

Kimism in Sŏn'gun Korea: The Third Generation of the Kim Dynasty

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Abstract North Korea is considered the world's most autocratic country. Established in 1948, the DPRK is now governed by the third generation of the Kim family regime. Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il, and Kim Jong-un have utilized institutions and ideology to consolidate power. Each period of power consolidation has been marked by extensive purges and the reduction of the winning coalition. Repression is exercised through the ruling party, the military, the state, and mass organizations, which have prevented the development of civil society. State projects, particularly the nuclear program, reward the winning coalition but result in poor governance and opportunity costs borne by the North Korean people.

Keywords North korea • Chuch'e (ideology) • *Sŏn'gun* • Military first

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B. Howe (ed.), *National Security, Statecentricity, and Governance in East Asia*, Security, Development and Human Rights in East Asia,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58974-9_2

INTRODUCTION

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea) is considered one of the most autocratic countries, if not the most autocratic country, in the world (Economist Intelligence Unit 2017; Puddington and Roylance 2017). When Korea was liberated from Japanese colonial rule in 1945, Kim Il-sung, the young leader of a small band of anti-Japanese guerillas, parlayed Soviet support and personal skills into what later would become an "almost perfect dictatorship" that has effected two dynastic leadership successions. Kim Jong-un, representing the third generation of the Kim family cult, now has consolidated his power and appears to have eliminated any potential challengers to his rule.

Some authoritarian regimes have introduced liberal economic reforms or have relaxed political control without giving up power, but in the North Korean case there is no sign of political liberalization. The political science literature has explored a "new type of authoritarianism" whereby autocratic leaders grant opposition parties and societal groups limited space to operate, but the Kim family regime has not compromised on its political and social control. On the other hand, "hybrid systems" representing the "new authoritarianism" hold elections and permit limited deliberation in legislative bodies, while also permitting some media presence and social media activities. This limited competition can be viewed as a mechanism for distributing rents (Wintrobe 1998), an effort to broaden mass support for the government (Gandhi and Przeworski 2007; Myerson 2008), or a channel for the regime to elicit information (Magaloni 2008). Myanmar is a recent example of partial liberalization (Cook Chap. 4), and even nominally communist China and Vietnam have elements of semi-competitive hybrid systems (Shirk 1993).

All political leaders—both democrats and autocrats—need a minimal base of support to seize and maintain political power. However, their methods for building their coalitions are different; democrats stand for free and fair elections, and they tolerate an opposition. On the other hand, autocrats do not tolerate an opposition; they use force or the threat of the use of force to construct a winning coalition. Members of the autocrat's coalition have an incentive to delegate authority to a single individual to surmount collection action problems. However, the bargaining process is beset with credible commitment problems as well as the control of coercive instruments and assets that are needed

to buy loyalty. Finally, autocratic regimes are often roiled by the dictator's incentive to reduce the size of its coalition to increase the share of rents for each member (Wintrobe 1998; Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003; Bueno de Mesquita and Smith 2011).

The Kim dynasty offers a case study in the establishment of an anachronistic neo-monarchy with showcase state projects that not only result in poor governance and the misallocation of scarce resources, but also threaten international peace and security. This chapter examines how the Kims rose to power and consolidated their rule to establish a personalistic family dictatorship along with its project to construct a Korean "nuclear state." In the process of seizing and consolidating power, Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il, and Kim Jong-un all began with a relatively broad coalition of support, but over time each Kim reduced the size of his winning coalition through purges that were effected by manipulating ideology, and by creating and transforming institutions.

BACKGROUND AND THE RISE OF KIM IL-SUNG

The DPRK was established in 1948 as a social reconstruction project to replace Japanese colonialism (1910–1945) and the Chosŏn dynasty (1392–1897). The result is a regime that exhibits all the characteristics of a totalitarian system: a charismatic leader, a single party, myths surrounding the nation and the leadership, an official ideology or belief system, and well-developed institutions to reward regime loyalists, and to deter and punish regime enemies—real or perceived (Friedrich and Brzezinski 1965). Kim Il-sung, an anti-Japanese guerrilla fighter, was instrumental in transforming a Soviet proto-satellite state into the world's most authoritarian system.

