

The Party Delegates' Conference and the Inauguration of the Transitional Power Structure

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1. Introduction

Understanding North Korea's internal politics is difficult for several reasons. It is even trickier at times of transition like this, when Kim Jong Il's worsening health has acted as a catalyst for a reorganization of the power structure. This is a time of dramatic fluctuations, when the past and future(s) become intertwined, and the traditional, standardized framework is shattered.

The September 28th Party Delegates' Conference and Central Committee Meeting represented stepping stones in a transitional phase leading from the past to the future. These meetings elected members of the leading organs of the Central Party. In the process, the Party Central Committee and its main organs were restored after years of atrophy. The Party Bylaws were also revised. The key question is, what does this bode for the future? This paper examines the Party Delegates' Conference from 3 different angles. The first is Kim Jong Il's strategy for managing power. The second is crisis in the survival strategy of the regime and its strategy to overcome it. The third looks at the structure of the future and policies hereafter, implicit in the transitional power management.

2. Kim Jong Il's Power Management: Major Context and Priorities

In authoritarian regimes, periods of power transition are the most dangerous times. The absolute dictator has no choice but to allow a new power nucleus to form around someone other than himself, thereby increasing the danger of internal fractures among the elite increases. Therefore the incumbent dictator must enact various measures amid an environment of complex concerns.

It must still be a safe proposition that Kim Jong Il, himself, has taken charges in managing the succession process. It should be assumed that Kim Jong Il still plays the role of the director of the entire process, while Kim Jong Eun and others are merely the actors. Therefore, it is important to evaluate the significance of various events and measures, while taking his principles on power management into consideration.

From Kim Jong Il's perspective, there are four major priorities and principles of power management. First, how can he maintain a stable hold on his own power? Second, how can he overcome the strategic threat to the continuation of the DPRK regime? The more the regime prospers, the higher the probability that the succession will succeed. The opposite is also true. Third, how can he maintain solidarity among the elite and strengthen control over society? The most prevalent view is that the power succession may self-destruct internally due to discord among the elite. Only by securing unity among members of the leading group, he can build up sufficient power to counteract even a challenge from the people. Fourth, in this delicate time of strategic crisis and power succession, how can he effectively guard against the actions of hostile outside forces? Currently North Korea faces dual anxieties: a strategic threat to the continuation of the regime and uncertainty about the power succession process. Kim Jong Il is undoubtedly concerned that hostile outside forces may take advantage of North Korea's current fragile condition.

3. The Significance and Context behind the Party Delegates' Conference

The Party Delegates' Conference has been characterized as a rally to restore the solidarity among North Korean elites, and the restoration of the Central Party structure was probably promoted with the goal of strengthening the staying power of the regime by systematically securing this new feeling of unity.

This was done while calculating the political significance of various events which occurred around the time of the conference. The goal was to show the domestic and external audience that they are prepared and have established the necessary conditions for dealing with the internal and external challenges faced by Kim Jong Il, his successor, and the North Korean power elite. They particularly wanted to strengthen internal confidence in the regime's stability and longevity. Even if this confidence did not extend to the society as a whole, it did contribute to boosting confidence and unity among the power elite.

It was probably with these objectives in mind that Kim Jong Il made his "surprise" visit to China in August. In a highly irregular move, Kim Jong Il made two separate trips to China in 2010, in May and August, and held interviews with high-level Chinese officials. Kim's "surprise" August visit in advance of the Party Delegates' Conference particularly drew attention. By showing off the close relationship with China, this visit had the effect of demonstrating to the domestic audience that the regime is not isolated and that with China's help it can overcome the present difficulties. The August visit was carried out in a way that strongly evoked the aura of Kim Il Sung within North Korea.

After showing a strong front to the outside world, the Party Delegates' Conference was convened. At this conference, the various organs of the Central Party were formally restored to more normal functionality. These party organs had been relegated to nominal existence since the last meeting of the Party Central Committee, the 23rd plenum of the 6th Party Congress, in 1993, and various vacancies had been left unfilled for a long time. These party organs were reinforced with new personnel.

The holding of the conference as an "irregular special measures" was brought on by the need, in advance of the "great undertaking" of the succession, to create a foundation of support within society for the new power structure and to breathe life into this group. It is as yet unclear how much weight will be carried by each of the various Party organs, and what roles they will play. But along with the inauguration of the succession system, throwing a "party" and bestowing high-level positions on various individuals (Central Committee members, etc.) will likely be an effective way of preparing the battle lines, infusing a feeling of restoration into the power structure, and reinvigorating the system.

