

UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMICS OF STATE POWER IN NORTH KOREA:  
MILITANT NATIONALISM AND PEOPLE'S EVERYDAY LIVES

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## Preface

How can we understand the legitimacy of authority in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)? My dissertation suggests an alternative understanding of the dynamics of state power in North Korea's militant nationalism, and explores how the DPRK's state power has operated in individuals' everyday lives by focusing on its militant nationalism. I analyze how North Korea's anti-American state power was reproduced by people's solid micro-fascism from the 1950s through the 1980s, and how this state power has been renegotiated, questioned, and challenged through the social process of both change and persistence in people's micro-fascism from the 1990s through the present.

In this dissertation, I intend to answer, through analyzing the DPRK's militant nationalism and people's everyday lives, a small part of a big question concerning how communist state power is exercised. From Marx and Gramsci to Foucault and Deleuze/Guattari, how state power is exercised in the relationship between the state and individuals has been of critical interest (Lukes 2005; Scott 2001). How does the state dominate and mobilize individuals and how do individuals react to state power? This simple but fundamental question requires political sociologists to examine the nature of state power from various perspectives. However, the internal dynamics of communist state power in North Korea, where a one-sided totalitarian approach to study dominates, have not received a great deal of attention. The study of state socialism, especially in North Korea, has been very challenging due to the difficulty of gaining access to data, and the ideological biases in some analytical approaches.

Today, the DPRK is often called the "hermit kingdom" or a "modern autocratic dynasty." It was even labeled the "axis of evil" by the Bush regime. This representation of the DPRK reveals the difficulty of exploring the reality of a closed society. Up until now, North

Korean socialism has represented the Western idea of the antagonistic “other” (Armstrong 2003). The Western image of communism has been of an autocratic, all-powerful totalitarian state inexorably imposing its harsh will upon its subjects. In particular, the traditional totalitarian approach has emphasized the violent aspects of communist power based upon a top-down approach in state-society relations (Arendt 1951; Friedrich and Brzezinski 1956; Riley Jr. and Schramm 1951; Scalapino and Lee 1972). From this perspective, the DPRK has been viewed as one of the countries that closely fits the model of totalitarian rule (McCormack 1993:46). As seen in Friedrich and Brzezinski’s (1956) notion of totalitarianism centered on a monolithic organic entity, North Korean communism has been characterized by a “forced monolithic system” composed of a single communist party led by Kim Il Sung, a unifying ideology, a monopoly of military force, and a centrally directed economy (Scalapino and Lee 1972:ch. VIII). Existing studies have frequently evaluated the DPRK as a Stalinist state or one-man dictatorship based upon political purges, gulags, surveillance, and thought control (Lankov 2002; Lee 1969; Ree 1989; Szalontai 2005; Yang 1972). It is true that the North Korean regime’s “brutal” power has purged its political rivals, monitored many members of the “hostile” classes, and threatened ordinary people’s lives. In particular, extreme punishment, such as public execution, has exposed individuals to the politics of horror.

Nevertheless, existing studies have overlooked another aspect of power which the North Korean regime has exerted. They have not paid close attention to the internal dynamics of North Korean state socialism, which has maintained its own system for over half a century. Communist states have not necessarily been all-powerful (Verdery 1996). They also have had different internal dynamics in their politics that cannot only be evaluated ideologically (Armstrong 2003; Park 2002). Some recent research shows that the individual’s everyday life under the Stalin regime was more diverse, active, and dynamic than that described by the traditional approach to

totalitarianism (Fitzpatrick 1999; Kotkin 1995). In this regard, the totalitarian approach has ignored different aspects of power which the North Korean state has exerted; state power is neither necessarily top-down nor does it operate omnipotently and smoothly, but is always beset with internal tensions or dynamics (Yang 1988).

In the DPRK, the more complex dynamics of state power can be found in the ways in which North Korea's anti-American nationalism has been legitimated through individuals' practices. As Giddens (1985:303) emphasizes, modern nation-states' "totalitarian" rule has had an elective affinity with nationalism. The North Korean regime has reached into everyday lives through the social mechanism of people's attitudes about the war and perceptions of the American national enemy. The DPRK's socialism has been characterized by an anti-American ideology which has developed as a product of strong nationalist socialist traditions and antagonistic intra-Korean politics of division. Since the national liberation of Korea (1945) and the Korean War (1950-1953), the DPRK's anti-American power has encouraged the politics of hatred, patriotism and emotion against its enemies, South Korea and especially the United States. Even the mildest statements of "Yankee" disdain for the North Korean regime and people have been treated as acts of aggression and extreme anger. American "imperialism" and the South Korean "puppet" regime have been the national enemies that have armed North Korea and its population militarily and ideologically. Developed in this antagonistic relationship, North Korean ideology has evolved into a militant and political form of extreme ethnic nationalism (Shin 2006).

Historically, certain nationalist movements revealed an ambivalent phenomenon that justified aggressive nationalism as a modern but violent form of fascism (Chatterjee 1986:2). The DPRK's militant nationalism has called for a morality in warfare that has required the separation of the enemy leadership from the innocence of the North Korean people led by the DPRK's

regime (Cumings 2004). While the DPRK's "anti-imperialist" mentality has stemmed from the colonial legacy of its anti-Japanese struggle, anti-American nationalism has defined a pivotal aspect of North Korea's socialist modernity. The DPRK's regime has tried to turn its whole citizenry into patriotic anti-American fighters, stimulating people's collective memories of the Korean War and establishing systematic lifelong education and full-scale mass armies. North Korea's ethnic nationalism has provided a basis for totalitarian organic governance (Shin 2006:95). In this context, the DPRK's anti-American nationalism can be described as a form of "categorical identity," or what Calhoun (1997) calls national identity. Nationalism is identified by similarity of attributes, as a member of a set of equivalents, as it overrides other categorical identities such as class (Calhoun 1997:42). In Anderson's (1991) words, the North Korean nation is an "imagined community" whose members are collectively connected to each other through imagination vis-à-vis the impersonal medium of state propaganda, mass media, and schooling. In this way, the DPRK's politics of national division has justified dictatorship and repressed society's internal differences as a Janus-faced nationalism.

However, the DPRK's anti-American nationalism has gone beyond a simple macro-politics of totalitarianism. While the DPRK's state mobilization has originated from above, the people's politics of hatred, patriotism, and deep emotion has been reproduced from below. The nationalist politics from above has been organically incorporated into ordinary people's lives (Giddens 1985:303). The DPRK's militant nationalism has been instigated by the state as a macro-politics, but it has also been created and recreated as a micro-politics that has penetrated people's militant lives. The crucial point here is *how* the ideology of nationalism is legitimated with and by people's reactions to communist state power. This question illuminates the new stream or radical view of power research based upon the positive functioning of power (Lukes 2005; Scott 2001). In this vein, Gramsci's (1971) notion of hegemony is important as the regime

or the ruling class' material incentives and ideological forces change the interests of the subordinate class, thus substantially permeating individuals' lives and identities. This power is reshaped by the representational work of the media as meaning is produced through language (Hall 1997). Bourdieu's (1984, 1989) concept of "habitus" is also useful for analyzing this power mechanism when we seek to understand individuals' practices evolving within particular socio-cultural contexts. This habitus is internalized into a disposition that generates meaningful practices and perceptions. As the whole set of practices, the habitus carries out a systematic application of the necessity inherent in learning conditions (Bourdieu 1984:170). This positive functioning of nationalist power can be inscribed into individual subjects and change their lives from below. In this sense, North Korea's politics of national identity are strongly rooted in ordinary people's perceptions and behaviors. In short, the DPRK's anti-American power has extended to individuals' micro-politics in another version of what Delueze and Guattari (1987) call "micro-fascism." The North Korean state has revealed a new aspect of power functioning that is not only top-down and violent from above, but also productive and diffusive from below. Therefore, the DPRK's seemingly monolithic system should be approached in terms of the internal dynamics of agents' political perceptions and behaviors embedded in the state's politics and social culture (Park 2002).

Within this framework, I examine how the DPRK's anti-American state power has been legitimated in citizens' lives. While exploration of the micro-politics of North Korean militant nationalism is one of the main goals of this research, the other critical goal is to reveal how the DPRK's anti-American power has been contested and recreated in citizens' lives through a comparison of two periods: the 1950s to the 1980s and the 1990s to the present. North Koreans' solid micro-fascism before the economic crisis is clearly contrasted with their differentiated reactions after the 1980s. While there has been no change in North Korea's aggressive militant

nationalism from above, citizens' responses have been simultaneously characterized as persistent, conflicting, and challenging. Identity formation is not determined but instead is viewed as a construction—always in process (Hall 1996). In this context, Hirschman (1970) shows people's reactions to economic decline and a resulting recuperative mechanism of social organization through an interactive model of "exit," "voice," and "loyalty." When East German citizens resisted the communist regime by voicing demands for free exit or democratization, the regime accepted, and this led to the collapse of communism in East Germany and people's loyalty to the new regime (Brubaker 1990). It is useful to apply Hirschman's model to the three types of North Korean reaction (persistence, conflict, and challenge) to the DPRK's power during the economic crisis. Specifically, since the 1990s, North Koreans have heightened their militant way of life through fatalistic patriotism, have hoped to create changes to overcome their current hardships through war, or have demonstrated passive resistance and challenged the regime. The contemporary DPRK's regime has been able to overcome these challenges by strengthening the majority of citizens' fatalistic patriotism in the face of America's "threat" of nuclear war while North Koreans' reactions have significantly departed from their previously solid micro-fascism.

With this in mind, I delve into how North Korea's nationalist power was exercised by people's solid micro-fascism from the 1950s through the 1980s, and how that state power has been contested and recreated by both change and persistence in micro-fascism from the 1990s through the present. Through a micro-approach to the ways in which anti-American power has penetrated citizens' lives, my study places individuals' political perceptions and behaviors at the center of the analysis and highlights the ways in which state power has been shaped and reshaped in individuals' lives. In order to analyze the dynamics of productive state power in North Koreans' participatory nationalism, I ask the following questions: How did the DPRK influence

its citizens to become emotional patriotic fighters who maintained extreme enmity against the U.S. and the South Korean regime from the 1950s through the 1980s? Why and how did North Korean citizens actively participate in the state's militant nationalism even though they suffered from its violent Stalinist politics? How have people's reactions to anti-American state power been differentiated during the crisis of socialism from the 1990s through the present and how has state power been created and recreated in this process?

This dissertation consists of seven chapters. Chapter I, the "Introduction," provides the theoretical perspective, research method, and data employed for analysis. The theoretical framing suggests how totalitarianism and nationalism should be understood in analyzing socialist state power and explicates how state power is understood as an extension of people's micro-politics. In addition, I outline the research method and data and discuss their usefulness and limitations. In Chapter II, "Anti-Colonial Nationalism and Colonial Legacy," I introduce the historical origin of North Korea's ethnic and organic nationalism as a colonial legacy and compare colonial and communist Koreas in terms of totalitarian and nationalist governance. Chapter III, "The Socialist Revolution from 1945 to 1950," analyzes the early socialist revolution from national liberation (1945) through the Korean War (1950-1953) in order to introduce the historical background of North Korea's communism that foreshadowed post-war Stalinist politics and militant nationalism. In Chapter IV, "The Post-War Stalinist Regime," I examine the post-war Stalinist regime from the 1950s through the 1980s, centering on purges, terror, punishment, surveillance, and centralized control systems in light of the traditional totalitarian approach in order to contrast this approach with my own. The main part of my dissertation, Chapter V, "Militant Nationalism and People's Lives from the 1950s through the 1980s," explores how state power operated and extended into citizens' everyday lives by offering empirical research on what I refer to as "the people's micro-fascism." By synthesizing Chapters IV and V, I focus on the dynamic power

structures of the post-war communist regime. Chapter VI, “Anti-Americanism and Change during the Recent Crises,” examines people’s differentiated reactions to the regime’s anti-American power during the economic crisis from the 1990s to the present. This chapter offers an explanation of how the contemporary DPRK’s anti-Americanism has been renegotiated, questioned, and challenged in people’s lives during the crisis of socialism. In Chapter VII, “Understanding the Dynamics of North Korean State Power,” I present conclusions by revisiting the primary findings of my research and discussing their implications for scholarship on socialist state power. Finally, in the Epilogue, I reiterate the significance of my dissertation by revisiting refugee data and explaining who the North Korean refugees are.

## **Chapter I Introduction**

In this chapter, I outline the theoretical perspective, research method, and data for analysis of my dissertation. First, I discuss the theoretical perspective for a case study of the DPRK's militant nationalism and people's ways of life. Second, I critically review the existing literature of North Korean socialism and provide an alternative perspective of state power that operates in the DPRK's militant nationalism. Third, I provide a thematic periodizing framework for the entire dissertation. Finally, I explain the sociological significance and limitations of the research method and data employed in this dissertation.

### **Theoretical Perspective**

#### **(1) Totalitarianism and Stalinism**

I consider totalitarianism as an analytical paradigm for examining the macro-politics of North Korea's state power. This is because a paradigm of totalitarianism remains useful for evaluating communist countries' totalitarian aspects in spite of the theory's limitations and drawbacks. At the same time, I take the differentiated internal dynamics of totalitarianism seriously by paying attention to the difference between Stalinism and Fascism/Nazism, including re-evaluating historical Stalinism. In so doing, I provide an alternative theoretical and analytical framework for exploring North Korea's state power.

The prior research on totalitarianism has described Stalinism, Fascism, and Nazism as similar subtypes of totalitarianism. As a pioneering analyst of totalitarianism, Arendt (1951) fused Stalinism, Fascism, and Nazism into the term totalitarianism. In her view, totalitarianism

was commonly characterized by the totalitarian state, the secret police, and total domination of society. Totalitarian politics was made possible by killing the juridical and moral person in man and man's individuality (Arendt 1951). Thus, totalitarianism was a mammoth organization and ideology which threatened individual lives and freedom as a distorted consequence of modernity. Parallel to Arendt, Friedrich and Brzezinski (1956) formulated totalitarianism as a paradigm of the Soviet Union under Stalin as well as of the Nazi or Fascist regimes. They defined totalitarianism as a "mutually supportive organic entity comprised of a unifying ideology, a single party typically led by one man, a system of terroristic police control, a monopoly of communication, a monopoly of weapons, and a centrally directed economy" (Friedrich and Brzezinski 1956:9-10). Despite continuous debates due to the disparity between theoretical generalizations and empirical findings, the notion of totalitarianism remains useful for considering totalitarian aspects of communist societies (Geyer and Fitzpatrick 2009; Russo 2004).

However, while Stalinism, Fascism, and Nazism as subtypes of totalitarianism share some similar characteristics, they may be viewed as distinct from each other in terms of their socio-economic origins and elite-mass relations (Deleuze and Guattari 1987; Geyer and Fitzpatrick 2009; Griffin and Feldman 2004; Menze et al. 1981). In particular, Stalinism started with elite formations and organized the masses accordingly, while Fascism and especially Nazism started with a mass organization which was gradually dominated by elite formations (Arendt 1951:367). Traditional totalitarian theory ignored the fundamental character of the Nazi governing system and the murderous frenzy that boiled up from below (Allen 1981; Geyer and Fitzpatrick 2009; Gleason 1995). The Nazis' use of violence in recreating society was regenerated from below as much as it was instigated from above (Geyer and Fitzpatrick 2009). As a caveat, Stalinism may have had elements of both top-down and bottom-up politics, but the

crucial difference is that in general the politics of Fascism/Nazism was more bottom-up than that of Stalinism (Berezin 1999; Deleuze and Guattari 1987). The Russian Revolution, which started “from below,” became the violent top-down politics of Stalinism.

As is well known, North Korean state power has epitomized the violent Stalinist politics of purges, gulags, surveillance, and social control along with charismatic leadership supported by the communist party and a centrally directed economy. However, at the same time, the DPRK has exerted a nationalist power of ethnic aggression against American “imperialism,” idealizing an organic state that has emphasized the interests of the nation rather than those of class. Cumings’ (1993) thesis of “neo-socialist corporatism” in North Korea tried to justify a transformed version of Confucian “fascist” body politics based upon antagonistic nationalism, people’s active politics in the street, and the charisma of the leader. Despite Cumings’ problematic Confucian evaluation of North Korea’s nationalism, his perspective suggests a productive power mechanism of organic totalitarian governance that is exercised in people’s lives. Drawing on this viewpoint, my alternative approach to North Korean state power explores the DPRK’s militant nationalism as a productive micro-politics of totalitarianism on a discursive level while I recognize the DPRK’s Stalinist violent politics.

With this in mind, I explore an understudied aspect of state power that is represented by North Korea’s militant nationalism and people’s militant ways of life. I focus on how the North Korean regime has enabled citizens’ micro-politics in their lives through anti-American nationalism. This perspective goes beyond a fixed belief in the one-sided or unilateral functioning of communist power, thus emphasizing dynamic power structures. I challenge existing one-sided perspectives of traditional totalitarianism as a macro-politics. This challenge can also be found in recent scholarship that re-evaluates historical Stalinism in people’s social lives and culture. Stalin’s power was more diverse, active, and dynamic than that described by

the traditional approach to totalitarianism (Fitzpatrick 1999; Kotkin 1995). Kotkin (1995) emphasizes the bottom-line proposition that the Stalinist state was permeated throughout by social influences, a notable modification of the prevailing one-sided view of state-society relations in the Stalin era. He delves into the cultural dimension in which Stalinist state power was practiced in individuals' everyday lives. "Stalinism as civilization" was not simply a political system, but rather a "set of values, a social identity, and a way of life" (Kotkin 1995:23).

Going beyond existing studies, I analyze how the DPRK's nationalist state power has penetrated citizens' lives as another face of totalitarianism. This analysis will be made possible by explicating the relationship between totalitarianism, communism, and nationalism, and a micro-politics of totalitarianism.

## **(2) Totalitarianism, Communism, and Nationalism**

North Korea's primary ideology has been not simply communism but rather nationalism (Armstrong 2003; Shin 2006). In fact, nationalism was or has been a crucial ideological weapon of communism. However, "communist nationalism" is contradictory in itself because communists derided nationalism as "bourgeois ruling ideology" (Marx and Engels 1967). With this contradictory reality, some communist countries in Eastern Europe, as well as China, North Korea, Vietnam, and Cuba apparently defined the national state. Having foreseen this dilemma, Lenin advocated the importance of "national forces" in the colonies to combat capitalist imperialism. Following Lenin's line, Stalin highlighted "socialist patriotism" and formulated the thesis of Socialism in One Country. This socialist patriotism had its origin in the "national line" of the *Comintern*, established per Soviet instructions following the German invasion of the Soviet Union (Mevius 2005). Stalin encouraged the parties of the *Comintern* to oppose the

Germans by issuing a call for national liberation, and he appealed to the Soviet people to support Soviet patriotism. All of these ideas show that nationalism does not necessarily conflict with socialism. Nationalism may serve a hegemonic power as the ruling class or regime creates a national-popular collective will through a nationalist force that serves as a “modern popular religion” (Gramsci 1995).

The DPRK’s nationalist nature has been clear in its origin and has displayed more peculiar traits. Over half a century, the DPRK has fought against American “imperialists” as its main enemy. Since the national liberation of Korea in 1945, the DPRK has developed anti-Americanism as a state ideology. The DPRK has strengthened an extreme form of ethnic nationalism through encouraging a people’s politics of hatred and deep emotion in the name of socialist patriotism against American “imperialism.” In particular, North Korean people have always recalled the horror of the Korean War with images of bombing attacks and bacteriological warfare. This has enabled the post-war DPRK’s militant politics to arouse extreme national enmity toward America. As seen in fascist regimes, the North Korean regime’s politics of “moral warfare” has justified the contrast of the enemy leadership with the innocence of the people led by North Korean elites (Cumings 2004). Regarding the dark side of nationalist thought in the post-colonial world, Chatterjee claims:

Seen as part of the story of liberty, nationalism could be defined as a rational ideological framework for the realization of rational, and highly laudable, political ends. But that was not how nationalism had made its presence felt in much of recent history. It has been the cause of the most destructive wars ever seen; it has justified the brutality of Nazism and Fascism; it has become the ideology of racial hatred in the colonies and has given birth to some of the most irrational revivalist movements as well as to the most oppressive political regimes in the contemporary world. (Chatterjee 1986:2)

As Chatterjee points out, some modern movements justified “cruel and irrational nationalism” supported by the masses, such as Nazism. Through an extreme form of racial nationalism, the Nazis intended to create a harmonious relationship between the state and individuals. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler (1971) referred to the state as the organism which enables and preserves national life on earth. His ideology grew out of his fantasy of the nation as an actual organism. At the core of Nazi ideology was the image of the German nation as an actual human body suffering from a potentially fatal disease caused by Jewish people. In this context, Foucault (2003:259) argued that no state had more disciplinary power than the Nazi state. Parallel to Germany’s racial and organic nationalism, the DPRK’s politics of national division has characterized the organic integration of the individual body and nation and developed a militant nationalism as a political form of extreme ethnic nationalism (Shin 2006). The DPRK has justified its “violent” organic nationalism by encouraging racial hatred against the American enemy. North Korea’s ethnic nationalism has offered a basis for the totalitarian organic system (Shin 2006:95). Extreme forms of nationalism such as Germany’s and North Korea’s show that it has elective affinities with the organic governance of totalitarianism.

In this way, the DPRK’s anti-American nationalism has functioned as one of the “categorical identities,” for which Calhoun (1997) argues. Nationalism means identification by similarity of attributes as a member of a set of equivalents, as it overrides other forms of categorical identity (Calhoun 1997:42). This explains the Janus-faced nationalism of the DPRK that has encouraged solid social integration through constructing the external American enemy and has punished and controlled internal enemies at the same time. According to Nairn (1981), who defines nationalism as a “modern Janus,” while one face of nationalism looks to the future and is a vehicle for social transformation, the other looks to the past and enables social subordination. In the case of North Korea, this Janus-faced nationalism has been a historical

product of colonial legacy, the Cold War, and national division. The DPRK's politics of national division has legitimated dictatorship and oppressed society's internal differences.

Yet, the DPRK's anti-American nationalism has gone beyond the simple violent macro-politics of totalitarianism. It has also been productive of totalitarian micro-politics. The organic politics of totalitarianism constructed a totalizing discourse of nation and penetrated citizens' lives through its individualizing mechanism (Giddens 1985:303). Historically, Korea's ethnic nationalism has evolved as a collective cultural phenomenon (Smith 1991). However, North Korea's nationalism through its politics of national division has functioned as a collective ethos that creates individuals' national identities. Nationalism is more complex when it serves as a micro-political mechanism of the nation that permeates citizens' lives (Calhoun 1997). As a collective cultural phenomenon, on the one hand, nationalism has been created and recreated by the political power of nationalist elites from above. On the other hand, the nationalist politics from above has been organically incorporated into ordinary people's lives. Nationalism cannot be separated from ordinary people's responses to the state's mobilization. For instance, North Korea's revolution from 1945 to 1950 created not only new collective identities among people, but also individual subjects centered on a new "imagined community" of the North Korean nation (Armstrong 2003). In this regard, the DPRK's anti-Americanism has been instigated by the state as macro-politics, but it has also been created and recreated as a micro-political mechanism that has encouraged people's militant lives. The DPRK's nationalist power should be examined as a union of both macro- and micro-politics.