During the 1930s, Kim Il-sung led a group of guerrilla fighters in Manchuria, commanding about 200–300 men against the Japanese (Kim 1932; Minnich 2005; Buzo 1999; Cumings 2004, pp. 103–127). However, by the winter of 1940–1941, Japanese counter-insurgency operations pushed Kim and his cohorts into the Soviet Far East where Kim was integrated into the Soviet Army's 88th Special Brigade. While Kim was in exile, he was unable to participate in the Korean domestic communist movement, which had moved underground due to Japanese surveillance and repression. During the colonial period, Korea had a provisional government located in Shanghai and later in Chongqing, but upon liberation in August 1945, Korean nationalists in Korea formed

the Committee for the Preparation of Korean Independence. At the same time, numerous political groups sprung up around the country as Soviet and American occupation forces were deploying to the peninsula (Cumings 1981, pp. 68–100).

Four days after the atomic bombing of Nagasaki, Soviet troops crossed into northeastern Korea to occupy the area around the port of Rajin. When Japan surrendered on August 15, Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander of Allied Forces of the Pacific, issued General Order No. 1, which addressed the surrender of the Japanese military in Korea. The order provided for a temporary Soviet occupation of the area north of the 38th parallel, while the US military occupied the area south of the 38th parallel.

Kim Il-sung did not arrive in Korea until September 19, 1945, aboard a ship in Wŏnsan harbor on the east coast. The following day, Stalin issued an order to establish a central administrative authority and to support the establishment of party organizations. That work began in October, but the Korean Communist Party (朝鮮共產黨) already had been established in Seoul on September 11, 1945, by domestic communists in the South under the leadership of Pak Hŏn-yŏng. Therefore, the Soviet military authorities convened a meeting in October with communist figures in the North and established the “Northern Branch of the Korean Communist Party.” In December, the name was changed to “North Korean Communist Party (NKCP)” with Kim Il-sung as a secretary; however, the first secretary position went to Kim Yong-bŏm (Chŏng 2011, p. 75; KINU 2016, pp. 27–28).

For Kim Il-sung, Soviet support was important for obtaining an appointment as a secretary of the NKCP. Kim was only 33 years old and the leader of what appeared to be the weakest faction, the Ppalch’i-san group of guerrilla fighters. Kim’s faction had to compete against four main domestic factions as well as the Soviet faction and the Chinese-supported Yŏnan faction. In August 1946, the NKCP merged with the New Democratic Party (新民黨) to form the North Korean Workers Party (北朝鮮動黨) (Han 2011, p. 56)¹ as part of a “united front” to co-opt noncommunist nationalists. Stalin felt that a strong party would be necessary to guide the establishment of a new state, so he decided that Kim Tu-bong, a senior member of the Yŏnan faction, should lead the party (KINU 2016, p. 28). In the South, the Korean Communist Party merged with the Korean People’s Party and the South Korean new Democratic Party to form the South Korean Workers Party in November

1946. The two parties then merged to create the Korean Workers Party in June 1949 (Chŏng 2011, p. 75; KINU 2016, pp. 76–78).

As the various political factions were jockeying for position in Pyongyang, Kim sent guerrilla loyalists into the provinces to support networks with workers, farmers, and intellectuals, and to build capacity in what later would become the mass organizations, which still play an important role in the regime's control of society (Han 2011, pp. 56–57). Membership in the four main mass organizations is mandatory for essentially all North Korean citizens. The four main mass organizations are the Kimilsungist-Kimjongilist Youth League, the General Federation of Trade Unions of Korea, the Union of Agricultural Workers of Korea, and the Socialist Women's Union of Korea (Song 2004; KCNA 2016a, b). These organizations serve as a “non-state and nonparty transmission belt” for indoctrination and to provide party discipline for nonparty members in society. North Korea's mass organizations have prevented the emergence of any civil society that could aggregate and channel the interests of North Korean citizens.

In the realm of interim proto-state institutions, the North Korean Provisional People's Committee (北朝鮮時人民委員會) was established in February 1946 with Kim as chairman (KINU 2016, p. 28).² From this position, Kim maneuvered into the position of cabinet premier when the DPRK was established in September 1948 (Han 2011, pp. 57–59). Using the Soviet Union as a model, the North adopted many populist reforms that were broadly embraced by the public including a land reform that broke up large land holdings, as well as laws for labor standards and gender equality. In June 1946, the North Korean Provisional People's Committee also adopted an election law that would determine the way elections were held in August 1948, just before the official establishment of the DPRK (Chŏng 2011, p. 75; KINU 2016, p. 83). The rigged elections that followed surpassed Lenin's innovative method of expanding the nominal electorate as much as possible by holding elections for Supreme People's Assembly (SPA) seats to represent the South even though Koreans south of the 38th parallel could not cast ballots. On August 24, 1948, a meeting was held in the North to elect 360 SPA members for the South. The following day, elections were held in the North for 212 SPA members. The reported voter turnout in the North was 99.97%, and the candidates were approved by 98.49% (Chŏng 2011, p. 84).

