

### **III. THE WELL-INFORMED CADRE**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **DEFINITIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS**

What factions or potential factions exist among the North Korean elite, and what power do they exercise? What information sources and channels do these different groups depend upon? What contextual factors influence how they receive and interpret information from outside sources? Based on the initial guidelines provided for this study, the following definitions frame the search for answers to these three questions. “Factions” are any divisions among the elite that respond in their own way to information from outside sources. “Elites” are those who have political power and who are in a channel of communication leading toward the top of the North Korean leadership hierarchy. “Information from outside sources” refers to open-source information about initiatives related to U.S. military planning.

For lack of better information on the DPRK’s internal situation, the following assumptions are made. Kim Jong-il is the only person with “real power,” although others may exercise power on his behalf. A useful rule of thumb is that the closer to Kim one is, the more power one has. It is also assumed that those with more power have greater knowledge about the domestic and international situations.

### **DIVISIONS IN NORTH KOREAN SOCIETY**

The basic division in North Korean society is between those who are deemed to be loyal to the Kim regime and those whose loyalty is questioned. Since the North Korean economy collapsed in the 1990s, a second division has emerged between those who have access to foreign currency and those who do not. Foreign analysts have often speculated about the existence of divisions among the elite on a variety of other dimensions, including hardliners versus soft-liners, military versus party personnel, members of Kim Il-sung’s different families, members of Kim Jong-il’s different families, older- versus younger-generation elites, technocrats versus ideologues, economy-first versus military-first policy makers, and nationalists versus internationalists. No evidence exists that any of these dimensions are the basis for cohesive groups or factions. In terms of power, the military and security organizations have more power than do other organizations in North Korean society, but no credible information indicates that people within the military or security services operate as political groups outside of the party structure.

What is known about decision making and information flow in North Korea suggests that on important matters, Kim turns to his subordinates for policy suggestions, encouraging them to

discuss and argue among themselves. But once Kim makes a decision, it is official policy until he chooses to review it. In this decision-making process, Kim wants everyone to report up to him, not to each other. Because everyone's personal security is dependent on pleasing - or at least not displeasing - Kim, self-censorship is presumably an important characteristic of policy discussions and recommendations.

## **DOMESTIC NEWS SOURCES**

The major North Korean media consist of four national newspapers, one AM radio station, three television stations, and local cable systems connected to loudspeakers in homes and public places. For many North Koreans, television sets and radios are still a luxury, and hardly anyone has access to a computer. Kim Jong-il is known to be an avid web surfer, and a select number of scientists and officials also may have access to the Internet. The Kwangmyong Intranet was set up in 2000 to link major cities and organizations.

“Newsworthy” items are scarce in all the media. The DPRK's premier news outlet is *Nodong Sinmun* (Daily Worker), which publishes six pages every day of the year. Page 6 is devoted to international news. News in the DPRK press focuses on two themes. First, that the domestic and foreign policies of the Kim regime are correct and successful. Second, that Japan, the United States, and some elements in the ROK pose a threat to all Koreans. An informal survey of news stories in the North Korean press relating to U.S. military initiatives indicates that a considerable amount such news is available, although it is presented in a very negative fashion. News stories in 2003 reported on the transformation of the USFK, the deployment of fighters and bombers to Guam, the southward relocation of American soldiers in the ROK, the Proliferation Security Initiative, and the war in Iraq - especially the U.S. military's psychological operations in the early stages of the war.

## **FOREIGN NEWS SOURCES**

In principle, North Koreans should not be able to gain direct access to foreign news sources. Possession of a radio with an unfixed dial, listening to foreign radio or television broadcasts, possessing foreign video or audiotapes, and reading foreign newspapers or magazines all are grounds for detention. Although the government tries to jam foreign broadcasts, including Radio Free Asia, these broadcasts do sometimes get through, and some risk listening to them with foreign or altered radios.

There is little reason to believe that one group of the North Korean elite is more likely than another to be exposed to information from foreign broadcasts. Those cadres who have the opportunity to meet tourists and those with the opportunity to travel overseas obviously have

greater access to first-hand information from outside the country. But those few North Koreans who travel abroad are watched carefully by North Korean security personnel. Because of security restrictions and infrastructure problems, most personal communication inside the DPRK takes place on a face-to-face basis. Mail, telephone, and intranet communications are subject to monitoring by the security services.

## **RECEIVING AND INTERPRETING INFORMATION**

How North Koreans respond to news about U.S. initiatives depends to a large extent on how they process this information. Like people everywhere, North Koreans are probably skeptical of information that contradicts their beliefs, although this skepticism may be overcome if the communication source is highly credible. Whereas the North Korean press depicts Kim Jong-il as the most credible person in North Korea or anywhere else, the United States is portrayed as a country of schemers plotting to enslave North Koreans and other “progressive” peoples.

Communications coming from the United States urge the North Korean elite to change their policies - the same policies that put them at the top of their society. Change may not be in their best interest. To overcome strong resistance to change, a highly credible source must present an extremely attractive - or extremely threatening - message. The greatest challenge is not how to get international news into North Korea, but how to get the desired response to that news.



## A. BACKGROUND AND DEFINITIONS

As a foreign visitor to North Korea marveled, “There are no shopping malls or advertising boards, no lights or neon or color of any sort except for propaganda banners.”<sup>1</sup> Only one major daily newspaper (with six pages) serves the country of 23 million people. The dials of authorized radio receivers are pre-set to the government station. Two television stations broadcast part-time, although few North Koreans have a television set in their home. Many homes and most workplaces are equipped with a speaker system to broadcast local party news, although these speakers are not always working. It is forbidden to read foreign publications, listen to foreign broadcasts, or watch foreign television or videotapes. Personal communication *between* people is restricted as well, thanks to a compartmentalized social structure and fear of domestic surveillance. How then do the people get information about the outside world; and in such an environment, what does that information mean to them?

Of course, no society can be perfectly regulated or sealed. The fact that the government regularly publishes articles calling for vigilance against “the imperialists’ cunning maneuver of ideological and cultural infiltration” attests to the imperfections of censorship and social control.<sup>2</sup> North Korea has its share of malingerers, black marketers, and rumor mongers. In a society regulated by money and power, not by law, some who break the rules or speak ill of the Kim regime are punished and perish, others are punished and later pardoned, and those with money often avoid punishment altogether.

Kim’s socialist paradise-in-the-making is a typical communist class society, with party cadres as the new ruling class. As the elite become disillusioned with socialism and use their power to gain access to increasingly limited resources, the gap between the ruling and ruled classes widens. Part of the advantage enjoyed by the ruling class is that its members have better contact with the outside world. The increasing number of options for economic prosperity, especially among the elite, is a threat to the homogeneity of North Korean society and to the cohesiveness of the political elite.

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<sup>1</sup> Oliver August, “A Journey into the Land That Time Forgot,” *The Times*, September 17, 2003, Internet version. FBIS EUP20030917000097.

<sup>2</sup> To pick one of hundreds of examples. Article by Paek-hyon Yun so titled, *Nodong Sinmun*, May 24, 1997, pd 6. FBIS FTS19970626000069.

The first question addressed by this study is what factions or potential factions exist among the North Korean elite, and what power they exercise. The second question is what information sources and channels these different factions depend upon. The third question is what contextual factors influence how the elite receive and interpret information from outside sources. Based on the initial guidelines provided for this study, the following definitions are understood. “Factions” are any divisions among the elite that respond in their own way to information from outside sources. “Information from outside sources” refers most specifically to open-source information about initiatives related to U.S. military planning. “Elites” are those who have political power and are located in a channel of communication leading toward the top of the North Korean leadership. Needless to say, most of North Korea’s 23 million people have little direct influence on policy formulation. Participation in elections is usually reported to be 99.9 percent, with 100 percent casting their votes for the party candidates listed on the ballot.<sup>3</sup> But the people do exercise a measure of political and economic power, even if their votes do not count. James C. Scott has chronicled (for rural Indonesia) the “weapons of the weak” in such forms as “foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, and sabotage,” to name a few.<sup>4</sup> With the possible exception of arson and sabotage, these behaviors are easily found in North Korea as well.<sup>5</sup>

## **B. THE ORIGINS OF POLITICAL POWER**

In the absence of better information about the DPRK, it is often necessary to operate on assumptions. A central assumption in this study is that Kim Jong-il holds most of the political power. Former South Korean president Kim Dae-jung once remarked that Kim Jong-il was “perhaps the only person who matters in his country.”<sup>6</sup> Hwang Jang-yop has said that Kim is the

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<sup>3</sup> As was the case in the 2003 SPA election. KCBS, August 4, 2003. FBIS KPP20030804000057. An ITAR-TASS article by Denis Dubrovin informs readers that “North Korean citizens who came to polling stations on Sunday do not even permit an idea of voting against candidates to the Supreme People’s Assembly. A teacher of an elementary school . . . told TASS that ‘by voting for candidates, we express our full and unanimous support for the great leader Kim Jong-il.’” ITAR-TASS, August 3, 2003. FBIS CEP20030803000027.

<sup>4</sup> James C. Scott. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985. Scott notes that peasant rebellions and revolutions are rare compared to the everyday forms of resistance. He admits that such resistance has only a small effect on the measure of exploitation suffered by the oppressed; nevertheless, the “powerless” do inhibit and interfere with the elites’ exercise of power. An application to North Korea may be found on pp. 211-214 in Jae Jean Suh, “Class Conflict and Regime Crisis in North Korea,” pp. 195-218 in Chung-in Moon (ed.), *Understanding Regime Dynamics in North Korea*. Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1998.

<sup>5</sup> One is inclined to consider the reported “terrorist” bombing at an SSD office in June 2003 as an anomaly. See Kang Chol-hwan, “Explosion Erupted in Front of Musan County State Security Building,” *Choson Ilbo*, July 22, 2003, Internet version. FBIS KPP20040128000122.

<sup>6</sup> As reported by Steven Mufson, “Seoul’s Kim Presses for U.S. Role,” *Washington Post*, March 9, 2001, p. A22.

only person with “real power,” although others may exercise power on his behalf.<sup>7</sup> A useful rule of thumb might be that those with the closest working relationship to Kim have the most power.

Consider the evidence for Kim’s power. To the extent that the North Korean people believe the party propaganda, they may have come to accept that the first duty of any loyal citizen is to lay down his life for General Kim.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, the extravagance and frequency of this kind of propaganda probably indicate that the people have yet to be convinced. More compelling evidence for Kim’s power is provided by those who have been in close contact with him. The stories told by Kim’s former Japanese chef, Kenji Fujimoto, reveal that Kim could get just about anything he wanted in his personal life, from foreign delicacies for his table to Japanese jet skis and Sony home electronics.<sup>9</sup> Likewise, the account of Yi Nam-ok (Li Nam-ok), who grew up as a companion to Kim’s first son, Kim Chong-nam, reveals no limits to Kim’s desires or power. Ms. Yi and the rest of the family lived as virtual prisoners in one of Kim’s villas, but lacked nothing in terms of luxuries. On one occasion when Kim became angry with the family, he cut off food supplies to the house, and the family was forced to sneak out and buy their own food.<sup>10</sup> If Kim could treat his own family in such a way, how must others fare when they displease him?

It is difficult to find evidence of a case in which Kim has proposed or backed a policy, such as building small power plants or rezoning land, only to see that policy blocked by others. This is not to say that his policies work; however, once a policy has been decided upon, it is not directly opposed. Two potential contending power centers are the bureaucrats, who through their inertia hinder the implementation of Kim’s policies, and the military, who could go up against him with their guns. The bureaucrats (in North Korean terminology, “functionaries”) are notorious for failing to carry out socialist policy with any degree of enthusiasm. Not a month goes by without the press publishing complaints on this point, often coming from Kim Jong-il.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> “No one has real power. You should know that clearly. . . Only Kim Jong-il has real power. . . A person who gains some trust today may be gone tomorrow. Therefore, it is better not to pay attention to individuals but policy.” Interview on KBS Television, July 10, 1997. BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, July 15, 1997. It should be noted that some analysts entertain doubts about the credibility and judgment of former secretary Hwang.

<sup>8</sup> For example, “The vitality of collectivism is that people entirely depend on their leader for their destiny and future, and they uphold the leader’s ideology and leadership with loyalty. . . We must think of the respected and beloved general at any time and place, and we must devotedly defend the general by using our bodies as citadels and as shields.” Pak Yong-mi, “Loftiest Expression of Collectivism,” *Minju Choson*, October 9, 2003, p. 2. FBIS KPP20031107000020.

<sup>9</sup> Fujimoto’s story has been published in Japanese under the title *Kin Seinichi no Ryoryinin* [Kim Jong-il’s Chef], Tokyo: Fusosha, 2003. The title of the Korean edition is *Kim Jong-il ui yorisa*. FBIS translated sections of the book over a period of months in 2003, and offers a CD compilation for U.S. government employees (but not contractors). One of the series on the FBIS web site is KPP20031003000076.

<sup>10</sup> Interview of Yi Nam-ok by *Bungei Shunju*, February 1998, pp. 274-292. FBIS FTS19980119000029.

<sup>11</sup> Some of the strongest complaints were made at the time Kim launched his “new economic thinking” campaign in early 2001. For example, “Throwing oneself into one’s work and [versus] the cult of self-preservation can be said

But this lack of enthusiasm is probably not a result of any objection to the policies *per se*, but rather an indication that the functionaries do not believe their best interests lie in energetically implementing the policies.

