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The Game of Throne: Analysis of North Korea's Next Transition of Leadership and Foreign Policy

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I. Abstract

North Korea, also known as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), has been at the center of attention in international affairs on various topics in the last decade. One of which was the recent exposure of the current supreme leader's daughter, Kim Ju-Ae, who many expect to be the next heir of the Kim dynasty. Nonetheless, the reality of succession is complex, and various factors can play a role in altering the winner of the game. This research uses game theory to analyze the characteristics of players, preferences of strategies, variance in interactions, and the consequencing payoffs to simulate North Korea's next succession of power. Specifically, this research highlights the significance of *praetorians*, or Kim's security-intelligence guards, in determining the next winner of the throne. Further, this paper discusses how the new female leader will influence the DPRK's foreign policy, and denotes alternative variables that were not included in this research due to limited information.

Keywords: North Korea, Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), succession, praetorians, game theory.

II. Introduction

On January 4, 2024, the *Associated Press* reported, “South Korea views the young daughter of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un as his likely successor.”¹ The *National Intelligence Service* - South Korea’s main intelligence agency - cited her public activities and the state protocols as indicators of Kim Ju Ae’s likelihood of becoming the next successor. Unlike the previous speculation of Kim Jong Un’s sister, Kim Yo Jong, inheriting the power, Kim Jong Un’s recent promotion of his daughter and Kim Yo Jong’s deviation from the public presence portrayed the direction of the next heir.

The transitions in leadership can often shift states’ domestic and foreign policies, and their influence varies based on the authority of the leader and the structure of the regime. They also come in different forms, such as a democratic transition through a legitimate public voting process, an authoritarian transition through a dominant party’s selection process, or a monarchic transition through a hereditary system. North Korea, officially the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), presents a unique case, operating under a totalitarian regime where the leader is not only a leading-personal figure, but a sacred figure that cannot be secluded or denied from North Korean society. Moreover, it is one of the few remaining hereditary political leadership, which minimizes the competition for power but raises questions on the perseverance of legitimacy and the future of North Korean policies.

Although a few other totalitarian regimes, such as Turkmenistan, Eritrea, and arguably China and Afghanistan, exist in the modern world², North Korea stands out in its inheritance system and its position in international politics. Since the Korean War in 1950, DPRK underwent

¹ Tong-Hyung, Kim, and Jiwon Song. “Analysis: North Korea’s Rejection of the South Is Both a Shock, and Inevitable.” AP News, AP News, 17 Jan. 2024.

² *World Population Review*: “Totalitarian Countries 2024”

three leaderships from one family. Unlike its counterpart that went through 13 Presidents and 12 various forms of power transitions - ranging from military coups to democratic elections - DPRK's transitions of power seem consistent and, in some sense, stable. Following the tradition of previous successions, many scholars foresee that a member of the Kim family will inherit the throne once again. Nonetheless, the dispute between these scholars arises when asked, which Kim, amongst the ones we know, will inherit the power.

First, many speculate that the daughter of the current leader is projected to be the next heir of the DPRK leadership, and Kim Jong Un's preparation for succession has already begun. Kim Ju Ae first appeared in November 2022,³ accompanying Kim Jong Un at a missile test launch and marking her significance in North Korean society. Since then, Kim Ju Ae has accompanied Kim Jong Un on 28 occurrences, mostly involving military visits and positioning herself above senior military and political officials on state media.⁴

Previous to her recent appearance, however, scholars were observing Kim Jong Un's sister, Kim Yo Jong's rise in power. Kim Yo Jong's first appearance and recognition was in March 2014, when she attended the Supreme People's Assembly elections alongside Kim Jong Un, and her name was mentioned publicly by the DPRK's state media.⁵ Since then, Kim Yo Jong has deeply engaged with DPRK's politics, serving as a diplomat at key international meetings and a senior official of DPRK's Workers' Party of Korea (WPK). Consequently, many recognized her as the DPRK's de facto second leader in charge,⁶ and raised the possibility of becoming the next supreme leader in the absence of Kim Jong Un.

³ Yoon, John. "Kim Jong-Un Takes His Daughter to Missile Test Launch." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 19 Nov. 2022.

⁴ "Kim Ju Ae Watch (2022-2024 Events)." *North Korea Leadership Watch*, 16 Mar. 2024.

⁵ "Kim Yo Jong Fast Facts." Edited by CNN Editorial Research, *CNN*, Cable News Network, 14 Aug. 2022.

⁶ Martin, Timothy W. *Kim Yo Jong: What We Know about Kim Jong Un's Sister and Her Role in North Korea - WSJ*, 10 Aug. 2023.

However, very few scholars and literature discuss the possibility of external candidates beyond the Kim family seizing the throne. This is not irrational, as DPRK's power and legitimacy in leadership stem from the belief - closer to a cult - of the "Mt. Baekdu" bloodline. Using this idea, the Kim family was able to control the general public through propaganda and elites through undeniable incentives or punishment. Despite its "success" in maintaining authority for three generations, some are pessimistic about the plausibility of its sufficiency in legitimating the fourth succession. This leads me to ask the following research question: What will the next succession of DPRK's leadership look like? This paper uses game theory to analyze the ambiguous actors and variables of the DPRK. Beyond the conventional actors of the Kim family, this research presents alternative actors - the *praetorians* - as significant subsidiary players that can alter the direction of the game tree.

Another question that arises along with the transition of leadership is what changes will the new leadership bring. With DPRK's policymaking heavily relying on its supreme leader, it is an enigma whether the new leader will adopt a more aggressive or inclusive policy in foreign affairs. Historically, DPRK's stance on international politics was that North Korea holds hostility against the United States while keeping allyship with China and Russia. Although this statute remains true until today, presumption was shaken throughout time. When South Korea's policies on North Korea fluctuated favorably or unfavorably along with changes in administrations, North Korea showed its potential to cooperate with favorable South Korean administrations that adopted more inclusive policies. On the other side, North Korea's relationship with China was shaken in instances when conflicts surrounding maritime projects,⁷ North Korea's nuclear

⁷ Fong, Clara, and Eleanor Albert. "Understanding the China-North Korea Relationship." *Council on Foreign Relations*, Council on Foreign Relations, 7 Mar. 2024.

proliferation, or China's vote in the United Nations Security Council were against the interests of the other.

However, on January 16, 2024, Kim Jong Un announced to redefine South Korea as the "top enemy" and to eliminate the possibility of peaceful reunification at DPRK's Key Parliamentary meeting. This announcement revised previous assumptions in North Korea's foreign policy analysis by establishing the following statutes:

- 1) Reunification of the Korean peninsula is no longer the primary interest of North and South Korea.
- 2) DPRK will maintain hostility against South Korea regardless of the changes in South Korea's administration and foreign relations policies.

Despite the current South Korea's conservative administration adopting a more aggressive policy against North Korea - similar to previous conservative administrations - Kim's sentiment surprised many scholars as Kim officially declared hostility against his counterparts in public, eliminating the potential for future negotiations and treaties. Simultaneously, Kim began his preparation for the next inheritance of power, positioning his daughter as the second person in power and building the legitimacy of her authority. This leads me to ask another question: How will the new leadership of DPRK influence its foreign policy? Given the likelihood of the next leader being a female - regardless of the winner of the game - this paper discusses the significance of leaders in influencing foreign policies and characteristics of female leaders in modern history to anticipate DPRK's future direction in foreign affairs.

III. Literature Review

Transition of Previous “Kims”

Until today, there were only two transitions of power in the DPRK. Nonetheless, the circumstances in which each transition took place were quite different. The preparation for the succession from Kim Il-Sung to Kim Jong-Il began at an early age, beginning with Kim Jong-Il rising in ranks from the Kapsan Faction Incident and establishing his legitimacy in the regime.⁸ Further, Kim Jong-Il imprinted his significance in the DPRK society by influencing the North Korean film industry, which intensified the personality cult of Kim Il-Sung and himself to the public.⁹ Later on, Kim Jong-Il gradually rose to power, appointed as a senior official in the Presidium, the Military Commission, Secretariat of the Workers Party of Korea (WPK), and the Supreme Commander of the Korean People’s Army, making himself the second most powerful man of DPRK before his father’s passing. Kim Jong Il was claimed as the designated successor as early as 1974, and became Supreme Leader upon his father's death.¹⁰

Similarly, Kim Jong-Un’s preparation for the inheritance of power began with Kim Jong-Un’s gradual assimilation into the political-military sphere. Beginning with a candidacy for the Supreme People’s Assembly, Kim Jong-Un climbed up the power ladder through a senior post and chairmanship of the National Defense Commission (NDC), head of the State Security Department, four-star general of the DPRK army, and the first secretary of the WPK.

Unlike the conventional wisdom of the Kim family being unitary, however, some speculate that tensions existed between the Kim supreme leaders. Prior to Kim Il-Sung’s death, the conflict between Kim Il-Sung and Kim Jong-Il surrounding the DPRK’s foreign policy took

⁸ Adrian Buzo, *The Making of Modern Korea*. London: Routledge Press, 2002, pp. 127.

⁹ Levi, Nicolas, "Kim Jong Il: a film director who ran a country". *Journal of Modern Science*. 25 (2): 155–166.

¹⁰ Lim, Jae-Cheon, *Leader Symbols and Personality Cult in North Korea: The Leader State*. Routledge, 12 April 2017.

place allegedly. While Kim Il-Sung preferred diplomacy and showed the potential to open his totalitarian state, his successor, Kim Jong-Il, strongly opposed this sentiment and pushed the isolationist agenda. Subsequently, the previously planned summit between North's Kim Il-Sung and South's President Kim Young-Sam was canceled with the sudden death of Kim Il-Sung, with some speculating Kim Jong-Il neglecting his father's health conditions intentionally. From two Kims with two different visions, the DPRK's fate went down the path of isolation and suffered a great famine in the following years.

