

## **NORTH KOREA: THE MODERN DYNASTY OF THE KIM FAMILY**

**GRADE:** 10

**AUTHOR:** Christopher P. O'Brien

**TOPIC/THEME:** History, Government,

**TIME REQUIRED:** Two or three 50-minute class periods.

### **BACKGROUND:**

The goal of this lesson is to examine “The Modern Dynasty of the Kim Family in North Korea”. The totalitarian control that Kim Il Sung and his son, Kim Jong Il, have exerted over the People’s Republic of Korea for the last 65 years has been absolute and brutal. This lesson will focus on their lives, at least what is known about them, and what we know about North Korea today. It will facilitate a discussion on how the Kims have developed a dynasty, and maintained it for over a half of century without any serious challenge to their power. The students will explore the methods that this dynasty has employed to maintain their authority: propaganda, “concentration camps”, control of information and the use of secret police.

### **CURRICULUM CONNECTION:**

Democracy and Tyranny: In the three decades following World War II, a multitude of new sovereign states appeared around the world. The breakup of the Soviet Union that began in 1990 introduced fifteen more. Triumphant nationalism, in short, has radically transformed the globe’s political landscape. Even so, peoples on every continent have had to struggle persistently for democracy and justice against the powerful counterforce’s of authoritarianism, neo-colonialism, warlordism, and stolid bureaucracy. Many of the newer independent states have also faced daunting challenges in raising their peoples’ standard of living while at the same time participating in a global economic system where industrialized countries have had a distinct advantage. The political, and in some places economic, reform movements that bloomed in Africa, Eurasia, and Latin America in the 1980s are evidence of the vitality of civic aspirations that originated more than two centuries ago but in other corners of the globe, North Korea for example, the flames of democracy and liberty have been tempered by the hands of corrupt dictators.

### **CONNECTION TO STUDENTS’ LIVES:**

In the context of social sciences, power is the ability to control the behavior of other people. This can take the form of control based on ones occupation in society, personality or charisma, and/or inherited power. All three of these forms have been used by the Kim dynasty in North Korea to gain and maintain power. The students can easily give examples of people that have power over them and who they have power over. They can further explain the sources of this power. This lesson is all about power: how the Kim family has created a dynasty of power in North Korea and the methods by which they have been able to consolidate and maintain this power for over 65 years.

**OBJECTIVES AND STANDARDS:****NCSS Standard:**

The student understands why global power shifts took place and the Cold War broke out in the aftermath of World War II.

Explain the causes and international and local consequences of major Cold War crises, such as the Berlin blockade, the Korean War, the Polish workers' protest, etc.

Describe ways in which art, literature, religion, and traditional customs have expressed or strengthened national or other communal loyalties in recent times

The student understands major global trends since World War II.

Explain the changing configuration of political boundaries in the world since 1900 and analyze connections between nationalist ideology and the proliferation of sovereign states.

Assess the degree to which both human rights and democratic ideals and practices have been advanced in the world during the 20th century.

**Arizona Standards:**

Analyze the political, economic and cultural impact of the Cold War

Explain the fall of the Soviet Union and its impact on the world.

Connect current events with historical events and issues using information from class discussions and various resources (e.g., newspapers, magazines, television, Internet, books, maps).

**Common Core Standards:**

WHST 1 Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content

WHST 4 Produce clear and coherent writing

WHST 9 Draw information from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research

SL 1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions

SL 2 Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats

RH 1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources

**Lesson objectives:** Define power. Explain the three main sources of power.

Trace the rise to power of Kim Il Sung.

Describe how he was able to consolidate and extend his power over the people of North Korea.

Describe the process by which Kim Il Sung transferred power to his son, Kim Jong Il.

Describe how Kim Jong Il was able to maintain his power for the last twenty years.

Compare the differences between the father and son in terms of how they implemented their powers.

Evaluate how successful the transfer of power to the next generation within the Kim family was.

Trace the key events in modern North Korean history since WWII.

Define *Juche*.

**MATERIALS REQUIRED:**

- List of key events associated with North Korea since the end of WWII.
- Biography on Kim Il Sung
- Biography on Kim Jong Il
- "Keeping Kim: How North Korea's Regime Stays in Power"  
Policy Brief, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School *July 2010* Authors: Daniel Byman, Jennifer Lind
- Large pieces of paper for the students to construct annotated time lines of modern North Korean history.
- Copy of the National Geographic film "Inside North Korea". Available on YouTube in two parts. **Documentary: Inside North Korea**  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mxLBywKrTf4&has\\_verified=1](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mxLBywKrTf4&has_verified=1)  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2z\\_wks78Feg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2z_wks78Feg)
- Copy of questions that the students need to address while watching the film.
- TV/DVD/LCD Projector

**INTRODUCTION and EXPLORATION:** Ask the students to list people who have power over them. Have them also list people that they have power over. Have them brainstorm how one person can control another person. This will lead into a class discussion on what is power. What are the types of power that people have over others. Some power is based on a person's occupation: police officer, soldier, teacher, parent, older sibling. Other power is based on physical or intellectual power. Some forms of power are passed on from one generation to another where as others are based on a person's charisma. Tell the students that this lesson is about how a father and his son were able to use all of these forms of power to control the people of a whole nation: The People's Republic of Korea (North Korea).

**PROCEDURE:**

**THE DELIVERY OF THE CONTENT:** The students will have access to five key resources in which they will obtain content that they will need for this lesson: List of key events associated with North Korea since the end of WWII, Biography on Kim Il Sung, Biography on Kim Jong Il, the article "Keeping Kim: How North Korea's Regime Stays in Power" and the film "Inside North Korea".

