

# Internal and External Perceptions of the North Korean Army

■ by Jeung, Young-Tai



*Korea Institute for National Unification*

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The analyses, comments and other opinions contained in this monograph are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the Korea Institute for National Unification.

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# I . Introduction

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The sudden death of Kim Il-sung in 1994 brought about the natural change of the leadership in North Korea. Of course major power had been already transferred to Kim Jong Il who had been handpicked as the official successor of Kim Il Sung before he died. Kim Jong Il was elected the Secretary of the Organization and Propaganda-Agitation Department at the Seventh Plenum of the Fifth Central Committee of the Korea Workers' Party in September 1973. The following year, Kim Jong Il began to be recognized as the official successor being called the "Party Center," while being elected the member of the Politburo (commissar) at the 8<sup>th</sup> Full Committee. He solidified his position as an official leader by becoming the First Deputy Chairman of the National Defense Committee (May, 1990), the Supreme Commander of the People's Army (December, 1991), and the Chairman of the Defense Committee (1993), respectively. Kim Il Sung's unexpected death eventually replaced his power with that of Kim Jong Il. Kim Jong Il directly began to control North Korea under the notion of

“Instructions of the Late Kim Il Sung” without official procedures to declare a change of leadership.

Kim Jong Il faced much hardship during the period of the behests of the Late Kim Il Sung. With the collapse of the socialist block, the alliance power of socialism and its cooperative power did not exist any longer. Regime changes in socialist states became a threat to the Kim Jong Il regime and emerged as one of the more challenging elements threatening the Kim’s regime, even more so than Western countries including the United States. The Kim Jong Il regime faced a dual challenge: Externally it should overcome the new threatening elements of reform and openness and internally, it should normalize the overall situation of deviation resulting from economic sufferings. It is believed that in order to effectively block these external and internal challenges and establish his own power base, Kim Jong Il sought to capitalize on the Korean People’s Army (KPA).

The urgent task that Kim Jong Il faced was to pacify the internal turmoil and confusion. The lack of food supply in the wake of economic hardship was enough to nullify the organization of the KWP as a whole. The North Korean people could not trust the Party any longer which had virtually instructed and controlled the North Korean society as a main power base. Due to a worsening economy, the food distribution system which had functioned as a vehicle of instructing and controlling the people could no longer work itself. Thus, the people themselves attempted to find a way to secure food. On top of this, the deterioration of the economy deepened the corruption of the bureaucracy and accordingly, it became a major reason behind the people’s grievance instead of loyalty to the Party. North Koreans began to express their open distrust toward the Party, stating that, “We are sure to die of hunger if we do as the Party instructs.”

The Kim Jong Il regime appears to have opted for the mobilization

of the army as an alternative, since the existing political mobilization in accordance with instruction and control of the Party is unable to deal with the internal and external problems facing the country. Kim Jong Il conducted a series of audits and inspections on the major power organizations including the Party and on the factories and companies, using the army (in particular, the National Defense Headquarters). At the same time, it was shown that the army was actually dispatched into economic sectors only to work there after restoring a few units of production.

Kim Jong Il made official the so-called “Army First Politics” of putting the army at the helm in order to legitimize the mobilization of the army for social control and stability. Since introducing Army First Politics in 1998, Kim Jong Il began to establish the notion of army favored politics by stating that the “overall history of the Army First Politics” originated from his visit to Dabaksol military observation point on January 1, 1995. Since then, Army First Politics has developed to emphasize the legitimate role of strengthening the military and fortifying the regime with campaign slogans such as, “It is more important to make the army stronger rather than pursue economic development, and a strong rifle makes a strong country,” and “the Military First Politics is shining light over us as a political mode of the strong and complete socialism of the contemporary.” With these developments, the KPA gradually reinforced its status and the military-centered trend became strikingly evident. The army’s role in economic sectors was reestablished and its political mission to preserve the regime was high.

The question may be raised on whether the Kim Jong Il regime will be safe over the long run as it continues to depend heavily upon the military. In reality as the function and role of the military increases, so the influence of the North Korean army over the regime will expand. It is highly possible that this can be an invisible

challenge to the Kim Jong Il regime. The Kim Jong Il regime needs to make every effort to retain the military as the most stable mechanism for the purpose of regime preservation, while continuing to keep the military as a leading organization. Regime preservation is the reason why the Kim regime has attempted to stabilize the external and internal perceptions within the military by strengthening ideological education for the military.

The purpose of this study is to analyze how the Kim Jong Il regime formalizes the external and internal perceptions of the military so as to maintain regime stability and consolidation and the internal movement of the People's Army. For this, the analysis of the report is as follows.

- Perceptions toward the internal system of the North Korean military units (Chapter II)
- Perceptions of the political trends of the outside world (Chapter III)
- An evaluation of the internal movement of the North Korean military units (Chapter IV)

This study was mainly based on propaganda materials, lecture sources prepared for military officers (generals, colonels, etc.), non-commissioned officers and soldiers, speech materials for high ranking officials and the masses, study reference materials, and cultural reading materials.<sup>1</sup> Thus there are some gaps in terms of details of the status over the North Korean military's internal and external perceptions, however an attempt was made to fill in these gaps through face-to-face interviews with those who recently defected from North Korea.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that this study has been based mainly on over 200 internal sources on North Korea.

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## II. Perceptions of the Internal System of the North Korean Military Units

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### 1. Perceptions of Kim Jong-il: the ‘Suryong Leader Views’<sup>2</sup>

The North Korean military’s perceptions about the supreme leader Kim Jong Il are formed by the politico- ideological lectures mainly given to the military. The politico-ideological lectures start with what Kim Jong Il said; “The leader is the highest figure and the heart of the revolution.” And he explains the reasons why the chief executives of the revolution are called the brain and heart of the revolution.

First, it is said that the brain parts of the revolution are the center of the unified solidarity among the party, the military, and the people. The chief executives of the revolution are the brain and the heart part of the revolution, the party is the nucleus, and the

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<sup>2</sup> *Hak-sop-je-gang*6[Lecture plan, Vol. 6] (for military officers and generals), (Pyongyang: North Korean People’s Army Publishing House, 2004), pp. 1~25. *Suryong* is the highest brain of the people who guides the revolutionary struggle for independence.

military is the main force of the revolution. For human beings, the brain controls all life-related activities and the heart supports the functioning of the body. As both the brain and heart are the center of life, so the brain of the revolution plays a decisive role in achieving the destinies of the party, the military and the people while at the same time orchestrating and being the center of all revolutionary activities. It is also said that the executive part of the revolution becomes the supreme brain and heart of the revolution essentially because it demonstrates the leading ideology and path of the revolution in the wake of synthetic analysis.

Second, it is indeed the executive part of the revolution that leads to the success of the revolution. The executive part of the revolution becomes the brain and heart of the revolution, because the brain of the revolution paves the way of the revolution by rightly showing the leading ideology and providing a powerful main body of the revolution by organizing and mobilizing the party, the military and the people into a revolutionary struggle. Thus, it is emphasized that the military should “devotedly defend the Most Respectful Commander-in-Chief Comrade Kim Jong Il, the supreme brain and heart of the revolution, with a do-or-die spirit.”

In addition, Kim Jong Il’s supposed supreme abilities are greatly highlighted for the purpose of leading the people to believe that Kim is the supreme brain and heart of the revolution. For instance, it is said that Kim Jong Il “has a great figure-like appearance and political skills of guaranteeing the destinies of the homeland and revolution and socialism.” Above all, Kim is referred to as “a militarygeneral-like leader ideally possessing military and literary arts alike,” and “a creative, great man having all the intellectuality, capabilities and skills to the highest degree as a politician leading the greatest endeavors of socialism.” By the same token, Kim’s greatness is due to the fact that he “has wisely led our revolution the one way of victory and glory through the military first politics.”

