

PROPAGANDA AND AGITATION DEPARTMENT

A sword is the central focus of the cover. The hilt is wrapped in red and blue fabric, with a silver metal guard featuring intricate carvings. The blade is silver and tapers to a point. The background is black with a subtle grid pattern.

*Kim Jong-un Regime's
Sword of Indoctrination*

ROBERT COLLINS

PROPAGANDA AND AGITATION DEPARTMENT

KIM JONG-UN REGIME'S SWORD OF INDOCTRINATION

BY

ROBERT COLLINS



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Committee for Human Rights in North Korea

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This report is dedicated to the memory of Jae Hoon Ahn (1941 – 2011)

Member, HRNK Board of Directors

Founding Director, Korean Service, *Radio Free Asia*

Korean-American journalist, broadcaster, thought leader, freedom fighter, patriot

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ABOUT THE COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN NORTH KOREA

The Committee for Human Rights in North Korea (HRNK) is the leading U.S.-based nonpartisan, non-governmental organization (NGO) in the field of North Korean human rights research and advocacy, tasked to focus international attention on human rights abuses in that country. It is HRNK's mission to persistently remind policymakers, opinion leaders, and the general public that more than 20 million North Koreans need our attention.

Since its establishment in October 2001, HRNK has played an important intellectual leadership role in North Korean human rights issues by publishing more than 50 major reports (available at <https://www.hrnk.org/publications/hrnk-publications.php>). Recent reports have addressed issues including the role of sanctions in policy toward North Korea, North Korea's overseas workers dispatched overseas, the influx of outside information into North Korea and the regime's response, as well as North Korea's political prison camps and other detention facilities.

HRNK is the first NGO that solely focuses on North Korean human rights issues to receive UN ECOSOC consultative status. It was also the first organization to propose that the human rights situation in North Korea be addressed by the UN Security Council. HRNK was directly and actively involved in all stages of the process supporting the work of the UN Commission of Inquiry (COI) on North Korean human rights.

Its reports have been cited numerous times in the report of the COI, the reports of the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in the DPRK, a report by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, two reports of the UN Secretary-General António Guterres, and several U.S. Department of State DPRK Human Rights Reports. HRNK has also regularly been invited to provide expert testimony before the U.S. Congress.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Robert M. Collins completed 37 years of service as a soldier and U.S. Department of the Army civilian employee. He served 31 years in various assignments with the U.S. military in Korea, including several liaison positions with the Republic of Korea Armed Forces. Mr. Collins' final assignment was as Chief of Strategy, ROK-US Combined Forces Command, serving the four-star American commander as a political analyst for planning on the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asian security issues. He received the Sam-il Medal (Republic of Korea Order of National Security Medal, Fourth Class) from President Lee Myung-bak and the U.S. Army Decoration for Exceptional Civilian Service by the Secretary of the Army.

Mr. Collins earned a B.A. in Asian History from the University of Maryland in 1977, and an M.A. in International Politics, focusing on North Korean Politics, from Dankook University in 1988. Mr. Collins is a Senior Advisor at HRNK, where he conducts interviews with North Korean escapees living in South Korea to gather data on the North Korean population and their human rights.

He is the author of *Marked For Life: Songbun, North Korea's Social Classification System*; *Pyongyang Republic: North Korea's Capital of Human Rights Denial*; *From Cradle to Grave: The Path of North Korean Innocents*; *Denied From the Start: Human Rights at the Local Level in North Korea*; *North Korea's Organization and Guidance Department: The Control Tower of Human Rights Denial*; and *South Africa's Apartheid and North Korea's Songbun: Parallels in Crimes Against Humanity*, which were published by HRNK.

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ACRONYMS

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
COI	UN Commission of Inquiry on North Korean human rights (2013–14)
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CWL	Chosun Writers' League
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
GPB	KPA General Political Bureau
HRC	UN Human Rights Council
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
KPA	Korean People's Army
KSCA	Korea-Soviet Culture Association
KWP	Korean Workers' Party
MGS	Monolithic Guidance System
MIS	Monolithic Ideology System
OGD	KWP Organization and Guidance Department
OHCHR	UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PAD	KWP Propaganda and Agitation Department
SAC	State Affairs Commission
SEK	Scientific Education Korea (Animation Studio)
SLYL	Socialist Labor Youth League
TPMI	Ten Principles of Monolithic Ideology
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UFD	KWP United Front Department
UN	United Nations
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
USSR	Soviet Union
VOKS	Soviet Foreign Culture Liaison Association

TERMS

<i>Inminban</i>	Neighborhood watch unit
<i>Juche</i>	Self-reliance
<i>Saenghwal chonghwa</i>	Self-critique session

One senior North Korean escapee revealed a common saying among the populace about the importance of ideology in North Korean society:

“There can be a space on the pavement for weeds to grow, but there should be no empty space in the people’s brain for any (forbidden) ideology to penetrate.”

Foreword

“Propaganda”—all states do it. Whether to promote the interests of political leadership or “control the narrative,” states have historically used propaganda extensively as a tool to propagate and modulate information. The degree to which this is carried out varies considerably by state.

While all states engage in the business of propaganda to varying degrees, the scale, intensity, and enforcement of information operations substantially increases with a state’s propensity toward authoritarianism. Today, Russia and China each exemplify this through widescale censorship, state use of social media to shape and control narratives, mass mobilization of public support, and coordinated domestic efforts to foster cults of personality.

As a full totalitarian dictatorship, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK, i.e., North Korea) is virtually unmatched in terms of its ability to organize and deploy state propaganda.

A system of information control has been engineered in North Korea that is staggering in its totality. At the top, dynastic, autocratic rule is directed by one man with three hats—the *Suryong*. As the *Suryong*, Kim Jong-un is chairman of both the Korean Workers’ Party (KWP) and State Affairs Commission, the latter of which also makes him the ‘Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces.’ Kim packages his rule inside the uniquely ideological brand of autonomy, *Juche*, and implements it through North Korea’s single KWP political faction. The Party apparatus is exerted down and across to the local levels in a society cleaved into three classes for ease in preserving monolithic rule—the *Songbun* system. Within this system, North Koreans must live by a mandatory code of loyalty to the *Suryong*—the Ten Principles of Monolithic Ideology (TPMI)—and are monitored through mandatory ‘self-criticism’ sessions (*saeng-hwal chong-hwa*)—where they must demonstrate a rote understanding of the TPMI. How does North Korea preserve this monolithic system to ensure unchallenged loyalty and glorification of the regime?

Robert Collins’ *Propaganda and Agitation Department: Kim Jong-un Regime’s Sword of Indoctrination* is a thoroughly researched and comprehensively constructed report that addresses this question. In this report, Collins, a standout scholar and respected expert on North Korea, explains how the Kim regime organizes and implements its policy of human rights denial using the Propaganda and Agitation Department (PAD) to preserve and strengthen its monolithic system of control. The report also serves as a valuable reference with rich, detailed background and history of the formation of the PAD, as well as a human terrain map that details present and past PAD leadership.

Collins makes an important distinction, heretofore insufficiently addressed in the literature, between “agitation” and “propaganda” in the North Korean context. As Collins states, agitation and propaganda are combined and “designed to idealize and activate the masses to carry out the revolution and to enable domestic control.” Propaganda involves the process of “injecting revolutionary thought into human consciousness” while agitation involves “imposing socio-political tasks, and driving (the people) to complete these tasks.”

Collins also carefully explains how the PAD, with its pervasive portfolio of tools to enforce and support the TPMI, works to infringe on the fundamental human rights of North Koreans. Despite claiming to adhere to international conventions and its own constitution regarding human rights, the TPMI drive policy and shape the lives of North Koreans.

Finally, as Collins concludes with a discussion on the role of the PAD in the future of the North Korean regime, he reminds us that “The KWP, through the PAD, designs and structures every North Korean life to be lived for the benefit of the regime.” Thus, as challenges continue to mount for the regime, whether stemming from sanctions, failed economic policies, or natural disasters, the PAD’s role in helping to preserve the regime will become increasingly important.

Through this latest contribution to the literature, Robert Collins arms researchers, strategists, policymakers, and other practitioners with a vital reference for understanding the machinery that drives North Korea’s system of human rights denial.

George Hutchinson, Ph.D.

Managing Editor, *International Journal of Korean Studies*

November 28, 2023

Executive Summary

Section 1 introduces the PAD and its role in North Korea. It plays a critical role in maintaining the Kim regime by enforcing and disseminating the regime's directives.

Section 2 explains the PAD's missions, objectives, and internal structure. The author illustrates how the PAD enforces the Kim regime's ideology through ideological instruction and education.

Section 3 provides a brief history of the PAD, starting from its origins in 1945. The author emphasizes the Soviet roots of the PAD and outlines key developments under Kim Jong-il and Kim Jong-un.

Section 4 analyzes the content of the propaganda that is created and disseminated by the PAD. The Ten Principles of Monolithic Ideology and the KWP Charter form the basis of North Korean propaganda. Its main themes include the Kim regime's Monolithic Guidance System, revolutionary traditions, and anti-American sentiment.

Section 5 examines how the PAD uses media and art as tools to achieve its mission. The author explains the different institutions and the sub-organizations of the PAD that exercise control over the arts.

Section 6 details the PAD's censorship activities. By working with the Ministry of State Security and Ministry of Social Security, the PAD suppresses the inflow of external information and quells internal resistance.

Section 7 gives an in-depth look at the influence of the PAD in the North Korean education system. For North Korean children, indoctrination begins when education begins.

Section 8 discusses the role of the PAD in the military. The author discusses the General Political Bureau and how its officers are integrated into the KPA, as well as the power that political officers hold in North Korea's military.

Section 9 explains the role of the PAD in creating and cultivating the Kim family's cult of personality. The author discusses how the PAD introduced new social norms into North Korean society. There is also a brief discussion of developments under Kim Jong-un.

Section 10 outlines a list of key individuals and leaders in the PAD, past and present, beginning with Kim Jong-un and Kim Yo-jong.

Section 11 assesses the human rights violations of the PAD and North Korea's legal obligations, which include not only the international treaties which North Korea has ratified, but also its own constitution.

Section 12 discusses the future of the PAD and the role that it may play in North Korea's political future.

Section 1: Introduction

Totalitarian states like North Korea seek to establish a “utopian” society.¹ Propaganda and agitation are required to accomplish this goal. Even after such a social transformation, propaganda and agitation are still required to maintain the new society. This accurately describes North Korea.²

The Korean Workers’ Party (KWP) is the driving force behind the Kim family regime. This is emphasized in North Korea’s foundational documents: the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) Constitution (Article 11) and the KWP Charter. It is also a core principle of the Ten Principles of Monolithic Ideology (TPMI), which dominate the personal ideological life of each and every North Korean citizen and ensure their individual commitment to the Supreme Leader.³ As part of its totalitarian political strategy, North Korea has also created a system of socio-political classification (*songbun*) based on perceived loyalty to the regime and its ideology.⁴

The Propaganda and Agitation Department (PAD) is a specialized department within the KWP that implements and inculcates the political intent of North Korea’s foundational documents. It defends and disseminates the regime’s foundational ideology. This report addresses the history, organization, and role of the PAD as a pivotal institution in the North Korean regime.

North Korea is one of the least free states in the world, and the PAD is a major contributor to this lack of freedom. Freedom House, in its report entitled *Freedom in the World 2022*, rated North Korea’s observation of political rights with a score of zero, and gave only three points for civil liberties. These ratings are among the lowest in the world, alongside Turkmenistan, South Sudan, and Syria.⁵

1 This report contains and substantially expands on material previously published in Robert Collins, *Pyongyang Republic: North Korea’s Capital of Human Rights Denial* (Washington, D.C.: Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2016), 117–19, and Robert Collins, *North Korea’s Organization and Guidance Department: The Control Tower of Human Rights Denial* (Washington, D.C.: Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2016), 77–84.

2 Lee Kee-woo, *Bukhan-ui seonjeon seondong-gwa Rodong Sinmun* [North Korean Propaganda and Agitation and the Rodong Sinmun] (Seoul: Paradigm Books Publishing, 2015), 40.

3 The text of these ten principles is provided in Robert Collins and Amanda Mortwedt Oh, *From Cradle to Grave: The Path of North Korean Innocents* (Washington, D.C.: Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2017), 3–5. https://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/Collins_Cradle_to_Grave_WEB_FINALFINAL.pdf.

4 For a comprehensive overview of the *songbun* system, please see Robert Collins, *Marked for Life: Songbun, North Korea’s Social Classification System* (Washington, D.C.: Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2012). https://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/HRNK_Songbun_Web.pdf.

5 Chae Yoon-hwan, “N. Korea ranked one of worst countries for political rights and civil liberties: report,” *Yonhap News*, February 25, 2022. <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20220225002600325>.

Propaganda and agitation are powerful weapons in carrying out a revolution. North Korea's methods in this area are very similar to those of the Soviet Union. Andrei Lankov, a Russian scholar of North Korea, insists that North Korean propaganda has not strayed far from the Soviet style introduced in 1945.⁶ However, there are important differences: North Korean propaganda and agitation are designed to idealize and activate the masses to carry out the revolution *and* to enable domestic control. For Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il, and Kim Jong-un, propaganda and agitation are critical tools for maintaining the regime. To justify the Kim family's rule, the PAD glorifies Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il, and Kim Jong-un. It emphasizes TPMI to secure the Supreme Leader's (*Suryong*) Monolithic Ideology System (MIS). According to paragraph four of the TPMI, "one must be armed with the revolutionary ideology and their party lines and the policies of comrades Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il."⁷

North Korea defines propaganda as "a project of injecting revolutionary thought into human consciousness and transforming it into a new humanoid that acts according to the party's demands," and regards it as a powerful means of fulfilling internal and external revolutions.⁸ Its *Dictionary of Political Terms* defines agitation as "transmitting and interpreting content nationwide that is intended to be given to the public in an appealing way to achieve its intended purpose as well as mobilizing and inspiring them."⁹ Put differently, the 1968 version of the *Chosun Language Dictionary* states that "propaganda" recognizes singular ideology, theory, knowledge, and truth, whereas "agitation" teaches politics to the people, imposes socio-political tasks, and drives them to complete these tasks.¹⁰

6 Andrei Lankov, "Comparison of NK and USSR," *The Korea Times*, June 20, 2011. https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/opinion/2011/06/137_89209.html. Lankov grew up in the former Soviet Union and attended Kim Il-sung University for a year in the 1970s.

7 Oh Gyeong-Sub, "Chejeyuji-ui jungnaek, nodongdang jojik-jidobu-wa seonjeon-seondong-bu" [Nucleus of Regime Maintenance, KWP OGD and PAD], *Bukhan* (Aug. 2015): 26–31.

8 "Bukhan-ui daenam seonjeon seondong jojik chegye" [North Korea's system of propaganda and agitation against South Korea], *Naver Encyclopedia*, accessed April 3, 2021. <https://terms.naver.com/entry.naver?docId=727486&cid=42140&categoryId=42140>.

9 *Works of Kim Il-sung*, "About Improving and Strengthening Party Organizational Tasks and Ideological Tasks" (Pyongyang: KWP Publishing Agency, 1968), 304, as cited in Jeong Wook-i, "Bukhan-ui daenam seonjeon seondong yeongu" [A Study of North Korea's Internal Propaganda And Agitation] (Master's thesis, Kyungnam University Graduate School of North Korean Studies, 2007), 26.

10 *Chosun-mal sajeon* [Korean Dictionary] (Pyongyang: Academy of Sciences of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 1968), as cited in Jeong, "A Study of North Korea's Internal Propaganda and Agitation," 25–26.

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The PAD conducts general guidance of propaganda activities, conducts ideological education and control of publications, and censors domestic and foreign publications.¹¹ In North Korea, the purpose of propaganda and agitation is to politicize the economic sector, motivate the military, and—most importantly—to indoctrinate every North Korean citizen. Propaganda and agitation are also critical in “maintaining a reunification front against the Republic of Korea in the south, and diplomatic and psychological warfare against the United States.”¹²

Ideological indoctrination takes place at every school, neighborhood housing unit (*inminban*), workplace, military unit, government institution, economic enterprise, and KWP branch. The objective is to ensure absolute loyalty to the Supreme Leader. The Kim regime also uses propaganda and agitation for mass mobilization in service of national goals. It does this through Party elements in every institution of every type, emphasizing collective work over individualism. The Supreme Leader is the only individual who can risk radical innovation, thus suppressing initiative across the political system.¹³ The KWP PAD is responsible for emphasizing this every day at every level of society to every North Korean.

According to North Korea’s *Dictionary of Political Terms*, agitation “plays an important role in gathering the masses to the attention of the Party and the leader and powerfully motivating them to implement Party policies.” Agitation tasks must be carried out at the right time and under the right conditions based on the revolutionary mission.¹⁴ North Korea’s political agitation includes lectures, studying works by the Supreme Leader, and viewing KWP-sponsored movies. It also includes an oath of loyalty to the Supreme Leader every morning at the workplace. Every Saturday—morning to evening— is a “political” day. There are lectures on the international situation, the Supreme Leader’s love of the people, *Songun* (military-first) politics, and other instruction regarding the country’s political situation.¹⁵

11 Republic of Korea Ministry of Unification, “Seonjeon seondong-bu” [Propaganda and Agitation Department], accessed June 13, 2021. <https://nkinfo.unikorea.go.kr/nkp/term/viewNkKnwldgDicary.do?pageIndex=1&dicaryId=128>.

12 Kim Cheol-woo, *Overview of North Korean Propaganda System and Key Players* (Seoul: Korea Institute for Defense Analyses, 2010).

13 Robert Scalapino and Chong-sik Lee, *Communism in Korea: Part II – The Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 778.

14 *Jeongchi sajeon* [Dictionary of Political Terms] (Tokyo: Social Science Publishing Agency, 1971), 366.

15 An Chan-il et al., *10 nyeon hoo-ui Bukhan* [North Korea Ten Years Later] (Seoul: Ingan Sarang Publishing, 2006), 241.

The PAD ensures that each North Korean citizen experiences lifelong indoctrination as directed and managed by the KWP, particularly in justifying the leadership role of the Supreme Leader and the Party. This leadership role is divided into the guidance of Party life and the guidance of Party policy. Guidance of Party life is further subdivided into the guidance of organizational life and guidance of ideological life. The former is overseen by the KWP Organization and Guidance Department (OGD), and the latter is the remit of the KWP PAD. As such, the OGD and the PAD are like the two wheels of a cart that sustain the North Korean regime.¹⁶ Kim Il-sung referred to the OGD as the “doctor” and the PAD as the “medicine.” He also stated that the OGD must assess the Party members’ Party life, and the PAD must provide the appropriate indoctrination.¹⁷ While the OGD focuses on restricting North Korean society by managing and monitoring the country’s political institutions, the PAD focuses on restricting North Korean society cognitively and emotionally.¹⁸ To that effect, the leaders of the OGD and PAD are treated with higher respect than leaders of other departments within the Party.¹⁹

These two departments are inextricably tied to the history of the Kim regime. In his bid to become the successor to Kim Il-sung and increase his control over the regime, Kim Jong-il heavily relied on the OGD and the PAD.²⁰ From the beginning of his service in the PAD after graduating from Kim Il-sung University, Kim Jong-il focused on the PAD’s role in emphasizing Kim Il-sung as the revolutionary Supreme Leader and developing the ideology to secure the people’s loyalty to him. Kim Jong-il became the PAD cultural arts director at the age of 25. Two years later, he became the PAD director. In the former position, he gathered all actors, writers, directors, singers, musicians, and artists for a month-long conference on ideological struggle. At the conference, he pushed for the elimination of “anti-Party poison” that Kim Il-sung rivals were advocating for. Kim Jong-il gave them social benefits and rebuilt their studios with European equipment.²¹ As a result of Kim Jong-il’s efforts, the PAD became second only to the KWP OGD in terms of power within the Kim regime. When Kim

16 Republic of Korea Ministry of Unification, “Propaganda and Agitation Department.”

17 Republic of Korea National Intelligence Service, “Bukhan Nodongdang-ui haekshim buseo” [Core Department of North Korea’s Korean Workers’ Party], 2006. Accessed June 22, 2009. http://www.nis.go.kr/app/board/view?sc_param=M03180000&midArr=M03180000&fieldArr=&keyword=&page=1&startDate=&endDate=&dataNo=23452&h-code=39077402012879299424981&viewNo=201; see also Oh, “Nucleus of Regime Maintenance, KWP OGD and PAD.”

18 An et al., *North Korea Ten Years Later*, 214.

19 Ibid., 219.

20 See Collins, *North Korea’s Organization and Guidance Department*, 10–12.

21 John H. Cha with K.J. Sohn, *Exit Emperor Kim Jong-il* (Bloomington, IN: Abbott Press, 2012); 28–9.

Jong-il was appointed as KWP Secretary for Organization, he maintained the positions of OGD Director and PAD Director. From these positions, Kim Jong-il rebuilt the Party to establish the Monolithic Ideology System and the Monolithic Guidance System.²² In his words:

In order to strengthen the Party leadership function, in guiding the party members' party organizational life and party ideological life, the OGD and the PAD must integrate their operations. Based on data collected by the OGD and subordinate Organization sections, the PAD and its subordinate sections should carry out proper training measures.²³

It should also be noted that OGD political officers control the PAD through the OGD's Inspection Section, which upholds the Monolithic Guidance System and compels the PAD to follow the *Suryong's* directives on themes and messages.²⁴

The report will proceed as follows. Section 2 explains the PAD's internal structure and its tasks and responsibilities. Section 3 outlines the historical origins of the PAD, dating back to the founding of the North Korean state. Section 4 summarizes the themes and messages contained in the content that are produced and overseen by the PAD. Section 5 examines the role of the PAD in the media and the arts of North Korea, and Section 6 explains the PAD's role in censorship. The next two sections discuss ideological indoctrination: Section 7 focuses on North Korea's schools, while Section 8 addresses the North Korean military. Section 9 portrays the PAD's role in upholding the cult of personality surrounding the Kim family. Section 10 provides a list of key leaders in the PAD, past and present. Section 11 analyzes the human rights violations committed by the PAD with respect to international human rights treaties. Section 12 concludes with a discussion of the PAD's role in the future of the North Korean regime.

22 An et al., *North Korea Ten Years Later*, 213–14.

23 Republic of Korea National Intelligence Service, "Core Department of North Korea's Korean Workers' Party."

24 Jae-Cheon Lim, *Kim Jong Il's Leadership of North Korea* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 68.

Section 2: PAD Mission & Organization

The KWP PAD is responsible for the indoctrination and ideological training of every North Korean. To justify Kim family rule, the PAD glorifies Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il, and Kim Jong-un. To achieve this, the PAD establishes and manages propaganda direction and content, as well as propaganda policy and methods. Propagandists and political agitators are assigned to every organization in the Party, government, military, and economic and social organizations. Those propagandists conduct self-critique sessions and ideological training for every North Korean. There are no exceptions.²⁵

One of the PAD's most important missions is to inculcate the population on the TPMI, which in turn supports the Kim regime's Monolithic Ideology System (MIS) and forces acceptance of *Juche* as the only permissible ideology in North Korea. The PAD also upholds the Monolithic Guidance System (MGS), which compels absolute obedience to the Supreme Leader's (*Suryong*) guidance and directives by disseminating directives and policies issued by the Supreme Leader and the Party. In doing so, the PAD promotes adherence to collectivist values as established by the KWP, but most of all, it promotes individual loyalty to the *Suryong* and to the exclusion of individual rights. Paragraph four of the TPMI states that "one must be armed with the revolutionary ideology and their Party lines and policies of comrades Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il."²⁶

North Korean propaganda and agitation has four primary objectives:²⁷

- Strengthen the cult of personality and dictatorship of the Kim family regime
- Affirm the Monolithic Guidance System of the Paektu bloodline by manipulating the masses
- Maintain the work mobilization system through the "hero worker" program
- Foment public hostility toward the United States and South Korea

25 Michael Madden, "KWP Propaganda and Agitation Department," *NK Leadership Watch*, November 2009. <http://nkleadershipwatch.files.wordpress.com/2009/11/kwppropagandaandagitationdepartment.pdf>.

26 Oh, "Nucleus of Regime Maintenance, KWP OGD and PAD."

27 Lee, *North Korean Propaganda and Agitation and the Rodong Sinmun*, 75–83.

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To achieve these objectives, the PAD conducts the following tasks:²⁸

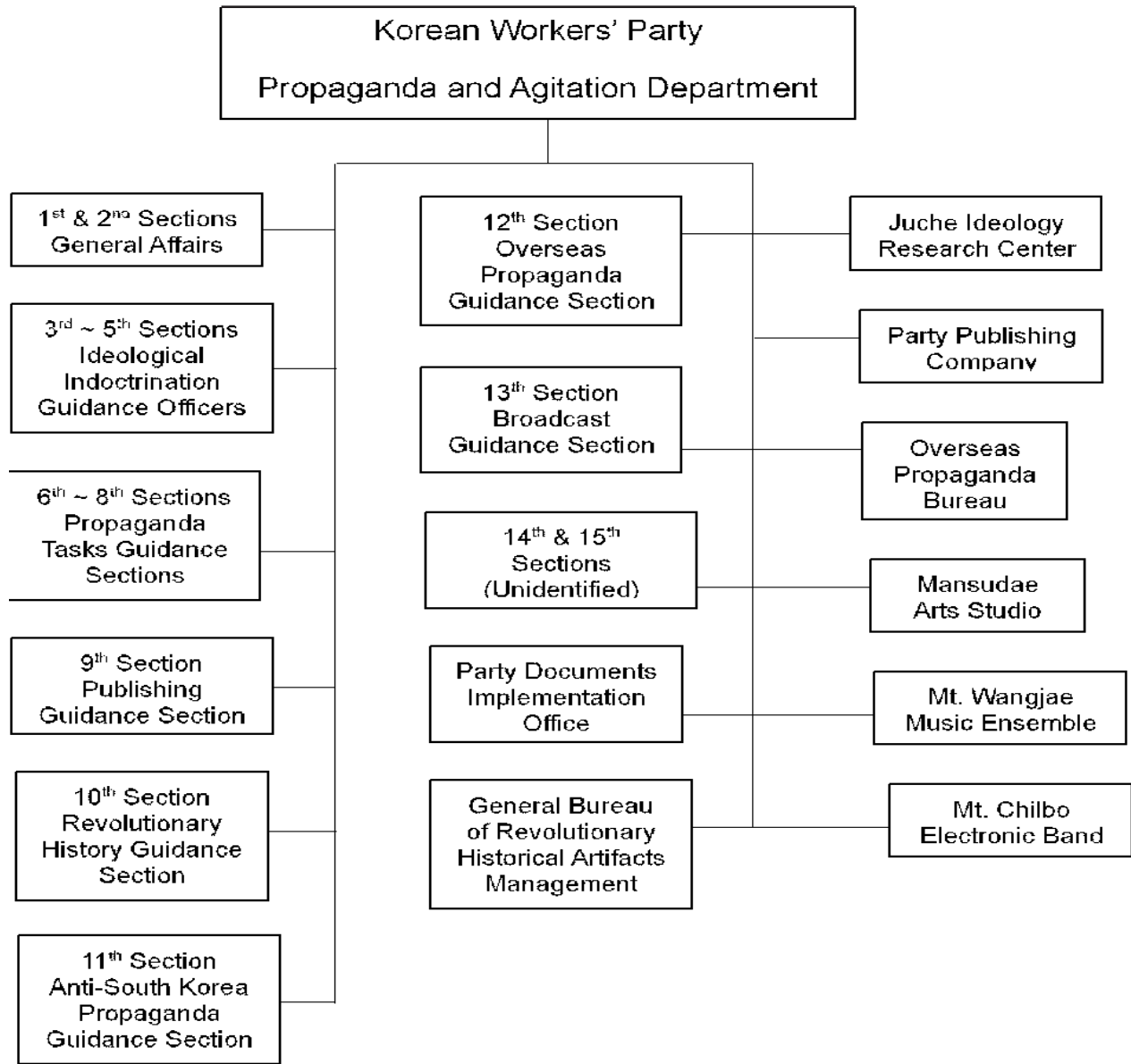
- Organizes and conducts ideological instruction
- Oversees all publishing and media broadcasts and implements education designed to glorify the Kim family
- Organizes and mobilizes political events to promote KWP policies for all Party members and the general population
- Carries out tasks that publicize the major ideological lessons of revolutionary historical sites, historical battle sites, and revolutionary ideological research

The organization of the PAD reflects these objectives. Understanding the structure of the PAD is critical to understanding how it controls all information in North Korea. Under the PAD director, there are three vice directors who each lead three primary efforts – propaganda, agitation, and education (ideological training).²⁹ The organizational chart of the KWP PAD is shown in the next page.³⁰

28 An Hui-chang, *Bukhan-ui tongchi cheje: jibae gujo-wa sahoe tongje* [North Korea's Governing System: Governance and Societal Control] (Seoul: Myongin Books, 2016), 95.

29 Jeon Yeong-Seon, *Dasi gochyeo sseun Bukhan-ui sahoe-wa munhwa* [Revised North Korean Society and Culture] (Seoul: Yeongnak Publishing, 2006), 34–35.

