

Romanian Perspectives on Korean Unification: Regime Change and the Romanian Precedent

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Abstract

Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu was a great admirer of North Korean leader Kim Il-sung, attempting to duplicate the personality cult, national-Communism and other aspects of the North Korean dynastic totalitarian regime. Systematic human rights violations were common in both countries. Despite the relentless repression, indoctrination and surveillance, there are several factors that could potentially erode the Kim Family Regime's grip on power, including informal marketization and increased information inflow from the outside world. As such, Romania provides an important precedent for the current situation in North Korea. Of particular note, understanding those factors that conferred legitimacy on the Romanian military enables a deeper appreciation of the military's role in the anti-communist revolution and turbulent times that followed. Kim Jong-il learned from the Romanian experience, adopting a military first policy in North Korea. In contrast, Kim Jong-un has attempted to return some power to the Korean Workers Party. Kim Jong-un's success in gaining the support of the country's elites would be a key factor in avoiding a Romanian-style revolution and obliteration of the top leadership.

Key Words: North Korea, Romania, Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il, Kim Jong-un, Nicolae Ceausescu, Mihai Pacepa, Romanian revolution, Romanian precedent, regime change, human rights denial, UN Commission of Inquiry, apparatchik capitalism, post-communist transition

Introduction

“What the Romanian revolution does demonstrate is that the heroes die, the fighters go home, and opportunists make their way to the fore.”
Professor Dennis J. Deletant, Georgetown University

“Carpathian Genius,” Kim Il-sung’s Disciple

Romania was the one communist country in Europe that came closest to becoming a dynastic totalitarian regime. Nicolae Ceausescu, dubbed the “Carpathian genius” by communist propaganda, was dictator of Romania from 1965 to 1989. Ceausescu made his wife number two in the country’s political hierarchy, and was grooming his youngest son Nicu to assume hereditary leadership of Romania. The leader’s cult of personality, inspired by his good friend Kim Il-sung (whom he visited in 1971, 1978, 1982, and 1988, and hosted three times from 1975 to 1985) drove the country into desperation and bankruptcy.

In 1971, Ceausescu fell deeply in love with Kim Il-sung’s surreal personality cult, national-communism, and self-reliance, or *juche* philosophy.

What Ceausescu loved the most was giving speeches before large crowds of highly regimented people. Third world dictators put on a show for him everywhere he went, but the ones who were absolutely flawless were the North Koreans. That is why, when he first visited North Korea in 1971, it was love at first sight.¹

Following closely in Kim Il-sung’s footsteps, Ceausescu trampled on the human rights of Romanians with impunity. Traveling abroad was severely restricted. The degree of surveillance, control, coercion and punishment exercised by Romania’s Securitate (Departamentul Securitatii Statului, the more or less “secret” political police) attained levels comparable to the Kim Family Regime (KFR) in North Korea. Overwhelmed by food shortages, power outages, human rights violations and political oppression, Romania became Eastern Europe’s “heart of darkness;” the situation was particularly acute in the 1980s. For these and other reasons, comparisons have often been drawn between Ceausescu’s totalitarian state and the KFR in North Korea.

Following a magnitude 7.2 earthquake in March 1977, Ceausescu saw an opportunity to raze large parts of the capital city of Bucharest, once known as “The Little Paris.” The new city would be a Romanian replica of Pyongyang, a city filled with cold, soulless pharaonic structures and gigantic squares where tens of thousands of worshippers gathered to venerate the leader. Ceausescu borrowed astronomic amounts of money from foreign sources in the 1970s to build a notoriously

inefficient industrial sector, the sole purpose of which was to claim self-sufficiency and establish the Romanian brand of *juche*. Unlike Kim Il-sung, he did not default on his debt, but decided to pay it in its entirety, even before the expiration of loan terms. Toward the late 1980s, Ceausescu managed to repay the entire foreign debt by exporting vast amounts of Romanian consumer goods and drastically curtailing imports, resulting in food and energy shortages that challenged the very survival of average citizens. Life in Romania under Ceausescu was the closest Eastern Europeans ever got to experiencing life in North Korea.

North Korea under Kim Jong-un: A Human Rights Perspective

Twenty-eight years after the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, the DPR has not only managed to survive, but it has accomplished two hereditary transmissions of power. Under Kim Jong-un, North Korea's human rights situation continues to remain abysmal. Five trends have defined the human rights situation under the Kim Jong-un regime: 1) an intensive crackdown on attempted defections; 2) an aggressive purge of senior officials, aimed to consolidate the leader's grip on power; 3) a "restructuring" of the political prison camp system, with some facilities, closer to the border with China, being shut down, while inland facilities have been expanded; 4) disproportionate oppression of women, who have assumed primary responsibility for the survival of their families; thus, women represent the majority of those arrested for perceived wrongdoing at the *jangmadang* (markets), or for "illegally" crossing the border; and, 5) the sustained, if not increased, economic importance of the political prison camps.²

In the twenty-first century, North Korea is the only country in the world that is still running a vast system of political prison camps, incarcerating 120,000 men, women and children under gruesome conditions. They are persecuted behind the barbed wire fences of North Korea's political prison camps, subjected to malnutrition, forced labor, torture, and sexual violence, as well as public and secret executions. In 2017, pursuant to *songbun*—a system of social discrimination established in the 1950s—access to food, jobs, and any type of opportunity continues to depend on one's perceived loyalty-based social classification. As a UN member state since 1991, North Korea is bound by the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, and other international human rights instruments it has ratified, including the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, the *International Covenant on*

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, and the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Nonetheless, North Korea violates each and every conceivable human right.

For 69 years, North Korea has been a dynastic totalitarian state ruled by the Kim family. Marshal Kim Jong-un has been the *suryong* (supreme leader) following his father's death in late 2011. Although many analysts hoped Kim Jong-un would be more tolerant and reasonable than his father and grandfather, he has, by some accounts, been far more "aggressive, arrogant and impulsive."³ After all, he was likely chosen to be leader of North Korea despite being the youngest of three sons. Kim Jong-un's selection can be attributed to being the son most likely to follow in his father's footsteps, not because he was seen as a potential reformer. Moreover, while his father was 53 when he became leader of North Korea, Kim Jong-un was only 28 years old. While his father had twenty years to prepare to assume the top leadership position, he only had three. As he attempted to quickly establish a power base during his first four and a half years at the helm, Kim Jong-un purged potential rivals in all four fundamental building blocks of the regime: the Korean People's Army; the Workers' Party (in particular, the Administrative Department); the internal security agencies; and the inner core of the Kim family. The execution of Jang Sung-taek, his uncle and Kim Il-sung's only son-in-law, highlights the unprecedented extent of the purges.

Under the Kim Jong-un regime, North Korea's fundamental strategic objectives have stayed the same: preserving the regime through a domestic policy of human rights denial,⁴ aggressive behavior and diplomatic deception; establishing hegemony over the entire Korean peninsula under the KFR, as the ultimate long-term guarantee of regime survival; maintaining international "relevance" and preserving the regime through the development of nuclear weapons and long-range ballistic missiles; and, continuing to attempt to drive a wedge between the United States and its key strategic allies in Northeast Asia, South Korea and Japan.

