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**Continuities and Changes  
in the Power Structure and the Role  
of Party Organizations  
under the Kim Jong-il's Reign**

*By Hyeong-Jung Park and Kyo-Duk Lee*




Korea Institute for  
National Unification

STUDIES SERIES



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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 Korea Institute for National Unification.

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## I . Introduction

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In the early 1990s, North Korea faced with a drastically different external environment in the wake of repercussions of the collapse and/or transformation of socialist systems in other regions. During the same period, it was experiencing numerous domestic difficulties, as well. Furthermore, North Korea's attempts to improve relations with South Korea and other neighbors in the early 1990s were frustrated owing to its own nuclear ambitions, while its economy rapidly deteriorated. Just as the North Korean nuclear issue was headed toward a temporary resolution by way of the 1994 Agreed Framework, Kim Il-sung who used to be the pillar of internal cohesion, passed away, and the economic hardship exacerbated further. Under the weight of these circumstances, North Korea's traditional ruling structure was thrown into a crisis situation. Extreme situations seemed to call for extreme measures.

In addition to relying on such extreme measures as public

executions, tightening of security agencies and deployment of soldiers for domestic stability, North Korea began to emphasize from 1995 such slogans as the “Ideology of Red Banners,” the “Arduous March,” and the “Military-first Politics.” Ever since, the “military-first politics,” a policy seeking to enhance the prestige and expand the scope of activity of the military, became a major political tenet in North Korea. Subsequently, in the process of revising the constitution in 1998 a new structure of government centered on the National Defense Commission (NDC) and its Chairman was established. The new constitution also put emphasis on the responsibilities of the Cabinet on economic matters. In July 2002, North Korea announced the so-called “July 1 Economic Management Improvement Measures (hereinafter ‘July 1 Economic Measures’).” In October, however, the North Korean nuclear issue began to resurface. Throughout this series of events, North Korea has incessantly emphasized the importance of national cohesion and the imperative of allegiance to Kim Jong-il. But, it would be reasonable to assume that some changes would have taken place in the party-government-military relationships as well as in the structure of power elite, especially the middle and lower echelons of the elite class.

The main purpose of this paper is to analyze the political changes that have taken place during the Kim Jong-il era. This paper will examine the impact of social changes brought on by the economic hardship in the 1990s; how they affected the political process and ruling structure; and how the North Korean authorities responded to these changes. At the same time, we will analyze the power structure, the power elite, and the party-military relationship, as well as organizational changes, if any, within the Korean Workers’ Party (KWP).

Chapter 2 deals with the political power structure in the Kim Jong-il era under the aegis of “military-first politics.” The background of the appearance of the new political power structure will be explored in Chapter 3, and Chapter 4 will analyze, given the ‘military-first politics, the relationship between the National Defense Commission and the KWP Central Military Affairs Committee. In Chapter 5, we will examine the changing roles and functions of various levels of KWP, the central party, provincial branches, and party elementary organizations.



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## II. The Institutionalization of Military-first Politics

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Kim Jong-il became the general secretary of the Korean Workers' Party three years and three months after Kim Il-sung's death. In other words, North Korea officially did not have either the head of state or the general secretary during this entire period. Kim Jong-il simply ruled North Korea in his capacity as the supreme military commander and chairman of NDC. The inauguration of Kim Jong-il as general secretary meant the official launch of the Kim Jong-il regime. Legally and institutionally, the new Kim regime was born by the decisions of the first meeting of the 10<sup>th</sup> Session of the Supreme People's Assembly (SPA) on September 5, 1998.

At this meeting, North Korea revised its constitution and streamlined various state agencies. The structural reforms reflected several distinct features: First, in developing a ruling structure centered on Kim Jong-il, North Korea tried to ensure that Kim Il-sung's leadership system is maintained. For example,

the position of Jusok (State Chairman) was abolished, but Kim Il-sung's instructions were reaffirmed as fundamental guidelines and the implementation of these guidelines was presented as the foremost national goal. Second, through a series of readjustments of roles and powers of state agencies, a division of labor was achieved between the titular head of state and the source of real power. Under this setup, externally power is shared between the Chairman of NDC, the President of SPA Presidium, and the Prime Minister. Third, the entire power structure was built around the Chairman of NDC who was empowered with full authority over the military.

More specifically, in its newly written preamble to the constitution, North Korea declared that Kim Il-sung "shall be highly honored as the permanent Jusok of the Republic, and we will finish the great task of Juche (self-reliant) Revolution by upholding, preserving, succeeding and developing his ideas and achievements."

Since Kim Il-sung is now enshrined as the permanent Jusok, the post of Jusok, which had played the role of head of state, was abolished, along with the Central People's Committee, which used to serve as the highest leadership organ for the sovereign power. Most of their power was transferred to the SPA Presidium.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> An example of the transfer of this authority is Article 110 of the constitution. Section 10 stipulates, "It can create or abolish Cabinet committees or agencies." and Section 11 says, "When the SPA is not in session, it can appoint or dismiss, upon the recommendation of the prime minister, deputy premiers, committee chairmen, ministers and other members of the ministries." Section 14 of the same article stipulates, "It can ratify or decline treaties concluded with other countries;" Section 17 says, "It can exercise general and special amnesty: and Section 18 authorizes it to "create or

The President of the SPA Presidium is now charged with such duties as organizing and guiding various projects, and receiving and recalling diplomatic credentials and foreign emissaries on behalf of the state. The president, then, will represent North Korea externally, and will thus act as the head of state, however nominally.

A new phrase “overall guidance on defense projects” was inserted in Article 102 of the revised constitution, which defines the power of NDC Chairman. Previously it only said he will exercise “overall command and control over the armed forces.” Since the concept of “defense projects” is very broad and comprehensive, the new provision will now allow the NDC chairman to exercise enormous power over all sectors of the nation by dint of the phrase “overall guidance.” To that extent, the stature of NDC Chairman has been enhanced. North Korea’s Central Broadcast also elaborated this point, saying that the “defense projects” do not refer to “simple military tasks” but to “the most serious of all national issues for the attainment of our top priorities such as national prosperity and social progress.” It added that the position of NDC Chairman is “the highest position in the nation that is incomparable to any other high office for the success of our great revolution.”<sup>2</sup>

While Kim Jong-il succeeded Kim Il-sung’s Jusok position in his capacity as NDC Chairman, he elevated the role and status

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revise administrative units and administrative districts.”

<sup>2</sup> Both “Chosun Central Annual” and North Korea’s Central Broadcast on November 15, 1998, said, “The chairman of NDC is the sacred post and the highest position of the nation that symbolizes and represents the glory of our fatherland and the national pride.” See Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) on Nov. 15, 1998 and the *Chosun Central Annual* (Pyongyang: 1999) p.84.

of the SPA presidium so that it could exercise legislative power and its president could perform the role of head of state externally. The Cabinet is charged with the duties of overall management of public administration and economic projects.<sup>3</sup> The former State Council, which used to direct various projects under the “guidance of Jusok and Central People’s Committee,” was renamed as the Cabinet. Since the two higher structures (Jusok and CPC) have disappeared from the new constitution, the Cabinet has become an “independent administrative body.” The prime minister is charged with the duties of “representing the Government and organizing and guiding various Cabinet projects.” So, the prime minister will now play leading roles in certain sectors on behalf of the supreme leader Kim Jong-il.

The president of SPA presidium, however, may exercise his power of representing the state only to the extent that Chairman Kim Jong-il will delegate such authority to him. On this point, North Korea explains its constitutional arrangement as follows: “By doing it in ‘our own style,’ we can take the burdens of directing the projects off of our beloved Chairman, and, under his leadership, we can actively proceed with summit diplomacy to meet the changing situations in foreign relations.” So, it implies that the president of the presidium will step in on Kim Jong-il’s behalf whenever it is convenient to do so. The power to represent the state substantially still resides with Kim Jong-il. The same is true of the power to represent the government. As a result, Kim Jong-il will now be able to concentrate on party operations and military projects without any burden from the legislative, diplomatic, or economic issues.

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<sup>3</sup> As the State Council is reorganized into the Cabinet, the number of deputy premiers was reduced from 9 to 2 and 32 agencies in the economic sector were reduced to 23 to improve their efficiency.



The death of Kim Il-sung in 1994 has brought on a significant change to the status of National Defense Commission itself. The death of Jusok, who was constitutionally higher in hierarchy than the NDC, automatically pushed the NDC to the highest position of authority. And, the September 1998 constitution formally abolished the post of Jusok and placed NDC at the top of the institutional hierarchy.

Under the 1992 constitution, NDC was placed below the SPA, SPA Presidium, and Central People's Committee. But, the new 1998 constitution put NDC right below the Supreme People's Assembly. Furthermore, NDC is defined as "the supreme military guidance authority under the national sovereign power and the overall national defense management bureau." This is interpreted to mean that NDC will exercise not only sovereign authority in the defense field but also administrative power, as well as the exclusive authority in organizing and directing the entire field of national defense projects, including the military-industrial complex.

The phrase "supreme military guidance authority under the national sovereign power" indicates the fact that "this is the authority that will exercise the highest command authority over all armed forces under the sovereign power, and "the overall national defense management bureau means that this office will exercise the command and control authority over the entire armed forces of the nation and control, guide and supervise all conceivable national defense projects, including the military-industrial complex." Therefore, it is said, the "NDC is given a unique status among all national agencies."<sup>4</sup> In the 1992

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.law.dprkorea.com/korean/list.php> (As of Sep. 24, 2004).

constitution, NDC was simply defined as the “supreme military guidance authority under the national sovereign power.”

