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## ACADEMIC PAPER SERIES

MARCH 12, 2015

THE WHISPER IN THE EAR: RE-DEFECTOR PRESS CONFERENCE AS  
INFORMATION MANAGEMENT TOOL

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**Abstract**

Although coercion is a key element in the governing strategy of the North Korean party-state, the authorities in Pyongyang do not hold political power at the barrel of a gun alone. Control and manipulation of information are equally important tools. This paper uses the case of “re-defector” press conferences convened in Pyongyang between 2011 and 2013 to illustrate how the party-state employs an active information management strategy to buttress its rule. Building upon the contemporary “politics of authoritarianism” literature and the concept of governmentality, this paper utilizes Thomas Callaghy’s “domain consensus” as a framework to codify the reciprocal communicative process by which the party-state interacts with the citizenry. The domain consensus framework subdivides authoritarian control into a trifurcated framework of ideal types: coercive, utilitarian, and normative. This working paper focuses on the third of these – the normative. As such, this paper explores the information management strategy used to promote a consensus on expectations of life inside and outside North Korea. Using brand new structured interview findings, this paper also provides a bottom-up perspective that shows how the information propagated by the government of Kim Jong-un is manipulated, rejected, or reproduced by ordinary people.

**Keywords:** *North Korea, politics of authoritarianism, domain consensus, North Korean defectors, information management*

**Introduction<sup>1</sup>**

Although coercion is a key element in the governing strategy of the North Korean party-state, where, as in similar political systems, a single party dominates access to political office and positions of policy-making, the authorities in Pyongyang do not hold political power at the barrel of a gun alone. Control and manipulation of information are equally important tools. This paper uses the case of “re-defector” press conferences convened in Pyongyang between 2011 and 2013 to illustrate how the party-state employs an active information management strategy to buttress its rule.

Building upon the contemporary “politics of authoritarianism” literature and the concept of governmentality, this paper utilizes Thomas Callaghy’s “domain consensus” as a framework to codify the reciprocal communicative process by which the party-state interacts with North Korean citizens. The domain consensus framework subdivides authoritarian control into a trifurcated framework of ideal types: coercive, utilitarian, and normative. This working paper focuses on the third of these – the normative. It explores the information management strategy used to promote a consensus on expectations of life inside and outside North Korea. Using brand new structured interview findings, it provides a bottom-up perspective that shows how the information propagated by the government of Kim Jong-un is manipulated, rejected, or reproduced by ordinary people.

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## The Return of History and the Politics of Authoritarianism

The events of 1989 seemed to mark “the end of history.” With the collapse of the Soviet Union and apparent triumph of liberal democracy, the “third wave” of democratization was predicted to sweep the globe. It was a momentous and paradigmatic moment: Russia and other former Soviet republics were implementing economic and political reforms; they were on the road to democracy. Soon, so too would everyone else.

But then history returned. Through the 1990s and into the 2000s it became clear that authoritarianism was not going away after all. Authoritarian regimes<sup>2</sup> proved more durable than scholars had suspected. In response, the study of non-democratic regimes and the “politics of authoritarianism” took a turn towards greater depth and sophistication.

Much credit must go to Barbara Geddes, whose work on regime transitions is foundational. She successfully disaggregated different types of dictatorial regime, thus rescuing “dictatorship” from its functionally useless prior definition: “anything that isn’t democracy.” Using an innovative categorization of authoritarian regime types (personalist; military; and single-party), Geddes argued that understanding the differences between different types uncovers systematic differences in how—during times of economic crisis—such regimes do or do not break down.<sup>3</sup>

Building upon Geddes’ work, Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way challenged the “pronounced democratizing bias” of the immediate post-Cold War period, positing (1) degree of linkage to the West and (2) capacity of “state and governing party structures” as the structural variables which most accurately determine authoritarian regime durability. “Where linkage to the West was high, competitive authoritarian regimes democratized. Where linkage was low, regime outcomes hinged on incumbents’ organizational power. Where state and governing party structures were well organized and cohesive, regimes remained stable and authoritarian; where they were underdeveloped or lacked cohesion, regimes were unstable, though they rarely democratized.”<sup>4</sup>

The same authors’ supplementary insight into the durability of single-party states concerned the hypothesis that regimes led by “revolutionary” parties exhibit the components of durable authoritarian rule more than those without “revolutionary” character. They argued, in short, that single-party regimes forged of a revolutionary process have more organizational power and thus capacity to survive the fluctuating fortunes of state

construction and management. Although the Soviet Red Army put the North Korean variant in place—with Kim Il-sung as its leader—this followed an extensive guerrilla campaign centered on Jilin Province, part of the modern day People’s Republic of China. This forms the historical backdrop to the revolutionary pedigree ascribed to the guerrilla force’s institutional successor, the Korean Workers’ Party.<sup>5</sup>

The argument that strong party structures are a key determinant of regime durability was substantiated by Milan Svoblik, who concluded that authoritarian systems under single-party rule are more resilient than other types of system because party organizations are “incentive structures that encourage sunk political investments by their members.”<sup>6</sup> Put simply, once you are in, you are in for the long haul. Furthermore, party organizations provide a mechanism for the exercise of political control over armed forces—not least by co-opting commanding officers into party structures. Rather than seeking to fence in and regulate the functional purpose of the military outside the civilian administrative structure, durable party states bring commanding officers into the party. The ability of authoritarian parties to essentially (re)structure much of society around the goals of the party helps explain their durability.

Perhaps counter-intuitively, hereditary succession may also contribute positively to high regime durability. This is because succession provides the moment of gravest danger for a regime, specifically ones that lack effective mechanisms for conflict resolution and credible commitment. It places embedded networks and systems of loyalty under renewed pressure; nobody can be sure what the new leader will do, who or what they now answer to, or to whom will go the spoils under the new system.

This threat and its potential consequences render acquiescence to hereditary rule attractive (in terms of being the least bad option) for risk-averse elites. The dangerous process of choosing a new leader from within the ruling organization may lead elites to “support hereditary succession as a method for preserving their influence” and mitigate “the uncertainty that surrounds an aging ruler and an impending leadership change,” according to Jason Brownlee. Hereditary succession clarifies the succession process, reduces the potential for intra-elite conflict, and creates a “‘focal point’ for elite consensus.”<sup>7</sup>

Then, is that all it takes to explain the high level of regime resilience in the North Korean case? Certainly, theoretical insights into the durability of party-states and dynastic rule provide



pertinent conceptual clarity. North Korea is a state where the practical business of rule takes place through the Korean Workers' Party and one that has gone through two rounds of hereditary succession.