Some evidence exists that Kim might face policy constraints. He himself has claimed that on some issues, the military has its own opinion. In a meeting with visiting South Korean media executives, Kim explained that opening a direct flight route between Pyongyang and Seoul was “no problem at the government level, but it is a problem at the military level. I need to speak with the military in order for direct flight routes to be opened.”<sup>12</sup> This sounds a bit like a good-Kim/bad-military routine played out for the benefit of foreigners, but in any case, such flights have only occasionally been realized. When the media executives raised the issue of the harsh anti-South Korean tone of the KWP’s charter, Kim said that he would “find it difficult to revise the platform” because some of the top party officials who had worked with his father would have to resign, and that would make it look like Kim was purging them! Regarding the armed clash between North and South Korean patrol boats in 1999, Kim told South Korean delegates at the 2000 June summit that the sailors initiated the attack “without instructions from authorities.”<sup>13</sup> And he informed visiting Prime Minister Koizumi that a recent armed spy boat intrusion into Japanese waters, and the abductions in the 1970s of Japanese citizens, were conducted without his knowledge by “radical elements” of North Korea’s spy organizations.<sup>14</sup> If these denials are true, they suggest that Kim is not always completely in control of the military, but these examples do not indicate any serious opposition to his authority.

The most convincing evidence that Kim has almost complete power is that the rule of the Kim dynasty has not been seriously contested since the 1950s. In good times and in bad, Kim Jong-il’s position appears secure. The people suffer, the economy atrophies, and the military makes do with less, but Kim sticks to failed policies. If anyone else has power, why haven’t they tried to use it?

If power in North Korea is largely in the hands of Kim and a few associates, what can be assumed about how knowledge about the outside world is distributed? We know that Kim, with his multiple satellite television channels and 24/7 Internet access, is highly knowledgeable about

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to be a line that separates functionaries’ devotion from cowardice. Such a way of doing things as putting on an air of importance and doing nothing but sitting in the office has nothing to do with today’s realities.” Kim Chin-kuk, “Initiative, Creativity, and Dedication,” *Nodong Sinmun*, February 23, 2001, p. 2. FBIS KPP20010315000007.

<sup>12</sup> Yonhap News Agency of August 13, 2000. FBIS KPP20000813000044.

<sup>13</sup> Yonhap, July 4, 2000. FBIS KPP20000704000022.

<sup>14</sup> For example, NHK Television, September 17, 2002. FBIS JPP20020917000132. Also, Koichi Kosuge, “Japanese Abducted So They Could Teach Language to Spies,” *Asahi Shimbun*, September 19, 2002. FBIS JPP20020919000045.

world events. It might also be assumed that the more power his followers have, the more knowledge they have as well. The top-most cadres may know more about world events than the average American.

Another assumption underlying this study is that the loyalty to Kim shown by top cadres is both genuine and feigned. The elite are proud to have been chosen to serve Kim, and they enjoy the power and privileges that come with the job. At the same time, they realize that their positions depend entirely on pleasing Kim, and this puts a lot of pressure on them because the alternative to working for Kim may be working in a labor camp. All in all, however, they probably find the benefits of their positions to exceed the costs. Recall that most of Stalin's followers remained with him, even though their position was more tenuous than the position of Kim's followers.

### **C. DIVISIONS IN NORTH KOREAN SOCIETY**

Depending upon how one defines them, the North Korean elite number anywhere from a thousand to two million. Whatever their number, as a class they share the characteristics of the typical communist nomenklatura.<sup>15</sup> The basic division of people in the DPRK - whether the elite or the masses - is between those who are deemed to be loyal to the Kim regime and those whose loyalty has been questioned. A secondary division, corresponding somewhat to the first, is between laborers who depend on state rations for survival, and bureaucrats and officials who can market their services to petitioners for bribes, thereby supplementing their government rations. Needless to say, it is difficult to become a bureaucrat or official unless one is a member of the "loyal" class. The political class division can be viewed in terms of the tripartite classification system outlined by Kim Il-sung at the 1970 party congress, but operating in some form as early

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<sup>15</sup> By all accounts, Victor Kuznetsov's harsh characterization of the typical member of the Soviet nomenklatura applies to the North Korean cadres as well: "As a rule, it was a man superficially and one-sidedly educated, cynical, hypocritical, and selfish. A confirmed member of the nomenklatura had no respect for the law; he knew that Soviet laws were formal and not meant to be enforced or were to be observed only by ordinary citizens. As long as he followed the unwritten rules common to all members of the 'ruling upper class,' his status in the hierarchy was assured. Breaking a formal law was dangerous for him only because it could be used by other members of the nomenklatura in their own interests in the course of the unrelenting inner struggle to obtaining a more prominent post. The real strength of the nomenklatura member consisted not in his professional knowledge, but in his ability to please his chiefs and, circumstances permitting, to intrigue against them hoping to take their place." In the North Korean case, it might be added that the first unwritten rule is not to criticize or disparage Kim Jong-il. It also seems likely that the North Korean nomenklatura, as well as many commoners, are more motivated by nationalism than their Soviet counterparts. Passage from Victor Kuznetsov, "The Economic Factors of the USSR's Disintegration." Pages 264-279 in Anne de Tinguy, *The Fall of the Soviet Empire*. Distributed by Columbia University Press, New York, 1997. Quotation from p. 270. For an excellent discussion of class conflict and regime security in the DPRK, see Jae Jean Suh.

as the 1950s.<sup>16</sup> The security organizations classify people according to their presumed loyalty to the regime, with classification based primarily on family history going back several generations. These classifications may be reviewed whenever an individual is considered for occupational promotion.

The trusted “core” of society, comprising about 30 percent of the population, comes from families who historically were members of the working class. The elite are a select few from this core class. A few of the historical subgroups in this class are laborers, poor farmers, office clerks, and soldiers - not by any means members of the intellectual class. The 50 percent of North Korea’s society belonging to the “wavering” class are considered to have the potential to become members of the loyal class, given sufficient time and indoctrination. They include those whose families, in pre-communist times, were middle-class merchants, prosperous farmers, or workers who immigrated from South Korea. At the bottom of society is the “hostile” class, constituting at least 20 percent of the population. These are “untrustworthy” people whose ancestors were wealthy landlords or merchants, committed members of religious organizations, officials or collaborators of the Japanese occupation government, or anyone who has a family member guilty of criticizing the Kim regime. Except in highly unusual circumstances, these people never become party members, let alone join the Pyongyang elite. The dregs of this group are tens of thousands of political prisoners serving life-time sentences in an animal-like existence.

Beginning in the 1990s, hard times fell on most North Koreans, and party membership no longer guaranteed a privileged life. Instead, access to foreign currency (primarily dollars or yen) became the ticket to success, and sometimes, even to survival. Consequently, a major division in society has emerged between those who have foreign currency (regardless of their political classification) and those who do not.<sup>17</sup> Foreign currency can be acquired through black market activities, border trade with China, and travel abroad (in unusual cases). An inferior alternative to having foreign currency is to have direct access to food, because in the 1990s food became the basic goal of life for many North Koreans. Country life had always been tougher than city life, but when the North Korean economy was knocked back to the stone age, farmers survived better than city dwellers,<sup>18</sup> excepting the higher classes in Pyongyang who could use their political power to extract food from the countryside or help themselves to foreign aid supplies.

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<sup>16</sup> See for example, *White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea, 2003*. Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, 2003, pp. 111-114. On the web, see the National Intelligence Service’s summary of “Social Elements” in the Society/Controlling People section at <http://www.nis.go.kr/eng/north> (refresh).

<sup>17</sup> Two excellent articles have been published on foreign currency earning in the DPRK. Yi Kyo-Kwan, “North Korea’s Up-and-Coming Influential People,” *Chugan Choson*, June 19, 2003, pp. 36-37. FBIS KPP20030623000066. And “North Korean Regime’s Mobilization of Residents for Garnering Foreign Currency,” *Keys*, Vol. 13 (summer 2003), pp. 8-27.

<sup>18</sup> Yonhap, December 19, 2003. FBIS KPP20031219000034.

No known political divisions among the elite could fairly be called “factions”: that is, organized or semi-organized groups working against other groups or against the regime. By the time the identity of any such group came to the attention of foreign analysts, the group would already have been exterminated.<sup>19</sup> Kim may appreciate the value of setting one person against another in order to keep people from joining up against him, but he does not seem to relish the idea of independent group formation, perhaps because he realizes they could form a coalition and turn against him. Hence the monolithic nature of North Korean politics. In terms of the ideological themes of Juche and the socio-political organism (a single Confucian-style family), only the “main branch” of the North Korean tree can be tolerated, with all competing branches harshly pruned. This explains why the families of political criminals are punished: their “bad seed” must be completely eliminated from the garden of North Korean socialism.

Warnings in the North Korean press that “impure, hostile elements are wriggling inside our country”<sup>20</sup> hint that there may well be aggregations of the elite, not organized as formal or even informal groups, that share ideas and interests at variance with official ideology. Foreign analysts and the press have often speculated about the existence of divisions arrayed on a variety of dimensions, including hardliners versus soft-liners, military versus party personnel, members of Kim Il-sung’s different families (Kim Jong-suk versus Kim Song-ae families), members of Kim Jong-il’s different families (Song Hye-rim, Ko Yong-hi and their three sons as possible successors to Kim Jong-il), older versus younger generation elites, technocrats versus ideologues, economy-first versus military-first policy makers, and nationalists versus internationalists, to name a few. Any of these dimensions could spawn factions, but that is a matter for the future to decide.

Other factors may create divisions among the North Korean elite without having the potential to galvanize them into factions. Those who fear impending arrest (for example, because they have engaged in illegal economic activities) may fear the current regime. Some who have been punished or reprimanded by Kim may never forgive him. And those who believe that the Kim regime is an impediment to reunification may be motivated by a higher, nationalistic goal. People with affiliations to foreign countries might also form the basis for political divisions; in the 1950s, the domestic (South Korean), Yen-an (Chinese), Soviet, and partisan (Kim Il-sung) groups might be considered factions, but of course their leading members were purged by Kim Il-sung many years ago.

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<sup>19</sup> Yi Nam-ok had this to say about possible factions: “[Kim] has organizational capabilities, and is always in the know about what is happening. If a bud of a ‘faction’ sprouted, he would not leave it to grow bigger.” Interview of Yi Nam-ok by *Bungei Shunju*.

<sup>20</sup> According to an internal DPRK document published by *Tokyo Shimbun* (Morning Edition), August 15, 2003, p. 4. FBIS JPP20030817000050.

Another way to look at divisions within North Korean society is to define them in terms of how segments of the population distinctively respond to communications. Contemporary marketers in capitalist economies have embraced the idea of identifying population segments that respond differently to marketing communications and to the rest of the “marketing mix” (product, price, place of sale, as well as promotional communications).<sup>21</sup> If different segments of the North Korean elite have access to different channels of communication, or if they interpret communications in different ways (e.g., naively versus skeptically), it might be useful to segment the elite along these communication dimensions, regardless of what other characteristics they possess. For example, if some soldiers, diplomats, and technocrats have access to certain foreign information sources and others do not, all of the foreign-information people could be considered a single communication segment. However, in the absence of reliable indications that different segments of the elite have access to substantially different sources of foreign news or are inclined to interpret news in different ways, it may be too soon to segment the North Korean elite news market.

#### **D. DISTRIBUTION OF POLITICAL POWER**

Which of these potential groups - under conditions not yet realized - might possess sufficient power to impose their will on other groups or on Kim Jong-il? The military and security elites (two or more possible groups) have such power, but no reliable information indicates that people within the military or security services operate as political groups outside of the party structure.<sup>22</sup> Other groups could have the power that derives from the cohesiveness provided by shared interests, or power based on access to information (e.g., technocrats), but it is hard to see how such groups could go up against the vast political and military power controlled by Chairman Kim. One hears rumors of the occasional coup attempt against the Kim regime, but it does not appear that any coup has come close to succeeding.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Segmenting a market is justified when different people make different responses to a marketing communication, when those different responses occur within separate, identifiable, and homogeneous segments, and when the marketing benefits of segmentation (usually increased profitability) outweigh the costs of tailoring the marketing mix to one or more segments. For example, the advertising market is usually segmented by age group; products are often segmented by benefits sought (e.g., cavity prevention, brighter teeth, or cleaner breath for the toothpaste market).

<sup>22</sup> Notwithstanding unsubstantiated reports such as that by Yi Tong-chun, “Does an Anti-Kim Jong-il Group Exist in the North Korean Military,” *Hanguk Ilbo*, February 6, 2003, Internet version. FBIS KPP20030206000046. The report claims that a document “opposing the Kim Jong-il system” and signed by several “high-level cadres of the KPA, including three generals” was delivered to “U.S. intelligence authorities in Seoul.”

<sup>23</sup> Rumors of military coup attempts have surfaced from time to time. In the 1950s and 1960s, when Kim Il Sung was still consolidating his power, show trials were held to convict allegedly traitorous generals and politicians, most notably during the Korean War, in 1956-1958 (when Kim Il Sung completed his major purges of political rivals), and in 1969-1970 (when officers opposed to the 1960’s “people’s military strategy” were purged). One of the most frequently cited coup rumors relates to an incident in 1992 in which a group of officers who had received

Whatever political power Kim fails to exercise resides with his personal representatives, although they must be careful how they use this power. Among foreign analysts, a popular way of estimating relative power is by the platform seating order of top officials who gather on important occasions. These rankings are regularly reported by the ROK press.<sup>24</sup> Another way to gauge power position is to note who appears with Kim on his on-the-spot inspections.<sup>25</sup> Leadership rankings show considerable stability from year to year, as one would expect for a government that does not subject itself to free elections. This stability may also be accounted for by the fact that power comes from showing loyalty to Kim, and in turn from Kim's trust in others; loyalty is relatively enduring in a Confucian culture, and trust develops slowly. Two frequently noted shifts have occurred in the power line-up. First, most of the first-generation cadres - Kim Il-sung's old partisan comrades - have died and been replaced by Kim Jong-il with people of his own generation, who are better educated and more loyal to him. Second, since Kim Il-sung's death in 1994, military figures have risen in the official hierarchy. Members of Kim Jong-il's National Defense Commission have even appeared ahead of politburo and secretariat members. The rise of military officials, and the emphasis given by the press to Kim's military-first policy, indicate either Kim's greater reliance on the military for support or his accommodation to the increased power of the military.