The Previous Challengers of the Throne

Many scholars that analyze DPRK's leadership exclude the possibility of alternative candidates not within the Kim family's "Mt. Baektu" bloodline taking the throne. This supposition seems to be justified, as there were only a few case studies that presented alternative challengers who sought the throne not only outside of the bloodline, but within the "Mt. Baektu" bloodline that was not *nominated*, in a sense, by the preceding supreme leader.

However, DPRK was not absent in challengers, but all challengers, ranging from senior military officers who attempted the coup to a small group of students who organized protests, were eliminated. The Kim family faced numerous oppositions in times of succession since the founding of the DPRK. The "August Faction Incident," also known as the "Second Arduous March," was a failed attempt by the Soviet-Korean faction and the Yeon-An (China-Korean) faction to remove Kim Il-Sung from power.¹¹ With only one, and last legitimate¹² trial to remove the Kim family from power, "individuals who argued for a more moderate rule of the country, or opposed Kim Il-sung in any way, were systematically purged, and more than a quarter of the

¹¹ Suh, Jae-Jung, ed. *Origins of North Korea's Juche: Colonialism, war, and development*. Lexington books, 2012.

¹² By legitimate, refers to non-violent, public method during the Plenary session of Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea in 1956.

elected deputies had lost their mandates only two years after the elections.”¹³ The leader of this movement, Kim Tu-Bong, “disappeared” from view and was assumed to be executed.¹⁴

During the transition period from Kim Il-Sung to Kim Jong-Il, about 7 known assassination and coup attempts were made to prevent Kim Jong-Il from assuming the position from 1992 to 2004.¹⁵ The actors of these attempts included senior officers of VI and VII Corps (2 of 13 Army Corps) who attempted to stage a rebellion by taking control of a university, communications center, Chongjin Port, and missile installations, Kim’s bodyguards who attempted to assassinate their leaders in two occasions, and anonymous actors who failed to assassinate Kim Jong-Il by exploding Kim’s train on his trip back from China.¹⁶

For Kim Jong-Un, no official records - agreed by different sources - were announced and confirmed to take place. Nonetheless, on May 5, 2017, DPRK accused South Korea and the United States of plotting to kill Kim Jong-Un,¹⁷ claiming that a biochemical weapon was attempted to be used and the DPRK regime would extract and punish all imposters who engaged in the attempt. Prior to DPRK’s accusation, the *Asahi Shimbun* released a press claiming that President Park Geun Ae’s administration plotted the assassination by leading Kim Jong-Un to die of natural causes (Source). South Korea’s Ministry of Unification and the National Intelligence Service denied these claims.

Victor Cha and Nicholas Anderson list two possible sources of uprising against North Korea’s totalitarian regime. First is the “selectorate,” which refers to the elites such as “the party

¹³ Tertitskiy, Fyodor, “1959: Secret elections in North Korea,” *Daily North Korea*, Kookmin University, September 19, 2017.

¹⁴ *Wilson Center, Digital Archive*, “Kim, Tu-bong (Kim Du-bong)”.

¹⁵ Cha, Victor, and Nicholas Anderson. “North Korea and Kim Jong-Il.” *North Korea in Transition: Politics, Economy, and Society*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2012, pp. 91–118, p.110.

¹⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁷ Choe, Sang-hun. “North Korea Accuses South and U.S. of Plotting to Kill Kim Jong-Un.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 5 May 2017.

members, military officers, and government bureaucrats who have benefited from the regime's rule."¹⁸ Aligning with the selectorate theory¹⁹, leaders in power seek to remain in office by significantly incentivizing the selectorates that have avenues to keep or remove the leader from their office. However, if the utility of the selectorate falls below their incentive to *defect*, the selectorate will be more likely to choose to defect against the regime. In this research, the praetorians can be perceived as a selectorate, as they hold the intelligence and security power to keep or remove Kim Jong-Un from his authority.

Another possible source of an uprising is the urban poor, which includes urban workers (laborers) and farmers who lack support for basic needs from the government and face starvation.²⁰ North Korea has historically been ranked as one of the lowest countries in the *Global Hunger Index*²¹, with an estimated number of 10.7 million people - more than 40 percent of the population - being malnourished.²² When the payoff from abiding by the regime equates to the payoff of an unsuccessful rebellion - which is a choice between death by starvation or execution - urban poor may choose to *defect* against the government as the *defect* strategy has a probability of yielding a better payoff if the rebellion is successful. This research does not include the urban poor as an actor partaking in the succession process, but recognizes its significance as a potential exogenous variable that grants challengers and selectorate justification and legitimacy in *defecting* against Kim Jong-Un's authority.

¹⁸ Byman, Daniel, and Jennifer Lind. "Pyongyang's Survival Strategy: Tools of Authoritarian Control in North Korea." *International Security* 35, no. 1 (2010): 44–74. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40784646>.

¹⁹ Siverson, Randolph M., and Bruce Bueno de Mesquita. "The selectorate theory and international politics." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*, 28 June 2017.

²⁰ Cha, Victor, and Nicholas Anderson. "North Korea and Kim Jong-Il." *North Korea in Transition: Politics, Economy, and Society*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2012, pp. 91–118, p.112.

²¹ *Global Hunger Index 2023: Korea (DPR)*

²² *World Food Programme (WFP)*: "DPR Korea Country Brief," December 2021.

Defectors' Memoirs: North Koreans' Perceptions of the Kim Family

Defectors - those who escaped DPRK's extreme border - often testify about their experience of North Korea and their journey of a successful escape. Defectors range from rural, working-class citizens to high-ranking officials. One of the most significant defectors of the DPRK was Thae Yong-Ho, who served as the DPRK's former deputy ambassador to the United Kingdom and now serving as a member of South Korea's National Assembly. On November 1, 2017, Thae testified at the United States House Committee on Foreign Affairs regarding the ongoing trends and issues in North Korea. Thae stated:

“Contrary to the official policy and wish of the regime, the free markets are flourishing. As more and more people get used to free and capitalist-style markets, the state-owned socialist economic system becomes increasingly forgotten about. The welfare system of North Korea has long collapsed and millions of civil servants, army officers, and security forces are dependent on bribes and state asset embezzlement for their survival. The citizens do not care about state propaganda but increasingly watch illegally imported South Korean movies and dramas. The domestic system of control is weakening as the days go by. Back in 2010, during the Arab Spring, many experts said it would be impossible to imagine such similar events taking place in North Korea. These changes, however, make it increasingly possible to think about civilian uprising in North Korea.”

Though one may argue that a single testimony cannot represent the full reality of North Korean trends, Thae's testimony provides an in-depth imagery of an individual living in today's North Korea. In fact, Thae's testimony is only one of many testimonies that transferred the internal story of life and opinions in the DPRK to the outside world. According to the *Report on North Korea's Economy, Society, and Perception* presented by South Korea's Ministry of Unification, nearly 55 percent of 6351 interviews conducted on North Korean defectors disapproved of the

tradition of hereditary leadership of the “Mt. Baekdu” and 56.3 percent gave a negative assessment of Kim Jong-Un as an individual leader.²³

The question arises, then, whether the fourth hereditary succession will be successful despite the growing public sentiment of disapproval. Amongst the defectors, those who claim that the succession will fail and Kim’s regime may collapse indicate three factors that can lead to this result.

First, the extreme poverty of the urban poor will eventually lead to an uprising. Similar to the sentiment made by Minster Thae, many are expecting that the urban poor, whose utility of *defecting* equates or yields a higher payoff than remaining *loyal*, will choose to uprising against the regime despite the consequence of repression. Second, the generation that will be in the working class by the time of succession was born during the famine, which caused this young generation to have less loyalty toward the Kim family and the party, and more toward their self-interest. Correspondingly, North Korean locals began to foster the market economy through individual smuggling of goods (due to lack of support from the regime), many of which were imported from South Korea and China and consisted of information on the life and culture of the outside world. With increased exposure to lives outside of North Korea, defectors state that people’s loyalty and idolization of the Kim family is gradually degrading. Lastly, many claim that it is not only the common citizens, but also the elites that are questioning their loyalty to serve only one family for another generation. According to Kim Gil-Sun, a defector who was previously a North Korean journalist, stated that about 90 percent of the prisoners in the concentration camps were the elites.²⁴

²³ *South Korea Ministry of Unification*, “North Korea’s Socio-economic Perception - Reality of North Korea Told by 6351 Defectors,” 2023.

²⁴ Testimony from “Now On My Way to Meet You,” on 4th succession.

However, some scholars argue that the Kim dynasty will persevere through the uncertainty. One of the key arguments for this claim is Kim Jong Un's strong connection to the central military officers. Preparing the first succession of power from Kim Il-Sung to Kim Jong-II, one of the first things that Kim Il-Sung established for his son was sitting Kim Jong-II in the position of Commander in Chief. As the nature of the totalitarian state relies heavily on military power and control, keeping key military officers on the side of the leader is one of the most crucial components in maintaining the totalitarian regime. As of now, the central military power is still shown to remain loyal to the supreme leader,²⁵ protecting Kim Jong-Un from possible military coups or general uprisings.

In contrast to the previous claim that the marketization of North Korean society is fostering the awakening of the people, another faction argues that the marketization is decreasing organizational power by increasing individualism instead. As society is getting impoverished, some claim that individuals cannot participate, or even consider political revolution when they are struggling to find basic needs and suffering from starvation.²⁶ Marketization, they argue, is not an optimistic effort of fostering capitalism, but a struggle for survival to fulfill individuals' self-interests.

Lastly, some are afraid that there are no "safe" replacements for the current *Juche* ideology. As DPRK's citizens were long indoctrinated with Kim Il-Sung's *Juche* ideology and established education, the uncertainty will hesitate people from replacing the long-standing "sacred" ruler. Moreover, if the Kim family loses its legitimacy in holding power, the instability of the regime from power struggles between the elites that strive to claim the throne can lead to more disturbance than the current state of DPRK. *Juche* seeks stability through the collective

²⁵Jeon, Hyun-Joon, Huh, Moon-Yung, Kim, Byung-Ro, Bae, Jin-Su, "Report on North Korea's Political Structure and Stability," *Korean Institute for National Unification 통일 연구원*, 2006.

