

V. REACHING INTO NORTH KOREA

DAVID J. SMITH
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER,
NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	S-1
A. Introduction.....	1
B. Remote, Peculiar, and Miserable	2
C. North Korean Society	3
D. The Elite in General	5
E. Sources of Information	6
F. North Korea's IT Era	8
G. Diplomats: Licit	11
H. Diplomats: Illicit	11
I. Bureau 39	14
J. Entrepreneurs Back Home	15
K. Reaching into North Korea	17
L. Means of Communication.....	18
M. Impediments to Communication.....	19
N. Some thoughts About Lengthening Our Reach	20
O. Conclusion	24

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

North Korea is not known as the hermit kingdom without reason. It is difficult to identify target audiences and effective messages and tactics to overcome the considerable barriers to communication. Kim Jong-il has achieved a level of social control and personal adulation that would make Stalin weep.

The power and status of what might be called the North Korean elite are entirely derived from Kim. Some may not like him, but forming even the loosest of associations would require articulating discontent, a crime one commits only once in North Korea. Therefore, there are no independent groups in North Korean society, certainly none based on dissension among the elite. As a consequence, it is more accurate to speak of divisions rather than groups, fault lines rather than fissures. Behind each fault line are a number of North Korean elites, and certain messages - if received - may appeal to them.

North Korea is benighted and desperately poor. That means that among the most important determinants of power are information and money, both commodities that are, to a significant extent, derived outside North Korea. The elites that derive these benefits have some window on the outside world, making them more accessible to us.

In general, the third generation, young people who do not remember what westerners refer to as World War II, probably has a different outlook than its grandparents' generation that fought the Japanese and then the Americans with Kim Il-sung. Younger people are increasingly susceptible to the lure of practical ideas and money, particularly in Pyongyang.

Pyongyang is the center of information. Some residents may have access to the North Korean *Kwangmyong* intranet service. Those who dare may listen to South Korean, American, or British radio broadcasts. Fewer have access to South Korean television. North Korea has a large agency devoted to translating foreign press and broadcast programs. Depending on their position, officials may have access to a translated digest of the foreign media.

Perhaps more interesting is that Kim Jong-il and at least some of the leadership have determined that North Korea must develop information technology to survive. This has given rise to a small elite of mostly young IT professionals. It appears that a very select few may have Internet access for circumscribed purposes. Their computers no doubt are carefully monitored, and they know that security agents are peppered among co-workers and friends. There are also a number of software development joint ventures with China, South Korea, and Japan. Other

interesting developments include a North Korean cellular telephone network and E Mail provided by the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications for certain businesses.

The new high-tech generation will not transform the Kim Jong-il regime, but some of the few selected for this kind of experience may begin to question the tenets of the regime drilled into them since infancy. And these people are all the more susceptible because they are more exposed to information than are other members of the elite. The window may be open just a crack, but it could be made to open wider.

The paper proceeds to examine a number of other divisions with uncommon access to information or money:

- Diplomats speak languages, analyze world situations, entertain foreign visitors, see information from abroad, and serve at foreign posts.
- North Korean diplomats are also an important part of Kim Jong-il's worldwide mafia, charged with bringing in cash to support their own diplomatic missions as well as the regime.
- Closely related is a wider illegal money-making operation known as Bureau 39.
- Back home in North Korea, there have been signs of budding market enterprises, including farmers' markets, restaurants, and city kiosks.

To reach people inside North Korea, radio is probably the single most potent medium. At a time when South Korea is reportedly watering down the content of KBS *Social Education Broadcasting*, broadcast objectives should be reviewed. With accurate news about North Korea as a base, broadcasts should target particular divisions in North Korean society and overcome cognitive dissonance by offering a sense of belonging, and alternative frameworks. Some content should be designed to appeal to small entrepreneurs and exporters, IT professionals, and younger members of the elite, generally.

Other media should not be ignored. We should consider Internet site content that might be attractive to North Korean elites. And experts should study the technical aspects of using the E Mail system, the *Kwangmyong* intranet, and cellular phones. South Korean opponents of Kim Jong-il are very active in the print media, but Americans can become more active.

There also are a number of relevant diplomatic initiatives that should be considered. In particular, Roh Moo-hyun should be encouraged to articulate a South Korean vision of an independent, democratic, peaceful, and prosperous Korea. This would help North Koreans grasp an alternative framework for feelings about their government and their country.

Turning to the darker side, the only way to affect Kim Jong-il's dirty diplomats and Bureau 39 thugs is to squeeze them. A concerted effort to constrict the money flow will send a

message right to Kim Jong-il, and measures can be relaxed or tightened in accordance with the Dear Leader's behavior or with U.S. policy.

There is no easy formula for effectively reaching into North Korea. Physical barriers, fear of punishment, and cognitive dissonance stand in the way. Still, some, whether driven by desperation or uncommon courage, wonder what lies south of the DMZ. Though still a trickle, increasing numbers of North Koreans risk escape from the hermit kingdom. In this light, continuing to communicate with them, and to refine our effort, is a worthy endeavor.

The most reliable method of toppling North Korea's dictatorship is to instill a democratic ideology of valuing human rights into the North Korean people so that they can exert grass roots pressure on North Korean rulers.

Hwang Jang-yop, 2000¹

A. INTRODUCTION

North Korea is not known as the hermit kingdom without reason. Reaching into it is a challenge greater than reaching beyond the Iron Curtain, into Mainland China, or into Iran. It is hard to identify target audiences, effective messages, and tactics to overcome the considerable barriers to communication.

The demilitarized zone (DMZ), starkly dividing North from South Korea, is the epitome of physical barriers. Few North Koreans leave their country, and few of us will ever visit them. Fear of punishment is another barrier. Tinkering with the preset frequencies on North Korean radios is a one-way ticket to a labor camp. But perhaps the greatest barrier to communication with North Koreans is cognitive dissonance. Social control is so complete that skeptics have no other frame of reference. Their support for Dear Leader Kim Jong-il may be skin deep, but they have no context in which to consider alternatives.

Still, some human beings, whether driven by desperation or uncommon courage, wonder what lies south of the DMZ or north of the Tumen River. Defectors report listening to South Korean and American radio broadcasts, such as KBS Social Education Broadcasting, Far East Broadcasting and Radio Free Asia.² Though still a trickle, increasing numbers of North Koreans

¹ Hwang Jang-yop, "Treatise by ex-WPK Secretary Hwang Chang-yop on DPRK's Reunification Strategy," *Seoul Wolgan Choson*, December 1, 2000, FBIS translation KPP20001201000106, pp. 182-214. Hereafter cited as Hwang Jang-yop.

² Paek Sung-ku, "Kim Chong-il Orders to Confiscate Radios, A Conspiracy is Underway to Abolish the KBS Social Education Broadcasting to Keep Step With North Korea's Suspension of Anti-North (sic) Propaganda Broadcasts," *Seoul Wolgan Choson*, September 1, 2003, FBIS translation KPP20030830000035, pp. 249-255. Hereafter cited as Paek Sung-ku.

risk escape from the hermit kingdom.³ And at least one true hero, Ahn Chol, has gone back and forth to bring pictures of tragic North Korea to the outside world.⁴

In this light, continuing to communicate with North Koreans, and to find ways of refining our effort, is a worthy endeavor. This paper contributes to the consideration of potential North Korean audiences, effective messages, and tactics to overcome the barriers to communication.

B. REMOTE, PECULIAR, AND MISERABLE

Reference to the works of Lewis Carroll is the best way to begin any analysis of North Korea, as Kongdan Oh and Ralph C. Hassig do in the title of their excellent 2000 book: *North Korea: Through the Looking Glass*.⁵ Everyone knows the story. Stepping through the looking glass, Alice soon finds that she needs a mirror to read the title of an epic poem, *YKCOWREBBAJ*. Then she encounters living chessmen, talking flowers, and the Red Queen, to whom she explains that she has lost her way. “All the ways about here belong to me” retorts the queen!⁶

So it is with North Korea. Oh and Hassig call it “remote and peculiar” and it is, one should add, miserable.⁷ And all the ways about there belong to Kim Jong-il! As one ponders just how to reach the isolated people of North Korea, it is important to bear in mind just how bizarre and perfectly totalitarian the place is.