The methods the regime has employed to stay in power have persisted: conducting relentless surveillance and control of its people, and punishing those ascertained as disloyal; systematically brainwashing every North Korean, since the pre-cognizant age; and severely restricting the inflow and outflow of information across the borders. The nation's three internal security agencies, the State Security Department (SSD), the

Ministry of Public Security (MPS), and the Military Security Command (MSC) comprise 270,000 agents, who conduct strict surveillance of North Korea's 25 million people.⁵ Every family has to participate in *inminban*, a "neighborhood watch" system involving weekly meetings, self-criticism sessions, and reporting on one's relatives and neighbors. Under the strict supervision of internal security agents, the *inminban* ensures the implementation of the policy of human rights denial at the local level. Due to the relentless surveillance of the population, the degree of social cohesion in North Korea is very low, and civil society nonexistent.

Not only ordinary people, but also those at the core of the system have been victimized under the Kim Jong-un regime. The purges have been on a par with Kim Il-sung's purges of the late 1950s, if not worse. According to a report of the South Korean Institute for National Security Strategy, 140 high-ranking officials were executed, and more than 200 purged during the first five years of the Kim Jong-un regime.⁶ One has to keep in mind that North Korea is a massive bureaucracy. Each time a senior official is purged, the entire bureaucratic support structure below the victim is removed. Associates and family members are physically eliminated or sent to political prison camps, pursuant to *yeon-jwa-je*, a system of guilt-by-association of feudal inspiration. Up to three generations of the perceived offender's family are punished. Following Jang Sung-taek's execution in late 2013, *Yonhap* News Agency and other Korean and international media organizations reported, based on multiple in-country sources, that Kim Jong-un had ordered the "total elimination of his uncle's biological relatives." Those reportedly executed included Jang's sister Kye-sun, her husband and DPRK ambassador to Cuba Jon Yong-jin as well as Jang's nephew Jang Yong-chol, DPRK ambassador to Malaysia, together with the nephew's two sons.⁷

An overview of the purging of the Korean People's Army (KPA)'s General Staff Department (GSD) illustrates the extent of the purges affecting the North Korean military. The GSD is the senior military agency in charge of the KPA's administrative, operational, and logistical needs.⁸ Prior to the Kim Jong-un regime, the GSD had twelve chiefs since its establishment in 1948. The GSD has had five chiefs in the five years since Kim Jong-un came to power in December 2011. Vice Marshal Ri Yong-ho (GSD Chief, 2009–2012), was thought to be one of Kim Jong-un's mentors and protectors; he was one of the eight honorary

pallbearers who walked alongside Kim Jong-il's hearse. Vice Marshal Ri was demoted, disappearing in the summer of 2012. His successor, Hyon Yong-chol (GSD chief, 2012–2013) was promoted to Vice Marshal and Minister of Defense. He was executed in April 2015. Hyon's successor, General Kim Kyok-sik (GSD chief, 2007–2009, 2013) was demoted after a North Korean arms shipment was intercepted in Panama, dying of "respiratory complications" soon after. Kim's successor, General Ri Yong-gil (GSD chief, 2013–2016) was demoted in early 2016, and succeeded by General Ri Myong-su.⁹ As *fearpolitik* continues, the favorite piece of execution equipment has been the ZPU-4. A widely quoted satellite imagery analysis report published by HRNK and AllSource Analysis confirms the use of the .50 caliber four-barrel anti-aircraft machine gun system in high profile executions.¹⁰ The victims' bodies are practically pulverized, turned into "pink mist." No one is safe in Kim Jong-un's North Korea: even the perpetrators of human rights violations may become victims themselves.

Kim Jong-un's government maintains a policy of human rights denial on the international stage by North Korea's flagrant disregard for United Nations resolutions, reports, and sessions. Domestically, as the 2014 UN Commission of Inquiry found, the government's human rights violations against its people are "without parallel in the contemporary world." These rights violations are most severe inside its political prison and forced labor camps, where many violations constitute crimes against humanity. Throughout the country, and especially outside of the privileged enclave of Pyongyang, North Koreans generally face severe restrictions to their civil, political, economic, and social rights due to the KFR.

Despite new sanctions, North Korea continues to develop its weapons programs, including nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. The KFR diverts precious resources away from the humanitarian needs of its people, and denies citizens their basic human rights. In the weeks leading up to the first Workers' Party Congress in 36 years, Kim seemed more unrelenting than in implementing in *byeongjin* (simultaneous nuclear and economic development) policies and denying human rights, making it even more necessary to continue highlighting the regime's atrocities.¹¹

The individuals who preserve the KFR and enable it to retain political control are rigorously selected through the unforgiving filter of a loyalty-based system of social classification. North Korea's ideology, centralization of power, resource prioritization, and political loyalty-

determined privilege support the preservation of the regime through a policy of human rights denial. Crimes against humanity and other egregious human rights violations do not happen in a vacuum. They span nearly seven decades and are an intrinsic part of the Kim regime's *modus operandi*, situated at the very core of the apparatus that has maintained the family in power.

Forces Working to Delegitimize and Undermine the Kim Regime

Despite the relentless repression, indoctrination, and surveillance, there are drivers of internal change in North Korea that could potentially erode the Kim regime's grip on power. Such forces emerged in the aftermath of the famine that killed millions in the 1990s. They include: small, informal markets developed as a survival mechanism; information that penetrates North Korea's firewall through foreign radio broadcasting and mobile media storage devices sold on North Korea's black markets, at a higher rate than a decade or so ago; remittances and phone calls from some of the 30,000 North Korean defectors living in South Korea, surreptitiously taken by relatives left behind on smuggled Chinese cell phones; and the slow, but steady inroads underground Christianity is making into North Korea.

The Kim regime and its officials thrive on corruption. Internally generated market activities fuel corruption among North Korea's elites. One of the likely reasons why the regime allowed Orascom Telecom to establish a cell phone network is to collect *de facto* taxation through the sale of expensive phones and plans to those who have money, power, or both.¹² Most quasi-private activity must be carried out under the protection of a government agency. So, while money has been playing an increasingly important role in North Korea, good *songbun*, or at the very least access to those of good *songbun* continues to be a pre-requisite of entrepreneurial success. Pyongyang's real estate market is reportedly on the rise.¹³ Since the government owns all real estate, transactions involve the right to reside in a dwelling rather than the title to a property. The same applies to many of those driving "private" cars in North Korea: they don't purchase property titles, but the "right" to drive cars registered under government agencies. This hybrid of quasi-private entrepreneurship and property and state control is a formula for unfathomable corruption. Although it fills the regime's coffers, such corruption also acts as a factor slowly eroding its grip on power.

Although North Korea continues to be an extraordinarily oppressive regime, markets have driven significant social change. Before the development of North Korea's markets, life used to be centered on the workplace and the place of residence. An individual couldn't choose his or her workplace; instead, the government assigned each person a workplace. Because one's place of residence was assigned through the workplace, the government played a similar role in determining where an individual lived. The life of men and single women was centered on the workplace, the workplace Worker's Party organization, and the workplace chapter of the General Federation of Trade Unions of Korea (GFTUK).¹⁴ The life of married women was centered on the place of residence, the local *inminban* neighborhood watch unit, and the local Democratic Women's Union chapter. People only related to one another through the workplace and place of residence or through public mobilization campaigns, sports and cultural events organized by the workplace or place of residence. Although friendships were surely forged in the process, they were hardly sustainable. Once people were reassigned to a new workplace, and they were given a new place of residence.

