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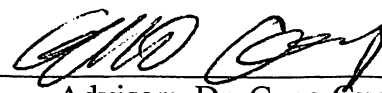
Prospect of Reform in North Korea: Will China Play a Role?

By
Emily Victoria Bennett

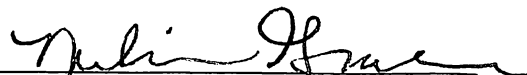
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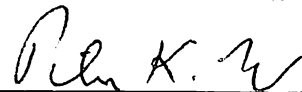
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This capstone project addresses the prospect of reform within the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, North Korea, DPRK; and what, if any role the People's Republic of China, China, will play in North Korea and its prospects for reform. This report addresses three main questions: 1) Is the DPRK's economy in enough trouble to encourage them to make concessions?; 2) How much leverage does China really have over the DPRK, economically or politically?; 3) Why (and will?) the Kims stay in nominal charge?. The answers to these questions are further explained within the body of this paper.

1. Is the DPRK's economy in enough trouble to encourage them to make concessions?

This question is further separated into two parts: a) What is the likelihood North Korea will make concessions for economic assistance? and b) What is the likelihood that North Korea will make any efforts at fundamentally reforming their economy?. First, I judge with moderate confidence that North Korea will not offer any major concessions in return for food or other economic assistance from the world. Yes, from an American perspective, the North Korean economy is failing and going backwards, but the North Korean economy has improved from its lowest point. Moreover, the North Korean government has maintained a high level of control over the people. In the North Korean view, they are able to maintain their political power, their economy is not good, but it is far from its lowest point and their recent rhetoric against the United States and the world

has helped Kim Jong-Un consolidate his power within the government and in the eyes of his people. Additionally, the US, one of the lead negotiators and providers of humanitarian aid with North Korea, has stated multiple times that it will not negotiate with North Korea unless it shows that it is working toward complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement (CVID). However, the United States has repeatedly presented this demand but has backed down and eventually did offer humanitarian aid to North Korea without proof of CVID. The North Korean government is not ignorant of history. As explained later in the paper, if a country threatens the world enough or has enough economic trouble, another country in the world eventually helps. With this attitude going into negotiations, North Korea is unlikely to offer any major concessions.

Secondly, I judge with moderate confidence that North Korea is unlikely to work toward any fundamental reform of their economic system within the next two to three years. To improve its economy, the DPRK government needs to not only to change from extractive economic institutions to an inclusive economic institutions, but also to an inclusive political institutions, as well, since economic institutions stem from political institutions. As seen from the Soviet Union, extractive policies are not sustainable in the long run. I judge that the current North Korean is unwilling to change their economic system because they do not want to risk upsetting the balance of power within the country.

How much leverage does China have over North Korea economically or politically?

China has little leverage over North Korea economically or politically. China plays an important role in helping North Korea maintain its legitimacy as a state, but China has little power to sway North Korea toward

make any major changes to its economic or political structure. As North Korea's only major ally, China has boxed itself in regarding options. China cannot drop all protection from Pyongyang without threatening the stability of their regime. North Korea's ability to support itself in the world without the support of China is unknown. One of China's main goals regarding the Korean peninsula is to maintain North Korea as a buffer state between China and NATO forces in the south. Through this, China prefers a not-quite failing, military first North Korea to a unified Korea or no North Korea at all. Most importantly, North Korea knows this.

While China cannot threaten North Korea into behaving in what is consider a more normal fashion with the world, China does have a moderate amount of leverage regarding the North Korean economy. While China's investments in North Korea mean that China cannot threaten abandonment, it also means that China can, on a smaller scale, ensure activity within North Korea's economy and spur some investment. China alone cannot solve all of North Korea's economic problems, nor can it alter North Korea's behavior via economic means, but China can help ensure that North Korea stays afloat which is also important.

Why (and will?) the Kims stay in charge, at least nominally?

With this question, it is important to specify nominally instead of the actual power running the country. Given the opacity of the North Korean regime and the difficulties associated with obtaining clear data, it is nearly impossible to know the actual power structure within the country through open source intelligence. North Korea has built a personality cult surrounding Kim Il-Sung, Kim Jong-Il, and Kim Jong-Un. If the

Kim family loses control over the country, any incoming leaders will have to overturn the current system that is entrenched throughout the country. Whether Kim Jong-Un makes the decisions behind the curtain is not important in the matter. What matters is that Kim Jong-Un is seen as the product of their Eternal President and a rallying point. The Kim family also provides a rallying point toward the rest of the world as well. When considering the North Korean regime, most people do not consider North Korean citizens, but instead focus on the current Kim ruler as representative of all problems within the country.

The only plausible scenario where the Kim family would publicly lose leadership would be a military coup, most likely the in order to avoid what they consider an undesirable direction for the military such as legitimate threats to fire nuclear weapons.

The paper itself is separated into three sections which explain the above questions and answers in much fuller detail. Section One describes the current economic situation within the DPRK, and explains how they arrived at this point as well as the politics behind the economics. The DPRK's economy is define by its extractive policies which are a product of its extractive political institutions. Extractive political and economic institutions have existed since the founding of the DPRK and have caused most of the DPRK's current economic misfortunes. Extractive institutions and policies are ones which lack secure property rights, have a bias law system, and there is not a level playing field for people to exchange and contract, or public markets.¹ The main North Korea's main ideology, known as “juche” or self-reliance, is one of the most prominent examples

¹ Daron Acemoglu, and James Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: the Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*, (Crown Business, 2012), 74-75.

of how extractive ideas dominate and harm the country. North Korea's economy is based primarily on agriculture and the nation consists of pitiable farmland; to promote continual self-reliance is not sensible from an economic perspective.

Section Two discusses the relationship between the DPRK and the PRC, including their political, military and economic ties. Within the political section, it is important to consider the differing opinions between the countries regarding their alliance. The DPRK and PRC's military relationship began with the Korean War when the newly founded PRC crossed the Yalu and helped the North fight back and push US and Allied troops below the 38th parallel. Following the Korean War, the PLA helped rebuild North Korea, but has had little overt involvement in the country since. China is currently obligated to defend North Korea militarily as required by the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance. As for economic ties, trade between China and North Korea has exploded since China's economic revival in the late 1970s. The actual trade amounts and items traded were affected by the political mood at the time. Following such instances as the PRC's official recognition of South Korea as a country, trade between the PRC and the DPRK suffered, but otherwise, trade has followed an upward trend for the past few decades.

Despite the political, military and economic relationship China and North Korea share, North Korea's WMD program is a major source of contention between the two countries. China has repeatedly stated that it opposes North Korea possessing nuclear weapons. Despite this, North Korea has continued to build its nuclear arsenal and recently conducted their third nuclear test on February 12, 2013.

Section Three discusses three different scenarios regarding the possibility of

reform in North Korea within the next two to three years. I judge with moderate confidence that North Korea will work to remain at a status quo situation and that their economic situation will not significantly improve or deteriorate.

Chapter 1: The Economics of the DPRK

Current State of the DPRK's Economy

North Korea's economy suffers from two major problems: deteriorated capital stock and misallocated spending. A large quantity of the DPRK's capital stock is “nearly beyond repair as a result of years of underinvestment, shortages of spare parts, and poor maintenance.”² This is due in part to the second major obstacle: the government concentrates on “large-scale military spending [which] draws off resources needed for investment and civilian consumption”.³ As a result of these factors, the DPRK is currently facing major problems.

The DPRK military spending as a percentage of GDP far outpaces the rest of the world. Exact statistics regarding the DPRK's GDP and military spending are unavailable. Not all countries around the globe have readily verifiable figures. Excluding North Korea, the expenditures for other countries listed are a percentage of GDP on an exchange rate basis and not a purchasing power parity basis. As a result, the exact numerical differences between North Korea and other countries is inaccurate. Disregarding the margin of error within the statistics, they still tell a compelling story. According to the CIA World Factbook, the country with the greatest military expenditures as a percentage of GDP are Oman, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia which all range between 10-

2 “Korea, North.” CIA—World Factbook. Updated April 1, 2013. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kn.html>

3 CIA World Factbook, 2013

11%.⁴ Only 5

4 CIA World Factbook, 2013
8

countries in the world have military expenditures above 7.5%.⁵ North Korea is not listed in the CIA World Factbook due to the uncertain nature of their statistics. Despite this, we still know that the DPRK's military expenditures far surpass that of other countries. The DPRK officially claims that they spend approximately 15% GDP per year.⁶ In 2003, outside experts assessed the DPRK's military spending as approximately 27.2%.⁷ While the DPRK's military spending far outstrips any other country percentage-wise, their overall economy does not stack up. The DPRK is the 103rd largest economy in the world with the 49th largest population in the world.⁸ North Korea exemplifies the perennial economic question of guns versus butter. The guns versus butter debate is a simplified question of how a country splits its monetary resources between military spending and supporting their population. Based on current statistics and historical precedent, most countries tend to invest more in butter related items, possibly because butter involves more aspects than guns do. Overspending on the military is a major cause of North Korea's other economic problems.

