

“North Korea—Failing and Flailing”

By Cindy '17

In recent years, North Korea has considerably increased as a prominent topic in the realm of global politics due to continued threats and tests of nuclear weapons. All of this has the world on high alert. Despite the very real tension of this development, there is few consideration or after thought about why North Korea was originally placed on the international agenda—an extremely oppressive regime governed by totalitarian leadership. Personally, whenever I heard about North Korea in my middle school or high school classes, it was about how strictly the government limited outside information to its citizens. Not only this, but also how deserted the cities are, about daily soldier marches, and how their grocery stores barely contain actual food; the shelves would be lined with empty boxes and containers, contributing to a façade, a menagerie of oppression and injustice against their own people. Furthermore, current media portrayal of North Korea is geopolitical, and as a result, focuses on either Kim Jong-Un or the nuclear crisis—it fails to mention the ongoing humanitarian and refugee crisis in its strive for unification on the Korean peninsula.

Although both issues feed into one another, the issues are not something that is discussed together, they are separated. Human rights activist, Robert Park succinctly describes the situation when he says, “North Korea’s nuclear weaponization and its crimes against its own people are the conjoined twins of the Kim dynasty. They can no longer be treated...as separable and unrelated issues.”¹ Political Scientist Nicholas Eberstadt echoes the same sentiment when he

¹ Robert Park ("The Forgotten Genocide: North Korea's Prison State." *World Affairs* 176, no. 2 (2013): 71. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43554782>.)

comments that “North Korea’s food problem, like its other major economic problems, is the direct consequence of the policies that Pyongyang has carefully selected and relentlessly enforced.”² Since the beginning of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), military operations always received more military funding and food supplies than the rest of the population. Park further emphasizes the need to recognize and bring attention back to the civilians by stating that, “while spending billions on its nuclear program, the Kim regime...was also presiding over a state-induced famine and mass atrocities within its prison camp system that have taken on the proportions of a homemade genocide.”³

This paper focuses on the original reason why North Korea was a hot topic, the issue of human rights violations under its tyrannical government, and how North Korea has effectively redirected public attention from its failing state to its entry as a dangerous and armed nuclear country—its way of flailing for legitimacy and survival as a nation. I investigate this through the analysis of the Asian Underground Railroad, North Korea’s objectives in the international community through its identity as a weak state and development of nuclear arms, and through an evaluation of its portrayal in media.

There is a substantial amount of research and literature about North Korea, from a variety of disciplines, including but not limited to: Political Sciences, History, and Economics. Many of these talk about the Hermit Kingdom and its style of government. Others discuss the research and budget toward the militarization of the country and its interests in nuclear arms. Moreover, there exists substantial information on the humanitarian and refugee crises in North Korea. This in turn, is supported by a growing selection of memoirs that bear testimony to the cruelty of the

² Nicholas Eberstadt (*The End of North Korea*, 1999, 120)

³ Robert Park. ("The Forgotten Genocide: North Korea's Prison State." 2013, 71. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43554782>.)

North Korean government and the extent of deprivation and suffering that the refugees experience. Outside of written accounts, there are also numerous documentaries and movies made about either the ruling Kim family, life in North Korea, or the journey of a defector escaping from North Korea and what experiences that includes. My research is original because it combines the international relations lens of realism in observing the paradoxical survival strategies of the Kim regime in conjunction with research of a holistic perspective at the refugee crisis.

Introduction

North Korea remains the most isolated and closed country in the world today. Its borders are closed off to other countries, but also within. Consequently, it is illegal for the citizens to leave the country without first asking for and obtaining permission from the regime.⁴ More surprising, the citizens are not allowed to travel freely within North Korea to different providences. This serves to prevent any political organizations and riots from happening amongst the people through disbursement of information from more urban areas to more rural providences.⁵ Additionally, the North Koreans are prohibited from listening to or watching broadcasts from other countries. Essentially, anything not government approved, including internet access and very limited international calls; and even then, this is largely only available to the elite.⁶ Mobile phone service was first introduced to the country in 2008, and by 2012, the

⁴ Ahlam Lee (*North Korean Defectors in a New and Competitive Society: Issues and Challenges in Resettlement, Adjustment, and the Learning Process*. 2016, 3)

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

supplying phone company predicted that it provides service to a little more than just about four percent of the NK population.⁷

Despite East and West Germany having operated under opposing ideologies during the Cold War, they were still able to reunify a year after the fall of the Berlin wall in November 1989. On the other hand, the Korean peninsula remains separated and drastically different, a result of opposing ideologies and government styles in communism and capitalism. Not only is North Korea totalitarian and communist, the main ideology taught and pursued by the people is *juche* ideology.⁸ It was developed by the late Hwang Jang-yop, who had defected from North Korea in 1997.⁹ The literal translation of *juche*, is “self-reliant.” Over the years, in pursuit of communism, extreme nationalism, and totalitarianism, North Korea is one of the poorest and secluded nations in the world. On the other hand, South Korea’s pursuit of market capitalism, globalization, and democracy have made it one of the wealthiest and most developed countries in the world.