30 Cheong Seong-Chang, *The Contemporary North Korean Politics: History, Ideology and Power System* (Seoul: Hanul Publishing, 2011), 318.



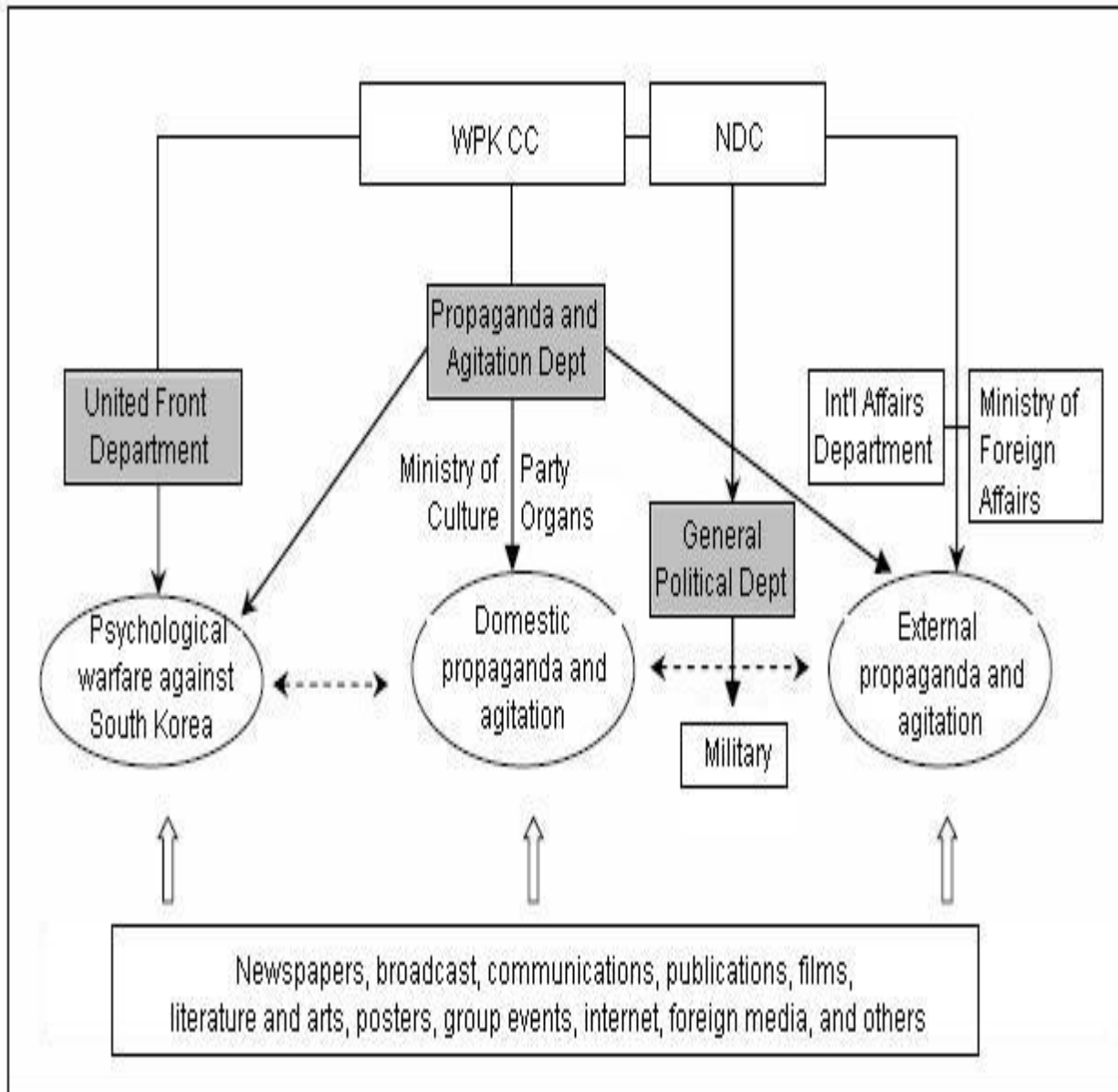
The subsections of the PAD include those responsible for Literature, Mass Culture, Party Policy Review, Arts, Stage Management, Events, Movies, Party Literature and Movies, Newspaper, Publishing, Reporting, Finance, Management, Organization, Cadre, Revolutionary History, Lecture Indoctrination, and Slogan Themes. All of these elements have direct input into the Ministry of Culture.³¹

31 An et al., *North Korea Ten Years Later*, 216.

PROPAGANDA AND AGITATION DEPARTMENT

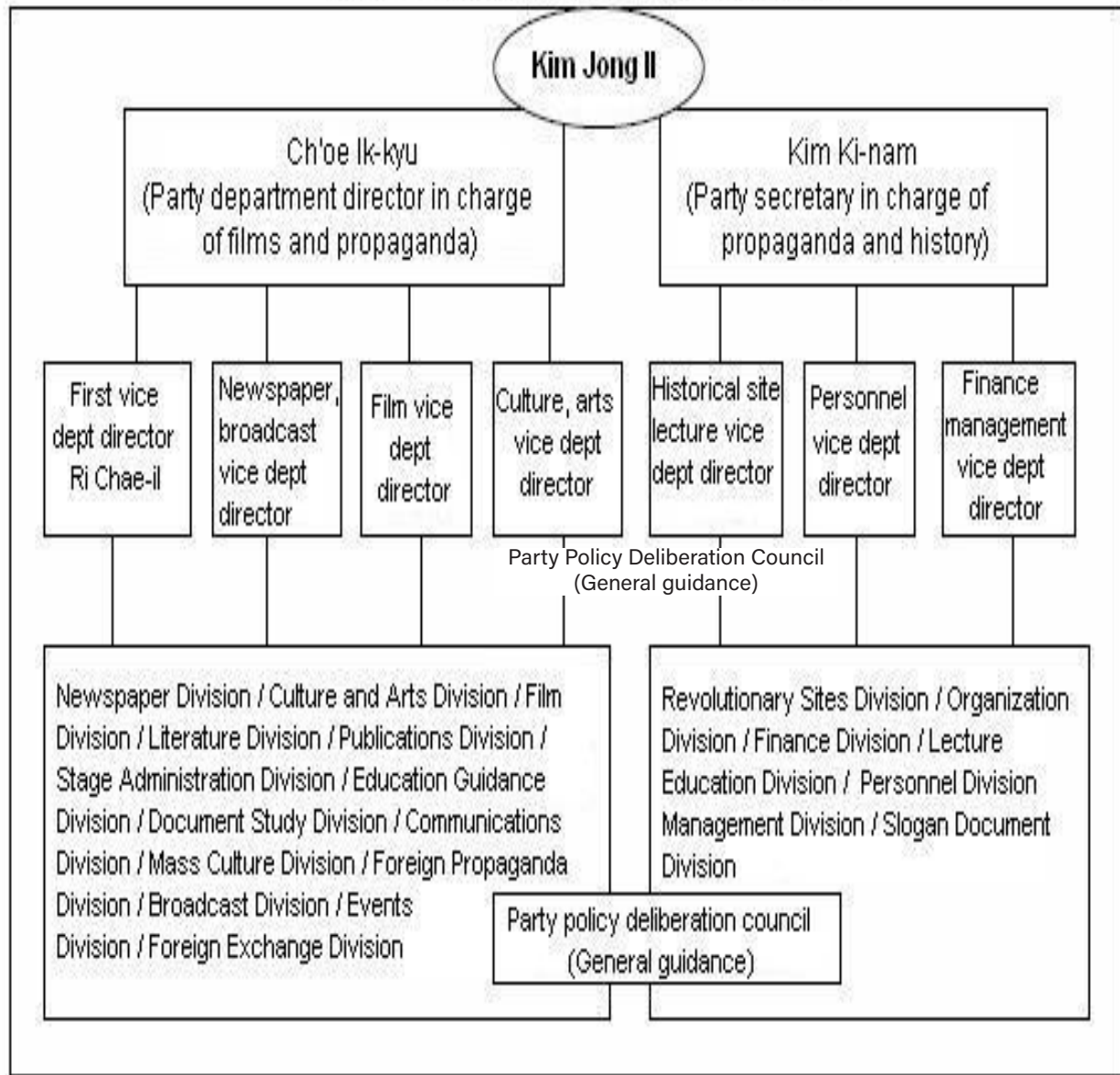
The three charts in the following pages emphasize different aspects of the PAD's structure. Image 1 gives an organizational view on how the PAD integrates with other KWP and governmental organizations. Image 2 gives an alternate view of the PAD's internal organization, while image 3 gives an overview of broadcasting.³²

<Image 1> Basic Organizational System of North Korea's Propaganda and Agitation

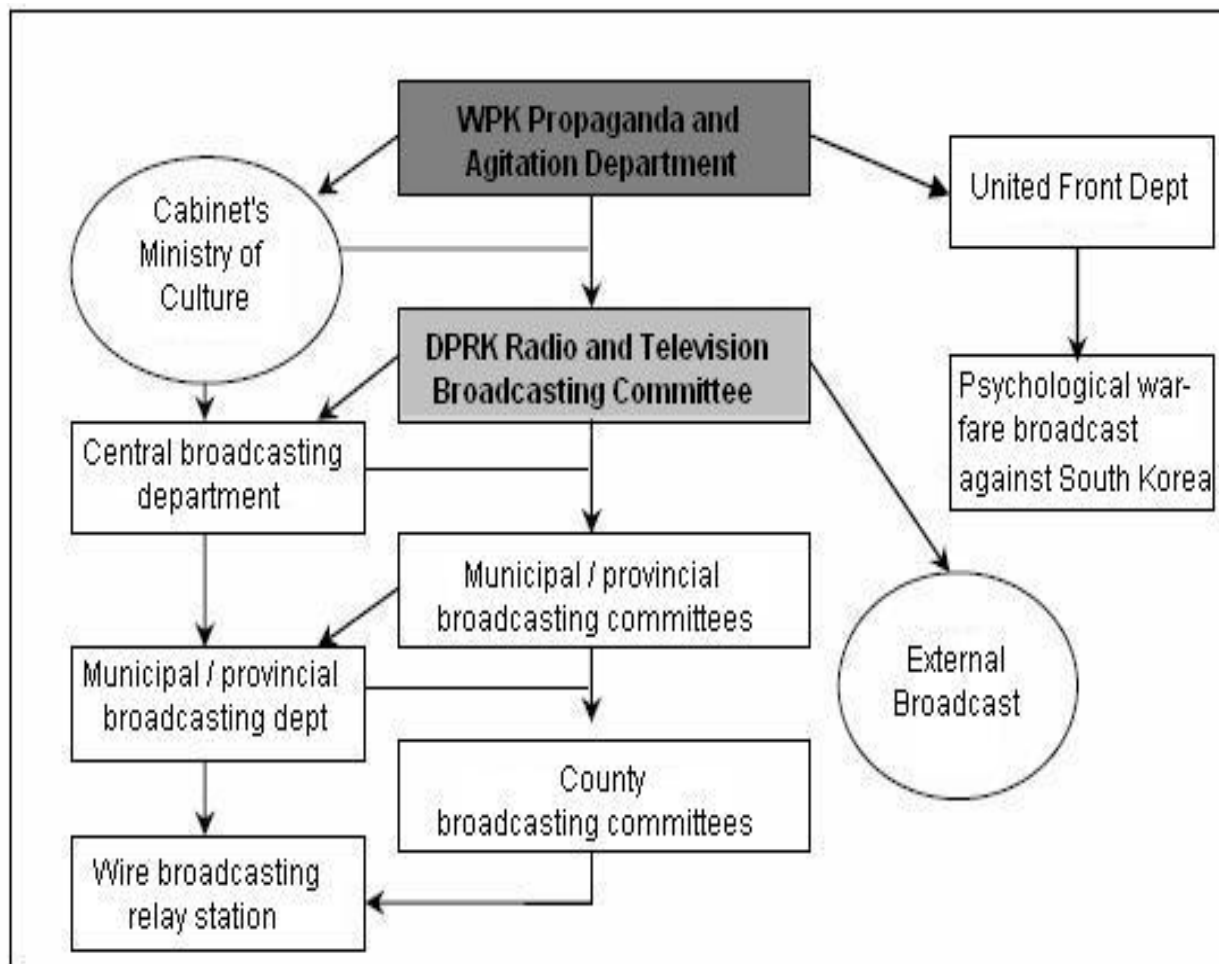


32 Kim, *Overview of North Korean Propaganda System and Key Players*. In Image 1, note that the National Defense Commission (NDC) has now been effectively replaced by the State Affairs Commission (SAC) as the regime's highest decision-making body. For Image 2, the names of specific individuals have changed since this chart was first published.

<Image 2> Detailed Organizational Structure of the WPK's Propaganda and Agitation Department



PROPAGANDA AND AGITATION DEPARTMENT



The PAD maintains representatives at every level of the party, government, and military. Consequently, the number of propaganda and agitation personnel is much larger compared to other Party departments.³³ North Koreans first encounter a PAD representative and their messages at school at the age of seven, and they encounter such PAD representatives for the rest of their lives unless they are in prison.³⁴ Each provincial, city, and county Party committee has a propaganda department, which is under the command of the central Party PAD. These committees oversee systemic propaganda and ideological education for school students and local residents.³⁵

33 An et al., *North Korea Ten Years Later*, 222.

34 Adam Whitnall, "North Korean Defector Says She Believed Kim Jong-Il Was A God Who Could Read Her Mind," *The Independent*, April 10, 2014. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/north-korean-defector-says-she-believed-kim-jongil-was-a-god-who-could-read-her-mind-9251983.html>. (For testimony on how effective this inculcation process is, see video at citation.)

35 Republic of Korea Ministry of Unification, "Propaganda and Agitation Department."

Furthermore, the PAD assigns a political agitation officer at every level of every agency in the North Korean political, government, military, internal security, economic, and social sectors.³⁶ By doing so, the PAD ensures that every corner of North Korean society hears PAD themes and messages. The PAD does so by being embedded in the Party committee that is located in every administrative organization. These Party committees have an organization section, a propaganda and agitation section, and a cadre section. At every level, the Party committee conducts lectures and lesson studies on the glorified history of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il.³⁷ The lowest political level of propaganda and agitation is carried out by the propaganda and agitation section at the workplace. These sections carry out propaganda and agitation activities as directed by the PAD.³⁸ Mass agitation activities are conducted through poetry, dialogue poetry, and jokes, or music and dance.³⁹

The fifth article of the TPMI's fourth principle states that every person must study Kim Il-sung's revolutionary thought through study sessions, lectures, and classes for two hours. They must obey study rules to the point of it becoming a habit. To this end, the PAD creates and distributes lecture materials, study themes, and study plans to each Party committee nationwide. These materials are employed in brainwashing, ideology lessons, and class indoctrination. There are self-critique sessions, tests, and inspection of individual notes for all Party members and citizens. Propagandists conduct indoctrination sessions based on PAD plans and textbooks across the entire Party apparatus every Saturday.⁴⁰

This includes all KWP propagandists, who must attend self-assessment sessions every other day to instill discipline. Their attendance and obedience to the Supreme Leader's teachings and observance of the TPMI are critical to accomplishing their mission.⁴¹

To ensure every citizen is paying attention to PAD propaganda, Party cadre and ordinary citizens must always have nine sets of notes.⁴²

36 The KWP United Front Department and the KPA General Political Bureau also conduct psychological operations against the Republic of Korea and the international community. Those operations are beyond the scope of this report.

37 An et al., *North Korea Ten Years Later*, 220.

38 Ibid., 243.

39 Ibid.

40 Hyun Seong-il, "Bukhan sahoe-e daehan nodongdang-ui tongjechegye" [KWP's Control System Over North Korean Society], *Bukhan josa yeongu* [North Korean Research Studies] 1.1 (1997): 28.

41 Lim, *Kim Jong Il's Leadership of North Korea*, 69.

42 Hyun, "KWP's Control System Over North Korean Society," 28.

- Kim Il-sung directives notes
- Kim Jong-il directives notes
- Kim Il-sung writings notes
- Kim Jong-il writings notes
- Kim Il-sung moral character studies notes
- Kim Jong-il moral character studies notes
- Focused lecture notes
- Lecture meeting notes
- Saturday lesson notes

There is a paper shortage in North Korea, so some take their notes in a book. Once a quarter, the propaganda and agitation section of the local KWP committee checks individual political study notebooks to evaluate a person's political performance.⁴³ If one's studies fall short of the PAD's planning standards, one can be criticized and punished. Party members and non-Party members alike must study materials on a weekly, monthly, and quarterly schedule based on PAD lesson plans for the first half of the year, then based on another plan for the second half of the year. These are inspected by the Party cell secretary. The study plan must follow the PAD format and instructions. The most burdensome aspect of this study is the question-and-answer sessions, which are especially important on the Supreme Leaders' birthdays every year.. This is the most important event in every organization, and they are conducted like athletic events, where there is a pre-game, halftime, and final phase. All cadre and Party members, as well as North Korean citizens, must perfectly follow the PAD 100-page guide manual to question-and-answer studies.⁴⁴

As is the case with many Party-government relationships under the Kim regime, the PAD relies on a government organization to implement themes, messages, and related actions. For the PAD, this is accomplished primarily by the DPRK Ministry of Culture. The Ministry of Culture is responsible for administrative oversight of such issues as literary education, socialist and traditional arts, circus acrobatics, domestic and foreign tourism, and hosting of international sports events.

43 An et al., *North Korea Ten Years Later*, 242.

44 Ibid.

ROBERT COLLINS

The Ministry of Culture and Propaganda, the predecessor of the current Ministry of Culture, was established in 1948 with the founding of the DPRK. It was merged into the Ministry of Education and Culture in August 1957 before being separated once again as an independent entity in December 1960. In 1998, as a result of changes to the DPRK Constitution, it was finally designated as the Ministry of Culture under the Cabinet, the executive branch of the North Korean government.⁴⁵

The Ministry of Culture provides administrative oversight for the entities below. Each organization takes its mission tasking and guidance from the KWP PAD.⁴⁶

- Education Bureau
- Mass Culture Bureau
- Theater and Halls Management Guidance Bureau
- External Relations Bureau
- Theatrical Arts Guidance Bureau
- Cultural Preservation Guidance Bureau
- Cultural Remains and Relics Preservation Management Bureau
- Arts Guidance Bureau
- Film General Bureau
- State Inspection Committee for Theatrical Works
- Sea of Blood Opera Troupe
- National Cultural Arts Troupe
- National Symphony Orchestra

45 Park Young-ja et al., *Kim Jong-un sidae Bukhan-ui gukga gigoo-wa gukga-seong* [North Korea's State Apparatus in the Kim Jong-un Era] (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, 2018), 212.

46 Ibid., 212–13.

Below is a partial list of past leaders of the Ministry of Culture.⁴⁷

- Heo Jung-sook (허정숙): September 1948 –
- Han Sol-ya (한설야): September 1957 –
- Pak Ung-geol (박웅걸): October 1962 –
- Pak Yong-sin (박영신): December 1967 –
- Kang Nung-su (강능수): September 1999 – September 2003
- Choi Ik-kyu (최익규): September 2003 – December 2005
- Kim Jin-sung (김진성): December 2005 – June 2006
- Kang Nung-su (강능수): June 2006 – January 2010
- An Dong-chun (안동춘): January 2010 – May 2012
- Hong Kwang-sun (홍광순): May 2012 – September 2013
- Pak Chun-nam (박춘남): September 2013 – December 2019
- Chon Myong-sik (전명식): December 2019 – January 2021
- Seung Chung-kyu (승정규): January 2021 – present

47 “North Korea’s 1st–4th Cabinets” [in Korean], *NK Chosun*, October 30, 2013, accessed March 14, 2022. http://nk.chosun.com/bbs/list.html?table=bbs_23&idxno=3853&page=4&total=247; the following online biographies provided by the Republic of Korea’s Ministry of Unification, all accessed March 14, 2022: “Kang Neung-su,” <https://nkinfo.unikorea.go.kr/nkp/theme/viewPeople.do?nkpmno=4892>, “Choi Ik-kyu,” <https://nkinfo.unikorea.go.kr/nkp/theme/viewPeople.do?nkpmno=1216>, “An Dong-chun,” <https://nkinfo.unikorea.go.kr/nkp/theme/viewPeople.do?nkpmno=16002>, “Hong Kwang-sun,” <https://nkinfo.unikorea.go.kr/nkp/theme/viewPeople.do?nkpmno=24516>, “Pak Chun-nam,” <https://nkinfo.unikorea.go.kr/nkp/theme/viewPeople.do?nkpmno=8204>; “Seung Chung-kyu Newly Appointed as Minister of Culture” [in Korean], *News1*, January 18, 2021. <https://www.news1.kr/photos/view/?4578584&190>.

Section 3: Historical Background

For nearly eighty years, North Korean propaganda and agitation has evolved in line with the country's domestic political situation and developments in its external relations. Since the end of the Japanese occupation of the Korean Peninsula in August 1945, there have been five distinct periods in North Korean propaganda and agitation. First, from 1945 to 1948, propaganda and agitation focused on the Soviet Union's communist ideology, praise for Joseph Stalin and the Soviet Union as liberating guides, and establishment of the communist state. In the second phase from 1948 to 1973, it focused on praising Kim Il-sung. In the third phase from 1973 to 1994, Kim Jong-il restructured the KWP and the process of propaganda and agitation. In the fourth phase from 1994 to 2011, propaganda and agitation focused on praising Kim Jong-il. In the fifth and current phase from 2011 to the present day, the emphasis has been on praising Kim Jong-un.⁴⁸

The Soviet Roots of the PAD

When North Korea's propaganda and agitation began in 1945, inculcating Marxist-Leninist ideology was a key objective of the revolution. Kim Il-sung instructed that Party propaganda and agitation must educate Party members on the theoretical foundations of Marxism-Leninism. Through these efforts, Party policy could be firmly consolidated. Kim Il-sung once stated that "agitation work is a project that boosts the momentum of the masses and directly activates them to carry out their revolutionary tasks."⁴⁹

Early on, the KWP Central Committee established that propaganda tasks included teaching Party members Marxist-Leninist ideology and arming them with knowledge of Party policy.⁵⁰ Kim Il-sung stated in a speech to propaganda and agitation personnel that the fate of the revolution depended on successfully mobilizing the masses, which itself depended on propaganda and agitation. He insisted that propaganda and agitation efforts be conducted meticulously, with the utmost attention to every detail.⁵¹

48 Jeong, "A Study of North Korea's Internal Propaganda and Agitation," 35.

49 *Works of Kim Il-sung*, "About Improving and Strengthening Party Organizational Tasks and Ideological Tasks" (Pyongyang: KWP Publishing Agency, 1968), 304; as cited in *Ibid.*, 26.

50 The Kim regime began replacing Marxist-Leninist ideology with *Juche* ideology in the 1950s.

51 Jeong, "A Study of North Korea's Internal Propaganda and Agitation," 26.

PROPAGANDA AND AGITATION DEPARTMENT

Before Kim Il-sung emerged on the political scene, Pak Hon-yong led communist efforts in the southern half of the peninsula. O Ki-sop and Kim Yong-bom were Pak's counterparts in the north, but they were initially in jail. Kim Il-sung and his fellow Manchuria-based anti-Japan partisans arrived in Wonsan on September 19, 1945, and Kim Il-sung was presented as a leader in North Korea by the Soviet military to Pyongyang residents at a rally on October 14, 1945. In December 1945, the Soviet Koreans accompanied the Soviet Union's 25th Army into North Korea as enlisted intelligence agents. This faction included Ho Ka-i, who led the Propaganda Department of the Party. Because the Manchurian group was considered politically inexperienced, the Soviet Koreans dominated the new North Korean Communist Party. The so-called Yan'an Koreans from China also arrived in December.⁵²

At the third meeting of the North Korean Communist Party on December 17, 1945, Kim Yong-bom, of the domestic faction, was designated the Party's Second Secretary. Kim Il-sung was designated the Responsible Secretary and thus maintained control over the Organization Department and the Propaganda Department. O Ki-sop became the Organization Department Director, while Yoon Sang-nam became the Propaganda Department Director. Other political leaders during this time were the 56-year old academic Kim Du-bong, who served as the KWP's first leader, and 40-year-old Mu Chong, who had been an artillery regiment commander in Communist China's Eighth Route Army. Mu Chong became the Cadre Department Director.⁵³

In December 1945, the Soviet Union, the United States, and the United Kingdom came to an agreement in Moscow to establish the U.S.-Soviet Joint Commission. After this, North Korea was politically dominated by the Yan'an and Soviet factions through control of the North Korean Communist Party. However, this group did not have sufficiently trained personnel to carry out propaganda and agitation on a national scale. Thus, they had to depend on Soviet personnel for these tasks.⁵⁴

In June 1946, the Organization Department of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union's (CPSU) Central Committee decided to establish people's schools in North Korea. The schools were ostensibly set up in the name of the North Korean Provisional People's Committee (NKPPC), which was based in Pyongyang. The first classes began on July 1, 1946. Each iteration of classes had 100 students for a three-month course. Teachers were hired from Korean-speaking and politically active North Korea Communist Party members. The Party Central Committee selected individuals to serve as monitors. NKPPC representatives from each province recommended student candidates, and the Soviets controlled the

52 Jeong, "A Study of North Korea's Internal Propaganda and Agitation," 28–29.

53 Ibid., 29.

54 Ibid. A list of prominent Soviet Koreans can be accessed through the Library of Congress website at <https://www.loc.gov/item/2005551562/>.

selection of the students. The contents of the instruction were approved by Soviet General Nikolai Bulganin of the CPSU Central Committee, and the Soviet 25th Army's Political Department provided the curriculum.⁵⁵

Early on, official propaganda and agitation organizations operated through cultural, art, publishing, broadcasting, and radio platforms located at city, county, and sub-district levels. These were led by propaganda and agitation guidance officers who operated under the direction of Kim Myong-kuk, who was the propaganda secretary of the NKPPC in April 1946. In January 1948, the NKPPC's propaganda and agitation functions were elevated to the bureau level and Ho Chong-suk replaced Kim Myong-kuk. Ho oversaw 120 core personnel, who in turn directed 2,374 propagandists throughout North Korea.⁵⁶

Soviets taught North Korea's propagandists the "tools of the trade" in propaganda and agitation. The Soviets and the North Koreans combined to form an agitation element, as well as the Korea-Soviet Culture Association (KSCA). The former conducted agitation operations, while the KSCA engaged in propaganda operations. These organizations leveraged the employment of 130,000 personnel from the KWP, the Democratic Youth League, the Agricultural-Forestry League, and the Workers' League to support agitation operations throughout the country during reform movements, elections, and meetings of the U.S.-Soviet Joint Commission.

For instance, agitators went to every sub-county (*myeon*) and village people's committee elections to agitate for specific candidates.⁵⁷ At the village level, there were 7,763 agitation teams with 74,075 agitators. They received lectures for two days and were trained on agitation tasks to support those elections. After training, these agitators produced and distributed slogans, flyers, placards, lectures, and election materials.⁵⁸

The KSCA was responsible for propaganda. When it was founded in November 1945, the leadership could not find a facility large enough to occupy. Under Director Ri Gi-young, the KSCA only carried out basic tasks. In May 1947, KSCA had five bureaus: organization, propaganda and agitation, translation, publishing, and general affairs. It also supervised thirty-four regional offices (six provinces and twenty-eight cities), which had 25,000 personnel overall. The KSCA also sent personnel in charge of propaganda duties to the Soviet Union for training and education in 1947. After their return, they gave a total of 77,000 speeches on sixty-six occasions under the guidance of the Party central committee of the KSCA. This was supervised by the Soviet 25th Army's deputy commander, P.F. Lagutin.⁵⁹

55 Jeong, "A Study of North Korea's Internal Propaganda and Agitation," 30.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid., 31.

59 Ibid.

In July 1948, the KSCA was reorganized into a centrally managed bureau with 107 regional offices (six provinces, twelve cities, and eighty-nine counties). These controlled 4,690 factories and 13,337 urban and rural organizations. The number of personnel under its purview expanded to 756,352. These personnel carried out tasks such as lecturing, translation, publication of ten-day reports and monthly issues of *Chosun Culture*, releasing Soviet movies, holding exhibitions on the history of the CPSU, and teaching a three-week Russian language course along with other Soviet subjects.⁶⁰

The Soviet 25th Army was also involved in strengthening cultural ties between the Soviet Union and North Korea. Section 7 of the Soviet Union's 25th Army helped manage funds for Pyongyang and Chongjin Cultural Halls for the Soviet Foreign Culture Liaison Association (VOKS), supplied Soviet cultural items, dispatched theater groups, and provided publication papers for appropriate causes. The connection between VOKS and Section 7 was through the latter's chief, Lieutenant Colonel Bogdavov, who oversaw two speechwriters, Gornilov and Belagov. Soviet-Koreans Kim Droid, Pak Gyerasim, Pak Chang-sop, and Pak Hye-son served as translators.⁶¹

The PAD under Kim Jong-il and Kim Jong-un

Under Kim Jong-il's leadership, the KWP PAD became more integral to maintaining and strengthening the regime's political control. After Kim Jong-il graduated from Kim Il-sung University in 1964, he began his career as a section chief in the OGD and in the PAD. As early as 1967, Kim Jong-il began to tighten the reins of ideological control within the KWP through the PAD by making films that idolized Kim Il-sung.⁶²

In 1967, Kim Jong-il was promoted to chief of the PAD Cultural Arts Section and the PAD Publication and Press Section. In 1969, Kim Jong-il was promoted to Vice-Director of the PAD under Kim Kuk-tae.⁶³ At the seventh plenary meeting of the Fifth KWP Central Committee in September 1973, Kim Jong-il was elected as the KWP's "Secretary in charge of Organization and Propaganda."⁶⁴

60 Jeong, "A Study of North Korea's Internal Propaganda and Agitation," 31.

61 Jeong, "A Study of North Korea's Internal Propaganda and Agitation," 32. The Russian names in this paragraph have been transliterated from Korean into English.