The crucial point here is *how* the ideology of nationalism is reproduced with and by people's reactions to communist state power. Gramsci's (1971) notion of hegemony is important when it comes to the reproduction of nationalist state power. The regime or the ruling class' material incentives and ideological forces change the interests of the subordinate class, thus

substantially shaping and reshaping individuals' identities. Furthermore, state power is reproduced and diffused by the representational work of the media (Hall 1997). This representation is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. Bourdieu's concept of "habitus" also emphasizes individuals' practices that evolve within particular socio-cultural contexts. In order to explore the militancy of North Koreans in their everyday practices, we can consider habitus as a system of internalized dispositions that mediate between abstract and largely invisible social structures and the everyday activities of individuals (Bourdieu 1984). Borrowing Bourdieu's (1984:170-172) words, North Koreans' militancy is like a systematic product of habitus as a "structuring and structured structure" of anti-Americanism. North Koreans have developed systematically internalized dispositions that mediate an "imagined" anti-American social structure and individuals' everyday activities. This positive functioning of nationalist power can be inscribed into individual subjects and change their lives from below. The politics of national identity are strongly rooted in ordinary people's perceptions and behaviors. Therefore, nationalism should be understood as a dual phenomenon that is constructed from above but also should be analyzed from below (Puri 2004). A form of "political behavior" in totalitarianism should be considered in terms of an agent as well as a system or structure (Paxton 2004:218). These perspectives underscore how the micro-politics of nationalism extends into individuals' political perceptions and behaviors.

### **(3) Micro-Fascism**

The pivotal theoretical interest of my dissertation is how subjects practice a nationalist power and how they are constituted. As a collective cultural phenomenon, North Korean nationalism has been created from above by the political power elites. On the other hand, the

nationalist politics from above has been organically incorporated into ordinary people's lives in what we might call a marriage between macro- and micro-politics. Giddens (1985) suggests an alternative understanding of the notion of totalitarianism as a union of macro- and micro-politics in modern nation-states. Reformulating Friedrich and Brzezinski's claims of the traditional totalitarian theory, Giddens (1985) defines "totalitarian" rule as a politics of "surveillance such as information coding, documentation of activities of the population, supervision of activities of the population; moral totalism; the terror maximizing police power; and prominence of a leader figure who depends not upon a professional military role, but the generation of mass support" (Giddens 1985:303-304). However, Giddens problematizes the notion of totalitarianism by broadening its usage. In his view, no modern nation-state was completely immune from the potentiality of being subject to totalitarian rule (Giddens 1985:302). He focuses on the "totalitarian" character of the nation-states that monopolized and legitimized surveillance and violence. The possibilities of this "totalitarian" rule depend upon the politics by which the state penetrates citizens' daily activities and changes them from below. Therefore, Giddens' understanding of totalitarianism raises two important points. One is that all modern states engage in totalitarian characteristics in certain ways. The other is that the individualizing mechanism of modern nation states' totalizing power can be seen as a marriage between macro- and micro-politics.

This analytical view of nationalism "from below" can be interpreted using Foucault's idea that modern power is diffused through the disciplinary control of individual bodies. Foucault's thinking on modern power also provides an insightful perspective on the micro-politics of totalitarianism. According to his study on the origin and development of modern power, the modern technique of surveillance was created not merely by a unilateral imposition of coercive control from above over individuals, but rather by diffusion of the productive power of

“docile bodies” (Foucault 1977). In Foucault’s sense, the modern power of the police that Althusser (1971) identified with a “repressive state apparatus” was not simply manipulated by a social body of sovereign institutions, but was inscribed into individual bodies as disciplining details. These disciplinary details characterize the individualizing mechanism of totalizing power in modern societies. In Foucault’s sense, national identity can be understood as inscribed into the political body of the modern individual. The discourse of nationalism not only encourages viewing individuals as linked through their membership in a set of abstract equivalents, but it also encourages viewing identity as inscribed into and coterminous with the individual body (Calhoun 1997:46).

Similarly, Deleuze and Guattari’s perspective on state power provides insight into the micro-politics of communist society. In their view, the notion of mass is a “molecular” notion operating according to a type of segmentation irreducible to the “molar segmentarity” of class (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:213). Fascism is disseminated in fragments throughout the social spectrum, and the form it takes in any one place depends on the prevailing relations of power. This productive mechanism of fascism is distinct from both molar segments and their centralization, which can be characterized in typical Stalinist totalitarian states (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:214). In Deleuze and Guattari’s terminology, the politics of “fascism” employs the social mechanism of the “war machine” that integrates the state and individuals through the micro-politics of diffusion (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:230). In this sense, they highlight the interaction and union of macro- and micro-politics: “Every politics is simultaneously a macro-politics and a micro-politics” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:213).

Communist state power in the DPRK is not only run from the center, but also depends on the micro-fascist regime of nationalism that works with the center (to borrow Deleuze and Guattari’s term). That is, the way in which the DPRK’s state power has operated in people’s lives

is another version of what Deleuze and Guattari (Deleuze and Guattari 1987; Guattari 1984) call “micro-fascism.” A union of macro- and micro-politics in what they describe as micro-fascism provides a useful theoretical and analytical framework for exploring North Korean militant nationalism. Similarly, Foucault articulates the micro-politics of fascism in his preface to *Anti-Oedipus*:

The major enemy, the strategic adversary is fascism. And not only historical fascism, the fascism of Hitler and Mussolini—which was able to mobilize and use the desire of the masses effectively—but also the fascism in us all, in our heads and in our everyday behavior, the fascism that causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us. (Foucault 1983:xiii)

Foucault emphasizes the fascism in ordinary people’s heads and in their everyday behaviors. The Nazis’ power managed the population through interventions upon the individual and collective body and instrumentalized the micro-fascism of everyday life (Rose 1999:26). The micro-politics of fascism does not necessarily work by oppressing people’s freedom and individuality but rather by encouraging them from below. In this way, the DPRK’s militant nationalism has been inscribed into individuals, and people have created their own micro-fascism through the politics of hatred, patriotism, and deep emotion in their everyday lives.

Finally, as Hall (1996) emphasizes, the subject’s identity is socially constructed and it is always in process. Identities are not unchanging but constructed and reconstructed through difference as power operates through internal dynamics. With this theoretical framework, I explore subjects’ identity formation and transformation that are found in the micro-politics of totalitarianism and the social mechanisms of micro-politics. Considering long term social transformation of the DPRK including recent changes, I focus on how the DPRK has encouraged

militancy in the lives of citizens, and how the micro-fascism of nationalism has developed and changed.<sup>1</sup> By analyzing how the DPRK's anti-American state power has created people's micro-fascism and how this state power has been created and recreated in people's everyday practices, I provide an in-depth understanding of power functioning which is differentiated from the traditional totalitarian approach. By doing so, I show how North Korean state power has been reproduced, questioned, and challenged in individuals' everyday lives.

### **Understanding North Korean Socialism**

In this section I critically review the existing studies of North Korean socialism by discussing their academic contributions and limitations. This critical review of existing literature helps clarify my alternative theoretical perspective on the DPRK's state power and provides a thematic backdrop for understanding North Korean socialism.

In the late 1980s, U.S. officials considered North Korea, Pakistan, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Libya as "rogue states." The term referred to authoritarian regimes that severely restricted

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<sup>1</sup> It should be emphasized that this dynamics of micro-fascism can be differentiated and reconstructed (Deleuze and Guattari 1987; Foucault 1977; Hall 1996; Mitchell 1988). The subjects who exercise or submit to power relations are enmeshed in a self-making process within a power structure that regulates the conduct of each and every member of society. At the same time, resistance is always interrelated with the subjects exercising power (Foucault 1990:94-95). Foucault says, "[Micro-powers] define innumerable points of confrontation, focuses of instability, each of which has its own risks of conflict, of struggles, and of an at least temporary inversion of the power relations" (Foucault 1977:27). In this view, the micro-powers can break down and counteract one another or overreach (Mitchell 1988:xi). This idea is congruous with Hall's (1996) notion of cultural identity; the concept of identity is not an essentialist one but a strategic and positional one. It is always socially constructed and reconstructed. This explains the ways in which people's reactions to the North Korean regime's anti-Americanism after the 1980s have been differentiated. The DPRK's nationalist state power can be renegotiated, questioned, and challenged as people's micro-fascism coexists with change and persistence.

human rights, sponsored terrorism, and sought to proliferate weapons of mass destruction. This concept of the rogue state was replaced with the “axis of evil” concept by the Bush administration in 2002. As an “evil” state, the DPRK has functioned as the Western antagonistic idea of the communist “other.” Along this line, many existing studies have defined North Korean socialism as a system of extreme punishment and brutal control with a one-sided violent way of power functioning.

As early leading scholars of North Korean studies, Scalapino and Lee (1972) underscored a violent image of the Stalinist regime in the DPRK that made citizens into docile beings who complied with the state. In their view, North Korean society was like a monolithic “monarchy,” and nationalism was seen as a convenient vehicle of the state’s violence, for both war and national mobilization. The DPRK was represented as a “forced monolithic system” composed of a single communist party led by Kim Il Sung, a unifying ideology, a monopoly of military forces, and a centrally directed economy (Scalapino and Lee 1972:ch. VIII). This evaluation echoed Friedrich and Brzezinski’s (1956) traditional approach of totalitarianism centering on a monolithic organic entity. Therefore, the DPRK’s communist system imitated the Stalinist model and Kim Il Sung’s rule was like “Stalinism in the East” (Lee 1969).

McCormack (1993, 2002) also evaluated North Korean socialism through a neo-totalitarian prism. His perspective on totalitarian North Korea blended surveillance, terror, and mobilization with state rituals such as an allegedly charismatic leader, absolute faith, implacable hostility to heresy, dedication of considerable resources to the construction of memorials which symbolically represented the central truths of state ideology, and the mass games which the society celebrated and with which it renewed identity (McCormack 1993:46). Thus, the DPRK closely fitted the model of totalitarian rule (McCormack 1993:46). Furthermore, permeated by monolithism, xenophobia, and leader-worship, the DPRK was never demobilized, and even the

fatal economic crisis after the 1980s did not change this fact (McCormack 2002). From a different angle, Szalontai (2005) explored the roots of “North Korean despotism” not in terms of one-sided Soviet influences but rather of North Korea’s independent effort at de-Stalinism. The DPRK’s despotism was a historical product which North Korea created from post-colonial rule, the international Cold War, and socialist great powers. However, this study did not go beyond the traditional approach to totalitarianism since North Korea’s despotism was not significantly different from that of the Soviets. According to Lankov (2002:87), Kim Il Sung’s purges against rival groups in the late 1950s were reminiscent of the Great Purge in Stalin’s Russia during the years of 1936-1938. From this perspective, the DPRK’s nationalist line represented a Stalinist model of violent politics (Lankov 2002, 2006).

Another common interpretative theme of North Korean socialism refers to the importance of the effect of the military-political leadership on state formation and social militarization. Wada (1993) categorized North Korea as a “guerrilla state.” The implication is that siege conditions were crucial in the creation and maintenance of the North Korean system with its exceptional degree of military and political cohesion around highly concentrated leadership in the communist party and the armed forces. Wada (2002) recently argued that the North Korean guerrilla state was shifted to a “regular army state” that projected modern military forces and systematic militarization of the entire society. Facing a food crisis, North Korea’s regular army state tried to overcome the crises of socialism by mobilizing the entire nation through military-first politics. In this context, Cumings (2004) compared the DPRK to a “garrison state” in which, as Laswell (1941:455) argued, the “specialists on violence are the most powerful group in society.” The DPRK’s militarized nationalism called for arming the entire populace and turning the entire country into a fortress. This militaristic approach to the DPRK

offers a good explanation of the historical origin and development of North Korean state formation and military nationalism.

On the other hand, the cultural approach that can be called a Confucian revival explains North Korean state formation and social transformation in terms of its representation of Confucianism (Cumings 1993, 1997; Lee 1975; Suzuki 1994). Early on, Lee (1975) provided a significant anthropological analysis of socio-cultural transformation in rural North Korea under communism. According to Lee's study, North Korea was able to create a stable socialist system by connecting Confucian principles such as loyalty and filial piety (*ch'ung-hyo*) to communist rule. From his perspective, the Kim cult was comparable to Confucian reformist Zhu Xi's dream of a new Confucian society (Lee 1975:189). Suzuki (1994) also highlighted the importance of Confucian tradition in North Korean political ideology and systems. In Suzuki's view, the unitary leader system and organic political culture stemmed from Asian Confucianism. His understanding of the DPRK's political leadership focused on the sociocultural aspect of state power that was strengthened by the "consonance between political power and Confucian culture" (Suzuki 1994:183-189). Similarly, Cumings' thesis of neo-socialist corporatism emphasized a Confucian reading of North Korean studies. He viewed the DPRK's neo-socialist corporatism as a mixture of socialism, corporatism, and Confucianism, including nationalist governance, organic solidity, charismatic leadership, and so forth. Arguing for the revival of Confucianism in corporatist socialism, Cumings (1993:219-220) viewed the "Hermit Kingdom and Confucianist past" as one of the most important determinant causes of this peculiar socialist Confucian corporatism.

This cultural approach to North Korean state power has assumed that the Confucian transformation of the post-war DPRK was a reflection of traditional Confucianism and revealed a cultural determinist element in the DPRK's political power (Kang 2011). These rhetorical claims

for “Confucian” communist Korea have depicted some aspects of political-cultural phenomena without a thorough understanding of Confucianism and its modern revival. In fact, North Korea’s political power is not projected by Confucian culture, but the reverse is true (Kang 2011; Sö 1996; Wada 2002). In this regard, contemporary North Korea’s organic Confucian rhetoric of “socio-political life” and “socialist big family” has functioned as a dominating political discourse (Yi 2000). The neo-traditional phenomena themselves have been created and recreated by political power and its discursive mechanisms. Therefore, in a way, the cultural approach to North Korean socialism has overlooked the political construction of national identity formation and cultural transformation.

Going beyond both the one-sided totalitarian perspective and cultural interpretation of North Korean studies, Armstrong (2003) traced the disciplinary state power of early post-liberation North Korea (1945-1950). From his perspective, North Korea was not a Soviet satellite in the Eastern European manner, nor was it the result of a local revolution, as in Cuba or Vietnam. The DPRK became a nationalist state that created a new people, nation, collective identities, and individual subjects. The DPRK’s nationalist power represented not the “Sovietization of North Korea” but the “Koreanization of Soviet communism” (Armstrong 2003:241). This state power was rooted deep in the social nexus beyond a unilateral Stalinist force. The DPRK’s legitimating disciplinary power penetrated people’s daily activities and encouraged an organic integration between the state and individuals. Armstrong’s study provides a new insight into how state power operated in the relationships between the state and society in the post-liberation DPRK. His study enables us to go beyond the traditional totalitarian approach to North Korean socialism and delve into the DPRK’s nationalist state power that has been reproduced from below.

Based upon and going beyond Armstrong's perspective and focusing on the DPRK's militant nationalism, my dissertation explores how state power has extended into citizens' lives and has been shaped and reshaped by people's practices. Through criticizing existing studies, I argue that the North Korean state is not an omnipotent organizer that has imposed its one-sided force upon individuals, but rather an integrative organizer that has penetrated individuals' everyday practices and motivated their beliefs, activities, and interactions. In this dynamics of state power, individuals are active fighters rather than terrorized agents under the politics of horror.

### **Contextualizing the Thematic Framework**

My dissertation is chronologically organized in order to explore the multiple ways state power has functioned in the DPRK's anti-American nationalism. In this dissertation, the dynamics of North Korean state power are analyzed in four historical phases: the colonial period (1910-1945), early socialist reform (1945-1950), post-war Stalinist politics and militant nationalism (the 1950s-the 1980s), and the changes during the economic crisis (after the 1980s).

First, Chapter II explores the colonial period before national liberation in 1945 that shows Kim Il Sung's anti-colonial nationalism. I discuss the historical origin of North Korea's communism and nationalism and the Japanese colonial legacy in terms of totalitarian and nationalist governance.

Second, in Chapter III, I analyze the early socialist revolution from national liberation until the Korean War (1950-1953) broke out. The second historical phase introduces the historical background of North Korean socialism which foreshadowed the post-war Stalinist politics and militant nationalism. I examine a complex historical process of coercive and

hegemonic state powers along with the coexistence of Stalinist and nationalist governances. North Korea's early hegemonic power was replaced by the state's coercive power which intended total domination of society, centering on war and military mobilization. At the same time, anti-American nationalism emerged in this process and evolved as a dominating state ideology of the post-war DPRK.

Third, in Chapters IV and V, I explore the DPRK's post-war Stalinist politics and militant nationalism together, in terms of North Korea's dynamic power functioning from the 1950s through the 1980s. During this period, on the one hand, the post-war Stalinist regime epitomized the violent top-down politics of a one-man dictatorship, purges, punishment, surveillance, and thought control (Chapter IV). On the other hand, the DPRK's militant nationalism was characterized by the new face of state power which was not necessarily top-down and violent, but also productive and diffusive from below (Chapter V). The third historical phase shows how state power operated in citizens' lives in different ways. In particular, Chapter IV is a reiteration of accepted scholarship on totalitarianism and serves as a set-up for Chapter V which reflects my main research questions, claims, and themes.

Finally, Chapter VI examines social changes in North Korea's anti-American state power and citizens' lives during the economic crisis from the 1990s through the present. North Koreans' reactions to the regime's militant nationalism after the 1980s can be simultaneously characterized as persistent, conflicting, and challenging. This final historical phase offers an explanation of how anti-American state power has been contested and recreated in citizens' everyday practices.

## Methodology

In this research, I employed a qualitative method based upon in-depth interviews with North Korean refugees living in South Korea. I examined the everyday lives of North Koreans, how they lived and felt during the socialist revolution, and how anti-American state power worked. In-depth interviews with a total of 80 North Korean refugees living in South Korea were conducted during my three years (2006, 2008, and 2009) of summer research. I joined many formal and informal social gatherings, meetings, and everyday life activities of North Korean refugees. I used snowball sampling due to the difficulty of obtaining access to North Korean defectors. I also used an informal, semi-structured one-on-one in-depth interview method. Using these personal semi-narrative sources as the main methodological framework of this study helped me “link an individual life with stories about the collective destiny” (Maynes, Pierce, and Laslett 2008:3). All of the interviews were tape recorded, transcribed, and translated into English. I ensured interviewees anonymity to encourage them to speak freely and frankly.

Appendix I shows the personal background information of 18 refugees who defected before the end of the Korean War (1950-1953). Of 18 interviewees who fled to the South before 1953, 12 were men and 6 were women. The distribution of interviewees’ ages shows 6 persons in their 70s, 9 in their 80s, and 3 in their 90s. Since most of these interviewees were very young or were students at the time of defection and their memories were quite old, their statements might have some limitations as reliable interview data. Nevertheless, their interviews provided some valuable information about the social reality in North Korea from national liberation to the Korean War.

Appendix II shows that of 62 refugees who defected after the Korean War, especially during the food crisis after the 1980s. There were 33 men and 29 women in this group. The

distribution of interviewees' ages shows 1 person in their teens, 5 persons in their 20s, 4 persons in their 30s, 13 persons in their 40s, 13 in their 50s, 8 in their 60s, 16 in their 70s, and 2 in their 80s. Analyzing this key data, I found some differentiated points, especially in relation to the background information of 62 interviewees. All but two interviewees fled to the South during the food crisis after the 1980s. The distribution of refugees' ages was diverse, ranging from one teenager to people in their 80s.<sup>2</sup> I also found regional differences in North Korea's social changes, especially after the 1980s. According to the defectors I interviewed, social integration in the areas around the capital Pyongyang and inland provinces has been stable, while in the border areas between China and North Korea around North Hamgyŏng, North Pyŏngan, and Yang'gang Provinces it has disintegrated. Among 47 defectors who revealed information about their places of birth or residence, 25 were born or resided in these significantly disintegrated border areas. Furthermore, if I include people who temporarily resided in the border areas for the purpose of defection, the number reaches almost 80 percent. This indirectly shows that my data might not have represented the reality of the socially integrated areas in North Korea. However, this makes my arguments regarding the positive functioning of state power more convincing. This point applies to interviewees' family backgrounds. Among 52 defectors (10 did not disclose this information), 29 suffered from their "bad" family/class backgrounds; their parents were landlords or Christians, their family members fled to the South before the Korean War, their family members came from the South, Japan, or China, or they or their family members were politically

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<sup>2</sup> I considered the generation gap in North Koreans' reactions to the regime's mobilization. I focused on North Koreans in their 40s or older while I considered a valid valance of the distribution of age. This is because my dissertation analyzes long-term post-war North Korean social transformation. In addition, it was very difficult to get access to defectors who experienced the period of the 1950s since the respondents living through the transition were more advanced in age. I made up for this problem by examining the childhood of interviewees in their 60s or older.

purged and fell into an “anti-revolutionary” class. These people’s defections were mainly for political reasons. The remaining 23 interviewees defected from the North because of economic hardship and food shortages. Among defectors who fled to the South for political reasons, many have maintained extreme antagonism against not America but the North Korean regime and thus they frequently evaluated North Korean society negatively. Their perspectives were obviously shaped by their harrowing personal histories of purges, punishment, incarceration, defections, famine, and the horrors of being surrounded by death.

In addition, I paid close attention to the changes in interviewees’ reactions to the regime in terms of their political opinions. Among a total of 62 defectors minus seven (two defected before the 1990s and five were too young), 40 shifted their political opinions from being pro-regime to anti-regime after the 1980s; 10 had already had antagonism towards the regime before the 1990s; and 5 have not significantly changed their own beliefs and still maintain some type of pro-regime ideas even in the South. This distribution reveals that most North Koreans served as enthusiastic fighters against America until the economic crisis arose, and the food crisis has significantly influenced people’s reactions to the regime’s governance since the 1990s. In particular, changes in people’s consciousness during the food crisis, the period of refugees’ political/economic asylum in Northeast Asia, and resettlement in South Korea are important for the analysis of individual stories; but actual changes in most interviewees’ consciousness occurred when they experienced social crises in North Korea rather than as a post-immigration product or as a result of living in the refugee community. Thus, refugees’ perspectives represent the ways in which other people in the North have understood and reacted to the regime’s anti-Americanism.

Employing this refugee data, I had to carefully consider the problem of interviewees’ political biases as a traditional limitation of the qualitative research method. For instance, some

interviewees exaggerated or over-generalized their experiences and political opinions. They may have said what they had just heard without seeing or experiencing it. Likewise, some interviewees might have hidden or distorted their own opinions and general public opinions, especially in their evaluation of the North Korean regime's ideology and policies, because of their extreme political enmity toward the regime. In spite of this limitation, refugee-supplied information obtained by examining the real lives of ordinary people and by listening to their real stories can serve as valuable data (Whyte 1974:243). I interviewed refugees who had a variety of anti-communist sentiments which might have biased their responses. The basic way to overcome potentially biased data was to find refugees who did not share the same problem, ask them similar questions, and then compare the responses. In case some informants' claims were falsified by other informants', I depended upon the claims with which the majority of the informants agreed. The debatable points in collected data were compared with other researchers' findings and secondary sources.

Along with this qualitative analysis, I analyzed archival data from North Korean publications such as newspapers, magazines, and textbooks. In this archival analysis, I focused on the North Korean government's discourse of militant nationalism. I examined the sources of the communist government's propaganda through analysis of their context and compared them to interviews and other secondary sources.

