major Economic Indicators between 1990 and 1998

Category	Unit	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Nominal GNI	Trillion Won (billion dollars)	164 (23.1)	168 (22.9)	164 (21.1)	164 (20.5)	170 (21.2)	172 (22.3)	173 (21.4)	168 (17.7)	176 (12.6)
Growth rate	%	-3.7	-3.5	-6	-4.2	-2.1	-4.1	-3.6	-6.3	-1.1
Budget	Billion dollars	16.6	17.2	18.5	18.7	19.2	N/A	N/A	9.1	9.1
Crop	10,000 tons	402	442.7	426.8	388.4	412.5	345.1	369	348.9	388.6
Fertilizer	10,000 tons	88.9	80.4	77.5	90.1	73.8	67.6	53.6	43.1	39.2

*Source: Bank of Korea, North Korean Economic Data, <http://www.bok.or.kr/index.jsp/> (searched on September 7, 2008).

North Korea began to advocate the theory of a great, powerful and prosperous country at a time when it entered the so-called “forced march of socialism” after finishing the “march of hardships.”²⁰⁾ As the North declared its goal of emerging as a great, powerful and prosperous country in 2012, the meaning of this theory became much clearer as

20. See General Secretary of WPK Kim Jong-il's “Noble Patriotism for the Nation and Great Love for the People,” *Rodong Sinmun* (July 12, 1998); “Great Leader to Advance the Korean Revolution,” *Rodong Sinmun* (August 11, 1998); “Let the Youth Become Chongnyon Jonwi Faithful to the Feats of the Party,” *Rodong Sinmun* (August 28, 1998); “Outstanding Leader to Glorify the Feats of Founding the Nation by President Kim Il-sung,” *Rodong Sinmun* (August 28, 1998); “Victor's 50 Years,” *Rodong Sinmun* (September 1, 1998); “Glorify This Year as a Year of Great Transformation to Construct a Great, Powerful and Prosperous Country,” *Rodong Sinmun · Joson Inmingun · Chongnyon Jonwi* (January 1, 1999), etc.

a national strategy. At the Intellectuals Congress held from November 30 to December 1, 2007, North Korea stressed the “(revolutionary) upsurge” in order to set and achieve the goal of becoming a great, powerful and prosperous country in 2012 when it celebrates the centennial anniversary of the birth of Kim Il-sung.²¹

According to North Korea,²² the theory of a great, powerful and prosperous country, is “the most august goal of national construction presented for the first time in the history of the nation.” While arguing that the North broke through the “march of hardships” and the “forced march of socialism” through Songun (military-first) politics and opened up a transformational phase toward becoming a great, powerful and prosperous country, Pyongyang 1) boasted the dignity and status of a politically and ideologically powerful country, 2) aggrandized its power as being that of a military powerhouse, and 3) claimed that it needs to push forward with the construction of an economic powerhouse and 4) emerge as an advanced country in science and culture. While propagandizing that in terms of political and ideological power it has already gained the status as a great, powerful and prosperous country, the North is encouraging the

21. Chang Yong-seok, “North Korea’s Hedging Strategy against China’s Rising”, *The Korean Journal of Unification Affairs*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (2012), p. 51.

22. As for the theory of a great, powerful and prosperous country, see *The Party History Institute of the Central Committee of the WPK, Our Party’s Songun Politics*, The WPK Publishing House, 2006, pp. 327-382.

construction of an economic powerhouse.

North Korea defines a politically and ideologically powerful country as a country in which all members of society are armed with the revolutionary viewpoint of the Suryong, and it argues that its power, as a politically and ideologically powerful country, is intensively revealed through the realization of unity between the Suryong, the Party, the military and the people. The North propagandizes that this is the result of Kim Jong-il's successful efforts to make the military and the people "strong in ideology and faith" through Songun politics. North Korea emphasizes that in the modern era, when the fate of the nation and the people is determined by either victory or defeat in military confrontations, the build-up of military power is important, arguing that since military power is the essence of national power, a country cannot become a great, powerful and prosperous country without becoming a military powerhouse. The North asserts that it can open a shortcut to becoming a great, powerful and prosperous country by strengthening its overall national power with the "superiority of Songun politics" as the core of its military power. At the same time, Pyongyang stresses the development of the defense industry, saying that advancing the defense industry is very important in that it can enable the country to wield significant military power. Against this backdrop, the North argues that it has already reached the status of a military powerhouse, saying that "The People's

Army has been strengthened with the invincible revolutionary military power and the fatherland has proudly stepped onto the global stage as a powerful military country.”

Regarding its status as a military powerhouse, the North especially stresses that it is a nuclear state. While boasting North Korea’s nuclear capability, Kim Jong-un asserted the legitimacy of the Byungjin ideology in which the economy and nuclear weapons are developed simultaneously, saying that “the supremacy of military technology is no longer the monopoly of the imperialists, and the times when the enemies threatened us with nuclear bombs have ended for good.”^{23]} He also claimed that Kim Jong-il, with his peerless Songun politics, led the nation to a victory in the fierce nuclear confrontations with the U.S., thus protecting the socialism of Juche by achieving the great feat of developing nuclear weapons and laying the solid foundation to take a leap forward in constructing a powerful and prosperous country.^{24]}

Meanwhile, unlike such propaganda, Kim Jong-un, who is tasked with cementing his power, advocates dignity and independence to gain the legitimacy and justification of this regime, saying that “Peace is invaluable to our Party and the

23. “Comrade Kim Jong-un’s Speech at the Formal Military Inspection to Celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the Birth of the Great Leader Kim Il-sung,” KCNA, April 15, 2013.

24. “Dear Comrade Kim Jong-un’s Report at the Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee of the WPK in March 2013,” Rodong Sinmun, April 2, 2013.

government of the DPRK which set the goal of constructing a powerful and prosperous country and improving people's standards of living. However, the dignity of our people and the independence of our nation are more valuable to us." Kim Jong-un is stressing the build-up of military power, saying that "We need to strengthen the People's Army in every possible way in order to successfully realize the feat of constructing a powerful and prosperous socialist country."^{25]}

North Korea stresses that although it basically wields its power as a politically and ideologically powerful country and a military powerhouse, becoming an economic powerhouse is a task to be achieved by concentrating all of its capabilities. The North puts up the construction of an economic powerhouse as an important, praiseworthy task in building a great, powerful and prosperous country because it can proudly claim that it is a great, powerful and prosperous socialist country if a high economic status is achieved. It adds that since economic power is an important criterion to measure national power and the material basis for a great, powerful and prosperous country, "politics, ideology, military and culture can be smoothly developed only based on strong economic power." To do this, North Korea is justifying Kim Jong-il's Songun politics where "with

25. "Comrade Kim Jong-un's Speech at the Formal Military Inspection to Celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the Birth of the Great Leader Kim Il-sung"

the People's Army at the core, it opens a breakthrough for economic construction, and with the military and the people united, it creates a miracle and innovation in all fields of the people's economy with the revolutionary soldier spirit." The North also maintains that "Developing further all fields of culture, such as science and education, arts and sports, is an important demand for achieving the overall enhancement of the construction of a socialist country and building a great, powerful and prosperous country," adding that "The golden age of science and culture is an important indicator for a great, powerful and prosperous country." In particular, Pyongyang stresses the importance of science and technology, saying that "Science and technology is a driving force behind the construction of a great, powerful and prosperous country" and "only when economic and military power is guaranteed by the development of science and technology can a country continue to strengthen its power at the level of a great, powerful and prosperous country."

North Korea still emphasizes the construction of an economic powerhouse and the emergence as an advanced country in science and culture as the tasks to be achieved. This also means that the Kim Jong-un regime must address these issues in order to stabilize and cement its power base. Accordingly, North Korea prioritizes the construction of an economic powerhouse as the most urgent and important task at the level of improving people's standards of living.

It also stresses that the North should bring about a new transformation in the development of agriculture and light industry, which are the main directions in the construction of an economic powerhouse, and that the nature of the North's economic powerhouse should be as a knowledge-based economic power driven by science and technology in the current context when the height and speed of economic and social development are regulated by the development of science and technology.²⁶⁾ Also, North Korea is calling for the construction of a socialist, civilized country as the most advanced, civilized nation where all people have high levels of cultural knowledge, physical strength and refined moral character and enjoy a socialist cultural life, and where the society is filled with a beautiful and healthy living spirit in the most civilized conditions and environment.²⁷⁾

2) Backwardness of North Korean society

As the Kim Jong-un regime came into power, North Korea began propagandizing that the construction of a powerful and prosperous country is a goal to be achieved in the foreseeable

26. "Dear Comrade Kim Jong-un's Report at the Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee of the WPK in March 2013"

27. A written decision titled "On marking the 65th anniversary of the founding of the DPRK and the 60th anniversary of the victory in the Fatherland Liberation War as grand festivals of victors" was adopted at the meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the WPK, KCNA, February 12, 2013

future, saying that “If the single-hearted unity and invincible military power are combined with an industrial revolution in the new century, it will lead to a powerful and prosperous socialist country.”²⁸⁾ However, in fact, the North still remains backward in general. This has been identified in a variety of indicators with which the international community has evaluated the North.

First, looking at the Failed States Index which is an annual ranking of 178 nations based on their levels of stability and the pressures they face according to 12 key political, social and economic indicators and more than 100 subcategory indicators through the joint survey by the Fund for Peace and the magazine Foreign Policy, in 2012, North Korea was ranked 22nd with 95.5 points out of 120 points, placing it between Myanmar with 96.2 points and Eritrea with 94.5 points. At that time, Somalia topped the list with 114.9 points and South Korea was ranked 156th with 37.6 points, placing it between the Czech Republic with 39.5 points and Singapore with 35.6 points.²⁹⁾

Transparency International releases the Corruption

28. “Comrade Kim Jong-un’s Speech at the Formal Military Inspection to Celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the Birth of the Great Leader Kim Il-sung”

29. “The Fund for Peace Failed States Index 2012”, <http://www.fundforpeace.org/global/library/cfsir1210-failedstatesindex2012-06p.pdf> [searched on June 20, 2013]. In 2013, North Korea with 95.1 points was ranked 23rd, one step lower than a year earlier. http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/06/24/2013_failed_states_interactive_map [searched on June 28, 2013]

Perceptions Index, which ranks countries and territories based on the perceived corruption of their public sector through surveys and evaluation data by 13 institutions around the world including the World Bank. The index shows that North Korean society is considered to be highly corrupt. In the 2012 Index, North Korea was given 8 points, ranking it 174th and placing it at the bottom out of 176 countries along with Afghanistan and Somalia. This indicates that Pyongyang is considered to be significantly corrupt. In the same index, South Korea's 56 points ranked it 45th. The higher the score, the cleaner the country.³⁰⁾

Freedom in the World, which evaluates the level of freedom in 195 countries and 14 territories based on 10 categories of political rights and 15 categories of civil liberties by Freedom House, shows North Korea's backwardness in terms of political rights. In 2013, North Korea was classified as "Not Free" with 7 points in both categories of political rights and civil liberties. The score is on a scale from 1 to 7, with a score of 1 being completely "Free."³¹⁾ According to Freedom House, the North has been evaluated as Not Free with 7 points in both political rights and civil liberties since 1998.

Pyongyang guarantees neither political rights nor civil

30. "Corruption Perceptions Index 2012," http://cpi.transparency.org/cp2012/in_detail/#myAnchor1 [searched on June 20, 2013].

31. "Freedom in the World 2013," <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2013> [searched on June 20, 2013].

liberties, and in addition, a chronic food shortage is threatening the survival of most North Korean people. According to the report, “Crop Prospects and Food Situation” released by the U.N. FAO in March 2013,^{32]} North Korea was classified as one of 36 countries that need food support from foreign countries. FAO found that 28 countries in Africa, 6 in Asia and 2 in South America and the Caribbean need food aid from abroad, adding that North Korea and Yemen in Asia are suffering from overall food shortages and there are 2.8 million vulnerable people. In fact, Pyongyang has suffered a chronic food crisis and needs half a million to a million tons of food annually through either commercial imports or external support. In the case of the 2012-2013 fiscal year, North Korea was found to lack 507,000 tons, and except for the 300,000 tons to be commercially imported, it still fell short 200,000 tons.^{33]}

32. “Crop Prospects and Food Situation,” <http://www.fao.org/docrep/017/a1998e/a1998e.pdf> (searched on June 20, 2013).

33. “FAO/WFP Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea”, (November 12, 2012), p. 25.

Table 2 Trend of Food Supply in North Korea

(Unit: 10,000 tons)

Category	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Output ¹⁾	431	454	448	401	431	411	(425)
Imports ²⁾	115	35	75	27	(20)	(32)	(20)
Minimum Requirement ³⁾	515	518	521	523	526	529	531
Shortage	△31	29	2	95	(75)	(86)	(86)

※ Note 1) The data through 2009/10 is from the Rural Development Administration and data for 2010/11 is from FAO/WFP.

2) The data through 2007/08 is from WFP and data from 2008/09 to 2011 shows commercial imports (China) and aid from international organizations.

3) The figures were calculated by of applying FAO/WFP's per capita requirement to the North Korean population (Statistics Korea)

4) (Parenthesis) indicate indefinite figures. / Data: Rural Development Administration, FAO, WFP, Statistics Korea

*Source: Kim Young-hoon, "North Korea's Agriculture and Food Situation in 2012," KREI North Korean Agricultural Trend, Vol. 13, No. 4 (2012), p. 6.

http://www.krei.re.kr/web/www/45?p_p_id=EXT_BBS&p_p_lifecycle=1&p_p_state=exclusive&p_p_mode=view&p_p_col_id=column1&p_p_col_count=1&_EXT_BBS_struts_action=%2Fext%2Fbbs%2Fget_file&_EXT_BBS_extFileId=32451401 (searched on June 20, 2013)

North Korea's chronic food shortages are significantly affecting the health of the people. This is clearly identified in the average life span of North Korean people. The analysis of average life span based on North Korea's census data between 1993 and 2008³⁴⁾ shows that the average life span of North Korean people fell by 3.4 years from 72.7 in 1993 to 69.3 in

34. Kim Du-seop, et.al, North Korean Population and Census, Statistics Korea, 2011, p.300.

2008. The possibility has been raised that the chronic food crisis has worsened the North's level of health, resulting in an increase in mortality.

3

Independence line and dependency on foreign countries

1) North Korea's independence line

North Korea asserts independence as the most important principle in foreign relations. The preamble of the Rules of the Worker's Party of Korea specifies that "Independence, peace and friendship are the basic ideals of foreign policy."³⁵ The North stipulates in Article 17 of the Constitution that "Independence, peace and friendship are the basic ideals of foreign policy and the principles of the external activities of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The State shall establish diplomatic as well as political, economic and cultural relations with all friendly countries, on the principles of complete equality, independence, mutual respect, noninterference in each other's affairs and mutual benefit. The State shall promote unity with the world's people defending independence, resolutely support and encourage the struggle of all peoples who oppose all forms of aggression and interference and fight for their countries' independence and

35. "Preamble of the Rules of the WPK", Rodong Sinmun, April 12, 2012.

national and class emancipation.” Pyongyang clearly declares that the most important principle in diplomacy, whether it is party to party or state to state relations, is independence.

North Korea describes independence as a basic ideal that needs to be adhered to in establishing and developing equal and fair international relations between nations and peoples.³⁶⁾ The nature and content of international relations are determined by the level of independence, reflecting either an equal and reciprocal relationship, or a dominant-subordinate relationship. Therefore, complete equality and mutual respect in international relations can be realized when firmly maintaining the ideal of independence. The ideal of independence requires that advocating independence should be considered the most important principle; independence should be protected completely; and the independence of other nations and peoples should be respected. Against this backdrop, the North argues that it is invariably carrying out its independent foreign policy, even in a complicated external environment, and that it does not infringe upon the independence of other nations, while also not tolerating any violations of its independence. In addition, according to the ideal of independence, North Korea declares respect for independence, equality and mutual benefit, territorial integrity and non-aggression as the basic principles

36. As for the concept of independence, see Politics and Law Compilation Committee of the Chosun Encyclopedia Compilation Committee, Kwangmyong Encyclopedia, Vol. 3, pp. 267-269.

of international relations.

It was in the mid-1960s that Pyongyang officially declared independence as its key principle in foreign relations. Kim Il-sung announced in his report entitled “Current Status and Tasks of Our Party” at the second Congress of Party Representatives on October 5, 1966, that the North would hold fast to its independence while strengthening international solidarity through unity and cooperation based on equality and independence with socialist countries, as well as friendship and cooperative relations with newly independent countries. This translated into adhering to independence in foreign relations with powerful countries, such as China and the Soviet Union, and expanding friendly relations and strengthening nonalignment diplomacy with the newly independent nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America.³⁷⁾

It was in the mid-1950s when the issue of establishing Juche was first raised in North Korea. At that time, the so-called toadyism toward China and the Soviet Union emerged as a problem as a result of receiving aid from the two powerful countries during the Korean War. Kim Il-sung raised the issue of establishing Juche in his speech entitled “On eliminating dogmatism and formalism and establishing Juche in ideological work” to the workers involved in propaganda

37. Chung Kyu-seop, *Yesterday and Today of North Korean Diplomacy*, Ilshin Publisher, 1997, pp. 92-101.

and instigation for the Party in December 1955, saying that Marxism-Leninism should be applied as suited the North's situation. After that, the issue of establishing Juche became the basic line of the North Korean regime through Party discussions in the early 1956, and developed to the extent that the North made an official attempt to define the concept of Juche in 1958. During the process, especially through the factional incident in August 1956, the efforts to establish Juche were ignited. In addition, in the 1960s, Beijing and Moscow criticized each other for pursuing revisionism and dogmatism, respectively, rupturing the conflict between the two pillars of socialism. This also served as a driving force behind the establishment of the Juche line in North Korea.³⁸⁾

Against this backdrop, North Korea's independence line took root as the basis of its foreign policy through the eras of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il. In particular, as the Kim Jong-un regime came to power, it is emphasized more acutely at the level of securing the legitimacy and justification of hereditary power. Right after the death of Kim Jong-il, North Korea propagandized that "the dignity as a nuclear power and a country of manufacturing and launching a satellite," the greatest legacies of Kim Jong-il, ensured that no other country can look down on this land, which has undergone

38. Lee Jong-seok, *A New Version of the Understanding of Modern North Korea*, Yeoksa Bipyong (Critical Review of History), 2000, pp. 145-162.

many hardships resulting from being sandwiched between strong nations, any longer and that the people of a small and weak power with deep resentment and sorrows can live as people with much dignity who straighten themselves and look down on the world. Kim Jong-un declared on April 15, 2012 that independence is the most important value, saying that “Although peace is priceless to our Party and the DPRK, which present the construction of a powerful and prosperous nation and the improvement of the people’s standards of living as our overall goals, the dignity of our people and the independence of our nation are much more valuable to us.” While criticizing the geopolitical fatalism which describes the Korean Peninsula as being destined to be invaded by powerful countries, Pyongyang stressed that it maintains independence between strong neighboring countries and argued for the theory of a “strategic location.”³⁹⁾ In particular, in 2013, the North strongly condemned China and Russia, its long-time allies, for following the U.S. as they supported a resolution against the North’s missile launch.⁴⁰⁾

39. Kim Ji-young, “Leadership of the Supreme Commander as the center of single-hearted unity-3”, Choson Sinbo, March 17, 2012.