62 "The Life of Kim Jong-il, North Korea's Absolute Ruler for Thirty-Seven Years" [in Korean], *The Kyunghyang Shinmun*, December 19, 2011. <https://www.khan.co.kr/politics/politics-general/article/201112191230231>.

63 Lim, *Kim Jong Il's Leadership of North Korea*, 42–43.

64 Unification Education Institute, *2021 Bukhan e-hae* [Understanding North Korea: 2021] (Seoul: Ministry of Unification, 2021), 29.

Kim Jong-il then strengthened the embedded KWP committees in all other institutions. Once the PAD had control of the Ministry of Culture, ideology took precedence over all else. There was no room for originality in the media and arts organizations that operated under the ministry.⁶⁵ Under Kim Jong-il's direction, the OGD and the PAD were run by a first vice-director, as were the KWP United Front Department (UFD) and the State Security Department.⁶⁶

In the 1970s, all culture and arts in North Korea became propaganda tools to promote *Juche* ideology.⁶⁷ During this time, the PAD was closely linked with the OGD. Kim Jong-il solidified his legitimacy as Kim Il-sung's successor by directly overseeing propaganda efforts aimed at the North Korean population. Kim Jong-il oversaw the creation of literary and artistic works to strengthen the cult of personality around Kim Il-sung and help accomplish the Party's policies.⁶⁸ During his time in the PAD, Kim Jong-il worked hard at developing the MIS. He also renovated sites where Kim Il-sung fought the Japanese, such as Pochonbo and Popyeong, as well as cabin sites at Mount Paektu.⁶⁹

Under Kim Jong-un, the PAD has remained a critical element of the regime. It is now responsible for glorifying Kim Jong-un's accomplishments and promoting North Korea's ever-expanding ballistic missile and nuclear capabilities. Press reports from late 2021 indicate that the KWP has created a new "Culture and Arts Department" in an apparent effort to foster the population's loyalty to Kim Jong-un through music and literature.⁷⁰

65 Jang Jin-sung, *Suryong yeongija Kim Jong-un* [Kim Jong-un: the *Suryong* Actor] (Seoul: Bibong Publishing, 2017), 40.

66 The State Security Department is now known as the Ministry of State Security.

67 Unification Education Institute, *Understanding North Korea: 2021*, 272.

68 Republic of Korea Ministry of Unification, "Propaganda and Agitation Department."

69 Lim, *Kim Jong Il's Leadership of North Korea*, 42–43.

70 Bae Young-kyung, "North Korea, which has Emphasized Strengthening Ideological Efforts, Has Newly Created a 'Culture and Arts Department' in the KWP" [in Korean], *Yonhap News*, November 25, 2021. <https://www.yna.co.kr/view/AKR20211125065800504>.

Section 4: PAD Themes & Messages

The *Korean Central News Agency (KCNA)* has referred to the ideological policy of self-reliance (*Juche*) as a “treasured sword” that North Korea depends on for its survival. On a previous occasion, it also stated that “The whole history of the Korean revolution is a history of self-reliance.”⁷¹ The Kim regime insisted that its policy of *Juche* (self-reliance) was also the way to protect the nation-state from the coronavirus pandemic.⁷²

To this end, propaganda and agitation in North Korea are designed to indoctrinate and enforce ideological concepts determined by the Supreme Leader and the KWP. Themes stressed by the regime range from the glorification of the Supreme Leader to the bizarre claim that North Korean children are happy if they have nuclear weapons.⁷³ The Kim regime’s intent is to ensure that all themes and messages support and advance the Supreme Leader’s and the KWP’s policies.

These functions are carried out around the clock by the KWP PAD. The concepts disseminated by the PAD are designed to shape all of North Korean society and each of its citizens to demonstrate loyalty to the Supreme Leader, uphold nationalistic values, and defend the country’s independence from foreign influence. The most critical task the PAD performs is adhering to the Monolithic Guidance System and strengthening the Supreme Leader’s exclusive and absolute authority through ideological education of the entire population and the military. The intent is to “*Juche-ize*” every North Korean individual, thereby maximizing the regime’s control.⁷⁴

The two most important documents supporting these efforts are the KWP Charter and the TPMP. The least relevant document is the DPRK Constitution, which is not taught, propagandized, or explained at any level of national political activity outside the Supreme People’s Assembly (SPA).⁷⁵ While the Constitution addresses human rights, the primary reason that human rights perform no role in North Korean society is that the Kim regime perceives these rights as a direct threat to its ideological foundations.

71 “N.Korea calls self-reliance ‘treasure sword’ for survival and prosperity,” *Yonhap News*, May 19, 2020. <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20190507009700325>.

72 Choi Si-young, “N. Korea reiterates ‘self-help’ in antivirus effort,” *Korea Herald*, November 23, 2020. <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20201123000901>.

73 Jeon Joon-gang, “North Korea’s propaganda video claims children are happy when they have nuclear weapons” [in Korean], *Insight*, February 14, 2016. <http://insight.co.kr/newsRead.php?ArtNo=50328>.

74 An et al., *North Korea Ten Years Later*, 218.

75 Jeon, *Revised North Korean Society and Culture*, 32.

The primary themes promoted by the PAD are:

- Kim family regime's Monolithic Guidance System
- Class indoctrination
- Heroism of the brain trust
- Military-first politics
- Revolutionary traditions
- Civil-military relations
- Unity
- Anti-American sentiment
- Anti-South Korean sentiment
- Nationalism
- Socialism

To disseminate these themes, the PAD controls all media, arts, information formats, and propaganda strategy as tools of political strategy.⁷⁶ The Kim regime has moved from its early days of promoting communism and Marxism-Leninism to *Juche* and Monolithic Ideology. *Juche* ideology (frequently referred to as Kim Il-sung-ism) and the TPMI are the predominant ideological lines of the Kim regime and the backbone of Kim family's rule. While *Juche* focuses on accomplishing national goals and objectives through political independence, economic self-sustenance, and self-reliance in national defense, the TPMI focuses on individual loyalty to the Supreme Leader and the KWP.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ An et al., *North Korea Ten Years Later*, 218.

⁷⁷ See link at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tower_of_Juche_Idea,_Pyongyang,_North_Korea_\(2909105165\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tower_of_Juche_Idea,_Pyongyang,_North_Korea_(2909105165).jpg).



Kim Il-sung initially presented the *Juche* concept in a speech to KWP propagandists and agitators on December 28, 1955.⁷⁸ The TPMI were initially developed in the late 1960s by Kim Il-sung's brother, Kim Yong-ju, and were completed in the early 1970s under Kim Jong-il. Consequently, the regime's propaganda and agitation efforts focus on promoting themes and messages that support these ideologies. The PAD concentrates on indoctrinating every North Korean citizen on these ideologies through weekly study sessions, lectures, and bi-weekly self-critique sessions.

In 1974, Kim Jong-il made a memorable speech pushing for the “Kim Il-sung-ization of the whole (North Korean) society.” In the speech, he defined Kim Il-sung-ism as the guiding principle for the “idea, theory, and method of *Juche*.”⁷⁹ At an individual level, *Juche* calls for a struggle against external forces, as well as internal habits of thought that remain from older, traditional cultural influences. This produces strong psychological pressure on each individual citizen. The intent of *Juche* has always been to produce the ultimate socialist citizen, but the emphasis has often been on “Kim Il-sung-ization of the North Korean citizenry.” An ideological by-product of these two ideological lines is the concept of *Suryong-juui* (Supreme Leader-ism), which is designed to justify the Monolithic Ideology System and the Monolithic Guidance System.

78 “On Eliminating Dogmatism and Formalism And Establishing *Juche* In Ideological Work,” in *Kim Il-sung: Selected Works*, vol. 1 (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1971), 582–606.

79 Lim, *Kim Jong Il's Leadership of North Korea*, 59.

The dominant theme of *KCNA*, as well as the rest of the North Korean media, is developing and perpetuating the personality cult of Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il, and Kim Jong-un through glorification of their personality, leadership, and wisdom. Other prevalent themes include hostile policy towards the United States and the Republic of Korea, information warfare against enemies both foreign and domestic, and the superiority of socialism. To support these themes, the PAD promotes propaganda slogans across the country. A sample of slogans from recent years is listed below.⁸⁰

- *Let us glorify this year, which marks the 110th anniversary of the birth of our Great Leader and the 80th anniversary of the birth of our Great General, as a year of great achievements for the revolution, a year of new victories!* (2022)
- *Let us all exert our efforts to execute the decisions of the Fourth Plenary Meeting of the Eighth Central Committee of the KWP!* (2022)
- *Let us generate more electricity, necessary for economic development and improving the people's living standards!* (2021)
- *We do whatever the Party decides!* (2020)
- *Great Comrade Kim Jong-un, we will be loyal to you until the end!* (2020)
- *Let us build a powerful socialist nation on this land under our Dear Supreme Leader Comrade Kim Jong-un!* (2020)
- *Let us emulate the revolutionary spirit of self-reliance demonstrated by our anti-Japanese forerunners!* (2020)
- *Let us forge a new path for socialist construction, raising high the banner of self-reliance!* (2019)
- *The United States is within our firing range!* (2017)

80 Sources include *Naenara*, a North Korean state-run website, and Colin Zwirko, "Let's break through the barriers! North Korea's new political slogans for 2020," *NK News*, January 6, 2020. <https://www.nknews.org/2020/01/lets-break-through-the-barriers-north-koreas-new-political-slogans-for-2020/>. Additional examples can be found at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_North_Korean_propaganda_slogans.



Above is a *KCNA* picture of a rally at Kim Il-sung Square in downtown Pyongyang during the Kim Jong-un era. The banner in the foreground states “Long live the Great Kim Il-sung-Kim Jong-il-ism!” The longer banner behind the first banner states “Let us overcome all obstacles that hinder our progress with a frontal assault!” The banner in the background, next to the elevated memorial placard, reads “Revolutionary Spirit of Mount Paektu.”⁸¹

Despite the regime’s stringent restrictions on external news, North Koreans learn of major world events through unauthorized telephone traffic and word-of-mouth. News of the death of Iranian Major General Qasem Suleimani in January 2020 is such a case. North Korean sources reacted to this by conveying the same popular reaction to Muammar Gaddafi’s death in 2011. Evidently fearing public reaction, the PAD organized propaganda events which proclaimed that “We are different from Libya. We will never surrender to the U.S. without first using nuclear and biochemical weapons.”⁸²

81 Photograph from *Korean Central News Agency* as displayed by *NK News*, accessed July 8, 2021. <https://www.nknews.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/jan5-kctv-pyongyang-mass-rally-propaganda-banners-slogans-8.png>.

82 Jieun Kim, “Official (and Unofficial) News of Soleimani Killing Spreads in North Korea’s Capital,” *Radio Free Asia*, January 9, 2020. <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/korea/nk-soleimani-news-pyongyang-01092020115346.html>.

This is consistent with the strong anti-United States themes that dominate North Korea's national security propaganda. North Korea's art is frequently used for this purpose. Many of these artistic displays are on display at the Sinchon Museum of American War Atrocities, located south of Pyongyang. Hatred for "imperialists"—a term most often used to refer to the United States—includes blame for current economic conditions and hostility toward existential security threats. As noted in Section 7, this hatred is taught from a very early age. North Koreans experience political agitation even in pre-school. A common theme is North Koreans "becoming guns and bombs to protect the Supreme Leader." The Kim regime also slanders South Korea at almost every opportunity as a "colony" of the United States, a terrible society where individuals suffer miserable lives due to the capitalist system. While North Korea claims that its population is one of racial purity, South Korea's population is a place of racial "contamination."⁸³

At the KWP's Eighth Party Congress in January 2021, Kim Jong-un adopted a new ruling ideology referred to as "Kim Il-sung-Kim Jong-il-ism." This was reportedly done at the expense of *Juche* and *Songun* politics.⁸⁴ This news should be regarded with some skepticism. While any change in ideological focus will take some time to take effect, this would be an obvious move to cement Kim Jong-un's power.

83 Brian Myers, *The Cleanest Race* (New York, Melville House, 2011), 37.

84 Kang Seung-woo, "New party rules show North Korean leader breaking away from predecessors," *The Korea Times*, June 3, 2021. https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2021/06/103_309879.html.

Section 5: Media and the Arts

The North Korean media promotes and defends Party policy, promulgates the instructions of the Supreme Leaders, and publicizes the superiority of the North Korean system to the outside world.⁸⁵ It is also responsible for identifying events and processes that glorify Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il, and Kim Jong-un, and educating the masses through ideological education.⁸⁶ Media outlets continually urge the North Korean public to focus on socialist ideology.⁸⁷

The North Korean regime uses the arts as a means of propaganda and agitation. This is due in no small part to Kim Jong-il's legacy.⁸⁸ Kim wrote several works on the North Korean arts, including cinema, opera, theater, dance, literature, and architecture.⁸⁹ Rather than appreciation for performance, Kim Jong-il praised North Korean dance, art, music, and poetry for their propaganda and agitation value. He insisted that they amplify military-first themes and called it “our-style art.”⁹⁰

The PAD exercises control over media and the arts in North Korea. Accordingly, the Cabinet's Cultural Performance and Publication Guidance Bureau, as well as major media outlets and cultural institutions—such as the Chosun Central Broadcasting Commission, *Korea Central News Agency*, *Rodong Sinmun*, KWP Publishing House, *Minju Chosun* newspaper, Industrial Publishing House, Chosun Art Film Studio, Chosun Archives Film Studio, and Mansudae Arts Studio—are under the direct supervision of the PAD.⁹¹

85 Yonhap News Agency, *North Korea Handbook* (Seoul: M.E. Sharpe Publishing, 2002), 408.

86 Ibid.

87 “North Korea's newspaper urges people to prioritize socialist ideology,” *The Korea Times*, August 31, 2021. https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2021/08/103_314335.html.

88 Kim was extremely interested in the arts. According to one anecdote, Kim Jong-il wanted his high school *alma mater* to make a graduation album, but the high school had no camera. The PAD took care of the issue and ordered the album to be published. See Lim, *Kim Jong Il's Leadership of North Korea*, 29.

89 Ibid., 140.

90 An et al., *North Korea Ten Years Later*, 234.

91 Republic of Korea Ministry of Unification, “Propaganda and Agitation Department.”

Overview of Media and Cultural Institutions

All reporters, actors, and writers in North Korea serve the PAD. They conduct their organizational life within the PAD and are controlled and monitored by KWP political supervisors.⁹² To stimulate their creative will and sense of honor in the direction of worshipping the Kim family leaders and instilling loyalty to the Party, honorary titles are given to those who display exemplary performance, such as labor heroes, people's artists, meritorious artists, people's reporters, meritorious journalists, people's actors, and meritorious actors.⁹³

Those working in the fields of literature and the arts are managed by the General Federation of Korean Literature and Arts Union, which was founded in March 1946 as the North Korean Arts Alliance, led by the novelists Ri Ki-yeong and Han Sol-ya.⁹⁴ The National Literature and Arts Inspection Committee examines all propaganda products for compliance with *Juche* principles. The PAD filters out any creations that are born of individual creativity or self-interest.⁹⁵

According to a list compiled in 2006, there are twenty-one primary publishing companies covering public information, literature, and the arts.⁹⁶

- 국가문학예술작품 심의위원회 (National Cultural Arts Work Inspection Committee) – 250 personnel
- 무력부 문학예술작품 심의위원회 (Ministry of Defense Cultural Arts Work Inspection Committee) – 100 personnel
- 노동신문 (*Rodong Sinmun*) – 2,000 personnel
- 민주조선신문 (*Minju Chosun Sinmun*) – 500 personnel
- 조선중앙방송위원회 (Korea Central Broadcasting Committee) – 3,000 personnel
- 조선중앙통신사 (*Korea Central News Agency*) – 300 personnel
- 조선인민군신문사 (KPA Newspaper Agency) – 1,200 personnel
- 조선인민군출판사 (KPA Publishing Agency) – 700 personnel
- 평양신문사 (Pyongyang Newspaper Agency) – 300 personnel

92 An et al., *North Korea Ten Years Later*, 219.

93 Ibid.

94 “Chosun munhak yesool chongdongmaeng” [General Federation of Korean Literature and Arts Union], *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*, accessed March 14, 2022. <http://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Contents/Item/E0052017>.

95 An et al., *North Korea Ten Years Later*, 219.

96 Ibid., 221.

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- 조선노동당출판사 (KWP Publishing Agency) – 400 personnel
- 김일성 사회주의청년동맹출판사 (Kim Il-sung Socialist Youth League Publishing Agency) – 400 personnel
- 문학예술출판사 (Literature and Arts Publishing Agency) – 350 personnel
- 4.25 문학창작사 (April 25th Literary Creation Studio) – 200 personnel
- 조선작가동맹중앙위원회 (Korea Writers' Union Central Committee) – 500 personnel
- 조선인민군 문학창작사 (KPA Literary Creation Studio) – 700 personnel
- 조선영화문학 창작사 (Korean Literature Film Creation Studio) – 300 personnel
- 4.25 영화문학 창작사 (April 25th Literature Film Creation Studio) – 200 personnel
- 만수대 창작사 (Mansudae Art Studio) – 1,000 personnel
- 백호미술 창작사 (Paekho Art Studio) – 600 personnel
- 인민보안성 창작사 (Ministry of Social Security Creation Studio) – 150 personnel
- 철도성 미술창작사 (Ministry of Railways Art Studio) – 150 personnel

Of note, the KWP Publishing House oversees the writing, editing, and publishing of books related to ideological education, including the writings of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il. The Foreign Language Publishing House publishes foreign books and periodicals for foreign propaganda, and Keumsong Youth Publishing House publishes newspapers, magazines, and books for youth education.⁹⁷ Lastly, each province has its own newspaper publishing company, which works with the Writer's League Central Committee.⁹⁸

The author has identified four additional publishing agencies, bringing the total number to at least twenty-five primary publishing companies:⁹⁹

- 근로출판사 (Labor Publishing Agency)
- 사회과학출판사 (Social Science Publishing Agency)
- 과학백과사전종합출판사 (Comprehensive Science Encyclopedia Publishing Agency)
- 조국통일사 (Fatherland Unification Agency)

97 “Bukhan-ui choolpansa” [North Korea's Publishing Companies], *Naver Encyclopedia*, accessed November 29, 2021. <http://terms.naver.com/entry.nhn?docId=68755&mobile&categoryId=505>.

98 An et al., *North Korea Ten Years Later*, 221.

99 Books printed by these publishing agencies are in the personal collection of HRNK Executive Director Greg Scarlatou.

The following is a list of North Korea's art troupes and movie organizations, also compiled in 2006:¹⁰⁰

- 만수대예술단 (Mansudae Art Troupe) – 400 personnel
- 피바다가극단 (Sea of Blood Opera Art Troupe) – 600 personnel
- 국립민족예술단 (National People's Art Troupe) – 300 personnel
- 국립교향악단 (National Symphony Orchestra) – 300 personnel
- 국립연극단 (National Theater Company) – 200 personnel
- 국립희극단 (National Comedy Company) – 200 personnel
- 평양음악단 (Pyongyang Music Troupe) – 150 personnel
- 평양교예단 (Pyongyang Chorus) – 600 personnel
- 조선인민군교예단 (KPA Chorus) – 650 personnel
- 번역영화제작소 (Translation Film Studio) – 200 personnel
- 조선예술영화촬영소 (Chosun Art Film Studio) – 1,000 personnel
- 4.25 조선인민군촬영소 (April 25th KPA Studio) – 800 personnel
- 조선기록영화촬영소 (Korea Documentary Film Studio) – 1,000 personnel
- 조선인민군기록영화촬영소 (KPA Documentary Film Studio) – 500 personnel
- 인민보안성협주단 (Ministry of Social Security Orchestra) – 600 personnel
- 조선인민군협주단 (KPA Orchestra) – 600 personnel
- 공군 협주단 (Air Force Orchestra) – 300 personnel
- 해군 협주단 (Navy Orchestra) – 300 personnel
- 철도성 협주단 (Railroad Ministry Orchestra) – 400 personnel
- 청년협주단 (Youth Orchestra) – 400 personnel
- 영화 및 방송 예술단 (Movie and Broadcast Art Troupe) – 200 personnel
- 여성 취주악단 (Women's Brass Band) – 450 personnel
- 최고사령부 군악단 (Supreme Command Military Art Troupe) – 300 personnel
- 최고사령부 취주악단 (Supreme Command Brass Band) – 400 personnel
- 조선직업총동맹선전대 (Korea Professional Union Propaganda Troupe) – 350 personnel
- 평양시선전대 (Pyongyang Propaganda Troupe) – 300 personnel

100 An et al. *North Korea Ten Years Later*, 220.

These music groups usually perform in one of the fourteen performance halls in Pyongyang, whose capacities range from 1,500 to 6,000 seats.¹⁰¹ For political study sessions every Saturday, which all North Koreans are required to attend, the KWP organizes film screenings at these performance halls to intensify indoctrination.¹⁰²

Newspapers and Magazines

Although Article 67 of the DPRK Constitution nominally promotes freedom of speech and the press, North Korean reporters are not allowed to choose interviewees, much less their words. They must follow the instructions of the Party, which seeks to portray any situation to suit the Party's interests.¹⁰³ Furthermore, North Korean journalists and reporters experience stricter organizational life, political study sessions, and political lectures than other organizational workers.¹⁰⁴ In 2021, the PAD criticized journalists for failing to “play their proper role” and ordered them to “bolster the skill and Party loyalty.”¹⁰⁵ Thus, it is not surprising that the North Korean press was rated 179th out of 180 countries in press freedom in 2021. In 2020, it was last.¹⁰⁶

Kim Jong-il implored PAD personnel to protect the regime through its activities. In his speech to the Eighth Conference of the Chosun (Korea) Reporters League, Kim Jong-il insisted that “publishing and reporting tasks are primarily the frontline of KWP ideological tasks. I will put my pen to approve revolutionary struggle actions any time.” Kim Jong-il's focus was on Kim Il-sung-izing the whole of society.¹⁰⁷

Kim Jong-il greatly influenced press writers and journalists by providing guidance on writing style. In a book entitled *Guidance for Journalists*, he states that “It is advisable that the newspapers carry articles in which they unfailingly hold the president in high esteem, adore him and praise him as the great revolutionary leader.”¹⁰⁸ Elsewhere, Kim Jong-il also wrote of the need for the media to adhere to revolutionary consciousness and socialist ideology:

101 An et al. *North Korea Ten Years Later*, 221.

102 Ibid., 242.

103 Ibid., 224.

104 Ibid., 225.

105 Jong So-Yong, “North Korea's propaganda and agitation department orders journalists to “take lead” in ideological education,” *Daily NK*, August 13, 2021. <https://www.dailynk.com/english/north-koreas-propaganda-and-agitation-department-orders-journalists-to-take-lead-in-ideological-education/>.

106 Reporters Without Borders, “2021 World Press Freedom Index,” accessed March 14, 2022. <https://rsf.org/en/ranking>.

107 Lee, *North Korean Propaganda and Agitation and the Rodong Sinmun*, 67.

108 Richard Lister, “Life in Pyongyang,” *BBC News*, October 28, 2000. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/995692.stm.

Our Party's idea of giving importance to the pen originated in the anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle. From the early days of his anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle, President Kim gave special importance to the activities of the mass media, and had various revolutionary publications issued during the arduous armed struggle, when no support from elsewhere was available, to waken the guerillas and the rest of the people to revolutionary consciousness and rouse them to the sacred war for the liberation of the country.¹⁰⁹

Our media workers should become, above all, ideological standard-bearers for firmly consolidating the ideological position of socialism...Journalists and other men of the pen should conduct in a systematic and profound way theoretical education for establishing the Juche-oriented revolutionary outlook on the world among Party members and other working people.¹¹⁰

Every journalist in North Korea is a member of the Korean Journalists' Union (조선기자동맹), which is under KWP control. This union was founded in 1946 and membership is mandatory for all journalists.¹¹¹ The editor-in-chief of the *Rodong Sinmun* concurrently serves as the chair of the union.¹¹² Kim Jong-il described the role of the Korean Journalists' Union as follows:

In order to enhance the role of journalists and other men of the pen, it is necessary to improve the work of the Journalists Union. The Journalists Union is not something like a journalists club in a capitalist society, but an ideological education organization that leads journalists and other mass media workers to champion the Party and the leader with pen and microphone, and support them with practical abilities.¹¹³

Every year, the *Rodong Sinmun* and the *Minju Chosun*—the most influential papers in North Korea—run an editorial addressing members of the North Korean media “to become the party's permanent company, loyal supporter, and excellent adviser, and an ardent defender and an unmitigated fulfiller of the party policy, by resolutely defending and preserving the headquarters of the party headed by our leader.”¹¹⁴

109 Kim Jong-il, *Selected Works*, vol. 15 (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 2014), 195.

110 Kim Jong-il, *Selected Works*, vol. 15 (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 2014), 197.

111 John A. Lent, *Newspapers in Asia: Contemporary Trends and Problems* (Hong Kong: Heinemann Asia, 1982), 127.

112 Joo Seong-ha, “Newspapers in North Korea Need Not Worry about Making a Profit” [in Korean], *Nambuk Story* (blog), July 2, 2011. <https://nambukstory.donga.com/Board?bid=123×eed=503&#!lid=302456&bid=123&p=771&m=view>. Joo, a graduate of Kim Il-sung University, is now a journalist for the *Dong-A Ilbo*, one of South Korea's largest daily newspapers.

113 Kim Jong-il, *Selected Works*, vol. 15, 205.

114 Yonhap News Agency, *North Korea Handbook*, 408.

There are three primary daily newspapers in North Korea: the KWP's *Rodong Sinmun* (Worker's Daily), the DPRK government's *Minju Chosun* (Democratic Korea), and the Socialist Labor Youth League's (SLYL) *Cheongnyeon Jeonwi* (Youth Vanguard).¹¹⁵ There are also twelve local newspapers including the *Pyongyang Sinmun*, published by the Pyongyang KWP committee, and one for each province, published by the respective provincial KWP committee.¹¹⁶ These regional newspapers include *Kaesong Sinmun*, *Gangwon Ilbo* (daily), *Hambuk Ilbo*, *Hamnam Ilbo*, *Hwangbuk Ilbo*, *Jagang Ilbo*, *Pyongyangbuk Ilbo*, *Pyongnam Ilbo*, *Ryongyang Ilbo*, and the *Hwangnam Ilbo*.¹¹⁷ Every publication is directly affiliated with specific institutions and Party agencies. The *Rodong Sinmun* serves the KWP, the *Minju Chosun* serves the SPA and the DPRK Cabinet, and the *Youth Vanguard* serves the SLYL. In addition, there are specialized magazines aimed at workers in specific fields of occupation, such as athletics (*Cheyook Sinmun*), education (*Gyoweon Sinmun*), and railways (*Cheoldo Sinmun*).¹¹⁸

The *Rodong Sinmun*, which began publishing on September 1, 1946, is the most authoritative paper in North Korea and sets the standard for other publications.¹¹⁹ This paper is the voice of the Party targeting the North Korean masses.¹²⁰ In every edition, the first and second pages typically cover politics, pages three and four cover socialist construction, and the sixth page covers international issues. The fifth page covers South Korean affairs and is prepared by the 101st Liaison Station, which is subordinate to the KWP UFD.¹²¹ The paper is delivered only to KWP cadre, down to the level of Party cell secretaries.¹²²

The DPRK Cabinet's newspaper is the *Minju Chosun*. This paper focuses on laws and administration matters but also publishes regime propaganda. This newspaper started on June 4, 1946, under the North Korea Provisional People's Committee. In 1948, it became the organizational newspaper for the DPRK Cabinet. The *Minju Chosun* is published with four pages, six days a week.¹²³ It is printed and delivered to local government offices.¹²⁴ The *Youth Vanguard* is distributed to SLYL organizations, and it mostly contains content from *Rodong*

115 The KWP recently changed the name of the Kimilsungist-Kimjongilist Youth League to the SLYL at the SLYL's Tenth Congress on April 21, 2021. See Yi Wonju, "N.K.'s largest youth group drops late founder's name from title after 25 years," *Yonhap News*, April 30, 2021. <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20210430002600325>.

