

Diagnosis and Assessment of North Korea's Sociocultural Sector in 2012

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In 2011, with the death of Kim Jong-il, North Korea faced the exigent task of establishing a stable successor regime around Kim Jong-un. At the same time, the regime was presented with the tasks of rapidly settling the Kim Jong-un regime, minimizing the problems that may arise during the accelerated, short-term power succession process due to Kim Jong-un's untested ability, and presenting citizens with a vision of the power succession and sense of its validity. Politically, the Kim Jong-un regime's power succession should not be a problem, as North Korea is a society based on the collective transfer of power. The revolutionary generation who participated in founding the socialist Chosun nation and their descendants had their own stake in politics and passed power down through the generations. Kim Jong-un comes from the storied family line of Baekdu Mountain and Mangyongdae, and thus he has the highest stake in power. Members of the revolutionary generation who have not made any noteworthy mistakes are guaranteed spots in the succession regime. Since instability in the Kim Jong-un regime translates directly to collective anxiety, the revolutionary generation will participate in ensuring a stable power succession. The tasks for Kim Jong-un is to persuade North Koreans of his vision for the future and change their quality of life. In the short term, the new regime will promote the idea of the leader's eternal life by ruling in the name of Kim Jong-il's precepts and emphasizing "the sole bloodline" passed down from Kim Il Sung via Kim Jong-il. The historical significance of the year 2012 will be emphasized as the regime proceeds with the power succession.

Key Words: North Korea's 2012 cultural policy, nation of the Arirang people, Chosun-ethnocentric policy, Kim Jong-il, Kim Jong-un

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Introduction

This paper provides a diagnosis and assessment the state of North Korea's sociocultural sector in 2012. In 2011, with the death of Kim Jong-il, North Korea faced the exigent task of establishing a stable successor regime around Kim Jong-un. At the same time, the regime was presented with the tasks of rapidly settling the Kim Jong-un regime, minimizing the problems that may arise during the accelerated, short-term power succession process due to Kim Jong-un's untested ability, and presenting citizens with a vision of the power succession and sense of its validity. Politically, the Kim Jong-un regime's power succession should not be a problem, as North Korea is a society based on the collective transfer of power. The revolutionary generation who participated in founding the socialist Chosun nation and their descendants had their own stake in politics and passed power down through the generations. Kim Jong-un comes from the storied family line of Baekdu Mountain and Mangyongdae, and thus he has the highest stake in power. Members of the revolutionary generation who have not made any noteworthy mistakes are guaranteed spots in the succession regime. Since instability in the Kim Jong-un regime translates directly to collective anxiety, the revolutionary generation will participate in ensuring a stable power succession.

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The year 2012, from the North Korean perspective, is the 100th anniversary of Kim Il Sung's birth. Considering the fact that North Korea has been commemorating his birth in 5 or 10-year intervals, the year 2012 is very meaningful in that it marks the 100th such anniversary. From early on, North Korea has vowed that it will one day "open the doors to the era of the powerful and prosperous

nation." In 2012, North Korea in some shape or form will have to propose a macroscopic vision for this powerful and prosperous nation. In this sense, North Korea's policy will focus on summing up the achievements of the past century and presenting a new vision for the next one.

For the past few years, North Korea's policy has prioritized construction of a "powerful and prosperous nation." North Korea has been utilizing its national mobilization system and pushing economic policies forward aggressively in the name of establishing a powerful and prosperous nation. It especially has been concentrating on making concrete and visible improvements in people's daily lives.

Their policy objective for 2012, however, will suggest a macroscopic outlook and vision based on Chosun-ethnocentric ideology in contrast to that of the past few years. The emphasis on cultural policies will increase as North Korea attempts to present a vision for the new century of Kim Il Sung's people.¹

However difficult the reality is, North Korea must come up with a clear vision for the future of "Kim Il Sung's people" in 2012. The focus on ethnicity foreshadows that North Korea will attempt to resolve all of its current problems through this ethnocentric ideology. The vision for the year 2012 will be realized by presenting a future vision in terms of the "Arirang People" (Kim Il Sung's people)." This vision presents North Korean ethnicity as the true successor to the ethnic tradition of Korea, as opposed to South Korean ethnicity. Just as North Korea identifies Kim Jong-un as the main line descendant of Kim Il Sung, so the Chosun people are presented as the successors of the "Korean people's republic modeled on socialism" and will

1. The pieces introduced at the propaganda exhibition in January 2011 symbolized the expectations and preparations for the year 2012. At the "New Year's Address Attainment" propaganda exhibition held at the Pyongyang International Culture Center on January 7, 2011, the propaganda emphasized "the 100th anniversary of Kim Il Sung's birth," but the exhibit pieces mostly focused on grain production and the people's livelihood. "The Opening of a Propaganda Exhibition for the Full-Court Press for the Improvement of People's Lives and the Building of the Powerful and Prosperous Nation," *Rodong Sinmun*, January 8, 2011.

form the base of the powerful and prosperous nation. Also, emphasis will be placed on counteracting the economic crisis and societal breakdown to prevent system collapse.

In this sense, North Korean cultural policies for 2012 are expected to emphasize the following three points.

First is the fortification of nationalism. North Korea will boast its image of ethnic superiority both inside and outside the country and expand efforts to enhance national uniformity on a national level. The focus of this article will be on explaining the “Arirang People” ideology. Various versions of Arirang were created and introduced in North Korea around 2000; this paper will focus on analyzing the political meaning of each of them.

Second is the cultural policy of counteracting the Korean Wave (*hallyu*). The Korean Wave has been bringing a new wave of change to North Korea. *Hallyu* has had great impact inside North Korea, where cultural diversity is seriously lacking. From North Korean point of view, *hallyu* is a risky agent that could accelerate the dissolution of the North Korean system. Various policies will be put forward in order to prevent *hallyu* from penetrating further into North Korean society.

Third is the extension of proactive foreign cultural exchange. During recent years, North Korea’s foreign cultural diplomacy has been more proactive than ever. Cultural diplomacy conventionally has been a core aspect of North Korean diplomacy, and North Korea has been intensifying foreign performances for the sake of its Chinese and Russian relations for several years. North Korea will focus on fortifying its international ties, bringing cultural aspects to the fore, as a core part of its foreign exchanges in 2012.

The Structure of the Kim Jong-un Succession System and Cultural Policy for 2012

One of the key tasks of cultural policy for 2012 will be to thoroughly settle the succession issue, which was kicked into high gear after 2008. The succession propaganda will focus on Kim Jong-un’s

bloodlines rather than his official ascension to formal positions of power, and will portray North Korea as the "Nation of the Arirang People" in the historical year 2012.