That is to say, it is argued that Kim “not only offered military power with no defeat to solidly protect the fate of the country and the people by way of military first politics, but raised up the esteem and authority of self-reliant Chosun (Korea)” and is making “a new transition in the construction of a economically strong socialist country.” Leaders in Pyongyang contend that “there is no country on earth but North Korea that is able to face the United States’ high-handed and arbitrary decisions and at the same time confront America without hesitation.” In order to highlight Kim Jong Il as the leader of “great Chosun,” it is also said that, “through five thousand years of national history, North Korea has not been overlooked by the world as having the status of a great country to extend its national esteem and honor until the people highly attend to the most respectful supreme leader Kim Jong Il in the military first period of today.”

And for the revolution to achieve victory in the fierce war with the United States and its followers, North Korea finds the secret of its strength through unanimous solidarity where the brain part of the revolution remains at the core. The revolution is solidarity and vice-versa. The solidarity does not happen spontaneously but comes out of the do-or-die spirit to defend and protect Kim Jong Il. North Korea has thus let the people recognize that the highly-prepared spirit for honoring the leader should be seen as the most important task. It also underscores that without the brain part of the revolution, there is neither solidarity nor a socialist homeland. It is because “the greatest achievement of socialism is cultivated, and advanced in a victorious manner, by the supreme leader.” They have stressed that as the supreme leader has supported and held fast to the great achievements of socialism, the leader-to-be-preserved spirit finds its legitimacy. In this regard, a North Korean military authority explains as follows:

“With the collapse of socialism around the globe, our enemies were in a frenzy to ‘isolate’ and ‘choke us off. The enemies already made a timetable, asserting that the collapse of socialism in our country is only a matter of time... (Since the death of Kim Il Sung). Moreover, natural disasters seriously damaged agriculture and caused the loss of electricity and worsening living conditions. Under these circumstances, no one expected our country to rise up again. It was generally believed that our country would collapse since the great Soviet Union had already collapsed. As the question of whether to be a slave to imperialism or an independent guardsman became more crucial, Kim Jong Il, the supreme commander-in-chief and most respectful comrade as a shepherd of socialism, displayed the invincible sword of the military first politics, thereby turning the hardest times into the best of times. The existence of the most respectful Kim Jong Il enabled the country to keep socialism stable and tenable, while gaining some achievements in a struggle of constructing a strong and prosperous nation.”<sup>3</sup>

Based on these ideas, the North Korean military has formulated the logic necessary to maintain a thorough conviction and fidelity toward the brain part of the revolution. The military authority has continually implanted into its members an endless loyalty toward the supreme leader Kim Jong Il by warning that, “We the commanding personnel are the first to be executed at the hands of the enemy if we do not keep the brain part of the revolution safe and lose our socialist politics,” and that, “The commanding personnel should follow the supreme leader in earnest as a son follows his father and should not throw away the deepest conviction and fidelity toward the highest commander-in-chief under any circumstances.”

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.21.

## 2. Perceptions of Regime Preservation: “Suryong (Leader) System”

As mentioned above, the North Korean People’s Army’s recognition toward regime preservation has been made on the basis of the “*Suryong* System” or maintaining the loyalty and power of the highest commander-in-chief. This is evidenced by the fact that the politico-ideological education for the KPA has focused on the *Suryong* System. North Korean authorities underscore that without the brain part of the revolution in the KPA, there is no homeland of socialism. The North asserts that as the great things of socialism should be preserved and protected by the *Suryong*, we should preserve and protect the *Suryong* to maintain the strength of socialism. It then adds that without the *Suryong*, the party, the military, the masses and socialism do not exist. The North also refers to the historical examples of the old Soviet Union.

“In the old Soviet Union when there were Lenin and Stalin, socialism was able to be preserved and protected. Yet as soon as the traitors of the revolution such as Khrushchev and Gorbachev emerged as leaders, socialism began to go bad only to collapse. The first sign of collapse in the Soviet Union was Khrushchev’s calumniation against Stalin. Khrushchev weakened the masses’ faith in socialism by criticizing the personal cult of Stalin and opposing his leadership style. Gorbachev also ruined the socialism that Lenin and Stalin established by referring to them as dictators and in the name of reform and openness explained to the people of Russia that Lenin and Stalin led them to recklessness through socialism. Although the erstwhile Soviet Union had vast territory and a huge population as well as potential military and economic power, it went bankrupt after the loss of great leaders such as Lenin and Stalin.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.20-21.

Therefore, North Korean authorities<sup>5</sup> asked the KPA “to report all problems promptly and to react in the eyes of the brain of the revolution.” In particular, it encourages the KPA to organize and perform the missions that guarantee the politico-ideological superiority of the KPA, the preparedness of military training and mobilization, the management of weapons, ammunitions, explosives and the military units in the eyes of the brain of the revolution.

The North also states that “imperialist America is making a frantic attempt to kill the brain of the revolution in order to get rid of socialism, and so we should perform with alertness our military duties ranging from national borders to guarding the coast.” By mentioning that, “The KPA should organize military units with the pride of preserving and protecting the most respectful leader and not have the brain of the revolution exposed to danger because of carelessness,” the authority tries to connect the Suryong system to regime preservation.

Indeed, the North Korean authority<sup>6</sup> quotes Kim Jong Il as saying that, “The soldiers should become genuine warriors willing to sacrifice their lives for the supreme leader, always thinking of the leader, even when they are in the direst of situations. In order to become a warrior for Kim Jong Il, North Korean authorities state: First, “[He/she] should be a passionate comrade who backs up with loyalty and conscience the most respectful leader Kim Jong Il, while strongly believing and following the leader as the sun of destiny.” Second, “should be a ‘do-or-die fighter for the leader’ to safeguard the supreme leader in every way.” To make this happen, North Korean authorities ask the KPA to “attend collective study gatherings such as political study and lectures to get to know

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.37~39.

<sup>6</sup> *Hak-sop-je-gang* 4[Lecture plan, Vol. 4] (for non-commissioned officers and soldiers), (Pyongyang: North Korean People’s Army Publishing House, 2003), pp. 5~11.

the greatness of the supreme leader” and “make it routine and accustomed to read through all kinds of materials including books, journals and newspapers regarding his greatness.” At the same time, the authorities demand that the KPA “keep a pure mind regarding the most respectful leader under any circumstances,” and “to feel whole heartedly grateful about the love and care from the most respectful leader and repay it with earnest sincerity.” To protect Kim Jong Il’s safety, authorities make the following request of the KPA: “First, it should always keep the most respectful leader the safest in its military units and at observation points. Second, it should maintain revolutionary alertness in order to pay attention to the negative activities and maneuvers of the impure elements, observing strictly the confidentiality of events and their rules. Third, it should devote all its wisdom and zeal to whatever the most respectful leader cares about so as to please and satisfy him.” North Korean authorities emphasize the following<sup>7</sup> in order to become warriors for maintaining Kim’s authoritative power.

- [They] should make the revolution ideology of the party and the Juche (Self-reliance) ideology their own flesh and bones. They should instantly seek to crush any discord that threatens faith in the ideology.
- [They] should keep and take care of rooms where the portraits and drawings of the Great Leader and the Dear Leader are, the revolutionary sites and the on-the-spot guidance points and the memorable monuments around the military units.
- Oil-paintings, newspapers, magazines and other published materials containing images and portraits of the Great Leader and the Dear Leader should be handled with care and be kept inside boxes after use.
- [They] should do as the most respected leader thinks and does, whenever and whatever they do including in their military life.

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12.

### 3. The KPA's own Recognition: "Chosen Military Recognition"<sup>8</sup>

Kim Jong Il set up the "military first politics," where "the KPA plays a pivotal role." He has seen the KPA as the "main force of revolution." The main force of the revolution is said to be "the core and fundamental units that can push and lead the revolution at the main and front lines." This means that, "The subject of revolution set a good example to the masses with the KPA as a strong core and having the KPA play a leading role as the subject of the revolution." That is to say, the KPA should not only safeguard the nation but also construct socialism in North Korea, as the KPA is led to "protect the safety of the homeland and the trophy of the revolution and to break through in every field for the construction of socialism."