116 Unification Education Institute, *Understanding North Korea: 2021*, 291–92.

117 Yonhap News Agency, *North Korea Handbook*, 415–26.

118 Unification Education Institute, *Understanding North Korea: 2021*, 291–92.

119 *Ibid.*, 293.

120 An et al., *North Korea Ten Years Later*, 226.

121 *Ibid.*, 225. The 101st Liaison Station focuses on propagandizing the North Korean population in terms of respecting the Supreme Leader while also conducting psychological warfare targeting South Korea.

122 Joo, "Newspapers in North Korea Need Not Worry about Making a Profit."

123 Unification Education Institute, *Understanding North Korea: 2021*, 294.

124 Joo, "Newspapers in North Korea Need Not Worry about Making a Profit."

Sinmun, with a focus on issues that pertain to the youth.¹²⁵ As for the regional daily newspapers, the majority of the content is similar to that in the *Rodong Sinmun*, with some space allocated for local news.¹²⁶

Other notable papers include the Ministry of Defense's *Korean People's Army (Chosun Inmingun)*, which is distributed to military units, and the English-language *Pyongyang Times*, which is published every Saturday and is aimed at foreigners and diplomats in Pyongyang.

Each college also has its own newspaper titled with the college name, such as "*Kim Il-sung University*" for Kim Il-sung University.¹²⁷ Lastly, the *Chosun Sinbo*, which is based in Japan, produces various media content for the pro-North Korea *Chongryon* community of ethnic Koreans in Japan.¹²⁸

Radio and Television

The PAD manages all information services in North Korea, including the state's four television stations and approximately 200 radio stations.¹²⁹ It supervises the Central Broadcasting Committee, which oversees broadcast media, including the *Korean Central News Agency*.¹³⁰ The Central Broadcasting Commission of Korea, which is directly under the Ministry of Culture, is under the command and control of the PAD. The PAD oversees the contents and organization of broadcasting and manages and appoints personnel to the broadcasting station and each of the broadcasting committees.¹³¹

On October 14, 1945, Pyongyang Broadcasting Station began operations and was redesignated Korea Central Broadcasting Station in February 1948. It began broadcasting for three hours per day, but broadcasts are now conducted at all hours except between 3 am and 5 am. Sixty percent of broadcasts focus on the socialist system, the leadership of the *Suryong*, and

125 Joo, "Newspapers in North Korea Need Not Worry about Making a Profit."

126 Ibid.

127 Ibid.

128 Oliver Hotham, "NK Signal: State-backed South Korean news agency pitches inter-Korean romance," *NK News*, August 7, 2018. <https://www.nknews.org/2018/08/nk-signal-state-backed-south-korean-news-agency-pitches-inter-korean-romance/>.

129 There were three channels until 2015, when North Korea launched a new channel dedicated to athletics. See Im Eun-Jin, "North Korea launches New Channel Dedicated to Athletics to Become a Sporting Power" [in Korean], *Yonhap News*, August 14, 2015. <https://www.yna.co.kr/view/AKR20150814080800014>.

130 Madden, "KWP Propaganda and Agitation Department."

131 "Daenam bangsong" [Anti-South Korea Broadcasting], *Daum Encyclopedia*, accessed March 14, 2022. <https://100.daum.net/encyclopedia/view/14XXE0073383>.

Juche ideology.¹³² Regular television broadcasting was introduced for the first time in North Korea in September 1953. Formal broadcasts began in 1963 and were able to reach the entire country by the early 1970s. North Korea has developed four primary broadcasting stations: Korea TV Broadcasting Station for Education and Culture, Mansudae TV Broadcasting, Athletic Television, and Central Broadcasting System of the DPRK.¹³³

The Mansudae Television General Bureau translates and broadcasts Chinese and Russian movies for foreigners and Pyongyang residents, as well as athletics and animal movies. The Movie Translation Studio translates famous foreign movies – particularly those from the U.S. and Europe – within one week of release.¹³⁴

The Mansudae Television Bureau edits foreign broadcast programs and is staffed by 100-200 personnel. The Translation Film Studio translates foreign films for the Supreme Leader and friends.¹³⁵ The Korea Central Television Bureau appeals to emotions as it plays 80% music, most of which is about the Supreme Leader.¹³⁶

Training and Education of Artists

North Korea's art education system is extremely strict. Early education schools for talented children include those under the Pyongyang Music College, Daedongmun Kindergarten, Kyongsang Kindergarten, and Changgwang Kindergarten. Additionally, there is an arts college in every province with a kindergarten that specializes in educating the most talented students. Some art students are sent to Russia, China, Austria, and Italy to study abroad.¹³⁷ There are several advanced education institutes at the college level: the Pyongyang Music and Dance College, Pyongyang Theater and Movie College, Pyongyang Art College, Writer's Department of Kim Hyong-jik Teachers College, Acrobatics Academy, and the KPA Art College.¹³⁸

132 "Chosun joongang bangsong" [Korea Central Broadcasting], *Daum Encyclopedia*, accessed May 25, 2021. <https://100.daum.net/encyclopedia/view/b19j2528a>.

133 "TV Broadcasting and Its Development in DPRK," *The People's Korea*, June 28, 2003. https://web.archive.org/web/20150801234645/http://www1.korea-np.co.jp/pk/188th_issue/2003013008.htm. See also Im, "North Korea launches New Channel Dedicated to Athletics to Become a Sporting Power."

134 An et al., *North Korea Ten Years Later*, 224.

135 Ibid., 222–23.

136 Ibid., 226.

137 Ibid., 240.

138 Ibid., 239.

The North Korean education system uses every possible opportunity to propagandize its students through the arts in the classroom. According to a North Korean escapee, 60 percent of the classes at a North Korean art college are concerned with politics, mostly related to the leadership cult.¹³⁹ Art colleges, as do other colleges, give admission priority to those who have served ten years in the military.¹⁴⁰ Upon graduation, the PAD cadre section assigns each artist to their workplace. Artists receive an official rating of one to six, one being the highest rating. After artists graduate from art college, if their political studies are unsatisfactory, they receive no rating at all. If their political studies are judged as good, they start at a rating of six. As artists advance through their careers, their ratings can improve.¹⁴¹

Literature

The Kim regime controls all writers through the Chosun Writers' League (CWL). Until the 1950s, North Korean writers wrote in the Soviet style. However, after Kim Il-sung's August 1956 purge of his political enemies, literature began to focus on praising the KWP and its policies. From then on, Kim Il-sung directed all writers to belong to the CWL Central Committee, located in Munheung-dong, Pyongyang. Every province and city has its own CWL chapter. Writers are not permitted to write on their own. They must produce political literature based on instructions from the CWL. Influential writers are not determined by the degree of public interest. Instead, they are recognized by the KWP based on the Supreme Leader's interests. Under Kim Il-sung, there was a focus on novelists, but poets gained recognition under Kim Jong-il.¹⁴²

Between the Japanese colonial period and the era of *Songun* politics under Kim Jong-il, the themes and content of North Korean literature reflected major contemporary political issues. After liberation from Imperial Japan and during the Korean War, North Korean literature focused on victory by North Korean forces. After the Korean War, it focused on reconstruction and then on *Chollima* economics.¹⁴³ This was followed by a focus on *Juche* ideology, the Monolithic Ideology System, and *Songun* politics.¹⁴⁴

139 Jae-Cheon Lim, *Leader Symbols and Personality Cult in North Korea: the Leader State* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 10.

140 An et al., *North Korea Ten Years Later*, 240.

141 Ibid., 240–41.

142 An et al., *North Korea Ten Years Later*, 230–31.

143 The *Chollima* campaign was a large-scale mobilization campaign conducted under Kim Il-sung. In Korean folk tradition, *Chollima* is a winged horse that flies a thousand leagues, in other words the Korean version of a *Pegasus*. Under Kim Jong-un, North Korean propaganda initiated a *Mallima* campaign, named after a winged horse that flies ten thousand leagues, instead of just a thousand.

144 An et al. *North Korea Ten Years Later*, 227.

North Korean literature highlights the Supreme Leader through four aspects: shaping the individual, shaping the image of the Supreme Leader, shaping the masses, and shaping the enemy, as explained in detail below:¹⁴⁵

- Shaping the individual: This focuses on individual loyalty to Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il, and the KWP. Only human beings typified by the personal worship of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il and their loyalty to the Party can be selected as protagonists. Realistic themes, such as romantic conflicts, corruption, pessimism, sadness, and weakness are counter-revolutionary and are unacceptable in literature.
- Shaping the image of the Supreme Leader: This focuses on glorifying Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il. To maximally glorify the Kim family regime's leaders, North Korean media distorts reality and beautifies each Supreme Leader. All vocabulary is specifically chosen to shape each North Korean's view of the Supreme Leader, employing terms such as "great sun," "dear," "genius," "respected general," and "great." Common, colloquial words are never used when referring to the Supreme Leader. Literary works show that "every North Korean can live a happier through respecting the Supreme Leader."
- Shaping the masses: This is aimed at maximizing public support for the Supreme Leader. All literature is aimed at shaping each North Korean into a solid revolutionary by glorifying the Supreme Leader. North Korea's *Juche* literature only emphasizes strength and positivity. It never even hints at negativity.
- Shaping the enemy: This focuses on defeating the enemy. In North Korean literature, there is no satire about socialism, but there is satire about capitalism. Class enemies in North Korea are satirized in literature. The aim of this satire is to portray the enemy's brutality, inhumanity, slyness, and lack of compassion.

Movies

North Korea's movies are produced to glorify the Supreme Leaders. Movies are not commercial products, but KWP policy agitation products.¹⁴⁶ Thus, *Juche* themes dominate North Korean movies. No North Korean film can be produced without demonstrating dedication to *Juche* ideology, and only Party members participate in movies.¹⁴⁷ After the National Lit-

145 An et al. *North Korea Ten Years Later.*, 227–30.

146 Ibid., 237.

147 Ibid., 235.

erature and Arts Creation Inspection Committee reviews proposed productions for consistency with Party policies, the PAD must give its approval. This is then sent up to the Supreme Leader for his approval.¹⁴⁸

Four types of movies are produced in North Korea. First, the most common movies focus on the Supreme Leader's on-site inspection tours. These are distributed nationwide, and typically at least one is produced every month. Second, foreign movies are translated for the ruling family and their friends. Third, eight to ten movies per year are produced to politically motivate the North Korean people. Lastly, movies on history, science, and children are produced to inculcate the masses.¹⁴⁹ Many of these movies are designed to inculcate the North Korean population about *Songun* consciousness. Around eight movies a year focus on admiration for soldiers, where the lead actor is an active duty or retired soldier. Under Kim Jong-il, an "artistic" movie was produced once a year, focusing on the North Korean people's destiny.¹⁵⁰

There are several film studios, including the Korea Film Studio, the Korean Documentary Film Studio, the April 25th Film Studio of the KPA, and the Scientific Education Korea (SEK) Studio. North Korean film studios typically produce less than a hundred films per year.¹⁵¹ The SEK Studio, an animation group, operates in China and North Korea. It has been sanctioned by the U.S. Treasury Department for being "owned or controlled by, or having acted or purported to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, the Government of North Korea."¹⁵² The sanctions were imposed in response to North Korea's consistent abuse of its overseas workers by extorting money from their wages.

Perhaps the most famous aspect of North Korea's cinema history is the abduction of South Korean film director Shin Sang-ok and his wife, actress Choi Eun-hee. The abduction was carried out under Kim Jong-il's orders. He sought to use their talent to improve North Korea's film industry, which he saw as "too dogmatic." Choi was abducted in Hong Kong in January 1978, and Shin was taken six months later. They eventually escaped in 1986 while filming in Vienna, via the U.S. embassy in Austria.¹⁵³

148 An et al. *North Korea Ten Years Later.*, 236.

149 Ibid.

150 Ibid., 236–37.

151 Johannes Schönherr, *North Korean Cinema: A History* (Jefferson: McFarland Publishing, 2012), 145.

152 U.S. Department of Treasury, "Treasury Sanctions Perpetrators of Serious Human Rights Abuse on International Human Rights Day," December 10, 2021. <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy0526>.

153 Paul Fischer, *A Kim Jong-il Production: The Extraordinary True Story of a Kidnapped Filmmaker, His Star Actress, and a Young Dictator's Rise to Power* (New York: Flatiron Books, 2015).

Music

Music plays a significant role in propaganda throughout North Korea for the purpose of conducting political agitation amongst the population.¹⁵⁴ It is performed at all levels of society, from national leadership events to local agricultural events. Performances are given by a wide array of folk, pop, light instrumental, political, and classical performers. Beyond patriotic and political music, popular groups like Pochonbo Electronic Ensemble and Moranbong Band perform songs about everyday life in the DPRK and modern “light pop” reinterpretations of classic Korean folk music.

North Korean music prior to 1945 focused on anti-Japanese themes, liberation, and war. After liberation, music focused on *Chollima* themes (individual effort contributing to mass movement), “Sea of Blood” (theater play) and revolutionary themes, followed by *Songun* politics. Today, songs must be about the Supreme Leaders, loyalty to the KWP, revolution, and one’s individual adherence to those themes.¹⁵⁵

To prevent Western music such as disco and rock-n-roll from entering North Korea, the Kim regime focused on “protecting society” from outside influence. Like writers, musicians had to perform songs that reflected KWP policy in its content.¹⁵⁶ Kim Jong-il pressed his best musicians to further his political leadership as a dominant propaganda theme. He also compelled his musicians to play modern musical instruments and to modernize *pansori*-style (traditional Korean singing) music.¹⁵⁷ During the *Songun* era under Kim Jong-il, music was reorganized to reflect a military style, where dance and art routines were performed in the field. Given North Korea’s economic problems, particularly the lack of electricity, outdoor performances became more frequent.¹⁵⁸

Music is widely taught in schools, with President Kim Il-sung first implementing a program of study of musical instruments in 1949 at an orphanage in Mangyongdae, Pyongyang. A photograph of school students performing a dance underneath a school banner stating “Let’s thoroughly arm ourselves with the revolutionary thought of our Dear Generalissimo Kim Il-sung” is shown in the next page.¹⁵⁹

154 See, for example, the photo at <https://n.news.naver.com/mnews/article/421/0006825464>.

155 An et al., *North Korea Ten Years Later*, 232.

156 An et al., *North Korea Ten Years Later*, 233.

157 Ibid.

158 Ibid., 234.

159 See link at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:North_Korea_094_\(6160441533\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:North_Korea_094_(6160441533).jpg).



Musical performances are also an important element of the North Korean military. The Central Military Band of the KPA, sometimes known as the KPA Marching Band or the DPRK Army Orchestra, is based in Pyongyang. It is the sole military band of the KPA and it is subordinate to the GPB, the political arm of the KPA. The Women's Military Marching Band of the Ministry of Social Security, shown below, is the all-female unit of the central band and is subordinate to the KPA Military Band.¹⁶⁰

160 See photo link at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/northkoreatravel/10334899135/in/photolist-gKg4s8-2iw6Z2Y-duoXaa-duoKQc-duoY2t-duoskc-duuJuQ-duuPk7-dup33B-dupiB4-duu3xL-duuXWC-dup5o6-duuLnW-duoTWk-duowWa-duujuj-dup3T6-duuYoA-duuNLN-du-utg1-duuW3d-duuS7j-duuGj3-dupm6R-duv2o7-dupcvn-dupfJe-duu4ME-duoQCc-dup2hM-duphYv-dup9xe-duoDZD-dup4Ek-dupoMP-duuUWw-duozqr-duperD-dupya8-duuFzC-duowcz-duoAcF-duo-YLB-duoPyZ-duv1Kh-duoVvc-dupukZ-dupxsV-duuMwY>.



Kim Jong-un has established a new State Affairs Commission (SAC) band, which has a chorus and orchestra. This band took center stage in two military parades in October 2020 and January 2021.¹⁶¹

Though all assets in North Korea are ultimately at the disposal of the Supreme Leader, there are music and art troupes that are devoted strictly to the Supreme Leader. These include the Pochonbo Electronic Music Group, Wangjesan Music Troupe, Translation Film Studio, Mansudae Television General Bureau, KPA Meritorious Chorus, and the National Creativity Team.¹⁶² These groups are not supervised by the PAD but instead are directly managed by the OGD. For example, the Pochonbo Electronic Music Group is comprised of 100 personnel who sing or operate electronic musical instruments. Their mission is to entertain the Supreme Leader by presenting domestic and international songs. While the Pochonbo group sings, the Wangjesan group performs dancing and light music. The Pochonbo and Wangjesan groups focus on modern music, and the KPA Meritorious Chorus performs classical music.¹⁶³

161 Colin Zwirko, “Kim Jong-un’s new favorite band lives life of luxury in new music videos,” *NK News*, June 24, 2021. <https://www.nknews.org/2021/06/kim-jong-uns-new-favorite-band-lives-life-of-luxury-in-new-music-videos/>.

162 An et al., *North Korea Ten Years Later*, 223. The KPA Meritorious Chorus and its individual singers were leading entertainers during the *Songun* era.

163 *Ibid.*, 234.

Finally, musical diplomacy continues to be relevant to North Korea's foreign relations. Musical and cultural delegations have held concerts in China and France in recent years, and musicians from Western countries and South Korea have collaborated on projects in North Korea.

Paintings, Sculptures, and Monuments

The most famous institute of art in North Korea is the Mansudae Art Studio, also known as the Mansudae Creative Agency. It was founded in 1959 and employs 4,000 personnel. Most of the artists are graduates of the Pyongyang Art College.¹⁶⁴ This studio produces art, sculpture, paintings, handicrafts, jewelry, monuments, statues, and posters. In a 2018 *CBS* documentary, the reporter acquired testimony from foreign art dealers that Mansudae was founded in 1959 to establish "cultural goodwill." The floor space of Mansudae is over 120,000 square meters, and it employs 800 artists.¹⁶⁵

Paintings in North Korea are classified into five categories: portrait painting, propaganda painting, landscape painting, "sun" painting (images of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il), and caricature.¹⁶⁶ Many famous painters are employed by the Mansudae Art Studio. Only the best artists are allowed to draw or paint images of the Supreme Leader. Others who attempt as such will be punished. Like other artists, painters live a strict organizational life and only paint political images.¹⁶⁷

The Mansudae Overseas Project is the overseas extension of the Mansudae Art Studio. It specializes in building statues, monuments, and other projects to contribute funds to the Kim regime. According to one estimate, the Mansudae Overseas Project had earned North Korea a cumulative total of \$260 million as of 2018.¹⁶⁸ By 2013, the Mansudae Overseas Project had built structures in seventeen countries, most of them in Africa: Zimbabwe, Togo, Algeria, Mali, Senegal, Angola, Benin, Chad, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Namibia, Equatorial Guinea, and Mozambique, as well as Cambodia, Germany,

164 Mansudae Art Studio, "Mansudae Art Studio – North Korean Art," August 14, 2021. <https://web.archive.org/web/20151208233912/http://www.mansudaeartstudio.com/>.

165 CBS News, "North Korea: The art of surviving sanctions," Youtube video, accessed November 13, 2021, 4:35. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YY06DRmP76o>.

166 An et al., *North Korea Ten Years Later*, 237.

167 *Ibid.*, 238.

168 "North Korea builds monuments around the world," *CBS News*, November 16, 2018. <https://www.cbsnews.com/pictures/north-korea-mansudae-art-studio-monuments-around-the-world/>.

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and Malaysia.¹⁶⁹ As an example, the Samora Machel statue at Independence Square (Praça da Independência) in Maputo, Mozambique is shown below.¹⁷⁰



For the time being, international sanctions have halted Mansudae from being a source of profit for the regime.¹⁷¹ In 2017, the Mansudae Overseas Project was sanctioned under UN Security Council Resolution 2371.¹⁷² The official text of the designation is as follows.

KPe.050 Name: MANSUDAE OVERSEAS PROJECT GROUP OF COMPANIES

A.k.a.: Mansudae Art Studio **F.k.a.:** na

Address: Pyongyang, Democratic People's Republic of Korea

169 “Mansudae Art Studio, North Korea’s Colossal Monument Factory,” *Bloomberg*, June 6, 2013. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2013-06-06/mansudae-art-studio-north-koreas-colossal-monument-factory>.

170 See link at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Statue_of_Samora_Machel.jpg

171 These sanctions have had the unintended effect of making Mansudae-produced art more valuable. See CBS News, “North Korea: The art of surviving sanctions,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YY-06DRmP76o>.

172 United Nations, “Security Council Toughens Sanctions Against Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2371 (2017),” August 5, 2017. <https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/sc12945.doc.htm>.

Listed on: 5 Aug. 2017

Other information: Mansudae Overseas Project Group of Companies engaged in, facilitated, or was responsible for the exportation of workers from the DPRK to other nations for construction-related activities including for statues and monuments to generate revenue for the Government of the DPRK or the Workers' Party of Korea. The Mansudae Overseas Project Group of Companies has been reported to conduct business in countries in Africa and Southeast Asia including Algeria, Angola, Botswana, Benin, Cambodia, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Malaysia, Mozambique, Madagascar, Namibia, Syria, Togo, and Zimbabwe.¹⁷³

Such expertise in creating large monuments was not acquired overnight. Public monuments play a major role in both worship of the Supreme Leader and the glorification of the KWP's ideological themes. According to North Korea watcher Jacob Bogle, there are approximately 11,170 monuments and 1,000 propaganda signs scattered across North Korea. He notes that there are “six categories of monuments: towers of immortality, statues of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il, murals of the two Kims, general murals, general monuments and statues, and large monuments such as the *Juche* Tower.”¹⁷⁴ The Mansudae Art Studio follows PAD policy by providing displays of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il in every province, city, and county at every workplace, school, and childcare center.¹⁷⁵ To idolize Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il, entities and various institutions in North Korea also place a stone monument to commemorate the Supreme Leaders' on-site visits or quote their speeches. These organizations compete with one another to erect the most impressive memorial.¹⁷⁶

According to Bogle, of the 11,170 monuments placed throughout North Korea, the breakdown by province is as follows.

- Pyongyang: 1,473 monuments
- North Pyongan Province: 1,252 monuments
- South Pyongan Province: 1,497 monuments
- Jagang Province: 657 monuments
- Ryanggang Province: 431 monuments
- North Hamgyong Province: 864 monuments

173 United Nations, “List established and maintained pursuant to Security Council res. 1718 (2006),” March 28, 2021. <https://scsanctions.un.org/en/?keywords=dprk>.

174 Jacob Bogle, “The Monuments of North Korea,” *Access DPRK* (blog), February 27, 2019. <https://mynorthkorea.blogspot.com/2019/02/the-monuments-of-north-korea.html>.

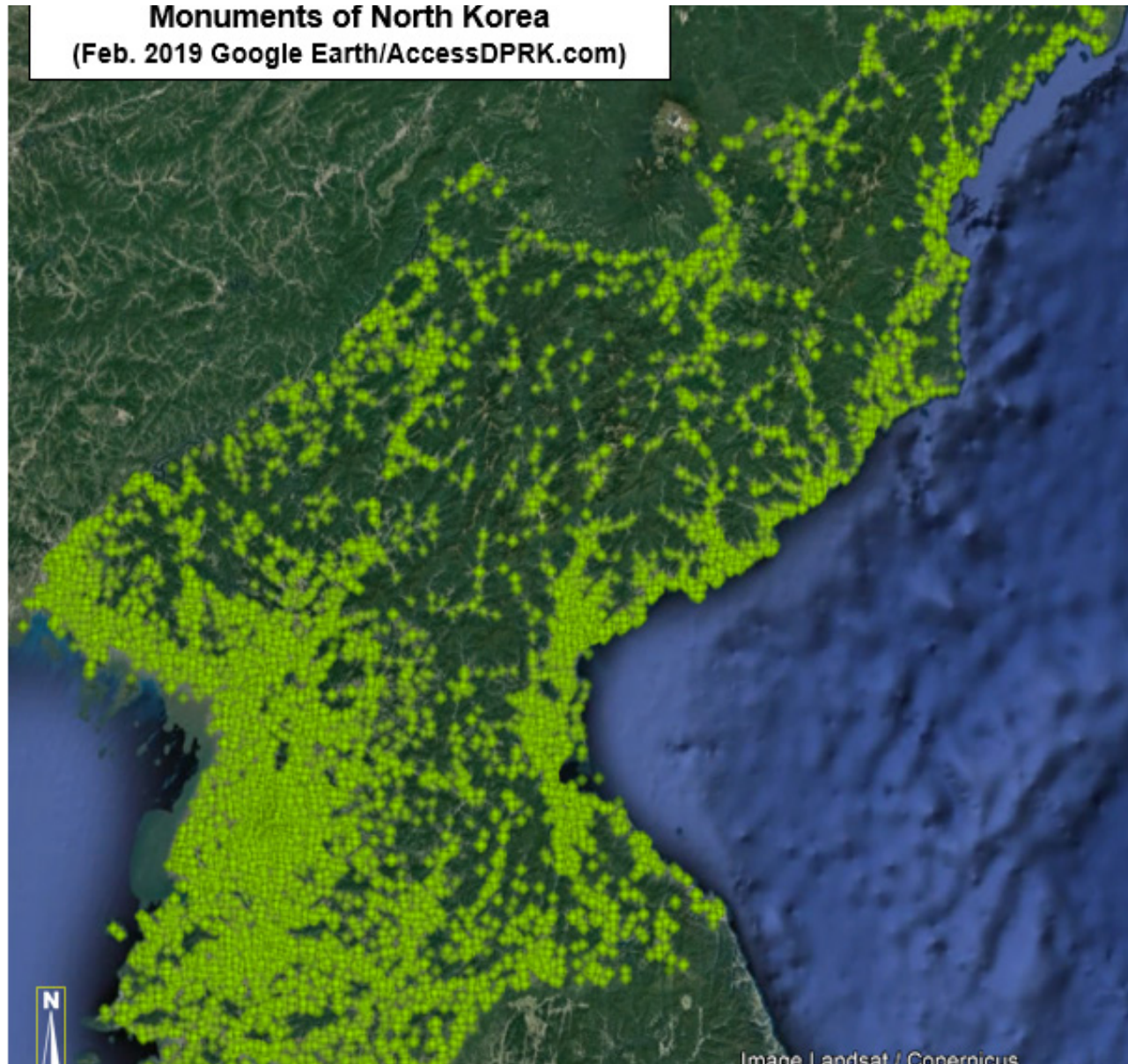
175 An et al., *North Korea Ten Years Later*, 238–39.

176 *Ibid.*, 242.

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- South Hamgyong Province: 1,295 monuments
- Gangwon Province: 1,073 monuments
- North Hwanghae Province: 1,265 monuments
- South Hwanghae Province: 1,254 monuments
- Rason City: 109 monuments.¹⁷⁷

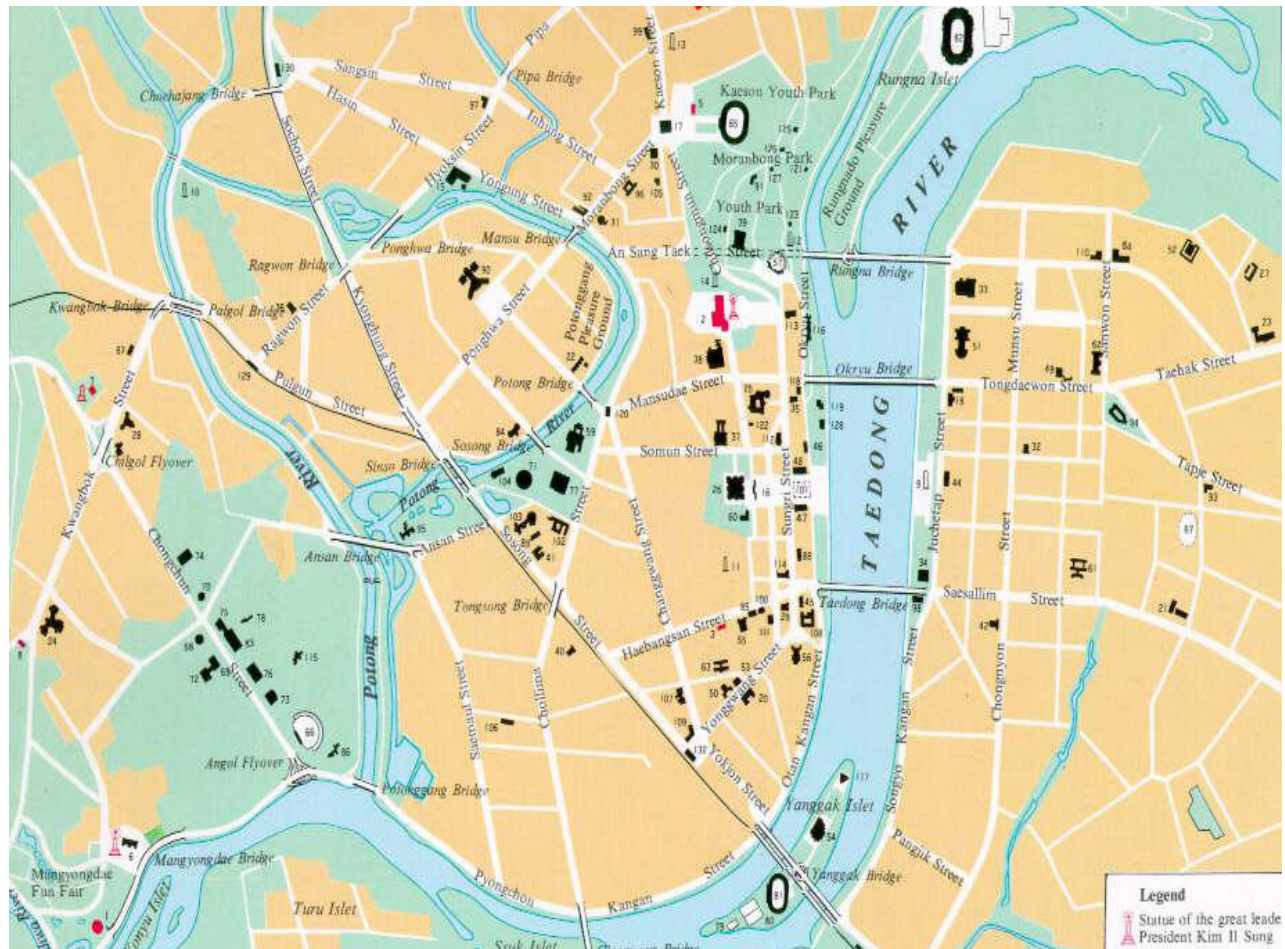
The satellite image below illustrates the density of these monuments across the North Korean landscape:¹⁷⁸



177 Bogle, “The Monuments of North Korea.”

178 Ibid.

The map below depicts where all the major monuments are located in Pyongyang:¹⁷⁹



The following revolutionary sites and monuments are shown on the map:

1. Kim Il-sung's birthplace at Mangyongdae
2. Korean Revolution Museum
3. Party Founding Museum
4. Chonsung Revolutionary Museum
5. Monument to Autograph of President Kim Il-sung in Speech on His Triumphant Return
6. Mangyongdae Revolutionary School
7. Chilgol Revolutionary Site

179 Wikimapia, "Pyongyang Monuments Map," accessed February 19, 2015. <http://www.pyongyang-metro.com/metromaps.html>; citing the book *Pyongyang* (Pyongyang: Korea Pictorial, 1990).