These insights are critical to our understanding of various types of authoritarian rule. However, we do not think they are sufficient. We argue that ending the analysis at this point results in an overweening focus on the state, state organizations, and elites. It demands that ordinary citizens be conceptualized as passive observers of the political process, which they are not. To rectify this imbalance, we propose an additional important variable for analysis: the mechanism through which state power manifests itself in and through society.

The concept of “governmentality” takes us beyond the conventional understanding of power as a simple hierarchy of state over citizen. It posits that control is not merely dictated above by the state and reproduced from below by the citizenry.<sup>8</sup> Power is diffuse and interactive. Governmentality encourages holistic analysis of government, or, in the words of Mitchell Dean, to “analyse those practices [of government] that try to shape, sculpt, mobilize and work through the choices, desires, aspirations, needs, wants and lifestyles of individuals and groups.” An “analytics of government” is concerned with how thought is conceived “within programmes for the direction and reform of conduct.”<sup>9</sup> In short, it is how governments define the field of action in which citizens live, think, and act.

As such, governmentality provides crucial insights into the foundations of state legitimacy and authoritarian durability. However, herein lingers a problem; governmentality is primarily conceptual. It lacks a clear framework for understanding how, on the ground, governments such as the party-state of North Korea interact with citizens to define what is and is not acceptable. Fortunately, there is insight in Thomas Callaghy’s “domain consensus,” which offers a disaggregation of governmentality and results in a usable framework for understanding the constitution of state-society relations.<sup>10</sup>

Callaghy seeks to explain the mechanisms by which governments manufacture consent over what both state and people can or cannot, will or will not do. Basing his research on authoritarianism in southern Africa, he posits three ideal types of consensus structure—coercive, utilitarian, and normative—arguing that all three combine to constitute the specific set of power relations that exist between a given state and its citizenry.

Neither the coercive nor utilitarian mechanisms of control and consensus formation directly concern us here, but a brief explanation will be instructive. The first mechanism, coercion, is axiomatic, incorporating as it does all the physical acts of violence and repression—and the resultant fear of those same acts on the part of citizens—that operate on a continuous basis to extract compliance from citizens either individually or in groups. The second, utilitarian mechanism, involves bargaining and negotiation between and among individuals and the state. For instance, this can be the bargain between state and citizen regarding the availability and type of distributed rations, or a much larger deal between the state and individual elite(s) over access to material resources, business contracts and the like.

Our point of interest in this paper is the third ideal type: normative. Callaghy posits that this type of consensus arises when a majority of citizens accept the right of a particular system or ruler to govern, and voluntarily—i.e., most would continue to do so in the hypothetical absence of coercion or utilitarian incentives—observe the rules and norms of that system of governance as laid down by the ruling elite.<sup>11</sup> In democratic systems, plebiscites act as a mechanism for the creation, at regular intervals, of normative consensus. However, this does not imply that authoritarian systems without free and fair elections are incapable of arriving at the same outcome. As Callaghy notes, a normative domain consensus can also be forged through the artful instrumentalization of information.<sup>12</sup>

This working paper explores precisely this process, specifically the North Korean party-state’s use of so-called “re-defector press conferences” as a tool to formulate and maintain a normative consensus with the domestic citizenry. Through a carefully constructed information management strategy, the party-state harnesses the power of information to define the field of action and buttress its governing legitimacy.<sup>13</sup>

### Re-defector Press Conferences: Information Management in Action

After Kim Jong-un came to power, the young ruler and his party-state faced a variety of problems that had the potential to create instability and undermine the legitimacy of the new leadership. The North Korean economy was suffering from macroeconomic instability, inequality, and corruption,<sup>14</sup> while insufficient and unstable energy supplies plagued even Pyongyang, which was dealing with some of the worst electricity shortages it had seen in years.<sup>15</sup>



As many North Koreans struggled, the persistent diffusion of popular South Korean dramas and pop music smuggled into the country—often featuring wealthy South Koreans in luxurious settings—served as subversive advertisements for a better life south of the DMZ. A May 2012 report commissioned by the U.S. State Department confirmed what many already knew: due to significant shifts in North Korea’s media landscape, the “growing access to a range of media and communication technologies is undermining the state’s monopoly on what its citizens see, hear, know and think.”<sup>16</sup> The Kim Jong-un government thus faced the task of combating socio-economic difficulties at the same time as finding tools by which to prevent, refute, criticize or manipulate a burgeoning array of unsanctioned external information and other media spreading throughout the North Korean populace, which threatened to portend undesired consequences, such as defections or potential dissatisfaction with the government.

One of Pyongyang’s pivotal information management strategies in this context has been a number of highly publicized “re-defector” press conferences. These showpiece events feature North Koreans who previously defected to South Korea but subsequently returned to North Korea.<sup>17</sup> The use of press conferences was inherently risky, as the returnees reminded the audience that some fellow North Koreans are indeed leaving “the best country in the world.” Nevertheless, the propaganda authorities appear to have made a calculated risk. Instead of trying to hide the defector issue from the public and severely punishing anyone caught attempting to defect to the South—as in the past<sup>18</sup>—the Kim Jong-un government began pursuing double defectors, officially welcoming them back with open arms and using them to criticize the South and, importantly, discourage other would-be refugees from leaving.<sup>19</sup> (See Table 1 in the Appendix for a table of the re-defector press conferences covered.)

The first of these re-defector press conferences involved an elderly woman called Pak Jong-suk on June 28, 2012.<sup>20</sup> This was followed by Kim Kwang-hyok and his wife and child on November 8.<sup>21</sup> In each of the 2012 re-defection press conferences, the returning North Koreans conveyed very similar scenarios for their defections to the South and their decisions to subsequently return to the North: treacherous South Korean intelligence agents lured them to defect via subterfuge and manipulation; they endured a miserable life within the South’s capitalist system; they longed to return to life in the North; and ultimately the Supreme Leader generously welcomed them back home despite their betrayal.<sup>22</sup> Many of the messages and themes conveyed in the press conferences were consistently repeated, implying a fixed authorial voice from Pyongyang.

