

**Changing Relations between
Party, Military, and Government
in North Korea and Their Impact
on Policy Direction**

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North Korea has recently exhibited some noteworthy changes. In September 1998 it amended its constitution to change the power structure and introduced a number of progressive clauses. It also began to use the slogan “A Strong and Prosperous Nation,”¹ which emphasizes economic prosperity as well as political, ideological, and military strength.

There are two conflicting views among North Korea watchers regarding these changes, together with some other recent changes in relations between the party, military, and government. One view is that the new constitution can be characterized by the distribution of authority and power. According to this view, North Korea is now trying to institutionalize the ruling system, ending Kim Jong Il’s personal rule. Technocrats will take more responsibility for running the economy. Constitutional clauses regarding the economy also aim to provide legal and institutional bases for reform and opening to the international community. This view regards the slogan “A Strong and Prosperous Nation” as North Korea’s declaration of its intent to focus foremost on economic development rather than the military and ideology. According to the other view, on the other hand, the new constitution only institutionalizes and strengthens the military rule that has persisted in North Korea for the last several years. This view suspects that the distribution of power reflected in the new constitution is nominal and that constitutional change regarding the economy is nothing but acceptance of change that has already taken place in North Korea. Therefore, the closed system will be maintained.

During the last several years, particularly since the death of Kim Il Sung, there has been debate regarding the relationship between the party, military, and government in North Korea. Does the enhanced status of the military increase its role in North Korea’s general decision-making? Is the role of the party decreasing in the face of the rising role of the military? Is the role of the government also changing? Finally, do the changing relations between the party, the military, and the government affect North Korea’s policy direction?

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the changing relations between the party, military, and government, and their impact on policy direction in North Korea.

The New Constitution

North Korea amended its constitution on September 5, 1998, when it held the first session of the 10th Supreme People's Assembly. According to the new constitution, political power is theoretically divided into three parts: the National Defense Commission, the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly (SPA), and the Cabinet. The post of president and the Central People's Committee were abolished and the late Kim Il Sung named "eternal president" of the DPRK. Kim Jong Il was elected chairman of the National Defense Commission, which was strengthened in its status and function. The chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly represents the state and is in charge of foreign affairs. Kim Young Nam, former minister of foreign affairs, was elected Presidium chief. The State Administrative Council was replaced by the Cabinet, which would be expected to play a more active role in internal affairs such as the economy and administration.

With regard to economic policy, the new constitution included some progressive-looking clauses: ownership of the means of production by the state and social cooperative entities; the right of foreign trade by the state and social cooperative entities; economic accounting; extension of private ownership to the profits acquired by legal economic activities; and freedom of relocation and travel.

The Military

Few people correctly anticipated that Kim Jong Il would officially terminate the transitional period by resuming the chairmanship of the National Defense Commission (NDC) and abolishing the post of president.

Under the new constitution, the NDC's role and status was strengthened. The new constitution defines the NDC as "the highest guiding organ of the military and the managing organ of military matters." The chairman of the NDC controls the armed forces. In a speech endorsing Kim Jong Il as NDC chairman, Kim Young Nam made it clear that chairman of the NDC is the highest position in the country, in charge of all matters regarding the country's politics, economy, and military. Thus Kim Jong Il is in substance head of the state, but theoretically the chairman of the SPA Presidium represents the state and is responsible for foreign affairs such as reception of foreign envoys and the signing of treaties with foreign countries.

Given the fact that Kim Jong Il has been in firm control of North Korea, the constitutional change implies several points. First, by making his father the "eternal president," Kim Jong Il intends to extend Kim Il Sung's charisma and legitimacy as ruler. Second, Kim Jong Il was able deliberately to avoid the burdens of being head of the state: meeting with foreign guests and making public speeches, which he has seldom done. Third, he also avoids responsibility for North Korea's devastated economy.

The new constitution can be characterized as the institutionalization of military rule. In the several years since Kim Il Sung's death, Kim Jong Il has ruled North Korea as commander in chief of the Korea People's Army (KPA), and has maintained military rule. The status of the military was enhanced and it appeared to occupy the center of the North Korean political

system; all the social sectors were forced to follow the military spirit and adopt military methods. Kim Jong Il's public activity focused heavily on on-the-spot guidance of places and events related to the military. During this period, North Korea had neither a secretary-general in the party nor a president. No functions of the government or party were normal. Minimal legal procedure was ignored. Although the new constitution appears to end the abnormal political system, it does not appear to completely terminate the transitional military rule. Rather it seems to legitimize and institutionalize military rule by making the NDC the most important state organ and its chairman the highest authority.