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8. Monument to the Fork to Mangyongdae
9. Tower of the *Juche* Idea
10. Monument to the Potong River Improvement Project
11. Monument to Fallen Soldiers of the People's Army
12. Liberation Tower
13. Friendship Tower
14. Chollima Statue
15. Victorious Fatherland Liberation War Museum
16. Kim Il-sung Square
17. Arch of Triumph

The construction of such monuments requires significant investment of scarce resources. Nonetheless, in 1994, North Korean communities constructed statues glorifying Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il. After Kim Il-sung's death that same year, the Kim Jong-il regime constructed statues glorifying Kim Jong-il's mother, Kim Chong-suk. Communities competed to build monuments to Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il, and Kim Chong-suk during the great famine of the mid-1990s. The use of national resources for this purpose led to significant popular dissatisfaction and the destruction of monuments in numerous locations. The KWP's reaction was to establish more Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il revolutionary research rooms and KWP-led monument guard teams.¹⁸⁰

180 An et al., *North Korea Ten Years Later*, 243.

Section 6: PAD and Censorship

One senior North Korean escapee revealed a common saying among the populace about the importance of ideology in North Korean society: “*There can be a space on the pavement for weeds to grow, but there should be no empty space in the people’s brain for any (forbidden) ideology to penetrate.*”¹⁸¹ Controlling the North Korean population is key for the Kim regime to accomplish “independence of the masses” from outside ideologies. Consequently, the regime seeks to isolate the population from the rest of the world as a deliberate policy, which the PAD is tasked with implementing.

This is done through censorship, media control, propaganda, and agitation. The Kim regime endeavors to keep out all foreign books, printed materials, audio recordings, videotapes, electronic devices, television games, and clothing from North Korean people. Customs officials at points of entry thoroughly inspect North Korean citizens who return from overseas visits.¹⁸² With the fall of the Eastern Bloc in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Kim regime dramatically suppressed external news and culture. It heightened punishments for those who encountered outside information or possessed the means to do so.¹⁸³

The focus of North Korean censorship is to suppress external information and internal resistance to the PAD’s themes and messages that promote the Supreme Leader, the KWP, and the regime’s political-military-economic intent. The Kim regime is able to do so due to its control of all information services within North Korea, as noted in Section 5. During the famine of the mid-to-late 1990s, the Kim regime went to extremes in its anti-ROK, anti-U.S., and anti-West propaganda. North Korean diplomats were punished if they spent leisure time with their U.S. counterparts without permission.¹⁸⁴

The Kim family regime has enforced strict censorship policies for decades. Song Hye-rang, the sister of Kim Jong-il’s mistress Song Hye-rim, recalls in her memoir that there was a major censorship effort in the 1960s and 1970s called the “May 25th Instruction.” Kim Il-sung instructed that books inconsistent with his ideological vision be destroyed. These books were collected and sent to paper factories.

181 Kim Myong, “Korea’s ‘Berlin Wall’ Must Fall,” HRNK Insider, November 20, 2020. <https://www.hrnkinsider.org/2020/11/koreas-berlin-wall-must-fall.html>.

182 Hyun Seong-il, “Bukhan sahoe-ui jayuhwa siltae-wa jeonmang” [Current Status and Prospects for Liberalization of North Korean Society], *Bukhan josa yeongu* [North Korean Research Studies] (Feb. 1999): 11; see also Kim Ga-Young, “North Korean authorities concerned about effects of outside information,” *Daily NK*, November 7, 2017. <http://www.dailynk.com/english/m/read.php?cataId=nk01700&num=14805>.

183 Hyun, “Current Status and Prospects for Liberalization of North Korean Society,” 11.

184 Ibid., 13.

Classical music also fell victim to this initiative. Emphasis was on the cult of the Supreme Leader, anti-Japanese revolutionary activities, and class revolution.¹⁸⁵ Over the years, the Kim regime's censorship efforts have also focused on indoctrinating both the elite and the general public on avoiding external information that runs counter to the Party's policies. There are numerous examples, including a document prepared by the PAD in 2010 entitled "On the thorough elimination of non-socialist phenomena in all fields of social life," which was designed to compel Party members into maintaining socialist principles.¹⁸⁶

The KWP possesses the institutional means to exercise significant information control—from the central government down to the neighborhood level—aimed at informing, deceiving, or denying information from the North Korean populace. Every community in North Korea, rural or urban, is divided into neighborhood units of ten to forty households referred to as *inminban*. A neighborhood unit chief, who is appointed by the local people's committee and approved by the Party, reports on the activities of all households to the police and the people's committee. Middle-aged and elderly women are often appointed to this position, which is referred to as the *inminbanjang*. The *inminbanjang* also delivers lectures assigned by the local KWP committee, and the PAD devises the content of these lectures. In 2021, the propaganda secretary for South Pyongan Province stated in a lecture that "watching, listening, or possessing films, recordings, publications, books, songs, drawings or photos from South Chosun [South Korea]" will lead to sentences of five to fifteen years of correctional labor or even death for those who "import and distribute such materials."¹⁸⁷ During the COVID-19 pandemic, the KWP also relied on local-level lectures to control the population's awareness of the spread of COVID within North Korea.¹⁸⁸

Although this kind of censorship is effective most of the time, it has increasingly failed to suppress the inflow of external information as media communications became more sophisticated during the 21st century. Historically, the Kim regime has limited access to information through media control, which involved pre-tuning all radios and televisions to only receive broadcasts from state-controlled programming stations, thereby preventing access to other broadcasts, foreign or domestic.¹⁸⁹ Short-wave radios are banned in North Korea

185 Lim, *Kim Jong Il's Leadership of North Korea*, 41.

186 "Party Reveals Worries over Foreign Wind," *Daily NK*, May 24, 2011. <https://www.dailynk.com/english/party-reveals-worries-over-foreign/>.

187 Mun Dong-Hui, "North Korea conducts lectures warning people of broadcasts from the US, South Korea and Japan," *Daily NK*, January 29, 2021. <https://www.dailynk.com/english/north-korea-conducts-lectures-warning-people-broadcasts-us-south-japan/>.

188 Jieun Kim, "Ruling Party Lecturers Admit COVID-19 is Spreading in North Korea, Contradicting Official Claims," *Radio Free Asia*, April 17, 2020. <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/korea/confirmed-coronavirus-04172020192920.html>.

189 "Korea, North," *CIA World Factbook*, March 4, 2022, accessed March 14, 2022. <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/korea-north/>.

for this reason. Even journalists are trained not to write anything negative about the North Korean leadership, regime ideologies, or KWP policies.

The fourth sub-article of the TPMI's Article 7 states "Deliberately use the guidelines of the Great Leader when preparing reports, discussions, lectures or printed materials, and eliminate any words or sections that are contrary to his instructions."¹⁹⁰ Journalists are compelled to obey this ideological directive under the threat of imprisonment.

Internally, internet access is strictly limited to the elite and foreigners. Cell phone usage has become more widespread with the establishment of a state-run mobile network, especially in the past decade.¹⁹¹ At the same time, foreign cellphones—coming from China, in many cases—have become a major target of censorship. Cell phones from China link North Koreans living in northern areas of the country to the outside world. The Sino-North Korean border was a major route for the influx of CDs, DVDs, and USBs previously, and currently for the influx of MicroSD cards and other storage devices that contain outside information.

The North Korean regime has continued making efforts to respond to these developments, which undermine its control over North Korean society.¹⁹² For example, the SPA passed a "Youth Culture Security Act" in 2021 to control the ideology of North Korea's youth, many of whom are now familiar with foreign culture, ideology, and technology.¹⁹³ Furthermore, the "Law on Elimination of Reactionary Thought and Culture," passed in December 2020, levies a maximum penalty of five years in prison for viewing or possessing foreign cultural content. Dissemination of the same is punishable by death.¹⁹⁴ In North Korea, "information is uni-directionally moved through state media such as the *Rodong Sinmun* and central broadcasting, and the information is cut off as if it was partitioned."¹⁹⁵

190 Jang Haesung, "The North Korean Government's Control Over Literary Art and Imprisonment of Writers," *PEN International*, December 2013, accessed January 2014. <https://pen-international.org/app/uploads/archive/2013/12/Speech-of-Jang-Haesung.pdf>.

191 Yonho Kim, "North Korea's Mobile Telecommunications and Private Transportation in the Kim Jong-un Era," *HRNK Insider*, January 2019. <https://www.hrnkinsider.org/2019/01/north-koreas-mobile-telecommunications.html>.

192 For a more comprehensive treatment of this subject, see Martyn Williams, *Digital Trenches: North Korea's Information Counter-Offensive* (Washington, D.C.: Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2019).

193 Ji Jeong-eun, "The Youth Culture Security Act proves that it is difficult to control the ideology of the North Korean youth" [in Korean], *Radio Free Asia*, August 30, 2021. https://www.rfa.org/korean/in_focus/controlideology-08302021093502.html.

194 "Sudden mass release of detainees, easing of punishment, but no food for the detainees," *Rimjin-gang*, August 2, 2021. <https://www.asiapress.org/rimjin-gang/2021/08/society-economy/detainees/>.

195 Yoo Byong-jun, "Science in North Korea, according to a former North Korean Scientist Who Has Escaped" [in Korean], *Daehak Shinmun*, April 12, 2009. <http://www.snunews.com/news/articleView.html?idno=7868>.

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The PAD is not the only institution in the Kim regime that engages in censorship efforts. The Ministry of State Security and the Ministry of Social Security work with the PAD in all censorship operations to ensure that foreign influence does not infiltrate North Korean society.¹⁹⁶ On orders from the OGD, the Ministry of State Security also spreads false information among the population as a form of psychological operation. Additionally, it spreads propaganda on the glorification of the Supreme Leader, anti-ROK and anti-U.S. themes, and criticism of North Korean escapees, while promoting the enormous power of the KPA.¹⁹⁷

There is also a State Inspection Commission, which was established in 1948 as a central administrative department of the DPRK Cabinet.¹⁹⁸ All public information organizations are monitored by the State Inspection Commission.¹⁹⁹ Originally created as the Ministry of State Inspection under the Cabinet, it took on its current name and was moved directly under the Central People's Committee following the constitutional amendment in 1972. It was once again made subordinate to the Cabinet, where it currently remains, as a result of the constitutional amendment in September 1998.²⁰⁰

The following is a partial list of past Ministers of State Inspection.²⁰¹

- Kim Won-bong (김원봉): September 1948 –
- Park Mun-kyu (박문규): September 1957 –
- Kim Ik-son (김익선): December 1967 –
- Kim Ui-soon (김의순): September 1998 –
- Chang Ki-ho (장기호): last confirmed January 2020

196 Madden, “KWP Propaganda and Agitation Department.”

197 An et al., *North Korea Ten Years Later*, 246.

198 “Gukga geomyeolseong” [Ministry of State Inspection], *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*, accessed February 5, 2022. <http://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Contents/Item/E0066232>.

199 An et al., *North Korea Ten Years Later*, 225. Newspaper and television organizations are particularly politicized with no public input to their efforts. There are no private advertisements in North Korea. If there are “advertisements,” they are about the Supreme Leader’s love of the people.

200 “Ministry of State Inspection,” *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*.

201 “North Korea’s 1st–4th Cabinets,” *NK Chosun*; “List of Key Government Personnel in North Korea,” [in Korean], *Chosun Ilbo*, September 6, 1998. https://www.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/1998/09/06/1998090670005.html; “Organizational Chart of North Korean Leadership,” *Korea Institute for National Unification*, December 14, 2020. <https://www.kinu.or.kr/brd/board/726/L/menu/382?brdType=R&thisPage=1&bbIdx=58517>.

Section 7: PAD and the North Korean Schools

Indoctrination in North Korea takes place at schools, workplaces, farms, factories—in other words, anywhere North Koreans work or live.²⁰² Generally, the Supreme Leader gives relevant directives to the KWP PAD verbally or in writing. PAD action officers then design indoctrination concepts which are transmitted to publishing and media agencies, art organizations, and educational institutions supervised by the PAD.²⁰³

North Korea's Constitution lays the groundwork for the ideological indoctrination of students, which begins in preschool. Article 43 of the Constitution states, “The state shall implement the principle of socialist pedagogy, and thus raise the younger generations as resolute revolutionaries who struggle for the society and the people, and as new *Juche*-type people of knowledge, virtue, and physical health.”²⁰⁴ However, upon interviewing dozens of North Korean escapees, it becomes clear that North Korean students do not study the DPRK Constitution whatsoever.²⁰⁵

Every North Korean begins to study PAD-directed themes and messages concerning the glorification of the Kim family leadership in preschool and elementary school. North Korea's education system focuses on Confucian and socialist values over freedom of choice, and it demands loyalty to the Supreme Leader as the centerpiece of a patriarchal, feudalistic society. Students are taught that individualism is egotistical and despicable—the “dregs of ideology.” “Bourgeois freedom” is taught as reactionary and harmful. Those that want greater freedom are identified as thieves and violators, a cancer that should be excised from North Korean society.²⁰⁶

On the orders of PAD Vice Director Kim Yo-jong, North Korean preschoolers have reportedly tripled their study of Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il, and Kim Jong-un from 30 to 90 minutes daily. This study is referred to as “Greatness Education.”²⁰⁷ North Korean children are taught in school that they are fed, clothed, and nurtured by the “grace of the Chairman.”

202 This chapter includes content previously published in Collins and Mortwedt Oh, *From Cradle to Grave*, 6–8.

203 Kim Jeong-soo, “How does Ideological Education under Kim Jong-un differ from that of the Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il eras?” [in Korean], *Dong-A Ilbo*, January 23, 2019. <https://www.donga.com/news/Politics/article/all/20190123/93825981/1>.

204 “North Korean Constitution – April 2009,” *Northeast Asia Matters* (blog), October 8, 2009. <http://asiamatters.blogspot.com/2009/10/north-korean-constitution-april-2009.html>.

205 Author's interviews of North Korean escapees.

206 Hyun, “Current Status and Prospects for Liberalization of North Korean Society,” 9.

207 Michael Havis, “North Korea triples the amount of propaganda taught to pre-schoolers so children spend half their day learning about Kim Jong-un,” *Daily Mail*, September 16, 2020. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8738473/North-Korea-triples-propaganda-taught-pre-schoolers.html>.

The fomenting of anti-American sentiment also begins in earnest in kindergarten. There are drawings on kindergarten classrooms' walls depicting children using rifles and bayonets to attack American soldiers. Kindergarten students are provided with toy pistols, rifles, and tank models to simulate assaulting American soldiers as part of the curriculum.²⁰⁸

The titles and content of North Korean textbooks display the degree to which ideological education pervades the education system. Textbooks with titles such as *Our Father, Love of Our Father, We Pray for "Our Master,"* and *Kim Jong-il Looking at Photos* have been used in the classroom. Students are taught to read Kim Il-sung's writings "loudly, and slowly and with a feeling of respect," and "they...are taught a special way of speaking toward Kim."²⁰⁹ Even math problems are set in ideological settings. Second grade elementary students study a mathematics problem that poses the following question: "*People's Army soldiers killed 374 American bastards and arrested 133 fewer than they killed. How many were arrested?*"²¹⁰ Another math problem awash in propaganda concerns the proper use of the protractor. The problem focuses on critiquing the inability of students who, as future soldiers, cannot properly target the U.S. Navy fleet because of their poor understanding of how to use a protractor.²¹¹

According to one estimate, North Korean students spend 684 hours studying the ruling Kim family so that they "acquire the concept of revolution and endless loyalty toward the party and the supreme leader."²¹² Middle and high school curriculums require the study of topics such as *The Respected Supreme Leader Generalissimo Kim Il-sung's Revolutionary Activities; The Respected Supreme Leader Generalissimo Kim Il-sung's Revolutionary History; The Great Leader Marshal Kim Jong-il's Revolutionary Activities;* and *The Great Leader Marshal Kim Jong-il's Revolutionary History; Communist Morals; Juche Philosophy;* and *Present Party Policies.*²¹³

208 "How North Korean children are taught to hate the 'American b*****' at kindergarten," *Daily Mail*, June 24, 2012. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2163817/How-North-Korean-children-raught-hate-American-b----kindergarten.html>.

209 Andrea Matles Savada, ed., *North Korea: A Country Study* (Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1994), 95. <https://archive.org/details/PAM550-81/page/n127/mode/2up>.

210 Lim, *Leader Symbols and Personality Cult in North Korea*, 10.

211 Emily Lodish, "North Korea: propaganda cartoons reach kids," *Global Post*, June 27, 2011. <https://theworld.org/dispatches/globalpost-blogs/the-rice-bowl/propaganda-cartoon-north-korea-education>.

212 Isadora Savage, "Top Ten Facts About Education in North Korea," *Borgen Project*, May 20, 2019. <https://borgenproject.org/top-10-facts-about-education-in-north-korea/>.

213 Kim Hyung-Chan and Dong-Kyu Kim, *Human Remodeling in North Korea: A Social History of Education* (New York: University Press of America, 2005), 222. See also Kim Hae-won, "In North Korea, Discriminatory Education for Gifted Children to be Trained as Loyal to the Party is Widespread" [in Korean], *Dalian News*, September 2, 2013. <http://www.dailian.co.kr/news/view/381610>.

Specifically, they must spend 150 hours on the “Revolutionary Activities of the Great Supreme Leader Grand Marshal Kim Il-sung,” 195 hours on the “Revolutionary History of the Great Supreme Leader Grand Marshal Kim Il-sung,” 112 hours on the “Revolutionary Activities of the Dear Leader Comrade Kim Jong-il,” and 110 hours on the “Revolutionary History of the Dear Leader Comrade Kim Jong-il.”²¹⁴

Students receive more indoctrination outside of regular school hours, as they often visit historical sites that reinforce their ideological studies. There are approximately sixty historical sites that school students visit regularly. Forty sites are related to Kim Il-sung, twenty are related to Kim Jong-il, and there are additional sites related to other Kim family members.²¹⁵ As noted in Section 6, the regime’s efforts to control the youth extend beyond schools. For example, the passage of the “Youth Culture Security Act” in 2021 is a great illustration.²¹⁶

This drawing shows kindergarten students attacking a U.S. soldier. The propaganda slogan states, “Let’s play fun military games where we hit American bastards.”²¹⁷



214 Since the time of the cited work, secondary education in North Korea has increased from six to seven years. The number of hours devoted to these subjects has likely increased. See Lee Sang-mu, ed., *Bukhan-ui Yeoksahak* (1) [North Korean History (1)] (Seoul: National Institute of Korean History, 2002), 136.

215 PSCORE, “Forced to Hate,” accessed July 1, 2021. <http://pscore.org/life-north-korea/forced-to-hate/>

216 Ji, “The Youth Culture Security Act proves that it is difficult to control the ideology of the North Korean youth.”

217 See link at [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Propaganda_poster_in_a_primary_school_-_DPRK_\(2604154887\).jpg](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Propaganda_poster_in_a_primary_school_-_DPRK_(2604154887).jpg).

Section 8: PAD and the North Korean Military

Under the Kim regime, North Korean propaganda and agitation has two components—one applicable to society in general, and one that is applicable to the military. The former focuses on the national and ideological leadership of the Supreme Leader, and the latter focuses on the military and national security leadership of the Supreme Leader, including *Songun* (military-first) politics.²¹⁸ Military propaganda and societal propaganda play distinct but complementary roles in supporting the Kim regime's MGS.²¹⁹

In socialist countries, the military is not the government's military but the Party's. The KWP's control over the military is rooted in ideological control. Consequently, enforcing ideological loyalty is important to maintaining the character of the KPA. The KWP determines military personnel decisions, military administration, and military unit employment.²²⁰ According to the KWP Charter, the General Political Bureau (GPB), the military's political organization, is subordinate to the KWP Central Committee.²²¹ There are three powerful institutions that lead the KPA: the GPB, the General Staff Department, and the Ministry of Defense. Of these, the GPB leads all organizational and propaganda activities in the KPA, and it also controls personnel issues.²²²

The KPA GPB: Organization and Structure

It is noteworthy that the GPB, which oversees ideological education in the KPA, is guided by the PAD in terms of propaganda and agitation. Through the PAD, Kim Jong-un monitors and controls the GPB and exercises ideological influence over the military.²²³

The KPA GPB Propaganda Department is composed of the following subordinate sections. All of these sections have direct input into the KPA Cultural Arts Department:

- Art Sub-section: sub-sections include Mass Culture Sub-section and Party Policy Review Sub-section.

218 An et al., *North Korea Ten Years Later*, 214–15.

219 Ibid., 216.

220 Lee Dae-geun, *Bukhan gunbu-neun wae koodeta-reul haji anna* [Why Doesn't the KPA Launch a Coup?] (Seoul: Hanul Publishing, 2003), 168.

221 Cheong Seong-Chang, *Bukhangun chongjeongchiguk-ui wisang mit yeokhal-gwa gwollyok seunggye munje* [The Status of the GPB and its Role in Power Succession] (Seoul: Sejong Institute, 2013), 7–8.

222 Ibid., 5.

223 Kim Seon-ho, "The Role and Status of the KPA GPB" [in Korean], *Konas*, July 12, 2013. <http://www.konas.net/article/article.asp?idx=31579>.

- Movie Section: a subordinate section is the Script Movie Sub-section.
- Newspaper Sub-section: a subordinate section is the Publication Sub-section.
- Finance Sub-section: a sub-section is the Management Sub-section.
- Organization Sub-section: a sub-section is the Cadre Sub-section.
- Revolutionary History Sub-section: sub-sections include the Lecture Indoctrination Sub-section and the Slogan Themes Sub-section.²²⁴

The GPB Propaganda Department is responsible for the ideological life of every officer and soldier in the KPA. In the military, ideological life primarily involves arming soldiers with the Supreme Leaders' ideology and KWP policies, as well as all related efforts, which include: the study of the political topics of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il ideology; indoctrination of socialist patriotism; the evils of landowners, capitalists, and imperialism; related class indoctrination; and the study of the *Suryong's* directives on strengthening readiness and combat training, as well as self-study and attendance at all political lectures at every echelon.²²⁵ Propaganda officers who belong to the GPB Propaganda Department carry out propaganda tasks and political ideology training for the military. The GPB also holds conferences for military propaganda officers to emphasize the importance of their role.²²⁶

Within the KPA, political officers and propaganda officers hold enormous influence over commanders at all levels. Political officers are tasked with evaluating the overall qualities of commanders, such as their ability to command the unit and their loyalty to the Party. This is why commanders in the KPA cannot wield absolute power. Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il, and Kim Jong-un have all used their political officers effectively to wield absolute power over their subordinate commanders. With a single damning report from a political officer, even battalion commanders and higher ranked commanders can be shot to death.²²⁷

224 An et al., *North Korea Ten Years Later*, 217.

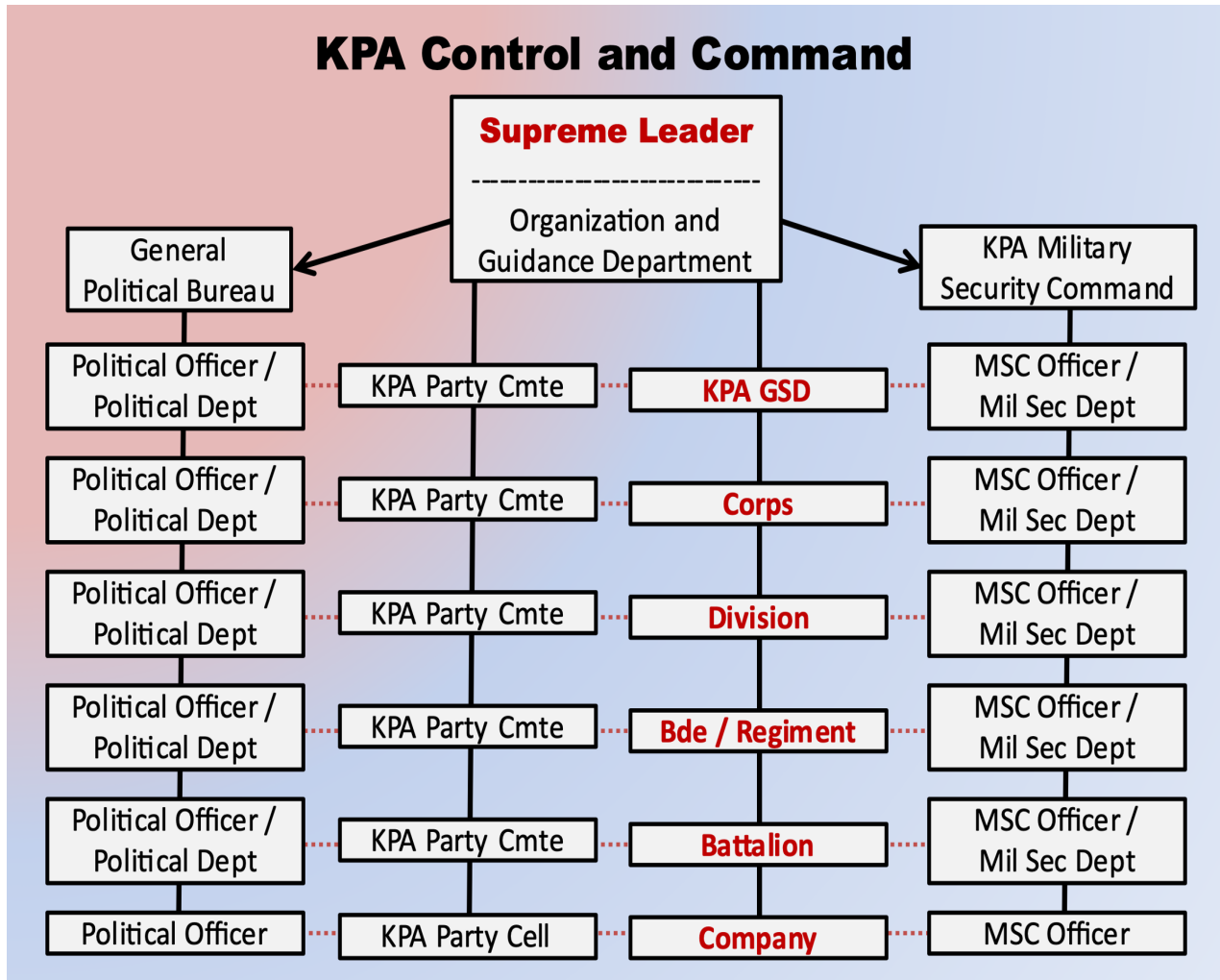
225 Cheong, *The Status of the GPB and its Role in Power Succession*, 33.

226 Lee, *Why Doesn't the KPA Launch a Coup?*, 172.

227 For example, see On Jong-rim, "Ninety shots fired at North Korean cadre after watching South Korean drama" [in Korean], *New Daily*, September 28, 2010. <http://www.newdaily.co.kr/site/data/html/2010/09/28/2010092800035.html>.