According to selectorate theory, the likelihood of political survival in autocracies is enhanced if the nominal selectorate is large and the winning coalition is small, subject to the constraint of the leadership's available assets to pay off its winning coalition of supporters in exchange for loyalty. Politicians have designed ingenious methods to artificially expand and shrink the size of the selectorate and the potential winning coalition. Historically, these constructs have been based on attributes such as birthplace or lineage; special skills, beliefs, or knowledge; wealth; and gender or age (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003, pp. 43–49). With democratization, the trend has been to expand both the selectorate and the potential members who could be part of a winning coalition. If the winning coalition is large, as in a democracy, the leadership generally is unable to deliver private goods to so many coalition members. Therefore, democrats are forced to compete in the realm of public policy and the delivery of public goods. Autocracies, on the other hand, have devised methods to shrink the winning coalition while erecting difficult entry barriers for anyone wishing to join it. Therefore, autocratic dictators can remain in power with a winning coalition that represents a very small portion of the population or nominal selectorate (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003; Bueno de Mesquita and Smith 2011).

In the North Korean case, the nominal selectorate is all voters, or practically all adult citizens, but those with a realistic chance of being part of the winning coalition is very small. Since the leadership only needs to reward the winning coalition to remain in power, it can provide private goods to the members of the winning coalition. When the DPRK was founded, the winning coalition included the Kim Il-sung's Ppalch'isan faction along with the other factional groups that had formed a united front under Soviet tutelage. Over the next 20 years, Kim continuously purged his rivals to consolidate his personalistic dictatorship.

In 1948, members of Kim's rival domestic and Yŏn'an factions held most of the positions in the cabinet and the Supreme People's Assembly (SPA). However, Kim's faction was predominant in the security services, including the Ministry of People's Security and the KPA. The Soviet faction also held a significant number of positions in the KPA as it was being built up into a modern military force (Han 2011, pp. 57–59). Kim's partisans along with Soviet advisers made up the core of the military training schools and facilities that were created prior to the KPA's official establishment in February 1948 (KINU 2016, p. 29; Chŏng 2011, pp. 78–80).

Early on, Kim and his loyalists took aim at rivals, accusing them of “regionalism” and “factionalism.” However, the setbacks in the Korean War gave Kim the pretext to launch methodical purges to eliminate potential challengers. In December 1950, at the Third Plenum of the KWP Central Committee, only weeks after the Chinese People’s Volunteers entered the war to save the KPA from certain defeat, Mu Jǒng, a KPA commander and senior Yōnan faction leader, was purged for the North’s collapse and retreat. During the Fourth Party Central Committee Plenum in November 1951, Kim purged Hō Ga-ūi of the Soviet faction. With the Yōnan and Soviet factions neutralized, Kim turned his attention to his domestic rivals, purging Pak Hōn-yōng at the Fifth Plenum in December 1952 for being an “American spy” among other charges (Chōng 2011, pp. 86–87). Pak had been the leader of the South Korean Workers Party prior to the merger, and he served as Vice-Premier and Foreign Minister. Pak’s fate was sealed when he had promised that a people’s insurgency in the South would bring certain victory in the war, but it failed to materialize.

The Kim regime also developed an ideology on its path to power consolidation. Over time, state ideology has been modified, particularly by Kim Jong-il to ensure dynastic succession. In December 1955, Kim Il-sung introduced the term *chuch’e* for the first time in a speech before KWP agitation and propaganda workers (Kim Il Sung 1955). The term did not become common until about a decade later when Kim needed an ideology as an instrument in support of his final mass purges for the establishment of an extraordinary personality cult (Myers 2015). But first, Nikita Khrushchev’s “secret speech” in February 1956 sent shockwaves throughout the communist world, including Pyongyang. Khrushchev’s criticism of Stalin’s excesses emboldened some within the KWP to criticize Kim and to suggest reforms for collective leadership. While Kim was visiting Eastern Europe from June 1 to July 19, 1956, a group of pro-Soviets North Koreans took action to criticize Kim for his personality cult and leadership style. They confronted Kim when he delivered his trip report during a KWP Central Committee meeting on August 30. The anti-Kim group had even garnered support from the Soviet ambassador to Pyongyang while Kim was away, but their anti-Kim movement failed and they were purged (Chōng 2011, pp. 88–89).