As belated as it is, there is some significance in the fact that the Party structure, which had essentially been abandoned since the start of the *songun* system in 1995, has been summoned back into action by way of a Delegates' Conference, and the Central Party has been revived. This shows that even in North Korea, power succession is a political process. First, even in

North Korean they must establish the validity of the new power structure created through the succession process in order to provide the people with a convincing reason to support and not resist it. Second, they need a core group of political supporters to guide the overall society in backing this political process. In order to achieve this they must first re-constitute the upper tier entitled group within North Korean society and redraw the battle lines, so that later they can expand this base into the provinces and the lower classes. This is the reason why the personnel structure of the Party Central Committee, at least in form, has been restored.

This conference restored the Central Party and again placed it at the core of the North Korean political system, while re-constituting the specialized bureaus of the Central Party and supplementing the high-level party members on the cabinet, thus strengthening the internal policy-making mechanism. In particular, by effectively re-appointing all members of the Central Committee, they have boosted the sense of belonging and identity upon the existing elite group, and thus forged a unified feeling toward Kim Jong Il, the North Korean regime, and Kim Jong Eun. Further, through the various armed demonstrations now underway or planned for the future (the military parade on the anniversary of the KWP's founding, the reaffirmation of the futility of abandoning nuclear weapons, armed demonstrations against South Korea, the continued symbolic adherence to the *songun* revolution, Kim Jong Eun's military activities, etc.), they will encourage feelings of fear, both internally and externally. The purpose of this is to show off to the domestic and foreign audience the invincibility of the North Korean system.

This Party Delegates' Conference is considered the 3rd organizational reshuffling since Kim Jong Il suffered a stroke in October 2008. In three brief periods - February-April 2009, June 2010, and September 2010 - the power structure has repeatedly been reorganized, which can be seen as evidence of the fluidity and uncertainty of internal politics. In February-April 2009 the NDC was strengthened through a constitutional revision. Specifically, Oh Kuk Ryol became a vice chairman, while Jang Song Taek and others became new members. In addition, the General Reconnaissance Bureau was founded. Afterwards, a particularly hard-lined policy was advanced. In June 2010 a session of the Supreme People's Assembly was held, with Kim Jong Il in attendance, at which Jang Song Taek became a vice chairman of the NDC. Then on September 28, 2010, the Party Delegates' Conference was held and the power structure was reorganized. We can anticipate additional measures along these lines in the future.

This most recent power structure can also be termed a transitional reorganization. In the period between the February-April 2009 constitutional revision and September 2010, a series of power players have already dropped out. This most recent reorganization appears to still

maintain the Kim Jong Il-centered system. As some aspects of Kim Jong Il's control are boosted, it included several future-oriented measures, with the goal of setting up the succession system as the actual ruling system under Kim Jong Il's guidance.

4. Major Issues

There are five key items of note with regards to this Party Delegates' Conference. First, the Kim Jong Eun power succession; second, the relationships among Kim Jong Il, Kim Jong Eun, Kim Kyung Hee, and Jang Song Taek; third, the fall of the old military leaders and the rise of the new; fourth, the mutual relationships between the Central Party, the NDC, and the Party Central Military Committee; and fifth, the significance of the normalization of the Central Party organs.

a. The status of Kim Jong Eun as the designated successor

From Kim Jong Il's perspective, Kim Jong Eun is not the best choice as successor, but he may have been the only choice possible. Kim Jong Eun has several weak points as to be a strong successor. Therefore prior to the Delegates' Conference, external observers of North Korea proffered various opinions about what job Kim Jong Eun would be assigned and where he would be positioned within the power structure.

There are 3 reasons for Kim Jong Eun's present weakness. First, because of his extreme youth, he is unable to provide credibility and secure public faith in his abilities to overcome the obstacle, which the regime confronts with. Even within the upper-level leadership, which is key to achieving a successful power succession, there are probably doubts about his abilities and qualifications. Second is the fact that once again power is being passed down along hereditary lines. In attempting a 2nd hereditary succession, they risk amplifying external mockery and public dissatisfaction, potentially putting the entire regime at risk. What is worse, because the North Korean regime is not officially a dynasty, the "ultimate blood line" argument lacks persuasive force. Therefore, third, Kim Jong Eun's legitimacy as successor must be ultimately defended on the basis of his legendary abilities. However there is no easy way of proving this aside from obstinate insistence. Since January 2009, when the campaign to promote the successor began in earnest, efforts to promote Kim Jong Eun have proven awkward and sometimes counterproductive (the 150- and 100-day battles in 2009, the

Cheonan attack in March 2010, the fireworks celebration in the eve of Kim Il Sung's birth day on April 14, 2010, the crushing defeat in the World Cup in June 2010, etc.).