## Chapter II Anti-Colonial Nationalism and Colonial Legacy

This chapter gives the historical background of North Korea's anti-colonial nationalism and discusses the Japanese colonial legacy that influenced North Korea's communism and nationalism. In going back to the historical origin of modern Korean nationalism, we must pay attention to the fact that Korea's ethnic nationalism emerged as a response to aggressive Japanese imperialism. According to Sin Ch'aeho, a famous early Korean nationalist, "History is the record of the struggle between the 'I' (*a*) and the 'non-I' (*pi-a*)" (Sin 2006:24). Sin's dichotomous logic of the ethnic notion of nation imagined an independent "pure" Korean nation that had to be saved from "vicious" Japanese imperialism. The Korean nation was viewed as an "organic entity (*yugiche*) formed from the national spirit (*minjok chöngsin*)" in his essay *Toksasillon* (A New Way of Reading History) (Sin 2007:214). This organic body formed out of the national spirit represented the ethnic core of the Korean people. This ethnic-centered nation became a mythical ideal that filled the gap left by the absence of the Korean state under Japanese colonialism. In this way, Korea's modern ethnic nationalism emerged and developed in the historical context of the contentious politics between colonial rule and the anti-colonial struggle, in which both Japanese colonizers and colonized Koreans politically utilized the ethnic notion of the Korean nation (Shin, Freda, and Yi 1999:473).

During the colonial rule of Korea, the Japanese attempted to assimilate Koreans into the empire as "imperial subjects" in the name of "Japanese and Koreans as one body." Koreans were forced to be assimilated as subjects (*sinmin*) of imperial Japan. However, this colonial politics, racializing Koreans as second-class Japanese, did not erase Korean national consciousness but rather reinforced Koreans' conviction that they were a purely homogeneous ethnic nation (Shin, Freda, and Yi 1999:472). At the same time, Korean nationalists' anti-imperialism did not go

beyond the politicization of ethnic nationalism managed by the Japanese. Korean nationalists developed ethnic nationalism for their resistance movements through the discourse of a homogeneous nation. This colonial residue transformed into the two post-colonial Koreas that called for their own “pure” nation.<sup>3</sup>

In the northern part of a liberated Korea, Kim Il Sung established the DPRK on September 9, 1948, a month after Rhee Syngman proclaimed the establishment of the Republic of Korea (ROK) as the only legitimate government on the Korean peninsula. With national liberation, Kim Il Sung’s anti-Japanese nationalism was followed by anti-American nationalism. North Korea’s national enemy shifted from Japan to America. Right before the outbreak of the

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<sup>3</sup> Both Kim Il Sung and Rhee Syngman demonstrated a serious investment in the purity and unity of the ethnic nation while they organized their politics of nation based upon different ideological positioning. Rhee’s aggressive nationalism developed through anti-communism and climaxed to “*Ilmin chuui*” (an ideology of one people) as the state discourse of a new nation. When the new country of “one people” meant a unified anti-communist nation, Rhee tried to construct an organically integrated anti-communist society by idealizing a society of one people or one nation under “anti-communist totalitarian fascism” (Sō 2005). Rhee even attacked communism as a “contagious disease” that broke the unity of the Korean national community. In a speech, he encouraged, “Dear friends, you must fight against communists. You must fight against communists like you fight against a contagious disease” (Rhee 1957:120). When his political leadership took on anti-communism as the main political machine, the Republic of Korea’s (ROK) anti-communism developed an extreme nationalist discourse through the dichotomy of “civilization and barbarism.” Rhee claimed, “The Russians dominated half of our country by force, developed the communist party, sent their rioters to the South, deceived ignorant North Korean people by lying, and made North Korea a colony. They have committed murder, arson, and all barbarian deeds which ordinary people do not dare to commit. Thus, we will not forgive their brutalities any longer and will make sure that this dangerous situation is stopped” (Kim 1950:113-114). In this speech, he described communist North Korea as a barbarian society. He frequently contrasted the ROK, “our democratic nation,” with the communist DPRK by using the dichotomy of civilization and barbarism (Rhee 1956:100). Through Rhee’s anti-communist prism, North Korea’s communism equaled barbarism, whereas South Korea’s democratic liberalism represented civilization. This dichotomous anti-communist ideology in the ROK advanced aggressive nationalism which justified Korea’s unification through northern advance (Rhee 1953:24).

Korean War, Kim Il Sung argued enthusiastically for the construction of an integrated anti-American Korea:

Our people have now risen in a struggle to implement the proposal of the Democratic National United Front for the country's peaceful reunification in order to attain complete national independence, develop the country along democratic lines and win peaceful reunification. A graphic illustration of this struggle can be seen in the fact that the people in the northern half of the Republic are energetically building democracy to strengthen the political and economic base of our Republic while the people in the southern half are putting up mass resistance and mounting a guerrilla struggle against the U.S. imperialists and the treacherous Syngman Rhee clique, their lackeys. (Kim Il Sung 1964:431)

In this speech, Kim Il Sung advocated an extreme form of nationalism when the DPRK named as national enemies the U.S. and the ROK. As the DPRK's call for national liberation aimed at the conquest of "evil imperialism" and its "treacherous clique," the Korean War became a "war for justice" against "injustice" (Korean Workers' Party 1964). The virtues of "peace, independence, democracy, and national unification" belonged to North Korea, while "struggle, imperialism, treachery, and national division" were associated with South Korea. As seen in this dichotomy of "good and evil" used by Kim Il Sung, irrational collective spirits or belongings could be mobilized by modern rulers or elites' extreme language and use of negative ethnicity (Hobsbawm 1990:51). North Korea's ethnic and militant nationalism was a modern construction of a "pure" ethnic nation created through the attempt to establish a crude collective identity that was aggressive and irrational.

## Colonial Legacy

Japanese colonial legacy significantly influenced communist Korea's totalitarian and nationalist ways of governance. Armstrong (2003:243) pointed out that both Stalinism and Japanese colonialism were systems of total mobilization, and the North Korean revolution from 1945 to 1950 was inspired by the former and supplanted by the latter. During early communist reform, eliminating the vestiges of Japanese colonialism as one of the most critical social issues and goals of the new regime elicited North Korean support. However, ironically, while the communist regime succeeded in eliminating colonial residuals through radical revolution, the regime's control systems were established by the retention of the colonial functionaries (Armstrong 2003:192). The communist regime destroyed the political and economic structures created by the Japanese, but communist Korea's administrative, judicial, and social infrastructures maintained the Japanese colonial legacy in certain ways (Armstrong 2003:192, 243). The regime accepted Japan's administrative infrastructures and effective political and social control mechanisms in order to strengthen its initially weak state system. Specifically, some low-level officials and policemen who had served the colonial government kept their positions until the Korean War broke out. This is because the state lacked trained officials and policemen at the local level and the communist infrastructure was not completely established. For instance, refugee interviewee Y. Pyŏn (male, 85) from the Japanese Kwantung Army worked as a cell party leader under the tacit consent of party committee officials until his past pro-Japanese record was officially detected, and he fled to the South in 1950 when the Korean War broke out.

The paradox of colonial legacy in the post-colonial communist state can be clearly seen in North Korea's political agenda and economic system for total domination of society. The

Movement of the Ideological Mobilization of the Entire Nation for State Building formulated by the communist regime in 1946 was informed by the Movement of the Mobilization of the Total National Spirit established by the Japanese during colonial rule. In addition, although the North Korean Stalinist political-economic system was different from the Japanese, the fundamental logic of socio-economic domination between them was not significantly different (Kimura 1999). The Japanese colonial government issued a decree tightening control over the marketing of rice in 1939. Korean farmers were forbidden to sell their harvested rice until they had fulfilled the compulsory quota of state-purchased rice (*kongch'ul*). Production and distribution of industrial crops were strictly controlled, and the state requisitioned large proportions of these products from farmers. Communist Korea did not abolish the mandatory state purchase of rice and the communist regime strongly controlled the production and distribution of industrial crops. In this way, “totalitarian Korea” was viewed as the continuity of “fascist Japan” (Kimura 1999).

In addition, the Japanese administrative and social control units remained, albeit transformed, in post-colonial North Korea. For instance, the patriotic associations (*aegukpan*) during Japanese colonial rule became the people’s associations in North Korea, which are similar to today’s neighborhood meetings (*pansanghoe*) in South Korea. In form they were different, but their actual content was unchanged. The patriotic association, consisting of 10-20 households, was a basic unit of control that was connected with the social body of the state and its bureaucracies. In February 1939, the Japanese patriotic associations in Korea numbered 310,000, with 4,250,000 members, thus enabling the surveillance and control of most Korean people. According to the colonial government’s “plan to strengthen the practice of patriotic associations,” patriotic associations manipulated “religious” rituals toward the Japanese emperor, monthly meetings of the association, and public service work (Yi 2004). Japanese “fascist” power tried to control people’s everyday lives, encompassing their political, ideological,

economic, and cultural lives in the patriotic associations. The Japanese regime asked people to stop drinking and smoking and to perform ceremonies, such as ancestor worship, frugally in order to prevent waste of food and to avoid empty formalities and vanity (Yi 2004). The people's associations in communist Korea had functions that were similar to the patriotic associations in colonial Korea. These people's associations were in charge of controlling residents' political tendencies, economic activities, and social morals and lives. Heads of the people's associations usually became heads of cell organizations, the lowest ranking party organizations. People were grouped into cells of the communist party; each cell was watched over by a party member; and cell leaders were watched over by the police and their informants (Kim 1995:250). Refugee interviewee M. Yu (male, 77) was born in South P'yŏngan Province and fled to the South in 1950. According to him, each head of a cell (*sep'ojang*) kept his or her eye on 8 people. The heads' activities were an effective way for the state to manipulate the entire social control system, as they were located in small cities, towns, and rural areas. The heads of the people's associations regularly checked and controlled residents' ideological tendencies and amoral behaviors and organized their economic mobilization for the government's policies and programs.

The police institution and its governing mechanism in North Korea also manifested the colonial legacy. The Japanese colonial goal was to maintain one substation for every township, and by 1936 the Japanese boasted of employing over 20,000 police distributed among 254 police stations and 2,574 substations (Armstrong 2003:195). Through these police organizations, colonial infrastructural power penetrated Korean people's everyday lives. In the North Korean communist regime, the province level public security bureaus of the Japanese police system were largely adapted to the new situation and their duties centered on the purge of "impure elements" (Paik 1993:276). One significant improvement in the realm of public security was the abolition

of torture, or at least the abolition of the atrocious Japanese-style methods of torture used with dissidents. Nevertheless, the communist forces of public security imitated and strengthened the Japanese model. The North Korean security forces had roughly 60,000 personnel in the spring and summer of 1949 (Paik 1993:302). Specifically, 500 general policemen and 48 security agents worked in Ch'ŏlwŏn County on August 26, 1950 (National Institute of Korean History 1993:113). According to a refugee interviewee (male, 90) who defected from Ch'ŏlwŏn County in 1947, the population's intelligence-gathering activities and public security in communist Korea were similar to those in colonial Korea. According to a security report created by Hŭirim Chŏn, the head of Ch'ŏlwŏn County public security office, on August 26, 1950, Ch'ŏlwŏn County detected 10 "anti-revolutionary" or "counter-national" cases through informants in the people's associations of each village (National Institute of Korean History 1993:115).

Seen in this way, the colonial governing method had a great impact on communist Korea. Most of all, Japanese colonizers tried to utilize an organic idea of nation centering on the ruler-subject relationship. Japanese rulers forced Koreans to serve as loyal subjects of the Emperor. For instance, through the 1922 reform of the family register, the colonial state tried to institute changes to the traditional family and construct a new nuclear family system under the direct domination of the state (Yang 1999:221). Japanese imperialism elevated the Emperor to the supreme ruling organ in an organic entity whose base was family/individuals as independent cells (Cumings 1993:202-203). In the name of a unified Japan and Korea, the colonial state endeavored to dominate the entire population more fully by obtaining specific information about all family members. This Japanese idea would become a part of North Korea's communist ruling mechanism. Kim Il Sung's *Chuch'e* ideology represented modern North Korea's nationalist and organic approach. Both Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il developed the *Chuch'e* ideology on the basis of the organic relationship between the state (brain) and the masses (body) (Kim Jong Il

1992). Kim Jong Il (1992) emphasized the spiritual socio-political life of nation rather than the physical personal life of individuals. In the junior Kim's view, the individual's physical life had to be incorporated into the nation's socio-political life. North Korea's ruling mechanisms were influenced by Japanese totalitarian and nationalist governance.

### **Chapter III The Socialist Revolution from 1945 to 1950**

This chapter explores the early socialist revolution of North Korea from 1945 to 1950. On August 15, 1945, Korea was liberated from 36 years of Japanese colonial rule. However, before the people of Korea could fully appreciate liberation, their country was divided into the North and the South and the two halves put under the control of the Soviet Union and the United States respectively. This was because the national liberation of Korea was made possible by foreign great powers rather than Korea's own force. During the Cold War between the U.S. and the Soviet Union right after World War II, the South was dominated by the U.S., which tried to prevent the Soviet Union's communist extension into East Asia, while the North was rapidly transformed into a Soviet communist society under Stalin's influences.

Under the antagonistic intra-national relationship between the two Koreas, the North Korean regime began to establish the base of a strong state system, while at the same time preparing for war in the name of national unification. From national liberation until the Korean War (1950-1953) broke out, North Korea established a broad bureaucratic system of party and state apparatuses, security, and military forces, and developed a state system for social mobilization in agriculture, labor, industry, finance, and so on. Early comprehensive reform through a combination of coercive and hegemonic powers in North Korea allowed the state to stably dominate society by defeating some of the localized resistance. However, when the DPRK aimed at the total domination of the entire society for war mobilization and the centralization of state power, the state's hegemonic power began to be eroded by its coercive power. In addition to political and economic structures, military and security forces and social control systems were based upon a Stalinist model and tradition. However, at the same time, the DPRK encouraged its

people to be armed with anti-American and anti-South Korean ideology for national reunification to save its own nation.

### **Early Socialist Reform and Hegemonic State Power**

North Korea's socialist revolution after national liberation brought about radical changes in the nature of society. As it was liberated from Japanese rule in 1945, North Korea embarked on various policies towards a series of socialist reforms such as land reform and nationalization of major industries and private enterprises. The post-colonial communist state not only destroyed political and economic structures created by the Japanese through the purges of pro-Japanese officials and landlords, land reform, and the nationalization of private business and industries, but it also tried to eradicate the residual Japanese influence from the Korean people's culture. Through mass-supported reforms, early post-liberation North Korea was able to gain people's support by granting economic incentives and calling for political legitimacy.

From 1945 to 1950, the North Korean communist reform under the auspices of the Soviets was omni-directional as it transformed almost all sectors: party and state apparatuses, security and military forces, agriculture, labor, industry, finance, and so forth (Paik 1993). Among these sectors, agricultural revolution was one of the most remarkable changes in post-liberation reform in North Korea. Through the promulgation of the Law on Land Reform on March 5, 1946, the communist regime succeeded in changing the traditional structure of landownership by confiscating the land and properties possessed by Japanese and traditional landlords. Land reform was successfully completed within three weeks because most landlords fled to the South around the time of the establishment of the communist regime in the northern part of Korea, and thus there was no significant resistance. The land reform was achieved in a

less violent manner than that in China and North Vietnam (Cumings 1981). North Korea's land reform abolished the ownership of land by landlords and the traditional sharecropping system and sought to establish an agricultural system based upon the "land to the tiller" principle. All sharecropping lands and all the land owned by the Japanese, Korean national traitors, and the Korean landlords who had more than 5 *chǒngbo* (1 *chǒngbo*=2.451 acres) were confiscated or nullified. The confiscated land was distributed gratis, for permanent use, mainly to landless peasants and small landholders according to the principle of the number of family members plus the number in the labor force of the family. The total amount of land confiscated was 1,008,178 *chǒngbo*, and the confiscated land was distributed as follows:

*Table 1 Land Redistribution*

Category	Amount of Land Received	Percent of Land Received	No. of Households
Agricultural laborers	22,387	2.3	17,137
Landless peasants	603,407	61.5	442,973
Small land holding peasants	345,974	35.2	260,501
Landlords who moved to other counties	9,622	1.0	3,911
Total	981,390	100.0	724,522

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, State-Planned Committee of the DPRK, *1946-1960 Chosǒn minjujuǐ inmin konghwaguk inmin kyǒngje paljǒn t'onggyejip* (1946-1960 A Statistical Collection of People's Economic Development in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea) (Pyongyang: Kungnip Ch'ulp'ansa, 1961), p. 59.

As shown in Table 1, most of the land was redistributed to poor peasants through land reform. The rich landlords lost their land and most of them fled to the South. Sǒk-hyǒng Kim was born in Pakch'ǒn County, North P'yǒngan Province in 1914. He served as a security

policeman for the North Korean regime until 1960 when he was dispatched as a spy to the South. He was captured by the South Korean security police in 1962 and jailed as a non-converted communist criminal until 1991. Eventually he went back to his hometown in 2000 when the South Korean government decided to repatriate the remaining non-converted communists who were in jail to the North. Right after national liberation, Kim experienced North Korean land reform as the head of the township (*myŏn*) party committee. According to his memoir (Kim 2001:140), the communist regime's land reform was a successful national event without major conflicts. Without a doubt, the private ownership of land via land reform and the changes in the structure of landownership constituted material benefit for North Koreans. As an incentive, the 25 percent tax in kind was a remarkable benefit compared to that of late Chosŏn and Japanese rule. According to American reporter Anna Louise Strong's (1949:26) eye-witness report, North Korean peasants supported the government's reform, as they gave 25 percent of their crop to the government in taxes instead of the former 50 to 80 percent to the landlords in rent; even though 1946 was a bad crop year because of excessive rains, the peasants had much more grain than they did before. In Strong's description of North Korean society in those times, state power characterized the hegemonic power that satisfied individuals' material needs and had their political support. In her report, a farmer argued that the "democratic government" through socialist reform was the work "of their own hands" (Strong 1949:7).

However, many North Korean refugees who fled to the South between 1945 and 1953 and hated the North Korean regime were unwilling to agree with this report. A refugee interviewee (male, 80) was born in North P'yŏngan Province and fled to the South with his parents in 1948. Because his father was a landlord, his family lost their land during the communist regime's land reform. In addition, his parents were sincere Christians and their antipathy toward the regime significantly influenced their children as they fled from the North

and resettled in the South. With this background, this interviewee tried to reveal the communist regime's violent and cruel aspects. He argued that the peasants had to contribute more crops to the communist government due to reduced yield caused by inclement weather. His account was that the substantial tax burden in post-liberation communist North Korea was not significantly different from that during Japanese rule. Furthermore, after 1947, the regime extracted the early tax in kind in order to compensate for insufficient revenue for domestic affairs and war mobilization (*Nodong sinmun* June 23, 1948:1). Actually, this early tax in kind doubled the peasants' economic hardship. It is obvious that the North Korean government tried to extract as many resources as possible especially for war mobilization. However, the interview testimony of refugee Y. Pyön (male, 85) contested that of the above-mentioned interviewee. Pyön was born in South P'yöngan Province and served as a soldier in Japan's Kwantung Army 138 Special Forces. He came back to his hometown in 1945 when Japan surrendered to the United States in the final stage of World War II. He was appointed as a communist county official because he hid his pro-Japanese career and the central communist party did not know about this. However, he was purged in 1949 when this was detected by the central province government, and he fled to the South in 1950. He experienced the communist reform as a cell party leader and local tax official. He argued that the North Korean government tried to maintain 25 percent in tax levies even though the tax burden with early tax extraction after 1947 was heavier due to the shift in external conditions such as bad crops. Likewise, almost all defector interviewees in their 70s or older who lived in the post-war DPRK and recently fled to the South agreed that their economic lives were improved despite some tax burden during this period. Actually, after land reform, the peasants had only to pay 250,000 tons for the tax in kind while 350,000 tons of surplus remained for their own use (Paik 1993:463). Although the North Korean government extracted around 40 percent of tax in kind, which was somewhat higher than it had originally proclaimed, the peasants had at

their disposal five to seven times as much grain as before the land reform in terms of absolute material benefit (Paik 1993:464).

In this way the communist regime served people's economic interests, and North Korea's early state power was able to garner people's voluntary support and cooperation. For instance, the People's Committees, spontaneous people's political organizations created before the establishment of the DPRK in 1948, were not only created from the center but rather organized from the bottom up (Armstrong 2003:49). This early communist reform was based upon what Gramsci (1971) calls "hegemonic power." The North Korean regime motivated and generated people's active support and participation through providing peasants with material incentives (Kim 2005). Both the state's top-down reform and people's spontaneous bottom-up politics contributed to the creation of a new socialist order to a certain degree (Cumings 1981).

### **People's Resistance and the Crisis of Hegemonic Power**

Early socialist reform in North Korea succeeded in forming a hegemonic power structure between the state and society. However, such hegemonic power was threatened by two types of resistance to the communist regime centering on land reform. One was inaction and passivity on the part of the People's Committees, and the other was resistance from the landlords, their supporters, and South Korean spies. Rapid land reform sometimes encountered local resistance, not only from landlords fleeing to the South or South Korean spies and terrorists, but also from some peasants who defended landlords (Armstrong 2003; Institute of North Korean Studies 1983; Paik 1993; Park 1996b; Ree 1989). The targets of resistance were the Soviet occupation, the predominance of communists in the People's Committees, and the loss of social position, especially of the landlords.

According to an encyclopedia report of North Korean studies (Institute of North Korean Studies 1983:927-930), there were some small-scale resistance movements such as guerrilla combat against the communist regime led by South Korean spies and North Korean landlords' children, and small-scale student and peasant demonstrations. The Sinūiju Student Movement of November 23, 1945 against the Soviet military's early rule was a representative example of such resistance. Former Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) agent Young Sik Kim (1995), who published an essay on his experiences in the North before and during the Korean War, joined an anti-communist student group at the time. According to him, anti-communist movements arose regionally and sporadically after non-communists were purged from the city or regional governments, village councils, and even schools (Kim 1995:112-113).<sup>4</sup> Children of landowners and purged people and some guerrillas of allied South Koreans and refugees conducted small-scale combat against the communist regime. For example, North Korean communist Sōkhyōng Kim's memoir (2001:247-249) shows that small-scale resistance led by South Korean spies and landlords' children occurred in Hwanghae Province. However, this local resistance did not extend to the national level and was soon defeated by the central government. Refugee interviewee I. O (male, 74) was born in Hwanghae Province and fled to the South in 1950 because his parents were persecuted as Christians by the communist regime. He recalled that

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<sup>4</sup> The antagonism between pro- and anti-North Korean camps intensified through the radical communist reform and some people's resistance brought about the politics of terror during the Korean War. In a U.S. journalist's publication focusing on interviews with North Korean refugees (Martin 2004:81, 756), Myongchol Kim, a male defector, told an anecdote of his father's first wife and children during the Korean War (Kim is a son from his father's second marriage). In Songhwa County of Hwanghae Province, former landowners bore a grudge against the deputy chief of the County People's Committee, Kim's father, for his leading role in the land reform of four years. The aggrieved landowners and neighbors waited for their chance for revenge. When South Korean troops with the U.S. forces occupied North Korea, the landowners threw Kim's father's first wife and six children down a 100-meter vertical mine shaft and killed them all.

some people might have complained of the communist policies, but ordinary people's organized resistance or objection was almost impossible. This is because most landlords and anti-socialist groups had already fled to the South and most peasants supported or complied with the regime. Furthermore, the regime harshly punished people involved in these resistance movements. A former communist party leader, who was a leader in the Hamhŭng Farmers' Union and who defected in late 1946, asserted that some 250,000 Koreans were sent to compulsory labor camps in Siberia (Scalapino and Lee 1972:1022).

