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### ***Current State of North Korea and Types of Its Contingencies***

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## **Current State of North Korea and Types of its Contingencies**

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Toward the end 2008 as Kim Jong Il's health was quickly deteriorating leading party members seemed to realize that the early composition of a plan for succession would be essential. Kim Jong Il is reported to have decided on his third son, Kim Jong Eun, as his successor and has initialized preparations for the transfer of authority. Until Kim Jong Eun officially becomes the successor, he will experience various types of works in the Party, Government, and Military. Kim Jong Eun seems to have been named to the National Defense Commission and is the director of the National Security Agency.

Before being nominated as the successor to President Kim Il Sung in 1974, Kim Jong Il began his career as an advisor or guide and then worked as a section chief in the Propaganda & Instigation Department. Later he moved up to become the head of that department and was concurrently promoted to the position of Party Secretary in charge of the Organization & Guidance Department. Kim Jong Il was regarded as having had accumulated enough experience through his groundwork within the Party and in learning how to manage loyal supporters amongst the senior party cadres under the guidance of the supreme leader Kim Il Sung in the 1970s. At the Sixth Party Congress held on October 1980 in Pyongyang, Kim Jong Il was officially nominated as successor and assisted his father Kim Il Sung for the next 14 years. During that period of time he was able to complete his leadership training.

However in the case of Kim Jong Eun, it seems quite likely that he will not have enough time to get through the preparation course as his father, Kim Jong Il, did. Therefore, if Jong Eun is to become the next leader in North Korea, he should not attempt to follow the steps that his father had taken in such a short period. This

would probably be the most appropriate way to control and rule the core power organs of North Korea, such as the National Defense Commission.

### **Problems of Political Succession**

On April, 2009, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea partially revised its constitution. Revisions included the promotion of the National Defense Commission as a top national institution and also awarded the Chairman the same position and status formerly granted to the Premier. It was a step which was taken to reinforce Kim Jong Il's regime and at the same time help lay the groundwork for eventual succession.

After the revision of the constitution Kim Jong Il's health began to improve. Therefore, it remained possible to maintain Kim Jong Il's policy which prioritized the centralization, and strengthening of the military. This would also be used to justify the Suryong system, the Party State system, the Juche ideology, and the Military First Policy (Sungun). Preparatory steps will continue in order to cultivate Kim Jong Il's third son, Kim Jong Eun, as the successor, but details of this succession process are not expected to be revealed for the time being. Regime succession work will continue systematically until the year 2012.

As for Kim Jong Eun, because of his young age and lack of experience, in order to become a full-fledged successor, he will likely have to overcome many problems such as inter-disciplinary conflict. Therefore, while Kim Jong Il is still alive, and possibly even after he has passed away, assistance for administrative work will be needed.

The newly appointed personnel of the National Defense Commission, who are believed to support Kim Jong Eun in the succession process are Kim Jong Il's brother in-law Jang Sung-Taek, head of the administrative department of the KWP, Joo Sang-Sung, Minister of the People's Security Office, Woo Dong-cheuk, the 1<sup>st</sup> Deputy Minister of the National Security Office, Joo Kyu-Chang, the 1<sup>st</sup> Deputy Director of the Heavy Industry Office of the Korean Worker's Party, Kim Jong-Gak, the 1<sup>st</sup> Deputy Director of the Political Bureau of the Korean People's Army, and Oh Guk-Ryol, vice-chairman of the National Defense Commission.

In addition to the new members of the National Defense Commission there are some loyal cadres close to both Kim Jong Il and Jong Eun. Minister of the Korean People's Army Kim Young-Choon, and the Chief of Staff of the Korean People's Army Lee Young-Hoo are Kim Jong Il's aides and worked for Kim Jong Il's late wife Goh Young-Hee. It is believed they are highly regarded and will play vital roles in Kim Jong Eun's succession process. Within the upgraded framework of the National Defense Commission, people who came from the Central Administrative Department and offices of the Korean Worker's Party and the Korean People's Army will lineup to support Kim Jong Eun.

