CURRENT ISSUES BRIEF

No. 16 1994

Moving mountains, whipping up whirlwinds.
Political succession in North Korea
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10 August 1994

Parliamentary Research
Service

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I Government Structure in North Korea

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Glossary

ASEAN  Association of South-East Asian Nations

CIA  (US) Central Intelligence Agency

CPSU  Communist Party of the Soviet Union

'Dear Leader'  the most common epithet for Kim Jong-il

'Great Leader'  the most common epithet for Kim Il-sung

*Juche*  term for the self-reliant ideology of the ruling party

KPA  (North) Korean People's Army

KWP  (North) Korean Workers' Party

UNTCOK  United Nations Temporary Commission for Korea

USMG  United States Military Government
Executive Summary

On 8 July 1994 the world's longest-serving head of state, North Korea's President Kim Il-sung, unexpectedly died. He had seemed in good health only a short time before when he met former United States President Jimmy Carter in P'yongyang (in fact, he joked about how well he felt), but even the Party hagiographers could not make him immortal.

There was genuine regret in many quarters that the planned historic summit meeting between Kim Il-sung and his South Korean counterpart, Kim Young-sam, could not now take place.

Although Kim Il-sung's son, Kim Jong-il, has been carefully groomed for succession for more than twenty years, was officially endorsed as the heir apparent in 1980 and has in effect been in charge of the day-to-day administration of North Korea for the last few years, there was considerable apprehension about whether the change in leadership would proceed smoothly.

There were several reasons for this concern. In the first place, there is the simple fact that the West has never really understood Korea. This has been compounded since the Korean War by North Korea's deliberate effort to isolate itself from outside influences, and heightened by its own bizarre propaganda efforts. Secondly, there has been real uncertainty about how North Korea would cope with the collapse of Communism in the Soviet Union and the fundamental changes taking place in its other close ally, the People's Republic of China. With its economy in disarray, would it open up to the outside, as for example Vietnam has done, or would it tighten the screws internally even further? Finally, there has been anxiety about how North Korea, assuming that it has been driven into a corner, would respond to the mounting concerns about its apparent interest in a military nuclear programme.

In the belief that the attitudes and actions of the North Korean leadership (and, for that matter, also of that in Seoul) can only be understood in the light of events on the peninsula during the Japanese colonial occupation and the immediate post-war period, this Current Issues Brief looks first at this historical background.

It then considers the emergence and leadership of President Kim Il-sung and the career of his son and heir apparent, Kim Jong-il. At the time of writing, the succession appears to have proceeded without complications, but there are still problems ahead, both internally and externally. The future of North Korea depends on how these are tackled by the 'Great Successor' as well as on how the West responds to P'yongyang's attempts to break out of its isolation.
Introduction

Throughout the post-Korean War period, North Korea has remained an enigma. To a large extent, much of the blame lies with its own bizarre propaganda machine and with its deliberate isolationist policy.

It emerged from the forty years of Japanese colonisation with a much better developed infrastructure than South Korea and an industrial base. It also had natural energy and raw material resources, although only half the population. Until 1976 its economy outpaced that of South Korea, and if one considers per capita income and not simply aggregate GNP, it was only overtaken in 1986 (Hwang Eui-gak). Since then it has fallen badly behind, with reports of food shortages, shortcomings in infrastructure maintenance, lack of necessary development and an acute shortage of oil.

Much of the blame for this state of affairs must lie with the diversion of resources to the defence effort. Of course, North Korea is not unique in this regard; in 1991 the defence appropriation in South Korea fell below 4 per cent of GNP (24.7 per cent of the total budget) for the first time in 18 years, although Seoul can afford to bear this level of expenditure more easily than P'yongyang. Whatever one may think about this state of affairs, it needs to be remembered that both halves of the divided peninsula remain on a war footing since no peace treaty has replaced the armistice concluded at the end of the Korean War.

North Korea has also been adversely affected by the collapse of Communism elsewhere and the inability or unwillingness of its erstwhile allies to continue concessional trade arrangements. Even China is now only prepared to lend moral support.

The official ideologies of juche and chalip (its equivalent in the economic sphere), with their emphasis on 'self reliance,' and the constant mass campaigns designed to increase productivity, which were effective for so long (at considerable human expense), are no longer adequate to overcome these problems.

The North Korean leadership has not been unaware of the need to tackle the economic crisis, and new leader Kim Jong-il, himself a graduate in political economy, has been appointing technocrats to key positions for some time. But the belated establishment of the Najin-Sonbong Special Economic Zone and enthusiastic support for the Tumen River Area Development Programme - even the proposed development by South Korean chaebol Daewoo in Nampo - (all distant
from P'yongyang) have come too late. Home-grown solutions are no longer sufficient; North Korea must open up to the outside world.

Here it faces another dilemma. Can it open up its economy, perhaps like China or Vietnam and still maintain control over its citizens? Is economic reform possible without changes to the political system?

Any sudden or drastic change of course (away from the policy of isolation) would obviously have undermined the whole legitimacy of the regime and the authority of Kim II-sung. His son and successor, Kim Jong-il, can scarcely embark on such a wholesale reform either, for to do so would challenge not only Confucian ideals but also the very foundation of the dynastic succession.

Nevertheless, the regime has made tentative moves to break out of its isolation in the past - unfortunately, generally misunderstood or deliberately ignored. Even the present nuclear crisis appears designed partly to extract concessions from the United States, principally recognition and economic assistance.

The problem is that the West (and especially the United States) has never really understood Korea and consequently has not known how to respond to signals from Pyongyang (or Seoul, for that matter).

In the late 19th century Western gunboats forcibly opening the 'Hermit Kingdom' to missionary activity and trade, neither of which it desired. In 1905 the United States rejected Emperor Kojong's desperate plea for support against Japanese aggression and the refusal of the powers to support the Emperor's request at the Hague Peace Conference in June 1907 for support against Japanese annexation only emboldened Japan to turn Korea into a full-blown colony. This was followed by refusal by the Allies to recognise the Korean government-in-exile in China. At the end of the Pacific War - because it could not conceive of the Koreans governing themselves (something they had done as a unified kingdom since 668 AD) - the United States proposed the trusteeship (not supported by Britain) which ultimately led to the division of the peninsula. This was followed by massive interference in South Korean politics during the period of US military occupation. Then came the tragedy of the Korean War; if actually launched by the North (as now appears likely from records released by the Russian archives over the last few years), it was more than brought about by Rhee Syng-man and those in his 'kitchen cabinet,' who constantly initiated provocations along the border (Kaesong, Ongjin, Mongumbo).

The United States has blown hot and cold on Korea. It has vacillated between a desire to prevent 'a repetition of the "Polish situation" in Manchuria and Korea' to the realisation (by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 25 September 1947) that 'from the standpoint of military security
the US has little strategic interest in maintaining the present troops and bases in Korea.' It has repeatedly threatened troop withdrawals. It has talked about 'knocking out' North Korea's nuclear facilities with 'smart weapons.' Even President Clinton threatened to blow away North Korea if it developed nuclear weapons.