“Never before has there been such a country,” argues Sin Sang-ok, a South Korean movie director abducted and held by Kim Jong-il.⁸ Although North Korea is sometimes dubbed “Stalinist” or “communist,” no “ist” really applies because it is truly unique. Indeed, Kim Il-sung and his son, Kim Jong-il, have achieved a level of social control and personal adulation that would make Stalin weep. Moreover, North Korea’s ideology is *Juche*, not communism - Marxism has been removed from the constitution and the charter of the Korean Workers’ Party. *Juche* is commonly translated as self-reliance, but it is a singular Korean blend of nationalism, socialism, Confucianism, and just plain authoritarianism, all twisted around to legitimize the absolute rule of the Kim dynasty.

³ “Some 15,000 N., Korean Soldiers Go AWOL in 2001-2002,” *Seoul Yonhap*, September 26, 2003, FBIS translation KPP20030926000088; “249 N. Koreans Enter S. Korea via South’s Diplomatic Missions,” *Seoul, Yonhap*, October 9, 2003, FBIS translation KPP20031009000012.

⁴ Gripping video taken by Ahn Chol is featured in *Children of the Secret State*, broadcast on the Discovery Times Channel, August 19, 2003.

⁵ Oh, Kongdan & Ralph C. Hassig, *North Korea: Through the Looking Glass*, Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2000, hereafter cited as Oh & Hassig.

⁶ Carroll, Lewis, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass*, New York, Bantam Books, 1998, pp. 113-125.

⁷ Oh & Hassig p. xiv.

⁸ Sin Sang-ok, “ROK Movie Director Sends ‘Open Letter’ to President Kim Tae-chung,” *Seoul, Wolgan Choson*, October 1, 2001, FBIS translation KPP20010924000017, pp. 138-156. Hereafter cited as Sin Sang-ok.

The Kims rule with a heavy dose of mysticism. The late Kim Il-sung remains president for eternity - Kim Jong-il rules as Chairman of the National Defense Committee. Born in a Soviet refugee camp, Kim Jong-il claims to have been born at the foot of Mount Paektu, the traditional birthplace of the Korean people. Deer from that mountain wander his Pyongyang palace grounds, and only wood gathered from Mount Paektu can cook his food. Speculation is rife about which son Kim Jong-il will name as successor, and when,⁹ but there is no doubt he will try to install a third generation Kim at the helm.

Kim is revered as the *dear leader*, *great general*, and even *matchless hero who rules the world with great virtue*. But a *Nodong Sinmun* editorial shows that all bounds have been broken with regard to glorification of Kim Jong-il:

We shall believe in and follow General Kim Chong-il, the peoples' leader who has taken over the magnificent achievements of *Juche* ideology as a god...We shall live our life, trusting the great general as god. That is the banner of our eternal victory.¹⁰

Newspapers and books are replete with passages such as:

The great leader, Comrade Kim Chong-il, has pointed out the following: **“Today, the heavy and honorable duty of further developing the country’s communications is presented before us.”**¹¹

The Dear Leader is credited with authoring thousands of articles on *Juche*, and he dispenses advice on weighty matters of state, as well as on everything else from the design of uniforms for Pyongyang’s (female) traffic police to the proper feeding of the rhinoceros at the capital’s zoo. North Korea is a leader-dominant state like no other.

C. NORTH KOREAN SOCIETY

All this matters for the consideration of potential North Korean audiences. With such absolute and total power, the Kim’s have literally redrawn social structures in North Korea.

⁹ Speculation has recently been revived by yet another report that Kim Jong-il is ill, coinciding with Kim Jong-nam returning from abroad. “Kim Chong-il Enters Hospital To Receive Emergency Treatment for Serious Liver Disease: Will the Kim Dynasty Collapse Finally?”, *Tokyo Shukan Bunshun*, January 22, 2004, p. 28-31, FBIS translation JPP20040116000057; Ko Sung-il, “Shukan Bunshun - Rumors of Chairman Kim Chong-il Having a Liver Trouble,” *Seoul Yonhap*, January 15, 2004, as translated and re-titled by FBIS KPP2004011600007.

¹⁰ Kentaro Isomura, “Interpretation of the ‘New Order’ in North Korean Leadership; Mr. Kim Chong-il Is Now a ‘God’,” *Tokyo AERA*, March 10, 1997, FBIS document FTS19970521000883.

¹¹ Yi Pyong-ch’un, “DPRK Ministry Reports Progress in Mobile Telecommunications Network Construction Nationwide,” *Pyongyang Nodong Sinmun*, September 14, 2003, FBIS translation KPP20030924000114, p.3. The bolding represents how such a passage would appear in a North Korean newspaper. Hereafter cited as Telecommunications Progress.

Society is divided into three broad groups delineated by Kim Il-sung: core, wavering, and hostile. Each of these is, in turn, divided into a total of 51 sub-groups, based on pre-liberation (from Japanese occupation) family status. Social mobility is rare.

Members of the core group carry out Kim Jong-il's orders, run the state apparatus, and perform other functions deemed necessary to the state. These people comprise an elite in the sense that they occupy the most important positions and have power over certain situations and people. They are rewarded with housing, medical care, education, and goods unavailable to ordinary citizens. However, just as North Korea is a leader-dominant society like no other, its elite is like no other because its status and power are entirely derived from the Kims.

Revolutions in other countries have, to be sure, jumbled societies, purging traditional elites and catapulting lower or marginalized groups to the fore. But no matter how a society is recast, one would expect to find at least some elites come to the table with power derived from a variety of power bases - military, labor, religious, regional, ethnic, linguistic, business, academic, etc. In North Korea, Kim Jong-il bestows power, status, and perquisites. The organizational chart of the upper strata of North Korean society would resemble spokes on a bicycle wheel with no rim and no tire. Those closer to Kim Jong-il - the hub - rank higher than those farther out, with no connection among the spokes, except at the hub.

These people did not achieve their positions without making personal calculations. They must have likes and dislikes, and some of them may not like Kim Jong-il. As Oh and Hassig explain, "the greatest threat to the security of the Kim regime would come from a palace coup by top cadres or by the security people."¹² Kim Jong-il knows this and guards against it. A former bodyguard recounts that when the Dear Leader visits Peoples' Army units, soldiers must unload their weapons, air activity in the vicinity is prohibited, and his personal bodyguards keep even security agents 1,000 meters away.¹³ Sin Sang-ok suggests that when the Dear Leader traveled to Moscow, he "took about 150 people with him on the train because they were the people likely to revolt during his absence."¹⁴

However, knowing that there must be discontent, and finding it, are different things. Forming even the loosest of associations would require articulating discontent, a crime one commits only once in North Korea. Therefore, there are no independent groups in North Korean society, certainly none based on dissension among the elite. Consequently, it is more accurate to

¹² Oh & Hassig, p. 38. For a good analysis of the North Korean social structure and political control, see Chapter Six, pp. 127-147.

¹³ "DPRK Leader's Former Bodyguard Describes Security Procedures on Inspection Tours," *Seoul Nanun Kim Chong-il Kyonghowoniotta*, p. 5, November 20, 2002, FBIS translation KPP20030124000045.

¹⁴ Sin Sang-ok.

speak of divisions instead of groups, fault lines instead of fissures. Research can suggest where the fault lines lie, but it is far more difficult to know who belongs to which division, what they know and how they know it, what they think though dare not say, and how they might react to a particular emergent situation. Nonetheless, behind each fault line are a number of North Korean elites, and certain messages, if received, are bound to appeal to them.

There are a number of fault lines to analyze: the so-called “lesser” versus “greater” branches of the Kim family, Kim Il-sung confidants versus Kim Jong-il confidants, the Korean Workers’ Party versus the Korean Peoples’ Army, soldiers versus generals, army versus local people, the First Security Department versus the Second, and no doubt more. Recently gaining some attention in the press is a potential fault line within the Kim family that may underlie the succession to Kim Jong-il. Will Kim appoint his eldest son, Kim Jong-nam, born of Sung Hae-rim? Or will he name the younger Kim Jong-chul, or the younger yet Kim Jong-woon, both born of Ko Yong-hee?¹⁵ This is an important matter and we should analyze all available information. However, it is hard to glean more than anecdotes and harder still to know how to affect the outcome.