The second half of the 1950s resembled Stalin’s purges in the 1930s. Terror gripped society as all KWP identification cards were replaced between late 1956 and early 1957. On May 30, 1957, the Standing

Committee of the KWP Central Committee issued a directive to “reinforce the struggle against counter-revolutionary elements” (Chŏng 2011, p. 89). This directive also marked the beginning of the *sŏngbun* social stratification system that classifies citizens into three main groups: Kim loyalists, wavering, and hostile (Collins 2012, p. 14; Han 2011, pp. 92–96).

The 1950s purges also extended to the KPA. After MacArthur’s Inch’ŏn landing and the swift KPA retreat during the war, the KWP established the KPA General Political Bureau (GPB) to monitor KPA units to ensure compliance with party policy directives (Chŏng 2011, p. 86). But in March 1958, the KWP Central Committee held a full meeting and purged GPB Director Ch’oe Jong-kak and hundreds of his subordinates. By the end of the decade, Kim had eliminated all challengers in the party, the military, and state institutions. Purges also occurred in the mass organizations to ensure that Kim’s directives were implemented throughout society (Song 2004). Kim effectively had established a personalistic dictatorship with a winning coalition restricted to his small group of Ppalchi’i-san guerrilla comrades (Collins 2012, p. 14; Chŏng 2011, p. 89). This period was also marked by the rapid collectivization of agriculture and the nationalization of industries. Given the migration of many landlords and business owners to the South in the wake of the war, the regime did not face the kind of resistance that most other socialist regimes encountered. In August 1958, the DPRK announced that “socialist reconstruction” had been completed, and that the regime would promote the “Three Great Revolutions in Ideology, Technology, and Culture” in the struggle to build socialism in every aspect (Chŏng 2011, p. 97).

Once Kim had liquidated the Yŏnan and Soviet factions, he sought greater autonomy from Soviet and Chinese influence over North Korea’s foreign policy. Subsequently, various terms synonymous with independence and self-reliance began to emerge in state policy guidelines. In December 1956, “self-reliance in the economy (經濟에서의 自立)” appeared during a Central Committee meeting to approve the 5-year economic plan as war reconstruction aid from the Eastern Bloc was in decline. In December the following year, “independence in domestic politics (政治(内政)에서의 自主)” emerged during the Central Committee meeting in the wake of purges against the Yŏnan and Soviet factions. In 1962, following the Cuban Missile Crisis, Pyongyang felt the Soviets had abandoned Cuba, which gave rise to “self-preservation

in national defense (國防에서의 自衛).” And in 1966, the term “independence in foreign policy (政治(外交)에서의 自主)” emerged in North Korea’s political discourse (KINU 2016, pp. 35–36). This discourse reflects the DPRK leadership’s consistent view that regime survival can only be guaranteed through self-help, which is the justification for the DPRK nuclear and missile programs.

In the second half of the 1960s, Kim Il-sung’s rivals and potential challengers had been eliminated, but the regime had to consider the problem of succession. Kim was only in his 50s and appeared to be in good health; he lived until 1994 and reached the age of 82, so this was the early stage of succession politics. Kim Yŏng-ju, Kim Il-sung’s younger brother, initially was considered a potential heir. Kim Yŏng-ju was born in 1920 and held several senior positions commensurate with those of a successor. In 1960, he was appointed director of the KWP Organization and Guidance Department (OGD), and in 1966 he became an alternate member of the Politburo and a secretary in the secretariat. He became a full member of the Politburo in December 1969 (MOU 2015, p. 121).