It is said that North Korea previously saw the matter of the main force of revolution in the context of both socio-economic conditions and class. North Korea has quoted Karl Marx as saying that "[He] analyzed the socio-class relationship of Western countries in the mid-19 century to reveal that the working class should be able to end the rule of capitalists and their exploitation, while declaring the working class as the main or leading force of the revolution." Marx was quoted as referring to the fact that, "It became an undeniable formula to carry out a revolutionary struggle and socialism construction alike on the basis of the working class-as-a-core in order to achieve the great socialist ideal." But it is said that the working class can become no longer the main force of the revolution because the fundamental life of the working class and the components of social classes have greatly changed over time.

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<sup>8</sup> *Hak-sop-je-gang* [Lecture plan] (Pyongyang: North Korean Worker's Party Publishing House, 2004), pp. 2~9.

Now the North Korean revolution is required to adhere to its own way of socialism as it is encircled by imperialism, and thus the revolutionary army, it is argued, must regain its status and role as the main force of the revolution. North Korean authorities say that they see the KPA or revolutionary army as an important “political asset,” unlike how they previously viewed it as merely a basic weapon of destroying and counterbalancing anti-revolutionary violence and as a means of protecting the revolution and safeguarding the homeland.” The “political asset” here implies the revolutionary idea of the do-or-die spirit for the supreme leader, the must-do spirit and sense of heroic sacrifice. Accordingly, North Korea tries to make the KPA a banner of military first politics, the core unit and the main force, while underscoring that “the KPA is a creator and forerunner of the revolutionary military spirit and is the “most powerful military force that successfully protected the first front of the North Korean revolution.”

Likewise, it can be said that the chosen army as a recognized pillar of the revolution has been further strengthened within the KPA in terms of regime preservation. Namely, it seems to proactively use the KPA as a machine for solidifying the regime by transforming the existing Kim Il Sung army into the Kim Jong Il army. The Rodong Daily Newspaper, an organ of the North Korean Party, reinforced this in its editorial in commemoration of its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the KPA foundation that, “Our people’s army should develop and strengthen the army for the comrade Kim Jong Il permanently.”<sup>9</sup> To make this happen, North Korea gradually actualizes the characteristics of the military first ideology into the revolutionary theory and promotes the role of the army by putting the army first as the main force of the revolution instead of the working class. After all, North Korean authorities attempt to have

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<sup>9</sup> *Rodong Shinmun*, April 25, 2002.

the KPA be recognized as “the revolutionary lines that have broken the powerful rifles of the class, revolution and anti-imperialism class struggles.”

#### **4. Perceptions toward the Labor Party: “Military-First by the Party”**

North Korea defines the party and the supreme leader Kim Jong Il as equals by stating that, “The great general (Kim Jong Il) is the party and vice versa.” Thus, the party’s policy line “should be achieved unconditionally and thoroughly” because it is the same as the leader’s own will. They point out that the party can be strengthened only when all the policies proposed by the party are carried out completely. The KPA is said to be the best example in accomplishing these policies of the party. It is also pointed out that Kim Jong Il “performed the military-first politics during the period of the arduous march at the throes of the revolution,” because “the KPA had the most thorough must-do spirit of any other units.” Accordingly, it underscores that, “The masses, like the KPA, should do their best to achieve the policy lines of the party to the end.” North Korean authorities have led the masses to believe that the party is Kim Jong Il and to accept that the party’s policy lines are those of Kim Jong Il, while encouraging them to keep the same identity and loyalty to the Party.<sup>10</sup> North Korea contends that establishing a military leadership system is a fundamental guarantee to perform the military and political tasks put forward the KPA. The establishment of the military leadership system guarantees the ideology and the oneness of the leader with the KPA and the notion that he should be followed as the leader

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<sup>10</sup> *Lecture materials for the cadre and the crowd* (Pyongyang: North Korean Worker’s Party Publishing House., 2002), pp. 5~7.

of one body.<sup>11</sup>

North Korea seems to try to put the KPA under the thorough control and guidance of the party so as to maximize the political capabilities of the KPA. North Korea argues that the old Soviet Union and the Eastern European states sought for the “non-ideological and de-politicized military” while refusing the leadership of the party and separating the military from the party permanently. As a result, the party could not retain its leading position any longer. North Korea strongly emphasizes this as one major reason why the old Soviet Union and European nations collapsed. The following is North Korea’s description of why the Soviet Union collapsed.

“On January, 1991 Gorbachev, who was a betrayer and backslider of the revolution, announced ratifications of the principles regarding military and political institutions. This was a part of his maneuvers to break up the party’s leading system against the military and thus the Soviet politburo of the military became reduced to a straw man under the administrative organ of the president, while organizing cultural and entertainment-like events for soldiers and to inform about current news. Moreover, the party organization within the military did not guide the political tasks any more. As the communist party separates from the military, the enemies of the revolution started to challenge the party. As the party weakened through losing its military base over time, so too did the ideological base of socialism begin to falter and eventually the party, the socialist regime and socialism collapsed over time.”<sup>12</sup>

Thus, North Korea intends to learn from what the Soviet Union

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<sup>11</sup> *Learning-reference material 1* (for soldiers and non-commissioned officers) (Pyongyang: North Korean Army Publishing House., 2001), p. 17.

<sup>12</sup> Ri Chol, “The Great Leader Kim Jong Il’s creative thoughts on the military first revolutionary leadership,” (Pyongyang: Social Science Publishing House., 2002), p. 11.

and the states in Eastern Europe had experienced so as to strengthen the Party instead of weakening it. Knowing that the danger is “focusing on destroying the solidarity of the Party and the unification ranks,” North Korea argues that “the Party members should make every effort to strengthen the solidarity of the Party and the revolutionary ranks starting from the historical experience of our revolution and from the stark reality of today.” To strengthen the Party is “to make the party organization strong,” and to raise up the leading role of the Party is “to develop the function and role of the Party organization.”

Based on this, North Korea underscores the importance of the party’s control over the KPA. Namely, it is said that the leading role of the party is of the utmost necessity. Putting into the minds of the army the ideology and the leading role of the party necessary for the mission and task, North Korea takes for granted the party’s control over the KPA.<sup>13</sup> In the age of the Kim Jong Il regime, it was only natural that ideological education be strengthened in the military organization within the party. In connection with this, North Korea argued that “the enemies of revolution have always tried to disturb the ideological education within the KPA,” and stressed the importance of such political and ideological education from the party by “getting the revolution army ready for the most invincible army through the military first spirit that both the party and state lead.”<sup>14</sup> Additionally, Kim Jong Il already instructed the party’s strengthening of political ideology education toward the army by way of “The Order from the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the People’s Democratic Republic of Korea” as follows:

“Our party’s invincible military power as prepared by the military first

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p.121.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p.123.

politics is secured and solidified through the military political training. At the moment when the last day comes near to fight against imperialist America, we are urgently required to sharpen our swords to destroy the enemies while further strengthening military political training. I would like to order you the KPA soldiers and civilian defense members to carry out the operation and military political training of 2004 so as to get ready for the war against the enemies as soon as possible, with the deepest faith of 'you-die and I-survive' for the continuation of the revolution."<sup>15</sup>

Kim also emphasized it through the order that, "Political study should be conducted to make the whole KPA follow the Party and at the same time to get all the soldiers strong enough to be militant and devoted warriors for defending the leader under any circumstances with the same spirit of destiny as the Party."