However, through this Delegates' Conference, Kim Jong Eun was assigned the important post of vice chairman of the Party Central Military Committee. This helps to solidify his status, and is advantageous to both Kim Jong Il and Kim Jong Eun. If he had been appointed to a lower post, the troubling secret gossip about his lack of status would have continued, leading to speculation of grave uncertainties in the preparations for the post-Kim Jong Il power structure; such a state of affairs would have no advantage for either Kim Jong Il or his son.

While Kim Jong Eun cemented his status as official successor, he was not officially given a practical role in government. To be sure, many experts claim he has already inherited a fair amount of power and is active in the areas of finance, personnel management, and security. Nevertheless, if he is to secure his position as successor in both name and deed, he must carry out a formal expansion of his power base on a large scale. In the future, who moves up in power and who must step down will become the central issue in North Korean politics. This will inevitably disrupt the existing leadership, and therefore frictions may erupt among the various dimensions of the current power structure.

b. The Relationships among Kim Jong Il, Kim Jong Eun, Kim Kyung Hee, and Jang Song Taek

In evaluating the various developments involved in the power succession, it is important to remember that up to now Kim Jong Il alone has wielded absolute power. Even now, Kim Jong Eun, Kim Kyung Hee, and Jang Sung Take must operate within the boundaries permitted to them and fulfill the basic obligations of their assigned roles while keeping an eye on their situations.

While backing his son's advancement, Kim Jong Il has already supported the rise of Jang Sung Taek in June and the rise of Kim Kyung Hee at this most recent conference. These strategic moves have a complex meaning. He is using Jang Song Taek, Kim Kyung Hee, and General Choi Yong Hae, each of whom has a degree of popular influence, to set up a screen covering Kim Jong Eun's many weaknesses. Because of Kim Jong Eun's weaknesses, it is possible that he could be overthrown, in which case Kim Kyung Hee and Jang Sung Taek could replace him as successors. This is a better solution for Kim Jong Il than having an outsider positioned as successor. It also creates a better situation for the North Korean ruling elite than any other

option. After all, a rise to power by an outsider would be a greater shock to the system than the rise of a member of the Kim family.

Kim Kyung Hee will act as Kim Jong Il's direct representative, while working to protect Kim Jong Il's interests from conflicting with those of Kim Jong Eun and Jang Song Taek. While these two clearly have their own vested interests in expanding their personal influence, Kim Kyung Hee has no independent faction and wields power only when entrusted to do so by Kim Jong Il, and thus can be trusted to faithfully devote her efforts to him. Kim Kyung Hee's power will be secure as long as Kim Jong Il is alive.

As long as Kim Jong Il lives, Jang Song Taek's position will be limited. Recently numerous people under Jang's tutelage have risen to positions of influence, the first and foremost being Choi Yong Hae. Considering that many experts, particularly in South Korea, believe that Jang actually plays an extremely important role, he will probably consider it wise as long as Kim is alive to follow the old Chinese wisdom of "waiting patiently and not showing off one's abilities or status."

c. The Fall of the Old Military Leaders and the Rise of the New

One remarkable thing about this latest personnel reshuffling is the rise of several new names in the military establishment. Lee Young Ho rose quickly from Chief of General Staff (February 2009~) to become a member of the Politburo Standing Committee, a vice chairman of the KWP Central Military Committee, and a member of the KWP Central Committee. It appears that Lee will act as the guard of Kim Jong Eun and the succession leadership within the military establishment. He achieved this meteoric rise despite the fact that he has not been a commander of the field army, which is the main branch of the North Korean military. Therefore he has no reason to enjoy such a rapid rise up aside from the Kim's personal confidence. A similar individual worth our attention is Kim Young Chol. From 2006 he led the North Korean delegation to the inter-Korean high level military talks. Since April 2009 he headed the General Reconnaissance Bureau, and he has been promoted from lieutenant general to colonel general.