During the early period of communist reform, the DPRK's state power was based upon the harmonious connection between coercive reform from above and voluntary consent from below. However, this hegemonic power was not stable, as people's support and resistance coexisted and the state began to depend upon unilateral coercive power for war mobilization. Power shifted in this complex dynamic. People's support for the regime was variable according to changing political and economic situations. Continuous bad crops and relatively excessive taxes brought about peasants' rapid alienation from the communist government. According to Armstrong (2003) who analyzed a collection of the DPRK's documents captured by the U.S. forces during the Korean War, North Koreans' support for the communist regime fell most sharply among the peasants, who had originally been the greatest beneficiaries of the reforms.

*Table 2 Percent of Support for the North Korean Regime*

Group	Percent of Support for the North Korean regime	
	1946	1950
Factory and common laborers	60	50
Farmers	70	30
Students	?	70

Source: Charles Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution, 1945-1950* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 189.

Table 2 shows that the peasants' support of the regime decreased dramatically from 1946-1950. Defector interviewee T'. Kim (male, 59) was a top ranking official in the North Korean foreign consulate. Since his defection from the North, he has worked in Seoul as a counselor for a right-wing South Korean civic organization for North Korean human rights. Even though his father was a poor farmer and received some distributed land from the communist government, his father did not support it. Kim's father stayed in the North and pretended to comply with the regime because he did not want to leave his hometown. Whenever he suffered a bad crop, he criticized the regime for its excessive taxes. While it may not be a good idea to generalize about the opinions of peasants based only on this case, it is true that their support for the regime continued to decrease until the Korean War broke out. The peasants' disapproval of the communists reached its peak as the regime's taxes became more severe around the time of that war. Refugee interviewee C. Yi (male, 77) was born in South Hamgyŏng Province. He stated that his parents owned a clothing store and did not lose their land, but they did not like the communist ideology and culture. Because of his father's partial pro-Japanese experience, his family were discriminated against, they were not able to live freely and richly, and they eventually fled to the South in 1950. Moreover, the state's coercive control and ideological surveillance and inspection in the new communist culture were plainly unacceptable to the peasants, who maintained traditional values and culture. In this social atmosphere, communist Sŏkhyŏng Kim regretted in his memoir that children liked to sing the nursery rhyme, "Arrogant Communist Party" (Kim 2001:143).

In summary, early socialist revolution right after national liberation in North Korea was implemented by the state's hegemonic power. However, communist state power evolved as a historical process in which support/resistance and active participation/passive accommodation coexisted. In this process, people's bottom-up politics was overwhelmed by the top-down politics

of the central state that tried to mobilize society for war preparation (Armstrong 2003:68). This shift of state power developed the DPRK's Stalinist coercive politics while the regime encouraged people's ethno-centric nationalism against American "imperialism."

### **Stalinism and Nationalism**

From national liberation until the Korean War broke out, the DPRK's political line was based upon Stalin's Socialism in One Country (Ree 1989). The North Korean communist reform based on the theory of a "democratic base" would have been impossible without the assistance and guidance of the Soviets (Kim 1964). Soviet communism was a structural force to constrain the DPRK's action (Paik 1993). However, at the same time, North Korea had more autonomy than any of the Eastern European Soviet satellite countries (Armstrong 2003). The post-liberation DPRK accepted Soviet ideology but at the same time tried to connect Soviet communist tenets to its own revolutionary nationalist tasks. In this sense, Kim Il Sung could be considered a leader who melded communism and nationalism (Cumings 1981:401-402). In fact, while the DPRK's "anti-imperialist" mentality has stemmed from its anti-Japanese struggle and ideology, post-colonial anti-American nationalism has defined a pivotal aspect of North Korea's socialist modernity. The anti-colonial political legitimacy of the new communist regime enabled rapid land reform calling for hegemonic power and top-down war mobilization against the nation's enemy. In this way, the post-colonial DPRK's politics of national division has justified a patriotic "war nationalism" against "imperialists" while at the same time it has enforced a coercive dictatorship repressing society's internal differences. Therefore, the post-liberation DPRK's state power has characterized both Stalinist politics and "anti-imperialist" nationalist politics.

## **(1) Stalinist Politics**

North Korea's early socialist revolution through its hegemonic power successfully accomplished anti-Japanese social reform and land reform. However, the DPRK's state power aimed for the total transformation of politics, economy, social relationships, culture and everyday life in the late 1940s (Armstrong 2003:243). The totalizing ambitions of the new regime began to further call for its centralized and top-down Stalinist politics. For example, a free political process such as parliamentary and civil democracy was stifled, while a "monolithic" state was built in a short time period (Park 1996a, 1996b). Even during the short occupation of Seoul during the Korean War, the social control systems in North Korea reached all segments of the population and insinuated themselves into all aspects of South Korean life (Riley Jr. and Schramm 1951:45).

A critical aspect of Stalinist politics from 1945 to 1950 was the strengthening of the military and security forces. Stalin emphasized the importance of one country's military and security forces for the victory of socialism. Along this line, Kim Il Sung centered on consolidating a coercive power to establish a stable state system and wage a war. Thus, the militarization of society was necessary for this purpose. U.S. military intelligence estimated North Korea's military manpower at 125,000 as of April 1947 (Paik 1993:358-359). The Kim Il Sung regime continued to build up its military forces until the outbreak of the Korean War; as of June 25, 1950, soldiers of the Korean People's Army (KPA) numbered a total of 164,380: the army with 148,680, the air force with 2,000, and the navy with 13,700 (War History Compilation Committee 1967:738-739). Security forces were also critical because they could be used not only as a coercive tool for removing and neutralizing rivals, but also for extraction of taxes, surveillance, and thought control. According to Paik (1993) who analyzed estimates of the

strength of the North Korean security forces during 1945-1950, the DPRK had many para-military organizations such as the police constabulary, the independent brigade, the railway constabulary, and the border constabulary, in addition to the regular police forces. The total security forces numbered 50,000 in 1947, 58,000 in 1948, and 57,300 in 1949 (Paik 1993:303). More specifically, by 1950, Ch'ŏlwŏn County in Kangwŏn Province had 19 inspectors and nearly 200 intelligence agents, mostly poor and middle-class peasants and workers (Armstrong 2003:208). These military and security forces became an important material base which created and strengthened coercive Stalinist politics in the post-liberation DPRK.

This Stalinist state power worked in the social surveillance systems as well. According to former CIA agent Young Sik Kim (1995:112-113), the secret police (Political Security Bureau) and their informants worked everywhere. The secret police's informants permeated the communist party, People's Committees, schools, clinics, and so forth. The communist methods of inescapable surveillance, getting information about the people by spying, inspection, and personal history, were effective (Schramm and Riley, Jr. 1951:765). Overt and covert surveillance were carried on by the security police and their informants. According to South Korean eyewitness accounts during the communist occupation of Seoul in 1950, a forty-year-old editor commented bitterly: "Very often one was betrayed by an old friend, so every man kept his secrets to himself" (Riley Jr. and Schramm 1951:143). Everyone could monitor and be monitored. In particular, the intra-national spy war between the North and the South created many security police and their informants. For instance, as a North Korean communist and security policeman, Sŏkhyŏng Kim was able to prevent a small resistance led by South Korean spies by utilizing his informants in the provincial party (Kim 2001:247). Regulation 282 of the Public Security Law of Hwanghae Province shows that all levels of state organizations monitored "suspicious" people from each city or county to each village (*li*) through public

security agents, and each agent utilized his or her informants actively for full-scale surveillance of citizens (National Institute of Korean History 1993:367). An administrative guide for township-level public security activities published by Inje County Public Security Office in 1950 emphasized counter-spy movements, self-security forces, and active mass mobilization (National Institute of Korean History 1994:309-313).

Finally, the post-liberation DPRK employed a Stalinist tool of thought control by using the device of criticism (*pipan*) and self-criticism (*cha'a pipan*). Individuals' thoughts were always checked and controlled in the communist party-led political meetings. The political trainings worked effectively for people's ideological change. Communist political study and culture hours were usually held daily in professional associations, schools, and places of business as well as the party and state organizations. Refugee interviewee C. Yi (male, 77) recalled that people in attendance read aloud an article or speech on communism from a newspaper, pamphlet, or book, and discussed it with other people according to communist party officials' instruction. This political meeting became a routine part of people's everyday practices that worked by force from above. A person who was absent was considered to be "reactionary." This political meeting was the most important device for "word-of-mouth Sovietization" during the North Korean army's occupation of Seoul in the summer of 1950 (Riley Jr. and Schramm 1951:110). The North Korean provisional government in Seoul on July 11, 1950 asked all citizens to go to their nearest police station and confess everything that was related to "socialist vice" (Riley Jr. and Schramm 1951:124). The pressure to confess was considerable in the political meetings. In the meetings of community associations such as the Women's League and the Youth League, it was common for one member to charge another with misdeeds and then for the accused to have to mount the platform and make an oral self-criticism. Among the general public, the pressure of opinion and the threat of official harm operated to encourage confession. Such a Stalinist device

sometimes caused side effects such as lying and manipulation. A refugee interviewee (male, 81) recalled that forced confession frequently led to lying, exaggeration, mockery, passive response, and so on. Despite this problem, the Stalinist device worked as the communists wanted it to work. It served to focus the attention of the people on the values and ideology of communism. However, the state's control of "socialist vice" depended upon coercive methods, and this caused some North Koreans' disagreement or antipathy toward communism.

In short, from 1945 to 1950, the Stalinist military and security forces and social control systems such as surveillance, punishment, confessional technology, and political meetings established the unilateral and top-down politics of the post-liberation DPRK.

## **(2) Post-Colonial Nationalism**

While a Stalinist top-down politics emerged with the regime's mobilization, an organic politics of state and people based upon patriotic "anti-imperialist" nationalism was established around the Korean War. Koreans' anti-imperialist mentalities stemmed from anti-Japanese ideology and movements, and this allowed the post-colonial DPRK to strengthen hegemonic power and war mobilization based upon people's patriotism that advocated national interests. For instance, people's participation in public affairs such as school construction, and their contribution of "patriotic rice" were spontaneous and voluntary, and these movements extended to a national level. Around 1,500 tons of rice was donated as of August 1947 and 18,777 patriotic peasants donated rice as of early March, 1948 (Paik 1993:452). In particular, many peasants and citizens donated patriotic rice to pay for establishing Kim Il Sung University (Kim 2001:145-146). Farmer Sangjun Kim contributed 30 bags (*kamani*) of rice for the establishment of Kim Il Sung University after paying tax in kind (*Nodong sinmun* November 18, 1947:2). This patriotic

rice donation campaign reflected people's positive responses to the state's mobilization as well as the regime's appeal to the ideological mobilization of the entire nation for state building in 1946. The state appealed to the patriotic voluntarism of the peasants for "even one grain of rice," and many peasants and citizens actively responded. According to refugees who defected after the Korean War, the patriotic support of officials, laborers, and students stood out in spite of peasants' somewhat differentiated responses in the late 1940s.

The DPRK's post-colonial nationalism based upon people's anti-imperialist mentalities and patriotism allowed the regime to mobilize the nation for war for national reunification. From 1945 to 1950, Kim Il Sung tried to argue for his own nationalism through socialist patriotism, while he advocated the principle of proletarian internationalism depending on Stalinist communism. An article in *Sae Chosŏn* (New Korea) in 1949 tried to relate the logic of patriotism to the issue of people's democracy and the reunification of the Korean peninsula:

While our people's patriotism was based upon anti-Japanese imperialism and anti-feudalism during the Japanese rule, today, our people's patriotism is based upon peaceful unification and independence that will be shown through the consolidation of people's rights and the complete conquest of our peninsula (*Sae Chosŏn* 1949:46-47).

In the above, Kim Il Sung emphasized the importance of Korean patriotism as the basis for anti-imperialism and national reunification. Furthermore, the DPRK's regime argued for North Korea's war as a war for "justice" based upon anti-American nationalism. During the Korean War, North Korean soldiers and students in particular maintained firm patriotism against American "imperialism." Yŏnglyŏl, who was then a student in the Soviet Union, wrote a letter to his family in July 1950 as follows:

Dear Mother and Sister, 20 days have passed since the war for national reunification as the war of justice began. ... I have heard of American imperialists' military intervention and their bombing attack on Pyongyang. Mother, they are trying to conquer Korea for their evil purpose. They are trying to enslave Koreans once again. They interfered with Korean unification and are now attempting their undisguised military intervention. ... Justice will win. No doubt, we will win. Mother, Koreans are fighting for justice. (National Institute of Korean History 1994:459)

Yönglyöl advocated for the DPRK's war as a battle for "justice." The U.S. was a national enemy for him and was seen to represent "evil imperialism." He was sure that North Korea would defeat the U.S. and win in the end. Similarly, North Korean People's Army soldier Chuyöl Hwang confirmed his determination to fight against the national enemy in his poetry "I Also Made an Appearance" (*Ch'öngnyöñ saenghwal* September 1948:74); Like Yönglyöl's letter, Hwang's poetry also described the Korean War as a fight for "justice" that stirred up young people's strong patriotism. In addition, according to Hwanghae Province's security report of people's public opinions (National Institute of Korean History 1990:675), many ordinary North Koreans showed antagonistic sentiments and mentalities toward the South Korean regime and the U.S. In this report, mine laborer Pokkil Yi and white collar laborer Linsik Yi argued that North Korea should mount military attacks on the U.S. and the South Korean government that interfered with national reunification. However, these responses should be understood in context: early hegemonic state power was being eroded by top-down mobilization and coercion. This can be found in some political dissenters' local resistance and the dramatic decrease of peasants' support for the state (Armstrong 2003). The point is that post-liberation North Korea's power was shifted to a coercive force aimed at the total domination of society for war mobilization, while at the time it was able to create from below people's patriotic nationalism against their enemies America and South Korea.

## Chapter Summary

This chapter has examined the dynamics of the DPRK's state power during the socialist revolution from 1945 to 1950. From national liberation until the Korean War broke out, the way in which state power operated revealed a complex process of hegemonic power and its crisis along with the coexistence of coercive Stalinist governance and patriotic nationalist politics. The early land reform consisted of a harmonious combination of coercive and hegemonic powers based upon people's material incentives and active support for the regime. This allowed the state to dominate society effectively, defeating some of the localized resistance, and to mobilize the nation for war and instigate people's patriotic and ethnocentric nationalism against America and South Korea. At the same time, however, by implementing full-scale national mobilization for war, the DPRK tried to centralize state power by force and establish a coercive communist system with various Stalinist tools. Coercive police power, top-down and minutely organized surveillance systems, and ideologically-driven political meetings represented pre-war Stalinist politics. The post-liberation DPRK's ambition for total domination reinforced Stalinist rule and control systems while at the same time developing patriotic anti-American ideology. This foreshadowed a dynamic power functioning of the post-war DPRK's Stalinist politics and militant nationalism.

## **Chapter IV The Post-War Stalinist Regime**

During the years of 1945-1950, the North Korean state's hegemonic power was transformed into a strong coercive power based upon centralized control systems. At the same time, the DPRK tried to make a new nation-state through a war against its national enemies, the U.S. and the ROK. The DPRK's state-making and social control were based upon both Stalinist and nationalist politics. This post-liberation politics of the DPRK characterized two faces of post-war North Korean state power. On the one hand, the regime strengthened top-down Stalinist politics and methods for social control even though they were largely transformed in a nationalist form. On the other hand, the regime tried to reinforce people's militancy from below by encouraging anti-American ideology in their everyday lives. Chapters IV and V deal with these two faces of state power centering on the ways in which it operated and was reproduced from the 1950s through the 1980s. Chapter IV is a reiteration of accepted scholarship on totalitarianism and serves as a set-up for Chapter V which reflects my main research questions, themes, and claims. This chapter examines the Stalinist face of post-war North Korea's state power. After the Korean War, the DPRK enforced a full-scale coercive politics based upon the Soviet style political-economic system and social control systems, even though the DPRK gradually departed from the influences of great socialist powers after the late 1950s and pursued its own independent nationalist line. Kim Il Sung strengthened his one-man dictatorship through political purges, increased labor camps to confine many prisoners, and established stable surveillance systems to systematically monitor the "suspicious" classes and released prisoners. In this chapter, I outline the Stalinist face of North Korean socialism in terms of the supreme leadership with

political purge, extreme punishment, inescapable surveillance, and thought control from the 1950s through the 1980s.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Korean War and Post-War Reforms**

In his historical explanation of Western European state formation, Tilly (1990) argued that “States make war, and war makes states.” The two Korea’s modern state formation began from war making. Through the Korean War, the two Korea’s pursued strong state formation in the name of national reunification on the Korean peninsula. The Korean War was an “organized crime” in Tilly’s term (1985), which justified violent domination of society through war-making and state-making. Therefore, although the impact of the Korean War of 1950-1953 was devastating, the cruel war offered the two Korea’s the paradoxical opportunity to initiate more aggressive state building (Park 1996b).

The DPRK actively restored its country following the war that almost totally destroyed it. Through the Three-Year Post-War Reconstruction Plan of 1954-1956, the DPRK tried to reconstruct its devastated economy with the assistance of the Soviet Union, China, and East European communist countries. Thanks to socialist countries’ assistance, North Korea’s economy grew much faster than South Korea’s until the 1960s (Yim 1996). The DPRK’s gross national product per capita in 1957, when the Three-Year Plan of 1954-56 ended and the Five-Year Plan of 1957-60 began, was more than four times higher than that in 1946 (*Chosŏn chungang yŏn’gam* 1957:177). After the 1960s, however, the DPRK’s economic growth slowed until it was stagnant

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<sup>5</sup> I consider Stalinist traits of the DPRK’s socialism in terms of a macro-politics. These Stalinist traits continue to persist after the 1980s but are more differentiated along with the economic crisis and the change of Soviet political and economic structures.

at the beginning of the 1990s because of an excessive arms budget for military build-up, and the ending or reduction of economic aid to North Korea from its socialist countries. In terms of industry, as early as 1976, the North Korean economy was out-produced by the South in per capita terms in almost every sector (McCormack 1993:33).

Along with early economic development, the post-war DPRK overcame the crises caused by socialist great powers' influences and domestic rival factions' political challenges. At the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union held in 1956 after the death of Stalin, Khrushchev formulated a new doctrine of de-Stalinization as the principle of international socialism, attacking Stalin's dictatorship, political purges, and anti-socialist defects.<sup>6</sup> Thereafter, China attacked the Soviet position as "revisionist." The Soviets, in turn, responded to China, condemning its position as "dogmatic." This Sino-Soviet confrontation lasted until the 1970s. Among the international pressures of the de-Stalinization campaign of the Soviet Union and the Sino-Soviet disputes, the DPRK experienced a political crisis through internal rival factions' challenges to Kim Il Sung's leadership in the late 1950s at the August 1956 Plenary Meeting of the Third Party Congress. In response to this, the Kim Il Sung group attacked all factionalists. During the 1950s-1960s, North Korea almost completed its political purges of rival factions and minimized the great powers' influences. In addition, the DPRK had to compete with the ROK in attempts to reunify a divided Korea, and this led the DPRK to continue to build up military forces to defend itself against U.S. forces and the ROK's anti-communist politics. Overcoming these internal and external crises in the early 1970s, North Korea established a one-man dictatorship by

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<sup>6</sup> After the death of Joseph Stalin in March 1953, Khrushchev denounced Stalin in a secret speech at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party. Due to Khrushchev's de-Stalinization, from the mid-1950s to the early 1960s, repression and censorship in the Soviet Union were partially reversed, and millions of Soviet political prisoners were released from labor camps.

formulating an official state ideology known as the *Chuch'e* idea, which means the “independent stand” or the “spirit of self-reliance.”

Early post-war North Korea’s stable political and economic structure was made possible by a radical shift of agricultural and industrial structures. After the Korean War, substantive socialist reform was initiated by agricultural collectivization and the *Ch’ollima* movement. Agricultural collectivization was the first communist national program that centralized the DPRK’s state power. The transition from a system of private ownership to collective agriculture occurred during the 1954-1958 period. Most holdings went through three stages of progressive collective types: “permanent mutual-aid teams,” “semi-socialist cooperatives,” and “complete socialist cooperatives.” In the final stage, all land and implements were owned collectively by the cooperative members. As the mode of land ownership shifted from private to state ownership, the state succeeded in getting rid of all pre-capitalist or capitalist land ownership elements that prewar land reform did not revolutionize (Kim 1972). This agricultural reform was more coercive than pre-war land reform. Scalapino and Lee’s study (1972) provides the testimony of male defector Kiwan O who was a Soviet-educated agronomist and assistant to the Agriculture Minister between 1955 and 1959. O argued:

Some farmers joined the cooperatives voluntarily as a result of our propaganda, but we also had to use various threats and forms of coercion. Initially, we told those who were reluctant that, if they didn’t join now, they would have to join the next year anyway, so they would be better off to come in early. The following year, we shut off the water supply from those who remained outside the cooperatives. We could do this because irrigation facilities were now all state-owned. Even so, some stubborn farmers carried water on their backs. Then we made it impossible for them to get chemical fertilizers. Despite these measures, a few continued to resist, but they were eventually defeated. (Scalapino and Lee 1972:1059-1060)

As seen in the above quote, the state used a combined carrot and stick approach in order to limit peasants' complaints or disagreements. The state benefited peasants who participated voluntarily, but strongly controlled those who did not.<sup>7</sup> Through the state's persistent persuasion, poor peasants organized themselves and participated in the cooperatives relatively voluntarily, while many rich peasants did not want to join the cooperatives (Kim 1990:241). Some rich and middle-class farmers and surviving clan and kinship communities challenged the regime's policies by rejecting participation in the cooperative system (Kim 2000:329). For instance, the North Korean government used force to defeat the so-called *paech'ŏn param* (Breeze of Paech'ŏn), a local peasant resistance movement against agricultural collectivization in Paekch'ŏn County of Hwanghae Province. Many rich peasants killed their pigs and cattle by burning them to death intentionally (Kim 1972). Deviant behaviors such as arson, butchery, or poisoning of livestock were reported by the government (Kim 2000:333). In response to this resistance, the authorities punished many of the peasants as "counter-communists." Defector interviewee M. Kim (male, 71) was born in South Hamgyŏng Province and his father, a landlord, fled to the South during land reform. Because Kim could not flee with his father, he had to stay in the North. He had to serve the North Korean army and pretend to support the regime in order to survive. Eventually, he too defected from the North in 1959. He recalled the agricultural

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<sup>7</sup> The DPRK's agricultural collectivization and people's resistance were not as violent as the Soviet Union's. The Soviet Union's sweeping collectivization often involved tremendous human and social costs while the issue of economic advantages of collective farms remained largely unresolved. Many peasants opposed collectivization, and often responded with acts of sabotage, including the burning of crops and the slaughter of draught animals. Stalin blamed the prosperous peasants, referred to as kulaks, who organized resistance to collectivization. The Soviet government responded by cutting off food rations to peasants in areas where there was opposition to collectivization. Many peasant families were forcibly exiled and resettled in Siberia and Kazakhstan, and many of them died on the way. Estimates suggest that about a million so-called kulak families, or some 5 million people, were sent to forced labor camps (Fainsod 1963:526).

collectivization during the early post-war reform. He claimed that people who disagreed with the government's policies were abducted secretly. Overall, the regime elicited people's support and participation and defeated some of the local resistance through a combination of persuasive appeasement and coercive force (Kim 2000). Eventually, the regime succeeded in nationalizing the agricultural structure in the late 1950s.