## **5. KPA's perceptions of the State and the Major Values of the State**

It seems that the KPA has strongly recognized the necessity of the values of the existing regime stability and social order. The North Korean army has been required to assume the role of having a thorough political orientation. Although the elites of the army may dislike internally the political activities, they have been officially forced to stick to such a political function. The KPA's political activities appear to focus on strengthening the do-or-die spirit for the leader and internalizing it. North Korea believes that the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries were due to the de-politicization of the army. As the traitors of

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<sup>15</sup> See "With regard to the military operation and the militant political training tasks of the KPA, the civic defense and the people security-related authorities," The Order of the KPA Supreme Commander-in-Chief, October 2, 2003.

socialism infiltrated the leadership class, the army under the slogans “de-politicization” and “non-ideology” broke up the party and working class leading to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the states in Eastern Europe. Therefore, this explanation reflects the necessity of the KPA’s political characteristic so as to keep the existing system and social order stable.

North Korea has sought for internal social order and stability and nation-state solidarity from within the KPA and since its regime foundation, while concentrating on the expanded values of this in order to reinforce a stronger defense system of opposing external threats. The North has tried to solve this by realizing the Juche ideology. Kim Il Sung once referred to the Juche ideology as “the most correct ideology of Marx-Lenin so as to perform all the policies and constructions of our Republic in a successful manner and is the most solid guideline of all policies and activities.”<sup>16</sup>

He also said that “Our Republic government should achieve the Juche ideology of the party in every field, solidify the political independence of the country, and make stronger the independent national economic base for securing complete unification and prosperity, and achieve independence, self-reliance, and self-defense to proudly safeguard the homeland for ourselves.”<sup>17</sup> Likewise, the North has forced and encouraged the KPA to implement the spirit of the revolution – independence, self-reliance and self-defense – in every sector of state activity. The North attempted to establish internal social order and stability in internal affairs. North Korea has thoroughly removed the elements of flunkeyism, dogmatism and factionalism in the name of establishing the Juche ideology and as a result, succeeded in making the regime based on “Kim

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<sup>16</sup> Selected Works of Kim Il Sung (Pyongyang, North Korean Worker’s Party Publishing House, 1968), p. 533.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 533-536.

Il Sungism” which led to the North’s social stability and order. North Korea has officially refused nationalistic solidarity but adopted the nation state as a basic element of socialism development by allowing the working-and-farmer-class based nation state and proletarian internationalism to co-exist through the discourse of “socialistic patriotism.” In the 1980s, North Korea bluntly emphasized the need of nationalism necessary for national unity on the basis of independence. North Korean scholar Ri Gyu-rin explains Kim Jong Il’s concept of nation as follows:

“The masses’struggle for independence is made on the basis of the nation state and the fate of the masses is developed within the purview of nation and state. The national border decides the nation and as long people lives as a unit of the nation state, it is impossible to separate the fate of the masses from that of state and nation.”<sup>18</sup>

As North Korea has carried out ideological education for all social organizations including the KPA in order to achieve its policy objectives, it seems to have successfully made the masses of the organizations share common values uniformly. The military is no exception. Kim Il Sung stressed the necessity of the army to the political workers within the army, saying that, “Although the KPA is equipped with good weapons, we cannot achieve victory without knowing for whom and for what we’re fighting to sacrifice ourselves.” For victory, he then added that, “we should raise up the spirit of the Juche ideology and have strong faith to safeguard the DPRK to the end, to build up socialism and communism in the country and to achieve world revolution after destroying imperialist America together with the revolutionary masses of the world.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ri Gyu-rin, “An understanding of the Most Respectful Leader Kim Jong Il’s creative concept on the nation,” *Social Science* (February, 1968), p. 6.

To this end, Kim Il Sung said it is necessary to get rid of flunkeyism, dogmatism and factionalism and to strongly establish the Juche idea to accomplish the “Korean Revolution.” In a speech entitled, “How to Establish Juche and Oppose Dogmatism in the Party’s Political Activities within the KPA,” Kim Il Sung strongly told the KPA’s military and political workers that, “Following other countries’ policies aimlessly could destroy the revolution and the construction of socialism so we should have the KPA recognize the legitimacy of the policies that the party employs as well as the necessity of Juche, while removing the legacies of flunkeyism and dogmatism.”<sup>20</sup>

North Korea has claimed to stand for a self-defense-based military policy so as to strengthen the defense system from external threats. North Korean leadership argues that the North’s self-defense policy aims to “liberate South Korea” by way of military force and secure the “revolutionary booties from imperialist America occupying the South and to strengthen defense in one way or another for peace on the Korean peninsula.” The North’s recognition of external threats seems to start from the aggressive danger posed by supposed imperialists.

Since the cease-fire agreement at Panmunjom, North Korea has been encircled by the United States both militarily and in terms of institutions. The United States has alienated North Korea internationally and branded it as the “peace-breaking state” at the UN. The North has been militarily and strategically surrounded by the U.S.-Japan Mutual Defense Agreement (October, 1953) as well as the Korea-U.S. Mutual Defense Agreement (October, 1953). Indeed, the U.S.-Japan agreement contains a clause on South Korea

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<sup>19</sup> Selected Works of Kim Il Sung 24 (Pyongyang: North Korean Worker’s Party Publishing House, 1968), p.267, p. 249.

<sup>20</sup> Selected Works of Kim Il Sung 13 (Pyongyang: North Korean Worker’s Party Publishing House., 1968), pp. 296~301.

explaining that its safety is indispensable to that of Japan. Thus, North Korea sees America as an imperialist state with the intrinsic danger of aggression and as the largest impediment to the “liberation of South Korea,” which is the utmost mission of North Korea. On the basis of this, the North has continued to strengthen the political and ideological education of the masses to create a common animosity toward imperialist America.

The North underscored the principle of self-defense as “a scientific, revolutionary military ideology of guaranteeing the victory of the revolutionary war with no troubles.” According to them, “the revolutionary basis of self-defense lies in the idea that the state, the party and the people should resolve all theoretical and practical problems of defense build-up and military activities with the minds of the masters, while securing the homeland and the revolutionary booties from the attack of imperialist America.<sup>21</sup> The actual expression of self-defense can lead to the strengthening of defense power. The North’s strengthened military power has been described in detail in the so-called, “Four-Point Military Line” that includes the militarization of the entire populace, the army’s cadreization, the country seen as a fortress, and the military establishment’s modernization.

North Korea considers imperialism as inherently unchangeable and aggressive, and believes that as long as imperialism exists, the origins of aggression and war will not change. Thus the North thinks that what is most important at the moment is to develop a stronger movement opposing imperialism. When the army does not believe there is a real threat and feels at ease with slackened consciousness, the imperialists will surely attack the people. Thus, the North has tried to make the army strengthen their capabilities

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<sup>21</sup> Political Dictionary (Pyongyang: Social Science Publishing House, 1973), p. 728.

and increase their preparedness against a possible attack from the enemy.

The last thing to mention is the North's ambition for national unification through military force. North Korea has asked the KPA "to share the most respectful commander-in-chief's views of national unification through military force." Emphasizing that Kim Jong Il has a solid belief to destroy the United States and Japanese attackers and the puppet government of South Korea by means of military force to achieve national unification, North Korea finds it urgent to remove the enemies and demolish the South's paper government instantly. The North continually encourages the KPA to become the warriors for unification and liberation of the South.<sup>22</sup>

Truly, North Korea has stressed the importance of politico-ideological education in that it should be the KPA's values to maintain internal social order and stability, promote national solidarity and strengthen the defense system against external threats, and achieve unification through military force. In particular, North Korea has so far strengthened the party-military activities for politico-ideological education and armed the army with ideology and policies, while putting the army under the control of the Suryong or Kim Jong Il by propagandizing the party's policies. The North also set up party-related organizations and the politico-military committee within the army in order to inject the ideology and policies into the army effectively. North Korea has called the KPA the warriors of the red revolution that are protecting the party, the homeland and the people at the risk of their own lives, and contended that the KPA should be superior to others and higher in terms of ideology. Besides, the KPA has been "not only militarily but also politically trained in the communist school."<sup>23</sup> By extension,

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<sup>22</sup> *Hak-sop-je-gang* 3 (for soldiers and non-commissioned officers) (Pyongyang: North Korean People's Army Publishing House, 2003), p. 11.

accepting the political opinions as proposed by the single Labor Party has been a key element of deciding the KPA officers' promotion along with military experience. As a result, the KPA members tend to have an internally strong consciousness toward the major values of the country they promote. That is to say, the KPA has successfully internalized the national values of social order and stability, national solidarity, staunch defense against external threats and unification through military force.<sup>24</sup>

## 6. Perceptions toward the Enemies of the Regime

North Korea tends to see the enemies of the regime in the context of class. Branding the U.S. and Japan as “the enemy of the external class,” North Korea claims that “the enemies are making frantic attempts to demolish ‘our way of socialism’ after disarming us in the name of ‘talks,’ and ‘peaceful resolutions’ on the nuclear issue.” So, the North requires the KPA to “recognize well who the enemy is and to become ferocious beasts of revolution to ruthlessly fight the enemy” so as to crush the enemy.