While Lee Young Ho and Kim Young Chol have advanced and all positions on the Party Central Military Committee have been fully refilled, the main military figures involved in the "songun system," such as Oh Kuk Ryol and Kim Young Chun, have relatively declined in status or, like Jo Myong Rok, have been relegated to nominal roles due to old age and infirmity. Thus it appears that a strategy of promoting a new military leadership and suppressing the old

leadership is in play. In the coming months we can anticipate that there may be supplementary purges of those connected to the old guard and additional promotions of new military leaders. Kim Jong Eun will probably not “have hold on the military” through Lee Young Ho, but rather the latter will be used as point man to intimidate the military so as to maintain discipline and suppress any dissent.

In effect, this military reshuffling means the end of the careers of those individuals who led the “*songun* system” since 1995 (Jo Myong Rok, Kim Young Chun, and Oh Kuk Ryol). Meanwhile, the various military-based ventures that had been developed and expanded by those three during the previous period will be withdrawn and redistributed by Kim Jong Il, Kim Jong Eun, and Jang Song Taek. The case of Oh Kuk Ryol demonstrates this. The long-time head of the Operations Bureau, Oh expanded various foreign currency-earning schemes such as the counterfeiting operation. New leaders like Lee Young Ho and Kim Young Chul advanced while keeping their distance from the field army, which was deeply involved in various ventures. Likewise, since 2005 Jang Song Taek has been active in limiting the activities of military trading companies, and, for example, working to merge the smaller companies into larger ones.

d. The Central Party-NDC-Central Military Committee Triangle

In this most recent personnel and power structure reorganization, a typical authoritarian control technique which has long been a part of the North Korean regime’s arsenal has been prominently on display. By distributing power ambiguously among individuals and organizations and arranging mutually overlapping roles, the regime ensures that the various officials will check each others’ powers and feud amongst themselves, and thus the dictator can back whichever agency serves his purpose at the time, prompting battles to demonstrate loyalty and further deepening his absolute power over the fates of individuals and organizations.

It is significant that the KWP Central Military Committee and other organs of the Central Party have been restored as a result of this most recent reorganization. Overall, this conference was essentially a KWP event, and no special measures were taken with regard to state organizations such as the NDC. However, there is significant overlap with the personnel and powers of the NDC, and with the revival of the Central Party and Central Military Committee, which had been lying in ruin for the last 15 years, there are bound to be some changes in the relative prestige of these three organizations.

Of course, there are formal norms which dictate the respective roles of the Central Party, NDC, and Central Military Committee. As already mentioned, according to these regulations there is some overlap in responsibilities among these three groups. However, as is always the case in North Korea, whenever an organization seeks to monopolize some aspect of this shared power, the obstacle is not the regulations, but the possibility of interference with Kim Jong Il's authority. Here we must take heed of the reality that just because North Korea is in name a "socialist" country does not automatically guarantee leadership by the KWP. Only with the backing of Kim Jong Il can the Party guarantee its authority. If we understand that the word "Party" such as in the phrase "Party leadership" actually means Kim Jong Il, then in the one-man dictatorship that is North Korea, "Party leadership" has come to mean Kim Jong Il's leadership.

Since 1995, the NDC has been at the core of the *songun* system, while the Central Party and the Central Military Committee had been cast aside. In the *songun* era of 1995-2004, the NDC expanded its influence in economic and foreign affairs in such a way as to guaranteeing the bureaucratic self-interests of the military. The NDC acted as the military-civilian joint entity and played the role of implementing the interests of the military as national policy. From February-April 2009, shortly after Kim Jong Il recovered from his health crisis of October 2008, the NDC's status was boosted through a serious of personnel reshufflings and a constitutional revision.

Through this Delegates' Conference, the Central Party and the Central Military Commission at least had their personnel completely restored, while the old generals who had made up the core of the NDC (Jo Myong Rok, Kim Young Chun, and Oh Kuk Ryol) lost influence. It is probable that the NDC's stature would decline. One of the future possibilities is that civilian technocrats in the Central Party may begin to take on a bigger role in making major foreign and domestic policy decisions, while the Central Military Committee may take a more specialized approach to military affairs, creating a clearer civilian-military division.

e. Significance of Normalizing Central Party Organizations

The various organs of the Central Party have been rebuilt, but it is still unclear what role they may play in the future. Once the organizational restructuring is completed, they will need to regulate and expand their operations in order to demonstrate their staying power.

Another point to watch for is that if the absolute dictator, Kim Jong Il, dies, from that time on official titles may become more important in determining actual responsibilities. The North Korean regime is made of a complex interplay of the institutional and the personal internally they are aware that if the personal advances, the institutional weakens, and if the first are kept down then the latter grows stronger. Thus as long as Kim Jong Il lives, official titles will be of lesser importance, but after his death they may become more meaningful, and this may become the starting point for internal squabbling. In that sense, who holds which position in the Central Party might become significant in the future.