²⁶ Testimony from "Now On My Way to Meet You," on 4th succession.

cooperation of the masses and the following of the leader,²⁷ and the masses that were indoctrinated by this ideology may find it challenging to revolutionize the current standing system.

Nonetheless, the general public opinion of the DPRK on the hereditary regime seems to be more cynical. The *Korean Institute for National Unification* released a report on “DPRK’s Structure and Stability,” which consists of research on 37 different aspects of DPRK society ranging from public opinion on the Kim family to corruption levels of elites. The research was conducted by surveying 314 North Korean defectors in South Korea’s transition facility and interviewing 12 in-depth to cross-examine the consistency of information.

One of the sections observed the DPRK public’s perception of the Kim family’s power succession. From 1996 to 2005, the public’s level of discontent regarding the succession from Kim Il-Sung to Kim Jong-Il increased by about 75 percent.²⁸ Similarly, the level of discontent on the succession of Kim Jong-Il to Kim Jong-Un (whom the public did not know the exact identity of until the publication) also increased by about 50 percent,²⁹ projecting a continuous diminish in public support of the Kim family’s tyranny.

²⁷ Lee, Kyo Duk (2004). "'Peaceful Utilization of the DMZ' as a National Strategy". *The successor theory of North Korea*. Korean Institute for National Reunification. pp. 1–52.

²⁸ Jeon, Hyun-Joon, Huh, Moon-Yung, Kim, Byung-Ro, Bae, Jin-Su, “Report on North Korea’s Political Structure and Stability,” *Korean Institute for National Unification 통일 연구원*, 2006, pp. 37, Figure II-3.

²⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 39, Figure II-4.

IV. Theoretical Paradigm

Methodology

This research is conducted using a mixed method, primarily using the formal model and supporting it with qualitative analysis. The qualitative analysis consists of a comparative case study on Joseph Stalin's Soviet Union, which explains an unconventional player, the "praetorians," as a potential actor partaking in DPRK's leadership transition. The formal model consists of the game theory, which builds a model based on variables of players, utilities, preferences, and strategies, to simulate the ambiguous nature of the DPRK with limited information.

Characteristics of the Totalitarian Regime

Due to the lack of transparency of DPRK's regime and society, this research constructs simple game trees using available information and given actors. The primary interest of autocrats in totalitarian regimes is assumed to remain in power. To achieve this interest, autocrats repress their opponents and surround themselves with loyal members. They also require security guards who not only protect the leader but oversee the political and military officials - the selectorate - who have the power to remove the leader from authority. This paper uses the term *praetorian* to refer to Kim Jong Un's security guards, which stem from the Roman emperors and their Praetorian Guards.

Although praetorians are crucial in maintaining a stable totalitarian regime, rulers of these regimes face a dilemma of loyalty-competence trade-off, in which "rulers, especially those who are weak and vulnerable, sacrifice the competence of their agents,

hiring mediocre but loyal subordinates.”³⁰ For instance, in Stalin’s Soviet Union, the selection of the four most notable Chekist ministers - Feliks Dzerzhinsky, Genrykh Yagoda, Nikolai Yezhov, and Lavrenty Beria - was a deliberate choice of Stalin to surround him with people competent enough to manage important roles and missions, but lack in charisma and independent power to revolt against Stalin’s authority.³¹ Three “wild cards” were held by Stalin to reign over his powerful subordinates.

First, Stalin segregated Chekist leaders since the selection process to prevent them from forming a coalition against his authority. The information blockage between key branches of the government, as well as between the officials and the public, established an *incomplete game* where players are not aware of other players’ preferences and strategies to make an ideal strategic decision for their best payoff. The ambiguity in payoffs drew officials to choose to remain *loyal*, which was a safe strategy that yielded a decent payoff.

The second card Stalin held against his subordinates was their compromising backgrounds.³² Entering his position as the General-Secretary, Stalin collected information on his subordinates that was sufficient to black-mark and justify their removal from power.³³

The last card that reigned Stalin over his subordinates was the ethnic and personality factors. Stalin adopted a similar practice to other dictators throughout history, which “employed foreign bodyguards who could not take power themselves and would

³⁰ Egorov, Georgy, and Konstantin Sonin. “Dictators and their viziers: Endogenizing the loyalty-competence trade-off.” *Journal of the European Economic Association*, vol. 9, no. 5, 30 Aug. 2011, pp. 903–930, p.1 Abstract.

³¹ Gregory, Paul R. “Stalin’s Praetorians.” *Terror By Quota*, Hoover Institution, Stanford, California, 2009, pp. 42.

³² *Ibid*, p. 45

³³ Central tapping on phone lines of party members was the primary method of information collection, and compromised information ranged from personal scandals such as mischievous sexual life to more serious black marks such as covered assassination attempts.

remove themselves apart from the ruling elite due to their ethnicity.” Stalin’s praetorians each contained traits that infringed them from having a higher ambition.³⁴

Nonetheless, these “wild cards” were prerequisites to insure against potential defections, but were insufficient to be solely relied upon. Once the baseline for loyalty is established, dictators have to consider how to enhance and maintain the loyalty of praetorians. There are two simple equations to securing loyalty: increasing the incentive to remain *loyal* and significantly decreasing the utility of *defecting*.

The most common method of securing loyalty by increasing the incentive is through material rewards, such as the granting of positions and power, monetary wealth, or access to goods and information limited to the public. As the incentive to remain *loyal* increases, praetorians deviate from the *defect* strategy which yields a lower payoff. Another method of increasing the preference of praetorians to remain *loyal* is by significantly decreasing utilities from choosing the *defect* strategy. Harsh punishments, ranging from removal from power to execution, decrease the payoff of choosing to *defect* and encourage praetorians to remain *loyal*. In the case of the Soviet Union, four praetorians saw their predecessors - former fellow Mensheviks, Cadets, or Social Revolutionaries - effortlessly discredited from their positions.³⁵ Many were assassinated or executed, and the justification was established through Stalin’s process of black marking.

In the case of DPRK, the Kim family not only adopted these strategies from the Soviet Union, but also took them a step further to maintain total control of the regime. Beyond the executions of all oppositions, the Kim family implemented the “collective

³⁴Dzerzinsky was Polish, Yagoda was Jewish, Yezhov was bisexual, and Beria was a Mingrelian from Western Georgia, which Stalin believed were failing criterion to lead the Soviet state.

³⁵ Ibid, p. 46

punishment,” or “guilt by association” policy from previous Korean dynasties, which punished family relatives associated with people who were prosecuted for crimes.³⁶ Commonly, those who attempted, or successfully escaped from DPRK faced the repercussions of the “guilt by association” policy, in which the families of defectors were punished by being sent to the concentration camps or in extreme cases, executed.³⁷ Consequently, even in the case where individuals’ utility falls to the minimum to remain *loyal* - death from starvation or other factors - people still hesitate to *defect* against the regime as the repercussion of choosing to *defect* can yield an even lower payoff of harming their families beyond individual considerations. Through this method, the Kim family established additional barriers between individuals from forming coalitions, as a small mistake from an individual can lead to massive extermination of the opposition party. A case study that depicted this theory was the “August Faction Incident,” which the failed attempt of the Soviet-Korean faction and the Yeon-An (China-Korean) faction to remove Kim Il-Sung from power led to a complete extermination of the opposition party.³⁸

Players of the Game

This paper recognizes the limit of information on all potential players and therefore identifies three “key players” that presume to have the most influence and relevancy in the next succession. Players of this game include Kim Jong-Un, Kim Yo-Jong, and the praetorians. Kim Yo-Jong and praetorians have two strategies: *loyal* and

³⁶ *Human Rights Watch: North Korea*, “연좌제, Yeon Jwa Jae,” p. 1.

³⁷ “THE LIST” of North Korean Refugees & Humanitarian Workers Seized by Chinese Authorities,” *North Korea Freedom Coalition*, 2013.

³⁸ Suh, Jae-Jung, ed. *Origins of North Korea's Juche: Colonialism, war, and development*. Lexington books, 2012.

defect. These strategies are inflexible (cannot be a mixed strategy) as both Kim Yo-Jong and praetorians have to solidify their choice of remaining *loyal* or *defecting* in reality which yields consequencing payoffs. Kim Jong-Un has a different set of strategies: *trust* and *distrust*. If Kim Jong-Un chooses to *trust*, he will maintain the current structure of the regime until the succession. If he chooses to *distrust*, he will attempt to decrease or eliminate the power of Kim Yo-Jong.

Nature of the Game

Two suppositions significantly influence players' preference for strategies in the next succession. First, suppose that Kim Jong-Un lives until Kim Ju-Ae's maturity and safely inherits the power to his daughter. If the current power structure continues, both praetorians and Kim Yo-Jong will prefer to remain *loyal*. For praetorians, it is simply more *cost-efficient* to support the selected heir than an alternative leader (Kim Yo-Jong) since the legitimacy of leadership and status quo of power is already established without any risk. Moreover, personal loyalty to the incumbent leader and regime may prevail as well. For Kim Yo-Jong, it is extremely risky for her to be the first mover of the game. If she signifies her willingness to *defect* to praetorians or other officials, the risk of having a defector amongst the *defectors* is too high relative to the probability of having a successful coup (as observed in the August Faction Incident). If she is the second mover, Kim Yo-Jong will remain *loyal* as the praetorians prefer to remain *loyal* in this scenario.

However, suppose that Kim Jong-Un has a bad health condition or dies unexpectedly - from any causes - before the maturity of Kim Ju-Ae to inherit the supreme authority. First, if the projected succession still takes place without any players *defecting*

against the current regime, Ri Sol-Ju, Kim Ju-Ae's mom and Kim Jong-Un's current wife, will take over the throne until the maturity of Kim Ju-Ae. This tradition is called "Suryeomchumjung" - the Korean version of the regent system - which was a monarchical tradition used by ancient Korean royal families.³⁹ Kim Jong Un's mother was not exposed to the public due to her Japanese identity and her bloodline deemed to be the lowest in the *songbun* class status.⁴⁰ Instead, this practice was still allegedly shown in the previous succession, where Jang Sung-Taek, Kim Jong-Un's uncle, was the declared regent by Kim Jong-Il.⁴¹ However, Jang Sung-Taek, along with his faction of power, was later exterminated for his power threatening Kim Jong-Un's authority.