Developed as a coping and survival mechanism, not as the result of top-down reform, the *jangmadang* (open market), *nongmin-shijang* (farmer's market) and *ahm-shijang* (black market) of North Korea have changed the way people interact. Although technically everyone has to be employed by a state entity, money is increasingly generated through market activity. People with money have begun to relate through shared interests, including shared hobbies, now made possible by money.

Women, married women in particular, are much more active than men at North Korea's markets. In North Korea, once they marry, women spend less time on public mobilization campaigns, and thus have more time to spend on ensuring their own survival, as well as the survival of their families, through involvement in market activities. Moreover, as Hazel Smith points out, "in the face of a government that remained fundamentally hostile to liberal capitalism, women's participation in markets was not understood as a direct challenge to the economic organization of the DPRK."¹⁵ One cannot help but think of the precedent of Protestant Christianity changing Chosun Korea through its appeal to women, enlightened and empowered through the access to education provided by Christian missionaries. In somehow similar ways, markets are changing North Korea through their appeal to women, enlightened

and empowered through access to economic opportunity. On the downside, as indicated by HRNK's recent research, since women are most active at the markets, they are the ones who are imprisoned for crossing the border without government approval, or for alleged wrongdoing at the markets. This has resulted in the disproportionate repression of women.¹⁶

North Korea has never been a society relying on trust among its people, but rather on surveillance, control, coercion, punishment, and seeding deep distrust into the hearts and minds of each and every person. However, as markets developed, goods have been imported from China, through wholesale markets in the border areas, wholesale markets in the provinces, and ultimately retail markets. But North Korea doesn't have an available banking system capable of sustaining private business transactions. Absent a formal financial system, phone calls are made, money is lent and borrowed, and merchandise sold and purchased based on reputation and trust. It is the markets that taught North Koreans that developing a solid reputation was more profitable in the long run than making a few thousand dollars through a one-time theft. Above all, the increasing importance of trust in business relationships is perhaps the biggest change the markets have induced in North Korea.

After the collapse of the Public Distribution System (PDS)¹⁷ the regime realized that the markets could not be wiped out. Nonetheless, the Kim regime has been cracking down on precisely such potential drivers of positive change. The ongoing crackdown has resulted in the worsening of the overall human rights situation. In late 2009, with preparations for the second hereditary transmission of power under way, a confiscatory currency reform aimed to wipe out the savings of those active on North Korea's black markets. According to South Korean National Intelligence Service chief Nam Jae-joon, in late 2013, the number of confirmed public executions increased twofold since the previous year, from 17 in 2012 to 40 in 2013. In late 2013, people accused of watching or distributing South Korean soap operas and movies were executed in seven major North Korean cities. According to the ROK Ministry of Unification, the number of former North Koreans arriving in South Korea declined by almost 50% during the first year of the Kim Jong-un regime, from 2,706 in 2011 to 1,509 in 2012. In 2015, due to the continued crackdown on attempted defections, only 1,276 (251 male and 1,025 female) North Koreans escaped to South Korea, down from the previous year and less than half the number in 2011.¹⁸

In the aftermath of dozens of reported executions of senior officials, including Jang Sung-taek, North Korea's elites must have noticed that the rules have changed. Members of the inner core of the KFR have to fear for their personal safety. Even loyalists may turn away if they fear they and their families are next in the ZPU-4 line, as proven by recent high-level defections to South Korea.

The North Korean state is built on human rights violations including *songbun*-based social discrimination, enforced disappearances, *yeon-jwa-jae*-based multi-generational unlawful imprisonment and arbitrary deprivation of life. It is a state that profits from the exportation of its own citizens as forced laborers and its women as prostitutes. It is the same human rights violations, including the lack of adequate private property rights, and the relentless operation of North Korea's surveillance state that hamper and stifle the nascent market forces. As forces challenging the regime's grip on power continue to strengthen, North Korea today may resemble Ceausescu's Romania in the early 1980s: dark, impoverished, isolated and oppressed. At the same time, the state is increasingly aware that alternatives to totalitarianism do exist. Could the Romanian precedent apply to Kim Jong-un's North Korea?

The Romanian Precedent

The December 1989 anti-communist revolution began with popular unrest in the southwestern city of Timisoara. Very much alike North Korean border cities such as Shinuiju, Timisoara was a major point of transit for goods smuggled into Romania from Yugoslavia. Purchased at open wholesale markets in Timisoara, electronics, clothing, footwear, foreign liquor, cigarettes, coffee and other goods (that the regime made available only at hard currency stores for foreigners and the communist elites) found their way to open markets and black markets throughout Romania. North Korea has its *jangmadang*. Romania had the *talcioc*, a strikingly similar concept. The anti-communist revolution began in the heart of the Romanian *jangmadang*, where people could also watch West German television broadcasts (with better reception on cloudy days). Many had relatives abroad, most concentrated in West Germany.

Inflamed by the vicious repression of the communist authorities, the December 1989 anti-communist revolution soon spread all over Romania, eventually reaching the capital city of Bucharest. The downfall of Ceausescu was swift. Undoubtedly, it was the popular revolution that set in motion the demise of communist dictatorship. But what ultimately

ensured the success of the popular uprising and avoided a bloodbath was a coup staged by the Romanian military.

After dozens of protesters were killed on December 16–22, many of them by army bullets, General Vasile Milea, the minister of defense, died of a gunshot wound to the chest.¹⁹ Ceausescu appointed General Victor Stanculescu as minister of defense, and ordered him to step up the armed repression of the protestors. However, the general refused to carry out Ceausescu's order, his direct superior and commander-in-chief of the military. Stanculescu ordered the troops back to their barracks instead.²⁰ Stanculescu's decision likely avoided unimaginable civilian casualty figures.

In his book *Finally, the Truth*, General Stanculescu claimed that, unknown to him at the time, a group of pro-Russian military officers and communist party officials had acted behind the scenes, assuming power after the execution of the Ceausescu couple.²¹ Immediately after the coup, General Stanculescu was replaced by General Nicolae Militaru, who was called out of retirement; Militaru was previously proven to have been a Soviet agent. Lieutenant General Ion Mihai Pacepa, the highest ever intelligence officer to defect from a Warsaw Pact country, had identified Militaru as a Soviet GRU agent in a book published in 1987.²² Stanculescu would then become minister of the economy and, eventually, again minister of defense. Until his death, Stanculescu claimed that the members of pro-Soviet factions that had contributed to Ceausescu's demise also created the legal problems that followed him.

Although open dissidence was nearly impossible in Ceausescu's Romania, scholars and investigative journalists have identified three anti-Ceausescu "factions" responsible for masterminding the coup: the "Old Stalinists," the "Soldiers," and the "Perestroika Group."²³ For various reasons, all three groups had Soviet connections: disappointment with Ceausescu's perceived betrayal of the Soviet Union; a Soviet education (in particular at the Frunze Military Academy);²⁴ or fascination with the new openness and reform proposed by Mikhail Gorbachev. Members of these three groups, including Ceausescu's direct successor, former President Ion Iliescu, and their offspring have continued to play prominent roles in post-communist Romania.