40. “Statement by the Foreign Ministry of DPRK”, KCNA, January 23, 2013; “We will wage an all-out war to protect the nation’s sovereignty”: “Statement by the Defense Commission of DPRK”, KCNA, January 24, 2013; “It is our people’s firm will to protect the nation’s sovereignty through an all-out war”, Rodong Sinmun, January 26, 2013; Ri Kyung-soo, “The brigandish <resolution on sanctions> is the ultimate in double standards”, Rodong Sinmun, February 2, 2013; “Ten million soldiers and people will sternly crush the challenge by hostile forces”, Rodong Sinmun, February 14, 2013.

North Korea is showing signs of holding fast to the independence that it declared in various fields, such as politics, diplomacy and military.⁴¹ First, in terms of politics, Pyongyang emphasizes that it is different from China and Russia which gave up socialism during the process of system transformation by defining its identity as “our-style socialism centered on the masses of the people,” and by extension, it asserts the theory of a great, powerful and prosperous country as a national strategy. As for diplomacy, North Korea carries out a soft balancing strategy in which it seeks to improve relations with the U.S. as part of its efforts to guard against and check rising China while making proactive efforts to secure its maximum interests between Beijing and Moscow.⁴² From the aspect of military, the North seeks limited military cooperation with foreign countries while stressing the importance of securing self-defensive deterrent power. At the same time, it aggressively pursues an internal balancing strategy in which it builds up military power based on internally available resources,

41. As for North Korea’s internal and external policies to hold fast to independence, see Chang Yong-seok, “North Korea’s Independence-Dependency Dilemma and Hedging Strategy,” *The Peace Foundation, China’s Rising and East Asia: Recognition and Response Strategy*, Baeksan Seodang, 2012, pp. 275-295.

42. A soft balancing strategy refers to seeking a strategic balancing by strengthening political and diplomatic relations instead of military alliance against a third threat. In general, weak countries take a soft balancing strategy by taking advantage of competition between strong countries. (Lam Peng Er, Narayanan Ganesan, and Colin Dürkop, “Introduction: China and East Asia’s Mutual Accommodation”, in Lam Peng Er and N. Ganesan, Colin Dürkop (eds.). *Facing a Rising China in East Asia*, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2010, p. 16

such as proactively developing nuclear weapons.⁴³ This is clearly identified in the Byungjin line in particular, which simultaneously pursues both economic development and nuclear weapons after the third nuclear test in February 2013. In this respect, Kim Jong-un maintained that nuclear weapons, as a reliable war deterrent, serve as collateral to protect the nation's independent sovereignty while stressing that a series of recent tragic incidents occurring in many other countries show that without power, a country cannot protect the nation's independent sovereignty and the people's dignity, nor achieve the happiness and prosperity of the people. Also, in terms of the economy, North Korea continues to emphasize the principle of traditional self-reliance and self-rehabilitation as "a revolutionary spirit in which people strive to responsibly address all problems arising in the revolution and construction to the end."

2) Paradox of independence and growing dependency on foreign countries

Although it insists on independence in foreign relations, North Korea, in reality, shows a growing dependency on a

43. An internal balancing strategy seeks a balance against the opposite party by building up its military power considering the disadvantages that can be caused by external balancing, including alliance. (John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, N.Y.: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001, p. 157)

certain country, namely China, while becoming increasingly isolated from the rest of the world. This trend is marked especially in diplomacy and economic cooperation. The policy that the North pursues to hold fast to its independence line has the effect of intensifying its isolation and actually weakens the foundation of independence, thus causing the paradox of independence.⁴⁴⁾ The tactics of the independence line have the contradictory effect of deepening dependency. This is largely due to an internal balancing strategy from the military perspective.

North Korea advocates the logic that it should strengthen its means of self-defensive deterrence in response to the U.S.'s hostile policies. However, as Pyongyang propagandizes that nuclear weapons and satellites are the legacies that enabled the North to straighten its shoulders between China and Russia, the North continues to build up its military power to maintain the so-called our-style socialist system and regime while resisting interference from its traditional allies, such as China and Russia, and especially the pressures of system transformation, such as reform and opening. Among the North's options, developing and possessing nuclear weapons is the most critical. As mentioned above, this strategy is identified in the remarks of Kim Jong-un, "Nuclear weapons are the reliable collateral to protect independent sovereignty."

44. Chang Yong-seok, "North Korea's Hedging Strategy against China's Rising," *The Korean Journal of Unification Affairs*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (2012), p.73.

However, the development and possession of nuclear weapons, and especially the declaration that the North is a nuclear power, are intensifying its international isolation. North Korea conducted its third nuclear test in February 2013 and claimed that it had realized compact, lightweight nuclear weapons while diversifying the types of nuclear weapons in its arsenal.⁴⁵⁾ In particular, Pyongyang declared the Byungjin line, which pursues both economic and nuclear development, at the plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the Party in late March.⁴⁶⁾ As the North made it clear that it would change and use the existing nuclear facilities to manufacture nuclear weapons in accordance with the Byungjin line while aggressively seeking nuclear weapons,⁴⁷⁾ even China declared its strong position for the North's denuclearization and took stern measures to pressure Pyongyang into cooperation with the U.S. As a result, not only have the international community's sanctions against the North become much stronger, but also it has become much harder to make the switch to dialogue. This is because the demand for measures from the North for preemptive denuclearization is growing from Seoul and Washington, and the international

45. "Successfully conducted the third underground nuclear test in Korea," KCNA, February 12, 2013

46. "Report on the plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the WPK," KCNA, March 31, 2013

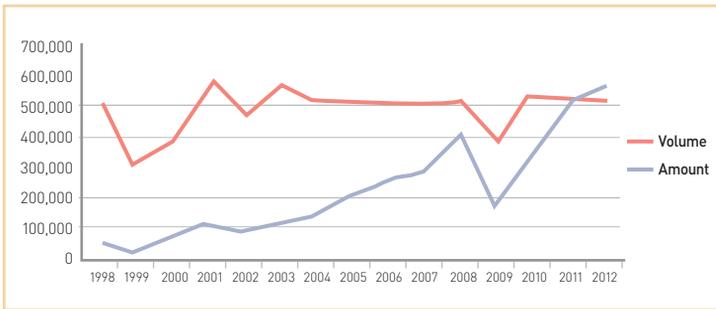
47. "A spokesman for North Korea's general bureau of atomic energy said that the use of the current nuclear facilities will be adjusted and changed," KCNA, April 2, 2013

community's support for this is increasing.

Under these circumstances, North Korea is in a difficult situation in which it is leaning toward its traditional allies, such as China and Russia, while seeking a shift toward dialogue in order to lift the sanctions and consolidate the results of its provocations. This phenomenon has continued since 2003 when China began to engage in addressing the North Korean nuclear issue, and the more the U.S. leans toward a hardline policy toward North Korea, the worse it gets. This is because no matter how much the North wants to talk with the U.S., if it does not make preemptive concessions, such as giving up its nuclear weapons voluntarily, it will be difficult to hold talks without the help of China, which, along with the U.S., is one of the two axes in maintaining regional order and managing change while claiming a new type of major-country relationship. This is the reason that North Korea has to deal with “dialogue” as an important issue while strengthening strategic cooperative relations with China through such efforts as Director of the Korean People's Army Choe Ryong-hae's visit to China as a special envoy of Kim Jong-un and First Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye-gwan's visit to Beijing. In consideration of this, North Korea's internal balancing strategy in terms of the military in order to adhere to the independence line is actually intensifying its diplomatic isolation and deepening its diplomatic dependency on certain traditional allies like China.

This paradox is significantly more marked in the North's economic cooperation with foreign countries. This is because the North depends on imports for strategic materials such as food and crude oil. As the North faces a chronic food shortage, without food imports, most of the people would face a crisis of survival, eventually undermining the legitimacy of the regime. Even if Pyongyang tries to address food shortages by increasing agricultural production, their production is not able to meet the demand for agricultural materials, especially fertilizer. Therefore, the North has to import these materials as well. In addition, Pyongyang imports crude oil, with most of it coming from China in particular, at an annual level of 500,000 tons.⁴⁸⁾

Figure 1 Status of North Korea's Crude Oil Imports



※ Note: The decrease in imports for 2009 does not mean a decline in reality because the records for four months are not disclosed.

*Source: South-North Korea Exchanges and Cooperation Support Association, "Trend of North Korea's Oil Imports," Report on Natural Resources in North Korea 13-05 (May 15, 2013) p. 3.

48. South-North Korea Exchanges and Cooperation Support Association, "Trend of North Korea's Oil Imports," Report on Natural Resources in North Korea 13-05 (May 15, 2013) p. 2.

North Korea's economic dependency on foreign countries mainly occurs in its trade with China. The proportion of made-in-China consumer goods is growing in the general market, and the import of raw materials and intermediary goods from China is increasing across industries as well.⁴⁹⁾ In this context, the proportion that China accounts for in the North's overall foreign trade volume is reaching 90 percent.

Table 3 Trends of North Korea's Trade Dependence on China

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Proportion	24.7	32.5	32.7	42.8	48.5	52.6	56.7	67.1	73	78.5	83	89.1	88.3

※ Note: China's proportion of North Korea's foreign trade except for inter-Korean trade

*Source: KOTRA; Reconstructed the table of Hong Ik-pyo et.al, Assessment of North Korea's International Economy for a Decade (2001-2010), p. 101 by adding data of 2011-12.

49. Hong Ik-pyo, et.al, Assessment of North Korea's International Economy for a Decade (2001-2010), Korea Institute for International Economic Policy (KIEP), 2011, p.100.

4

National cooperation and provocations against South Korea

1) June 15th South-North Joint Declaration and national cooperation theory

North Korea's "national cooperation theory" claims that unification issues should be addressed by our nation itself while rejecting cooperation with foreign countries. The theory was first adopted at the "2001 Congress to Open the Door to Unification by Our Nation Itself" held on January 10, 2001. The immediate cause for the emergence of the "national cooperation theory" was Section 1 of the June 15th South-North Joint Declaration adopted at the first inter-Korean summit meeting held in June 2000, which specifies that the South and the North have agreed to resolve the question of reunification independently and through the joint efforts of the Korean people, who are the masters of the country. North Korea developed "By Our Nation Itself" of the June 15th South-North Joint Declaration into the "national cooperation theory."^{50]}

50. The Ministry of Unification, Overview of North Korea for 2004, Ministry of Unification, 2003, p.453.

However, Pyongyang has used “Our Nation Itself” more often than “national cooperation” since 2005, stressing the former as the best method for unification and the basic ideal of national reunification in the June 15th era.⁵¹⁾

The North considers the June 15th South-North Joint Declaration, which specifies “Our Nation Itself,” as the common doctrine of the Korean people. The June 15th South-North Joint Declaration is a collective unification strategy of the Korean people which reconfirmed the three principles of national unification, such as independence, peace, and the greatest national solidarity; a declaration of national independence to the entire nation which declares that we, the subject of unification, will independently address unification issues by our nation itself; and a declaration of national unity which seeks to build trust and harmony between the same people. In this context, the North believes that the “Declaration for the Development of Inter-Korean Relations and Peace and Prosperity (October 4th Declaration)” that was adopted at the Second Inter-Korean Summit Meeting held in October 2007 holds fast to the spirit of the June 15th South-North Joint Declaration and is the practical principle and code of conduct to realize unification in earnest.⁵²⁾ Against this backdrop,

51. Korea Institute for National Unification (KINU), Overview of North Korea for 2009, p.460.

52. Politics and Law Compilation Committee of the Chosun Encyclopedia Compilation Committee, Kwangmyong Encyclopedia, Vol. 3, pp. 252-253.

North Korea defines the era following the adoption of the June 15th Joint Declaration as the so-called “June 15th era” and continuously asserts the overall implementation of the June 15th Joint Declaration and the October 4th Summit Declaration based on the spirit of “By Our Nation Itself.”

As Pyongyang stresses, the spirit of “By Our Nation Itself” has its roots in independence and the greatest national solidarity stated in the July 4th Joint Statement in 1972. North Korea argues that the principle of independence is basically based on the realization of unification on our own, without dependency on or interference from foreign countries, by expelling the U.S. from the South and strongly opposing the forces which draw in foreign influence.

This principle of independence was developed more specifically into the “10 Principles of the Greatest Solidarity of the Entire Nation for the Unification of the Fatherland” adopted at the 5th Congress of the 9th Supreme People’s Assembly in April 1993. The 10 Principles defines affection for the nation and the spirit of national independence as the ideal basis of the greatest national solidarity and advocates co-existence, common prosperity and the common good as both the starting and ending point of such solidarity. Here, co-existence means that the South and the North live together while recognizing the other’s system. Common prosperity refers to achieving advancement and prosperity together, and the common good means that the two sides seek to enhance

joint profits.⁵³⁾ In line with this logic, Kim Jong-il proposed five plans for the greatest national solidarity by sending a letter entitled “Let’s achieve an independent, peaceful reunification through the greatest solidarity of the entire nation” to a forum to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the joint meeting between South and North Korea in April 1998.

Table 4 10 Principles of the Greatest Solidarity of the Entire Nation and Five Plans for the Greatest National Solidarity

10 Principles of the Greatest Solidarity of the Entire Nation (April 6, 1993)

- 1) Create an independent, peaceful and neutral unified nation through the greatest solidarity of the entire nation

- 2) Unite based on affection for the nation and the spirit of national independence

- 3) Promote co-existence, common prosperity and the common good, and unite according to the principle of bringing all things into submission to achieve national unification
The North and the South recognize and respect each other’s different mindset, ideology, and system.

- 4) Unite by stopping all political strife that aggravates the division and confrontation between the same people

- 5) Trust and unite with each other by dropping apprehensions about the invasion of the North and the invasion of the South, a victory over communism and communization

- 6) Join hands and move toward the road of national unification by valuing democracy and not excluding others for holding different ideas and principles

- 7) Protect the material and spiritual property of individuals and groups, and encourage this to be used in promoting the greatest national solidarity
Recognize national property, cooperative property and personal property not only before unification but also after unification, and protect the capital and property of individuals or groups, and joint interests with foreign capital

53. Ibid. pp. 240-244.

10 Principles of the Greatest Solidarity of the Entire Nation (April 6, 1993)

- 8) Unite the entire people by understanding and trusting each other through contact, exchanges and dialogue
- 9) Strengthen the solidarity of the entire Korean people, including North and South Koreans and overseas Koreans, on the road toward national unification
- 10) Highly value the people who contribute to the greatest national solidarity and the achievement of national unification

Five Plans for the Greatest National Solidarity (April 18, 1998)

- 1) The greatest national solidarity is completely based on the principle of national independence
- 2) Unite the entire people under the flag of affection for the nation and the people and of national unification
- 3) If we are to achieve the greatest national solidarity, we need to improve relations between North and South Korea.
- 4) Oppose foreign rule and interference and fight against national traitors and anti-unification forces in order to achieve the greatest national solidarity
- 5) The North and the South have to continue contact, exchanges and dialogue and must strengthen solidarity and alliance to achieve the greatest national solidarity.

Even after Kim Jong-un came to power, “By Our Nation Itself” based on independence and the greatest national solidarity continues to be stressed. In his first official New Year’s address after Kim Jong-un succeeded office, he said that the two Koreas have to work together to address the issue of unification by our nation itself, and all the compatriots not only in the North and the South but also from abroad should

put priority on and pursue the cause of the reunification of the fatherland, the entire nation's task, from the perspectives of nation-first, nation-centered and national unity. Therefore, the entire Korean people should not tolerate any acts that obstruct national reunification, while sternly opposing and rejecting foreign rule and interference, invasion and threats. While stressing the struggle against the so-called anti-reunification forces based on the spirit of "By Our Nation Itself," he called for the thorough implementation of the agreements between the two leaders of South and North Korea, saying that the whole nation needs to launch a dynamic struggle to carry out the June 15th Joint Declaration and the October 4th Declaration, which are great reunification programs common to the nation in the new century and milestones for peace and prosperity.⁵⁴⁾ North Korean institutions related to its policy toward the South repeated such arguments, calling for the struggle against the anti-reunification forces which cooperate with the so-called foreign influences.⁵⁵⁾

54. "Comrade Kim Jong-un's New Year's Speech," KCNA, January 1, 2013.

55. "Statement of a spokesman for the National Defense Commission of the DPRK", KCNA, January 2, 2013; "Those bent on confrontation and war between the same people cannot escape destruction: Statement of a spokesman for the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland," KCNA, January 3, 2013; "June 15th Joint Declaration is the platform for national reconciliation and unity," Rodong Sinmun, June 2, 2013; Ra Seol-ha, "Confrontation policy that instigates the collapse of North-South relations," Rodong Sinmun, June 4, 2013; "The entire nation will settle anti-nation crimes of puppet groups that ruined the June 15th joint commemorative event": Statement of a spokesman for the North Side Committee for Implementing June 15th Joint Declaration, KCNA, June 15, 2013.