Kim Jong Un's Strategies and Preference

During his term, Kim Jong-Un has indirectly presented the consequences of choosing *defect* and *loyal* to Kim Yo-Jong. In the case of *defect*, Jang Sung-Taek was eliminated due to his enormous power and reputation in DPRK threatening Kim Jong-Un's authority even before the official succession of Kim Jong-Un. Some speculate that Kim Yo-Jong, acknowledging this insecurity, has intentionally decreased her presence in public events and media to gain Kim Jong-Un's trust. If this is true, and Kim Yo-Jong decides to remain *loyal*, her future may be similar to that of Hyon Chol-Hae, Kim Jong-Un's mentor. Hyon Chol-Hae trained and raised Kim Jong-Un since young, and backed Kim Jong-Un as the "sole successor" to lead the DPRK.⁴² Consequently, Hyon Chol-Hae received the highest regard during his lifetime and upon death, with Kim

³⁹ When kings passed away early in the years and queens helped the young princes to manage the political governance.

⁴⁰ Cho Jong-ik, "Great Mother" revealed to World", *Daily NK*, 1 July 2012.

⁴¹ Cummings, Bruce, "The Origins of the Korean War," 1981.

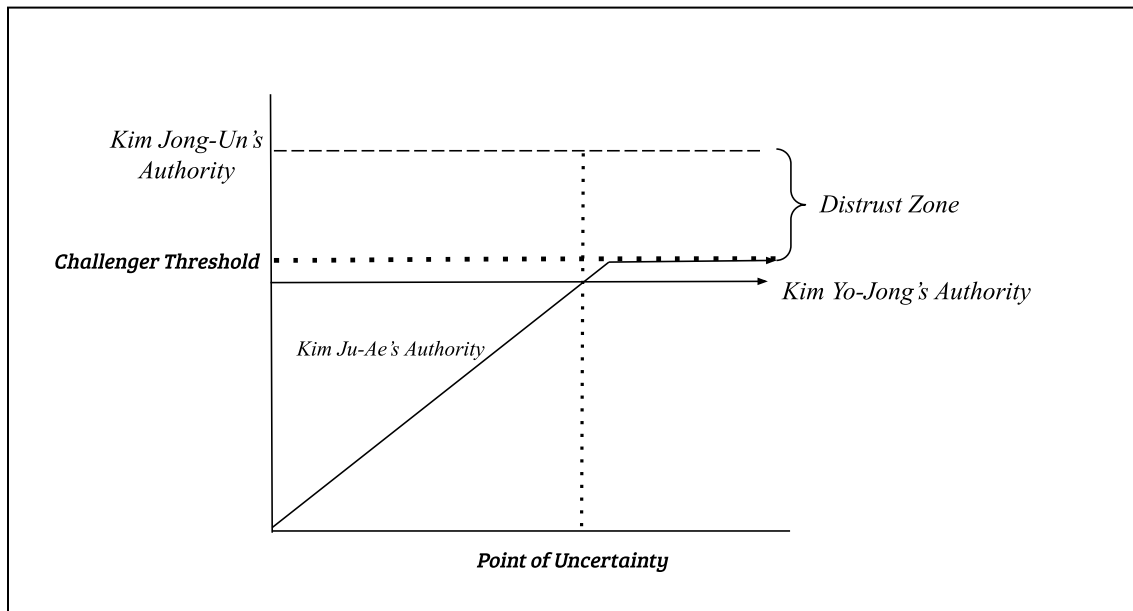
⁴² Zwirko, Colin. "Kim Jong Un Watches Death of Mentor Who Backed His Rule in New North Korean Film: NK News." *NK News - North Korea News*, 14 June 2022.

Jong-Un accompanying him at his deathbed, carrying Hyon Chol-Hae's coffin himself, burying the coffin with his bare hands, and creating a recognition documentary film for his mentor. If Kim Yo-Jong chooses to remain *loyal*, she can be expected to become the political-military mentor of Kim Ju-Ae, similar to the relationship built between Kim Jong-Un and Hyon Chol-Hae.

In Figure 1, the *challenger threshold* represents the line that determines Kim Jong Un's strategy of *trust* or *distrust*. If Kim Jong-Un chooses to *trust*, the current political structure will be maintained. If he chooses to *distrust*, those who rise above the *challenger threshold* will be eliminated. Jang Sung-Taek was executed due to his power exceeding the *challenger threshold*, threatening Kim Jong-Un's authority and making Kim *distrust* against Jang's factions. The consequence of *distrust* may vary, but it certainly removes the oppositions from the positions by any means.

Another assumption from historical evidence that is featured in this game is the relationship between Kim Jong-Un and Kim Yo-Jong. Although these players are denoted as "rivals" aiming for the throne in this game, their relationship is known to be intimate as they grew up together since young, and it is Kim Jong-Un's personal interest to keep his sister by his side. Therefore, Kim Yo-Jong's survival is considered in calculating Kim Jong-Un's utility, though it may vary based on Kim Yo-Jong's decisions to remain *loyal* or to *defect*.

Figure 1: DPRK Power Projection



Kim Yo-Jong's Preference in Strategy

Kim Yo-Jong will be risk-seeking - prefer to *defect* - when her authority approaches or exceeds the *challenger threshold*. Two factors that lead her to risk-seeking preference are Kim Jong Un's *distrust* and the praetorians' *defection*. Under the supposition that Kim Jong-Un is alive, Kim Jong-Un will choose to *distrust* and remove Kim Yo-Jong from power when her perceived power is above the *challenger threshold*. Kim Yo-Jong will yield a better payoff by *defecting* since remaining *loyal* will only lead to the removal of her power, regardless of the praetorians' choice of strategy. On the other hand, the praetorians' *defection* may grant Kim Yo-Jong authority beyond Kim Jong-Un's authority when Kim Yo-Jong's authority approaches or exceeds the *challenger threshold*, leading her to choose *defect*. Kim Yo-Jong will also be risk-seeking in the absence of Kim Jong-Un, as her authority is certainly higher than that of Kim Ju-Ae before the *point of uncertainty* and possibly contestable beyond the *point of uncertainty*.

Inversely, Kim Yo-Jong will be risk-averse - prefer to remain *loyal* - if her authority is below the *challenger threshold* and under Kim Jong-Un's continuous leadership. In this case, Kim Jong-Un is likely to *trust* Kim Yo-Jong because she is not a threat, and Kim Yo-Jong will prefer to remain *loyal* as it yields a better payoff. When Kim Yo-Jong's authority is far below the *challenger threshold*, the praetorians' choice of strategy does not affect Kim Yo-Jong's preference to remain *loyal*, because the combined authority of Kim Yo-Jong and the praetorians from *defecting* cannot exceed Kim Jong-Un's authority.

Praetorians: The Alternative Player and Exogenous Variable

Most totalitarian leaders throughout history have used special guards that ensured their and oversaw the power structure of the regime: Roman emperors' Praetorian Guards, Napoleon's Imperial Guard, Papa Doc Duvalier's Tonton Macoutes, Nikolai Ceausescu's Securitate, Hitler's Gestapo, and more.⁴³ Leaders put in enormous effort to maintain the loyalty of their praetorians, as praetorians have access to the interest and strength of potential challengers. Consequently, in determining Kim Yo-Jong's next course of action, praetorians play a significant role in the outcome of the game.

In this research, praetorians are simplified and refer to the members of two entities that oversee DPRK's military and political structures: The *Supreme Guard Command* and the *General Political Bureau*. Praetorians can be the first or the second mover, as they consist of information on Kim Jong-Un and Kim Yo-Jong's preferences and strengths. Praetorians also face the issue of the "crown prince dilemma," in which the praetorians have to decide whether they would want to remain *loyal* to the current leader or *defect* to the next leader. This dilemma was

⁴³ Gregory, Paul R. "Stalin's Praetorians." *Terror By Quota*, Hoover Institution, Stanford, California, 2009, pp. 33.

shown during the transition of power from Kim Il-Sung to Kim Jong-Il, when the “real power,” such as the military and political officials, were drifting away from Kim Il-Sung and shifting toward Kim Jong-Il as the succession was getting closer and the successor was apparent.

In this succession, praetorians have to choose between two potential successors - Kim Ju-Ae and Kim Yo-Jong - when Kim Jong-Un approaches the end of his term. As mentioned in the *Nature of the Game* section, praetorians are more likely to remain *loyal* as time goes by. As Kim Jong-Un lives longer, the preparation for Kim Ju-Ae’s succession will be more solidified, and her legitimacy of power stemming from the elite’s loyalty and structural influence⁴⁴ will make challenging the throne extremely difficult. Moreover, Kim Yo-Jong will be older in age, giving more incentives for praetorians to remain *loyal* to Kim Ju-Ae who is likely to remain in power longer.

However, in the case of an anomaly - the unexpected death of Kim Jong-Un- praetorians face the real issue of the “crown prince dilemma.” With Kim Yo-Jong holding second-most power after Kim Jong-Un, praetorians may have more incentive to *defect* from Kim Ju-Ae (or Ri Sol-Ju, who is the expected regent) and give their loyalty to the person with a higher probability of becoming the succeeding leader. The probability of a successful coup will decrease as time goes on, as Kim Ju-Ae’s status in DPRK’s politics will be more solidified, and the surrounding power will shift toward Kim Ju-Ae. However, if Kim Jong-Un deceases within the next few years, the chances of Kim Yo-Jong obtaining the power, if she chooses to *defect*, will be significantly higher.