The enhanced status of the military and military-centered political system was confirmed at the first session of the 10th SPA by the promotion of NDC members in the official power hierarchy. All ten NDC members were ranked within the top twenty on September 5, and all but one occupied the top twenty at the fiftieth anniversary of National Foundation Day on September 9 (see table).

The new ranking disturbs the traditional official hierarchy of North Korea. Traditionally the order of the ranking was Politburo full members, candidate members, and then secretaries, although some military officials were ranked higher than Politburo members after Kim Il Sung's death. The September ranking is a complete break from the past, however. Yon Hyong Mook and Hong Sung Nam, both members of the NDC but only candidate members of the Politburo, outrank some full Politburo members. These NDC members may be elected into the Politburo when it is reorganized. It is also feasible that the NDC will take over the Politburo's role as the highest decision-making organ, although this is not a strong possibility.

The enhanced status of the military was anticipated by the SPA election last July, when 101 military officials were elected out of 687 delegates. This was a big jump from the 57 military officials elected during the 9th SPA in 1990.

The Government

The new constitution gave the Cabinet more responsibility and power to run the economy and the administration. The status of the government rose, and its role is expected to be bigger under the new constitution. While the State Administrative Council (SAC) was the highest executive organ, the Cabinet is not only the executive organ but the organ managing the state. Before the new constitution the president was the head of the state and head of the government, but the prime minister of the Cabinet now represents the government as head of the government.

North Korea also reduced the number of Cabinet departments from twelve committees, twenty-three departments, one commission, one bank, and two bureaus to one committee, twenty-six departments, one commission, one bank, and two bureaus. The number of deputy prime ministers also was reduced, from twelve to two. Hong Sung Nam was elected prime minister, and the two new deputy prime ministers are the former minister of mechanical engineering and the former minister of resource collection.

The Cabinet now has the right to supervise and control the Local People's Committee (LPC) with regard to local economies and administration. As the SAC was replaced by the Cabinet, the Local Administrative and Economic Committee (LAEC) was abolished and its functions regarding local politics transferred to the LPC. A party chief secretary no longer concurrently holds the post of LPC chairman, which has been taken over by a former LAEC chairman. Thus, the LPC is theoretically independent of the local party and is under the

	September 5, 1998		September 9, 1998	
Rank	Name	Position	Name	Position
1	*Kim Jong Il	Chairman, NDC	*Kim Jong Il	Chairman, NDC
2	*Kim Young Nam	Chairman, SPA Presidium	*Kim Young Nam	Chairman, SPA Presidium
3	#Hong Sung Nam	Prime Minister	*Lee Jong Ok	Honorary Vice Chairman, SPA Presidium
4	*Lee Jong Ok	Honorary Vice Chairman, SPA Presidium	*Park Sung Chul	
5	*Park Sung Chul		*Kim Young Joo	
6	*Kim Young Joo		Chun Moon Sup	
7	Cho Myong Rok	First Vice Chairman, NDC Director General, Political Affairs (KPA)	Cho Mong Rok	First Vice Chairman, NDC Director General, Political Affairs (KPA)
8	Lee Ul Sul	NDC Member, Chief of Guard Board	Kim Young Chun	NDC Member, Chief of General Staff (KPA)
9	Kim Il Chul	Vice Chairman, NDC, Minister, Ministry of People's Armed Forces	Kim Il Chul	Vice Chairman, NDC, Minister, Ministry of People's Armed Forces
10	Lee Yong Moo	NDC Member	Lee Ul Sul	NDC Member, Chief of Guard Board
11	*Gye Ung Tae	Secretary	#Hong Sung Nam	Prime Minister
12	*Chun Byong Ho	NDC Member, Secretary	*Chun Byong Ho	NDC Member, Secretary
13	*Han Sung Ryong	Secretary	#Yon Hyung Mook	NDC Member
14	Kim Young Chun	NDC Member, Chief of General Staff (KPA)	Lee Yong Moo	Vice Chairman, NDC
15	#Yang Hyung Sup	Vice Chairman, SPA Presidium	*Gye Ung Tae	Secretary
16	#Choi Tae Bok	Speaker, SPA	*Han Sung Ryong	
17	#Kim Chul Man	NDC Member	#Yang Hyung Sup	Vice Chairman, SPA Presidium
18	#Yon Hyung Mook		#Choi Tae Bok	Speaker, SPA
19	Paik Hak Lim		#Kim Chul Man	NDC Member
20	Chun Moon Sup	Honorary Vice Chairman, SPA Presidium	#Choi Yong Lim	Attorney General