At her press conference, one of Pak Jong-suk’s statements was particularly illuminating: “Referring to the living conditions of the ‘defectors from the north’, she said the jobs they could find at best were nothing but waste cleaning, vessel washing and servicing and other most hateful and difficult jobs.”<sup>23</sup>

This shows that, instead of attempting to negate the quality of life depicted in South Korean media, the North’s information management strategy is to utilize re-defectors like Pak to accentuate socio-economic divisions between relatively wealthier South Koreans and a purported underclass of North Korean defectors.<sup>24</sup> Thus, one of Pak’s key messages is that even though the South may be relatively wealthier, the North Koreans living there are relatively poorer and more miserable than they were in North Korea.<sup>25</sup> This is not new, but is a particularly overt manifestation of a trend that has been ongoing since the turn of the century.<sup>26</sup>

In 2013, several press conferences reaffirmed Pyongyang’s commitment to this policy line. In late January at the People’s Palace, Kim Kwang-ho, Ko Kyung-hee, and other re-defectors gave testimonials that reinforced themes highlighted in the 2012 press conferences. The press conferences further emphasized forgiveness, as the defectors were portrayed as victims of South Korean deception. Kim Kyong-ok recalled that she was taken to South Korea “due to threat and appeasement made by Kim Kwang-chol, specialist in buying and tempting people wandering about China’s border area, via refugee camps in China and Thailand.”<sup>27</sup>

Additionally, the returning defectors portrayed themselves as mere mortals who made mistakes. Just as Pak Jong-suk was pursuing an ill-fated and “foolish idea to meet with my father in the South and ask him for money,” Kim Kwang-ho and Kim Ok-shil had a “stupid” idea about becoming rich in the South,<sup>28</sup> which ended in failure.

The press conferences continued to exploit the guilt and emotional hardships that many North Korean refugees experience as a result of leaving families and hometowns behind. Returning defectors lamented how much they missed living in North Korea, and how their defections had caused hardships for loyal family members who remained in North Korea. Pak Jong-suk expressed fears that her defection may have resulted in punishment for the rest of her family (as is often the case), but, upon returning to North Korea, was permitted to live with her son’s family in Pyongyang.<sup>29</sup> Kim Kwang-hyok and his wife, Ko Jong-nam, were concerned about their son in South Korea, since “Children of the ‘defectors from the north’ are [...] left out



in the cold in the south [...] reluctant even to go outside, it being a common occurrence that they are beat at schools.”<sup>30</sup> Building on these sentiments, Kim Kwang-ho and Kim Ok-shil testified that concerns about their child’s future motivated their return. “In the south,” Kim said, “we could not take responsibility for our fate, of course, nor the future of our daughter.”<sup>31</sup>

According to this interpretation, the North Korean defectors were not inherently treacherous, so their lapses in judgment could be forgiven thanks to the “generosity” of the Supreme Leader. This is also an important development in Pyongyang’s treatment of defectors: they were formerly chastised and threatened with severe punishment for defecting, but were subsequently welcomed back into Kim Jong-un’s loving arms.<sup>32</sup>

Beginning with the May 17, 2013 press conference featuring Kang Kyong-suk and two other returnees, the setting changed to a more comfortable, intimate atmosphere – devoid of glaring lights, multiple reporters, cameras, and microphones of the early conferences.<sup>33</sup> This new atmosphere reinforced the notion that the re-defectors were not being punished, but were instead victims recounting horrible tales of deception and trafficking by deceitful South Koreans, including a Christian pastor.

The same comfortable atmosphere, as well as criticism of South Korean “flesh traffickers” (including clergymen), featured prominently in the re-defection interview with nine teenagers and young adults who were repatriated to North Korea from Laos (the so-called “Laos Nine”).<sup>34</sup> In the interview, the U.S. is also explicitly linked to the plot to kidnap North Koreans, as an American woman from the “Association for Freedom of North Korea” apparently provided funding and worked with a South Korean pastor surnamed Jang. This reinforces the message that although the Americans and South Koreans feign interest in freedom and human rights in North Korea, they are actually kidnapping North Koreans and violating their human rights. In her December 2013 interview, Choe Kye-sun echoes the claim that “flesh traffickers” are taking unwitting North Koreans to the South.<sup>35</sup>

### A Kernel of Truth: The View from Below

In order to investigate how North Korean citizens might be expected to receive the content of re-defector press conferences, structured interviews were conducted with members of the defector refugee community in Seoul. The group was constituted of ten individuals representing different age cohorts and dates of departure from North Korea. Six came from border cities along

the Tumen River; two from Pyongyang; and two from inland provincial cities. Three were in their twenties, five in their thirties, and two in their fifties. Each respondent is indicated hereafter by a combination of a single letter and a number: respondents A1-A3 left North Korea between 1998 and 2003, B1-B4 departed between 2004 and 2009, and C1-C3 between 2010 and the present day. (See Table 2 in the Appendix.)

All of the interviewees were given the same set of questions, which asked them to stipulate their socio-economic status three years prior to departing North Korea, explain their media consumption behavior while in North Korea prior to defection, and to consider the affective reception of the press conferences by North Koreans in light of their personal experiences.<sup>36</sup>

Though a small sample of this nature is not statistically significant—the refugee community in South Korea as a whole numbered more than 27,500 by the end of December 2014<sup>37</sup>—it does provide a nuanced, illuminating view of the way the re-defector press conferences are interpreted and their potential for affective reception by North Korean citizens.

Responses indicate that the effectiveness of re-defector press conferences as a tool of social control is predicated upon a combination of structural factors (pertaining to the social environment in North Korea) and functional ones (related to the press conference content itself). In the former category are a lack of countervailing information and age group distinctions, as well as limited provision of power to residential districts in provincial areas.<sup>38</sup> These are discussed below.

However, the functional component is arguably the crucial one. As we will see, the element of truth that underpins the narratives conveyed in the re-defector press conferences also contributed to their affective impact.

As the respondents note, even though the South Korean government has established systems to help arrivals from North Korea find employment by offering job training and subsidies to companies that hire North Koreans, many refugees do not find employment beyond comparatively low-paying jobs. Similarly, although North Korean refugees are eligible for specific scholarships, stipends and free university tuition, university dropout rates are disproportionately high and students struggle with bullying and an education gap with their South Korean peers.

One result of this state of affairs is that the North Korean government has a kernel of truth with which to propagate the notion that going from North to South Korea is not a good or wise idea



for its citizens. The public propagation of the return of individuals from South Korea contributes to this process, representing an active element of the government's information management strategy. Even in cases where individuals suspect or believe that North Korean state media output is partially fabricated, this does not neutralize the affective reception of press conference content.

The causal relationship between external media exposure and perception of the world beyond North Korea's borders has already been demonstrated. A 2012 Intermedia report established through qualitative research that North Koreans with access to external media "make natural comparisons between their own lives and their perceptions of the outside world, particularly South Korea."<sup>39</sup>

Though by definition impossible to test, it is plausible to hypothesize that the opposite must also be true. North Koreans who do not have regular access to external media—or to indirect experiences of life in South Korea, for instance through family or friends—are less likely to have a positive perception of the outside world, and less likely to make natural comparisons between their own lives and those of others. Faced with little other than the North Korean media, they are presumably left without the tools to make nuanced comparisons.