When the government overspends on guns, they fail to invest in social support programs or even ensure that their population receives the basic amount of nutrition necessary to life such as in North Korea. While the food situation in North Korea is not nearly as severe as it was during the mid-1990s, it still produces many negative consequences for the average North Korean citizen. A general lack of proper nutrition,

5 CIA World Factbook, 2013

6 Nanto, Dick K and Chanlett-Avery, Emma, "North Korea: Economic Leverage and Policy Analysis". Congressional Research Service, January 22, 2010.

7 Nanto and Chanlett-Avery, 2010.

8 CIA World Factbook, 2013

sometimes reaching famine heights, is the most common cause for desertion from North Korea with approximately 55% of defectors citing the above reason.⁹ As a communist country, people receive their goods from a public distribution system set up from an aggregate. Since the 1950s, the public distribution system has been designed to supply North Korean citizens with 60 – 70% of their food.¹⁰ Because of the communist nature of the state, when the distribution system broke down, the people had no way to obtain food from other sources besides scrounging the countryside for supplements such as weeds.¹¹ In 1997, the PDS only provided sustenance to approximately 6% of the population and in 1998 effectively no one received food from the PDS.¹² While North Korea was receiving large amounts of food aid from the international community, they still spent nearly a quarter of their GDP on military expenditures.¹³ In 1999, the DPRK purchased 40 MiG-21 fighter aircrafts and eight military helicopters from Kazakhstan.¹⁴ While the major famine caused by repeated, large-scale natural disasters ended over a decade ago, the North Korean people in the outer provinces still suffer major nutritional deficiencies. In 2011, a US NGO group traveled to North Korea and found multiple instances seven-year-old children that weighed only 15 pounds.¹⁵ They also reported that 60% of the population in the outer provinces has to rely on “alternative sustenance” such as weeds and tree bark to survive because the PDS was unable to meet their nutritional needs.¹⁶

Besides the obvious human rights problems inherent in this scenario, it is

9 Cha. 184.

10 Cha. 186.

11 Cha. 186.

12 Cha. 189.

13 Cha. 186.

14 Cha. 186.

15 Cha. 182.

16 Cha. 182.

impossible for North Korea to thrive as a country if a large percentage of the country cannot function due to lack of nutrition. This is especially true as while the worst of the famine finished over a decade ago, but North Korea still faces major food problems. Malnutrition has caused a multitude of diseases that have resulted in lasting effects for the population and their ability to function as a country. First, malnutrition on this scale has had a major effect on future generations. Since the famine, conception rates have fallen, miscarriages have increased, stillbirths have increased, and overall infant mortality has increased.¹⁷ Children born during or slightly before the famine have undergone lasting effects from the famine. A 2004 study found that, on average, a seven-year-old South Korean boy is 4'1" and 57 pounds while his northern counterpart is only 3'5" and 35 pounds.¹⁸ Adult bodies are slightly more resilient to the effects of malnutrition as they have already finished growing. However, they still suffer weakened immune systems which allows them to catch slightly dangerous diseases more easily than other people.¹⁹ Additionally, during the worst of the famine, it was not uncommon for people to suffer long-term brain psychological damage or declines in brain function.²⁰ Obviously, these health problems present problems for the country as a whole. Workers cannot function or help improve a country under these circumstances. Beside this, all people of a country deserve a chance to the basic necessities of life. Overall, North Korea is failing economically. The North Korean government appears to recognize the failings of their economic system. However, barring a surfeit of natural disasters as during the 1990s, the situation is better than the past. That said, the economic situation cannot improve unless

17 Cha. 190.

18 Cha. 194.

19 Cha. 191.

20 Cha. 191.


there are dramatic changes to the structure of the country's political and economic institutions.

The Institutional Theory of Economic Growth

Economic growth theory has divides countries into two broad spectra: inclusive and extractive economies which are in turn based on either inclusive or extractive institutions. A previously accepted theory of growth was the geography theory which stated that any country's economic future was predetermined by its geographic location. One aspect of the theory states that countries in the tropics, defined as the area between the Tropic of Cancer in the north and the Tropic of Capricorn in the south. This is due to a culture of laziness or lack of work ethic which results from the tropical environment, a poor environment for agriculture, and an abundance of diseases which flourish in most tropical regions.²¹ A second major aspect is that the geographic terrain within any country worldwide is a predictor of its success. Therefore, according to this theory, the DPRK's rich mineral deposits should produce a much stronger economy on the world stage than it currently enjoys, even considering their small supply of arable farmland. This theory has many weak points. First, "there is no simple or enduring connection between climate or geography and economic success" based on historical precedent.²² Prior to European colonization, the American tropics were much more advanced than the more temperate zones in the Western Hemisphere. The Aztecs and Incas "were politically centralized and complex, built roads, and provided famine relief" and the

21 Acemoglu & Robinson. 49

22 Acemoglu & Robinson. 49-50.

Aztecs had money and writing²³. In contrast, what would later become the United States, Canada, Argentina, and Chile “were mostly inhabited by Stone Age civilizations lacking these technologies”.²⁴ Secondly, tropical diseases cannot be blamed for current economic trends based on Earth's history. Tropical soil and diseases have not suddenly transformed from ancient times to current. In fact, given advances in medicine, even among poor and underdeveloped countries, tropical diseases pose less of a challenge today than they did 2000 years ago. Additionally, the authors claim that tropical diseases are a byproduct of poverty, not poverty a byproduct of tropical diseases.²⁵ Prior to its rapid industrialization and subsequent. England was a “very unhealthy place”.²⁶ Following strong investment in public health, England's overall public health and life expectancy improved dramatically. Thirdly, and most relevant to this study, man-made political borders disprove the geography theory. Prior to the Korean War, North and South Korea were one country and had been for for over a millennium. As a small country, North and Korea have similar geography throughout. Not only are citizens of both countries descended from the same people, many people are still alive on either side from when Korea was a unified country. Despite these similarities, North Korean “living standards [are] akin to those of a sub-Saharan African country”.²⁷ North Koreans make approximately one-tenth as much as their South Korean neighbors and life expectancy in North Korea is 10 years less than in the South, 69 years in the North compared to 79 in the South.²⁸ 

23 Acemoglu and Robinson, 50.

24 Acemoglu and Robinson, 50.

25 Acemoglu & Robinson, 51.

26 Acemoglu & Robinson, 51.

27 Acemoglu & Robinson, 71. *Why Nations Fail*.

28 Acemoglu & Robinson, 71. *Why Nations Fail*

29 CIA World Factbook.

The institution theory of economic growth is now widely accepted and has supplanted the geography theory of economic growth. Unlike the geography theory which fails when considered in relation to the past, the institutional theory explains both modern and ancient economic growth and development, or lack thereof. According to the institution theory, there are two types of political institutions across the globe: inclusive and extractive. These political institutions then result in economic institutions of the same kind. Inclusive political institutions, also known as pluralistic political institutions, spread political power among “a broad coalition of a plurality of groups” as is often found in democratic societies.³⁰ However, inclusive institutions must not only spread power broadly, but also have “sufficiently centralized and powerful states” who have overall control in order to achieve economic prosperity.³¹ Extractive political institutions, on the other hand, “concentrate power in the hands of a narrow elite and place few constraints on the exercise of this power”.³² A country without a centralized government, such as Somalia, is neither inclusive nor extractive, but it cannot lead to prosperity for the country and is therefore sorted into extractive institutions. The generally accepted definition of a governmental state is “the monopoly of legitimate violence in society” which is required to “enforce law and order” and “provide public services and encourage and regulate economic activity”.³³ Inclusive economic institutions are the logical result of inclusive political institutions as extractive economic institutions are of extractive political institutions. When political power shared among a broad base, it is difficult,

30 Acemoglu & Robinson, 80. *Why Nations Fail*

31 Acemoglu & Robinson, 81. *Why Nations Fail*

32 Acemoglu & Robinson, 81. *Why Nations Fail*

33 Acemoglu & Robinson, 80. *Why Nations Fail*

almost impossible. for a small group of people to obtain enough power to create extractive economic institutions. Likewise, inclusive political institutions are designed to “constrain [governmental power's] arbitrary exercise” which is the point of extractive institutions.³⁴ Additionally, extractive rulers have no incentive to create inclusive economic institutions because it would “destabilize the extractive political institutions, opening the way for the emergence of inclusive political institutions”.³⁵ Overall the two type of extractive institutions and the two types of inclusive institutions reinforce each other and create a cycle. A cycle involving inclusive institutions is known as a virtuous cycle and a cycle involving extractive institutions is known as a vicious cycle. According to the institutional theory of growth, “nations fail when they have extractive economic institutions, supported by extractive political institutions that impede or even block economic growth”.³⁶ As will be shown in a later section of this paper, the DPRK has extractive political and economic institutions.