* Politburo Members

Politburo Candidate Members

control of the Cabinet. The status of the LPC, as the local executive organ, in principle became higher than before.

The Party

In North Korea, as in other socialist countries, the party is the highest ruling organ. It is the source and center of political power. The party guides all state and social organs. The constitution states that “the DPRK shall conduct all activities under the leadership of the KWP [Korean Worker’s Party].”

Despite the almighty status and power of the KWP, it has not functioned normally since Kim Il Sung’s death. A party congress has not been held since the sixth party congress in 1980. According to the Party Act, a party congress is supposed to be held every five years. The plenum of the Central Committee has not been held since the twenty-first plenum in December 1993. The plenum, which has the right to elect the secretary-general, was not held even when Kim Jong Il became the party’s secretary-general in October 1997. Instead Kim Jong Il was endorsed by both the Central Committee and the Central Military Committee. For the first time in the history of North Korea’s communist party, a plenum also was not held before the first session of the 10th SPA. It is also suspected that Secretariat and Politburo meetings have not been held since Kim Il Sung’s death. It is likely that not one organization within the party is fulfilling its decision-making function, and thus that the party is not working properly as a system.

There are a number of vacant positions in the party, although vacancies in the military have been filled several times since Kim Il Sung’s death and the cabinet was also reshuffled on September 5. Vacant positions include agriculture secretary, international secretary, education secretary, chairman of the Central Military Committee, and chairman of the Central Inspection Committee.² Several Politburo member positions also need to be filled. All the Politburo Standing Committee members except Kim Jong Il have died.

The primary reason a party congress has not been held seems to be the difficulty of providing a long-term economic plan or vision. Given the fact that the 10th SPA has been held, however, it probably will not be long before the seventh party congress is held. The convening of the party congress will be followed by the reorganization of the Central Committee, Politburo, and Secretariat. Reorganization of the party organs, however, does not mean the normalization of their function as a major discussion forum or a decision-making body as in the Kim Il Sung era. Kim Jong Il’s personal leadership will overwhelm any other institutional leadership. For example, individual party secretaries take orders from Kim Jong Il, and departments in charge of organization and propaganda/agitation carry out the orders.

Rule by a Single Strongman

Kim Jong Il, like many other world leaders, is assisted by the office of his personal secretaries (*Suhkishil*). The role of this office differs greatly from that of the Chinese *mishu* (secretary)³ or the White House staff, however. *Mishu* play a “ubiquitous role” in politics in China as major advisors, writers, personal representatives, coordinators, office administrators, personal managers, servants, and chief bodyguards to Chinese leaders;⁴ White House staffs significantly influence the president’s decision-making. Kim Jong Il’s personal secretaries (not party secre-

taries), on the other hand, do not actively participate in decision-making but handle only administrative matters.

In North Korea, where the principle of rule by man overwhelms the principle of rule by law, the personal relationship is still very significant. In fact, a number of high-ranking officials are related to Kim Jong Il or worked with him in the same department in the 1960s and '70s and contributed to his succession to power.⁵

North Korea, like China, has a dual communication network consisting of the open mass media and the closed system within the bureaucracy. There are various communication channels within the bureaucracy: the formal documentary system, telecommunications, oral briefings, personal letters, and commentaries.⁶ North Korean cadres, however, do not have private communication among themselves as freely as Chinese cadres do, which often serves as an important way of collecting information, understanding current issues, adjusting their opinions, and so on. North Korean cadres are often subject to close watch when they meet privately. The higher the cadre's rank, the closer the watch. Thus, high-ranking officials have few friends. North Korea has guarded strictly against factionalism since the consolidation of Kim Il Sung's one-man dictatorship. North Koreans are not allowed to organize any kind of private meeting such as alumni associations and meetings of people from the same hometown, which have traditionally been very popular in Korea. Needless to say, this is to preempt potential opposition to the regime from growing and being organized. The inevitable result of this is the rigidity of North Korean decision-making.

