

# The Basis of Power Succession of Kim Jong-Il and Policy Directions

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**A**s the second-ranking figure in the power structure of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Kim Jong-Il is the leader with whom we must deal to solve the problems of the Korean peninsula after Kim Il Sung. Kim Il Sung has confirmed that, except for a part of foreign affairs, Kim Jong-Il now holds all power. However, despite his being such an important person, there is still little we know for certain about Kim Jong-Il—only a variety of speculations. Due to lack of academic interest, therefore, not only are there few specialized works on this subject, but even the works that have been published are generally descriptive rather than analytical.

This article does not, of course, overcome the scholarship difficulties arising from existing studies. Materials published by people in North Korea contain mostly propaganda and have little value as factual evidence, and secondary literature produced by North Korean specialists in South Korea are generally ideologically oriented accounts. Therefore such materials cannot be taken at face value. It is not easy to come up with an objective, non-ideological analysis in a study of North Korean figures based on scholarly data. In particular, research on Kim Jong-Il has more shortcomings than research on Kim Il Sung, because there is hardly anyone who has directly met or shared experi-

ences with Kim Jong-Il. Nevertheless, I have attempted to study objectively what is possible in relation to the necessary research on Kim Jong-Il.

Our interest in Kim Jong-Il concentrates on the exercise of actual power, whether he can easily receive legal power, to what extent he can maintain power after succession, and what policy directions he will take.

In this article, in order to analyze to what extent Kim Jong-Il's power base is firm, we will examine whether or not he controls the coercive power structure and security apparatus, and whether or not he has a hold on the persuasive aspect of power (popular support). Accordingly, as the basis for a concluding analysis I will look at future prospects for power maintenance, and attempt to forecast Kim Jong-Il's policy direction while he does remain in power.

## **Control of the Means of Coercion**

### **1. Comprehensiveness of Support Base**

In order to receive power succession in an autocratic system like that of North Korea, the successor must have complete advance backing, and in the area of unofficial backing Kim Jong-Il's nomination is perfect. The evidence of this is that supreme leader Kim Il Sung has confirmed Kim Jong-Il as his handpicked successor and secured him in the corresponding duties. Furthermore, in the North Korean political system characterized by the "three-in-one" rule of the Party, the government and the military, anyone who wishes to attain supreme power must have authority over these three ruling bodies. That is, through some method he must be guaranteed the support base of the ruling elite. Kim Jong-Il has in fact been drawing the support of the basic political elite since 1960,<sup>1</sup> and as a result he has guaranteed the support of the

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1 Takashi Sakai, "Kim Jong-Il's Power Base", in Han S. Park, *North Korea's Conditions and Prospects* (Seoul: Tonghwa Yonguso, 1991, p. 16).

first-and-a-half- to second-generation of the revolution. They can be divided as follows. First, Kim Il Sung's partisan comrades; second, graduates of Mangyondae Revolutionary Academy and Kim Il Sung University; third, party members in their 50s and 60s trained through the Party secretariat, study abroad or overseas travel; fourth, graduates of the "Three Great Revolutions" school; fifth, 14-to-30-year-old young people organized in Party-affiliated groups; sixth, military and military-associated Party organizations; seventh, Kim Jong-Il's relatives, etc.<sup>2</sup>

As the above shows, Kim Jong-Il's power base is quite "inclusive." That is, horizontally it includes all groups maintaining the essential elements of power in the Party, the government, and the military, and vertically it includes each group from the center to the base. Furthermore, not only does Kim Jong-Il's power base include horizontally people affiliated with groups ranging from scholars, scientists and technicians, Party bureaucrats, soldiers, etc., but it also covers vertically all age groups including the elderly (60s-70s), the middle-aged (50s), and youth (30s-40s).

The elderly elite, the generation of the military leaders including Kim Il Sung, follow and support Kim Il Sung's every line. They are the first and 1.5 generations: O Jin-u, Pak Song-ch'ol, Choe Kwang, So Ch'ol, Kim Chol-man, Paek Hak-lim, Yi Tu-ik, etc.