Article 103 of the 1998 constitution supplied a new phrase to the mission and authority of NDC, to wit: “NDC shall have the authority to create or abolish central agencies in the national defense sector.” The constitution does not provide NDC for the authority to carry subsidiary agencies under it or directly operate such agencies. However, it stipulates NDC to “exercise command over all armed forces of the nation and direct all national defense construction projects,” and to serve as “the central agency for the national defense sector (presumably the Ministry of People’s Armed Forces).” From these stipulations, it is highly probable that NDC has under its command the Ministry of People’s Armed Forces and the National Security Protection Agency.<sup>5</sup>

The Rodong Shinmun has been advertising that the NDC is the “backbone of the military-first leadership system.”<sup>6</sup> The paper further said the fact that NDC has become one of the most important national agencies, was an “epoch-making and revolutionary step that would enable us to brilliantly achieve the military-first revolutionary leadership of the Korean Workers’ Party and strengthen the people’s armed forces as an invincible and victorious force, which would, in turn, firmly safeguard

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<sup>5</sup> Article 103 of the constitution defines NDC’s mission and authority as follows: 1. Guides overall armed forces of the nation and national defense projects. 2. Creates or abolishes central organizations in the defense sector. 3. Appoints and dismisses major military personnel. 4. Determines names of military ranks and awards promotions above the rank of general. 5. Proclaims the state of war and mobilization for the nation.

<sup>6</sup> See Ryu Yong-sik, Choi Seung-pil and Ko Hyun-joo, “The Invincible General Commanding the World,” *The Rodong Shinmun*, June 28, 2004.

our socialist fatherland from the aggressive designs of the imperialists.”<sup>7</sup>

In addition to these structural changes, a remarkable development in the power structure of the Kim Jong-il regime is the rapid rise of military leaders in the power hierarchy. Before the demise of Kim Il-sung, the power hierarchy in North Korea mainly revolved around the positions held within the party; namely, the party’s political affairs committee members (No. 1-13), Alternate political affairs committee members (No. 14-23), Party secretaries (No.24-29), Deputy premiers, and so on.

After the death of Kim Il-sung, however, the hierarchy of military leaders, such as Lee Eul-sol and Paik Hak-rim, has suddenly begun to rise, and by “the 100-day central memorial ceremony (for Kim Il-sung)” in September 1994 they placed themselves between the “alternate members” and “party secretaries.” At the time of Kim Il-sung’s funeral in July, the Protective Force Commander Lee Eul-sol, Director General of the political affairs committee Cho Myong-rok, Army Chief of Staff Kim Young-choon, and Social Safety Minister Paik Hak-rim were placed 77<sup>th</sup>, 89<sup>th</sup>, 88<sup>th</sup> and 53<sup>rd</sup>, respectively, on the list of funeral service officials. But, by the “second anniversary memorial ceremony (July 8, 1996),” Lee, Cho, and Kim above placed themselves 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> respectively, advancing to the level of political affairs committee members.

Once the NDC’s functions and power were beefed up as the “overall national defense management authority” under the

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.law.drpkorea.com/korean/list.php> (As of Sept. 24, 2004).

September 1998 constitution and upon inauguration of general secretary Kim Jong-il as NDC chairman, the power hierarchy has changed in the following order: Political affairs committee members, NDC members, alternate political affairs committee members, party secretaries, and so on.

At the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of North Korea (September 9, 1998), Director General Cho above, who now served as the first vice chairman of NDC, was placed 7<sup>th</sup> and other vice chairmen, Kim Il-chol and Lee Yong-moo, found themselves listed 9<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> respectively. All other NDC members, Kim Young-choon, Lee Eul-sol, Chun Byung-ho, Yon Hyung-muk, and Kim Chul-man were listed within the 20<sup>th</sup> of the hierarchy, except for Paik Hak-rim.

Director General of the political affairs committee Cho Myung-rok was placed higher than the Minister of People's Armed Forces, Kim Il-chol. This is an unprecedented case. In the past, the Minister of People's Armed Forces had always been placed at the top of all military leaders. The fact that NDC first vice chairman outranked the top military leader in the official hierarchy shows the enhanced stature of NDC and the improving role of party elements within the military.

By the Armed Forces Day in April 1999, Cho Myong-rok found himself 3<sup>rd</sup> in hierarchy, right behind Chairman Kim Jong-il and President Kim Young-nam of SPA Presidium, and above and beyond all senior leaders such as Park Sung-chol and Kim Young-joo, who were both honorary vice chairman of the presidium. This trend continued on. At the time of the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of 10<sup>th</sup> SPA (March 27, 2002) the hierarchy listed Kim Jong-il at the top, followed by President Kim Young-nam,

Vice chairman Cho Myung-rok, Premier Hong Sung-nam, Army Chief of Staff and NDC member Kim Young-choon, Minister of People's Armed Forces and NDC Vice chairman Field Marshall Lee Eul-sol, Minister of People's Security Paik Hak-rim, Party secretary and political affairs committee member Jun Byung-ho, and so on.

Another notable point in the list of top political hierarchy is that in some cases the alternate political affairs committee members are placed ahead of full members. For example, during the second meeting of the 10<sup>th</sup> SPA (April 1999) alternate political affairs committee member and NDC member Yon Hyung-muk was placed 11<sup>th</sup> and ahead of the party political affairs committee member Chun Byung-ho. Again, in April and October 2001 (3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of 10<sup>th</sup> SPA and the 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the party's founding), Yon was introduced ahead of political affairs committee members such as Ke Eung-tae and Han Sung-ryong. All these examples show that the NDC members have formed the upper echelon of power with greater prestige. The NDC first vice chairman, Cho Myung-rok, vice chairman Yon Hyung-muk, NDC members Kim Il-chol, Kim Young-choon and Chun Byung-ho have all found themselves inside or close to the 10<sup>th</sup> in power hierarchy.

There was no change in this order of hierarchy announced during the first meeting of the 11<sup>th</sup> SPA (September 3, 2003). Kim Jong-il, of course, was at the top, followed by Kim Young-nam, Cho Myung-rok, Park Sung-chul, Kim Young-joo, Hong Sung-nam, Kim Young-choon, Kim Il-chol, Chun Byung-ho, Yon Hyung-muk, Han Sung-ryong, Ke Eung-tae, Lee Yong-moo, Lee Eul-sol, Paik Hak-rim, Kim Chol-man, Yang Hyung-sup, and Choi Tae-bok.

A personnel reshuffle was carried out during this meeting, and a new list was subsequently released during the military parade and rally celebrating the 55<sup>th</sup> founding anniversary (September 9, 2003). The new list showed Kim Jong-il, Kim Young-nam, Cho Myung-rok, Park Sung-chol, Kim Young-joo, Park Bong-joo, Kim Young-choon, Kim Il-chol, Yon Hyung-muk, Lee Yong-moo, Jun Byung-ho, Han Sung-ryong, Ke Eung-tae, Kim Chol-man, Choi Tae-bok, Yang Hyung-sup, Kim Kook-tae, Chung Ha-chol, Kiim Joong-rin, Chang Sung-woo, Kwak Bom-ki, Ro Doo-chol, Jun Seung-hoon, Kim Yoon-hyuk, Lee Eul-sol, Paik Hak-rim, and Kim Ik-hyun. So, the list showed very little change, except for Lee Eul-sol and Paik Hak-rim, who were removed from the NDC membership, hence dropped lower in the list of hierarchy.<sup>8</sup>

The rise of military leaders in the hierarchy means that their political stature is growing even though the party still exercises control over the military. This trend is also apparent in North Korea's publications. In the past, North Korea used to list "party-people-military" as the three pillars of the socialist capability for self-reliance. Recently, North Korean publications list them as "party-military-people." It is reported that Kim Jong-il ordered in February 1997 to upgrade the status of the military when he said, "We must properly define the status of the party, the military, and the people. Above all, we need the People's Armed Forces to safeguard the great works of

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<sup>8</sup> A central reporting session commemorating the 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the nomination of Kim Jong-il to the position of NDC Chairman was held on April 8, 2004. The list of hierarchy was as follows: Kim Young-nam, Cho Myung-rok, Yon Hyung-muk, Kim Young-chun, Kim Il-chol, Lee Yong-mu, Chun Byung-ho, Han Sung-ryong, Kim Chol-man, Yang Hyung-sop, Kim Kuk-tae, Chung Ha-chol, Kim Joong-rin, Kim Ki-nam and Lee Eul-sol. (Kim Jong-il did not attend this session.).

the party and to protect our fatherland and ‘our own style’ socialist system.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Kim Chol-woo, *General Kim Jong-il's Military-first Politics* (Pyongyang: Pyongyang Pub. Co., 2000), p.278.





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### III. Background of the Military-first Politics

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Around the year 1990, North Korea was facing two major developments that threatened to bring down its system. The first was the external development, symbolized by the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the socialist bloc in Eastern Europe. The other was the internal development, triggered by the rapidly exacerbating economic conditions, food shortage and the subsequent deterioration of social control functions.

The Rodong Shinmun recently recalled this situation in terms of a period “when “packs of reactionaries of history rushed in from without and extreme difficulties of livelihood within posed horrendous threats to people’s survival.”<sup>10</sup> The newspaper was describing external as well as internal threats impending at the time. Indeed, the internal economic hardship

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<sup>10</sup> Song Hyo-sam, “With Suryong toward a Brilliant Future,” *The Rodong Shinmun*, April 18, 2004.

drove North Korea into a serious crisis as much as the external systemic threats.

As North Korea entered the 1990s, its economic growth rate dropped into negative; Kim Il-sung passed away; and the food ration system collapsed. As a result, an unknown number of North Koreans deserted their homes and began to float around in other regions in search for food.

Up until this point, the North Korean authorities were able to exercise strict controls over unauthorized movements across the prescribed boundaries. In the face of increasing numbers of floaters and peddlers, they had no other recourse but to relax the restrictions and allow certain types of movement. Now that the food ration system has collapsed, the authorities could not check the inhabitants from moving around without travel permits, nor could they prevent the spread of markets where people sold, bought and exchanged grains and other foodstuffs.

