CHANGES IN THE COMPOSITION AND STRUCTURES OF THE NORTH KOREAN POLITICAL ELITE

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It is contended that the structure of the Soviet and Chinese political elites underwent evolutionary changes under state socialism, becoming larger, widely differentiated, functionally specialised, and socially heterogeneous. This trend was particularly conspicuous in the 1980s. This paper examines changes in the North Korean political elite between 1980 and 2000, and investigates whether its composition and structure have diversified as in the case of the Soviet and Chinese political elites. An in-depth study of the Korean Worker's Party Central Committee pinpoints relative personnel stability and continuity in the North Korean political elite structure with regards to members' social attributes. Some signs of widening differentiation in the political elite were detected in the 1980s, where its size grew and the representation of the state elite consisting of technocrats and managerial personnel increased. Facing internal and external crises in the 1990s, however, it showed a reverse pattern. The North Korean political elite became smaller in size, closed, and homogeneously centralised, in which members were interconnected by similar demographic, education and career backgrounds. A narrowing differentiation of the

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political elite, featuring decreasing representation of state elites and the rapidly increasing numbers of Party and military elites, also marked a distinctive characteristic of the 1990s. In contrast to the Soviet and Chinese political elites which have experienced a radical turnover following leadership change, the North Korean political elite under Kim Jong-il has developed into a compact cohesive elite without any abrupt personnel change.

I. Introduction

Elite theorists define the political elite in state socialist formation as being ideologically unified, with narrow differentiation and strong unity. Long-term studies of the political elites in the USSR and China, however, present quite a different picture.[1] Although the pace of change differed, both the Soviet and Chinese political elites underwent gradual changes under state socialism, which transformed from the original 'ideocratic' type to a more diversified pluralistic type. The

1 E. Mawdsley and S. White, *The Soviet Elite from Lenin to Gorbachev: the Central Committee and its members 1917-1991* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); T. H. Rigby, *Political Elites in the USSR: Central Leaders and Local Cadres from Lenin to Gorbachev* (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1990); J. Higley, J. Pakulski and W. Wesolowiski (ed), *Post-communist Elites and Democracy in Eastern Europe* (London: Macmillan Press, 1998); D. Lane, "The Gorbachev Revolution: the Role of the Political Elite in Regime Disintegration," *Political Studies*, vol. 44, no. 1 (1996);L. Cheng and L. White, "The thirteenth Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party: from Mobilizers to Managers," *Asian Survey*, vol. 28, no. 4 (1988);L. Cheng and L. White, "The Fifteenth Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party: Full-fledged Technocratic Leadership with Partial Control by Jiang Zemin," *Asian Survey*, vol. 38, no. 3 (1998); S. Kwon, *An Elite Analysis of the Disintegration and Survival of State Socialism*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Cambridge (2003), chapters 4 and 5.

gradual change in the composition of the political elite stretched over generations, in which Party professionals and revolutionaries were replaced by those with 'managerial and technological skills' who were younger, better-educated and more competent in organising industrial development and associated social complexity. The co-option of people with varying career and social attributes resulted in an elite group that is more numerous, organisationally diverse, functionally specialised and socially heterogeneous. The elite diversification process in the Soviet and Chinese elites was further accelerated in the 1980s under Gorbachev and Deng Xiaoping. A high turnover and revolutionary change in the composition accompanied the within-system reform, which brought about the substantial influx of younger, technically trained elites.[2]

Change in the structure and nature of a political elite can offer one window on political change and transformation of a state socialist regime. Infusion of elites from different backgrounds who advocate their different interests induced elite differentiation and the polyarchic characteristics in the Soviet Union and China. The nature of the political elite began to change as people who are not strongly, ideologically or emotionally connected to the Party joined the group. Accordingly, the intensity of commitment to ideology and the institutional framework of Communism as well as the degree of ideological conviction, upon which elite legitimation and organisational integration is based, diminished. Associated with the significant change in the structure and nature of the political elite was some form of system change, either system disintegration or system reform, depending on the degree of change from the original 'ideocratic' configuration.

Studying developments of the political elite can be a means to speculate on the direction of political development in a state socialist regime. This paper investigates one specific case—the North Korean

2 S. Kwon, *ibid*, pp. 62-83.

political elite, focusing on its composition and structure between 1980 and 2000. It aims to examine how the North Korean political elite changed over time and whether it displayed a similar changing pattern to that of the Soviet Union and China. The analysis also compares and contrasts its major characteristics in the 1980s and 1990s in order to identify any structural adjustment in the elite group under the new leader, Kim Jong-il. The paper is structured to discuss the following: the concept of 'political elites' under state socialism, the methods of analysis, major analytical findings, and their implications.

Definition of the Political Elite

In defining the parameters of the political elite for empirical investigation, there has been marked preference for positional definition, which considers people holding key positions in a large powerful organisation who directly and regularly influence political decision-making of national significance.[3] Following this line of positional conception, 'elites' may be defined as "persons who are able, by virtue of their strategic positions in powerful organisations, to affect national political outcomes regularly and substantially."[4] Whereas the political elite in general refers to those who exert power only in the formal political arena, and the political elite in a state socialist power structure may include selected elites from other fields as long as they occupy positions in the most powerful organisation, the Communist Party, and exercise power at a national level.

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3 For varying definitions of 'elite' by different authors, see table 12.1 in M. Burton and J. Higley "Invitation to Elite Theory" in G. W. Domhoff and T. R. Dye (ed.), *Power Elites and Organizations* (Newbury Park: Sage publications, 1987), p. 223. For positional definitions of the political elite proposed by various authors, see S. Kwon, *ibid*, p. 41-42.

4 R. J. Higley and R. Gunther, *Elites and Democratic Consolidation in Latin America and Southern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 8.

State socialism is characterised by the political domination of society by the Party, which incorporates a multitude of social, economic and political forces. Within the Communist Party, the Central Committee ratifies all the important decisions and the members of this body participate in decision-making and decision implementing processes. The Central Committee thus gives political legitimacy to acts of the Party, state, and government institutions; it forms the major ideological, executive and political support system under state socialism. The Central Committee includes members of the Politburo and the Secretariat,[5] the top decision makers and executors in the Communist Party. Therefore, changes in the representation of groups at the Central Committee level may have significant bearings on the management of the country.[6]

For the aforementioned reason, most of the studies on the Soviet and Chinese political elites have been predominantly concentrated on the members of the Central Committees. Likewise, this paper employs the positional definition of the North Korean political elite on the basis of their occupancy of post in the Korean Workers' Party (KWP) Central Committee.[7] Limiting the investigation to the Party Central Committee may neglect other sectors, which may be equally influential, though organisationally distinct from the Party. However, the Central Committee itself includes representation from these apparatuses, comprised of the most influential leaders of the political, economic, cultural, military and other fields in North Korea. Additionally, this kind of positional and institutional definition of the North Korean elite is advanta-

5 The Politburo makes the vital decisions on concrete political directives and fundamental policies, which are prepared by the Secretariat. The Secretariat, on the other hand, heads the Party Bureaucracy and executes all the work of the Central Committee.

6 D. Lane, *The Socialist Industrial States: Towards a Political Sociology of State Socialism* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1976), p. 122.