The North Korean Public Distribution System (PDS) is based off of the *songbun* system.¹⁰ *Songbun* means ascribed status, and is based on the political, social, and economic backgrounds of the individual's direct ancestor(s).¹¹ “*Songbun* classification is deliberately inconsistent with the principle of equality among persons.”¹² Overall, this hierarchy characterizes the individual’s social class, which determines their political standing and degree of loyalty to the regime.¹³ Due to this organization, only the elite live in Pyongyang, and the furthest from the

⁷ Melanie Kirkpatrick (*Escape from North Korea: the untold story of Asia’s Underground Railroad* (New York: Encounter Books, 2012, 256)

⁸ (Lee. 2016,)

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 66

¹¹ Ibid., 31-2

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

capital are those classified in the lowest *songbun*, those in the northeastern part of the country are the poorest, but also the most liberal.¹⁴ As a result, they have received the least amount of food through the North Korean Public Distribution System (PDS), but have also acquired necessary survival skills to cross the border into China because being in the northeastern provinces, they are under less strict surveillance than those in Pyongyang.¹⁵

From the Inside Out

The most revealing and horrific evidence of North Korea comes from defectors and their testimonies. Before the American Civil War, the Underground Railroad helped quickly moved slaves in the south to free states in the north or Canada. Through an efficient network of anonymous safe houses that provided temporary coverage for slaves on the run for freedom, the success rate of escaped slaves increased. In turn, more and more stories of horrific slave experiences aided in changing the attitude toward slavery and created a push strong enough to abolish it. Today, an underground railroad exists in Asia to help North Korean refugees and defectors in escaping from an oppressive and totalitarian nation.

With the fall of the Soviet Union, the North Korean economy dramatically deteriorated. In 1990, its GDP was one tenth of South Korea, despite having the larger industries at the time of separation because of its economic ties with Japan.¹⁶ It was also during the 1990s that more North Koreans attempted escape due to the great famine in the nineties when food became a primary reason for the starving citizens to flee the country.¹⁷ Prior to this, China under Mao Ze Dong did not seem like a significantly better option, and there was the additional risk of

¹⁴ Ibid., 41

¹⁵ Ibid., 41

¹⁶ Christoph Bluth (*Korea*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008)

¹⁷ (Lee, 2006, 29)

successfully escaping China into South Korea,¹⁸ however, after the great famine, the incentive to defect was inspired by the trans-border flow of different cultures between China and North Korea.¹⁹ Additionally, those who wanted to escape from North Korea realized that their lives were in jeopardy whether they stayed or left. Those who chose to escape also must cross either the Tumen or Yalu Rivers. Since the establishment of the Underground Railroad, it has helped about twenty five thousand people.²⁰

This Underground Railroad begins in northeastern China, where it shares a border with North Korea approximately eight hundred and eighty miles long.²¹ A small part of it goes further up north to either Mongolia or Russia, but the majority of it is focused in the Golden Triangle of Southeast Asia.²² The Golden Triangle is made up of Thailand, Laos, and Burma. In many cases, the majority of the safe houses are either religious missionary groups, non-profit organizations, or individual brokers. As a preventative measure against endangering the whole system, although each one operates as a part of the Underground Railroad and is knowledgeable of a few places to further refer or direct the refugees, it is critical that they don't not know the organization in its entirety in case of capture and interrogation.²³

Kim Jong-Un took over as Chairman in North Korea in 2011. One of the first orders he gave was to the border guards: the shoot-to-kill policy for any seen escapees. However, rather than decreasing the number of North Koreans trying to escape altogether, it increased the number of refugees fleeing to Russia by way of the Yalu River, especially when it was frozen.²⁴ North

¹⁸ (Kirkpatrick, 2012, 28)

¹⁹ Ibid., 29

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 9

²² Provided under Notes, there is a map depicting different defector routes.