However, there may be some fault lines and divisions more susceptible to analysis and outside influence. North Korea is benighted and desperately poor. That means that among the most important determinants of power are information and money, both commodities that are to a significant extent derived outside North Korea. The elites that derive these benefits have some window on the outside world, making them more accessible to us. We should examine North Korean elites and some of their avenues to outside information and money.

D. THE ELITE IN GENERAL

Bearing in mind the qualifications just outlined, it is reasonable to say that North Korea has an elite, centered in Pyongyang. Among this elite, architects of South Korea’s “sunshine policy” such as former president Kim Dae-jung and his reunification aide Lim Dong-wan purport to see traditionalists and reformers, hawks and doves. Some western observers agree.¹⁶ Frankly, their case is overstated.

Oh and Hassig point out that, “most likely the elite population, as well as the masses, rarely engages in political thought, thereby avoiding the discomfort of cognitive

¹⁵ Fairclough, Gordon, “Pyongyang Place: The Family Saga of Kim Jong Il,” *The Wall Street Journal*, p. A1, October 10, 2003; “Japanese Weekly Examines Reports that ‘Big Change to Occur Soon in North Korea’,” *Tokyo AERA in Japanese*, p. 76-77, October 6, 2003, FBIS translation JPP20030930000154.

¹⁶ Harrison, Selig, “North Korean ‘Good Guys’ require U.S. Assistance,” *USA Today*, p. 13A, January 7, 2004.

contradictions.”¹⁷ This makes sense for two reasons. First, members of the elite are creatures of Kim Jong-il, and he and his father are the only authority figures they have ever known. Second, Kim Jong-il keeps things as they are by meting out severe punishment for even inadvertent slights, not to mention opposition: possibly death, and certainly a labor camp for the offender and his family, extending as far as seventh cousins.¹⁸

In such a stark and brutal regime, it is likely that among some elites support for the Dear Leader and *Juche* is rather shallow. Given the chance, they might grasp at alternatives, but, a prominent defector notes, “they couldn’t find any alternative...they just live on a day-to-day basis.”¹⁹ That said, there no doubt are divisions among the elite and the most likely fault line is generational.

The third generation, young people who do not remember what westerners refer to as World War II, probably has a different outlook than its grandparents’ generation that fought the Japanese and then the Americans with Kim Il-sung. Oh contrasts the outlooks of the two generations as “old glory” and “new opportunities.”²⁰ An aid worker who visits North Korea frequently elaborates. The younger elite, he says, is more numerate and less ideological. “Corruption and the power of money appear to be gaining power over party rule.”²¹ It is unnecessary to determine whether the former has truly overtaken the latter to accept this expert’s point that younger people are increasingly susceptible to the lure of practical ideas and money.

One would be most likely to observe this phenomenon in Pyongyang. Kim Jong-il’s regime carefully controls residency in the capital, so just to live in Pyongyang denotes something of elite status. But of course, that elite extends from Kim Jong-il’s inner circle - probably no more than a dozen to a score of people - through senior military, party, and government officials, the middle ranks, out to, say, schoolteachers who instruct the children of the elite.

E. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

“The center of information,” writes the *Seoul Choson Ilbo*, “is naturally Pyongyang.” Pyongyang residents have more access to the official information sources, although these carry nearly pure propaganda. “In the absence of information,” *Choson Ilbo* continues, “the public is sensitive to rumors, most of which turn out to be true.” If something happens in the capital, residents of other cities will start hearing of it when the next train arrives from Pyongyang. The

¹⁷ Oh & Hassig p. 39.

¹⁸ Kongdan Oh, presentation to the National Institute for Public Policy, “Who is the DPRK? Decisionmaking and the Regime,” September 12, 2002. Hereafter cited as Oh presentation.

¹⁹ Yun Seong-su, speech to the Defense Forum Foundation, May 17, 2002.

²⁰ Oh presentation.

²¹ Aid worker presentation to the National Institute for Public Policy, September 6, 2002.

Seoul newspaper goes on to describe how children of the elite, though carefully watched, swap stories at institutions such as Pyongyang University of Foreign Studies and Kim Il-sung University.²² Some Pyongyang residents may have access to the North Korean *Kwangmyong* intranet service.²³ Those who dare may listen to South Korean, American, or British radio broadcasts.²⁴

Fewer would have access to South Korean television. Kim Jong-il lets his few visitors know that he watches South Korean television. His residences have cable access to these, plus to broadcasts from Japan and Russia.²⁵ It is possible that his inner circle enjoys some of these privileges some of the time, but unlikely that many more do.

North Korea has a large agency devoted to translating foreign press and broadcast programs.²⁶ The people involved in this process obviously have access to these. Depending on their position, other officials may have access to a translated digest of the foreign media.²⁷ We know the North Korean government pays attention to the South Korean and western press because Pyongyang often directly responds to particular articles.²⁸ Though these feisty rejoinders frequently reveal bizarre misconceptions,²⁹ the people involved in this process - from translation to response - have some knowledge of media content outside of North Korea.

Much has been made of Kim Jong-il's Internet prowess - he even had his personal armored train wired for Internet access.³⁰ Very few other North Koreans would have access to the Internet; however, there may be some exceptions. A 2001 article in *Minju Choson* lionized Hwang Tok-man, a young biologist. After pointing out that Hwang was inspired by Kim Jong-il's declaration of the 21st. Century as the era of information technology, the government newspaper goes on to detail that Hwang's research involved retrieving data from the U.S. Department of Energy's Brookhaven National Laboratory's Protein Database.³¹ While the

²² "Article Views Public's Access to, Spread of Information, News in DPRK," from *Seoul Choson Ilbo* (Internet edition), April 1, 2001, FBIS translation KPP20010429000034. Hereafter cited as Choson Ilbo.

²³ Oh presentation.

²⁴ See Choson Ilbo and Paek Sung-ku.

²⁵ "Kimraderie, At Last," *The Economist*, June 17, 2000, p. 41; "Full Dialog Between DPRK Leader, ROK Media Delegation," *Yonhap*, August 13, 2000, FBIS translation 20000814000035; Interview with ROK Unification Ministry official Park Kwang-ho, August 2, 2002. Hereafter cited as Park interview.

²⁶ Park interview.

²⁷ Oh presentation.

²⁸ Park interview.

²⁹ The book, *Stupid White Men*, lampooning the George W. Bush administration was taken as serious American commentary in, "Stinging Satire of Current U.S. Administration," *Nodong Sinmun*, July 24, 2002, FBIS translation KPP20020806000025.

³⁰ Seo Soo-min, "Kim Jong-il's Railroad Trip to Moscow," *The Korea Times*, July 28, 2001.

³¹ "DPRK Rising Biologist Hwang Tok-man Featured," *Minju Choson*, July 21, 2001, FBIS translation KPP20010904000142.

Internet is not specifically mentioned, it appears that a very select few may have access for no doubt clearly circumscribed purposes. Such people are surely among the most trusted and the most monitored in the country, but they may also be among the most curious.

F. NORTH KOREA'S IT ERA

Whether her own words or supplied by the helpful writers at *Minju Choson*, Hwang Tok-man's invocation of a Kim Jong-il-inspired information technology era may indicate a chink in the Dear Leader's armor. Kim has also dubbed this, "the age of science, technology and computers."³² His eldest son, Kim Jong-nam, was appointed by his father as head of the North Korean Computer Committee.³³ All this adds up to indicate that Kim Jong-il and at least some of the leadership have determined that North Korea must develop certain advanced technologies in order to survive, if not compete with the outside world.