Extractive Political Institutions within the DPRK

While the DPRK is a considered a dictatorship, it does have a large political system with separate, easily recognizable parts. The DPRK has an executive, a legislative, and a judicial branch.³⁷ The executive branch's main body is the Supreme People's Assembly, within which the Presidium is most exclusive part.³⁸ The legislative branch is unicameral and all election results are pre-approved by the government. The

34 Acemoglu & Robinson, 82. *Why Nations Fail*

35 Acemoglu & Robinson, 86. *Why Nations Fail*

36 Acemoglu & Robinson, 83. *Why Nations Fail*

37 CIA World Factbook .“North Korea”.

38 CIA World Factbook. “North Korea”.

major party is the Korean Worker's Party (KWP); there are two minor parties—Chondoist Chongu Party and the Social Democratic Party—but they are controlled by the KWP.³⁹ All major judges within the judicial branch are also pre-approved by the KWP.⁴⁰

North Korea is currently led by Kim Jong-Un, the third and youngest son of Kim Jong-Il and grandson of Kim Il-Sung. Kim Jong-Un is believed to be 28 or 29 and Kim Jong-Il began grooming Kim Jong-un as his successor in approximately 2010 following concerns for Kim Jong-Il's health.⁴¹ As the third son, Kim Jong-Un was not originally considered a contender for ruler of North Korea. Kim Jong-Nam, Kim Jong-Un's half brother who appears to be at least a decade older, was the original successor.⁴² By 2001, Kim Jong-Nam had proven himself an untenable choice for North Korea. In 2001, Kim Jong-Nam was detained by Japanese officials at Narita airport for using false identification.⁴³ He was allegedly attempting to enter Japan in order to visit Tokyo Disneyland with his four-year-old son.⁴⁴ Although he was already removed from the line of succession, Kim Jong-Nam has further distanced himself from the North Korean regime. In 2010, he professed his dislike of the North Korean regime when he said that "hereditary succession" did not "fit socialism and my father was against it" but it "was done to stabilize the framework of the nation" alienating him from his few supporters.⁴⁵ Previously, a nephew of Kim Jong-Il defected to South Korea and wrote an expose on North Korea which resulted in his assassination in 1997.⁴⁶ While Kim Jong-Nam's words

39 CIA World Factbook . "North Korea".

40 CIA World Factbook . "North Korea".

41 New York Times. "Kim Jong-Un News" Times Topics—New York Times. 2012.

42 Kirk. Donald. "North Korea Drama: Where Are Kim Jong-Un's Brothers?" ABCnews. 2011.

43 Kirk "North Korea". 2011

44 Kirk "North Korea". 2011

45 Kirk "North Korea". 2011

46 Kirk "North Korea". 2011

are not as dangerous as defecting to South Korea, he still put himself at risk in regards to the regime. Currently, Kim Jong-Nam lives in Macao, off the coast of China.⁴⁷ Kim Jong-Chol, Kim Jong-Un's full brother, is approximately two years older than him and much less controversial.⁴⁸ Kim Jong-Il is believed to have passed over Kim Jong-Chol because of his "unmanliness" and "love for decadent western pop".⁴⁹ All three Kim brothers are believed to have attended the International School of Berne in Switzerland.⁵⁰ While Kim Jong-Nam attributes his anti-communist views to his Swiss education, Kim Jong-Un has thus far exhibited none of said behavior. After attending school in Switzerland Kim Jong-Un attended Kim Il-Sung Military University, "a leading officer-training school in Pyongyang", from 2002-2007, but was taught at home.⁵¹

As a relatively new leader to a country with an established, rigid hierarchy, Kim Jong-Un faced many difficulties following his father's death. While Kim Jong-Il was groomed as future head-of-state for nearly 20 years, Kim Jong-Un was much less prepared. While preparing for leadership Kim Jong-Il "terrorized the older elite and won their grudging respect in a process of consolidating absolute power".⁵² After Kim Jong-Il's stroke in 2008, Kim Jong-Un was put on the fast-track for advancement, beginning full speed in 2010.⁵³ Before 2010, there were no official photographs of Kim Jong-Un, excluding a single photo from elementary school.⁵⁴ Following his public introduction, besides being Kim Jong-Il's son, Kim Jong-Un's public image was greatly helped by his

47 Kirk "North Korea". 2011

48 "Profile: Kim Jong-Un," BBC News, July 25, 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-11388628>

49 Kirk "North Korea". 2011

50 "Profile." BBC.

51 New York Times. "Kim Jong-Un News"

52 New York Times. "Kim Jong-Un News"

53 New York Times. "Kim Jong-Un News"

54 New York Times. "Kim Jong-Un News"

strong resemblance with his grandfather.⁵⁵ While in public Kim Jong-Un normally wore Mao suits similar to Kim Il-Sung and wore his hair in a similar fashion.⁵⁶ Following his first appearance on national media, many Western media outlets began claiming Kim Jong-Un had plastic surgery to increase his resemblance with Kim Il-Sung in an effort to ease his transition.⁵⁷ Resemblance between immediate family members is not unusual and since Kim Jong-Un's ascension to Supreme Leader of North Korea in December 2011 media outlets have ceased such speculation. While the idea of plastic surgery is highly unlikely, the marked resemblance between grandfather and grandson, including mannerisms, is likely a strategic decision by the North Korean government in order to facilitate Kim Jong-Un to power by reminding the people of their prosperous past. Currently, North Korean media portrays Kim Jong-Un as a “confident, modern leader in tune with the daily concerns of citizens”.⁵⁸ By using the personality cult machine in conjunction with fashioning Kim Jong-Un after his grandfather, Kim Jong-Un is accepted more easily by his citizens. This is important since his transition to power was extremely short, especially compared to the transition between Kim Il-Sung and Kim Jong-Il.

As a dictatorship that perpetuates personality cults of the leaders among ordinary citizens, public opposition never posed a problem to Kim Jong-Un's succession. Kim Jong-Un's main challenge was to convince the military of his ability to lead the country. While Kim Jong-Un reportedly attended Kim Il-Sung Military University, he is not believed to have any firsthand military experience. This stands in sharp contrast to Kim

55 New York Times, “Kim Jong-Un News”

56 New York Times, “Kim Jong-Un News”

57 Julian Ryall, “Kim Jong-Un Rumoured to Have Undergone Plastic Surgery.” *Telegraph.co.uk*, October 5, 2010. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/northkorea/8042865/Kim-Jong-un-rumoured-to-have-undergone-plastic-surgery.html>

58 “Profile.” BBC.

Jong-Un's grandfather who founded the DPRK after fighting Japanese guerrillas for decades.⁵⁹ Despite this, Kim Jong-Un was appointed as a four-star general in 2010.⁶⁰ Later that year he was also appointed deputy chairman of the Central Military Commission of the Worker's Party.⁶¹ On March 26, 2010, North Koreans sank the South Korean ship the *Cheonan*.⁶² The attack was reportedly organized and implemented by Kim Jong-Un in an effort to improve his reputation with the Korean People's Army.⁶³ Immediately following Kim Jong-Il's death, Kim Jong-Un was hailed as the "Great Successor".⁶⁴ By April 2012, Kim Jong-Un was given many titles to solidify his standing in North Korea. Kim Jong-Un is officially the First Secretary of the Worker's Party of Korea, the Chairman of the Central Military Commission, First Chairman of the National Defense Commission of North Korea, Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army, a member of the Politburo and its presidium, and is publicly referred to as the Supreme Leader.⁶⁵

While Kim Jong-Un is the overall leader of North Korea, the amount of decision-making power he actually has over the country is unknown. Given the short period of time since Kim Jong-Il's death and Kim Jong-Un's lack of experience, the same power structure is likely still largely in place. Kim Jong-Il's sister and brother-in-law both wield large amounts of power within the country and are believed to be a driving force behind smoothing Kim Jong-Un's acceptance in the Korean politics and military and promoting

59 Choe, Sang-hun. "As Rocket Launching Nears, North Korea Continues Shift to New 'Supreme Leader'". New York Times, April 11, 2012

60 Cha, 101.

61 Cha, 101.

62 Cha, 105.

63 Cha, 105.

64 "Profile," BBC.