7 This concept is taken in full knowledge that it cannot be assumed either that membership of the elite is always congruent with a position of power or that power is equally distributed among all members of the Central Committee.

geous for analytical purposes since it permits a cross-national comparison with other state socialist regimes and helps a long-term comparison of the political elite at different times.

II. Research Design and Methods

The profile analysis of the North Korean political elite is composed of two main parts. Firstly, it scrutinises personal profiles of full-fledged members of the Korean Workers' Party Central Committee (CC), and pinpoints major characteristics of the North Korean political elite in decade periods.[8] The base years for tabulation of the CC members are 1980, 1990 and 2000, and the number of people being examined was 145 in 1980, 180 in 1990 and 158 in 2000. Secondly, it analyses the type of elites being co-opted to the Central Committee to identify emerging trends in the composition and nature of the political elite as well as important changes in personnel policy.

The study is designed to scrutinise social and career attributes of each member. Eight social (demographic) attributes of the elites are selected: gender, age, place of origin (birth), kinship with Kim Il-sung or Kim Jong-il, generation group, educational backgrounds, overseas study experiences and schools attended by the members. The coding sheet constructed for the analysis of social attributes of the members of the Central Committee is shown in table 1.

The age of each CC member in three different analytical years (1980, 1990, 2000) is calculated based on his or her birth year. For the place of origin, the USSR and Manchuria are added to the list variables of nine

8 It would obviously be desirable to include data on the alternate membership, but limitations on the information currently available on the alternate members of the Central Committee do not permit this. Instead, I incorporate the study of biographical data of the alternate (candidate) members who were promoted to full-fledged membership in the period of analysis.

Table 1. Coding Sheet for the Social Attributes of the CC members

A. Social Attributes

a. Name

b. Sex 1) male 2) female

c. Age (birth year)

d. Place of Birth 1)South Pyongan Province 2) North Pyongan Province 3) South Hamgyong Province 4)North Hampyong Province 5) South Hwanghae Province 6) North Hwanghae Province 7) Jagang Province 8) Kangwon Province 9) Yanggang Province 10) USSR 11) Manchuria (China) 12) South Korea 13) Pyongyang 14) Kaesung 15) Japan

e. Kinship with the leader

1) Family and relatives 2) Comrades in the Partisan War with Kim Il-sung

f. Generation group

1) *Revolutionary first:* those who were born before 1920 and participated in the revolutionary movement (i.e. Partisan War)

2) *Revolutionary second:* offspring of the revolutionaries and born in the late 1920s, 1930s, 1940s

3) *Party & Technocrats group:* those born in the late 1920s, 1930s, 1940s and who have no privileged family backgrounds

4) *First, non-revolutionary generation:* those born in the 1900s, 1910s, 1920s and who have no experience in the Partisan War

5) *The third (post-war) generation:* those born after 1950

g. Education I: Primary & Secondary (High) School

1) Mangyongdae Revolutionary School 2) High school graduates 3) Junior high graduates 4) Primary school only 5) No formal education

h. Education II: Special School

1) Kumkang Political School (Training school for special agents) 2) Central Party Schools 3) Military Academy

i. Education III: University

1) Kim Il Sung University 2) Kim Chaek Engineering College 3) International Relations School 4) Teachers' College 5) College of Economics 6) Other universities

j. Education IV: Study Abroad

1) Moscow University 2) Other Universities in the USSR 3) China 4) Japan 5) Eastern Europe 6) Western Europe & US 7) Military Academy in the USSR 8) Party Schools in the USSR

k. Field of Study

1) Literature and Foreign Language 2) Politics, Law, Social Sciences 3) Economics 4) Engineering and Science 5) History and Philosophy 6) Education 7) Military 8) Arts and Music 9) Medicine

administrative provinces in North Korea. During Japanese colonisation, a significant number of Koreans emigrated to the USSR and Manchuria where guerrilla activities took place. As a result, some members, including the leader Kim Jong-il, were born outside of Korea. Considering the peculiar and chaotic Korean historical setting, it cannot be said that the place of birth represents the regional affiliation of the CC members. However, regional background of the members is an important social variable that may reflect regional distribution of the political elite in North Korea.

Kinship relations to the top leader are a variable unique to the study of the North Korean political elite. Since the North Korean regime characterises a monolithic power structure centred on Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il, it may be assumed that personal relations with the leaders may be linked to the elevation of one's social status. The study aims to perceive the proportion of those with personal connection with the leaders in the political elite, and hence, to determine the importance of this variable as a criterion for elite selection. It is often specified in the North Korea People's directories[9] whether a member is related to the leader, either as family and relatives, or revolutionary comrades, making it possible to identify members who are related to Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il.

The generation group variable categorises CC members into five different groups. People who participated in the Partisan war with comrades of Kim Il-sung and contributed to the establishment of the DPRK fall into the 'first revolutionary group.' The 'second generation revolutionary group' is identified as those who are offspring of the first

9 For instance, see the *North Korean People's Dictionary* (Seoul Daily Newspaper Agency); Directory of North Korea (Yonhap News); *North Korean People's Dictionary* (North Korea Research Center); *Dong-A Yearbook: the North Korean People's Dictionary* (Dong-A daily newspaper); *The North Korean People's Dictionary* (Korean Daily Newspaper Agency); *North Korean People's Dictionary* (Joongang News Agency) [all in Korean].

generation revolutionaries who were born after the late 1920s and educated in the Mangyongdae Institute.[10] Kim Jong-il, the current leader, represents this generation group. A variant of the second generation, which consists of members who were born after the late 1920s, lacked revolutionary background, but came into tenure in the Central Committee through a Party career or government bureaucracy is called the 'Party and Technocrats group.' This group is distinguished from the second-generation revolutionaries in the sense that their career path was not determined solely by their family backgrounds. The fourth group is referred to as the 'first, non-revolutionary generation' of people born before 1920. They belong to the same age group as the 'first generation revolutionary' group, but are differentiated by the fact that they have never participated in revolutionary activities such as the Partisan War. They were either recruited or co-opted to the Party and government in their later years. The fifth group, the 'post-war third generation,' includes people who were born after the establishment of Communist rule in North Korea and the Korean War. The generation born post-1950, however, is not represented among the top leadership and not a single Central Committee member falls into this 'third generation' group.

Educational background variables analyse the level of education attained, schools and institutions attended, whether the individual received overseas education, and if so, the country in which the person studied. The analysis, in particular, scrutinises members who were educated in the Mangyongdae Revolutionary Institute and Kim Il Sung University, which are valued as the elite training schools in North Korea, and establishes the significance of school ties in the North Korean elite group.

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10 Mangyongdae is a special educational institute established exclusively for the bereaved children of fallen revolutionary fighters in the Partisan wars. The institute, however, accepts offspring of revolutionaries and privileged children with revolutionary family backgrounds.

The career attributes of individuals are analysed based on six variables: the year of starting the Party Career, the year of being elected as a CC member, whether the person was promoted from an alternate membership, elite type by occupational sector, and engaged functional sector. The second part of the coding sheet is designed to analyse career attributes of the members of the Central Committee (see table 2).

The first two variables seek for the specific year in which an individual joined the Workers' Party and the Central Committee. These variables are significant in demonstrating the composition of the political elite in terms of the years of members' experience in the Party and the Central Committee. Another important variable is whether a member started his or her career in the Party apparatus or was co-opted from other apparatuses. Because the increasing proportion of those co-opted to the Central Committee indicates the degree of diversification, the analysis of members' career patterns may be useful in gauging the extent of elite differentiation that has occurred within the North Korean political elite.