As the number of mobile population increased, effective control of information was impossible and organized activities such as the normal operation of workplaces and schools became difficult. Increasingly, fewer people reported for work at factories; the community life system became nominal; and political study sessions were not welcome anywhere. The voices criticizing the Kim Il-sung/Kim Jong-il duo increased among the people, and the graffiti and slogans critical of the North Korean system cropped up in many places.

Furthermore, the collective lifestyle, which used to be a distinct mark of the North Korean society, began to crumble, and the

more egotistic and individualistic behaviors increased among the people. In an effort to survive, people would cut up factory facilities and sell off for food. Many items of value would be looted and vandalized, and daily necessities would be traded in black-markets, not to mention frequent crimes committed in the process. During this period, the North Korean authorities issued many stern warnings and proclamations against illegal and illicit activities and tightened security agencies. But, these measures only served to reveal the level of severity of its restive population.<sup>11</sup>

North Korea itself named this period as the “Hardship March.” By 1998, however, the chronic food shortage and economic difficulty have improved somewhat, but social disintegration, started by the food shortage and economic hardship, continued to deteriorate. The number of North Koreans defectors across the Chinese border was increasing every year, and the number of displaced North Koreans also increased. Of course, many families all over North Korea were broken up and dissolved as a result.<sup>12</sup>

If this situation were left unattended, there was a possibility of the so-called “disturbance from below.” Local civil disturbances could be suppressed without mobilizing the military, but if disturbances were to take place on a national scale, the troops will have to be called in because the only organization that will respond to order from above in a disintegrating society is the military.

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<sup>11</sup> Park Hyeong Jung, *The Crisis and Change of the North Korean System in the 1990s*, (Seoul: KINU, 1997), pp.17-57.

<sup>12</sup> KINU ed., *The Unification Environment and Inter-Korean Relations: 1998-1999* (Seoul: KINU, 1998), p.14.

For this reason, Kim Jong-il has chosen a policy of actively utilizing the military under the banner of “military-first politics.” At a meeting with his confidants, Kim Jong-il said, “As I have long emphasized, a regime is safeguarded by the force of arms. This is the truth that has been proven through history.”<sup>13</sup> The idea is to prevent the fracture or collapse of the system by augmenting the party’s social control functions by relying on the military. This is why the North Korean armed forces stand as the most important political base supporting the Kim Jong-il regime today.

Be that as it may, however, the system-protective role the military plays in the Kim Jong-il regime is only the basic one. Currently, the military is a labor force that is mobilized for massive construction works and an economic business group that is engaged in arms production for export and foreign currency purposes. This is why the military is encouraged to play the role “not only of the protector of socialism but also of the creator of happiness.”<sup>14</sup> In short, the North Korean military under the “military-first politics” is being actively utilized as a labor force in economic construction and as the “main battle force in building a ‘Strong and Prosperous Nation.’” The military is an indispensable labor force for the construction of various social infrastructure projects. And, as such, the soldiers are sent to construction sites and dispatched to farmlands to help improve agricultural output.

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<sup>13</sup> Kim Jong-il, *On Promoting a Social Environment Emphasizing a Strong Military and People’s Armed Forces*, During conversations with the senior workers of the KWP Central Committee, Feb. 4, 1992, (Pyongyang: KWP Pub. 1998), p.4

<sup>14</sup> Kim Chol-wu, *General Kim Jong-il’s Military First Politics*, p.39.

North Korea praises its military in glowing terms, saying “the People’s Army is always the first to grab the party’s economic policies and carry out the tasks fully.” If Kim Jong-il’s instructions were to “increase fish-farming, the military built fish-farms. If building basic food factories was urgent, the military built salt-refining factories and soy-bean-paste factories.”<sup>15</sup>

Some of the economic facilities the People’s Army has built since the 1995 natural disasters include the following: The Chungryu bridge, the No. 2 Kumreung Tunnel, the Gaechon-Taesung Lake Irrigation works, the Anbyon Youth Electricity-generating Works, the Taechon Electric Works, the Pyongyang-Hyangsan Sightseeing Highway, the Pyongyang Ostrich Farm, the Hwangju Chicken Farm, the Kuwolsan Resort, the Kangwondo Naepyeong Electric Works, the September 9<sup>th</sup> Street in Pyongyang, the Pyongyang 4.25 Inn, a pharmaceutical research lab, a syringe factory, the Galma Resort in Wonsan, and the Rainbow Tunnel along the Pyongyang-Wonsan Expressway.

The military mobilization for economic purposes is inevitable in light of the serious shortage of labor force, which is a result of the decision to maintain massive armed forces. Even the North Korean authorities admit this fact: “In our country, many healthy young men who should play major roles in economic projects are serving in the military. For this reason, it is an important issue to get the assistance from the military for large construction projects that require enormous manpower.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *Chosun Central Broadcast*. July 24, 2001.

<sup>16</sup> Kim Duk-hyon, “People’s Armed Forces are Protectors of Fatherland and the People and Active Participant in Building Socialism,” *The Worker* (November, 1986), p.23.

Furthermore, North Korea seriously lacks energy resources and earth-moving equipment, which is another reason why many construction projects have to rely on military manpower.

In addition, the military is also playing the role of “infusing into society the ideological spirit, morality and culture, the spirit of revolutionary struggle, and healthy life styles.”<sup>17</sup> One of the lessons that North Korea learned in the process of Eastern Europe’s demise was that if it allowed the intrusion of imperialist ideology and culture, its society would change and disintegrate. Disorder and chaos would follow, and ultimately would even ruin the “prizes of revolution.”<sup>18</sup> Consequently, the military is mobilized to stay alert against the intrusion of imperialist ideology and culture and to circulate the “revolutionary military spirit” in the society.<sup>19</sup> In other words, “If the solid spirits, decent morality, civilized lifestyles and healthy cultural mind were to rule over the society, no alien elements of ideology and habit could survive in our society and the imperialist ideas and culture could not intrude.” The North Koreans argue that it is for these reasons that “the revolutionary military is in the vanguard of developing the revolutionary ideas and culture, and the development of national ideology and culture is inseparable from the strengthening of the revolutionary military.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ko Sang-jin, “Fundamental Characteristics of Great Leader Kim Jong-il’s Military-first Politics,” *The Philosophical Studies*, Vol. 1 (1999), p.18.

<sup>18</sup> Cho Taek-bom, “We must alert to the attempts to intrude with reactionary ideas and culture,” *The Rodong Shinmun*, Sept. 14, 2004.

<sup>19</sup> North Korea demands the people to emulate the “revolutionary military spirit,” which the soldiers displayed to surmount various difficulties in the process of constructing the Anbyon Youth Electric Plan in Kangwon Province, of which the first stage was completed in 1996, and the last phase in October 2000.

<sup>20</sup> <http://drpkorea.com/special/leader/index.php> (As of August 18, 2004).

As we have seen, the North Korean military is performing vital roles for the country as a whole, including the national defense, economic construction, and the generation of revolutionary spirits for the society.





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## IV. National Defense Commission and the Central Military Affairs Committee

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There are signs that KWP party organizations are not functioning properly. For example, the plenary session of the party's 'central committee' apparently has not met since the 21st meeting of the sixth session in December 1993. The basis for this assessment is that there has not been any new appointment for such positions as Political affairs committee members, Alternate members, party secretaries, or military committee members. These positions are supposed to be elected at the plenary session of the party central committee.

As indicated earlier, North Korea had announced the nomination of Kim Jong-il as the general secretary of the party, a vacant position since the death of Kim Il-sung, on October 8, 1997 through a 'special announcement' of the party central committee and the central military affairs committee. The party regulations required the election of this position through the official plenary session, but this requirement was replaced by

a more convenient “special announcement.”

In addition, both the political affairs committee and the standing committee of the bureau do not appear to be functioning properly either. These are the central decision-making organs of the party and responsible for organizing and guiding all the party’s projects during the period between party plenary sessions. Today, however, these committees remain in name only and Kim Jong-il is the only remaining member in the standing committee of the Political Affairs Committee.

According to the testimony of Hwang Jang-yop (the former party secretary who defected to South Korea), these committees have never met between the death of Kim Il-sung (July 1994) and the time he defected in 1997.<sup>21</sup> But, Radio Pyongyang had reported February 25, 2000 on a political affairs committee meeting without indicating the time or place.

The political affairs committee meeting was mentioned during the Radio’s special report on the activities of Kim Jong-il after Kim Il-sung’s death, entitled “the Great and Shining Five Years that will last in History.” The radio in the same program reported on the decision-making process within the leadership group, including the location of Kim Il-sung Mausoleum and the postponement of nomination of Kim Jong-il to the position of general secretary. The broadcast said, “Without exception, governments of the world would convene an emergency political meeting to determine the successor once the head of state passed away. What about our own country? Ignoring this practice, the political affairs committee meeting held during

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<sup>21</sup> Lee Jong-suk, *Understanding Contemporary North Korea - A New Look* (Seoul: History Critique, 2000), p.21.

the period of mourning discussed the issue of preserving the lofty and eternal veneration of the Great Suryong (leader) in the image of his lifetime.” In light of the fact that the “mourning period” lasted from July 8th through the 17th, it is believed that the political affairs committee meeting was held sometime during this time frame. Specifically, the meeting would have taken place in the morning of July 9th, since Kim Il-sung’s death was announced in a “special report” released at noon of the same day. Also announced were the State Funeral, the “medical conclusions” about the cause of his death, and the list of Funeral Committee members. Furthermore, it would appear that the political affairs committee meetings were held several times after Kim Il-sung’s death. For example, Radio Pyongyang reported in February of 1999 that Kim Jong-il convened a political affairs committee meeting on July 17, 1994 to discuss the issue of economic recovery.<sup>22</sup>

In addition, the “Youth Vanguard” dated September 8th, 2001, had reported that a political affairs committee meeting on September 4, 1998, decided, “To abolish the Jusok title since our only Jusok has passed away. And, since the title Jusok can only be used to designate our Suryong (leader), the new socialist constitution removed all provisions related to Jusok, and the position of Jusok was also abolished.” It was also reported in the South Korean press that Kim Jong-il commented during a political affairs committee meeting on February 4, 1999, “Without strengthening our People’s Army, we would not be able to preserve the already-won prizes of our revolutionary struggle, or proceed with the construction of a socialist society, not to mention the unification of the country.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *Yonhap News*, February 25, 2000.