Praetorians are assumed to choose the strategy that yields them the best payoffs. Figure 1 shows that in the absence of Kim Jong-Un, Kim Yo-Jong’s authority is higher than that of Kim Ju-Ae until the *point of uncertainty*, where Kim Ju-Ae’s authority reaches above Kim Yo-Jong’s

⁴⁴ Referring to positions and experiences Kim Ju-Ae will go through to get to the position of supreme leader.

authority. The *point of uncertainty* is the point in time where the praetorians' preference is vague because the strengths of Kim Yo-Jong and Kim Ju-Ae are deemed to be similar, and the payoffs of choosing either decision may yield similar or ambiguous results.

V. Results & Analysis

Utility Scaling

Under the supposition of Kim Jong-Un living until aged, the game begins with Kim Jong-Un's choice of *trust* and *distrust*. Kim Jong-Un will choose to *trust* if he expects the safe inheritance of power to Kim Ju-Ae, which involves variables of Kim Jong-Un's health and Kim Yo-Jong's perceived power (under the *challenger threshold*). Kim Jong-Un will choose to *distrust* if he is expecting to die before Kim Ju-Ae's maturity or Kim Yo-Jong's perceived power exceeds the *challenger threshold*. When Kim Jong Un *distrusts*, he can directly remove Kim Yo-Jong from power, or command the praetorians to support his succession effort to Kim Ju-Ae. Recognizing Kim Jong-Un's preference, Kim Yo-Jong can send signals to praetorians (and other elites) of her preference between *loyal* and *defect*. As the third mover with information on both Kim Jong-Un and Kim Yo-Jong's preferences, the praetorians who receive this signal can now weigh between the strength and payoffs of remaining *loyal* to Kim Jong-Un or *defect* to Kim Yo-Jong.

The given payoffs are ordinal and are leveled by arbitrary utilities of each player in different scenarios. (5) is given when the player acquires new power without losing their legitimacy or factions. (4) is given when the player acquires new power but under conditions and constraints. (3) is given when the player upgrades in power or receives significant incentives. (2)

is given when the player receives moderate incentives. (1) is given when the player satisfies their personal, psychological interest, (0) is given when the player's position does not change, (-1) is given when the outcome goes against the player's interest, but does not affect the player's position, (-2) is given when player's information is exposed and poses risk to their positions, (-3) and (-4) is given when player loses their power and may or may not survive. (-5) is given for punishment - removal or execution - of the player.⁴⁵

Table 1: Utility Definition

5	Acquisition of New Power
4	Acquisition of New Power with Constraints
3	Upgrade in Power or Incentive
2	Incentive
1	Interest (Personal)
0	Status Quo
-1	Against interest
-2	Information Exposure / Strategic
-3	Lost of faction of power
-4	Lost of power with survival
-5	Punishment (Removal, Execution)

⁴⁵ Alternative punishment exists, such as labor concentration camps or exile, but these punishment often leads to death of individuals, which is equatable to execution.

About the Sequential Game Tree

DPRK's succession problem consists of both sequential and simultaneous games. In the macroscale analysis, the succession problem can be drawn using sequential games, in which the succeeding players have information on the actions of preceding players. In these sequential games, the order of players can be manipulated, and actions are assumed to be a "signal" in which players are expressing their intentions preceding their actions. Thus, praetorians who have access to both Kim Jong-Un and Kim Yo-Jong's preference for strategy is placed as the third mover of the game.

In Figure 2, the game tree begins with Kim Jong-Un sending a signal to Kim Yo-Jong. Assume this signal is indirect, and its information intercepted and collected by Kim Yo-Jong from an alternative intelligence.⁴⁶ When Kim Jong-Un's signal arrives to Kim Yo-Jong, Kim Yo-Jong can express her *loyal* intention by not doing anything, or her intention to *defect* by subtly acquiring powers under the *challenger threshold* radar. Then, praetorians who acquire this information may choose to report to Kim Jong-Un and remain *loyal*, or choose to *defect* by ignoring or supporting Kim Yo-Jong's effort. Once Kim Yo-Jong receives the praetorians' signal, she can finally decide whether to remain *loyal* to the current regime or to *defect* and carry out a revolutionary coup.

Kim Yo-Jong is the only player in this game who can make two moves, which is the depiction of intelligence exchange that is crucial in carrying out a successful coup. In reality, these exchanges can continue numerous times between several alternative actors such as the military and political elites or intelligence officers. Nonetheless, these information exchanges can also be used to manipulate actors strategy and the receiving actors may choose to trust or distrust

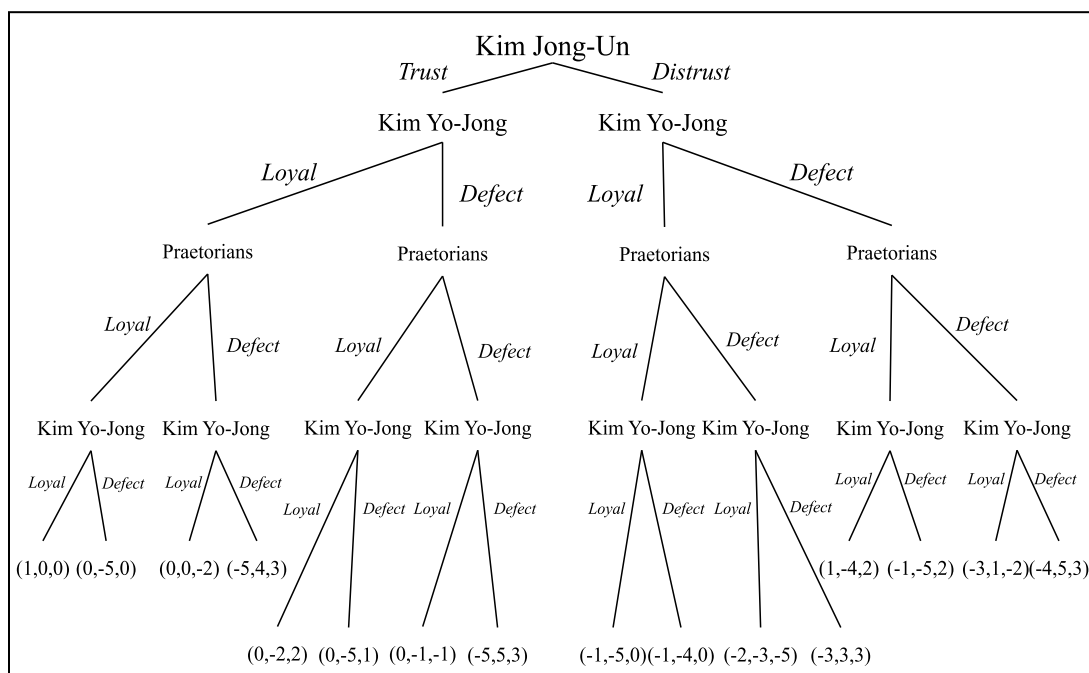
⁴⁶ This paper recognizes the possibility of this signal being manipulated by the alternative intelligence, but the alternative intelligence is not included as an actor in this research due to the time constraints.

the given signal. In this game, Kim Yo-Jong can maintain her decision from the first move, or revert to the alternative strategy in the second move. There are several reasons for Kim Yo-Jong to revert in her decision. If Kim Yo-Jong was *loyal* in the first move, she may revert to *defect* if she is certain that praetorians will legitimately *defect* against Kim Jong-Un and yield a higher payoff for her. If Kim Yo-Jong chooses *defect* in the first move, she may revert to *loyal* if she is skeptical about the praetorians' legitimacy in their power or intention of *defecting*. Beyond the actors of this game, the failure to recruit additional power to join her faction for the palace coup can deviate her from carrying out her initial plan.

Nonetheless, reverting strategies comes with a cost. First, Kim Yo-Jong exposes her intention to *defect* regardless of the strategy orders. When her potential for *defecting* is exposed, even to a minimum number of people, Kim Yo-Jong is creating a risk to her current position and life. Although the notion of "praetorians" is simplified in this research, Kim Yo-Jong still must satisfy both the members of the *Supreme Guard Command* and the *General Political Bureau* to succeed in the coup or to conceal her intention. If Kim Yo-Jong reverts her decision, she diminishes her legitimacy and grants partaking members incentives to expose her intention to the authority. Therefore, Kim Yo-Jong will always result in a better payoff when her strategy is consistent and aligns with the praetorians' strategy.

Macroanalysis: Sequential Game

Figure 2: Sequential Game



*Payoffs are written in the order of players: (Kim Jong-Un, Kim Yo-Jong, Praetorians)

In the first payoff, Kim Jong-Un receives 1 by choosing *trust*, Kim Yo-Jong receives 0 by remaining *loyal* in both turns, and praetorians receive 0 by remaining *loyal*. In this scenario, Kim Ju-Ae will inherit the power as projected, Kim Yo-Jong and the praetorians remain in the same positions, and Kim Jong-Un satisfies his interest in succeeding his power to the intended heir and preserving the life of his closely related sister.

In the second payoff, Kim Jong-Un receives (0) by choosing *trust*, Kim Yo-Jong receives (-5) by reverting her initial choice of *loyal* to *defect*, and praetorians receive (0) by remaining *loyal*. In this scenario, Kim Yo-Jong receives the worst payoff as she reverts her strategy and fails to align her strategy with the praetorians. Since Kim Yo-Jong exposed her intention to *defect* while praetorians remained *loyal*, she will likely be removed from her power.

In the third payoff, Kim Jong-Un receives (0) by choosing *trust*, Kim Yo-Jong receives (0) by maintaining her *loyalty*, but praetorians receive (-2) by exposing their intention to *defect*. Nonetheless, praetorians' risk of exposing *defect* preference is lower than that of Kim Yo-Jong, as Kim Yo-Jong does not have an incentive to expose praetorians that could have supported her effort if she chose the alternative strategy.⁴⁷

In the fourth payoff, Kim Jong-Un receives (-5) for choosing *trust*, while Kim Yo-Jong receives (4) by reverting her *loyalty* to *defect*, aligning with the praetorians' *defect* strategy. Praetorians, who succeed in a coup by supporting Kim Yo-Jong, receive (3). In this scenario, Kim Yo-Jong is initially hesitant to carry out a coup but decides to pursue the coup after receiving a *defect* signal from praetorians. Since she reverted her strategy as a reaction to the praetorians' decision, Kim Yo-Jong's legitimacy and authority may not be as complete as they would have been if she decided to initiate the coup from the beginning.