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training in the Soviet Union allegedly plotted to kill an assemblage of North Korean officials by turning their tank cannon on them. It is said that the plot was discovered, the coup participants arrested and punished (presumably executed), and that virtually all officers who had received training in the Soviet Union in the 1980s (approximately 600) were purged. See Kwang-chu Son, "Kim Chong-il and the Military," *Sindong-a*, October 1997, pp. 210-237; FBIS FTS19971104001278. The defector Kang Myong-to is apparently describing the same incident in his book *Pyeongyangun Mangmyongul Kkumggunda*, June 1, 1995, pp. 255-272. FBIS KPP20030528000014. An account of the purges following this coup attempt is by Yun Sok-chin, *Chungang Ilbo*, March 21, 1996, p. 10. FBIS-EAS-96-056, p. 42. SK2103071196. On this and other coup attempts, see Han Ki-hung, "The 'Anti-Kim Chong-il Tendency' in the Military Is Serious," *Tong-a Ilbo*, August 20, 1995, p. 14. FBIS-EAS-95-161, pp. 40-41. SK2008060095. A former SSD officer, Yun Tae-il, speaks of other coup plots, including a military plot in 1995. *Kukka Anjon Powibuui Naemak*, July 20, 2002, pp. 138-166. FBIS KPP20030423000070.

<sup>24</sup> Until the late 1990s, the monthly *Vantage Point*, published by Naewoe Press (later by Yonhap News Agency), produced excellent leadership charts in its December issues. The South Korean and foreign press continue to monitor the rankings. See, for example, the rankings from 1998-2002 reported by Kim Tu-hwan of Yonhap on March 28, 2002. FBIS KPP20020328000022. An excellent discussion of North Korean leadership, along with rankings, is Kenneth E. Gause, *The North Korean Leadership: Evolving Regime Dynamics in the Kim Chong-il Era*. Center for Naval Analysis, 2003. For a broad view of power relations in the Kim regime, see Jinwook Choi, *Changing Relations between Party, Military, and Government in North Korea and Their Impact on Policy Direction*. Institute for International Studies, Stanford University, 1999. A longitudinal analysis of the composition of the KWP Central Committee, noting the consolidation rather than the diversification of that committee since the death of Kim Il-sung, is reported by Kwon Soyoung, "Changes in the Composition and Structures of the North Korean Political Elite," *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2 (2003), pp. 87-122. A book-length view of regime dynamics, with contributions from a multinational roster of scholars, is *Understanding Regime Dynamics in North Korea*, edited by Chung-in Moon. Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1998.

<sup>25</sup> See, for example, the FBIS Media Analysis of this issue, corrected version of February 11, 2004, entitled "FMA 6 Feb: Roundup of Kim Chong-il's Appearances in 2003," KPP20040206000129.

Because the Kim regime governs according to personal rather than organizational position, it is difficult to determine how much power people have without knowing their personal connections. Kim prefers to live and work outside of the limelight, and some of his closest aides keep out of the public eye as well. The analyst who studies North Korea must beware of a “window-dressing effect” whereby high ranking people (e.g., top generals) accompany Kim not because they have any real power, but because Kim believes that their presence confers legitimacy on his regime. Why else would these busy people follow Kim around and scribble notes of his passing thoughts?

Kim seems to rely on a “kitchen cabinet” of trusted advisers, which presumably never convenes as a group but instead consists of individuals with whom Kim frequently consults and socializes. Most of the people believed to reside in this inner circle are of Kim’s generation; all are considered loyal to him and, under normal circumstances, would share his fate. Most hold positions of power in the military, party, and/or government. Some inner circle members are from Kim’s own family. Some are drinking buddies. A veritable cottage industry has grown up around speculation about the identity of these chosen few, and no two lists are the same. A recent report by the ROK’s National Intelligence Service (NIS) warns of the difficulty of identifying members of this group:

Due to the closed nature of the society, information on the extent and make-up of Kim’s military inner circle is hard to obtain. Moreover, Kim’s self-righteous and impulsive leadership style makes it virtually impossible to make educated guesses about who might be among his favorites. The only thing one might conjecture with a degree of certainty is that the make-up of the inner circle can change at any time based on perceived loyalty to Kim.

The report then goes on to list ten candidates for inclusion in Kim’s military inner circle. Other recent listings may be consulted as well.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> “Kim Chong-il’s Inner Military Circle,” National Intelligence Service, August 17, 2003. FBIS KPP20030817000027. Kang Myong-to [a defector], “North Korea’s Power Men,” Chapter 5 in his *Pyongyangun Mangmyongul Kkumggunda* [Pyongyang Dreams of Exile/Defection], June 1, 1995, pp. 129-171. FBIS KPP20030831000019, and KPP20030528000012. Kwon Kyong-pok, “Who Are the People That Run North Korea with Real Power in Their Hands?” *Chugan Choson*, June 20, 2000, Internet version. FBIS KPP20000620000047. Chon Yong-u, “Kim Chong-il’s Men - Close ‘Power Elites’ Placed Everywhere,” *Taehan Maeil*, April 11, 2002, Internet version. FBIS KPP20020411000099. “National Defense Commission, Secretariat Have Kim Jong-il’s Ear in North Korea,” *Yonhap*, July 7, 2003, citing the ROK defense ministry’s biannual magazine. FBIS KPP20030707000066. An Yong-chol [a North Korean defector], “The Mystery of the Son’s Rivalry to Become Heir and Who is This No. 2 Man Kang Sang-chun - Kim Chong-il’s Group of Closest Confidants Wrapped in Veil of Secrecy,” *Gendai*, August 1, 2003, pp. 110-119. FBIS JPP20030710000005. Kim Kwang-il, “New Year’s Special: Ten Years of Kim Jong-il - Change of Close Aides,” *Chosun ilbo*, December 31, 2003, Internet version. FBIS KPP20031231000069. Bae Sung-in, “Recruitment Characteristics of Kim Jong-il’s Ruling Elite,” *Vantage Point*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (January 2001), pp. 44-53. Kenneth E. Gause, pp. 12-20. Kongdan Oh also compiled her own list in May 2003 (personal communication).

How is power used to make policy decisions?<sup>27</sup> What is known about decision making in North Korea suggests that Kim does not go around dictating - at least not all of the time - although he is known to intervene in even the smallest of affairs if they come to his attention (for example, he may decide on where a particular high-level cadre should live or what kind of car he should drive). On important matters, Kim turns to his subordinates for policy suggestions, encouraging them to discuss and argue among themselves. These subordinates, presumably working within a single organization rather than communicating between organizations, then send their recommendations up to him to be evaluated in terms of what is good both for national and regime security. Once Kim makes a decision, it is official policy until he reviews it, and presumably no one can contest it.

Two points are worth noting. First, Kim wants everyone to report up to him, not to each other. This is a prudent means to prevent the formation of factions. Early in his career, Kim began sending Three Revolution Team squads throughout the country to teach and to monitor what was going on. Over the years, Kim has developed an extensive reporting system that enables him to receive information from all sectors of society, without people in those sectors learning about what is happening in other sectors, but the exact nature of these channels is as difficult to discern as the nature of communication existing in, say, the U.S. government. Clearly, the North Korean intelligence services play an important role in this monitoring function. People are expected to report relevant information to Kim, and if he gets that information instead from another source, he becomes angry. The security services - MPS, SSD, and Security Command - have separate channels of upward communication, and in a sense are competitors who often spy on each other.<sup>28</sup> The people with the most power also may be the most carefully watched and the most completely isolated - the better to prevent them from plotting against Kim.

A second important point is that because everyone's personal security is dependent on pleasing - or at least not displeasing - Kim, self-censorship is a well-developed art. Psychological researchers in the United States have studied self-censorship and related "groupthink" phenomena in U.S. government and corporate policy making.<sup>29</sup> The groupthink effect is most powerful when the group knows - or believes it knows - the leader's policy preferences. A good

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<sup>27</sup> Information on decision-making is fragmentary, because none of Kim's close associates has defected. See Kenneth E. Gause, pp. 20-23. Also, Jinwook Choi. And Huh Moon-young, "The Foreign Policy Decision-Making Structure of the Kim Jong-il Regime," *Vantage Point*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (February 1999), pp. 36-46. A few very enlightening paragraphs about Kim's method of operation may be found in Choe Son-yong, "Why the Discrepancy between ROK, DPRK Joint Communiqué Regarding Military Authorities Talks," *Yonhap*, April 8, 2002. FBIS KPP20020408000065.

<sup>28</sup> Memoir by the defector Im Kyong-su, "The Inside of DPRK Ministry of Public Security: A Prison Empire of Corruption, Conspiracy, and Torture," *Wolgan Choson*, June 1999, pp. 340-370. FBIS FTS19990614001666.

<sup>29</sup> The original source is Irving L. Janis, *Victims of Groupthink*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972.

guess is that anyone who rises in the North Korean hierarchy is adept at reading the mind of his superiors, although the mercurial Kim can be a tough person to predict. Even when people are careful to consider Kim's likely preferences, they still face the danger that a recommendation seemingly consistent with Kim's current thinking may be branded "counter-revolutionary" if Kim changes his mind at a later date. Consider the cases of Kim Dal-hyon and Kim Chong-u.<sup>30</sup> This dilemma of creativity vs. orthodoxy critically undermines Kim Jong-il's call for "new thinking."<sup>31</sup>

## E. DOMESTIC NEWS SOURCES

What roles do different kinds of communications play in North Korean society? What role would Kim like them to play in order to achieve his goal of making society into a homogenous "socio-political organism," with the leader as the "nerve center"? How can communications contribute to social stability and at the same time promote adaptations to a changing world? Models and theories of communication raise many interesting and important questions about North Korean communication patterns, suggesting future lines of research.

For example, systems theorists are fond of pointing out that closed systems, which do not communicate with the environment, inevitably die.<sup>32</sup> Open systems live, but at the risk of becoming destabilized by their environment. How will the Kim regime resolve this dilemma?

Organizations tend to employ an information search process matching the perceived degree of ambiguity of the environment.<sup>33</sup> An unambiguous environment can be scanned with a simple search mechanism (e.g., a few clerks assigned to the environmental monitoring function), whereas a complex, ambiguous environment requires that the organization employ more

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<sup>30</sup> Kim Dal-hyon, who appeared to be the champion of North Korea's economic modernization in the early 1990s, rose to the posts of State External Economic Affairs chairman and deputy prime minister. He led a delegation to South Korea in 1992, but later was abruptly demoted to a local economic position from which he never made a comeback. He is believed to have died in 2000. Yonhap News Agency, *North Korea Handbook*. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2003, p. 830. Later in the 1990s, Kim Chong-u, the top North Korean official in charge of external economic affairs, failed to appear at a November 1997 economic conference. It is rumored he was banished to the countryside. A number of other top external economic officials disappeared at about the same time. *Chosun Ilbo*, December 28, 2001. FBIS KPP20011228000015.

<sup>31</sup> Expanding on the New Year's editorial, one of the major statements of Kim Jong-il's "new economic thinking" campaign in early 2001 instructs that "With innovative insight, functionaries should meditate on and examine their overall tasks anew . . ." At the same time, they should do everything "in line with the great Comrade Kim Jong-il's intent." That is to say, be creative in the way that you think Kim wants you to be creative. *Nodong Sinmun* editorial, January 4, 2001. Broadcast on KCBS on the same date. FBIS KPP20010104000042.

<sup>32</sup> A readable overview of communications theory, including the systems approach, is Dominic A. Infante, Andrew S. Rancer, and Deanna F. Womack. *Building Communication Theory*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 2003. Another good source is Stephen W. Littlejohn. *Theories of Human Communication*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2002.

<sup>33</sup> This is the "principle of requisite variety," a part of "organizational information theory." The original source is Karl Weick's *The Social Psychology of Organizing* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979.

complex tools and a larger staff to open a wider channel of communication to the environment. In the relatively complex post-Cold War environment, have North Korea's communication channels been broadened, as the theory suggests they should have been? Is North Korea suffering from a widening information gap? If so, are some of the elite motivated to narrow that gap?

Communication is the means by which groups organize, and by the same token, communication is used to influence and control group members. The North Korean people are subjected to a constant stream of communications telling them what to do and what to think. Are these communications effective, or are they largely ignored? Information also travels in the opposite direction, as people's reactions and feedback flow upward, influencing the leaders in terms of making their job easier or more difficult. One of the managerial problems that the North Korean elite encounter is that misinformation and disinformation hamper their decision making. Within a group or society, control is also exercised horizontally, as individuals and groups at the same level provide or withhold information, and sometimes compete against each other (as illustrated by the rivalry between different security organizations). A brief summary of communication flows within North Korea might look like this: communications from outside are usually blocked; communications among the people are restricted; communications from the people to their leaders are not to be trusted; and communications from the leaders to the people are ignored as much as possible.