The North stresses “By Our Nation Itself” as a strategic act with various purposes. First of all, from the aspect of its strategy toward the South, North Korea may try to maximize its economic benefits by inducing the South to change its policy toward the North and developing inter-Korean cooperation projects. This also has an effect of diversifying its dependency on China. Internally, the North may be attempting to actively use the issue of unification as a mechanism to secure the legitimacy of the regime. From the standpoint of the Kim Jong-un regime, this may indicate that it seeks to actively use “By Our Nation Itself” to stabilize its power in the early stage of the regime by strengthening the legitimacy of hereditary power succession. That the North has stressed the so-called “war for the country’s reunification” since last year is due to such purposes.⁵⁶⁾ Externally, this may be an attempt to improve its foreign relations by moving away from international isolation through progress in inter-Korean relations. Also, this may indicate that the North is trying to strengthen anti-American forces while easing pressure against

56. “Supreme Commander of the Korean People’s Army Kim Jong-un inspected island defense detachments stationed in the biggest hotspot in the southernmost part of the southwest front and ordered that “If even one shell falls on our territory, deal an immediate annihilating counterblow leading to a war for national reunification!”, KCNA, August 17, 2012; Lee Nam-ho, “Let’s achieve our nation’s long-cherished desire through a war for national reunification,” Rodong Sinmun, August 19, 2012; A spokesman for the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland stresses that warmongers must bear in mind that the order of a war for national reunification has already been issued, KCNA, August 23, 2012; Indomitable spirit of Songun Chosun which will lead a victory in the shelling on Yeonpyeong Island to a war for national reunification; Joint meeting of soldiers of the KPA’s 4th Corps and people in Kangryeong County, KCNA, December 23, 2012.

the North created through coordination between Seoul and Washington by blocking the South's cooperation with the U.S., the key country in hostile policies toward the North. This may be part of the North's traditional united front tactics against South Korea.

2) Exclusion of the South by issue and provocations against the South

Although the North emphasizes "By Our Nation Itself" based on the theory of independence and the greatest national solidarity, it continues to try to exclude the South from the discussion on the key pending issues on the Korean Peninsula. North Korea is relatively proactive in carrying out exchanges with the South in the private sector at the level of economic cooperation projects, the South's support for the North and united front tactics, which ensure economic benefits. However, the North shows a strong tendency to exclude the South as much as possible from the discussions on the North Korean nuclear issue and the peace system, the key issues of peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula.

North Korea insists that the nuclear issue is a product of the U.S.'s hostile policy toward the North and seeks to discuss the easing of military tension and the establishment of the peace system on the Korean Peninsula, as well as the nuclear

issue, directly with the U.S.⁵⁷⁾ This can be clearly seen in the following measures: drawing the basic agreement, including the freezing of the Yongbyon nuclear facility and the provision of a light water reactor, through the high-level talks between the U.S. and the North at the time of the first North Korean nuclear crisis in the early 1990s; seeking to exclude South Korea in the process of the four-party talks between North and South Korea, the U.S. and China in the late 1990s; holding the tri-party talks between Pyongyang, Beijing and Washington in April 2003 by demanding the talks with the U.S. before the multi-party talks at the time of the second North Korean nuclear crisis; making progress in discussions with the U.S. at the center, even within the six-party talks framework; and trying to discuss denuclearization and related issues through the high-level talks between the North and the U.S. in 2011.

Regarding the peace treaty in particular, North Korea stated in the September 19th Joint Statement in 2005 (Joint Statement of the Fourth Round of the Six-Party Talks) that, while implicitly assuming the four-party discussions including North and South Korea, the U.S. and China, relevant parties should negotiate a permanent peace system on the Korean Peninsula at an appropriate forum, and

57. "Significant statement of a spokesman for the National Defense Commission of the DPRK," KCNA, June 16, 2013.

specified in the South-North Summit Declaration in 2007 that “The heads of the directly related three or four parties would meet and cooperate on the issue of declaring the end of the war on the Korean Peninsula. Nonetheless, the North insists on discussing the issue of peace with the U.S. This is clearly an attempt to exclude or check the South in the discussions on key issues according to the North’s political needs. In this regard, although North Korea stresses “By Our Nation Itself,” it considers the dialogue and cooperation with the South as a stepping stone for dialogue or improving relations with the U.S. This is seen in the fact that the North still denounces the South Korean president as a puppet president or a puppet ruler.⁵⁸⁾

Although North Korea claims that the two Koreas should be united and cooperate with each other as one nation, it strengthens its control over residents internally by creating tension between North and South Korea and makes military provocations to incite interest in peace issues by raising the gravity of the situation on the Korean Peninsula. Over the last 60 years after concluding the armistice agreement, there have been numerous conflicts caused by the North’s military provocations in the region around the Military Demarcation Line and in the waters of the Northern Limit Line. Cases in

58. “Statement of a spokesman for the Political Bureau of the National Defense Commission of the DPRK,” KCNA, May 25, 2013.

point are the first battle of Yeonpyeong in 1999, the second battle of Yeonpyeong in 2002, the battle of Daecheong in 2009 and the sinking of South Korean Navy corvette Cheonan in 2010. In particular, the North's shelling of Yeongpyeong Island in 2010 was not only a direct attack on South Korean land for the first time since the armistice agreement in 1953, but also a serious provocation in that the North indiscriminately shelled residential areas of civilians.⁵⁹⁾

These exclusions of and provocations against the South by the North reflect the nature of hostile co-existence in inter-Korean relations and the situation in which the issues on the Korean Peninsula now reach beyond the Peninsula and have become international issues. However, this also shows the North's recognition of the South and its strategic duplicity through the act of overshadowing its emphasis on "By Our Nation Itself" based on the theory of national solidarity.

59. Ministry of National Defense of the ROK, 2012 Defense White Paper, Ministry of National Defense, 2012, p. 49.



DOUBLE- SIDEDNESS IN ECONOMY · SOCIETY

1. Planned economy and private economic activity
2. Distribution system and the market
3. Egalitarian society and discrimination by Songbun (North Korea's social classification system)
4. Pyongyang, the "capital of the revolution," and the provinces

1

Planned economy and private economic activity

1) Traditional economy and adjustment of the plan

The North Korean economic system can be summarized through the following three characteristics: first, the State or cooperative organizations own the means of production; second, resources are distributed not by the market but as planned; and third, the central administrative authorities, instead of individual economic units, have decision-making rights.

Article 21 of the North Korean Constitution states that “There is no limit to the property which the State can own. All natural resources of the country, railways, air, transport service and communications establishments, as well as major factories and enterprises, ports and banks are owned solely by the State.” The land, agricultural machinery, ships, small and medium-sized factories and enterprises are owned by social, cooperative organizations. In addition, Article 34 of the Constitution specifies that “The State shall ensure a high rate of growth in production and a balanced development of the national economy by implementing unified and detailed

planning.” Regarding the method of economic management, Article 33 of the Constitution provides that “The State shall direct and manage the national economy through the Taean work system, a socialist form of economic management and through the system of agricultural guidance whereby agricultural management is conducted by industrial methods.” The above-mentioned Articles of the Constitution are key factors in understanding the North Korean economic system.

First, North Korea’s planned economy operates under the policy of “unified and detailed planning” presented in 1965. “Unified planning” refers to a system that ensures the establishment of economic plans by the relevant authorities by reflecting the policies of the Party and the State, instead of setting up the plans arbitrarily by each sector and unit of the economy. To do this, the North entrusts the State Planning Committee (SPC) of the cabinet with full authority to devise, enforce and supervise the economic plans and has set up a planning department at all units, such as Departments (Ministry), central organizations, local administrative and economic agencies; plants; and enterprises. “Detailed planning” means a system that ensures an exact match of the plans between each sector and unit of the economy. To do this, the planning authorities establish specific and detailed planning indicators to be carried out by all units of production, including plants at the lowest level, and deliver them to the lower level units. Planning indicators are allocated as the type in kind (the output target) and each unit of production must

conduct delivered planning indicators unconditionally. If a unit of production fails to do so, it cannot avoid responsibility to the Party and legal liability.

Next, we will examine the Taeon work system. If unified and detailed planning is the system operating at the macro level of the North Korean economy, the Taeon work system is the system operating at the micro level.⁶⁰⁾ The Taeon work system is an industrial management method presented by Kim Il-sung after staying at the Taeon Electric Factory for 10 days in December 1961 for field guidance. In summary, the existing one-man management system was replaced by a system in which the collective guidance system by the factory's Party committee operates industrial management. In other words, whereas one manager made decisions in the past, under the Taeon work system, the Party committee secretary, factory manager, chief engineer and representatives of employees engage in discussions and make decisions collectively. Another characteristic of the Taeon work system is that the upper level is responsible for raw materials and directly delivers them to the lower level of production. This raw material procurement system is aimed at enhancing the efficiency of material use by strengthening central control over material consumption.

60. Yang Moon-su, *The North Korean Planned Economy and Marketization*, Institute for Unification Education of the Ministry of Unification, 2013, p.12.

However, the post-Cold War era of the 1990s resulting in the collapse of socialist countries severely affected the North's planned economy. The third 7-year plan between 1987 and 1993 failed, and since then, a new economic strategy placing primary emphasis on agriculture, light industry and foreign trade has failed to achieve tangible results. Moreover, the death of Kim Il-sung in July 1994, natural disasters and a large-scale famine caused the North Korean economy to record negative growth for 9 consecutive years from 1990 to 1998. The Bank of Korea estimated that Pyongyang's GDP declined a whopping 30.0% during the same period.⁶¹

A severe lack of raw materials and energy shook the physical foundation of the North's planned economy, which made its basic operation principles, "unified and detailed planning" and "the Taean work system," unable to function normally. The North Korean authorities had to adjust the plan in order to respond to the crisis facing the planned economy. The overall adjustment of the North's planned economy began with "new economic management improvement measures" (hereinafter referred to as the "July 1 Measures") announced on July 1, 2002, followed by various follow-up measures until 2004.

The July 1 Measures consist of the following three elements. The first is strengthening a self-financing system

61. Ibid, p. 20.

of enterprises based on the principle of “earned income” and “profits” and tightening the taxation system while at the same time cutting subsidies. The introduction of the indicators for earned income means a reduction in the planning indicators and the expansion of operational autonomy of enterprises. In addition, the North sought to recover the country’s fiscal capability by strengthening a self-financing system and cutting subsidies. The second is raising the government’s purchasing prices of agricultural products. This measure not only increases farmers’ motivation to produce but also is intended to recover the country’s capability to procure food. The North intended to concentrate agricultural products in the State while preventing them from flowing into the market by raising the buying prices closer to market prices. After the July 1 Measures, the “new sub-team management system” was introduced in rural areas, strengthening incentives by allowing the autonomous disposal of extra output beyond the target (actually, selling them in the market is allowed). The third is significantly increasing the workers’ wages. This measure adopts a new level of wages by reflecting market prices because existing wages failed to serve as real income due to soaring prices. Through this measure, the North sought to stabilize the livelihood of laborers and return them to work.

It is true that the July 1 Measures brought life to the overall North Korean economy, albeit temporarily. However, the Songun line adopted by the Kim Jong-il regime as a national

development strategy caused a serious imbalance between the defense industry and the people's economy by giving priority to the defense sector in the distribution of economic resources. In other words, the Songun line further impoverished the people, thereby heightening the masses' grievances against the regime. Recognizing this rising dissatisfaction, the third leader of North Korea, Kim Jong-un, stressed in his speech at the formal military inspection to celebrate the centennial anniversary of the birth of Kim Il-sung on April 15, 2012 that the Party and the government should "establish the objectives of constructing a powerful and prosperous country and improving the people's lives," while promising that "I will not make our people tighten their belts again." However, the North declared "the Byungjin line of developing the economy and nuclear weapons simultaneously" at the plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the WPK in March 2013. In the end, Kim Jong-un chose the same path as his predecessor to protect the regime rather than improve the people's lives. As a result, the Byungjin line will further aggravate the imbalance of the North's planned economy in the long term, making it difficult to rise out of the economic downturn.

2) Types and real conditions of private economic activities

Socialist countries mobilize or use a variety of types of economic spaces and means to cope with the inevitable

failure of their plans. One of the response methods to the failure of the plans is to tolerate or approve “the domains of the unplanned economy.” In real forms of socialism, there has never been a country or a time which experienced the disappearance of “the domains of the private economy.” Rather, the State’s sector and the private sector have been mutually complementary, serving as the two pillars that support the reproduction of a socialist economy.⁶²

The private economic sector (legal or illegal) in real socialist countries, including North Korea, has been a significant complementary economic sector to supply consumer goods for the people. In the 2000s, the officially-published documents in North Korea presented a new definition of the relationship between the planned economy and the market. A handbook concerning the economy published by the Party History Institute of the WPK’s Central Committee in 2005 stated that “To push forward with the construction of the socialist economy, the State needs to firmly maintain the planned economy as requested by the socialist principles and appropriately use the market, instead of neglecting it. The combination of the planned economy and the market should be based on state-run enterprises and move toward the direction of filling a vacuum by using the market as an

62. Yu Seung-kyeong, “Is the domain of market always a threat to North Korea?” Weekly Focus, LG Economic Research Institute, p. 36.

ancillary space.⁶³⁾

In its official economic theory, North Korea has not allowed for the market economy even after the July 1 Measures in 2002. The North Korean authorities define the market economy as an economy in which production and sales naturally develop around the market based on the private ownership of means of production, and they remain vigilant against the market expanding into a market economy while stressing that there is no such market economy in the North, as such a system requires production and free sales being realized based on the private ownership of means of production, and that there are only markets for the exchange of goods and local markets.⁶⁴⁾ Yet, a variety of types of private economic activity exist in North Korean society, and it is difficult to deny that “an invisible hand,” the market principle, plays an important role in distributing economic resources just as in a capitalist society.

It was not that there had been no private economic activity in North Korean society before the economic crisis in the mid-1990s. Some domains for private economic activity remained even after the completion of the agricultural cooperatives and socialistic modification of private commerce

63. Seo Jae-yeong, et.al, *Explanation of Economic Ideas for Our Party's Songun Era*, Workers' Party of Korea Publishing House, 2005, p. 309.

64. *Ibid*, p. 309.

and industry in 1958. For each farm household, such items as the following were allowed: a kitchen garden of 30-50 pyeong (3.306m²); animal husbandry including for pigs, chickens, rabbits, goats, etc.; a cottage industry; small scale fruit-growing; and free disposal of surplus agricultural products through farmers' markets. In addition, raising cows, pigs, sheep, goats and beekeeping, as well as kitchen gardens, were allowed. A wide-range of side jobs were encouraged, such as the manufacturing of water wheels and the production of items made from willow trees, as well as the collection of wild herbs and medicinal herbs.⁶⁵ However, the scale of private ownership significantly dwindled with the introduction of the new regulations of the agricultural cooperative associations adopted at the National Congress of Agricultural Cooperatives on January 5, 1959. In the case of kitchen gardens, the areas allowed to each farm household were reduced from 70-200 pyeong under the previous regulations to 30-50 pyeong under the new regulations.⁶⁶ This measure was taken because farmers spent too much time tending to their kitchen gardens, lowering attendance rates at cooperative farms. Cabinet Decision No. 140 made in August 1958 defines that the farmers' market is "a form of commerce

65. Hong Dal-seon, Constant Direction of Cooperative Ownership toward the Entire People's Ownership, Kyeongje Yeongu (Economic Research), (1959), p. 78.

66. For farmhouses in ordinary areas, 30 pyeong is allowed, and for farmhouses in mountainous areas, it is extended to 50 pyeong. Choi Chang-jin, Shining Solution to Taxation Issues in Rural Areas, Social Science Publishing House, 1993, p. 334.

in which farmers directly sell some of their agricultural or livestock products produced in cooperative farms and farmers' private side-working fields to residents at a certain place."⁶⁷⁾ However, the Party entered into a dispute on the question of whether to continue or abolish the farmers' market in the 1960s. Radical groups argued for the abolition of the farmers' market, saying that as a legacy of capitalism, it obstructs the operation of the planned economy of socialism and becomes the material foundation for the revival of capitalism. Moderate groups supported the maintenance of the market, saying that the farmers' market has more positive functions in the current social and economic conditions in which the level of productivity is not high.

Kim Il-sung ended the dispute on the farmers' market within the Party by recognizing the need for the market, saying that "Even if farmers sell just a few chickens expensively, this will not make them capitalists, and planting some tobacco plants in a kitchen garden will not translate into capitalistic management. There is nothing wrong with such production in side-working fields or the maintenance of the farmers' market in a socialist society, rather, it can be good."⁶⁸⁾

67. Kim Il-sung, *On Some Theoretical Problems of the Socialist Economy*, Workers' Party of Korea Publishing House, 1969, pp. 24-25.

68. Kim Il-sung, "On Leading a Frugal Nation by Strengthening the Party's Projects," *Collection of Kim Il-sung's Works*, Vol. 20, Workers' Party of Korea Publishing House, 1982, pp. 129-130.

But, since the mid-1990s, the rationing system collapsed and the State gave up its duty to support the people, encouraging residents to actively participate in private economic activity for their survival. In the past, private economic activity was passively conducted among residents in rural areas. However, since the 1990s, residents in urban areas have led the expansion and revitalization of the domains of private economic activity.

In the case of the private economic activity revitalized since the mid-1990s, by type, first, private cultivation has markedly increased in kitchen gardens, patches of field and small-scale land. This is largely because a number of North Korean residents engaged in private farming to procure food by themselves due to the suspension of the food ration. Residents in urban areas created kitchen gardens in vacant lots surrounding their apartment buildings or on their verandas. Originally, North Koreans were allowed to grow only vegetables for side dishes in kitchen gardens, with the growing of crops such as rice and corn being banned.