The reality is, of course, that the information revolution is distancing Seoul from Pyongyang by orders of magnitude at an ever-increasing rate. That some North Korean leaders have grasped this indicates that they have some idea of developments - and their implications - in the outside world. How they deal with this may prove the downfall of the Kim regime, just as President Ronald Reagan predicted communication would topple the already teetering Soviet Union.³⁴

The Korean Workers' Party newspaper *Nodong Sinmun* reports three areas in which "primary efforts should be directed:" information technology, nanotechnology, and bioengineering.³⁵ (Hwang's research involves two of these!) This drive has resulted in a number of developments that affect how various members of the North Korean elite may receive some information from outside the country.

Though the numbers are yet small, Dr. Hwang cannot be the only researcher with limited access to the outside world, probably via the Internet. Even if she never manages a peek at AskJeeves.com, she must be awed by the quantity and quality of data openly available from the Brookhaven National Laboratory site. Colleagues will find similar offerings on sites pertaining to their respective fields. Their computers are no doubt carefully monitored and they know that

³² Song Sun-sop, "Developments in North Korea's IT Sector, and North-South Exchanges and Cooperation Following the Joint Declaration of 15 June 2000," *Seoul Pukhan*, December 1, 2001, FBIS translation KPP2001121000045. Hereafter cited as Song Sun-sop.

³³ Lee Kyo-kwan, "Kim Jong-il's Eldest Son Heads the IT Industry in NK," *NKchosun.com*, posted April 23, 2001. (nk.chosun.com)

³⁴ President Ronald Reagan, Speech at Moscow State University, USSR, May 31, 1988. Text of the speech is available Online at http://www.forerunner.com/forerunner/X0692_Reagans_Speech_in_Mo.html.

³⁵ FBIS Report, "DPRK Channeling Foreign Information Technology, Information to Regime Goals," November 24, 2003, KPP20031124000116. Hereafter cited as FBIS Report (IT).

security agents are peppered among co-workers and friends. Still, the eyes of intelligent, educated people see what they see, and this cannot help but have some effect.

Although we must be cautious about reports originating in Pyongyang, it is worth noting here that KCNA has reported that since March 2003 E-Mail has been available to North Korean businesses through the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications.³⁶ It may not be as much of a “growing trend,” as KCNA says, and access is surely circumscribed and monitored. Nonetheless, even communications of a strictly business nature open a window, if only a crack, and even if only to a few. Meanwhile, an Internet cafe has opened in Pyongyang. Reportedly, high prices restrict the clientele to foreign officials based in Pyongyang³⁷

Another interesting development has been a North Korean cellular telephone network. Naturally, “the great general personally selected the mobile communications network format.”³⁸ According to North Korean reports, there are now 20,000 subscribers. Ten base sites have been erected in Pyongyang and 40 nationwide, toward a planned total of 59. Apparently, cost keeps most North Koreans from cell phone service - the initial cost can be as much as \$1,200. Again, we should be suspicious, particularly of the numbers reported, but a cellular telephone network of any kind and size in North Korea is big news.³⁹

Some other indications of Pyongyang’s budding interest in information technology include holding the Pyongyang International Science and Technical Book Exhibition since 2001, and reportedly even buying books on Amazon.com. Also, a number of North Korean technical delegations have attended events such as the China International Software and Information Service Fair in Dalian and the World PC Expo in Tokyo. A North Korean “Go” computer game team has traveled to a number of international competitions.⁴⁰

There also are a number of software development joint ventures with China, South Korea, and Koreans in Japan.⁴¹ Reportedly, North Korean interest in IT industry development has even

³⁶ Kim Chi-yong, “Fatherland News: KCNA Transmits Photo Regarding Service Provided by International Telecommunications Bureau,” *Tokyo Choson Silbo* (Internet version), November 29, 2003, FBIS translation KPP20031129000026. Note that *Choson Silbo* is a pro-Pyongyang newspaper in Japan, citing KCNA, North Korea’s official broadcast service.

³⁷ FBIS Report (IT).

³⁸ Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM).

³⁹ Telecommunications Progress; “Choson Sinbo Notes Number of DPRK Mobile Phone Subscribers Surpasses 20,000,” *Seoul Yonhap*, December 4, 2003, FBIS translation KPP20031204000063, hereafter cited as DPRK Mobile Phone; “DPRK Minister Discusses Telecom Development for International Communications,” *Pyongyang KCNA*, October 1, 2003, 1042 GMT, FBIS translation KPP20031002000047.

⁴⁰ FBIS Report (IT).

⁴¹ *Ibid.* See also Song Sun-sop, however, beware that this is written by a South Korean Unification Ministry official whose purpose is to advance “Sunshine Policy.” The quality and extent of North-South IT ventures may not be all he describes.

led to a training program for young North Korean programmers at the Hanna Program Center in Dandong, China.⁴² (Dandong is just across the Yalu River from North Korea's Sinuiju Special Economic Zone.) Interestingly, another report indicates that Pyongyang has sent a number of officials to Ho Chi Minh City and to Hanoi for training on market economies with professors from the Stockholm School of Economics.⁴³

Of course, neither Dandong nor Hanoi is anything close to cosmopolitan, but these are still major steps for North Korea. To put it in perspective, defector Yun Seong-su says he fled in 1998 because he was accused of having too much overseas experience as a State Security Department agent in northern North Korea. Yun's job was to return North Korean refugees who had fled into China. His overseas experience was traveling across the Tumen River into parts of northeast China far less sophisticated than Dandong.⁴⁴

It would be nice to think that a new high-tech day is dawning over North Korea, but that would be a mistake. A number of qualifications must be considered. First, while there is surely at least a kernel of truth to everything presented above, it may be exaggerated by North Korean propagandists or South Korean sunshiners. Second, exaggerated or not, North Korea's high-tech ventures will fail to save its economy without a systemic overhaul, of which the regime is incapable.

The third point to consider is that Kim Jong-il's regime will remain what it is, so long as Kim is there. The most expansive aspects of North Korea's IT efforts involve only a few people who no doubt are highly trusted - and highly monitored. They will be asked to turn their new talents toward strengthening the Kim regime, including using information technology for more effective propaganda and social control. We should recall the words of Hwang Jang-yop:

Only a select few people are allowed to go overseas, and when they return, they are permitted only to stress the negative aspects of foreign countries. They also have actively to propagandize how the North Korean leader is respected even in foreign countries.⁴⁵

So, the point here is not that a new high-tech generation will transform the Kim Jong-il regime; rather, it is simply that some of the few selected for this kind of experience will begin to question the tenets of the regime drilled into them since infancy. And these people are all the

⁴² FBIS Report, "DPRK-ROK IT Venture in China Developing DPRK Software Expertise," January 4, 2004, KPP20040107000119.

⁴³ "DPRK Officials Receive Training on Market Economy in Vietnam," *Seoul Yonhap*, January 5, 2004, 0902 GMT, FBIS translation KPP20040105000091.

⁴⁴ Interview with Yun Seong-Su, North Korean Defector, May 16, 2002.

⁴⁵ Hwang Jang-yop.

more susceptible because they are more exposed to information than other members of the elite. The window may be open just a crack, but it could be made to open wider.

G. DIPLOMATS: LICIT

Another subset of the elite with uncommon access to information is the diplomatic corps. Diplomats always have a perspective different from other officials because their experience is different from their colleagues'. They speak languages, analyze world situations, entertain foreign visitors, see information from abroad, and serve at foreign posts. In this sense, North Korean diplomats share some traits with South Korean, Japanese, or western counterparts. This may be unremarkable in our societies, but in North Korea it places at least some of them, particularly the younger ones, in what Oh describes as the new opportunities group. They may be at varying stages of disillusionment with the Kim Jong-il regime, looking for fresh ideas consistent with the interests of their country.

But as in all things North Korean, commonalities with the outside world are limited. The North Korean diplomatic corps is a service like no other. Its members are carefully watched by the various security agencies of their own country and, when abroad, kept under careful surveillance by the host country. Their movements are limited and their contacts are confined to countries with which they have diplomatic relations. Compared to South Korean, Japanese, or western diplomats, their experience is very limited, but it is expansive compared to other North Koreans, including members of the domestic elite.