It was the Soviet intervention that extinguished the 1953 anti-communist East German uprising, the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, and the Prague Spring of 1968. Surely, what Gorbachev wanted was openness and reform to sustain and legitimize a more "humane" version

of socialism and Soviet domination, not the collapse of communism or the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. Keen on preserving his regime, Ceausescu claimed that reforms had already been enacted in Romania, and refused to follow Gorbachev's lead. There was no love lost between Gorbachev and Ceausescu, and the absence of a Soviet intervention ultimately ensured the success of the revolution that brought down the Ceausescu regime.

Gorbachev's red line appeared to be Ceausescu's openly confronting him at a meeting of the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Pact. Soviet leaders summoned Warsaw Pact heads of state to Moscow for discussions on December 4, 1989, immediately following the December 2-3 Malta Summit between Presidents George H. W. Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev. The minutes of the bilateral meeting between Nicolae Ceausescu and Mikhail Gorbachev, held on the sidelines of the Warsaw Pact gathering, highlight dramatic differences between the two leaders, despite the apparently cordial tone. Gorbachev speaks in favor of reform, and mentions the fall of communist leaders who had failed to follow that direction. Ceausescu speaks from the standpoint of an inflexible, uncompromising Orthodox communist.²⁵

By refusing to adopt *perestroika* and *glasnost* at the last hour, and by openly confronting Gorbachev, Ceausescu crossed a red line. Unlike Berlin 1953, Budapest 1956, or Prague 1968, the Soviets would not invade or attempt to protect the Ceausescu clan. A few hours after attempting to flee, Ceausescu and his wife were captured, tried at an ad-hoc tribunal, and executed by a military firing squad on Christmas Day 1989.

I thought they didn't believe they would die, not till the last minute. As we walked out of the building, I sensed they thought the trial had been just for show, and everything would be O.K. After being ordered to place them against the wall and shoot them, we headed in the direction of the two helicopters outside. When I put my hand on his shoulder and turned him around toward the wall, he realized he would die. That's when I saw his eyes tear up. Elena just cursed us. He started singing the Internationale, but was cut down by our bullets before he finished.²⁶

In the period between their attempted escape and the days following their execution, more than 1,000 people were killed and over 3,000 wounded during a week of fighting. Some were killed by rogue snipers, acting under a supposed guerilla warfare plan to “defend the country temporarily occupied by hostile forces.”²⁷ Many died accidentally, caught in the crossfire or killed by friendly fire, due to the incompetence of Romanian officers and NCOs. New recruits who had joined the military in September 1989 had barely seen a weapon before, having spent their entire time working in agriculture to replace farming hands depleted by forced industrialization. Some were killed in plots to eliminate witnesses or settle scores.

The Romanian military was involved in the brutal repression of the popular demonstrations prior to the fall of the regime, as well as accidentally shooting protestors during subsequent fighting. Nonetheless, the role of the Romanian military is generally perceived to have been benign. After all, the anti-communist revolution would have failed if the military had not fraternized with the protesters. Moreover, the military allowed civilian leadership to take control. The reasons for the decision not to establish military rule may have included: a genuine belief that the role of the military was not to rule the country, but to support civilian leadership; the international press corps’ close monitoring of developments in Romania; the very negative perceptions that may have been created by the replacement of one type of dictatorship with another; and, the possibility that new government leaders offered privileged positions to former senior military officers in the new government, as well as opportunities in the rapidly expanding private sector.

Although its ultimate success was ensured by a coup d’état, the Romanian Revolution and its aftermath were far more complex. A coup d’état rarely results in dramatic systemic change. Romania underwent a significant transformation. Post-1989, Romanians ultimately managed to put in place a liberal and democratic system, although affected by all-pervasive cronyism and endemic corruption.

What Conferred Legitimacy upon the Romanian Military?

Ultimately, the transformation begun in December 1989 resulted in a functioning democracy, a market economy, and Romania’s joining the NATO in March 2004 and the European Union in January 2007. None of this would have been possible without the coup and subsequent military support of the anti-communist revolution. What conferred legitimacy

upon the Romanian military, allowing it to win the hearts and minds of the anti-communist revolutionaries and become a stabilizing force through turbulent times?

In communist Romania, time-honored institutions including the monarchy and the multi-party system had been eliminated. Severely repressed, the Romanian Orthodox Church was hardly relevant. Within the one-party system, the two most prominent establishments were the communist party and the military. The omnipresent Securitate (Departamentul Securitatii Statului), the secret police, was powerful, but not as visible. Although by the mid-1980s about 20% of Romanian adults belonged to the communist party, membership was limited, and fairly strict conditions had to be met. In contrast, all able-bodied men above age 18 were drafted into the military. The Romanian army had around 140,000 personnel in 1989, but close to 100,000 of them were conscripts. Additionally, Romanian conscripts served the shortest period of conscription of all Warsaw Pact countries: most served between nine and 16 months of service, with Marines, alpine troops, and border guards serving up to 24 months.²⁸

The paramilitary “patriotic guard” was supposed to include all men under 62 and all women under 57, theoretically incorporating millions of Romanian citizens. All of them had full-time jobs, and regarded paramilitary training as a great weekend nuisance. Under the umbrella of the Interior Ministry, the internal security force, or Securitate had over 20,000 troops, most of them also conscripts. The police, or “militia” had about 30,000 personnel. The only “professional” combat units within the Interior Ministry included approximately 500 presidential guards and about 800 members of anti-terrorist squads. In 1989, the Interior Ministry troops had no experience and little training in the use of nonlethal force in riot control. The system had relied on a network of informants, ensuring that dissent was identified and quashed with extreme prejudice before it could gain momentum. The sole exceptions had been a coal miners’ strike in 1977, and a smaller scale rebellion in the city of Brasov in 1987, when a 20,000 strong demonstration had been dispersed with no casualties and 300 arrests.

The indiscriminate use of lethal force by Interior Ministry and Ministry of Defense troops against the initial Timisoara protests in 1989 inflamed spirits throughout Romania. News spread via foreign radio stations, fueling the uprising. Although by comparison to other Eastern Bloc countries military duty was short, the nine to sixteen months of

military service were, nonetheless, a rather traumatizing experience, shared by most Romanian men, young and old, college graduates and high school dropouts, from both urban and rural areas.

By the time of the revolution, the pre-communist elite mentality of the officer and non-commissioned officer corps had been substantially diminished; both groups had begun their military careers as conscripts. Most members of the Romanian military did not view themselves as a group separated from the rest of society. Rather, conscription and serving in the military were seen as an integral part of the collective ordeal of living under the communist regime. Decades of forced industrialization had depleted agricultural labor. To make up for the lack of farm hands, military conscripts were often used as forced labor. In addition to agriculture, conscripts supported the construction of Ceausescu's pharaonic projects, including the People's House in downtown Bucharest and the Danube-Black Sea Canal. Conscripts worked alongside paid construction workers, as well as convicts.²⁹ This helped further enhance awareness that the military was a "popular army," experiencing the same hardship as the rest of Romanians, and not a privileged group that could help crush dissent and maintain the dictator's grip on power.

While many viewed the communist party as Ceausescu's cheerleading squad, the military was perceived as less ideological, possibly with the exception of very senior officers, and thus not responsible for the appalling political oppression, human rights violations, Ceausescu's absurd personality cult, and the dramatic shortages of food and other daily necessities. For a long time before the collapse of the Ceausescu regime, many regarded the military as the only benign institution in the communist state, willing and able to fight and defeat the much feared and loathed secret police, the Securitate, which, also had to depend heavily on conscripts.