65 New York Times. "Kim Jong-Un News".

their own interests. As with Kim Jong-Il's regime, good deeds and assistance to the leader is not unrewarded. As Kim Jong-Il's sister and brother-in-law, Kim Kyung-hee and Jang Song-Taek already had high positions within the regime. Following their support of Kim Jong-Un they were rewarded even farther. Kim Kyung-hee, Kim Jong-Il's sister who was extremely close with him before his death, was promoted to four-star general in the Korean army.⁶⁶ Jang Song-Taek, Kim Jong-Un's uncle, was named vice chairman of the National Defense Commission, North Korea's highest decision making body.⁶⁷ During Kim Jong-Il's funeral, Kim Jong-Un was flanked by his uncle Jang Song-Taek and Ri Yong-Ho, the chief of the general staff of the Korean People's Army and Vice Marshal.⁶⁸ This represents how highly the regime considered Vice Marshal Ri; however, Ri Yong-Ho was removed from all of his positions within North Korea in July 2012 for "health reasons".⁶⁹ Based on outward appearance, Vice Marshal Ri was quite "vigorous" and healthy compared to the majority of leaders within North Korea leading credence to the belief that Vice Marshal Ri was fired because he disagreed with the regime.⁷⁰ The use and subsequent discarding of high-ranking officials has long been the Kim "family's favorite tool of control — using and discarding the senior officials around him like pawns on a chessboard".⁷¹ Prior to Ri Yong-Ho's dismissal, Kim Jong-Un had not lived up to this expectation. Here, Kim Jong-Un is removing one of the stepping stones of his ascension to power and following in his family's tradition which is indicative that his control over the regime is tightening.

66 New York Times, "Kim Jong-Un News"

67 New York Times, "Kim Jong-Un News"

68 New York Times, "Kim Jong-Un News"

69 New York Times, "Kim Jong-Un News"

70 New York Times, "Kim Jong-Un News"

71 New York Times, "Kim Jong-Un News"

The exact role of the military within the DPRK is unknown. Although the DPRK is classified as a classless, socialist society, there are three main categories and 51 subsets of the population under the public distribution system (PDS) used for food distribution across the country.⁷² The military elite are members of one of the highest subsets, but even lower military members still enjoy a status above the average citizen.⁷³ From this we can see that the military is treated differently, but specifics beyond this are unclear.

Ideology Versus Economics Within North Korea

North Korea's current economic problems stem from multiple sources. Among them, stressing ideology over sound economics is the largest. Ideology can be further divided into two types: *juche* and *chollima*. *Juche*, self reliance, is the major form of ideology found in North Korea. As is obvious from the name, under the *Juche* system, North Korea must grow as a country and provide for all of its citizens solely through its own efforts and cannot rely on outside assistance. While *Juche* does rule over the lives of everyday people and how their government deals with them, the government seems to have no problem accepting help under certain circumstances. In recent years, the DPRK has proven particularly fond of coercing other countries to provide assistance through threats of nuclear activity or missile tests. An offshoot of *juche* that produced similar negative consequences is *Chollima*. This is the belief that through the “revolutionary zeal” of North Korean citizens, the country would experience what can only be described as “superhuman productivity gains” thus propelling the North Korean economy beyond

72 Cha. 183.

73 Cha. 183.

the frontier of any other country.⁷⁴ Under Chollima, the “revolutionary zeal” meant that all people needed to work extreme hours with older equipment and methodologies.⁷⁵ This idea was doomed to failure under the basic precepts of economics. The growth in North Korea at the time is textbook extractive growth policies. As discussed earlier, North Korea has very extractive political institutions which have resulted in extractive economic institutions. Extractive institutions do not invest in future growth or technological progress and often simply throw more people at a problem, such as with the Chollima movement. One of the most basic ideas of economics is the law of diminishing returns which states that each additional unit produces less positive than the previous unit. That is not to say that an additional unit causes productivity to decrease, although it can at a certain point, but that the additional worker is not as useful. The classic example is cooks in a kitchen. The additional output from no cook to a single cook will produce the most benefit to the kitchen. The next cook helps the kitchen run more efficiently and specialization can begin, but at some point the kitchen will have too many cooks and it will spoil the soup. This law has two parts. Besides the overallocation of human capital, especially untrained human capital, a major cause of economic decline in North Korea was their lack of investment in technology. Because of their focus on “revolutionary zeal”, the North Korean government did not invest in technology. Following the initial rebuilding efforts following the Korean War, many of which were at least partially subsidized by the USSR or China, and into the 1960s, the North Korean government seemed content with the technology they had and did not account for depreciation of capital assets or general upkeep necessary to keep the technology working

74 Cha. 115.

75 Cha. 115.

at maximum efficiency⁷⁶. Besides not investing in upkeep, the DPRK did not invest in keeping up with the technological frontier. Within the global economy, there are countries that innovate and countries that imitate. Imitators and innovators refer to technology used in order to produce some good or service which builds an economy. Countries that innovate define the technological frontier and continually push it forward in order to allow economic growth for the countries that follow. Even if the DPRK did not innovate and relied solely on imitations of relatively recent outside technology to spur economic growth, their economy would be exponentially better.

North Korea's struggles powering the country are a microcosm illustrating how *juche* and *Chollima* severely limit North Korea's economic options. During the 1970s, North Korea decided to build multiple large coal-burning power plants.⁷⁷ First, North Korea built the Pyongyang Thermal Power Plant and then the Pukch'ang Thermal Plant, financed mainly through foreign assistance.⁷⁸ While these power plants were new, the related technology was not updated to match. Coal plants are much more expensive to build and run than oil burning plants; however, based on *juche*, North Korea decided to build coal plants. On the surface, this is logical as the DPRK has large coal deposits, especially for a country of its relatively small size, but their coal mining technology was "antiquated."⁷⁹⁸⁰ As per *Chollima*, North Korea decided to throw more and more people at a problem instead of updating their technology. North Korea threw more and more people toward mining, but they were only able to excavate 5-6 tons of coal of day while

76 Cha. 114.

77 Cha. 113.

78 Cha. 115.

79 CIA World Factbook. 2013.

80 Cha. 115.

through the use of up-to-date technology, the West could produce “exponentially” more with only two workers.⁸¹ In the 1970s, the DPRK finished building a hydroelectric power plant with a max capacity of 4.4 million kilowatts, but they were only able to produce a maximum of 250,000 kilowatts, barely 5% of the optimal output.⁸² Beside limiting the production capability, the DPRK wasted a large amount of money on a project with no return on investment. This exemplifies how the self reliance and revolutionary zeal ideas not only failed to help the country, but in fact produced many negative results.

History of Extractive Economic Growth in the DPRK

The DPRK's Military and National Security Policy as Related to Economic Growth

The DPRK and WMDs:

North Korea's nuclear capabilities are their most commonly mentioned WMD⁸³. North Korea previously conducted nuclear tests in 2006 and 2009.⁸⁴ They currently “possesses full nuclear fuel cycle capabilities, including a presumed basic capability to enrich uranium” and enough highly enriched uranium (HEU) to produce 10 nuclear warheads.⁸⁵

North Korea is currently believed to have 2,500-5,000 metric tons of chemical weapons and is not a signatory of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). North

81 Cha. 115.

82 Cha. 115.

83 As the DPRK hides most aspects of its WMD program, exact and accurate information is unavailable.

84 “Overview of North Korea.” *NTI.org*. November 2012. <http://www.nti.org/country-profiles/north-korea/>

85 “Overview.” *NTI.org*.

Korea has signed the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and the Geneva Protocol prohibiting the development, use or stockpile of biological weapons, but experts believe that North Korea has a biological weapons program.⁸⁶ In the 1990s, defectors from North Korea had antibodies from a smallpox vaccine in their bodies.⁸⁷ This would indicate that North Korea has access to smallpox and likely begun vaccinations in order to protect their own people. Anthrax also grows naturally in the soil of some regions in North Korea, but it must be further cultivated to meet weapons grade standards.⁸⁸ Based on this evidence, North Korea is pursuing some form of biological weapons.

In addition to the threat of nuclear weapons themselves, North Korea actively seeks advanced weapons system to deliver nuclear warheads. When the United States used nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, they flew airplanes over the desired target and dropped the bomb, hoping it would hit the intended target. This method is considered highly unwieldy and inaccurate; the American bomb over Nagasaki exploded in the air before reaching its desired destination.⁸⁹ Now, nuclear bombs are created into “miniaturized warheads that can be placed on the top of a long-range missile” and strategically target a specific target.⁹⁰ There are three types of missiles: short range ballistic missiles, intermediate range ballistic missiles, and intercontinental ballistic missiles. Reports on the quality of North Korean missiles vary; however, they are not currently advanced, nor is the DPRK's nuclear technology advanced enough, to utilize miniaturized warheads in conjunction with ICBMs to attack distant places with nuclear

86 “Overview.” NTL.org.

87 “Overview.” NTL.org.

88 “Overview.” NTL.org.