Along with the agricultural revolution, the other important reform that shifted North Korean society was the *Ch'ŏllima* (Thousand Li Horse) movement.<sup>8</sup> From the late 1950s through the 1970s, the DPRK led a full-scale national campaign for economic development and ideological mobilization of the socialist state. Like the Great Leap Forward movement in China (1958-1961), the DPRK had an expectation that mass movements should lead to forward leaps or advancements in social and economic development. The entire society was mobilized by state reform from above. This national movement extended to the entire society such as party organizations, social organizations for women, youth, workers, and peasants, schools, the military, factories, cooperative farms, hospitals, and so forth. Non-materialist incentives encouraged citizens to join this national movement. For example, "labor heroes" were widely publicized and work units performing feats beyond production quota were awarded the title "Ch'ŏllima work team" or "double Ch'ŏllima work team" in cases that were repeated.

Defector interviewee P. Kim (female, 64) was born in the city of Ch'ongjin, North Hamgyŏng Province and defected in 1997 because of her family's political purges and food

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<sup>8</sup> The word *Ch'ŏllima* refers to a mythical horse that was able to travel a thousand miles in a single day. The *Ch'ŏllima* movement was a massive campaign aimed at constructing a socialist economy at a "blindingly quick pace." It embodied the DPRK's style of approach to economic policies: planned, slogan-oriented, and heavily reliant on mobilization of the masses. In 1958, Kim Il Sung formulated the *Ch'ŏllima* movement for the systematic mobilization of labor for economic development in addition to socialist ideological mobilization. As the general basis of North Korean socialist construction, the *Ch'ŏllima* movement was replaced with the Three Revolution Movement after the 1960s.

shortages. She was an enthusiastic communist party member in the “core” class but fell into the “anti-revolutionary” class due to the continuous political purges of her family and relatives. According to her, the communist party granted hard-working people honorable political fame rather than economic incentive. When Kim was a primary school student, she sat up late and worked hard all night in order to finish assignments and compete more effectively. When she stayed overnight at school, her parents brought her breakfast in the classroom the following day. She received many honorific titles, and she was proud of being a “young heroine.” She believed that the movement was based on voluntary participation and positive cooperation corresponding to the state’s strong reform work. This was commonly supported by most other defectors I interviewed. Defector interviewee U. Ch’oe (female, 75) was born in North Hamgyŏng Province and defected in 2003 because of the food crisis. Her father was a farmer who was granted land by the communist government. She and her family supported the regime until she fled to the South via China. She said when I interviewed her:

There were some individual sacrifices, but we did not think that we were sacrificing ourselves. The state’s mobilization and its effect were tremendous, and people’s enthusiasm was very high as well. I recall that at the time I was happy and it seems like the only time when I felt I was happy.

The dynamics of the *Ch’ŏllima* movement basically came from top-down mobilization, but at the same time it was supported by people’s positive and active responses. During the post-war period, this *Ch’ŏllima* movement demonstrated the state’s hegemonic power that had people’s voluntary consent and participation. However, the movement’s success was temporary, and ended in failure because of the collective economic system’s inefficiency and the lack of economic incentive toward ordinary people. In the 1970s, the *Ch’ŏllima* movement was replaced

with the Red Flag Three Revolution Movement: Ideology, Technology, and Culture. The strategies for this movement were geared toward the mobilization and encouragement of production and competition, but they were not successful compared to the *Ch'ollima* movement. Ideological mobilization from above by force without economic incentives elicited only passive responses and compliant participation. P. Kim said that their dreams in the *Ch'ollima* movement were shifted to despair and discouragement over their dark future. Ordinary people felt alienated from the ideological slogans of the “three revolutions.”

### **Post-War Stalinist Politics**

During post-war state formation, the DPRK enforced a full-scale coercive politics based upon the Stalinist political-economic system and social control systems, even though it departed from the socialist great powers' influences under its nationalist slogan of *Chuch'e* socialism from the 1960s through the 1970s. When the DPRK tried to depart from the socialist countries' influences, it had to face and defeat rival political groups' challenges. Kim Il Sung's leadership was consolidated by continuous political purges, which resulted in a proliferation of purged elites and officials, and necessitated the creation of labor camps to confine prisoners, and the development of surveillance systems to systematically monitor the “suspicious” class and released prisoners. This politics of purge and punishment led the North Korean regime to strengthen minute and stable systematic surveillance and control of the populace. While the North Korean state exerted a new force of power through enforcing militant nationalism and encouraging people's micro-fascism, as will be discussed in the next chapter, there was also a

shift toward a “Stalinist”<sup>9</sup> socialist society with purge of political dissenters, suppression of the “hostile” class, and justification of a one-man supreme dictatorship. In this section, I explore the Stalinist face of North Korea from the 1950s through the 1980s in terms of (1) supreme leadership with political purge, (2) extreme punishment, (3) inescapable surveillance, and (4) thought control. I examine these four Stalinist traits of North Korean socialism in light of the traditional perspective of totalitarianism.

### **(1) Supreme Leadership with Political Purge**

For almost half a century, Kim Il Sung was the supreme leader of the DPRK. Kim fought Japanese colonial forces in the 1930s. In 1948 when the DPRK was established, he became its first premier. He led his nation in the Korean War between 1950 and 1953 and defeated political rivals during and after the war. During the 1950s, Kim Il Sung purged the “domestic faction,” the “Soviet faction,” and the “Yenan faction.” In order to consolidate his dictatorship, Kim continued to attack his rival groups until the 1970s when he established a stable state system and political base for transfer of political power to his son. Indeed, the history of political purge in the DPRK was a summary of Kim Il Sung’s quest for power and his defeat of the opposing factions’ challenges.

First, the domestic faction consisted of former underground communists who had stayed in Korea throughout the colonial period, initially operating in the South, and who had to leave for the North in 1945-1950. Pak Hŏnyŏng, the head of the domestic faction and Deputy Prime

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<sup>9</sup> I do not claim that North Korea is a Stalinist or totalitarian state. Instead, I consider Stalinist or totalitarian traits in terms of the DPRK’s macro-politics, while I focus on the micro-politics of its militant nationalism in Chapter V.

Minister of the DPRK, worked with Kim Il Sung to wage war but he was his rival at the same time. After the failure of the war, the Kim and Pak groups fought each other, each attributing responsibility for the failure of the war to the opposite faction. When the usefulness of the domestic faction in running guerilla and spy networks in the South came to an end with the end of the Korean War, the Pak group's survival was in danger. The domestic faction attempted a military coup to overthrow Kim Il Sung and his followers, but it immediately failed (Suh 1988:126-130). The domestic faction was criticized and purged for "treason, counterrevolutionary activities, and espionage" at the Fifth Plenary Session of the Workers' Party Central Committee in December 1952 (Korean Workers' Party 1964:297). This purge of the domestic group was accompanied by the arrest of other members and activists of the former South Korean Workers' Party with defendants being executed or sent to forced labor in the countryside. This became the starting point from which the North Korean regime began to discriminate against communists and their families from the South, and to establish labor camps for political prisoners.

After the domestic faction's challenge, Kim Il Sung experienced another political crisis stemming from the Soviet and Yenan factions. These two rival groups attacked Kim's one-man dictatorship at the August 1956 Plenary Meeting of the Third Party Congress through the de-Stalinization campaign of the Soviet Union. However, the two groups were accused of dividing the party with "sectarianism" and driven out. Tubong Kim, the Deputy Prime Minister and famous Korean linguistic scholar, was involved in this incident, purged, and sent to a countryside ranch for forced labor (Kim 1990:25). Kim and his young wife had to endure hard farm work as members of a "reactionary" class. Considering this example, North Korea in the late 1950s was reminiscent of the 1936-1938 Great Purge in Stalin's Russia (Lankov 2002:87). Through the August 1956 Incident and political purges, Kim Il Sung pursued his independent political line against foreign powers and domestic rivals.

During the 1960s and the 1970s, the Kim Il Sung regime swept away the last surviving members of the domestic, Yenan, and Soviet factions, and even members of his own faction opposed to his deification. The 15th Plenary Session of the Party Central Committee in May 1967 saw Pak Kŭmch'ŏl, Yi Hyosun, and Kim Toman from Kim Il Sung's own Kapsan Faction purged on charges of "flunkeyism" and "factionalism." A South Korean specialist of North Korea evaluated the year 1967 as a threshold in which some elements of a political democratic system disappeared completely and an irrational one-man dictatorship system was firmly set up in North Korea (Yi 2000:205). In addition, military opponents of Kim's singular state ideology such as Kim Changbong and Hŏ Ponghak were purged as "inefficient military bureaucrats" and "anti-party and reactionary elements" in 1968. These opponents were charged for frequent military ventures into the South and their failure during the late 1960s.

*Figure 1* North Korea's Politics in the Street



Source: *Nodong sinmun* June 26, 1980, p. 1.

After defeating political rival groups, under the constitution revised in 1972, Kim Il Sung retained his position as the DPRK's supreme leader, that is, as the DPRK's president for life, the head of the Korean Workers' Party, and the commander-in-chief of the Korean People's Army. Under Kim's supreme leadership, the DPRK built up its military forces and embarked on a series of socialist programs of centralized reform and centrally directed economic development. Until he died in 1994, Kim was the unchallenged leader of the DPRK. Kim's leadership was glorified and idolized as absolute and sacred by North Koreans (Oh and Hassig 2000).

While Kim Il Sung's dictatorship was stabilized by political purges of oppositional factions and dissenters, his supreme leadership was consolidated by schooling and social education. Defector interviewee P. Yi (female, 50) was born in North Hamgyŏng Province and her father fled to the South before the Korean War broke out. Her family was politically and economically persecuted by the regime because of her father's defection. She worked as a nursery school teacher in the North. She tried to improve her "bad" family background by showing more loyalty toward the communist party. However, she fled to the South with her family in 1999 because she could not stand the severe food shortages, political persecution, and surveillance. She told me about her experience of teaching North Korean children. She said that she instructed two- or three-year-old children to point at Kim Il Sung's portrait and say "Great Leader." This was a form of routine education in North Korean daycare centers. If the children did not follow her instruction, she continued to strictly educate them until they did. This ideological education continued into primary school. Primary school students learned that loyalty to the leader was the touchstone of all human virtues. They were required to learn the history of Kim Il Sung's childhood days, listened to special lectures on political topics, and studied communism and moral education in addition to other general required courses. Thirty-five percent of elementary schooling was devoted to political education, rising to more than 40

percent for university students (Oh and Hassig 2000:140). According to the defectors I interviewed, elementary school readings were filled with episodes illustrating the two “great” leaders’ love of children, stories about the superiority of socialism, and the “evil” deeds of the DPRK’s national “enemies,” the U.S. and the ROK.

## **(2) Extreme Punishment: A Gulag Society**

The policy of extreme punishment is an important element in the DPRK’s Stalinism (Scalopino and Lee 1972; Lankov 2002). The North Korean regime induced the allegiance of the great majority of its people. Under the Central Party’s Concentrated Guidance Campaign from 1958 to 1960, the Kim regime launched an “anti-sectarian” struggle, and province level party and government officials were mobilized to conduct attacks upon “sectarianism” related to the purge of rival factions. This campaign aimed at a thorough reexamination of every individual in the society in order to get rid of disloyal elements in all forms. Approximately 2,500 individuals were imprisoned or executed, 8,000 families forcefully resettled, and 5,500 individuals sentenced to forced labor (Scalopino and Lee 1972:833-834). In particular, one of the keys to effective deterrence and punishment was the transformed use of the traditional punishment of *yŏnjoaje*, the guilty-by-association system or family purge in which punishment for an individual’s crime was visited on the extended family.

During the Kim Il Sung era, punishment for various types of crimes ranged from death to imprisonment, correctional labor, confiscation of property, cash fines, limitation of rights, work status demotion, and reeducation or remolding of the accused (Bunge 1981:220). Officially, the Kim Il Sung regime’s objective was to return lawbreakers to an active role in society (Chŏng 2002; Yi 1991). For instance, political prisoners such as purged politicians and officials went off

to labor camps, mines, countryside cooperative farms, and mountain districts for hard work, and they were forced to attend regular political meetings for self-criticism and reeducation (Cho 1995). This policy of punishment was sometimes so harsh and severe that it violated human rights and individuals' freedom.<sup>10</sup> I interviewed defector Yöngsun Kim (female, 74) who was incarcerated in the Yodök camp as a political prisoner in 1970. She was born in the city of Simyang, China in 1937. Her parents came from Kyöngsang Province and immigrated to China in the period of early Japanese colonial rule. Her family moved back to North Korea when she was eight years old. She worked as a university dancer and later in a state-owned store for foreign tourists in the North. Her brother participated in the China-Korea allied anti-Japanese combat force. Therefore, her family was in the "core" class with a "good" family background. However, her status changed abruptly as she was involved in revealing the personal family background of Hyerim Söng, Kim Jong Il's second wife, who was her college friend. In North Korea, political leaders' privacy is highly valued and their personal information is strictly hidden from ordinary people. Regarding her unhappy life, she recalled:

One day in 1970, I was all of a sudden taken to the Bureau of Defense Security and examined for two months because of an incident involving Hyerim Söng, known as Kim Jong Il's second wife, who was my college colleague. I was moved by force into a labor camp for political criminals,

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<sup>10</sup> According to most defectors I interviewed, during the Kim Jong Il era, the number of prisoners in the labor camps increased remarkably due to the social disintegration caused by the economic crisis after the 1980s. About 200,000 people were thought to have been held in labor camps (McCormack 2002:15). Those who committed serious felonies and political prisoners such as spies or purged "sectarian" politicians and officials went off to the "godforsaken" gulag camps (Cumings 2004). The revival of cruel traditional punishments such as execution by firing squad was the main target of criticism by the U.S. and Western mass media (Kang and Rigoulot 2001). Through this prism, North Korea was even called the "contemporary killing field" (United States Senate 2003). This Stalinist face has persisted even though the Stalinist political and economic systems have significantly changed in North Korea.

No. 15 Yodök camp. ... Under the guilty-by-association system, my family was taken there by force, and we were forced into compulsory labor. ... Political prisoners in the camp were held by family unit or singly. I saw many purged officials there. The camp held people from “bad” backgrounds or “counter-revolutionary” backgrounds such as Christians, landlords, people whose family members fled to the South, and people who worked as local policemen supporting the South Korean army during the occupation of the U.N. Allied Forces and South Korean army in North Korea. ... Life in the camp was only labor, education, and surveillance. From sunrise to sundown, we had to work. We had to have breakfast in our homes and bring a lunch box to a work site and there were only two or three 10 minute breaks in a 12 hour day. Since there was no rationing of food, people provided for themselves by gardening. Most people lived on things such as corn and grass. They were short of vitamins, and many people starved to death. I observed two persons publicly executed when they tried to escape from the camp but were caught. Over a period of 8 years, I saw only 8 families that were released from the camp. ... My parents starved to death, and one of my sons drowned. ... The most unhappy thing is that camp officials took over my identification card when I was incarcerated in the camp. It meant that I was not a legal or socially legitimate citizen in North Korea for 8 years. After my release, I went back to the status of a normal citizen, regaining my identification card, but the security police continued to watch me.

Kim lived an unhappy life in which she experienced family purging, forced labor in a horrific gulag, and coercive surveillance and control which extended even after her release. She saw other people’s public executions and suffered human rights violations in the gulag camp. In particular, cruel punishment in the form of public execution was comparable to Foucault’s (1977) description of the violent pre-modern penal institution as an antithesis of modern power. This Stalinist politics is a paradoxical regressive result of communism, which was supposed to realize human liberation.

### **(3) Inescapable Surveillance**

In the DPRK, the surveillance of the entire population has been viewed as an important aspect of Stalinist politics. North Korea's surveillance systems consist of three types of security networks which directly affect North Koreans: "intelligence networks" conducted by social security agents, "party member surveillance networks" among the party members, and "mass surveillance networks" centering around people's associations (Lee 1975). The first two types are performed covertly, but the last type overtly.

First, the extraordinarily strong and broad-scale power of the Ministry of Public Security which started during the pre-war period was seen in the range of responsibilities such as detailed class and family background checks and the regular observation of blacklisted persons, especially in the "reactionary" class, the operation and management of all prisons and labor camps as well as the maintenance of law and order, protection against anti-revolutionary activities, surveillance of all citizens, general crime prevention, and the control of individuals' movement and travel (Scalapino and Lee 1972:819). The Public Security Bureau was divided into a number of subsections, and it had a network of intelligence agents that penetrated every aspect of North Korean society. The Bureau operated in all state and social systems such as the party-state, social organizations, factories, cooperative farms, educational and cultural units, and people's associations. Specifically, as of the mid-1960s, each county had an average of approximately 100 security officers, thus making a national total of some 30,000 security officers and thousands of informants (Scalapino and Lee 1972:823).

Second, the communist party was omnipresent at all levels, not merely at the national level, but also at the provincial and local levels. Political organizations such as the Socialist Working Youth League, Agricultural Workers' Union, and Democratic Women's League were

also the major organizers and controllers of citizens' activities. The communist party used the periodic redistribution of party identification cards as a method of indoctrinating and controlling its members. The North Korean regime classified its entire population into three classes—the “revolutionary class,” the “middle class,” and the “counter-revolutionary class”—and 51 strata in the late 1950s Concentrated Guidance Campaign (Institute of North Korean Studies 1983:907). The regime also reclassified the social classes as the “core class” (28 percent), the “wavering class” (21 percent), and the “suspicious or hostile class” (51 percent) through resident re-registration from 1966 to 1970 (Institute of North Korean Studies 1983:895). The 1984 political classification system in North Korea shows that the social classes consisted of the “core class” (28 percent), the “wavering class” (45-50 percent), and the “hostile class” (20-25 percent) (Oh and Hassig 2000:133-134). In this way, the regime carried out policies to inspect and control the “suspicious stratum” or “hostile class” (Kim 1972). In this political classification system, family background (*ch'ulsin sŏngbun*) was the most important criterion. In North Korea, it was the most critical base for people's political ascendance and socio-economic success.

Finally, mass surveillance networks were one of the most influential surveillance systems in village and local level surveillance organizations. The “five-household-in-charge system” or the “five family system” functioned as a control unit for both education and surveillance, especially in the countryside. The five family system was first introduced in Kim Il Sung's on-the-spot-guidance exercised in Ch'angsŏng County in July 1958 (*Nodong sinmun* September 13, 1967). This system actually began within the social context of the eradication of illiteracy and communist propaganda but shifted to an institution of rural community-based surveillance. In addition, the people's association was an effective administrative grass-level control unit. It mobilized housewives for social work and kept an eye on people through periodical neighborhood meetings. Similarly, the association of the heads of the household was a

control unit mobilizing husbands for social work. Among these everyday surveillance organizations, the people's association functioned as the most influential. For instance, all workers had to report when they began and left work to the head of the people's association every day. All residents had to report their every move. In fact, the control of movement and travel was first enforced to detect South Korean spies during and after the Korean War, but this was then shifted to an effective surveillance/control system (Kim 1990). Through these surveillance systems, the state was able to monitor all individuals' everyday lives, including their level of knowledge, everyday contacts, thought tendencies, and ideological trends.

These surveillance and control systems extended into people's daily lives. An ethnographic study by Lee (1975), which analyzed the socio-cultural transformation of rural society during the post-war socialist revolution, paid attention to peculiar social phenomena reconstructed by the surveillance-control system centering on family backgrounds. For instance, Yong Ho Park's marriage could not be arranged because the father of Park's brother's wife had been an experienced law enforcement officer during the Japanese colonial period (Lee 1975:208-209). As a result of this connection, Park was discriminated against in marriage. Female defector Sunhŭi Ch'oe's case was even less fortunate. Her memoir (Ch'oe 2004:19-20) exemplifies her unhappy childhood. Whenever she quarreled with her friends over unimportant things, she was criticized by them for her "bad" family background. She was the daughter of a "reactionary" and political prisoner. However hard she studied, she was unable to go to a good university, marry a man with a "good" background, or succeed. Defector interviewee (female, 64) P. Kim's case, in which she fell into the "anti-revolutionary" class due to the continuous political purge of her family and relatives, was similar to Ch'oe's. One of her brothers named his daughter *Haengbok* (happiness) because he hoped that his daughter would live the happy life that eluded him. All these examples show how the regime exerted coercive power in order to control citizens' lives.

Seen in this way, the surveillance-control system centering on family units functioned as a critical instrument that integrated the state and society by force in the DPRK. The guilty-by-association rule became an effective principle of control as a means of punishment. While the security and general police were the main surveillance controllers, the people's associations became substantial root-level organizations. Defector interviewee Y. Ch'oe (female, 72) was born in North P'yŏngan Province and had a "bad" family background because her father was Christian and fled to the South before the Korean War broke out. She secretly maintained her Christian religion and fled to the South in 1999 during the food crisis. She suffered from the regime's surveillance systems due to her "anti-revolutionary" family background. According to her, the head of the people's association took care of approximately 20 households and knew each household in his or her charge through and through, to the extent that he or she knew even the number of spoons in each household. The security police, the heads of the people's associations, and multiple levels of agents and collaborators had complex yet stable networks that were connected between the state and individuals. South Korean war prisoner Ch'angho Cho, who was unable to defect from North Korea for 43 years, recalls in his essay:

In North Korea a prisoner of war like me was unable to escape from the surveillance of the security police. The surveillance lasted for 43 years until I defected from North Korea. The communist society was a horrible regime of surveillance that isolated and monitored suspicious people tenaciously so they could not harm society. (Cho 1995:271)

For Cho, the North Korean surveillance system was a type of gulag in a society that always monitored and harassed him. Under this Stalinist politics of surveillance and control, North Koreans became unceasingly monitored and persecuted by the state and its unilateral and coercive power. As the networks of surveillance became minute and multi-leveled, they

permeated into every level of society. According to most defector interviewees, spying existed in all organizations such as the party, work, hospitals, people's associations, clinics, and so on. Individuals were not able to escape from these networks of surveillance. All defectors I interviewed believed that many invisible agents and their collaborators worked to monitor ordinary citizens, and citizens did not know who the collaborators were. A female defector states in a publication of North Korean defectors' interviews:

There were several security branches and agents in a village. A security agent was in charge of the schools in a village and this person monitored the kindergarten, nursery school, secondary school, and even the people's association. How could one person be responsible for almost every organization? The answer is that ordinary people were the agents. If somebody did something wrong, other people would report it. (Good Friends 2000:235)

Surveillance among ordinary people was harsher than that conducted by the state organizations in that people were unable to speak frankly to others and did not trust others easily. According to defector interviewee U. Ch'oe (female, 75), the security agent's collaborators, called *sswaegi* in the people's associations, secretly kept in contact with the security police. The security police or the head of the people's association assigned several collaborators in the people's association and asked them to report everything on the residents. Since many anonymous collaborators were assigned and their reports were compared, it was impossible to report something that was a lie. Furthermore, collaborators could be people who had a "bad" background. For the networks of surveillance, whether the family background was good or bad did not matter. Defector interviewee S. Hong (female, 71) was born in China and in the 1960s she migrated with her parents to the North, where they were monitored and discriminated against

as immigrants. As a sincere Christian, she had strong antagonism towards the regime's policies and fled to the South in 2006. In her interview with me, she described the following:

In my work, one security agent monitored four people and those four people monitored one another. It was the network system of surveillance. This system was a more complex and effective surveillance system compared to China. This was like the surveillance system of *osubudong*, “five animals being still.”<sup>11</sup>

The surveillance system of “five animals being still” accounts for a competitive multi-level technique of surveillance in North Korea's Stalinist politics. This system was more effective when residents competitively monitored one another in the state's double and triple system. Even between family members, this surveillance did not stop. According to defector interviewees, the cases in which children reported their parents' errors to the government were very few, but there were such cases. Defector interviewee M. Ch'a (male, 82) was born in Kyōngsang in the South and participated in the Korean War as a soldier of the ROK's army. However, he was captured by the North Korean army and had to live as a war prisoner and peasant in South P'yōngan Province until he fled from the North in 2003. Regarding North Korea's surveillance system, he argued that wives reported their husbands to the party or the security police when their husbands tormented or harassed them. Under the networks of surveillance, even relationships with blood ties were bound within the state's control and surveillance. Ch'a pointed out that such phenomena were not considered as amoral but rather as desirable in North Korea.