To understand the North Korean position it is necessary to look at the historical background to the establishment of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Even the dynastic succession which has occurred, much to the mystification of Western observers, is quite understandable in the light of post-war history and Korean culture. There is a long tradition of such family rule in Confucian and Hindu societies, and even the heads of the South Korean chaebol (industrial conglomerates) have been known to pass the mantle to a son. This is not a far cry either from the Seoul's 'habit' of electing as presidents Korean Military Academy graduates (Chun Doo-hwan and Roh Tae-woo were classmates) and offering key appointments to alumni of Kyongbuk High School.

Historical Background

The Korean people have been ethnically homogenous and have had a sense of common identity for centuries. Early Korean society was noted for its order and decorum, as both Confucius and Mencius observed; it was the 'Land of the Morning Calm.' In the 1st Century BC there were three kingdoms on the peninsula, Koguryo (which also included most of the three Northeastern Provinces of modern China), Paekche and Silla. Gradually Silla, the newest of the Three Kingdoms, was able to subdue the other two, reaching the height of its power in the mid-8th Century, since which time Korea has been a unified state. Silla was followed by the Koryo Dynasty in the 10th Century and the Yi (Choson) Dynasty in 1392. This dynasty, which lasted until Japanese annexation in 1910 (members of the royal family still reside in the Changdok Palace) was the longest dynasty in world history.

Despite all efforts by the Yi Dynasty monarchs and the yangban (scholar-officials) to cordon off Korea from the outside world (giving rise to the name 'Hermit Kingdom'), it proved difficult to avoid being dragged into wider disputes. In the late 16th Century, following his consolidation of power in Japan, General Toyotomi Hideyoshi approached Korea to provide free passage so his armies could invade China. The King refused and in 1592 Hideyoshi dispatched a massive force to conquer Korea. Although the Japanese soldiers rapidly advanced as far as P'yongyang, Korean Admiral Yi Sun-shin was victorious at sea and succeeded in cutting the Japanese lines of supply. When Chinese troops intervened to help Korea, the Japanese were
forced into peace negotiations. A second invasion attempt in 1597 was also inconclusive.

Although ultimately able to resist the Japanese, Korea suffered greatly. The country was able to recover from the devastation of its agriculture, but the deliberate destruction of its cultural heritage by the Japanese (palaces were destroyed, archives burnt, pottery kilns smashed) has left a legacy of hatred which survives even today. The successful guerilla campaigns led by Buddhist monks and Confucian scholars against the invasions provided inspiration for the resistance against Japanese occupation in this Century.

By comparison, the Manchu invasions in the early 17th Century, brought about by continuing Korean support for the deposed Ming court, were not directed specifically against Korean culture. More serious were the inroads made by European ideas during the Manchu (Qing) Dynasty, particularly the introduction of Catholicism. At the same time as the regent Taewongun attempted to eliminate the Catholic influence in the country, foreign warships began appearing off the Korean coast to try and force an opening. The initial moves were made by Russia, Britain, France (particularly to protect Catholic missionaries) and the United States, but Japan was a growing power, and in 1876 was able to force Korea to conclude a friendship treaty.

Before long Japanese penetration of Korea had begun; Japanese merchants and other residents flocked to the main cities, and soon the former enjoyed a trade monopoly. The Korean court reluctantly began to open the country. On 6 June 1882 a Treaty of Commerce was signed with the United States, followed by similar treaties with Britain, Germany, France and Russia over the next few years. Korea now became a pawn in the rivalry between the powers. Both the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars had a profound effect on Korea. Angered by continuing Japanese affronts (which included the assassination of Queen Min), Korea turned to Russia. For a brief period the country enjoyed comparative freedom. In 1896, So Chae-p'il (Philip Jaisohn), who was a leading advocate of modernisation and democracy, founded the first modern newspaper, the Tongnip shinmun ('Independent').

**Colonial Legacy**

On 8 February 1904 Japan launched a surprise attack on the Russian Pacific fleet. Although Korea declared its neutrality, the Japanese landed troops and forced the Government to conclude an agreement

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1 There is hardly any historic site in South Korea which does not bear a plaque to the effect that Hideyoshi's troops were responsible for its destruction.
specifying, amongst other things, that Korea would not conclude treaties with third countries without Japan's approval. Under the Treaty of Portsmouth, which ended the hostilities, Russia recognised Japan's 'special interests' in Korea. Korea's subservience to Japan had thus been acknowledged by China, Russia and Britain (Japan's secretly since 1902).²

In October 1905 the Korean Government was reluctantly forced to accept Japanese responsibility for its external affairs, but still continued to fight annexation. Emperor Kojong ³ sent Syngman Rhee, a political activist associated with the Independence Club, to intercede with President Roosevelt. However, the United States rejected the Korean approach; it had just concluded the Taft-Katsura Agreement under which Japanese actions in Korea were traded off against a free hand for the United States in the Philippines. In 1907 the Emperor sent envoys to the Second World Peace Conference in the Hague to plead Korea's case, but they were refused admittance.

On 23 August 1910, Japanese Resident-General Terauchi Masatako and Yi Wan-yong of the puppet Korean Government ⁴ signed the Korean-Japanese Annexation Draft, under which all Korean treaties were annulled and Korean independence ended. There was overwhelming opposition to this turn of events. The New Korea Youth Party, which had been formed in exile in China in 1918, sent Kim Kyushik to appeal for Korean independence at the Paris Peace Conference. On 1 March 1919 mass demonstrations were held simultaneously throughout Korea and amongst Korean communities abroad, and a Declaration of Independence was proclaimed. Although the demonstrations were peaceful Japanese police and troops fired into the crowds, killing an estimated 7000 people.

The first 'socialist' party, the Korean People's Socialist Party (Hanin sahoe-dang) was formed by the radical activist Yi Tong-hwi in Khabarovsk in June 1918. At the same time, as part of the independence struggle, provisional governments were established by Korean emigres in Vladivostok and Shanghai, as well as in Seoul, that in Shanghai being led by Yi. By the end of 1919 these three bodies had decided to operate jointly as a single Provisional Government. In

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³ The King had been renamed Emperor in August 1897 in a move designed to emphasise Korea's independence.
⁴ He had previously been Foreign Minister and Chairman of the Independence Club.
1920 the Shanghai group sent an envoy to Moscow seeking financial assistance. Lenin apparently responded by saying:

In Korea, a proletarian social revolution is not necessary at this time. It is the time only for a national revolution, an independence movement. We will therefore support the Korean independence movement with all of our strength.\(^5\)

Yi Tong-hwi later founded the Korean Communist Party (Koryo kangsan-dang) in Shanghai. He was at the time still Premier of the Provisional Government, an indication that it was still possible for nationalists to collaborate with 'Bolsheviks.' There was considerable tension between Yi and the leadership of the Korean Communists in Irkutsk, who had formed a Korean Department of the Irkutsk Branch of the Bolshevik Party in January 1918, and who were probably more ideological in outlook. In the event, the rivalry grew so intense that in December 1922 the Comintern stepped in and ordered both parties to disband. Henceforth, the Comintern directed Korean affairs through the Korburo in Vladivostok.

Japanese colonial policy was deliberately designed to smash Korean culture. Japanese language and history lessons replaced Korean in the schools. Enrolment at Keijo Imperial University (Seoul) by Korean students was severely restricted. Special 'thought' prosecutors and judges were appointed, and military and 'special' police units targeted Communists, trade unionists and farmer activists, as well as all those suspected of anti-Japanese sentiments. Koreans were even obliged to take Japanese names and refrain from speaking Korean in public.