²³ (Kirkpatrick, 2012, 47)

²⁴ (Lee, 2016)

Korea is largely regarded as a hermit kingdom, a country secluded and enshrouded in mystery to most of the world. However, in an ever globalizing world, North Korea is slowly being exposed, and despite the medial attention it receives for its nuclear missiles, this is largely happening from the inside out.

Defectors and Refugees

There exists what Ahlam Lee refers to as the Black Market (*jangmadang*) generation. This is a generation that constitutes approximately two thirds of current defectors in their twenties and thirties in South Korea²⁵. These young adults do not have the same sentimentality and reverence that the generation before them carry for Kim Il-Sung, and about one fourth will pretend to glorify the Kim regime.²⁶ However, this apparent failure to idolize the Kim Dynasty, especially under Kim Jong-Un has led to a reign of terror and purging of high-ranking officials.²⁷ This has also increased the number of refugees seeking the Underground Railroad to escape.

Resources & Escape Plans

In spite of numerous Christian missionary organizations or non-profit groups willing to help the refugees, almost all of them are working outside of North Korea. As soon as the refugees escape from North Korea and cross into China, the resources become available. One of these is Tim Peters' organization, Helping Hands Korea, which helped begin the new Underground Railroad. Peters mentions that there are increased efforts from both the Chinese and North Korean side in stopping and deterring the network and the number of refugees.²⁸

²⁵ Ibid., 33

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 34

²⁸ (Kirkpatrick, 2012, 52)

However, this Asian Underground Railroad has been set up with what he describes as “separate, secure nodes.”²⁹ Although the resource can direct the refugee to several others along this railroad, no one person knows the entirety of the system.³⁰ This protects against a complete shutdown in the case of capture and torture to a safe house in the operation.³¹ Furthermore, Peters acts as a filter in his part of the Underground Railroad by having to choose between refugees who need help and those who are desperate for help.³² Due to limited funding for his work, these options translate to life and death, and considering which refugee is in more dire need of immediate assistance.

The reality for success in the escape attempts of refugees, is that the earlier they are able to encounter a Christian or a part of the Christian network, the higher their ability to avoid repatriation by China.³³ Kirkpatrick comments that about the desperation of the refugees, that “although they’ve been warned against Christians all their lives, [they] end up turning to Christians for help. This is particularly striking given that some of the Christians are South Koreans or Americans, two other groups...the North Korean regime has demonized.”³⁴

A vital step in aiding the refugees, is adequately camouflaging them. Those who are aiding the refugees teach and dress them appropriately, whether that is to match a certain occupation, or an ordinary Chinese citizen.³⁵ Furthermore, the physical appearance of the refugees are considered, because years of chronic malnutrition have impacted their physical characteristics, such as hair and height.³⁶ Additionally, some of the brokers or missionaries

²⁹ Ibid., 47

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 48

³³ Ibid., 42

³⁴ Ibid., 45

³⁵ Ibid, 10

³⁶ Ibid.

choose to accompany and guide the refugees in China. Their Chinese abilities or appearances acts as another skill and aspect of camouflage.³⁷

In the work of humanitarian groups, their three objectives include shaming Seoul for refusing North Korean refugees, forcing China to protect the refugees, and gaining global publicity for the issue.³⁸ In one example that made global news, refugees were encouraged to force themselves into the embassies of various countries in China in order to seek asylum.³⁹ This became so controversial and successful that China was unable to stop these refugees until they built a wall around their embassy and increased the number of security guards patrolling them.⁴⁰

Assimilation and Victimization

Upon arrival in Seoul, the accepted refugees are thoroughly questioned by South Korean National Intelligence Service (NIS), which lasts at the minimum, one month, and at most, three.⁴¹ The interrogation process is to adequately discern whether or not the individual is indeed a refugee, or a North Korean spy.⁴² North Korean spies have different objectives in posing as a defector. They attempt to discover routes of the Underground Railroad in order to destroy them, sabotage and disrupt South Korean society by creating social chaos, or they are carrying out an assassin on a high ranking North Korean defectors who are revealing too much about the Kim regime.⁴³ Once properly identified as a defector, they are sent to Hanawon.⁴⁴ Hanawon is generally referred to as a reeducation institution for the North Koreans, but is strictly for women

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 223

³⁹ Ibid., 225

⁴⁰ Ibid., 226

⁴¹ (Lee 2016)

⁴² Ibid. 52

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

and children.⁴⁵ The center provides the defectors with room and board, education, vocational training, psychological counseling, and physical examinations.⁴⁶ The time spent here helps the refugees adjust more easily to South Korean society through learning about a democratic and capitalistic society.⁴⁷ It teaches them necessary skills to be competitive and aware.