**THE APPLICATION OF THE CONTENT:** The first part of the lesson involves the students working pairs to create an annotated time line of North Korea since WWII. They will be asked to place on this timeline a minimum of five economic events, five domestic political events and five international events related to North Korea. This information will be gleaned from the resource: A chronology of key events in North Korea since WWII. The goal of the first part of this assignment is to provide the students with some necessary background information on North Korea. The second part of the assignment has one person in the each pair read the biography of Kim Il Sung and the other reads the biography of Kim Jong Il. As they read their assigned biography, each student will identify five turning points in each of the leaders' lives. They will also

identify five ways that each of the leaders' was able to gain and hold power. When each is done, they will teach their partner the turning points and methods of power that the leader that they were assigned used. Each student takes notes based on the information that they are taught. For homework or in class work (teacher discretion), each student reads the article "Keeping Kim: How North Korea's Regime Stays in Power" and records at least eight ways that Kim Jong Il has been able to maintain his absolute power over the people of North Korea. Discuss the article with the whole class. In order for the students to gain a visual image of life in contemporary North Korea, show the National Geographic film "Inside North Korea". As the students watch film they should record the answers to the questions listed in the resource section. Conduct a class discussion based on these questions and build on the students' responses to develop a deeper understanding of the political and economic situation in North Korea.

**ASSESSMENT:** Students' prior knowledge will be assessed by asking them to brainstorm ten things that they already know about North Korea prior to the start of this lesson. Students will be evaluated during the lesson based on their participation during the various discussion segments including the discussion following the video. The concluding assessment will be an essay where the student address the following questions: define power; explain the three main sources of power; trace the rise to power of Kim Il Sung; describe how he was able to consolidate and extend his power over the people of North Korea; describe how Kim Jong Il was able to maintain his power for the last twenty years and evaluate how successful the transfer of power to the next generation within the Kim family will be.

### **RESOURCES:**

#### **A chronology of key events in North Korea since WWII:**

**1945** - After World War II, Japanese occupation of Korea ends with Soviet troops occupying the north, and US troops the south.



Kim Il-sung died in 1994 but remains eternal president  
 Born near Pyongyang in 1912  
 North Korean leader from 1948-1994  
 Introduced 'juche', or self-reliance, as guiding philosophy

**1946** - North Korea's Communist Party (Korean Workers' Party - KWP)

[2004: N Korea tribute to 'eternal leader'](#)

inaugurated. Soviet-backed leadership installed, including Red Army-trained Kim Il-sung.

**1948** – The Republic of Korea established in the south, Democratic People's Republic of Korea proclaimed in North Korea.

**1950** - South declares independence, sparked North Korean invasion.

**1953** - Armistice ends Korean War, which has cost two million lives.

**1960s** - Rapid industrial growth.

**1968** - US intelligence-gathering vessel seized by North Korean gunboats.

**1969** - US reconnaissance plane shot down.

**1972** - After secret North-South talks, both sides seek to develop dialogue aimed at unification.

**1980** - Kim Il-sung's son, Kim Jong-il, moves up party and political ladder.

**1991** - North and South Korea join the United Nations.

**1992** - North Korea agrees to allow inspections by International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), but over next two years refuses access to sites of suspected nuclear weapons production.

**1994** - Death of Kim Il-sung. Kim Jong-il succeeds him as leader, but doesn't take presidential title. North Korea agrees to freeze nuclear programme in return for \$5bn worth of free fuel and two nuclear reactors.

**1995** - US formally agrees to help provide two modern nuclear reactors designed to produce less weapons-grade plutonium.

**Flood and famine**



US jets over Korea: The Korean War was UN's first military test

[On This Day 1950: UN condemns North Korean invasion](#)

[In Depth: The Korean War 2003: North Korea's 'creative' history](#)

**KIM JONG-IL**

**1996** - Severe famine follows widespread floods.

Pyongyang announces it will no longer abide by the armistice that ended the Korean War, and sends troops into the demilitarised zone.

North Korean submarine runs aground in South.

**1998** - The late Kim Il-song declared "eternal president", while Kim Jong-il's powers widened to encompass head of state.

UN food aid brought in to help famine victims.

North launches rocket which flies over Japan and lands in the Pacific Ocean. Pyongyang insists it fired a satellite, not a missile.

South Korea captures North Korean mini-submarine in its waters. Crew inside found dead.

### **Historic handshake**

**2000** - Summit in Pyongyang between Kim Jong-il and South Korean President Kim Dae-jung. North stops propaganda broadcasts against the South.

Senior journalists from South Korea visit the North to open up communication.

Reopening of border liaison offices at the truce village of Panmunjom, in the no-man's-land between the heavily fortified borders of the two countries.

South Korea gives amnesty to more than 3,500 prisoners.

One hundred North Koreans meet their relatives in the South in a highly-charged, emotional reunion.

**2001** May - A European Union delegation headed by Swedish Prime Minister Goran Persson visits to help shore up the fragile reconciliation process with South Korea. The group represents the highest-level Western diplomatic mission ever to travel to North Korea.



North Korea's leader is seen by some as a clever manipulator

[Profile: Kim Jong-il](#)  
[2004: North Korea's secretive 'first family'](#)



Leaders of the two Koreas met amid new hopes for peace

[2000: In pictures - Two Koreas make history](#)

**2001** June - North Korea says it is grappling with the worst spring drought of its history.

**2001** August - Kim Jong Il arrives for his first visit to Moscow after an epic nine-day, 10,000-kilometre train journey from Pyongyang. Kim apparently dislikes flying.

**2002** January - US President George W Bush says North Korea is part of an "axis of evil", along with states such as Iraq and Iran. Pyongyang says Mr Bush has not stopped far short of declaring war.

**2002** June - North and South Korean naval vessels wage a gun battle in the Yellow Sea, the worst skirmish for three years. Some 30 North Korean and four South Korean sailors are killed.

**2002** September - Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi visits, the first Japanese leader to do so. He meets Kim Jong-il who apologises for the abductions of Japanese citizens in the 1970s and 1980s.

### **Nuclear brinkmanship**

**2002** October-December - Nuclear tensions mount. In October the US says North Korea has admitted to having a secret weapons programme. The US decides to halt oil shipments to Pyongyang. In December North Korea begins to reactivate its Yongbyon reactor. International inspectors are thrown out.

**2003** January - North Korea withdraws from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), a key international agreement aimed at preventing the spread of atomic weapons.