The occupational sector variable identifies the category in which an individual has spent the majority of his/her time, and thus determines the elite type. The following are the criteria of classification for the elite type of the members and are self-explanatory. The 'Party elite' consists of people who have spent most of their time in Party posts and who have made a career in sections of the Party apparatus such as Politburo, Secretaries' bureau, Central Committee departments, city, county and province Party organisations, and other Party subordinate offices. The 'State (government) elite' includes people who have for the most part been engaged in the Central People's Committee, administration councils, ministries and commissions, and other government subordinate offices. The 'military elites' are those who served in the Korean People's Army as high-ranking officers and/or involved in the organs dealing with military affairs, including the Central Military Commission and the National Defence Commissions. The 'Social elite' is com-

prised of people who were involved in social and public organisations such as the General Federation of Trade Unions of Korea, Socialist Youth League, Korean Democratic Women's Union, Union of Agricultural Working People of Korea, United Front for Unification, Friendship Society with various foreign countries, and the Press.

Most of the CC members have overlapping membership in the legislative organ, the Supreme People's Assembly. Therefore, SPA members are not categorised separately as the 'legal elite' in the analysis. A significant number of members have been involved in more than one occupational sector or changed their occupational sectors frequently. In the highest Party organ, in particular, it is often the case that elites interchange and circulate to different posts. In the case of people who have changed their occupational sectors and have spent a significant amount of time in more than one sector, the classification of individuals is determined by the formal position held at the time of entry into the Central Committee.

The functional sector variable simply categorises individuals by the kind of work in which they are engaged in, rather than the institution of employment. Since it is common for the North Korean Party elites to change their field of engagement over time, coding is based on the field in which the individuals were engaged in, in the particular analytical year. This method of classifying individuals assesses the actual representation of functional engagement of individuals in the respective base year for the analysis and illustrates the representation of various occupational-institutional groups in the Party leadership at the time. I have constructed four main categories and nineteen subcategories, as listed in table 2.

The social and career attributes of those target elites chosen by period based on the criterion given above are analysed so as to discern the composition of the political elite in each base year (1980, 1990, 2000). Data analysis results and findings are discussed subsequently with tabulations and graphs.

Table 2. Coding Sheet for the Social Attributes of the CC members (Cont.)

B. Career Attributes

a. Year of joining the KWP
b. Year elected as Central Committee members
c. Promotion from alternate member 1) yes 2) no
d. Career Pattern I 1) Party Career 2) Co-opted
e. Career Pattern II
1) Party Elite (Party careerist)
2) State (government) Elite
3) Military Elite
4) Social Organisation
f. Functional Sector

Main Category	Sub Category	Code no.
I. Direction & Control	**Direction and Control (DC)** CC organization and guidance dept. Chief secretary of the City, County and Province Party committee	11
	Propaganda and Ideology (PI) Party newspaper editor, ideological sector, CC dept. of Propaganda and agitation dept. of documentation	12
	Internal Party Affairs (IPA) Party subordinate organs	13
	Economic Policy making and Planning (EPP) Dept. of economic planning, State planning commission, Premier and Vice-premier	14
II. Foreign Affairs & Defence, Security	**Foreign Affairs (FA)** Ambassadors, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Overseas intelligence & investigation, external affairs	21
	Defence and Security (DS) Military, Social Safety Agency, Intelligence	22
	Agitation against the South & Inter-Korea affairs (ASI) South Korea-directed operations, dept. of unification propaganda, Fatherland unification front	23
III. Economics & Science	**Finance and Trade (FT)** Ministry of External Economic Affairs, Dept. of Finance and Accounting	31
	Industrial Production (IP)	32
	Agriculture and Fisheries (AF)	33
	Transportation and Communication (TC)	34
	Mining & Natural Resources (MN)	35
	Science & Technology (ST) The Academy of Science	36
IV. Social & Cultural	**Culture, Literature, Music and Sports (CLMS)**	41
	Education (Edu) University professors, intellectuals, education commission	42
	Social Welfare (SW) Ministry of Public Health	43
	Press and Journalism (PJ) Broadcasting and Telecommunications	44
	Legal and Judicial (LJ) SPA, judges	45
	Social Organisation (SO) Trade Union, Women's Union, Friendship societies	46

Sources

Being a closed society, available data on the ruling personnel in North Korea are very limited. Since structural changes in North Korean organisations and appointments and dismissals of officials are not regularly announced, it is extremely important to constantly check on the names of officials and their titles. With respect to the Workers' Party of Korea, the movements of full-fledged and alternate members of its Politburo, Secretariat and Central Committee have been followed closely since the Party's 6th Congress held in October 1980. The lists of names, the present positions of the leadership and the latest changes in the membership are taken from the North Korea Directory,[11] the CIA directory, and directories published by the Ministry of Unification in Seoul. The lists of names of organisations and new positions of important personnel are also deduced through careful and continuous checking of official North Korean reports, *Rodong Sinmun* (Korean Workers' Party organ) and *Minju Choson* (government organ).[12]

A compilation of biographical data of the Central Committee members is based on numerous North Korean people's dictionaries, directories of North Korean officials, documents and reports from the South Korean government, and other secondary sources.[13] Collecting bio-

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11 *The North Korea Directory* is published by Radiopress in Japan, a short-wave broadcast monitoring service. The information they acquired was mainly from Radio Pyongyang and *The Korean Central News Agency* and was relatively accurate and updated. It has been annually published since 1988. *North Korean People's Dictionary* (Radio Press Inc., Japan) [in both English and Japanese].

12 The list of full-fledged Central Committee members and alternate members announced at the 6th Party congress and the list of the funeral committee members for high officials can be found in *Rodong Sinmun* and *Minju Choson*.

13 For the list of the North Korean People's Directories, see footnote 9. See also *Directory of Officials of the DPRK* (CIA, Washington); *Profile Documents on North Korean Core Ruling Elites 1999* [in Korean] (Seoul: The Ministry of Unification, Seoul); H. J. Chon, I. Ahn and Y. Suh, *A Study of North Korean Power Elites* [in Korean] (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, 1992); Y. Han, *A Study of North Korea* [in Korean]

graphical data and profiles of all the members is the most difficult part of the analysis, mainly due to inconsistent information from different sources. Information on the recorded dates of birth, birthplaces, and educational backgrounds of the members, in particular, varied considerably. Furthermore, missing biographical information on birth dates, educational backgrounds, and career attributes for some members presents added difficulty to the analysis. In order to lessen validity and reliability problems, crosschecking of the biographical information in different sources was necessary. Obituaries of high officials carried in *Rodong Sinmun* (Korean Workers' Party organ) and other North Korean publications were particularly useful for such a purpose.

There were six members of the KWP Central Committee whose biographical data were not found in any of the sources; they are either new to the Central Committee or of relatively little importance. A lack of biographical information of some of the members as well as some lacunae in the criteria inevitably caused missing values. The missing values cannot be ruled out completely, however, as it was less than 5 percent of the total number of the CC members studied, except for the place of birth and educational background criteria. Moreover, the information gap tends to be the same over all the study periods. For instance, many members whose biographical data could not be known remained in the Central Committee from 1980 to 2000, constituting the same missing value respectively in 1980, 1990 and 2000. Thus, they are unlikely to have a significant effect on assessing specific patterns in the structural changes of the power elite group over a period of twenty years.