So, we have several indications that the political affairs committee meetings were held during this period, but it is also clear that under the Kim Jong-il regime the previously high stature and major roles of the political affairs committee have by and large disappeared since 1997. For example, the sponsoring organizations announced for the National Founding Day ceremonies have gone through following changes: Before 1994, they were the “Party Central Committee and the Government as delegated by the Party Political Affairs Committee;” Between 1995 and 1997, the “Party Central Committee and the Government as delegated by Chairman of NDC and supreme commander Kim Jong-il;” From 1998 to 2003, the “Party Central Committee and the Government as delegated by the General Secretary, Chairman of NDC and supreme commander Kim Jong-il.” The ceremonies celebrating the Founding of the Armed Forces were sponsored by the “Party Political Affairs Committee as delegated by Comrade Kim Il-sung” until 1991; In 1992, the sponsor was “the Political Affairs Committee and the Central Military Affairs Committee;” In 1993 by the “Political Affairs Committee and the Party Central Military Affairs Committee as delegated by the Great Leader Kim Il-sung and Supreme Commander Kim Jong-il;” In 1994-1996 they were the “Political Affairs Committee and the Party Central Military Affairs Committee as delegated by Supreme commander and Comrade Kim Jong-il;” In 1997-1999 the “Party Central Committee and the Party Central Military Affairs Committee as delegated by Supreme commander and Comrade Kim Jong-il;” and from 2000 they became the “Party Central Committee and the Party Military Affairs Committee as delegated by General Secretary,

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<sup>23</sup> *The Chosun.com*, June 21, 2001.

Chairman of NDC, Supreme Commander and Comrade Kim Jong-il.”

It would mean that the body representing the central party has been changed from the political affairs committee that used to routinely lead the party projects to the more nominal and symbolic Party Central Committee. Since the Party Central Committee does not routinely discuss or decide party policies at its official meetings, this arrangement could not be regarded as a normal operation of the party’s highest decision-making process.<sup>24</sup>

This phenomenon brings up more questions, especially in view of the fact that most state agencies have returned to normal operations since the first meeting of 10th session of SPA in September 1998. Some analysts even point out that the fact the most frequently used title for Kim Jong-il is Chairman of NDC, reflects the lack of his confidence in the party projects and his negative evaluation of the leadership quality of the party.<sup>25</sup>

As a matter of fact, Kim Jong-il severely criticized the party central committee and other party organizations and their members, complaining that the government was becoming anarchical due to the food shortage; that the party projects were not accomplishing anything due to the inept party organizations;

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<sup>24</sup> Lee Dae-kun, “The Political Roles and Limits of the Korean People’s Armed Forces: with emphasis on Party-Military Relations in the Kim Jong-il Era,” *Korea Univ. Doctoral Dissertation* (1999), pp.68-71.

<sup>25</sup> Lee Kye-man, “The Principles of Organizing State Agencies under North Korean Constitution and their Characteristics,” *The Journal of North Korean Studies*, Vol. 7, No.2 (2003) p.18.

and that confusions were increasing in the construction of a socialist society.<sup>26</sup>

But, there is no evidence that this weakening of party functions was so serious as to damage the so-called party's preponderant position. In North Korea, the party still remains as the supreme organization that controls, organizes and directs various projects in the political, economic, cultural and military fields. It also executes political guidance over state agencies and the military. This is well expressed in such phrases as "the military-first politics fundamentally aims to ensure the unlimited loyalty of the military to the great tasks of the party."<sup>27</sup>

The objective of the military-first politics is basically to make the military to be fervently faithful to the "party rule principle" under a strict party control so that other social groups will emulate the military in their loyalty to the party. This policy would eventually increase the influence of the party in the military, and result in a strong bond between the party and the military. Since "the party and the military are inseparable, the projects to strengthen the military are the same as the projects to strengthen the party." Given this line of thinking, "active measures" are, in fact, taken such as promoting military leaders to high positions of the party.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Kim Jong-il, "Due to the food shortage, we are becoming anarchical" (Dec. 7, 1996). See *The Chosun Monthly* (Seoul: April 1997), p.308.

<sup>27</sup> Ko Sang-jin, *Basic Characteristics of Military-first Politics of Great Leader Comrade Kim Jong-il*, p.18

<sup>28</sup> There is an assertion that Kim Jong-il "filled major staff positions of the KWP with core officers who were well-trained in the People's Armed Forces." See Park Jung-nam, "The Brilliant and Lasting Achievement in the history of the Party building in the era of Military-first Politics," *The Rodong Shinmun*, Aug. 5, 2004.

Even though the role of the military is emphasized and praised, what Kim Jong-il praises is the military's spirit and performance of party projects, which he demands other party organizations in the society and their workers should learn, His dichotomy was not between the party and the military, but between the party organizations in the society and those within the military. The weakening of party functions in the 1990s did not mean the malfunction of entire party organizations but the deterioration of those in the society. In fact, the party functions within the military have always been solid and unaffected. So, the military is not replacing the roles of the party or the government, but actively pursuing to restore the weakened functions in them. In the face of declining revolutionary spirits in the society, North Korea is attempting to reinforce the revolutionary spirit in the party, people and the nation through the military examples.<sup>29</sup>

Under the Kim Jong-il regime, North Korea frequently announces important decisions or statements in a joint name of the party central committee and the party central military affairs committee. Such examples include the announcement of Kim Jong-il to be the party general secretary on October 8, 1997, and the announcement April 1998 of party slogans for the 50th anniversary of the nation's founding and the 55th anniversary of the founding of KWP.<sup>30</sup>

Even President Kim Young-nam's September 1998 speech

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<sup>29</sup> Lee Tae-sup, "A Study on the North Korean Economic Crisis in the 1990s and the Transformation into a Military System," *A Collection of the Papers of Young Researchers: The North Korean Realities - Political Sector* (Seoul: Ministry of Unification, 2001) p.263.

<sup>30</sup> *The Rodong Shinmun*, April 21, 1998 and Aug. 1, 2000

nominating Kim Jong-il to the position of Chairman of NDC took the format of reporting to the SPA upon recommendations of the party central committee and the party military affairs committee.<sup>31</sup> Especially in a dinner speech that China's Hu Jintao gave in his honor, Kim Jong-il also said, "I heartily congratulate the new Chinese leadership including Comrade Ho Kum-do in the name of KWP central committee, party central military affairs committee, and the National Defense Commission." Mentioning only the party central committee and NDC would appear to have been sufficient. But, he made a point of mentioning the party military affairs committee, also.<sup>32</sup>

Also, a report on Kim Jong-il's visit to the Kim Il-sung Mausoleum on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of his death said, "Flower baskets were laid in front of Comrade Kim Il-sung's statue in the joint name of KWP central committee, military affairs committee, and NDC."<sup>33</sup> If we look at the hierarchy of military organizations at an event to which Kim Jong-il brought many military leaders, it is clear that the stature and authority of the party central military affairs committee have not diminished. This fact is again proven when in commemoration of the 56th founding anniversary the flower baskets were laid in front of "the Fatherland Liberation War Victory Memorial Statue" in the joint name of the party central committee and the central military affairs committee.<sup>34</sup>

The stature of the party central military affairs committee was

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<sup>31</sup> *The Rodong Shinmun*, Sept. 5, 1998.

<sup>32</sup> *The Rodong Shinmun*, April 23, 2004.

<sup>33</sup> *KCNA*, July 8, 2004.

<sup>34</sup> *The Rodong Shinmun*, Sept. 10, 2004.



well expressed in Kim Jong-il's congratulatory message of September 20<sup>th</sup> to Hu Jintao when he succeeded the post of chairman of the CCP central military committee from Jang Zemin. In the message, Kim Jong-il said, "On the occasion of your ascension to the position of chairman, I have the honor of conveying to you the most fervent congratulations in my name as well as in the name of KWP central military affairs committee... I trust that the traditional Korean-Chinese friendship will further improve by the joint efforts of our two armed forces."<sup>35</sup> From this message, it is clear that the authority representing the North Korean armed forces is the party central military affairs committee.

Meanwhile, because North Korea itself, under the 'military-first politics,' declared that it has strengthened the status and competence of the National Defense Commission (NDC), most experts seem to agree that the NDC is a new state organization that exercises a wide-ranging control over all national affairs.

The role of NDC according to the constitutional provisions is the "management" and "guidance" of military affairs. Constitutionally, the command authority over the military belongs to the chairman of NDC, and to the party central military affairs committee according to the party statute. Originally, the NDC was not an agency charged with military command authority, and was not an important organization until the 1998 constitution gave stronger power and higher authority. This was true if we note the fact that during the national crisis in the mid-1990s following Kim Il-sung's death such important persons as the Director General of Political Affairs and the Joint Chiefs of

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<sup>35</sup> *The Rodong Shinmun*, Sept. 21, 2004.

Staff were not included among the members of NDC for three years. For example, when prominent military leaders like Ju do-il, Choi Kwang and Kim Kwang-jin passed away, their military positions were filled, but their successors were not given the NDC positions the deceased used to occupy, which in turn reduced the number of NDC membership down to five and the NDC became a nominal organization. The time the NDC returned to its normal was when Kim Jong-il was re-nominated to the NDC chair in 1998 and the membership was increased to 10 by including the Director General of Political Affairs and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The fact that core military leaders were not included in the NDC in times of most critical national crisis is evidence that NDC was not closely related with military command and control. Another supporting point is that since the overhaul of the NDC in September 1998, the party's military affairs director who used to direct and control the military from the party was left out of the NDC.<sup>36</sup>

Since the constitution gave NDC the authority for “overall military management,” it would appear that the NDC consists of the military-related leaders including the Ministry of People's Armed Forces, Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Rear-area Forces, the Protective Force, the Director General of Political Affairs, and the Second Economic Committee.<sup>37</sup> In short, NDC is a body of leaders of military high command and military logistics.