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<sup>11</sup> The system of “five animals being still” means a situation in which a mouse, cat, dog, tiger, and elephant snarl at one another but they cannot easily attack one another.

In this way, surveillance permeated into individuals' everyday lives. The state's technique of surveillance was transformed into "that of every man and by every man." This technique of surveillance allowed the regime to monitor and control the day-to-day activities of most of its subject population. With the state's efforts toward the total domination of society through surveillance, North Koreans were no longer individuals living in freedom but were unceasingly monitored by the state and its unilateral and coercive power.

#### **(4) Thought Control**

In the DPRK, ordinary citizens have been required to practice ideological evaluation, called *sasang ch'onghwa*, which consists of self-criticism (*chaa pip'an*) and criticism (*pip'an*) in their everyday political meetings. In political meetings, people were required to confess their political failings or faults, no matter how small, and to tell how they would improve themselves. These political meetings were held in every organizational unit periodically: every day, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annually. The political meetings consisted of a political study session and an ideological evaluation of self and others. Kim's works and the communist party's lines were read and discussed in the political study session, and then ideological self-evaluation and peer evaluation were conducted based upon the reading and discussion. The people who became the objects of criticism in these political meetings were those who were truant, fought with others, stole things, or stood up to the executive members (Good Friends 2000:299). According to a defector interviewee (male, 79), the political meeting was like a religious ritual. A person stood up and criticized his wrongdoings in front of others. This routine para-religious activity tired many people who wanted to take a rest after work. Many North Korean defector interviewees were sick and tired of tight schedules that deprived them of breaks. In addition, even if there was

nothing to criticize, they had to criticize something about themselves and others in the political meetings. If they had nothing to say during the meetings, they had to lie to others or pretend to speak frankly. If this trick was detected, it was severely criticized. Moreover, if a person attacked another person, the person who was criticized would attack the person who criticized him or her. Therefore, some people were often hurt emotionally during the meetings. This thought control was sometimes a severe coercive force for political prisoners (Kang and Rigoulot 2001).

This Stalinist technique of confession was often considered to be verbal abuse and extreme force. However, its actual use may have been more moderate. Defector interviewee Ch'un Li (male, 49) pointed out that the political meetings for routine ideological evaluation did not necessarily work by coercive force and verbal violence. According to him, people were able to have a chance to socialize by drinking together after the meetings. The political meetings were rather a natural everyday practice even though they frequently bored people. Exceptional horrific experiences were limited to a small number of political prisoners. Therefore, the political meetings did not do ordinary people harm in their private lives. In a publication of North Korean female defectors' interviews, Kūmsik Kang also claimed that the political meetings were even viewed as a type of sound social education (Institute of Korean Women's Society 2001:86-87). In the same publication, Suryōn Ch'oe, who was persecuted as a member of an "anti-revolutionary" family for thirty years, enthusiastically participated in the political meetings despite her bad situation. When older men and women were not familiar with how to quote the admonitions and how to make up the evaluations, she helped the older men and women do them. According to her account, as the political meetings helped to build a relationship between neighbors and helped them take care of each other, it became a public place for everyday cooperation among people (Institute of Korean Women's Society 2001:301).

Nevertheless, socialist confessional technology was based upon coercive Stalinist tools and operated effectively as a totalitarian method of people's thought control. *A Wisteria Tree House*, Kim Jong Il's sister-in-law Hyerang Söng's memoir (Söng 2001:340), shows that socialist thought control was an effective Stalinist totalitarian method to directly connect the socialist subjects to the supreme power, as it allowed the state to control people's daily lives.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter has analyzed Stalinist traits of North Korean socialist power in light of the traditional totalitarian approach. Existing studies frequently viewed the DPRK as a Stalinist state that epitomized a violent top-down politics of a one-man dictatorship with political purges, gulags, surveillance, and thought control. The North Korean regime's political rivals were purged, many people in the "hostile" classes were monitored by the security police and their informants, and ordinary people's individual lives were threatened by brutal state power. In particular, forms of extreme punishment such as public execution exposed individuals to the politics of horror. From the 1950s through the 1980s, the DPRK revealed a top-down and violent politics based on Stalinist/totalitarian methods. This post-war Stalinist politics of the DPRK will be contrasted with a new face of state power analyzed in the next chapter.

## **Chapter V Militant Nationalism and People's Lives from the 1950s through the 1980s**

The existing totalitarian approach has viewed the DPRK as a Stalinist state that violently dominated a weak society and destroyed individual freedom in people's daily lives. Totalitarian research has analyzed the total domination of society in North Korea by relying on a one-sided value-laden approach to state power. However, a different dynamic was inherent in the seemingly fixed power structure of the North Korean state. The DPRK's anti-American state power was not necessarily top-down or violent, not only oppressing individuals' human rights and freedoms, but rather producing active fighters against its national enemy. On the one hand, the DPRK's regime defeated rival groups and the influence of the great powers, and governed the population in a top-down way. On the other hand, the regime created and recreated its legitimating authority toward people through anti-Americanism that penetrated people's daily lives. In this chapter, I provide a new understanding of North Korean state power by exploring how the state shaped citizens into anti-American socialist beings and how citizens reacted to and participated in the regime's militant nationalism. First, I outline the historical background of North Korean militant nationalism. Second, I analyze the North Korean regime's militant nationalism from above in terms of the collective memory of the Korean War, anti-American education, full-scale mass armies, and the body politics between the state and individuals. Finally and most importantly, I explore North Koreans' militant spirits and lives, or what I refer to as "the people's micro-fascism," by using interviews and archival data. I show North Korean citizens' militant ways of life from the 1950s through the 1980s in terms of political perceptions and behaviors in their everyday practices.

## **The Historical Development of North Korean Militant Nationalism**

On August 15, 1945, Korea was liberated from 36 years of Japanese colonial rule. However, before the people could fully appreciate liberation, their country was divided into North and South, and the two halves were put under the control of the Soviet Union and the United States, respectively. After the national liberation of Korea in 1945 and the Korean War (1950-1953), the state of North Korea was formed within the historical context of a divided nation under the influence of the great powers. The DPRK's *Chuch'e* nationalism resulted from the Kim Il Sung regime's reactions to changing international and domestic environments from the late 1950s through the early 1970s. Kim Il Sung endeavored to establish his own nationalist line in order to consolidate his one-man dictatorship and defend it from the great powers. Against this historical backdrop of socialist patriotism, as well as the political pressures of the Sino-Soviet split in the 1960s, Kim Il Sung's *Chuch'e* idea gradually emerged as an ideological doctrine. Under the pressures of de-Stalinization, Kim experienced a domestic political crisis as the Soviet and Yanan factions attacked his one-man dictatorship. After defeating the challenges of both domestic rival groups and foreign great powers, Kim began to establish his own nationalist ideology and system. In his speech "On Socialist Construction and the South Korean Revolution in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea" on April 14, 1965, Kim outlined the three fundamental principles of *Chuch'e*: independence (*chaju*) in politics, self-sustenance (*charip*) in the economy, and self-defense (*chawi*) in national defense. In 1972 when the DPRK created a new Socialist Constitution (revising the one written in 1948), it officially proclaimed *Chuch'e* as the ruling ideology and Kim Il Sung as North Korea's unchallenged supreme leader.

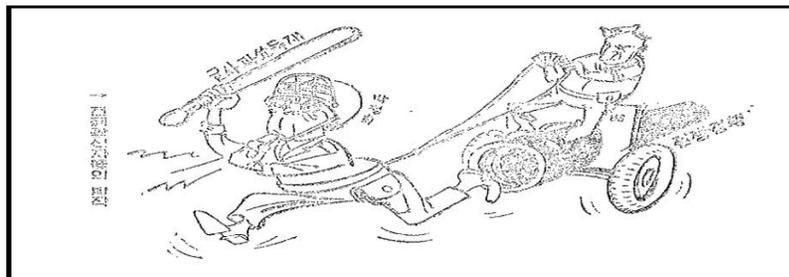
Establishing its own nationalist line based upon the politics of national division, the DPRK has maintained a long political, military tension with the U.S. and the ROK. The U.S.'s

military threat and the South's anti-communist politics have been the driving force which has allowed the DPRK to create a militant society over half of a century. In his report at the Central Conference of the Third Party Congress in April 1956, Kim Il Sung argued:

The division of our country is the reason for pain and unhappiness, both for South Korean people under control of American imperialism and the Syngman Rhee treacherous clique, and for the entire Korean population, and it has become a decisive hurdle and threat in the development of a Korean country and society. (Kim Il Sung 1988:129)

Kim Il Sung attributed national unhappiness around the Korean peninsula to American “imperialism” and South Korea. The DPRK’s authorities described Park Chung Hee, the third president of the ROK, as a “national traitor” who shifted from being a “Japanese puppet” to an “American puppet” (*Choguk* February 1970:114-115). In 1965, the Pyongyang regime held a large-scale mass demonstration against American “imperialism” and the Park regime in order to impeach their “fascist” rule (*Nodong sinmun* August 30, 1965:3). At the Central Conference of the Fifth Party Congress in November 1970, Kim Il Sung (1988:315) affirmed that the South Korean revolution was warranted as part of the Korean revolution; his revolutionary sentiment was filled with extreme hostility toward America and South Korea.

Figure 2 “Military Fascist Park Chung Hee”



Source: *Chöllima* May 1969, p. 113.

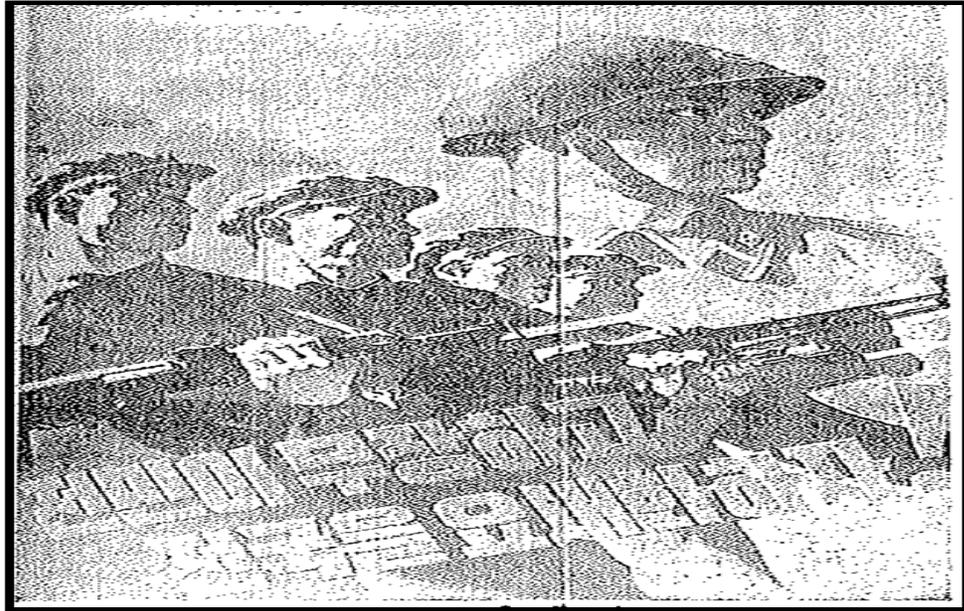
Developed in this antagonistic relationship, the North Korean approach has evolved into a militant and political form of ethnic nationalism (Shin 2006). In other words, North Korean militant nationalism has developed as a product of strong nationalist socialist traditions and the antagonistic intra-national politics of national division. In the face of the confrontation of two antagonistic regimes and the military threat of U.S. forces, the DPRK has called for the build-up of strong military forces of its own. The Korean People's Army (KPA) has functioned as an agent of militarization and been a model in educating and instilling in the minds of the people the regime's preferred values, beliefs, and attitudes. The DPRK has considered the KPA a model for ideal social construction:

To educate students to love the KPA means to have them emulate the revolutionary spirit, the experience of struggle and achievement of the KPA, which has inherited the shining traditions of the party. Further, it means to have new respect and positively support the KPA as the warriors of the party. Also, it means to arm them with the spirit to be boundlessly faithful to the party and the leader and to fight to their last drops of blood for the people. (*Inmin kyoyuk* November 1967:29)

Indeed, the KPA has been the backbone of North Korean society. The KPA has contributed to post-war state building and civil society's reconstruction as well as national defense and social security. According to Huntington (1957), the military institutions of society are shaped by two forces: a functional imperative stemming from the threats to the society's security, and a societal imperative. The DPRK has developed social forces on the basis of anti-American ideology, and North Korean citizens have actively participated in the state's military mobilization. The DPRK's civil-military relation has been an inseparable entity. For instance, the post-war reconstruction effort was carried out with much the same militaristic methods as the war itself. The line between the army and the civilian reconstruction workforce was often a

blurry one. The KPA draftees were sometimes retained in factory work rather than sent into the army, and active KPA troops were utilized in civilian reconstruction projects.

*Figure 3 “Let’s Arm the Entire Populace and Fortify the Entire Country!”*



Source: *Nodong sinmun* January 26, 1968, p. 3.

Based upon this cooperative civil-military relationship, the DPRK has militarily mobilized the entire population. In response to Park Chung Hee’s military coup in 1960, North Korea formulated the Four Great Military Lines: to arm the entire populace, to fortify the entire country, to train each soldier to become part of a cadre, and to modernize military weapons and equipment. In particular, the policy of arming the entire populace was intended to build a flawless defense system from below. Through this military policy, the DPRK created a variety of types of non-regular armies in addition to well-disciplined regular armies.<sup>12</sup> As of 1982, the

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<sup>12</sup> In the South, the Park Chung Hee regime was centered on mobilizing the entire people in order to create an anti-communist military base that was comparable to the DPRK’s communist base. The ROK established the homeland reserve forces in April 1968 in response to the North’s military ventures such as

DPRK maintained the KPA with 784,000 soldiers and many semi-military organizations, such as Training and Guidance Forces (*kyododae*) with 260,000 retired soldiers and the Worker-Peasant Red Guards with 1.5 million members (Institute of North Korean Studies 1983:1554). Furthermore, it is known that the DPRK has spent from about 20 percent to over one-third of the Gross National Product on the build-up of its military forces (Institute of North Korean Studies 1983:1439, 1583). In fact, North Korea could be viewed as one of the most militarized societies in the world (Halliday 1981:45).

### **Creating Anti-American Socialist Beings: Militant Nationalism from Above**

In North Korea, the regime has tried to forge its society into an anti-American military base. Militancy has been encouraged and promoted in the everyday lives of North Koreans by the state's mobilization from above. In this section, I analyze the regime's militant nationalism from above in terms of the collective memory of the Korean War, anti-American education, full-scale mass armies, and the body politics of the state and individuals.

#### **(1) The Collective Memory of the Korean War**

The impact of the Korean War of 1950-1953 was devastating: half of Korea's industries were destroyed, and civilian life was severely disrupted. This was a decisive historical moment in creating North Korean militant nationalism. The North Korean authorities have justified this

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the attempt to assassinate President Park on January 21, 1968 and the seizure of the *Pueblo* on January 23, 1968 (*Donga ilbo* April 1, 1968). In the early 1970s, Park was proud of building a 600,000-man force and two and half million homeland reserve troops (Park 1973:86).

tragedy in the name of war for “national liberation.” The DPRK has alleged that the South Korean troops under the “bandit traitor” Syngman Rhee crossed the border first and attacked North Korea (Korean Workers’ Party 1964:249). Almost all North Korean defector interviewees believed that the Korean War was a war of “justice” against “injustice”: an attempt to liberate the southern part of Korea, a colony of U.S. “imperialism,” and to reunify the country.

The social results of the Korean War were horrific, especially in the North. According to a North Korean government publication (*Chosŏn chungang yŏn’gam*, 1951-1952:104, 106), Pyongyang’s population fell from 500,000 to 50,000 because of U.S. air raids. The American air assault against North Korea ranged from the widespread and continuous use of firebombing to bacteriological-chemical weapons and threats to use nuclear weapons. In particular, the bacteriological-chemical warfare conducted by the U.S. air forces, which has still not been properly investigated and is still a matter of controversy between America and North Korea, was enough to leave North Koreans with a bitter legacy of anti-American hatred (Endicott and Hagermann 1999). According to a defector interviewee (male, 79) who served in the military in North Korea during the Korean War, many soldiers and civilians suffered and died from bacteriological-chemical attacks. In response to America’s cruel conduct, during the war, the North Korean government did not hesitate to attack American “imperialists,” labeling them as *hŭphyŏlgwi* (vampires) (*Nodong sinmun* December 11, 1950) and *panghwagwang* (incendiary maniacs) (*Nodong sinmun* February 21, 1951).

Figure 4 Bacteriological-Chemical Warfare by the U.S. Forces

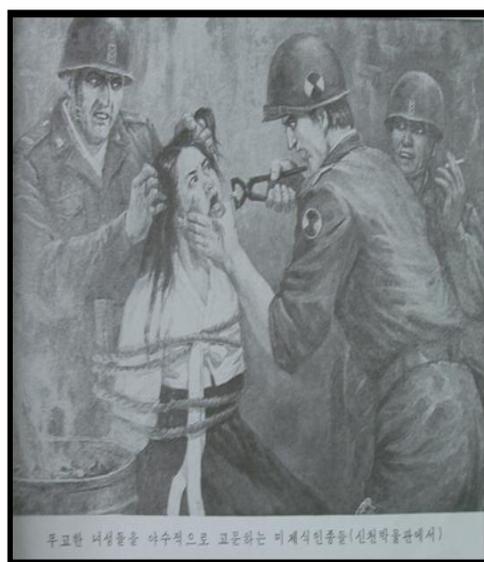


Source: *Chöllima* June 2000, pp. 20-21.

In addition, the North Korean authorities reported that 35,383, one-fourth of Sinch’ön County’s population, were massacred over 45 days by the U.S. forces, although this report was exaggerated (Park 2002:623). The North Korean government newspaper reported a massacre which was conducted by the South Korean military under the tacit consent of the U.S. forces in North Kangwön and included “burying women holding babies alive” (*Nodong sinmun* January 23, 1951:3). This inhumane deed by the American military has been one of the main features of North Korean propaganda against American “imperialism” (*Chöllima* June 2000:21). The Sinch’ön massacre of North Korean civilians by U.S. forces, which has remained controversial to this day, was also the motivation for Pablo Picasso’s painting “Massacre in Korea.” Stimulating people’s collective memory of the Korean War and criticizing American forces, the North Korean government has widely distributed propaganda of the Sinch’ön massacre. A series of essays, “We Testify to Sinch’ön, Land of Blood,” has reminded North Korean readers of this

incident's cruelty (*Chosŏn yŏsŏng* June 1968; *Inmin kyoyuk* March 2005). The Sinch'ŏn museum has been used as an effective instrument to remind North Koreans of the brutal war and "cruel American bastards' conduct." A North Korean magazine shows drawings in the Sinch'ŏn museum in which American soldiers torture a woman by pulling out her teeth (*Chosŏn yŏsŏng* April 1999) and kill the woman by hammering a nail into her head (*Chosŏn yŏsŏng* February 1999).

*Figure 5 A Drawing at the Sinchŏn Museum Figure 6 A Drawing at the Sinchŏn Museum*



Source: *Chosŏn yŏsŏng* February 1999.



Source: *Chosŏn yŏsŏng* April 1999.

This politics of national hatred against America has extended to civil society and people's lives beyond the state's propaganda. The collective memory of the brutal historical incident has shaped people's aggressive and militant views of the American enemy. This explains how North Koreans' anti-American sentiments have been shaped and reshaped and why they are still intact despite internal political and economic crises. This is also the reason many defectors living in South Korea still despise America and its military forces. Since the Korean

War, American “imperialism” has been an unforgettable national enemy for North Koreans. Regarding anti-American ideology, all North Korean defector interviewees mentioned the Sinch’ŏn incident first. They recalled their own or their parents’ experiences. This collective memory was passed on in their families, schools, neighborhoods, work, and social organizations. Defector interviewee Ŭ. Cho (female, 24) fled to the South with her mother due to the food crisis in 2005. She recalled what she had felt when she was a primary school student. She said:

When I saw the appalling pictures of my ancestors tortured and killed by *mije sŭngnyangidŭl* (American imperialists, wolves) at the Sinch’ŏn museum, I gave way to anger. I determined that I would fight against American imperialist bastards with a rifle if war would break out.

As shown in Cho’s statement, the brutality of war has allowed the North Korean regime to effectively utilize the collective memory for propaganda. This has led North Koreans to unite in extreme hatred of their national enemy. The horror of the Korean War has been remembered with bombing attacks, bacteriological warfare, and massacres, and this has justified the DPRK’s militant politics designed to arouse extreme hatred toward America. Lankov, a scholar and specialist in North Korean studies who travelled around North Korea, describes the DPRK’s propaganda of militant nationalism against “evil Yankees” as follows:

A group of fat American soldiers with long Pinocchio-style noses are grinning while slicing the breasts of a screaming Korean girl. Another group of evil Yankees are busy using their bayonets to push terrified women and children into a ditch where they will, presumably, be buried alive. These are pictures one can see in countless museums across North Korea. (Lankov 2007:45)

Through the regime’s propaganda and mass media, North Korea has created and recreated an image of “evil Yankees” that originates from the collective memory of the Korean

War. This anti-Americanism has been the most important social value that people have had to internalize in their lives. For instance, the DPRK has given preferential treatment to families of the war dead and the wounded in order to remind the public of the collective memory of the war and heighten people's patriotic anti-Americanism. "War heroes' families" have been listed as the "core" class in the North Korean social strata. Defector interviewee H. Ch'oe (male, 78) was born in China, moved to the North with his parents in the early 1960s, and resided in South P'yŏngan Province until he defected from the North during the food crisis. He and his family received preferential treatment from the government because his parents and uncles served in the military during the Chinese Liberation War and the Korean War. As members of the "core" class, his family benefited from political ascendance, economic support, and social prestige. Ch'oe worked as a government newspaper reporter, and his main job was to report historical events related to anti-Americanism and encourage citizens to heighten anti-American and militant ideology.