In sum, decision-making is highly centralized in the person of Kim Jong Il, particularly in the areas of military affairs, foreign policy, and high-level appointments, and he does not depend on an institutionalized body in the decision-making process. When a single paramount leader dominates the decision-making process, decision-making bodies do not operate properly, even though they are convened. When Mao ruled China, for example, he limited the degree of participation by top leadership in key policy debates, and decision-making bodies were relegated to rubber stamping.⁷ In North Korea, where the input of formal and informal institutions in the decision-making process is extremely limited, the results can be unpredictable, irrational, and sometimes even dangerous.

Relations between the Party, Military, and Government

Party-Military Relations

The party traditionally has controlled the military in North Korea since the Korean War, when North Korea began to dispatch political officials to the military. In October 1950, party committees began to be organized within the military. The party organs within the military were strengthened after two incidents in 1956 and 1969 that resulted in a wide-scale purge of factions opposed to Kim Il Sung. According to the Party Act (article 46) adopted in 1980, "KPA is the revolutionary armed forces of the KWP."

Some believe, however, that the military-centered political system of recent years may be damaging the party's control over the military. Kim Jong Il has treated the military better than ever by frequently visiting events and places associated with it and by promoting military officials in the official power hierarchy. The Central Military Committee appears to be

independent of the Central Committee, and is substantially treated as equal to the Central Committee. Although the Central Military Committee has nothing to do with selecting the party's secretary-general, it—together with the Central Committee—endorsed Kim Jong Il as secretary-general in October 1997.⁸ This can be interpreted as a dual structure of military and party, rather than simply a strengthening of the status of the military. Kim Jong Il condemned party workers for their poor handling of the food crisis while praising the military in a speech made at Kim Il Sung University in December 1996.⁹

In sum, it cannot be denied that the status of the military has been enhanced. But questions inevitably arise. What is the political significance of the enhanced status of the military? Will it mean an increased role for the military in decision-making? Does it indicate a fundamental change in party-military relations?

The enhanced status of the military is designed to guarantee the loyalty of the military in the transitional period. Some high-ranking military officials, who often escort Kim Jong Il to his on-the-spot guidance, may enjoy more prestige than ever. Kim Jong Il trusts and relies on military officials, since the military contributes to the stability of his regime and may be its last resort.

As the status of the military rises, it may have a greater voice in military-related matters such as the defense industry and security issues. The role of the military in the overall political system is not expected to increase, however. That is, the enhanced status of the military will be limited to an increased role in military affairs. Even this increased participation in decision-making is based on the assumption that Kim Jong Il holds the highest authority in decision-making.

For example, the influence of the military over national security policy in North Korea is not as great as it is in China, where the views of the military are increasingly expressed in national strategic objectives, foreign policy, defense policy, strategic research, analysis, and intelligence.¹⁰ In the absence of a single dominant leader like Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, China's policy-making process requires greater consultation among senior party and military heads, and the prospect of a military veto or significant military influence is more likely.¹¹

On the other hand, in North Korea, where a paramount leader plays the role of strong arbiter or enforcer at the top, bureaucratic disputes or military vetoes are not quite conceivable. The military is only allowed to answer questions that are asked by Kim Jong Il. Thus, the enhanced status of the military does not signify a fundamental change in party-military relations. Although Kim Jong Il trusts and relies on some military officials more than party officials, the military as an institution is unable to overwhelm the party. As long as the party controls the organization and ideology of the military, the party will remain in control.

During the last several years the military was often involved in non-military as well as military affairs. It participated in large-scale construction projects as a central labor force and even directly managed some collective farms. Military spirit was emphasized in every sector of society. It turned out, however, that the military has certain limitations in improving the economic situation vis-à-vis the technocrats. Thus, under the new constitution the military is expected to be less directly involved in the domestic economy. This job will gradually be handed over to the technocrats in the Cabinet.