Then, given that media penetration is evidently an important factor, it is worthwhile to recall that North Korea is not East Germany. West German television signals consistently penetrated approximately 85 percent of East German territory. As early as 1973, East German leader Erich Honeker conceded the influence of "Western mass media, especially radio and television of the Federal Republic, which here everybody can switch on and off as he likes." It is said that, given the opportunity, people would avoid living in "Dresden or the Greifswald area," the only large regions that the West German media could not penetrate. Writing shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Dieter Buhl, a senior editor of *Die Zeit* in Germany, recalled: "East Germans could receive at least half a dozen Western networks. Their ratings by far surpassed those of the East German stations, especially RIAS [...] which enjoyed, by far, more listeners in the East than in the West."<sup>40</sup>

No such statement is likely to be forthcoming from Kim Jong-un or his government. In the North Korean case, the issue of external media penetration is quantitatively different. Only five percent of respondents in a 2010 survey (sample size: 250) cited South Korean television as an important source of information, and a mere 13 percent pointed to the Chinese equivalent.<sup>41</sup> The challenge for citizens is not one of avoiding a few inland valleys

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that cannot receive external media; rather, the trick is to acquire real estate in one of the few locations that can.<sup>42</sup>

Moreover, even such modest statistical findings are guaranteed to have been influenced by the geographical distribution of people available for surveying. It is common knowledge that the overwhelming majority of refugees who leave North Korea are from just three of the country's nine provinces: North Hamgyong, South Hamgyong, and Ryanggang, all of which are on or near the North Korea-China border, and all of which thus receive—albeit not in all areas due to the mountainous topography of the region—Chinese television signals, not to mention radio and smuggled media content on DVDs or flash memory drives. Statistics show that 85.1 percent of all the defectors in South Korea at the end of August 2014 were from these three provinces.<sup>43</sup>

This matters, since the interview respondents repeatedly cited the presence or absence of countervailing information, offering the ability for an individual to compare, as an important element in the effectiveness of re-defector press conferences. "The very first time I thought that our North Korean news was a little dreary and boring was when I saw Chinese broadcasts," respondent A1 commented. "As someone who knew nothing about the outside world, I had considered the North Korean news style to be perfectly normal." In a similar vein, B1 asserted that "If you are someone who does not know the real situation inside South Korea" then you will be more heavily influenced by the re-defector press conferences. The most recent escapee, C3, concluded that "people with defectors in their family will not believe it," implying that direct personal knowledge of the circumstances that surround defection and re-defection play an important role in altering the frame of reception.

"There is no way that North Korean residents who only hear about South Korea by word-of-mouth could know that [...] it is mostly lies," B2 said. According to B4, the ones who are least likely to believe the press conference content are families and friends of defectors and senior government officials who "already know the state North Korea is in."



In addition to the presence or absence of alternative source of information, an individual's age and social status emerged as interlinked key determinants of his or her receptiveness to re-defector press conference content. A number of respondents pointed out that while access to external sources of information is undoubtedly an important variable, older people and those working in specific, highly controlled economic sectors are in any case more likely than younger people and, broadly defined, 'market participants' to trust the narratives expounded upon in the re-defector press conferences.

A2 said that in his view reception of the press conference message "depends on people's awareness and analytical thinking skills." C1 agreed, before stating that analytical ability is closely linked to social position: "There is a high chance that people who do nothing but work under harsh regulation, like farmers or soldiers working in textile mills, will accept the words of the re-defectors at face value." C3, for whom reception is at least partially a matter of age, said, "Most older people will probably take it at face value. The average person will half-believe it."

Superimposing another layer upon the issue while reflecting the inherent but often forgotten diversity of the North Korean populace, C2 said, "I want to say that everyone is different. People who are disillusioned by the political system and have an interest in South Korea will pay scant attention to what comes on Korean Central Broadcast. However, people who are ignorant under that social system will certainly take that content on board."

As we have seen, reception of the re-defector press conferences is influenced by pertinent societal divisions: between citizens with access to information provided by non-DPRK actors and those without, between older and younger generations, and between people working in "harshly regulated" industries and others engaged in those—like market activities—where one's own initiative frequently offers a distinct advantage. However, these divisions are not the whole story. Finally, the press conferences contain another important element: truth.

If it is to succeed over the long term, any information management strategy should contain a kernel of truth – preferably more than one. Without the ability to elicit an emotional response from recipients, an information management strategy will not have affective power. Narratives of re-defection are no exception. Respondents assert that both the authenticity of the voices of the re-defectors in the press conferences and the kernels of truth that they convey are key elements in their reception.

A1 asserted that the very fact that the people who appeared in the press conferences really had been to South Korea and later returned gave their words weight, in spite of the fact that, as A3 said, "Defectors all say that [the re-defectors] do [the press conferences] under pressure from the North Korean government." This is highly likely to be so, but that does not alter the fact that what underpins the press conferences is an uncomfortable truth: that the difficulties faced by some—though by no means all—defectors in South Korea are very real.

According to C1, "This is a strategy with a decent chance of success. It will even garner a sympathetic ear from North Korean residents who know about South Korea." C1 provided a story to illustrate why this should be so, saying that it had been his intention to defect with another individual from his native city. However, at the last minute the second individual refused to depart, telling C1: "You know how to draw and your computer skills are good, so you will be able to live well anywhere. I don't know how to do anything; I'm just old. Even if [I] went to South Korea, yes I would probably live better than I do here, but in my heart I would always feel bad. I'm sorry, but leave by yourself, and when you succeed please go and find my relatives in Japan."

The response of C1's acquaintance reveals a high degree of knowledge about South Korea, and implies that this degree of knowledge actually reduced his or her desire to leave the North, arguably the opposite effect to that anticipated. Reiterating the point, B2 declared, "Anyone who is not able to access South Korean culture or broadcasts will think, 'Oh, so if I defect I will receive that kind of treatment.'"

"There really have been cases," B2 revealed, "of North Korean residents asking their families in the South, 'Were you hoodwinked into going there by the South Koreans?' and 'In South Korea, are North Koreans really not even treated as people?'"