Following the death of Emperor Sunjong in April 1926, a new nationwide struggle against colonial oppression broke out, similar to that in 1919. A national organisation, Shinganhoe ('New Stem Association'), established in 1927, attempted to form a united front between Communists and nationalists, but was disbanded in 1931, mainly because of a shift in Comintern policy on united fronts.

During the first two decades of the Japanese colonial period, Korea was obliged to greatly expand its rice production to meet Japanese demand. As a result, a high proportion of rural families faced enormous hardship and near starvation conditions prevailed. Almost 20 percent of farmers emigrated at this time to Manchuria, Siberia and Japan.\(^6\)

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6 See the statistics in *Korean Workers' Party*, Tables 8-11, pp. 53-54.
As Japan stepped up its military campaign on the Asian mainland, the crackdown on all dissident activity increased in intensity. The Provisional Government appealed for support in vain to the Geneva Disarmament Conference in 1932. However, the Soviet Government again provided financial aid and Sun Yat-sen's regime in Canton extended recognition. Armed attacks on Japanese troops were made by the Korean units in Manchuria (who had been placed under the control of the Provisional Government in 1921), and individual Korean patriots assassinated Japanese officials.

One significant effect of the Japanese war effort was the radical transformation of the Korean economy, with a marked shift from agriculture to heavy industry, particularly chemicals. The farms had already been broken up into large landholdings, made over to Japanese proprietors or large Korean landlords. From 1942 the Korean Government-General (as the colonial administration was called) was completely subordinate to the Japanese Government. The following year Koreans became liable for Japanese military service. Korean workers were also conscripted for employment in mines and factories throughout the Japanese empire (many of the atomic bomb victims at Nagasaki were Korean labourers), and some 20,000 Korean women were abducted to serve in Army 'comfort stations' as far away as New Guinea.

After the outbreak of the Pacific War, the Provisional Government established a Liaison Committee headed by Syngman Rhee in Washington. The Provisional Government's envoy, Kim Koo, sought the support of the Nationalist Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek, while another envoy, Chong Han-gyong (Henry Chung) was sent by the Liaison Committee to the Cairo Conference. In February 1944 an attempt was made to broaden the base of the Provisional Government by including prominent 'left-wing' figures; Kim Koo became Chairman and Kim Kyu-shik Vice-Chairman.

More than 5000 Korean soldiers fought with Allied forces in China, while others deserted from the Japanese Army or joined forces with Chinese Communist troops in Manchuria.

**Division of Korea**

The Soviet Union entered the Pacific War on 8 August 1945. Two days later, Soviet marines carried out amphibious landings in Korea, capturing the naval base at Najin [see Map] on 11 August. In the United States War Department there was considerable consternation over the swiftness of the Soviet action since it had been assumed that Soviet forces would be tied down in Manchuria for some time. US
troops were not expected to be available for action in Korea prior to the end of September.

Therefore, in the evening of 10 August, when the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee met to consider the Japanese surrender offer made earlier in the day and to decide how local Allied commanders were to accept the surrender, they were unexpectedly faced with the problem of preventing the Soviet occupation of the entire Korean peninsula. Around midnight Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy gave Colonel Dean Rusk and Colonel Charles H. Bonesteel III half an hour to come up with a proposal which would harmonise the political desire to have the US forces receive the surrender [in Korea] as far north as possible and the obvious limitations on the ability of the US forces to reach the area.\(^7\)

For reasons of prestige, it was desirable for the United States to accept the Japanese Governor-General's surrender in the capital. Rusk and Bonesteel preferred to draw a line following the existing provincial boundaries. However, the one line which was on all the available maps was the 38th parallel, so that became the boundary between the two zones.

There was a precedent for such a division in the decision taken at the Potsdam Conference to allow (Nationalist) China to occupy Vietnam and Laos above the 16th parallel, with British administration south of that latitude. But consideration of the post-war administration of Korea had received little attention during the war. At the Cairo Conference in November 1943, the American, British and Chinese leaders had simply expressed their determination 'that in due course Korea shall become free and independent,' a stance endorsed by the Soviet leader at Teheran. The US State Department's attitude at this time was that the Koreans were 'not capable of self-government.' For this reason, the United States refused to recognise the Provisional Government of Korea, which had moved from Shanghai to Chungking in 1940. This was also why the State Department supported a post-war trusteeship for Korea (and the Netherlands East Indies).

On 27 March 1943 President Roosevelt had raised the idea of trusteeship with British Foreign Secretary Eden, but neither Eden nor Prime Minister Churchill were enthusiastic, and the proposal did not

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figure in any of the wartime communiques. However, the US President did discuss the matter with Marshal Stalin at the Yalta Conference in February 1945, suggesting that the Soviet Union, United States and China administer Korea for 20-30 years (the period of tutelage he believed necessary to teach the Koreans democracy). The Soviet leader objected to the length of the period proposed and suggested that Britain also be a trustee power. The matter was pursued further in discussions between President Roosevelt's personal envoy, former Secretary of Commerce Harry Hopkins, and Stalin and on 28 May the Soviets accepted the American trusteeship plan.

In their discussions, both leaders expressed the view that there was no need to station troops in Korea after the defeat of the Japanese, and as late as 24 July General George Marshall advised the Russian delegation at the Potsdam Conference that US troops would not enter Korea until after the successful capture of the main Japanese island of Kyushu. However, the State Department was working on plans for military occupation of the peninsula. Whether the Soviet Union was planning a temporary military occupation, as Chinese Foreign Minister Soong believed, is not certain. In any case, the matter was resolved by Soviet acceptance of General MacArthur's General Order No 1, which was conveyed to Great Britain and the Soviet Union on 15 August, the day of the formal Japanese surrender. Stalin raised no objection to the planned division of Korea (as devised onesteel); instead seeking approval for Soviet acceptance of Japanese surrender in the Kuriles and the partitioning of Hokkaido.

The Soviet 25th Army reached the 38th parallel on 28 August, but it was not until 8 September that Lieutenant-General Hodge's 24th Corps landed at Inch'on from Okinawa. The surrender of Japanese Governor-General Abe Nobuyuki was taken by Lieutenant-General Hodge and Vice-Admiral Kinkaid in Seoul the next day. The initial American retention in power of the despised Japanese colonial bureaucracy soon had to be reversed in the face of public outrage.

Two days before American troops arrived a nationwide administration (Korean People's Republic) was established, based on the People's Committees which had sprung up everywhere after the defeat of

8 Of course, landings on the Japanese home islands subsequently became unnecessary due to the surrender.

9 This order dealt with the procedure for accepting Japanese surrender.

Japan. These committees comprised those who had been struggling against Japanese colonial rule including, but by no means confined to, Korean Communists. This administration immediately instituted long-desired land reforms and other popular measures, such as the organisation of food distribution. A total of 145 committees existed throughout the peninsula, effectively administering the whole of Cheju-do and most of the South Korean provinces of Chollanam-do, Kyongsangnam-do and Ch'ungchongnam-do.\textsuperscript{11}

It was to be some weeks before the leaders of the Provisional Government, Kim Koo and Kim Kyu-shik, arrived from China. In the meantime, a number of conservative figures established the Korean Democratic Party on 16 September, proclaiming the absent Kim Koo, Rhee Syng-man and the US citizen Philip Jaisohn as their leaders. On 16 October the septuagenarian and veteran anti-communist Rhee Syng-man was permitted by the US Military Government (USMG) to return from Hawaii.\textsuperscript{12} He had been living in the United States since his expulsion from the Provisional Government in 1925 for embezzlement, but still enjoyed widespread popular support.