In spite of various programs designed by the South Korean government to support the defectors, there are those who return. As of 2013, South Korea's Ministry of Unification state that there have been a total of thirteen defectors who have returned to North Korea, although three have recently re-defected to South Korea.⁴⁸ However, it is acknowledged that the ones who have returned have either been lured back and promised better treatment by the Kim regime, or returned after having difficulty adjusting to the South Korean lifestyle.⁴⁹ The difficulty of adjusting to a completely different lifestyle is something that Hyeonsoo Lee also shares in her memoir.

Sadly, many of these defectors that returned are also used as propaganda and featured on North Korean news shows criticizing the South Korean government.⁵⁰ The criticisms include being treated as "sub-human," kidnappings, and torture at the hands of the NIS.⁵¹ This display by the North Korean government directly slanders South Korea. However, contrary to its aim, these displays have actually increased the number of defectors to South Korea.

The testimonies broadcasted to the citizens indirectly mention items that the South Korean government provided for the refugee, such as a house and money.⁵² Most North Koreans

⁴⁵ Raymond Sumner, interview by author, Fort Collins, CO, November 30, 2017.

⁴⁶ (Lee, 2016, 52)

⁴⁷ Ibid., 75-6

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

watching these newscasts hear about these items and understand that what they are watching is scripted and false because it is contradictory. They consider the likelihood of a North Korean defector experiencing maltreatment obtaining a house and money in so short a time on their own very slim.⁵³ In turn, these portrayals help them understand the government aid available to defectors, which acts as an incentive for them to defect. Contrary to the government objective of these stories, the North Koreans watching the program grow suspicious or to distrust their government more as opposed to Seoul because after recognizing the contradictions in the testimony.⁵⁴

Master of Illusion

In various measures of tangible aspects or emotional conditions taken into consideration that are seen as necessary in creating a strong and successful state, such as GDP or the Human Development Index (HDI), North Korea falls short. How then does a state leverage itself in dialogue with the rest of the international community? Accordingly, International Studies professor Christoph Bluth regards this as one of the paradoxes in the Korean situation, “that the weakest state in north-east Asia has been so successful in its negotiations with other powers...China refuses to ‘punish’ North Korea for ‘bad behavior’ and the Republic of Korea is...behaving as the weaker partner, frequently giving in to North Korean demands for aid and political concessions.”⁵⁵ North Korea uses its mystery and *juche* mentality to increase its power

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ (Bluth, 2008, 172)

among other states, but also its weakness of being systemically unstable as a principle asset in negotiations.⁵⁶

Political Scientist, Nicholas Eberstadt adds to the meaning as more than “self-reliant” by describing *juche* diplomacy as “tribute-seeking.”⁵⁷ He clarifies that a tribute is overseas aid that follows the terms established by the recipient rather than the donor.⁵⁸ Furthermore, he believes that through this policy, North Korea is successful because:

“not only [does tribute] strengthen the domestic sinews of the North Korean state but also affirms its international status, validates its international policies, and legitimizes its international authority...by establishing itself as an ever more menacing international security threat. The North Korean state evidently means to compel its neighbors—and even better, its enemies—to propitiate the DPRK with a constant and swelling stream of financial gifts.”⁵⁹

Therefore, it is beneficial for the Kim regime to formalize one-sided economic relationships with the governments most interested, namely those of China, Japan, Russia, South Korea, and the United States.⁶⁰

In the eyes of the Kim regime, what greater international security threat exists than those of nuclear missiles? No matter the situation or context, these weapons garner international attention, and Kim Jong-Un is aware of this. Therefore, he uses it to his advantage in engaging with other countries. According to Bluth, “North Korea is seeking nothing less than a US commitment to the national survival of the DPRK and normalization of relations, as well as significant support to stabilize the economy of the country.”⁶¹ In its desire to survive as a state,

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ (Eberstadt, 1999, 19)

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid. 23

⁶⁰ Ibid., 18, 23

⁶¹ (Bluth, 2008, 155)

North Korea has pursued nuclear weapons in order to receive tribute and attention. Perhaps another point of success, is that this distracts the international community from their ongoing humanitarian and refugee crises as well.

From this perspective, North Korea is successful—it has managed to influence the behavior of countries considered more powerful than itself to behave on their terms and conditions. For this reason, it is only more negligent of the international community to portray or refer to North Korea as “irrational, even mad” because it creates a lack of awareness for the logic and operations of a different system.⁶² This attitude of disregard and dismissal by the international community of the abilities of the Kim regime prophesizes more opportunity for manipulation.