In order to solidify his grip on power and further legitimize his rule, Ceausescu employed a type of national-communism bordering chauvinism. This was very similar to the North Korean view on national history. National history and the tales and images of historic kings and generals were used to justify and legitimize the dictator's personality cult. Leaders were presented as the direct descendants of the heroes of a glorious past, identified with the struggle for independence against the great empires surrounding the Romanians. Consequently, the communist propaganda presented the military as the one national institution that had always been on the just side of history. The Romanian military's

participation in the Holocaust in Moldova alongside German troops was conveniently ignored, and never included in communist history books. Within the national-communist view of history, the military was portrayed as the protector of national integrity throughout history. This further reinforced the military's image as the institution that people expected to fill the vacuum left after the collapse of the Ceausescu regime.

The unprecedented concentration of power in the hands of one man, his wife, family, and top-tier party collaborators—backed by the secret police—meant that these individuals could be blamed for the failures of communism. Consequently, the second- and third-tier party leaders got away relatively easily; in many cases they managed to become the great winners of the post-communist transition. Although Romanians had been oppressed for decades and had suffered from severe deprivation, the only guarantee they had under Ceausescu was relative peace and order, often brutally enforced by the communist authorities. This meant that, in the sudden power vacuum left by the disappearance of Ceausescu, people felt lost and disoriented, and desperate to see order restored.

As thousands of workers were marching on Ceausescu's palace, some of them were chanting "monarchy," and others "military dictatorship." The popular revolt evolved quickly: the demonstrators asked for food; an hour later for freedom of foreign travel; and, then for a multi-party system and free elections. The feeling of great disorientation was further exacerbated by the semblance of a civil war, being fought for a few days on the streets of many Romanian cities. With the country on the verge of collapse, the institution that was deemed capable of filling the power vacuum and restoring peace and order was the military.

In the early days of the transition, people were rather short sighted, focusing less on democratic change and more on improvement of their living standards. This enabled the National Salvation Front (Front) to assume control, despite the fact that it included many communist apparatchiks. Addressing the infiltration of second- and third-tier communist party members among the revolutionaries, Mircea Dinescu, a dissident poet and one of the two prominent personalities who first broadcast news from the recently liberated TVR Romanian television station—the other one was actor Ion Caramitru—told the author:

Caramitru and I had been exulting and telling viewers that the dictator and his wife had fled, and Romania was free. Then, one

by one, slowly but surely, party apparatchiks began showing up, wearing tricolor armbands, just like us and the other revolutionaries. To this day, I am sure that, had we not accepted them in our midst, they would have just killed us. Plain and simple.³⁰

Led by Ion Iliescu, a Soviet-trained “perestroika” communist previously purged by Ceasescu, the Front pledged to restore control and prepare the country for free elections. It soon broke that promise, turned itself into a political party in February 1990, and assumed control of the infrastructure and leadership networks of the communist party. After winning a landslide victory in Romania’s first free elections in May 1990, the Front ensured that transitional justice only targeted top tier communist party officials. The inadequacy of transitional justice resulted in deeply embedded cronyism and corruption, still plaguing Romania 28 years after the fall of communism.

Romania and North Korea: “Reversed Confucianism” Aside, Striking Similarities

Historically and culturally, Romania and North Korea are surely different. In certain ways, North Korea still resembles a Confucian country, although its Confucianism has been reversed. The old elites were exterminated and replaced with new elites, whose place in society depends on *songbun* and their loyalty to the regime. However, similarities between North Korea and communist Romania are also significant. To see that, one would have to look at the modern and contemporary history of Romania and North Korea, but also examine much older chapters in the history and culture of the two countries.

One of the reasons why the Kim regime has been so resilient is that it drew its inspiration from three totalitarian political systems: North Koreans went straight from feudal Chosun Korea, to the brutal occupation by imperial Japan, followed by Stalinist communism. After the death of Joseph Stalin on March 5, 1953, Kim Il-sung quickly realized that communist allies in Eastern Europe were beginning to flirt with concepts to include the peaceful coexistence with the liberal democracies of the West. This was unacceptable to Kim. The “siege mentality” he created, perpetuated by his son and grandson is, after all, one of the main arguments providing domestic “legitimacy” to the Kim regime. Kim Il-sung adamantly rejected such “foreign influences.”

Instead, he chose to repel them with *juche*, the leader-centric doctrine of “self-reliance” that is the ideological centerpiece of North Korea’s dynastic totalitarian national communism:

Pak Yong Bin, on returning from the Soviet Union, said that as the Soviet Union was following the line of easing international tension, we should also drop our slogan against US imperialism. Such an assertion has nothing to do with revolutionary initiative. It would dull our people’s revolutionary vigilance.³¹

Nicolae Ceausescu, Romania’s dictator, seized the opportunity to create his own national communist personality cult three years after he assumed power during the 1968 Prague Spring. He notoriously opposed the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, ordered the Romanian military to stand down, and gave an epic speech from the balcony of communist party headquarters, condemning Soviet interference in the internal affairs of brotherly communist nations. This earned him huge support in the West, translating into credit, investment, technology transfers, and political capital. In 1969, Richard Nixon visited Romania, becoming the first U.S. president to visit a communist country. What the West failed to realize was that, under the guise of an “independent minded” socialist leader, Ceausescu was forging a ruthless, repressive, merciless dictatorship. In July 1971, he issued the “April Theses,” including 17 policy proposals for ideological transformation and a return to socialist realism, heavily inspired by *juche* and Ceausescu’s recent visits to the PRC, North Korea, North Vietnam, and Mongolia.

Like his North Korean friend and mentor Kim Il-sung, Ceausescu quickly understood the need to find an external “threat” to national sovereignty to justify his one-man dictatorship and draconian grip on power. Just like North Korea’s *juche*, Ceausescu’s “self-reliance” meant that he was accountable neither to his own people, nor to any international norms, principles or fora governing human rights standards. Ceausescu’s regime created the perception of tensions between Romania and Hungary, in particular over the historic Romanian province of Transylvania. In 1988, one year before the demise of the Ceausescu regime, Romanian escapee, dissident and Radio Free Europe broadcaster Vlad Georgescu noted that Ceausescu’s “false nationalism” was nothing but “pure deception.” His remarks then could very well apply to Kim Jong-un’s North Korea today:

By entertaining an atmosphere of fortress under siege, by repeating ad nauseam that the motherland is in danger, the personality cult regime aims to divert attention away from the true and serious problems of the country, toward a false issue. Romania's number one problem is not revisionism, [...] not the frontiers. Romania's biggest problem is the Romanians who lead her. The Romanians who are ruling badly, those who are ruining her.³²

Nevertheless, throughout the four decades of communist dictatorship, despite the massacre of the old elites in forced labor camps in the late 1940s and 1950s, despite relentless indoctrination, and despite Ceausescu's all-pervasive cult of personality, Romanians had memories of different political systems, including the constitutional monarchy uprooted by the Soviets in 1947.

In North Korea, the collective memory of a non-totalitarian system is absent. This makes it extremely difficult for the ordinary person to challenge the *status quo*. Moreover, several factors have contributed to the Kim regime's longevity for almost seven decades, spanning three generations: the astonishingly low degree of social cohesion, caused by the relentless surveillance conducted by North Korea's three internal security agencies; the brainwashing of all North Koreans since a precognizant age; and the obstinate control of information exercised by the North Korean regime. All of these elements were present in Ceausescu's Romania, much more so than elsewhere in Eastern Europe, but not to the extent still seen in North Korea today.