The clear task of this cultural policy is to conclusively resolve the succession issue, which has been at the fore since 2008. In 2011 Kim Jong-un was presented in the image of a young Kim Il Sung, and his public exposure has been increased through the diffusion of commendational hymns and slogans such as "Blessings of the General" (Dae-Jang-Bok), etc. Songs relating to the successor such as "Footsteps" (Bal-Geol-Eum) and "Chosun Youth March" (Cho-Seon Cheong-Nyeon Haeng-Jin-Gok) are being actively spread. The reason why literature is utilized to build the succession is because it is intertwined with the political image of the successor.

As his official status has become certain, the leadership image Kim Jong-un chooses to adopt will be a key factor in determining North Korea's future course.² Every politician adopts an image, whether it be youthful ambition and passion or gentlemanly stability and refinement. Especially in North Korea, where all media outlets are controlled and censored by the Party, it is possible to manufacture and continually maintain symbols and images of the leader, which

2. Kim, Hyuk's "Chosun's Star" (Choseon ui Byuhl), Song, Gah's "General Kim Il Sung's Song" (Kim Il Sung ui Norae), Cho, Ki Chun's "Baekdusan," the musical "Fog Spreads All Over the Nation," Jung Kwan-Chul's painting "Pocheonbo's Torch" (Pocheonbo ui Hwehtbul), the Samjiyun Monument, a series of "Immortal History" (Bulmyeol ui Yeoksa) were model pieces for the creation of the image of Kim Il Sung during the process of building his unitary leadership system and played a crucial role in justifying the North Korean system by recreating revolutionary history. The image of Kim Jong-il started with the "Party Center" (Dang-jung-ang) and the "Dear Leader" (Chin-ae-hah-neun Jidojah). These images brought Kim Jong-il to life for the people, who had no other image of him, and ultimately became the binding force for maintaining the faltering Party while contributing to establishing a friendly image of Kim Jong-il amongst the people. The "Dear Leader" became the representative title for Kim Jong-il. With Kim Il Sung's passing, Kim Jong-il's title came to be denoted as "the Leader" (Yeongdojah); after the establishment of the military-first political system, "the Sun" (Taeyang) and "the General" (Janggun) became his main titles.

allows the North Korean state to actively involve itself in building images through culture. Statistics show that in the first half of 2011, Kim Jong-un was shown viewing a number of performances with Kim Jong-il. He conducted official activities in the cultural sector a total of 27 times, which amounts to 42% of his total recorded activities for the first half of 2011. Performance viewing topped the statistics for Kim Jong-il's cultural activities, totalling 22 events. He was accompanied by Kim Jong-un 20 out of 22 times.³

The newly introduced titles relating to the succession are "General Kim" (Kim Daejang) and "Youth General" (Chungnyeon Daejang). The phrase "General Kim" appeared in the commendational hymn for Kim Jong-un, "Footsteps" (Bahl-Geol-Eum).⁴ "General Kim" also appears in the following lyrics in "The Chosun Youth March": "Footsteps so magnificent, let's gather round General Kim" (1st verse), "With the red flag up high in the sky, let's gather around General Kim" (2nd verse), and "Comrades with arms around each other's shoulders, let's gather around General Kim" (3rd verse); in sum, the song urges everyone to gather around General Kim.⁵

3. *KCTI Cultural Trends: First Half of 2011* (Fifth Edition), Korea Culture & Tourism Institute, 2011, pp. 22–23.

4. In every verse of the song "Footsteps," which is known to be symbolic of Kim Jong-un's succession, the word "February" appears. February means Kim Jong-il. The first verse reads, "With the spirit of February/Steps taken energetically/The whole nation greets and follows." The second verse reads, "February's spirit becomes known/Steps taken energetically/The whole nation's people follow." The third verse reads "February's great achievements are being revered/Putting steps forward/The bright future will advance." In summary, General Kim is the figure whom the land greets and the people follow, and he will bring the future forward.

5. "Chosun Youth March" was composed by Kim Won-Kyoon with lyrics by Kim Ryuhn-Ho. The lyrics read as follows. First verse: "We are the youth of Chosun who are the sons and daughters of the wise people. We are the solemn future fighters striving to build a rich and powerful nation. Our youthful energy bubbles up in the workplace and at the academy. With magnificent footsteps, let's gather around General Kim." The refrain follows: "Victory is ours, power united in the truth shall be dedicated to the nation and the people." Second verse: "The people's great power overflows my land. The tradition of the anti-Japanese rebellion will be steadfastly preserved. All

Both "Footsteps" and "Chosun Youth March" have sufficient grounds to be considered as commendation songs for the successor. What should be noted here, however, is that neither song appears to include the phrase "military-first." It is a bit hasty to jump to conclusions, as there are no other works of note relating to the succession aside from "Footsteps," but "military-first" ought to be mentioned at least once, and yet it is nowhere to be seen. "Military-first" is a term that accentuates Kim Jong-il's political status. In other words, "military-first" symbolizes Kim Jong-il. What, then, can be implied about leaving this phrase out of the song that praises the successor?

In short, this appears to denote that Kim Jong-un will not carry on the military-first political system. If the succession is not characterized by military-first politics, then how will the regime justify it? The justification lies in *Juche* ideology. In other words, Kim Jong-un's legitimacy does not stem from Kim Jong-il's military-first politics, but is derived from the progenitor of "Socialist Chosun," and the successor will inherit Kim Il Sung's lineage.

As Kim Jong-un's status solidifies as the legitimate successor of *Juche* ideology, the regime will seek an exit from Kim Jong-il's military-first politics. This exit could come through normalization of North Korea-U.S. relations, a peace treaty, etc. The military-first political system is valid only as long as the North faces a confrontational situation with its enemies, since the military-first system is directed at protecting and safeguarding the old order, not making a new one.

Military-first politics work when clear external enemies exist. North Korea has formally identified the United States as its enemy. As a means of defending against the threat posed by the U.S., North Korea claims it has the right to pursue nuclear weapons for self-defense. If, however, the enemy ceases to exist, the justification for military-first politics vanishes as well. The absence of enemies signifies

hope and happiness are in our hands, so raise the red flag high in the sky and let's gather around General Kim" (Refrain). Third verse: "Where we are heading, nothing difficult or fearful is there. Over the mountains and the sea, our youthful strength extends. So comrades arm in arm, let's gather around General Kim" (Refrain).

a state of peace. Normalization of North Korea-U.S. relations or conclusion of a peace treaty, which North Korea has been emphasizing recently, could justify ending the military-first system. In that case, military-first politics can survive by upholding the pretext that it was responsible for preserving *Juche* ideology and the socialist system during the "Arduous March" period.