**2003** April - Delegations from North Korea, the US and China begin talks in Beijing on North Korea's nuclear ambitions, the first such discussions since the start of the nuclear crisis.

**2003** July - Pyongyang says it has enough plutonium to start making nuclear bombs.



Relatives divided for decades by the border are briefly reunited

[2003: In pictures - Korean families reunited](#)



North Korea has one of the world's largest standing armies

### Six-nation talks

**2003** August - Six-nation talks in Beijing on North Korea's nuclear programme fail to bridge gap between Washington and Pyongyang.

**2003** October - Pyongyang says it has reprocessed 8,000 nuclear fuel rods, obtaining enough material to make up to six nuclear bombs.

**2004** April - More than 160 killed and hundreds more injured when train carrying oil and chemicals hits power line in town of Ryongchon.

**2004** June - Third round of six-nation talks on nuclear programme ends inconclusively. North Korea pulls out of scheduled September round.

**2004** December - Row with Japan over fate of Japanese citizens kidnapped and trained as spies by North Korea in 70s, 80s. Tokyo says eight victims, said by Pyongyang to be dead, are alive.

**2005** February - Pyongyang says it has built nuclear weapons for self-defence.

**2005** September - Fourth round of six-nation talks on nuclear programme concludes. North Korea agrees to give up its weapons in return for aid and security guarantees. But it later demands a civilian nuclear reactor.

**2006** February - High-level talks with Japan, the first since 2003, fail to yield agreement on key issues, including the fate of Japanese citizens abducted by North Korea.



Nuclear ambitions: Fuel rods at the Yongbyon facility

[Q&A: N Korea's nuclear threat](#)  
[In pictures: Yongbyon](#)  
[N Korea demolishes reactor tower](#)



Trains from North and South crossed the border on a test run



**2006** July - North Korea test-fires a long-range missile, and some medium-range ones, to an international outcry. Despite reportedly having the capability to hit the US, the long-range Taepodong-2 crashes shortly after take-off, US officials say.

[2007: Korean trains in historic link-up](#)

**2006** October - North Korea claims to test a nuclear weapon for the first time.

**2007** February - Six-nation talks on nuclear programme resume in Beijing. In a last-minute deal, North Korea agrees to close its main nuclear reactor in exchange for fuel aid.

**2007** May - Passenger trains cross the North-South border for the first time in 56 years.

**2007** June - International inspectors visit the Yongbyon nuclear complex for the first time since being expelled from the country in 2002.

**2007** July - International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors verify shutdown of the Yongbyon reactor.

**2007** August - North Korea appeals for aid after devastating floods.

### **Nuclear declaration**

**2007** October - Pyongyang commits to disable three nuclear facilities and declare all its nuclear programmes by year-end.

The presidents of North and South Korea pledge at a Pyongyang summit to seek talks to formally end the Korean war.

**2007** November - North and South Korea's prime ministers meet for the first time in 15 years.

**2008** January - US says North Korea has failed to meet end-of-2007 deadline on declaring nuclear activities. China urges North Korea to honour its commitments.

**2008** February - The New York Philharmonic performs a groundbreaking concert in Pyongyang - a move seen as an act of cultural diplomacy.

**2008** February - South Korea's new conservative President Lee Myung-bak says aid to North conditional on nuclear disarmament and human rights progress.

**2008** March-April - North-South relations deteriorate sharply. North Korea expels Southern managers from joint industrial base, test-fires short-range missiles and accuses President Lee Myung-bak of sending a warship into Northern waters.

**2008 June** - In what is seen as a key step in the denuclearisation process, North Korea makes its long-awaited declaration of its nuclear assets.

**2008 July** - Soldier shoots South Korean woman in the Mount Kumgang special tourism area of North Korea, prompting further tensions.

Foreign Minister Pak Ui-chun and US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice hold talks on Pyongyang's nuclear disarmament, the first such meeting for four years.

### **Kim no-show**

**2008 September** - Kim Jong-il fails to appear at an important military parade, triggering speculation over his state of health.

North Korea accuses the US of not fulfilling its part of a disarmament-for-aid deal and says it is preparing to restart the Yongbyon reactor.

**2008 October** - The US removes North Korea from its list of countries which sponsor terrorism, in return for Pyongyang agreeing to provide full access to its nuclear sites.

**2008 November** - North Korea says it will cut off all overland travel to and from the South from December, and blames South Korea for pursuing a confrontational policy.

**2008 December** - Pyongyang says it will slow down work to dismantle its nuclear programme in response to a US decision to

suspend energy aid. The US move came following the breakdown of international talks to end the country's nuclear activities.

### **Nuclear tensions rise**

**2009 January** - North Korea says it is scrapping all military and political deals with the South, accusing Seoul of "hostile intent".

**2009 April** - North Korea launches a rocket carrying what it says is a communications satellite; its neighbours accuse it of testing long-range missile technology. After criticism of the launch from the UN Security

### **ROCKET LAUNCHES**



North Korea's repeated rocket launches have tested its neighbours' nerves.

Launches took place in 1998, 2003, 2006 and 2009.

In 2006, Taepodong-2 long range missile tested for first time.

[North Korea space launch 'fails'](#)  
[Why North Korea launched rocket](#)  
[North Korea's missile programme](#)

Council, North Korea walks out of the international six-party talks aimed at winding up its nuclear programme.

Kim Jong-il attends parliamentary vote to re-elect him leader, in his first major state appearance since a suspected stroke in 2008.

**2009 May** - North Korea says it successfully carries out an underground nuclear test, its second ever, drawing protests from the US, China and Russia.

It also announces that it no longer considers itself bound by the terms of the 1953 truce that ended the war between the two Koreas.

Defence Secretary Robert Gates says US "will not accept" a nuclear-armed North Korea.

**2009 June** - North Korea proposes reopening talks with South on

Kaesong factory park, which is run by South Korean companies, employs North Korean workers and is based just north of the border.

The eldest son of Kim Jong-il seems to confirm media reports that his younger brother Kim Jong-un has been designated the country's next leader. Kim Jong-nam was speaking to Japanese television.