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<sup>36</sup> Lee Dae-kun, *The Political Roles and Limits of the Peoples' Armed Forces, with emphasis on the Party-Military Relations in the Kim Jong-il Era*, p.127.

<sup>37</sup> Chung Chang-hyun, *Kim Jong-il Up Close and Personal* (Seoul: Toji Pub. Co., 1999), p.224.

The NDC was overhauled again at the first meeting of the 11<sup>th</sup> session of SPA in August 2003. Lee Eul-sol and Paik Hak-rim, both in the 80s and known as the original “partisan struggle” leaders, retired and Choi Yong-su and Paik Se-bong were appointed to the NDC membership. Currently, NDC has nine members including Chairman Kim Jong-il, First Vice Chairman and Director General of Political Affairs Cho Myung-rok, Vice chairman and Party Secretary for Jakang Province Yon Hyung-muk, Field Marshall Lee Yong-mu, Chairman of Joint Chiefs Kim Young-chun, Minister of People’s Armed Forces Kim Il-chol, Party Secretary Chun Byung-ho, former People’s Security Minister Choi Yong-su, and Paik Se-bong. The advance of Yon Hyung-muk is noticeable and Paik Se-bong appears to have filled the position of Kim Chol-man who used to be the head of the Second Economic Committee.

<Table 1> The NDC Personnel Changes over time

Time	Chair	First Vice Chair	Vice Chair	Members
1990	Kim Il-sung	Kim Jong-il	Oh Jin-woo, Choi Kwang	Chun Byung-ho Kim Chol-man Lee Ha-il, Lee Eul-sol Ju Do-il Kim Kwang-jin Kim Bong-ryul
1993	Kim Jong-il	Oh Jin-woo	Choi Kwang	(Same as above)
1995	Kim Jong-il	---	Choi Kwang	Chun Byung-ho Kim Chol-man Lee Ha-il Lee Eul-sol Kim Kwang-jin
1997	Kim Jong-il			Chun Byung-ho Kim Chol-man Lee Ha-il Lee Eul-sol
1998	Kim Jong-il	Cho Myung-rok	Kim Il-chol, Lee Yong-mu	Kim Young-chun Yon Hyung-muk Lee Eul-sol Paik Hak-rim Chun Byung-ho Kim Chol-man
2003	Kim Jong-il	Cho Myung-rok	Yon Hyung-muk, Lee Yong-mu	Kim Young-chun Kim Il-chol Chun Byung-ho Choi Yong-soo Paik Se-bong

In terms of composition, clearly the party central military affairs committee is better composed for the exercise of control over the military. For the past 20 years the party military affairs

committee was filled with either active officers or retired officers. In the military affairs committee the top brains of the armed forces are assembled in one place, including the minister of people's armed forces, director general of political affairs, joint chiefs of staff, director of party military affairs, party civil defense director, director of protective force, commander of Pyongyang Garrison Command, navy and air force commanders in chief, and director of national security.<sup>38</sup>

Also, every year the party central military affairs committee, not the NDC, has sponsored the armed forces day celebrations. Since 1995 the party central military affairs committee has issued all congratulatory messages to all military events, although the party central committee used to send them prior to 1995. For example, the central committee sent messages to an 'artillery event' in October 1992, the 'rear-area military workers' event' in March of 1993, 'the commanders' and political workers' event' in October, and 'army engineers' event' in November. The sponsor of the 'ninth agitators' rally' in January 1995 was the central committee, but the central military affairs committee sent messages to all subsequently military events such as the 'company commanders and company political guides' rally' in March 1995, the 'third youth workers' rally' in November 1996, the 'company commanders' rally' in February 1999 and the 'company political guides' event' in February 2000. Since the 'military-first politics' began in January 1995, we can assume that the party central military affairs committee's control activities over the military were strengthened from this point in time.

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<sup>38</sup> Lee Dae-kun, *op.cit.*, pp.132-135. Of the NDC members, Kim Jong-il, Cho Myung-rok, Kim Il-chol and Kim Young-chun are also members of the Party Military Affairs Committee.

Furthermore, until 1994 the supreme commander of the armed forces used to belong to the party central military affairs committee. The “Chosun (Korea) Central Annual” used to record all the party and state agencies and their leaders until 1994. And, it recorded “the chairman of the party military affairs committee Kim Il-sung; and supreme commander of the armed forces Kim Jong-il.”

Under the Party-State system, so long as there exists a military affairs entity within the party, the military affairs department on the “state” side (or, executive side) could not exercise major functions. The question, then, is whether the party central military affairs committee is functioning properly under the current North Korean system.

One thing different about NDC under Kim Jong-il is that the breadth of its control over various state (government) affairs has expanded. For example, touching on the “mutual cessation of inflammatory exchanges along the frontline (DMZ)” Kim Jong-il told the South Korean guests at a farewell dinner following the June 15 2000 summit that “I instructed military leaders at a NDC meeting to stop the inflammatory broadcasts, but some generals argued that even if we stopped the South would continue to engage in them. So, I shot back and persuaded them by saying that let us set the example first.”<sup>39</sup> In August 2000, when asked by a visiting group of South Korean news media presidents as to the timing of his return visit to South Korea, he said the issue was being discussed between “the foreign ministry and NDC,” indicating that the area of NDC’s involvement in the decision-making process

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<sup>39</sup> *The Dong-A Ilbo*, June 17, 2000.

was rather comprehensive.<sup>40</sup>

There are other indicators that would help the assessment of the stature of NDC. On August 15, 2004, Russian President Putin sent a congratulatory message on the 59<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Korea's liberation from Japan. It was addressed from Russian President Putin to Kim Jong-il, the chairman of NDC of DPRK (North Korea).<sup>41</sup> This will indicate that Russia regards Putin's North Korean counterpart as the chairman of NDC.

Upon return from a visit to China, Kim Jong-il send a thank-you message to China's Hu Jintao. It was addressed from the "General Secretary of KWP and NDC Chairman of DPRK" to the "General Secretary of the Central Committee of CCP and Chairman of PRC"<sup>42</sup> This is another indication that the North Korean position corresponding to the Chairman of PRC was the chairman of NDC.<sup>43</sup>

Another interesting aspect is that NDC is sponsoring various banquets for the visiting foreign guests as the representative body of the state. For example, NDC hosted banquets in honor of a visiting Russian plenipotentiary from Russia's Far Eastern Provinces on April 25, 2002, for a folk ballet group from the Russian National Academy that came to North Korea to celebrate Kim Jong-il's birthday on February 14, 2004, another Russian ensemble from the Russian academy on June 12, in honor of a visiting Chinese party and government delegation

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<sup>40</sup> *The Joong-ang Ilbo*, Aug. 14, 2000.

<sup>41</sup> *KCNA*, Aug. 15, 2004.

<sup>42</sup> *The Rodong Shinmun*, April 22, 2004.

<sup>43</sup> *KCNA*, April 26, 2002; Feb. 14, 2004; June 12, 2004; Sept. 10, 2004; and Sept. 14, 2004.

on September 10, and for a Chinese art troupe on September 13.<sup>44</sup>

In sum, even under the Kim Jong-il regime, it still appears to be the party central military affairs committee that exercises the command and control authority over the military. And, there is little indication that the authority or functions of this military committee has been transferred to NDC. However, so long as the role of the military under the “military-first politics” is not confined to military affairs but expanded to overall social sectors, the organization that directs military activities and coordinates with other agencies could not be the party central military affairs committee. For these reasons, the roles of NDC, in addition to the role of representing the state, appear to be expanding into the decision and policy-making areas.

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<sup>44</sup> In most events, deputy chairman of NDC Yon Hyung-muk had given speeches.



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## V. The Changing Status and Functions of Party Organizations

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It has been widely believed that KWP is the central ruling authority in North Korea. But, recently there are numerous signs and symptoms indicating that the stature and functions of KWP have been seriously weakened. The party congress was not held since the sixth congress in 1980, and the party central committee's plenary meetings, which were held twice a year, have not taken place since the 21<sup>st</sup> plenary meeting of the sixth SPA session in December 1993. Furthermore, the Politburo and its standing committee exist in name only. In the mean time, however, the position of military leaders in the political hierarchy has risen sharply and the prestige of NDC has been strengthened. In contrast, the status and organization of mid- to low-level party units, such as provincial branches and elementary organizations, have markedly declined in the process of economic hardship in the 1990s.

## 1. The Secretariat of the Central Party

The stature of Central Party is directly related with that of the Secretariat and its 'Organization and Guidance Section (OGS).' The potential rival of the Secretariat would be the higher echelon of the military and the cabinet. In the past, the Secretariat under the direct control of Kim Jong-il used to supervise the cabinet and the higher echelon of the military. Now that Kim Jong-il came to reign over all three organizations, the Secretariat also had to be relegated to one of three organizations under Kim's direct control. At least, nominally, the central party still exercise control over the military and the cabinet through various party mechanisms under its control, Given the overall trend and Kim Jong-il's policies, however, the cabinet and the military appear to be gaining the ascendancy.

Most of all, we can detect significant changes in the portfolio of specialized sections of the Secretariat in the 1990s. Several facts are available from an analysis of these changes. First, there are sections that continued to exist over the entire period under review. They include: The four sections that are responsible for internal party affairs and organizational controls, such as the Organization and guidance, the Propaganda and agitation, the Cadre, and the Social organizations; the specialized area sections such as the International affairs, the Military affairs, the Agricultural policy inspection, and the Science-education; the external/South Korean operations sections, such as the United front, the Socio-cultural, the External information analysis, and the Operations; and, the sections for Party-related economic activities and administration of the Secretariat, such as the Finance-accounting, the General affairs. Second, there were sections that have been abolished in the early 1990s.