However, with the food crisis worsening, corn began to be grown in most kitchen gardens. In addition, beginning in 1987, farming side-working fields (uncultured, barren, uncultivated land) was allowed for individual workers of institutions and enterprises, including the work units of cooperative farms. The size of such fields is about 50 pyeong per person. In addition, instructions were given to allow the

farming of side-working fields in the military beginning in 1995. In the case of a service family, 100 pyeong was allowed per household and 40 pyeong per KPA soldier. In fact, however, most residents cultivated much larger areas than officially allowed.⁶⁹⁾

The second type of private economic activity is the activity of producing consumer goods by a work-at-home unit and a side-working unit. These units, revitalized by the “August 3rd People’s Consumer Goods Production Movement” in 1984, are operated in the way that housewives without a job or senior citizens manufacture daily necessities using waste or items found near factories. These units are characterized by private production because they have only 3-5 members and procure raw materials by themselves. They should be registered with the authorities, and it is difficult to dispose of their products at their own discretion. Nonetheless, they are not included in the national plan, and the illegal trade of such products is widespread in the self-sustained markets (i.e. *jangmadang*). Various consumer goods, such as confectionary products, medicine, liquor, footwear and clothing, are produced by such work-at-home units. Unlike the work-at-home unit, which mainly produced industrial consumer goods, a side-working unit is typically composed of housewives and senior citizens,

69. Im Soo-ho, *Coexistence of Plan and Market: North Korea’s Economic Reform and Outlook for System Transformation*, Samsung Economic Research Institute, 2008, pp. 106-107.

producing and processing agricultural and livestock products, such as vegetables, livestock, fish, wild edible greens and medicinal herbs. For example, they sell tofu or bean sprouts at jangmadang.

In addition, there exist private economic activities that create a greater profit than just eking out a living, such as illegally establishing a small factory and employing waged workers or smuggling secondhand cars, minerals and colored metals, scrap metal, factory materials and facility items and dealing in antiques, private loan transactions, illegal foreign exchange trading, and housing transactions.

Since the 2000s, the North Korean authorities have chosen to legalize or institutionalize some private economic activities that are inevitable to earn a living. The State began charging a fee for the use of private arable lands, which were mostly being used for illegal cultivation. This measure, which followed the July 1 Measures in 2002, has a lot of advantages from the perspective of the State, such as increasing the usage rate of land, addressing the food problem by raising crop productivity and securing a source of national finance. In addition, the North Korean authorities expanded and reorganized the existing farmers' market by renaming it as the "general market" in March 2003, thus normalizing it. A market management office was installed within each market to collect fees for the use of the market, which became a source of important tax revenue for local governments since a

certain share of the monthly income was paid to the finance departments of the city and country people's committees.

Today, the market is the most important economic space for North Korean people to eke out a living. A survey of the real conditions of North Korean society conducted by the Institute for Peace and Unification Studies of Seoul National University (IPUS of SNU) four times from 2008 to 2012 found that in the four surveys, more than a majority of the respondents said that the share of people doing private business in the market, or *jangmadang*, is over 80%. The share of respondents who said that they themselves conducted business has been on a rise from 56.8% in 2008 to 66.7% in 2009, 69.3% in 2011 and 69.2% in 2012. Considering that most respondents are workers, farmers, office workers, and professionals, the survey results indicate that commerce is the most important unofficial source of income as a second occupation for North Korean people.⁷⁰⁾ Income earned from private economic activities is the single most important source of addressing the food, clothing and housing problems for North Korean people.⁷¹⁾

70. IPUS of SNU, North Korean People's Awareness of Unification and Changes in North Korean Society: Results of a Survey of North Korean Refugees in 2012, (released on August 29, 2012), pp. 51-52.

71. In the above survey, as many as 75.5% responded that they spent the most in "addressing food, clothes and housing."

2

Distribution system and the market

1) Objectives and operation of the distribution system

When it comes to North Korea's rationing system, it is common to associate it with a food ration. However, strictly speaking, it refers to the public distribution system. As it covers the distribution of a wide-range of consumer goods, including daily necessities, clothing and housing as well as food, it was the most important material foundation to maintain the basic livelihood of North Korean people before the economic crisis of the 1990s. Therefore, the collapse of the distribution system following the crisis refers to a far-reaching crisis in the actual physical foundation which was in charge of feeding, clothing and housing North Korean people.

First, examining the background of the introduction of the food rationing system in 1946, the system was partly implemented for office workers involved in the planning division amid food shortages right after national liberation. Then, it was gradually expanded to all residents in the late 1950s. However, the North Korean authorities divided the

distribution system and the food rationing system. The official explanation of North Korean authorities states that the distribution system was adopted to stabilize the livelihoods of workers and office workers in state-run sectors amid the lack of commodities after national liberation. In 1946, the North began food rationing for workers and office workers, and in 1947, it began distributing some daily necessities, including industrial products, which continued during the Korean War. After the war, however, with the production of agricultural products and consumer goods increasing, the distribution system for industrial products was abolished and the food rationing system was changed to the food supply system.⁷²⁾

Yet, it seems that there is no significant difference between the food rationing system and the food supply system.

In 1957, the North Korean authorities announced a Cabinet decision entitled “On Selling Food through the National Unitary System.” The North prohibited the private trading of food, which had been allowed until then, and unified all food trading, requiring that it should be done only through a national organization. Accordingly, residents in urban areas who were not able to produce food had to rely entirely on the State for their food. In addition, after the agricultural guidance system based on the management committee of the county cooperative farms was introduced in 1962, the distribution

72. Chosun Encyclopedia, Vol. 12, Encyclopedia Publisher, 1999, p. 298.

system was implemented even at cooperative farms.⁷³⁾

By implementing a thorough food rationing system for the entire population, the North was able to exercise centralized control over labor and capital, the two key factors necessary to achieve rapid industrialization, as one axis and maintain a grand-scale budget for military and defense as the other axis. The food rationing system, which was maintained for almost 50 years after national liberation until the economic crisis in the 1990s, did not originate from the nation's compassionate policy but in order to lower consumption to the minimum subsistence level by controlling residents' demand for food.⁷⁴⁾

City residents are supposed to receive food rations twice a month. They receive a ration ticket issued at their workplace and go to a distribution center with this ticket to buy food at an affordable price determined by the authorities. Food is assigned differentially for each grade based on age and occupation. There are nine different grades, and the daily ration amount provided to each grade is as below in <Table 5>.⁷⁵⁾ The people with the lowest grade, Grade 9, receive 100g of food a day. This is the amount provided to infants.

73. Yang Moon-su, *The North Korean Planned Economy and Marketization*, Institute for Unification Education of the Ministry of Unification, p. 15.

74. Yu Seung-kyeong, "Is the domain of the market always a threat to North Korea?" *Weekly Focus*, LG Economic Research Institute, p. 36.

75. Due to a chronic food shortage following the economic crisis in the 1990s, the ration amounts presented in <Table 5> have become meaningless except for a special class.

The group with the highest grade, Grade 1, receives 900g a day. Laborers working in hazardous occupations and miners excavating coal and other minerals belong to this group. Of note is that housewives are given just 300g of food a day, equivalent to the amount provided to kindergartners. This indicates that the food rationing system is used as an incentive to encourage the maximum level of female participation at industrial sites.

Table 5 Daily Food Supply for Each Grade

Grade	Ration Amount	Recipients
1	900g	Workers in the hazardous and heavy industries
2	800g	Miners, mine workers, heavy equipment operators
3	700g	Ordinary workers
4	600g	College students, senior men of merit with social security, patients
5	500g	Middle school students
6	400g	Primary school students
7	300g	Senior men on social security, kindergarten students, full-time housewives
8	200g	Toddlers between 1 and 4 years of age, prisoners
9	100g	Infants under the age of 1

*Source: The Institute for Unification Education of the Ministry of Unification, *Understanding North Korea*, 2013, p. 240.

Unlike urban residents, farmers receive a year's supply of food at one time through settlement and distribution after the fall harvest. The share for each farmer is determined

based on the workload table that considers the days of work, the days of operation and effort scores. Extra shares can be added by the preference of the work unit and the sub-team management system.⁷⁶⁾ For example, if a farmer worked 290 days with an average of 1.2 points per day and achieved the sub-team plan, he would be given a total of 330 points. Plus, the ration amount varies depending on the category to which he belongs. Category 1 includes farm workers directly participating in cultivating the land. Category 2 includes those who work in the indirect sectors of agricultural production, such as the fruit-growing sector, machinery work sector and repair sector, heads of management committees and heads of bookkeeping, etc. Lastly, Category 3 includes those who provide services at barbershops, hair shops and daycare centers as well as lower-level officials at the farm management committee such as a statistician or bookkeeper. Category 1, 2 and 3 are given 300kg, 290kg and 260kg of fixed rations, respectively. The remaining shares are paid in cash. In fact, however, farmers are subject to the food rationing system because the ration amounts that farmers receive through settlement and distribution is nearly equivalent to the amount of food ordinary workers receive over the course of a year.⁷⁷⁾

76. The preference of the work unit was eliminated through <The Agricultural Act> enacted in December 1998 and is no longer applied.

77. Jeong Eun-mee, A Study on the Relations between North Korea's State-centered Collective Agriculture and Farmers' Private Economy, doctoral thesis of sociology at Seoul National University, 2007, pp. 66-67.

In the case of daily necessities, in the early stages, residents were able to buy most products except for some items, including food. However, since the late 1970s and early 1980s when the so-called product supply card emerged, the North, in fact, made changes to the distribution system. There are two types of product supply card: the food card and the industrial product card. Ordinary residents are given 12 supply cards once a year. They then visit a state-run store once a month and present a supply card to buy the amount of products denominated on the card, or the ration amount determined by the State. For example, every person can buy a set amount of liters of soy sauce, grams of soybean paste, grams of cooking oil, pairs of shoes, socks, underwear, soap, toothbrushes and toothpaste, etc.⁷⁸⁾

2) Collapse of the distribution system and expansion of the market

During the 1990s, with system transformation taking place in the socialist countries of Eastern Europe, the unification of East and West Germany and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the world ushered in the post-Cold War era. The markets of the socialist bloc disappeared, having a great impact

78. Yang Moon-su, *The North Korea Planned Economy and Marketization*, Institute for Unification Education of the Ministry of Unification, p. 17.

on the North Korean economy. In addition, most factories and enterprises could not be run properly due to a lack of electricity and fuel, leading to the dwindling production of consumer goods including daily necessities, which eventually resulted in the suspension of product supply through state-run stores. Furthermore, insufficient agricultural equipment and materials and years of flooding led to a sharp decline in agricultural production, delaying or suspending food rationing altogether, which eventually resulted in a massive famine. To make matters worse, Kim Il-sung died in July 1994. In the end, North Korea was forced to ask the international community for emergency relief for the first time in its history. These hardships continued from 1995 to 1997, with the North Korean authorities calling this period the “march of hardships” and the North Korean people referring to it as the “unsupplied period.” The North Korean authorities began to pass the buck of addressing food problems on to local governments and enterprises. As early as 1992-1993, instruction was delivered to cities and counties to address the food problem by themselves. By around 1995-1996, during the unsupplied period, factories and enterprises were given an order to address the food issue on their own.⁷⁹⁾

In fact, North Korea is a social system in which social order has been maintained through reciprocal relationships

79. Ibid, p. 300.

between the Suryong and the people through the medium of the distribution system. In other words, the Suryong provided benefits to guarantee a stable life for the people, and in return, the people were loyal to the Suryong. However, as the distribution system which played an intermediary role between the Suryong and the people disappeared, the bilateral relationship loosened rapidly. People found it hard to maintain their physical lives before considering their political, social lives. As a result, people headed to jangmadang instead of their workplaces. The people were able to sustain their lives through the market, not through the State. As the official distribution network was paralyzed, the North Korean authorities approved the people's self-rescue plans by allowing illegal market trading. The prevailing view is that unofficial markets rapidly increased in North Korea from the mid-1990s when the distribution system was suspended. However, the market in North Korean society not only existed under the name of the "farmers' market" even from 1958 when the North declared that it completed the "socialist reform of private commerce and industry" but also served the role of complementing the State's planning division for consumer goods. Also, some believe it was even earlier than the 1990s. In 1984, in fact, when the authorities legalized market business, the daily markets, jangmadang and night markets began to increase in influence.⁸⁰⁾

80. Ibid, p. 36.

Before the 1990s, the market was developed around rural areas under the name of the “farmers’ market” and mainly used by farmers. The market opened every 10 days in line with the holidays of cooperative farms, and there were some non-tradable items available such as grain, liquor, medicine and industrial products. After the 1990s, however, the market developed around urban areas, and was mainly used by city residents. Almost all items were traded, including food, industrial products and imported products. The market before the 1990s served as just a means to complement the people’s livelihoods. In striking contrast, the market after the 1990s became the most important means to sustain people’s lives. Farmers’ markets gradually transformed into *jangmadang* and were legalized in May 2003, blurring the boundary between the official and unofficial markets.

Existing farmers’ markets were converted into general markets by Cabinet Instruction No. 24 on May 5, 2003. A market management office was established within the general market and is used to collect a certain amount of fees based on merchants’ income and the use of the market facility. The collected money is reflected in the local revenue. Considering international market prices and exchange rates, the price ceilings and commodity prices are determined, and decisions on the market price ceilings are limited to commodities for price-adjusting indicators such as rice, cooking oil, sugar and seasoning. However, the government’s market price

ceilings are not effective in reality and fail to function in adjusting market prices.⁸¹⁾ The North recognizes the failure of the authorities' market intervention, saying that it "shows that in the real condition of local market management, the administration's setting of price ceilings or simple posting of prices has little impact on market price changes."⁸²⁾

Currently, there are about 40 markets in Pyongyang City, 1-2 markets for each county and 3-5 markets for each city, and it is assumed that there are a total of 300-350 markets across the nation. As North Korea's officially-published documents say that "All people, as well as the members of farms, buy and sell all kinds of necessities including agricultural and local products, groceries, and industrial products,"⁸³⁾ the market in North Korea serves as an important part of the economy.

However, the North began to take measures to curb the market in 2005. The qualification to act as a market merchant was limited to women 40 year of age or older, and at the end of 2008, Pyongyang announced some market control policies: the general market would be closed on January 1, 2009; it would return to the farmers' market, limiting tradable items

81. Jeong Eun-mee, "North Korea's Transition to a Market Economy and Its Adaptability to the System," *Unification and Peace*, 1st Issue, 2009, p. 156.

82. Lee Won-kyeong, "Regarding Some Principle Issues Being Raised in the Currency Adjustment Area of the Nation at This Point in Time," *Kyeongje Yeongu* (Economic Research), No. 2, 2006, p. 37.

83. Seo Jae-yeong, et.al, *Explanation of Economic Ideas for Our Party's Songun Era*, p. 199.

to agricultural and local products and those produced in households; and imported products and industrial products would be sold on a consignment basis at state-run stores and direct sales stores. At the end of 2009, the North suddenly carried out a “currency reform” and banned the use of foreign currencies. However, whenever the authorities announced such market control policies, soaring prices negatively affected the people’s lives, and thus rapidly worsened public opinion. In the end, the authorities backed away from such policies.

The domain of the market found in socialism is neither the result of temporary chaos in the economic system nor a direct sign of system collapse. Rather, the competitive system between society and the State was formed around the market at a time when the Kim Jong-il regime ended and Kim Jong-un’s succession began in earnest. The competitive system was formed around market profits between the markets autonomously grown by the people, such as general markets and jangmadang, and the (distribution) markets led by the Party or the government, such as large shopping centers in the commercial center of Kwangbok Street. In particular, the Party or the government’s direct intervention in the large distribution market of consumer goods like at the commercial center of Kwangbok Street may be the means to strengthen the nation’s control power over the distribution network of consumer goods while at the same time checking the forces of the general market and jangmadang.

Egalitarian society and discrimination by Songbun (North Korea's social classification system)

1) Gap between the goal of an egalitarian society and reality

The North Korean authorities advocate “equality” as a key value that displays the superiority of the socialist system. The ideal of this equality is realized in the following systems: banning gender discrimination in the political sector; prohibiting private ownership of a means of production in the economic sector; and providing free education and free treatment in the social and cultural sector.

North Korea enacted and promulgated the “Act on Gender Equality in North Korea” as Decision No. 54 by the “Provisional People’s Committee for North Korea” in 1946 when the socialist regime took office. Among the three social organizations – the General Federation of Trade Unions of Korea, the Union of Agricultural Workers of Korea and the Korean Democratic Women’s Union – the Women’s Union was organized first. As a result, women’s participation in economic and social activities continued to increase. However, considering female workers’ entry and exit process, the

classification of types of work by gender and the patriarchal family structure, North Korean women are systematically discriminated against.

In North Korea, women's social participation is nothing more than the mobilization of women for political and economic reasons rather than for the purpose of "women's liberation." In particular, with the adoption of the Byungjin line of "defense-economy" in the 1960s, male workers were drafted into the military by force, leading to a labor shortage. This lack of labor was solved by replacing the men with female workers, but as the demand for the labor force declined due to an economic downturn, women were subsequently expelled from their workplaces. In the 1980s, the work-at-home unit and the side-working unit were organized to address the shortage of consumer goods and idle female workers were mobilized in force. Since the mid-1990s, with the suspension of the distribution system, women have played the head-of-household role in sustaining the family's livelihood through *jangmadang*. Yet, "the revolution of the household for women" was never realized in the North and a traditional patriarchal family structure still remains in society. Consequently, after the economic crisis, North Korean women have been suffering from the double torture of acting as the heads of household in eking out a living while also taking care of the household work and giving absolute obedience to their husbands.

North Korea eliminated the production relationship of dominance-subordination as seen in a capitalist society by banning the private ownership of the means of production and transferring such ownership to social organizations. However, a new form of subordinate relationship was created between the State and society through the distribution system. Since the 1990s, however, with the suspension of the distribution system and the increase in market economy activities, a dominant-subordinate relationship is slowly emerging as seen in a pseudo-capitalist society. First of all, the scope of private ownership has been greatly expanded, and Article 24 of the Constitution amended in 1998 states that “The products of individual side-working activities including those from the kitchen gardens as well as the income from other legal economic activities shall also be private property.” The underlined part is the newly added section of the revised Constitution. This addition means that the North legally allows private ownership of the products of economic activities such as illegally cultivating a patch of field or small-scale land to make ends meet and the income created through market economy activities during the unsupplied period.

With the scope of private ownership expanding and market economy activities growing, a small scale of privatization began to emerge. According to a study by Yang Moon-su based on a survey of 121 North Korean defectors who left the North after the July 1 Measures in 2002, privatization has

made some progress (over 30% on average) in restaurants, stores, service-related facilities such as a public bath, barbershops, hair salons, repair shops, billiard halls, other convenience facilities and trading companies.