Second, the enhanced status of the military appears to be related to Kim Jong Il's intention to bypass the party and control the military directly. If, as in the past, the military is controlled by the party in every aspect, it is possible that someone in the party may rise to become the strong second man on the North Korean political scene. In North Korea, where there is no official successor to Kim Jong Il, this situation may weaken the personal power of

Kim Jong Il. Kim Jong Il himself consolidated his power through the party organization beginning in the early 1970s. Kim, who as secretary of the party's organization department was able to monopolize personnel policy in the party, military, and government, knows this better than anyone. Therefore, he does not want to control the military through the central party organization.

This does not mean, however, the negation of the party's control of the military. The party organization within the military remains firm and may even be strengthened under the direct control of Kim Jong Il. In this sense, it is noteworthy that Cho Myong Rok, general director of the Political Bureau, outranks Kim Il Chul, minister of the People's Armed Forces. This implies that the general director of the Political Bureau is the highest position within the military. More importantly, the general director of the Political Bureau, rather than the central party or the minister of the People's Armed Forces, takes Kim Jong Il's orders and controls the KPA. North Korea knows that the dismantling of the party organization, or the Main Political Administration (MPA), within the Soviet military decisively weakened the party's control over the military.

Third, the enhanced status of the military may be aimed at the outside world rather than the inside. A strong military seems to be the only political leverage North Korea has. It believes that military blackmail and "military dissatisfaction or veto" is its most effective bargaining chip in relations with the United States and that the outside world will not dare look down on it when it shows off its military muscle. The slogan "A Strong and Prosperous Nation" can be interpreted in the same context. Showing off its strong military serves as a good way of frightening the outside world and making big money through missile sales.

The military, however, does not appear in talks with foreign countries such as the missile talks and Four-Party Talks. This is simply because the military does not have the people and organizations to handle such tasks. It is sufficient that officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs listen to the opinion of the military before going to talks. In the case of purely military talks, the military comes to the negotiating table, but military delegates are supposed to read what they are told by the party or related organs. When military talks are held between North and South Korea, for example, North Korean delegates must undergo intensive training by the party's Department of Unified Front and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In sum, the role of the military became more important in defending the country externally, but the party continues to absolutely maintain the mechanism of internal control. In this sense, the military cannot replace the party.

Party-Government Relations

The relationship between the party organ and the administrative organ is often compared to the relationship between the man who steers the boat and the man who rows the boat. Party workers in the back should steer so that administrative and economic workers can stay on the party track.¹² Article 11 of the new constitution repeats that "the DPRK shall conduct all activities under the leadership of the KWP."

Although relations between the party and the government have experienced both continuity and change,¹³ the party has maintained a guiding role over the government. In the near future, continuity rather than change in party-government relations is more likely to be the case. First, North Korean leaders attribute the demise of the socialist bloc in Eastern Europe to the failure of ideology. Thus, they emphasize the importance of ideology, which is led by the party. They also focus on the significance of popular support of the party.

Second, Kim Jong Il started his career as a party cadre and his succession to power took place within the structure of the party. Moreover, most of his strong supporters are in the party and the party at large is his most loyal supporter.

Third, North Korea's hesitation to implement a policy aimed at integration into the international community makes one expect that the status of the party vis-à-vis that of the government will be strengthened. Although North Korea is very concerned with the opening policy, its economic policy is dictated by political considerations. North Korea's opening policy is implemented in a very limited way because of the fear of the side effects opening may bring. Thus the role of government technocrats is clearly limited, and it is not feasible to see the government outside the control of the party.

In sum, in North Korea the leading role of the party is expected to be strengthened to overcome the regime crisis and to stabilize the power of Kim Jong Il. Although the cabinet gained in status under the new constitution, this does not seem to affect the guiding role of the party over the government. Particularly in the area of organization and ideology, party guidance may be firmer. However, if Kim Jong Il wants to directly control a ministry in the cabinet, the control of the party inevitably becomes weaker. For example, the party's International Department would have less power to control the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This control has been weakened only in policy guidance, however; guidance of organization and ideology was not affected.

Policy Directions for North Korea

North Korea introduced a number of new economic clauses in the revised constitution: ownership of the means of production by the state and social cooperative entities; the right of foreign trade by the state and social cooperative entities; economic accounting; extension of private ownership to the profits acquired by legal economic activities; and freedom of relocation and travel. Yet it is hard to see these clauses as indicators of reform, since the concepts embodied in them already existed in the North Korean economy. They may be nothing more than recognition and admission of change that has already occurred in North Korea in the last several years.