<Table 2> Changes in Specialized Sections of KWP Secretariat

	1985	1991	1994	1995	1997	2003
Organization guidance	×	×	×	×	×	×
Propaganda Agitation	×	×	×	×	×	×
Cadre	×	×	×	×	×	×
International affairs	×	×	×	×	×	×
United front	×	×	×	×	×	×
Socio cultural	×	×	×	×	×	×
	(External liaison)					(External liaison)
External information analysis	×	×	×	×	×	×
	(Analysis)	(Analysis)				(Room 35)
Agricultural policy inspection	×	×	×	×	×	×
	(Agriculture)	(Agriculture)				
Science education	×	×	×	×	×	×
	(Science, Education)					
Finance Accounting	×	×	×	×	×	×
Labor groups	×	×	×	×	×	×
General affairs	×	×	×	×	×	×
Military affairs	×	×	×	×	×	×
Operations	×	×	×	×	×	×
	(Liaison)					
Economy I	×					
Economy II	×					
Economy III	×					
Economy IV	×					
Economic Planning		×				
Administration		×				
	(Merge with Administration and Small Unit Projects)					
Mechanical engineering	×	×				
Chemical	×	×				
Culture and Art	×	×				
Health	×	×	(Merge with section below)			
		(Youth projects)				
Youth	×	×				
Small Unit for 3 Great Revolutions	×	×	×			
	(Merge with Admin. Above)		(Merge with Youth above)			
Construction	×	×	×			
Transportation						
Heavy industries		×	×			
Light industries		×	×			
Financial planning	×	×	×	×		
Military logistics		×	×	×	×	×
		(Logistics inspection)				
Civil defense		×	×	×	×	×
Economic policy inspection			×	×	×	×
New rooms					×	×
Room 38					×	×
Room 39					×	×

Source: “Annual Who’s Who” by organization, Ministry of Unification, Seoul.

They include the Culture/Art, the Health, the Youth, and the Small Units for 3 Great Revolutions. In 1990, the Administration section was merged with the Organization Guidance section.<sup>45</sup>

Third, the economy-related sections have undergone changes the most. Till mid 1990s, North Korea had divided the economy in various sectors and installed sections in the Secretariat for each sector. But, since 1995 these of sub-sections were simplified by merging them into the section for Economic policy inspection, except for the Agriculture and the Military industry. What is interesting is that even though the section for Agriculture has been renamed to the section for Agricultural policy inspection after 1994, the section for Military industrial policy inspection has changed into the section for Military industry in the same year. This meant that the agricultural affairs were simplified into a policy inspection function, while, in case of the military industry, change has been in the opposite direction. This is a noteworthy change in light of the fact that most other economic sections at the time were simplified into an economic policy inspection section.

The post-1994 changes can be analyzed in terms of policy directions, weakening the Secretariat's function in economic management and strengthening the responsibility of the State Council since 1994 and of the Cabinet after 1998. In October 1994, Kim Jong-il had said, "The State Council is the economic command center that organizes and directs all economic tasks of the nation under its control. All the committees and ministries, as well as other economic actors should concentrate all the

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<sup>45</sup> Hyun Sung-il, "The KWP's Control System over the North Korean Society," *The Survey and Study on North Korea*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Aug. 1997), p.12.

economic issues arising from economic tasks to the State Council and solve the problems under its unified control.”<sup>46</sup> Despite this instruction, however, there is little evidence that the State Council has properly discharged its responsibilities since 1994. During the 1994-1998 period, North Korea’s planned economic system, in fact, went bankrupt, and the role of the military was stepped up even into the productive activities of the economy.<sup>47</sup>

In other words, these economic system reforms had had little effect until 1998, when the overall national system and the power structure were streamlined under the new constitutional revision.<sup>48</sup> Under the new constitution, North Korea put

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<sup>46</sup> Kim Jong-il’s conversations with senior workers of KWP Central Committee, “Let Us Complete the Great Tasks of Beloved Suryong and Highly Revere the Great Suryong Forever,” Dec. 31, 1994, *The Selections of Kim Il-sung*, vol. 13 (Jan.1991-July 1991) (Pyongyang: KWP Pub. 1997), pp.436-437; Also see, Kim Kap-shik, “A Study on North Korea’s Changing Party-state System in the 1990s,” *Studies in the Problems of Peace*, Vol. 5, No.1 (June 2001), pp.255-258.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* Kim Kap-shik in his paper describes as if the “State Council-centered system” appeared suddenly after Kim Il-sung’s death in 1994. But, one of the major emphases Kim Jong-il repeated since 1989 in connection with economic management was to criticize that the Party was doing the job of the State Council. He argued that the Party should concentrate on “internal party projects” such as “ideology and organization projects, and the State Council should carry out economic projects by streamlining its organization and tightening the administrative rules.” See Park Heong-Jung, “The Launch, Scuttling, and Restoring the Partial Reform System: with emphasis on the North Korean Economy from mid-1980s to early 2000,” *The Journal of North Korean Studies*, Vol. 3 (Aug. 2002) pp.114-115.

<sup>48</sup> Cha Moon-suk, “The Factory Management System of the Kim Jong-il Regime: with emphasis on Factory Restructuring and Factory Management under the ‘New Economic Strategy’,” *The Journal of North Korea Research Associations*, Vol. 6, No.1 (Aug. 2002), p.95. Cha observes that since the shift to the Cabinet-centered system, the power relationship within factories has shifted in favor of managers. See, *Ibid.*, pp.121-122.

forward a “strong centralized and uniform guidance for economic tasks.”<sup>49</sup> Specifically, it was meant to enhance the authority of the Cabinet over economic tasks, to concentrate economic tasks on the Cabinet, and to follow the Cabinet’s decisions and instructions. In this connection, North Korea emphasized stronger functions for the government’s central organizations, using the term “the Cabinet system of government or the Cabinet-centered system.”<sup>50</sup> The first meeting of 10th Session of SPA proclaimed, “Having taken a drastic measure of streamlining national institutions and systems for an efficient and straightforward administration of economic tasks, we have greatly enhanced the nation’s authority and competence as the economic command center···”<sup>51</sup> Second, the objective was to develop economic plans accurately and ensure their strict implementation. For this purpose, North Korea has rearranged or abolished 44 multi-purpose production firms in 1998, including the Enterprise Consortium(Yeonhap Kiupso). North Korea also enacted the “People’s Economic Planning Law” in April 1999. By 2001, North Korea resurrected the system of the old Enterprise Consortium, and rearranged a total of 15 Enterprise Consortium companies under the control of the Cabinet.

In addition, North Korea transferred the previous regional accounting system to the new accounting system by sectors. This appears to have been an attempt to change the accounting system centered on provincial party branches, which naturally

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<sup>49</sup> Choi Young-ok, “Strengthening the Centralized Uniform State Guidance on Economic Projects is a Major Requirement for the Construction of ‘Strong and Prosperous Nation’,” *The Economic Study*, Vol. 4 (2000), p.6.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* p.6.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

would have parochial interests, to an accounting system centered on sector ministries. This system is said to be “superior because it allows a smoother collection and operation of the centralized funds.” This new “accounting system by sectors” is a system in which the sectorial ministry and its managerial section would collect the “state revenue” from the enterprises, and they would in turn forward to the Finance Ministry. “Under the former accounting system, the central authority could control the collection of the state revenue from the enterprises only through the supervision of the provincial financial authorities. But, under the new system the state (central authority), thorough sector ministries, will be able to directly control and manage the ‘state revenue’ itself paid by the productive enterprises.<sup>52</sup> This new system, then, will certainly weaken the provincial control over the local businesses and strengthen that of the central authority. North Korea explains that this new accounting system by sectors is a system in which the state collects directly from the enterprises “every month and by items in the form of physical goods produced.”

North Korea, however, reintroduced the regional accounting system in 2002, because either the accounting by sectors has been otherwise transformed or it failed to bring the expected results. The “regional accounting system” appears to have been revived to strengthen the regional finances and their control. Under this system, all factories and enterprises were required to pay in part of their due income through the regional governments of their residence. North Korea said this system will “encourage all regional governments to be responsible not

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<sup>52</sup> Park Sung-ho, “The Superiority and Characteristics of the New Government Expenditures and Receipt System,” *The Economic Study*, Vol. 4 (200), p.19.

only for the agencies and enterprises within their respective region, but also for the central government. The regional governments would also be actively engaged in collection and carry out their legal and budgetary duties, so that they could more effectively discharge roles and functions, as well as financial guidance and control within and among the regional units.”<sup>53</sup>

In light of all these developments, the functions of North Korea’s Central Party Secretariat may be summarized in four points as follows: First, through being responsible for party’s organizational and ideological activities, the Secretariat plays the role of comprehensive penetration and control of the entire society and organizations, and of information gathering. Second, it is a vast and opaque economic unit that is responsible for the maintenance and investment of Kim Jong-il’s personal assets and properties known as the “party economy.” Third, it is a mammoth intelligence organization, responsible for the espionage and secret operation regarding foreign countries, including South Korea. And, fourth, its direct managerial function in the economy appears to have been weakened since the mid-1990s as a result of the “Cabinet responsibility” principle.

## **2. The Regional Party Organizations**

It appears that the regional party system has been experiencing a significant disorder due to the economic hardship. First, the levels of control of higher party organizations over the lower organizations, and that of the party over the population have generally weakened. The most important cause for this develop-

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<sup>53</sup> Oh Sun-hee, “Issues in Improving Provincial Budget Structures,” *The Economic Study*, Vol.2, p.44.



ment is that the old planned system, in which the higher units monopolized the supply of goods to the lower units and thereby make the latter subservient to the former, has been crumbled. Though, nominally, North Korea maintained planned system, its authorities have to make the provincial organizations support themselves in 1994. But diminishing ability to supply from higher to lower units meant decreasing control capacity of the former to the latter.