The post-military-first agenda will be the globalization of *Juche* ideology. *Juche* ideology was developed by the Kim Il Sung regime and maintained by Kim Jong-il. Kim Jong-un's assignment will be to globalize military-first politics, and this will provide justification for the succession. Like the lyrics of "Footsteps" suggest, the task of "revering February's great achievements" provides justification for promoting the globalization of *Juche* ideology, and this will raise Kim Jong-un's profile as not only a political successor but a spiritual leader. On June 8, 2009, Kim Jong-un issued a directive in the name of Kim Won-Kyoon to recreate the Russian opera "Evgenii Onegin" at the Pyongyang Musical College, and Kim Jong-il declared that "Our people, pushing forward to the world with magnificent ethnic pride and self-esteem, will be living in a powerful and prosperous nation in the near future, and should know more about world culture." There is sufficient grounds to assess this statement as a pre-emptive effort to lay some groundwork for the succession. This could also be interpreted as part of the strategic movement around 2008 to restore diplomatic relations through cultural diplomacy while also positioning Kim Jong-un as the next leader in international relations.

In 2012, work in the cultural sector will focus on the following tasks in order to promote Kim Jong-un's image as a leader. Primarily, movies and other media will be used to parade the legitimacy of Kim Jong-un's power succession and his ability as a leader. The empirical justification for the succession of Kim Jong-un is the theory of the pure bloodline of the supreme leader. The bloodline of Mount Baekdu, as it is called, will be stressed along with the fact that Kim Jong-un greatly resembles his grandfather Kim Il Sung, including his hair style. Also the images of Kim Jong-un riding a horse, guiding soldiers at a military training camp, and commanding a military

training session will be intentionally exposed via all forms of media to propagate the notion of "Kim Il Sung's resurrection." His image will likely be most actively promoted via films.⁶

In the mid-to-long term, stories of Kim Jong-un's resourcefulness, his military tactics, and his bold character along with amazing anecdotes of his on-site guidance tours will be broadcast. With the death of Kim Jong-il, the former appellation for Kim Jong-un, "Dearest General Comrade Kim Jong-un," will be upgraded to fit his new status as the supreme leader. An appellation like "dearest" is suitable for a successor, but not the supreme leader. For the supreme leader, titles like "honorable leader" or "beloved leader" are used.⁷ Kim Jong-un could be called "honorable leader and comrade Kim Jong-un." The foundation of his power will be strengthened through his image as the pure-blood successor of Kim Il Sung.

This will be followed by propaganda about Kim Jong-un's achievements. The regime will continuously release reports on major achievements credited to Kim: the powerful and prosperous nation, science and technology, the launch of the Kwangmyungsung II missile which symbolizes North Korea's nuclear status, completion of the Heechun power plant and iron producing factory, CNC technology

6. In North Korea, movies are considered the best means to propagate ideology and cultural education, superior to all other visual mass media. The reason for this is because movies are the most efficient means to convey themes according to one's intention in a short period of time. The core of visual media relating to the supreme leader consists of documentary films. In North Korea, documentary films represent the official documentation of history. A documentary film about Kim Jong-il's life entitled "Military-first Sun that Shines around the World" was produced on July 15, 2009 by Chosun Documentary Film Production. The first part of this documentary film series, produced in July 2009 and entitled "Honor Chosun," deals with Kim Jong-il's childhood from his birth to his graduation from Kim Il Sung University. A 20-hour documentary film series about Kim Il Sung, "For the Independence of the Nation," began production in 1993.

7. Appellations for Kim Jong-il until 1970s were 'brilliant leader' and 'beloved leader,' which, since Kim was designated as an official successor in 1974, changed to 'beloved leader.' Kim Il Sung had titles such as 'Great Father' or 'Dear Father.'

which symbolizes economic renewal and scientific advancement, the Pyongyang Orchard Farm symbolizing the abundance of North Korean life, and the Kaesun Youth Park symbolizing cultural life.

Extensive foreign cultural exchange projects will be deployed for the sake of the April national holiday. The Spring Friendship Art Festival this April will be grander in scale than any previous year. Performance troupes and cultural delegations from all over the world, not only from traditional allies like China and Russia but from other Asian and African nations as well, will be invited. This festival will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the *Juche* era and introduce the new Kim Jong-un era to the world. It will be Kim Jong-un's official international debut.

Prospects for 2012 Cultural Policy

Diffusion of "Arirang Nationalism"

"Arirang Nationalistic Theory" as the New Nationalism

The Chosun-ethnocentric policy, which emerged in the mid 1980s for the sake of regime maintenance during the period of the fall of socialism, has been reinforced and re-shaped into "Kim Il Sung nationalism," which combines national cultural legitimacy with the authenticity of Kim Il Sung's lineage. Since the 1990s, use of terminology such as "the Kim Il Sung People," "the Sun of the Nation," and "the Kim Il Sung nation's language" has been expanding. Particularly after the passing of Kim Il Sung, North Korea started using the *Juche* calendar year system, celebrating the Day of the Sun, and constructing the Kim Il Sung Monument of Eternal Life, while externally they worked to build up the image of Kim Il Sung internationally. All of these efforts brought Kim Il Sung to the fore in order to emphasize that North Korean people are "the Kim Il Sung people." On July 28, 1997, the standard tongue of North Korea was established as "the national language of the Kim Il Sung people" and at the "Linguistics

Conference" held at Social Sciences Center it was resolved to reinforce projects related to teaching proper language usage.

These cultural education efforts are based upon the elitism associated with being "the Kim Il Sung people" (the People of the Sun). After 2000, North Korea's various nationalistic ideals have converged into "Arirang nationalism," and this nationalistic discourse will be expanded even further in the year 2012 as the country marks the 100th anniversary of Kim Il Sung's birth. The ideal of the "Arirang people" has been officially established both internally and externally by the mass gymnastic and art performance "Arirang." The title of the first act of "Arirang," which was performed for the first time in 2002, was "Arirang people." "Arirang people" has become a part of everyday terminology with the help of North Korean media.

Today's Chosun people are not yesterday's "Arirang people." The most prominent leader, the most magnificent ideology, the most powerful military, and the most superior system have made our people become the most powerful people of the Sun. Indeed, today's "Arirang people" are the people of the Sun.⁸

Before the term "Arirang people" came into use, "the People of the Sun" was the most popular terminology.⁹ The "Sun" in "the people of the Sun," of course, is Kim Il Sung.¹⁰ "The Kim Il Sung people"

8. "A protest from one united mind, a symbol of national power – Mass Games Performance related to 'Kim Il Sung Prize,' 'Arirang's creativity (5)," *Rodong Sinmun*, August 8, 2002.