By early November (and especially after a provocative broadcast by Rhee on 7 November) talks between the two rival groups had irrevocably broken down. In defiance of General MacArthur's proclamation that he was solely responsible for government south of the 38th parallel, a stance reinforced by US Military Governor Major-General Arnold on 10 October, the People's Republic continued to claim authority throughout the country. The response of the USMG was to devote the next twelve months to disbanding the committees in their zone.

In the Soviet zone, on the other hand, no military government was established. Instead, the Soviet Union utilised the People's Committees, and in particular their central executive, as the \textit{de facto} government of its zone. As George McCune from the US State Department pointed out, there was considerable evidence to indicate that the Russians actually did permit the Koreans of their choice to exercise real authority, whereas in the American zone, the Korean employees of the

\textsuperscript{11} See map in Jon Halliday and Bruce Cumings, Korea, \textit{The unknown war} (London: Viking, 1988), p. 21.

\textsuperscript{12} Although his return was actually approved on the proviso that he remain a private citizen, he was flown to Seoul by the US Army after secret meetings in Tokyo with Generals MacArthur and Hodge.
Military Government were allowed little power and no authority.\textsuperscript{13}

At a mass rally in P'yongyang organised by Soviet Major G. Mekler on 14 October, and in the presence of the Soviet military hierarchy including General Chistiakov, the 33-year old former resistance fighter Kim Il-sung addressed the crowd gathered in his honour.

The agreement on Korea concluded between the powers at the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers in December 1945 in effect obliged Koreans to choose between trusteeship and division. In response to the United States' proposal of a four-power trusteeship (to last as long as necessary, but probably five years) and a joint commission to largely consider infrastructure matters, Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov proposed a four-power trusteeship (to last five years), a Joint Commission to consider economic unification, and formation of a provisional government. The final agreement embodied each of these proposals.\textsuperscript{14}

The two competing forces in the south of the peninsula were internally divided over their attitude to the Moscow Agreement. However, as the People's Committees, which even the Central Intelligence Agency [CIA] conceded were a 'grassroots independence movement,' were disbanded by the US authorities, politics came to be dominated by a 'small class of landlords' and right-wing demagogues, backed by 'fascist' groups. Apart from Rhee Syng-man, these included Kim Song-su (a leading textile industrialist under the Japanese and founder of Korea University), Yi Pom-sok (leader of the Korean National Youth),\textsuperscript{15} An Ho-sang and Yun Chi-yong. The main forces supporting these political figures were the North-West Youth, refugees from the North described by US intelligence sources as 'a terrorist group,' and the Constabulary, which was led by Koreans who had served as officers in the Japanese Army, most notably Kim Sok-won (aka Kaneyama Shakugen), who had spearheaded efforts to capture Kim Il-sung in Manchoukuo. The head of the Seoul Metropolitan Police, Chang Taek-sang, was another shadowy figure.


\textsuperscript{15} On the Korean National Youth, over a million strong by 1948, and Yi's experience with Fascist movements, see Bruce Cumings, "Corporatism in North Korea," \textit{Journal of Korean Studies} 4 (1982-83), 289-290.
While these southern 'leaders' were dedicated to resisting foreign influence in Korea, they were equally concerned to establish a corporatist state with no tolerance of alternative views. In July 1947, Yo Un-hyong, the former populist leader of the Korean People's Republic, was assassinated. Thereafter, there was no one leader on the left to stand up to Rhee Syng-man.

However, in the face of the repressive police state, there was widespread mass resistance in the south, in particular the 'autumn harvest' uprisings centred on Taegu in 1946, as well as labour unrest and eventually armed guerilla campaigns, which lasted in some regions in South Korea even beyond the end of the Korean War. Although the guerillas (inmin-gun) only numbered in the thousands, it is officially estimated that 33,000 people were killed during the uprising on Cheju-do from March 1948-April 1949 and some 2200 in the Yosu-Sunch'on Rebellion in October 1948. A further 6000 'guerillas' were killed between November 1949-March 1950.\footnote{See The unknown war, pp. 36-50.}

On 4 February 1946 a Provisional People's Committee for North Korea, headed by Kim Il-sung, was established with Soviet encouragement in Pyongyang. In the south, faced with overwhelming opposition to its policies, the USMG responded on 30 June 1946 by announcing that it intended to support a coalition led by Kim Kyu-shik and Lyuh Woon-hyang, in a deliberate move to isolate Rhee Syng-man, whose prickly nature and bellicose attitude particularly annoyed the US Embassy. On 12 December 1946 an interim parliament was formed around these two groups.

The Joint Commission established under the Moscow Agreement was unable to make any headway, with the United States insisting that the Korean question be referred to the United Nations,\footnote{The rationale for referring Korea to the United Nations was the US desire, expressed in a Joint Chief of Staffs memorandum of 25 September 1947, to reduce forces in Korea which 'could well be used elsewhere' (Greece, Turkey). It was felt that there was 'little strategic interest in maintaining' troop levels in Korea. See Drawing the line, pp. 43-44.} and the Soviet Union calling for the withdrawal of all foreign troops from the peninsula. However, it was not until October 1947 (and in the light of developments in Europe) that the Soviet Union finally abandoned efforts to cooperate with the United States in the Commission.\footnote{See Okonogi Masao, 'The domestic roots of the Korean War,' in The origins of the Cold War, p. 306.} On 14 November 1947 the UN General Assembly adopted a US-sponsored resolution calling for elections to form a national government, and the
United Nations Temporary Commission in Korea (UNTCOK) was established to oversee the campaign.

Elections were held in the South on 10 May 1948. Rhee, now with the full backing of the United States despite his repeated calls for a 'march to the north,' was elected President and the Republic of Korea [South Korea] was proclaimed on 15 August 1948. Elections were also held in the North (not observed by UNTCOK, but then the voting in the South had also only been observed in a most perfunctory way). It was later claimed by P'yongyang that 77.8 per cent of eligible voters in the South had participated in underground elections for 1000 delegates, who met in Haeju to choose the 360 members for seats allocated to South Korea. The Supreme People's Assembly was thus held to represent the whole country. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea [North Korea] was established on 9 September 1948 and Soviet forces withdrew.

Kim Tu-bong, who had been chairman of the Korean Independence League (Choson tongnip tongmaeng) in Yenan (China) was elected Chairman of the Presidium of the Assembly (in effect, President), while Kim Il-sung became Premier and the South Korean Communist leader Park Hon-yong was appointed Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister.

Political Framework

Ignorance about the nature of 'national Communism' has meant that the United States has regarded North Korea as either a Soviet or a Chinese satellite. In fact, it has never been either. In the immediate post-war period the regime was based to a large extent on the People's Committees. Then, between 1947-1948, as global differences amongst the two superpowers emerged, the Soviet Union exercised a decisive influence. Thereafter, the People's Republic of China was able to establish enduring ties with North Korea. The role played by Kim Il-sung in manoeuvring between the two Communist giants will be discussed more fully below.