In North Korea with the preparation work for the successor being rapidly put in place, the propaganda and lectures for celebrating what Kim Jong Eun has achieved are now being widely held around the country. Kim Jong Eun, as successor, is being praised for having demonstrated his leadership and capability in launching the long range missile called satellite Eunha-2 as well as the second nuclear weapon test. At the same time he is believed to be leading North Korea in to becoming a strong and prosperous country by 2012 under the guidelines of the politics of the "military first policy" initiated by his father.

On April 15, 2009, for the celebration of Kim Il Sung's birth, Jong Eun reportedly organized the biggest fire-works show in Pyongyang to celebrate the birthday of his grandfather. This event also demonstrated his ability and scale to his father and to his people. Similarly, as a grandson of Kim Il Sung, he wanted to give the impression that he was the right person who could carry out the revolutionary tradition of the Mangyongdae(birth place of Kim Il Sung) family line and complete the national task of opening the gate for a strong and prosperous nation in 2012 (Which is also 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Kim Il Sung's birth).

Kim Jong Eun also mounted the mass mobilization campaign called "150 days of combat", which was very similar to what his father Kim Jong Il had initiated under the title of "70 days of combat" (a speedy mobilization movement) when he was named as an official successor in 1974. In addition, through the combat like movement, he seemed to learn how to become a supreme leader in such a short time of preparation. After the 150 days of Combat mobilization drive, he continued to mount another movement for an additional 100 days of combat.

North Korean official media has been trying to describe Kim Jong Eun as a super hero or a great genius in the field of military, politics, economy, diplomacy,

scientific technology, literacy and physical training. From that context it was revealed that he was worth being appointed as a person who could lead the North in becoming a beacon in the new global order.

Kim Jong Eun as a successor would be supported by a support group composed of the core members of the National Defense Commission, as a result the role of the Korean Worker's Party will decline. If this actualizes the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) basic power structure and identity will change. North Korea has been based on the party-state system and thus the party is the foundation and the transmission of the Suryong (one-man rule) system. However during the process of succession to Kim Jong Eun or in the transitional period that follows the transference of power, the role of the party could decline or be excluded completely. During this period there is a possibility of serious conflict between competing members of the elite group.

The Suryong system is based on "Juche" ideology, and has been operating based on various defense organizations and the KPA itself, but if factional disputes are not controlled by the ruling group, then the role of ideology and propaganda will decline. Therefore, there exists the possibility of a sudden looseness of authority. If the role of the communist party, which has maintained a special relationship with China, declines or collapses, then there is a high possibility that a pro-Chinese group will separate from, or resist against the new leadership in the North led by Kim Jong Eun.

### **Problems of Nuclear Development Program**

For the North, the development of a nuclear weapons program is the main tactic through which they hope to maintain the regime, so Pyongyang will not give up its secured nuclear program. Also as it proclaims itself to be a nuclear (possession) state, the North will want to negotiate with the U.S. and other regional states towards a peace treaty on the Korean peninsula from that status. Through the Six-Party talks, North Korea's nuclear program had been suspended, but there will be no permanent resolution of its nuclear program. Even if it realizes the importance of the September 19th Joint Statement, and there is a high possibility for North Korea to return to the Six-party talks soon, it seems quite unclear whether

North Korea would cooperate with the other participants in the process of verifying the files/documents reported by the North Korean authorities. Negotiations will continue to uncover all the data and information from the Yongbyon nuclear complex and the uranium-enrichment program to see the whole records of its nuclear development, and then the facts about North Korea's programs on missile and WMDs will be dealt with. But in the stages of negotiation, North Korea will likely repeat similar steps/tactics of brinkmanship diplomacy or Salami strategy in pursuit of delaying it as long as they can, just like they have done before.