PROPAGANDA AND AGITATION DEPARTMENT

The chart below displays the role of the GPB within the KPA's "Control and Command" structure.²²⁸ It shows how the KWP OGD institutes maximum control of the KWP over the KPA's command structure.²²⁹ GPB propaganda officers are embedded in the Political Department at each level of KPA command.

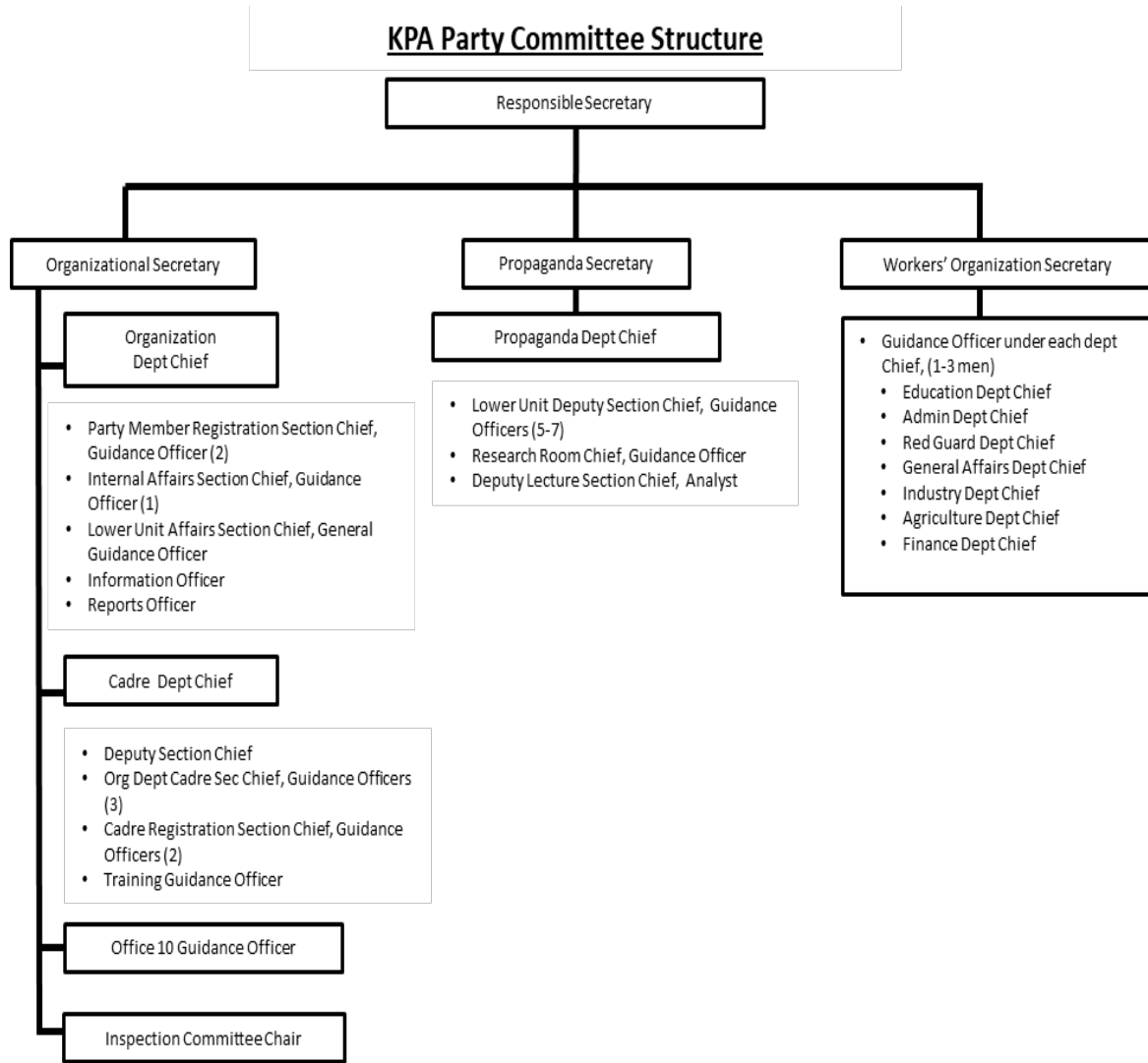


KPA propagandists receive mission guidance through the PAD and the KPA Party Committee. The latter is embedded in every KPA unit at the battalion level and above. The chart on the next page shows the organization of KPA Party Committees and the role of the GPB propaganda secretary within that structure.²³⁰

228 While most militaries in the West use the term "command and control," political control of every KPA unit and the ability of the political officer to counter a unit commander's directives is a more accurate description of the KPA's command structure.

229 Cheong, *The Status of the GPB and its Role in Power Succession*, 31. GSD is the General Staff Department. MSC is the Military Security Command, which is the KPA's counter-intelligence arm.

230 ROK Defense Intelligence Command, *North Korea Organization Reference Book*, as cited in Lee Kyo-dok et al., *Bukhan cheje-ui haengwija-wa sangho jakyong* [Actors and Their Mutual Interaction in the North Korean Regime] (Seoul: Korea Institute of National Unification, 2009), 79.



Political officers and propaganda officers play an instrumental role in creating a military that is loyal to the Party.²³¹ The KPA's political-ideological education is highly intensive, as it aims to create a socialist army that is superior to its imperialist enemy in political, ideological, spiritual, and moral terms. In particular, the propaganda and agitation department within the political departments at each echelon, the propaganda officers of the battalion-level political departments, and political leaders at the company-level play an important role in the education of soldiers.

231 Lee, *Why Doesn't the KPA Launch a Coup?*, 172.

Day-to-Day Indoctrination in the KPA

In the fall of 2021, the KPA GPB issued “collective study materials” that encouraged KPA personnel to establish a revolutionary spirit by defeating imperialist schemes through ideology.²³² From generals to those in the lower enlisted ranks, all KPA personnel must attend regularly scheduled and *ad hoc* political ideology classes. At the company level and below, the schedule is almost the same for officers and the enlisted. Scheduled ideology study at the company-level and below takes place for two hours on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday for a total of eight hours every week. Saturday is known as “politics day.” The propaganda officer lectures on the current situation facing North Korea. At the battalion-level and above, staff officers spend thirty minutes in self-criticism sessions every Saturday. Afterwards, the unit’s propaganda officer leads political studies. These studies focus on the writings of the three Supreme Leaders and KWP policy.²³³

Every morning before work starts, platoon or company officers or the propaganda officer read the *Rodong Sinmun*, the *Chosun Inmingun* (KPA), *Rodong Chongnyon* (Working Youth) newspapers aloud for thirty minutes. This time is referred to as the *dokbohoe* (reading time). At the battalion-level, this meeting is attended by the battalion’s commander, chief of staff, deputy commander, political officer, SLYL officer, logistics officer, and security officer, as well as the latter’s deputy. These meetings are for every soldier to study Kim Il-sung’s works for thirty minutes. In the afternoon, the unit’s staff officers issue orders and directives, and propaganda officers from the division and brigade convey the Supreme Leader’s directives. These directives must be written into each officer’s notebook.²³⁴

Propagandists’ Party lectures and ideological study are the methods for maintaining tight control over military officers. GPB officers conduct lectures for all regimental commanders through Corps-level officers, frontline commanders, and political officers, Ministry of Defense bureau chiefs and political officers, and General Staff Department bureau chiefs. These lectures are designed to ensure loyalty to the Supreme Leader and the Party as conditions change over time. Below the battalion level, the lecture schedule is set for each month in a separate place. It usually lasts from fifteen days to one month.²³⁵ To increase this indoctrination, the Supreme Leader also holds large-scale conferences for company commanders to improve ideological control over officers. Every unit holds a conference focusing on loyalty to the Party and the Supreme Leader.²³⁶

232 Jeong Tae-Joo, “N.Korea bolsters ideological education in military following restart of inter-Korean hotline,” *Daily NK*, October 5, 2021. <https://www.dailynk.com/english/north-korea-bolsters-ideological-education-military-following-restart-inter-korean-hotline/>.

233 Lee, *Why Doesn't the KPA Launch a Coup?*, 168–69.

234 Ibid.

235 Ibid., 170.

236 Ibid., 171.

All Party members in the KPA are provided with a “Standard Life Participation” notebook. Saturday study, Wednesday lectures, and Friday labor and the evaluation of each are recorded here. These are inspected by each respective Party cell.²³⁷ Every afternoon, the Party cell chief reports to his superior Party committee chief and reflects on the mistakes and problems of Party cell members. Every day, each cell member reports what he or she did well or poorly that day. Company-level officers report to the company Party cell chief. Battalion officers report to the battalion political officer, and regimental officers report to the regimental political officer. The Party cell chief prepares a Party personnel evaluation report that includes his own self-assessment. This is reported to the Party committee chief. The Party committee chief then prepares similar reports and forwards them to the division-level political section, and so on.²³⁸

Examples of North Korean Military Propaganda

The PAD consistently employs its artistic assets to foment anti-Americanism through military propaganda. The art depicts both the Kim regime’s resistance to the U.S. and the U.S. military’s brutality against the North Korean people. Below is a banner demonstrating Kim regime propaganda against “the American imperialist invaders.”²³⁹



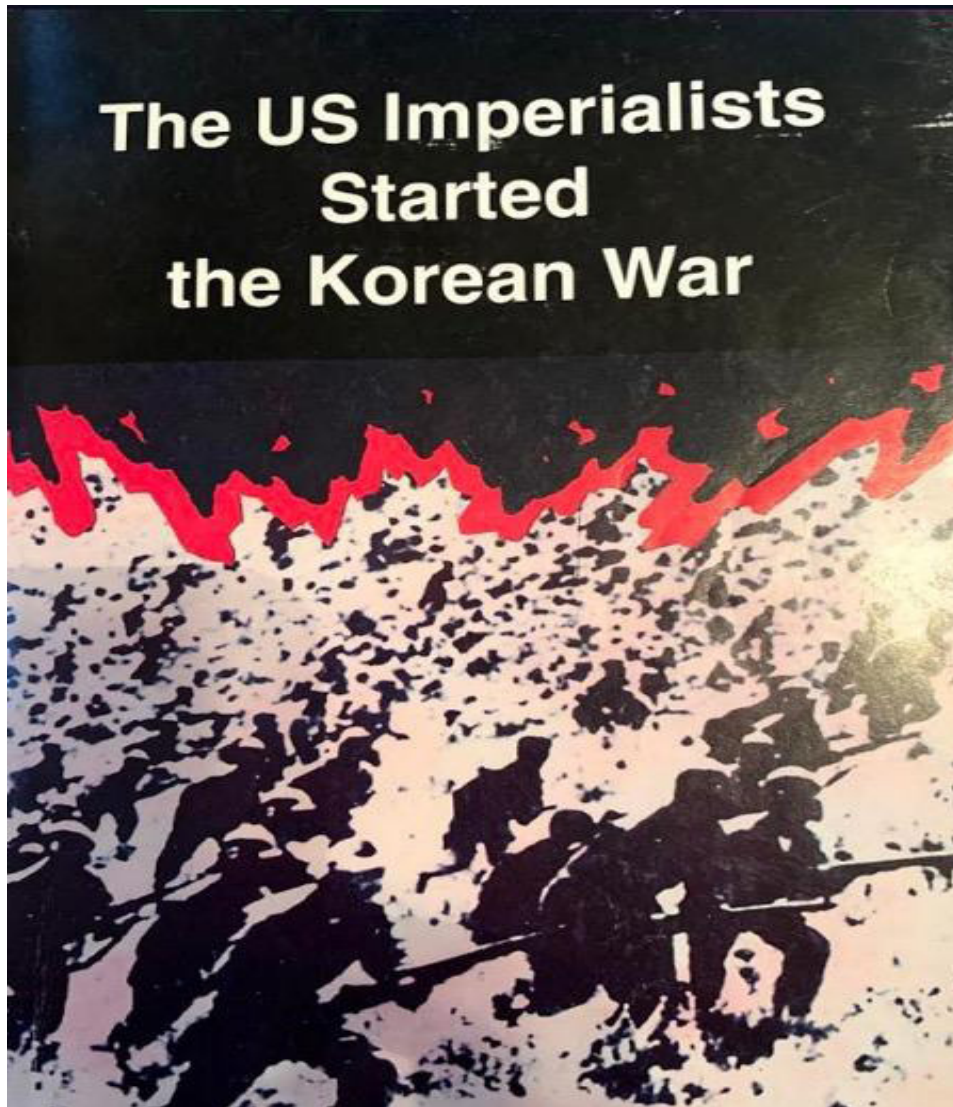
237 Lee, *Why Doesn't the KPA Launch a Coup?.*, 170.

238 Ibid., 178.

239 Photograph of banner at flickr.com. Banner reads “Roots of misery and pain, drive out American imperialist invasion forces.” See link at https://www.flickr.com/photos/x-ray_delta_one/8991693233.

North Korean military propaganda stresses the hostile policies of the U.S. and South Korea. It asserts that South Korea intends to invade North Korea and unify the Korean Peninsula or isolate and weaken North Korea.²⁴⁰ Consequently, the Kim regime sees South Korean and U.S. policy toward North Korea as intended to bring down the Kim regime. The regime sees any talk of freedom as anti-North Korean rhetoric designed to undermine and destroy North Korean society.²⁴¹

For example, the North Korean book pictured below outlines the Korean War for foreign audiences. It falsely claims that the United States initiated the conflict.²⁴²



240 Hyun, "Current Status and Prospects for Liberalization of North Korean Society," 18.

241 Ibid.

242 Ho Jong-Ho, Kang Sok-Hui, and Pak Thae-Ho, *The US Imperialists Started the Korean War* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1993).

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Beyond the Korean War, North Korean propaganda maintains that the “imperialists’ appeasement strategy” that fronts for a military invasion will be met by the KPA with a war of liberation. According to the highest-ranking KWP official to escape to South Korea, Hwang Jang-yop, the Kim regime leadership believes that “As the U.S. wants to ensnare the North Korean people, North Korea must strive all that much harder to resist.”²⁴³

A consistent message to the North Korean people is the concept that the KPA can drive the ROK-U.S. alliance out of the Korean Peninsula. The poster on the next page from 1951 demonstrates the Kim regime’s propaganda, indoctrinating the North Korean people that the KPA is capable of achieving this objective. The banner states “Brave KPA soldiers! Destroy the enemy and advance like thunder to Busan and Jeju Island!”²⁴⁴

243 Hyun, “Current Status and Prospects for Liberalization of North Korean Society,” 18.

244 A key task of the KPA’s operational plan is that the KPA must advance to the major port city of Busan and destroy the forces there to limit the ability of the United States to project forces through Busan.



See link at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/usmcarchives/6815496518/>.

Section 9: PAD and the Cult of Kim Il-sung



The development of the cult of Kim Il-sung and the Kim family’s “Paektu bloodline” was initiated after Kim Il-sung eliminated challenges from various domestic groups through political purges in the late 1950s and the late 1960s.²⁴⁵ In 1953, he led a purge against the indigenous faction, and in 1953 Kim purged Soviet-Korean leader Ho Ka-i. In 1956, Kim eliminated the Yan’an faction and other Soviet Koreans.²⁴⁶ After Kim Il-sung finally eliminated a major challenge to his rule from the Kapsan faction, the Kim regime’s efforts to strengthen his leadership began in earnest. This included the introduction of the mandatory Kim Il-sung badge and the use of the term *Suryong* when referring to Kim Il-sung. This term had not been widely used during the Korean War.²⁴⁷

245 See photo at link <https://www.flickr.com/photos/davidstanleytravel/5063141561/>.

246 Lim, *Kim Jong Il's Leadership of North Korea*, 37.

247 Ibid., 39–40.

The Fifteenth Plenum of the Fourth KWP Central Committee on May 4, 1967 dramatically shifted the focus of North Korean politics to begin the Kim cult in earnest. It introduced the Monolithic Ideology System that required loyalty to Kim Il-sung above all. However, it also had an enormous impact on North Korean society, politics, the personality cult, and the official interpretation of history. Rewriting the country's history involved downplaying the role of the Soviet Union, moving monuments to the Soviets out of public view, and ignoring the maintenance of monuments to Soviet soldiers.²⁴⁸

The development of this personality cult expanded in the 1960s and 1970s, to the point where political opposition to Kim became extremely difficult, if not impossible, by the time Kim Jong-il became the KWP Secretary for Organization and Propaganda in 1973. Furthermore, the introduction of the TPMI made the glorification of Kim Il-sung mandatory for every North Korean citizen. The TPMI were first developed by Kim Yong-ju, Kim Il-sung's brother and the then-Director of the KWP OGD, but Kim Jong-il usurped its supervision and development in 1973 and turned it into the predominant day-to-day ideology for every North Korean.²⁴⁹

Today, the Kim family cult surpasses that of any East European country during the Cold War.²⁵⁰ Every workplace and school maintains a facility that houses a Kim Il-sung research room, a Kim Jong-il study room, and a related meeting hall.²⁵¹ Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il badges, paintings and murals of the two, and statues of and monuments to each of these Supreme Leaders are ubiquitous in North Korea. Songs, theatrical plays, movies, art, and journalistic writings are dominated by the glorification of the Kim leaders. The *Rodong Sinmun* and the Korea Central TV launch propaganda themes that describe Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il as world revolutionary leaders every day.²⁵² All these efforts are dominated by the KWP PAD, and the PAD's propaganda specialists are controlled by the Cadre Section of the OGD.²⁵³ In other words, the OGD and the PAD are the primary political machines that drive the cult of Kim.²⁵⁴

248 Fyodor K. Tertitskiy, "North Korean Narrative of the Second World War: Why the Change?," *Russia in Global Affairs* 19, no. 4 (2021): 164–83. <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/north-korean-narrative/>.

249 *Juche* is the national ideology, whereas TPMI is the dominant ideology for one's personal political life.

250 Myers, *The Cleanest Race*, 37.

251 An et al., *North Korea Ten Years Later*, 242.

252 Ibid., 246. Specifically, the PAD Overseas Propaganda Bureau creates these themes.

253 Hyun Seong-il, "Bukhan nodongdang-ui jojikgujo-wa sahoe tongjehegy-e gwanhan yeongu" [A Study of the KWP's Organizational Structure and Mechanisms of Social Control], Master's Thesis (Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, 1999), 33.

254 The KWP United Front Department (UFD) is also involved in this effort. For example, Kim Jong-il instructed the UFD to create the annals of Kim Il-sung, just like the annals of the Chosun Dynasty. See also Jang, *Kim Jong-un: the Suryong Actor*, 15–16.



Key Elements of the Cult of Kim Il-sung

The proverbial starting points for the Kim cult are the Supreme Leaders' birthplaces.²⁵⁵ The birthplaces of Kim Il-sung (Mangyongdae in Pyongyang) and Kim Jong-il (near Mount Paektu) are memorialized at those locations and are frequently visited by North Koreans, and such visits are often compulsory. Neither birthplace is historically accurate, however. Though Kim Il-sung's father, Kim Hyong-jik, was from Mangyongdae, Kim Il-sung was born in his mother's home in nearby Chilgol.²⁵⁶ Kim Jong-il was born at the Voroshilov Camp in Nikolsk of the Russian Maritime Province, not next to Mount Paektu.²⁵⁷ The regime also creates images to illustrate Kim Il-sung's childhood and youth, as shown on the next page. In particular, the latter is intended to display his leadership qualities as a student.²⁵⁸

255 See photo (above) link at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/jennybento/33012576051/>.

256 Kim Joo-won, "The Truth about Kim Il-sung" [in Korean], *Radio Free Asia*, April 11, 2017. https://www.rfa.org/korean/weekly_program/ae40c528c77cac00c758-c228aca8c9c4-c9c4c2e4/co-so-04112017113521.html; Fyodor Tertitskiy, "Soviet Officer Reveals Secrets of Mangyongdae," *Daily NK*, January 2, 2014. <https://web.archive.org/web/20140211183034/http://www.dailynk.com/english/read.php?num=11335&cataId=nk03600>.

257 Lim, *Kim Jong Il's Leadership of North Korea*, 10–11.

258 *KCNA* photo at Christopher Richardson, "Hagiography of the Kims & the Childhood of Saints: Kim Il-sung," *Sino-NK*, January 31, 2015. <https://sinonk.com/2015/01/31/hagiography-of-the-kims-the-childhood-of-saints-kim-il-sung/>.



North Korea's PAD continues to use legendary stories to justify the Kim family and the KWP's power. For instance, about ten years ago, North Korea's Institute of National Classics of the Institute of Social Sciences published a report that claimed to have found the hideout of the legendary unicorn near Pyongyang. The habitat of the unicorn is related to the myth of King Dongmyeong, the founder of Goguryeo, and the Institute of National Classics of the Institute of Social Sciences claimed that Pyongyang, where the unicorn's hiding place was found, was the center of ancient Korea.²⁵⁹

North Korean research centers have been discrediting the country's international reputation for decades by telling outrageous stories and lies. Everyone knows that the unicorn is an animal that only exists in legends, but it is a bizarre phenomenon that North Korean research groups and media can tell such lies. However, grotesque distortion of reality is a specialty of North Korean propaganda. Looking at the propaganda content of the North Korean authorities over the past 70 years, there have been many cases in which stories that can only come out of fairy tales have been portrayed as reality to justify the hereditary succession of the 3rd generation of the Kim family.

259 Greg Scarlatou, "Unicorn and the Baekdu Lineage Kim Family Worship" [in Korean], *Radio Free Asia*, February 7, 2023. <https://www.rfa.org/korean/commentary/greg/gscu-02062023152905.html>.

For example, the *Rodong Sinmun* reported in an article titled “Unusual natural phenomenon” after the death of North Korean leader Kim Jong-il on December 17, 2011, “The temperature at Mt. Baekdu was extremely cold at minus 22.4 degrees Celsius, and the wind blew strongly at 18 meters per second. Around that evening, suddenly, a thud! It was reported that there was a loud trembling in the ground.” The *Rodong Sinmun* claimed that the tremor that shook heaven and earth continued from December 17, 2011, when Kim Jong-il died, to December 20, 2011. At the time, the *Rodong Sinmun* claimed that such “unusual natural phenomena” had occurred and stepped up its propaganda campaign saying “Comrade Kim Il-sung is a man from heaven.”²⁶⁰

Second, badges portraying Kim Il-sung have become a personal display of loyalty to the Supreme Leader. Early versions of the Kim Il-sung badge were produced by the PAD and worn only by Party members. However, after the Mansudae Art Studio (controlled by the PAD) was tasked with producing the badges, they became more sophisticated. They are not worn on coats, but instead directly over the heart on jackets or inner garments. The badges displaying both Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il were introduced a decade ago.²⁶¹ Badges of Kim Il-sung, and later badges displaying both Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il, are now worn by almost everyone in North Korea.²⁶²

Third, all North Korean households must hang portraits of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il on the most prominent wall in the house, which is usually in the living room. They must be hung square and cleaned regularly. Workplaces and public facilities are required to do the same.²⁶³ At first, only Kim Il-sung’s portrait was displayed. Portraits of Kim Jong-il began to be hung next to Kim Il-sung’s portrait in military buildings and offices in 1975. In 1983, KWP Central Committee offices began to do the same.²⁶⁴ These portraits must always be protected. They are valued so highly under the regime’s ideology that most citizens will risk their lives to save the portraits, even under perilous circumstances. There are numerous examples of such behavior over the decades. One example is the death of seven teachers and

260 Scarlatou, “Unicorn and the Baekdu Lineage Kim Family Worship.”

261 Hyowon Shin, “Behind the evolution of North Korea’s leadership loyalty,” *NK News*, July 30, 2013. <https://www.nknews.org/2013/07/behind-the-evolution-of-north-koreas-leadership-loyalty-badges/>; see also Andrei Lankov, *North of the DMZ: Essays on Daily Life in North Korea* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2007), 7–8.

262 Sung-Chul Yang, “Understanding the North Korean Political Framework,” in Soong Hoom Kil and Chung-in Moon, *Understanding Korean Politics: An Introduction* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 300.

263 Andrei Lankov, *The Real North Korea: Life and Politics in the Failed Stalinist Utopia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 32–36.

264 Lim, *Kim Jong Il’s Leadership of North Korea*, 70.

six students from Songhak High School in Hoeryong, North Hamgyong Province, who lost their lives while trying to recover the portraits of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il during a severe flood in 2016.²⁶⁵

Murals and monuments of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il also dot the North Korean landscape prolifically. Murals of the two are located at schools, universities, and factories. There are at least 265 murals nationwide.²⁶⁶ According to a report from 2021, as the Kim regime built new murals of the Kim family leaders, the North Korean people complained about food shortages in light of the regime's demands for contributions to pay for the murals. Such murals are being built at the borders between counties and local districts.²⁶⁷ As noted in Section 5, even on-site guidance visits to workplace sites, institutions, and military units are marked by commemorative plaques or monuments.

Moreover, the portrayal of the Supreme Leaders is carefully managed in all types of media. The names of the Supreme Leaders are always displayed in bold print in all printed materials. In media presentations, the Supreme Leaders' names are always preceded by a glorifying title. Even published documents cannot be printed where the name of a Supreme Leader is split across two lines, with "Kim" on one line, and "Jong-il" on the next.²⁶⁸ Perhaps no other document celebrates the cult of Kim Il-sung more than Kim Jong-il's presentation of Kim Il-sung's achievements, an example of which is shown on the next page.²⁶⁹

265 Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, 32; see also "Many died saving portraits of Kim from Korea blast," *Irish Times*, April 28, 2004. <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/many-died-saving-portraits-of-kim-from-korea-blast-1.977747>; See also Helene Hofman, "Girl, 14, drowns saving Kim Jong Il portrait in North Korea," *Global Post*, June 27, 2012.

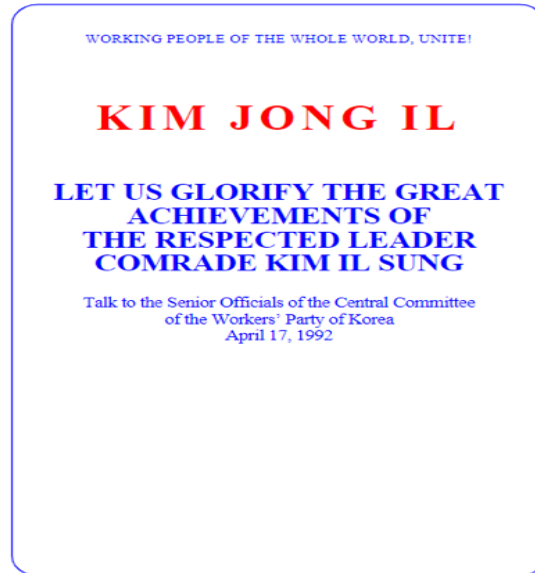
<https://www.pri.org/stories/2012-06-27/girl-14-drowns-saving-kim-jong-il-portrait-north-korea>; Kim Chae-Hwan, "3 die in attempt to salvage Kim portraits amid flooding," *Daily NK*, October 7, 2016. <http://www.dailynk.com/english/read.php?cataId=nk01500&num=14116>.

266 Jacob Bogle, "The Monuments of North Korea," *Access DPRK*, February 27, 2019. <https://mynorthkorea.blogspot.com/2019/02/the-monuments-of-north-korea.html>.

267 Jeong-Yon Park, "North Korea Forces Hungry Citizens to Pay for Propaganda Murals," *Radio Free Asia*, September 30, 2021. <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/korea/murals-09302021161209.html>.

268 "The Bewildering Cult of Kim," *New Focus International*, May 27, 2013. https://web.archive.org/web/20140407074839/http://newfocusintl.com/bewildering-cult-of-kim/?fb_source=pubv1.

269 See also "Let Us Glorify the Great Achievements of The Respected Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung," *Uriminzokkiri*, April 17, 1992. <http://www.uriminzokkiri.com/index.php?ptype=cforev&stype=1&c-type=1&page=1&lang=eng&mtype=view&no=2483&pdf=1>.



The North Korean media further ensures that the Supreme Leader does not take responsibility for failure of any kind. The Kim regime rejects the “wisdom of the crowd” and insists that the wisdom of one individual—the Supreme Leader—is always superior.²⁷⁰ Historically, the Supreme Leader pushes responsibility for ideological shortcomings down on the Party cadre, which in turn pushes blame down on the lower *songbun* masses.²⁷¹ To stress the Kim family leaders’ brilliance, the PAD has even proclaimed that the Kim family invented *Hangul*, the Korean alphabet.²⁷² This could not be further from the truth. In the 15th century, King Sejong commissioned a group of scholars under his authority to create *Hangul* to enable the average Korean to learn to read and write an original Korean alphabet, separate from the traditional Chinese characters used by scholars and officials.

Finally, once a Supreme Leader dies, and during observations of death anniversaries, the Kim regime enacts strict rules of public behavior. After Kim Jong-il died, North Korean citizens who demonstrated insufficient remorse were punished with six months of hard labor.²⁷³ On the tenth anniversary of Kim Jong-il’s death in 2021, Kim Jong-un mandated that nobody in North Korea was allowed to laugh or drink alcohol for eleven days.²⁷⁴

270 Lim, *Kim Jong Il’s Leadership of North Korea*, 88.

271 Collins, *Marked for Life*, 106–107; Hyun, “Current Status and Prospects for Liberalization of North Korean Society,” 15.