9. Mansu Arts Company Conductor Cho Jung-Rim was quoted as saying, "Chosun's joy and style is the best in the world. In keeping with the Great Leader and the era, 'Arirang' has captured the excitement and style of the people of the Sun, born anew from the sadness and remorse of the past few hundred years, and this gives great endless joy to the people." Quoted in "The biggest occasion of Chosun musical history, a masterpiece that reflected the image of 21st century Chosun: Thrilled and joyful voices of those who have encountered 'Powerful and Prosperous Revival Arirang'," *Rodong Sinmun*, August 27, 2001.

10. Jagang Province Farming Accountancy Committee Vice Chairman Cho Myung-Kwan was quoted as saying, "The song only the people of the Sun possess. Indeed, 'Powerful and Prosperous Revival Arirang' is the Arirang of

was changed to “the people of the Sun” sometime around 2002, and now “the Arirang People” has become the official term. What is noteworthy is that from 2002 to 2009, “the Arirang People” was the phrase generally used to refer to North Koreans.

This stipulation of “the Arirang People” is not coincidental. It can be verified through an analysis of articles related to the 2002 Mass Games performance and “Arirang” performance that “Arirang” was intentionally emphasized. Many meanings can be extracted from the 2002 Mass Games performance “Arirang.” What particularly captures our eyes is the title. Among the many North Korean performance pieces, none has ever had a title like “Arirang” before. Especially in pieces that celebrate Kim Il Sung or Kim Jong-il’s birth, never before has such a clearly nationalistic word as “Arirang” been chosen as a title. Common phrases used in titles include “Party,” “Leader,” “Labor Party,” “Red flag,” or “Victory”; alternatively, “Song of Happiness” or “Song of Glory” are used in the titles of songs.¹¹

“Arirang”’s original title was “The First Sun’s Song.” The title “The First Sun’s Song” would be appropriate for the 90th anniversary of Kim Il Sung’s birth considering what titles have been chosen for celebratory performances so far. So why was the term “the First Sun,” which symbolized Kim Il Sung, replaced by “Arirang”? This name change was done under Kim Jong-il’s direct order. Naturally,

the people of the Sun. We will make the world shake by singing ‘Powerful and Prosperous Revival Arirang’ with a national pride that raises the Leader’s name up high.” Quoted in *ibid.*

11. From the November 1930 performance of “Chosun’s Pride,” considered the origin of mass gymnastic and art performances in North Korea, up until “Arirang” was performed in 2002, mass games have been put on 84 times, but this is the first time the title “Arirang” was chosen. Related research: Park Young-Jung, *21st Century North Korean Performance Art Group Gymnastics and Arts Performance “Arirang”* (Wolin 2007); Kim Yeon-Gab, *Arirang Research: National Song, People’s Song Arirang* (Chungsong 2002); Jeon Young Sun, “North Korea’s Arirang Festival and Potential of National Arts,” *Korean Culture Research* (6th Edition) (Korean Literature and Arts Research Center: Soongsil University, 2010); and Jeon Young Sun, “Sociopolitical and Cultural-artistic Meaning of Group Performance ‘Arirang,’” *Research on China and Russia*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Asia-Pacific Research Center: Hanyang University, August 2002).

Kim Jong-il is the only one with the authority to change the title of the celebratory performance of Kim Il Sung's birth. One noteworthy fact is that the title change was openly revealed to the public through media coverage.¹²

Under the North Korean system, the change of the title could have been kept secret. The change of title from "The First Sun's Song" to "Arirang" and the announcement of this change by someone who had participated in the writing of the song imply that an overt policy judgment was made to inform the public of the symbolism of "Arirang." It hardly seems possible that the North Korean authorities replaced "the Sun" with "Arirang" simply to appeal to the public's nationalist sentiment without attaching any other special meaning to it. Therefore we can easily assume that this whole process was made possible by a combination of the North Korean peoples' sentimental attachment to "Arirang" and agreement within the North Korean government.

The difference between the term "Kim Il Sung people" which emerged in the 1990s and "Arirang people" is hidden in the secret meaning of "Arirang." What North Korea hoped to spread through its Mass Games performance "Arirang" was a sense of elitism.¹³ By

12. The change of the title was supported by Lee Chul-Woo, who is a celebrated artist, assistant dean of Pyongyang's Yoon Yi-Sang Musical Research Center, and performance planner for the Chosun Confederation in Japan. For more on this refer to "Group Gymnastics 'Arirang' Original Title Was 'The First Sun's Song,'" *Yonhap News*, December 19, 2001.

13. Kwon Myung-Sook writes, "The signal fire of 'Arirang' that lights the world is the conviction and volition of the great general's torch and the flame of wide ambition and optimism that lets the world know the dignity of Kim Il Sung's Chosun and the Kim Il Sung people and brings the zenith of the great and powerful nation to this land. Though an hour and a half in everyday life is such a short period of time, the Arirang people's 100-year history has unfolded within it! Through graceful musical dances and vigorous group gymnastics, extra-large screen and background, luxurious electric lights and laser lighting, and a rapturous art mystery is unveiled massively in three dimensions." From Kwon Myung-Sook, "Monumental Masterpiece of the New Century, 'Kim Il Sung Prize': Mass Games Performance 'Arirang,'" *Chosun Art*, Vol. 12 (December 2008).

identifying North Koreans as a chosen people who are distinct from all others, internal unity has been reinforced and North Korea's sense of national identity has solidified.

The anti-national scheme of the group of toady traitors who deny the commonality of the blood relationship can also be witnessed in the spreading of the "multi-national, multi-ethnic society" ideal which ignores the Chosun people's natural traits. Recently, South Korea has been conspicuously ignoring our people's essential traits and pursuing a "multi-national, multi-ethnic society." This "multi-national, multi-ethnic society" ideal denies the uniformity of our people and differentiates, jumbles and Americanizes South Korean society, which is an unacceptable act of annihilation. In today's world, where the imperialists' scheme of "globalization" is becoming more conspicuous, it is a matter of great importance that we assert and preserve our national characteristics to pioneer the destiny of our people.¹⁴

The nationalism that North Korea insists upon is founded upon blood, or in other words, bloodlines. The logic is that, through blood lineage, the Chosun people's fundamental traits have been maintained. In contrast, the multi-cultural society discourse in South Korea ignores the essence of the people and denies their unity. It is referred to as "Ethnic Annihilation Theory" which "differentiates," "jumbles," and "Americanizes" the people.