## **(2) Anti-American Education for the Whole Man**

The North Korean regime has developed an anti-American nationalist ideology through people's collective memory of the Korean War, and this has been reinforced by anti-American education from above. North Korea's anti-American education is systematic and lifelong for the entire citizenry. From childhood, North Koreans learn militant social values and lifestyles. As Figure 7 shows, *Urimal*, the textbook of Korean language for kindergarten children, promotes North Korean children's friendly relationships with soldiers in their everyday lives. This education lasts throughout primary school. All primary school textbooks include content

explicitly related to anti-Americanism and military culture.<sup>13</sup> The Korean language textbook for first year primary school students, published in 1989, is intended to arouse militant nationalism in young students:

Our tank goes forward.  
A child tank goes forward.  
Breaking American bastards into pieces,  
The child tank goes forward (*Kugŏ* 1989:42-43).

North Korean children learn the Korean letters through reading children's verses about a North Korean tank fighting American "bastards." Other textbooks serve a similar function. As Figure 8 shows, a picture of young children holding rifles and enjoying military games appears on *Semsegi*, the mathematics textbook for kindergarten children. Likewise, a primary school mathematics textbook published in 1973 asks the following question: "Our soldiers destroyed six tanks of American imperialists first. Next time, they destroyed two. How many total tanks did they destroy?" As seen in these examples, all primary school textbooks have been aimed to heighten anti-American ideology, and this has motivated children to have fierce enmity toward America. In 1973, a content analysis of the primary school textbooks such as Korean language, mathematics, communist morals, Kim Il Sung's revolutionary work, music, writing, painting, and art construction showed that the proportion of anti-Americanism/anti-South Korean sentiments and militant sentiments was 24.2 percent and 4.4 percent respectively, and in terms of

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<sup>13</sup> Similar to the North, the militarized ROK developed its anti-communist nationalism through systematic schooling. Elementary school curricula during the Park era were designed so that antagonistic anti-communist ideology would have a place in every field of study (Grinker 1998). For example, a textbook entitled *Sūnggong* (Defeating Communism), which was published for second year primary school students in 1965, depicted North Koreans as a barbarian people.

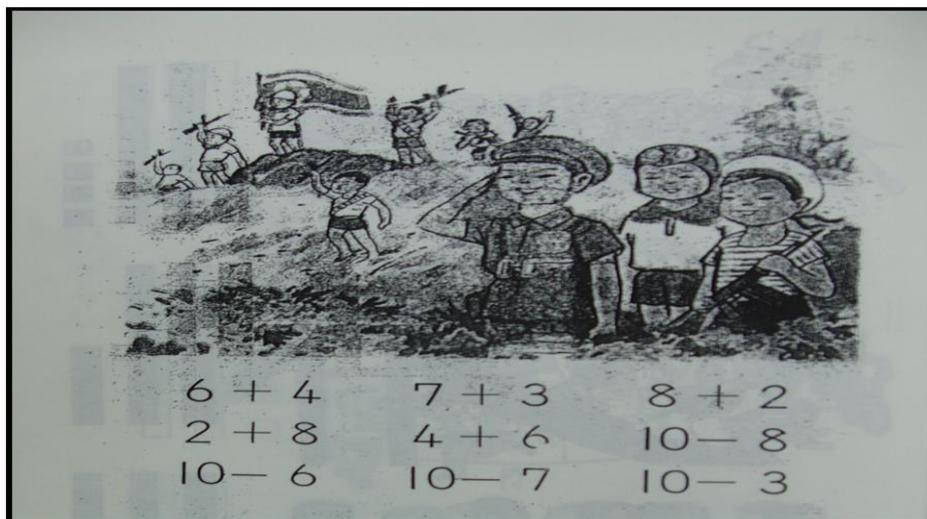
actual themes used in the textbooks, the proportion of militant sentiment accounted for 26.6 percent of the content (Institute of North Korean Studies 1983:1303-1304). With regard to this, defector interviewees indicated that little has changed in this militant anti-American education.

Figure 7 North Korean Children's Friendly Relationship with Soldiers



Source: *Urimal* 2000, pp. 46-47.

Figure 8 North Korean Children Holding a Rifle and Enjoying Military Games



Source: *Semsegi* 2002, p. 56.

North Koreans' extreme hatred and militant discourse toward Americans are evident in the very fabric of the language. The derogatory term *nom*, which is similar to calling somebody a "bastard," is without fail attached to the end of any word referring to Americans. According to defector interviewee P. Yi (female, 50), when they began to learn language, even two- or three-year-old children had to repeat the saying *mijenom* (American imperialist bastards), pointing at a very ugly depiction of American soldiers' big noses as per a teacher's instruction. The mathematics textbook for the second year primary school students published in 1986 describes the following:

In the last war for national liberation, our soldiers killed and dismembered (*jokch'ösümnida*) a total of 278 bastards, a sum of American imperialist bastards, wolves (*mije süngnyanginomdül*) and South Korean puppet soldier bastards (*Suhak* 1986:29).

The insulting words such as *nomdül* and *mijenomdül*, the aggressive terms such as *kkabusuda* (break down) and *chokch'ida* (kill and dismember), the extreme terms such as *sarinma* or *sarin'gwi* (devilish murderer), *hŭphyölgwi* (vampire), *panghwagwang* (incendiary maniac), and *hojŏn'gwang* (warlike maniac), and the terms for fierce animals such as *süngnyangi* (wolf) have been frequently used in association with Americans in primary school texts. For example, in one Korean primary school textbook, the terms *nom*, *mijenom*, and *wönsunom* (enemy bastard) appear 287, 139, and 85 times respectively (Institute of North Korean Studies 1983:1301). All these examples show how strongly the North Korean government has emphasized militant nationalism as early socialization in primary school education. Defector interviewee T. Kim (male, 37) was born in South Hamgyŏng Province and fled to the South via China due to food shortages in 2002. He was an ardent anti-American fighter until he defected from the North, and he has maintained a certain pro-regime idea of North Korea even after

resettling in the South. He recalled that anti-American education was a natural part of daily life and morality. Therefore, slandering Americans was not regarded as bad conduct but rather was encouraged and valued in both school and family life. He also liked to use the term *mijenom* when he fought with his friends.

In this way, official anti-American education has been enforced by the government and school from above. This power mechanism has been reproduced by representational work of the media that produces a symbolic power through language (Hall 1997). This anti-American education has been augmented by required military practices in the everyday lives of all citizens.

### **(3) Mass Armies and Militant Society**

Through both the collective memory of the Korean War and anti-American education, the North Korean regime has tried to create a militant society by instigating people's sentiments of hatred and establishing various mass armies against the American enemy. Both the military and civilians have been required to complete military education and practices. Defector interviewee S. Pak (male, 45) was born in South Hamgyŏng Province. He worked as the director of a drama company and was a loyal supporter of the regime. However, he was sent to labor camp (for reasons he was not willing to reveal), and fled to the South in 2000. Unlike most defector interviewees who hated the Kim Jong Il regime, he has maintained a certain pro-regime attitude toward North Korea, and criticized both the South and North's ideologies and systems. He explained North Korea's military education and societal mobilization as follows:

Since our childhood in which we joined *sonyŏndan*, the red boy-scout assembly, we had anti-imperialist education for primary school students. From childhood to adulthood, ideological education and military practices against American imperialism and the South Korean government

were natural as well as required. A militant fighter against national enemies was viewed as a great socialist.

In the militarized DPRK, from childhood to adulthood, anti-American military practices have been required for all citizens. Military practices, along with anti-American education, last even until one's retirement age. These civilian military trainings are held in all organizations such as cooperative farms, factories, clinics, and schools. According to the defectors I interviewed, North Korean military culture has dominated the entire society as military organizations have been set up at every level. Every person becomes a member of one or more military organizations. For instance, primary school students learn bayonet practice and the Korean martial art of empty-handed self-defense, and high school students have to perform annual 15-day military duty in the Young Red Guards. Retired soldiers take part in Training and Guidance Forces (*kyododae*) and laborers and peasants become members of the Workers-Farmers Red Guards. Even female college students engage in 6-month mandatory military training. In a publication of North Korean female defectors' interviews (Institute of Korean Women Society 2001:15-16), Chŏnghae Kim recalled that universities also follow a thorough military command system and lifestyle. Universities' organizational units consist of battalions, companies, and platoons, and college students employ a military communication style such as saying, "Yes, sir." In keeping with this morale, college students are advised to learn and follow Kim Il Sung's anti-Japanese guerrilla practices in work, study, and discipline (*Taehaksaeng* October 1981:59). These mass armies have been recreated and strengthened by North Korea's military mobilization during national crises.

## 1. The *Pueblo* Incident

Between the 1950s and the 1980s, North Korea's militant nationalism peaked during crises such as the *U.S.S. Pueblo* Incident in 1968 and the Panmunjom Ax Incident in 1976. As a consequence of long antagonistic intra-national relationships, the North Korean regime maintained serious military tensions with America and South Korea. The first national crisis of North Korea was the *Pueblo* Incident that occurred in the midst of post-war military tension around the Korean peninsula. On January 21, 1968, right before the *Pueblo* incident occurred, North Korea attempted to assassinate South Korean President Park Chung Hee in conjunction with the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the Korean People's Army on February 8, 1968.<sup>14</sup> A commando unit of 31 armed soldiers left Pyongyang on January 16, crossed the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, and reached Seoul near the Blue House on January 21. However, after a brief skirmish, one was captured alive and the rest of the commandos were killed or escaped (*Donga ilbo* January 22, 1968). On January 23, 1968, two days after this incident, North Korea reported the seizure of the *U.S.S. Pueblo* (*Nodong sinmun* January 24, 25, 1968). In this incident, one American sailor was killed and 82 others were imprisoned for nearly a year and tortured into writing confessions.<sup>15</sup> The North Korean authorities regarded the *Pueblo* as an "armed spy ship led by the U.S. imperialists' aggressive forces" (*Nodong sinmun* January 24, 25, 1968). In an official editorial of the government newspaper, the Pyonyang regime criticized the U.S. for attempting its "insane military invasion for war" (*Nodong sinmun* February 27, 1968:1). This

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<sup>14</sup> However, the North Korean regime claimed that this incident was attempted by pro-North Korean guerrillas in the South (*Minju Chosŏn* January 28, 1968; *Nodong sinmun* January 24, 25, 1968).

<sup>15</sup> The DPRK did not return the *Pueblo* to the U.S. In October 1999, the *Pueblo* was towed from Wŏnsan to Nampo on the West Sea and became one of the primary tourist attractions in Pyongyang. It is now anchored at the very spot where the General Sherman incident is believed to have taken place in 1866.

editorial argued, “We do not want war but do not fear war. Our people and armies will respond with retaliation for retaliation and with an all-out war for an all-out war. The only thing American invaders will see is their corpses and death.”

The DPRK’s seizure of the *Pueblo* was a by-product of the heightened militarization of the North. This incident brought about the first military tension between the DPRK and the U.S. on the Korean peninsula. Immediately following the crisis of the *U.S.S. Pueblo*, the American aircraft carrier *Enterprise* advanced to the East Sea with nuclear weapons to prepare for a probable attack on Wŏnsan, one of North Korea’s largest port cities (*Donga ilbo* January 24, 1968). In response, North Korea’s military forces concentrated on Wŏnsan to defend against an American attack (Kim 1990:135). The relationship between the two countries was strained to the breaking point in this way, but eventually the U.S., already involved in Vietnam, chose not to engage in a second conflict in Asia (Scalapino and Lee 1972:986).

Figure 9 The *Pueblo* Incident



Source: *Chosŏn* January 1973, pp. 28-29.

This *Pueblo* Incident led the entire North Korean society to shift to a state of readiness for war. In a publication of North Korean female defectors' interviews, Suryŏn Ch'oe recalled her experience:

A big incident came about; a state of war was declared all of a sudden, and the entire country was drawn into the horrific vortex of war. On January 23, 1968, we were surprised by news of our brave marines who had seized the American spy warship, the *Pueblo*, by force, and the great general Kim Il Song's amazing boldness and cleverness moved us to tears. We really thought that the second Korean War would break out. Everyone was busy with evacuation. At the time my second child was about to be born, so we were greatly thankful for having a second child. But, if the war broke out, we could not have moved an inch, and it would have caused a big problem. If the command of evacuation had been given, we would have taken only the first son leaving the second child at home. (Institute of Korean Women's Society 2001:340)

As illustrated above, during the *Pueblo* Incident, North Koreans believed that a war would break out on the peninsula and that they would have to prepare for conflict. This tension heightened North Korea's national unity and social integration. According to the defectors I interviewed, many young people volunteered for the military because they believed that they had to sacrifice themselves for their country. For instance, defector interviewee P'. Yun (male, 56) was born in South P'yŏngan Province and served as a military officer until he defected in 1998 when the severe food crisis occurred. He did not have any antagonism against the regime, but he crossed the Tumen river in order to look for food and medicine for his starving family and entered the South unintentionally. At the time of the *Pueblo* Incident, he was fourteen years old and attempted to volunteer for the military even though this attempt ultimately failed. The *Pueblo* Incident was enough to heighten North Korean citizens' anti-American patriotism for their country. In addition, the regime effectively utilized this incident for ideological mobilization. When the U.S. chose to avoid a military response toward the DPRK, North Korea

was intoxicated with its “victory.” Following America’s apology admitting that the *Pueblo* had been spying and that the U.S. would not spy in the future, the North Korean government released the 82 remaining crew members on December 23, 1968. The regime widely distributed propaganda concerning its victory in the “second” war with American “imperialism” (*Nodong sinmun* January 5, 1969). According to defector interviewees, North Korean citizens were proud of obtaining a war trophy and defeating America.

When the semi-war state ended, Pyongyang’s citizens held state-led rallies denouncing the “treacherous” action of the U.S. (*Nodong sinmun* May 30, 1968:3). Right after the *Pueblo* Incident, Kim Il Sung more firmly established the Four Great Military Lines to militarize the whole society. To arm the entire populace and to fortify the entire country were the most important agendas for the state’s social militarization (*Nodong sinmun* January 26, 1968:3). An editorial in *Nodong sinmun* (February 27, 1968) demanded that the DPRK further strengthen its national defense to create an impregnable fortification against “insane” American attacks. When military defense became a primary national task, the entire society was supposed to be radically militarized. The North Korean motto “Let’s Hack American Imperialism into Pieces” (*Mije ūi kag ūl ttŭja*) appeared openly in public (*Choguk* December 1968:138; *Nodong sinmun* October 2, 1968:5). Militant terms and slogans were more commonly used throughout the mass media. For instance, *Nodong sinmun* (February 27, 1968) described Yŏnan County’s farmers cultivating their land as if they were fighting in combat. *Nodong sinmun* also reported that laborers used a militant motto, “Let’s Work Twice and Three Times in High Spirits to Break Up American Imperialism” (*Nodong sinmun* March 21, April 17, 1968) and miners determined to increase production with the spirit of “Stabbing American Imperialists’ Hearts with a Bayonet” (*Nodong sinmun* April 17, 1968:3).

Figure 10 “Let’s Hack American Imperialism into Pieces!”



Source: Nodong sinmun October 2, 1968, p. 5.

Figure 11 Mechanic Fighters



Source: Ch'öllima July 1969, pp. 86-87.

## 2. The Panmunjom Ax Incident

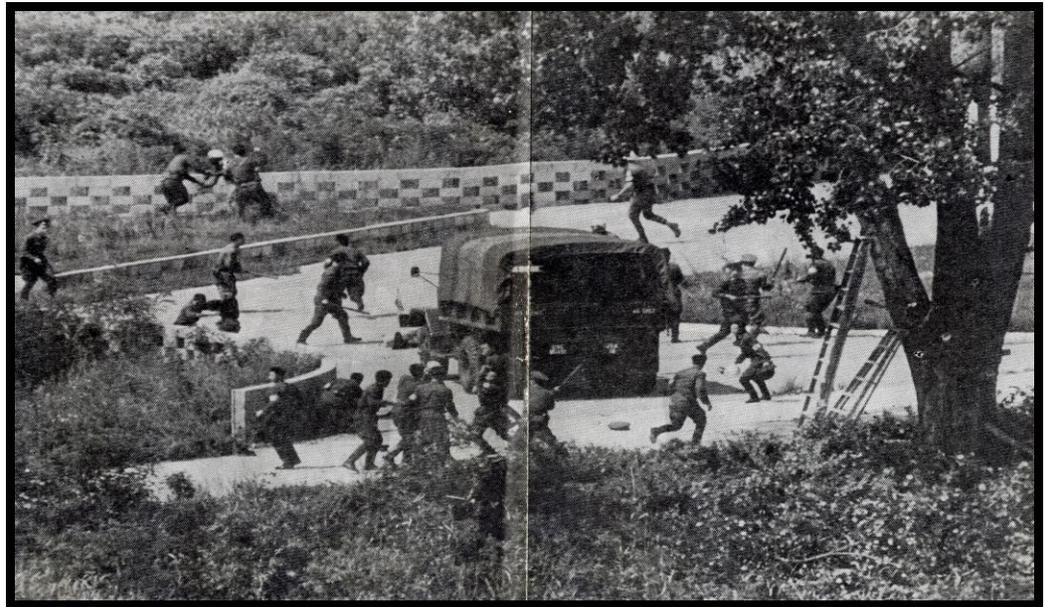
The second national crisis North Koreans experienced was the Panmunjom Ax Incident in 1976. Shortly before this incident, the first ROK-US Team Spirit military exercise was initiated in order to deter North Korean provocation and fortify ROK-US cooperative security.<sup>16</sup> North Korea's response to the Team Spirit exercise in 1976 was the proximate source of the "tree-cutting" incident that brought about the second military tension between the U.S. and the DPRK. On August 18, 1976, South Korean workers supervised by two U.S. Army officers were sent to prune a poplar tree in the Joint Security Area along the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). As South Korean workers chopped away at the branches of a poplar tree at the U.S. officers' instruction, several North Korean soldiers approached them and demanded that the pruning be stopped. When the American officers refused this demand, they were beaten to death on the spot by the furious North Korean soldiers, who were armed with metal pipes and ax handles. This incident brought the peninsula to the brink of another war. On the following day, the U.S. dispatched two combat squadron battalions (*Donga ilbo* August 20, 1976). There was a massive deployment of American air and naval vessels with nuclear capability to South Korea (Oberdorfer 2001). In response to America's military action, the DPRK proclaimed war, and ordered all regular and civilian semi-regular armies, including the Young Red Guards and the Workers-Farmers Red Guards, to prepare for war (*Nodong sinmun* August 20, 1976). An August 20, 1976 editorial in *Nodong sinmun* proclaimed that the DPRK would respond militarily to the

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<sup>16</sup> The Team Spirit exercises were held between 1976 and 1993 by the U.S. and South Korean militaries. The U.S. and the ROK offered to suspend the 1994 Team Spirit military exercises on the condition that North Korea would fully implement the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspection and exchange envoys with the South to discuss the nuclear issue. Since 1994, no Team Spirit exercises have been held.

U.S. forces if they attacked North Korea. However, the Pyongyang regime worried that this incident would actually cause a war, and Kim Il Sung ended the tension with a statement of regret. Meanwhile, the DPRK tried to instill militant anti-American ideology in its citizens, criticizing the U.S. for its military threats (*Nodong sinmun* August 19, 1976:5).

*Figure 12* The Panmunjom Ax Incident



Source: *Donga ilbo* August 20, 1976, p. 1.

Like the *Pueblo* Incident, the Panmunjom Ax Incident strengthened North Korea's military unity and patriotic militant nationalism. Defector interviewee W. Kim (male, 54) was born in North Hamgyŏng Province and fled to the South in 2007. He was discriminated against by the regime because his father came from the South. He tried to improve his "bad" family background through serving in the military and showing loyalty toward the regime, but his trials always failed and eventually he defected with his son, leaving his wife and daughter in his hometown. During the Panmunjom Ax Incident, he was recruited into the regular combat army

and had to sleep in his military shoes in a field trench for two months. This incident was almost like being in a war for him. America was a national enemy that instilled in him horror and hatred. Another defector interviewee S. Sim (male, 61) was born in South Hamgyŏng Province and fled in 1998 because he was involved in a certain “anti-revolutionary” activity. He had been a loyal communist and military officer, but he changed his ideology due to the food crisis and the junior Kim regime’s poor governance. He served as a high level officer in the North Korean army and led a private political association with his colleagues and inferior officers. Right before this activity was detected, he defected, leaving his family in the North. He recalled that all military orders were based on a real state of war during the Panmunjom Ax Incident. He introduced a story in relation to this incident; an anti-air artillery leader in the Second Corps did not comply with the authorities who ordered him to move his artillery to Wŏnsan by train and prepare for the probable U.S. forces’ attack. Instead, he decided to move his artillery on foot. However, due to the weather, the artillery arrived late at the destination, and the leader was purged for his disobedience to a superior’s order. These stories show how the North Korean regime and military leaders reacted to the national crisis.

Civil society was also in a state of semi-war. According to Insuk Chang’s testimony in a publication of North Korean female defectors’ interviews (Institute of Korean Women’s Society 2001:346), an enormous evacuation project went on in Pyongyang, and all the people who had “bad” family backgrounds were evicted from central to local areas. Academic institutions and business centers were also relocated to local areas. Trucks loaded with property to be moved filled the roads and railway stations. According to defector interviewees, every citizen made provisions for the emergent conflict and hid in air defense facilities every day for six months until the state of war ended. For North Koreans, the Panmunjom Ax Incident was like the resurrection of the nightmare of the Korean War.

#### (4) An Organic Politics of State and Individuals

According to the ideology of nationalism, the central entity or unit governing political and cultural life is the nation. Each individual belongs to a particular nation and attains identity by virtue of his or her relationship to national life. This nationalist ideology developed into an organic ideology in Nazi Germany. Hitler referred to the state as the organism which enables and preserves national life on earth (Hitler 1971:397-398). Germans also actively participated in the Nazis' racial nationalism as part of the organic state. In this way, the Nazis tried to fuse a number of distinct elements into a systematic matrix of political thought and action, integrating the individual and collective body (Rose 1999:26).