One should not assume that the historical background was more conducive to anti-communist revolution and democratic change in Romania. In conversations with North Korean escapees, one often hears, "Ceausescu was bound to fall, as Romania is a European country." While this is true, Romania is a European country that has usually lagged behind other European countries by about half a millennium. In this regard, one can see that isolation and developmental delay are distinctive features characterizing both Romania and North Korea.

The conquest and subsequent occupation of Dacia by the Roman Empire, finalized in 106 A.D., was the genesis of the Romanian people and their Romance language. Nonetheless, the Romans continued to regard any territory north of the Danube River as "uncivilized." The

Romans' perceptions of their own province of Dacia as part of the "barbarian world" continued until the Roman administration and military was withdrawn in 271 A.D. This "marginalization," traced back to Roman times, resulted in less exposure to European political, economic, and cultural centers.³³

The Romanian states of Wallachia and Moldova were created toward the middle of the 14th century. By this time, not only Western Europeans, but also Eastern neighbors including the Bulgarians, Czechs, Hungarians and Serbs had had viable political systems for centuries. Charles I, the first King of Bohemia to become Holy Roman Emperor, had established Prague's first university in 1348, more than 500 years before the first Romanian university was created. Romania entered the Middle Ages at the time it was almost over in the rest of Europe. For most of their history, the Romanian principalities of Wallachia and Moldova were by far the most unstable states in Europe. Rival factions would assassinate and dethrone kings, whose reigns just seldom exceeded a few years. Urban centers developed slowly, and continued to lag behind cities in the rest of Europe.³⁴ The great European cathedrals had generally been completed more than 500 years ago. In contrast, the Romanian Orthodox Church is still building its first grand, national cathedral (the "Cathedral of National Salvation") in 2017.

The "westernization" of Romania is a relatively recent phenomenon. Between the 1830s and the 1860s, Levantine garments, Cyrillic script, and Greek and Russian influences were replaced by Western clothes, the Latin alphabet, and great admiration for their French Latin cousins; the French became mentors to the quickly modernizing Romanians. Romania's first modern Constitution of 1866 closely imitated the 1831 Belgian Constitution. Just as Koreans use the phrase a "shrimp among whales" to describe being surrounded by great powers, Romanian discourse centers on being a "Latin island in a Slavic sea," and emphasizes its historically difficult position amidst the Russian, Ottoman, and Habsburg empires.

The present nation of Romania was fully defined by the mid-19th century. The principalities of Wallachia and Moldova were unified in 1859. After World War I, the historic province of Transylvania was unified with Romania. Lost through the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939, the Soviet Union annexed part of Moldova, creating today's independent Republic of Moldova. The appetite for unification has dramatically declined with the passage of time. One could rightfully

argue that failure to reunify immediately after the end of the Cold War is a similarity shared by Koreans and Romanians.³⁵

For most of their history, Romanians lived in a patriarchal society, generally devoid of the mechanisms capable of ensuring internal checks and balances. The obedient masses regarded the leader as the supreme administrator of justice and state affairs. Against this background, the descent into totalitarianism and political violence constituted an ever clear and present danger. Communist dictatorship, brought to Romania through Soviet tanks, was preceded by the fascist dictatorships of the Iron Guard and Marshal Ion Antonescu. Two sitting prime ministers (I.G. Duca in 1933 and Armand Calinescu in 1939) and a former prime minister and renowned historian (Nicolae Iorga in 1940) were assassinated by the Iron Guard. Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, leader of the Iron Guard, was assassinated by order of King Charles II in 1938, and Marshal Antonescu was tried and executed by firing squad in 1946, together with brother Mihai, a former Foreign Minister.

Is a Romanian Style Collapse Possible in North Korea?

Despite draconian surveillance, dissent is not entirely absent in North Korea, to include attempted military coups. In 1995, officers of the VI Corps, stationed in Chongjin launched a coup, attempting to join forces with the VII Corps in Hamhung. The conspirators were arrested, and dozens were executed. However, experts dismiss the possibility of a successful popular revolt or a military coup in North Korea, due to the tight control exercised by Kim Jong-un through the Organization and Guidance Department (OGD) and the coercion, control, surveillance and punishment exercised by the SSD, the MPS and the MSC. Romania's military chain of command was purely military, despite the presence of counter-intelligence (CI) officers in each unit, the equivalent of North Korea's MSC. In contrast, North Korea's military follows three chains of command: military, security agency (MSC, SSD) and political (OGD). This makes a North Korean military rebellion more difficult than the 1989 Romanian revolution.

Does this preclude a Romanian-style scenario from happening in North Korea? In North Korea, in similar fashion, but to a far greater extent than in Romania, previously existing institutions and traditions were completely wiped out. Kim Il-sung decided to abolish the traditional Korean holidays of *Chuseok* (Thanksgiving) and *Seollal* (Lunar New Year). Although both traditions were reestablished under

Kim Jong-il, the actions can be seen as a means for the “eternal president” to assume the absolute power that was subsequently inherited by his son, Kim Jong-il and grandson Kim Jong-un. Membership in the Workers’ Party is even more restrictive than it used to be in Romania: the overwhelming majority of the North Korean people do not have access to the advantages bestowed upon the upper echelons of the Korean Workers’ Party.

The population of North Korea is 25 million, similar to Romania’s 23 million in 1989. However, the North Korean Armed Forces are ten times larger than their Romanian counterparts. The 1.2 million-strong Korean People’s Army is the one institution that offers open access through the compulsory military service. Men and women between ages 17 and 49 must serve for 10 and seven years, respectively. While this provides a basis for the regimentation of North Korean society and the use of men and women in uniform as forced laborers, it also means that KPA members see themselves as a popular army. While North Korea’s 100,000 strong special forces continue to be well fed, trained, and equipped, many of the other North Korean troops have been affected by food shortages and the humanitarian crisis for the past two decades.

Have Kim Jong-un’s purges enhanced the loyalty of senior officers, or have they made it more likely that a Romanian-style scenario may unfold in North Korea? Similar to Ceausescu’s Romania, the Kim regime has mastered surveillance and repression. Regardless, are North Korean internal security and military forces trained and equipped in the use of nonlethal force to suppress large-scale demonstrations, should they happen? If, despite surveillance, punishment, and indoctrination, large-scale demonstrations do happen, will the North Korean military be ready to use overwhelming lethal force against the civilian population? The Romanian military could engage in the use of lethal force against unarmed civilians only for a few days. Will the KPA, a similar popular military sharing in the misery of the military experience, be ready to use lethal force against mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters for an extended period of time? Or will it find a way to outplay and bypass the political chain of command and follow in the footsteps of the Romanian Armed Forces?

The Kim Regime: Struggling for Survival

To ensure its own survival, the Kim Jong-un regime will continue to play cat-and-mouse, trying to repress the elements that erode its grip on

power, including new technologies and information from the outside world. Above all, the Kim regime will do its best to avoid a Romanian-style obliteration of the top leadership.