89 Cha. *Impossible State*. 217

90 Cha. *Impossible State*. 217

weapons.^{91,92}

Some of the technology North Korea showcased during their April 2012 missile test has been attributed to China.⁹³ Six transporter-erector launchers (TELs) that outwardly appeared Chinese or based closely on Chinese design were photographed. It is unclear how the DPRK gained manufactured these TELs. The possibilities include buying TELs from a Chinese company, receiving direct Chinese aid or reverse engineering the products without external help. TELs are important to the North Korean nuclear and missile program. TELs allow North Korea to have mobile missiles that are not tied to specific, easily targeted silos.⁹⁴

91 Cha. *Impossible State*, 217.

92 "Overview." NTL.org.

93 Melissa Hanham. "North Korea's Procurement Network Strikes Again: Examining How Chinese Missile Hardware Ended Up in Pyongyang." *NTI.org*, July 31, 2012, <http://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/north-koreas-procurement-network-strikes-again-examining-how-chinese-missile-hardware-ended-pyongyang/>

94 Hanham. 2012.

Chapter II: The China-DPRK Relationship

Political Ties

China may currently be considered the DPRK's closest ally, but the DPRK is not China's closest ally. This creates an interesting and dynamic relationship between the two countries in all aspects. China and North Korea face the world overall capitalist and democratic world as two of the last communist states. China and North Korea were founded under similar circumstances. While both countries are classified as communist, their governments exhibit many differences. China is currently transitioning from the leadership of Hu Jintao to Xi Jinping. Power is spread across China much more broadly than North Korea which is classified as a communist one-man dictatorship.⁹⁵

The current head of the DPRK, Kim Jong-Un, only succeeded his father Kim Jong-Il in December 2011 and his control over the party is likely not as complete. While North Korea is a dictatorship, there are many people working under him within the Korea Workers' Party to rule the country, but their power is limited compared to Kim Jong-Un.

As the DPRK's closest ally, the Chinese government frequently interacts with North Korea and attempts to influence North Korea. China's demands of North Korea can be summarized by the "5 no's": "no instability [on the peninsula], no collapse, no nukes, no refugees or defectors [fleeing across the border into China], and no conflict

⁹⁵ CIA World Factbook.

escalation".⁹⁶ Based on empirical evidence, it appears that North Korea has not listened to China on any of these issues; however, one must ask whether North Korea has not listened to China at all or whether the levels in recent years have been lower than they would have without the influence of China. In the past, their alliance was strong enough, and China's intentions were clear enough, that China supported North Korea during the Korean War, but ties were less clear cut after that. During the Cold War, North Korea used both China and the Soviet Union, the other main communist countries in the world in order to support their regime. In the early 1990s, North Korean relations with both countries faltered. The Soviet Union was officially dissolved in December 1991. In 1992, China and North Korea entered a "lost decade" after China's "great betrayal" where they formally recognized South Korea and established political ties.⁹⁷ China's actions in the aftermath of Kim Jong-Il's death show that despite their other problems, China is likely to continue some level of support to North Korea. In December 2011, shortly after Kim Jong-Il's death, Hu Jintao personally went to Pyongyang in order to express his condolences and show support for Kim Jong-Un, the new leader of North Korea and Kim Jong-Il's youngest son.⁹⁸ Hu Jintao expressed his hope that North Koreans will "remain united and turn their sorrow into strength".⁹⁹ On one hand, this statement could be considered as support for North Korea; on the other hand, Hu Jintao could easily be expressing his hope that North Koreans will united behind Kim Jong-Un as the new leader in an effort to save China the trouble of extricating North Korea from another

96 Choo, Jaewoo. Congressional research service. "Mirroring North Korea's Growing Economic Dependence On China: Political Ramifications." Last modified 2008.

97 Funabashi, 265.

98 "Hu Jintao visits Beijing's North Korean Embassy as China Backs Kim Jong Un." Bloomberg.com. December 19, 2011, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-12-20/hu-jintao-visits-beijing-s-north-korean-embassy-as-china-backs-kim-jong-un.html>

99 "Hu Jintao Visits". Bloomberg.com.

mess. Within the past decade, China and North Korea have visited each other regularly. In the two years prior to his death, Kim Jong-Il made three known visits to China.¹⁰⁰ Hu Jintao has also visited North Korea numerous times throughout his term as General Secretary of the CCP.

Of the 'Five no's', the most important no is to avoid regime collapse as the DPRK serves as a buffer zone between China and American and NATO-allied troops stationed at the DMZ between North and South Korea.¹⁰¹ Following DPRK's nuke test #1, some analysts and think tanks have questioned the necessity of North Korea as a buffer zone between the PRC and the West as represented by South Korea.¹⁰² As the Cold War ended 20 years ago, buffer countries between communist and democratic states is no longer as all important.¹⁰³ Additionally, North Korea's erratic behavior could result in harm to China or Chinese citizens in the future. For example, North Korea places many of its nuclear reactors along its northern border and any accidents, or attacks on said reactors, could result in a major problem for China and harm a large number of Chinese citizens.

As China is the DPRK's only ally on the international stage and a major provider of aid, they play a major role in the DPRK's continued survival. On the surface, it would appear that China holds all the power in the relationship, but because China needs North Korea to exist in order to secure its own borders and the North Korean government realizes this, China has no power in the relationship and must continue aiding North Korea.¹⁰⁴

100 "Hu Jintao Visits". Bloomberg.com.

101 Cha, 293.

102 Glaser, Snyder, and Park. 2008.

103 Glaser, Snyder, and Park. 2008.

104 Cha, 315.

Military Ties

China and North Korea's modern relationship began through their military ties starting with the buildup to the Korean War. North Korea borders China along its northeast provinces at the Yalu and Tumen Rivers. During the Cold War, many scholars believed that China aided North Korea simply because they were both Communist countries, but reality is more complicated. One reason that China allied with North Korea is because Chinese officials feared for the safety of their nation if UN forces continued northward. This made sense for the Chinese based on historical precedence and the current situation around the world. During the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, which includes World War II in the Pacific theater, the Japanese first invaded Korea and established bases.¹⁰⁵ The Japanese then moved into China and established bases there.¹⁰⁶ Additionally, in the 1940-50s America was experiencing the Red Scare and anti-communist feelings ran high. Based on the anti-Chinese attitudes in the Western world and China's history with the Japanese, China repeatedly warned the US and UN troops not to cross the 38th and only joined the Korean War "after all warnings had been ignored by Washington and General Douglas MacArthur".¹⁰⁷ President Truman threatened to use the atomic bomb at the China-North Korean border and General Bolte, the chief of operations in Korea, believed that up to "10-20 [atomic] bombs could be spared for Korea".¹⁰⁸ However, the US decided against nuclear weapons for two reasons. First, they believed they could win the war through conventional means.¹⁰⁹ Second, the world

105 Jian, 127.

106 Jian, 127.

107 Jian, 2.

108 Cummings, 2005.

109 Cummings, 2005

opinion regarding the American use of nuclear weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was low and deterred U.S. leaders from authorizing a nuclear strike.¹¹⁰ Many people currently incorrectly anchor their understanding of China's military strength during the Korean War on the PLA's current military might. At the time, China faced many challenges both internal and external.

Beside the outside threat Allied forces posed against China if they entered the war, China faced many domestic issues. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) had only founded the People's Republic of China (PRC, China) on October 1, 1949, a few months before the beginning of the Korea War. The CCP had yet to consolidate their hold over the country. After the civil war against the Chinese Nationalist Party, the CCP needed to help the economy recover from the effects of war and deal with the Nationalist presence left within the country and Taiwan.¹¹¹ The Korean War acted as a unifying element within China. 1.45 million Chinese fought in the Korean War and 300,000 troops were stationed in North Korea for five years following the war.¹¹² While there, the PLA among other Chinese citizens sent by the government, helped with reconstruction and skill training.¹¹³ Many veterans are still alive who remember the Korean War and their service in it fondly as evidenced throughout the Chinese name of the Korean War, the “War to resist America and assist Korea”.¹¹⁴ Overall, the Chinese viewed the Korean War in a positive light.

China is currently under obligation to defend North Korea militarily if necessary.