Media Portrayal: A Change in Focus

In December 1998, a charity organization based in Japan broadcast on both Japanese and South Korean television, a video that was secretly shot in North Korea.⁶³ Here, Western journalists describe what they saw:

“[B]arefoot orphans sucking fishbones in a squalid outdoor market; women picking lice from each other’s hair; men wading into a river to fish out the bodies of friends who starved to death or were shot by border guards.

In one scene, an emaciated boy staggers from hunger as the cameraman asks him where he lives. The child is an orphan and lives on what scraps he can find in the open air market. He is clearly close to collapse. In another harrowing scene, a small girl tries to scoop dirty water to drink from a puddle with a plastic bag. Some of the children said they had run away from state-run ‘relief centres’ where the only food was two ladles of corn gruel a day. In some cases, their parents had died or gone away to search for food and never came back.”⁶⁴

⁶² (Eberstadt, 1999, 6)

⁶³ Ibid., 2

⁶⁴ Ibid.

This description comes from illegal footage obtained almost twenty years ago, and captures a glimpse of the daily life that most of the North Korean population live every day. Since the nineties, millions have starved to death⁶⁵, and yet, the world is largely apathetic. Despite the publication of North Korean defector memoirs and the release of numerous documentaries and movies about North Korea, having an impact seems inaccessible, even with movies that are touching, such as *Crossing*. On the contrary, *The Interview*, released in 2014, was swept up in controversy and resulted in a Sony hack that North Korea seems to have committed.⁶⁶ Films, satirical or not, reveal a truth about the issue, in addition to bringing awareness and discussion about it. Afterward, personal actions must stem from movies like these and create an inspiration in education of the topic in order to inspire change, rather than letting movies about human rights be merely vogue.⁶⁷

Intervention Outside of North Korea

Security Dilemma

South Korea: The Lost Decade

The Sunshine Policy was based off Aesop's parable "The North Wind and the Sun."⁶⁸ In the parable, both the wind and sun try to make a traveler remove his cloak. No matter how hard the wind blew, the traveler held onto his cloak tighter, but as the sun came out, the traveler removed his cloak. In this fashion, South Korea would pursue a policy of persuasion and

⁶⁵ Jang-yop Hwang (*North Korean Democratization and Democratic Strategy*. The Zeitgeist, 2008.)

⁶⁶ Alex Altman and Alex Fitzpatrick. "Sony Hack: The Interview, North Korea, and Everything We Know So far." Time. December 18, 2014. Accessed November 30, 2017.<http://time.com/3639275/the-interview-sony-hack-north-korea/>.

⁶⁷ Raymond Sumner, interview by author, Fort Collins, CO, November 30, 2017.

⁶⁸ (Bluth, 2008)

kindness toward North Korea as opposed to blunt force. However, Hwang Jang-yop, expresses his disapproval of the Sunshine Policy, criticizing that “[Kim] put on a more dangerous coat of nuclear weapons thanks to the Sunshine Policy of South Korea.”⁶⁹

The Sunshine Policy was an arrangement from 1998-2008 undertaken by South Korea in its attitude toward North Korea.⁷⁰ First implemented under President Kim Dae Jung and continued by Roh Moo-Hyun, it is considered as the Lost Decade⁷¹, although its design and purpose was to facilitate the eventual reunification of the Korean peninsula through building peaceful relations between the two countries, it was, in reality, deceptive on the South Korean government, and unfortunately beneficial for the North Korean government.⁷² Of the policy, there is criticism that it “effectively signaled that human rights didn't matter. The Sunshine Policy belied its name...it shone ‘no light’ on the North Korean gulag or on the everyday brutality of life in North Korea...the South Korean government ‘kept a lot of what was happening in North Korea in darkness.’”⁷³ On the other hand, after ten years of implementation, the Lee Myung-bak administration ended the Sunshine Policy and instead focused on stricter efforts and a tougher attitude against North Korea by recognizing and respecting their state.⁷⁴

Rather than focusing on rebuilding or adding important infrastructure, the North Korean government used the money from the Sunshine Policy era to strengthen its military and develop nuclear weapons. Their military budget in 1999 was \$2.1 billion and in 2005, increased by almost three hundred percent to a total of six billion dollars.⁷⁵ Furthermore, North Korea made

⁶⁹ (Hwang, 2008, 28)

⁷⁰ (Bluth, 2008, 18)

⁷¹ (Kirkpatrick, 2012, 242-3)

⁷² (Bluth, 2008, 11)

⁷³ (Kirkpatrick, 2012, 205-6).