North Korea explains the class struggle as follows. The main target of the struggle is “the U.S. and Japanese aggressors and the South Korean puppets, all of who are mortal enemies.” The militant United States and Japan have long attacked North Korea and caused untold disaster and misfortune for the North. They are literally “atrocious and hundred-old-year enemies.” The North thinks that the United States interferes with its “nuclear deterrence” and tries

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p.265.

<sup>24</sup> See Kim Byong-ro, *A true reality of the internalization of the Juche idea* (Seoul: Korea Institute of National Unification, 1994); Jeong Young-tae, Kim Sung-chul, Oh Seong-ryol, Lee Hon-gyong, Lee Ki-dong, *Crisis of the North Korean socialist regime and perspective toward regime resiliency* (Seoul: Korea Institute of National Unification, 1996).

to isolate and strangle the North by surrounding it with military equipment and troops. The North contends that the Japanese militants are ready to attack the North in collaboration with the United States in order to achieve ambitions toward overseas expansion and the old dream of “re-aggression.”

The targets of the North’s internal class struggle are the “remnants of the exploiting class and the impure elements” in the North. North Korea sees them as dissidents who disrupt the social development movement of the North Korean revolution and rise in revolt against the great achievement of socialism. The North considers the internal dissidents to be more dangerous than the external class enemies and warns that they are able to make anti-revolution agitations that can cause irreparable damage.

North Korea demands that the KPA should always keep in mind that the remnants of the exploiting class, the impure elements, the United States, Japan, and South Korea are the sworn enemies of the class to be dealt with mercilessly. In this regard, the North has been educating the KPA members to “fill them with burning animosity against the enemies, to sharpen the rifles and swords of revenge and to harshly punish with rifles those who are rising against socialism.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> *Hak-sop-je-gang* 1 (for soldiers and non-commissioned officers) (Pyongyang: North Korean Army Publishing House, 2004), pp. 29~40.

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### III. Perceptions of the Change in World Political Affairs

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#### 1. General Perceptions of the World: Socialist DPRK vs. Imperialist U.S.

First of all, the North defines the world situation as “an acute one where the world’s political structure and power relationship changes and anti-imperialism warfare are a priority.”<sup>26</sup> The North claims that the structure of world politics and its power relationship has significantly changed with “the collapse of the Soviet Union and the countries in Eastern Europe in the 1990s.”<sup>27</sup> The North argues that before the collapse of communism, imperialism including the United States lost its justification but that the power structure of the world has changed as imperialism has challenged the independence of the world in the wake of the end of the Cold

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<sup>26</sup> *Hak-sop-je-gang* (for officers and generals) (Pyongyang: North Korean Army Publishing House, 2004)

<sup>27</sup> Kim Bong-ho, *A strong country wielding military first strength* (Pyongyang: North Korean Army Publishing House, 2005), pp. 48~50.

War between the West and the East. The Berlin wall, the symbol of the Cold War, was torn down on November 9, 1989 and the old Soviet Union was dismantled in 1991 followed by the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe. North Korea considers that the world entered the end of the Cold War along with the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe. They say that the end of the Cold War brought about the confrontation between the super powers and opened a tragic period in which the United States is able to run the world at its disposal.

Consequently, there was a critical difference between the socialist block and capitalism in terms of power, which the North argues led to the “reactionary imperialist faction” to take the offensive against the “anti-imperialism and independent power.” According to the North Korean army, the world situation created a situation where international law, order and the sovereignty of several countries were trampled upon. The North asserts that aggression toward and plundering other countries is the nature of imperialism. However, past imperialists would search for a reason to start war because of possible blame and criticism from the rest of the world. However, the United States is not like this. To the United States the world is the law of the jungle where all countries should move in accordance with the baton of America voicing arrogance, self-righteousness and preemptive attack. The North points out that a few weak countries which were anti-American were eventually crushed down by the United States and its followers.<sup>28</sup>

Namely, it is said that the United States is continually using a policy of aggression and war to dominate the world. It was neither peace nor the easing of the Cold War but rather aggression and war that the United States brought to humankind after the Cold

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<sup>28</sup> Hak-sop-je-gang (for officers and generals) (Pyongyang: North Korean Army Publishing House, 2004), p. 5.

War ended. The United States initiated the Gulf war in 1991, following the Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Kosovo disputes, respectively. Besides these, the United States caused a number of military conflicts and wars in the world including Afghanistan, Somalia and Chechnya. The U.S. military intervention is aimed at assuming leadership as the sole super power and to establish a new world order. Pyongyang believes that America's main target has been North Korea which continues to promote "the flags of independence and socialism."

In this regard, the North Korean military claims that, "America is suffocating our Republic and increasing its defenses, while suppressing North Korea in every field from politics to the military, economy, ideology, culture and diplomacy. Because of this, the North's revolution faced more troubles and difficulties than at any other time and could not help but confront the United States directly. That's why the North ensures that the KPA members have the world view that, "The political structure of the world is a dichotomy of the struggle between DPRK socialism and American imperialism."<sup>29</sup>

## **2. Perceptions of Relations between North Korea-U.S., North Korea-Japan and North-South Korea**

North Korea insists that America, Japan and South Korea, which have been hostile toward Pyongyang, are now attempting to improve relations with North Korea, "since the internal and external situation of the revolution rapidly changes." The North assumes that, "As the enemies bow their heads, there might be people expecting unification without war and some 'benefits' in the middle of the improved relationship."<sup>30</sup> Therefore, the North appears to be

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4~5.

working on educating the KPA. North Korea is telling the KPA members that the enemies did not change their mind over the improvement of relations at all but are instead trying to induce the North through an appeasement policy because, “the enemies found themselves unable to use military force, being fearful of the ‘military first politics.’” It also points out that the enemies are attempting to disrupt the North ideologically and to hurt the North whenever they can. The North is warning the KPA against appeasement by mentioning some “historical facts.”

“Fascist Germany manipulated the crisis of Gdansk (territory of Poland at the time) so as to attack Poland. By spouting off the absurd talk that Poland should belong to the territory of Germany, Hitler would protract the talks with Poland so as to give Warsaw the illusion of appeasement. At the same time, he amassed troops on the border of Poland. Poland was destroyed in less than one month since the high expectations from the talks made Poland relax and therefore not prepared for a possible attack from Hitler. The armies in the old Soviet Union and some nations in Eastern Europe also had the same experience as Poland and lost the trophies of the revolution because of the illusion over imperialism and the traitors of socialism.”<sup>31</sup>

The KPA members are thus asked not to be swayed by the ‘dialogue’ and ‘negotiation’ of the imperialists and to enforce their military preparedness and power.

## **A. North Korea-U.S. Relationship**

North Korea deals with the United States on the premise that

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<sup>30</sup> *Gang-yon-ja-ryo*[Lecture material] (Pyongyang: North Korean Army Publishing House, January, 2002), p. 2.

<sup>31</sup> *Hak-sop-je-gang 2* (for soldiers and non-commissioned officers) (Pyongyang: North Korean Army Publishing House, 2003), pp. 19~20.