A North Korean diplomat in New York, for instance, would not get more than a formal "good morning" from an American diplomat. He would have to receive permission from the U.S. State Department to travel outside a prescribed radius around the city - but there is plenty to see in New York City. It would not take more than the ride in from JFK Airport to observe that New York, not Pyongyang, is the center of the universe. Though they remain first-class rhetoricians on behalf of Kim Jong-il's regime, many North Korean diplomats must be silently seeking alternative explanations.

H. DIPLOMATS: ILLICIT

Sadly, North Korean diplomats also bear another distinction: they are part of Kim Jong-il's worldwide mafia, charged with bringing in cash to support their own diplomatic missions as well as the Dear Leader's regime.

North Korea's economy is a shambles and getting worse. Recent Congressional testimony of the Heritage Foundation's Larry M. Wortzel sums up the situation nicely.

North Korea's exports from legitimate businesses in 2001 totaled just \$650 million, according to Wall Street Journal reports of April 23, 2003, citing South Korea's central bank. Income to Pyongyang from illegal drugs in the same year ran between \$500 million and \$1 billion, while missile sales earned Pyongyang \$560 million in 2001. North Korea is producing some 40 tons of opium a year, according to U.S. Forces Korea officials cited in *The Guardian* on January 20, 2003, and earns some \$100 million a year from counterfeiting currency.⁴⁶

Economist Nicholas Eberstadt calculates that Kim Jong-il uses income of about \$1.2 billion per year just to keep his regime on life support. But it cannot do what would be necessary to overhaul the economy without dismantling its crippling "military first" policy.⁴⁷ That would undermine Kim's quest for Korean unification, which is the sole source of his regime's legitimacy. Sin Sang-ok sums it up pithily: "the nature of North Korean society dictates that Kim Chong-il cannot change and that his changing will mean his death."⁴⁸

To survive, the regime has turned to crime. Food crops, for example, have been abandoned in favor of opium. South Korean intelligence believes that opium production expanded from 4.3 million square meters in 1992 to 72 million square meters in 1994. Kim Ah-young of Pacific Forum CSIS writes, "government factories reportedly process the cultivated opium into heroin, and then companies and diplomatic economic departments distribute it."⁴⁹ Like the farmers, diplomats have been suborned to crime.

"Few North Korean embassies," writes Joshua Kurlantzick in *The New Republic*, "receive any money at all from Pyongyang, forcing them to fend for themselves. Nonetheless, if they can obtain enough money on their own, these diplomats can enjoy a capitalist lifestyle."⁵⁰ In other words, North Korean diplomats have become a subset of the elite that is well informed, exposed to the outside world, and all too capitalist! They can be reached, not with lofty ideals, but with the language of a New York City cop. The tale of Kim Jong-il's dirty diplomats is so bizarre that a few examples are required to gain credibility.

⁴⁶ Wortzel, Larry M., *North Korea's Connection to International Trade in Drugs, Counterfeiting and Arms*, May 20, 2003, testimony before the Governmental Affairs Subcommittee on Financial Management, Budget, and International Security, published by The Heritage Foundation at <www.heritage.org>. Hereafter cited as Wortzel.

⁴⁷ Interview with Dr. Nicholas Eberstadt, January 12, 2004.

⁴⁸ Sin Sang-ok.

⁴⁹ Kim Ah-young, "Targeting Pyongyang's Drug Trade Addiction," June 18, 2003, <www.atimes.com>, with permission of Pacific Forum CSIS.

⁵⁰ Kurlantzick, Joshua, "Traffic Pattern," *The New Republic*, March 24, 2003, p. 12.

About 40 percent of the heroin, methamphetamine, and opium consumed in South Korea and Japan originates in North Korea; some has reached the streets of New York.⁵¹ And North Korea's diplomatic corps has been serving as suppliers and mules, including using the diplomatic pouch for drug trafficking.⁵² Incidents have been reported since 1976 in Egypt, China, Russia, Germany, the Czech Republic, Venezuela, India, Nepal, Sweden, Zambia, Ethiopia, and Laos. Drugs included heroin, hashish, cocaine, rohypnol, and opium.⁵³

With regard to weapons, we usually focus on North Korea's lucrative missile trade, but an estimated 40 percent of their arms income is derived from sales of conventional weapons.⁵⁴ For example, Han Chong-li, accredited as a North Korean diplomat in Hungary, reportedly dealt in F-16s and torpedoes before his 2000 expulsion for activities inconsistent with his position.⁵⁵ Moreover, North Korean diplomats have been caught gathering military technology for North Korea's missile and nuclear programs. In 1993, when former Soviet scientists were looking for any kind of work, military attaché Nam Gae-wok was expelled from Russia for recruiting missile and space experts.⁵⁶

And many such deals have no doubt been paid for with Pyongyang's own counterfeit dollars and yen. One estimate says that North Korea prints \$10 to \$15 million per year.⁵⁷ Entire cases of fake money have been confiscated in Southeast Asia.⁵⁸ Moreover, counterfeiting arrests reveal that North Korea supplies diplomatic passports to some of its operatives who do not even pretend to be diplomats.

Finally, though the extent of the North Korean diplomatic corps' involvement in trafficking endangered species is uncertain, a few examples underscore the extent of its criminality. The Environmental Investigation Agency reports that North Korean diplomats have

⁵¹ Solomon, Jay, and Jason Dean, "Heroin bust point to source of funds for North Korea," *Wall Street Journal*, April 23, 2003; Ch'oe Yong-chae, "Reporter Ch'oe Yong-chae, Disguised as a Drug Dealer, Witnessed the Secret Dealing of North Korea-manufactured Drugs – 'Life? We Cannot Guarantee You Life. Merchandise? We Can Guarantee You That'," *Seoul Singdong-a*, 1 September 2002, FBIS document KPP20020827000033.

⁵² Perl, Raphael F., "Drug Trafficking and North Korea: Issues for U.S. Policy," *CRS Report for Congress*, page 6-7, December 5, 2003.

⁵³ Ibid; Hwang, Balbina, "Curtailling North Korea's Illicit Activities," *Heritage Foundation Backgrounders*, August 26, 2003.

⁵⁴ Lintner, Bertil, "North Korea's Missile Trade Helps Fund its Nuclear Program," *Yale Global Online*, May 5, 2003, available Online at <<http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/display.article?id=1546>>.

⁵⁵ Ronay, Gabriel, "North Korean Diplomat on Trial for Arms Smuggling," *Sunday Herald*, July 7, 2002.

⁵⁶ McElvoy, Anne, and Wolfgang Munchau, "Russia Foils North Korea Plot to Hire Nuclear Team," *The Times*, November 17, 1993.

⁵⁷ Kaplan, David E., "The Far East Sopranos," *US News and World Report*, January 27, 2003, page 34; Rathbone, Owen, "North Korea: A Gangster State," *American Daily*, April 27, 2003.

⁵⁸ Lilley, James R., "North Korea – A Continuing Threat," *Testimony at the House Committee on International Relations*, Washington DC, March 24, 1999, available Online at <http://www.aei.org/news/newsID.17032/news_detail.asp>.

been the biggest buyers of ivory over the last decade.⁵⁹ They are involved in rhinoceros horns too. But the prize surely goes to Kim Yong-chal who was detained in 1998 at a Paris airport with 600 kilograms of elephant tusks in twenty suitcases. Just a year later, Kenyan authorities detained Kim with 188 elephant tusks weighing 700 kilograms!⁶⁰

Other incidents have been reported involving gold, pirated CDs, and bootleg alcohol and tobacco. All this would be humorous if it were not so tragic and dangerous.

The point is that, although some North Korean diplomats may have new opportunities and outlooks, many others are interested in plain criminal opportunities. These people form a sort of elite in North Korean society because they have information and money - and they are vital to Kim Jong-il's regime. They are too valuable and too dangerous to bring home, so they probably have little impact on day-to-day thinking in the capital. But if their sources of income were to be squeezed, the cries would no doubt be heard in the highest places in Pyongyang.