The academic-centered support base, who tend to be of the second generation, are active in various areas such as politics, foreign affairs, economics and the military. Most of them were appointed during the time of Kim Jong-Il's strengthening of power. They include Kang Song-san, Kim Kang-hwan, Kim Kuk-t'ae, Kim Pyong-ryul, Kim Hwan, Paek Pom-su, So Yun-suk, Oh Kuk-ryol, Oh Yong-bang, Yon Hyong-muk, Yi Kil-song, Yi Pong-gil, Yi Pong-won, Yim Hyong-gu, Chon Pyong-ho, Choe Mun-sok, Choe Sang-uk, Choe Yong-hae, Han Sang-gyu, Hyon

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2 Hung-yeol Doh, "Formation and Circulation of Elites", in Hyon-uk Ko, et al. *North Korea's Structure and Change* (Seoul: Kyongnam University Institute of Far Eastern Affairs, 1990), p. 239.

Chun-kuk, Hong Si-hak, Yun Ki-bok, Kim Yong-nam, Choe Yong-rim, Kang Hui-won, Hong Song-nam, Kim Pok-sin, Kim Yun-hyok, Kim Dal-hyon, Kim Ch'ang-ju, Chang Ch'ol, Kang Sok-ju, Han Si-hae, etc.

Relatives include Chang Song-taek, Pak Song-ch'ol, Yang Hyong-sop, Hwang Chang-yop, Kim Chung-rim, Kim Ch'ang-ju, Kim Pong-ju, Kim Tong-kyu, Yi Yong-mu, Kang Hyon-su, Kang Hui-won, etc. They are summarized below (see table).

### Summary of Kim Jong-Il's Surrounding Elite

#### (In the Party)

Name (Age & Rank)	Status	Education	Relation to the Kims
Gye Eung-Tae 74: 8	Secretary Politburo	Party School of USSR	
Jeon Byeong-Ho 68: 9	Secretary Politburo	Kim Il Sung U. Moscow U.	
Kim Yong-Sun 57: 25	Secretary Head of Int'l Dept.	Kim Il Sung U. Moscow U.	Brother-In-Law Kim Il Sung(?)
Hwang Jang-Yeop 66: 28	Secretary	Kim Il Sung U.	Kim Il Sung's Nephew
Yun Gi-Bok 66: 34	Secretary	Moscow U.	
Kim Guk-Tae 68: 38	Head of Cadre Dept.	Mangyeongdae School Kim Il Sung U. Moscow U.	Kim Chaek's Eldest Son
Lee Chan-Seon Deceased	1st Deputy Head of Organization Dept.	Moscow U.	
Jnag Seong-Taek 47: CC Cand.	Head of Work Teams of Three Great Rev.	Kim Il Sung U.	Kim Jong-Il's Brother-In-Law
Han Si-Hae 58	Deputy Head of Int'l Dept.	Kim Il Sung U.	

**(In the Government)**

<b>Name (Age &amp; Rank)</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Relation to the Kims</b>
Yeon Hyeong-Muk 65: 6	Politburo Prime Min.	Mangyeongdae School Kim Il Sung U. Ural Engineering U.	
Kim Yeong-Nam 61: 7	Politburo Deputy PM Foreign Min.	Kim Il Sung U. Moscow U.	Supported by Kim Yeong-Ju
Yang Hyeong-Seop 67: 43	Head of Supreme People's Conference	Moscow U.	Kim Il Sung's Cousin
Kim Dal-Hyeon 52: 34	Deputy PM Trade Min.	Kim Il Sung U.	Son-In-Law of Kim Il Sung's Cousin Once Removed
Kang Seok-Ju 53: CC Cand.	1st Deputy Foreign Min		

**(In the Military)**

O Jin-U 75: 3	Defense Min. Politburo		
Choi Gwang 75: 10	Chief of Staff	Drop-Out of High School	Guardian of Kim Jong-Il
Kim Cheol-Man 74: 18	Military Committee Member		
O Guek-Yeol 63: 37	Former Chief of Staff	Mangyeongdae School	Son of O Jung-Heup
Kim Du-Nam 65: 61	Unidentified	Mangyeongdae School Soviet Mil. Academy	
Kim Gang-Hwan 61: 63	Head of Party Mil. Dept.	Mangyeongdae School Soviet Mil. Academy	

## 2. Control of the Party Secretariat and the Security Apparatus

In North Korea, where the Party dominates the State,<sup>3</sup> control over the Party is essential in guaranteeing the maintenance of authority. In effect, control of the Party means complete control of the secretariat: Article 26 of the "Korean Worker's Party Regulations" states that "The secretariat decides all internal Party matters, necessary Party procedures, and Party issues, and leads the execution of all such decisions." In actuality, the Party secretariat has nearly complete authority. Furthermore, paramount leader Kim Il Sung is directly in charge of the secretariat and second-in-command Kim Jong-Il as "Proxy Authority" actually runs politics. After the October 1980 Party Congress when Kim Jong-Il became Party Secretary, he was able to manipulate the Party apparatus as he liked.