“in particular, the North should raise awareness against America and its class consciousness,” while pointing out that “it is imperialist America that the North should definitely fight as the main enemy.” The North considers the United States as the mortal foe and “one-hundred-year-old enemy” cannot live with it under the same roof. North Korea demands the KPA bear eternal hatred toward the imperialism of America and fight it to the end on the one hand and on the other, requires that the KPA keep the solid principles of the revolution all the time in private and public life alike and remove the illusion and fear of imperialist America.<sup>32</sup>

North Korea says “the illusion of imperialist America means death” and quotes Kim Jong Il as saying that “not even a hint of the illusion of American imperialism should be allowed.” The North says it is necessary to learn the lessons about imperialist America from past history. The Hague incident and the strategic retreat during the Liberation War of the Homeland, otherwise known as the Korean War, are frequently quoted. The North claims that imperialist America pretended to help Korea become liberated from colonial Japan at the International peace Conference in the Hague but maneuvered behind the scenes to disallow the then Korean representatives including Lee Joon to join the conference. Regarding the strategic retreat, the North asserts that “it was literally an illusion for some people to wrongly judge that imperialist America would not kill innocent people and so they did not retreat. But the cruel Americans killed all the people regardless of kids, old people and women everywhere while burning and stabbing them to death and even burying them alive.”<sup>33</sup>

The North stresses that “the army always keeps this in ind, not

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<sup>32</sup> *Jik-maeng-hak-saeng-je-gang* [Lecture for students at the trade union] (Pyongyang: Trade Union Publishing House, 2003), p. 16.

<sup>33</sup> *Lecture material* (Pyongyang North Korean Army Publishing House, April, 2004), pp. 2~3.

simply as an old story, and at the same time completely ignores the illusion of America. Most recently, the North started explaining the tragedy of the Iraqi people caused by the war as an example while asserting that “we are facing America that has played a sly and wily trick.” With regard to the nuclear issue, North Korea defines the process of the nuclear negotiation between North Korea and the United States as “the war between the two” and claims that America is attempting to implant the illusion into the masses by using the stick-and-carrot trick. The North says that America continues to go on about the “unconditional talks,” “dispatch of a special envoy,” and “humanitarian aid.” The North also brags that “Bush named the North as part of the axis of evil, which is the undeniable policy of his administration. But America began to play down its tone as we fought against it in the strongest manner instead of kneeling down to it.” The North interprets the talks of the United States as “the tough American policy that has been shaken off because it felt fearful of the respectful command-in-chief’s fearless courage, intelligence and the insurmountable military first politics. North Korea makes the most out of this so as to raise Kim Jong Il’s greatness. Whatever the reason may be, North Korea highlights the “as a wolf cannot be changed into a sheep, so is America.” North Korea says that no matter how America treats North Korea, its tactics are just tricks to hide its hostile nature. Based on this, the North Korean military authority continually asks its members to rid themselves of the illusion of America completely and to get ready for the possibility of war in order to further promote “anti-American sentiment.”<sup>34</sup>

## **B. North Korea-Japan relationship**

North Korea asks the KPA to wake up to the fact that Japan

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3~6.

is becoming an increasing threat to North Korea and is expanding its militarization over time. The North thinks that Japan is attempting a “pre-emptive strike” against the North, the revision of Japanese Peace Constitution, Japanese militarization and nuclearization and the overseas dispatch of the Self-Defense Forces. This underscores the fact that the North should recognize the dangers of Japan’s anti-communism and militarization. North Korea recognizes that Japan needs to worsen the relationship with North Korea in order to achieve “the impure political and military purposes.” Accordingly, it is believed that Japan is desperately yearning for the establishment of the missile defense system and preemptive aggression against the North and its nuclear threats. North Korea also certainly thinks that Japan’s North Korean policies should be crueler than ever, since Japan finds it necessary to cause deterioration of the mutual relationship. And the North says that “there are some workers who believe that the actualization of North Korea-Japan relations would resolve some problems” but they should not have any sort of illusions like that. Rather, it forces the KPA to have a firm attitude to “fight reactionary Japan as long as it continues its militarization and prepares for pre-emptive attacks against us.”<sup>35</sup>

On the other hand, North Korea asserts that the Japanese prime minister’s visit to Pyongyang and the adoption of the North Korea-Japan joint declaration in Pyongyang and the resumption of the efforts to normalize the mutual relationship should be made because Japan “fully recognized the military power of North Korea strengthened by the supreme leader’s military first politics.”

### **C. North-South Korea Relationship**

North Korean authorities underscore the supremacy of North

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<sup>35</sup> *Lecture material* (Pyongyang North Korean Army Publishing House, March, 2004), pp. 2~8.

Korea by highlighting the negative aspects of South Korean society. The North explains that “the South is a society where political corruption is severe, with an economic crisis of bankruptcy owing to its economic dependency and vulnerability as well as a society of decay and decadence.” Therefore, the North continues to make the KPA recognize that the North’s way of masses-centered socialism is best after knowing about the corruption and inevitable fall of the South.<sup>36</sup>

By the same token, North Korea emphasizes the anti-South Korean sentiment in terms of its military and encourages the KPA to “keep a strong mind of killing the South Korean puppets with rifles.”<sup>37</sup> The North also stresses that the South is more eager to fight the North militarily than ever and is “running amok with bloody mouths as imperialist America’s food for fodder.” The following are some examples:

- “Even in the course of inter-Korean relations of the recent years, the puppet Defense Ministry of South Korea circulated education materials for its soldiers defining the North and its army as the main enemy.”
- “Like crazy guys, the South Korean puppet soldiers are shouting ‘anti-communism’ and ‘unification march toward the North’ during physical exercises every morning.” They named their units as the territories of the North, calling them “Myol-gong or Defeat-Communism,” “*Pil-song* or faith in certain victory,” and “Puk-jin or marching northward.”
- “The South arranged many of the heavy weapons including the 155 MM howitzers along the newly constructed railroads of the De-militarized Zone, claiming that ‘the North can march southward.’”

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2~8.

<sup>37</sup> Working People’s Organization Publishing House eds., *Agitation References No. 6*(for all the soldiers) (Pyongyang: North Korean Army Publishing House, March 2004), p. 2.

- “The South is plotting another military strike in the western sea where there had been a fierce battle, sending lots of warships and vessels.”

The North argues that “the South Korean puppet soldiers are the main enemies to fight first in the course of Southern liberation” and that “we the North Korean people cannot feel at ease nor unify Korea without destroying the South Korean puppets together with the American and Japanese aggressors.”

But the North says that the South is very active with regard to inter-Korean relations and dialogue and acknowledges that there is actually “dialogue,” “relations” and “contacts” between the two Koreas. In particular, North Korea actively mentions “the summit talks, working level contacts on economy, sports and cultural events, reunions of separated families, Gaeseong Industrial Complex and re-connection of inter-Korean railroads and roads.” But the North makes an effort to let the KPA recognize that Kim Jong Il has made all of these possible. To this end, the North ceaselessly underscores that “the KPA should take the highest pride of respecting the greatest politician, God-given great commander-in-chief and with this in mind,” “the KPA needs to know that military first politics must be the most precious sword to secure our victory.”<sup>38</sup>

### **3. Perceptions of ‘Enemies’ and ‘Peace’<sup>39</sup>**

The North recently asks again that, “the KPA should not have any sort of illusion of the enemies and peace, and should see all matters with a high level of consciousness and rivalry perspective,” the army is forced to “keep in mind the party’s intention and to

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<sup>38</sup> *Gang-yon-ja-ryo*[Lecture material] (Pyongyang: North Korean Army Publishing House, January, 2002), pp. 6~8.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8~10.

raise class consciousness more than ever, since the party's policies toward America and Japan is to aim at creating an atmosphere favorable to the revolution, not policy change at all."