272 Thae Yong-Ho, “North Korea must stop false claims about Hangul,” *Daily NK*, October 31, 2019. <https://www.dailynk.com/english/thae-yong-ho-north-korea-must-stop-false-claims-hangul/>.

273 Choi Song-Min, “Harsh Punishments for Poor Mourning,” *Daily NK*, January 11, 2012. <https://www.dailynk.com/english/harsh-punishments-for-poor-mournin/>.

274 Jieun Kim and Changkyu Ahn, “North Koreans forced to mourn on 10th anniversary of former leader’s death,” *Radio Free Asia*, December 13, 2021. <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/korea/mourning-12132021210022.html>.

Developments under Kim Jong-un

Since Kim Jong-un came to power, North Korean propaganda has gone to great lengths to glorify the new Supreme Leader. According to *Daily NK*, a ninety-page KWP document entitled “Notebook of an Agitation Official” promotes the “greatness” of Kim Jong-un. Although this document places Kim Jong-un behind Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il, it places him above his grandmother, Kim Chong-suk, and insists that only Kim Jong-un can ensure the legacy of past Supreme Leaders.²⁷⁵ The PAD also presented Kim Jong-un as an equal to President Trump. *KCNA* quoted Kim as saying, “the relationship between him and President Trump is special.” Whether Kim said as much or the PAD created the message is irrelevant, as it is consistent with the theme of presenting Kim as a wise and brilliant leader even on the international stage.²⁷⁶

Recent reports indicate that Kim Jong-un has removed portraits of his grandfather and father from official meetings. The term “Kim Jong-un-ism” is also being used within the Party.²⁷⁷ How far this will go remains to be seen. Kim Jong-un has reportedly directed North Korean propagandists to focus more on his “human” side than “mystifying” him.²⁷⁸ That has not happened, however, likely because of inertia in the regime’s propaganda themes and messages. For example, the *Rodong Sinmun* wrote in its June 28, 2021 edition about Kim Jong-un and his “10 years of great revolutionary guidance shining in triumph and glory.”²⁷⁹

275 Ha Yoon-Ah, “Efforts ramp up to promote Kim Jong-un personality cult,” *Daily NK*, November 12, 2018. <https://www.dailynk.com/english/efforts-ramp-up-to-promote-kim-jong-un-personality-cult/>.

276 Joyce Lee, “North Korea’s Kim Jong-un and Trump have ‘special’ relationship: KCNA,” *Reuters*, October 24, 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-usa/north-koreas-kim-jong-un-and-trump-have-special-relationship-kcna-idUSKBN1X22O3>.

277 Lee Haye-ah, “N.K. leader loses 20 kilograms, has no health issues: Seoul’s spy agency,” *Yonhap News*, October 28, 2021. <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20211028010952315>.

278 Koh Byung-joon, “N. Korea’s myth-making approach shows signs of change under young leader: experts,” *Yonhap News*, March 11, 2019. <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20190311004951325>.

279 Jeong Yong-soo, “Ten years of standing on his own,” *Korea JoongAng Daily*, July 4, 2021. <https://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/2021/07/04/opinion/columns/North-Korea-North-Korean-leader-Kim-Jongun/20210704193100309.html>.

Section 10: PAD Leaders, Past and Present

Kim Jong-un (김정은)

As North Korea's Supreme Leader, Kim Jong-un has the ultimate authority over the PAD's activities and the themes and messages contained in the media content that it oversees.²⁸⁰ The Kim regime has stressed that the Supreme Leader, the Party, and the North Korean people have one mind to block out Western influence because the West isolates and threatens the Kim regime. The prevailing thought is, and has been, "if socialism falls, what kind of frightening society will we face?"²⁸¹ Outside of total loyalty and obedience to the Supreme Leader and the Party, freedom and authority are suppressed to the point of making North Korea arguably the most totalitarian state in the world.²⁸² The PAD produced and carried out propaganda to support the hereditary transfer of power after Kim Jong-il's death in 2011, and it continues to play a vital role in Kim Jong-un's current efforts to consolidate power.

Joo Chang-il (주창일)

Joo Chang-il was appointed the Director of the Propaganda and Agitation Department in February 2022. He has previously served as the Kim Il-sung University Philosophy Department dean and vice-president. He may have also served as the KWP Culture and Arts Department. Little else is known about him.²⁸³

280 Unless otherwise specified, all profile photos in this chapter are taken from an online database maintained by the Republic of Korea's Ministry of Unification at <https://nkinfo.unikorea.go.kr/nkp/theme/peopleList.do>.

281 Hyun, "Current Status and Prospects for Liberalization of North Korean Society," 10.

282 Ibid., 1.

283 Ha Yoon-ah, "북한 노동당 핵심부서 선전선동부장 주창일...문화예술부장은 불명" [Joo Chang-il is Director of KWP PAD, while Director of Culture and Arts is Unclear], *Daily NK*, March 17, 2022. <https://www.dailynk.com/%EB%B6%81%ED%95%9C-%EB%85%B8%EB%8F%99%EB%8B%B9-%ED%95%B5%EC%8B%AC%EB%B6%80%EC%84%9C-%EC%84%A0%EC%A0%84%EC%84%A0%EB%8F%99%EB%B6%80%EC%9E%A5-%EC%A3%BC%EC%B0%BD%EC%9D%BC%EB%AC%B8%ED%99%94/>.

Kim Yo-jong (김여정)



Kim Yo-jong is a First Vice-Director in the PAD. As the younger sister of North Korea's Supreme Leader, she accompanies Kim Jong-un to on-site visits of all kinds outside of the military field. She spent two years being educated in Switzerland along with Kim Jong-un.²⁸⁴ Kim has reportedly also been appointed as an OGD First Vice-Director and is referred to by other Party cadre as North Korea's "No.2."

In the OGD, issues that require Kim Jong-un's ratification go through Kim Yo-jong. Party cadre are reported to both fear and respect her. Though there has been no official designation of Kim Yo-jong as an OGD First Vice-Director, she is likely treated that way, as the North Korean media always mention her alongside other Party cadre who serve at that level.²⁸⁵ Kim Yo-jong is part of the worshipped "Paektu bloodline," which is considered royal blood within Kim regime ideology, and therefore justifies the continuity of Kim family dominance in North Korea. On November 1, 2017, the U.S. Department of the Treasury placed sanctions on Kim Yo-jong for human rights abuses.²⁸⁶ She has been rumored to have married a college professor with a science background.

Pak Tae-song (박태성)



As of February 2022, Pak Tae-song was replaced as Director of the PAD.²⁸⁷ He was also concurrently a full member of the KWP Politburo. He was known to be one of Kim Jong-un's closest associates. Before his promotion as director of the PAD, Pak served as the KWP Committee Responsible Secretary of South Pyongan Province. Born January 1, 1955, Pak is also a member of the 13th SPA and the KWP

284 Michael Madden, "North Korea's New Propagandist?," *38 North*, August 14, 2015. <http://38north.org/2015/08/mmadden081415/>.

285 "Kim Yo-jong Referred to as the North's No. 2...Cadre Treat Her as an OGD First Vice-Director" [in Korean], *Chosun Ilbo*, March 25, 2014. http://news.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2014/03/25/2014032504324.html.

286 U.S. Department of the Treasury, "Treasury Sanctions Additional North Korean Officials and Entities In Response To The North Korean Regime's Serious Human Rights Abuses and Censorship Activities," November 1, 2017. <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/jl0699.aspx>.

287 A South Korean press report from July 2021 noted that Pak had not been seen in public for nearly six months. See Kim Myong-Seong, "Tae Hyeong-cheol Presumed to be Successor to Choi Sang-geon as KWP Secretary for Science Education" [in Korean], *Chosun Ilbo*, July 12, 2021. https://www.chosun.com/politics/north_korea/2021/07/12/UXXLLOZOZZCDHP3WFLMYJ3Y3HQ/.

Central Committee.²⁸⁸ He was elected as Chairman and a delegate of the SPA, succeeding former Chairman Choi Tae-bok, at the Central Committee of the KWP and the SPA on April 10 to 11, 2019. It is common for OGD leaders to be promoted into provincial and city Party committee chairmanships. Before being promoted to being the director of the PAD, Pak was a Vice Director in the OGD's military directorate.²⁸⁹

Pak Kwang-ho (박광호)



Pak Kwang-ho was a Vice-Chairman of the KWP and a member of the KWP Politburo. He was appointed the Director of the PAD at the second session of the Seventh Party Congress in October 2017.²⁹⁰ Knowledge of Pak's background is very scarce prior to his appointment as the KWP Vice-Chairman. Pak was designated a secondary sanctions risk on December 10, 2018 by the U.S. Treasury Department.²⁹¹

Ri Yong-sik (리영식)

Ri Yong-sik was promoted to First Vice-Director of the PAD in 2019, alongside Kim Yo-jong.²⁹² From 2014 to 2016, Ri served as the editor-in-chief of the *Rodong Sinmun*.²⁹³

288 Cho Jong-hun, "North's KWP Establishes Executive Policy Bureau, Appoints Kim Jong-un Chairman" [in Korean], *Tongil News*, May 10, 2016. <http://www.tongilnews.com/news/articleView.html?idx-no=116571>.

289 Cho Soong-ho, "Pak Tae-song is always at Kim Jong-un's side during on-site guidance visits" [in Korean], *Dong-A Ilbo*, July 3, 2013. <https://www.donga.com/news/Politics/article/all/20130703/56258960/1>.

290 "Choe Ryong-hae Appointed Party OGD Director" [in Korean], *KBS News*, January 11, 2018. <http://news.kbs.co.kr/news/view.do?ncd=3592939>.

291 U.S. Department of the Treasury, "Treasury Sanctions North Korean Officials and Entities in Response to the Regime's Serious Human Rights Abuses and Censorship," December 10, 2018. <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm568>.

292 It is not unusual for KWP departments to have more than one first vice-director under the department director. Usually, the intent is to have each first vice-director to oversee specific areas of a department's mission and tasks.

293 "North Korea's Ri Yong-sik promoted to First Vice-Director of the PAD – Same Title as Kim Yo-jong" [in Korean], *Munhwa Ilbo*, February 16, 2019. <http://www.munhwa.com/news/view.html?no=20190216MW111106932474>.

Kim Ki-nam (김기남)



Kim served as a leader within the PAD for almost seven decades, finally serving as the Director from 1989 to 2017. Born in 1929, he was relieved of his position due to old age and likely due to the rise of Kim Yo-jong within the KWP, the PAD, and the OGD. He has also served as a member of the KWP Politburo. Starting in the 1970s, he assisted Kim Jong-il by glorifying the Kim family and institutionalizing hereditary succession through propaganda and agitation activities.²⁹⁴

Ri Jae-il (리재일)



Ri Jae-il served as a PAD First Vice-Director from May 2004 until his death in February 2021 at the age of 86. He began his PAD career as the assistant editor of the Pyongyang Newspaper (dates unknown). From 2001 to 2004, Ri served as the PAD's Publishing Guidance Bureau chief. Ri was sanctioned in 2017 by UN Security Council Resolution 2356.²⁹⁵

Kwon Hyok-bong (권혁봉)



Kwon Hyok-bong has served for several years as the KWP's political controller of North Korea's art groups, ranging from theater, movies, and orchestras to art troupes. Kwon has been a Vice-Director of the PAD since 2005. He is also an advisor to the Chosun Arts Exchange Association. He was formerly a member of the 12th Supreme People's Assembly (2009–13). In March 1983, he was appointed as the Director-General of the Ministry of Culture and Arts' Film Bureau. In March 1987, Kwon served as the Secretary of the Pyongyang Film Festival organizing committee. In January 1989, Kwon became the Director General of the February 8th Art Film Studio and in 1999, he was appointed as the Director of the Motion Picture Bureau of the Ministry of Culture. Kwon received the Kim Il-Sung Medal in 2011. Born in 1944, Kwon graduated from Kim Il-sung University.²⁹⁶

294 Oh, "Nucleus of Regime Maintenance, KWP OGD and PAD."

295 Lee Sung-hun, "In North Korea, First Vice-Director Ri Jae-il of the Party PAD Dies" [in Korean], *Tongil News*, February 6, 2021. Photo from *Rodong Sinmun*. <http://www.tongilnews.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=201133>; see also Bukhan juyo inmul jeongbo 2020 [North Korea's Key Personnel: 2020] (Seoul: Ministry of Unification, 2020), 454. https://policy.nl.go.kr/search/searchDetail.do?rec_key=SH2_PL20200250883.

296 *North Korea's Key Personnel: 2020*, 45–46; Park Joon-hee and Cho Seong-jin, "Two Koreas to

Choi Ik-kyu (최익규)



Choi Ik-kyu served as the PAD Director from March 2009 to October 2010. He served concurrently as the Chairman of the National Cinema Committee. Born on February 26, 1933, in North Hamgyong Province, Choi also served as the PAD Vice-Director and Minister of Culture.²⁹⁷

Kim Kuk-tae (김국태)



Born on August 27, 1924, Kim Kuk-tae served as the PAD Director on three different tours in 1968, 1971, and 1983. He was later appointed as the Ambassador to Ethiopia in 1977, the KWP Education Department Director in 1984, and the KWP Cadre Department Director in 1985.²⁹⁸

Other notable leaders include:

- Kim To-man (김도만): former PAD Director, removed during the purge of the Kapsan faction in 1967.
- Pak Chang-ok (박창옥): Director, 1950–55
- Pak Yong-bin (박영빈): Director, February 1950–?
- Jong Kyong-hui (정경희): Vice Director, 1961–?
- Kim Hyon-nam (김현남): Director, 2002–?
- Jong Ha-chol (정하철): Vice Director
- Ri Sang-tae (리상태): Vice-Director
- Choi Hui (최휘): First Vice-Director²⁹⁹
- Kim Byong-ho (김병호): Vice-Director
- Ri Il-hwan (리일환)

Hold Working-Level Talks Tomorrow regarding Pyeongchang Olympics” [in Korean], *Munhwa Ilbo*, January 16, 2018. <http://www.munhwa.com/news/view.html?no=2018011601070503019001>.

297 John H. Cha with K.J. Sohn, *Exit Emperor Kim Jong-il: Notes from His Former Mentor* (Bloomington: Abbott Press, 2012), 161.

298 Republic of Korea Ministry of Unification, “Kim Kuk-tae,” accessed March 14, 2022. <https://nkinfo.unikorea.go.kr/nkp/theme/viewPeople.do?nkpmno=912>.

299 Oh, “Nucleus of Regime Maintenance.”

Section 11: North Korea’s Legal Obligations and the PAD’s Human Rights Violations

North Korea is a country of “ideologically-driven behavioral norms that serve a dictator’s objectives *over* the rule of law.”³⁰⁰ As discussed earlier in this report, *de facto* human rights policy is wholly determined by the KWP OGD. Simply put, North Korea is ruled not by law but by ideology.³⁰¹ The PAD is a crucial component of the KWP that controls information and produces propaganda. Thus, the PAD severely infringes on the North Korean people’s fundamental human rights. This section discusses North Korea’s domestic and international legal obligations in relation to the PAD’s activities, and its human rights violations that blatantly breach such obligations.

Notwithstanding the North Korean leader’s reliance on ideology rather than on the state’s domestic and international legal obligations, North Korea has voluntarily promulgated and agreed to uphold its obligations in relation to civil and political rights and economic, social, and cultural rights regarding information, expression, education, political participation, self-determination, and children. Domestically, these legal obligations include North Korea’s Constitution and, internationally, five core international human rights treaties.

Domestic legal obligations

Access to recent North Korean domestic legislation is often limited due to North Korea’s secrecy. When information is released, there are severe inconsistencies. Even if legislation is accessible online, for example, it is difficult to verify whether the legislation is current. This presents a challenge for outside observers trying to understand changes in North Korean law. Such difficulties also reinforce the testimony of North Korean escapees, who said that they did not have access to their own laws either.

As discussed, however, the TPMI and any orders or directives provided by the *Suryong*, enforced by the OGD and implemented by the PAD, hold much more weight than these domestic laws under the North Korean political system. Nevertheless, these laws create—or should create—obligations to respect and uphold certain rights.

300 Robert Collins, *Denied from the Start: Human Rights at the Local Level in North Korea* (Washington, D.C.: Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2018), 8, https://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/Collins_Denied_FINALFINALFINAL_WEB.pdf.

301 Ibid., 41.

DPRK Constitution

The Socialist Constitution of The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (hereafter “the Constitution”), promulgated in 1948, was modeled after the 1936 Stalinist Constitution of the former Soviet Union (USSR), elevating the SPA as the highest organ of State authority in direct resemblance to the USSR's Supreme Soviet.³⁰² Most notably, the 1948 Constitution provided the ability to exercise vast executive and legislative powers. This gave way to the creation of the Presidium, which is associated with “ceremonial authority.”³⁰³ Since then, amendments have been made to the Constitution in 1972, 1992, 1998, 2009, 2012, 2013, 2016, and 2019, in order to *mirror* the current political reality of North Korea.³⁰⁴ Hence, the Constitution allows the DPRK to continue exercising limitless authority without the restraints of legal mechanisms. Dae-Kyu Yoon articulates this well: “Although the Constitution is the highest law in form, it functions merely as a tool of propaganda.”³⁰⁵

In 1972, a key amendment was made to the Constitution, which consolidated the rule of Kim Il-sung as the single dictator of the country (Preamble). Moreover, the concept of private ownership diminished into what we know today as the adoption of Socialist collectivist values of a “classless” society (Art. 25).³⁰⁶ The last known amendment made to the original Constitution was on April 11, 2019.³⁰⁷ One notable change to the recent 2019 Constitution may represent a policy shift from *Juche* (self-reliance) and *Songun* (military-first)—concepts that have lasted in the Constitution for almost fifty years—towards a national ideology of economic construction, the protection of credit, and improving the nation's trade structure.³⁰⁸ For example, while the 2016 Constitution mentioned *Songun* in Articles 3 and 59, the 2019 Constitution removed any reference to *Songun*.³⁰⁹

302 Dae-Kyu Yoon, “The Constitution of North Korea: Its Changes and Implications,” *Fordham International Law Journal* 27, no. 4 (2003): 1292.

303 *Ibid.*, 1293.

304 *Ibid.*

305 *Ibid.*, 1304.

306 *Ibid.*, 1295.

307 Atsuhito Isozaki, “North Korea Revamps Its Constitution,” *The Diplomat*, August 26, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/08/north-korea-revamps-its-constitution/>.

308 “The Socialist Constitution of The Democratic People's Republic of Korea,” National Committee on North Korea, April 29, 2020, Article 36. <https://www.ncnk.org/sites/default/files/DPRK%20constitution%20%282019%29.pdf>.

309 “Korea (Democratic People's Republic of Korea)'s Constitution of 1976 with Amendments through 2016.” Constitute Project, August 26, 2021. https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Peoples_Republic_of_Korea_2016.pdf?lang=en; “The Socialist Constitution of The Democratic People's Republic of Korea,” translated by Daye Gang. *Law and North Korea*, May 21, 2020. <https://www.lawand-northkorea.com/laws/socialist-constitution-2019>.

2016 Constitution

- Art. 3: *The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea is guided in its activities by the **Juche** idea and the **Songun** idea, a world outlook centred on people, a revolutionary ideology for achieving the independence of the masses of the people.* [emphasis added]
- Art. 59: *The mission of the armed forces of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea is to defend the leadership of the revolution, to safeguard the interests of the working people, to defend the socialist system and the gains of the revolution, and to protect the freedom, independence and peace of the country from foreign aggression by implementing the **Songun**-based revolutionary line.* [emphasis added]

2019 Constitution

- Art 3: *The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea is guided in its State-building and activities exclusively by the great ideology of Kimilsung-Kimjongilism.*
- Art. 59: *The mission of the armed forces of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea is to defend to the death the Central Committee of the Party, headed by the great comrade Kim Jong-un; to safeguard the interests of the working people; and to defend the socialist system and the gains of the revolution, freedom, independence and peace of the country from foreign aggression.*

As related to the PAD, the North Korean Constitution provides the right to education (Art. 47), freedom of speech (Art. 67), freedom of religion (Art. 68), the right of petition (Art. 69), freedom of movement (Art. 75), and freedom of privacy (Art. 79).³¹⁰

310 “The Socialist Constitution of The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea,” translated by Daye Gang. *Law and North Korea*, May 21, 2020. <https://www.lawandnorthkorea.com/laws/socialist-constitution-2019>.

The TPMI of Monolithic Ideology (as Related to the DPRK Constitution)

The Kim family regime uses the TPMI, which provide more authority than the Constitution, to shape the daily lives of the North Korean people. The TPMI were first proposed by Kim Yong-ju in 1967 and officially announced by Kim Jong-il in 1974. The TPMI were established to imbue Kim Il-sung's "great revolutionary history and achievements" as a means to be "maintained with respect and protected at all costs."³¹¹ In turn, the TPMI support the regime's ruling policies of the MIS and the MGS.

The TPMI supersede all other laws and regulations, dictating all aspects of a person's life, including severe punishments if one has been found to violate the TPMI. The OGD's enforcement of the TPMI is undeniably oppressive, as the TPMI require citizens to abide by rituals such as *saenghwal chonghwa* (self-criticism sessions) and permit unannounced, intrusive searches of people's homes by inspection guards. It is thus crucial to consider the existence of the TPMI as an instrument of political propaganda and agitation when evaluating the legislative and judiciary power, or lack thereof, of the Constitution.

International legal obligations

North Korea is currently a State Party to five of the nine "core" international human rights treaties: (1) the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), ratified on September 14, 1981; (2) the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), also ratified on September 14, 1981; (3) the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), ratified on September 21, 1990; (4) the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), ratified on February 27, 2001; and (5) the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), most recently ratified on December 6, 2016.³¹²

311 "Ten Principles for the Establishment of the One-Ideology System," *Columbia Law School*, accessed November 8, 2021. http://www2.law.columbia.edu/course_00S_L9436_001/North%20Korea%20materials/10%20principles%20of%20juche.html.

312 UN Treaty Body Database, "Ratification Status for Democratic People's Republic of Korea," accessed April 7, 2021, https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=47&Lang=EN. It is also important to note that North Korea attempted to withdraw from the ICCPR in 1997, but the HRC issued General Comment No. 26 stating that withdrawal was, in fact, not possible. The notice to withdraw from the treaty was never officially reversed. See Ben Willis, "Scrutinizing North Korea's Record on Civil and Political Rights: The New ICCPR Reporting Cycle," *38 North*, September 2, 2021, <https://www.38north.org/2021/09/scrutinizing-north-koreas-record-on-civil-and-political-rights-the-new-iccpr-reporting-cycle/>.

By becoming a party to these treaties, North Korea obligated itself to respect, protect, and fulfill the internationally recognized human rights laid out in these texts. In the context of North Korea's propaganda and information-controlled environment, this includes the following human rights enshrined in the ICCPR, ICESCR, and the CRC:

- The right to self-determination (ICESCR, Art. 1; ICCPR, Art. 1)
- The right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion (ICCPR, Art. 18; CRC, Art. 14)
- The rights to hold opinions without interference and to freedom of expression (ICCPR, Art. 19; UDHR, Art. 19; CRC, Art. 13)
- The right to participate in public affairs, voting rights, and the right of equal access to public service (ICCPR, Art. 25)
- The right to liberty and security (ICCPR, Art. 9)
- The right to humane treatment of persons deprived of their liberty (ICCPR, Art. 10)
- The right to life (ICCPR, Art. 6)
- The right to take part in cultural life (ICESCR, Art. 15)
- No one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his honor and reputation (ICCPR, Art. 17)
- The right to the liberty of movement (ICCPR, Art. 12)
- Prohibition of propaganda for war and inciting national, racial or religious hatred (ICCPR, Art. 20(2))
- The right to freedom of information (CRC, Art. 17)

TPMI: the Right to Self-Determination

A constitution typically provides a list of rights and stipulates limits on government authority to ensure that these rights are protected. However, the Constitution *least impacts* a North Korean person's way of life. Instead, the TPMI shape political life. The TPMI represent a violation of the ICESCR and the ICCPR's Art. (1) the right to self-determination, which is also embodied in Art. 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).³¹³ In

313 UN General Assembly, *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICCPR)*, December 16, 1966, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 993, p. 3; UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)*, 10 December 1948, 217 A (III), <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.

principle, this right allows one to choose their own political status and to determine their own form of economic, cultural, and social development. To exercise this right is to be provided the freedom to make a choice as a means to determine one's own destiny.³¹⁴ However, in North Korea, citizens do not have this freedom. Instead, they must abide by the collectivist values as outlined by the KWP, and to the Party's directives, which are promoted by the PAD.

If a person violates the TPMI, he or she is severely punished.³¹⁵ North Korea's arrest, interrogation, and detention practices are also violations of human rights based on its treaty obligations under the ICCPR. These issues are discussed in more detail below.

Promoting the Suryong at the cost of individual rights, including the right to freedom of religion, the right to freedom of expression, and the right to participate in public affairs

The North Korean regime sustains the *Suryong*'s survival at the expense of the North Korean people's individual freedoms. The PAD carries out tasks that publicize the main points of the ideological lessons of revolutionary historical sites, historical battle sites, and revolutionary ideological research. These tasks serve to ideologically justify the Kim family's rule. North Koreans are not allowed to criticize the *Suryong*, discuss ideas that could be seen as anti-State, practice a religion—although this right is guaranteed in the Constitution (Art. 68)—or exercise free thought, because doing so would be seen as a threat to the State. To stay out of trouble with the KWP OGD, North Koreans must live their lives in a way that glorifies the Kim family. As such, the PAD's promotion of the *Suryong* violates the ICCPR's right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion (Art. 18), the right to hold opinions without interference (Art. 19(1)), and the freedom of expression (Art. 19(2)).³¹⁶

314 Unrepresented Nations & Peoples Organization (UNPO), "Self-determination," *UNPO*, September 21, 2021, <https://unpo.org/article/4957>.

315 North Korea has a criminal code, originally adopted in 1990, that was last publicly known to have been updated in 2022. The DPRK Criminal Law is important in that its stated purpose is for "instituting a proper system of penal responsibility and punishment for crimes..." However, as David Hawk points out, while many of the stated crimes in the code are generally understood to constitute traditional crimes, or "universally understood criminal acts," some are not. In fact, some "crimes" as written in the code violate internationally accepted human rights and fundamental freedoms. The regime has a legal basis in the criminal code to arrest, detain, sentence, and punish North Koreans who are found guilty of acts that democratic governments, for example, would not label as criminal. See David Hawk and Amanda Mortwedt Oh, *The Parallel Gulag: North Korea's "An-jeon-bu" Prison Camps* (Washington, D.C.: Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2017), 18–22. https://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/Hawk_The_Parallel_Gulag_Web.pdf.

316 UN General Assembly, *ICCPR*, December 16, 1966, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 999, p. 171, Arts. 18 (1), 18 (2), 19 (1), 19 (2) and 25.

The PAD also aids in the violation of the right to participate in public affairs, voting rights, and the right of equal access to public service (ICCPR, Art. 25). It is especially important to note the violation of the right to participate in public affairs. There is no democratic process in North Korea, and there are no opportunities to take part in North Korea's public affairs due to policies that uphold the *Suryong's* absolute authority. This is also a violation of Art. 67 of North Korea's Constitution, in which citizens are guaranteed the conditions for the "free activities of democratic political parties and social organizations."³¹⁷

However, the un-democratic voting process is exacerbated by extremely limited access to information and barriers to any meaningful political opposition, due to the KWP's legal control over all national institutions as granted in Art. 6 of the Constitution.³¹⁸ As a result, many North Korean citizens do not know who their representatives are, let alone who they should vote for. Regardless, there is no real freedom of choice when it comes to voting for a political candidate. Anyone who is seen to be disloyal to the Kim family is at great risk for being punished for anti-State acts.

"Least free press in the world": The right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, and the right to freedom of expression

The PAD controls literature, films, newspapers, publications, historical sites, and the arts, as well as guidance work for the Party and central institutions. The PAD also controls all themes, messages, and articles. The primary effort of the state-controlled North Korean media is to support the *Suryong* by executing the KWP OGD's guidance. For example, the PAD promotes individual loyalty to the *Suryong* by designing media broadcasts, published material, and educational content to glorify the Kim family regime. The PAD-controlled media has the responsibility to promote and defend Party policy and broadcast North Korea's superiority compared to the outside world.

The North Korean media does not provide the North Korean people with perspectives other than what is approved by the KWP. There are varying punishments for the "crimes" of possessing, distributing, or accessing foreign media content. Moreover, the PAD manages propaganda direction and content, which forces citizens to accept the ruling ideology of *Juche*.

317 *The Socialist Constitution of The Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, 2019, <https://www.ncnk.org/sites/default/files/DPRK%20constitution%20%282019%29.pdf>.

318 People for Successful COrean REunification (PSCORE), *PSCORE Comments and Textual Suggestions on the Draft Convention on the Right to Development For Consideration of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*, August 2021, A/HRC/WG.2/21/2, 3.