(Seoul: Pakyoungsa, 1989); N. S. Kim, "Prospects of Change of North Korea's Power Structure," *A Study of Unification Issue* [in Korean] (Seoul: National Unification Board, 1991); S. C. Yang, *The North and South Korean Political Systems: A Comparative Analysis* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994).

III. Data Analysis of the Central Committee

With the collected biographical data of the members of the Central Committee (CC), the composition and characteristics of the group are analysed on the basis of decade periods. The results of the data analysis of the North Korean political elites are displayed under the following headings: size and turnover, gender, place of origin, age distribution and generational shift, kinship with the leader; educational background, yeas of experience in the Party, career pattern by the elite type and functional sectors of the CC members.

Size and Turnover

The size of the political elite constantly increased from the first Party Congress in 1946 till the sixth Party Congress in 1980. As shown in table 3, the number of full-fledged members more than tripled and the number of newcomers increased simultaneously. A remarkable turnover of the CC members took place in 1970 at the fifth Party Congress, which may reflect a massive restructuring of the leadership following the purges of factional rivals in the 1960s and replacement of the ousted members by Kim Il-sung supporters.

Table 3. Number of the CC members elected at the Party Congress 1946-1980

The Party Congress	No. of full-fledged CC Members	No. of newcomers	% of newcomers
The first (1946.8)	43	–	–
The second (1948.3)	59	29	49.2
The third (1956.4)	71	42	63
The fourth (1961.9)	85	56	66
The fifth (1970.11)	117	85	72.2
The sixth (1980.10)	145	60	41.4

Source: Party Congress record and Rodong Sinmun (Party organ).

In 1980 at the 6th Party Congress, 145 people were elected as full-fledged members and 103 people as alternate members. 60 of the 145 full-fledged CC members of the 6th Congress were new to the Central Committee, which marked a turnover of 41.1%. Since 1980, however, significant turnover in the composition of the Central Committee has ceased. This is possibly due to the fact that a Party Congress has not been convened for over twenty years. Concerning the turnover of the Central Committee since 1980, table 4 shows that there were 67 members who either passed away or were dismissed, and 80 newcomers in 20 years. The turnover rate remained the lowest (less than 23 percent) since 1946.

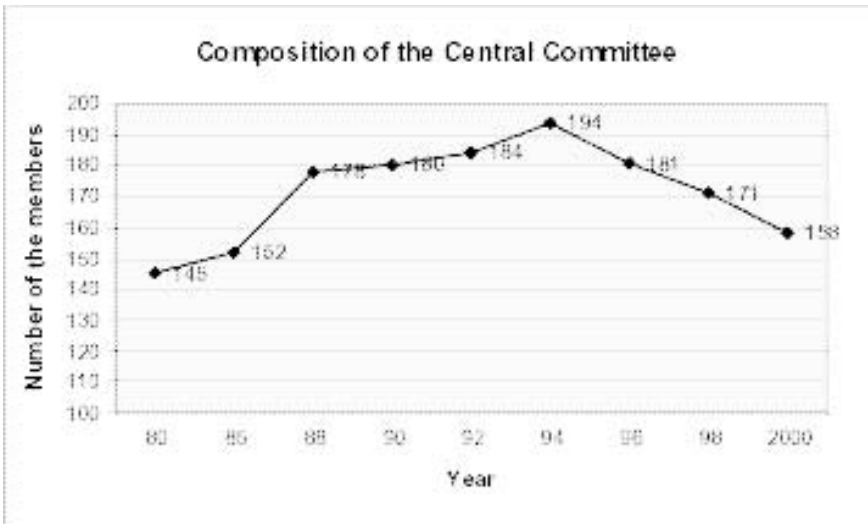
There has been no newcomer to the Central Committee since 1995 in spite of the increasing number of deceased members. 55 out of 80 newcomers were promoted from alternate members, which may indicate that the leadership has given top priority to stability of the power structure. Bringing in people who have had career experiences in the CC to fill in the full-fledged membership vacancies seems a preferable way to maintain a lesser degree of mobility within the Central Committee and prevent an influx of new elites into the positions of leadership.

According to the Party Constitution, it is not permitted to change more than 1/5 of the members in between the Party congresses. Never-

Table 4. Turnover of the Central Committee Full-fledged Members 1980-2000

	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	1980-2000
Composition	145	152	180	183	158	–
Newcomers	60	17	40	24	0	80
No.(%) of those promoted from CC alternate members		9 (52.9%)	28 (70%)	19 (79.2%)	0	
% of newcomers	41.4	11.2	22.2	13.1	0	–
Dismissed or Deceased	–	10	11	23	25	69

Graph 1. Changing Pattern in the Composition of the Central Committee



Source: North Korean Directory, (Radio Press, Japan), published annually from 1988.

theless, as shown in the table above, the KWP Central Committee continued to expand up to the mid 1990s, then continued to decrease. Graph 1 shows such a changing trend in the size of the Central Committee, based on the numbers of the CC full-fledged members every two years from 1988. The shrinking size since the death of the "great leader" Kim Il-sung implies that the rise of a new leader did not bring about any radical change in the composition of the political elite. Rather, the political elite became condensed and clustered, as suggested by the decreasing size and low turnover of the Central Committee in the post-1995 period.

Gender

The gender ratio among the CC full-fledged members is shown in table 5, which reveals that more than ninety percent were men in all

Table 5. Gender Ratio in the Central Committee

	1980	1990	2000
Male	139 (95.9%)	171 (95.0%)	149 (94.3%)
Female	6 (4.1%)	9 (5.0%)	9 (5.7%)

three-time periods. Although it has increased slightly, the proportion of women in the Central Committee has remained at less than 6%. Despite emphasis on the elevation of women's social status and gender equality in North Korea, the proportional imbalance between men and women in the political elite is distinct.

Place of Origin

Although there are many gaps in the available information for this criterion, which makes generalisations more tentative, the analysis of the available data reveals that the largest number of the Central Committee members come from the Hamgyong Provinces, especially North Hamgyong. South Pyongan Province, where Kim Il-sung was born and raised, ranks second largest in the CC, followed by Manchuria. Other studies on regional background of members show similar results.[14] The regional distribution of the full-fledged members of the Central Committee by the place of birth is as seen in table 6.

The high percentage of those from the Hamgyong provinces may be explained by the historical fact that the North Hamgyong province along with Manchuria and a part of Soviet Siberia used to be the centre stage of anti-Japanese guerrilla activities. Since the core of North Korea's political leadership was mainly recruited from the

14 W. Y. Lee, "Generational Switch and Potential Factionalism among the North Korean Power Elites," *The Korean Journal of National Unification* (Seoul: The Research Institute for National Unification, 1994), p. 58; S. C. Yang, *ibid*, p. 295.