The U.S. and the international community will be willing to lift sanctions against North Korea and offer security guarantees and a comprehensive package deal after North Korea suspends the development of its nuclear weapons and other WMDs. Then it will avoid confrontation with the U.S. and the international community; however, the North Korean leadership does not seem to have made its final decision whether or not to resume the Six-party talks in order to realize a permanent Peace Treaty and other concerns.

### **Economic Difficulties and Policy Dilemma**

North Korea's economic difficulties are chronic and possess a strategic characteristic. This year, food shortages have worsened while assistance from other nations has decreased, so it has been a hard time for the North to escape from its moribund economic situation. However, its centralized economy characteristics, such as its "planned economy" will continue and there are no other plans for reform or opening which might have the power to change North Korea's main policy directions or the regime itself. Regardless of the hardships and efforts to develop or overcome its economic difficulties by the mobilization campaigns of the 150 days of combat and the 100 days of combat, there were no signs of hope while conversely more problems appeared. Lack of resources in the areas of food, energy, and foreign currency have caused disappointment and anger with the slow and negative turns in its domestic economy among common people and elites alike. Through the improvement of the relationship between the North and South, and foreign states, the North hoped to gain economic assistance but because of its reluctance to comply with international norms its economic situation will not

improve. Partial and temporary steps for economic recovery will create a new gap between the rich and poor in North Korean society, and crimes for survival will become unavoidable.

On November 30, 2009, the North Korean authorities announced a currency reform project, which will denominate its old currency rate 100:1. The currency reform was assumed to control the rapid rising of price fluctuation, and to collect the individual's stored currency in order to capitalize on industrial investment, but instead of those goals, it seemed to achieve the political purpose of strengthening the power of the state vis-à-vis the market. In reaction to the growing power of the market, the government was to take the money from the merchant/business class to strengthen the military and calm the people's anger growing concerning the gap between the rich and poor. The contents and processes of currency reform were in a state of confusion, and even if the North Korean government tried to reset wages, the national price system and the currency rate, hyper-inflation and the rapid devaluation of North Korean currency continued to make situation even worse than before.

The bureaucrats and lower class workers who received wages from the government through the flawed public distribution system were believed to get benefits from such changes of wage value and fixing of public prices. Therefore, they might assume to resolve the disharmony problem and it would provide a greater sense of loyalty and expectation towards a stronger nation and party-state system, but at the end, due to the lack of product supply, skyrocketing prices caused only more hardships.

North Korea's currency reform was believed to be able to free up assets for creating the new successor's framework; such as the regulation of the free market, which was enforced by public authorities since 2007. The return to the planned socialist economy which the North highlighted in this year's "New Year Joint Editorial", was portrayed as a salvation program initiated by one's own effort. As those efforts to bring the planned centralized economy back to North Korea were regarded as having been fulfilled by the 150 days and 100 days of combat mass mobilization campaigns, the economic policy changes seemed to be pivotal for the succession process. If those goals could be realized by the target year of 2012, then the new foundation of for a national economy could create a strong and prosperous state in 2012.

Chronic economic difficulties cannot be resolved without development and opening, so even though there was large scale assistance from others, practical economic development has not yet been achieved. Through the partial settlement of the North's nuclear program and improved relations with the U.S., the possibility of the adoption of the market-economy is rising, but it also has certain limits. Through the normalization of relations with Japan, compensation claim funds would flow into the North, and money would come from international financial organizations. However it is not certain if the North would actually carry out economic development. The market economy activity could be accepted in the retail sector, but it will not be allowed in the fields of production and manufacturing. The gap between the official exchange rate and the black market will widen; moreover, even though there was a readjustment of the exchange rate, the pressure to develop the economy will be increased.

North Korea does not seem to be reforming its information and communication systems such as expanding its communication network and infrastructure for the use of mobile phones, thus the level and scope of keeping in touch and exchanges with other nations are very limited. If the North partially resolves the nuclear weapons problem with the U.S and Japan, Pyongyang's bilateral relationships with both countries will improve. However, the people will then be exposed to foreign influence due to penetration from the outside. Therefore the information coming from outside North Korea will be intercepted under tighter watching programs guided by the government and in the end, the North will again attempt to isolate and close off the regime.