North Korea has the least free press in the world, despite the right to the freedom of “speech” and the “press” afforded to North Koreans under Art. 67 of its Constitution.³¹⁹ The right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion (Art. 18) and the right to freedom of expression (Art. 19) are also enshrined in the ICCPR.³²⁰ Additionally, these rights are enshrined in the UDHR in Arts. 18 and 19, respectively. Art. 19 of the ICCPR specifies that the right to freedom of expression “shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.”³²¹

There are serious criminal implications for North Koreans who access foreign content or information not approved by the KWP OGD or PAD. For example, Art. 185 of North Korea’s Criminal Law stipulates that the following act is a crime: “A person who has listened to enemy broadcasts or collected, stored or disseminated hostile goods without a purpose against the nation.”³²² Under this law, this act is regarded as a crime of “impairment of the socialist culture.” Depending on the severity of the crime committed, an individual can be sentenced from less than one year to up to ten years in detention. The type of detention facility that an individual is sent to also depends on the assessed severity of the crime. Based on former prisoner testimony, treatment, and conditions inside North Korea’s detention facilities represent some of the most egregious human rights violations known to mankind. Escapee testimony has repeatedly provided evidence of violations of the ICCPR’s right to liberty and security (Art. 9) and right to the humane treatment of persons deprived of their liberty (Art. 10).³²³ In addition, the 2014 UN COI found evidence to reasonably conclude that crimes against humanity are committed in North Korea’s detention facilities, including both in its extrajudicial political prison camps—which are omitted from the North Korean Criminal Law—and its “ordinary prisons,” which include the facilities implicated in the Criminal Law, including the *kyo-hwa-so* (long-term prison-labor camps) and the *ro-dong-dan-ryeon-dae* (short-term labor training centers).

319 “The Socialist Constitution of The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea,” *National Committee on North Korea*, April 29, 2020. <https://www.ncnk.org/sites/default/files/DPRK%20constitution%20%282019%29.pdf>.

320 UN General Assembly, *ICCPR*, December 16, 1966, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 999, p. 171. Arts. 18(1), 18(2), 19(1), and 19(2).

321 UN General Assembly, *ICCPR*, December 16, 1966, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 999, p. 171. Art. 19(2).

322 “Criminal Law of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea,” translated by Daye Gang. *Law and North Korea*, September 1, 2020. <https://www.lawandnorthkorea.com/laws/criminal-law-2015>.

323 UN General Assembly, *ICCPR*, December 16, 1966, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 999, 171.

In 2020 and 2021, there were reports of new North Korean laws that may violate the international human rights treaties which North Korea has obligated itself to uphold. For one, news reports discuss a “Law on Elimination of Reactionary Thought and Culture.”³²⁴ This law was adopted by the SPA in December 2020.³²⁵ According to an article published by *38 North*, Article 27 of this law states:

The import or distribution of South Korean movies, TV shows, songs and books is punishable by an indefinite period of reform through labor or death. For people convicted of organizing or encouraging group viewing of the content—considered the highest level of crime—the punishment specified is death...The punishment for those caught watching or possessing the same content is five to 15 years of reform through labor.³²⁶

If accurate, this law violates the freedom of expression and information and severely infringes a person’s right to life if the death penalty is imposed (ICCPR, Art. 6). As Martyn Williams notes, this is one indication that North Korea has “intensified war against foreign content.”³²⁷ This article alone shows that the regime is highlighting South Korean culture with punishments as severe as the death penalty, which indicate that consuming South Korean cultural content is considered a grave crime and poses a serious threat to the Kim family. As three UN special rapporteurs articulated to the DPRK on August 23, 2021, in a joint letter, this law also implicates the right of a person to take part in cultural life, per the ICESCR at Art. 15(1)(a).³²⁸ The PAD bears responsibility for aiding the North Korean regime by shaping a controlled and oppressive information environment, where a person can be killed for organizing a group viewing of a South Korean movie.

324 Also translated as the “Reactionary Ideology and Culture Rejection Law”. See Martyn Williams, “North Korea Intensifies War Against Foreign Influence,” *38 North*, November 10, 2021. <https://www.38north.org/2021/11/north-korea-intensifies-war-against-foreign-influence/>.

325 “12th Plenary Meeting of 14th Presidium of DPRK Supreme People’s Assembly Held,” *KCNA Watch*, December 5, 2020. <https://kcnawatch.org/newstream/1607119391-783331900/12th-plenary-meeting-of-14th-presidium-of-dprk-supreme-peoples-assembly-held/?t=1640677940282>.

326 Williams, “North Korea Intensifies War Against Foreign Influence.”

327 Ibid.

328 “Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression,” OL PRK 5/21, August 23, 2021, <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=26593>.

Saenghwal chonghwa (self-criticism sessions) and political ideology studies: Freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and the freedom of peaceful assembly and association

It was reported that three North Korean soldiers were sent back to their military base for imitating a dance from the South Korean boyband BTS's "Blood, Sweat & Tears." Their alleged crime was "imitating a corrupt dance from South Chosun [South Korea]," which was deemed by the authorities as "ideologically corrupt to the core."³²⁹

The regime regulates the ideological and social life of every socio-political class, including through weekly and monthly *saenghwal chonghwa* and political ideology studies. *Saenghwal chonghwa* and political ideology studies are a clear violation of the ICCPR's right to freedom of expression and the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. These rights are also reflected in the CRC's Arts. 13 and 14, respectively.³³⁰ Controlling citizens' expression or communication with one another violates the aforementioned rights. As all citizens are forced to attend these state-sponsored sessions while being monitored closely by authorities, it obstructs any opportunities to vocalize criticism of the regime. It is also a violation of Art. 17 of the ICCPR, which states that "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his honor and reputation."

Furthermore, in accordance with the Criminal Law, the "fabrication and dissemination of false rumours" about the State is also considered a criminal act as per Art. 211, which can lead to sentencing to short-term labor term of up to a year.³³¹ This means that those who express dissatisfaction or opposing opinions against the State can be punished according to North Korea's Criminal Law. As a result, no member of the public can express dissenting opinions without fear of being punished by the State.

329 Jeong Tae-Joo, "Soldiers in trouble for doing BTS's "Blood, Sweat & Tears" dance moves," *Daily NK*, August 13, 2020, <https://www.dailynk.com/english/soldiers-trouble-doing-bts-blood-sweat-tears-dance-moves/>.

330 UN General Assembly, *ICCPR*, December 16, 1966, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 999, p. 171, Arts. 18(1), 1(2), 19(1) and 19(2), UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)*, November 20, 1989, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1577, p. 3, Arts. 13 and 14.

331 "Criminal Law of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea," translated by Daye Gang. *Law and North Korea*, September 1, 2020. <https://www.lawandnorthkorea.com/laws/criminal-law-2015>.

This is a direct violation of Art. 69 of the Constitution, in which citizens are entitled to submit complaints and petitions.³³² This reflects the Constitution's limited authority relative to the KWP's ideology and the Criminal Law. This is also a violation of the right to hold opinions without interference, as per Art. 19(1) of the ICCPR.

In 2021, it was reported that due to the lack of senior welfare centers, elderly citizens are gathering outdoors in public spaces such as parks during their free time to criticize the KWP and the socialist system. As a result, the government is “cracking down” on these gatherings. If accurate, this is another example of North Korea's willingness to violate its citizens' right to hold opinions without interference and the right to freedom of expression. The North Korean regime justifies the crackdown by claiming the gatherings are illegal under the “National Emergency Quarantine Act,” which forbids large group gatherings in public spaces.³³³ When a citizen complains about the hardships of life and makes anti-Party comments, this threatens the KWP's OGD absolute authority over North Korean society. This also counters the PAD's efforts to strengthen ideological and political control over the population. To the regime's misfortune, it seems that elderly citizens are “not scared that they could be arrested,” which may be attributed to the growing dissatisfaction of the elderly population with having lived their whole life under the regime.³³⁴

Yet, the UN special rapporteurs have reminded the DPRK that in addition to the rights it should guarantee under its human rights treaties, any restrictions on these rights should meet international human rights standards, including those found in the ICCPR Art. 19(3) and Art. 20.³³⁵ They also highlighted that “any limitations to the right to take part in cultural life must pursue a legitimate aim, be compatible with the nature of this right, be strictly necessary for the promotion of general welfare in a democratic society, and be proportionate.”³³⁶

332 “The Socialist Constitution of The Democratic People's Republic of Korea,” National Committee on North Korea, April 29, 2020. <https://www.ncnk.org/sites/default/files/DPRK%20constitution%20%282019%29.pdf>.

333 Chang-Gyu Ahn, “North Korea cracks down on senior citizen gatherings to stymie criticism,” *Radio Free Asia*, October 20, 2021, translated by Claire Lee, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/korea/elderly-10202021184817.html>.

334 Ibid.

335 “Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression,” OL PRK 5/21, 3.

336 Ibid.

Mass surveillance: freedom of movement and the right to privacy

Mass surveillance is a routine practice in North Korea. Monitoring of citizens begins with the *inminbanjang* (neighborhood unit chief), housing inspections, food distribution system, life necessities distribution system, housing assignment approval system, various special surveillance groups, travel permits, and control of all published material. The *inminban* (neighborhood watch unit), for example, was first established in 1946 following North Korea's "Rural, Urban and Regional People's Committee Act," whereby each neighborhood unit registered the number of households within its jurisdiction to identify persons who belong to each neighborhood unit. The *inminbanjang* closely watches the behavior and personal relations of the inhabitants under their supervision. They supersede the right to privacy, as they are granted the authority to visit homes at any time, day or night. This type of surveillance mechanism is crucial in controlling every single citizen who resides in North Korea. Every piece of information that is either written or published is strictly controlled under the neighborhood surveillance system.

The *inminban*, housing assignment approval system, special surveillance groups, and travel permits are clear violations of the right to the liberty of movement (ICCPR, Art. 12) and the right to privacy (ICCPR, Art. 17).³³⁷ These rights are also stipulated in North Korea's Constitution in Arts. 75 and 79, respectively.

Anti-American and anti-ROK propaganda: Prohibition of propaganda for war and inciting national, racial, or religious hatred

The regime inculcates the North Korean population with anti-South Korean and anti-capitalist concepts, excluding all concepts of freedom. This is arguably a violation of the ICCPR's Art. 20(2).³³⁸ By specifically targeting and "educating" the North Korean population with anti-South Korean and anti-capitalist propaganda, the regime advocates "national, racial or religious hatred," which constitutes an "incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence" as affirmed in the ICCPR.³³⁹ For instance, this type of propaganda is embodied in the Sinchon Museum of American War Atrocities. This museum is used as a center for anti-U.S. propaganda and education.³⁴⁰

337 UN General Assembly, *ICCPR*, December 16, 1966, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 999, p. 171, Arts. 11(1), 17(1) and 17(2).

338 Ibid.

339 Ibid., Article 20 (2).

340 "N.K. leader visits museum to mark atrocities by U.S. during Korean War," *The Korea Herald*, July 23, 2015. <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20150723000426>.

Kim Jong-un's last known visit to the museum was made ahead of the 62nd anniversary of the signing of the armistice. During this visit, he gave instructions to “intensify anti-US education” throughout the exhibition.³⁴¹ Furthermore, he instructed museum administrators to strengthen the anti-imperial and anti-U.S. education programs for younger generations who have never experienced war, as these are “crucial issues related to the fate of the country.”³⁴²

Children's Rights and the PAD

The younger generation of North Korean citizens is a crucial component of the PAD's efforts. The regime stresses ideological education for youth and rooting out non-socialist practices, especially in light of growing economic pressure from sanctions and the COVID pandemic.³⁴³ Children are taught at an early age to idolize the Kim regime. Individualism is taught as egotistical and despicable, and “bourgeois freedom” as reactionary and harmful. Children's education is also based on fear, hatred, and violence. As noted in Section 7, “Those that want greater freedom are identified as thieves and violators, a cancer that should be excised from North Korean society.” The indoctrination of North Korean schoolchildren, both in a school setting and beyond, violates the right to freedom of expression (Art. 13), the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion (Art. 14) and the right to freedom of information (Art. 17) of the CRC.³⁴⁴

Starting from a young age, North Korean schoolchildren must strictly adhere to weekly sessions of *saenghwal chonghwa*. In these public sessions, each student must admit their personal failings and receive criticism in front of their peers. Before they do so, however, they must refer to the TPMI and explain how they have not lived up to those ideals.³⁴⁵ This practice violates the aforementioned rights (Arts. 13, 14, and 17) enshrined in the ICCPR, as children have no freedom to structure their weekly confessions based on any scripture other than the formulaic, state-enforced TPMI. According to Greg Scarlatou, the teachings of the TPMI represent a “quasi-religious cult” which “fills the void that institutionalized religion once

341 “N.K. leader visits museum to mark atrocities by U.S. during Korean War,” *The Korea Herald*, July 23, 2015. <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20150723000426>.

342 Elizabeth Shim, “Kim Jong-un visits anti-U.S. museum ahead of war anniversary,” *UPI*, July 22, 2015. https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2015/07/22/Kim-Jong-Un-visits-anti-US-museum-ahead-of-war-anniversary/9451437617471/.

343 Yi Wonju, “N. Korea to hold Supreme People's Assembly session next month,” *Yonhap News*, August 26, 2021. <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20210826000552325>.

344 UN General Assembly, *CRC*, November 20, 1989, UN, Treaty Series, vol. 1577, 3.

345 Alan Weedon, ‘Welcome to North Korea's political shame circles, where self-criticism is taken to a whole new level,’ *ABC News [AU]*, March 30, 2019. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-03-31/welcome-to-north-koreas-self-criticism-classes/10936152?nw=0&r=Interactive>.

did.”³⁴⁶ This humiliating practice only creates feelings of shame and of social ostracization from their peers, as children are routinely unable to meet the strict standards of the TPMI. This practice continues to be enforced as a method to monitor internal dissent.

Furthermore, the Kim regime does not comply with international standards and norms for education. It bases education on violence and hatred (e.g., a school field day’s theme is “Crush the American”), distorted lessons on history, and indoctrination of young pupils to idolize the Kim regime.³⁴⁷ Jean H. Lee further states that “the systematic indoctrination of anti-Americanism starts as early as kindergarten and is as much a part of the curriculum as learning to count.”³⁴⁸ This is especially worrisome, as children are considered to have extremely impressionable minds. They do not know any better than to accept what they are taught at school, which means that they are prone to become avid believers of the regime’s ideology. This is also due to the fact that the PAD censors any conflicting teachings that may diverge from what the KWP wishes to inform their youth. This can arguably be seen as a violation of the ICCPR’s prohibition of propaganda for war and inciting national, racial or religious hatred (Art. 20).³⁴⁹ Children as young as four years old are taught to play military schoolyard games, where they knock down the “American bastard” and brandish their toy weapons as they attack a dummy of an American soldier. Although not explicitly propaganda for war *per se*, these violent, war-themed messages can be considered a violation of Art. 20.

Although not directly related to the PAD, it is important to also note that North Korea falsely claims that it provides free education to all its pupils, as stipulated in Art. 47 in the Constitution.³⁵⁰ Instead, it offers “free” education in exchange for forced labor as an “alternative form of tuition.”³⁵¹ Forced labor activities include scrapping for bronze, aluminum, copper, paper, iron, and any other material considered to have monetary value. Escapees have also shared testimonies of being forced to do agricultural work, such as harvesting corn and rice, during their school years.³⁵²

346 Ibid.

347 UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, “Alternative Report to the 5th Periodic Report for the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK): Child Labor in the DPRK, Education and Indoctrination,” September 2017, 12. https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CRC/Shared%20Documents/PRK/INT_CRC_NGO_PRK_28906_E.pdf.

348 Jean H. Lee, “In North Korea, learning to hate US starts early,” *The Salt Lake Tribune*, June 23, 2012. <https://archive.sltrib.com/article.php?id=54363300&ctype=CMSID>.

349 UN General Assembly, *ICCPR*, December 16, 1966, UN, Treaty Series, vol. 999, 171.

350 “The Socialist Constitution of The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea,” National Committee on North Korea, April 29, 2020. <https://www.ncnk.org/sites/default/files/DPRK%20constitution%20%282019%29.pdf>.

351 UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, “Alternative Report to the 5th Periodic Report for the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK),” 12.

352 Ibid., 7–8.

PROPAGANDA AND AGITATION DEPARTMENT

Despite being a signatory to the CRC, North Korea fails to protect its children. In accordance with international law, a child must be provided with special protection due to their status as a minor. Moreover, due to the current rights-based culture supported by international human rights law, children are encouraged to develop their own powers of self-determination.³⁵³ This means that practitioners and policymakers must be aware of a child's status as a respectable rights holder.

As such, children and their interests must be protected in order to allow them to gain the capacity to make reasoned decisions, as supported by law. Instead, the PAD carries out practices that restrict the child's ability to develop their own freedom of expression through the coercion of absolute obedience to the TPMI, which in turn supports the MIS and the MGS. By promoting individual loyalty to the *Suryong* from a young age, the PAD plays a crucial role in building future generations of devoted citizens.

Selective Human Rights Engagement at the UN

Since the UN COI report was released in 2014, North Korea has selectively engaged with the UN human rights system in an attempt to “ward off further criticism.”³⁵⁴ For example, there has been a willingness to participate in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process and engage in discussions with the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR).³⁵⁵ However, North Korea fails to meaningfully engage with the ICCPR and ICESCR treaty bodies despite being a signatory to both treaties.

In June 2021, the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) submitted its third periodic report, requesting North Korea to respond to allegations that the State party severely restricts freedom of expression and public access to information. The report requested North Korea to respond to the following:

353 Jane Fortin, *Children's Rights and Developing Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 4.

354 Willis, “Scrutinizing North Korea's Record on Civil and Political Rights: The New ICCPR Reporting Cycle.”

355 Ibid.

(a) discuss the relevant legal framework, including provisions within the Criminal Code criminalizing conspiracy to subvert the State and anti-State propaganda and agitation, and comment on their compatibility with the provisions of the Covenant; (b) clarify the role of the Propaganda and Agitation Department and clarify also to what extent independent media, films, radio broadcasting and entertainment programmes are freely available within the State party; and (c) respond to reports that harsh criminal sanctions, including the death penalty, have been inflicted on individuals for seeking information from sources outside the Government or exercising their freedom of expression.³⁵⁶

The report also requested that North Korea “provide information about who can access the Internet within the State party and whether online content is subject to State control.”³⁵⁷ As of October 2023, North Korea has not responded.³⁵⁸

356 UN Human Rights Committee, *List of issues prior to the submission of the third periodic report of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea**, CCPR/C/PRK/QPR/3, June 22, 2021, 5–6. <https://undocs.org/en/CCPR/C/PRK/QPR/3>.

357 Ibid.

358 UN Treaty Body Database, “Human Rights Bodies,” accessed October 26, 2023. https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/TBSearch.aspx?Lang=En&CountryID=47&ctl00_PlaceHolderMain_radResultsGridChangePage=1_50.

Section 12: The Future of the PAD

Human rights denial in North Korea is shaped by the regime's ideology and the KWP's demand for loyalty from every North Korean. To this effect, the KWP OGD has the ultimate power to control North Korean society.³⁵⁹ It guides the development and execution of the Kim regime's human rights denial policies and practices primarily through the Ministry of State Security, the Ministry of Social Security, and the PAD. North Korea's dual strategy of political terror and propaganda has proven to be effective in suppressing domestic political resistance to the Kim regime. Indoctrination has also played a major role in the Kim regime's survival, complemented by the apparatus of the police state and the gulag state.³⁶⁰

The PAD is the primary tool in ensuring there is no room in North Korean ideology for human rights. It begins its impact on every North Korean individual from birth, arguably far earlier than other tools of oppression employed by the regime. The KWP, through the PAD, designs and structures every North Korean life to be lived for the benefit of the regime. This is enforced through ideology, occupational assignments, socio-political classification, mandated living quarters, and weekly self-critique sessions.

The monitoring of citizens begins with the neighborhood unit chief (*inminbanjang*), housing inspections, the food distribution system (now practically defunct), the distribution of necessities, the housing assignment approval system, various special surveillance groups, travel permits, and control of all published material. The overall objective of these institutions and policies is to enforce complete and continuous loyalty to the regime among every North Korean.³⁶¹

The current condition of the Kim regime's socio-economic control is under great stress due to the coronavirus pandemic and the consequent border closure with China, international sanctions, and the inflow of external information that is giving rise to some awareness, even if limited, of the concept of freedom in the outside world. All three developments are eroding the Kim regime's ability to maintain political and ideological control over the population.

359 See Collins, *North Korea's Organization and Guidance Department*.

360 See discussion of the gulag state at David Maxwell, "The Nature of the Kim Family Regime: The Guerilla Dynasty and the Gulag State," *Foundation for the Defense of Democracy*, February 19, 2020. <https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2020/02/19/the-nature-of-the-kim-family-regime-the-guerrilla-dynasty-and-gulag-state/>.

361 Hyun, "Current Status and Prospects for Liberalization of North Korean Society," 8.

The coronavirus pandemic was both a threat and an opportunity for the regime. It had to maintain a strong defense against the virus because a widespread outbreak would have been devastating to society, the elite, and the military. On the other hand, the pandemic also enabled the regime to implement draconian controls that prevent any popular resistance against the regime. In this context, the PAD would have had to effectively explain coronavirus defense measures in order to provide a cover for the human rights abuses resulting from increased surveillance, security, and punishments.

Comparisons are being made to the “Arduous March” of the mid-1990s. It is possible that current conditions could worsen due to the “perfect storm” of COVID-19, failed harvests, severe food shortages, natural disasters, and sanctions. When combined with control measures that have closed the border to legal trade and smuggling activities, a crackdown on the influx of outside information, and prohibitions on movement and the use of foreign currency, the people have been deprived of the “safety valve” of the markets that was created during the Arduous March. It is this safety valve that enabled a basic level of resilience—that is, the ability to sustain a livelihood—among the population for the past two decades.

The PAD’s propaganda is critical for explaining to the people why they must continue to sacrifice and endure the brutal hardship that is becoming the “new normal.” The regime must justify to the population why a greater sacrifice is required now. Critical to these explanations will be the blame that is placed on external conditions as well as on the United States, South Korea, and the international community, who are all conspiring to harm North Korea according to the regime’s narrative.

What are some of the factors that could shape the future of the North Korean regime, and what is the role of the PAD? The health of Kim Jong-un is an important consideration. It is debatable whether North Korea’s second-tier leaders will accept Kim Jong-un’s sister, Kim Yo-jong, as a successor should Kim Jong-un pass away without a son. The key question is whether acceptance of the Paektu bloodline is more important than the fact that Kim Yo-jong is a woman. Kim Jong-un’s children are still far too young to replace him, and this will be the case for many years to come.

Should Kim Jong-un die early, there are several succession scenarios. First, there could be a loss of political stability, leading to a military coup d’état. Second, there could be a war between North Korea and South Korea, caused by miscalculations in decision-making that lead North Korea to initiate such a conflict. Finally, there could be a civil war between political-military factions. Any of these scenarios could lead to the KWP losing control over both society and the military. Furthermore, and most importantly, all of these scenarios will immediately lead to an escalation of human rights denial in North Korean society. Certainly, each of the scenarios would result in the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians.

PROPAGANDA AND AGITATION DEPARTMENT

The PAD may become ineffective if political instability leads to chaos. PAD personnel would likely find themselves taking sides within such a political division, negating the effectiveness of the institution as a whole. However, whoever assumes power will need the full capabilities of the PAD to provide ideological support to the new leader. The combination of an effective PAD and continued human rights denial are required for political survival. This means that the people of North Korea will continue to suffer horrendously.

There is, in North Korea, a growing understanding that the suffering of the Korean people is a result of deliberate policy decisions by Kim Jong-un. Perhaps the most important role of the PAD is to counter this popular understanding. Knowledge of Kim Jong-un prioritizing the development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, advanced conventional military capabilities, and support to the elite over the welfare of the North Korean people is a threat to regime survival. If the international community embarks on an information campaign to help the Korean people in the north understand how their human rights are being violated, as called for in the 2014 report of the UN Commission of Inquiry, the PAD will go to extreme lengths to counter these ideas. Deprived of a “safety valve,” such as the markets, the people of North Korea will be unable to see a way out of the current crisis when they compare their present plight with the Arduous March. This poses an enormous political challenge for the regime, which will continue to rely on both its brutal security services and the PAD to ensure its survival.



From March 28 to 30, 2022, the KWP hosted a conference for PAD workers, focusing on five issues:

- “emphasizing the need to color the Party and all of society with the revolutionary ideology of Comrade Kim Jong-un, making this the overall objective of the Party’s ideological work”
- “launching an aggressive ideological education campaign to prepare all members of society to become fervent patriots, true loyalists, and followers of the Party Center’s revolutionary ideology”
- “fundamentally innovating the form and method of our party’s ideological work in line with the era of new advancement and dynamism of our revolution”
- “making the whole country pulsate with the ideology of the Party Center by emphasizing intuitive propaganda and intuitive agitation”
- “the anti-reactionary nature of the imperialists’ scheme of cultural and ideological infiltration, as well as its poisonous consequences.”³⁶²

This conference is another sign that propaganda and agitation targeting the North Korean population is now more important than ever before for the Kim Jong-un regime due to the consequences of various international sanctions against North Korea, as well as its failing economic policies.

362 Lee Gye-hwan, “북, 당 선전부문 일꾼강습회 폐강...김정은 총비서 서한 연구” [North Korea Concludes Conference for Propaganda Workers, Focusing on Kim Jong-un’s Instructions], *Tongil News*, March 31, 2022. <https://www.tongilnews.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=204661>. The photo above accompanies this article.

ANNEX

The Socialist Constitution of The Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Article 47: Right to education

The State shall provide education to all pupils and students free of charge and grant allowances to students at universities and colleges.

Article 67: Freedom of speech, the press, assembly, demonstration and association

Citizens are guaranteed freedom of speech, the press, assembly, demonstration and association. The State shall guarantee the conditions for the free activities of democratic political parties and social organizations.

Article 68: Freedom of religion

Citizens have freedom of religious belief. This right is granted through the approval of the construction of religious buildings and the holding of religious ceremonies. Religion must not be used as a pretext for drawing in foreign forces or for harming the State or social order.

Article 69: Right of petition

Citizens are entitled to submit complaints and petitions. The State shall investigate and deal with complaints and petitions impartially as stipulated by law.

Article 75: Freedom of movement

Citizens have freedom of residence and travel.

Article 79: Right to privacy

Citizens are guaranteed inviolability of the person and the home, and privacy of correspondence. No citizen can be placed under control or arrest nor can a citizen's home be searched without a legal warrant.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)

Article 9: Right to liberty and security

Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention. No one shall be deprived of his liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law.

Article 10: Right to humane treatment of persons deprived of their liberty

All persons deprived of their liberty shall be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person.

Article 17: Right to privacy

1. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his honour and reputation.
2. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

Article 18: Right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion

1. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.
2. No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.

Article 19: Right to freedom of opinion and expression

1. Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference.
2. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.

Article 20: Prohibition of propaganda for war and inciting national, racial or religious hatred

1. Any propaganda for war shall be prohibited by law.
2. Any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law.

Article 22: Right to freedom of association

Everyone shall have the right to freedom of association with others, including the right to form and join trade unions for the protection of one's interests.

Article 25: Right to participate in public affairs, voting rights and the right of equal access to public service

Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without any of the distinctions mentioned in article 2 and without unreasonable restrictions:

- (a) To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives;
- (b) To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors;
- (c) To have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his country.

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)

Article 1: Right to self-determination

All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

Article 15: Right to take part in cultural life

The State Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone:

- (a) To take part in cultural life;
- (b) To enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications;
- (c) To benefit from the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

The steps to be taken by the State Parties to the present Covenant to achieve the full realization of this right shall include those necessary for the conservation, the development and the diffusion of science and culture;

The State Parties to the present Covenant undertake to respect the freedom indispensable for scientific research and creative activity;

The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the benefits to be derived from the encouragement and development of international contacts and co-operation in the scientific and cultural fields.

Convention on the Rights of Child (CRC)

Article 13: Right to freedom of expression

The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.

Article 14: Right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion

State Parties shall respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

Article 15: Right to freedom of association and of peaceful assembly

State Parties recognize the rights of the child to freedom of association and to freedom of peaceful assembly.

Article 17: Right to freedom of information

State Parties recognize the important function performed by the mass media and shall ensure that the child has access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health.

PROPAGANDA AND AGITATION DEPARTMENT

To this end, State Parties shall:

- a. Encourage the mass media to disseminate information and material of social and cultural benefit to the child;
- b. Encourage international co-operation in the production, exchange and dissemination of such information and material from a diversity of cultural, national and international sources;
- c. Encourage the production and dissemination of children's books;
- d. Encourage the mass media to have particular regard to the linguistic needs of the child who belongs to a minority group or who is indigenous;
- e. Encourage the development of appropriate guidelines for the protection of the child from information and material injurious to his or her well-being, bearing in mind the provisions of articles 13 and 18.

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