North Korea sentences two US journalists Laura Ling and Euna Lee to 12 years hard labour for allegedly crossing the border illegally.

UN Security Council votes unanimously to impose tougher sanctions on North Korea. Pyongyang responds by saying it will view any US-led attempt to blockade the country as an "act of war" and that it plans to "weaponise" its plutonium stocks.

### **Tensions subside**

**2009 August** - Former US President Bill Clinton visits to help secure the release of US journalists Laura Ling and Euna Lee, convicted of illegal border crossings two months earlier.

Pyongyang makes series of conciliatory gestures towards Seoul. It sends a delegation to the funeral of former South Korean President Kim Dae-jung, frees four South Korean fishermen who had been detained for a month, and agrees to resume programme of family reunions suspended since early 2008.

### **SUCCESSION MYSTERY**



Kim Jong-il's third son, Kim Jong-un - thought to be pictured here - has been seen as a likely successor

[Who will succeed Kim Jong-il?](#)

**2009** October - North Korea indicates that it may be willing to resume bilateral and multilateral talks on its nuclear programmes at a meeting with visiting Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao.

**2009** November - North Korea launches a confiscatory currency reform that caused disruption to private markets and unprecedented public protests into the New Year.

**2009** December - US envoy Stephen Bosworth visits Pyongyang, reaches "common understanding" on need to resume six-nation talks on North Korea's nuclear programme.

**2010** January - North Korea calls for end to hostile relations with US and vows to strive for nuclear-free Korean peninsula.

North Korea fires artillery into the sea near the disputed maritime border, as part of a "military drill". South Korea returns fire, but no injuries are reported.

**2010** February - North Korea declares four areas near its disputed sea border with South Korea to be naval firing zones, according to the South Korean military, and deploys multiple rocket launchers close to the frontier.

The government reportedly eases restrictions on private markets after the currency revaluation of 2009 wiped out many cash savings in the country.

### **Sinking**

**2010** March - Sinking of South Korean warship Cheonan, allegedly by the North, raises tensions on the peninsula to new heights.

**2010** June - North Korean parliament meets for a special session to approve a leadership reshuffle.

**2010** July - United States announces new sanctions on North Korea in response to sinking of Cheonan warship.

North describes planned US-South war games as a provocation and threatens a "nuclear" response.

### **CHEONAN SINKING**



North Korea denied claims it sank the Southern warship Cheonan in 2010

[Seoul's dilemma over sunken warship](#)

[Korea war games sign of growing tensions](#)

**2010** August - Kim Jong-il visits China, expresses hopes for early resumption of six-party nuclear talks, in first sign of attempts to conciliate international critics.

### **Heir apparent?**

**2010** September - As US President Obama signs new sanctions into law, the North makes a number of overtures to the South, including offer of more family reunions and acceptance of flood-damage aid.

Kim Jong-il's youngest son Kim Jong-un is appointed to senior political and military posts, fuelling speculation that he is being prepared to succeed his father.

**2010** November - North Korea shows an eminent visiting American nuclear scientist a vast new secretly-built facility for enriching uranium at its Yongbyon complex. The revelation sparks alarm and anger in Washington, Seoul and Tokyo.

Cross-border clash near disputed maritime border results in death of two South Korean marines. North Korea's military insists it did not open fire first and blames South Korea for the incident.

**2011** February - Foot and mouth disease hits livestock, threatening to aggravate desperate food shortages.


Source: BBC News, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/1132268.stm>

Biographies:

### **Kim Il-sung Biography**

original name Kim Song Ju

( 1912 – 1994 )

 (born April 15, 1912, Man'gyndae, near P'yngyang, Korea [now in North Korea]—died July 8, 1994, P'yngyang) communist leader of **North Korea** from 1948 until his death in 1994. He was the nation's premier from 1948 to 1972, chairman of its dominant Korean Workers (Communist) Party from 1949, and president and head of state from 1972.

Kim was the son of parents who fled to Manchuria in 1925 to escape the Japanese rule of Korea. He joined the Korean guerrilla resistance against the Japanese occupation in the 1930s and adopted the name of an earlier legendary Korean guerrilla fighter against the Japanese. Kim

was noticed by the Soviet military authorities, who sent him to the Soviet Union for military and political training. There he joined the local Communist Party.

During World War II, Kim led a Korean contingent as a major in the Soviet army. After the Japanese surrender in 1945, Korea was effectively divided between a Soviet-occupied northern half and a U.S.-supported southern half. At this time Kim returned with other Soviet-trained Koreans to establish a communist provisional government under Soviet auspices in what would become North Korea. He became the first premier of the newly formed Democratic People's Republic of Korea in 1948, and in 1949 he became chairman of the Korean Workers' (communist) Party. Hoping to reunify Korea by force, Kim launched an invasion of South Korea in 1950, thereby igniting the Korean War. His attempt to extend his rule there was repelled by U.S. troops and other UN forces, however, and it was only through massive Chinese support that he was able to repel a subsequent invasion of North Korea by UN forces.

The Korean War ended in a stalemate in 1953. As head of state, Kim crushed the remaining domestic opposition and eliminated his last rivals for power within the Korean Workers' Party. He became his country's absolute ruler and set about transforming North Korea into an austere, militaristic, and highly regimented society devoted to the twin goals of industrialization and the reunification of the Korean Peninsula under North Korean rule. Kim introduced a philosophy of *juche*, or “self-reliance,” under which North Korea tried to develop its economy with little or no help from foreign countries. North Korea's state-run economy grew rapidly in the 1950s and '60s but eventually stagnated, with shortages of food occurring by the early '90s. The omnipresent personality cult sponsored by Kim was part of a highly effective propaganda system that enabled him to rule unchallenged for 46 years over one of the world's most isolated and repressive societies. In his foreign policy he cultivated close ties with both the Soviet Union and China and remained consistently hostile to South Korea and the United States. While retaining control of the Korean Workers' Party, Kim relinquished the office of premier and was elected president of North Korea in December 1972. In 1980 he raised his eldest son, Kim Jong Il, to high posts in the party and the military, in effect designating the younger Kim as his heir.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s left China as North Korea's sole major ally, and even China cultivated more cordial relations with South Korea. Meanwhile, North Korean policy toward the South alternated between provocation and overtures of peace throughout

the 1980s and early 1990s. Relations improved somewhat with Seoul's hosting of the Olympic Games in 1988, to which the North sent a team of athletes. In 1991 the two countries were simultaneously admitted to the United Nations, and a series of prime-ministerial talks produced two agreements between North and South Korea: one that pledged nonaggression, reconciliation, exchanges, and cooperation, and a joint declaration on the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. The agreements went into effect in February 1992, although little of substance came of them, especially after the North became embroiled in controversy over its nuclear program and suspended all contacts with the South in early 1993.