⁷⁴ Ibid., 242-3

⁷⁵ (Lee, 2016, 12)

no attempt to friendly relations with South Korea. Instead, they continued to attack South Korea, beginning the Second Battle of Yeonpyeong in the Yellow Sea, resulting in casualties on both sides.⁷⁶

Conclusion

North Korea operates under a completely twisted system that combines the ancient feudal system of Korea with 1960s communism. As a result, it is a dictatorial hybrid regime governed by one family that teaches its people that “they live in the greatest, most prosperous nation on earth and that North Koreans are the world’s happiest people.”⁷⁷ They are statistically, one of the poorest countries in the world, yet with their prevailing *juche* ideology that teaches self-reliance and promotes tributes, they have managed to control the international discussion of nuclear weapons. Due to international detachment of the country as powerful, the Kim family has been able to create a strategy based off of this notion. Before the turn of the century, in 1999, Eberstadt writes about weapons of mass destruction in the hands of the North Korean government, claiming them as a “financial and political lifeline for [their] starving, decaying state. By the perverse logic of that design...the...system’s vital interests lie in *magnifying* the deadly risks it can pose to the outside world. Perfecting weaponry with ever greater reach and killing force...increases Pyongyang’s scope.”⁷⁸ Last month, North Korea tested an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) that experts estimate is capable of hitting any part of the

⁷⁶ Ibid., 13

⁷⁷ (Kirkpatrick, 2012, 16)

⁷⁸ (Eberstadt., 1999, 21)

United States⁷⁹—potentially, this may be the turning point in reunification on the Korean peninsula.

Sumner states that a factor in why North Korea has gotten away with actions that committed by any other country would be considered an act of war, is due to the division of North and South Korea on the 38th parallel; this gives Pyongyang an advantage because they are elevated above Seoul.⁸⁰ With estimates that the demilitarized zone (DMZ) between the two countries “has a higher concentration of military firepower than central Europe in the Cold War”⁸¹ and additional assessments that about eighty percent of the North Korean firepower can be deployed from one hundred kilometers of the DMZ, and sixty five percent of North Korean arms can be deployed from within sixty five kilometers of the DMZ,⁸² North Korea can easily kill approximately twenty five million citizens in Seoul.⁸³ Previously, this knowledge was regarded with peace, appeasement, and ignorance. However, with the recent test, citizens of the United States are factored into this situation, which can lead to more direct military intervention, both by Seoul and Washington.

Although the recent test adheres to North Korea’s past attitude, it also demonstrates their state of peril in paradoxes. Firstly, the necessary internal reform that is required completely opposes everything that they advocate as a nation.⁸⁴ Secondly, their desire to remain a sovereign state is responsible for their impending demise—their strict censorship of information flowing

⁷⁹ Alex Lockie. "North Korea just tested a missile that experts say could reach anywhere in the US." *Business Insider*. November 28, 2017. Accessed November 29, 2017. <http://www.businessinsider.com/north-korea-tested-missile-8100-miles-hit-the-entire-us 2017-11>.

⁸⁰ Raymond Sumner, interview by author, Fort Collins, CO, November 30, 2017.

⁸¹ (Bluth, 2008, vi)

⁸² *Ibid.*, 139

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 183

both within and from the country has caused a direct outflow, the defectors. Kirkpatrick elaborates:

“two things that the regime plainly fears: the outflow of its citizens and the inflow of information. Pyongyang’s crackdown on citizens who try to leave reflects the essential insecurity at the core of every totalitarian regime. So, too, does its suppression of information coming from any source other than itself. It is the response of a government that understands just how subversive the truth can be...the regime knows that information, if spread, threatens the very essence of its power.”⁸⁵

As revealed here, the strength of the Kim regime lies in its oppression of its people. But, with the work of the Underground Railroad, the entire state can implode.