For example, only state and cooperative entities were allowed to possess the means of production and engage in foreign trade under the old constitution, but under the new constitution social entities as well as state and cooperative groups can possess the means of production and the right of foreign trade. Social entities, which include KWP, the General Federation of Korean Trade Unions, the Agricultural Workers' Union, the Women's Union, the Kim Il Sung Socialist Youth Union, and so on, have already possessed the means of production and have been engaging in foreign trade. KWP already owns more than ten manufacturing factories and a number of trade companies, such as Kwangmyongsung and Daesung.

As for extension of private ownership, North Korea had already recognized the farmers' market, where people can earn profits from exchanging commodities and services. Freedom to move and to travel is not a new concept at all. North Korea has never said that it restricts such freedom, and the number of North Koreans who move and travel to search for food has increased because of the aggravated food shortage.

The concept of economic accounting per se is by no means a signal of reform, as it has existed in the North Korean economy. Economic accounting aims at effective management in

the implementation of economic policy and the production process. Factories are given the right to dispense of surplus profit for the purpose of reinvestment or worker incentive. In order for economic accounting to be meaningful, sufficient supply of materials should be guaranteed, and production goals should be exceeded to obtain surplus value. In North Korea, however, which suffers from chronic underproduction, economic accounting is not very meaningful because these conditions are hard to meet.

Change in the control mechanism of the economy, not in constitutional clauses, is more important as a signal of reform. For example, the production of raw materials and finished goods should be at least partially opened to the market.¹⁴ In other words, the state should refrain from completely controlling this process. The state should control only a part of input and output, while the rest should be opened to the market. Reduced control by the party of enterprises and factories would be considered another important signal of reform. It should not be the party committee but the managers that take charge of running factories and enterprises. Unfortunately, such changes cannot be found in the North Korean economy.

The current situation in North Korea seems far from reform and opening. In December 1993, North Korea entered a three-year Buffer Period of Socialist Economy after admitting the failure of the Third Seven-Year Economic Plan. It declared Three Economic Policy Priorities during this period: agriculture, foreign trade, and light industry. The number of trade companies in North Korea reached 120 at its peak. In 1996, however, the North began to close down a number of trade companies, and in the 1997 New Year's Address it removed foreign trade from the list of three priorities. It also abolished the External Economic Committee during the cabinet reshuffling on September 5, 1998.

What North Korea focuses on now is heavy industry and autarky rather than foreign trade and light industry. Although the status of the cabinet rose under the new constitution, this does not necessarily mean that North Korea will pursue reform and integration with the international community. In the cabinet reshuffling, one element is worthy of note. As mentioned earlier, the two vice prime ministers appointed on September 5 are the former ministers of mechanical industry and resource collection. These positions are related to heavy industry and the self-reliant economic system. The slogan "A Strong and Prosperous Nation" that North Korea has recently employed also emphasizes ideology, politics, and the military. Based upon just these three elements, the North believes it can easily achieve economic prosperity. Moreover, North Korea has asserted that foreign loans are opium.¹⁵

Kim Jong Il's rejection of the presidency cannot be considered a good signal for reform. It may instead mean that North Korea is reluctant to engage in a policy of reform. Kim Jong Il did not make a speech at the first session of the 10th SPA. Instead, North Koreans had to listen to a taped address of the late Kim Il Sung, which was made at the first session of the 9th SPA eight years ago. This means that North Korea has nothing new to show.