I. BUREAU 39

North Korea's illicit diplomats are plugged into a much wider money-making operation that provides them with banks and trading companies to facilitate their drugs, arms, and counterfeiting capers. Bureau 39 - within the Finance and Accounting Department of the Central Committee of the Korean Workers' Party - is the nerve center of Pyongyang's legal and illegal ventures. Over the years, it is said to have accumulated reserves of \$5 billion in offshore accounts, while funneling money to Kim Jong-il's slush fund and to North Korea's military programs.⁶¹

Bureau 39 has some legitimate product lines, such as exotic mushrooms and ginseng, but its big cash comes from drugs and arms. The Bureau operates through at least ten trading companies and its own Golden Star Bank with branches in Beijing, Macau, Singapore, and Vienna.⁶² Austrian intelligence reports that Golden Star in Vienna provides cover for North Korea's operatives in Europe and facilitates the trade in missiles and technology.⁶³

⁵⁹ "Intl Organization Denounces DPRK for Ivory Smuggling," *Yonhap* 2 April 2000, FBIS document KPP20000402000008.

⁶⁰ "Lethal Experiment: Ivory Seizures Soar," Report by *Environmental Investigation Agency* available Online at <<http://www.salvonet.com/eia/old-reports/Elephants/Reports/lethExp/>>; "Arrested N. Korean diplomat flees Kenya," Japan Economic Newswire, October 8, 1999.

⁶¹ "In NK, Secret Cash Hoard Props up regime," *The Wall Street Journal*, July 14, 2003. Bureau 39 is believed to have \$5 billion in cash assets in secret bank accounts in Macau and Switzerland; Hwang, Balbina, "Curtailing North Korea's Illicit Activities," *Heritage Foundation Background*, August 26, 2003.

⁶² Spaeth, Anthony, "Kim's Rackets," *Time Asia*, June 2, 2003; Lintner, Bertil, "North Korea: Pyongyang's Banking Beachhead in Europe," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, February 13, 2003; Polak, Matthew, "Kim's Drug Intervention," unpublished article, January 14, 2004.

⁶³ Burgermeister, Jane, "North Korean Bank is 'front for arms trade'," *The Observer*, July 27, 2003.

Like the illicit diplomats, Bureau 39 personnel are part of an elite with information, money, and a pivotal role in the Kim Jong-il regime. Defector and former Bureau 39 operative Kim Dong-hun says, “if it goes to Bureau 39, it is the same as sending it to Kim Jong-il.” Another defector, Kim Dok-hong, says that destruction of Bureau 39 would be “tantamount to a death blow for Kin Jong-il.”⁶⁴

Bureau 39’s overseas operatives are probably too valuable and too dangerous to bring home. But, like their diplomatic colleagues, if their sources of income were to be squeezed, the cries would no doubt be heard in the highest places in Pyongyang.

(NOTE: It is unclear whether the Japan-based pro-Pyongyang *Chosen Soren* organization should be considered part of North Korean society. However, it is important to recognize here that it plays an important role in North Korea’s illicit overseas operations.)

J. ENTREPRENEURS BACK HOME

Meanwhile, back in North Korea there have been some signs of budding market enterprises. Private gardens, farmers’ markets, restaurants, and city street kiosks have been reported by a number of travelers. The kiosks carry drinks, cigarettes, and some food. The farmers’ markets sell produce, but also bits of everything else, such as videos. Reportedly, Kim Jong-il directed the Pyongyang city government to issue small business permits.⁶⁵ Predictably, South Korean Unification Minister Jeong Se-hyun was quick to shed some sunshine on these developments. “The North,” he said, “recognizes the inevitability of taking the course of reform and openness.”⁶⁶ Equally predictably, a number of unnamed western diplomats and aid workers have joined the chorus.

Unfortunately for North Korea, the prospects are not so bright. The much-touted July 2002 economic reforms have made people even more desperate. Economist Nicholas Eberstadt explains that prices and wages increased without a rise in production. The result was, of course, rampant inflation.⁶⁷ It is unlikely any of this will lead to real economic change. More likely, Kongdan Oh told *The Economist*, Pyongyang is just “creatively muddling through.”⁶⁸ An aid

⁶⁴Spaeth, Anthony, “Kim’s Rackets,” *Time Asia*, June 2, 2003; Solomon, J., Hae Won Choi, B. Baas and C. Hardt, “The Dictator’s Long Shadow: Secret Network of Funds and Firms Supports North Korean Regime,” *Handelsblatt*, August 6, 2003, FBIS document EUP20030806000138.

⁶⁵AERA North Korea Reporting Team, “Surprising Information Flows Out of North Korea,” *Tokyo Aera*, October 6, 2003, FBIS translation JPP20030930000154, pp. 76-77. Hereafter cited as AERA Reporting Team.

⁶⁶“N.K. Embarks on Initial Phase of Market Economy,” *Yonhap*, September 19, 2003, 0313 GMT, FBIS translation KPP20030919000030.

⁶⁷“Progress at a Snail’s Pace,” *The Economist*, October 11, 2003, pp. 43-44.

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

worker who travels throughout North Korea observes that when food supplies decrease, social mobility increases.⁶⁹

Nonetheless, for the purpose of this paper, a division of people is being created - those who tend private gardens, and those who run restaurants, kiosks, or farmers' market stalls. Even someone who only sells locally grown produce is becoming acquainted with the basics of a market economy and, by contrast, with the inefficiencies of North Korea's command economy. Those who sell western cigarettes and videos also are in contact with suppliers and may well deal in foreign currency. Although there is no group identity among these people, and many of them even regard themselves as loyal to Kim Jong-il, they are forming common interests that would be affected by a government pullback from its current foray into the market. Moreover, a seed of regime criticism will have been planted in all of them.

North Korea's flirtation with a market economy has also resulted in instances of state capitalism. The (Tokyo) AERA North Korea Reporting Team writes:

Offices of the party, government and military services are now competing to expand their clout by putting farmland, like rice paddies and vegetable fields, and hotels and restaurants doing business in foreign currency under their umbrellas. Part of what these offices and departments earn is donated to General Secretary Kim as "loyalty funds." The general secretary himself also has some foreign currency earning organizations running right under his control. Kim has secured for himself a system by which he can earn money sitting doing nothing.⁷⁰

If true, this phenomenon reflects the aforementioned comment by an aid worker that corruption and the power of money are surpassing party rule. But even if only half true, it indicates that there is a segment of officialdom, including the Dear Leader, with some stake in preserving the *status quo*. Neither moving backward nor forward would suit their economic interests. A rejuvenated socialist regime would purge them as corrupt. But a move toward more efficient capitalism would sweep them away too.

Yet a third type of North Korean entrepreneur may be engendered by what Larry Wortzel describes as "perhaps the only successful feature of 'sunshine policy.'" Wortzel cites South Korean officials who say that over 450 South Korean small- to medium-size businesses are manufacturing textiles, shoes, clothing, and light industrial goods for export. Of course, this group probably overlaps with the aforementioned instances of state capitalism. North Korean bosses are no doubt military, party, or government officials, but exporting confronts them with certain business imperatives that may not be present in, say, cornering the private rice market in

⁶⁹ Aid Worker.

⁷⁰ AERA Reporting Team.

a province of North Korea. “Think of the implications of this commerce,” says Wortzel, “hundreds of South Korean small businessmen are looking communist Korean Workers’ Party officials in the eye on a regular basis and explaining profit and loss.”⁷¹

So long as the South Korean government or a large South Korean company does not subsidize these enterprises, they may prove truly infectious to Kim Jong-il’s regime.

K. REACHING INTO NORTH KOREA

This paper has identified a number of divisions in North Korean society, first by suggesting a generational fault line, and second by considering a number of economic factors now observable in North Korea. The people in these divisions have something in common, but the nature of North Korean society prevents the formation of a group consciousness, or even much substantive communication among division members. For example, there is no doubt some cohesion among a circle of friends at Kim Il-sung University. They may even swap gossip based on stories heard at home, but any deeper feelings of alienation from the Kim Jong-il regime are likely kept strictly personal.

A KBS survey of escapees offers some insight into this phenomenon. Asked how they learned of foreign radio broadcasts, only 15 percent indicated someone else had told them about them. Most said they “listened secretly by themselves.”⁷² Each has his or her own yearning for information, but not much identity with others in a similar situation or who hold similar views. North Koreans don’t know whom they can trust and they instinctively understand the principle of compartmentalization. They are members of analytical divisions, not groups.