To maintain the justification of the currency reform, regulation authority will be reinforced, and through intensive ideology re-education (the Politics of the Military first and Juche ideology) the regime will crackdown on rogue elements. Due to criticism from the international community concerning the North's human rights violations, Pyongyang might temporarily make efforts to introduce or revise its laws but to maintain its domestic order and avoid ideological degradation it would not accept further criticism against the regime. New technology to get information such as DVDs and communication systems such as internet and mobile phones were introduced and available among common people in North Korea, but since the failure of currency reform, political crackdowns have been reinforced. Wide spread dissatisfaction and discontent caused the North to reinforce its crackdown on the



people to avoid inner cleavages and looseness of the regime. Stronger regulations on job quitting, and heavy penalties and crackdowns against North Korean refugees in China will be implemented.

Due to pressure from the international community to revise its constitution for human rights, the North Korean authorities introduced some articles on human rights but still North Korea does not guarantee basic human rights to its people. There is only very limited access to foreigners (including South Koreans), moreover, the country does not accept the freedom to criticize the regime, nor freedom of ideology, religion, publication or association. To dilute the outside world's pressure, such as the pressure to guarantee human rights, the North would put forth minimum efforts toward reform, but basic ideological reform will not be achieved due to the threat it poses to the regime. North Korea's overall reformation will be a threatens to bring about regime collapse and reunification in which it is absorbed by the South, so ideological regulation and regime backed crackdowns will continue.

In spite of small signs of reformation and openness, to sustain the justification of the regime, the despotic regime system will be maintained. In addition Juche ideology, ideological regulation and ideological education will continue. Due to the criticism from the international community on its treatment of human rights, Pyongyang will temporally make efforts to create and revise this law, and to avoid regime crackdown and ideological looseness, it will not accept criticism against its regime. Moreover, freedom of ideology and religion will be regulated by the government, but it cannot fill all the cracks through which information is coming from other countries.

### **Prediction of the future North Korea and Types of contingency situations.**

In 2012, to celebrate Kim Il Sung's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, the North will complete its succession process and it will hold the 7<sup>th</sup> Party Congress to reaffirm its socialist system. North Korea will prepare for the post-Kim Jong Il era and develop the North Korean way of socialism. The North cannot suppress the secession of the middle-class and the business class, which was born from the great failure of the currency reform; and if resistance from the military forces occurs due to the process of political change in the name of facilitating power transition to the third son of Kim

Jong Il, the party-state system could face a serious conflict between party and military forces, or a dovish-hawkish rivalry between new and old factions within the national power politics sphere.

North Korea's contingency situation reflects wide ranging fundamental change over a short period of time. The North's contingency situation shows us that it is not a reform movement inside of the regime or the system rather it is a complete and swift change of the regime itself covering a wide range of issues. For instance, in North Korea, regime change is directly connected to its national characteristics as well as the destiny of its ideology. North Korea changing its national characteristics is pivotal because it is connected with the destruction of its regime and the immediate reunification of the North and South. We could find a similar case in East Germany, but the East German case is a little bit different from other contingency situations, because East Germany collapsed within a single year and it was not believed that reunification was achievable with the Federal Republic of (West) Germany in such a short period of time.

North Korea's contingency situation could occur in the fields of political-diplomacy, military, economy, and society, etc., and each field's contingency situation could cause crises which could bring about meaningful changes in its regime. Militarily, if there is an arms conflict or outbreak of war the food shortages and sanctions on economic assistance will be reinforced. This will heighten the sense of economic panic. In addition, there will be more defectors and more information from outside that will penetrate North Korea. This will lead to more ideological conflict between and among the competing factions.