Despite the particular path taken by North Korea, the political organisation which emerged was not all that dissimilar from those in other Communist states.

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19 44 people were killed on election day, but 323 had died in the ten days leading up to the elections. A further 10 000 were arrested and the USMG barred anyone with a police record (political activists) from voting.

20 See Korean Workers' Party, p. 81.
The Constitution of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which was adopted by the Supreme People's Assembly on 8 September 1948, was closely modelled on the then current Soviet Constitution. Although the Constitution was intended to apply to the whole of Korea (Article 103 even provided that the capital would be in Seoul), the decision had been made on 9 July 1948 to implement it in the North without waiting for reunification. The original Constitution stressed the sovereignty of the people and their rights and duties. It also laid down the roles of the Supreme People's Assembly and its Presidium, the Cabinet and Ministries, local government bodies and the courts.

The 1948 Constitution was amended a number of times and then, on 17 December 1972, replaced by the current Constitution. The new Constitution reflected the major restructuring of state organisation which had occurred progressively over the preceding 25 years. In particular, it regulated the creation of the new positions of President and Vice-Presidents, the formation of the Central People's Committee and State Administration Council (Cabinet) and the dominant role of the state ideologies of chuch' e (Article 4) and chollima (Article 13).

Of course, as in other Communist states, real power resides with the Korean Workers' Party (KWP), which is mentioned only once in the Constitution (in connection with the chuch' e ideology). All political leaders hold joint positions in the ruling party and the government, with the latter only serving to implement KWP policy. The Korean Workers' Party is a highly centralised mass party which reaches into every aspect of North Korean life. Although the National Party Congress, which meets irregularly, is nominally - together with its Central Committee - the 'supreme leadership organ' of the Party, real power rests in the hands of the members of the Central Committee's Political Bureau and that body's Presidium, and in the Military

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22 Chuch' e, literally 'foundation of action,' is the term used to denote the self-reliant line followed by North Korea. As Suzuki Masayuki has shown in *Kita Chosen shakaishugi to dento no kyoei* (Tokyo: Tokyo daigaku shuppankai, 1993), pp. 40-41, although first used by Kim II-sung in a speech made in 1946, it received its classic formulation in a speech about combating dogmatism he gave to party activists on 28 December 1955 (thanks to Gavan McCormack for this reference). Chollima, or 'thousand-ri horse,' refers to a mass mobilisation campaign designed to increase production through strenuous effort.

23 There are two 'front' parties, which together with the KWP form the Democratic Front for the Reunification of the Fatherland, analogous to the situation which existed in East Germany. These are the Korean Social Democratic Party (*Chosen saboe-minju-dang*) and the religious Ch'ondogyo Young Friends' Party (*Ch'ondogyo ch'ong-u-dang*).
Commission of the Central Committee. At the time of his death, Kim Il-sung was concurrently General Secretary of the Korean Workers’ Party, member of the Political Bureau and its Presidium, Chairman of the Military Commission, Chairman of the National Defence Committee and President.

Constitutionally, the Supreme People's Assembly is the 'highest organ of state power.' In fact, legislative and executive power is wielded by the Central People's Committee (under 'guidance' from the Korean Workers' Party). The State Administration Council in effect oversees the bureaucracy, while the Standing Committee of the Assembly is the permanent executive which operates when the latter is not sitting. This structure is illustrated in the table at Appendix I. It should also be noted that the State Political Security Department (secret police) is directly responsible to the President.

One other element of the political system in North Korea needs to be mentioned before turning to the life and times of Kim Il-sung himself. This is the personality cult which was created around, not only Kim Il-sung, but which embraces (almost) his entire extended family. The principal epithets attached to Kim Il-sung and his son and successor, Kim Jong-il, have been 'Great Leader' and 'Dear Leader' respectively. Other terms have included 'lodestar of our time,' 'genius of thought' and 'sun and legendary hero of the nation.' As Gavan McCormack has pointed out, such adulation reminds one of imperial cults such as that surrounding the late Shah of Iran. More significantly, a whole pantheon of myths has been created around Kim senior, particularly, but not solely, related to his anti-Japanese activities.

'Great Leader'

Kim Il-sung was born Kim Song-ju on 15 April 1912 in Nam-ri (now Mangyongdae) in the vicinity of P'yongyang. The official version of his early life, which makes him out to have been a youthful revolutionary, forming a 'Down-with-Imperialism Union' when he was fifteen and establishing the Korean Revolutionary Army at eighteen, is nothing but pure myth. Similarly, the subsequent re-writing of history to turn the whole Kim family into ardent revolutionaries is just one more example of the extent of the myth-making. Although there is little


doubt that his family was anti-Japanese and that his father, Kim Hyong-jik, a primary school teacher who later sold herbal medicines, was briefly imprisoned for nationalist activities, the plucking out of obscurity of his great-grandfather, Kim Ung-woo, to become the leader of the patriots who set fire to the US gunship General Sherman when it attempted to force Korea into 'opening up' in 1866, reveals the extent of the hagiography.

Despite these crude distortions of history, it is not true that Kim Il-sung was an unknown figure when chosen to head North Korea or that his later revolutionary activity was entirely fabricated as has been maintained by Cold War apologists in both South Korea and the United States. Nor is there any truth in the suggestion that the Kim Il-sung who became President of North Korea was a 'fake'. Chinese and Russian archival sources prove conclusively that Kim Il-sung (a nom de guerre) joined the Chinese Communist Party in 1931 and was a respected guerilla leader, who fought in the 1st Route Army of the Anti-Japanese United Army. However, this was a Chinese army, not the Korean Revolutionary Army he was subsequently reputed to have led. In 1987, a unit history which Kim Il-sung had written in 1942 was published in Beijing, along with similar unit histories of the 3rd and 7th Route Armies by Kim Ch'aek and Ch'oe Sok-ch'on (Ch'oe Yong-gon), in the 2-volume history of the Northeastern Anti-Japanese United Army. As the leading Japanese scholar on this subject, Wada Haruki, shows, Kim Il-sung was widely known for his daring cross-border raid on Japanese forces in the Korean town of Pojon in 1937 and his defeat of the Japanese 'Maeda Unit' in February 1940. When Yang Ching-yu, commander of the 1st Route Army, was killed on 23 February, he was replaced by Kim Il-sung. With a price of Y 10 000 on his head, Kim (code-named tora 'tiger' by the Japanese) retreated to the Soviet Union, where he spent the remainder of the

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27 *Revolutionary activities*, p. 4. See also 'Kim cult and distortion of history,' *Vantage Point* VII, 8 (1984), 12-15.


31 *Korean Workers' Party*, pp. 70-71.
war (along with 100-200 other Koreans) as a captain in the Red Army's 88th Special Brigade based near Khabarovsk.

In August 1945 Kim Il-sung was chosen, according to Wada with the support of the more senior Korean guerilla leaders, to head the Korean Task Force (Chaoxian gongzuotuan) delegated with reasserting Communist authority in post-war Korea. It was in this role that he returned on the Soviet ship Pugacheff, landing at Wonsan on 19 September 1945. With this backing by his war-time comrades-in-arms, Kim Il-sung was the logical choice of the Soviet 25th Army over his Christian rival and former president of the Choson Ilbo newspaper, Cho Man-shik, and subsequently by Stalin in August 1946 over the leader of the Korean Communist Party in the South, Park Hon-yong, although Kim had acknowledged the pre-eminence of the latter in a speech to Communist cadres in the Soviet zone on 13 October 1945.