In 1967, Kim Yŏng-ju drafted the “Ten Great Principles of the Establishment of the Unitary Ideology System” (당의 유일사상체계 확립의 10대 원칙 or “Ten Great Principles”) that were later used by Kim Jong-il as a critical instrument for dynastic succession (Chŏng 2011, pp. 90–91). The 10 Great Principles are more important in the daily lives of North Korean citizens than the KWP Bylaws, Constitution, or any statutes. Citizens must memorize them and regurgitate them at their workplace and during weekly indoctrination sessions with party cells or with mass organization meetings. Life in North Korea is said to be impossible without knowing and reciting the principles (Chŏng 2011, pp. 90–91, 102–105). The 10 Great Principles extol Kim Il-sung as a near deity and provide guidelines for the values and behavior of North Koreans. When they were publicized at the behest of Kim Jong-il in 1974, the principles also included 65 directives. The 10 Great Principles are as follows:

1. Struggle with all your life to paint the entire society the single color of the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il-sung’s revolutionary thought. It is considered the highest doctrine of our party to paint the entire society the single color of the Great Leader’s revolutionary thought, and a higher level of task is to construct our party’s unitary ideology system.

2. Respect and revere highly and with loyalty the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il-sung. Highly revering the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il-sung is the noblest duty of the revolutionary warriors who are endlessly loyal to the great leader. Within this lies the glory of our nation and the eternal happiness of our people.
3. Make absolute the authority of the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il-sung. Affirming the absolute nature of the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il-sung's authority is the supreme demand of our revolutionary task and the revolutionary volition of our party and people.
4. Accept the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il-sung's revolutionary thought as your belief and take the Great Leader's instructions as your creed. Accepting the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il-sung's thought as one's own belief and taking his instructions as one's creed is the most crucial element requested for one to become an endlessly loyal *chuch'e* communist warrior. It is also a precondition for the victory of our revolutionary struggle and its construction.
5. Observe absolutely the principle of unconditional execution in carrying out the instructions of the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il-sung. Unconditionally executing the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il-sung's instructions is the basic requisite for proving loyalty towards the Great Leader, and the ultimate condition for the victory of our revolutionary struggle and its establishment.
6. Rally the unity of ideological intellect and revolutionary solidarity around the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il-sung. The steel-like unity of the party is the source of the party's invincible power, and a firm assurance of the victory of our revolution.
7. Learn from the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il-sung and master communist dignity, the methods of achieving revolutionary tasks, and the people's work styles. Learning the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il-sung's communist dignity, the methods of achieving revolutionary tasks, and the people's work styles are the divine duties of all members of the party and workers, and the prerequisite for fulfilling the honorary fate of revolutionary warriors.
8. Preserve dearly the political life the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il-sung has bestowed upon you, and repay loyally with high political awareness and skill for the Great Leader's boundless political

trust and considerations. It is our highest honor to have bestowed upon us political life by the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il-sung and repaying his trust loyally can lead to a bright future for our political life.

9. Establish a strong organizational discipline so that the entire Party, the entire people, and the entire military will operate uniformly under the sole leadership of the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il-sung. Establishing a strong organizational discipline is the essential requirement to strengthen the party's collective ideology, leadership, and its combat power. It is also a firm assurance for the victory of our revolutionary struggle and its establishment.
10. *The great revolutionary accomplishments pioneered by the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il-sung must be succeeded and perfected by hereditary succession until the end* (italics added). The firm establishment of the sole leadership system is the crucial assurance for the preservation and development of the Great Leader's revolutionary accomplishments, while achieving the final victory of the revolution.

In the late 1960s, Kim Jong-il became active in the establishment of a personality cult surrounding his father. On the surface, those activities are consistent with Korea's long-standing neo-Confucian traditions of the Chosŏn dynasty, so it would have been difficult to criticize Kim Jong-il's demonstration of filial piety towards his father. However, the activities also were self-serving in support of Kim Jong-il's ambition to become the country's second Great Leader.

Dynastic succession, while common in monarchies, was antithetical to the principles of orthodox Marxism-Leninism. To execute a dynastic succession, the Kim family had to distance itself from the foreign ideology of Marxism-Leninism, but it could not return to the Chosŏn dynasty's flunkeyism of "serving the great (事大主義)" that structured Korean international relations during the East Asian world order (Kang 2010; Kim 1980). This problem was resolved by creating a new ideology to replace Marxism-Leninism to apply socialism "creatively for the unique Korean revolution."

Kim Il-sung is credited with the creation of *chuch'e* thought or ideology, but party secretary Hwang Jang-hyŏp was responsible for the term's selection and insertion into Kim's December 1955 speech (Kim Il Sung 1955), but Vice-Premier Kim Ch'ang-man referenced the term in the

early 1960s more than Kim Il-sung did. However, Kim Ch'ang-man was purged in early 1966 along with the remainder of the Kapsan faction (Myers 2015, pp. 87–95). However, from around 1970, Kim Jong-il began to build up *chuch'e* as an ideology worthy of extreme praise in honor of his father.