This idea fits in the same context as Kim Il Sung's earlier emphasis on the necessity of introducing a cultural language in 1966. On May 14, 1966, Kim Il Sung published the discourse "In order to revive the Chosun language's characteristics properly," which proposed that a new language standard be created. He criticized Seoul-style Korean language, which was the established standard for Korean language, as "a language dominated by rotten bourgeoisie lifestyle and male-dominated society," adding, "There is little pure language of our own, it is so jumbled with English, Japanese and Chinese." He decreed that Pyongyang, as the capital of revolution and the site where

14. Gahm Myung-Ok, "Toady Treachery of Denying the Commonality of Chosun Nationals' Blood Relationship," *National Cultural Heritage*, Vol. 1, 2009.

socialist national culture bloomed, should be the center for the national language.¹⁵ North Korea still perceives preservation of the purity of the language as a key task in protecting national culture.¹⁶

In the name of preserving the purity of language as a symbol of the people, Kim Il Sung established “cultural language” as a new standard system of language. Arirang Nationalistic Theory, which emerged after 2000, can be comprehended in the same context. That is to say, just as the creation of the new linguistic system was justified as protecting the superiority and purity of the language, the same logic applies to the promotion of the Arirang people as the new nationals who guard the superiority and purity of the people.

The reason why the issue of national discrimination will get expanded attention beginning in 2012 is because of the symbolism of the year 2012. The third generation succession will do away with the controversy through its promotion of nationalism based on blood lineage. During the second generation succession from Kim Il Sung to Kim Jong-il, “capacity” was emphasized. However, the third generation succession is taking on a different nature, emphasizing purity of blood. As blood lineage expands downward from Kim Il Sung, five generations of blood lineage will be promoted: two up and two down from Kim Jong-il. The emphasis on Kim Il Sung’s blood lineage combined with nationalism has created a new conception known as Arirang nationalism. This signifies that the “Arirang” people are the representative people of Korea who will maintain their national legitimacy apart from South Korea.

15. Kim Il Sung, “In Order to Revive Chosun Language’s Characteristics Properly: A Discourse with Linguists,” May 14, 1966.

16. “Seoul is now beset with languages from other nations and has transformed into a “flooded district” of foreign languages. Seoul’s language has been transformed into a jumble of English, Japanese and Chinese, and our language’s distinct characteristics have gradually disappeared. Various signs and advertisements use words from other languages, and it has become a fad to mix up English and Japanese in everyday conversation. Even mean and vulgar words are used profusely.” Choi Jung-Hoo, “Theory about National Language Development,” *Great Leader Kim Jong-il’s Ideology Theory: Linguistics* (Social Sciences Publishing Company, 1996), p. 54.

Public Proliferation of the Seeds of "Arirang"

The diffusion of Arirang into the national discourse began around 2000. In North Korea, "Arirang" is not an unfamiliar term. However, it was not until 2002 that "Arirang" took on a special role, aside from merely the name for a performance, as a window to a new national discourse within and outside of the nation. Arirang became popular both inwardly and outwardly through the promotion of "Mass Games" in which more than 100,000 people perform together.

"Arirang" is a massive performance which differs greatly in both nature and scale from regular stage performances or revolutionary operas. It was unprecedented even for North Korea to put on a show of such scale on a regular basis. The Mass Games performance "Arirang" has run annually from its premiere in 2002 until 2011.¹⁷ There were some cancelled performances in the early years, but Arirang now has become a regular annual event. The fact that such an event has been held continuously bears special meaning in itself.

Since 2000, not only the Mass Games performance "Arirang" but also pop songs and literature pieces with the title "Arirang" have been steadily released.

Pop songs include "Unification Arirang," "June 15th Arirang," "Citizens' Arirang," "Powerful and Prosperous Revival Arirang," "Arirang that Resonates in Kan-Sam-Bong."¹⁸ Particularly noteworthy pieces in this group are "Powerful and Prosperous Revival Arirang" and "Arirang that Resonates in Kan-Sam-Bong." "Powerful and

17. "Arirang" has undergone some revisions since its premiere, but it maintained the basic structure from 2002 and has been established as a regular performance. "Arirang" was ranked in the Guinness Book of World Records for staging the most performers (100,000) in a single performance. It has been steadily performed since its premiere in 2002. The 2011 performance schedule started on August 1 and came to an end on October 10 after two extensions. For more details refer to "Curtain drawn on North Korean Arirang... Extended performance for four consecutive years," *Yonhap News*, October 13, 2011.

18. For details on North Korea's Arirang, see Kim Yon-Gahb, *Research on North Korean Arirang* (Chungsong, 2002).

Prosperous Revival Arirang” is described as the “Arirang to the eternal victory of the Kim Il Sung people” and it is praised as a new rendition of the traditional Korean song “Arirang.”¹⁹ “Arirang that Resonates in Kan-Sam-Bong,” a song written by the Pocheonbo Jeonja band and first introduced in 2007, is about Kim Jung-Sook, the mother of Kim Jong-il. It was intended to portray Kim Jung-Sook’s pioneering spirit in the military-first era.²⁰ “Arirang that Resonates in Kan-Sam-Bong” is a song in praise of Kim Jung-Sook.²¹

“Arirang Short Story Collection,” published by Pyongyang Publishing Company in 1989, gets its title from Kim Won-Jong’s short story “Arirang.” The theme of Kim Won-Jong’s “Arirang” is Kim Jong-il’s interest in Korean traditional music and contains an explanation written by Kim Jong-il himself about Arirang’s superiority, characteristics and origin, and various changes it has undergone. It is an enlightenment story about how national cultural heritage should be cherished.

Park Jong-Chul’s “Arirang,” which was published by Literature Arts Comprehensive Publishing Company in 2001, is a novelette based on the legend of Sung-Bu and Rirang, which is an original fable that uses the creation of the “Arirang” mass games as its subject matter.²²

19. “Powerful and Prosperous Revival Arirang’ is a musical masterpiece in the era of the General and a monumental work for national pride,” *Rodong Sinmun*, August 26, 2001.

20. Kim Kwang-Moon writes, “It signifies that the Paekdu Generals’ pioneering history is the same as the Arirang people’s revival and victory in philosophical depth.” Kim Kwang-Moon, “Eternal Victory Arirang’ in relation to ‘Arirang that resonates in Kansahmbong’,” *Chosun Arts*, Vol. 6, 2007.