Centered on the Party secretariat, Kim Jong-Il also controls the "Organizing and Leading Departments" which are the basis of authority over the instruments of violence (*Gewalt* Apparatus), such as the National Ministry, the Security Ministry, the Korean People's Army, etc. In controlling the elites, Kim Jong-Il in actuality has secured the position of highest authority. In an interview with *The Washington Times* on 12 April 1991, Kim Il Sung confirmed that "Kim Jong-Il is in actual control of various areas including the Party, government, and the military." Party secretariat secretaries Kye Ung-tae (Public Security), Chon Pyong-ho (Economy), Han Song-ryong (Agriculture), Yun Ki-bok (South Korea policy), Kim Yong-sun (International), Hwang Chang-yop (Ideology) all comprise Kim Jong-Il's close circle of technocrats.

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3 The North Korean socialist constitution introduced in December 1972 states in Article 4 "The Democratic People's Republic of Korea...takes the chuch'e thought of the Korean Worker's Party as its leading guide in its activities." In North Korea all state activities are conducted according to the directives of the Worker's Party. However, Professor Dae-Sook Suh and others assert that the 1972 Constitution shifts emphasis from the Party to the state. Dae-Sook Suh, *Kim Il Sung: The North Korean Leader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), pp. 269-276.

However, the most important thing is that Kim Jong-Il is in charge of 27 "Expert Posts" and 12 "City and Province Party Chairmanships." This is where the specialist posts fundamental to system maintenance are concentrated. Among the 27 specialist posts the "Organizational Guiding Division" is actually the highest organ. Kim Jong-Il is directly in charge of this division, divided into 13 sections with 25 vice-chairmen. This division controls the Party organization through the "Three-Line (Party organization, Administration, Security)-Three-Day Report System", and its concrete task is to manage the leadership of Party life and the affairs of cadres, including their private lives.<sup>4</sup>

The all-powerful Organizational Guidance Division began under the talented leadership of Yi Ch'ang-son, and the vice-chairmanships can be represented as follows. The first Vice-Chairman of Section 1, Yi Ch'an-son (65 years old, appointed November 1984, deceased); Vice-Chairman of Section 2, Yi Hwason (56 years old, appointed April 1986); Vice-Chairman of Section 3, Kim Kwang-woo (appointed November 1989); etc. Yi Ch'ang-son, the first vice-chairman, simultaneously held the post of Central Party First Secretary, and controlled the Party lives of all the people in the Party Center. Section 2 commands the thought and lives of people in charge of foreign relations, including the foreign ministry, international economic and industrial ministry, and trade. Section 7 is in charge of the Internal Security Ministry, Section 10 manages Public Welfare, Judicial Law, and Administration, Section 13 manages the entire Korean People's Army. As Section 13 maintains "Party Leadership" over the army, it is in charge of day-to-day military affairs and directly controls the Military Party Committee (Committee Chairman O Jin-U) and the Military Political Bureau. As Chairman of the National Defense Committee and Supreme Commander of the

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4 For details of the report system see Ku-won Shin, "Kim Jong-Il's Strong Points and Weak Points, and the People's Resistance", *Wolgan Joongang* (July 1991), pp. 439-443.

Korean People's Army, and with O Jin-U in charge of the People's Armed Forces, "Marshall" Kim Jong Il is secure in his control of the military. Paek Hak-rim is in charge of the Internal Security Ministry but with Chang Ki-t'aek, the younger brother of Kim Jong-Il's brother-in-law Chang Song-t'aek, chairman of the Political Bureau of the Internal Security Ministry, Kim Jong-Il has complete control of the security apparatus governing the instruments of violence. The vice-chairmanship of the Ministry of National Security, which Kim Jong-Il effectively controls, is currently vacant, but with Kim Jong-Il's brother-in-law Chang Song-t'aek having been nominated to fill the position, Kim Jong-Il has thorough control of this organ as well.