South Korean president Kim Young Sam was scheduled to travel to P'yongyang in July 1994 for an unprecedented summit between the two Korean leaders, but Kim Il-sung died before the meeting could take place. Kim Jong Il ascended to power after his father's death, and in the revised constitution that was promulgated in 1998, the office of president was written out and the elder Kim was written in as “eternal president of the republic.”

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## Kim Jong Il Biography

also spelled Kim Chong Il

( 1941 – )

born February 16, 1941, though official accounts place birth a year later. Some mystery surrounds when and where Kim Jong Il was born. Official North Korean biographies state that his birth occurred on February 16, 1942, in a secret camp on Mount Paekdu along the Chinese border, in Samjiyon County, Ryanggang Province, in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea). Other reports indicate he was born a year later in Vyatskoye in the former Soviet Union.

During World War II, his father commanded the 1st Battalion of the Soviet 88th Brigade, composed of Chinese and Korean exiles battling the Japanese Army. Kim Jong Il's mother was Kim Jong Suk, his father's first wife. Official accounts indicate that Kim Jong Il comes from a family of nationalists who actively resisted imperialism from the Japanese in the early 20th century.

His official government biography claims Kim Jong Il completed his

general education between September 1950 and August 1960 in Pyongyang, the current capital city of North Korea. But scholars point out that the first few years of this period were during the Korean War and contend his early education took place in the People's Republic of China, where it was safer to live. Official accounts claim that throughout his schooling, Kim was involved in politics. While attending the Namsan Higher Middle School in Pyongyang, he was active in the Children's Union—a youth organization that promotes the concept of Juche, or the spirit of self-reliance—and the Democratic Youth League (DYL), taking part in the study of Marxist political theory. During his youth, Kim Jong Il showed an interest in a wide range of subjects including agriculture, music, and mechanics. In high school, he took classes in automotive repair and participated in trips to farms and factories. Official accounts of his early schooling also point out his leadership capabilities: as vice chairman of his school's DYL branch, he encouraged younger classmates to pursue greater ideological education and organized academic competitions and seminars as well as field trips.

Kim Jong Il graduated from Namsan Higher Middle School in 1960 and enrolled the same year in Kim Il Sung University. He majored in Marxist political economy and minored in philosophy and military science. While at the university, Kim trained as an apprentice in a textile machine factory and took classes in building TV broadcast equipment. During this time, he also accompanied his father on tours of field guidance in several of North Korea's provinces.

Kim Jong Il joined the Workers' Party, the official ruling party of North Korea, in July 1961. Most political experts believe the party follows the traditions of Stalinist politics even though North Korea began distancing itself from Soviet domination in 1956. The Workers' Party claims to have its own ideology, steeped in the philosophy of Juche. However, in the late 1960s, the party instituted a policy of "burning loyalty" to the "Great Leader" (Kim Il Sung). This practice of personality cult is reminiscent of Stalinist Russia but was taken to new heights with Kim Il Sung and would continue with Kim Jong Il.

Soon after his 1964 graduation from the university, Kim Jong Il began his rise through the ranks of the Korean Workers' Party. The 1960s were a time of high tension between many Communist countries. China and the Soviet Union were clashing over ideological differences that resulted in several border skirmishes, Soviet satellite nations in Eastern Europe were simmering with dissent, and North Korea was pulling away from both Soviet and Chinese influence. Within North Korea, internal forces were attempting to revise the party's revolutionary message. Kim Jong Il was appointed to the Workers' Party Central



Committee to lead the offensive against the revisionists and ensure the party did not deviate from the ideological line set by his father. He also led efforts to expose dissidents and deviant policies to ensure strict enforcement of the party's ideological system. In addition, he took on major military reform to strengthen the party's control of the military and expelled disloyal officers.

Kim Jong Il oversaw the Propaganda and Agitation department, the government agency responsible for media control and censorship. Kim gave firm instructions that the party's monolithic ideological message be communicated constantly by writers, artists, and officials in the media. According to official accounts, he revolutionized Korean fine arts by encouraging the production of new works in new media. This included the art of film and cinema. Mixing history, political ideology, and moviemaking, Kim encouraged the production of several epic films, which glorified works written by his father. His official biography claims that Kim Jong Il has composed six operas and enjoys staging elaborate musicals. Kim is reported to be an avid film buff who owns more than 20,000 movies, including the entire series of James Bond films, for his personal enjoyment.

Kim Il Sung began preparing his son to lead North Korea in the early 1970s. Between 1971 and 1980, Kim Jong Il was appointed to increasingly important positions in the Korean Workers' Party. During this time, he instituted policies to bring party officials closer to the people by forcing bureaucrats to work among subordinates for one month a year. He launched the Three-Revolution Team Movement, in which teams of political, technical, and scientific technicians traveled around the country to provide training. He was also involved in economic planning to develop certain sectors of the economy.

By the 1980s, preparations were being made for Kim to succeed his father as the leader of North Korea. At this time, the government began building a personality cult around Kim Jong Il patterned after that of his father. Just as Kim Il Sung was known as the "Great Leader," Kim Jong Il was hailed in the North Korean media as the "fearless leader" and "the great successor to the revolutionary cause." His portraits appeared in public buildings along with his father's. He also initiated a series of drop-in inspections of businesses, factories, and government offices. At the Sixth Party Congress in 1980, Kim Jong Il was given senior posts in the Politburo (the policy committee of the Korean Workers' Party), the Military Commission, and the Secretariat (the executive department charged with carrying out policy). Thus, Kim was positioned to control all aspects of the government.