## **Leadership Change**

Domestic disputes over the Suryong rule, dictatorship, and changing of the leadership are a direct threat to the regime and the existence of the system and the nation-state itself. After the establishment of North Korea's regime Kim Il Sung ruled the North for over 49 years. His death was the first ever critical moment capable of causing fundamental change within the North. It caused serious threats and was a real turning point. In the early days of the 1990s, people predicted that if Kim Il Sung passed away then the regime could only be maintained for 3 years

following his passing. Taking this into account we can see the close connection between Kim Il Sung and the North's regime and its system. However, Kim Jong Il, who was appointed as a successor, benefitted from favorable conditions to during his path to succession so the power transfer went along smoothly and could withstand the fragile political situation that arose following the death of Kim Il Sung.

Kim Il Sung's sudden death by heart attack was a natural death that was not predicted at the time. There were some rumors surrounding the cause of his sudden death, but Kim Jong Il, who had ruled in major institutes as an heir apparent, was able to control the transition process in an orderly way by grasping supreme authority right after his father's death.

If Kim Jong Il suddenly dies or his health condition deteriorates to the point that he cannot function as a ruler, then the North would be in danger of going into a contingency situation, because the North did not complete the post-Kim Jong Il succession process. Depending on the nature of Kim Jong Il's death there are different ways that the North's regime or system can change direction.

If Kim Jong Il passes away be it from of illness or any other types of causes, it is possible that despite the short time for power transformation political situation will stabilize quickly. If Kim Jong Eun is named the official successor he will have his loyal and faithful cadres and his support system will be built within the military and party. The National Defense Commission would be the control tower in the transition period. Kim Jong Il's sister, Kim Kyung-Hee and her husband, Jang Sung-Taek, would play major roles in supporting Jong Eun. They are the royal supporters of the Mankyungdae revolutionary tradition by blood, and through them the power transfer will be made in a stable and orderly way.

However under other circumstances even if Kim Jong Il dies in a natural way, there is still the possibility that the final winner would arise through a power struggle among competing groups. If there is no successor to Kim Jong Il when he dies, then elites from the military and the party could form an emergency regulation council. The National Defense Commission would become the ruling institute in the name of collective leadership. If Kim Jong Eun fails to build the perfect infrastructure as a successor, or a power struggle in a complex way comes to Pyongyang, then Kim Jong Il's death could cause serious conflicts and tensions over ruling power in North Korea.

Considering the security system for the North's leader, it is not likely that an assassination would occur but we can exclude that possibility be it from a domestic or foreign origin. Even though they always prepare for assassination attempts if a close associate assassinates Kim Jong Il, whether it is accidentally or intentionally, it will bring a new power/political system. Due to a personal grudge or to achieve political changes whether it is for reform or not, an assassination could bring a serious power struggle between pro Kim Jong Eun and anti Jong Eun groups. Moreover, there is the possibility of a civil war arising which could extended to the South as well as to China and Russia.

On the other hand, if the group, that assassinates Kim Jong Il, opposes Kim Jong Il's dictatorship and his autocratic system and wants to reform the regime in fundamental ways, then there is a possibility that South Korea and other nations may intervene to maintain peace and order in the northern part of the Korean peninsula in a coordinated manner.

### **Outbreak of Coup d'etat**

If there is a group which could oppose Kim Jong Il while he is alive, or could replace him when he is sick and unable to rule the nation, then that would have to be a powerful and well organized group like the military. Except for the military, no other group can confront the regime and when those kinds of challenging movements have been observed, the regime immediately acts to suppress them to prevent any contingency situation from arising.

After Kim Jong-Il recovered from a spell of bad health in late 2008, he spent his days doing on-site-guidance activity, military inspections and other events related to the domestic economy. In spite of the emergency situation, the reason why he thinks military first policy is the most vital point is that he really relies on the military. Simultaneously, he wants to show that he is not idle when it comes to control of the military. There has been no official disclosure on attempted military coups, and that means there have been no opposition movements against Kim Jong Il due to having built a loyal military base through his affection and consideration toward the military. There is also a thorough guard and regulation system by military security units and political inspection bureaus managing generals and high

officers. If an attempted coup were to be discovered there would be especially harsh punishment. Realistically, the likelihood of a coup attempt is very small. Still, in the process of the power transfer after Kim Il Sung's death, core generals were purged and in the middle of 1990s. There were reports of another case of a coup d'état attempted by former students who studied in the USSR, and through that case, the inspection and regulation over the military has been tightened. Despite these tight regulations there is a small possibility that the contingency situation through a coup d'état movement could arise.