Furthermore, through these security apparatuses, with surveillance and control over the elite as well as ordinary people and dividing the people into the "Core Classes," the "Wavering Classes," and the "Enemy Classes," Kim Jong-Il can make a completely "monolithic" society without political deviations. The international human-rights organization Asiawatch estimates that about 150,000 political criminals and their families are imprisoned in "Special Zones," showing the extent of this control over the people.

## Securing the Means of Persuasion

### 1. "Miranda" Government

Power cannot be maintained by enforcement measures only. Rather, it can be said that power is sustained because of voluntary compliance from the masses. Charles E. Merriam refers to the "Miranda" and "Credenda" as means to induce such voluntary subordination from the masses.<sup>5</sup> Miranda is a way to homogenize the mass by appealing to their human feelings and thus includes activities such as setting up various memorial

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5 Charles E. Merriam, *Political Powers* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1950), pp. 101-132.



days; building symbolic and commemorative structures, encouraging certain types of music while banning certain songs; beati-fying the anecdotes and history; holding mass demonstrations, etc. On the other hand, "Credenda" affects human reason and therefore is a way to induce respect and obedience from the people by legitimizing power. In other words, when the masses believe that power is legitimate, they respect their government and even sacrifice themselves for the just cause of their leadership.

It is believed that Kim Jong-Il has successfully utilized such methods as "Miranda" in order to take advantage of the shaman-istic tradition of the masses. Through repeated education people fully believe the beatified history of Kim's family and their patri-otic roles during the Japanese colonial period and the Korean War. People are also struck with awe before the gigantic com-memorative structures. They feel pride as well as fear and they know they will be punished if they are critical of the leadership. They worship Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong-Il and obey them as if they were gods. In this sense, North Korea is a pseudo-religious state.<sup>6</sup>

## 2. "Credenda" Government

In this form of government, most important is to secure the legitimacy of the regime. Max Weber once said that there are three types of rule: 1) traditional rule 2) rational rule 3) charis-matic rule.<sup>7</sup> People tend to follow the customs and traditions of their ancestors without reason. Likewise, people tend to obey authority as illustrated in such rules as a paternalistic rule and a

6 Onjook Lee, *Pukhan Sahoe Yongu* (A Study on the North Korean Society) (Seoul: Seoul National University Press, 1989), p. 31. Sang Woo Rhee defines the North Korean system as a divine political system. Sang Woo Rhee, "Kim Il Sung che je ui tuk jil," (Characteristics of Kim Il Sung System) *Puk Han 40 Nyun* (North Korea 40 Years) (Seoul: Eul Yoo Mun Hwa Sa, 1989), p. 25.

7 Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), pp. 152-153.

monarchic rule. Rational rule mean rule of law. People regard the law as a minimum of the morality and therefore tend to believe anything if it is stipulated by the law. People also tend to believe in a charismatic leader. Yet, such charismatic leaders are created for manipulating public obedience.

In order to legitimize traditional rule, the North Korean leadership brought in "a theory of successor,"<sup>8</sup> and made sure that their people took it for granted and regard it as rational that the No. 2 man will naturally succeed the No. 1 man. For Kim Jong-Il, however, one thing that needs to be done is to build his own charisma, which his father cannot bequeath him. Kim Il Sung built up his charisma from his own accomplishments. He maintains an image as the national father. His proclaimed victory in the Korean War, effective reconstruction after the Korean War, and his capability to maintain self-reliance earned him a charismatic leadership. Therefore, Kim Il Sung rules not merely as a President or Party Secretary General, but by his own personal authority as a "Suryong" like a divine King. It is most important for Kim Jong-Il to receive his father's spiritual authority. This is the core of the succession problem.

In order to stimulate this process, Kim Jong-Il spent much effort to create his image as a philosopher. His father Kim Il Sung and other Communist leaders such as Lenin, Stalin and Mao Zedong all succeeded in portraying their images as philosophers. He therefore wrote many articles and contributed to supplement his ideas to the Juche thought that is the central value system of the people in North Korea.

Kim also made efforts to boost his image as an economic manager. Like his father, he spent most of his time on fact-finding tours and giving on-site instructions to workers and laborers. This was one way to avoid the criticism that the economy was

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8 "Juche Sasang Ui Sahoe Ryuksa Wonri" (Socio-Historical Principle of Juche Thought) in *Juche Sasang Chong Seo 2* (Pyongyang: Sahoe Kwahak Chulpansa, 1985), pp. 209-222.

worse-off since he began controlling the nation's political power in the 1970s.