Table 6. Place of Origin of the Central Committee Members

	1980	1990	2000
Pyongyang	4 (3.7%)	9 (6.5%)	8 (7.1%)
Pyongan Province	**27 (25.0%)**	**36 (25.9%)**	**29 (25.9%)**
South Pyongan	16 (14.8%)	23 (16.5%)	21 (18.8%)
North Pyongan	11 (10.2%)	13 (9.4%)	8 (7.1%)
Hamgyong Province	**45 (41.7%)**	**55 (39.6%)**	**43 (38.4%)**
South Hamgyong	14 (13.0%)	16 (11.5%)	13 (11.6%)
North Hamgyong	31 (28.7%)	39 (28.1%)	30 (26.8%)
Hwanghae Province	5 (4.6%)	8 (5.8%)	6 (5.4%)
Kangwon Province	4 (3.7%)	5 (3.6%)	5 (4.5%)
Yanggang Province	4 (3.7%)	5 (3.6%)	6 (5.4%)
Kaesong	1 (0.9%)	1 (0.7%)	1 (0.9%)
USSR	2 (1.9%)	2 (1.4%)	1 (0.9%)
Manchuria	**10 (9.3%)**	**10 (7.2%)**	**8 (7.1%)**
South Korea	6 (5.6%)	7 (5.0%)	5 (4.5%)

Missing values are 37 in 1980, 41 in 1990, and 46 in 2000.

anti-Japanese partisan guerrilla groups in the early stage of development, people from the Hamgyong area may have risen to the political elite in large numbers. Elites who were born in this area, where the revolutionary heritage originated, were still significantly large in number between 1980 and 2000. Although data are missing for around 10% of the members, based on the analysis of 108 members in 1980, 139 in 1990 and 112 in 2000, it can be said that the majority of the elite were from the provincial areas, particularly the Hamgyong and Pyongan regions.

Age Distribution and Generational Shift

The membership of the Central Committee is continuously aging,

which implies that a significant intake of younger personnel has not occurred within the group since the 1980s. A lack of radical changes in the age structure can be confirmed by the fact that the backbone age group in 1980 was the fifties, the sixties in 1990, and the seventies in 2000. The number of missing values would not alter the evident aging phenomenon. As demonstrated in table 7, the mean age of the group constantly increased, signifying the persistence of gerontocracy in the North Korean political elite. A decrease in the mean age of the group, which was commonly the case in the USSR and China after the leadership change, was not the case in North Korea. The analytical finding supports the previous supposition that an infusion of younger generation members or a significant reshuffling of the membership has not occurred in the North Korean political elite.

Table 7. Age Distribution in the Central Committee

	30s	40s	50s	60s	70s	80s	Missing value	Total	Mean age
1980	1	16	**68**	34	9	0	17	145	57.3
1990	0	5	25	**91**	31	4	24	180	64.6
2000	0	0	7	30	**77**	16	28	158	72.1

Despite the aging trend of the Central Committee, a generation change from the first revolutionary generation to the second revolutionary generation was noticeable between 1980 and 2000. As indicated in the table below, the proportional balance between the first generation and the second generation in 2000 had shifted in comparison to that of 1980.

The distribution of the four different generation groups in the Central Committee illustrated in table 8 shows three distinctive characteristics. Firstly, the number of the first generation Partisan Revolutionary group has visibly declined. Most of the first revolutionaries and the old generation disappeared from the posts due to death. Although the

Table 8. Generation Groups in the Central Committee

	First Revolutionary	First, non-Revolutionary Generation	Second Revolutionary Generation	Second, Party & Technocrats, generation	Missing
1980	34 (26%)	15 (11.5%)	34 (26%)	48 (36.5%)	14
1990	29 (18.4%)	16 (10.1%)	49 (31.0%)	64 (40.5%)	22
2000	16 (12.0%)	4 (3.0%)	44 (33.1%)	69 (51.9%)	24

Note: For the definition of different generational groups, see table 1.

number of those with 'revolutionary experience' declined, revolutionary veterans were still active at the highest level of the Party. Among the North Korean political elites, the first generation, both revolutionary and non-revolutionary, accounted for 15% of the Central Committee in 2000. Secondly, the proportion of the second-generation revolutionaries has constantly risen in membership of the political elite. Considering that the new leader, Kim Jong-il, represents this group, the trend of an increasing proportion of the second-generation revolutionaries may be related to Kim Jong-il's power succession. The second revolutionary generation group is privileged to enter a special institute called the 'Mangyongdae Revolutionary School.' The school is known to be an educational institute that cultivates a new generation elite group with strong revolutionary spirit and loyalty to the leader. A radical change in the system, therefore, is unlikely to be initiated by this group of people. Thirdly, the proportion of the second generation Party and Technocrats group has been increasing at twice the rate of the second- generation revolutionary group in the last 20 years; by the year 2000, it accounted for more than half of the Central Committee.

A generation shift is still in progress in the North Korean elite structure, featuring a constant increase in the proportion of the second revolutionary and the Party & technocrats generation groups. However, such a generation shift would not alter the aging trend of the Central

Committee because the second revolutionary and the Party & technocrats generation groups consist of people who were born between 1925 and 1950. Since people in the second generation groups were mostly in their 60s in 2000, a shift to the second generation has no significance. It can be speculated that the rise of the third generation of people who were born after 1950 may foster significant and revolutionary changes, however, the presence of the third generation in the group has not yet been seen in the Central Committee.

Kinship with the Leader

The overall percentage of those with kinship to Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il and that of Kim Il-sung's Partisan Comrades remained at about 20% throughout the analytical period.

Table 9. Kinship with the leader Kim Il-sung in the CC Membership

	1980	1990	2000
Relatives	12 (8.3%)	20 (10.9%)	19 (12.0%)
Partisan Comrades	23 (15.9%)	20 (10.9%)	14 (8.9%)

As shown in the data, the percentage of Kim's relatives increased slightly over time. The Partisan Comrades of Kim Il-sung comprised 16% of the Central Committee in 1980, but the number of the Partisan group decreased over time, mainly due to aging and death. This survey discloses that a certain degree of nepotism exists in the North Korean political elite, where family background and personal ties with the leader provide informal channels for career advancement and inclusion in the Party centre. Accommodating relatives and comrades into the political elite group may have been a useful means for maintaining a strong political support base and consolidating loyalty within the leadership.

Educational Background

The rising level of education of the North Korean political elite is apparent in table 10. Despite the relatively large number of missing values, the table shows a high proportion of college graduates and its rising trend.

Table 10. Educational Background of Full-fledged Central Committee Members

	Primary & Junior High, No formal education	University graduates	Foreign education	Party School	Military School	Missing
1980	8 (8.2%)	68 (70.1%)	73 (75.3%)	11 (11.3%)	17 (17.5%)	48 / 145
1990	6 (4.5%)	99 (75.6%)	93 (71.0%)	12 (9.1%)	22 (16.7%)	49 / 180
2000	0 (0%)	85 (76.6%)	75 (67.6%)	11 (9.9%)	18 (16.2%)	47 / 158

Note: People who were educated in more than one institution are counted more than once.

Among those whose education background is known, the share of those who had completed their advanced education accounted for over 70%, and marked 76.6% in 2000. The number of people who had only primary education, on the other hand, fell significantly. CC members who were educated in foreign countries also dropped in percentage over time.