Possible Solutions

Following the last point, the Underground Railroad serves as a great resource. Currently, it is made possible by religious groups and non-profit organizations that must supply their own funding, which is incredibly difficult because it is so costly to transport the refugees. However, the power of the Underground Railroad lies in its ability to “nourish the capacities of the North Korean diaspora, and formulate policies to speed along the process of liberation and reunification.”⁸⁶ Furthermore, if the international community became more involved, then the burden that these refugees may pose to one specific country, would be eliminated.⁸⁷

By bringing the Underground Railroad to the surface, awareness for the magnitude of the issue is promoted and uncovered. After this, it becomes a job for the United Nations, to promptly move the refugees and take care of them. This eliminates the heavy flow and settlement of North Koreans in China, because they already have a guaranteed home, South Korea. Furthermore, the

⁸⁵ (Kirkpatrick, 2012, 298)

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

refugees can choose a different country if they wanted to.⁸⁸ Supporting the refugees and acknowledging them relieves the hopes of all North Koreans, and obstructs the desire of the Kim family to keep their atrocities and the humanitarian crisis hidden from the world. In what Kirkpatrick refers to as The Ceausescu Effect, named after longtime Romanian ruler Nicolae Ceausescu, he and his wife were killed after the Romanians rose up against them after the fall of the Berlin Wall.⁸⁹ “As we saw in Eastern Europe twenty years ago and in North Africa and the Middle East during the Arab Spring of our own decade, oppressed people can rise up with incredible speed to challenge even seemingly entrenched dictatorships.”⁹⁰

Currently, the North Korean refugees have no celebrity to garner support or interest in their story and struggles.⁹¹ Suzanne Scholte’s activism has been recognized by South Korea, “at a time when countries are purposefully neglecting the humans rights conditions in North Korea for their political interests.”⁹² As it is a human rights issue, it should be a concern to everyone. It is also important to realize that North Korean refugees are a vital piece to unifying the Korean peninsula and toppling the current North Korean government. First and foremost, they are the best informants, making them the best champions of propaganda for freedom and liberty. Friends and relatives still in North Korea are more likely to listen to stories of life outside the lies of North Korea through word of mouth. On the other side, refugees help bridge the gap between North Korea and the rest of the world. They are the voice to a voiceless society.⁹³ Outside of the regime, without fear or shame, they can bear witness to the cruel behavior of the Kim family in Pyongyang.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 300-2