In December 1996, Kim Jong-il complained, “Even today, the party secretaries in the provinces, cities, counties, factories and towns have failed to resolve the food shortage problem, asking the people to solve their own difficulties. Their incompetence forced the people into peddling, and ‘farmers’ markets’ are on the increase, which in turn threatens class fortress of the party.”<sup>54</sup> Meanwhile, the provincial parties could only read instructions from the center and simply pass up to lower units, without showing real capability of implementation. Second, in 1997-98 numerous party cadres, including chief secretaries and lower staff, were arrested with the charges of corruption, leading to a widespread loss of trust in the party. And, third, in the past the State Security Agency or the Military Security Command could not arrest anyone without the approval of chief secretary of the party, who is politically in charge of the suspect, but recently they could arrest anyone without approval if they were sure of crimes committed.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Kim Jong-il, “Due to the food shortage, we are facing an anarchic situation,” *The Chosun Monthly* (Seoul: April 1997), p.310

<sup>55</sup> Originally, the Security Ministry agents used to be assigned to the military units and placed under the control of the Party Committee of the unit. Since the new Security Command was established, however, it began to maintain a system that operated independent of party organizations and the military unit. The new command went beyond conducting surveillance

Given the situation, the relative importance among specialized sections in the Secretariat of the regional party organization has been also undergoing change.<sup>56</sup> In the past, the ‘organization section,’ which is responsible for intra-party political activities, used to have more number of people and more power compared to any other section in the province party organization.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, due to the economic hardship, both of the basic responsibilities of the provincial organizations, the intra-party tasks and the party’s guidance over administrative-economic activities of the local state organizations, have been weakened. However, most weakened was the regional party’s role in the guidance on administrative-economic activities rather than that of “political police” centered on the party’s “organization” section.

Another change was that the power of chief accountants has increased during the economic hardship. The secretary for organizational section is the appointee of the central party, while the chief accountant is the appointee of the provincial party secretary. But, now the provincial branches being responsible for their own expenditures, the role of the accountant has become more important. The chief accountant is responsible for all distributions of consumer goods and other rationed necessities to the

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over military officers and men, and exercised the power of surveillance over the civilians, as well. So, the new command had the power to independently investigate and dispose of cases regardless of the ranks or positions under investigation. See Chung Young-tae, “The Characteristics and Prospects of Change of the Political-Military System under the Kim Jong-il Regime” *Ten Years of Kim Jong-il Regime: Changes and Prospects*, (Seoul, KINU, 2002), p.25

<sup>56</sup> Hereinafter pseudonym “Defector S,” *Interviews with Defector “S”* (Seoul: KINU, July 19, 2004.)

<sup>57</sup> Defector “S” testified, “The main business of party provincial branches is to play major roles in information collection and to check ideological trends, and their main business is not economic projects.”

provincial party organization and to the officials on a graded priority basis. Since the chief accountant manages and supervises all the goods, sometimes even the provincial chief secretary could not override his authority. He became virtually the number two in the provincial party organization.

The chief secretary at the provincial branch exercises appointment authority and is the ultimate decision-maker, so he is very powerful. Taking advantage of position, he would build his personal power base and take economic profits, as well. During the economic hardship, the provincial branches had to support themselves by their own means, which tended to blur the distinction between the official and the personal economic activities. In addition, the control from the central party became loose. As a result, abuse of power for personal gains was on the increase at the provincial party branches.

Some of the examples will include: First, the illicit influence peddling was increasing in personnel appointments. The provincial branch normally trains the staff and sends them off to city and country branches, as well as other workplaces. The directors, deputy directors, and section chiefs at the provincial organization usually serve long-terms, while those below the level of guidance staff will be promoted to other positions after 4-5 years of service. So, in an effort to get appointed to more popular positions, they will bribe their way up and try to build personal contacts with powerful persons. In the process, disputes would erupt within the provincial party branch. During the economic hardship, competition for popular postings has become sharper, because depending on one's position the power, bribes and personal wealth would increase.

Second, the provincial chief secretary and people around him would often develop a symbiotic relationship with wealthy citizens in the region by offering privileges and protection in exchange for personal economic gains. For example, the organization secretary, chief of Office 39 at the central Secretariat, chief secretary and chief accountant of the Kangwon Provincial Branch were all arrested in 1998. They were accused of having given an unlimited power for foreign currency transaction to a wealthy local businessman who had connections with Japanese businessmen. The fact that provincial party organizations were engaged in cronyism and maintained closely knit symbiotic relations with business or personal profiteering networks is evidence that the central party control has been weakening.

### **3. Party Elementary Organization**

#### **<People's neighborhood association>**

The lowest administrative unit in North Korean cities is the “people’s neighborhood association(Inminban).” This neighborhood association is called into session once or twice a week, attended mainly by housewives. The local party committee appoints its leader among the housewives with ‘good’ family background. There are also ‘sanitation deputy leader’ and ‘household deputy leader.’ The neighborhood association leader consults frequently with agents from the State Security Agency and People’s Security Agency. He or she closely watches the behaviors, ideology and personal relations of inhabitants under his or her supervision. If a person under watch committed a crime, he or she is punished in addition to being fired from the position. The association leader is granted the authority to visit homes at any time, day or night, and all guests must be reported to

the leader immediately.<sup>58</sup>

Under their leader, the neighborhood association members are mobilized for patriotic duties and other mobilizations. They have to clean up local streets, collect scrap metals, polish statues and portraits of Kim Il-sung/Kim Jong-il, and attend political meetings. According to an eyewitness testimony, “We are told to assemble at someone’s home at six in the evening. It means that meeting is convened. There, we are told that the party gave us a mission; for example, a certain amount of money, a certain number of buttons, envelopes and letters for soldiers, etc. We must prepare all ‘gift chests’ for soldiers. Sometimes, some families are told to come up with fuel oil for boats. It is said that if you provide fuel oil, you would appear on a TV program...”<sup>59</sup>

Due to the increasing number of population on the travel for food or commercial activities, the control and surveillance functions through people’s neighborhood associations have weakened. Many people live in locations that are not their place of residence, which was unthinkable in the past. In the case of one association in Pyongsung, fully one fourth of its members came from other places or moved out to other locations.<sup>60</sup> In order to revitalize these defunct associations,

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<sup>58</sup> Andrei Lankof, *Under the Roof of Pyongyang: Diaries of Professor Lankof of University of Leningrad on His Life in Pyongyang* (Seoul: Yonhap News, 1991), pp.303-304.

<sup>59</sup> Chang Se-hun, “The Changing Network of City Dwellers’ Social Relations,” *A paper presented at the annual Spring secession of the North Korean Studies Association* (2004), p.10.

<sup>60</sup> Choi Ung-hee reported on June 23, 2004 that during the elections of SPA deputies in 1998, North Korea fell short of voters. So, anyone holding North Korean citizenship (ID card) was able to vote at any polling station.

North Korean authorities had rationed out small amounts of grains or daily necessities through the associations, instructing its leaders to offer them to those who faithfully attend the association. Another ploy was to provide small amounts of cash to the leaders so that they would faithfully carry out their duties.<sup>61</sup>

### **<The Relationship between Party Secretary and Factory Manager>**

As the economic hardship worsened in the 1990s, North Korea's centrally planned economic management system was gradually falling into paralysis. All levels of the system were functioning poorly, including central planning and implementation, production, distribution of output, and evaluation. On the contrary, the de facto autonomy of factories (and workplaces) has appeared since about 1993. Most factories began to exercise greater flexibility in deciding the items of production. Until the early 1990s, there existed efforts to get materials from the partners in plan, fulfill the production targets and distribute output according to plan. Since the mid-1990s, however, the distinction between the official and unofficial supply of materials has disappeared, and the cases of arbitrary disposition of products by the factories increased. Exceptions were for the cases of specific orders from the central government or designated distributions by special orders. In the process, the latitude of factories has increased and they were able to efficiently dispose of their own products.

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And, if you fail to vote, you will be treated as a political criminal, so many North Koreans who had crossed the border into China had to return to cast their votes.

<sup>61</sup> Chang Se-hoon, "The Changing Network of City Dwellers' Social Network," p.11.

With the income, they would purchase necessary materials, pay out to their employees and secure food for them.<sup>62</sup>

Amid these changes, there developed a small but significant change in the relationship between the party secretary and manager in state firms. First, the factories managed production directly, not according to a central plan, and they were also responsible for the livelihood of their employees. Because the manager must now directly control the production process, its role was becoming stronger, while the voice of party secretary was becoming weaker. Unlike the past, when party secretary exercised full control, consultations and/or conflicts between the two began to increase. Concomitantly, the role of the production staff, who were responsible for production or for the procurement of necessary materials, were rapidly growing. And, in large enterprises the autonomy of the manager and middle level staffers was growing in matters of disposition of output, acquisition of necessary materials, and decisions of items to produce. At the same time, cases increased in which the party staff would form cooperative or symbiotic relationships with merchants or factory managers for mutual benefit. As the nature of interests of the local party staff changed, the supervisory power of the central party over the provincial party staff was waning.<sup>63</sup>

The party organization's control over ordinary workers was also weakened. Since the ration system collapsed, the power the state used to wield over ordinary workers has generally

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<sup>62</sup> Lee Suk-ki, "The North Korean Economic Crisis in the 1990s and the Changing Business Style: Controlling the Livelihood-seeking Inhabitants and the Retrogressive Markets," *Doctoral Dissertation* (Seoul National University: Aug. 2003), pp.103-149.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.150-151.

declined so much so that some workers would “normally” not report to work by paying in to the factory or workplace. In the past, there were cases in which some workers would skip work to participate in political party activities, but such cases were also dwindling. Some workers, who got additional income from their own business or from their relatives abroad, provided financial assistance to the managers and party secretaries. This practice has inevitably weakened the party’s control over them. Under the economic hardship, the advantage of joining the KWP has also decreased, which in turn tarnished the luster of party secretaries’ power of recommending individuals to KWP membership, hence the power of party secretaries has decreased.<sup>64</sup> The declining and weakening control over workers was most conspicuous in the provincial factories.<sup>65</sup>

Even though the power of party organizations and chief secretaries was diminishing, many official North Korean documents continued to emphasize the party members’ role in economic tasks of the administrative branch. Even under extreme difficulties, the documents emphasized, the party members had to exert their utmost to fully carry out the party’s economic policies. Only then could they exercise control over workers and successfully carry out the economic tasks, they said.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.160-163.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p.183.