110 Cummings. 2005.

111 Jian. 3.

112 Cha. 293.

113 Cha. 293.

114 Jian. 3.

In 1961, China and North Korea signed the Sino-North Korean Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance. The goal of the treaty is “to safeguard and consolidate the peace of Asia and the world, and deeply convinced that the development and strengthening of the relations of friendship, co-operation and mutual assistance between the two countries”.¹¹⁵ Article V of the treaty states that China and North Korea “will continue to render each other every possible economic and technical aid in the cause of socialist construction of the two countries and will continue to consolidate and develop economic, cultural, and scientific and technical co-operation between the two countries”.¹¹⁶ Given the differences in economic, military, and political power, this treaty strongly favors North Korea. The overarching theme of the treaty is that “China is obliged to defend North Korea against unprovoked aggression”.¹¹⁷ China is aware of the imbalances in the relationship and “conceives itself to have the right to make an authoritative interpretation of the principle for intervention”.¹¹⁸ Tang Jiaxuan, former foreign minister of China referred to the clause as “a remnant of Cold War era thinking and no longer relevant to the current situation”.¹¹⁹ The world and China-North Korean relations have changed since 1961 though; China “now places more value on national interest over alliances blinded by ideology”.¹²⁰ Therefore, while China is nominally bound to help North Korea under the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual

115 Max, B. & Mike B. “Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance Between the People's Republic of China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.” *Marxists.org*. n.d. http://www.marxists.org/subject/china/documents/china_dprk.htm

116 Max, “Treaty of Friendship.”

117 Jayshreee Bajoria and Beina Xu. “The China-North Korea Relationship.” *Council on Foreign Relations*. February 21, 2013. <http://www.cfr.org/china/china-north-korea-relationship/p11097>

118 Bajoria and Xu, 2013.

119 Yoichi Funabashi, *The Peninsula Question: A Chronicle of the Second Korean Nuclear Crisis*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2007.

120 Bajoria and Xu, 2013.

Assistance. experts believe that China will not aid North Korea militarily unless Beijing wants to.

Another aspect of China and North Korea's military ties is how China deals with North Korea's aggressive actions toward other countries. First, there is the Chinese political reaction to North Korean military actions. The most recent attack happened in 2010 when North Korea shelled Yeonpyeong Island in the “first artillery strike on South Korean soil since the Korean War”.¹²¹ The attack killed 2 South Korean soldiers and wounded 15 soldiers and 3 civilians.¹²² The North blamed the South for inciting the attack through their Safeguarding the Nation military drill.¹²³ Earlier that year in March, the South Korean submarine *Choenan* was sunk; the South Koreans blame the North Koreans, but the North Koreans claim no responsibility.¹²⁴ Based on Beijing's official response to the attack that “the situation needs to be verified”, North Korea did not forewarn China of the attack.¹²⁵ This is not the first time that North Korean actions have caught China unaware. This causes some experts to believe that China has little influence over North Korea's military and some people go so far to say that China's lack of outward response to North Korea's attacks paint china as North Korea's “enabler”.¹²⁶ Additionally, China occasionally follows North Korea's lead regarding military actions and consequences.

Secondly, while the Chinese government appears to enable North Korea's military

121 Jerome. “North Korea's Escalating.”

122 Mark McDonald. “‘Crisis Status’ in South Korea After North Shells Island.” *New York Times*. November 23, 2010. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/24/world/asia/24korea.html>
pagewanted=1&_r=1&ref=global-home

123 McDonald. “Crisis Status.”

124 McDonald. “Crisis Status.”

125 McDonald. “Crisis Status.”

126 Jerome. “North Korea's Escalating.”

policies. the PLA's known relationship with the DPRK's military shows little evidence of special ties. Based on the PLA(N)'s involvement with the DPRK's military, China cannot be considered a true enabler of North Korea's military policies. Military exchanges are a major part of any government's bilateral exchanges to foster fraternity amongst their armed forces. According to China's 2010 Defense White Paper, they conduct military exchanges with other countries based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence—"mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence".¹²⁷ Exact figures are unavailable regarding official PLA delegations to the DPRK or vice versa. The Chinese government announced that in July, 1996, a PLAN ship conducted a 'major overseas visit' to the DPRK.¹²⁸ Additionally, the Chinese Defense Minister visited the DPRK in July 2006.¹²⁹ The military released the general figures the "the PLA has dispatched 33 batches (times) of high-level delegations to visit neighboring countries and received 38 senior military delegations from its neighboring countries since 2007" (current to 2009), but it did not release specific figures regarding which countries were engaged when.¹³⁰ Chinese media outlets frequently mention that the Chinese government and the PLA are aligning with other countries, especially in the region, and training them and helping them improve, but media outlets generally lack any specific data regarding which countries were visited and the duration of said visits.

127 "Backgrounder: Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence," *Xinhuanet.com*. June 14, 2004, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2005-04/08/content_2803638.htm

128 "Major Overseas Visits of PLA Naval Ships," *English.chinamil.com*, March 12, 2008, http://english.chinamil.com.cn/site2/special-reports/2008-03/12/content_1160891.htm

129 "Military Exchanges with Foreign Countries," *English.chinamil.com*, January 14, 2008, http://english.chinamil.com.cn/site2/special-reports/2008-01/14/content_1087973.htm

130 "China Actively Promotes Military Exchanges and Cooperation With its Neighbors," *English.chinamil.com*, March 20, 2009, http://english.chinamil.com.cn/site2/special-reports/2009-03/20/content_1695731.htm

moved from the traditional centrally planned economy of communist countries to one which combined the traditional command economy with select market characteristics which was branded “socialism with Chinese characteristics” by Deng Xiaoping.¹³⁴ The North Korean government considered this policy “revisionism” and a betrayal of their communist background and shifted much of their trade to the Soviet Union as a result.¹³⁵ For most of the 1980s, trade between China and North Korea was in the \$400-500 million range.¹³⁶ After the fall of the Soviet Union, trade between the DPRK and China quickly increased. In 2008, bilateral trade reached \$2.79 billion, up 41.3% compared to 2007.¹³⁷ In 2009, China provided 90% of North Korea's energy imports and 45% of their food imports.¹³⁸ As a whole, the DPRK bought about half of its imports from China and sold approximately a quarter of their exports to China.¹³⁹ Trade for 2011 rose to \$3.47 billion, an increase of nearly a billion from 2009.¹⁴⁰¹⁴¹ The DPRK exports include “minerals, metallurgical products, manufactures (including armaments), textiles, agricultural and fishery products”.¹⁴² The DPRK imports mainly “petroleum, cooking coal, machinery and equipment, textiles, [and] grain”.¹⁴³ In 2010, the DPRK's bought 64.5% of its imports from China and 24.6% from South Korea.¹⁴⁴ The same year, they sold 46.5% of

134  <http://baike.baidu.com/view/760805.htm>

135 Choo, “Mirroring”.

136 Choo, “Mirroring”.

137 Bajoria and Xu, 2013.

138 “Hu Jintao Visits”, 2011

139 Nanto and Chanlett-Avery, 2010.

140 “Hu Jintao Visits”, 2011

141 Nanto and Chanlett-Avery, 2010.

142 CIA World Factbook, 2013

143 CIA World Factbook, 2013

144 CIA World Factbook, 2013

their exports to China and 40.8% to South Korea.¹⁴⁵ In 2010, bilateral trade with China was approximately 8.6% of the DPRK's overall GDP.¹⁴⁶ Overall, China is a major player in the North Korean economy; however, this does not give China any major leverage over North Korea as is discussed further in the political section.

Table 1. China's Merchandise Trade with the DPRK, 1995-2009
(\$ in millions)

Year	China's Imports	China's Exports	Total Trade	China's Balance
1995	63.609	486.037	549.646	422.428
1996	68.638	497.014	565.652	428.376
1997	121.610	534.411	656.021	412.801
1998	51.089	356.661	407.750	305.572
1999	41.722	328.634	370.356	286.912
2000	37.214	450.839	488.053	413.625
2001	166.797	570.660	737.457	403.863
2002	270.863	467.309	738.172	196.446
2003	395.546	627.995	1,023.541	232.449
2004	582.193	794.525	1,376.718	212.332
2005	496.511	1,084.723	1,581.234	588.212
2006	467.718	1,231.886	1,699.604	764.168
2007	581.521	1,392.453	1,973.974	810.932
2008	754.045	2,033.233	2,787.278	1,279.188
2009	793.026	1,887.741	2,680.767	1,094.715

Source: China, Ministry of Commerce (excludes Hong Kong and Macau).

Bilateral trade is not the only facet of China and North Korea's economic ties. Through much of their shared history, China has given North Korea economic and humanitarian aid when North Korea's economy was suffering. During the 1990s China

145 CIA World Factbook, 2013

146 CIA World Factbook, 2013

and North Korean aid relations were not friendly. After Deng Xiaoping encouraged China to focus on financial pragmatism regarding foreign countries, North Korea did not receive as many benefits. North Korea had bought many of its imports from China on credit and had trouble making payments; therefore, China demanded hard currency as payment in order to avoid North Korea defaulting on their loans.¹⁴⁷ While this may seem like China was unkind to North Korea, the majority of products China exported to North Korea were discounted with a “friendship price”.¹⁴⁸ Under the friendship price policy, North Korea bought grains and oil at a third of the going price and other consumer goods at up to an 80% discount.¹⁴⁹ Upon formally recognizing South Korea, China became more “economically rational” when dealing with the North.¹⁵⁰ Then, China did not offer friendship prices anymore and expected the DPRK to pay off their loans, including interest.¹⁵¹

In conclusion, China and North Korea's economic relation has changed; China is currently treating North Korea in a manner similar to other countries as evidenced by the termination of friendship prices. However, China's economic support forms a backbone for the North Korean economy and cannot be removed without significant harm to the country, including possible destabilization. Through increased trade and investment in North Korea, China is able to direct the North Korean economy on a small scale, but China lacks significant leverage over the North Korean economy.