In the fifth payoff, Kim Jong-Un receives (0) for choosing *trust* and maintaining his position. Kim Yo-Jong receives (-2) for reverting her decision from *loyal* to *revert* and exposing her *defective* intention. Praetorians receive (2) for remaining *loyal* and getting an opportunity for incentives, either by informing Kim Jong-Un of Kim Yo-Jong's potential to *defect* or by blackmailing Kim Yo-Jong with given information.

In the sixth payoff, Kim Jong-Un receives (0) for choosing *trust* and maintaining his position. Kim Yo-Jong receives (-5) for maintaining her *defect* strategy while praetorians remain *loyal*, failing to organize a coup and likely be removed from power. Praetorians receive (1) by remaining *loyal* and completing their task of extracting defectors from the regime.

In the seventh payoff, Kim Jong-Un receives (0) for choosing *trust* and maintaining his position. Kim Yo-Jong receives (-1) for reverting her strategy from *defect* to *loyal*, but maintains

⁴⁷ Kim Yo-Jong still may inform Kim Jong-Un about the potential *defectors* to reaffirm her loyalty to Kim Jong- Un.

her position without penalties. Praetorians receive (-1) as the outcome goes against their interest in *defect*. Although unlikely, Kim Yo-Jong may revert her initial decision of *defect* to *loyal* after receiving a *defect* signal from praetorians, because she is skeptical of the signal being true and legitimate. This is an uncertain scenario, however, as praetorians who failed to convince Kim Yo-Jong to maintain her *defection* may elect an alternative leader among elites and organize a coup against the Kim family.

In the eighth payoff, Kim Jong-Un receives (-5) for *trusting* Kim Yo-Jong and the praetorians who chose to *defect*. Kim Yo-Jong receives (5) for obtaining the throne, and praetorians receive (3) for supporting Kim Yo-Jong, receiving higher positions and incentives in return. This scenario is likely to happen if Kim Jong-Un's health condition worsens before the *point of uncertainty*. Praetorians who face the "crown prince dilemma" have to decide which successor they should support, and as Kim Yo-Jong's authority exceeds that of Kim Ju-Ae in the absence of Kim Jong-Un, praetorians will likely *defect* against the incumbent.

In the ninth payoff, Kim Jong-Un receives (-1) for *distrusting* and going against his interest in eliminating his close sister. Kim Yo-Jong receives (-5) for remaining *loyal* to Kim Jong-Un and not resisting, ultimately being eliminated. Praetorians receive (0) for remaining *loyal* and simply performing their duty.

In the tenth payoff, Kim Jong-Un receives (-1) for *distrusting* and going against his interest in eliminating his close sister once again. Kim Yo-Jong receives (-4) for initially choosing *loyal* but ultimately choosing to *defect*, allowing her to potentially escape execution or organize another faction outside of the current regime. Praetorians receive (0) for remaining *loyal* and carrying out the mission.

In the eleventh payoff, Kim Jong-Un receives (-2) for *distrust* because praetorians *defect* against his command and expose his intention of hostility toward Kim Yo-Jong. Kim Yo-Jong receives (-3) for remaining *loyal* despite Kim Jong-Un's *distrust* and praetorians' *defection*, because she may appeal her loyalty to Kim Jong-Un by sacrificing the faction of her power and exposing the disloyalty of praetorians. Praetorians receive (-5) for *defecting* as they failed to convince Kim Yo-Jong to align with their *defection*. Although this subgame depicts similarity with the third payoff where Kim Yo-Jong chooses *loyal* twice and the praetorians *defect*, the eleventh payoff gives a lower utility to the praetorians as Kim Yo-Jong has a higher incentive and likelihood of exposing praetorians' disloyalty to Kim Jong-Un in order to gain the trust.

In the twelfth payoff, Kim Jong-Un receives (-3) for choosing *distrust*, and Kim Yo-Jong receives (3) for reverting her *loyalty* to *defect*, aligning with praetorians' *defect* strategy. Praetorians receive (3) as well due to the uncertainty of the coup's success. This scenario is similar to the fourth payoff, in which Kim Yo-Jong is initially hesitant to carry out a coup but decides to pursue the coup after receiving a *defect* signal from praetorians. However, unlike the fourth payoff where Kim Jong-Un *trusts* Kim Yo-Jong and lacks prior defense, Kim Jong-Un in the twelfth payoff is likely to be more prepared against a palace coup due to his initial hostility against Kim Yo-Jong. Nonetheless, Kim Yo-Jong is likely to thrive through the conflict as praetorians who hold the key to power choose to support Kim Yo-Jong in this scenario.

In the thirteenth payoff, Kim Jong-Un receives (1) for choosing *distrust* and successfully defending his throne against Kim Yo-Jong's initial *defection*. Kim Yo-Jong receives (-4) for reverting her *defection* to *loyalty* after recognizing praetorians' *loyalty*, but her power would be stripped away in exchange for her potential for survival. Praetorians receive (2) for remaining *loyal* to the defending incumbent against the defector. Kim Jong-Un and the praetorians'

alignment in strategy (*distrust - loyal*) grant them positive payoffs, while Kim Yo-Jong's failed "coup attempt" results in a negative payoff.

In the fourteenth payoff, Kim Jong-Un receives (-1) for choosing *distrust* and defending his throne, but costing his sister and faction of her power. Kim Yo-Jong receives (-5) for maintaining her *defection* against Kim Jong-Un and praetorians, eventually being eliminated. Praetorians receive (1) for remaining *loyal* and carrying out their missions, but with a small number of casualties against Kim Yo-Jong's faction.⁴⁸

In the fifteenth payoff, Kim Jong-Un receives (-3) for choosing *distrust* and losing the faction of his power. Because Kim Yo-Jong reverts her *defection* to *loyalty*, Kim Jong-Un remains in power but loses his legitimacy stemming from praetorians' loyalty. Kim Yo-Jong receives (1) for acquiring praetorians' intention of defection, but her faction is not solidified due to her reversion from *defect* to *loyal*. Praetorians receive (-2) for exposing their intentions to Kim Yo-Jong and potentially other praetorians who chose to be *loyal*. In this scenario, Kim Yo-Jong may revert her decision to *defect* if she perceives her authority to not be sufficient to establish legitimacy as a new, female leader. Similar to praetorians' preference for *cost efficiency*, Kim Yo-Jong may initially react to Kim Jong-Un's *distrust* with *defect*, but recognizes having a leader that is more legitimate and easier to manipulate is the best in her interest. Nonetheless, this is under the supposition that Kim Yo-Jong has gathered military and political power internally to the point where adding praetorians' power to Kim Yo-Jong's faction raises her authority over Kim Jong-Un's authority in Figure 1.

⁴⁸ This scenario consists of uncertainties, however, as Kim Yo-Jong is known to control decent amount of power with DPRK regime. Therefore, despite the failure of convincing praetorians to *defect* against Kim Jong-Un, Kim Yo-Jong may have a potential to win against Kim Jong-Un's authority if the discontent against Kim Jong-Un prevails. Nonetheless, it is denoted as a scenario where Kim Jong-Un wins the conflict as Kim Jong-Un holds majority of the intelligence and military power in current times.

The sixteenth payoff depicts the most representational palace coup. Kim Jong-Un receives (-4) for choosing *distrust*, losing his throne against Kim Yo-Jong's faction. Kim Yo-Jong receives (5) for *defecting* successfully along with praetorians. Praetorians receive (3) for investing risk and partaking in the establishment of a new regime, receiving great incentives in return. Similar to the eighth payoff, this scenario depicts Kim Yo-Jong's successful palace coup. However, two payoffs differ in Kim Jong-Un's initial stance against Kim Yo-Jong. Since Kim Jong-Un already held *distrust* (hostility) against Kim Yo-Jong, Kim Jong-Un may have established a backup plan such as an escape route or additional forces to hold Kim Yo-Jong's faction back. Therefore, his payoff from choosing *distrust* against *defect-defect-defect* is higher than his payoff from choosing *trust*.

Payoff Analysis

The best payoff for Kim Jong-Un takes place in the first and thirteenth payoffs, which involve Kim Yo-Jong and praetorians remaining *loyal*. The best payoff for Kim Yo-Jong takes place in the eighth and sixteenth payoffs, which involve a consistent *defection* from Kim Yo-Jong and praetorians. The best payoff for the praetorians takes place in the fourth, eighth, twelfth, and sixteenth payoffs, which involve aligning *defect* strategies with Kim Yo-Jong.

As the first mover of the game, Kim Jong-Un can anticipate the general preferences of Kim Yo-Jong and the praetorians by analyzing the game tree. Nonetheless, exogenous variables such as Kim Yo-Jong's authority at the point of analysis and the internal workings of praetorians may alter the payoffs of the game tree. As mentioned in *Kim Yo Jong's Preference in Strategy* section, Kim Yo-Jong will be risk-seeking if her authority approaches the *challenger threshold*, leading Kim Jong-Un to a risk-averse strategy of *distrust* that yields a safer payoff relative to

trust. If Kim Jong-Un perceives Kim Yo-Jong to be harmless, he may prefer to be risk-seeking and choose to *trust* that has an overall yield of better payoffs.

As the second and final mover of the game, Kim Yo-Jong can maintain or revert her strategy based on praetorians' signals and predicted payoffs. Although it is rational for Kim Yo-Jong to choose the final strategy that yields her the highest payoff, Kim Yo-Jong may deviate from that strategy if she is uncertain of the legitimacy of the praetorians' signals. Nonetheless, if the disparity between two payoffs exceeds or is equal to 4 (e.g. the first and second payoffs), Kim Yo-Jong is most likely to select the strategy that yields her the highest payoff. But if the disparity between two payoffs is less than 4, variables such as distrust in signal or personal interests may deviate Kim Yo-Jong from the strategy that yields the highest payoff.