The divisions presented here are illustrative, not exhaustive. Others will examine different phenomena that indicate fault lines different from those discussed here. Some of these may be congruent to those discussed in this paper; others may be crosscutting, resulting in new qualifications to the divisions identified here, in other words, sub-divisions.

This analysis sought to identify divisions in North Korean society susceptible to what mainstream westerners might call positive and negative information and other stimuli. They run the range from idealistic university students or young foreign service officers to Bureau 39’s thugs and mules. The former may accept carefully crafted messages about better opportunities in democratic, free market countries like South Korea. The latter are streetwise (in the pejorative sense), and may react only to the giving or taking of money or the tough talk of the back streets.

⁷¹ Wortzel.

⁷² Paek Sung-ku.

If we want to reach into North Korea, different messages must be crafted for different divisions in the society.

This paper has discussed, roughly: a general elite - particularly the younger members; IT professionals; small entrepreneurs; small exporters; diplomats - above-board and not; state capitalists; and Bureau 39 thugs. Each division's sources of information may be different, and sources may be general or specific. (Bear in mind, of course, that even general sources of information in North Korea are very restricted.)

L. MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

Rumors may be the most general source of information in North Korea. However, for us who are considering how to reach into that society, rumors are a secondary medium. The root information would have to come from radio or a foreign press article, although an occasional traveler or business person might offer grist for the rumor mill.

North Koreans have very limited access to foreign television - the country is too totalitarian yet to imagine banned but ubiquitous satellite dishes as one reportedly now sees in Iran. Consequently, radio remains the single best general source of outside information.

The foreign, particularly South Korean, press may also have some impact, although the government applies a double filter to it. The government controls what will be translated and circulated, and it severely restricts the number of officials with access to this once-filtered information. Still, it is reasonable to assume that a combination of foreign press and rumor mill affords the Pyongyang elite some second or third hand exposure to the foreign media.

The *Kwangmyong* intranet also is a source of general information, but it is a closed system run by the North Korean government and any communication through it would be carefully monitored. As a closed system, outsiders have no access to it. However, plans have been discussed to link it with the Internet.⁷³ In that case, Internet experts might want to study whether it is accessible from outside North Korea. Some North Koreans also have limited access to the Internet and reportedly the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications is making some kind of E Mail available to businesses. With some creative thought, the Internet, E Mail, and maybe the intranet also can become media for active communication with specific individuals or for passive content designed to appeal to certain individuals or small groups.

⁷³ Song Sung-sop, "Developments in North Korea's IT Sector, and North-South Exchanges and Cooperation Following Joint Declaration of June 15, 2000," *Seoul Pukhan*, p. 8, December 1, 2001, FBIS translation KPP2001121000045.

Other specific sources of information for North Koreans include the scientific book fair, computer shows and games, joint ventures, and diplomatic contact.

Turning to the dark side, North Korea's diplomatic *mafiosi* and Bureau 39 mules have considerable access to information because they operate outside the country. Although they work the back streets, they do get around, they see what there is to see, and they can be contacted easily, at least by certain elements of our societies.

M. IMPEDIMENTS TO COMMUNICATION

Using any of these sources of information, that is, reaching into North Korea, is difficult. As mentioned at the very beginning of this paper, North Korea is not known as the hermit kingdom without reason. Impediments to communication with North Koreans are physical, fear of punishment, and cognitive.

Physical impediments are the easiest to understand because, for the most part, we can touch and feel them. The DMZ, the carefully guarded Yalu and Tumen Rivers, and two seas seal off the country. Very few outsiders visit, fewer have real contact with the people, and fewer still North Koreans can go and come. Internally, movement and residency are controlled. Permission is required to live in Pyongyang, "the center of information" (such as it is).

Legal radios are preset to government stations, and inspections are conducted to detect tampering. Internet access is severely limited, and we should assume that computer terminals and passwords are carefully guarded.

The future of cellular telephones in North Korea is yet unclear, although it is difficult to imagine replicating in Pyongyang the scene of Seoul teenagers jabbering away on their mobiles (at dad's expense)! Interestingly, the Great General himself chose the GSM operating format for the North Korean cellular telephone network - different from South Korea's Code Division Multiple Access (CDMA) format.⁷⁴

Another impediment to communication with North Koreans that is both physical and cognitive is the use of amplifier broadcasting, an Orwellian showering of workplaces, towns, and even many homes with propaganda. This steady stream of gibberish makes it hard for people to talk or even think, and they are bound to retain bits and pieces of it.

That may be useful because the Kim Jong-il regime diabolically combines physical impediments to communication with fear of punishment. Anyone sufficiently savvy to become one of the lucky cell phone users also knows that the instrument must be used only for anodyne

⁷⁴ DPRK Mobile Phone.

conversations with the correct mix of obsequiousness and sycophancy. The same would apply to anyone fortunate enough to surf the web and to businesses that may gain access to E Mail. A labor camp is in store for anyone caught tampering with an official radio or concealing an illegal one.

In such a regimented society, the cognitive impediments to communication, though harder to see, may outweigh physical barriers and fear of punishment. Doubting is a lonely occupation in a society like North Korea. This can plunge most humans into feelings of isolation and anomie. The only way out is to let go and rejoin the group.

Still, some North Koreans surely harbor doubts about their system, but they have no intellectual framework in which to consider alternatives. Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il are the only authority figures they have ever known. And they have been taught since infancy that the systems in South Korea and the U.S. are embodiments of evil. To confuse them further, they may hear attacks on America and the U.S.-ROK alliance on South Korean radio. North Korean skeptics may wonder if South Korea and the U.S. are as demonic as depicted in the North, but they still have no coherent construct for an alternative to the Dear Leader.

Perhaps most important, Oh and Hassig point out that, despite doubts, the North Korean “elite believe(s) in socialism as a utopian idea... and probably also firmly believes in the importance of national pride, independence and economic self-reliance.”⁷⁵ Hwang Jang-yop’s recent Capitol Hill appearance is instructive in this regard. Repeatedly badgered by Korean expatriates about whether he should move to the U.S. to wage a more effective opposition to Kim Jong-il, a bristling Hwang retorted, “I am not a defector; I am a Korean living in Korea.”⁷⁶ Any messages we aim at North Koreans must be carefully and tactfully crafted.

N. SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT LENGTHENING OUR REACH

Echoing Hwang-Jang-yop’s thought used as the preface to this paper, Oh and Hassig write that “if more North Koreans had the courage to take exit or voice action in the face of the totalitarian regime, Korean reunification would come sooner rather than later.”⁷⁷ They are right, but North Koreans will need more information from the outside to do this, and that can only come from South Korea and the United States. Radio is probably the single most potent means to reach into North Korea.

⁷⁵ Oh & Hassig, p. 38.

⁷⁶ Hwang Jang-yop, “What America Needs To Know About North Korea,” speech to the Defense Forum Foundation, October 31, 2003.

⁷⁷ Oh & Hassig, p. xiv.

At a time when South Korea is reportedly watering down the content of KBS *Social Education Broadcasting*, broadcast objectives should be reviewed. Escapees report listening to foreign broadcasts, particularly for accurate news about North Korea.⁷⁸ With accurate news about North Korea as a base, the analysis in this paper suggests that broadcasts should target particular divisions in North Korean society and overcome cognitive dissonance by offering a sense of belonging and alternative frameworks.

Some content should be designed to appeal to small entrepreneurs and exporters, IT professionals, and younger members of the elite, generally. Moreover, it should be carefully considered to overcome cognitive dissonance.

Oh and Hassig point out that members of the North Korean elite are probably proud to be Korean and they believe in socialism as an ideal, bringing independence and economic self-reliance. Therefore, broadcasts should not attack these values. For example, exposing the corruption of Kim Jong-il, state capitalists, and Bureau 39 may be more effective than a stark capitalism versus socialism theme. Naturally, broadcasts should be by Koreans for Koreans, and Korean expatriates need to ensure that the message is about Koreans in the North, not Koreans in Los Angeles.