In 1997 North Korea executed and purged a number of high-ranking officials who had been charged with spying and accepting bribes. Most had engaged in foreign trade and economic cooperation with South Korea. The purge may signify the exclusion of reform-oriented technocrats inside the bureaucracy. Suh Kwan Hee (secretary of agriculture), Choi Yong Hae (chairman of the Kim Il Sung Socialist Youth Union), and General Lee Bong Won were executed. It has recently become known that Kim Yong Rok (first vice director of the State Security Agency); Kwon Hee Kyong (director of Department 35); Kim Jeong Woo, chairman of the External Economic Cooperation Promotion Committee, and two of this committee's vice chairmen, Kim Moon Sung and Lee Sung Rok, were purged. The purge is

attributed to North Korea's intent to consolidate Kim Jong Il's personal power by preventing the rise of opposition by those affected by the liberal mood.¹⁶

This series of incidents implies that North Korea is remedying the side effects of its past relations with South Korea and the outside world. North Korea is in a kind of readjustment period, reorganizing organs and personnel. This will inevitably affect inter-Korean relations. The party monopolizes the channel for economic relations with South Korea, and party secretary Kim Yong Sun seems to be in charge of this task in his role as chairman of the Asia-Pacific Peace Committee.

Conclusion

Relations between the party, military, and government in North Korea have undergone some changes. The status of the military has undoubtedly been enhanced. This does not seem to have led, however, to an increased role for the military in decision-making or to have affected traditional party-military relations. In domestic politics, particularly where the economy is concerned, the role of the military may in fact have been diminished. The cabinet seems poised to take a more active role in running the economy, as the North Korean political system has been partially normalized since the new constitution. This does not mean, however, that North Korea has embarked on reform and opening.

The role of the party has changed. In particular, the central party's control of the military and the Department of Foreign Affairs seems to have been substantially weakened. But the party will remain the central political power as long as it controls the organization and ideology of the North Korean system.

North Korea's foremost concern is its security. As long as the security problem remains unsolved, it will be difficult to see any fundamental policy changes in North Korea, or any changes in the present political system.

Notes

¹ This slogan first appeared on August 22, 1998.

² Agriculture secretary Shu Kwan Hee was executed on a charge of spying, international secretary Hwang Jang Yop defected to South Korea, and education secretary Choi Tae Bok was elected SPA speaker.

³ *Mishu* must be distinguished from *shuji*, both of which are translated as "secretary." *Mishu* is a personal secretary, while *shuji* refers to a party secretary. Thus a *mishu* often works for a *shuji*.

⁴ Wei Li and Lucian W. Pye, "The Ubiquitous Role of the *Mishu* in Chinese Politics," *The China Quarterly* 132 (December 1992).

⁵ Kim Jong Il's relatives include his sister Kim Kyong-Hee (party minister of light industry), Kim Kyong-Hee's husband Chang Sung Taik (party first deputy minister of organization and guidance), and Kim Il Sung's brother Kim Young Joo (honorary vice chairman of the SPA Presidium). Such party secretaries as Kim Ki Nam, Kim Kook Tai, and Kim Yong Sun once

worked with Kim Jong Il in the department of propaganda/agitation or the department of organization/guidance, and Kim Jong Il trusts their loyalty.

⁶ Michel Oksenberg, "Methods of Communication within the Chinese Bureaucracy," *The China Quarterly* (January–March 1974).

⁷ Since Mao's death, China's foreign-policy decision-making process has been transformed from a "strong-man model" to one more characterized by bureaucratic, sectorial, and regional competition. Lu Ning, *The Dynamics of Foreign-Policy Decisionmaking in China* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 1–17.

⁸ Kim Jong Il completely ignored the due process of election. This means he is above the party's Central Committee.

⁹ *Wolgan Chosun*, April 1997.

¹⁰ Michael D. Swaine, *The Role of the Chinese Military in National Security Policymaking* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1996).

¹¹ Swaine, *The Role of the Chinese Military*, xi–xii.

¹² Kim Il Sung, "Improving and strengthening the party's works on organization and ideology," *Kim Il Sung's Works* (Pyongyang: KWP Press, 1982), 157.

¹³ Until the 1950s, when North Korea was ruled by collective leadership, the KWP's leading role was unquestionably guaranteed. But since the 1960s, when one-man rule by Kim Il Sung was established, Kim's leadership prevailed over the KWP. During the 1970s and '80s Kim's absolute power and the KWP's leading role over the government were not denied, but after the promulgation of the socialist constitution in 1972 the role of the government was increased.

¹⁴ The production process includes decisions regarding acquisition of resources, number and wages of workers, and facilities, as well as what to manufacture.

¹⁵ "On Constructing the Nationalist Self-Reliant Economic System," Pyongyang Broadcasting System, September 17, 1998.

¹⁶ *Munwha Ilbo*, November, 6, 1998.

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