## Kim Jong-II's Quality and Popular Support

### 1. Quality as a Leader

How much actual political ability does Kim Jong-II have? At present there are two general opinions about Kim Jong-II's temperament, one positive, one negative. We will begin with the negative opinion.

First, there is the criticism of Kim Jong-II's ability, which holds that while Kim Jong-II has no ability of his own he has been designated successor by supreme leader Kim Il Sung. Moreover, his temperament is seen as inadequate for leadership, being a person given to debauchery and luxurious living, thus representing the worst aspects of "Oriental Despotism." Due to a stuttering problem he avoids public speaking and does not meet foreign delegations. Out of an inferiority complex about his height he wears elevated shoes, lacking any artistic knowledge he approves of the artistic works presented by his secretaries almost without amendment, and he lacks the critical governmental experience of his father.

Second, there is the issue of his style of rule. As a movie buff he wastes foreign exchange on a film collection, and is criticized for passing the time watching movies like a capitalist lumpen. His life is decadent and disordered, he conducts his business in an impromptu manner, he enjoys wild extravagance and he likes to call people up irregularly at three or four a.m.<sup>9</sup>, inconveniencing all his subordinates.<sup>10</sup>

9 Yong-hwan Ko, "The Truth about North Korea's Ruling Kim Jong-II, Kim Jong-II Group," p. 385.

10 This point is illustrated in *The Leader Kim Jong-II 2* as follows. "He left at 4 am and directly go to the office at the Party's Central Committee. From there, he is planning for a new day. He is working all the way through the night." Jin Tak et al. *The Leader Kim Jong-II 2* (Tokyo: Tongbangsa, 1984), pp. 165-166.

There is also the issue of the political decision-making process and the distribution of power. This criticism arises from Kim Jong-Il's preference for "political style", a type of behind-the-scenes position which tends toward impromptu decisions more than high-level discussion, and displays of authority rather than high-level decisions. The main people with whom Kim Jong-Il associates include O Jin-U (Armed Forces Minister), Yi Ch'an-son (Chairman of the First Section of the Organizational Guidance Division, died 1992), Hyon Chun-kuk (Editor-in-Chief of the *Rodong Shinmun*), Kim Yong-sun (Party Secretary), Kim Yong-nam (Foreign Minister), Kang Sok-ju (Vice-Chairman of the First Section of the Foreign Ministry), Kwon Hui-kyong (Vice-Chairman for Foreign Intelligence), and Kim Ch'ung-il (Vice-Chairman of the Propaganda Bureau).

Others who exercise influence in this secretive political decision-making process include Kim Jong-Il's photographer, cook, barber, tailor, shoemaker, and so on, who have access to the Organizational Guidance Vice-Chairman and thus have more real power than Central Party Economic Secretary Pak Nam-ki.<sup>11</sup> Of course this reveals the degree of authority wielded in the secretive policy-making processes of a dictatorship.<sup>12</sup>

Third, there is the issue of Kim Jong-Il's personality. Because he lost his mother early in life and was raised by a stepmother, his personality is quite twisted. His cruelty is such that he allegedly killed his younger brother by dropping him into a well, and one can assume that the obsequiousness shown to him from an early age by all around him has caused him to be arrogant and overbearing.

However, opposed to this is a positive evaluation of Kim Jong-Il. First, as to his drinking habit, Kim Il Sung in his excellent

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11 Yong-hwan Ko, "The Truth about North Korea's Ruling Kim Jong-Il, Kim Jong-Il Group", p. 388.

12 Un-hui Choe and Shin Sang-ok, *The Fatherland: That Heaven, That Distance* (California: Pacific Arts Cooperative, 1988), p. 116.

health sometimes imbibes alcohol. Many world politicians enjoy drinking—there are even womanizers such as John Kennedy.