⁸⁹ Ibid., 305

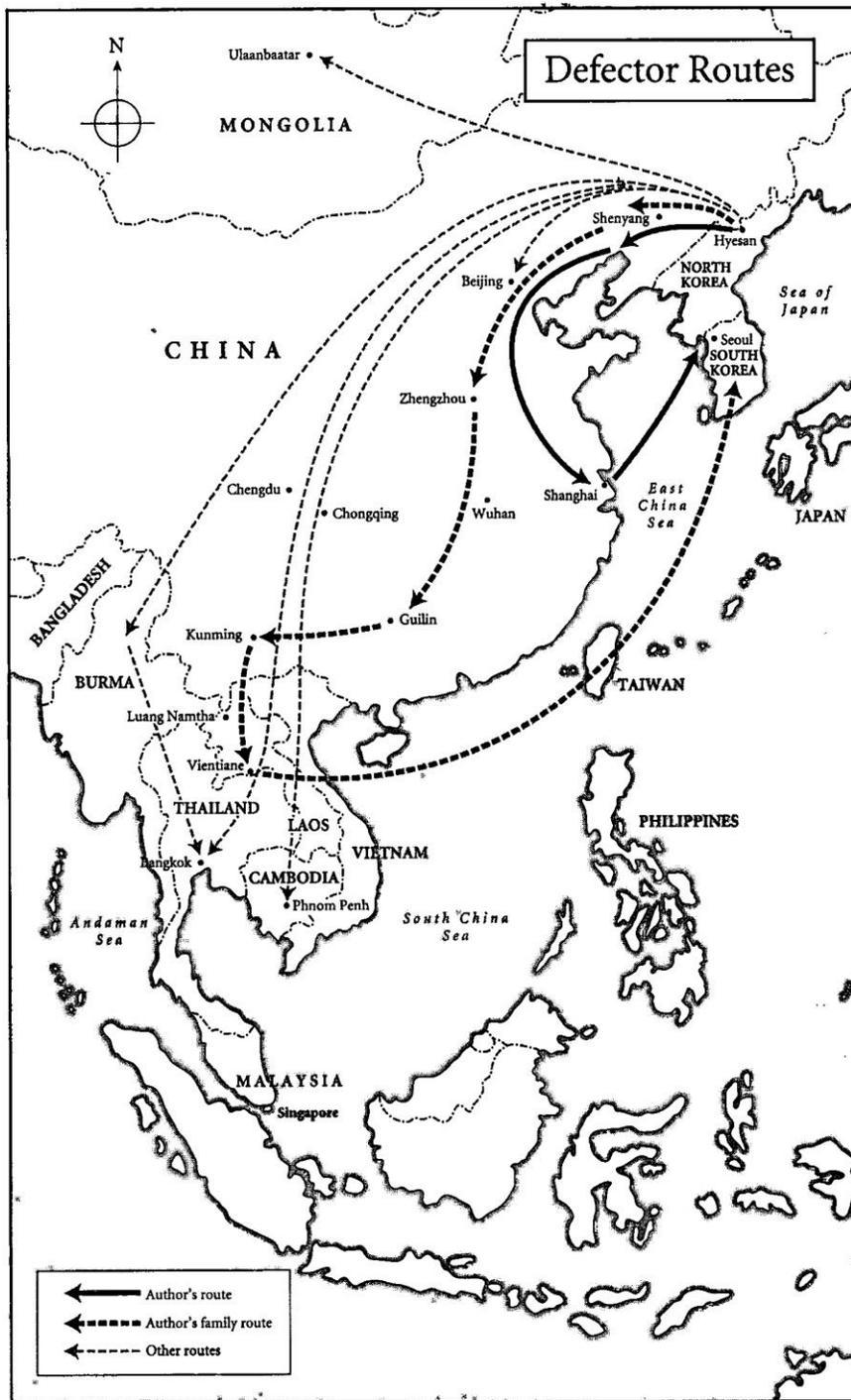
⁹⁰ Ibid., 306

⁹¹ Ibid., 208

⁹² Ibid., 207

⁹³ Ibid., 278-9

Notes



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⁹⁴ Map taken from *The Girl with Seven Names* memoir that shows the routes of the author, Hyeonsoo Lee, but also of others along the border. Does not show routes entering Russia, but shows many routes south that lead to the Golden Triangle in Southeast Asia.

(John Gilkes. *Defector Routes*. William Collins, 2015.)

REV. DISCUSSION

* REFUGEE → MORE LINGUISTIC, INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSON.

* NK HUMAN RIGHTS ACT, 2004, 08, 12, 16

↳ DEFECTING, MORE RAMIFICATIONS, INTERCHANGEABLE, DEFINE & CHOOSE

* SOUTH NE CHINA → MORE ECONOMIC REFUGEE

HOW YOU USE

↳ RIGOROUS PROCESS, EMBASSIES

* HANAWON, JUST BELIEFS & CHILDREN, NOT AS SCARED OR APPREHENSIVE OF

* 1960S UNDERSTANDING, THEY WOULD NEVER SURVIVE

AMERICANS AS YOU'D THINK

* N & S KOREAN DIALECTS, N HAS NO COGNATES, NO TERMINOLOGY

* SOME OF THE HARDEST TO INTEGRATE ARE PROFESSIONALS,

↳ I.E. DOCTORS, 1960S MENTALITY, SECRETARIES

* PREJUDICE, FEEL IT, PERCEIVED SO,

* TIM PETERS → HELPING HONORS KOREA → IN NK

* 07, END OF SUNSHINE POLICY → TOOK MUZZLE OFF DEFECTORS

* HWANG-JONG-UP → '97, 1, KIM FAMILY WANT GIVE UP NUCLEAR WEAPONS

* KIM FAMILY FEARS INFORMATION & REFUGEE MOST,

FEAR OF FOCUS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

* LATE 70s & JONCHU RUSSIANS, GATHERS MORE ATTENTION

BY US, VE TO
TALK ABOUT
NK HUMAN
RIGHTS

* KOREA, JAPAN, CHINA, US → SAME PAGE, KEEPING THEM THERE

* SK CHANGING ITS VIEWS ON NK HUMAN RIGHTS,

* SK MOVIE, CROSSING, PRESSURE TO NOT BE MADE, 2008

↳ MOST BRUTAL & REALISTIC PORTRAYAL

* TERM AMERICA → KIM JONG-IL,

* CHANGE OF FOCUS BEGINS WHEN NK STARTS TESTING NUKEs, 2006

* SEOUL, THEY'VE GOTTEN AWAY 70% BUT 30% THEY CAN EASILY KILL

25 MILLION IN SEOUL

* SUNSHINE POLICY → KEEP SEPARATE BY PUSHING UNIFICATION DOWN THE ROAD

↳ GERMANY COLLAPSED, BUT SK WOULD PAY IT ALL TO BRUNNEN, MODERNITY, PREVENT COLLAPSE

⁹⁵ Notes taken by the author during her interview with current GTA at CSU, Raymond Sumner. Sumner lived approximately fourteen years in South Korea beginning in the late 90s. He was also privileged in visiting Hanawon and speaking with various North Korean defectors, including the late Hwang Jang-Yop. (Raymond Sumner, November 30, 2017. Personal interview).

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