The simplest way for North Koreans to get information about the outside world is to read, listen, and watch their domestic media, which provide both news and a context for interpreting the news. The philosophy of news reporting adhered to by the government-controlled press is the same as the philosophy found in other communist and former communist states. According to this view, the purpose of news is not to satisfy the idle curiosity of the audience, but rather to shape them into the hardworking and loyal citizens their leaders wish them to be. As Lenin said, "Newspapers are free not for the sake of the circulation of news but for the purpose of educating and organizing the working masses toward the attainment of goals clearly defined by the thoroughgoing leadership of the party."<sup>34</sup>

Article 67 of North Korea's constitution provides for "freedom of press, publication, assembly, demonstration, and association," but "freedom" is defined as what is best for the masses.<sup>35</sup> Of course, what is best for the masses is determined entirely by those who are in power.

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<sup>34</sup> Quoted in Yu Chae-chon, *Pukhanui Ollon* [Media in North Korea], December 30, 1990, pp. 45-84. One of a series of FBIS translated articles on this topic. FBIS KPP20031009000071.

<sup>35</sup> According to Kim Pyong-ho, vice director general of KCNA, in an interview with No Kil-nam, editor of *Minjok Tongsin* (of Los Angeles), September 8, 2003. FBIS KPP20030930000082.

But even though the media serve as a political tool of the Kim regime, they are not without news value, because the propagandist needs the raw material of news content in order to tell his story. The intelligent news consumer can often separate content from spin to get to the real news.

To take an example, when *Nodong Sinmun* tells its readers that in the months after invading Iraq, the U.S. forces fell into a “trap” set by resistance forces, the article provides background with the news that “it took only some 40 days for the U.S.-led coalition forces to occupy Iraq.”<sup>36</sup> Trap or no trap, the astute reader can infer that U.S. military power must be formidable if it vanquished the Iraqi army in a matter of weeks. Likewise, the domestic press waited almost a month before informing its audience (in a Korean Central Broadcast Station news item) that Saddam Hussein had been captured. The news was placed in the background of a piece about the continuing attacks against U.S. forces by Iraqis.<sup>37</sup>

An interesting question is why the press chose to publish either piece of hard news, given that neither the quick U.S. victory nor Saddam’s capture was necessary for, or even relevant to, the main themes of these respective news articles. At other times, so many facts are left out of a news story that the audience probably can make neither head nor tail of it. For example, Korean Central Television (KCTV), presumably referring to speculation that the new nuclear transparency of Iran and Libya might have some effect on North Korea, cryptically says: “Recently, the United States has been extensively advertising on the incidents [left unspecified in the news item] they orchestrated in some Middle East countries and is having a hallucination that the effects from these incidents will be reproduced on the Korean peninsula. . . . To expect a change in our position is the same as expecting a shower from clear sky.”<sup>38</sup>

Saying that the North Korean news is censored would falsely imply that much of the news gets through, although with some distortion. In fact, only a few foreign and domestic news items find their way into the North Korean press, and even those items are usually published days or even weeks after the event, giving the North Korean propagandists time to evaluate the outcome of events and decide how best to report them. Items for broadcast or publication are selected with great care. Like all organizations in North Korea, the print and electronic media operate under the dual authority of the party and the government. If a published item reflects badly on the leader or the party, those responsible for its publication may lose their jobs and possibly even be banished to the countryside.

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<sup>36</sup> Paek Mun-kyu, “Fate of an Occupier Who Has Fallen into a Trap from Which There Is No Escape,” *Nodong Sinmun*, November 28, 2003, p. 6. FBIS KPP20031217000136.

<sup>37</sup> KCBS, January 8, 2004. FBIS KPP2004011000030.

<sup>38</sup> Korean Central Television, January 9, 2004. FBIS KPP20040109000087.

According to a KCBS scriptwriter who defected in 1996, reporters and writers receive monthly topic guidelines from the KWP's Propaganda and Agitation Department. Approved topics are similar from one month to the next: the greatness of the Kims, the value of "our style of socialism," and the corrupt nature of the United States, Japan, and "reactionary" elements in South Korean society. After news items are composed, they are submitted to the writing staff for review, and then sent up to the director of the news department.<sup>39</sup> As stories work their way through layers of inspection, they reach the General Bureau of Publications Guidance, and finally the appropriate news department of the KWP's Propaganda and Agitation Department. Important items (e.g., editorials and commentaries) are undoubtedly submitted to Kim Jong-il for approval. According to one source, most of the copy for newspapers is submitted a month ahead of time, and over half of the typesetting is completed several days before publication.<sup>40</sup>

For the domestic audience, North Korea has four national newspapers, one AM radio station, and three television stations. Also, each province publishes a daily newspaper comparable to the *Pyongyang Daily*. The only news agency is KCNA, the Korean Central News Agency, which reportedly employs between 500 and 1,000 people who gather international and domestic news, process that news, publish some of it internationally in English and other languages (for example, through the KCNA web site at <http://www.kcna.co.jp>), and make some of it available to the domestic news media.<sup>41</sup> Until the mid-1990s, reports out of North Korea indicated that about a thousand top cadres received *Chamgo Tongsin* (Reference News), a kind of *Early Bird* publication that provides not so much news, but challenging current issues to think about.<sup>42</sup> Reference News may now be distributed on the intranet.

Recent articles in the North Korean press mention problems in getting newspapers to readers: "The roles of the functionaries in the post and telecommunications sector are greatly related with the smooth operation of distribution publications, including the official party paper, cable broadcasting, and television broadcasting, which carry our party's voice. . . . Above all, the post and telecommunications sector must make sure that the publications, including the official party newspaper, should be immediately distributed without delay."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> News conference by former North Korean broadcast scriptwriter Chang Hae-song, KBS-1 Television in Seoul, June 7, 1996. FBIS-EAS-96-112, June 10, 1996, pp. 37-45 (FTS19960607000179). Also see Yonhap's *North Korea Handbook*, p. 410.

<sup>40</sup> Yonhap's *North Korea Handbook*, p. 410.

<sup>41</sup> Yonhap's *North Korea Handbook*, p. 410. Also, Yonhap, September 18, 2003. FBIS KPP20030918000039.

<sup>42</sup> Paeng Won-sun, "North Korea's News Agency," *Pukhanui Ollon*, December 30, 1999, pp. 227-244. FBIS KPP20031009000077.

<sup>43</sup> "Relay Party's Ideology and Intention to the Masses in a More Timely, Faster Way," October 6, 2003, p. 3. FBIS KPP20031106000049.

## *Newspapers*

The DPRK's premier news outlet is the KWP's *Nodong Sinmun* (Daily Worker), which publishes six pages every day of the year. Its articles - especially the editorials and commentaries - signal the direction of the Kim regime's thinking. As one would expect, any newspaper in which the editorials are the main attraction must be very boring indeed, and most North Koreans avoid reading *Nodong Sinmun*, although they are required to study selected articles as part of weekly political study sessions. Circulation is nominally rated at a million copies, but newsprint shortages almost certainly prevent the paper from reaching this announced circulation. In 2003, the newspaper became available on an intranet home page where cadres are urged to read it first thing in the morning in order to "learn about the party's intention and demands in a timely manner."<sup>44</sup>

The newspaper has 12 departments, with names like Propaganda for Juche Theory, Party History Cultivation, Revolution Cultivation, Party Life, Industry, Agriculture, International, South Korea, and of course, Editorials. A sample of the content (for the randomly chosen date of February 4, 2002 (Juche 91)) is illustrative:<sup>45</sup>

- Page 1 is the editorial page. To the left and right of the title are displayed wise words or slogans of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il. A commentary is spread across the top of the page ("Let's Be Fighters with an Iron Will"). Most of the articles on this page refer explicitly to the teachings or activities of one of the Kims: Kim Jong-il sends letters of New Year's greetings to a list of foreign political officials, beginning with the Chinese, then Russians, then Cubans, and ending with an official from the Communist party of Brazil; the late Kim Il-sung receives a doctoral degree from and honorary membership in the Belarus Academy of International Information and Technology (so does Kim Jong-il); Kim sends telegraphic New Year's congratulations to a list of "second-tier" world leaders; February is the month to show loyalty to Kim (his birthday is the 16<sup>th</sup>); a nationwide farmer's loyalty march has begun [they will converge on Pyongyang carrying letters of loyalty].
- Page 2 is similar to page 1, with articles and photographs about the two Kims. On this particular date, the entire page is given over to photographs of the two Kims under the heading "Heaven-Created Military Generals Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il."
- Page 3 is devoted to domestic stories: organizations that have reportedly reached or exceeded their production goals, examples of heroic workers, and descriptions of how the party's correct policies are being realized throughout the country. On this date, the theme

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<sup>44</sup> "Relay Party's Ideology and Intention to the Masses in a More Timely, Faster Way." According to the article, one model functionary, "after he read, first thing in the morning, the editorial that urged a great upsurge in building a powerful state with the pride of having splendidly celebrated the 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Republic's founding . . . carried out political work by going out to many cooperative farms bustling with corn harvests and letting them know the tasks suggested in the official party newspaper's editorial."

<sup>45</sup> *Nodong Sinmun* may be read, when it finally arrives, in the Library of Congress's East Asian Collection.

is the environment: “Let’s Build a Socialist Paradise with a Clean Environment According to the Instructions of General Kim Jong-il”; “Let’s Plant More Trees”; along with an article about how a model county manages its water resources and plants trees, articles about farm mechanization, and at the bottom of the page brief paragraphs of news from a dozen government ministries.

- Page 4 is devoted to arts and culture. The unifying theme on this date is the military: a reader’s contribution on “how our military is the best, and how we should support the military”; a poem praising the motherland; a description of how the military is like a big, happy family; an article on military-first youth patriotism.
- Page 5 is the pan-Korean or Korean unification page. “February is the designated month of South Korean people’s joy and longing for Kim Jong-il”; “South Koreans Praise Kim Jong-il”; “Let’s Defeat South Korean Divisionists”; “The United States Should Stay Out of the Korean Unification Issue”; “Japanese-Korean Youth Unite!”; “President Bush Is a Warmonger (divisionist).”
- Page 6, the international page, features articles praising North Korea and denigrating other countries, including “Banzai to Kim Jong-il, Sun of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” and “US Underhanded Approach to the Nuclear Issue.” In other articles on the page, readers are informed about support for North Korea coming from Egypt, Russia, and ASEAN; countries that hate the United States; U.S. armed hegemony; U.S.-Russia policy conflict; and the failure of IT globalization (viewed as a form of Western hegemony).

*Minju Choson* (Democratic Korea) is the paper of the government administration. It publishes four pages daily, with a maximum circulation of 600,000. It informs readers about government policies and urges their implementation. Many *Minju Choson* articles are indistinguishable from those published in *Nodong Sinmun*. *Pyongyang Sinmun* (Pyongyang Daily) is the Pyongyang city paper, publishing four pages daily with a circulation of 50,000 or less. It carries more entertainment and cultural articles than *Nodong Sinmun*. The daily paper of the KPA is *Choson Inmingun Sinmun* (Korean People’s Army Daily), with information tailored to the needs of military personnel. The daily paper of the Kim Il-sung Socialist Youth League is *Chongnyon Chonwi* (Youth Vanguard). Inasmuch as the party, the government, the military, and the youth organizations are the primary organizations in North Korea, these daily papers cover just about all of the population.

Three other publications may be of interest to the North Korean elite. *Kulloja* (Worker), the theoretical monthly journal of the party, publishes explanations and justifications for party policies, *Kyongje Yongu* (Economic Studies) is a quarterly journal explaining and rationalizing North Korean economic policies; *Kyongje Yongu* also tries to teach its readers the rudiments of market economics and international trade, on the theory that North Korea must be prepared to deal with non-socialist economies - until capitalism destroys itself and the world embraces socialism. *Chollima*, the DPRK’s only general-interest magazine, is dedicated to instilling

motivation in its readers through moderately interesting essays, travel articles, poems, and the like.

### ***Electronic Communication Channels***

For many North Koreans, television sets and radios are luxury items. There may be only about four million radios and one or two million television sets in the country. In Pyongyang, one household in three may have a television; in the countryside, only one in 30 or 40 homes.<sup>46</sup> North Korean radios are fixed to receive only the broadcast frequency of KCBS, with transmitters throughout the country.<sup>47</sup> Computers are scarcer still. In Pyongyang, an Internet cafe opened in August 2002, but the prices for a connection to the outside world by way of China (optical cable to Shanghai via Sinuiju) are too expensive for most North Koreans; in any case, computer use is closely monitored by the authorities.<sup>48</sup> Kim Jong-il is known to be an avid web surfer, and a select number of scientists and officials may also have access to the Internet. The Kwangmyong [brightness] intranet was set up in 2000 to link major cities and organizations.<sup>49</sup> It is presumably on this network that the *Nodong Sinmun* home page is located. A few other, more localized intranets are also said to operate. An ROK source reports that, beginning in May 2003, international email service has been provided on a highly restricted basis by the “International Communications Department” in Pyongyang.<sup>50</sup> Before that, the “Silibank” web site (<http://www.silibank.com>) is said to have provided email service to foreign addresses by way of a server in Shenyang, China.<sup>51</sup>

KCBS carries more domestic news and less international news than KCNA provides to the international audience. The three television stations are Korean Central Television (KCTV), offering news and other programming on weekday evenings and during the weekend, Mansudae Television, providing entertainment programs on weekends and holidays, and Korean Educational and Cultural Television, broadcasting educational programs three hours a day during the week, and longer on weekends. The so-called “third broadcasting” network consists of local cable hook-ups to homes, public buildings, and loudspeakers in public spaces, over which local instructions and news are delivered (for example, instructions on how to behave before a scheduled VIP visit to the town).

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<sup>46</sup> Yonhap News Agency, *North Korea Handbook*. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2003, p. 409.

<sup>47</sup> Radio and TV information in this section is summarized from Yonhap’s *North Korea Handbook*, pp. 422-423.