In August 1946 the North Korean Bureau of the Korean Communist Party amalgamated with the New People's Party (Shinmin-dang), which had been established by the Communists who had returned from Yanan, to form the North Korean Workers' Party. This move not only strengthened the Communists in the North from the Party leadership in Seoul, but also served to consolidate Kim Il-sung's position (even though Kim Tu-bong became its Chairman). By the time of the 'national' elections in August 1948, Party membership had grown to more than 700 000. In June 1949, the Southern and Northern Parties amalgamated to form the Korean Workers' Party, with its headquarters in P'yongyang and Kim Il-sung as its Chairman.

In the lead-up to the Korean War, all opposition to the Communists (with the exception of the United Front parties) was eliminated, on the whole not physically, but through 'encouragement' to flee South or political re-education. A particular target were North Korean Christians, although churches were allowed to remain open (political activity was, however, banned) and Kim Il-sung personally mediated between the Party and leading Christians. There is no evidence for the long-held view that a group of Koreans from the Soviet Union was the dominant political force at this time, or for the belief that Soviet advisers played a significant back-room role. On the contrary, there were only 200-250 advisers in North Korea when the Red Army withdrew, a figure which had fallen to 120 on the eve of the war.\(^{32}\)

With the war over, Kim Il-sung set about systematically restructuring the KWP and consolidating his position. At the 5th Central Committee plenum in December 1952, he delivered a scathing attack on factionalism in the Party. In earlier criticising the 'left-wing error'

\(^{32}\) The unknown war, pp. 59-60.
of 'exclusionism' (that is, favouring workers at the expense of peasants) he had obliquely attacked and distanced himself from the leading figure in the 'Tashkent' group, Organisation Department head Ho Kai. The target was now the so-called 'domestic faction' headed by Park Hon-yong. These pre-Pacific War Communists were accused of collaboration with the Americans and a number were executed.

For a few years yet, Kim Il-sung was still obliged to share power with leading figures from both the Russian-Korean faction (Park Ch'ang-ok, Park Yong-bin) and the Yenan faction (Ch'oe Ch'ang-ik, Kim Tu-bong), but at the Central Committee plenum in August 1956 - under the influence of events at the 20th Congress of the CPSU earlier that year, when Premier Nikita Khrushchev denounced Josef Stalin33 - there was a final showdown. Kim was able to turn the tables on his challengers, accusing them of 'treachery to the revolution.' Their talk of 'freedom' and 'democracy' was designed to turn the Party into a 'factionalist clique of pedagogues.'34

By early 1958 Kim Il-sung was in a position to steer North Korea along a new path (called 'The Forced March' by Scalapino and Lee). In a major speech commemorating the tenth anniversary of the foundation of the Korean People's Army on 8 February 1958, he stressed the tradition inherited from the Anti-Japanese United Army, which alone had 'fought against imperialism in the interests of the workers, peasants, and other working people.' Other armed groups had acting in the interest of landlords or not engaged in actual combat. Not only were the Party and the Army henceforth to be modelled on the tradition of the guerilla struggle in Manchuria, but emphasis on the revolutionary struggle also served to underpin the personality cult around Kim Il-sung. Other features of this period were the rebuilding of the Party and government structures, which had been severely compromised by the Korean War, criticism of intellectuals, an end to factions and a new focus on nationalism and patriotism.

'Dear Leader'

That the creation of a family dynasty has a political significance which transcends a mere personality cult, is borne out by events leading up to the emergence of Kim Il-sung's son by his first wife, Kim Jong-il, as his protege.

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33 This was also the period of the Hundred Flowers campaign in China, during which a degree of pluralism was tolerated before another Anti-Rightist crackdown.

34 Korean Workers' Party, pp. 86-102.
When Kim Il-sung's younger brother, Kim Yong-ju, returned to North Korea in 1953 from the Soviet Union, where he had been attending university and Party schools since 1945, he was appointed to the Central Committee's Organisation and Guidance Department, rising to become its head in September 1960. At the 2nd Conference of the Korean Workers' Party in October 1966 he was elected a Candidate Member of the Political Committee, becoming a Member at the 5th Party Congress in November 1970. At that time he ranked sixth in the Central Committee.

Then, in September 1973, at a secret session of the Central Committee, Kim Jong-il was elected Party Secretary for Organisation and Propaganda. The following February, Kim Yong-ju became a Deputy Premier, a 'demotion' allegedly due to his opposition to the promotion of his nephew, although he was also reported to be suffering from mental depression. In any case, he remained out of public view from April 1975 until his surprise reappearance at seventh place in the hierarchy in late 1993.

Kim Jong-il was born on 16 February 1942 in Vyatsuk in the Soviet Maritime Province, not as myth has it, on Paektusan (Mt Pektu), a mountain on the North Korea-China border which is venerated by all Koreans. His mother died in 1949, and he was raised by his stepmother, Kim Song-ae, whom his father married in 1952. He attended school in Pyongyang, and in 1964 graduated from Kim Il-sung University where he studied political economy. His university course was interrupted by two years study at the East German Air Force Academy from 1958-1960. After finishing university he was appointed as a cadre in the Organisation and Guidance Department of the KWP Central Committee. Differences with his uncle, who was Head of the Department at that time, led to his transfer to Hamgyongbuk-do Province until 1966 when he was assigned to the Ministry of People's Armed Forces and became a major in his father's security guard. In 1971 he was appointed Deputy Head of both the

35 'Kim Jong-il and his surroundings,' Vantage Point VI, 2 (1983), 12.

36 At the 21st plenary session of the Central Committee on 8 December 1993 he became a Politburo Member, and was elected a Vice-President by the Supreme People's Assembly on 11 December. See Kim Yong-ju ranked 7th in Workers's [sic] Party hierarchy,' Vantage Point XVII, 1 (1994), 22.

37 Some sources give his birth year as 1940 and suggest he was born in Manchuria. See Who is Kim Jong-il? (Seoul: Institute for North Korea Studies, 1980), p. 7. A reference book recently published in China claims that he was actually born in Samarkand (Uzbekistan).
Organisation and Guidance Department and the Culture and the Arts Department of the Central Committee.\textsuperscript{38}

In February 1973 Kim Il-sung launched the 'Three Revolution Teams,' a movement described as a 'new method of revolutionary guidance' to accelerate the ideological, technical and cultural revolutions.\textsuperscript{39} Kim Il-sung himself said their main purpose was to lend our cadres good help so they may discard conservatism, empiricism, and other outdated ideas and successfully carry out their work as required by the Party and thus develop our economy at a faster pace.\textsuperscript{40}

The movement thus provided an ideal opportunity to implement Kim Il-sung's view, expressed in an address to the 6th Congress of the Socialist League of Working Youth on 24 June 1971, that

the rising generation may keep up the revolutionary tradition only by continuing the revolution generation after generation.\textsuperscript{41}

With his election to the position of Party Secretary for Organisation and Propaganda, Kim Jong-il was therefore entrusted with control of the Teams.