Kim Jong-il generally is chided in the West as a stuttering misfit, a drunkard who wore lifts in his shoes to boost his short stature. He was well known for his movie collection, and foreign media often described him as someone who would rather have been a movie director if his father had not forced him to take over the family business. This depiction is far from the truth. Of course, he needed his father's approval to be chosen a successor, but Kim Jong-il's activities and the pursuit of power were most critical.

Kim Jong-il's career path was well planned; he did not stumble into leadership after failing to become a movie director. After graduating from Kim Il-Sung University in 1964, Kim was given a position in the OGD where he learned the backgrounds of senior cadres and how to monitor their "party life" activities. In 1966, Kim was assigned to the General Guard Department (護衛總局), which is now the Guard Command (護衛司令部), and the equivalent of the US Secret Service but with an estimated 100,000 personnel serving as the regime's bodyguards (Ko 2008). In 1967, Kim was appointed the head of a department in the party's Propaganda and Agitation Department, and he was Vice-Director of the whole department (MOU 2017). By this time, Kim Jong-il was actively engaged in the regime's internal security affairs as he began to exert control over the arts, film, literature, and propaganda so that they all would reflect the unitary ideology and ultimately the dynastic succession.

At the Fifth Party Congress in November 1970, the party bylaws were revised to declare that the KWP would be guided by Marxism-Leninism and Kim Il-sung's *chuch'e*, "the creative application of Marxism-Leninism to the reality of Korea" (Myers 2015, p. 111; KINU 2016, p. 36). In 1972, the DPRK Constitution was revised for the first time to mark Kim Il-sung's 60th birthday, or "hwan'gap," which is the fifth cycle of the 12-year Chinese zodiac and traditionally considered an important milestone. Children express filial piety for this occasion, and Kim Jong-il used the propaganda resources at his disposal to build monuments and elevate his father to the status of a near-deity. The Constitution created a new position of President for Kim Il-sung, a title he still holds posthumously.

Kim Jong-il's work to glorify his father was rewarded with more promotions and responsibilities. In October 1972, Kim became a member of the KWP Central Committee. And the following year, he was assigned concurrent positions as director of the Propaganda and Agitation Department, head of the Three Revolutions Movement, and director of the ODG (MOU 2017). After passing the test in those positions, Kim formally was designated as Kim Il-sung's successor in February 1974. To dissuade or crush any challengers, the Politburo met on August 8, 1977, and issued a directive giving the OGD broad powers to investigate and exert control over General Political Bureau officers in the KPA. And in February 1979, the KWP CC Military Committee delegated broad authority to Kim Jong-il over working-level military decisions or affairs (Chŏng 2011, p. 106).

At the Sixth Party Congress in October 1980, Kim Jong-il was officially unveiled as his father's successor. After having cleared of all domestic obstacles, it was finally time to obtain foreign recognition of the dynastic succession, especially from the communist world. Beijing and Moscow did not welcome the news of succession plan, but relations with North Korea changed considerably when the Cold War ended. In May 1990, the SPA elected Kim Il-sung Chairman of the National Defense Commission (NDC) and Kim Jong-il as First Vice Chairman. And in December 1991, the KWP Central committee elected Kim Jong-il as KPA Supreme Commander, separating the function of DPRK President and Commander of the armed forces. The Constitution was revised in April 1992 to reflect this change by naming the NDC Chairman as the Commander of the nation's armed forces (Chŏng 2011, pp. 115–116). The 1992 Constitution also removed all references to Marxism-Leninism and inserted "*chuch'e*" as the guiding principle of the state.

Following Kim Il-sung's death in July 1994, the country entered a 3-year period of mourning, which had been customary for family members during the neo-Confucian Chosŏn period. However, this period was also marked by a famine and breakdown in state control (Haggard and Noland 2009). Many analysts predicted regime collapse given the extreme food insecurity and the delay in Kim's official anointment as the new leader. Kim ruled through his position on the Politburo Standing Committee and as the party's organization secretary (head of the OGD), in addition to his position as NDC Chairman, before he was elected as KWP General Secretary in October 1997 (Chŏng 2011, pp. 122–123).