To C3, this state of affairs made perfect sense. "I, too, could have trusted that North Korean propaganda," she concluded. "Even without the government, it is already well known from people who have defected that North Korean people are marginalized in South Korea and have trouble finding work and making a living. People have known that for a while."<sup>44</sup>

## Conclusion

Re-defector press conferences form part of an information management strategy to forge a normative consensus shaping



people's expectations of life at home and abroad. Information management of this type is crucial for the North Korean party-state in an era when its legitimacy is being challenged by the act of defection and circulation of foreign media that counters the state's description of North Korea as an advanced, "civilized" society. Re-defectors are instrumentalized to convey carefully calibrated messages to the domestic audience: to emphasize the notion that South Koreans, Americans, and human rights activists operating in the border region are deceptive, dangerous, and exploitative people; to declare that defectors are now welcome back in the country and will not be punished as criminals; and to highlight the notion that while South Korea is the more affluent society on the Korean Peninsula, it is one in which arriving North Koreans form part of an underclass, suffering discrimination and lower quality of life than their South Korean counterparts.

Further research is needed before it will become possible to judge the overall effectiveness of this information management strategy. However, structured interviews conducted with ten North Korean defectors indicate that it has the potential to bring about the intended result. Although some North Korean citizens, quite rightly, suspect fabricated content and the coercion of participating individuals in the press conferences, the messages are nevertheless internalized. In the interior of the country this reflects an absence of alternative information sources, while on the fringes of the state it serves to buttress pre-existing regimes of knowledge concerning the hardships defectors face in South Korea. This lends the press conferences a ring of truth, and impacts relative expectations of life on either side of the DMZ.





## Appendix

**Table 1. Re-defector Press Conferences in the Kim Jong-un Era**

Name(s)	Date	Type	Themes	Content
Pak Jong-suk	7/28/12	News conference with foreign reporters at the People's Palace of Culture	Family; immoral Southern society; intelligence services; abduction and trickery; imperialism; dehumanization; poverty; commitment to the benevolent motherland	Pak Jong-suk claims she was captured by South Korean intelligence agents while crossing the Sino-NK border in an attempt to reunite with her father, who defected during the Korean War. She hoped to live with her family in South Korea, but found she was distrusted and devalued, even by her own family, because she was from the North. Pak describes working menial jobs, constant corruption and deceit, and said her life in the South was worthless. She expressed her love and adoration at her warm welcome from the benevolent and forgiving Kim Jong-un.
Kim Kwang-hyok, Ko Jong-nam, and child	11/8/12	News conference with foreign reporters at the People's Palace of Culture	Family; poverty; dehumanization; commitment to the benevolent motherland; trickery and abduction; immoral Southern society	This family says a broker lured them in and "South Korean puppet forces" deceived them into thinking South Korea would be a decent place to live. Kim and Ko say they met dehumanization and poverty upon arrival. The two claim children of defectors are targets of abuse and exclusion and were prompted to return after seeing the kindness of Kim Jong-un in a video, which they found compared well to the everyday cruelty aimed at defector children, a fate that Ko Jong-nam feared her son would face. The two praised Kim Jong-un and expressed their desire to contribute productively to the DPRK as a reunited family.
Kim Kwang-ho, Kim Ok-sil, and Ko Kyung-hui	1/24/13	News conference with foreign reporters at the People's Palace of Culture	Human rights and hypocrisy; intelligence services; abduction and trickery; China and profit motive; imperialism; immoral Southern society	Kim Kwang-ho and Kim Ok-sil claim a corrupt priest took them to South Korea with ties to the South Korean intelligence service and the chairman of an American human rights organization who lied to them about the socioeconomic conditions for defectors. The two convey dissatisfaction with the character of South Korean society and returned to the DPRK after seeing the gracious welcome given to Pak Jong-suk. Third returnee Ko Kyung-hui crossed the border to China intending to make money, but was tricked by a man who offered to take her to Canada only to wind up in South Korea. Ko claims she was abused and mistreated by the South Korean authorities, even as they criticized the DPRK's human rights record.
Kang Kyong-suk, Kim Kyong-ok, and Ri Hyok-chol	5/17/13	Round table talks at the Koryo Compatriots Palace	Abduction and trickery; family; commitment to the benevolent motherland; hypocrisy and human rights; immoral Southern society	Kang Kyong-suk was taken to South Korea in 2010, Kim Kyong-ok in 2011, and Ri Hyok-chul in 2007. Kang claims she was tricked and bribed into defecting and then detained and interrogated at the "Joint Centre for Interrogation of Defectors from the North," an agency that brings in defectors to the South so as to topple the DPRK government. She notes that "refugee camps" in Thailand and China are preyed upon. Kim claims her captors told her that South Korea is not wealthy but is willing to spend money on defaming the DPRK. Ri says his brother (another defector) and a South Korean pastor deceived and stole from him, though he ultimately blames the South Korean National intelligence service for his situation. All three re-defectors called the human rights issue a hypocritical "smear campaign" against the DPRK.



The "Laos Nine" (a group of nine teenagers and young adults who returned from Laos)	6/20/13	Round table talks at the Koryo Compatriots Palace	Abduction, trickery; imperialism; hypocrisy and human rights; China and profit motive; commitment to the benevolent motherland	This group of teenagers and young adults lived with a South Korean clergyman in China before being taken to South Korea by human traffickers. The clergyman kidnapped wanderers in the Chinese borderlands and forced them to practice Christianity in the South Korean style, as well as punishing all acts of loyalty to the DPRK. The teenagers claim they were contacted by a U.S. representative from the "Association for Freedom of North Korea" who funded the captor of the teenagers and had previously sent forced other defectors to go to the U.S. They finished by praising the benevolence of the DPRK and of Kim Jong-un in protecting their beloved country.
Pak Jin-gun and Jang Kwang-chol	9/30/13	Round table talks at the Koryo Compatriots Palace	Poverty; intelligence services; abduction and trickery; China and profit motive; hypocrisy and human rights; immoral Southern society	These two claim "puppet forces" in South Korea used brokers and intelligence service agents to trick, bribe, and abduct defectors caught in the Chinese borderlands, and that these organizations are getting bolder. The time they spent in South Korea was a nightmare marked by desperation and poverty. They say that were aware of smear campaigns run by the South Korean government and intelligence service to malign the DPRK for its human rights records, intending to capture North Koreans and paint them as defectors in an attempt to harm the DPRK's international image. They say the returned to the North after seeing a press conference by an earlier re-defector and express a desire to work for the prosperity of the DPRK and Kim Jong-un.
Choe Kye-soon (with Pak Jong-suk)	12/20/13	Round table talks at the Koryo Compatriots Palace	Poverty; intelligence services; abduction and trickery; China and profit motive; hypocrisy and human rights; immoral South Korean society	Choe Kye-soon, appearing with Pak Jong-suk, claims she was bribed into defecting to the South whilst in China making money. Both Choe and Pak emphasize the luring tactics of the South Korean Intelligence Service from embassies abroad. Choe underscores the debauchery of South Korean society and the class divide between those from the North and other (South) Koreans, claiming that everyone there lives miserably (especially defectors). Choe and Pak express relief for returning to the DPRK and an appreciation for the motherland. Choe vows to devote herself to serving the party and country. Pak claims to be writing a book about her experiences.