The one area of leadership in which Kim Jong Il might have had a perceived weakness was the military. The army was the foundation of power in North Korea, and Kim had no military service experience. With the assistance of allies in the military, Kim was able to gain acceptance by the army officials as the next leader of North Korea. By 1991, he was designated as the supreme commander of the Korean People's Army, thus giving him the tool he needed to maintain complete control of the government once he took power.

Following the death of Kim Il Sung in July 1994, Kim Jong Il took total control of the country. This transition of power from father to son had never been seen before in a communist regime. In deference to his father, the office of president was abolished, and Kim Jong Il took the titles of general secretary of the Workers' Party and chairman of the National Defense Commission, which was declared the highest office of the state.

It is important to understand that much of Kim Jong Il's persona is based on a cult of personality, meaning that legend and official North Korean government accounts describe his life, character, and actions in ways that promote and legitimize his leadership. Examples include his family's nationalist revolutionary roots and claims that his birth was foretold by a swallow, the appearance of a double rainbow over Mount Paekdu, and a new star in the heavens. He is known to personally manage the country's affairs and sets operational guidelines for individual industries. He is said to be arrogant and self-centered in policy decisions, openly rejecting criticism or opinions that differ from his. He is suspicious of nearly all of those who surround him and volatile in his emotions. There are many stories of his eccentricities, his playboy lifestyle, the lifts in his shoes and pompadour hairstyle that make him appear taller, and his fear of flying. Some stories can be verified while others are most likely exaggerated, possibly circulated by foreign operatives from hostile countries, which in fact is nearly every country.

In the 1990s, North Korea went through a series of devastating and debilitating economic episodes. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, North Korea lost its main trading partner. Strained relations with China following China's normalization with South Korea in 1992 further limited North Korea's trade options. Record-breaking floods in 1995 and 1996 followed by drought in 1997 crippled North Korea's food production. With only 18 percent of its land suitable for farming in the best of times, North Korea began experiencing a devastating famine. Worried about his position in power, Kim Jong Il instituted the Military First policy, which prioritized national resources to the military. Thus,

the military would be pacified and remain in his control. Kim could defend himself from threats domestic and foreign, while economic conditions worsened. The policy did produce some economic growth and along with some socialist-type market practices characterized as a "flirtation with capitalism" North Korea has been able to remain operational despite being heavily dependent on foreign aid for food.

In 1994, the Clinton administration and North Korea agreed to a framework designed to freeze and eventually dismantle North Korea's nuclear weapons program. In exchange, the United States would provide assistance in producing two power-generating nuclear reactors and supplying fuel oil and other economic aid. In 2000, the presidents of North Korea and South Korea met for diplomatic talks and agreed to promote reconciliation and economic cooperation between the two countries. The agreement allowed families from both countries to reunite and signaled a move toward increased trade and investment. For a time, it appeared that North Korea was reentering the international community.

Then in 2002, U.S. intelligence agencies suspected North Korea was enriching uranium or building the facilities to do so, presumably for making nuclear weapons. In his 2002 State of the Union address, President George W. Bush identified North Korea as one of the countries in the "axis of evil" (along with Iraq and Iran). The Bush administration soon revoked the 1994 treaty designed to eliminate North Korea's nuclear weapons program. Finally, in 2003, Kim Jong Il's government admitted to having produced nuclear weapons for security purposes, citing tensions with President Bush. Late in 2003, the Central Intelligence Agency issued a report that North Korea possessed one and possibly two nuclear bombs. The Chinese government stepped in to try to mediate a settlement, but President Bush refused to meet with Kim Jong Il one-on-one and instead insisted on multilateral negotiations. China was able to gather Russia, Japan, South Korea, and the United States for negotiations with North Korea. Talks were held in 2003, 2004, and twice in 2005. All through the meetings, the Bush administration demanded North Korea eliminate its nuclear weapons program. It adamantly maintained any normalcy of relations between North Korea and the United States would come about only if North Korea changed its human rights policies, eliminated all chemical and biological weapons programs, and ended missile technology proliferation. North Korea continually rejected the proposal. In 2006, North Korea's Central News Agency announced North Korea had successfully conducted an underground nuclear bomb test.

There have been many reports and claims regarding Kim Jong Il's health

and physical condition. In August 2008, a Japanese publication claimed Kim had died in 2003 and had been replaced with a stand-in for public appearances. It was also noted that Kim hadn't made a public appearance for the Olympic torch ceremony in Pyongyang in April 2008. After Kim failed to show up for a military parade celebrating North Korea's 60th anniversary, U.S. intelligence agencies believed Kim to be gravely ill after possibly suffering a stroke. During the fall of 2008, numerous news sources gave conflicting reports on his condition. The North Korean news agency reported Kim participated in national elections in March 2009 and was unanimously elected to a seat in the Supreme People's Assembly, the North Korean parliament. The assembly will vote later to confirm him as chairman of the National Defense Commission. In the report, it was said Kim cast his ballot at the Kim Il Sung University and later toured the facility and talked to a small group of people

Kim's health was watched closely by other countries because of his volatile nature, the country's possession of nuclear weapons, and its precarious economic condition. Kim had no apparent successors to his regime as did his father. His three sons spent most of their lives outside the county and none seemed to be in the favor of the 'Dear Leader' to ascend to the top spot. Nonetheless, in 2010 the youngest son, Kim Jong-un began being groomed as the successor, when he was appointed a four-star general and vice chairman of the Central Military Commission of the Workers' Party.

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## **Handouts**

### **Questions to discuss with the students after they review the timeline and biographies.**

1. What is the purpose of the air of mystery surrounding the current leader?
2. What benefits do you see for the government by having this air of mystery? What disadvantages?
3. What is the justification for focusing on the military while the masses of people are starving?
4. Would you, in Kim Jong Il's place, hold true to your ideology, or go ahead and make the social/economic changes that might (or might not) relieve the economic burden?
5. What is the benefit of having nuclear weapons? What are the disadvantages?