<sup>48</sup> FBIS compiled report, November 24, 2003. FBIS KPP20031124000116.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. Also, Yonhap’s *North Korea Handbook*, pp. 244-245.

<sup>50</sup> Kim In, “North Korea Sets up International E-Mail Server,” *Chosun Ilbo*, November 28, 2003, Internet version. FBIS KPP20031128000177.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. Also, FBIS compiled report, November 7, 2003. FBIS KPP20031107000090.

For comparison purposes, here are the major news stories carried by the KCNA web site, *Nodong Sinmun*, KCBS, and KCTV on December 18, 2003.<sup>52</sup>

### **KCNA**

- The president of Bangladesh sends greetings to Kim Jong-il on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations.
- South Koreans rally against sending troops to fight in Iraq.
- The ROK's GNP opposition party members are characterized as thieves for allegedly engaging in corruption.
- Regulations are issued for doing business in the proposed Kaesong free-trade zone.
- Regulations for entry, stay, and residence are issued for the Kaesong zone.
- Customs regulations are issued for the Kaesong zone.
- China's ambassador to Pyongyang hosts a reception and predicts a brilliant future for China-DPRK relations.
- Kim Jong-il sends a reply to the president of Bangladesh.
- Japan is criticized for planning to send troops to Iraq.
- People of the world are urged to frustrate the imperialists' globalization initiatives.
- SPA president Kim Yong-nam sends greetings to the king of Bahrain on the country's founding day.
- Recent successes of DPRK sports teams in international competitions are applauded.
- Greetings are sent to the president of Nigeria on the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the republic.
- In Pyongyang, a film about Kim Jong-il is shown to foreign diplomats on the occasion of the 12<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Kim's appointment as KPA supreme commander and the 86<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of his mother, Kim Jong-suk.
- U.S. legislation sanctioning Syria is said to be part of a campaign to intimidate independent states.
- A friendly gathering of North Korean and Chinese youth league representatives is held.

### ***Nodong Sinmun***

Page 1:

- Kim thanks managers and workers for supporting the army.
- People in various countries deeply study the classic works of Kim Jong-il.
- The DPRK's achievements in various fields are celebrated.

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<sup>52</sup> KCNA from <http://www.kcna.co.jp/index-e.htm> (Past News); *Nodong Sinmun* from FBIS KPP20031219000043; KCBS from FBIS KPP20031218000122; KCTV from FBIS KPP20031218000094.

Page 2:

- Kim Jong-suk's development of national handicrafts is celebrated ("Embroidering Brilliant Future of National Handicraft").
- Representatives from various countries lay wreaths at the statue of Kim Jong-suk on the occasion of her 86th birthday.
- SPA president Kim Yong-nam sends greetings to the president of Niger on its founding anniversary day, and to the king of Bahrain on its founding day.

Page 3:

- Achievements of various organizations are presented under the heading of "Let Us Endlessly Create Production Upsurges with the High Spirit of Victors."

Page 4:

- Articles and photographs highlight the achievements of Samjiyon County under the heading "People's Paradise That Sings of the Creation of a New World."
- In Pyongyang, a film about Kim is shown to foreign diplomats on the occasion of the 12th anniversary of Kim's appointment as KPA supreme commander and the 86th anniversary of the birth of his mother, Kim Jong-suk.
- The Russian ambassador hosts a new year's friendship party.
- A friendly gathering of North Korean and Chinese youth league representatives is held.
- The DPRK's ambassador to Iran pays the president a farewell visit.

Page 5:

- A special article celebrates the theme of Uri Minjokkiri ("our race only").
- ROK news is reviewed, including ROK criticism of President Bush's diplomatic policy.
- Japan's Chongnyon is praised for its efforts in reinforcing nationalist education.

Page 6:

- A special article warns against the dangers of war presented by the relocation of U.S. forces in the ROK.
- A commentary explains why a DPRK nuclear deterrent is the only way to prevent war.
- A spokesperson for the foreign ministry sees evil designs behind the passage of the U.S. sanctions law against Syria.
- The Cuban army minister vows to crush U.S. provocations.
- Developing countries are developing science and technology.
- An article warns that "We Should Be Cautious of Japan Emerging as a Country of Aggression."

***Korean Central Broadcasting Station (18 minute news cast)***

- Kim thanks managers for planting trees and carefully protecting historical relics.
- The 24th anniversary of Kim's work on "living in our own style" is celebrated.
- The works of Kim and his father are displayed at the Juche exhibition hall.
- New Kimilsungia and Kimjongilia greenhouses are built.
- People visit the Kim Jong-suk relic room at a museum on the occasion of her birthday.
- ROK authorities are denounced for their anti-reunification act of suppressing ROK students.
- Japan's budget for a missile defense program is denounced.

***Korean Central Television Network (29 minute news cast)***

- One of Kim Jong-il's books is published in Angola.
- Various countries, including Egypt, celebrate the 86th birthday of Kim Jong-suk and the 12th anniversary of Kim Jong-il's appointment as KPA supreme commander.
- Kim thanks a boat crew for their accident-free work at Kumgang.
- People are shown listening to a lecture at the Historic Place of Revolution on the occasion of Kim Jong-suk's 86th birthday and Kim Jong-il's appointment as supreme commander.
- Archive footage shows on-the-spot guidance at a food institute given by Kim and his father.
- The winner of the Kim Il-sung poet prize and his family are shown enjoying a "birthday table" of food sent by Kim Jong-il.
- A video shows progress in land rezoning work in North Hamyong province.
- A video shows progress in the construction of the Orangchon Power Plant.
- A video celebrates the year-end acceleration of production at the Nanam Coal Mine Machinery Complex.
- The operation of the Tokchon Chicken Plant is shown.
- Medical researchers at the Academy of Koryo Medicine talk about their recent achievements.
- A "meritorious" technician is shown working in a laboratory at the 5 October Automation Apparatus Plant.
- A visiting delegation of Vietnamese is shown paying their respects to Kim Il-sung and reviewing exhibits on display at the Kumsusan Memorial Palace.
- Representatives from various countries are shown laying wreaths at the statue of Kim Jong-suk on the occasion of her 86th birthday.
- The announcer notes that in 2003, the world's progressive people supported the DPRK's anti-U.S. policy, with photographs of approving foreign publications.
- A DPRK foreign ministry spokesperson reports on the interest of various countries, including the Czech Republic, Russia, and China, in the resumption of six-party talks.

This selection of news items presents few surprises. More attention is devoted to Kim Jong-il (and his mother) in the domestic press than in KCNA; Kim Il-sung is infrequently mentioned. More international news is presented in KCNA and *Nodong Sinmun* than on domestic radio and television. “Newsworthy” items are scarce in all the media. On this date, news relating to the United States appeared in all the media except KCBS, and all the news about the United States was negative. None of the news items on North Korea’s domestic situation was the least bit negative; in fact, the only negative domestic items ever to appear are veiled references to the need for better social order and criticism of bureaucrats for failing to work more energetically.

The news presented in these four channels is consistent with two themes. First, that the domestic and foreign policies of the Kim regime are correct and successful. Second, that Japan, the United States, and some elements in the ROK threaten the freedom of peace-loving people. These themes are two aspects of one grand theme of legitimacy: the DPRK under the leadership of Kim Jong-il is the best country in the world to live in.

Foreign sources wishing to communicate with the DPRK audience through the domestic media are faced with an opportunity and a challenge. The opportunity is that a scarcity of international stories in the North Korean domestic press makes any international news item stand out. The challenge is that the North Korean audience has been conditioned to expect that anything related to the United States is negative, and so U.S. initiatives are likely to be interpreted in a negative manner.

## **F. FOREIGN NEWS SOURCES**

In principle, North Koreans should be unable to gain access to any foreign news sources. Possession of a radio with an unfixed dial, listening to foreign radio or television broadcasts, possessing foreign video or audiotapes, and reading foreign papers or magazines are all grounds for detention. Inspectors make surprise visits to households to check on radios, and defectors say that many North Koreans returning from overseas discard their imported radios rather than come under a cloud of suspicion.<sup>53</sup> Speaking with visiting foreigners invites a subsequent interview with the police. But the Kim regime has not achieved complete control over its citizens, because complete technical control cannot be achieved and the controllers can easily be bribed.

Although the government tries to jam foreign broadcasts, they do sometimes get through, and some people risk listening to them with foreign or altered radios. The ROK government

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<sup>53</sup> Kang Chol-hwan, “North Koreans Watch South Korean Videos in Pyongyang, Wonsan,” *Chosun ilbo*, August 21, 2003, Internet version. FBIS KPP20030822000038.

operates several “gray” radio stations broadcasting to the North.<sup>54</sup> The Social Education Broadcasting (*Saehoe Kyoyuk Pangsong*) station, operated by the ROK government’s KBS network, beams signals into North Korea and China 24 hours a day. Echo of Hope Broadcasting (*Huimangui Meari Pangsong*) transmits for about 12 hours a day, with its opening and closing music the beloved “Arirang” (played by Paul Mauriat and his orchestra, according to the web site “Clandestine Stations in East Asia”).<sup>55</sup> The station claims to be sponsored by Koreans living abroad, but is reportedly run by the NIS. Voice of the People Broadcasting (*Inminui Sori Pangsong*), transmitting 12 hours a day as well, advertises itself as a service of the Korean Workers’ Union, but is reportedly operated by the Ministry of National Defense.<sup>56</sup> Since the beginning of the Kim Dae-jung administration, broadcasts that slander the North Korean regime reportedly have been banned on all the ROK government-sponsored stations. Far East Broadcasting (*Kukdong Pangsong*) is operated by a Korean Christian organization (although it is not clear who provides the finances), and may be more outspoken in its opinions.

In a February 2003 survey of 103 defectors conducted by the KBS Broadcasting Institute, 67 percent of respondents said they had listened to KBS’s Social Education Broadcasting; six percent said they listened to Far East Broadcasting, and three percent said they listened to Radio Free Asia. Some 40 percent said they listened to the KBS station once or twice a week, and the same proportion said they listened every day. Asked how they learned about KBS broadcasts, 50 percent said they discovered the station by accident, whereas 15 percent said the station was recommended by others. What the North Korean listeners liked most about the station was “information about the ROK.”<sup>57</sup> In July 2003, the DPRK government admitted that its “black” propaganda station, Voice of National Salvation (VNS), which had been broadcasting programs in South Korean dialect since 1970, was not in fact a dissident South Korean station, but was, as everyone knew, broadcasting from the DPRK. The station signed off on August 31, and the DPRK asked the ROK government to make a corresponding gesture by ending broadcasts aimed at the North. The admission and request were widely seen as a sign that the Kim government was increasingly concerned about outside information reaching the North Korean people, especially

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<sup>54</sup> FBIS Report, August 1, 2003. FBIS KPP20030801000115. The privately run web site “Clandestine Stations” is at <http://www.clandestineradio.com>. The brief section on ROK broadcasts to the DPRK is under Country Intel/North Korea. According to this web site, a one-hour Internet-based radio broadcast sponsored by Radio One, an organization of North Korean defectors, began test broadcasts on February 16, 2004 (Kim Jong-il’s birthday) in advance of an official launch on April 15 (Kim Il-sung’s birthday). The origin of “gray” propaganda is disguised, but it does not claim to come from the target country, whereas “black” propaganda attempts to disguise its true origin by purporting to originate in the country toward which it is targeted.

<sup>55</sup> The privately run web site “Clandestine Stations in East Asia” is at <http://www.246.ne.jp/~abi/clangest.htm>.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Paek Sung-ku, “Kim Jong-il Orders to Confiscate Radios; A Conspiracy Is Underway to Abolish the KBS Social Educational Broadcasting to Keep Step with North Korea’s Suspension of Anti-North [sic] Propaganda Broadcasts,” *Wolgan Choson*, September 1, 2003, pp. 249-255. FBIS KPP20030830000035.

in the wake of the U.S. propaganda attack on Iraq and calls in the United States to increase Radio Free Asia broadcasts to North Korea.<sup>58</sup>

In 2003, Radio Free Asia (RFA) began broadcasting in Korean four hours a day (0700-0800 and 2300-0200 local time). Before that, Korean broadcasts were limited to two hours a day - the same as broadcasts in Burmese, Laotian, and Khmer, and less than the six hours broadcast in Tibetan!<sup>59</sup> On July 16, 2003, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill authorizing 24-hour broadcasts and urging that transistor radios be dropped over North Korea, but these measures have yet to be implemented. Voice of America (VOA) beams Korean-language broadcasts to North Korea for three hours a day, from 0600-0700 and 2100-2300 local time.<sup>60</sup>

Loudspeakers operated along the DMZ by the ROK government formerly carried slanderous comments, but since the coming of the sunshine policy, the slander has apparently ceased. The ROK's NIS also has apparently ended its flights of balloons that dropped propaganda flyers into North Korea.