147 Choo. “Mirroring”.

148 Choo. “Mirroring”.

149 Choo. “Mirroring”.

150 Cha. 301.

151 Cha. 301.

Levers

China, the DPRK, and WMDs

Chinese and North Korean views regarding WMDs on the Korean peninsula vary greatly. Through their continual pursuit of nuclear weapons, North Korea exhibits an obvious desire to become a strong nuclear power. Following a failed rocket launch in April 2012, North Korea amended their national constitution to officially declare themselves a nuclear-armed nation.¹⁵² In February 2012, the DPRK held its third nuclear test. The Korean Central News Agency, North Korea's official news outlet, stated

“The test was carried out as part of practical measures of counteraction to defend the country's security and sovereignty in the face of the ferocious hostile act of the U.S. which wantonly violated the DPRK's legitimate right to launch satellite for peaceful purposes....The test was conducted in a safe and perfect way on a high level with the use of a smaller and light A-bomb unlike the previous ones, yet with great explosive power”.¹⁵³

The Chinese government's official response to this test was “On 12 February 2013, the DPRK conducted another nuclear test in disregard of the common opposition of the international community...the Chinese government is firmly opposed to this act”.¹⁵⁴

China's official advocates

“resolving the nuclear issue in the Korean Peninsula peacefully through dialogues and consultations, endeavoring to balance common concerns through holding six-party talks in order to realize the denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula and

152 Nightwatch, 2012. Which specific edition?

153 Nightwatch, 13 February 2013.

154 Nightwatch, 13 February 2013.

maintain peace and stability of the Korean Peninsula and the Northeast Asia”.¹⁵⁵

China's policy evolved not only from worry regarding what Kim Jong-Il would possibly do with a nuclear weapon, but also how other countries would react to a nuclear armed DPRK. The largest danger to China itself was the location of North Korea's nuclear facilities which were located along the China-North Korean border.¹⁵⁶ China feared that an American or NATO attack would cause damage on the Chinese side of the border and draw China into an unwanted war.¹⁵⁷ Another, generally unspoken, worry was that Japan would go nuclear as well if North Korea did.¹⁵⁸ China and Japan have a mutual history of distrust and fighting which, in the event of nuclear weapons in Japan, would make China one of Japan's largest targets.¹⁵⁹ While this is one of China's main worries, Japan has repeatedly stated that it “shall neither possess nor manufacture nuclear weapons, nor shall it permit their introduction into Japanese territory” as a result of the American attacks on Japan at the end of World War II.¹⁶⁰ When North Korea tested a nuclear weapon in 2009 and did not inform Beijing ahead of time, an American official with the Department of State familiar with the matter stated that “Pyongyang has spit in the [People's Republic of China's] eye.”¹⁶¹ Experts consider North Korea's disregard for China's nuclear stance as a main reason that China has been pushing for hard sanctions

155 “Full Text: China's National Defense in 2010.” *English.news.cn*, March 31, 2011.
http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2011-03/31/c_13806851.htm

156 Funabashi, 2007, 301.

157 Funabashi, 2007, 301.

158 Funabashi, 2007, 301.

159 Funabashi, 2007, 302.

160 Funabashi, 2007, 303.

161 Bajoria and Xu, 2013.

against North Korea.¹⁶² Despite China's strict condemnations of the DPRK's WMD and missile program, a 2007 report by the CIA stated that private Chinese businesses continue to sell materials, manufacturing equipment, and components suitable for use in ballistic missile, chemical weapon and nuclear weapon programs to North Korea".¹⁶³ Additionally, China classifies much of their trade with North Korea as "economic development and humanitarian activities" which are allowed under UN sanctions.¹⁶⁴ Overall, China overtly disapproves of the DPRK's nuclear program and facilitate talks between the DPRK and the world discussing disarmament. On the other hand, when it comes to global sanctions against North Korea in an effort to give them an incentive to eliminate their weapons program, China ignores said sanctions when it benefits them.

162 Bajoria and Xu. 2013.

163 Bates Gill. "China's North Korea Policy." *United States Institute of Peace*. July 2011.

164 Bajoria and Xu. 2013.

Chapter III: Scenarios Regarding the Future of North Korea

Key Assumptions Check:

1. The leaders of the DPRK will act in a rational manner to ensure the survival of the DPRK regime.
 - △ Solid. While the world may stereotype the DPRK as a country of crazy people, their leadership has actually acted in a rational manner as is consistent with their culture and situation at the time. As mentioned above, the DPRK believes that nuclear weapons are necessary for regime survival and continues to manufacture and test nuclear weapons and related technology. The DPRK has not historically acted in a manner inconsistent with their culture and worldview; therefore, it is logically consistent to assume that the DPRK will continue to do so.
2. The DPRK will follow their historical behavior pattern of escalation of conflict followed by an abrupt ending to forestall any non-political conflict
 - △ Caveated. The caveat is that the leaders of the DPRK will act in a rational manner, as described above.
3. China will be involved in the DPRK in some manner, no matter which path the DPRK chooses.

- ^ Supported. First, China is currently bound to defend North Korea by the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance. Second, no matter what China's opinion on North Korea is, the majority of the world considers North Korea to be China's problem. Third, China currently has significant trade ties with North Korea. While North Korea is far from China's largest trade partner, China is a major factor involved in keeping North Korea economically afloat. Based on the combination of the above factors and their shared border, China will be involved in some manner.

Based on the situation as described above, I judge with moderate confidence that North Korea's overall situation will remain at a status quo within the next two years. The DPRK's actions over the the past month and a half have indicated a possible deterioration of the security situation on the peninsula: however, I judge with moderate to high confidence that the situation will not reach the drastic scale described under scenario 2. The two alternate scenarios, a drastic deterioration or improvement in conditions, are both unlikely, but are important to understand fully because of the far-reaching implications either scenario would have for the world.

Scenario 1: Status Quo

I judge with moderate confidence that the DPRK will remain in a status quo situation for the next two to five years. As suggested by the name, under this scenario, there will be no attempt at reform within the DPRK. As a result, the situation within the DPRK and regarding their relations around the world will remain the same. There can be short

variations within the scenario while maintaining the status quo moniker.

Indicators:

As this scenario is status quo, it is not defined by special indicators, but rather by a lack of different material. This scenario would be defined by 1) a lack of increased weapons testing; 2) the DPRK military does not deviate from their current training regime ; 3) language in North Korean media outlets remains the same; it does not become either more threatening or more open to the outside world.

Implications:

This scenario would have the best short-term implications for the world. While most of the world believes that the relative uncertainty of North Korea's actions has a negative impact on the global security environment, the world has become used to the situation. Scenario 2, destabilization of the Korean Peninsula or a severe decline in North Korean relations with the world, is obviously undesirable, but Scenario 3 also present many problems.

China's Role:

On the surface, this scenario would involved the least work, but it would actually involve significant work on China's part. While outright war is not imminent, given the recent escalation of conflict on the Korean Peninsula, China must use significant politicking in order to smooth relations between the DPRK and the rest of the world. Above all, China will work to ensure that the current Kim regime stays in power as that ensures a buffer zone between themselves and the possibility of any American or allied troops stationed at the border between China and Korea. Under this scenario, China

assumes that any collapse of the Kim regime would result in reunification of North and South Korea without the possibility of a military coup or other group taking over North Korea. As a result, American or allied troops would then be able to station troops at the border between China and a newly reunified Korea. Most importantly, this would be right on China's doorstep.

Scenario 2: Overall Situation Deteriorates

This scenario has two possibilities: 1) the DPRK initiates war with another country, likely South Korea or the United States and no internal reform is possible as a result; 2) the DPRK experiences severe hardship such as during the natural disasters of the 1990s which make any attempt at internal reform impossible. I judge that neither scenario is likely. As a layperson, it is impossible to accurately predict major meteorological or geological effects with any accuracy. Statistically speaking, a concurrence of multiple, large-scale natural disasters is unlikely to occur again in a short period of time.