Restaurants in particular are the most advanced in privatization.⁸⁴⁾ In addition, there exists privately hired labor, one of the labor types of a capitalist economy. In 2012, the IPUS of SNU conducted a survey entitled “Changes in North Korean Society” of 127 North Koreans refugees who left the North in 2011. Out of 100 respondents who answered the question, “Have you ever hired people outside your family?” for income creating activities, 25 (25%) responded, “Yes. I have.” Regarding the number of employees, the percentage of respondents who answered that they hired 1-3 persons stood at 57%, accounting for the largest proportion.

Next, in the social and cultural sector, the ideal of “equality” is realized through systems such as free education and free treatment. Article 73 of the Constitution specifies that “Citizens have the right to education.” The Education Act states in Article 12 that “Citizens have the duty to secondary general education and the right to free education.” The Act defines that in the case of secondary general education, fees shall not be paid for admission, classes, field trips and field

84. Yang Moon-su, *North Korean Economy's Marketization: Aspect · Character · Mechanism · Implication*, Hanul Academy, 2010, pp. 288-290.

surveys (Article 16) and that the State shall provide food to students for each education stage and compensate and guarantee school supplies and daily supplies at affordable prices (Article 18). In particular, it is noteworthy that the General Education Act specifies criminal responsibilities in “cases where a person receives money or goods in relation to school recommendations, admissions, classes, practical training, field trips, and field surveys” (Clause 1) and in the case where “a person engages in private tutoring to make a profit” (Clause 9). Article 205 of the Criminal Act states that “A person who unfairly deals with school recommendations, admissions, evaluations and placement work shall be punished by short-term labor for less than two years. In cases where the person commits a grave offense, he or she shall be punished by reform through labor for less than five years.” Also, Article 97 of the Administrative Procedures Act defines that “A person who engages in private tutoring in return for money or goods shall be given a warning or strict warning, or work without pay or training on work culture for less than three months. In cases where the person commits a grave offense, he or she shall be punished by work without pay and training on work culture for more than three months.”

As seen above, the North has the legal system for free education in place. However, with the economic downturn continuing, the financial and physical foundation to maintain the free, universal education system has been

weakened and the gap between the system and the real education environment is widening. In particular, the North is shifting the financial burden necessary for the operation of schools to the parents. Schools making parents take on the financial burden of decorating classrooms, repairing school facilities, supplying education materials and heating schools is widespread. Parents even support part of the living expenses for teachers, who can barely make ends meet due to the economic crisis. Of course, parents provide the school supplies for each student. In addition, students suffer from labor mobilization during the farming season and the need to collect raw materials such as scrap metal, thereby further degrading the quality of education. Even more serious is the gap in educational opportunity based on wealth. Among the upper class, education in musical instruments such as piano and violin and private tutoring in mathematics and English are spreading. Even in the case of college admissions, it is much easier for students who have parents with economic power to attend college, even if their academic ability is lacking. This indicates that the North's free education system, in reality, is in a state of total collapse.

Despite such a reality, the North Korean authorities announced a new law regarding the 12-year compulsory education system at the 6th Congress of the 12th Supreme People's Committee on September 25, 2012 by upgrading the 11-year compulsory education system which had been carried

out since 1972.^{85]} In addition, under the new education system, the North seeks to strengthen computer and foreign language education based on basic knowledge, such as mathematics and physics. These measures were intended to appease the people's complaints against the third hereditary power succession and a chronic economic downturn and win social support for Kim Jong-un.

The reality of free treatment is no different from that of free education. North Korea's healthcare policy is based on providing medical service as a preventative measure. The medical delivery system consists of clinics, city and county hospitals, provincial hospitals and general hospitals in Pyongyang. There are 133 hospitals at the central and provincial level, 601 in counties and 6,263 clinics in villages.^{86]} In principle, no medical facility should accept medical and treatment fees. However, as the economic crisis continues, it is believed that the existing health and medical system has in fact collapsed. First, in the case of medicine, patients have to pay the full cost. Furthermore, medicines are traded illegally in *jangmadang*, not on the shelves of drugstores, since pharmaceutical factories have failed to be run properly. As they are not able to receive rations and income due to the

85. "Decree of the Supreme People's Assembly of the DPRK – On Implementing a Universal 12-Year Compulsory Education," KCNA, September 25, 2012.

86. Kim Soo-am, et.al, *Quality of Life of North Korean People: Real Condition and Recognition*, KINU, 2011, pp. 124-125.

difficult economic situation, doctors who belong to state-run hospitals engage in private medical treatment activities. In addition, bribes are often delivered to doctors in order to receive medical treatment or surgery as soon as possible. As a result, the free treatment system remains in name only, and in reality, North Korean people receive discriminatory medical services depending on the social class to which they belong.

2) Inclusion and exclusion based on family background

The system farthest from the “egalitarian society” that the North advocates is social discrimination based on family background. Article 65 of the Constitution provides that “Citizens enjoy equal rights in all spheres of State and public activity,” indicating that all citizens enjoy equal rights by law. Pyongyang claims in its Second Regular Report on Civil and Political Rights submitted to the UN Human Rights Council in March 2002 that “Citizens of the DPRK shall be guaranteed equal rights without being discriminated against due to their race, skin color, gender, language, faith, political views or different beliefs, national and social background, property, birth or status.”⁸⁷ Despite such statements, however, North Korea has conducted a survey of Songbun several times after

87. Lee Geum-soon, et.al, White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2004, KINU, 2004, p. 114.

liberation and carried out discriminatory policies by classifying residents according to family background and social class.

The North Korean authorities have continued to repeat a survey of Songbun and the classification of residents whenever certain social and political changes occur, such as the “central party’s concentrated guidance project” conducted from December 1958 to December 1960; the “resident registration project” from April 1966 to March 1967; the “project of classifying into 3 classes and 51 categories” from 1967 to June 1970; the “project of identifying naturalized citizens from foreign countries and those who defected from the South to the North” from April 1980 to October 1980; the “project of identifying overseas Koreans repatriated to the North” from January to April 1981; the project of renewing the resident card from November 1983 to March 1984; the project of re-registering residents from October 1989 to December 1990; the project of renewing the identification card from February to October 1998; and the project of replacing and issuing the identification card in April 2004.⁸⁸⁾ The survey of Songbun is a North Korean-style caste policy to effectively manage and control residents by identifying their political inclinations through a survey of the entire populations’ family backgrounds and social activities.⁸⁹⁾

88. Kim Kook-shin, et.al, White House on Human Rights in North Korea 2011, KINU, 2011, pp. 169-170.

89. The Institute for Unification Education of the Ministry of Unification, Understanding North Korea, 2013, p. 226.

North Korean people are classified into three classes: core group (core class), basic group (wavering class), and complex group (hostile class). The core group is the governing class which leads the North Korean system, accounting for around 28% of the population. The basic group consists of ordinary workers, technicians, farmers, office workers, teachers and their families, who do not belong to the core group and are not Party members, representing around 45% of the entire population. The complex group is composed of those who are hostile against the classes and the nation. They are branded as impure elements and reactionary elements and isolated and excluded from society, accounting for about 27% of the entire population.⁹⁰⁾ According to this classification, the North Korean authorities maintain discriminatory policies in all aspects of social life, including employment, education, housing and medical benefits. In particular, the complex group usually engages in dangerous hard labor, is separated by deportation and is banned from living in major cities including Pyongyang and the border regions. Their movements are always monitored and they are subject to intensive ideological education. They are also restricted from entering a college and joining the military or the Party. They cannot even dream of joining the Party agencies or security agencies. According to North Korean refugees, even sentences

90. Cho Jeong-hyun, et.al, White House on Human Rights in North Korea 2013, KINU, 2013, p. 174.

and penalties vary depending on Songbun.⁹¹⁾

Of particular note is that although most people vaguely know which class they are in, there is no right, procedure or document to identify it. However, since Songbun has a critical impact on their path forward at important points in life, such as college admission, joining the military, workplace assignment and marriage, they come to know their Songbun through such occasions.

91. Lee Geum-soon, et.al, White House on Human Rights in North Korea 2004, KINU, pp. 126-127.

4

Pyongyang, the “capital of revolution,” and the provinces

1) Symbolism of Pyongyang and changes in development plans

Pyongyang, with a land area of 2,629km², is characterized as an urban-rural complex city consisting of 19 Districts and 4 Counties (as of 2003). Among them, 11 Districts, such as Daedonggang, Daeseong, Dongdaewon, Rakrang, Mangyeongdae, Moranbong, Botonggang, Seoseong, Seongyo, Chunggu and Pyongcheon, were developed into high streets, and their combined areas cover just 100km².⁹²⁾ The city has 3.25 million people, and the population density is 1,236 persons/km². The population of Pyongyang accounts for around 13% of the entire population of 24 million.⁹³⁾ This is significantly lower compared to South Korea, where a quarter of the South Korean population lives in Seoul and half of the population

92. The Institute for Peace Affairs, the Chosun Science and Encyclopedia Publishing House, Encyclopedia of North Korean Geography and Culture - Pyongyang City, Institute for Peace Affairs, 2003.

93. According to a 2008 population census submitted by North Korea with the support of UNFPA, as of 2008, the North Korean population is 24.052 million. Kim Du-seop, et.al, North Korean Population and Census, p. 20.

is concentrated in the metropolitan area. This smaller urban population is believed to be the result of the North's measures of curbing population movement in order to control the excessive expansion of major cities and promoting small cities in provinces while maintaining Pyongyang's symbolism as the "capital of revolution."⁹⁴ In particular, Kim Jong-il described the theory of balanced regional development based on the self-sufficient county in his thesis entitled "The Position and Role of the County in the Construction of Socialism" at Kim Il-sung University. Accordingly, this balanced regional development strategy based on the county could minimize the phenomenon of overpopulation in a certain region, including Pyongyang.

Furthermore, in 2010, the North Korean authorities incorporated the southern region of Pyongyang, including Gangnam, Chunghwa, Sangwon and Seungho, into North Hwanghae Province, carrying out the reorganization of downscaling the capital city. This reorganization reduced the land area of Pyongyang by 57% and the population by half a million. In response, many press outlets speculated that Pyongyang made this decision to lessen its burden of public distribution while also breaking the news that those people incorporated into North Hwanghae Province from the city

94. Im Dong-woo, *Pyongyang and post-Pyongyang: A Different Perspective of City Space in Pyongyang*, Hyopyeong Publisher, 2011, p. 25.

of Pyongyang were dissatisfied with the change. Meanwhile, some explained that with this reduction of administrative districts in Pyongyang, the capital city could lessen its burden of infrastructure construction by incorporating some farmland counties into North Hwanghae Province at a time when the Ministry of Capital Construction is leading many projects under the goal of becoming a “great, powerful and prosperous country in 2012.”^{95]}

Transportation in Pyongyang is predominantly by public transport. Although the city’s road network is relatively well developed, individuals are restricted from owning private cars and most of the city traffic is by subway, tram, and bus for other economic and military reasons. Currently, there are three subway lines in Pyongyang, with the first line opened in the 1970s.^{96]} A few subway stations in Pyongyang are magnificent, being splendidly adorned with chandeliers and murals, and are being used as locations for regime propaganda. Of particular note is that although many citizens live in the downtown area, many people still work in cooperative farms within the city. Farmers who live in the city commute to and from these farms by bus. Downtown

95. Ibid, p 269.

96. The construction of the first line of Chollima began in the first 7-year plan in the 1960s, and it was opened in 1973 with 6 stations spanning 12km. The second line of Hyeoksin was completed in 1978 with 9 stations spanning 20km. In the case of the third line of Mangyeongdae, its initial construction was completed in 1987 when the 13th World Festival of Youth and Students was held.

Pyongyang is connected with other regions by the radial road system, and buses use these roads to transport urban residents to cooperative farms in suburban areas.⁹⁷⁾

Symbolic squares or monuments that can serve propaganda sites for the socialist revolution are very important elements in organizing the city space of Pyongyang just as in other socialist cities. The instigation and assembly of the masses are considered to be very important in socialism, and a space for such political events is necessary because the masses and society can be united through such events. As mentioned above, Pyongyang is being built, remodeled, repaired and maintained as the “capital of revolution” through a very elaborate project of symbolization. The North is trying to make Pyongyang a symbol through the two methods of building squares and erecting monuments. Pyongyang has several satellite regions and each region has a symbolic square. At the center of all squares is Kim Il-sung Square, which is recognized as the symbolic space of Pyongyang. Next is Mansudae Square, home of the Kim Il-sung statue. Near the two squares, cultural and educational facilities are situated, such as museums, art galleries and the Grand People’s Study House. Monuments, the second method of symbolizing Pyongyang, were constructed to commemorate

97. Im Dong-woo, *Pyongyang and Post-Pyongyang: A Different Perspective of City Space in Pyongyang*, Hyopyeong Publisher, 2011, p. 26

war victory, propagate Juche ideology and idolize Kim Il-sung. In particular, the Kim Il-sung statue, as the most fundamental element constituting a city in North Korea, is erected downtown or on a hill overlooking the city.⁹⁸⁾

Meanwhile, the current urban landscape consisting of rows of high rise apartment buildings was mostly created in the 1980s. In response to Seoul's hosting of the Olympic Games in 1988, the North decided to host the 13th World Festival of Youth and Students in 1987 and massively developed the city of Pyongyang in order to display its advanced capital to the international community. In the 1980s, Pyongyang pursued to expand the urban area and become an international city in its development goals and perspectives. In particular, the North simultaneously sought horizontal and vertical horizontal expansion while focusing on the construction of 20-30 story high-rise apartment buildings to accommodate its growing population. Yeonggwang Street and Changgwang Street, among the most bustling streets in Pyongyang, played a great role in creating the current face of Pyongyang. The beginning of Moonsu Street, which was newly created during that time, led to the development of residential areas on Gwangbok Street within Mangyeongdae District and Tongil Street within Rakrang District in the late 1980s and early 1990s.⁹⁹⁾

98. Ibid, pp. 88-93.

99. Ibid, pp. 150-152

To become an international city, which was another goal of Pyongyang's development in the 1980s, the capital city's development was mainly focused on constructing cultural facilities and amenities in line with international standards. Pyongyang attempted to be recognized as a "good city to live in" internationally by expanding its green space and amusement facilities. Large hotels targeting foreign guests, including Yukyung Hotel, Koryo Hotel and Yanggakdo Hotel, were all planned at that time. Koryo Hotel and Yanggakdo Hotel were completed in 1985 and 1995, respectively, and are in operation. However, in the case of the 105-story Yukyung Hotel, the construction work continued until the mid-1990s then was halted due to the economic crisis, and was only recently resumed. This building remains as a symbol of North Korea's economic downturn.

In the 1990s, most urban development plans or construction projects which were underway were suspended or delayed due to the economic crisis. Then, in 2010, the North planned the project to build 100,000 houses in Pyongyang to be completed by 2012 as part of its efforts to make an achievement for new successor Kim Jong-un while celebrating the centennial anniversary of the birth of Kim Il-sung and commemorating the first year of opening the gate to a great, powerful and prosperous country. However, this project is known to be mired in a very difficult situation due to the lack of financial resources and materials.

2) Structure and reality of regional disparity

North Korea's local administrative system basically consists of the Direct-administered City, Province, City, County, District, Town, Neighborhood and Village and the Workers' District.¹⁰⁰⁾ According to a 2008 population census, there is one Direct-administered City, which is Pyongyang, and three Special-level Cities, namely Nampo, Gaeseong and Naseon.¹⁰¹⁾ By population size, the 2008 census showed that South Pyongan Province accounts for 17.35% of the country's population, Pyongyang for 13.94%, South Hamgyong Province for 13.13%, North Pyongan Province for 11.69%, North Hamgyong Province for 9.97%, South Hwanghae Province for 9.90%, North Hwanghae Province for 9.05%, Kangwon Province for 6.33%, Jagang Province for 6.33% and Ryanggang Province for 3.08%. South Pyongan Province is the most populous region and Ryanggang Province is least populated.

North Korea's urbanization progressed at a very rapid pace from the post-war reconstruction period to the late

100. A Workers' District is established in cases where workers account for more than 65% in "Villages" in which more than 400 adult workers live and where the area has the form of a city, including a place of business related to mining, forestry, fisheries, factories, enterprises, etc. A Workers' District is a special village which is built in the form of a city in densely populated areas, including coalfields, industrial complexes, salt farms, mining regions, power plants, fishing grounds and special farms in order to increase productivity and efficiency by collectively managing the labor force. Kim Du-seop, et.al, North Korean Population and Census, pp. 156-158

101. Naseon was upgraded from a Special-level City to a Special City in January 2010.

1960s. Industrialization centered on the development of heavy industry, and the agricultural cooperative farm project resulted in a great influx of rural populations to the cities. As a result, the share of urban population greatly increased from only 17.7% in 1953 to 47.5% in 1965 and to 54.2% in 1970, indicating that half of the population was living in cities.

Of note, however, is that the population growth rate between urban and rural areas has reversed since the mid-1990s. According to a 1993 population census, population growth rates in urban and rural areas were 1.35% and 0.43%, respectively. In contrast, in a 2008 census, the same figures were recorded at 0.88% and 0.84%, indicating that while the population growth rates in urban areas decreased, those of rural areas doubled. There is a gap in urbanization among regions. In the case of Kangwon Province, North Hwanghae Province and South Hwanghae Province, the share of urban populations represents less than 50%. By contrast, in Ryanggang Province, North and South Hamgyong Provinces, Jagang Province and North and South Pyongan Provinces, the share of urban populations ranges from a minimum of 50% to a maximum of 70%.¹⁰²⁾ However, in analyzing population change by region during the period of 1993-2008, those administrative districts with a lower

102. As for the data of changes in population distribution, see Kim Du-seop, et.al, North Korean Population and Census, pp. 162-174.

share of urban populations, except for Pyongyang, showed a higher population growth rate than the overall average. That is, Kangwon Province and North and South Hwanghae Provinces showed a higher population growth rate than North and South Hamgyong Provinces and North and South Pyongan Provinces. These population change figures indicate that people in urban areas suffered more from the Great Famine resulting from the shortage of food than those in rural areas.