The North requires the KPA to "see through the invisible bad intentions of the enemies behind the talks." According to them, the mood of the talks that the enemies currently enjoy is a smoke-screen tactic of highly calculated aggression, and thus should not be judged based on appearances alone. The North emphasizes that a similar situation is happening on the Korean peninsula. In this regard, the North argues that "the enemies should give up the hostile policies against us and stop all the war tactics of opposing us so as to improve the relationship, while doubting "the enemies' true behavior lurking behind the talks." The North also continually infuses the danger of war on the peninsula into the KPA members, alleging that "the American and Japanese imperialists and the South Korean puppets meet often to plot war."

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## **IV. KPA's Internal Situation**

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### **1. Realities of Military Service**

North Korea already enacted 'the Law on the Whole People's Military Service' in the sixth meeting of the 10th Supreme People's Assembly (SPA) and had it enforced. According to the law, North Korea shortened military service for men by three years, from thirteen years to ten years and three years for women from ten years to seven years. It is also known that the North adjusted the mandatory conscription age of more than 15 years old to less than 25 years old and unscripted men under 28 are required to serve. North Korean young people preferred military service because of the social trend of encouraging military service and some advantages gained as a party member. The party members are given favorable opportunities in several respects while living in North Korea. For instance, the discharged party members can become a lower-level manager in charge of a small business unit. Yet the economic difficulties after the death of Kim Il Sung caused some negative

conditions that made young people reluctant to serve in the military. As party membership does not always provide good opportunities economically, most of them began to choose other ways to make more money after finishing military service.

It is assumed that the Law firstly aims to “minimize the decrease of military man power as a countermeasure to deal with food difficulties and the tendency of disliking military service and to provide an alternative.” Secondly, it “applies unexceptionally to mandatory military service to resolve a sense of incongruity among the class and blocks social departure based on military first politics.” Thirdly, the Law is believed to repress departure from within the KPA through the change of armed generations. Kim Jong Il continues to seek his goals of making a strong army while putting forward military first politics to reinforce the ideological education within the military and to revamp the loose systems of the military units. Indeed, Kim increased the age of military service to 35 years old (October, 2002) and the National Defense Committee instructed “the unconditional order of military service”(August, 2002) to ensure military strength.

It is common to see massive gatherings of high school graduates in Pyongyang asking for acceptance of their military service, which the party organizations have mobilized and propagandized. North Korea recently promotes the junior students’ voluntary service in the army through military first politics and its families, while highlighting voluntary events. It is understood in the same context that the North currently propagandizes the “representative family” and “representative brothers” in which all family members, father and sons, brothers and sisters join the military as a way of establishing military first politics in society.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Yim, Heung-kun, *Ibid.*, pp. 16~19.

## 2. Military Exercise

North Korea has conducted its military exercises in a unitary manner under the control of the center. Owing to long-term military service of over ten years, the military skills of an individual soldier are in a relative state of excellence. Especially, it is known that military trainers are assigned to each unit and so they are highly specialized and skilled in terms of their tactical measures enough so as to make the whole military “become officers.” As the North performs some military drills because of its shortage of oil and ammunitions, however, it exercises mock drills rather than actual ones such as unit maneuvers. For instance, most of the soldiers who joined the service in the 1990s and worked in the backward areas have not yet shot rifles during their service of ten years; a certain soldier who was assigned to the tanks unit and spent ten years there says that he did not ride in an actual tank but performed mock tank drills sitting in model tank.<sup>41</sup> North Korea is focusing on the training of small military units. The flying time drills of North Korean pilots are known to be remarkably lower than that of South Korean pilots.

In the meantime, the KPA uses the term of military-political drills as a general term of its military drills, which means that the North values the political drills as much as the military ones. The KPA’s drills have some of the following characteristics. First, military drills are performed in a unitary manner under the strong control of the center. Second, these are focused on the cultivation of revolutionary warriors. Third, collective capabilities are emphasized in the drills rather than individual ones. Fourth, by performing the drills with focus on the independent cultivation of military strength, the KPA is developing its own training manuals. Fifth, the KPA

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<sup>41</sup> Yim, Heung-kun, *Ibid.*, pp. 36~37.

is carrying out unified military education so as to advance the Worker-Peasant Red Guardsman, military training corps, and Red Youth Lifeguards to the same level of the regular military units.<sup>42</sup>

### 3. Military Discipline and Mores

First, the North Korean military authority forces the soldiers to attend military learning in earnest and to master it. It is known among the soldiers that there is much ‘mood’ where they are just given the routine and annual educations any old how, do not need know the manuals correctly, and simply learn the manual by heart but do not become skilled in action. Thus, it stresses the need to get rid of the wrong and routine attitudes in learning the regular military drills because of the annual learning drills and those already learned. The authority also points out that the soldiers are not able to master the drills if they skip the learning. Therefore the soldiers should deeply study the required points of every clause clearly until they fully understand it when they are given the learning specified in the regulation.

Secondly, the authority asks every soldier to follow the rules and manuals while carrying out military duties. The military rules are said to be the textbook of military attitudes, which all soldiers should observe. That is why anyone wearing the military uniform is required to behave and think in accordance with the rules, which is an unbreakable principle.

The main reason that the North began to stress the rules seems to have something to do with the recent internal and external accidents related to military discipline. In this regard, North Korea mentions the bad behavior of soldiers as follows;<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 194

<sup>43</sup> *Hak-sop-je-gang*(Pyongyang: North Korean Army Publishing House, Juche

- “Unwilling to follow the rules or act according to the situation because of military control.”
- “To lose the attitude as a soldier in terms of appearance, etiquette, walking and the management of military activities.”
- “Randomly to do something or otherwise nothing in the non- military period or outside the units.”
- “Wrongdoings such as AWOL (absent without leave), unauthorized outings, and damaging the soldier and military-civilian relationship.”

The North also demands the soldiers perform political activities to encourage them. Through this, the North wanted to improve the soldier’s military capability. And through the ideological education, likewise, the North allocated 20-30 percent out of the whole education for the soldiers while using a variety of encouragement policies to raise the soldier’s military capability.

First, North Korea would offer soldiers the prize and decorations at the anniversary ceremonies for the foundation of the KPA and the nation, while providing a variety of commemorative events and entertainment. The North also dispatches the high ranking officials of the workers organization and women’s representative body to the locals to give honored soldiers the flags, medals and presents, encouraging the soldiers to join the welcoming ceremonies of the civilian organizations.

Second, as part of KPA policy, the KPA holds a variety of ceremonies: movement to become the red flag military company and to catch the three-revolution red flag, collective cultural activity and entertainment, seminars on political cultivation, movies (one time per week) and physical activities on holidays and commemorative days.

Third, as a special policy, the KPA annually performs the event in which the military generals on the army division level spend

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87, 1988), pp. 1~2.

their time doing the same thing as the soldiers in the local areas do. The North also invites the soldiers working at the front lines to Pyongyang (two days through one night) or provides an opportunity to visit Mt. Baektu for low-level managers such as leaders from the Youth Union of Socialism and Labor Solidarity.

On top of this, the North performs, as a way of strengthening military capability, an event of the versatile soldiers movement<sup>44</sup> in accordance with a strong revolutionary spirit, unbelievable and excellent military drills, steel-like power, and perfect shooting skills. And for the purpose of leading the soldiers to fight for the leader Kim Jong Il only, the North campaigns through movie-based learning and the notion of do-it-as-hidden heroes. The former is recognized as a vehicle to raise up the military and its technical capability and the latter to promote the soldiers' loyalty and heroic spirit under the situation that there is no war or military disputes along with the development of socialism.