Concerning the school attended by the CC members, as shown in table 11, Mangyongdae Revolutionary School graduates accounted for about 35% of those whose education background is known. It is especially noteworthy that the share of Mangyongdae attendees in the political elite has increased since 1980s. The trend seems to be related to Kim Jong-il's power succession; the Mangyongdae Institute, founded in 1948, is the alma mater of Kim Jong-il. The graduates of Kim Il Sung University compose over 60% of those with university education in the Central Committee. A high and constant percentage of those who stud-

ied at Kim Il Sung University indicates that the graduates from this top elite school are more privileged to rise to rule positions in North Korea. A large Kim Il Sung University alumni cohort in the Central Committee also implies relative homogeneity and coherence of the political elite in terms of school background.

Table 11. The Percentage of Graduates of Top Elite Schools

	Mangyongdae School	Kim Il Sung University
1980	32.9%	67.6%
1990	34.8%	62.0%
2000	35.1%	67.1%

Among those in the Central Committee who had studied abroad, the Soviet Union had been the most popular overseas study locale (see table 12). Since the establishment of the North Korean regime and right up to 2000, an overwhelmingly large number had studied in the Soviet Union. Though the change was small, the percentage of people who studied in engineering colleges in Eastern Europe increased from 1980 to 2000.

Table 12. Overseas Areas for Study

	USSR	China	Japan	Eastern Europe	U.S. & Western Europe	Total
1980	52 (71.2%)	3 (4.1%)	8 (11%)	9 (12.3%)	1 (1.4%)	73
1990	65 (69.9%)	3 (3.2%)	9 (9.7%)	15 (16.1%)	1 (1.1%)	93
2000	53 (70.7%)	3 (4.0%)	5 (6.7%)	14 (18.7%)	0 (0%)	75

Note: Overseas study on two or more occasions were cumulative. The people who attended schools in the US or Japan had educational opportunities before the national liberation in 1945, and therefore, they have little importance to the analysis.

The majority of people who were educated in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe were technocrats and economic experts. Analyzing the field of study of those who had studied in these two areas, the engineering and science field was most dominant. There was a particularly strong correlation between the engineering field and Eastern Europe as an area of study. It can be inferred that North Korea encouraged studies in the country which is most advanced in the socialist bloc in terms of science and technology since it needed advanced knowledge in the science field, especially in the technical area. The overall percentage of people with foreign education fell slightly over time, which may be due to the declining representation of technocrats in the Central Committee in the 1990s (see 'functional sector' of the CC members in this paper).

Years of Experience in the Party and the Central Committee

On the basis of the year of Party entry of each member, table 13 displays the years of experience in the Party that the Central Committee members have had. As shown in the tabulation, the years of experience in the Party of the members increased over time: the majority of members had 10 to 20 years of Party experience in 1980, 20 to 30 years of experience in 1990, and 30-40 years of experience in 2000. A similar trend can also be noticed when we consider the years of members'

Table 13. Experience in the Party

	Less than 10 yrs.	10-19 yrs.	20-29 yrs.	30-39 yrs.	40 yrs. and over	Total
1980	36	**52**	38	10	0	136
1990	18	40	**59**	49	6	172
2000	7	20	37	**51**	33	151

Note: missing values are 9 in 1980, 8 in 1990, and 7 in 2000.

experiences in the Central Committee (see table 14). The average years of experience in the Central Committee of the members increased from 6.6 in 1980 to 12.6 in 1990, and to 19.2 in 2000.

Table 14. Experience in the Central Committee

	Less than 5 yrs.	5-9 yrs.	10-19 yrs.	20-29 yrs.	30-39 yrs.	40 yrs. and over	Mean	Total
1980	**74**	2	60	5	4	0	6.6	145
1990	41	16	**64**	52	4	3	12.6	180
2000	0	23	46	**51**	38	0	19.2	158

The characteristic of increasing experience of the members in the Party and the Central Committee seemed to parallel the aging trend of the Central Committee members and low turnover in the membership. This reflects continuity of the North Korean leadership. Absence of substantial change in the composition of the political elite may have contributed to the accumulating years of experience of its members, thus securing political stability in the Party centre. The finding also implies that those who were skilful and familiar with the workings of the Party and the Central Committee increased in the Party leadership. These old guards in the political elite were likely to advocate and support the existing political system and the regime, rather than initiating radical changes.

Co-optation Practice

More than half of the Central Committee members were co-opted into the Party Central Committee from different occupational sectors. Among the co-opted members, the majority of people came from either the state apparatus or the military. Although over 60% of members were co-opted, the proportion of members who had a Party career all

their lives remained constant and relatively significant in the last 20 years. As the table below shows, over 35% of the North Korean political elite were Party careerists.

Table 15. Career Pattern of the Central Committee Members: Co-optation

	Party Career	Co-opted
1980	53 (38.1%)	86 (61.9%)
1990	60 (34.7%)	113 (65.3%)
2000	55 (36.2%)	97 (63.8%)

Note: missing values are 6 in 1980, 7 in 1990, and 6 in 2000.

Active co-optation practices must have promoted diversification of the Central Committee. The fact that a greater number of the Party Central Committee members were co-opted from the government and military apparatus in North Korea may be interpreted in two ways: it may reflect the intention of the regime to diversify the leadership by bringing in various experts and professionals from different functional fields. Or, it may reflect the intention of strengthening the links between the State, Party, and Military to constitute a unitary political elite. The second interpretation seems more likely in the case of North Korea, particularly in the 1990s.

Career Pattern by the Elite Type

The career pattern of the Central Committee members was evaluated by analysing the sector in which a person spent the majority of his or her career. Each member was classified into Party, state, military, and social elite type by the major duties in which they were engaged. When a person held numerous duties, the job performed over the longest period was counted. In the case of a person who changed occupational background over time, the one in which the person spent the

longest time and for which he/she is best known has been counted. There are cases in which a member spent an equally large amount of time in more than one sector—in such cases, the member is categorised according to the official posts of the member around the time of being selected to the Central Committee. The number of people who spent an equally substantial amount of time in more than one occupation sector was 32 in 1980, 19 in 1990, and 28 in 2000. This indicates that it is common for the Central Committee members to have overlapping positions and to be involved in more than one occupational sector. The most common movements in the North Korean Party elite were from the government sector to the Party, and from the Party to the social organisation sector. Table 16 and graph 2 display the changing representation of different elite types in the KWP Central Committee.

Table 16. Career Pattern of the Central Committee Members: Elite Type

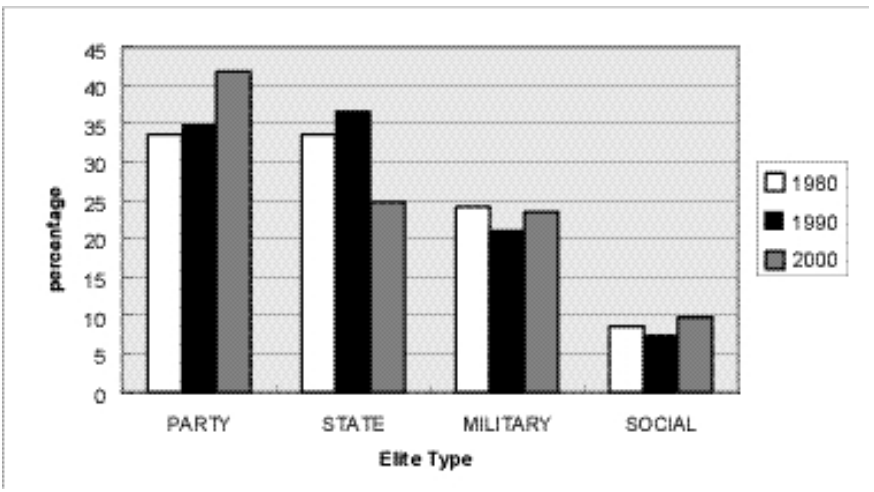
	Party	State	Military	Social
1980	47 (33.6%)	47 (33.6%)	34 (24.2%)	12 (8.6%)
1990	61 (34.9%)	64 (36.6%)	37 (21.1%)	13 (7.4%)
2000	64 (41.8%)	38 (24.8%)	36 (23.5%)	15 (9.8%)

Note: missing values are 5 respectively in 1980, 1990 & 2000.