Second, as to the problem of movies, the first area in which Kim Jong-Il worked after graduating from Kim Il Sung University was the Propaganda Ministry. Because it is important to maintain power over the ideological system, and because mobilizing the people through movies serves both a cultural purpose and more quickly and expediently serves the state's goals, raising the emotions of the masses and mobilizing them in a single direction, naturally he would have a strong interest in this area.<sup>13</sup>

According to a February 1988 Pyongyang news broadcast, Kim Jong-Il has made as many as 3,000 films. In fact in the early 1970s he made such important films and operas as *Sea of Blood*, *Tell the Story*, *The Flower Girl*, *True Daughter of the Party*, *Song of Mt. Kumgang*, etc., and wrote the scripts to the operas himself. *The Theory of Film Art*, written in 1973 by Kim Jong-Il, lays out the Juche theory of art and serves as the guide to all literary and artistic activity, and his *Theory of the Seed* is the basic theory of artistic creativity.

Third, there is a different assessment of Kim Jong-Il's arrogant behavior. Kim Jong-Il is said to be exceptionally polite toward the first-generation revolutionaries and considerate toward the sons and daughters of the revolution. In particular, Kim Jong-Il protects the lives of the old revolutionaries. On New year's day he gathers dye and other presents and gives a New Year's greeting to them. According to former North Korean diplomat Ko Yong-hwan, when People's Armed Forces Vice-Chairman O Jin-U was involved in a traffic accident Kim Jong-Il saved his life, and this incident is revealing of Kim Jong-Il's attitude toward the revolutionary generation.<sup>14</sup>

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13 Yong-ku Yoo, "Kim Jong-Il's Governmental Style," *Wolgan Joongang* (March 1992), p. 372.

14 Yong-hwan Ko "The Truth about North Korea's Ruling Kim Jong-Il, Kim Jong-Il group," p. 387.

*The Leader Kim Jong-Il Vol. 1 & 2* reveals that Kim Jong-Il always defers to the old partisans at state functions, he sends them on holidays to resort areas, and he gives them food, films, and books on life-prolonging medicines for their 60th birthday celebrations.<sup>15</sup>

On the basis of such evidence it is possible to infer that Kim Jong-Il has an open-minded personality and that he values substance rather than formality and shows his feelings frankly.<sup>16</sup>

## 2. Popular Support

How much popular support does Kim Jong-Il have? Of course under the present circumstances this is very difficult to evaluate accurately, but on the basis of intelligence analysis there are two kinds of assessments.

First, the negative assessment claims that the economic stagnation from 1974 onward was caused by the wasteful and uneconomical industries set up by Kim Jong-Il and that the people are beginning to doubt Kim Jong-Il's administrative abilities.<sup>17</sup> Due to his unpopularity Kim Jong-Il firmly avoids speaking to the masses and devotes himself to organizational issues.

Second, the positive assessment holds that Kim Jong-Il manages difficult tasks with timeliness and appropriateness with his bold and magnanimous character. Especially he makes his contribution as a morale booster by giving people a sense of pride through his capacity to guide them at work. He has an artistic talent.<sup>18</sup>

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15 *The Leader Kim Jong-Il 2*, pp. 151-162 lists in detail Kim Jong-Il's acts of consideration.

16 Choe and Shin, pp. 93-113.

17 See the testimony of Nam Myong-ch'on, a North Korean student in Leningrad who defected to the South on April 2, 1990. *North Korea, Its Shocking Reality* (Seoul: Choson Ilbosa, 1991). p. 165.

18 *The Leader Kim Jong-Il 1*, p. 284; Kwang-dong Cho, "The Northern Compatriots Lives, Hearts, and Dreams," *The Han-Kyoreh Shinmun*, 5 June 1991.

It appears that most North Korean people hold the second view. This is because they understand that leaders such as Kim Il Sung or Kim Jong-Il "naturally" possess extraordinary abilities from birth, and it is forbidden to challenge or deny the authority of Kim Il Sung or Kim Jong-Il.<sup>19</sup> They believe that they could not live without their belief in Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong-Il.<sup>20</sup> Because of this the people tend to believe these mythical attributes and take them at face value.

The North Korean people do not think of Kim Jong-Il as Kim Il Sung's son, but as the "Comrade" who is always close by, listening to and solving their problems. This belief about Kim Jong-Il has become the mysterious religion of North Korea.

In fact, the North Korean people do not want to see their myth broken. Perhaps they are fearful that their future might be destroyed. In that sense, the myth will not be broken so long as people want to keep it with them.