Next is the comparison of the standard of living by region. Although the North officially maintained the balanced regional development policy for decades, there exists a disparity in the standard of living by region. First, one method to compare the standard of living between urban and rural areas is the infrastructure of a house – water supply, bathroom, method of heating and cooking, etc.

Looking at the sources of water supply by housing unit in a 2008 population census report, the share of households using piped water into their housing unit is 85.0% as seen in <Table 6>. By region, the share reaches 89.5% in urban areas, but the figures remain at 78.0% in rural areas.

Although it is not included in <Table 6>, the census report found that in the case of administrative districts which are urbanized, the share of households using piped water into their housing unit is relatively high. Pyongyang showed the

highest rate with 95.7%, followed by South Pyongan with 87.9%, South Hamgyong with 85.3%, North Hamgyong with 84.5% and South Pyongan with 84.2%, indicating that a higher urbanization rate corresponds with a higher piped water supply rate. By contrast, South Hwanghae recorded the lowest rate with 78.4%, with North Hwanghae at 80.5%. The higher the share of rural areas, such as in North and South Hwanghae Province, the lower the piped water supply rate.

Table 6 Type of Drinking Water Source and Distribution Ratio (2008)

(Unit: Number of households, %)

Source of drinking water	Total	Urban	Rural
Total	5,887,471 (100.0)	3,579,626 (100.0)	2,307,845 (100.0)
Piped water into dwelling unit	5,003,904 (85.0)	3,204,368 (89.5)	1,799,536 (78.0)
Public tap	133,618 (2.3)	81,425 (2.3)	52,193 (2.3)
Tube well/ borehole with pump	501,501 (8.5)	202,941 (5.7)	298,560 (12.9)
Protected waterhole	159,562 (2.7)	59,273 (1.7)	100,289 (4.3)
Protected spring	56,801 (1.0)	19,702 (0.6)	37,099 (1.6)
Others	32,085 (0.5)	11,917 (0.3)	20,168 (0.9)

*Source: Reconstructed Data of Central Bureau of Statistics of DPRK, DPRK Korea 2008 Population Census: National Report, p. 252.

Looking at toilet facilities, a 2008 population census report showed that the sanitation situation in North Korea is quite poor as shown in <Table 7>. The penetration rate of flush

toilets is still significantly low in North Korea. As seen in <Table 7>, private flush toilets account for 58.3% and shared flush toilets represent only 1.1% of the total toilet facilities. There is a marked difference by region. In urban areas, flush toilets (private + shared) account for 67.9%, and in rural areas, the share of flush toilets is 46.2%. The overall share of pit latrines is over 40%, and the proportion of pit latrines in rural areas reaches 53.8%. Although it is not included in <Table 7>, by administrative district, Pyongyang City showed the highest share of flush toilets with 76.1%. South Hwanghae Province recorded the lowest share at 55.1%. Since the penetration rate of flush toilets is closely related to the source of drinking water, South Hwanghae's low rate of piped water led to a low penetration rate of flush toilets.

Table 7 Type of Toilet and Distribution Ratio (2008)

[Unit: Number of households, %]

Type of Toilet	Total	Urban	Rural
Total	5,887,471(100.0)	3,579,626(100.0)	2,307,845(100.0)
Flush toilet, private	3,434,306(58.3)	2,374,540(66.3)	1,059,766(45.9)
Flush toilet, shared	65,579(1.1)	58,629(1.6)	6,950(0.3)
Pit latrine, private	2,045,134(34.7)	858,412(24.0)	1,186,722(51.4)
Pit latrine, shared	342,452(5.8)	288,045(8.0)	54,407(2.4)

※ Source: Reconstructed Data of Central Bureau of Statistics of DPRK, DPRK Korea 2008 Population Census: National Report, p. 254

The difference in the standard of living by region reviewed above is the result of quantitatively comparing the population

census reports. It is also interesting to investigate how North Korean people recognize the gap in the standard of living by region. A survey of 127 North Korean refugees (limited to those who left the North in 2011) entitled “Changes in North Korean Society” conducted by the IPUS of SNU in 2012 showed that, except for Pyongyang, the richest province is South Pyongan (38.4%) and the richest city is Naseon (37.1%). In the case of South Pyongan Province which includes Pyongyang, the western region is the plain area and the northern region is the industrial zone. The Province also has Pyongseong City, which is the largest logistics hub and an educational and cultural city in which universities and research institutes are concentrated. All these factors seem to contribute to North Korean people recognizing South Pyongan as the most prosperous province. In the case of Naseon City, listed as the richest city, it is located on the border area between China and the Russian Far East. As a free economic and trade zone, products and capital are concentrated in the city, leading people to consider Naseon the most prosperous city.

On the other hand, respondents answered that the poorest province is Kangwon (40.0%) and the poorest city is Sariwon (30.3%). Kangwon seems to be considered the poorest because the military and mountainous region is the least industrialized. There may be a city poorer than Sariwon in North Korea. However, it is noteworthy that among the

choices presented in the survey, such as Sinuiju, Cheongjin, Naseon, Hyesan, Wonsan, Nampo, Pyongseong, Sariwon and Gaeseong, the most respondents answered that Sariwon is the poorest city. The main reason is that Sariwon is the only local city representing rural communities. Since other cities, except for Gaeseong, are either border regions or port cities, there is an influx of capital and goods from abroad and people-to-people exchanges are also active. Considering this, a city seen as a rural community is considered to be relatively poor.



DOUBLE- SIDEDNESS IN PEOPLE'S LIVES · VALUES

1. Collectivism and individualism
2. Official media and informal information
3. Social control and aberrations
4. Socialism centered on the masses and human rights violations

1

Collectivism and individualism

1) Conceptual difference in official discourse

Collectivism is the dominant social norm that underlies North Korean society and the standard for the rights and duties of the North Korean people. According to Chosun Encyclopedia, collectivism is a human's natural need and one of the fundamental characteristics of the working class, and a human has a social and political life and cannot live away from society and a group. Therefore, individual profits should be subordinated to those of the group. The principle of collectivism is epitomized by the slogan <<One for All and All for One>>, which is also specified as the rights and duties of citizens in the Constitution. Also, collectivism is expressed in loving a group and an organization; being faithful to social and political life; valuing political life; sparing and loving national and social property; loving one's comrades and others; and helping and leading each other. However, the highest expression of collectivism is defined as loyalty to the Suryong, indicating the normative characteristics of North

Korean socialism.¹⁰³⁾

On the other hand, in the Encyclopedia, individualism is defined as “the thought of the exploiting class who think and act with an individual at the center while preferring the interests of an individual over those of a group, and it is opposed to collectivism as a nucleus of bourgeois thought.”¹⁰⁴⁾ According to the North’s official discourse, individualism is caused by private ownership and gives rise to a gap between the rich and the poor, eventually leading to a confrontation between people. Therefore, in a socialist society, the interests of an individual should be the interests of the group, and collectivism becomes the basis of social life. However, even after establishing a socialist system, individualism remains for a certain period in the minds of the people as the vestiges of old ideas, appearing in various forms such as egoism, ambition for success, individual heroism, patronizing attitudes, liberalism, etc. Accordingly, the logic goes that all workers should be armed with the monolithic ideology of the Party and cultured with the spirit of collectivism in order to overcome individualism completely. By doing so, the North Korean regime endlessly conducts ideological education projects in daily life such as study, lectures and criticism and self-criticism meetings in order to internalize the ideology of collectivism into the North Korean people.

103. Chosun Encyclopedia Vol. 20, Encyclopedia Publisher, 2000, pp. 214-215.

104. Chosun Encyclopedia Vol. 4, Encyclopedia Publisher, 1996, p. 353.

2) Economic crisis and a change in values

In general, academics posit that North Korea faced a significant change in values during the food shortages and the Great Famine in the mid-1990s. As the distribution of food and daily necessities came to a halt, individuals increasingly participated in market economy activities, naturally leading to putting the interests of an individual before those of the group. In addition, while the North could maintain tight social control based on the distribution system in the past, after the suspension of the distribution system, its social control was eased to a significant degree, leading to low participation in organizational life, which is accelerating the internal dissolution of collectivism. In other words, due to the chronic food shortage and the difficulty in securing daily necessities, North Korean people can barely make ends meet. As it is, the collectivism-based, society-oriented view of life is losing its momentum and, on the contrary, North Korean people are naturally learning about a self- and family-based, individual-oriented view of life.¹⁰⁵⁾

The reason why North Korean people, socialized by collectivism-based social norms for decades, came to form individualistic values is because they could no longer depend on the distribution system of the State for their livelihoods

105. Kim Soo-am, et.al, Quality of Life of North Korean People: Real Condition and Recognition, pp. 166-167

and had to earn a living on their own due to a sudden change in their social and economic conditions and status. Such a change in the physical environment had a critical impact on the mindset of North Koreans. Also, a growing influx of information from the outside world has greatly affected the North Korean people. With inter-Korean exchanges and cooperation growing and cross-border trade with China increasing, the information about South Korean society and cultural products flowed into North Korean society. Some analysts believe that it was around 2004-2005 when the Korean Wave began to sweep through North Korea.¹⁰⁶⁾ This was at a time when South and North Korea were carrying out exchanges and cooperation projects in earnest. According to a survey of North Korean refugees who reside in the South conducted by the IPUS of SNU, the respondents who had access to the South's broadcasts, movies, dramas and songs in the North reached 76.7% (80 out of 105 respondents) in 2011 and 89.8% (114 out of 127) in 2012. As information from the outside world flowed into North Korean society, North Korean people slowly came to recognize the self as an independent personality with individuality, not the self buried in a group. As a result, they began to change their view of life from a collectivism-based point of view that values being loyal to the Suryong as the greatest value to an individualistic view of life

106. Kwon Soon-cheol, "The Korean Wave bursts into bloom across North Korea," Newsmaker, No. 744, [October 9, 2007]

that values the life of the self and family more than that of a group.

As seen above, it is true that North Koreans' values are shifting from collectivism to individualism, but it is hard to say that the collective value system has completely collapsed. Dual values play an important part in the mindset of North Korean people. North Korean people comply with collective values in public spheres and individualistic values in private spheres. This is a survival strategy they learned through the experience of surviving in the North Korean-style socialist system.

3) Symbiotic relationship between collectivism and individualism

In a socialist society, the revolutionary or collective social norms presented by the State are logically contradicted by individualistic social norms. However, the norms of the two values are cognitively compartmentalized, thus not causing any confusion in the real-life actions of individuals.¹⁰⁷⁾ This concept explains how the State's ideology and an individual's norms are separated and harmonized in people's daily lives. In other words, people living in real socialist societies, including

107. W. Parish, M. Wyte, *Village and Family in Contemporary China*, University of Chicago Press, 1978.

North Korean people, maintain a personal conscious world separated from public spheres. The reason for this is that the State's official ideology and policies serve as the guidelines for action, extending across every part of their lives, and that the reasonable actions needed in their specific living environments are often constrained and sometimes punished by the State. Through cognitive compartmentalization, North Korean people have come to be able to enact passive deviant behavior in private spheres at an individual level within a scope that can escape criticism and punishment while submissively complying with the State's monolithic guidance system.

The aspects and characteristics of North Korean people's dual value system revealed through reality can be found in surveys of North Korean refugees. For example, among the questions in surveys¹⁰⁸⁾ conducted by the IPUS of SNU in 2011 and 2012, "What was the attendance rate of North Korean people for a weekly meeting for criticism and self-criticism when you were in the North?" was intended to indirectly identify how collectivism is maintained through organizational life. The response rate to the question is as shown in <Table 8>. The proportion of those who said the

108. The 2011 survey was conducted on 105 North Korean defectors who left the North in 2010, and the 2012 survey was on 127 North Korean refugees who fled the North in 2011. Through these two surveys, a comparative analysis can be carried out on the situations in North Korea in 2010 and 2011.

attendance rate is over 50% is predominant, and the share of those answering that it is over 70% was 42.0% in 2011 and 50.7% in 2012, indicating that organizational life is still well maintained in the North.

Table 8 North Korean People’s Attendance Rate for a Weekly Meeting of Criticism and Self-criticism (%)

Attendance rate Year	Less than 30%	30-50%	50-70%	70-90%	Over 90%
2011	12.5	10.7	34.8	24.1	17.9
2012	9.2	16.2	23.8	36.9	13.8

*Source: IPUS of SNU, North Korean People’s Awareness of Unification and Changes in North Korean Society: Results of a Survey of North Korean Refugees in 2012, pp. 57-58.

On the other hand, in the two surveys during the same period, the results of the question, “When you were in the North, what did you think should come first, the group or yourself (or family)?” are presented in <Table 9>, showing contradictory results with the question about organizational life. In both surveys, the share of those answering that an individual should come first is 82.2% and 80.8%, respectively, accounting for a predominant share compared to that of those answering that the group should come first.

Table 9 Comparison of North Korean People's Preference between Individual Value and Collective Value (%)

Year \ Value	Preference for collective value	Preference for individual value
2011	17.8	82.2
2012	19.2	80.8

*Source: IPUS of SNU, North Korean People's Awareness of Unification and Changes in North Korean Society: Results of a Survey of North Korean Refugees in 2012, pp. 57-58.

As the contrasting survey results show, North Korean people are characterized by cognitive compartmentalization in which they act in accordance with individualistic values in private spheres while following collective values in public spheres. This shows that North Koreans have adapted themselves well to the changed environment through symbiosis rather than going through the conflict and chaos of holding dual values.

2

Official media and informal information

1) Types and functions of official media

The official discourses in North Korea are produced and distributed by official media outlets, including the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), Korean Central Television (KCTV), and the Rodong Sinmun. However, the role of these official media outlets is to describe the Party's policy and line, and to culture and persuade the masses. They are nothing more than a means for spreading propaganda and inciting agitation. Therefore, all official media outlets in North Korean society are controlled by the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the WPK and serve the function of propagandizing and agitating to maintain the regime.

First, in the case of broadcasting, KCNA, KCTV and the Third Broadcast system provide services to North Korean people, while Pyongyang Broadcasting Network (PBN) and the Voice of Korea offer services to South Koreans. In addition, the North's broadcasting system includes a foreign-language broadcast as international broadcasting. North Korean

broadcasting values class, the Party and the masses more than objectivity and fairness. Reports in North Korea are marked by the absence of breaking news and any accidents or incidents are not reported.¹⁰⁹⁾ North Korea's broadcasting news and newspaper articles have meaning only within the scope allowed by the WPK's policy, and they are thoroughly censored by the Party in the process of producing the news or writing articles. Reports mainly focus on praising the supreme leader, and they intensively cover the leader's field guidance and major events related to the Party.

Kim Jong-il, who established the current North Korean broadcasting system, said that the goal of TV programming is to set up the monolithic ideology system within the Party organizations and North Korean society. To do this, political propaganda should be broadcast during breakfast, lunch and dinner times when many people are listening. He also instructed that if there is a strategic need for the Party, the propaganda should be reported repeatedly, ten times, and even twenty times.¹¹⁰⁾ This principle for broadcast programming still remains today.

109. The Korean Associations of North Korean Studies, *North Korea's Broadcasting and Press and Arts*, Kyung-in Publishing Co., 2006, pp. 8-14

110. Kim Jong-il, "On a Few Matters Raised in the Broadcasting Project" (Dialogue with the chairman of the Korean Central Broadcasting Committee, July 30, 1967), *Collection of Kim Jong-il's Works, Vol. 1*, Workers' Party of Korea Publishing House, 1992, p.228

Next, publishing is not that different from the broadcasting media. The diversity of publications and the press completely disappeared in the mid-1960s when the Kim Il-sung monolithic ideology system was established after finishing the factional struggle within the Party. North Korea's publishing is controlled by the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the WPK, and publications and the press are considered to be the key of the propaganda project in particular. For example, the editor-in-chief of the Rodong Sinmun, the official newspaper of the WPK, also serves as the chairman of the Korean Journalists Union, a high-ranking official equivalent to that of vice-premier of the cabinet.¹¹¹⁾

All publications are published by the official press system which belongs to the Party and organizations. The Rodong Sinmun, the newspaper familiar to South Koreans, is the official newspaper of the Central Committee of the WPK, Minju Joson is the official newspaper of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly and the Cabinet, and Joson Inmingun is the official newspaper of the Ministry of the People's Armed Forces and the General Political Bureau. Since there are no private publications in the North, all information delivered by these media outlets is simply dramatized and fabricated information supporting the Party's policy, line and purposes. Also, the contents mainly focus

111. Ibid, p. 54.

on the praise and idolization of the greatness of the supreme leader. The principle of the masses applied to the editing and system of publications refers strictly to technical matters, such as applying editing standards through considering readability and the people's understanding by ensuring the use of appropriate terms. It neither represents what is best for the people nor reflects their preferences and interests.

As seen above, the information and discourses delivered through the North's official media outlets have reached the limit of uniformity and schematization and are increasingly neglected by people. Furthermore, due to the lack of production budgets, the share of dramas, animations and children's programs significantly declined during the 2001-2010 period. As the North re-ran existing films and dramas rather than newly produced ones, North Koreans have increasingly lost interest in the official media. In particular, since the 2000s, with the rapid spread of the market, the inflow of informal information and cultural products from the outside world has soared, further weakening the competitiveness and functions of the official media.

2) Types of unofficial media and its dissemination across society

The illegal distribution of CDs, called "alpan (meaning round disk in Korean)," was rampant throughout the border

regions. As such content rapidly spread to the rest of North Korea, it has become a serious social issue to which the security authorities respond sensitively. According to the appendix of the “Report on Major Statistics Index in North Korea” released by the National Statistical Office on January 5, 2011, there is a boom in North Koreans watching South Korean films and dramas on MP3 players and laptops among young people in major cities including Pyongyang and the border regions. According to the annual surveys of North Korean refugees conducted by the IPUS of SNU from 2008 to 2012, the share of respondents who used to have access to South Korean broadcasting, films, dramas and music when they were in the North was 63.6% in 2008, 57.1% in 2009, 76.7% in 2011, and 90.0% in 2012. With this result alone, it is clear that there is widespread consumption of South Korean cultural products among North Koreans.