<sup>66</sup> Choi Wan-kyu, Ham Taek-young and Kim Keun-shik, “Restructuring the Project Systems of Provincial Parties: The Duet of Continuity and Change,” *Development and Chang of North Korean Cities* (Seoul: Kyungnam Univ. Press, 2004), pp.16-17.



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## VI. Conclusions

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Since the 1990s, North Korea has faced multiple dimensions of crisis and change, and had to respond and adjust: the collapse of socialist bloc countries, which used to support North Korea; the nuclear issue and international isolation; the extreme economic hardship and changes in the traditional ruling structure.

At the ideological level, North Korea has launched numerous campaigns, including the “Red Banner Ideology,” “Strong and Prosperous Socialist Nation,” “Military-first Politics,” “Emphasis on Science,” and “Pragmatic Socialism.” Since North Korea replaced some members of top-level power elite in 1997-98, it has continued to replace middle and low working-level partisans. In terms of power structure, it has strengthened the position and status of National Defense Commission and its chairman under a “new state system” through the 1998 constitutional revision. This was a logical outcome of the ‘military-first politics’ launched in 1995 in which North Korea

tried to strengthen the status of the military for symbolic and realistic reasons. The status and roles of various party organizations, which were at the heart of internal control and administration, have also undergone significant changes. The authority of party organizations was weakened, and their absolute superiority over other organizations was tarnished and partially lost.

At close examination, however, both continuity and change are found in the North Korean system. The old North Korean political system has neither experienced a complete break nor remained intact. The old system had to adjust itself to new situations. New imperatives were imposed on a regime that wanted to maintain the basic framework of its old system. The ruling structure based on a vast party apparatus was seriously weakened and paralyzed in the face of economic hardship in the 1990s. North Korea's response was to strengthen the role of the military and security agencies, thereby to maintain the old political and ruling structures and to secure domestic stability, and to adjust its ruling ideology according to changing situations. Even though North Korean authorities have taken conservative attitude in the fields of power and ruling structures, critical for the regime maintenance, the level of totalitarian penetration into private lives and economy have been weakened. This trend is clear when we examine the lenient policies North Korean authorities have taken toward "unconventional" activities of the population, keeping their livelihood in the face of faltering socialist economy and rapidly dwindling disposable government subsidies.

The continuity and change in the ruling ideology were also evident as North Korea tried to develop new ruling ideologies

to meet changing circumstances, while trying to retain the “Suryong (Great Leader)” and Juche (Self-reliance) as the two pillars of its ruling ideology. Since North Korea put forward the ideology of “our-style socialism,” in the early 1990s, it has launched several campaigns in succession: the “Red Banner Ideology” since 1995, the “Strong and Prosperous Socialist Nation” since 1998 and the “Military-first Ideology” since 2003. The Red Banner ideology has been promoted in 1995-1997, right after Kim Il-sung’s death, emphasizing perseverance, faith, and comradeship to successfully overcome the so-called “arduous march.” Since 1998, in an effort to give hope for the future and vision for the people who had endured three years of extreme hardship, North Korea proposed the ideology of “Strong and Prosperous Socialist Nation.” At the same time, North Korea also put more emphasis on the slogan of “Military-first Politics,” originated from 1995. With deteriorating international environment because of North Korea’s nuclear weapons developments, in 2003, the “Military-first Ideology” was launched, and from 2004, the regime began to demand mono-color the whole nation with this ideology. In the Military-first Ideology, unlike former variants, the workers are not regarded as the main force of revolution, they are replaced by the soldiers.

At the power elite level, the line-up of top echelon appears to be relatively stable. But, there are strong indications that changes are occurring there also, including natural retirements of old guards and new recruitments of middle and low-level staff, as part of an effort to streamline the post-1998 Kim Jong-il system and to promote new policies. First signs of change inside North Korea’s power elite after Kim Il-sung’s death appeared in or about October 1997 when Kim Jong-il

was officially nominated to the position of general secretary of KWP. Subsequently, Kim Jong-il has replaced a great number of staff in the Cabinet and social organizations through the September 10, 1998 election of deputies. Through the election of 11<sup>th</sup> term deputies in August 2003, he has also replaced some of the party and military personnel. In the process, the average age of staff in the KWP-related organizations was lowered from the 70s to the 50s and 60s, and the persons in the 50s and early 60s rose up as the party and military elite. Most of the new elite came from the ranks of prominent leaders of the “Three Revolutionary Movement” that Kim Jong-il engineered in the 1970s. These “second generation” revolutionaries are graduates of Mankyungdae Revolutionary School and Kim Il-sung University. They slowly but naturally filled the positions vacated by the retiring “first generation” senior leaders and formed the leading power elite in the Kim Jong-il era. Recently, relatively younger leaders out of the “second generation” are rising up to power positions in the party and the military. A new trend of personnel change was confirmed during the election of deputies for the 11<sup>th</sup> SPA in 2003. Close to a half the number of deputies was replaced, the ratio of military officers was lowered, and many people engaged in the inter-Korean relations came up prominently. Especially noteworthy was that the military officers belonging to the party political affairs committee moved up, along with those who performed well in the past 5 years in the fields of economy and inter-Korean relations. Unlike the election of 10<sup>th</sup> term deputies in July 1998, many economic bureaucrats and managers of factories and enterprises were also rising. This partly reflected the result of the North Korean campaign launched at the beginning of the year 2000, in which it emphasized expertise and professional competence of workers

at all levels, along with revolutionary spirits and loyalty to the regime and the system. The party loyalty and quality of competence of the newly rising leaders have already been proven in the course of “arduous march,” and so they would most probably grow up to form the power elite that will move North Korea in the near future. For these reasons, we should keep tabs on the new power elite group. This group would include, for example, the rising “third generation” revolutionaries in the party and the military, as well as the “arduous march” generation in the Cabinet and the factory sectors.

Continuity and change are also apparent in the power structure and the party-military relations. The power structure during the Kim Il-sung period could be characterized in terms of party superiority, concentration of power on the President of the republic (the Jusok), the Suryong thesis, and the gradual upgrading of the party’s central military affairs committee and the National Defense Commission. The unique feature of Kim Jong-il’s power structure would be the institutionalization of the system of “Military-first Politics.” This system became official during the first meeting of 10<sup>th</sup> term of SPA in September of 1998. The essence was to reorganize the entire ruling structure centered on the National Defense Commission, which would then empower the “military-first” policy to effectively operate and be implemented in the North Korean society. Accordingly, the military’s role and its political standing have also risen. But, even with the enhanced status, the military is not independently expanding its power outside the realm of party control. The power structure Kim Jong-il has built is one in which the military will most ardently and faithfully support the principle of party control under a strict party control, and set examples for other social groups to emulate the military

and pledge absolute allegiance to Kim himself. The position of the National Defense Commission has been enhanced and its stature significantly improved, but the command authority over the military is still with the party military affairs committee. The enhanced status of NDC under the Kim Jong-il regime simply means that its area of authority has been expanding across the entire national affairs. Since the role of the military under the “Military-first Politics” is not confined to military affairs but should spill over into the society at large as a model, the party military affairs committee would hardly be qualified to direct various projects and coordinate relations with other government agencies. For these reasons, the NDC will have to play the role of representing the state, which used to be discharged by Jusok and the central people’s committee, and the missions of NDC have to expand as the areas of its concern broaden.

Continuity and change are also detected in the stature and roles of various party organizations. Under the North Korean ruling structure, party organizations have performed pivotal roles. In descending order, this structure consists of “Suryong” – Party Central Committee – Provincial Party Committee – Municipal/County Party Committee – Town or Factory (workplace) Party Committee. This type of vertical hierarchy demands a strict “command-obedience” relationship, and each level of party committee exercises control over government agencies within their purview. All horizontal power is designed and expected to merge in the party committee at that level. Even within the party committee, all horizontal power is centered on the party secretary. Because of this horizontal concentration of power at all levels of party committees and chief party secretaries, tendencies will inevitably appear to consolidate the party and

the government into one and the party and the military, as well as the party and the society. Going through the economic hardship in the 1990s, however, this structure had experienced some turbulence and paralysis, but it was not fundamentally abolished. Nonetheless, the structure has undergone the following functional changes: First, as Kim Jong-il seized the supreme power, and as overall functions of party organizations declined, the status of the central party secretariat has become somewhat comparable with the Cabinet and the military high command. Second, it seems that the functions of basic party units at low levels have been by and large paralyzed. These units could function properly only when their host organizations like enterprises, factories, and local administrative units functioned properly. Third, due to the collapse of basic party units, the provincial and municipal party organizations also were unable to exercise effective political/ideological control over them as in the past. The provincial party organizations were supposed to exercise control over all agencies and enterprises, but they lost such capabilities when they failed to supply necessary resources for the units under their control. Fourth, the partial collapse of basic units and provincial party units also served to undercut the effective management of economic and financial tasks, not to mention the party's primary role of ideological and organizational control, and brought a major threat to the North Korean regime. For these reasons, the military was called on to perform more active roles as the bulwark of the system and as the ideological mode. Furthermore, in recent years, the People's Security Agency, the State Security Agency and the Military Security Command occasionally intrude into the turfs of inviolability that had previously been strictly reserved for party organizations. Another remarkable development was that local economic and administrative units were becoming more

autonomous as the party apparatus was unable to effectively supervise various political and economic tasks due to the deteriorating party disciplines and organizations.