**"Keeping Kim: How North Korea's Regime Stays in Power"**  
 Policy Brief, [Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School](#)

*July 2010*

Authors: [Daniel Byman](#), [Jennifer Lind](#)

Belfer Center Programs or Projects: [International Security](#); [Quarterly Journal: International Security](#)

*This policy brief is based on "[Pyongyang's Survival Strategy: Tools of Authoritarian Control in North Korea](#)," which appears in the Summer 2010 issue of [International Security](#).*

#### BOTTOM LINES

- **The Challenge of Succession.** Kim Jong-il's hold on power in North Korea seems more secure than many pundits suggest. The regime does not appear vulnerable to coups d'états or revolution. The greatest threat to the regime is the challenge of succession.
- **Hardly an Erratic Regime.** The Kim regime's foreign policy behavior, though frequently called erratic or crazy, has a rational basis. International provocations help to stoke popular nationalism, shoring up the regime's domestic position, particularly within the military.
- **The Paradox of Sanctions.** Effective sanctions—those that target Kim's power base—are likely to be rejected by key stakeholder countries because of the risk they pose of regime collapse and the chaos that would likely ensue.

#### THE STAYING POWER OF THE KIM REGIME

Predictions of the Kim regime's demise have been widespread for many years, particularly in the 1990s, as upwards of 1 million North Koreans perished in a famine. Limited openness in the form of bustling markets and some cross-border trade were viewed as a possible threat to the regime's control. Recently, analysts have argued that North Korean bellicosity—for example, the March 2010 attack on a South Korean warship and its nuclear and missile tests in 2009—is aimed at a domestic audience: an effort by a weak regime to shore up support among the North Korean military in advance of succession. Analysts also point to surprising popular protests after Pyongyang's botched 2009 currency reform and to increased information flows as reasons to think the regime may soon fall.

Decisionmakers and analysts, however, often underestimate the power of tyranny. Like other dictatorships, the Kim regime relies on numerous tools of authoritarian control to stay in power. Although data are opaque, Kim Jong-il's hold on power seems more secure than many pundits suggest: the regime does not appear vulnerable to coups d'état or revolution. The greatest threat to the Kim regime is the challenge of succession. Prior to his death in 1994, Kim Il-sung skillfully applied a variety of tools from the "authoritarian toolbox" to ensure a smooth transfer of power for his son—for example, creating a cult of personality around the younger Kim. The current regime has not yet made similar preparations for Kim Jong-il's successor, which raises the risk of contested succession and regime collapse after Kim's death or incapacitation.

Understanding the Kim regime's resilience requires an understanding of the tools it has used to stay in power. The first is social engineering—creating a country where the very building blocks of opposition are lacking. North Korea has no merchant or land-owning class, independent unions, or clergy. Intellectuals are regime-loyal bureaucrats, not dissidents, and strict restrictions on the activities of students have cowed them into submission.

Second, the regime pushes an ideology. The Supreme Leader (*suryong*) system established Kim Il-sung as the center of a cult of personality. At the core of the regime's *juche* ideology is nationalism with a xenophobic, even racist, slant. Anti-Japanese sentiment, hostility to South Korea, and propaganda against the United States create legitimacy for the regime. As the regime inculcates its ideology and cult of personality, it strives for tighter controls on information. In the 1990s, after the famine, the regime's control of information decreased and cross-border smuggling grew, but recently the regime has tried to reassert its control.

Perhaps most important, the North Korean regime is brutal in its use of force. Dissent is detected through an elaborate network of informants working for multiple internal security agencies. People accused of relatively minor offenses undergo "reeducation"; those accused of more serious transgressions are either immediately executed or interred in miserable political prison camps. Even more daunting, according to the "three generations" policy, the regime punishes not only the individual responsible for the transgressions but his or her whole family.

At the same time, Kim Jong-il uses perks and rewards to co-opt military and political elites. Members of this class receive more and better food, in addition to the most desirable jobs working for the regime. During the famine, the core class was protected, so that the famine's devastation was concentrated on the people deemed least loyal. This group acquiesced to the succession of Kim Jong-il after his father's death; it keeps Kim in power and will influence his choice of successor. Kim Jong-il has co-opted the military by bestowing on it policy influence and prestige, as well as a large share—perhaps 25 percent—of the national budget. The military also has a favored position in policy circles and is lauded in regime propaganda. Nuclear weapons provide another tool for cultivating the military's support. They bring prestige to an institution whose morale has been challenged by hunger and by its relative inferiority to South Korea's military forces.

Kim Jong-il's regime manipulates foreign governments to generate the hard currency needed to buy off elites and sustain his military. China and the Soviet Union propped up North Korea during Kim Il-sung's reign. Kim Jong-il continues to rely on Chinese patronage, but he has also been adept at extracting extensive aid from his adversaries. Since the late 1990s, Pyongyang has used promises of denuclearization to extort more than \$6 billion in aid, as well as hundreds of thousands of tons of food, not only from South Korea but also from the United States, China, and Japan. Economic initiatives associated with South Korea's sunshine policy, such as the Kaesong Industrial Complex, have also provided Pyongyang with a significant revenue stream. Although Seoul initially announced cuts in this economic support after the March 2010 attack on the South Korean warship, only a few months later it began to backtrack.

Should co-optation fail and domestic elites grow dissatisfied, the Kim regime has coup-proofed North Korean institutions in ways that deter, detect, and thwart anti-regime activity among these elites. North Korean military leaders are chosen for their political loyalty rather than military competence. Key positions are granted to individuals with family or other close ties. Kim Il-sung ruled with the help of relatives and his fellow anti-Japanese guerrillas. Kim Jong-il relies on multiple and competing internal security agencies to reduce the unity of the security forces and to maximize the information he receives about anti-regime activities. The Kim regime has created parallel security forces to protect itself from a military coup.

#### IMPLICATIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This analysis suggests several implications for foreign policy toward North Korea, in particular the effort to pressure Pyongyang to give up its nuclear arsenal. Sanctions aimed at weakening North Korea's broader economy are unlikely to exert much coercive pressure on Pyongyang;

Kim Jong-il (like Joseph Stalin, Saddam Hussein, and many other dictators) protects his elite core while shifting the burden of sanctions to the people. A more effective economic lever with which to move the regime would be to directly threaten its access to hard currency and luxury goods, which it needs to bribe elites. Policies such as freezing North Korean assets overseas and embargoing luxury items are thus the most promising options.

Ironically, the United States and other countries will be hesitant to apply the kinds of sanctions that have the best chance of success. In China, South Korea, and the United States, fears of war or chaos on the Korean Peninsula and the calamity of refugees pouring across borders are likely to lead these states to continue to prop up the Kim regime, helping it to weather crises and keeping the country poor, starved, and brutalized.

North Korea is unlikely to yield to pressure to relinquish its nuclear arsenal. Although much debate focuses on the regime's security motivations for acquiring nuclear weapons, these weapons also serve as a tool of its survival. They help to curry the favor of the military, and they provide a bargaining chip that earns the regime billions of dollars in hard currency.

In contrast to the media, which persist in portraying Kim Jong-il as a madman or an incompetent playboy, this analysis shows him to be a shrewd, if reprehensible, leader. His meticulous use of the authoritarian toolbox reveals him to be a skilled strategic player. Kim shows every sign of being rational—and thus deterrable.

Should the United States reject a deterrence strategy toward North Korea (as it ultimately did toward Iraq), limited military operations undertaken with the goal of inciting a coup or popular revolt are unlikely to succeed in this coup-proofed dictatorship. Air strikes would do little to stir up popular unrest or sufficient anger among the military elite to topple Pyongyang's regime. Rather, they would inflame nationalism at the popular level and likely increase the military's loyalty to the leadership. Kim's regime would be able to blame any resulting economic problems on the bombings rather than on its own bungling. Toppling the Kim regime, then, is unlikely to work with coercive strikes and would instead require a full invasion, a course the United States is unlikely to choose because of the tremendous instability it would unleash.

*Statements and views expressed in this policy brief are solely those of the authors and do not imply endorsement by Harvard University, the John F. Kennedy School of Government, or the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs.*

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**Question for students to answer while watching the National Geographic film: “*Inside North Korea*”**

Answer the questions while watching the video..

1. Describe the feelings of the film crew during the first few days in Pyongyang?
2. What were some of the examples of the control Kim Jong Il has over his people and information in North Korea?
3. What is the propaganda village?
4. Why was the team threatened with expulsion from the country? Why was this considered offensive by the North Koreans?
5. How are the guards set up on both sides of the DMZ? What are the symbols of power that are used at the DMZ?
6. What is the ‘Stunted Generation’?
7. What is ‘juche’?
8. How did the North Korean border guard cross the DMZ?
9. What were the reactions of the people when the bandages were removed from their eyes?
10. How did you feel as you watched their reaction?
11. How do you think the people of North Korea can gain democracy and liberty?

**Websites that provide additional information on life inside North Korea**

**Documentary: Inside North Korea**

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mxLBywKrTf4&has\\_verified=1](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mxLBywKrTf4&has_verified=1)

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2z\\_wks78Feg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2z_wks78Feg)

**Inside North Korea; An Amazing Television Documentary Editorial article**

<http://www.ukapologetics.net/08/korea.htm>

***Inside North Korea*: National Geographic Documentary Review**

[http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/735397/inside\\_north\\_korea\\_national\\_geographic.html?cat=71](http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/735397/inside_north_korea_national_geographic.html?cat=71)

**North Korea vs South Korea from 'PLANET B-BOY'**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jCxdku8sx-A&feature=fvst>

**Life in the People's Paradise of DPRK**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9HxGhIo-6k>

**North Korea: video from the inside**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cw9OofrXwHY&feature=related>

**North Korea is changing... slowly**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-YDjzSLa5Go>

**Inside North Korea 2009 by Chinese media 2/7 Eng Sub**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eR-MA4pANm4&feature=related>



**North Korea's Killing Fields**

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g0R6D0rw\\_5g&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g0R6D0rw_5g&feature=player_embedded)

Parts 1 and 2 Escapee of North Korea's brutal prison camp tells his horrifying story Very Good!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4LYjo81MIQM&feature=related>

2/2 Escapee of North Korea's brutal prison camp tells his horrifying story

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ts\\_IcywvB9Y&NR=1](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ts_IcywvB9Y&NR=1)

North Korean Prison Camps Worse than Hell 61009 LibertyUnderFire.org Fox News good clip

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fNbCYTZzy9s&feature=related>

**Welcome to North Korea by Peter Tetteroo and Raymond Feddema / Documentary Educational Video**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FJ6E3cShcVU>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FJ6E3cShcVU&feature=BFa&list=PLC1C1735771F33CAD&index=1>

**Good lesson plans LESSON: WHY IS NORTH KOREA GOING IT ALONE?**

[http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/teachers/lessonplans/world/nkorea\\_10-14.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/teachers/lessonplans/world/nkorea_10-14.html)

**Different perspective of war**

[http://www.opednews.com/articles/genera\\_jay\\_jans\\_080227\\_ny\\_phil\\_plays\\_in\\_a\\_k.htm](http://www.opednews.com/articles/genera_jay_jans_080227_ny_phil_plays_in_a_k.htm)

**Justin Bieber in North Korea**

<http://www.mtv.com/news/articles/1643113/justin-bieber-not-going-north-korea-rep-confirms.jhtml>

**A Tale of Two Heavens: Escaping North Korea**

<http://www.teachersdomain.org/resource/wa10.socst.global.conn.lpcrosheav/>

**The Government of North Korea**

<http://www.lessonplanet.com/lesson-plans/north-korea>

**World Affairs Council "North Korea on our Minds And in our Classrooms" free resource available at:**

[http://www.world-affairs.org/sites/default/files/resource\\_packet\\_nk\\_web.pdf](http://www.world-affairs.org/sites/default/files/resource_packet_nk_web.pdf)