If there is a military coup d'état against Kim Jong Il, then we could classify it based on its characteristics, either as extreme-left adventurism or a right-wing revolutionary pro-regime coup d'état. In the case of an extreme leftist coup d'état, it could be that Kim Jong Il is deposed if he abandons missiles and nuclear weapons and decides to reform the regime due to pressure from the U.S. and the international community. Perhaps the extreme leftist camp does not want to provoke military confrontation with the U.S and South Korea, and thus they just seem to purge corrupted groups from within the party and government in a way that would maintain the socialist nature of the DPRK. They would want to unify the military and also they would want to maintain Kim Il Sung's traditional Juche ideology and defend socialism, so they will continue policies of isolation and keep society closed for a while.

If Kim Jong Il keeps refusing to return to the Six-party talks and does another 3<sup>rd</sup> round of nuclear and WMDs test, then the sanctions from the U.S. and the international community will be strengthened and also if China and Russia assist with them then there is the possibility that a coup d'état could occur. After the currency reform, the economic situation worsened and if discontents from the people rise and also if China and Russia stop assisting Kim Jong Il's regime, then that kind of coup d'état could be conducted. In the case of a reform coup d'état, the right wing would not have the strong military base to confront Kim Jong Il that the extreme left does, but if an internal war was waged due to Kim Jong Il provoking the military, then this kind of reform coup d'état could be realized.

## **Rebellion of the people**

The politics of the military first was established to manage the crisis situation following the death of Kim Il Sung and was intended to overcome the obstacles posed by serious food shortages and isolation from other countries. At the crossroad of the regime's life or death, defeatism or pessimism among the elite was revealed and breakaways from the regime occurred in the shape of defectors and even ordinary people. Moreover, at first, the military first policy was a pivotal mechanism to regain and boost trust and confidence among themselves. Under the control of the military first policy, for the last 15 years, to achieve his plan for survival, Kim Jong Il drastically replaced top members of the party, the government, and the military and so on, in order to recruit new officials from the third and fourth generation. Kim Jong Il's active and drastic drive to replace officials by generational change was made because he thought the revolutionary generation such as the first and second generations would not be able to achieve his goal, so instead of them, he needed a younger generation who learned in the new education system. He also referred to the Chinese policy of reformation and openness, but the appearance of a new generation to realize this new idea was used to reform and develop the North internally. For the last 15 years through the use of the military first policy to deal with internal and external crises and for managing the inflows of information from the outside, the North developed nuclear weapons to survive the crisis, and moreover, through more ideological education they tried to control the people. However there is a limit to the amount of regulation that is possible through ideology.

In spite of the North's surveillance and ideological education, they cannot control all the complaints that are arising from the inside. Previously the North acted quickly to ruthlessly suppress violent situations at the border area between China and North Korea through military force and security organizations, but it cannot prevent all violent situations. If the regulation statement is strictly functioning and elite consciousness-raising does not occur, then large scale violent situations and the formation of a liberal civil society will not be imminent. But as contact with the outside grows and criticisms of Kim Jong Il's regime pile up, anti-regime movements out of underground organizations could arise as they did in Eastern Europe. Anti-regime movements or uprisings made up of underground

organizations do not have enough power to change or transform the regime, but through their existence, they could propel inner-conflicts within the elite group. With increased pressure from international society against North Korea's violations of human rights, and if people come to believe in possibilities and hope for themselves, then non-violent but anti-regime group activities could extend to the whole society in a systemic way .