Apart from listening to foreign radio broadcasts, North Koreans can get news of the outside world from the thousands of Korean and Chinese-Korean traders who regularly cross the northern border. Occasional information also comes from conversations with tourists, whose numbers have increased in recent years. By the end of 2003, almost 600,000 South Koreans had traveled to the Kumgang Mountain tourist area, where they could view the stunning scenery but were kept isolated from North Korean citizens. In fact, most tourist personnel in the area are ethnic Koreans brought in from China. At Kumgang, speech with North Korean tour guides must be conducted with great care to avoid causing offense and inviting detainment. The Tongil conglomerate of South Korea, financed by the Unification Church, began offering tourist trips to Pyongyang in September 2003, but the Tongil tourists also are isolated for the most part from the North Korean population.<sup>61</sup> The only other large group of tourists to visit North Korea are

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<sup>58</sup> Yonhap, July 30, 2003. FBIS KPP20030730000057. FBIS Report, August 1, 2003. Paek Sung-ku. VNS went out defiantly: "Our nation is now welcoming the 15 June [2000] era of reunification in which the fellow countrymen will become one under Great General Kim Jong-il's military-first politics based on love for the country and people. . . . The North side, on the occasion of the 15 August Independence Day, proposed to stop all broadcasts that slander the other party . . . . The Editorial Bureau of the Voice of National Salvation, while extending full support to, as well as fully sympathizing with, the North's proposal, in response to such a proposal, inform all of you that we will actively and totally end our broadcast starting 1 August. From the bottom of our hearts, we extend our thanks to all of you who gave unsparing support to our broadcast and earnestly enjoyed listening to it and wish that greater results are seen in the future struggle. Good-bye, everyone." VNS, July 31, 2003. FBIS KPP20030801000001.

<sup>59</sup> RFA's home page is <http://www.rfa.org>.

<sup>60</sup> VOA's home page is <http://www.voa.gov>.

<sup>61</sup> "Tongil Group Starts 'Pyongyang Tourism Business,'" *Chugan Choson*, September 25, 2003, pp. 38, 40. FBIS KPP20031107000119.

Chinese who come to gamble in Chinese-owned casinos in Pyongyang and in the Najin-Sonbong foreign trade zone.<sup>62</sup> Westerners, especially Americans, are usually denied visas. Employees for the various NGOs that provide aid to North Korea are mostly non-Americans, and in any case few Korean-speaking NGO representatives are granted visas.

There is little reason to believe that one segment of the North Korean elite is more likely than another to be exposed to information from foreign broadcasts. Those cadres who have the opportunity to meet tourists, and those with the opportunity to travel overseas, obviously have greater access to outside information. More importantly, their information comes in the form of first-hand experience rather than brief news reports. But even the North Koreans who travel abroad have to be careful about whom they converse with and what they read, watch, or listen to, because they are accompanied by North Korean security personnel.

#### **G. DIFFUSION OF NEWS WITHIN NORTH KOREA**

It is difficult to get a sense of the nature and amount of personal communication that occurs in North Korea's "closed" society. Because of security restrictions and infrastructure problems, most communication takes place on a face-to-face basis. Mail is easily examined, and ownership of private telephones is limited to upper-level cadres or relatively wealthy traders.<sup>63</sup> Cellular telephone service was initiated in 2002 and has spread rapidly: in late 2003, a pro-North Korean newspaper in Japan reported that 20,000 mobile phones were in use in North Korea, although there is no independent verification of this statistic.<sup>64</sup> Near the border, Chinese cell phones have become so popular that the SSD is reportedly cracking down on them.<sup>65</sup>

Research on public opinion in the United States has demonstrated that most Americans do not pay close attention to the news, especially to the political news. The communication psychologist Paul Lazarsfeld and others discovered years ago that many media messages reach

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<sup>62</sup> Cortland Bennett, "Beauty Waiting for a Beholder: Astonishing Sights Await Visitors to North Korea - If They Can Get in," *Chungang Ilbo*, August 2, 2003, Internet version. FBIS KPP20030802000035.

<sup>63</sup> For access to land-line telephones, see the "How do North Koreans make phone calls?" under Society/Living Conditions on the National Intelligence Service's web site at <http://www.nis.go.kr/eng/north>.

<sup>64</sup> FBIS sources include KPP20031020000039, KPP20031112000084, and KPP20011204000101.

<sup>65</sup> Yi Hae-yong, "Mobile Phone Regulations along DPRK-PRC Border," Yonhap, September 21, 2003. FBIS KPP20030922000071. Also, Kang Chol-hwan, "Mobile Phone Calls Possible from Musan, North Korea, to Seoul," *Chosun Ilbo*, September 25, 2003, Internet version. FBIS KPP20030924000118. And "Asia: Cellphones New Threat for North Korean Regime," *Asahi Shimbun*, February 12, 2004, Internet version. FBIS JPP20040212000041. Also, Kang I-ruk, "Modernization of Telecommunications Network Being Rapidly Accelerated in the DPRK - Foundation for the Development of Information Industry," *Choson Sinbo* (pro-North Korean paper in Tokyo), December 3, 2003, Internet version. FBIS KPP20031204000101.

the general audience in a two-step process, with messages first being received by a small, educated segment of “opinion leaders,” who in turn pass the information on to their friends.<sup>66</sup>

Some sort of news diffusion obviously occurs in North Korea, where scarce information about the outside world is cautiously passed from one person to another.<sup>67</sup> Hwang Jang-yop believes that until greater freedom of speech is available within North Korea, broadcasting to or dropping information leaflets on North Korea may be premature.<sup>68</sup> Between two North Koreans, some freedom of communication is possible, because if one reports to authorities that his interlocutor said something that could be construed as “counter-revolutionary,” the other can always deny it. But among three or more people, a form of the prisoners’ dilemma provides the motivation for listeners to report disloyalty to the authorities before they in turn are reported upon. Children are sometimes even induced by their teachers to report on their parents. Nevertheless, defectors report that news, rumors, and even criticism of the Kim regime make the rounds, with a few people paying the price for their loose lips but most avoiding negative consequences.

## **H. NEWS OF U.S. MILITARY INITIATIVES**

As an example of what North Koreans could learn about the U.S. military policy toward their country - without needing direct access to foreign media or contact with foreigners - consider the following news items and accompanying interpretations carried in *Nodong Sinmun* and/or broadcast on KCBS or KCTV during the year 2003.

On U.S. military forces: On May 13, KCBS reported that Secretary Rumsfeld had asked Congress to appropriate funds to develop a nuclear bomb to destroy underground bunkers.<sup>69</sup> On June 26, *Minju Choson* carried an article on the Defense Department’s “combat capability enlargement plan.”<sup>70</sup> The article said the United States would spend \$11 billion in the ROK over the next three years to introduce a mobile armed brigade, precision-guided bombs, and updated Apache helicopters, and that “there is no way to view the U.S. military buildup maneuvers other than as the augmentation of armed forces for war against the North.” Similar items have

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<sup>66</sup> Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet. *The People’s Choice*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1948. The two-step information flow is but one form of information diffusion, initially studied by the sociologist E. M. Rogers, and a long-standing concern of the marketing industry. See E. M. Rogers. *Diffusion of Innovations*. New York: The Free Press, 1962.

<sup>67</sup> For example, a brief discussion of how North Koreans discuss political topics is provided by the defector Kim Jin Ho in an interview for *Keys*, vol. 15 (Winter 2003), p. 36.

<sup>68</sup> Hwang was speaking to a meeting of police officers in Seoul. Yonhap, October 13, 2003. FBIS KPP20031013000079.

<sup>69</sup> KCBS, May 13, 2003. FBIS KPP20030519000036.

<sup>70</sup> O Pyong-chi, “The U.S. Imperialists Must Withdraw the Adventurous ‘Combat Capability Enlargement Plan.’” *Minju Choson*, June 26, 2003, p4. FBIS KPP20030709000084.

appeared regularly in the latter half of 2003, directed both at the North and South Korean audiences. In the stories targeted at the North, it is frequently reported that South Koreans were protesting this military buildup. Similar stories targeted at the South (e.g., on the Pyongyang Broadcasting Station) urge the South Korean people to join their brothers in the North in resisting the further militarization of the Korean peninsula by the Americans.

On September 24, KCBS reported that five days earlier the United States had conducted its 20<sup>th</sup> subcritical nuclear test, which was “stirring strong protests and denunciations from the world.”<sup>71</sup> On October 7, *Nodong Sinmun* published a commentary entitled “A Very Dangerous Military Measure,” in which it denounced the introduction along the MDL of the Shadow 200 UAV, said to be able to detect automobiles and other vehicles at a range of 3.5 kilometers in the dark. The article also reported on the recent introduction into the ROK of new helicopters and Patriot 3 missiles, arguing that this introduction constituted a “preparation for a military attack on our Republic” and was inconsistent with Washington’s professed desire to peacefully resolve the “DPRK-U.S. nuclear issue.”<sup>72</sup>

The December 10 issue of *Nodong Sinmun* carried a commentary which said that on November 13 the U.S. Air Force chief of staff had announced that F/A-22s would be deployed to Guam.<sup>73</sup> The article reported that 24 B-1B and B-52 bombers and two nuclear attack submarines had already been sent to Guam, and that three more submarines were scheduled to be deployed there. According to the commentary, the United States also wanted to dispatch another aircraft carrier to Hawaii or Guam. The Bush administration’s 2004 fiscal year defense budget was reported to be \$401.2 billion - “the largest of its kind.” *Nodong Sinmun* concluded that “Although it champions the six-party talks, the United States is not revoking its previous brigandish demand of [the DPRK] first giving up the nuclear [program] and is stepping up military threats to and preemptive attack maneuvers against the DPRK.”

A KCBS broadcast on December 27, 2003, mentioned the U.S. deployment of U-2 reconnaissance aircraft, the stationing of six F-117 stealth bombers in South Korea, and reminded its audience that the United States and South Korea had jointly staged the Foal Eagle and RSOI military exercises during the year.<sup>74</sup> In regard to these forces, the broadcast cited a DPRK foreign ministry spokesman who said that the United States wanted to transform its forces stationed in South Korea “into a Northeast Asian force which targets not only our Republic but

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<sup>71</sup> KCBS, September 24, 2003. FBIS KPP20030924000064.

<sup>72</sup> “A Very Dangerous Military Measure.” *Nodong Sinmun* commentary reported by KCBS and KCNA. FBIS KPP20031007000094.

<sup>73</sup> “Main Culprit in the Destruction of Regional Peace and Stability.” *Nodong Sinmun* commentary of December 10, 2003, carried by KCBS and PBS. FBIS KPP20031210000049.

<sup>74</sup> KCBS, December 27, 2003. FBIS KPP20031227000047.

also countries surrounding the Korean peninsula,” thereby making the region “more unstable and tense.” Two days later, KCBS informed its listeners that the U.S. Pacific Fleet had announced plans to move anti-submarine aircraft from Hawaii to Misawa (in northern Japan), and use an environmentally controversial “low-frequency detector” at sea.<sup>75</sup>

U.S. negotiations with the ROK to redeploy American soldiers from the DMZ and Seoul to south of the Han River did not go unnoticed by the DPRK media. On June 27, *Nodong Sinmun* termed the planned redeployment “a very dangerous military move which should not be overlooked.”<sup>76</sup> The article explained that “It is the view of the U.S. military strategists that when a war starts in Korea, Seoul and areas north of it will turn into a sea of fire in a matter of days due to North Korea’s strong artillery fire power, and none of the U.S. troops within its firing range will be able to survive.” Thus the redeployment plan was viewed in the context of a “strategy for a preemptive attack on the DPRK.” On July 27, *Nodong Sinmun* cautioned the United States not to forget its “past defeat” in the Korean War, and warned that “it is utter folly for the U.S. to think that its troops will go scot-free when they are relocated in areas south of Seoul.”<sup>77</sup> At the end of the year, *Nodong Sinmun* published an article citing a November 25 message by President George W. Bush in which he reportedly announced global redeployment plans for U.S. forces.<sup>78</sup> According to the article, a “considerably large” number of U.S. troops currently stationed in Germany were to be redeployed to eastern Europe as part of a larger strategy aimed at “modernizing and lightening U.S. military units and deploying them closer to ‘danger spots’ (citing a *Wall Street Journal* article).” The article claimed that “in this redeployment program, the Bush administration puts the focus on the Asia-Pacific region,” and warned that “maneuvers for redeploying U.S. forces are an extremely dangerous scheme for war aimed at realizing an ugly design for world hegemony by force at all costs.”

Another Bush administration strategy that received some attention was the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), although the North Korean domestic press appears not to have labeled it as such. An item carried by KCTV and KCBS on June 8 said that at the recent G-8 summit, the United States had made a proposal “to inspect and check ships and planes carrying nuclear substances, missile parts, and equipment and materials necessary to manufacture them. This, in essence, is aimed to justify blockades against sovereign countries like our country.”<sup>79</sup> Relating this initiative to what the Kim regime sees as the reluctance of the United States to engage in

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<sup>75</sup> KCBS, December 29, 2003. FBIS KPP20031229000049.

<sup>76</sup> KCNA, June 27, 2003; citing a *Nodong Sinmun* article of the same date. FBIS KPP20030627000085.

<sup>77</sup> KCNA, July 27, 2003; citing a *Nodong Sinmun* article of the same date. FBIS KPP20030727000021.

<sup>78</sup> *Nodong Sinmun*, December 15, 2003, carried on the Uriminzokkiri web site (<http://www.uriminzokkiri.com>). FBIS KPP20031216000050.

<sup>79</sup> KCTV, June 8, 2003. FBIS KPP20030608000037.

bilateral discussions on the DPRK's nuclear program, the item concluded that the delay in talks was an excuse to "buy time for stepping up international pressure on and blockade against us." In a related development, a July 2 *Nodong Sinmun* article cited U.S. State Department spokesman Richard Boucher as warning that countries should refrain from engaging in military cooperation with the DPRK.<sup>80</sup> In this regard, the article denied that the DPRK's export of missiles was illegal, charged that the United States was the world's largest weapons exporter (earning "nearly 50 billion dollars from 1997 to 2001"), and characterized the U.S. policy as a "collective siege" against the DPRK. Two days later, KCBS cited a member of the "U.S. Defense Department Policy Advisory Committee" as having advocated the creation of a "maritime network on our east and west coasts to stop all suspicious North Korean boats and investigate all their shipped goods."<sup>81</sup> The news item warned that insofar as a maritime blockade of North Korea would violate Article 2, Paragraph 15 of the Armistice Agreement, in the event of a blockade the KPA would "immediately and decisively take strong and merciless retaliatory measures by mobilizing all its potentials, completely free from the binding force of the Armistice Agreement."