The transition period marked the introduction and evolution of the concept “military first (先軍),” which first was referenced as “military first politics (先軍政治).” Military first politics refers to a type of governance or public administration that emphasizes military security. The North Korean literature extols the contributions of Kim Jong-il and his realization that military capabilities are necessary to complete the socialist revolution. The literature asserts that Kim and the DPRK had to turn to military first politics because of the deteriorating international environment after the collapse of socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (Kim In-ok 2003; Kim Bong-ho 2004; Chŏn 2004). In recent years, “military first” has been elevated to the status of a new ideology (Pak et al. 2009).

In 1998, the DPRK Constitution was revised to reflect the state institutional changes commensurate with Kim Jong-il’s status as an official leader. Kim Il-sung was declared “eternal President of the DPRK” and the NDC was elevated to be the highest state institution for managing state affairs. Therefore, the NDC Chairman nominally was the head of state. In contrast to his father, Kim Jong-il did not begin to consider succession plans well in advance. However, Kim could no longer avoid the issue after he suffered a stroke in August 2008. Kim decided to select his third son shortly thereafter, and the decision was relayed through the internal KWP bureaucracy on January 8, 2009, which is believed to be Kim Jong-un’s 26th birthday (International Crisis Group 2012).

Preparations for succession accelerated in the spring with a constitutional revision to give the NDC broader powers in case Kim Jong-il could no longer rule. In April 2009, North Korea attempted to launch a satellite into orbit and failed, but conducted its second nuclear test the following month. Also in April, North Korea embarked upon a 150-day “speed battle” to increase labor inputs with the intention of generating more economic output at the behest and command of Kim Jong-un. By the end of 2009, internal security institutions and the KPA General Political Bureau were reporting to Kim Jong-un (International Crisis Group 2012).

On September 27, 2010, Kim Jong-il promoted his son to four-star general, and the following day the KWP convened its Third Party Conference, the first since October 1966. The last Party Congress was held in October 1980, so the party conference was the first full meeting of the party in 30 years. Many party positions had become vacant through attrition, which naturally enabled Kim Jong-il to shrink his

winning coalition. Now Kim needed a broader base of support to ease the second dynastic succession. The Third Party Conference elected Kim Jong-un to the Central Committee and Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission (International Crisis Group 2012).

The year following Kim Jong-un's selection as successor at the Third Party Conference, Kim began to accompany his father more frequently during on-site inspections (Kim Kwang-tae 2011), just as Kim Jong-il had done while Kim Il-sung was still in power. Purges were rumored to occur during the summer of 2011 to put Kim Jong-un loyalists into important government positions down to the provincial level (Jeong Jae Sung 2011). On October 8, 2011, Kim Jong-il reportedly left a last will and testament that declared Kim Jong-un should assume supreme command of the KPA (KCNA 2011). Kim Jong-un's first leadership position was KPA supreme commander, but he was elected "first secretary of the KWP" at the Fourth Party Conference in April 2012 (KCNA April 11, 2012a). The conference also declared that Kim Jong-il would be "held in high esteem as eternal general secretary of the KWP" (KCNA April 11, 2012b).

On April 13, 2012, the Supreme People's Assembly convened to elect Kim Jong-un as the "first chairman" of the NDC (KCNA April 13, 2012a), and to declare Kim Jong-il as the "eternal NDC chairman" (KCNA April 13, 2012b). While prominent Kim family loyalists were appointed to high-level KWP and state positions according to Kim Jong-il's wishes, Kim Jong-un wasted no time in using his powers of appointment and promotion. For example, on February 15, 2012, one day before his father's birthday, Kim Jong-un issued an order for the promotion of 23 general officers (KCNA February, 2012e).

While Kim was promoting some generals, he was purging others. Mimicking Stalin's great purges of the Soviet military in the 1930s, Kim called a Politburo meeting on a Sunday in July 2012 to suddenly dismiss Vice Marshal Ri Yong-ho, the chief of the general staff, and one of the eight escorts in Kim Jong-il's funeral procession (Herman 2012). Ri was never heard from again, but Kim also began frequent purges or rotations of senior military leaders, including the dismissal and execution of General Hyŏn Yŏng-ch'ŏl, Minister of the People's Armed Forces (Pinkston 2015). In sum, Kim Jong-un quickly seized control of the military and security apparatus, and has relied upon the institutions of the party, military state, and mass organizations bequeathed by his father and grandfather. Kim also has demonstrated his ruthlessness on several occasions when wielding the powers of repression.