In the end, Kim Jong-Il without Kim Il Sung will soon be the myth of the North Korean people. First, the ordinary people do not have accurate information about Kim Jong-Il. Second, as mentioned above, through "Miranda" rule Kim Jong-Il does not actually appear before the people and thus presents a mysterious image.

## **Power succession and policy direction**

### **1. The Timing of Succession**

Kim Jong-Il's power succession culminated with his designation as Supreme Commander of the Military on 12 December 1991, leader of the Party, the Government, and the Army on 31 March

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19 Hyon-hui Kim, *The Hankook Ilbo*, 11 August 1991.

20 While visiting New York, Han Si-hae, Vice-Chairman of North Korea's "Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland," said in an interview with An Tong-il that Christianity and Juche thought resemble each other in their emphasis on equality, love, firm determination and solidarity. *Sahoe P'yongron* (July 1991), p. 281.

1992, and the declaration of his title as Marshall on 20 April 1992. Since his official selection as successor in the 1980s Kim Jong-Il's position has continued to solidify, and according to Choch'ongryon, the organization of pro-Pyongyang Koreans in Japan, he has even been called the "Great Leader."<sup>21</sup> That is, through Kim Il Sung's very gradual and careful transfer of legal position to Kim Jong-Il, according to the logic of "selecting a successor while the Leader is alive," by 1995, designated the "Year of Unification", Kim Il Sung will have transferred all power to Kim Jong-Il and will retire as "International Leader," governing from behind the scenes.<sup>22</sup>

However, the current situation is rapidly changing. While from North Korea's position the timing may seem quite natural, from an outsider's perspective North Korea's pace seems difficult and frustrating. Therefore researchers are continuously trying to understand the reason for the delay in transferring power to Kim Jong-Il. Why doesn't Kim Jong-Il, who wields such actual power, have the title of Supreme Leader? The delay of power succession can be analyzed as follows.

First, there is the problem of Kim Jong-Il's personal ability. Because Kim Il Sung is well aware of Kim Jong-Il's shortcomings, he may be delaying the power transfer out of "parental feelings" and the feelings of the old guard.

Second, Kim Il Sung may dread transferring power to anyone before he dies, having a great attachment to his position attained through bitter struggle.

Third, environmental factors for the delay in succession may include the necessity of Sino-North Korean partnership with the surviving first-generation Chinese revolutionaries, the collapse

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21 According to the congratulation message of Han Tok-su, chairman of the Choch'ongryon Central Information Meeting for the congratulatory committee for Kim Il Sung's 80th birthday and the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the Korean People's Army, 8 May 1992. *Joongang Broadcasting Agency*, 10 May 1992.

22 Chae-ch'on Kim, "The Theory and Practice of Succession," p. 48.



of the Soviet Union and Eastern European socialist states and the threat of American world hegemony, North Korea's own economic stagnation, the crisis mentality of the first-generation revolutionaries over Kim Il Sung stepping down, etc.

Of course, all three of the above reasons in combination may contribute to the delay in succession, but the author sees the second reason as most important.

## 2. Speculation on the Maintenance of Power

Nevertheless there remains the question of how long Kim Jong-Il will maintain power once he takes over the regime. There are several opinions on this among scholars.

First, there is the theory that succession is impossible.<sup>23</sup> This theory predicts that because Kim Jong-Il's support, from the common people to the elite, is won only through coercion, succession itself is impossible and power will be transferred to Kim P'yong-Il, who takes much more after Kim Il Sung, or to Kim's more capable son-in-law Chang Song-t'aek.

Second, there is the "collapse theory" that power seized will collapse in one to two years.<sup>24</sup> The method of collapse will be a military coup, or a palace coup by reformist bureaucrats or alienated relatives such as Kim Yong-ju or Kim Song-ae.<sup>25</sup>

Third, there is the possibility of at least medium-term power maintenance.<sup>26</sup> The reasons for this are first, Kim Jong-Il has solidified his power base for over 20 years, so that even if he does lack sufficient personal charisma he can maintain organizational power. Furthermore, compared to Kim Il Sung, who has reso-

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23 Tong-min Sung, "Kim Jong-Il," *Chayu Kongnon* (July 1990), p. 161.

24 Sang Woo Rhee, Seminar at the Research Institute for National Unification on 25 May 1991.

25 Jung-min Kim (former high-level official in the North Korean Ministry of Internal Security), Seminar at the Research Institute for National Unification on 9 May 1991.