21. *Ibid.* Kim Kwang-Moon also writes, “Arirang’s melody, which was tainted with the national remorse of having been deprived of our own nation resonates and which was sounded through all of Korea by the legendary generals of Mt. Paekdu, even making the foreign intruders shiver.... That same Arirang that our mothers sang has become the song of the new history of the Arirang people, who have become known for their military-first ideology which shakes the whole world. This is the fierce breath of the military-first era through which the people’s hopes are realized and the continuing victory of Arirang resonates to the summit of Mt. Paekdu.”

22. The legend of Sung-Bu and Rirang is the story of a young man named

In the short story anthology "Starting Point" published in 2007 by Pyongyang Publishing Company, Jang Su-Bong's "Unification Arirang," Kim Seung-Ki's "What is Earned and Lost," and Hyun Myung-Su's "Filial Duty Tour" are grouped together and presented as the "Pyongyang Arirang" triptych.²³ Not only professional writers but the general public as well are encouraged to participate in this trend. The magazine *Youth Literature* volumes 9 (2006), 5 (2009), and 11 (2009) include lyrics submitted by the general public entitled "Happy Arirang that overflows in our home," "Dae-Hong-Dahn Arirang," and "Coal Falls Arirang." The lyrics of these songs reference "happy home," "Dae-Hong-Dahn, model town for potato farming," and "Coal" as their themes. Songs and novels with the title "Arirang" created by professional writers and also submitted by the masses have been introduced for general consumption. Arirang nationalism has massively proliferated as a result of this process.

Reinforcement of Reaction Culture as a Means of Social Control

Another noteworthy characteristic of North Korea's 2012 cultural policy is the aspect of social control. The regime is expected to actively

Rirang and a young woman named Sung-Bu who was a servant of the house of Kim Jwa-Soo in the mid-Chosun era. The two youths are inevitably separated after Rirang participates in a riot against a crafty landowner. While Rirang was crossing a hill towards the fighting grounds to avenge the townspeople who were killed on false charges, Sung-Bu sings a song extemporaneously mourning the separation from her beloved husband; that song is "Arirang."

23. Jang Su-Bong's "Unification Arirang: From a South Korean Pastor's Essay" relates the story of a South Korean pastor who was deeply moved by the performance of "Arirang"; Kim Seung-Ki's "What's Earned and Lost" is about photographer Jung Hee-Chul who participated in the Arirang performance and was moved to appreciate the North Korean system by watching the Arirang performance and gazing at the Daedong River. Hyun Myung-Soo's "Filial Duty Tour" is about a grandfather who went to see "Arirang" against his will. Upon his return from the performance, he urges the family to get tickets to "Arirang." All three novels are works of propaganda literature that serve to justify the North Korean system.

promote a movement to purify North Korean society against foreign influences.²⁴ External information has been flowing into the North through border trading and the markets. South Korean drama and movies are being directly consumed as the influx of external culture spreads, and distribution networks are being formed connecting consumers. South Korean cultural influences are flowing inland from North Hamgyong Province, China and the coastal border areas. As the distribution of television ownership expands, regular TV and satellite TV reception is also expanding from North Hamgyong, Yanggang, and Jagang Provinces to Pyongyang City, Kangwon Province and Hwanghae Province.

In addition, cell phone use is quickly increasing, allowing for rapid distribution of information within North Korea and increasing the frequency of exposure to external information.²⁵ Information control measures and propaganda are being deployed to combat South Korean dramas and movies, but their effect is limited. People are usually able to get information about control measures in advance, and can use bribery to avoid punishment. Types of "Korean Wave" influence within North Korea range from external forms such as fashion, speech, and hair styles to altered consciousnesses such as more positive attitudes toward South Korea and development critical

24. In the process searching for food or visiting relatives, North Koreans have engaged in increasingly active migration along the North Korea-China border and within North Korea. As trade items become more diverse with the activation of markets, hardware (recorders, stereos) and software trading has become possible, and in some areas the "Korean Wave" phenomenon has hit full stride. CDs, DVDs, VHS tapes are available through the markets, and recently a new distribution structure has formed allowing for professional rental services.

25. In North Korea, mobile communications service fees are relatively high, but considering the numbers of domestic wired phone subscribers in the metropolitan area (200,000-300,000 households, approx. \$500 membership fee), it is not entirely impossible to secure subscribers. Cell phone prices are extremely high for the general public, but subscription rates are rising rapidly among Party executives and vendors. The service area is initially limited to Pyongyang but will later be extended to major cities like Kaesong, etc. Lately, even limited internet services are being provided for cell phones.

thinking skills through comparison of the North and South Korean systems.²⁶

To counter the flow of external culture, North Korea will work to reinforce its own ideological education while simultaneously providing alternative cultural options. Groups like the Galaxy Orchestra and the Sam-Ji-Yon Band were brought into sudden prominence and are gathering public attention as new attractions. The Sam-Ji-Yon Band has drawn attention with its princess-like dresses and upbeat music. It now enjoys as much popularity as the Pocheonbo Jeonja Band did when it attained explosive fame in North Korea with everyday songs in the mid 1980s.²⁷ The Galaxy Orchestra is similar to a “Pops Orchestra” that performs with various classical instruments as well as modern ones such as electric guitars, drums and saxophones.²⁸ The Wang-Jae-Sahn-Kyung Band, the Sam-Ji-Yon Band and the Galaxy Orchestra have also gained acclaim for their outstanding talent and performance. The new trends in music and dramas are providing North Koreans with various attractions that compete for their attention.

“Liberal Arts Education through National Cultural Heritage” will be in full swing as part of the effort to emphasize the superiority of the national culture and heighten patriotism.²⁹ This emphasis on

26. Kang Dong-Wan and Park Jung-Rahn, *Korean Wave Shakes Up North Korea* (Neulpumplus, 2011).

27. The Sahn-Ji-Yon Band derived from the Kong-Hoon Women’s Instrumental Band of Mansu University’s Arts Company and was established in January of 2009 with Kim Il-Jin as the leader. It is also known as “Snow White” for having bright mood which clearly departs from musical groups of the past. The Sahn-Ji-Yon Band is an instrumental band that mainly plays classical instruments rather than national modernized instruments. It mainly consists of attractive artists in their 20s and 30s.

28. This is a band that gained fame through broadcasts around 2010. They drew attention at the New Year’s Concert in February 2010, not only by their performance but also by their daring costumes that revealed shoulder lines and collarbones. Swing jazz music, which was forbidden until recently in North Korea, has been gaining popularity for its novelty.