Note: Content taken from KCNA summaries written in English and Korean.

**Table 2. AKS Defector Interviews- Analytic Table**

Interviewee Code	Date of Defection	Home Town, City or Province	Age	Attitude
A1	1998	Hyesan	33	Truth, Effective
A2	2000	Chongjin	50	Lies, Effective
A3	2002	Pyongyang, Chongjin	27	Lies, Ineffective
B1	2006	Chongjin	38	Lies, Effective
B2	2007	Musan	36	Truth, Effective
B3	2009	Hyesan	55	Lies, Effective
B4	2009	Hyesan	30	Lies, Effective
C1	2010	Pyongyang, Hamgyong Province	30	Lies, Effective
C2	2011	Hyesan	28	Lies, Effective
C3	2012	Hyesan	24	Lies, Effective



## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> This research is supported by an Academy of Korean Studies Grant (AKS-2013- R-11). Additional support has been received from Leiden University and the University of Toronto. Many thanks to Alex Verman for his research assistance.
- <sup>2</sup> In much of the academic literature on “regime” types, regime is used as a neutral term, denoting a political system. The term regime, as in “authoritarian regime,” is employed in this working paper as such. However, “North Korean regime” is a contested phrase, especially in Korean, and so we omit it to avoid unintentionally conveying any connotation.
- <sup>3</sup> Barbara Geddes, “What Do We Know About Democratization After Twenty Years?,” *Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci.* 2 (1999): 115-144.
- <sup>4</sup> Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 5.
- <sup>5</sup> Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, “The Durability of Revolutionary Regimes,” *Journal of Democracy* 24.3 (2013): 5-17.
- <sup>6</sup> Milan Svoblik, *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 12.
- <sup>7</sup> Jason Brownlee, “Hereditary Succession in Modern Autocracies,” *World Politics* 59 (2007): 605, 607.
- <sup>8</sup> Michel Foucault developed the concept of governmentality—the art and practices of government—during his lectures at the Collège de France between 1978 and 1979. See Graham Burchell et al. (eds.), *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991).
- <sup>9</sup> Mitchell Dean, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society* (London: Sage, 1999), 20, 27.
- <sup>10</sup> Thomas M. Callaghy, “State-Subject Communication in Zaire: Domination and the Concept of Domain Consensus,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 18.3 (1980): 469-492.
- <sup>11</sup> Readers should avoid being misguided by Callaghy’s use of “normative” to describe this mechanism; the ideas, rules and values propagated are not inherently normative – in some cases quite the opposite. Rather, they need only be upheld by the body politic, thus taking on a normative character.
- <sup>12</sup> This paper employs derivations of the term “information management strategy” in lieu of variations on the term “propaganda.” This is done so as to render the explanations in the paper more accurate, and is a necessary step because the term “propaganda” has taken on a meaning that the scholars and practitioners who initiated its study would no longer recognize. “Propaganda” is now primarily associated with the actions of some types of government and not others, whereas it was originally concerned with any and all governments’ tactical utilization of information in a range of modes (political and sociological propaganda; propagandas of agitation and integration; vertical and horizontal propaganda; rational and irrational propaganda, etc.). It should be noted also that in the Korean language as used in North Korea, the term “propaganda” carries no negative connotation whatsoever. For more on “propaganda” and its historical sub-categories, see Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 61-87.
- <sup>13</sup> An information management strategy, as we employ the term here, must meet three conditions. It must involve state-directed or state-sanctioned actors or organizations; the message delivered must be directed primarily at a domestic audience; and the message must be intended to establish or maintain a certain type of domain consensus.
- <sup>14</sup> Marcus Noland, “The Current State of the North Korean Economy,” *KEI*, 2012. [http://www.keia.org/sites/default/files/publications/kei\\_koreaseconomy\\_16\\_marcusnoland.pdf](http://www.keia.org/sites/default/files/publications/kei_koreaseconomy_16_marcusnoland.pdf) (accessed on February 15, 2015).
- <sup>15</sup> Jeremy Laurence, “Power cuts pitch North Korea capital into darkness: diplomat,” *Reuters*, February 1, 2012. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/02/01/us-korea-north-power-idUSTRE81022X20120201> (accessed on February 15, 2015). As a later report illustrates, part of the problem resulted from water levels behind the Huichon Dam, which was built to serve the capital’s power needs but, as with any hydroelectric power capacity on the Korean Peninsula, faces limitations outside the relatively brief summer rainy season. Joshua Lipes, “New Power Plant Falls Short,” *Radio Free Asia*, December 7, 2012. <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/korea/power-12072012160153.html> (accessed on February 22, 2015).
- <sup>16</sup> Kretchun, Nat and Jane Kim, *A Quiet Opening: North Koreans in a Changing Media Environment*, Intermedia, May 2012, <http://www.intermedia.org/a-quiet-opening-in-north-korea/> (accessed on February 15, 2015). There is an extensive body of literature on this subject in the Korean language. For instance, see: Jung-ran Park and Dong-wan Kang, “A Study on the North Koreans’ Acceptance of South Korean Media and Their ‘Distorted Images of South Korea’” [북한주민의 남한 미디어 수용과 왜곡된 남한 상(像)], *Tongiljeongchaengnyeongu* 21 no. 1 (2012): 239-270. The most recent published study in the field is probably Kang Dong-wan, “A Study on the Introduction of Foreign Culture into North Korea and Changes to the North Korean Society: -With an Interview Survey with North Koreans in a Third Country” [북한으로의 외래문화 유입 현황과 실태 - 제3국에서의 북한주민 면접조사를 중심으로], *Tongirinmunhak* 60 (2014): 167-201.
- <sup>17</sup> It is unclear which re-defectors returned to North Korea of their own volition, and which were coerced. For instance, Pak Jong-suk’s friends living in the South revealed that she “had little love for her home country and returned only because she thought she had to,” with the reason being that she “was clearly worried about her only son, a violinist in his 30s, whose life fell apart [because he] was punished for his mother’s defection. See: Chico Harlan, “Behind North Korea’s propaganda star, a darker story,” *The Washington Post*, September 22, 2012 ([http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/behind-north-koreas-propaganda-star-a-darker-story/2012/09/22/e0c02846-fcab-11e1-8adc-499661afe377\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/behind-north-koreas-propaganda-star-a-darker-story/2012/09/22/e0c02846-fcab-11e1-8adc-499661afe377_story.html)). The Ministry of State Security appears to have been behind a deliberate policy of luring some defectors back to the North using a mixture of physical and psychological coercion. See: Choi Song Min, “Re-defections Chalked up by Musan NSA,” *Daily NK*, November 12, 2012, <http://www.dailynk.com/english/read.php?catald=nk01500&num=10028>. Finally, there are reports that some of the re-defectors may have been North Korean spies. See: Choi Song Min, “Re-defector Koh Was NSA Agent,” *Daily NK*, November 19, 2012, <http://www.dailynk.com/english/read.php?catald=nk01500&num=10060>. All articles retrieved on February 19, 2015.
- <sup>18</sup> See paragraphs 42 and 43 of the summary report of the UN Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, and (in detail) paragraphs 405-471 of the final report. Both the summary and final reports can be downloaded from <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/CoIDPRK/Pages/ReportoftheCommissionofInquiryDPRK.aspx>.