The two U.S. military issues that received the most news coverage in the domestic press were the war in Iraq and the U.S. military's psychological operations. North Korea saw the two issues as closely related. As presented in the North Korean press, the story line on Iraq was simple. The intrusive inspections that Iraq was forced to accept fatally weakened its defense capabilities. In the words of a March 29 *Nodong Sinmun* article, "The Iraqi situation generates a serious lesson that imperialists' weapons inspections on a sovereign state lead to disarmament; the disarmament turns into war . . . ."<sup>82</sup> The North Korean press said that in the face of a U.S. attack, the Iraqi army quickly folded because it had been weakened by U.S. psychological operations. The press further said that the U.S. attack came despite the wishes of the international community; that in fact, the United States had intended to attack regardless of the outcome of the inspections: "Since the United States pursued its goal to disarm and take over Iraq from the first, it moved on to use armed forces, regardless of the inspection process or results."<sup>83</sup> After the war, according to this story line, it became clear that the original justification for going to war was false, because no weapons of mass destruction could be found.<sup>84</sup> The North Korean press warned

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<sup>80</sup> KCNA, July 2, 2003, citing a *Nodong Sinmun* article of the same date. FBIS KPP20030702000067.

<sup>81</sup> KCBS, July 4, 2003. FBIS KPP20030704000081.

<sup>82</sup> As the North Koreans present it, the link between inspections and war is not altogether clear, because according to their assessment, war was inevitable. KCBS, March 29, 2003; FBIS KPP20030329000036.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> "There is growing opinion that the 'information about the suspected production of weapons of mass destruction' in Iraq might be faked up to invade it" and "the misinformation about Iraq's 'plan for purchasing uranium' is being brought to light." KCNA, July 31, 2003; citing *Nodong Sinmun* on the same date. FBIS KPP20030731000017.

that the war in Iraq was “a test war for the second Korean War,” and therefore warranted high vigilance on the part of the North Korean people.<sup>85</sup> Reports picked up from the U.S. press about a new Operation Plan 5030 to supplement Oplan 5027 for conducting military operations against North Korea further reinforced North Korean concerns.<sup>86</sup>

The North Koreans have been particularly interested in the psychological operations (psyops) dimension of the war in Iraq. Here is *Nodong Sinmun*'s take on the operation and its relevance to the North Korea case:<sup>87</sup> The Iraq war, which had been anticipated to drag on, came to an end some time ago. . . . Were the hundreds of thousands of Iraqi regular army troops then wiped out by U.S. high-tech weapons? . . . Public opinion gathering strength today has it that the U.S. ‘victory’ in the Iraq war is attributable more to psychological warfare experts than to ultra-precision weapons. . . The fact that the United States is ballyhooing ‘victory’ and crediting it to its high-tech weapons is, in itself, psychological warfare.”

As to the psyops method: “The No. 1 target in the U.S. psychological campaign was the Iraqi leadership. . . . The U.S. CIA and military intelligence agencies focused on establishing contact with general officers of the Iraqi army and high-ranking figures of the Ba’ath Party through modern communication networks such as e-mail and cell phones. . . . The United States carried out false propaganda prior to the beginning of the war. It was to the effect that Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Aziz ‘has the intention of defecting.’ . . . It pressed on a large-scale false propaganda campaign vilifying Saddam Husayn, his sons, vice presidents, and other members of the Iraqi leadership.”<sup>88</sup>

Bribery allegedly plays an important role in U.S. psyops: “The U.S. imperialists are attempting to easily realize their aggressive goal by seizing control of the pertinent country’s leading classes through a reinforced bribe campaign against them. . . . According to data, at a decisive moment right before a fierce battle in the capital, Baghdad, it is said that hundreds of Iraqi military commanders were taken in by the United States’ bribe campaign; either they ran away to foreign countries or surrendered themselves. . . . Of late, the United States is reportedly planning a large-scale bribe campaign against our functionaries. They [the Americans] are running amok, with bloodshot eyes, to find out about our functionaries’ ideological leanings and

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<sup>85</sup> KCNA, March 30, 2003, citing a *Nodong Sinmun* commentary on the same date. FBIS KPP20030330000010.

<sup>86</sup> “Extremely dangerous New War Plan for Northward Aggression,” KCBS, July 21, 2003. FBIS KPP20030721000029.

<sup>87</sup> Yi Kyong-su, “Psychological Warfare - the U.S. Imperialists’ Cunning Way of Aggression and Domination.” *Nodong Sinmun*, May 15, 2003, p. 6. FBIS KPP20030530000013.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

the details of their material life through various channels, and they are craftily maneuvering to realize [the bribe campaign] in various conspiratorial ways.”<sup>89</sup>

In these and similar news items, the North Korean audience was reminded of the wisdom and foresightedness of Kim Jong-il in establishing his “no compromise” military-first policy to aggressively resist U.S. psychological and physical military operations. “We never regret that we walked on the military-first path without properly feeding or dressing ourselves in such a difficult time of the arduous march and the forced march, but we consider it the greatest pride.”<sup>90</sup> “If one should give ear to the U.S. imperialists’ deceitful and hypocritical propaganda, he will end up with a shaken faith and walking a path of betrayal against his people.”<sup>91</sup> “[We] must never accept their coercive demands for weapons inspections or disarmament, and instead, must strongly act in response to them. . . . One step of concession to the imperialists will result in tens, hundreds, and thousands of steps of concessions.”<sup>92</sup>

The Kim regime’s concern over foreign news sources entering North Korea is nothing new. The Iraq (and Afghanistan and Kosovo) cases only sharpened fears that the United States would come after the North Koreans, first with propaganda and then with weapons. According to the North Korean press, psyops information can reach the people by flyers dropped from airplanes (mentioning F-16s and B-52s), shells shot from cannons (155mm howitzers), radio broadcasts from terrestrial stations and from airplanes (EC-130E), booklets “using the same paper and fonts as produced locally in target countries,”<sup>93</sup> photographs, newspapers, magazines, novels, movies, music, and so forth.

Perhaps the most feared psyops source, to judge by the critical attention it receives in the North Korean press, is Radio Free Asia. North Koreans who pay attention to the domestic media know about RFA, even if they have never listened to it. They have been informed that RFA began Korean broadcasts in March 1997, that Radio “Free” broadcasts are made in Europe and Africa and the Middle East, and that thanks to Radio Free Europe (RFE) “large numbers of people, such as the youth . . . were imbued with illusions about capitalism” in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, thereby resulting in the collapse of communism and a worse life for everyone. In the North Korean case, the United States is accused of “attempting to disintegrate

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<sup>89</sup> Cho Taek-pom, “Vicious Bribe Campaign.” *Nodong Sinmun*, September 19, 2003, p. 6. FBIS KPP20031002000080.

<sup>90</sup> KCBS, March 29, 2003. FBIS KPP20030329000036. Similar to KCBS on April 7, 2003. FBIS KPP20030407000045.

<sup>91</sup> Yi Kyong-su, “Psychological Warfare”

<sup>92</sup> KCBS, April 7, 2003. FBIS KPP20030407000045.

<sup>93</sup> Cho Song-chol, “Let Us Raise Awareness Against U.S. Imperialists’ Psychological Scheming Warfare.” *Nodong Sinmun*, July 17, 2003, p. 6. FBIS KPP20030801000061.

and transform us internally through showing in numerous pocket size radios on the one hand and on the other hand, through airing Radio 'Free Asia' programs in the Korean language day and night," thereby "falsely trumpeting the temporary difficulty we are experiencing due to natural disasters as if our system itself has 'huge shortcomings' or 'problems.'"<sup>94</sup>

To summarize, the DPRK domestic media report foreign news by mixing fact with propaganda, thereby providing their own interpretation of events. By paying close attention to news broadcasts, and by drawing logical inferences, the audience can gain a considerable amount of information about U.S. military policy and operations targeted at the DPRK. The media's intention is obviously to prepare (inoculate) the people to resist this kind of information, but it is difficult to tell how the people respond to this mixture of news and propaganda. Are people impressed and frightened by news of U.S. initiatives, or are they hardened to resist them? Their response must depend to a large degree on how they process this information in the context of other information (mostly propaganda) that is available to them.

## **I. RECEIVING AND INTERPRETING INFORMATION**

Gaining access to outside information is one thing; interpreting it is something else. People everywhere hate to change their minds. New information is not viewed objectively, but instead is interpreted in light of the old information that already forms the basis for an individual's understanding of the world. The communications analyst should not focus so closely on the message that he ignores other factors in the traditional communication model: source, medium, and audience response. Several research psychologists who worked for the Information and Educational Division of the War Department during World War II and later collaborated at Yale University published landmark studies in the fifties on how information reaches and influences people.<sup>95</sup> In addition to looking at how variations in the factors of the communication model affect communication responses, they looked at the stages through which an audience may progress after being exposed to information: attention, comprehension, and acceptance.<sup>96</sup> Consistent with early work in the field that demonstrated strong resistance to persuasion, social psychologists over the years have noted the operation of several "cognitive filters" that prevent

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<sup>94</sup> Cho song-chol, "U.S. Imperialists' Vicious Psychological Warfare Via Radio 'Free Asia.'" *Nodong Sinmun*, June 13, 2003, p. 6. FBIS KPP20030702000054. Many other articles offer similar criticism of RFA. See, for example, KPP20030527000059, KPP20030801000061, KPP20031110000056, KPP20030823000049, KPP20030805000098.

<sup>95</sup> The most comprehensive statement of research from this group is Carl I. Hovland, Irving L. Janis, and Harold H. Kelley, *Communication and Persuasion*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953. Their research may be found in any book on social psychology or communication theory.

<sup>96</sup> The Yale group did some work on this process, but it was researched more extensively two decades later by William McGuire (also at Yale). An original source is his "Personality and Attitude Change," pages 171-196 in A. G. Greenwald et al. (Eds.), *Psychological Foundations of Attitudes*. New York: Academic Press, 1968.

people from fully processing new information. In order of appearance, these filters are selective exposure, selective attention, selective understanding, and selective remembering.<sup>97</sup> The more committed an individual is to current beliefs, the “thicker” these filters will be. Consider how they might work for a typical North Korean.

The Kim regime is highly selective about what information it allows its people to receive. For the information that does make it through that first filter, selective attention is not likely to be a significant second-stage filter in North Korea’s under-communicated society, because outside information is so scarce that people will pay attention to it. This is in contrast to Western societies, where most media information is ignored. Selective interpretation, on the other hand, may prevent information from being understood in the way the information source intends. North Korean propaganda consistently - over time and across media – has taken the line that the United States’ aim in all its endeavors is to subjugate the North Korean people. Even American foreign aid is depicted as a kind of psychological operation.<sup>98</sup> North Koreans who believe this propaganda will be inclined to interpret any information coming from the United States as “imperialistic” propaganda.

Those North Koreans who have access to outside information - even if they have a healthy skepticism of their own government’s propaganda - cannot help but notice that people all over the world are voicing concern about growing U.S. military power and influence. These knowledgeable cadres may well share the concerns and fears of less-enlightened North Koreans that the United States is out to dominate the world, country by country, and that North Korea is near the top of Washington’s target list. Such skepticism about U.S. intentions brings into focus two important and related issues in communication and persuasion: latitude of acceptance and communicator credibility.

Latitude of acceptance is another way of looking at how people resist changing their attitudes. Beginning with the work of Hovland and his colleagues, it has generally been found that communications are most persuasive when they are neither too different from nor too similar to the audience’s current attitudes and experience.<sup>99</sup> Too similar, and the new information is

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<sup>97</sup> A good discussion is in David O. Sears, Jonathan L. Freedman, and L. Anne Peplau, *Social Psychology*, Fifth Edition, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1985. pp. 417-421.

<sup>98</sup> About once a month, the North Korean press publishes a warning about the evil intentions behind U.S. foreign aid; in 2003, this aid was often characterized as a type of psyops. For example, “The purpose of the United States’ ‘aid operation’ lies in the paralysis of anti-U.S. independent consciousness by creating fantasy about the United States in people and encouraging pro-U.S. flunkeyism that depends on the United States.” Cho Song-chol, “Let Us Heighten Vigilance Against U.S. Imperialists’ Psychological Smear Campaign: Cunning Stratagem Abusing Humanitarianism,” *Nodong Sinmun*, August 14, 2003, p. 6. FBIS KPP20030829000063.

<sup>99</sup> For example C. Hovland, O. J. Harvey, and M. Sherif, “Assimilation and Contrast Effects in Reaction to Communication and Attitude Change,” *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, Vol. 55 (1957), pp. 244-252.

received with little thought and has little impact, falling well within the latitude of acceptance. Too different, and the new information is rejected as implausible or incomprehensible, falling in the latitude of rejection. The width of these latitudes varies for each audience segment and even for each individual. A plausible hypothesis is that the North Korean people having been for so long isolated and subjected to anti-American propaganda, have developed a wide latitude of rejection for foreign (especially American) communications.<sup>100</sup>

Resistance to communications outside the latitude of acceptance may be overcome when the source of the communications is highly credible.<sup>101</sup> One might like to believe that validity would be judged on the merits of the message, but this is not the case when validation requires more knowledge, education, and/or cognitive effort than is available to the audience. Consider the problems juries have in deciding a case based on the evidence - and how they become susceptible to the persuasive communications of the prosecuting and defense attorneys. North Koreans may interpret outside communications primarily on the basis of the perceived credibility and intentions of the communication source. If the source is not credible, whatever it says may be rejected or misinterpreted.