By 1989, Ceausescu's policies had become so destructive and unpopular that the Romanian people, the military, perestroika proponents, Stalinists, and even the secret police contributed to his demise. Soviet acquiescence was also critical in ensuring the success of the revolution and coup. In Romania, the "red line" that turned the masses against the dictator was the indiscriminate use of lethal force against unarmed civilians. Is there such a "red line" in North Korea? Would an attempt to crack down on the markets constitute such a "red line?" For Gorbachev, the "red line" was Ceausescu's refusal to adopt *perestroika* and *glasnost*, to open up and reform. While China is seriously annoyed by North Korea's development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles and its military provocations, it hasn't reached the point where it is ready to change its fundamental strategic stance on North Korea. China continues to regard the Kim regime, which it helped establish and perpetuate for almost seven decades, as a vassal, a buffer state, and a bargaining chip. While it doesn't enthusiastically endorse the Kim Jong-un regime, China continues to regard it as the only available political arrangement that ensures stability on its borders, prevents high refugee outflows into China, and maintains North Korea within China's sphere of influence. Is there a Chinese "red line" that, if crossed, would have China standing by while a Romanian-style scenario unfolds in North Korea? Or would China intervene anyway, unless it had a viable alternative to Kim Jong-un, keeping North Korea stable and within China's sphere of influence/

According to North Korean escapees, including Hwang Jang-yeop, the highest-ranking defector, Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il were seriously frightened by Ceausescu's downfall. What Kim Jong-il learned from the Romanian experience is that the secret police are instrumental in identifying and crushing dissent, but the loyalty of the military is the ultimate guarantee of regime survival when large-scale demonstrations erupt. Arguably, the Romanian precedent persuaded Kim Jong-il to implement his military-first *songun* policy. Kim Jong-il decided to shift authority away from the Korean Workers' Party, toward the KPA. In doing so, Kim entrusted his regime's legitimacy, safety and sovereignty to the military, rather than the party, as had been the case during his father's rule. This shift was completed at the 10th Supreme People's

Assembly in 1998. At that time, the National Defense Commission was invested with supreme decision making authority over the KWP.

In contrast, Kim Jong-un has been attempting to shift the balance by focusing more on the party, more or less along the lines of his grandfather's policies. Diverting resources and influence away from the military may arguably increase the likelihood of a Romanian-style scenario in North Korea, despite the relentless surveillance of senior officers by the MSC and SSD, supported by the OGD's close supervision. What hasn't changed is the length and timing of North Korea's military service. Those who rose up to bring down communist dictatorships in Budapest in 1956, Prague in 1968 and Bucharest in 1989 were young people in their late teens and early to mid-twenties. In North Korea, almost every young man is in a military uniform from age 17 to 27, subjected to even more relentless indoctrination than he endured in school. By the time they are discharged, the "age of revolution" has already passed. In addition to surveillance, punishment, and indoctrination, this is what has made a "spring of Pyongyang" extraordinarily difficult.

One of the unfortunate side effects of the fall of the Soviet empire was the emergence of connected criminal groups and corrupt politicians, comprising a Global Shadow Economy.³⁶ Many of those behind this shadow economy were former senior communist party, overseas intelligence, and secret police officials. They had the capital, know-how, overseas experience, and networks that enabled them to succeed. Although they were supposedly guardians of the totalitarian system, they realized they could become the great winners of post-communist transition. Recognizing their potential windfall, they subsequently began conspiring on bringing down the system and the top leaders. This is what also happened in Romania, against the background of a popular revolt.

Could North Korea's elites realize that, like their Eastern European peers more than a quarter century ago, they could be the great winners of the post-communist transition? Most likely not. North Korea's elites understand that, unlike Eastern European communist elites, they are not indispensable, but disposable. The reason is the very existence of the Republic of Korea, which presents the clear alternative of unification under a free, prosperous and democratic Korea. North Korea's elites are still convinced that their survival depends on the survival of the Kim regime. Perhaps aware of the role played by communist elites in the downfall of communist regimes in Eastern Europe, Kim Jong-il

commanded loyalty through bribery and *giftpolitik*, continued by his son Kim Jong-un. Almost twenty years ago, Marcus Noland predicted:

In the end, North Korea will most likely follow Romania in a form of apparatchik capitalism in which growth will follow the initial decline in output that results from the relaxation of central control.³⁷

Moreover, as Stephan Haggard pointed out, Kim Jong-un has tried to keep the elites loyal by creating more consumption space for them. These activities included the construction and operation of projects including water parks, theme parks, department stores, and ski resorts.

If the elites of North Korea are to ever consider contributing to regime change, the full toolkit of transitional justice should be applied. Those involved in the chain of command that has perpetrated crimes against humanity must surely be prosecuted, unless they safeguarded political prisoners in the camps and other victims of the regime during its agony. However, truth, reconciliation and amnesty will also be important, if the elites of North Korea are to be incentivized to enact positive change. That said, Romania's difficult transition also indicates that lustration is extraordinarily important. Whether Korea would be reunified after dramatic change in North Korea, or whether the two Koreas would coexist for a period, empowered former apparatchiks could become a poison pill that would contaminate a post-Kim regime in North Korea for decades as the Romanian precedent indicates. Most importantly, the people of North Korea, and not outside actors, are the ones who must reach consensus on the transitional justice mechanisms employed, including amnesty for former senior officials.

As far as the people of North Korea are concerned, the Kim Jong-un regime continues to prevent dissent and rebellion through its policy of human rights denial. Coercion, control, surveillance, punishment, indoctrination and information control continue to be the tools of regime preservation. Ultimately, the only actors who can bring change to North Korea are its very people. However the outside world can facilitate change by stepping up information campaigns delivered through vehicles including radio broadcasting, mobile media storage devices, and even drones. These means should convey three basic stories to the people of North Korea: the story of their own abysmal human rights situation, which they do not know or understand; the story of the corruption of

their leadership, especially the core of the Kim family; and the story of the outside world, in particular the story of democratic economic powerhouse South Korea, and that of the downfall of communist despots, such as Romania's Ceausescu.

¹ Ambassador Urian studied at Kim Il-sung University from 1954 to 1962. He was Ceausecu's personal interpreter in meetings with Kim Il-sung. He was later appointed Romania's first ambassador to the Republic of Korea, serving from 1990 to 1994. Izidor Urian in discussion with the author, May 22, 2014.

² Joseph S. Bermudez, Jr., Andy Dinville, and Mike Eley, *North Korea Ch'oma-bong Restricted Area*, (Washington: The Committee for Human Rights in North Korea and Longmont, Colorado: AllSource Analysis, 2016), p. 2. Available online: http://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/ASA_HRNK_Chmbg_201603_FINAL.pdf

³ Senate Armed Services Committee, *Advance Questions for General Vincent K. Brooks, USA, Nominee to be Commander, United Nations Command, Commander, Republic of Korea-United States Combined Forces Command, and Commander, United States Forces Korea*, 114th Congress, April 19, 2016, (Statement of General Vincent K. Brooks, USA), http://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Brooks_02-19-16.pdf.

⁴ Robert Collins coined the term "North Korean policy of human rights denial," constituting the centerpiece of his report *Pyongyang Republic: North Korea's Capital of Human Rights Denial*, (Washington: The Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2016), Available online:

http://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/Collins_PyongyangRepublic_FINAL_WEB.pdf

⁵ See, generally, Ken E. Gause, *Coercion, Control, Surveillance, and Punishment: An Examination of the North Korean Police State*, (Washington: Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2012), Available online:

https://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/HRNK_Ken-Gause_Web.pdf.