For the Central Party to become more active in the future, the most essential factor is Kim Jong Il's support; he must assign real power and finances to each of the various departments, not merely giving lip service to their roles. On the matter of funding, the issue is whether the Central Party will provide funds to each department, or else require the different departments to raise their own funding. Either way, the demand for funding will increase. To obtain it they will need to either create new business ventures or take them over from other agencies. The first option seems improbably difficult, and the second option will likely require the re-distribution of ventures belonging to the military.

In the future the regime's internal executive power may increase as the Central Party and the Cabinet share the responsibilities of government. The responsibilities of some Central Party departments overlap considerably with those of the Cabinet. This latest reorganization particularly reinforced the leading positions within the KWP Secretariat and the specialized departments of the Central Party. Further, in last June's Cabinet reshuffling a significant number of Party cadres, such as Choi Yong Rim, gained positions in the Cabinet. We should also take note of the rise of several provincial party secretaries into the ranks of the Central Party.

In the future we should pay close attention to the new members of the reconstructed Central Committee. These people are key members of the next generation that will lead North Korea, and they are seen as the core of the succession system. We need to get a better grasp of who makes up this group. We should also watch out for attempts to restore the provincial and base Party organizations as supplemental measures to back up the Central Party reorganization.

5. Overall Evaluation and Outlook

In connection with these developments, there are 4 elements we should observe closely. First is the reorganization of the Kim Jong Il-centric power structure and the transitional power structure for succession; second, the reorganization and decline of the “*songun* system” under the banner of the “*songun* revolution” third, the relationship between party-state and society under the succession system, and fourth, the succession system’s approach to foreign relations.

a. The Reorganization of the Power Structure

This revision of the power structure springs from Kim Jong Il’s need to show off to his country and the world that he is preparing a succession system, which has become an urgent matter since his health condition has worsened. To summarize its main features: first, the Central Party was restored and the solidarity of the ruling elite was strengthened, thus improving overall regime stability. Second, Kim Jong Il revised the power structure in a way that revealed the first beginnings of the succession system structure, while ensuring his own safety. Third, while trying to prepare the best possible conditions for successfully inaugurating the Kim Jong Eun succession system, they also reserved a number of alternative cards to play to guarantee Kim Jong Il’s safety in the event that the succession plans fail. Fourth, as always, the roles of organizations and individuals were deliberately made to be vague and overlapping, to make it difficult for power to be focused too much on anyone other than Kim Jong Il.

With advances in the succession process, we can expect to see the power structure shift considerably in the future, increasing uncertainty inside the country. There are two elements that could make waves in connection with the power structure. The first is the expansion of Kim Jong Eun’s individual power base, and the second is the status of the Central Party. There may be some overlap between these two issues.

In relation to this, the following issues deserve our attention. First, they will probably make more direct progress on military restructuring in the future. More of the old military leaders will retire, and there may be additional promotions of new leaders.

Second, a restructuring of the bureaucracy may occur as large numbers of young bureaucrats are promoted en masse to form Kim Jong Eun’s “Red Guard.”

The third issue is how much real power the newly equipped organs of the Central Party will be able to wield. In North Korea, as in other countries, the Party has always played more

important role in the legitimacy and political symbolism than the military and public security organizations. Therefore, from the successor's perspective, he may wish to make use of the Party structures in expanding his political position. The expanding role of the Party is likely to have particular impact on the military's prestige. In that event, future national policies will tend to be set in a way that does not merely reflect the military's one-sided interests, but represents a compromise between several competing interests, and the interests of the civilian sectors will gain relatively more emphasis. But if this actually happens, while the military's influence will appear to visibly weaken, additional conflicts may erupt between different sectors over competing interests.

b. The Reorganization and Decline of the “Songun System” under the Banner of the “Songun Revolution”

This recent conference has nominally continued the “*songun* revolution,” but in practice it appears that a new phase has begun.