Up to the 1990s, the proportion of the state elite surpassed that of the Party elite. A relatively high proportion of the state elite in the 1980s may have been due to the accentuated role of technocrats and experts in the leadership for economic development. Towards the end of the 1990s, however, the representation of the Party elite increased, while that of the state elite declined.

By 2000, the composition of the Central Committee was marked by a considerable increase in the Party and military representation and a significant proportional decrease of the state elite. This is in contrast to the structural changes that occurred in the USSR and China. The pro-

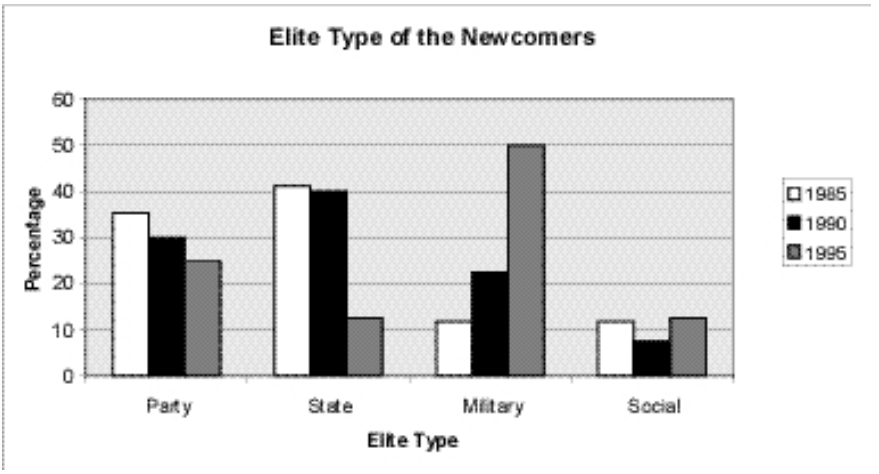
Graph 2. Career Pattern of the Central Committee Members



portion of the military elite, in particular, stayed significantly high in North Korea compared to other state socialist elite structures, which may be taken as a sign of the political elite becoming more conservative. If we consider that the military and the Party elites are likely to have greater interests in advocating and safeguarding the state socialist regime, the regime survival in North Korea may be explained by the increasing representation of these particular groups in the 1990s. Such a trend is particularly noticeable in the analysis of the newcomers to the Central Committee in the 1990s. The following graph displays a considerable proportional increase of military representation in the newcomer group, in which fifty percent of newcomers in the period between 1990-1995 were members of military elites in the Defence and Security sector.

Bringing in a large number of people with a military career to the Central Committee coincided with the rise of Kim Jong-il as the Chairman of the National Defence Commission. Based on this finding, it can be deduced that the North Korean power structure has been readjusted

Graph 3. Elite Type of the Newcomers



to reinforce the military, which shows strong loyalty to Kim Jong-il, for consolidating the new leadership and crisis management relying on the military. It may also be interpreted as an integration of the Military and the Party, which puts the military under Kim Jong-il's direct control. This tactic might have targeted curtailing military threats, formation of any potentially powerful military faction, and possible seizure or coups by the military.

Functional Sectors

As to the field of engagement of the CC members, people involved in the Foreign Affairs & Defence Security (FADS) and Direction & Party Control (DPC) sectors have been dominant in the North Korean political elite. The proportion of technocrats who were engaged in the Industrial Production (IP) sector increased up until 1990, then declined towards the end of the 1990s. The representation of members in Economics and Science (ES) decreased drastically, while those involved in Defence and Security (DS) increased significantly at the end of the

Table 17. Functional Sector the Central Committee Members are engaged in (%)

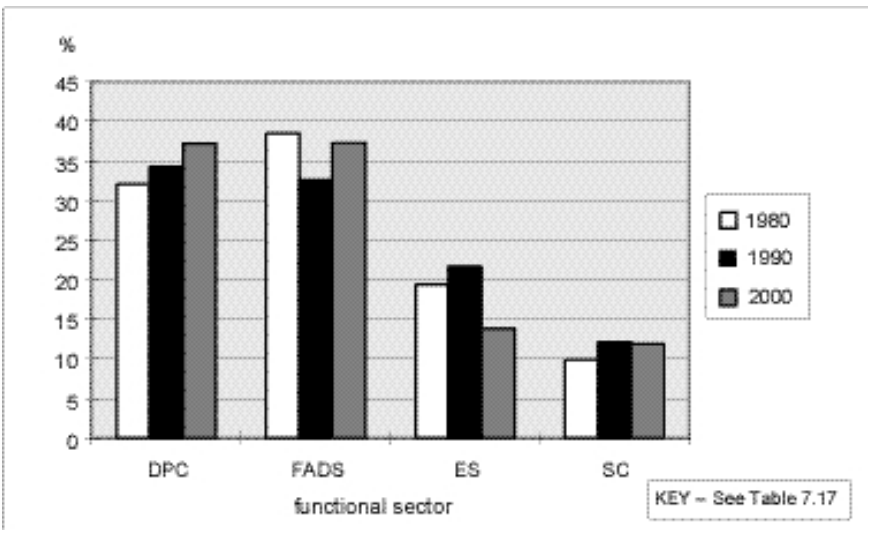
	1980	1990	2000
I. Direction & Party Control (DPC)	**32.1**	**34.3**	**37.2**
Direction and Control (DC)	16.4	14.9	15.0
Propaganda and Ideology (PI)	2.1	2.9	5.9
Internal Party Affairs (IPA)	5.0	7.4	6.5
Economic Policy-making and Planning (EPP)	8.6	9.1	9.8
II. Foreign Affairs & Defence Security (FADS)	**38.5**	**32.6**	**37.3**
Foreign Affairs (FA)	7.1	6.9	7.2
Defence and Security (DS)	25.7	22.3	25.5
Agitation against the South & Inter-Korea affairs (ASI)	5.7	3.4	4.6
III. Economics & Science (ES)	**19.4**	**21.7**	**13.8**
Finance and Trade (FT)	2.9	1.7	1.3
Industrial Production (IP)	7.9	12.0	7.8
Agriculture and Fisheries (AF)	2.9	2.3	1.3
Transport and Communication (TC)	4.3	3.4	2.0
Mining & Natural Resources (MN)	1.4	1.7	0.7
Science & Technology (ST)	0	0.6	0.7
IV. Social and Cultural (SC)	**9.9**	**12.1**	**11.9**
Culture, Literature, Music and Sports (CLMS)	3.6	2.9	1.3
Education (Edu)	2.1	3.4	3.3
Social Welfare (SW)	0	0.6	0.7
Press and Journalism (PJ)	1.4	0	0.7
Legal and Judicial (LJ)	0.7	0.6	0.7
Social Organisation (SO)	2.1	4.0	5.2

Note: the missing value was 6 persons respectively in 1980, 1990 and 2000.