The praetorians can choose to be risk-averse or risk-seeking based on Kim Jong-Un and Kim Yo-Jong's initial strategies. If risk-averse, the praetorians will choose *loyal* as it yields moderate payoffs with minimal fluctuations. If risk-seeking, the praetorians may earn a higher payoff if Kim Yo-Jong's final strategy aligns with their *defection*, but they also carry the risk of misaligning *defection* and exposing their disloyalty. Ultimately, the praetorians' preference for risk will be determined by Kim Jong-Un's authority at the point of evaluation. If Kim Jong-Un's authority remains high, the praetorians will be risk-averse as it is more *cost-efficient*. If Kim Jong-Un's authority diminishes and Kim Yo-Jong's authority increases, the praetorians have incentives to deviate from the incumbent and become risk-seeking.

VI. Discussion

Regardless of the uncertain variables that can influence the outcome of the game, it is likely that the next successor of DPRK will be a female. This will attract international attention as DPRK has never seen a female leader. Moreover, with the embedded patriarchal culture still prevalent in DPRK society, it is also a question of how DPRK's public and elites will react to female leadership. Many scholars argue that the "Mt. Baekdu" bloodline is deemed to override the DPRK's gender norm. However, as the legitimacy and support for the notion of "Mt. Baekdu" is in a steady decline, the DPRK's reaction to the next female leader may be cynical. If the trends in poverty, oppression, and famine in DPRK continue in the next generation, it may not only lead to uprisings among the urban poor but also unexpected risings from the elites.

Consequently, DPRK may face two different fates. First, if the maintenance of power is successful within the Kim family, the leader, whether it is Kim Yo-Jong or Kim Ju-Ae, is likely to adopt more aggressive policies domestically and internationally. Female leaders across the world have been shown to pursue a more aggressive policy, derived from combatting gender stereotypes and depiction of strength as a leader.⁴⁹ Moreover, if the general public and elites are against the dictatorship regime, the dictator must take stronger measures against subordinates to maintain her power. Consequently, the DPRK's leader who encompasses characteristics of both a female and a totalitarian dictator may reinstate the classical totalitarian measure of terror and control domestically. Internationally, the leader will likely hold the statues Kim Jong-Un proclaimed at DPRK's Key Parliamentary meeting, which eliminated the peaceful reunification

⁴⁹ Schwartz, Joshua A., and Christopher W. Blair. "Do Women Make More Credible Threats? Gender Stereotypes, Audience Costs, and Crisis Bargaining." *International Organization* 74, no. 4 (2020): 872–95.

effort of the Korean peninsula and reinforced DPRK's hostility against South Korea and the Western world.

However, if the succession problem becomes significant and the factioning of power begins with a coup, DPRK may face the contrasting fate of opening its borders. DPRK's border has been sealed since its founding, and citizens were prohibited from leaving the country except for the selected few for specific purposes. Due to the lack of trade and resources across the borders, the DPRK has been failing to support the needs of citizens and suffering from poverty. If a new populist leadership emerges - whether internally or externally from the regime - their challenge will be to establish legitimacy in authority. Because the legitimacy stems from the selectorate - elites or citizens - their primary interest will be to satisfy their selectorate by generating economic incentives across the borders. Although this scenario is largely hypothetical, it is certainly plausible as DPRK has been deteriorating from famine and lack of natural resources for decades. Moreover, increasing exposure to South Korean films and products among locals is coaxing DPRK elites and citizens toward curiosity about the world beyond the borders.

VII. Limitations

This research, by nature, is limited in information and resources due to the lack of transparency of the DPRK. To overcome the shortcomings of empirical evidence, this research used game theory and leveraged the given information on the DPRK's personnel and power structure to analyze the upcoming years of the DPRK regime. Nonetheless, this research cannot address additional players and variables that can significantly influence the outcome of the succession. These players and variables were not included due to the inability to confirm their legitimacy. For instance, the *National Intelligence Service (NIS)* of South Korea speculates that Kim Jong-Un has three children total, with the eldest being a son.⁵⁰ This raises the question of why Kim Jong-Un did not select his son as the next successor, given the patriarchal culture of DPRK and its efficiency in establishing legitimacy. Moreover, is she actually the appointed successor of the throne, and if she is, why did Kim Jong-Un choose Kim Ju-Ae as the next heir over the others? Many questions cannot be answered until further intelligence is gathered.

Another limitation this research faces is the uncertainty of Kim Ju-Ae's characteristics. Kim Ju-Ae is extremely young, and the development of her charisma and intelligence will be a significant factor in determining the actions of praetorians and Kim Yo-Jong. Similar to the loyalty-competence tradeoff that dictators face, the praetorians may prefer a leader who is more legitimate, but less powerful and easier to manipulate for their interest. Under this assumption, Kim Ju-Ae can obtain her support toward authority by 1) Satisfying praetorians' interest and becoming a "marionette" leader, or 2) Manifesting a dominant leader similar to her predecessors.

⁵⁰ Gong, Se Eun. "South Korea Says Again That Kim Jong Un Has 3 Children, and the Eldest Is a Son." *NPR*, NPR, 8 Mar. 2023.

As Kim Jong-Un began his preparation for Kim Ju-Ae's succession, building Kim Ju-Ae's authority and surrounding her with *loyal* praetorians would be the key to a stable succession.

VIII. Conclusion

70 years have passed since the armistice agreement was signed in the Korean peninsula, but the war is still officially ongoing today. Despite the previous efforts of Korean governments to reunify the peninsula, tensions have grown further along with the public's diminishing support of reunification. While DPRK was labeled as a member of the "Axis of Evil" during President Bush's administration, its infamy persists with its provocative proliferation of nuclear weapons and continuous violations of human rights.

The totalitarian structure of DPRK posed a challenge to researchers in studying its domestic affairs and the next course of action in international politics. Historically, no significant changes or contingencies were observed throughout the three generations of the Kim family's succession. The inheritance of power was relatively smooth and the successors were evidently selected. However, embarking on a new generation of leadership in the DPRK in the upcoming years, it is uncertain whether Kim Ju Ae will be the next heir, and if she is, whether she will safely inherit the throne against Kim Yo-Jong. In accordance with Kim Ju-Ae's and Kim Yo-Jong's authority in the time of succession, praetorians' decision to remain *loyal* or to *defect* plays a crucial role in determining the next leader of the DPRK.

Another question that comes along with the new leadership is the changes in policymaking. Will the new leader, whether it is Kim Ju-Ae or Kim Yo-Jong, adopt the more aggressive policy as the study claims for many other female leaders, or will we see a softening of DPRK's borders and stance against South Korea and the Western world? More importantly, how will the DPRK society react to its first female leader?

DPRK is not only at the center of international relations studies due to its threat and distinctive system, but also due to its position in international politics. As it was during the Korean War, North and South Korea is placed at the forefront of the "proxy war" between the two Great Powers. Consequently, politics within the Korean peninsula is often influenced by external forces that seek to pursue their interests in foreign affairs. Nonetheless, as DPRK is expecting a new generation and personality of leadership, it is essential to closely monitor the developments and adapt diplomatic strategies accordingly to navigate potential shifts in the political affairs of the region.

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X. Appendix: Politics of the Korean Peninsula

The Future of North Korean Foreign Policy

The Korean peninsula has shared its common history for centuries, and it was only in recent times that it was divided into North and South Korea as we perceive it today. The first recorded history of Korea dates back to 2000 B.C. when a tribal chief named “Dangun” established the “Dangun Joseon,” also known as “Go Joseon.”⁵¹ Through generations of fights against Han Chinese forces, then comes the “Three Kingdoms” period in the year 562, which consisted of Goguryeo, Baekje, and Silla. The capital of Goguryeo was Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea today. Three Kingdoms were eventually united by Silla through generations of wars and conquests, which opened the next period of “United Silla ” in 676. Fighting against constant domestic uprisings and foreign invasions, Silla eventually collapsed, and the “Goryeo dynasty,” or the “Later Goguryeo,” was founded by Wang Geon to reunite the Korean peninsula. The name “Korea” was obtained during the Goryeo dynasty, when trades with Arab nations were developed and foreign traders addressed “Goryeo” as “Korea.” In 1392, Goryeo dynasty ended with a military coup staged by Yi Seonggye, who founded the new “Joseon” dynasty and moved its capital to Seoul, the capital of South Korea today. The Joseon dynasty had its significance in inventing the modern-day Korean language (Hangul), developing science and culture, and improving diplomacy with foreign nations. Yet, it came to an end with an Annexation Treaty between Joseon and the Japanese empire, and Joseon entered the period of Japanese colonial rule.⁵² Korea’s struggle for independence continued until 1945, when Japan surrendered unconditionally against the Allied Powers and retrieved its military from all colonies. The

⁵¹ Kim, Djun Kil. *The history of Korea*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2014.

⁵² Ibid

unification of Koreans through independence did not last long, however, with divisions of ideologies taking place internally between nationalistic socialists and liberal capitalists.

The Korean peninsula has a long history of being at the center of the Northeast Asian region⁵³. Subsequently, it was prone to foreign invasions and ripple effects of surrounding conflicts. Rooted in constant resistance against foreign forces, large factions of the Korean population grew its strong desire for independence and cynicism against foreign interventions. Subsequently, many of this faction migrated to the North, and those who remained in the South commonly became “left-wing activists” against the United States and Japan, as they perceived Western influence as the “intruders” against the Korean peninsula and tradition. Similarly in the North, despite the allyship with China being formed through anti-capitalist sentiment, the suspicion of China’s interest in overtaking North Korea from the Kim family, along with misaligning policies pursued by both North Korea and China against each other on international affairs⁵⁴ established an underlying tension between the “bitter allies⁵⁵.”