#### **4. Military Preparedness**

First of all, the North Korea claims that “the war tactics of the imperialists America and Japan and the South Korean puppets have already gone too far.” The acute situation forces the soldiers to always be in fighting mode so as to prevent the socialist homeland from being attacked. To this end, the North stresses thorough ideological preparedness of the “self-reliant views on war.” To make this happen, the North firstly emphasizes “the strong faith to kill the enemies including imperialist America through the war whatever the situation is.” Secondly, the North says that “we can't avoid war without meeting imperialist America and thus should

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<sup>44</sup> *Puk-han-chong-ram* [Pandect on North Korea] (Seoul: Institute of North Korea Studies, 1983), p. 1466.

have the deep conviction of never being defeated and killing or be killed.” Thirdly, the soldiers are required to have “a convincing revolutionary viewpoint to win against the enemies in the war for ourselves.” North Korea asks the army to retain military preparedness, the viewpoints of the war class and their own capabilities.

The North encourages the soldiers to “carry out war with tension and defeat the enemies in any situation,” and to always prepare for possible attacks and “to hastily counterattack.” Furthermore, the North requires the soldiers to be alert even in daily life. In this regard, Kim Jong Il stated that “under the situation facing the enemies we should always be tense, ready in daily life and should not be negligent or lavish.” The idea here is to emphasize the importance of the get-ready-for-attacks attitude or “the military preparedness” even at an ordinary time.<sup>45</sup> The North has already outlined the “Wartime Detailed Rules” so as to actually prepare for possible war. Its aim is “to effectively make every sector, workers and party members in all the units, and soldiers to become more consolidated and ready for the revolutionary war as leaders.” The Central Military Committee of the Korean Worker’s Party gives the following orders in preparation for war:

- a. Every sector and unit should carry out the “Wartime Detailed Rules” when war is officially declared.
- b. Every sector and unit should make its own detailed enforcement regulations in accordance with the Wartime Detailed Rules and be fully prepared for war.
- c. The party, administrative, judiciary and prosecutory authorities in each area should punish severely those people who do not follow or otherwise neglect the Wartime Detailed Rules only to obstruct war preparedness.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> *Hak-sop-je-gang* (Pyongyang: North Korean Army Publishing House, Juche 93, 2004), pp. 26~37.

The North has frequently instructed the KPA to maintain war preparedness to strengthen its military posture. In the 1980s, the North once made the orders of quasi stat of war (1983), of strengthened military preparedness (1984), more strengthened posture of military preparedness (1985) and of military preparedness posture (1986), respectively. Through these orders, North Korea has repeatedly propagandized, whereas letting the KPA make strict rules and social order in every field and live militarily in a constant state of military preparedness. The North's military policy also gives guidelines that the soldiers should follow when going to fight against the enemies, as they should be ready for the possibility of war at any time. That is to say, North Korea enforces the military preparedness of each unit so as to launch full-scale war, limited local warfare, and war through special military units.

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<sup>46</sup> Order No. 2 of the Central Military Committee of the North Korean Worker's Party, Pyongyang, April 7, Juche 93 (2004).

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## V. Concluding remarks

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First of all, the North Korean military authority has always assumed the internal and external enemies against the regime and then encouraged the KPA members to have the deepest resentment against the enemies and at the same time, stressed the KPA's preparedness to achieve victory over them. The North has instilled in the minds of the soldiers that to safeguard the Kim Jong Il regime is the most important mission.

The North views the United States, Japan and South Korea as external enemies threatening the regime. These countries are considered to be "class foes" and thus the KPA should become the 'beasts against the class struggle' fighting these enemies. However, North Korea makes every effort to dispel the "peace illusion," where the soldiers consider the nuclear issue-related six-party talks and the U.S.-North Korea contacts as momentum toward peace on the Korean peninsula. North Korea claims that these talks are nothing more than the party's tactical dialogue with the "class enemies," so that the soldiers should not harbor any such

illusions. Nevertheless, there is much evidence showing that North Korean soldiers have begun to recognize the changes of the outside world including South Korea. For example, there is a growing sense of curiosity toward the South among the military officers and the number of people who enjoy listening to South Korean radio programs is gradually increasing over time. Namely, it is said that there is a growing atmosphere within the North that people enjoy South Korean radio programs and movies from South Korea, the United States and Hong Kong. The North Korean military authority has reportedly begun tightening control on such activities. The military inspection team would monitor the officers and the military officers' families are randomly searched to see if they own radios or TVs. It is said that radios are tuned into one station and TV channels remain fixed. If people are found watching or listening to some foreign programs, they are required to report to the authorities. The North warns that unless they report on their own accord, they are punished the same as a violator and possession of a radio is punished the same as listening to foreign broadcasting clandestinely. North Korea stresses as a warning that those who listen to South Korean and foreign broadcasting should be severely punished.<sup>47</sup>

The problem with this is that it has limited effect in terms of control. Although the North tries to instill into the KPA members the mind that “the more peaceful slogans there are, the more the KPA should unify Korea with only rifles,” it will be difficult to fully break “the peace illusion” of the KPA as the U.S.-North Korea dialogue as well as inter-Korean talks continue over time. The North warns that if the soldiers have an illusion toward the enemies and peace, “their class consciousness may be paralyzed and they are unable to keep up military preparedness for the time of battle”

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<sup>47</sup> Interviewed with North Korean defector Park\*\*\*.

and “we may lose our socialism to become a slave of imperialism.”<sup>48</sup> In fact, it is believed that the more the KPA soldiers’ recognition of “peace illusion” expands over time, the more flexible their recognition toward America will be. As a result, the recognition of “class enemy” toward the South will become inevitably thin.

In addition, the KPA’s weakening view of the enemies will likely lead to the reform and openness of the regime. We cannot rule out the possibility that the young officers who seek effectiveness and rationality of the regime may prefer reform and openness, although they are still recognized as the most conservative and loyal group dedicated to maintaining the regime. Indeed, there are some witnesses indicating that the officers and non-commissioned officers are more interested in making money whenever possible.<sup>49</sup> If the poor supply of military equipment including food persists, the KPA is likely to expand its abnormal economic behavior in a decisive manner for means of survival.

On the other hand, North Korea is endeavoring to bolster Kim Jong Il’s leadership in terms of drawing on the KPA to be loyal to the great leader. The North has always emphasized the slogan “Keeping the great leader” in political and ideological education toward the KPA. That is, North Korea requires the KPA to behave and act in the way of “Keeping the great leader.” Yet it is worthy to note that the KPA’s trust toward Kim Jong Il is not as high as would be expected. According to some defectors who recently escaped from the North, the KPA’s high ranking officers and North Korean people bear much more dissatisfaction with and grudge against Kim Jong Il than would be thought. Defectors argue that North Koreans often say, “We could live more or less in the period

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<sup>48</sup> *Hak-sop-je-gang 3* (for soldiers and non-commissioned officers) (Pyongyang: North Korean Army Publishing House, 2003), pp. 4~6.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with North Korean defector Park\*\*

of Kim Il Sung but as soon as he died, the country was headed for ruin and it will not take long to see it. However such things cannot be discussed publicly.”<sup>50</sup> This dissatisfaction and grudge must be rampant among North Korean soldiers. No matter how much the spirit of “Keep the leader at all costs” is emphasized, it will be an empty echo in the long run. Thus, it is said that North Korea focuses on political and organization events in order to divert the attention of soldiers and civilians from such problems and instead focuses their attention upon loyalty toward Kim Jong Il, because a loose way of life could lead to useless ideas and complaints, which would eventually lead to disloyalty. It is reported that even on national anniversaries and holidays, North Koreans are rarely given time to enjoy their leisure.<sup>51</sup>

All in all, we can infer that as the North Korean soldiers’ hostile recognition toward enemies begins to weaken, their “illusion of peace” is growing over time. Thus, their loyalty toward Kim Jong Il will likely begin to falter. The North Korean soldiers’ recognition of its enemies will change along with the party’s “peaceful slogans” and variety of external situations including improving inter-Korean relations. North Korea will, thus, enforce its political and liberal education more than ever before but this may not be enough to counter the changing perceptions. Therefore, North Korea will likely decrease social and political functioning and the roles that the KPA employs and at the same time, will focus on making the current army more professional as an effective “regular army.”

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<sup>50</sup> Interview with North Korean defector Cho\*\*.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with North Korean defector Park\*\*.