Although the term 'Party Centre' had been used previously on occasions, its appearance in an editorial in the Party organ Rodong Shinmun on 14 February 1974 to denote Kim Jong-il was confirmation that he was being groomed to succeed his father. There was, however, resistance to this turn of events from a number of quarters. These opposition groups centred around Kim Yong-ju, Kim Song-ae and Kim Dong-gyu were demoted or purged, as were senior officers of the Korean People's Army such as Li Yong-mu. Other prominent figures were reportedly executed, amongst them Chi Kyong-su and Chi Byong-hak.\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{38} Who is Kim Jong-il?, pp. 8-9.

\textsuperscript{39} 'Aims and realities of the Three-Revolution Team Movement,' Vantage Point VI, 3 (1983), 12.

\textsuperscript{40} Korean Workers' Party, p. 128.

\textsuperscript{41} 'The consolidation of Kim Jong-il's base of power in North Korea,' Vantage Point XVI, 2 (1990), 2.

\textsuperscript{42} 'Can Kim Jong-il maintain his father's "inviolable" [sic] authority?,' Vantage Point IV, 7 (1981), 11-15; 'The consolidation of Kim Jong-il's base of power,' 2-3.
The 'Three-Revolution Teams' were a major element in the campaign for the consolidation of Kim Jong-il's succession. They were particularly important in ensuring control of the Korean People's Army which, because of the nexus between the military and the Party in North Korea, was essential in maintaining power in the KWP. Following Kim Jong-il's formal endorsement as the heir apparent at the 6th Congress of the Korean Workers' Party on 10-14 October 1980 (he had become First Deputy Chairman of the National Defence Commission in May), he started to appoint younger cadres and officers, many former classmates from the Mangyongdae Revolutionary School, to influential posts in the Party and military. These included General O Kuk-yol, who became Chief of the General Staff. Since the late 1980's, in line with the priority being given to economic policies, a large number of technocrats, many with economics training, were appointed to senior positions in both the Party and bureaucracy, in moves designed to further strengthen Kim Jong-il's power base.

Since the late 1980's, day-to-day affairs in North Korea have been under the control of Kim Jong-il, as confirmed by Foreign Minister Kim Yong-nam in New York in September 1992. On 14 March 1993 it was revealed that he was responsible for the decision to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty regime. At the same time, he has assumed several new posts and titles: Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army (December 1991), Marshal (20 April 1992) and Chairman of the National Defence Commission (9 April 1993).

Succession

On 8 July 1994 Kim Il-sung died, aged 82. According to the official medical report, the previous day he had suffered a 'serious myocardial infarction owing to heavy mental strains, which was followed by a heart shock' from which he did not recover. While the 'Great Leader' lay in state in the presidential palace, where many thousands

43 Who is Kim Jong-il?, pp. 11-14.

44 'The consolidation of Kim Jong-il's base of power,' 7-10; 'Profiles of newly rising figures in North Korean Workers' Party as close associates of Kim Jong-il,' Vantage Point XVI, 8 (1993), 22-26.

45 'Military heads campaign to bolster Kim's dynastic succession,' Vantage Point XVI, 7 (1993), 11.

46 'Kim Jong-il's ploy of "semi-war state" shakes entire North Korea,' Vantage Point XVI, 3 (1993), 22.

of North Koreans paid their respects, the hagiographers were at work. According to the Korean Central News Agency in P'yongyang, at the instance of Kim Il-sung's death Mt Paektu shook, 'writhing in grief,' while strong winds whipped up the waters of Lake Ch'onji in its crater and heavy rain fell on the mountain, reflecting the sorrow of all Koreans. On the other hand, there were also those who perceived more earthly intervention; former CIA Director Robert Gates told NBC that the timing of Kim Il-sung's death was 'all too convenient' and suggested that he may have died from other than natural causes, a view echoed by Kim Chang-soon, Director of the Institute for North Korea Studies in Seoul.

Whatever the reality, and so far no evidence has emerged to support the conspiracy theories, the transition of power to Kim Jong-il appears to have proceeded unexpectedly smoothly. On 10 July the Korean Workers' Party summoned all 145 Members and 103 Candidate Members of the Central Committee and the 687 members of the Supreme People's Assembly to P'yongyang. Other leading Party members and senior bureaucrats outside of the country were also recalled. According to an Itar-Tass report, Kim Jong-il was confirmed in the positions of President and General Secretary of the Korean Workers' Party on 12 July, although a formal announcement was not expected until after the funeral. Other reports, based on a radio broadcast, suggested that Kim Jong-il had also been elected to the third of his father's posts, Chairman of the Central Military Commission. There is, however, still some confusion about which positions Kim Jong-il has actually assumed, along with reports of a power struggle with his uncle over the presidency.

While the Korean Central News Agency reported that 'more than five billion (people) on the five continents expressed deepest condolences on the death of the Great Leader,' the South Korean Government refused to send any message or to permit its citizens to express

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50 Agence France Presse report, Seoul, 10.7.1994, 1738.

51 Kyodo report, Tokyo, 19.7.1994, 1125. Suggestions that he might relinquish one or other of the posts held by his father, for example, allowing his uncle Kim Yong-ju to assume the presidency, proved ill-founded.

52 Australian, 14.7.1994, 6.


54 Age, 2.8.1994, 10.
sympathy, Prime Minister Lee Yung-duk blaming Kim Il-sung for the division of the peninsula.\textsuperscript{55}

Problems Ahead

Whether Kim Jong-il reigns supreme in his own right, or whether a quasi-collective leadership ('the Party Centre behind Kim Jong-il') rules North Korea, at least for the time being, as veteran South Korean Government adviser Kang In-duk believes will occur,\textsuperscript{58} the country faces severe problems at home and abroad.

One of the main problems is Kim Jong-il himself. He undoubtedly lacks the respect his father enjoyed as a consequence of his reputation as a leader of the anti-Japanese struggle, as shown by the opposition to his consecration as heir apparent, not least by the Chinese leadership. He has minimal military experience in a country where the Party and military are intertwined. He has a reputation as a playboy and dilettante. He has been described as 'unstable and bizarre,' as 'impetuous and temperamental.' Some of the worst excesses of the North Korean regime (abortive raid on the South Korean presidential house, attempted assassination of President Park Chung-hee and fatal killing of his wife, axe incident at Panmunjom, Rangoon bombing, downing of KE 858 over the Andaman Sea) have been ascribed to him.

Although not everybody agrees with these descriptions of Kim Jong-il, there are enough doubts to suggest that time is not on his side. Does this mean that he will be toppled by a younger group of military leaders, perhaps led by Vice-Marshall Kim Gwang-jun? Or that he will be 'retired' on medical grounds (there has been renewed speculation about the state of his health in recent weeks) so that a fundamental break can be made with the past, as has occurred in other Communist states? Much depends on how he tackles the other problems alluded to above.

Apart from the regime's capacity to change, about which it is still too early to make any predictions although there are some encouraging signs, the most pressing internal problem is the state of North Korea's economy. As already mentioned, the North Korean economy was stronger than that of South Korea until 1976, even longer if per capita income is taken as the base. There is now widespread evidence that the economy is in dire straits, with reports of tightened food rationing

\textsuperscript{55} Associated Press report, Seoul, 18.7.1994, 1438.