Kim's reign of terror was in full force in November 2013 when Chang Sŏng-t'aek, Kim's uncle by marriage, was arrested and executed after a public show trial reminiscent of Kim Il-sung's purges in the 1950s (Lankov 2013). Chang was married to Kim Kyŏng-hŭi, the younger sister of Kim Jong-il. Chang's sudden execution took many analysts by surprise because of his marriage to Kim Kyŏng-hŭi, even though he had been purged and subsequently rehabilitated during the reign of Kim Jong-il. Chang was known as an economic pragmatist or technocrat who had been responsible for much of North Korea's trade with China. It's uncertain whether Chang was too greedy and miscalculated, or whether Kim Jong-un sought to wrest the assets under Chang's control. Nevertheless, Kim did seize those assets to support control of his dictatorship, while at the same time sending a clear signal that no one in North Korea is safe from Kim Jong-un's wrath. Foreign analysts debated whether Chang's purge was a sign of instability, or a sign of Kim Jong-un's firm control. There has been no resistance since Chang's execution, and Kim Kyŏng-hŭi has disappeared so it appears Kim Jong-un has eliminated potential challengers.

The adept utilization of punishments and rewards are the direct tools for Kim Jong-un as he has constructed and maintained his winning coalition. However, Kim Jong-un also employs state projects to cultivate a sense of national pride, and to employ some of the critical actors—such as those responsible for the missile and nuclear programs—in Kim's winning coalition. The Kim Jong-un regime has promoted projects such as amusement parks and a new ski resort, but the nuclear and missile programs are very costly for the North Korean people. The opportunity costs of these programs are greater than the expenditures diverted to the programs because these activities have brought North Korea under economic sanctions and international isolation.

Since coming to power, Kim Jong-un has accelerated the pace of missile and nuclear development, having presided over three nuclear tests and a greater number of missile flight-tests compared to his father's regime. As of this writing, North Korea appeared to be preparing for a sixth nuclear test at the Punggye-ri nuclear test site (Bermudez and Liu 2017). North Korea also has accelerated its activities to develop new missile systems, including a road-mobile ICBM and a submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) system. The Kim regime also has tested a new

solid-fueled mobile missile based on the SLBM design. These activities are consistent with the regime's *chuch'e* and *sŏn'gun* (military first) ideologies, as well as Kim Jong-un's *pyŏngjin* line, which calls for the simultaneous development of nuclear technologies (both military and civilian) and the national economy.

The Kim Jong-un regime remains committed to "completing the revolution in the South" and sustaining the nuclear and missile programs despite the opportunities costs borne by the North Korean people. The regime narrative is that nuclear weapons are necessary for three important state objectives: national defense, economic development, and respect from the international community. While North Korea has shown some interest in marginal changes in economic policies, such as the reduction in the size of work teams or the establishment of special economic zones that permit more international transactions, the regime remains committed to an inward-looking system that remains relatively closed except for a small number of regime elites. Nuclear weapons and their delivery systems have become so embedded in the regime's ideology and state identity that it is difficult to imagine the regime abandoning these programs without a revolutionary change in thinking, identity, and policy. Until then, the North Korean people will pay a high price for the Kim regime's autocratic governance.

The thorough penetration of North Korea's mass organizations in addition to the state's monitoring and surveillance capabilities have made it impossible for civil society to develop. State control of media and information technologies is an insurmountable obstacle for citizens who wish to express any views that diverge from the ruling party's official line. Party and state intuitions have been designed to ensure the "dictatorship of the proletariat" and "democratic centralism" with North Korean characteristics, which means "our style socialism" guided by a one-man dictatorship under the Kims. The third generation of Kim leadership has continued the program of state projects centered on rent-seeking in support of the regime's winning coalition of supporters, and accelerated its program to become a full-fledged nuclear state. Under the Kim family regime, North Korea almost certainly will continue with its poor governance and lack of accountability for the North Korean people while posing greater hard security challenges for the international community.

NOTES

1. When the party was established, the central committee was made up of 14 domestic faction members, 12 Yŏn'an faction members, 8 from the Soviet faction, and only 4 from Kim's Ppalch'i-san faction.
2. The committee functioned as a de facto centralized government under Soviet control to implement policy directives from the center throughout the country.

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National Security, Statecentricity, and Governance in
East Asia

Howe, B. (Ed.)

2018, X, 160 p. 1 illus., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-3-319-58973-2