There are several signs which point to this. First, the fact that Kim Jong Eun was named a vice chairman of the Party Central Military Committee, and civilians like Kim Kyung Hee and Choi Yong Hae were made into 4-star generals, demonstrates a determination to show that the principle of civilian rule over military affairs will still be maintained. In addition, the civilian-dominated Central Party is restored. Second, the individuals who had formed the core of the *songun* system since 1995 have declined in influence. With the fall of the old military guard (represented by Jo Myong Rok and Kim Young Chun), the rise of the new military clique, and the restoration of the Central Party and the Central Military Committee, there must inevitably be a decline in the relative status of the National Defense Commission - the organization at the center of the *songun* system. Meanwhile, the concept of “strengthening the Party and its leadership role” is gaining new emphasis.

Nevertheless it appears that *songun* will continue to be maintained for the time being. First, *songun* is the practical and symbolic expression of Kim Jong Il's one-man rule. The *songun* system came into place after Kim Il Sung died in 1994 and Kim Jong Il assumed sole power in 1995; subsequently it was expanded into the broader *songun* ideology. Considering this, as long as Kim Jong Il is alive - and indeed, even after he dies, as long as his structure of authority is upheld - *songun* will be maintained, at least symbolically. Second, due to current internal and external conditions - particularly the high state of tension over security issues - they cannot easily discard the *songun* banner at this time.

However, while *songun* is being formally maintained, the structural foundation of the old *songun* system has already been transformed considerably through the Party Delegates' Conference. We should be aware that, if conditions allow, a new ideological direction may begin to emerge.

c. State-Society Relations under the Succession

As mentioned previously, because the regime is attempting a 2nd generation dynastic succession with a very young and untested successor, Kim Jong Eun's position is very weak. However, the other options are even less worthy.

The regime will likely absorb considerable costs in the process of convincing the ruling elite and the general population to accept Kim Jong Eun. The efforts so far to promote his image have not yet yielded real results. Further, looking at overall conditions, it looks like he will have a difficult time amassing major positive achievements and thus gaining the public's confidence.

Under such difficult conditions, there are two ways to successfully establish Kim Jong Eun as the successor. One is expanding education programs and symbolic fabrications about his greatness. However this method can succeed only when the party, state, and dictator exercise strong control over the people through physical coercion and material persuasion. Clearly such methods were used effectively in the mid-1970s. However, under the current state of affairs, when the state's control over the individual has weakened conspicuously, this approach is less likely to succeed and may even backfire.

The alternative is promoting fear. To prevent Kim Jong Eun from being ignored by officials and the public, for a time the regime may show a marked increase in the use of fear and the public security apparatus to exert control over the public. While the leadership does not approve of market activities, they may have no choice but to overlook them; meanwhile they may increase the use of fear and crackdowns by public security in other areas.

Actually, the General Reconnaissance Bureau and State Security were the first organizations in which Kim Jong Eun showed an interest and through which he began to take power; clearly these organizations are rising in influence. Yet at present there is tremendous pressure from North Korean society, which expects some sort of change. Thus, once the successor has secured a degree of status, the new leadership may selectively adopt a compromising posture toward some of society's demands, while being careful to ensure their own vested interests.

d. The Succession and Foreign Relations

The domestic political logic described above will also apply in much the same way to external relations. There are two reasons behind the hard-line foreign policy North Korea has pursued since 2009. First, they are hoping to use this high-handed policy to break through the strategic crisis of the regime. In other words, while striving for acceptance as a nuclear power by threatening South Korea and the US, at the same time they are trying to improve relations with South Korea in order to obtain continuous aid and building a foundation that will allow them to maintain strict internal control without reform. They are applying strong pressure to force South Korea and the US to accept this turn of affairs. Second, they probably intend these forceful measures as a warning to hostile foreign powers not to try to take advantage of the regime's current extremely fragile state in view of Kim Jong Il's health problems and the succession crisis.

As the regime proceeds with preparations for the succession, it is likely that for some time to come they will adhere to this hard-line foreign policy due to domestic political concerns. At present Kim Jong Eun is unable to take firm control internally, and North Korea is in a weak position internationally. Therefore they will most likely take a hawkish foreign policy approach to prevent external pressure, while manipulating the atmosphere of fear domestically.

However, in order to cement their status as a nuclear power, there is a chance that they might pursue actively a sort of appeasement policy. On the premise that North Korea is now a nuclear power which has twice performed nuclear tests, North Korea may refuse further discussion on the nuclear issue and instead take an approach to actively expanding inter-Korean relations. This would be done mainly by making conciliatory gestures to the South Korean government or provoking debate within South Korean society in order to elicit new promises of aid from the South.

In sum, while North Korea may take a hard-line stance toward issues such as its nuclear programs, in its relations with the South it will likely alternate between compromise and threats on a cyclical or case-by-case basis.