\textsuperscript{56} See his interview with Chong Bong-uk, 'The fate of the [sic] Pyongyang's collective leadership will most likely be determined this coming spring,' Vantage Point XVII, 7 (1994), 6-8.
and famine. However, not all economists agree with such assessments. Well known scholar, Hwang Eui-gak, for example, lists a number of social indicators, including daily calorie supply, which throw a different light on the North Korean situation. In the past, P'yongyang's policy of autarky was blamed for the downturn in the economy, but in reality over half of all North Korea's foreign trade was with the Soviet Union and China (1990), and when they began to demand payment in hard currency (in 1991 and 1992 respectively) there was no longer any way to hide reality. In 1990, the first year of negative growth (-3.7 percent), the foreign debt totalled US$ 7.86 billion. Although the bulk of this debt is with Russia, many Western creditors (including Australia) are linking improved relations with North Korea to the manner in which the regime tackles this problem.

A recent study by the main South Korean economic think-tank, the Korea Development Institute, suggests that any attempts to improve the North Korean economy are doomed unless the issue of inefficiency and the inadequate infrastructure are tackled. Nevertheless, business leaders in Seoul are generally optimistic that the change in regime will result in increased business opportunities and a gradual opening up of the country. Already, two-way cross border trade with China has increased to approximately US$ 700 million (1993).

Externally, the overwhelming problem remains the North Korean nuclear issue. Whether, as many analysts (including leading North Korea watchers in Seoul) believe, the issue was triggered by P'yongyang mainly to force the United States to the bargaining table, or whether it is the last desperate act of a regime abandoned by its friends and finally cornered, is not clear. However, the former assessment seems at least partly correct. North Korea desperately seeks both American recognition and financial aid. So long as the sole extent of official United States contact with North Korea for forty years was in the set-piece environment of Panmunjom, there was no prospect of achieving these goals. At least in the less artificial atmosphere of Geneva some progress appears possible.

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While not discounting the possibility that P'yongyang may have been engaged in developing a nuclear weapons capability until detected (partly through its own revelations), it is not the only country to have done so. Indeed, it joins a list of countries which have been either actively encouraged by the United States to do so, or at least aided andabetted in one form or another (Israel, Iraq, Pakistan). North Korea genuinely fears the possible resurgence of Japanese militarism (a prospect not viewed with much enthusiasm in Seoul either), and has had legitimate grounds for apprehension about South Korea's own nuclear ambitions. It is now known that Seoul only abandoned its nuclear weapons research programme, initiated by President Park Chung-hee's Weapons Exploitation Committee in 1971, in 1991.61

Of course, any nuclear proliferation is to be deplored, but the latest CIA estimates suggest that earlier concern was exaggerated.62 The problem for the West is how to proceed from here.

Conclusion

Despite the lengthy grooming process which Kim Jong-il undertook, and the fact that he has effectively held the reins of administrative power in North Korea for some years, the 'Great Successor' remains something of an enigma - except to the fortune tellers in South Korea, who have been predicting his early demise or ouster.63

Not everyone subscribes to the assessments of him made by North Korean defectors or the intelligence communities in South Korea and the United States. As late as December 1993, the US Defense Intelligence Agency described Kim Jong-il as 'paranoid, spoiled and suspicious,' adding that

his limited personal ability, possible widespread opposition and the continuing poor economic and social conditions could lead to a coup.64

While anything is possible, this view is not shared by others who have met him and noticed his keen interest in business and politics. In fact,

61 On this issue, see Peter Hayes, 'The Republic of Korea and the nuclear issue' (paper presented to the Workshop on 'Security and the Korean Peninsula in the 1990s,' Canberra, 1992).


there have been fairly reliable reports dating back to at least 1982 to the effect that Kim Jong-il favoured the opening of North Korea. The recent approaches made through the Australian Embassy in Bangkok for assistance in joining the ASEAN Regional Forum is probably an indication that the new regime wants to break out of its isolation.⁶⁵

In a further sign of North Korea's intention to continue the dialogue brokered during former President Carter's visit to P'yongyang, senior officials swiftly advised both the United States and South Korea that planned talks would take place after Kim Il-sung's funeral, even expressing 'regret' to Seoul that it had not been possible to hold what would have been an historic summit meeting between Kim Il-sung and Kim Young-sam (Kim Yong-sam).⁶⁶

For the time being, Kim Jong-il appears secure as leader of North Korea. The Korean People's Army and security forces have pledged loyalty, most potential family rivals have been sidelined and the elite managing the country are largely younger bureaucrats who have been hand-picked by Kim Jong-il, such as the North-South summit negotiator Kim Yong-sun and Deputy Foreign Minister and chief negotiator with the United States Kang Sok-ju. Kim Jong-il's major dilemma will be how to open up North Korea and improve the ailing economy without bringing about the destruction of the regime.

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⁶⁵ Australian, 29.7.1994, 1.

Formal Governmental Structure of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea

Supreme People’s Assembly
615 Deputies

President of the
Democratic People’s Republic
of Korea
3 Vice-presidents

Central People’s Committee
1 Secretary
14 Members

State Political Security
Department
Director

Local People’s Assemblies
Provincial and City/County

State Administration Council
Premier
First Deputy Premier
12 Deputy Premiers

National Defense Commission

Central Court
President
Provincial Courts
Local Courts

Ministries
Chemical Industry
Communications
Construction
Culture and Art
External Economic Affairs
Finance
Foreign Affairs
Foreign Trade
Labor Administration
Land and Sea Transportation
Materials Supply
Metal Industry
Natural Resources Development
People’s Armed Forces
Power Industry
Public Health
Public Security
Railways

Commissions
Academy of Sciences
Agriculture
Building Material Industry
Education
Fisheries
Land and City Administration
Light Industry
Machine Building Industry
Mining Industry
People’s Service
State Construction
State Planning
State Science and Technology
Transportation

Standing Committee of the
Supreme People’s Assembly
1 Chairman
2 Vice-chairmen
12 Members

Budget Committee
1 Chairman
6 Members

Rules Committee
1 Chairman
6 Members

Credentials Committee
1 Chairman
6 Members

Special Agencies of State Administration Council
Civil Aviation Bureau
Committee for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries
Committee for the Promotion of Industrial Trade
General Bureau of Overseas Companies Affairs
Hydrometeorological Bureau
Korean Central News Agency
Korean Radio and Television Broadcasting Committee
Nursery and Kindergarten Guidance Bureau
Physical Culture and Sports Guidance Committee
Press Guidance Bureau

Provinces
Changdok Chongsin
North Hwanghae
South Hwanghae
South Hwanghae
Kangwon Kangnam
Nampo
North Pyongan
South Pyongan
Pyongyang
Yanggang
Cities
Hamhung
Sariwon
Sinuiju
Wonsan
Others
“Special Cities”

Source:
Tai Sung An, North Korea.
A political handbook
Kim Il-sung's Family Tree

Grandfather
(Kim Bo-hyon)

Father
(Kim Hyong-jik)

Mother
(Kang Ban-sok)

Kim Il-sung

First Wife
(Kim Jong-suk)
Children:
Kim Jong-il
Kim Kyong-hui

Second Wife
(Kim Song-ae)
Children:
Kim Kyong-jin
Kim Pyong-il
Kim Yong-il

Brothers
(Kim Chol-ju)
(Kim Yong-ju)