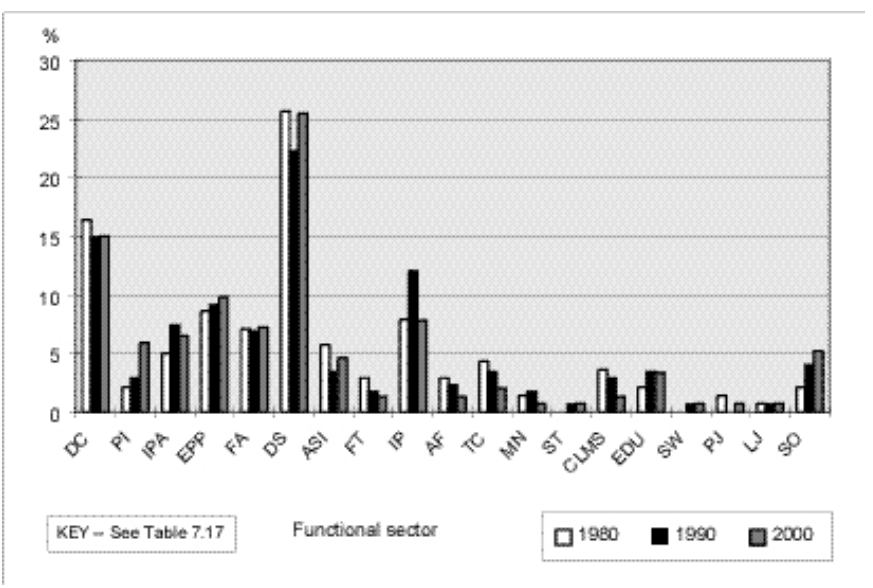
1990s. An increasing proportion of people engaged in the Propaganda and Ideology (PI) sector was also noticeable in the 1990s. Graphs 4 and 5 clearly illustrate this trend.

Concerning the functional sectors in which the CC members are engaged in, graph 4 shows that there has been a prominent proportional imbalance, which mainly concentrated on the Defence and Security

Graph 4. Functional Sector of the CC Members



Graph 5. The Fields of Engagement of the CC Members



(DS) and Direction and Control (DC) fields. Although a dispersion of graph bars indicates that members from diverse fields composed the apparatus of the Central Committee, the disproportional distribution of the field of engagement signifies relatively narrow differentiation in the overall structure of the North Korean political elite.

Development of the North Korean Central Committee: Overview

The analysis of the Central Committee of the Korean Workers Party has demonstrated the continuity of leadership in terms of social attributes between 1980 and 2000. Despite the change of leaders in the 1990s, there has not been any significant change in the composition of the political elite. The aging of the members and increasing years of members' career experiences in the Party and the Central Committee substantiates this point. A majority of the political elite belonged to the second generation who were born in the 1930s and the 1940s, and shared similar educational backgrounds of studying at Kim Il Sung University and in the USSR. The representation of the graduates of Mangyondae Revolutionary School and Kim Il Sung University in the political elite was significant during the analysed period. Overall, the North Korean political elite featured a cohesive group, bonded by personal relations and school ties.

Despite this general trend of continuity and cohesiveness in social attributes of the political elite, the analysis found a marked difference in the functional group representation of the Party Central Committee in the 1980s and 1990s. Its composition in the 1980s showed a widening differentiation with increasing numbers of people with technical and managerial skills. In the 1990s, however, it displayed a different pattern with an increasing representation of military and Party elites and a decreasing representation of state elites. The Central Committee became smaller in size, and the number of members who were engaged in the Defence and Security sector and the Propaganda and

Ideology sector significantly increased. Since this trend appeared following the collapse of the socialist bloc, it may have been a deliberate attempt to secure political stability and regime security.

Rapid turnover and an accelerated diversification process of the political elite, following the accession of Gorbachev in the USSR and Deng Xiaoping in China, did not take place in North Korea. While the Gorbachev and the Deng Xiaoping leaderships brought about radical changes in the political elite structure with infusion of a younger and more technocratic-inclined generation, the Kim Jong-il leadership painted a contrasting picture of declining representation of technocrats and increasing representation of the Party and military elites. The overall characteristics of the political elite under Kim Jong-il were those of concentration and limited differentiation.

IV. Conclusion

In the case of the USSR and China, elite diversification is considered one of the preconditions for change to occur in a state socialist system. Therefore, what is crucial to understanding the system survival in North Korea is to determine whether such a diversification process has occurred in the political elite structure. A major change in the structure and composition of the political elite is generally noticeable and easily identifiable following a Party Congress. Although the congress is supposed to convene every five years, since the 6th Party Congress in October 1980, North Korea has not had a Party Congress. Absence of a Party congress, however, does not completely freeze the personnel movement within the Party centre. The composition of the political elite can still be altered gradually by means of co-optation. This explains some important changes detected in the structure of the KWP Central Committee between 1980 and 2000.

The North Korean political elite in the 1980s shared a trend of struc-

tural diversification, although to a lesser degree than that in the USSR and China. The structure of the Central Committee gradually changed, targeting economic development and modernisation of the country. A generational shift was in progress, in which the second revolutionary generation and the Party & technocrat generation began to outnumber the first revolutionary generation. The military elite decreased, whereas that of the state elite consisting of technocrats and managerial personnel increased. The infusion of the better-educated and specialists from diverse functional sectors into the political elite was an apparent characteristic of the 1980s.

The structure of the North Korean power elite changed and headed towards an unusual direction in the 1990s. When the "great leader" of North Korea, Kim Il-sung, died of a heart attack on July 8, 1994, more radical changes in the leadership centred on the new generation were anticipated. However, the pluralisation and diversification process in the political elite, which was observed in other state socialist countries in the 1980s, discontinued under the new leadership of Kim Jong-il. Instead, the political elite became condensed, exclusive, and homogeneously consolidated. The size of the leadership shrank significantly with a sharp rise in the proportion of the military elite and the Party careerists and a significantly decreased proportion of technocrats and managerial elites. The representation of people who have personal and school connections with Kim Jong-il has drastically increased. The analysis concludes that change in the political elite in the 1990s was directed towards minimising elite differentiation, strengthening the Party and the military, and promoting elite cohesion and integration.

The 1990s was a critical period of time for the North Korean regime, which was challenged by numerous exogenous and endogenous crises such as the collapse of the Socialist bloc, death of the 'Great Leader,' tension over the nuclear issue between the US and North Korea, the leadership change, natural disasters and surmounting economic problems. Therefore, the deliberate structural readjustment

towards narrowing elite differentiation and reinforcing elite cohesion should be understood in the context of crisis management. The relatively compact size of the ruling elite, in general, enables its members to act together in a conscious and cohesive manner, and thus manage and manipulate the political sphere—at least in the short run—to perpetuate its domination. Considering the change in the North Korean political elite in the 1990s, it may be argued that the elite characteristics were one of the contributing factors to survival of the North Korean regime.