29. As a *National Cultural Heritage* editorial urged: “Education through national cultural heritage is an important task that heightens socialistic patriotism

national cultural heritage is an effort to reinforce anti-imperialism through national culture. Anti-imperialism through national culture boils down to “not forgetting the nature of imperialism which pillaged and robbed our national cultural heritage.”³⁰ A prelude to this new direction in North Korean education can be found in the 2006 action movie “Roaring Spirits of Pyongyang,” which depicted martial arts experts fighting to protect a secret traditional martial arts scroll, and the historical drama “Kae-Wol-Hyang,” which was made in early 2011.³¹

Boosting Cultural Diplomacy

Early on, North Korea began using culture as a vital diplomatic tool. One of the key policies of the sociocultural sector in 2012 is to boost the use of cultural diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy has traditionally been one of the tools North Korea uses to confirm its relationship with friendly nations.

and hierarchical consciousness among the laboring masses through the material and spiritual heritage that our ancestors created. The Great Leader Kim Jong-il understood the meaning and importance of patriotic education through national cultural heritage at an early stage and lead us wisely to fortify our efforts according to the demands of modern-day development.” From “Reinforce Patriotism Education through National Cultural Heritage,” *National Cultural Heritage*, Vol. 3, 2001.

30. Full quote: “In order to reinforce anti-imperialism education through national cultural heritage according to the demands of the military-first era, firstly, we must not forget the invasive nature of imperialism which destroyed, robbed and pillaged nation’s valuable historical relics, and we must uplift an uncompromising spirit of struggle to fight against it to the end.” From “Reinforce anti-imperialism education through national cultural heritage even more adapting to the request of military-first era,” *National Cultural Heritage*, Vol. 3, 2003.

31. “‘Kye-Wol-Hyang’ was produced to stand against South Korean dramas, but was cancelled for falling short of viewers’ standards,” *Chosun Ilbo*, June 25, 2011. “Kye-Wol-Hyang,” which was broadcasted on Chosun Central TV, is a historical drama about a famous *kisaeng* (Korean *geisha*) from Pyongyang. Historical dramas are rare in North Korea, and it was hoped that this one would provide a new attraction for viewers.

Since 2000, as inter-Korean relations have developed, North Korea's cultural diplomacy has been relatively inactive. However, since the advent of Lee Myung-bak administration in 2008, North Korea has been actively utilizing culture as a diplomatic tool. In April 2008 the Sea of Blood Opera Company embarked on a month-long tour of a number of major cities in China including Beijing, performing the revolutionary opera "The Flower Girl." This is one of the most well-known North Korean operas in China; it was first performed there in 1973. The 2008 performance was the first performance in China in 15 years.³²

As a successor to "The Flower Girl," another revolutionary opera, "Dream of the Red Chamber" (Hong-Roo-Mong), was recreated and staged in 2008. This opera is an adapted version of the Chinese classic "Dream of the Red Chamber." Chinese opera experts actively supported the 2008 recreation. These experts supervised the stage setting, arts, costumes and choreography in Pyongyang and saw to the proper combination of Chinese, North Korean and Western instruments. Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao viewed the performance with Kim Jong-il during his visit in 2009. In 2010 there were 21 performances, running from May 7 to July 18 in the major cities of Changsha, Wuhan, Chongqing, Shenzhen, and Xian. The Sea of Blood Opera Company consisted of 198 members led by Vice Minister Hahn Chul of the Korean Peninsula Culture Ministry.

In 2010, both the Chinese opera "Dream of the Red Chamber" and the Chinese play "A Sentinel under the Neon Light" were performed in celebration of 60 years of amicable relations between North Korea and China. In order to emphasize the opera's Chinese characteristics, Chinese, North Korean and Western instruments

32. "The Flower Girl" was introduced to China in the form of a movie before being staged as a performance. The movie was released throughout China in 1972, and due to its popularity a performance tour was launched in China the following year. Oh Yang-Yuhl, "'The Flower Girl' performance in China, sour reaction from the audience," Cultural Arts Committee Webzine *Arco* Vol. 108 (April 2008), http://www.arko.or.kr/home2005/bodo/sub/north_news.jsp?idx=784#793.

were artfully combined for the 2008 performance. On October 4, 2009 the performance was viewed by Kim Jong-il and Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao, who was visiting North Korea at the time. These performances became emblematic of the friendly relationship between North Korea and China, touring 12 Chinese cities including Beijing over an approximately 70-day period from May to July of 2010.³³

North Korea's recent cultural exchanges with Russia have also been noteworthy. North Korea recreated the classical Russian opera "Evgenii Onegin" in 2009 and held a commemorative performance in celebration of 60th anniversary of the North Korea-Russia Economic and Cultural Treaty on March 18, 2010, emphasizing amicable relations with Russia through various cultural events. "Evgenii Onegin" was originally written by Pushkin and composed as an opera by Tchaikovskii in 1897. The North Korean performance premiered at the Pyongyang Music University in 1958 and was performed in February of 2010 at the Kim Won-Kyu Music University of Pyongyang. The North Korean media emphasized that the performance was created with the help of Russian artists and viewed by Kim Jong-il on February 5, after which the producers received watches and commendations. Also, the characters and material were covered extensively in reports by the *Choson Sinbo*. In order to further emphasize the amicable relations with Russia, Russian movies were screened and Russia's "21st Century Orchestra" visited for a performance in North Korea. North Korea is fortifying its diplomatic relations with Russia through various cultural exchanges such as a performance of the ballet "Esmeralda," based on Victor Hugo's novel "The Hunchback of Notre-Dame," to mark the opening of a new ballet theater.

33. The opera "Dream of the Red Chamber," which was performed at the stage of Chinese Beijing TV Hall on May 6, 2010, is based on a full-length novel written during the Qing dynasty. It is a tragic love story about the rise and fall of a family. This classic tale has been made into a North Korean-style opera. The opera was recreated for the purpose of celebrating the 60th anniversary of North Korea-China relations and confirming the traditional friendly relations between the two nations.

On March 3, 2011 Russia's "21st Century Orchestra" traveled to Pyongyang to perform at the East Pyongyang Theater, and on June 29 the Russian Home Department's Home Military Academy Orchestra visited Pyongyang for a 30-day performance run, demonstrating the steady stream of cultural exchanges between the two countries.

As has been shown, North Korea is using culture as a means to solidify North Korea's amicable relations with China and Russia. The opera "Dream of the Red Chamber" and the classical opera "Evgenii Onegin" are respectively the most Chinese and the most Russian operas known to the world. North Korea's primary reason for performing these world-renowned pieces is to promote traditional friendship with the two nations. By staging performances outside of North Korea, they may also enhance their country's position in the world.