Positions of Two Koreas in International Structure

In 1950, the Korean peninsula was divided into two contradistinctive nations: a democratic state with an open-market economy in the South versus a totalitarian state under autocratic leadership in the North (Kim, 2014; Lee, 2020; Hwang 2021). Yet, both Koreas promoted the notion of “One Korea” and “one nationality” in hopes that their side would, one

⁵³ Kim, Samuel S. “Korea and the Great Powers in a Changing World.” *The Two Koreas and the Great Powers*, Cambridge University Press.

⁵⁴ Chung, Jae Ho, and Myung-hae Choi. "Uncertain allies or uncomfortable neighbors? Making sense of China–North Korea Relations, 1949–2010." *The Pacific Review* 26, no. 3 (2013): 243-264.

⁵⁵ Term coined by John Park, Asia security analyst at the Harvard Kennedy School, and Michael Swaine, Senior Fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, at the discussion “Bitter Allies: China and North Korea” on January 25, 2018.

day, unite the other. Until today, North Korea refers to the two Koreas as “North and South Joseon,” the name used before colonization, while South Korea refers to them as “DaeHanMinGuk,” the name used for independence during the colonial rule with an addendum of the Korean word, “republic.” Since then, the statutory position of North Korea on the international stage reflected positions of the Korean War: maintaining allyship with Russia (the Soviet Union at the founding of North Korea) and China, while holding hostility against South Korea and undoubtedly, the United States and Japan.

North Korea’s primary interest has been the reunification of the Korean peninsula and its independence from foreign influences. This vision was rooted in the struggle against the colonization of Imperial Japan in 1945, and the drive for independence continues today with North Korea’s continuous development of nuclear weapons and restraints from foreign influences.

Internal Conflict: South Korean Policies Against North Korea

The hostile relationship between North and South Korea continued as the remaining residue of the war, and the governance under authoritarian regimes in both North and South Korea until the 1980s fostered the “competitive nature” between the two Koreas. From the South, anti-communist campaigns established a narrative of the North being the “traitors” against Korea’s unity and freedom. From the North, anti-Western power and capitalist (mostly the United States) campaigns indoctrinated people’s perception of the South and its influencers as antagonistic, greedy intruders.

In 1988, South Korea transitioned to a legitimate democracy and elected its first President of the “Sixth Republic,” the Republic of Korea acknowledged today. From 1998 to 2008, the

progressive administrations under President Kim Dae Jung and Roh Moo Hyun adopted “inclusive policies” against North Korea, which utilized the theory of *functionalism* and *spill-over effect* in hopes of gradually integrating and influencing North Korea from the bottom (low politics, social and culture) to top (high politics, political and military) approach.⁵⁶ Despite the *functionalist* policies, such as the establishment of the Kaesong Industrial Complex, reducing the tension between North and South Korea on the surface, their impact was limited by the structure of North Korea’s totalitarian regime. The theory of *functionalism* bases its foundation on *pluralism*, which views a non-unitary, diverse set of actors such as the state, NGOs, individuals, and international organizations shaping the state's interests.⁵⁷ Given the unitary structure and interest of North Korean society, attempts to influence North Korea through relationship building were ineffective, and many criticized the administration’s inclusive policy for promoting North Korea’s hedging strategy and nuclear proliferation.

In contrast, from 2008 to 2017, the conservative administrations under President Lee Myung Bak and Park Geun Hye adopted a more cynical policy, applying pressure on North Korea by strengthening its relationship with the United States and expanding conjoint military operations. Learning from the failure of previous regimes’ bottom-to-top approach, Lee and Park’s administration adopted the top-to-bottom approach, tackling the issue of nuclear proliferation as their priority. Lee’s administration presented the “Grand Bargain” strategy, which offered \$3000 per capita in financial support if North Korea succeeds in nuclear removal (Hwang, 2021, p.33). However, this strategy was under the assumption of a “subgame,” which required North Korea to be the first player to enact nuclear forfeiture in order for South Korea to

⁵⁶ Hwang, Ji Hwan. *Progressive Versus Conservative Policies Against North Korea, 20 Years Later* / 진보 대 보수의 대북정책, 20년 이후, *Reunification Policy Journal 26 Edition, Volume 1* pp. 29-49, 2017.

⁵⁷ Ernst B. Haas, “International Integration: the European and the Universal Process,” *International Organization*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (1961), pp. 42-43

provide financial support. This structural deadlock resulted in increased sanctions against North Korea and ultimately diminished the relationship building between the North and South.

Learning from the shortcomings of Lee's policies, Park's administration presented the "Korean Peninsula's trust-building process" policy⁵⁸, which sought a step-by-step approach beginning by improving North and South relationships, securing peace in the Korean peninsula, and ultimately unifying Korea.⁵⁹ This policy integrated the "inclusive policies" from progressive administrations and conservative policies from the previous administration in an effort to balance the criticisms received by both sides, but this paradoxical approach failed to persuade North Korea to cooperate in trust-building, as well as other international actors such as the United States and China in understanding the new perception of the Korean peninsula.⁶⁰ In January of 2016, North Korea pursued its fourth nuclear testing, and the trust-building approach proved to be ineffective. In the Presidential Address to the Congress in February, President Park denoted that the "previous approaches and optimism failed to prevent North Korea's nuclear development, and it is now clear that it will only lead to the destruction of the Korean peninsula."⁶¹

This statement from President Park was shown to be justified, as the attempts from the next progressive administration of President Moon to rebuild its relationship with the North through engagement failed to show significant progress. Despite Moon's advocacy for a declaration of "end of war" coordinating three summits between North and South Korea and two

⁵⁸ Jung, Sung Im. "Korean Peninsula's Trust-building Process: Components, Perceptions, and Approaches 한반도 신뢰프로세스: 구성, 인식, 접근방식." *Research on Reunification Policies 통일정책연구*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2013, pp. 191–213.

⁵⁹ Hwang, Kyung Moon. *A history of Korea*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021, p. 34.

⁶⁰ Hwang, Jihwan, "The Paradox of South Korea's Unification Diplomacy: Moving beyond a State-Centric Approach," 북한문제 해결을 위한 주변 강대국들과의 협력 어려움에 대해서. *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (2014).

⁶¹ From the speech by President Park Geun Hye, at the "Presidential Address to the Congress," 16 Feb. 2016.

between North Korea and the United States, the negotiation was ultimately unproductive and the administration failed to halt North Korea's continuous development of nuclear weapons.

July 27, 2023, marked the 70th anniversary of the Korean Armistice Agreement. President Yoon of South Korea "laid wreaths in remembrance of fallen soldiers at the UN cemetery in Busan, the first incumbent president to do so."⁶² Meanwhile, North Korea celebrated the anniversary by inviting delegations from China and Russia to commemorate the armistice it sees as a victory in the "Grandfatherland Liberation War."⁶³ Two distinctive celebrations involving the international community highlighted the rising tensions in the Korean peninsula. Today, President Yoon's administration has adopted similar cynical policies as the previous conservative administrations, greatly enhancing US-South Korean military operations and strengthening diplomacy with democratic nations. Moreover, the recent diplomacy established between South Korea and Cuba - one of North's few Cold War allies - added fuel to the rising tension.⁶⁴ Daniel Kritenbrink, the assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, stated, "rather than focusing on a peace treaty, I think we would rather focus on the immediate problem,"⁶⁵ forecasting stronger deterrence measures and pressure against North Korea.

⁶² Embassy of the Republic of Korea in the United Kingdom. "On the 70th Anniversary of the Korean War Armistice Agreement, President Yoon Paid Tribute to Fallen UN Soldiers." *On the 70th Anniversary of the Korean War Armistice Agreement, President Yoon Paid Tribute to Fallen UN Soldiers, Embassy of the Republic of Korea in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Permanent Mission to the International Maritime Organization*, 1 Aug. 2023.

⁶³ Kim, Tong-Hyung. "Both Koreas Mark 70th Armistice Anniversary in Two Different Ways That Highlight Rising Tensions." *PBS, Public Broadcasting Service*, 26 July 2023.

⁶⁴ Tong-Hyung, Kim, and Jiwon Song. "South Korea Says Opening Diplomatic Relations with Cuba Would Shock North Korea." *AP News, AP News*, 15 Feb. 2024.

⁶⁵ Byun, Duk-Kun. "U.S. Focused on Threats Posed by N. Korea Rather than Peace Treaty: Kritenbrink." *Yonhap News Agency, Duk-Kun Byun*, 18 July 2023.

External Conflict: Paradox of Reunification

Despite the continuous effort toward relationship-building in the Korean peninsula previously, no significant improvement has been made in the last decades. The central issue to this “deadlock” relationship is the paradox of reunification, where two Koreas are “caught between the ideal of autonomy and the reality of interdependence.”⁶⁶

Historically, both Koreas promoted the norm of reunification as the common goal to achieve. According to a survey conducted by the *Carnegie Endowment For International Peace*, nearly 69 percent of South Koreans felt that the two Koreas should be unified without foreign interventions.⁶⁷ However, this opinion on reunification poses two paradoxes. First, the public sentiment on reunification is projected to decrease over time, as the generation that strongly desired reunification with families on the other side starts to age. According to data provided by *Statista* and *Gallup*, a significant decrease in support for reunification is observed, with 64% in support of unification in 2007 dropping to 44% in support of unification in 2023.⁶⁸ The diminishing support of reunification seems to be apparent in the North as well, with Kim Jong Un redefining South Korea as the “top enemy” and eliminating the possibility of peaceful reunification in early 2024. With Korea’s desire for reunification declining, it is apparent that the peninsula will remain as two states in the upcoming decade.

⁶⁶ Lee, Chung Min. *A Peninsula of Paradoxes: South Korean Public Opinion on Unification ...*, 2020, pg. 5.

⁶⁷ Lee, Chung Min. *A Peninsula of Paradoxes: South Korean Public Opinion on Unification*, 2020, pg. 2.

⁶⁸ IPUS. "Opinion on The Necessity of Unification between South and North Korea from 2007 to 2023." Statista, Statista Inc., 22 Dec 2023: Gallup Korea conducted Face-to-face interview from 2007 to 2023, 1,200 respondents; 19-74 years in age range.