- <sup>19</sup> In the following paragraphs, wherever possible quotations are taken from official English versions of original Korean articles carried by the North Korean state news agency KCNA. In the event that the English version differs substantively from the Korean, we translate the Korean and note the fact.
- <sup>20</sup> “DPRK Woman Interviewed upon Her Return Home,” *KCNA*, June 28, 2012, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2012/201206/news28/20120628-23ee.html> (accessed on February 16, 2015).
- <sup>21</sup> “‘Defectors from North’ Interviewed after Return to DPRK,” *KCNA*, November 8, 2012, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2012/201211/news08/20121108-19ee.html> (accessed on February 16, 2015).
- <sup>22</sup> Pak, noting the “luring tactics” of the South Korean side, “recalled that while living in [S]outh Korea for six years she led a life little short of a miserable slave’s for want of money.” Kim Kwang-hyok was, KCNA claims, taken in by the South Korean “puppet forces’ smear campaign and appeasement.” He and his wife then supposedly lived in the “unjust and unequal” South Korean society until they saw a video of Kim Jong-un and “renewed their determination to come to the care of the Marshal.”
- <sup>23</sup> “DPRK Woman Interviewed upon Her Return Home,” *KCNA*, June 28, 2012, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2012/201206/news28/20120628-23ee.html> (accessed on February 16, 2015). This list of tasks is rather non-specific. The original Korean is only slightly more revealing, stipulating the work available to Pak as, “sewage cleaning, washing dishes, and waiting on [people]” [오물청소, 그릇닦기, 시중들기]. See: “Lured to South Korea, Pak Jong-suk Holds a Press Conference with Domestic and Foreign Reporters” [남조선에 유인당하였던 박정숙녀성 국내외기자들과 회견], *KCNA*, June 28, 2012, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/calendar/2012/06/06-28/2012-0628-043.html> (accessed on February 16, 2015).
- <sup>24</sup> Defectors struggle in South Korea relative to South Koreans of comparable age. Their difficulties include higher unemployment rates and relatively lower wages, while those in education face challenges borne of educational limitations they faced in North Korea and psychological difficulties upon arrival in the South. However, statistics suggest that circumstances are improving year-on-year. For more, see: “Defectors work more, make less,” *Korea JoongAng Daily*, February 10, 2015, <http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=3000748&cloc=joongangdaily|home|newlist1> (accessed on February 15, 2015). The report cited therein is based on an annual survey of defector opinion and circumstances on a range of metrics undertaken by Korea Hana Foundation (formerly North Korean Refugees Foundation), a South Korean state-funded body. These reports can be downloaded (in Korean) from <http://www.nkrf.re.kr/www/wwwMain/main.do#>.
- <sup>25</sup> Brian Gleason, “Double Defectors: Signifiers of Pyongyang’s Strategic Shift,” *Sino-NK*, December 6, 2012, <http://sinonk.com/2012/12/06/double-defectors-signifiers-of-pyongyangs-strategic-shift/> (accessed on February 15, 2015). Experts such as Andrei Lankov subsequently echoed this assertion. See: Tania Branigan, “Choco Pies offer North Koreans a taste of the other side,” *The Guardian*, May 1, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/may/01/choco-pies-north-koreans> (accessed on February 19, 2015).
- <sup>26</sup> According to Andrei Lankov, “In the post-2000 propaganda, the alleged poverty of South Korea has ceased to be a topic worthy of mention. It is even grudgingly admitted that South Korea might be relatively affluent [...] However, with all its wealth, South Korea is represented as basically a very unhappy place.” This is the approach adopted in the heavily stage-managed re-defector press conferences. For more see: Andrei Lankov, *The Real North Korea: Life and Politics in the Failed Stalinist Utopia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 105-106. For the types of physical and psychological repression instituted by the North Korean government in response to the spread of external information inside the country, see: Kang Dong-wan, “A Study on the Introduction of Foreign Culture into North Korea and Changes to the North Korean Society” [북한으로의 외래문화 유입 현황과 실태]. For an example of this process manifested in the North Korean media, see: Jeon Yeong-hui, “Imperialists’ Ideological and Cultural Poisoning Should Be Frustrated” [청년들을 목표로 한 반동적사상문화침투책동], *Rodong Sinmun*, October 19, 2014. The original version in Korean can be found here: <http://www.uriminzokkiri.com/index.php?ptype=gisa2&no=195122>, while an abbreviated English translation is available at [http://www.rodong.rep.kp/en/index.php?strPageID=SF01\\_02\\_01&newsID=2014-10-21-0005&chAction=D](http://www.rodong.rep.kp/en/index.php?strPageID=SF01_02_01&newsID=2014-10-21-0005&chAction=D), and an English write-up covering the main points of the argument is available via KCNA at: <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2014/201410/news19/20141019-13ee.html>. All versions retrieved on February 23, 2015.
- <sup>27</sup> “Round-table Talks Held with Inhabitants upon Their Return Home from South,” *KCNA*, May 17, 2013, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2013/201305/news17/20130517-12ee.html> (accessed on February 15, 2015).
- <sup>28</sup> In the English (<http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2013/201301/news24/20130124-11ee.html>) the couple’s motivation is stated as the pursuit of money. It declares that Kim crossed the Sino-North Korean border a number of times at the time of the Arduous March, and was punished under North Korean law. The Korean adds that he failed to “come to his senses” and crossed the border again in August 2008. “Returning from the South to the Republic, Kim Kwang-ho, his wife, and Go Kyung-hee Hold Press Conference” [남쪽땅에서 공화국으로 돌아온 김광호부부, 고경희 기자회견], *KCNA*, January 24, 2013, <http://kcna.co.jp/calendar/2013/01/01-24/2013-0124-022.html> (accessed on February 16, 2015).
- <sup>29</sup> “Pak Jong Suk’s Family Enjoys Happy Life in Pyongyang,” *KCNA*, July 10, 2012, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2012/201207/news10/20120710-22ee.html> (accessed on February 16, 2015). The English version notes that the state gave Pak and her son’s family an apartment to live in, while the Korean version differs slightly, noting only that they were permitted to live together. See: “Lured to South Korea, Pak Jong-suk Holds a Press Conference with Domestic and Foreign Reporters” [남조선에 유인당하였던 박정숙녀성 국내외기자들과 회견].
- <sup>30</sup> “‘Defectors from North’ Interviewed after Return to DPRK,” *KCNA*, November 8, 2012, [www.kcna.co.jp/item/2012/201211/news08/20121108-19ee.html](http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2012/201211/news08/20121108-19ee.html) (accessed on February 16, 2015).
- <sup>31</sup> Concerns over their child’s future is not reported in the English. It is only conveyed in the Korean from where the quote is taken (and translated). See: “Returning from the South to the Republic, Kim Kwang-ho, his wife, and Go Kyung-hee Hold Press Conference” [남쪽땅에서 공화국으로 돌아온 김광호부부, 고경희 기자회견].
- <sup>32</sup> For more, see: Brian Gleason, “Overwhelmed by Guilt: Pyongyang’s Evolving “Double Defector” Propaganda,” *Sino-NK*, May 25, 2013, [http://sinonk.com/2013/05/25/overwhelmed-by-guilt-pyongyangs-evolving-double-defector-propaganda/#\\_ftn3](http://sinonk.com/2013/05/25/overwhelmed-by-guilt-pyongyangs-evolving-double-defector-propaganda/#_ftn3) (accessed on February 15, 2015).
- <sup>33</sup> Video of the conference, which appeared on [North] Korean Central Television, can be accessed via YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Blxx-ybTZM>.
- <sup>34</sup> “Round-table Talks Held with Teenagers Who Came Back to DPRK,” *KCNA*, June 20, 2013, [www.kcna.co.jp/item/2013/201306/news20/20130620-20ee.html](http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2013/201306/news20/20130620-20ee.html) (accessed on February 16, 2015). These re-defectors were slightly different than the others, as they did not make it to South Korea at all. Nevertheless, once they were returned to the DPRK (by coercion, it is generally assumed), they gave an interview that conveyed similar themes to previous re-defector press conferences.
- <sup>35</sup> “Round-table Talks Held with Inhabitants upon Their Return Home from S. Korea,” *KCNA*, December 20, 2013, [www.kcna.co.jp/item/2013/201312/news20/20131220-21ee.html](http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2013/201312/news20/20131220-21ee.html) (accessed on February 16, 2015).