As individuals become disassociated with the all-encompassing Kim Jong-il regime, broadcasts should help fill in a sense of belonging and alternative frameworks. Stories about how escapees felt before they left the North, or about people in, say, the IT professions in South Korea might appeal. Far more difficult is to offer an alternative framework to a person who has been taught from infancy that Kim Jong-il is everything.⁷⁹

“We helped them realize North Korean society’s problems by informing them what Christianity is and what kind of figure Jesus is,” said Han Ki-pung of the private Far East Broadcasting.⁸⁰ It is unnecessary to judge the message to see that this station is providing an alternative framework for North Korean listeners. In addition to messages like this, what is sorely needed to counter Kim Jong-il’s vision of a united Korea is a South Korean vision of an independent, democratic, peaceful, and prosperous Korea.

Although radio can be very powerful, there are a number of other measures we should consider to strengthen our reach into North Korea.

⁷⁸ Paek Sung-ku.

⁷⁹ The captain of the North Korean women’s soccer team provided a sad example of the complete lack of alternative frameworks before a recent World Cup match in Philadelphia. “I am determined to bring joy and happiness to Kim Jong-il,” was her only comment to an American sports writer. Gildea, William, “More Great Feats for Hamm, U.S. Women,” p. D1, *Washington Post*, September 26, 2003.

⁸⁰ Paek Sung-ku.

Although the future of cellular telephones and the Internet in North Korea is yet uncertain, it would be useful to consider how these media might be used to lengthen our reach to the kind of North Korean elites discussed in this paper. We should consider Internet site content that might be attractive to North Korean elites - IT professionals and researchers like Hwang Tok-man. Computer experts should study the technical aspects of using the Internet, the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications' E Mail system, and the *Kwangmyong* intranet system.

We should not ignore the print media. We know that the North Korean government pays attention, particularly to the South Korean press. This information is circulated on a limited basis and probably passed along the rumor chain. South Korean opponents of Kim Jong-il are very active in this regard, but Americans can become more active.

Korea is a security, economic, and social priority for the U.S. and we should not shy away from writing about it. Articles in English may have some impact, but National Institute for Public Policy analysts Matthew Polak and Cristen Duncan have demonstrated that it is possible to have articles republished in Korean.⁸¹ Depending on the subject, this kind of activity also enhances the dialog between the United States and its ally, South Korea.

More contact and dialog would surely help strained U.S.-ROK relations, but that matter is beyond the scope of this paper. There are, however, a number of relevant diplomatic initiatives that should be considered. Roh Moo-hyun is the elected president of South Korea and he is continuing the sunshine policy toward the North. Despite Washington's misgivings, we could encourage him in two directions that would lengthen our (U.S. and South Korean) reach into North Korea. First, President Roh should be encouraged to articulate a South Korean vision of an independent, democratic, peaceful, and prosperous Korea. This would help North Koreans grasp an alternative framework for feelings about their government and their country.

Second, following Larry Wortzel's point, South Korea should be encouraged to promote independent small businesses that actively engage North Koreans in free enterprise, consistent with alliance security requirements. In pursuing this, however, we should be mindful that there is a fine line between encouraging North Korean entrepreneurship and providing cash to the Kim Jong-il regime. The latter would be harmful.

There also is a diplomatic initiative we could pursue with some of our other allies that have diplomatic relations with North Korea. Their diplomats could begin identifying particularly younger North Korean diplomats who may be quietly part of the new opportunities group

⁸¹ Duncan, Cristen, "North Korea's Nuke Freezing Proposal is a trap – Defense News," *Yonhap News*, January 21, 2004, available in Korean at <www.yonhapnews.co.kr>; Polak, Matthew, "Does Aid Really Reach North Koreans?", available at <www.vietvet.co.kr>.

described by Kongdan Oh. Allied diplomats might then engage these people more purposefully. This would, of course, have to be done within each foreign ministry's guidelines for diplomatic contact with North Korea. But concerns over guidelines may be eased because the North Korean diplomats of interest are young and generally of a lower rank. The United Nations and other international organizations in which North Korea participates would be the best venues for this sort of effort.

Of course, as we have pointed out, not all North Korean diplomats are what they claim to be. There is no point in crafting sophisticated messages for Kim Jong-il's dirty diplomats or Bureau 39 thugs. The way to affect this division of the North Korean elite is to squeeze them. A concerted effort to constrict the money flow will send a message right to Kim Jong-il, and measures can be relaxed or tightened in accordance with the Dear Leader's behavior or with U.S. policy. Apart from this, stemming the flow of missiles and drugs would be in the interest of the United States, its allies, and its friends.⁸²

Stemming the flow of Pyongyang's missile sales is challenging because to a significant degree the sales are legal. Nonetheless, the Bush Administration has demonstrated that the international community can band together for a common purpose under the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). It should be noted, however, that sporadic harassment is unlikely to be effective;⁸³ a comprehensive effort is required. The U.S. and its PSI allies need to consider the international legal implications of their strategy and agree upon a common policy. China needs to be pressed to not provide alternate overland routes. And potential recipient countries must understand that there will be consequences for buying North Korean missiles.

The PSI can double as a drug interdiction effort, as the recent Australian seizure of the Pong Su shows.⁸⁴ And a wider effort to stem the tide of North Korean drugs is liable to garner considerable support among affected countries, if presented as apolitical law enforcement. We could first enlist the support of Australia, Japan, South Korea, and even China; then Southeast Asian countries could be approached with offers of assistance. For example, their police, customs, and coast guard officials have valuable information about North Korean drugs, but often do not have the means to intercept them. With relatively small expenditures, we could assist them with intelligence, organization, and interdiction capabilities.

⁸² For a discussion of constricting money flows to North Korea, see Stevens, Terry C. with David J. Smith et al., "Deterring North Korea: U.S. Options," *Comparative Strategy* 22(5), December 2003, pp. 503-508.

⁸³ Gertz, Bill, "Ship gets arms in and out," *The Washington Times*, February 18, 2003. The December 9, 2002 Spanish detention of the North Korean vessel *Sosan* and its subsequent release demonstrate the need for careful legal consideration and policy development. It is likely that Kim Jong-il saw this incident as an example of American weakness.

⁸⁴ "Macao-based organized crime said behind N. Korea heroin trade," *Kyodo News Service*, November 19, 2003.

There are a host of other things one could do to constrict Kim Jong-il's income and assets. A comprehensive campaign can be designed, but it need not be leak-proof. Just \$1.2 billion keeps the North Korean regime afloat in its current miserable state, so constriction of just a few hundred million dollars would have enormous effect. The lowest people in Pyongyang's criminal food chain would be the first to lose their perquisites; then the effect would ripple up the elite pyramid to Kim Jong-il himself.

O. CONCLUSION

This analysis is by no means complete; it must be complemented by the research of others. When this is done, some revision will no doubt be required to produce a full and accurate picture of North Korean elites. Some of the thoughts for action offered here may need to be revised and joined with other recommendations before a draft plan can be presented. It should also be noted that this analysis was conducted without knowledge of any particular policy direction; only with the general sense that the United States would like to refine its approach to reaching the people of North Korea.

With all this said, we should be mindful that social science jargon and analysis sometimes dull us to the fact that we are discussing real people in an infernal situation. *Wolgan Choson* reporter Paek Sung-ku's interview with Kim Un-ch'ol, a 33-year-old teacher who escaped from North Korea, is sobering.

PAEK: It is said that the North has recently issued a radio seizure order. Does something like this happen from time to time?

KIM: In North Korea, radio frequencies are fixed at Korean Central Broadcasting Station and Pyongyang Broadcasting Station. The residents who have a certain degree of know-how, however, can restore them to the original state. Of course, they are punished when they are found out. The North creates special control teams and frequently inspects radios. If a radio seizure order has been issued recently, it is proof that the internal community is chaotic to that extent and illegal activities are in vogue.

PAEK: What kinds of punishment are doled out when people are found out?

KIM: They are taken to labor discipline camps. They receive mentality-transforming education.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Paek Sung-ku.