⁶ See, generally, *Kim Jong-un Jipkwon Five Nyun Shilchong Baek-seo* [The Reality of the First Five Years of the Kim Jong-un Regime: A White Paper] (Seoul: Institute for National Security Strategy, 2016). http://www.inss.re.kr/contents/publications_yc.htm. Last accessed March 15, 2017.

⁷ "North Korea Executes Entire Family of Kim Jong-un's Uncle, Jang Sung-taek," *The Huffington Post UK*, January 26, 2014. Available online:

http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2014/01/26/kim-jong-un-uncle-jang-sung-taek-executed_n_4669249.html.

⁸ Ken E. Gause, North Korean House of Cards. Leadership Dynamics under Kim Jong-un. HRNK. 2015. http://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/Gause_NKHOC_FINAL_WEB.pdf.

⁹ Based on information provided by the ROK government, numerous media organizations reported that General Ri Yong-gil was in early 2016. However, he resurfaced during the recent 7th Congress of the KWP, albeit missing a star on his epaulette—a fairly widespread practice involving those who are purged, but not imprisoned or physically eliminated.

¹⁰ Greg Scarlatoiu and Joseph Bermudez. "Unusual Activity at the Kanggon Military Training Area in North Korea: Evidence of Execution by Anti-aircraft Machine Gun?" *HRNK Insider*, April 2015. Available online:

<http://www.hrnkinsider.org/2015/04/unusual-activity-at-kanggon-military.html>.

¹¹ “The risk of waning support for universal human rights norms is increasing as authoritarian regimes push back against human rights in practice and in principle.” Senate Armed Services Committee, *Statement for the Record, Worldwide Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community*, 114th Congress, February 9, 2016, (Statement of James R. Clapper, Director of National Intelligence), Available online: http://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Clapper_02-09-16.pdf.

¹² The other conceivable reasons to allow a cell phone network in the world’s most reclusive country could include: a. Tapping into cell phones and using them an effective tool of surveillance targeting those who matter most. b. Cell phones make the capital city of Pyongyang look good: Although the respective cell phones can’t be used to make international calls or to call foreign residents of North Korea (who use a different network), by seeing people on cell phones and women on high heels foreign travelers to Pyongyang may be left with the impression that it is a more or less normal city.

¹³ According to the author’s discussions with senior North Korean defectors in Seoul, elites purchase the right to live in a “posh” Pyongyang apartment for sums up to \$100,000.

¹⁴ GFTUK is the only legal trade union organization in North Korea—in actual terms, just a paper umbrella union, fully under government control.

¹⁵ Hazel Smith, *North Korea: Markets and Military Rule*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 212.

¹⁶ See, generally, David Hawk, *The Hidden Gulag IV: Gender Repression and Prisoner Disappearances*, (Washington: The Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2015), Available online: https://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/Hawk_HiddenGulag4_FINAL.pdf.

¹⁷ The PDS continues to work only for Pyongyang residents and members of the elites.

¹⁸ Republic of Korea Ministry of Unification, Resettlement Support Division, *Buk Han Ital Chumin Hyunhwang [Status of North Korean Defectors]*, last accessed April 20, 2016, <http://www.unikorea.go.kr/content.do?cmsid=1440>.

¹⁹ Although General Milea’s death was ruled a suicide, it is not absolutely clear to this day whether that was the case, in particular in light of some of the little forensic information collected at the scene.

²⁰ General Stanculescu passed away on June 20, 2016, aged 88.

²¹ Alex Mihai Stoenescu, *In Sfarsit, Adevarul... Generalul Victor Atanasie Stanculescu in dialog cu Alex Mihai Stoenescu [Finally, the Truth: A Conversation with General Victor Atanasie Stanculescu]*, (Bucharest: Rao Publishing House, 2011).

²² Ion Mihai Pacepa, *Red Horizons: The True Story of Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu’s Crimes, Lifestyle, and Corruption*, (Washington: Regnery Gateway, 1987), pp. 193-195.

²³ Grigore Cartianu, *Sfarsitul Ceausestilor [The End of the Ceausescus]*, (Bucharest: Adevarul Holding Publishing House, 2010), p. 41.

²⁴ Interestingly, hundreds of North Korean graduates of Moscow’s Frunze Military Academy were purged following a 1992 failed coup attempt in North Korea, which involved the participation of some alumni of the same institution. See Ralph Hassig and Kongdan Oh, *The Hidden People of North Korea: Everyday Life in the Hermit Kingdom*, Second Edition, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2015), p. 124.

²⁵ Serban Sandulescu, “Minutes of the Meeting between Nicolae Ceausescu and Mikhail Gorbachev, December 1989,” trans. Mircea Munteanu, December ’89. The Coup D’Etat

Confiscated the Romanian Revolution, (Bucharest: Omega Press Investment, 1996), pp. 283-298. Available online: <https://chnm.gme.edu/1989/itens/show/692>.

²⁶ Dorin Carlan (former paratrooper and one of the three members of the firing squad that shot the Ceausescus) in discussion with the author, May 23, 2014.

²⁷ “The Terrorists of December ’89: Resistance Fighters” [Teroristii din Decembrie ’89: Luptatorii-din-Rezistenta], Jurnalul National, December 9, 2009. Last accessed January 26, 2017, <http://jurnalul.ro/campaniile-jurnalul/decembrie-89/teroristii-din-decembrie-89-luptatorii-din-rezistenta-531005.html>.

²⁸ Border guards were under the umbrella of the Interior Ministry, and not the Ministry of Defense.

²⁹ The Danube-Black Sea canal project was first suggested by Stalin to Ceausescu’s predecessor, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej. Thousands of members of the pre-communist elites, politicians, lawyers and senior military officers died in the canal labor camp. Many of the unmarked individual and mass graves have yet to be located.

³⁰ Mircea Dinescu (poet) in discussion with the author, May 19, 2014.

³¹ Kim Il-sung “On Eliminating Dogmatism and Formalism and Establishing Juche in Ideological Work,” Speech to Party Propaganda and Agitation Workers, December 28, 1955, in *Kim Il Sung Works*. Volume 9 (July 1954-December 1955), (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1982), p. 401.

³² Vlad Georgescu, “A False Nationalism,” *Romania Anilor ’80 [Romania in the 80s]*, page 33-34. Essay collection edited by Gelu Ionescu. Ion Dumitru-Verlag Publishing House. Munich-Bucharest, 1995.

³³ Lucian Boia, *De Ce Este Romania Altfel? [Why Is Romania Different?]* (Bucharest: Humanitas Publishing House, 2012), p. 7.

³⁴ Ibid, page 7-18.

³⁵ Ibid, page 19-25.

³⁶ Eric Hanley, Petr Mateju, Klara Vlachova, and Jindrich Krejei, “The Making of Post-communist Elites in Eastern Europe,” *Social Trends* (1998). Available online: <http://www.sda.soc.cas.cz/stwp/984.doc>.

³⁷ Marcus Noland, “Why North Korea Will Muddle Through: Apparatchik Capitalism,” *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 76, Number 4 (July/August 1997), p. 118. Available online: <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/53230/marcus-noland/why-north-korea-will-muddle-through>.