- <sup>36</sup> Only one of the interviewees left North Korea in the Kim Jong-un era: C3, who left in mid-2012. Additionally, the group was not instructed to review the re-defector press conferences in full prior to giving their assessments of affective potential, as this could then have become a complicated legal matter under South Korean law. We acknowledge, therefore, that the respondents saw the South Korean media's framing of the press conference content, and that this may have differed markedly from the original North Korean productions.
- <sup>37</sup> South Korea's Ministry of Unification posts regular updates to defector statistics at: <http://www.unikorea.go.kr/content.do?cmsid=1518>.
- <sup>38</sup> The matter of access to electricity or industrial batteries is of great importance, but there is no space to discuss it at length here. The situation for a substantial number of households was characterized by respondent A2, who said, "Even though I had a TV I couldn't watch it when I wanted because there was no electricity [...] on days when electricity actually came it would be for two hours from 8 to 10 in the evening, and at that time it was possible to watch new dramas [...] I never had any interest in the news."
- <sup>39</sup> Kretchun and Kim, *A Quiet Opening*, 2.
- <sup>40</sup> Dieter Buhl, *Window on the West: How Television from the Federal Republic Influenced Events in East Germany* (The Joan Shorenstein Barone Center Discussion Paper D-5, 1990), 2. Buhl's full discussion paper is available online at: [http://shorensteincenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/d05\\_buhl.pdf](http://shorensteincenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/d05_buhl.pdf).
- <sup>41</sup> Those who have the best access to South Korean television are in southern border provinces, and thus very badly positioned to consider the option of defection. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the influence of South Korean television is under-represented in the survey data.
- <sup>42</sup> In 2012, there were concerns that the switch from analogue to digital television signals in South Korea would jeopardize access to South Korean television in southern regions of North Korea. See: "North Koreans to soon loose [sic.] access to South Korean TV," *North Korea Tech*, November 6, 2012, <http://www.northkoreatech.org/2012/11/06/north-koreans-to-soon-loose-access-to-south-korean-tv/>. However, the South Korean government later decided to maintain the analogue signal. See: South Korea to maintain analogue TV signals for programs sent to NK, *Korea Times*, December 25, 2012, [http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/biz/2012/12/123\\_127638.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/biz/2012/12/123_127638.html). Continuing access for North Korean citizens was confirmed in late January 2013 by New Focus International. See: "North Korean television sets still receive South Korean signals," *New Focus International*, January 30, 2013, <http://newfocusintl.com/north-korean-television-sets/>. All retrieved on February 19, 2015.
- <sup>43</sup> As of August 2014, 23,023 out of a total of 27,080 defectors living in South Korea were from these three provinces. The Ministry of Unification posts regular updates to these statistics at: <http://www.unikorea.go.kr/content.do?cmsid=1518>.
- <sup>44</sup> It should be noted that many defectors remit money—and with it information—back to family and friends. A lot by North Korean standards, this money helps to counter the idea that those living in South Korea are poor, even though given the difference in cost of living between the two states, they may well be. Also, a majority of defections are chain defections, wherein individuals cross over to join family members or friends already in the South. In such cases, this can involve the South Korean side painting a more positive picture of life in South Korea than may be warranted. Overall, it can be difficult for North Koreans to get a realistic picture of life in South Korea. Source: Interview with Sokeel Park, LiNK Director of Research and Strategy. Conducted by Christopher Green on February 23, 2015.

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