However, the effect of the Korean Wave on North Korean society being discussed by some media and researchers is exaggerated to some extent, requiring a cautious approach. There are two points of view in North Korean society. One is that the consumption of South Korean cultural products is widespread, requiring the North Korean authorities to censor and crack down on such consumption, calling it “anti-socialist phenomenon,” “capitalist yellow wind” and “South Korea’s delinquent-style” and causing North Koreans who watch South Korean cultural products to yearn for South Korean

society and imitate South Korean culture, thus accelerating aggressive acts of breaking away from the system such as fleeing North Korea. The other is that the spread of South Korean cultural products in North Korean society weakens the hostility against the South, thus serving a positive function in the cultural integration between South and North Korean people. Both are based on the functionalistic perspective that the Korean Wave promotes changes in the mindset and behavior of North Korean people and serves as a mechanism of integration.¹¹²⁾

However, it is often argued that the effect of the Korean Wave on North Korean society is exaggerated. Some scholars point out that the exaggerated interpretation of the effect of the inflow of South Korean cultural content requires caution in a situation where it is hard to objectively measure the relationship between the total amount of South Korean videos flowing into the North and the level of change in North Korean people's awareness. Even a North Korean defector-turned-journalist claims that the consumption of the Korean Wave in the North varies depending on class and power level, pointing out that it has failed to be popularized due to the control of the authorities. He is skeptical of the view that the Korean Wave fever helps change the North Korean system,

112. Jeong Eun-mee, "Background of the Study on the Korean Wave in North Korea, Information Circulation, Critical Review on Interpretation," *KDI Review of the North Korean Economy*, Vol. 13, No. 12, 2011, p. 91.

arguing that it is almost impossible for the Korean Wave to be expanded and developed as a significant political act.¹¹³⁾

These two differing perspectives on the effect of the Korean Wave on North Korean society tell us that although there is a growing demand for South Korean cultural products as they partly satisfy the cultural needs which the North's official media outlets fail to meet, we need to be cautious about "excessive expectations" that this will lead North Koreans to develop a critical mindset about their system and that the Korean Wave will serve as a driving force behind system transformation.

Last but not least is the use of cell phones and intranet, which is rapidly increasing in North Korean society. These ICT devices are placed in the middle of official media and informal information. In December 2008, the Egyptian company Orascom and North Korea's state-owned Korea Post and Telecommunications Corporation (KPTC) jointly established "Koryolink," the country's mobile operator, thereby commercializing mobile phone services. The number of subscribers is rapidly growing. The chairman of Orascom Telecom predicted in a written interview with the American business magazine Forbes in November 2012 that mobile phone subscriptions would reach 1.7 million by the end

113. Ibid, pp. 94-95

of 2012, saying that the numbers had already surpassed 1.5 million in North Korea. He added that subscribers to Koryolink are spread throughout the country, including 15 major cities and 100 small and medium-sized cities.¹¹⁴⁾ This shows that just as in any other country, the cell phone is emerging as the most significant device in forming a social network in North Korea.

On the other hand, beyond the officially registered cell phones via Koryolink, North Korean defectors claim that many people are using “cell phones under borrowed names” – mostly registered through Chinese citizens. Most of the people using these illegal phones are merchants or brokers near the border regions, who frequently visit China. Some North Korean people communicate with their relatives in China or South Korea using these phones under borrowed names. During this process, North Korean news flows out of the country and news from the outside world flows into the North. For these reasons, the North’s security agency censors the possession or use of illegal cell phones very thoroughly and cracks down on calls using a radio frequency detector near the border. As it is, free communication using cell

114. “Chairman of Orascom, 1.5 Million Cell Phone Subscriptions in North Korea,” Daily NK, November 20, 2012. Orascom said that the number of mobile phone subscribers in North Korea would reach 120,000 in March 2009, 185,000 in late June 2010, and 560,000 by the end of 2011. Considering that the number of subscribers reached 1.5 million in November 2012, the spread of cell phones is growing at a rapid pace.

phones is fairly restricted in North Korean society. Therefore, the rapid increase in the number of cell phone subscribers does not necessarily translate into the formation of public opinions on social issues through ICT devices as in any other society.

In addition to cell phones, the Internet and intranet are emerging as important channels in changing the speed of information dissemination as their number of users are growing along with the spread of computers. According to International Data Group, an international technology media outlet, over 1,000 internet addresses had been registered in the North as of June 2010. Also, major universities, libraries and enterprises have access to “Kwangmyong,” the intranet established in 2000, to search information and use email accounts.¹¹⁵ The Choson Sinbo, the journal of Chongryon (General Association of North Korean Residents in Japan), reported in its online edition of February 22, 2004, that netizens in Pyongyang are characterized by their curiosity about new information, saying that “a new generation who major in computer technology make good use of a ‘meeting’ provided by cyberspace, i.e. conducting joint development of programs by using a chat room.” Netizens in North Korea use computer rooms at universities and institutions, and they access Kim Il-sung University, Rodong Sinmun, Pyongyang

115. “North Korea Registered 1,024 Internet Addresses,” Yonhap News, June 15, 2010.

Sinmun, major factories and enterprises via internal networks to search for necessary information or exchange emails. In addition, there are “ICT shops” (similar to an Internet café in South Korea) in major cities including Cheongjin, where the youth play games, exchange emails and chat. However, like the cell phones, these channels are blocked from connecting with the overseas Internet networks. As the inflow of information from the outside world and information exchanges via the intranet are severely restricted, it is hard to expect that public opinion is formed in the cyber world.

However, since the 2000s, with exchanges and cooperation with the outside world increasing, the inflow of information has increased significantly. With the markets rapidly spreading across the nation, they are emerging as an important space for information exchange. With the spread of ICT devices such as cell phones and computers, a private discourse, or the second public opinion, not the official discourse, is being formed. In general, there are two separate public opinions in a socialist society: the official public opinion led by the political system and the second public opinion formed in private daily lives with a less political nature. The second public opinion in a socialist society, as the expression of the discontent of the masses, rejects the manipulated opinion (the first public opinion) led by the government and plays a role in spreading and disseminating conflicts, which may develop into a resistance opinion as seen

in the experience of socialism in Eastern Europe. In particular, although there are limits in identifying the formation of the second opinion, numerous groundless rumors that have spread throughout North Korean society show the possibility of forming the second opinion. While gossip is typically about personal matters, groundless rumors circulate about social and political matters. An increase in such groundless rumors since the mid-1990s is not irrelevant to social change in the North, such as market expansion, eased social control and growing deviant behavior.

Social control and aberrations

1) Means of social control

North Korea controls society through three distinct channels. First, in terms of social and economic control, the distribution system is a representative method. It was the most powerful means of social control before the economic crisis in the 1990s. The North Korean authorities exclusively controlled food procurement for over 70% of the entire population and graded people by Songbun and occupation under the distribution system. Workers had to bring their ration ticket when they went on a business trip in order to have meals. In this way, the distribution system was used to control regional movement.

The second social control is carried out through various forms of organizational life. Most North Korean people engage in organizational life by joining the Party, working groups and social groups (the General Federation of Trade Unions of Korea, the Union of Agricultural Workers of Korea, the Korean Democratic Women's Union, etc.) depending on their occupation and age. The General Federation of Trade

Unions of Korea (hereinafter referred to as the “Trade Union”), established on November 30, 1945, is assumed to have about 1.6 million members and is the largest social organization. Workers and office workers 30 years of age and older are required to join the Trade Union, and men have to engage in organizational life until the age of 65 and female members until the age of 60. The Trade Union is organized by each workplace and consists of nine unions. The second-largest social organization is the Union of Agricultural Workers of Korea, established on January 31, 1946. The members of cooperative farms between the ages of 30 and 65 (60 for women) join this union, and it is estimated that there are about 1.3 million members. The Korean Democratic Women’s Union (hereinafter referred to as the “Women’s Union”) was established on November 18, 1945, earlier than the Trade Union. Women 30 years of age and older have to join this union unless they belong to other organizations, and currently there are 200,000 members. In addition, there is the Kim Il-sung Socialist Youth League for young people between the ages of 14 and 30. Youth under 14 join the Youth Pioneer Corps. In this way, almost all North Koreans engage in organizational life. The organizations enhance collective solidarity through regular or intermittent study, lectures, criticism and self-criticism meetings and labor mobilization while restraining individual aberration as much as possible.

Lastly, the North Korean authorities maintain social control through physical control using governmental authority.

Traditionally, such administrative organizations as the National Security Agency, the People's Safety Agency and the Judicial (law-abiding) Life Guidance Committee have been in charge of such social control. However, since the late-1990s, social order has rapidly been relaxed, increasing various types of aberration. As a result, in support of the Songun (military-first) line, the military directly engages in social control. Since the end of the 1990s, the Ministry of the People's Armed Forces has dispatched military agents to every administrative unit, enterprise, cooperative farm and college to take direct action to track down and punish "anti-socialist elements," keeping an eye on the movements of the people.^{116]}

2) Factors and types of aberrations

As the chronic food crisis and economic crisis have continued, people are increasingly becoming tired of their everyday lives being formal and organizational. In particular, people have increasingly engaged in market economy activities and as such, they are frequently moving from region to region. As a result, they cannot but be absent from their organizational lives such as criticism and self-criticism meetings, study and lectures. However, if they don't attend

116. The Institute for Unification Education of the Ministry of Unification, Understanding North Korea, 2013, pp. 225-257.

their organizational activities, they have to face political criticism and social disadvantages, thus they are increasingly involved in aberrations such as making false records of their organizational lives by resorting to expedients like paying bribes.

A study shows that aberration from organizational life mostly occurs by those in the relatively younger generation who are in their 20s to 40s, and such behavior does not happen in the older generation who are 50 years of age and older. Women rather than men often don't participate in organizational life. This is because the younger generation and women conduct trade, moving from region to region.¹¹⁷⁾

There was a time when allegations that exaggerated the instability of North Korean society, such as a theory of sudden change in North Korea, were raised in South Korea before and after the death of Kim Jong-il in 2011. In addition, as the number of North Korean refugees entering into South Korea has surged¹¹⁸⁾ since the mid-2000s, the South began to analyze the North's social changes in detail at the micro level based on

117. Kim Soo-am, et.al, Quality of Life of North Korean People: Real Condition and Recognition, p. 175.

118. According to official statistics by the Ministry of Unification, the number of North Korean defectors that entered the South was 1,044 in 1999-2001, 1,143 in 2002, 1,282 in 2003, 1,896 in 2004, 1,332 in 2005, 2,022 in 2006, 2,548 in 2007, 2,804 in 2008, 2,929 in 2009, 2,042 in 2010 and 2,706 in 2011, indicating a significant increase between 2005 and 2006. <http://www.unikorea.go.kr/CmsWeb/viewPage.req?idx=PG0000000365>

their testimonies. Also, studies on the Korean Wave emerging in North Korean society attracted public attention around the same time. Such studies have reached a consensus that the North's social control has weakened and North Korean people's aberrations have increased, leading the authorities to strengthen their "anti-socialist censorship."

However, according to time-series analyses of surveys of North Korean refugees living in the South conducted by the IPUS of SNU over several years, the North Korean authorities don't seem to maintain social control very well. <Table 10> shows that the response rate of "Social control is not well maintained" is greater than that of "It is well maintained" across all four surveys in response to the question, "Do you think the security agencies maintained social control well when you were in the North?"

Table 10 Level of Social Control by North Korea's Security Agency (%)

Level of Social control	Year	2008	2009	2011	2012
	Well maintained		49.8	38.7	37.2
Not well maintained		50.2	61.2	62.8	63.8

*Source: IPUS of SNU, North Korean People's Awareness of Unification and Changes in North Korean Society: Results of a Survey of North Korean Refugees in 2012, pp. 54-55.

Also, as the security agencies fail to maintain social control adequately, the aberrations of North Koreans seem to increase.

According to the above surveys, the response rate of “Yes” is much greater than that of “No” in all four surveys in response to the question, “Was there political criticism against the leader and the government (graffiti, leaflets, etc.) when you were in the North?”

Table 11 North Korean People’s Acts of Political Criticism (%)

Level of Acts of Criticism	Year	2008	2009	2011	2012
	High		11.1	9.5	17
Mid-level		49.1	47.6	52.7	63.1
None		39.8	41.4	30.3	25.4

*Source: IPUS of SNU, North Korean People’s Awareness of Unification and Changes in North Korean Society: Results of a Survey of North Korean Refugees in 2012, pp. 54.

However, although they responded “Yes” to the question of whether there was criticism by a third party, the question of whether they experienced or witnessed such political criticism by themselves showed contrasting results. According to another survey of 70 North Korean defectors who left the North after 2000 and are living in the South, 48 respondents, or 70.6%, said “No” and 20 persons, or 29.4%, said “Yes” to the question, “Have you ever made critical remarks about Kim Il-sung or Kim Jong-il in front of your family or others when you were in the North?” Also, 61 respondents, or 88.4%, said “No” to the question of whether they had ever seen a poster or leaflet criticizing Kim Jong-il or a specific high-ranking

officer.¹¹⁹⁾ As the contrasting results of the two surveys show, the analysis and evaluation of acts of political criticism occurring in North Korean society should be conducted in a cautious manner considering that North Korean defectors, as a reference group, may still feel threatened by the rules and punishment in a political sphere with a residual effect on their minds.

Lynne Viola, who analyzed Soviet society under the rule of Stalin, pointed out that “Resistance was only one part of a wide continuum of societal responses to Stalinism that also included accommodation, adaptation, acquiescence, apathy, internal emigration, opportunism, and positive support.”¹²⁰⁾ The behavioral aspects that Soviet people showed during Stalin’s rule are not that different from those displayed in North Korean society. North Korean people also show various types of response and attitudes to the State’s governing acts, such as cooperation, participation, sympathy, acquiescence, compromise, reserved accommodation, connivance, apathy, neglect, keeping distance, rejection and protest, etc. In particular, while most people showed acquiescence, cooperation and participation toward the State before the economic crisis, they are now showing acts of resistance, such

119. Jeong Eun-mee, “Actual State of Opening and Fragment Structure in North Korean Society – based on analysis of survey data,” *Journal of the Korean Association of North Korean Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 1, [2012], p. 147.

120. Lynne Viola (ed.), *Contending with Stalinism*, Cornell University Press, 2002, p. 1.

as apathy, escape, rejection and aberration, as the State can no longer guarantee a stable life. These contradictory attitudes flexibly coexist depending on the situation and sphere they are in.

Since the mid- and late-1990s, aberrations for subsistence and anti-socialist cultural aberrations have been rising rapidly. For example, citizens cultivate illegal farmlands such as small pieces of land or patches of fields; travel around to conduct business, freed from organizational attendance by paying a certain amount of money; work as paid employees; steal raw materials, equipment or some of the products at enterprises or farms; and pay bribes to high ranking officials of relevant agencies in order to ensure easy movement to China or other regions. Serious offenses such as smuggling and drug trafficking are also included. Although it doesn't mean that there were no such aberrations in the past, they have significantly increased in quantity after the food crisis and the Great Famine in the mid-1990s. Furthermore, citizens believe that "This is illegal but I cannot help but do this to survive," justifying a serious moral hazard through the necessity of survival.

Next is the so-called "yellow wind," an aberration rapidly increasing in the 2000s, which refers to an act of privately enjoying capitalist culture. The North Korean authorities are cracking down on this aberration. As video players or CDs, so-called "alpan," flowed into the North through vendors who

travel to and from China, South Korean films and dramas are very quickly infiltrating deep into the daily lives of North Korean people, regardless of region, class and age. In response to such social phenomenon, the North strengthened control over the act of watching South Korean videos beginning in 2007. The instruction of the central Party entitled “Regarding a Crackdown on South Korea’s Recorded and Illegal Tapes” was directed across the nation on June 4, 2007. In July 2007, the Ministry of People’s Security announced a declaration entitled “A Clean-up Operation of Anti-socialist Ideological and Cultural Infiltration” in the border regions, including Hoiryeong, Onsung and Musan in North Hamgyong Province, and carried out very tight controls such as closing down facilities, including electronic multi-media facilities, computer rooms, video arcades, karaoke rooms, etc.; sending violators to other regions or an offenders institute; or confiscating all the property.¹²¹⁾ However, with the official social norms and ideology losing their persuasive power, the people’s interest in cultural content provided by the North Korean authorities is disappearing. In a situation of the absence of various types of leisure activities, North Korean people’s desire for the consumption and purchase of South Korean cultural products is not likely to disappear easily, even despite tight social control.

121. Cho Jeong-ah, et.al, North Korean People’s Daily Lives, KINU, 2008, pp. 286-287.

4

Socialism centered on the popular masses and human rights violations

1) Human rights as independent rights and socialism centered on the masses

North Korea considers human rights as natural rights which humans have as social beings. It says that humans are the owners of nature and society and if they are to play such a role, human rights suitable to humans' independent nature in all fields of social life, including politics, economy and culture, should be guaranteed. However, since human rights are not guaranteed to all members of society in all countries, the socialist system centered on the people in which the working masses, the majority of society's members, become the owners of the State and society, should be established.¹²²⁾

The precondition to this is to hold fast to the independence of the country and people because human rights cannot be guaranteed for the people under foreign rule.¹²³⁾ In this regard,

122. Chosun Encyclopedia, Vol. 28, p. 593.

123. Kim Jong-il, "Socialism Is a Science (November 1, 1994)", Collection of Kim Jong-il's Works, Vol. 13, Workers' Party of Korea Publishing House, 1998, p. 477; "There Cannot Be Human Rights without Sovereignty", Rodong Sinmun, May 26, 2013.

the North argues that it guarantees human rights to all people at the highest level since socialism centered on the masses is established, which carries with it independence in politics, self-reliance in economy and self-defense in national defense. That is, Pyongyang maintains that, “There cannot exist any human rights issue in our country (North Korea), a socialist system centered on the popular masses, and human rights issues are fundamentally nonexistent.”¹²⁴⁾

Also, North Korea claims that in a society where “socialist democracy,” democracy by the popular masses, is realized, members of society enjoy freedom, equality and independent lives based on love for comrades and mutual cooperation. Therefore, it argues that the working masses are guaranteed true freedom and full rights, and thus a happy life in all aspects of social life. This means that people are completely guaranteed human rights under the North Korean-style socialist society centered on the masses where socialist democracy is realized.