Indicators (Current and Future):

The DPRK announced a termination of the ceasefire agreement between themselves and South Korea effective 11 March 2013.¹⁶⁵ The DPRK tested their third nuclear weapon less than a month earlier.¹⁶⁶ The DPRK has also recently acted in accordance with the typical preparations for traditional warfare. On 7 March 2013 they closed their largest

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trade border with South Korea.¹⁶⁷ Around the same time, the DPRK began to cover their military vehicles in camouflage netting.¹⁶⁸ As of 25 March 2013, nothing has resulted of North Korea's talk. Politically speaking, North Korea cannot unilaterally sever the armistice agreement due to how it was created. That said, if North Korea invades South Korea as Germany invaded Russia during World War II, that would effectively end the armistice agreement without following the proper channels. At this time, such an action appears unlikely.

Implications: Of the three possible scenarios presented, a deterioration of conditions within North Korea presents the greatest threat to the world. Within this scenario, there are varying degrees. First, and least, is that the DPRK might attack a single South Korean place such as the attacks on the Cheonan and Yeonpyeong Island 2010. While the North did directly attack the South, neither side resorted to war and instead increased military deals. Second, a traditional war could break out between the two Koreas which would quickly involve their allies. Third, and most dangerous, is that following an outbreak of war, the situation could deteriorate into a nuclear conflict. Besides using a nuclear weapon, the war could become nuclear because one side attempted, or succeeded, in injuring or eliminating the other side's nuclear plants. Scenarios 2.2 and 2.3 are both disastrous for the world.

Causes: The most likely preliminary cause of this scenario is the DPRK's recent satellite launches and nuclear weapon test, 12 February 2013, in the event that these tests were the beginning of the DPRK's North Korea's previous nuclear tests caused international

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outrage which resulted in UN sanctions. North Korea declared that the Armistice Agreement between North and South Korea would be officially voided as of 11 March 2013.

China's Role:

If this scenario occurs, China will have little ability to influence the DPRK. It should be noted that, if this scenario does occur, China will have worked diligently to prevent it. China's overall influence over the DPRK is relatively small, but China has traditionally worked very hard to avoid direct confrontation between the DPRK and the rest of the world. China's overall goal, as stated over years in multiple forums, is to maintain regional stability in Northeast Asia. A traditional war near China's border would be threatening, but the threat of a nuclear war is unacceptable. As explained above, China has provided major support for the DPRK's economy. With its recent provocative action, North Korea has threatened to upset China's conditions of support or five no's—no regime collapse, no instability on the peninsula, no nukes, no refugees, and no escalation of conflict—and has brought international condemnation upon itself. Following the February 2013 nuclear test, a spokesman for China stated that China would comply with international law.¹⁶⁹ As of writing this, international law supports strict economic sanctions for North Korea in an effort to deter further nuclear activity. Should China agree to these sanctions as suggested, the economic situation within the DPRK may suffer a severe downturn or collapse.

Scenario 3: Reform in the DPRK: Overall Situation Improves

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Indicators:

Indicators of this scenario include 1) mentions of economic reform in DPRK media outlets; 2) changing how past reforms are discussed; 3) likely increased interaction with China; and 4) possible changes in the DPRK's security policy. Note: the fourth factor is only a possibility and is not entirely indicative of any form of economic reform. For further information, see implications section below.

Implications:

While this scenario would help the DPRK become more in line with international expectations over the long run, in the short run it would undermine the legitimacy of the current regime. More specifically, any attempt to legitimately improve the economy would require a shift from extractive to inclusive economic institutions. As the economic institutions in a country are dependent on the political institutions in a country, the Kim regime will not consider any fundamental reform of their economy. A possible alternative to fundamental reform is Chinese style economic reforms. Under the socialism with Chinese characteristics, China has melded their country into a mix of inclusive and extractive economic and political institutions that, over time, are gradually becoming more inclusive.

The state of the DPRK's military policy is only a possible indicator of reform in North Korea. If the DPRK attempted to entirely turn their economy from extractive to inclusive institutions, their current military first policy would be unsustainable. As that scenario has an extremely low likelihood under the current regime, the DPRK may attempt to improve their economy in slight increments while improving their weapons

program. Currently, the DPRK spends approximately a quarter of their annual GDP on military related items.¹⁷⁰ Beside using nuclear weapons as a bargaining chip for humanitarian aid and concessions from other countries, the DPRK is known to sell their weapons technology and might their nuclear knowledge.

History of Reform Attempts, Obstacles to Reform, and China

The DPRK is known for its reclusive politics and threats to the world, not reform. In truth, North Korea has attempted to reform their economy previously, but no attempt has proven successful. The reforms efforts all focused simply on fixing a symptom of their economic problems instead of addressing the underlying problem.

The 2001 currency reforms are one of the most recent attempts. Following the breakdown of the Public Distribution System (PDS) during the major famine on the 1990s, small-scale markets sprang up across North Korea.¹⁷¹ As the government desires as close to complete control over its people as possible, such markets were not allowed. While the actions in 2001 were a form of reform, they were used as a way to help bring the country back under government control. Many of the reform-minded actions were not referred to as reforms.

Instead, they were called “utilitarian socialism.”¹⁷²

In January 2001, Rodong Sinmun, the official North Korean newspaper, wrote “Things are not what they used to be in the 1960s. So no one should follow the way people used to do things in the past.” Kim Jong-Il and the entire regime changed their views on reform within a few years. By 2009, the Kim regime changed their tune. In

170 Cha. 186.

171 Cha. 186.

172 Nanto and Chanlett-Avery, 2011.

March 2009. Kim Jong-Il said that the state should “energetically lead the masses by displaying the same work style as officials did in the 1950s and 1960s.”¹⁷³ Following Kim Jong-Il's death, people within North Korea went further and now refer to these ideas as “ideological pollution.”¹⁷⁴ Sometimes, Kim Jong-Il's reform attempts are referred to as “utilitarian socialism”.¹⁷⁵

China has attempted to improve the DPRK's economy, mainly through sharing some of their successful business with the DPRK and trade. Chinese trade with the DPRK has increased steadily, but the DPRK's economy has not followed suit. In response, “Beijing has grown increasingly perplexed, frustrated, and probably very angry over its increasingly obvious inability to persuade, cajole, or pressure its erstwhile North Korea friend and ally to [reform its economy]”.¹⁷⁶ Prior to Kim Jong-Il's death, Zhou Yongkang, a “senior leader in the CCP”, told Kim Jong-Il that China would support Kim Jong-Un as Kim Jong-Il's successor, but only if North Korea took “substantive steps to open up its economy, including rejoining diplomatic efforts, to relieve the external economic pressures on it”.¹⁷⁷

There is a slight possibility that the DPRK may emulate China and reform their economy. China radically transformed their country through implementing the Reform and Opening Up policy of 1978, but a host of factors obstruct the DPRK from treading a similar path. First, while China of 1978 and the DPRK of 2013 are similar, their

173 Cha. 66.

174 Cha. 235.

175 Nanto and Chanlett-Avery. 2011.

176 Michael D. Swaine. “China's North Korea Dilemma.” *Hoover Institution*, n.d.
<http://media.hoover.org/sites/default/files/documents/CLM30MS.pdf>

177 Ian Johnson and Michael Wines. “North Korea Relies on China, but Tends to Resist Its Guidance.” *New York Times*, November 23, 2010.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/24/world/asia/24beijing.html?ref=asia>

governments are radically different. In the late 1970s, there was much controversy within the leadership of the PRC and Deng Xiaoping eventually gained power. Following Kim Jong-Il's sudden death in December 2011, his youngest son Kim Jong-Un seamlessly transitioned into his role as supreme leader, at least as far as the outside world is concerned. Deng Xiaoping was a very charismatic leader who relentlessly pushed major reform for China.¹⁷⁸ Since then, Chinese leaders have espoused the idea that “to get rich is glorious”.¹⁷⁹ Under this policy, China transformed itself into the economic giant we know and recognize today.

North Korea lacks a Deng Xiaoping-esque character to push reform which makes any possibility for fundamental reform highly unlikely. Kim Jong-Un may have been educated in the West, Switzerland, but he has displayed no tendency toward real reform. Given the unknown nature of North Korean politics it is impossible to rule out the possibility that a reform minded character does exist within the upper echelons of DPRK politics, but no signs of such a person have been outwardly apparent. Secondly, North Korea has proven fearful of minor reform, much less any major form of reform. This is a direct result of the Arab Spring that swept across the Middle East North Africa region recently. Leadership in North Korea watched as dictators who had ruled for decades were deposed by democratic forces that barreled through the region like a tornado. While many of the countries that participated in the Arab Spring were ruled by dictators, none of them enjoyed even a fraction of the power the Kim family holds over their subjects. Many of the dictators in the Middle East were feared; Kim Il-Sung is worshiped similarly to a god and many North Koreans are told that they are the chosen race. North

178 Cha, 21.

179 Cha, 21.

Korean leaders fear that opening up their economy to the world, especially South Korea, will result in the population learning of the differences between their standard of living and the rest of the world. thus allowing discontent to permeate throughout its populace.

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