From October 2011 to January 2012, the Sea of Blood Opera Company is touring major cities throughout China, including Jilin Province, to perform the opera "Yang-Sahn-Baek and Chook-Young-Dae."³⁴ This opera was adapted last year by Kim Jong-il's order to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Chinese volunteer troops' entry into the Korean War and was premiered on October 24 of the same year. In the process of creating the opera, "China provided the costumes and stage settings gratis and also supervised the script writing and stage direction." "Yang-Sahn-Baek and Chook-Young-

34. According to the Sea of Blood Opera Company's China tour agency, the China Foreign Cultural Group, "Yang-Sahn-Baek and Chook-Young-Dae" was directed by North Korean artist Chae Myung-Suhk, who also directed "Dream of the Red Chamber" and was showered with rave reviews last year. The choreography was done by Kim Mok-Ryong, who supervised North Korean mass games performance 'Arirang.' Choi Yae-Ok, who also starred in the North Korean revolutionary opera 'The True Daughter of the Party,' played the role of the heroine Chook-Young-Dae, and the hero Yang-Sahn-Baek was played by Oh Chung-Song, who starred as the hero in 'The Tale of Choon-Hyang.' It is performed by a full-scale opera company consisting of 200 players including actors, dancers, chorus members and musicians. North Korea's Sea of Blood Opera Company tours for 3 months in China." *Yonhap News*, October 15, 2011.

Dae's value as a symbol for North Korea-China relations has been proven as it is unfailingly viewed by all high-level Chinese officials on visits to North Korea.

It is expected that the policy of pursuing foreign strategy through culture will continue to be expanded in 2012, with considerable efforts put into targeting Russia as well as China. It has been confirmed that on April 15, 2011, North Korea chartered an airplane to fly in foreign artists participating in the commemoration of the "Day of the Sun." Although the North has invited foreign performers to its Spring Art Festival of Friendly Relations in the past, chartering a plane to bring them in represents an exceptional extravagance.³⁵ Regarding the unusual mobilization of a chartered airplane for the art festival, a *Rodong Sinmun* article dated April 18 explained that "It is becoming a global art festival." As noted, the promotion of foreign exchange through culture creates opportunities for North Korea to escape from its rigid image both outwardly and inwardly and is a way to promote pride and self-esteem by showing off North Korea's international status.

North Korea is applying this "diplomacy through culture" strategy not only with traditionally close countries like China and Russia but also with the U.S. Nongovernmental diplomacy efforts between North Korea and U.S. began with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra's performance in Pyongyang in 2008 and garnered attention once again in June 2011 with the dispatching of a North Korean taekwondo demonstration team to the U.S. North Korea also sent a taekwondo demonstration team in 2007. The 2011 team, the first in 4 years, departed Pyongyang on June 4 via Beijing, arrived in the U.S. on the 9th, and returned to Pyongyang on the 22nd. At the taekwondo demonstration in the U.S., a North Korean representative stated that the purpose of the visit was "to cultivate reconciliation and peace with the U.S. through cultural exchange." The U.S. Department of State processed the North Koreans' entry visas as quickly as possible

35. "North Korea Flew a Chartered Airplane for Artists Invited to Perform at the Day of the Sun Commemoration," *Yonhap News*, April, 11, 2011.

and issued a special permit for the North Korean U.N. envoy staff to leave New York in order to guide the team to Boston. Continuing the precedent set by the taekwondo demonstration, the Chosun National Orchestra, the Pyongyang Performance Company and the Youth Choir have begun to prepare performances for the U.S. as well.

In the wake of Kim Jong-il's death, North Korea's cultural exchange effort is expected to focus on internal events rather than overseas performances. The Spring Friendship Art Festival and the Pyongyang Film Festival, which take place around Kim Il Sung's birthday in April each year, will be grander in scale than any other year. The Spring Friendship Art Festival in particular will likely be a grand event, since it must not only celebrate the 100th anniversary of the *Juche* era but also must compete with the Nuclear Security Summit in Seoul. The festival will represent the combined power of North Korea's diplomatic capabilities and its mass mobilization campaign and is expected to be equivalent in importance to the 13th World Youth Festival in 1989.³⁶

Conclusion

The top priority of North Korean cultural policy for 2012 is to put the future of North Korean society into perspective. North Korea has described its future outlook as a "powerful and prosperous revival." The regime has worked hard to build confidence in the feasibility of this "powerful and prosperous revival" through specific, repeated invocation of the "Arirang" ideal. Arirang nationalism, which hit full stride with the 2002 performance of the Arirang mass games, is a cultural code that suggests overcoming national suffering and achieving a powerful and prosperous revival. Starting with the

36. The recently completed new office building at Pyongyang Airport is one example of the preparations that have been made in advance of the international events in 2012.

"Arirang" mass games, a series of efforts have been deployed to instill this Arirang code among the masses through songs, novels and popular works.

Arirang's seed concepts – military-first politics, unification, and a powerful and prosperous revival – are embedded as subtext in the "Arirang" mass games, "Unification Arirang," "Powerful and Prosperous Revival Arirang" and various other songs, children's poems, novels and popular works. These are the products of North Korea's desire to change its national discourse from the "Kim Il Sung people" / "people of the Sun" discourse of the 1990s into a new "Arirang nation" discourse, with "military-first" and "powerful and prosperous revival" as its keywords. The "Arirang nation" is emphasized through this process.

The "Arirang nation" terminology has been planted naturally in the popular identity through efforts by major media outlets since 2002. The Arirang ideal, which was created in North Korea sometime around 2000, was the byproduct of a process of reconstructing and promoting a new North Korean national identity as the "Arirang nation" or the "Kim Il Sung people," rather than a modern creation emphasizing nationalist sentiment. This was a symbolic process employed to publicize the idea that North Korea has overcome its past ordeals and its people can now live happily in the military-first era as the "Arirang nation," singing songs of the "powerful and prosperous revival of Arirang." The process will peak in 2012.

The reinforcement of the "Arirang nation" ideal puts greater distance between North and South Korea and is distinct from the previous conception of identity, which identified South and North Koreans as members of a single race. In other words, this could quite possibly contribute to the reverse logic that "North and South used to be one race, but South Korean society lost its national purity by blending with other races. Hence, Korean national purity only exists among North Koreans (the Kim Il Sung people)." If people come to accept that North Korea and South Korea are different races, this could work as a psychological defense mechanism against unification by absorption. Although this logic still lacks persuasiveness and also leaves

ample room for objection to the emphasis on a single race, it could be seen as a process of growing acceptance of the “Arirang people” as a superior race in contrast with South Korea’s multi-cultural society.

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