The Yale group found that credibility is the product of trustworthiness and expertness: a trustworthy source will speak truthfully; a knowledgeable source will speak accurately. A trustworthy and knowledgeable source can speak the truth, whereas a trustworthy but unknowledgeable source may be unintentionally biased, and a knowledgeable but untrustworthy source may intentionally mislead. Indicators of trustworthiness include personal character, reputation for trust, confidence and consistency in speech and behavior, and demonstrated lack of self-interest in the persuasive endeavor. Indicators of expertness include experience, credentials and titles, public recognition, sometimes age, and volubility (people who say more are perceived to know more).

Whom do North Koreans consider to be a credible source? In the North Korean press, Kim Jong-il is depicted as a benevolent genius who sacrifices himself for the welfare of his people. This portrait may not be believed in its entirety, but to the extent that Kim is seen to be carrying on the work of his father, who *was* widely perceived as a benevolent genius, Kim's credibility is high. The United States, on the other hand, is depicted as a country of schemers,

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<sup>100</sup> An interesting case is the North Korean who escaped to China, where he came across an article in a Russian journal telling about how the Korean War had actually been started by Kim Il-sung. "If the journal had not been from Russia, I still would have believed the article was fabricated by South Korea. . . . I had not believed in Juche, but I did believe in Kim Il-sung." Interview of a North Korean defector, footnote 46 on page 101 of Kongdan Oh and Ralph C. Hassig, *North Korea through the Looking Glass*, Washington, DC: Brookings, 2000.

<sup>101</sup> Again, the Hovland group. A few methods to enhance the credibility of U.S. communications directed at the DPRK are discussed in Kongdan Oh Hassig. *Bringing the News to North Korea*. IDA Document D-2519, October 2000, p. 25, pp. 49-51.

with a fool for a president;<sup>102</sup> any information coming from the United States may be viewed as coming from a source of low credibility.

The true beliefs of the North Korean masses and elite are difficult to judge from their behavior. No opposition voices are heard (although some anti-regime graffiti have been reported), nor is there any public criticism of Kim Jong-il or his father. This absence of criticism may indicate public apathy or support, but it may also mask private dissension. The abrupt fall of communism in the former Soviet bloc demonstrated that underneath the surface of society, people - and not just the dissident intellectuals - held their governments in contempt. No intellectual dissent has been detected in North Korea, but it may exist, buried more deeply than it was in Eastern Europe.

The Kim regime has taken measures to prevent its people from receiving and believing foreign communications, especially those coming from the United States. As the country opens itself slightly to foreigners, a “mosquito net” of censorship has been erected to let some information in while preventing unwanted influences from endangering the mental health of the people.<sup>103</sup> Another measure to combat outside communications is the use of “inoculation,”<sup>104</sup> whereby North Korean propagandists contrast an idealized picture of American life with the harsher reality in order to prevent the audience from believing everything they hear and see about the United States. For example, America’s ideal of freedom of ideas is criticized on the grounds that because the “ruling class” controls the media, “unlimited freedom [is ensured only] for the ideological activities to champion and propagate the bourgeois ideas which represent its class interests.”<sup>105</sup>

In the last quarter century, work on communication and persuasion has gone beyond the classical studies that manipulated source, message, medium, and audience factors to probe *how* people process information. One of the newer cognitive theories is the theory of cognitive dissonance, which is especially relevant to the case of people living in a country with no freedom of expression. The North Korean elite, who generally know more about their country and the

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<sup>102</sup> According to Yonhap, on March 12, 2002 a DPRK literary journal published a crude poem beginning, “Dear notorious U.S. President Bush/You are such a fool,/ but a real stylish fool.” FBIS KPP20020313000018. President Bush has been called much worse in the North Korean press.

<sup>103</sup> A German visitor quotes Kim Il-sung as using the term “mosquito net” in regard to the opening of the Najin-Sonbong foreign trade zone. The term occasionally appears in the North Korean press. For Kim’s original quote, see Hy-Sang Lee, *North Korea: A Strange Socialist Fortress*. Westport, CN: Praeger, 2001, p. 178.

<sup>104</sup> The idea of attitude inoculation was introduced by William McGuire, who began thinking about the concept after reports of brainwashing during the Korean War. The original source is William McGuire and D. Papageorgis, “The Relative Efficacy of Various Types of Prior Belief Defense in Producing Immunity against Persuasion,” *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, Vol. 62 (1961), pp. 327-337.

<sup>105</sup> “Deceptive Nature of Freedom of Ideology Chanted by Imperialists,” KCNA report on a *Nodong Sinmun* article of June 29, 1995; transcribed by FBIS-EAS-95-125 on June 29, 1995, p. 33 (FTS19950629000451).

outside world than the ordinary workers, are faced with a serious contradiction. On the one hand, their leader and his media say that North Korea is the best country in the world to live in; on the other hand, they know that domestic conditions are bad because of their corrupt system, and that conditions outside North Korea are much better. Do the elite live with this contradiction in their minds, or do they somehow resolve it?

The theory of cognitive dissonance makes predictions about how people resolve discrepancies between conflicting information.<sup>106</sup> The theory's first principle is that when people recognize discrepancies or dissonances between two or more of their beliefs, they experience a cognitive discomfort that motivates them to reduce the dissonance. For example, the belief that socialism is the most superior economic model is inconsistent with the perception of North Korea's abject poverty. Dissonance can be reduced in a variety of ways. One way is to avoid thinking about the inconsistency. Many North Koreans are perhaps so accustomed to socialist propaganda on the one hand and poverty on the other, that they do not notice the inconsistency. Another dissonance reduction method is to seek out information that bolsters one of the beliefs, or seek a higher principle that explains the inconsistency. The belief in the correctness of socialism could be bolstered by the government's claim that socialism can succeed only if everyone wholeheartedly supports it, which they obviously do not. The conflict may also be resolved by the belief that socialism in its early stages is bound to encounter many obstacles, but will eventually prevail. The question is, have the elite reconciled themselves to their situation, coming to believe in the superiority of socialism and the legitimacy of the Kim regime, or are they living a lie? Dissonance theory predicts that people do all that they can to avoid living a lie. The people of the former communist regimes in Eastern Europe faced a similar dilemma. As one of his aides recounted, "Gorbachev, me, all of us, we were double-thinkers, we had to balance truth and propaganda in our minds all the time."<sup>107</sup> Others said the same. But dissonance theory would predict that most people either found a way to resolve the inconsistencies, or ignored them, as often seems to have been the case in Eastern Europe. Any communication directed at the North Korean elite should take into account the possibility that they have either ignored this kind of inconsistency, or they are searching for a way to resolve it.

A final issue worth examining is how people deal with the wealth of information coming at them: in the case of North Koreans, a wealth of propaganda. Much of the early research on communication and persuasion assumed that when people are presented with information, they

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<sup>106</sup> Thousands of dissonance studies have been conducted since Leon Festinger's formal presentation of the theory in *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*. Evanston, IL: Row, Peterson, 1957.

<sup>107</sup> Georgi Shalchnazarov, an aide to Gorbachev, quoted by David Remnick in *Lenin's Tomb: The Last Days of the Soviet Empire*. New York: Random House, 1993, p. 168. This issue is further discussed in Kongdan Oh and Ralph C. Hassig, pp. 37-40.

rationally process it and draw reasonably appropriate conclusions. This is the model of the “thinking person.” In recent years, research has supported another, more common-sense view; namely, that most of the time people do not think very carefully about what they read, hear, and see. They are exposed to it, they may attend to some of it, but somehow their interpretative powers fall short of the ideal. Many a marketer has lamented the public’s weak response to his creative offerings. Do most communications in fact fail to have any impact?

One of the newer cognitive models, the elaboration likelihood model, assumes that people process information on two levels.<sup>108</sup> Information relating to important issues (such as buying a house or a car) is carefully attended to and “elaborated” upon. Other information goes in one ear and out the other. The effect of this “unelaborated” information is not nearly as strong as the effect of elaborated information, but *cumulatively*, even this lightly processed information has an effect. For example, not one of the thousands of automobile advertisements one sees in a lifetime may motivate a person to go out and buy the advertised car; but when car-buying time comes around, some automobile makes or models may be more favored than others because of the cumulative effect of these “ignored” advertisements. It is quite possible that the same thing happens with North Korean propaganda. Any given propaganda item may be easily dismissed as blatantly false, especially by the elite, but the cumulative effect may shape a North Korean’s attitude toward his own country and other countries, and thereby provide a cognitive context for interpreting information.<sup>109</sup>

How to summarize the main points about information reception and interpretation? Getting information to people involves choosing appropriate messages and channels, and then getting the information through the physical and cognitive filters that protect people from being overwhelmed by their information environment. The difficult task is to present information in such a way that it will be accepted by people who already have firm ideas that serve them reasonably well. When information is presented that challenges basic beliefs, thereby triggering

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<sup>108</sup> The original source is Richard E. Petty and John T. Cacioppo, “The Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion,” pages 123-305 in Leonard Berkowitz, (Ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol. 19. New York: Academic Press, 1986.

<sup>109</sup> *Symbolic convergence theory* sounds depressingly dry, but its associated research methodology, “fantasy theme analysis,” could be of interest to analysts of North Korea. The key observation here is that members of a group or society use stories or fantasies to create and reinforce an identity, to provide guidelines on how to view outsiders, to promote norms of behavior, and to motivate members to work toward group goals. An analysis of these stories, often about the group’s founder or heroes, can provide a better understanding of how the group sees itself and what it views as important. No society has a more elaborate repertory of (regime-manufactured) stories than North Korea. Although these stories are usually viewed by outsiders as the regime’s rather crude attempt to gain legitimacy, the stories can be examined as a lens through which the North Korean people view communications coming from the outside world. See E. G. Bormann, “Symbolic Convergence Theory and Group Decision Making,” pages 219-236 in R. Y. Hirokawa and M. S. Poole (Eds.), *Communication and Group Decision Making*. Beverly Hills: Sage, 1986.

cognitive dissonance, particular care must be taken to provide people with a “face-saving” way to accept the new information. To achieve this acceptance, skillfully crafted messages from highly credible sources are needed. But it is not necessary to make every message a “knock-out blow.” Oftentimes, people gradually change their thinking under the onslaught of many messages, each of which may be hardly noticed.

## **J. CONCLUSIONS**

The first question addressed in this study is what factions or potential factions might exist among the North Korean elite, and what power each faction might exercise. The second question is what information sources and channels these different factions could depend upon, especially to learn about publicly communicated initiatives related to U.S. military planning. The third question is what contextual factors influence how North Korean elites receive and interpret this kind of information. Given the constraints imposed by the ambiguity of type of communications to be examined (“relating to U.S. military planning”) and uncertainty surrounding how to define the “North Korean elite,” what conclusions can be drawn about communication among the North Korean elite?

No reliable evidence exists of factions within the North Korean elite. Members of the elite certainly have different attitudes on many issues. The Kim regime classifies society, including the elite, in terms of perceived loyalty to the regime. It is important for the elite not to fall from the regime’s favor; it is also important for them to physically survive in North Korea’s harsh environment. Consequently, those who have access to foreign currency or any other resource that can be exchanged for life’s essentials and luxuries are better off than those whose only asset is loyalty. It seems likely that, in the future, the most important divisions among the elite will have something to do with this economic factor.

Except for those who fear being cast out of the group, the elite share a common interest and destiny. With Kim, they are something; without him, they risk being nothing. Their loyalty in the service of their perceived best interest enables Kim to exercise power over them. Kim’s power also comes from his ability to watch over and punish individuals and their entire families. Yet another important source of Kim’s power is Korean nationalism: the proud desire that the DPRK be recognized as a political equal of the United States.

Communications from the United States to the North Korean elite urge them to change their policies - the same policies that put them at the top of their society and keep North Korea independent from other countries. Change may not be in their best interest. When they look at how U.S. military power has transformed other countries - most recently Iraq, Afghanistan, and Yugoslavia - they see societies in which many in the ruling class have been displaced. Changes

in the former Soviet bloc were likewise not kind to many of the nomenklatura. Only China, which is big enough to resist military and political pressure from the United States, has managed a controlled change that has kept the ruling party in power. This is what the North Korean elite see when they look out on a changing world. In short, communications that favor change in North Korea are likely to be welcomed more warmly by the masses, who have little, than by the elite, who have relatively more. But thanks to a half-century of communist propaganda, even the masses, living their miserable lives, may fear any change that is advocated by Americans. To overcome strong resistance to change, a highly credible source must present an extremely attractive - or extremely threatening - message. What that message might be, or what it might seek to achieve, is beyond the scope of this study. But it is probably safe to say that the United States is not a credible source of information in the eyes of most North Koreans.

In what channels can messages from the United States be placed in order to reach the North Korean elites? To reach Kim Jong-il, any public channel will do. He monitors CNN, NHK, and South Korean and Chinese broadcasts. He has people who gather news for him from other major international sources as well. A handful of Kim's closest associates probably have privileged access to international news as well. For the rest of the elite, articles that KCNA picks up from the *New York Times* and similar news outlets find their way into *Nodong Sinmun*, and to a lesser extent, into KCBS and KCTV, thereby providing satisfactory coverage of possible U.S. military threats against North Korea.

From a policy perspective, the important issue is not so much how to get international news into North Korea, but how to get the desired response to that news. Strong anti-Americanism on the part of the North Korean elite may hinder the achievement of American goals on the Korean peninsula. It is naive for Americans, who live in a society structured very differently from North Korean society, with a national history very different from North Korea's history, to assume that information sent to the North Koreans will be interpreted in the same way it might be interpreted in Washington, DC.