In this context, North Korea is strongly opposed to human rights diplomacy.¹²⁵⁾ The North states that human rights diplomacy is a “sly invasion policy by imperialists led by the U.S. under the banner of human rights protection” and the

124. “Statement of a Spokesman for the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland,” KCNA, March 24, 2013.

125. “A spokesman for the DPRK Foreign Ministry totally rejected the U.N. <Human Rights Resolution> against the DPRK,” KCNA, March 22, 2013

West's imperialists set international human rights standards as the basis for their own values and if the human rights situations in other countries fail to meet their standards, they define them as human rights violations, raising issues. Therefore, Pyongyang argues that Western countries' human rights diplomacy is an underhanded tactic with the real purpose of invasion, which they have failed to achieve by force of arms, under the banner of human rights protection. Based on this position, North Korea refutes human rights diplomacy, saying that raising human rights issues is tantamount to interference in domestic affairs or infringement upon sovereignty, expressing a strong response to human rights issues as a fight to protect national sovereignty.¹²⁶⁾ At the same time, North Korea shows limited acceptance of the international community's demand for human rights improvements, such as selectively cooperating with it or revising domestic laws, in order to improve its negative image abroad.¹²⁷⁾

Regarding its recognition of or arguments against human rights, Pyongyang has actually ratified and joined various international human rights treaties as a member of the international community, and although they are not carried

126. Lee Won-woong, "North Korea's Recognition and Response to the International Community's Human Rights Pressure: Critical Evaluation," *Korean Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (2007), p. 221.

127. *Ibid.*, pp. 226-228

out by rule, the North has enacted and implements various regulations related to rights defined in human rights treaties.¹²⁸⁾

Table 12 Key Six Human Rights Treaties and North Korea

Human Rights Treaty	North Korea	State's Regular Reporting System	Inter-state Communications	Individual Communications	Closed Inspection
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR 66)	Joined in 1981	O	X (Non-Party to the Optional Protocol)	X (Non-Party to the Optional Protocol)	X (Non-Party to the Optional Protocol)
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR 66)	Joined in 1981	O	X (No declaration of acceptance)	X (Non-Party to the Optional Protocol)	N/A
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD 66)	Non-Party	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW 79)	Joined in 2001	O	N/A	X (Non-Party to the Optional Protocol)	X (Non-Party to the Optional Protocol)
Convention against Torture (CAT 84)	Non-Party	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC 89)	Signed in 1990 Ratified in 1990	O	N/A	N/A	N/A

*Source: Cho Jeong-hyun, et.al, White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2013, p. 57.

128. Cho Jeong-hyun, et.al, White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2013, pp. 56-65

Table 13 North Korea's Human Rights Related Laws

	Rights	Related Laws
Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)	Human dignity, Rights to life, Personal freedom and security	Criminal Act, Supplementary Provision of the Criminal Act (General Crimes), Administrative Penalty Act, People's Security Enforcement Act, Act on Surveillance by the Prosecution, Act on City Administration
	Rights to equality	Gender Equality Act, Act on the Protection of Women's Rights, Act on the Management of the Capital City of Pyongyang
	Rights to be protected by due process of the law, Rights to be presumed innocent	Criminal Act, Attorney-at-Law Act, Act on the Composition of a Court, Act on Complaints and Petitions, Sentence and Decisions Enforcement Act
	Rights to compensation	Criminal Procedures Act, Civil Procedures Act, Maritime Litigation Act
	Freedom of residence, movement and travel	Immigration Act, Act on City Administration,
	Rights to political participation	Act on the Election of Delegates for the People's Assembly at Each Level
	Rights to have nationality	Nationality Act
	Freedom of opinion and expression	Publication Act
	Rights to have family and personal property	Family Act, Civil Act, Act on Inheritance, Act on Compensation for Damages

	Rights	Related Laws
Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)	Rights to health	Public Health Act, Act on the Prevention of Epidemics, Act on Medical Care, Medicine Control Act, Mineral and Hot Springs Act
	Social security	Social Insurance Act, Act on the Nursing and Upbringing of Children, Act on the Protection of Elderly Persons, Act on the Protection of Persons with Disabilities, Act on the Protection of Children's Rights
	Rights to work	Socialist Labor Act, Labor Protection Act, Act on the Required Amount of Labor, People's Economic Planning Act, Act on the Basic Standards for Consumption of Materials
	Rights to receive education (right of education)	Education Act, General Education Act, Higher Education Act, "On Implementing a Universal 12-year Compulsory Education"
	Rights to enjoy cultural life	Cultural Heritage Protection Act, Act on the Protection of Historic Sites, Scenic Sites and Natural Monuments, Forest Preservation Act, Act on Natural Protection Zone, Mineral and Hot Springs Act
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)	Protection of women's rights	Gender Equality Act, Act on the Protection of Women's Rights
Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)	Protection of the rights of the child	Act on the Nursing and Upbringing of Children, Act on the Protection of Children's Rights

*Source: Cho Jeong-hyun, et.al, White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2013, p. 57.

2) Situation of human rights violations

Pyongyang argues that any human rights issues cannot exist under the socialist system centered on the popular masses because the so-called socialist democracy is realized, guaranteeing human rights of the people at the highest level. However, human rights violations are widespread across the country. This is basically related to the North's recognition of human rights as follows. As seen in the definition of the "dictatorship of people's democracy" in Article 12 of the Constitution, North Korea recognizes human rights from the perspective of class and stresses the dictatorship against hostile forces, eventually denying the universality of human rights.¹²⁹⁾ The North also emphasizes national sovereignty and self-determination at the level of collectivism and argues for cultural relativism¹³⁰⁾ while pointing out that the West's concept of human rights is unilateral. Accordingly, the North is strengthening its dictatorial nature internally and rejecting the outside world's demand for human rights improvement.

At the same time, it has been reported that North Korean people, who are the victims of human rights violations and the subjects of the arguments for human rights improvement,

129. Kim Soo-am, North Korea's Recognition and Response to Democracy and Human Rights, KINU, 2007, p. 39.

130. Lee Geum-soon and Chun Hyun-joon, A Study on North Korean People's Awareness of Human Rights, KINU, 2010, pp. 18-19.

show a very low level of awareness about human rights.¹³¹⁾ The North Korean authorities recognize and implement the law from the perspective of control over hostile factors that threaten the system and maintenance of order of socialism rather than protecting individual rights. Against this backdrop, since there is a political culture in which people consider human rights as benefits granted by the Suryong rather than approaching the issue from legal and system-related perspectives,¹³²⁾ North Korean people show a very low level of understanding about human rights as the realization of human dignity set universally by the international community.

131. Ibid, pp. 149-152.

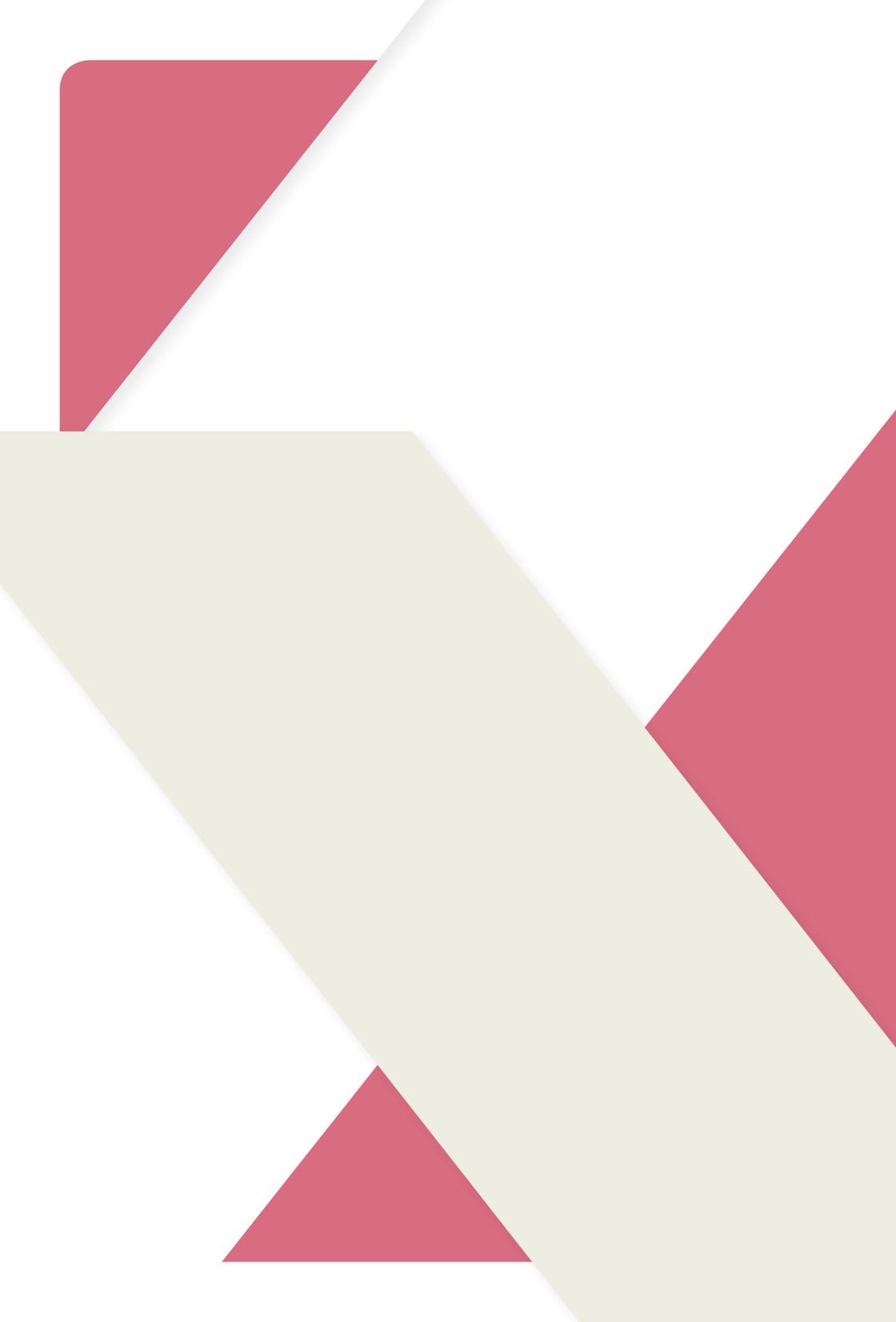
132. Ibid, p. 20.

Table 14 Situation of North Korea's Human Rights Violations

Type	Rights	Situation of human rights violations
Civil and Political Rights	Rights to life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The scope of death penalty subjects is wide-ranging and capital punishment is imposed in the form of a declaration. • Public execution, death in a detention facility or a political prisoner camp, killing North Korean defectors by firing squad, forced abortion, infanticide, starving to death, infant and maternal death
	Rights to personal freedom and security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forced labor in a detention or correctional facility, torture and cruel treatment, high mortality resulting from a poor nutritional and medical situation • Political prison camps (estimated to accommodate 80,000-120,000 persons)
	Rights to be protected by due process of the law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of independence in the composition of a court or trial (controlled by the Party) • Violation of criminal trials / perfunctory operation of the appeal and lawyer system
	Rights to equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued discrimination based on Songbun • Continued discrimination against the families of defectors, those who have relatives in the South, those who have relatives or connections in China, or ethnic Chinese / spread of discrimination due to corruption
	Freedom of residence, movement and travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When residents move away from the city or county where they live, control them with a pass or inspection of accommodations • The approval of the relocation of residence or forced expulsion by the authorities
	Freedom of religion and conscience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religion must not be used as a pretext for drawing in foreign forces or for harming social order (Article 68 of the Constitution) • Use of religious buildings for propaganda and the suppression of the religious lives of individuals • Absence of the provision of freedom of conscience under law, and emphasis on the 10 principles of the monolithic ideological system
	Freedom of speech and the press, Freedom of assembly and association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control rights to know, rights to free press and freedom of the press with various laws, systems and customs. • Allow only the assemblies and associations necessary to the Party and deprive citizens the opportunity to form a voluntary association
	Rights to political participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single-candidate system by the Party's review and selection and vote for or against him • The State Security Department and security officers tight control of the election process

Type	Rights	Situation of human rights violations
Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	Rights to food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A continued absolute lack of food • Unequal access to food according to political, social and economic class • Continued distribution concentrated in the ruling elites and the military
	Rights to health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collapse of the free healthcare system and an absolute lack of medicine and basic medical equipment • The threat of the economic crisis on basic elements of healthcare, such as road and emergency infrastructure, etc. • Unequal access to medical care according to political, social and economic class
	Rights to work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infringement upon the freedom of occupation through workplace assignments by the State • Lack of safety in the workplace, unrealistic wages and non-payment • Unpaid labor at a detention facility or camp (violation of the prohibition of forced labor) • Assignment of workplaces according to Songbun, loyalty to the Party and family background (violation of the prohibition of discrimination)
	Rights to education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widening regional gap of education programs (availability) • Deepening disparity in education opportunities due to the collapse of the free education system (Accessibility) • Lack of universal values and knowledge or character building while focusing on politics and ideology (Acceptability) • Failure to reflect the demand of students and social changes due to the economic crisis (Adequacy)
Human Rights of Vulnerable People	Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited advancement of women into society and status improvement • Continued awareness of discrimination according to the feudal, patriarchal order
	Child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most children suffering from a chronic famine and malnutrition • Absence of the rights to select educational content, and a heavy burden of labor, such as support for farming
	Persons with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forced vasectomies on dwarfs, and limiting the residential areas for the disabled or accommodating them • Refusal to join the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

*source: Cho Jeong-hyun, et.al, White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2013, pp. 13-37.



CONTINUATION AND CHANGE OF DOUBLE- SIDEDNESS OF NORTH KOREA

1. Dual Economic Structure with Ambiguous Boundaries
2. Coexistence of the Planned and Market Economies
3. Supplementary and Conflicting Relations Between the Planned and Market Economies
4. The North Korean Government's Dilemma

We have looked at the official value, idea, system and reality of North Korea in the categories of politics · military, economy · society, and people's lives · values. As a result, North Korea's political propaganda discourse is clearly at odds with its reality. This distinct reality, drastically different from its official system, is in the process of being created and the authorities and people are adapting to the changing reality.

In the aspect of politics · military, North Korea officially defines its system as “our-style socialism centered on the masses of the people.” The North is seeking the unity of the system and the government while propagandizing that its essence is the “dictatorship of people's democracy,” – a dictatorship against the exploiting class and imperialists, one that realizes democracy for the working masses, the true majority sovereign ruler. However, North Korean people's daily lives are far from democracy. Although Pyongyang claims democracy of the popular masses, the reality facing the residents as the governed group is nothing but the so-called “another our-style dictatorship.” Although the North argues for emerging as a powerful and prosperous country, it still remains backward by international comparison. Although Pyongyang stresses the independence line while stating that independence is more valuable than life, in reality, its dependence on China, its traditional ally, continues to grow. Various policies to maintain the independence line fall into the “paradox of independence,” working to actually erode the very foundation of the independence line. Although

Pyongyang argues for national cooperation with South Korea, its checks and provocations against the South continue for a variety of purposes.

The same is true in the economy and society sector. A different world is unfolding from the one described by official propaganda or explanations or the policy line of the government. Although the planning and control by the State under the official ideology of pursuing socialism is stressed, private economic activity and the market have become a lifeline to sustain the North's social and economic system, and the government is adapting to it. Private economic activity and the revitalization of the market have helped expand the value of individualism. Although its official media for system propaganda and the education of the people seem to wield power, news or cultural products from the outside world are flowing into the North due to increasing communication about informal information.

This means that the North's official value, idea and system are under pressure to change amid the tense relations with the disparate reality. All things must change. If they don't, it is hard for them to continue to exist. In this regard, we need to pay attention to how the reality hidden behind the official ideology, the rapidly changing economic and social reality and the changes in people's lives and resulting changes in their values affect the North Korean government system in the future.

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List of Themed Unification Lectures

1. Negotiations with North Korea, How Do You See It?
2. Support for North Korea, Let's See It in a New Light
3. North Korean Reality Seen through Food
4. Establishment of Peace on the Korean Peninsula and Lessons from the EU
5. Change in International Order in the 21st Century and the Korean Peninsula
6. Legal Understanding of the Development of Inter-Korean Relations
7. Comparison of the Recognition of History between South and North Korea
8. How Have South and North Korean Arts Changed?
9. Comparison of IT Terms between South and North Korea
10. Change in North Korean Education in the Kim Jong-il Era
11. How to Look at North Korean Law
12. Information Era and Level of Information in North Korea
13. Understanding of Science and Technology in North Korea
14. Border Trade between North Korea and China and the Status of the Market in North Korea
15. Unification Story in Plain Language
16. North Korea's Environment Policy and Real State
17. Real State of Religion in North Korea and Outlook for Inter-Korean Religious Exchanges
18. Real State of Medical Care in North Korea

19. Trends and Characteristics of Modifying the Legal System in North Korea
20. Real State of Tourist Attractions in North Korea and the Outlook
21. Real State of Sports in North Korea
22. Real State of Cultural Assets in North Korea
23. North Korea's Strategy toward the South
24. 20 Years of German Unification: Current Status and Lessons
25. The Past Reserved for the Future, DMZ
26. Realization of Future-Oriented Unification Education in Schools
27. Greater Unification Benefits than Unification Cost
28. Rethinking the Need for Unification
29. North Korea: Hereditary Succession of Power
30. Changing North Korea, Unchanging North Korea
31. Women of North Korea: A Closer Look at Everyday Life
32. North Koreans' Daily Lives in Light of Arts and Culture
33. FTA and the Unification Environment on the Korean Peninsula
34. Truth and Fiction of the Theory of a Great, Powerful and Prosperous Country
35. South Korea and Germany, Division and Unification Story
36. The Story of North Korea Told by a North Korean Refugee
37. Unification Education and Education for Democratic Citizens
38. Plan and Task of Forming an Inter-Korean Economic Community
39. A Prepared Unification Is a Blessing
40. The North Korean Planned Economy and Marketization