26 Takashi Sakai, "Kim Jong-Il's Power Base," pp. 56-57.

lutely avoided internal reform for the sake of establishing political legitimacy, Kim Jong-Il could be a conspicuous improvement.

Fourth, there is the view that, whether or not in the short or medium-term North Korea pursues a reformist or an isolationist path, the basic contradictions of the socialist system will lead to ruin not just for Kim Jong-Il's regime, but for North Korea itself.<sup>27</sup>

Analyses based on Kim Jong-Il's abilities or personality may each have valid grounds, but based on the above analysis of the solidity of Kim Jong-Il's power base in the areas of persuasion and coercion, we expect him to maintain power for more than five years.

### 3. Policy Directions in Various Areas

In overall policy direction, Kim Jong-Il's free and active personality and his political pragmatic attitude<sup>28</sup> would lend themselves to the direction of reform and opening, there being no other way to strengthen the system than to pursue a reformist path. Here are policy direction predictions in various areas:

First, in the political area the importance of the ideological attitude of "Korean-style socialism centered on the popular masses" together with the three-in-one system, leader-party-masses, and social-political unity will continue to be stressed.

Second, in the economic sphere there will be a selective opening.<sup>29</sup> Examples include an emphasis on consumer goods, the

27 Professor Byung-chul Koh divides power succession scenarios into four types, short-term failure, short-term success, medium-term success, and long-term success, and suggests that the most likely possibilities are short-term success and medium-term success. By short-term he means one year, medium term, four to five years, and long-term, six to ten years. See Byung-Chul Koh, "North Korea's Power Succession: Problems and Prospects," Research Institute for National Unification, *North Korean System Change: Current Situation and Prospects* (Seoul: Research Institute for National Unification, 1991), pp. 349-352; Song-ho Kim, "The North's Successor Kim Jong-Il" *Tongil Hanguk* (February 1990), p. 38.

28 For the concrete content of Kim Jong-Il's speeches see Choe Un-hui and Shin Sang-ok, *The Fatherland: that Heaven, that Distance*, pp. 231-232.

29 Jae-Jean Suh, "Policy Directions after Kim Il Sung", paper presented at the seminar commemorating the first anniversary of the Research Institute for National Unification, 10 April 1991, pp. 18-26.

creation of Special Economic Zones, expansion of exports, introducing the essential elements of "market socialism," allowing more private garden plots, introduction of privately-owned taxis, opening of golf courses, karaoke bars, lotteries, and so on. Of course although such openings could become a Trojan Horse, they are essential measures in the present situation.

Third, in the military sphere, North Korea will continue to push for arms reduction and peace agreements, while on the other hand because of the threat of the surrounding great powers it will also concentrate on producing up-to-date weapons. Of course, this is also because Kim Jong-Il's ultimate base of support is the military.

Fourth, in the area of foreign policy North Korea will try to break out of its isolation and attempt to strengthen relations with the U.S. and Japan, and like the Chinese and Soviet experience will attempt to maximize its national economic benefit from the U.S. and Japan. Also, though in its relations with South Korea it will try to maintain a friend-foe situation, South-North relations will still continue to progress.

## Conclusion

Because Kim Jong-Il's "before-the-fact" legitimacy is weak, he must "after the fact" skillfully match carrot-and-stick tactics to succeed in preserving political power. Because Kim Jong-Il did not actually experience the anti-Japanese armed struggle that is the basis of political legitimacy in the North Korean regime, the next best thing is to use expressions from this armed struggle such as "combat," "revolution," "struggle," etc., to convince the people of his ability to succeed his father and carve out the image of the "son who struggles with shovel and hoe" like the "father who struggles with gun and sword".

Kim Jong-Il clearly lacks the charisma of Kim Il Sung. But to compensate for this he has built up his power base for the last 20 to 30 years. He has efficiently demonstrated administrative expe-

rience and political leadership and now possesses a stable base of power, ranging from the support of the power elite to a "religious support" of the people. Therefore, after Kim Il Sung's death Kim Jong-Il's regime will not easily be toppled.

Furthermore, the time of succession will come whether due to Kim Il Sung's actual death or his physical incapacity to carry out his duties. At a minimum Kim Jong-Il will likely remain in power for at least five years and policy will move in the direction of reform and opening, both because Kim Jong-Il himself feels the need for opening, and because of changes in the objective environment.