Similarly, North Korea has endeavored to create a socialist, organic nation-state through idealization of the harmonious relationship between the state as an organism and the individual as a cell. It is notable that the political construction of organic discourses contributed to the development of the DPRK's *Chuch'e* nationalism. The North Korean regime defined the *Ch'ollima* movement of the late 1950s through the 1970s as a full-scale national campaign and as the general socialist line for economic development and ideological mobilization in the 1972 Constitution (Article 13). The slogan of the *Ch'ollima* movement, "One for All, All for One," functioned as the collectivist principle for North Korean citizens' rights and duties (Article 49). This collectivist principle was fused with the metaphor of the state as an "organism" and of the family as a "cell" and this became the dominant political discourse. This is explicitly indicated in the 1972 Constitution: "Those who are married and families receive protection from the state. It is strongly affirmed that families are the cells of the society and shall be well taken care of by the state" (Article 63). The Constitution identifies the family and its members as the cells in the body of the state—an organism looking after its cells. For the DPRK, the family and its members are

necessary cells without which society itself cannot exist. In his report at the Central Conference of the Fifth Party Congress in November 1970, Kim Il Sung (1988:309-310) argued for “revolutionizing the whole of society” through “revolutionizing family.” The DPRK has aimed to integrate atomized individuals through the family to the state. The term “domestic revolution” is defined as follows in *Hyōndae Chosŏn mal sajŏn* (Modern Korean language dictionary):

All families are to be educated to have unending devotion to the party and *suryōng* (leader) and all traces of old ideas remaining in their minds should be thoroughly uprooted. Families should always work and learn for the purpose of the revolution, and in order to live a great life they should each dedicate their whole body to becoming a fighting revolutionary and communist for the party, *suryōng*, the fatherland and the people. (*Hyōndae Chosŏn mal sajŏn* 1981:35)

In the post-war DPRK, each individual is expected to become a devoted revolutionary fighter for the nation through his or her family. Using this political rhetoric, North Korea has tried to integrate family and individual cells into the body of the state and nation. North Korea’s social relations have been conceived in terms of the harmonious integration of individuals into a collective whole. This characteristic was represented by Kim Il Song’s Confucian cult and Kim Jong Il’s power succession during the 1960s and 1970s. From the late 1960s, Kim Il Song’s leadership began to be ethicized in a patriarchal form, and this provided the political logic for Kim Jong Il’s power succession (Suzuki 1994:183, 274). In the following poem which appears in a North Korean novel, the senior Kim’s supreme power is exalted by a patriarchal Confucian form:

Our father is Marshal Kim Il Sung.  
Our home is in the bosom of the party.  
We are all siblings.  
We have nothing to envy in the world. (Yi 1965:159)

The poem idealizes Kim Il Song as a father to the people, who—as his children—are all siblings. This ethicized authority has supported Kim’s supreme leadership and been extended to people’s social practices. A publication of North Korean defectors’ interviews describes orphan Chŏnghae Kim as the “President’s (*chusŏk*) daughter.” She states:

I grew up with the name Kim that was taken from President Kim Il Song. I knew my real father’s family name through documentation but all the children in the orphanage had the family name Kim from infancy. So all our classmates had the same family name Kim. ... During mealtimes, after greeting the parental leader with thanks and our hands raised, we were able to eat. (Institute of Korean Women’s Society 2001:7-8)

Orphans in North Korea have been rehabilitated as workers for the socialist revolution. They have taken Kim Il Song’s family name because, for them, he is both father of the home and great leader of the state. Discursive use of such terms as the parental leader is a result of the DPRK’s ideological interpellation of socio-cultural phenomena through ethical justification of the supreme power (Kang 2011). This discourse has justified the transfer of power from father to son. Most North Korean refugee interviewees believed that ordinary people rarely disagreed with or resisted Kim Jong Il’s power succession because they took his rule for granted. They also believed that Kim Jong Il would improve their lives. The political slogan, “Let’s Be Loyal to Kim Il Sung for Generations,” did not conflict with ordinary people’s Confucian tradition of male line succession. North Korea’s political logic for absolute power was clearly expressed in Kim Jong Il’s theory of the “socio-political life”:

The masses of people constitute a socio-political living body that possesses an eternal and independent life force, as they are united with the ideological organization centering on the leader under the party’s guidance. Individual persons’ physical lives have an end, but the lives of the masses of people that are united with the independent socio-political life are eternal. ... As an

individual's center of life is the brain, the socio-political group's life center is the supreme brain of the group or *suryŏng*. (Kim Jong Il 1992:160)

In Kim Jong Il's theory, the supreme leader governs as the life center or brain of all citizens while the individual functions as a body who serves his or her national center or brain. This model elevates the supreme leader to a spiritually superior position. The junior Kim has advocated North Korea's absolute power through the organic integration of state and masses, socio-political and physical life, and brain and body. This organic and Confucian form of socialism has been created and recreated by state power and its political logic, justifying the senior Kim's supreme leadership.

Figure 13 A Shouting Young Soldier



Figure 14 "Let's Club American Imperialist Bastards to Death!"



Source: *Minju Chosŏn* January 26, 1968, p. 1. Source: *Minju Chosŏn* February 29, 1968, p. 3.

Figure 13 shows a shouting young soldier making a dash at an American enemy with a bayonet. His look and posture are filled with furious enmity against the enemy and a will for fighting and revenge.

Figure 14 shows two North Koreans trying to kill an American soldier by aiming at him with their rifle and ax. Their eyes are filled with furious anger and enmity against the American enemy.

Figure 15 “The Only Thing American Invaders Will See  
Is Their Corpses and Death!”



Source: *Chöllima* June 1970, p. 68.

Figure 15 exemplifies a North Korean soldier’s gallant attitude pointing out an American soldier’s corpse. His right hand holds a rifle with a bayonet that was used to kill the U.S. soldier.

Figure 16 “Yankee, Bastard!”



Source: *Chosŏn* November 1973, p. 33.

Figure 16 shows a stout North Korean man striking with his naked fist a U.S. soldier, who has long nails like a wild beast’s claws.

## **People's Militant Lives and Micro-Fascism**

Most existing studies so far have viewed North Koreans as being simply docile in response to brutal state power from above. However, evaluating North Koreans' responses to state power from only one direction does not provide an in-depth analysis of the DPRK's nationalist power. North Korea's politics of hatred, patriotism, and emotion have gone beyond the state's mobilization from above. Citizens have also accepted and practiced the state's militant nationalism from below. The prior research of North Korean state power has not paid attention to why and how North Korean citizens have actively participated in the regime's anti-American politics. In this section, I explore North Korean people's militant lives in terms of the politics of extreme hatred, patriotic fighting, and deep emotion from the 1950s through the 1980s.

### **(1) The Politics of Hatred**

With every national crisis North Korean society has been transformed more and more into a militant society, and citizens have increasingly participated in the state's militant nationalism. The DPRK's politics of extreme enmity against the national enemy has worked as one of the principal mechanisms that have created North Koreans' militant ways of life. A North Korean magazine for adult women, which depicted Americans as "vampires," introduced a story of an American missionary who drew a Korean patient's blood and sold it for money (*Chosŏn yŏsŏng* February 1979:41-43). As shown in this example, North Korean propaganda has sometimes used exaggeration or fictional stories because this has been effective in easily convincing and moving the people. However, North Koreans' politics of hatred has gone beyond

the state's simple propaganda from above. North Korean citizens have accepted and practiced the regime's anti-Americanism from below.

This politics of hatred can be clearly found in North Korean's daily lives from the 1950s through the 1980s. Defector interviewee O. Han (female, 70) was born in North Hamgyŏng Province. She experienced the Korean War when she was eleven years old. She lost her parents in an American bombing raid. She has never forgotten her parents' death. From her childhood, she thought of America as a "mortal enemy":

Whenever I saw a bomber or airplane, it reminded me of my parents who died from an American bombing. I could not get rid of my hatred against America. After my parents died, I was brought up in an orphanage. Since my childhood, I have lived with extreme hatred of American bastards. ... When I went to the Sinch'ŏn museum, I realized again that American bastards were really devilish murderers. ... This anti-Americanism was not only strengthened by the state's education, but rather by myself, my own experience and ideology. My own anger and hatred overwhelmed others'.

Han still dislikes the U.S. even though she defected from the North and lives in the South. What is important in her interview is that her anti-American ideology was not taught by the state or school education alone, but rather she believed that it stemmed from her own experience and was strengthened by her own sentiment and will. Her memory of war perpetuated her anger against America as her own enemy so that her anti-American sentiment was the product of both state ideology and personal experience. This statement represents how the politics of national division and hatred caused by the Korean War was created and recreated by North Koreans' experiences.

Beyond the regime's unilateral mobilization, North Korea's anti-Americanism was able to penetrate citizens' daily lives in this way. A defector interviewee (female, 39) recalled that

whenever she quarreled with her friends, her mother advised them to stop, saying “Why are you guys fighting? You should rather fight against American bastards.” She and her friends would stop quarreling because such an admonition was regarded as most insulting in North Korean society. In other words, parental discipline was rendered more effective by anti-American sentiment. In an essay in a North Korean magazine for adult women, Un-sim Hwang, a North Korean woman, wanted her son Myōngsu to take revenge for his father who died during the Korean War and to have a sense of justice (*Chosŏn yŏsŏng* July 1963:23-24). She believed that the primary task to educate her son was to make him take revenge for his father, who was killed by the American military. America was her family’s enemy as well as her country’s enemy. In another essay, North Korean combat hero Chinsu Kim recalled that he had been advised by his mother that he should not make a compromise with his enemy (*Chosŏn yŏsŏng* May 1958:24). His mother always advised him to stop fighting with friends when he was very young. However, she did not put a stop to his fighting with a Japanese boy. She believed that national enemies should be defeated in all circumstances. This type of testimony was commonly found in most defector interviewees. In this way, North Koreans’ assertions of hatred against the national enemy were diffused throughout daily life.

Ordinary people’s politics of hatred against the American enemy is also found in children’s writings. In a magazine for children, Yu-mi Li, a primary school student, describes her hatred against the U.S. in her poem “My Mother’s Military Cap” as follows:

My mother  
Lost her parents and sisters in the sea of a grudge  
Grabbed a rifle with the mind of revenge  
Wore a military cap the great leader granted  
From the first day when she joined a revolutionary line,  
How many enemies did she shoot in every decisive combat,

Hitting the bull's eye one hundred percent as a great shooter! (*Adong munhak* September 1980:64)

In the above children's poem, Li is proud of her mother, who lost her family and suffered from war but avenged herself on her enemies as a brave fighter. These types of poems are found in most volumes of *Adong munhak* (Children's Literature). From their childhood, North Koreans actively hated the American enemy.

The positive use of hatred of the American enemy in political perceptions was connected to a dichotomous logic toward America. Defector interviewee T. Kim (male, 37) was a primary school student in the early 1980s. He argued in his interview:

When I was very young, a bad word "bastard" like "American imperialist bastard" was the most insulting word between friends. Americans were depicted as two-legged wolves. They were depicted as sadistic killers and scheming exploiters of enslaved South Korea. As it were, they were regarded as Satan, while North Koreans were seen as innocent young lambs. North Korean ideology was very similar to simple Christian ethics that emphasized a black and white logic. This logic worked well with ordinary people.

Through their extreme hatred based upon this black and white logic, North Koreans were easily moved and became horrified, aggressive, and militant. In the same way that Americans were derogated as "two-legged wolves," U.S. "imperialism" became an object of national hatred as a "country of Satan." The U.S. became a mortal enemy of the people themselves. Kim continued to describe, "Anti-Americanism was a way of life for North Koreans, so harsh hatred against America was absolutely necessary, and citizens were encouraged to discipline themselves with this spirit. Citizens' lives themselves were anti-American."

This extended politics of hatred on the individual level is obvious in North Korean athletes. Hojun Li became the first Olympic winner of the DPRK by breaking the Olympic and world records in the finals of the small bore rifle shooting at the 1972 Olympic Games held in Munich, Germany (*Daily NK* August 6, 2008). In a press conference, Li argued, “I shot as if I were aiming at the heart of the enemy.” His remark gave rise to public censure because it contradicted the Olympic spirit. However, according to defector interviewee T. Kim (male, 69), who worked as a soccer trainer in North Korea, Li became a national hero due to his “honorable” anti-American spirit as well as his gold medal. Regarding this black and white logic of North Korea’s anti-Americanism, interviewee K. Hō (male, 55), who defected from the North in 1993 in order to reunite with his parents who had fled to the South during the Korean War, indicated that hostility towards national enemies was perceived as desirable and necessary in North Korean society. Hō argued:

For North Korean people, especially dichotomous ideologies, such as justice and injustice, division and unification, national independence and imperialism, nation and national enemy, were like a powerful collective and individual tenet. Extreme hatred of the national enemy was viewed as part of good socialist morals and conduct. It was always regarded as right and good.

His testimony revealed that the dichotomous logic of militant nationalism contributed to integrating the society and disciplining individuals. The dichotomous logic and language of good and evil enabled the North Korean regime to make people actively participate in its “violent” politics of hatred.

This extreme anti-Americanism, which was exalted as good and sacred, evolved into a political form of ethnic nationalism. Through such spirited political beliefs and behaviors, North Koreans carried out the “sacred” mission of saving humanity from the evil forces of

“imperialism.” Defector interviewee U. Han (female, 59) was born in China and moved to North Korea with her parents in the 1960s. She lived in South P’yŏngan Province until she defected in 2006. Her family had the “North Korean Dream” but suffered from the regime’s discriminatory policies against immigrants. She fled from the North with her children when they faced severe food shortages. Although she disliked the North Korean regime, she actively participated in the state-led demonstrations against America. In response to threats of war and economic hardship, she wished all white American people to be drowned in the Pacific Ocean. She stated, “As I felt that my own suffering was due to American imperialism, my complaints about the regime shifted to hatred against America. ... I believed that we could live better by killing all white people.” Her negativity about the North Korean regime was overtaken by her ethnic hatred toward Americans that was represented by the naive marker of skin color. Ethnic hatred towards Americans extended to all white Western people. Extreme nationalist practices that integrate the individual body and social body through divisive racial categories are like political religions that create boundaries separating “sacred kin” from “alien kind” (Manzo 1996:3). Through this mechanism, political discourse concerning the differences between “us” and “them” is nationalized and racialized (Puri 2004:101).

In addition, North Korea’s militant nationalism shaped and reshaped North Korean citizens’ militant behaviors as a disciplined way of life that developed from childhood. According to the memoir of defector Kŭmjŭ Yŏ (1995), a militant game of “beating American scarecrows with a stick” was commonly conducted in kindergartens and primary schools. She describes this game as a forced way of schooling and recalls that many students suffered from coercive education. However, the majority of the defectors I interviewed revealed that it was not simply imposed from above by force but rather students enjoyed it. Defector interviewee K. Yi (male, 45) served as a military officer and was also an enthusiastic pro-regime citizen. Yi’s father was in

the “core” class as he served as a high level official in the Central Party. However, Yi defected from the North in 2006 when his father was politically purged. After that, he came to hate the North Korean regime. He described his childhood in our interview. He and his classmates enjoyed this militant game when they were seven or eight years old. He emphasized that it was practiced with students’ active participation. Through joining in and enjoying this game, Yi and his classmates gradually heightened their own anti-Americanism. He said, “Some guys felt pain because they were forced to beat American scarecrows harder with a stick. But, most other peers and I enjoyed the beatings because we were filled with antagonism against American bastards and we felt that we could be brave fighters.” Yi’s experience in his boyhood foreshadowed his future in which he would serve as a military soldier. He said, “I hoped to serve as a brave soldier, and my dream came true. Whenever I grabbed my weapons, this reminded me of my boyhood as a militant child fighter. This was possible because I maintained my own harsh antagonism against American bastards.”

With regard to Yi’s experience, a defector interviewee (male, 43) who worked as a primary school teacher, explained that North Korea’s methods of military education stimulated young students’ “violent” dispositions and attitudes toward life and made such violent dispositions and attitudes commonplace. Children internalized the militant state spirit into their own beliefs, and they developed this militancy in their lives. Through both systematic education and individuals’ active practices, North Koreans’ “righteous and aggressive” politics operated extensively in their ordinary lives. Defector interviewee H. Ch’oe (male, 78), who was a central government newspaper reporter, explained, “North Koreans are very righteous and aggressive as well. They are proud of hating and attacking the enemy. They are easily excited and agitated and don’t tolerate any unjust activities. The entire society has been filled with these kinds of thoughts and behaviors.” As Bourdieu (1989) emphasizes, individuals’ practices evolve within particular

socio-cultural contexts as a system of internalized dispositions that mediate between a social structure and the everyday activities of individuals. North Koreans' militancy in their everyday activities is like habitus as an internalized disposition that generates meaningful practices and perceptions for anti-Americanism. As the whole set of practices, the habitus carries out a systematic application of the necessity inherent in the learning conditions (Bourdieu 1984:170). North Koreans' everyday practices can be understood as a lifelong learning process beginning in childhood and extending throughout the course of life.

With this in mind, the state's anti-American nationalism was inscribed into individuals, overcoming differences in family backgrounds and generations. The example of defector interviewee (male, 49) C. Li's father (male, 77) who also had a "bad" family background, indirectly reveals the social process of North Koreans' internalization of anti-American ideology. C. Li's father was drafted into a "volunteer" army (*ũiyonggun*) by force at the age of 18 when the North Korean military invaded the South with the outbreak of the Korean War. He was unable to defect from North Korea until 51 years later. In North Korea, he was persecuted by the regime due to his "bad" family background of South Korean origin. At first, he was unwilling to accept North Korean socialist culture and ideology because he had already been educated in South Korean ideology. He did not accept North Korean political ideology, filled with anti-American "imperialism," although he pretended to. However, he observed some soldiers who died or suffered from bacteriological warfare during the Korean War when he served in a military hospital. Being witness to this evidence of cruel American conduct led him to have antagonistic sentiments toward the U.S. forces, even though he did not completely accept the North Korean regime's propaganda. While he was only partially integrated into the anti-American ethos of North Korean society, his son C. Li was an enthusiastic supporter of the anti-American regime.

C. Li believed that his family had to contribute to the state by positively serving as anti-American fighters so that they could overcome their unfavorable family background.

Seen in this way, North Koreans' patterns of militant thought and behavior were disciplined by anti-American education from above, but they were also recreated and strengthened by people's active practices. Of course, I found some differentiated points in the cases of people who had "bad" family backgrounds. One of these exceptional cases is defector interviewee Y. Kim (female, 74), who was incarcerated in the Yodök camp as a political prisoner. Because of an incident involving her college friend Hyerim Söng, who was Kim Jong Il's second wife, Y. Kim and her family were moved by force into a labor camp for political criminals. She saw many purged officials there; the camp held people from "bad" backgrounds or "counter-revolutionary" backgrounds such as Christians, landlords, people whose family members fled to the South, and people who worked as local policemen supporting the South Korean army during the occupation of the United Nations' Allied Forces and of the South Korean army in North Korea. In this labor camp, her parents starved to death, and one of her sons drowned. She experienced family purge, forced labor in a horrific gulag, and coercive surveillance and control which extended even after her release. Since then, she has viewed the Kim Jong Il regime as her enemy and now lives as a pro-American South Korean citizen in Seoul.

Another exception is defector interviewee M. Ch'a (male, 82). He was born in Kyöngsang Province in South Korea. He participated in the Korean War as a soldier of the South Korean army but was captured as a prisoner of war, and forced to live as a miner in the countryside of South Pyongan Province in North Korea. He secretly maintained a South Korean ideology and was harshly antagonistic towards the North Korean regime until 2003, when he fled from the North. While there, however, he had to continuously pretend to comply with the regime

in spite of being filled with hatred and hostility towards it. For over 50 years, he had to swallow his anger toward the North Korean regime, which brought him and his family into despair and conflict. His children constantly complained about the hardships they suffered due to their father's "bad" family background. His sons blindly complied with the state's policies and anti-American education in order to live a better life, and he could not stop them. For Ch'a, the enemy was not America but North Korea.

We can see a minority of North Koreans' differentiated responses to the regime's anti-Americanism as shown in the cases of Kim and Ch'a. However, political perceptions and behaviors of extreme enmity against America were held by ordinary North Koreans and commonly found in most defectors' testimonies. In spite of the differences of age, class, and family background as well as some counterfactual examples, the DPRK's anti-American power was positively internalized and practiced by North Korean citizens. From the 1950s through the 1980s, North Koreans actively developed militant thoughts and ways of life by and for themselves while they were disciplined by the state's anti-American power. With regard to the way in which state power worked in citizens' politics of hatred, a defector interviewee (male, 79) who worked as a local government official claimed in our interview:

The way in which state power mobilized individuals was not necessarily by force, but it also worked in a certain way with people's power as they maintained militant hatred and hostility by themselves. Hatred toward the national enemy equaled social justice in North Korea. At the time of every national emergency and individual suffering, we ascribed these to American imperialism and the South Korean regime. Hatred and hostility is a natural human sentiment. Not only is it natural but it is easy to cultivate. We learned to maintain it, but we also tried to create it by ourselves. The regime manipulated this technique of rule insidiously.

North Koreans believed that their suffering was rooted in the politics of national division which was caused by the U.S. As shown in the above interview, North Koreans' hatred and hostility towards the national enemy was viewed as a natural human sentiment. They learned to maintain it from the regime and official education, but they also tried to create it by themselves. In this way North Korea's anti-American power was naturally inscribed into individuals, as it was supported by a dichotomous justification through the contrast of North Korean force and enemy force.

## **(2) The Politics of Patriotism and Deep Emotion**

From the 1950s through the 1980s, North Korea's militant nationalism integrated the individual and social body through the politics of patriotism and emotion as well as through the political mechanism of extreme hatred against America.

In the DPRK, the ideal type of socialist being was an anti-American militant fighter who would sacrifice himself or herself. This way of life was typically found in their spirit of self-sacrifice. According to Durkheim (1951), suicides are caused by the degree of imbalance of two social forces: "social integration" and "moral regulation." Durkheim views the altruistic suicide as a social result of excessive social integration, and the fatalistic suicide as a social product of excessive moral regulation. Durkheim's structural perspective and focus on "social facts" come from his emphasis on a group identity that is collective and external to the individual and has coercive power (Durkheim 1982). On the one hand, the North Korean case fits well with this Durkheimian perspective in that North Koreans, as militant fighters, displayed a strong degree of self-sacrifice that was motivated by extreme social integration and moral regulation. While personal values and beliefs unique to individuals were considered counterproductive and were

discouraged, North Koreans retained a sense of belonging and identity with a high degree of in-group cohesiveness (Park 2002:177). North Koreans found their individual identities at the national level as they were obsessed with militant nationalism. Defector interviewee P. Yi (female, 50) who was from the “anti-revolutionary class” argued, “We lived without thinking of a self, ourselves; North Koreans live without knowing about themselves.” This statement emphasizes that individual identity is subject to group identity within state-led nationalism.

On the other hand, North Koreans’ individual identities evolved within group identity and had their own dynamics within the boundary of the group. In this respect, the DPRK’s state-led nationalism could be related to micro-level nationalism. North Koreans did not necessarily blindly participate in the state’s nationalist politics by force, but they chose to join in the state activities by and for themselves. According to defector interviewees, North Korean people believed that their self-sacrifice toward their country would ultimately benefit them since both individuals and the state were integrated into an identical social body. Defector interviewee S. Pak (male, 45) said, “It is an exaggeration to say that individual self or interest is totally subordinated to the state and group. Rather, an integrated balance between the state and the individual is a more proper evaluation. North Koreans pursue their own interests with and within the state and nation.”

Considering this dual aspect of North Korean socialism, the DPRK’s nationalist state power should be understood as a dual phenomenon that is constructed from above but also should be analyzed from below. North Korea’s anti-American nationalism based upon people’s patriotic fighting and deep emotion were instigated by the state as a macro-politics, but were also created and recreated at a micro-politics level. Defector interviewee Y. Kim (male, 58) was born in South P’yŏngan Province and fled to the South in 1988. He did not disclose why he defected, but he was an enthusiastic anti-American fighter and has maintained this anti-American idea

even in the South. During the *Pueblo* Incident, he was only sixteen years old, but he was so deeply patriotic that he misrepresented his age in order to volunteer for the military. He asserted, “I was prepared to die by an act of terrorism with seven hand grenades.” As seen in Kim’s case, the so-called spirit of “one for one hundred” became the norm for a model soldier (*Chöllima* January 1973:20). Kim also introduced a story about North Korean soldiers’ patriotic fighting. In 1974, when Mobutu, the president of Zaire, made a surprise visit to the Hwanghae steelworks, as the fourth army corps stood in a row, he tested North Korean soldiers’ patriotic spirit by asking them if they would kill themselves by putting their bodies into a blast furnace for their country. Incredibly, several soldiers tried to rush to the blast furnace to kill themselves, and their suicide was only prevented when Mobutu suggested that other soldiers stop them. Clearly, patriotic spirit exceeded even Mobutu’s expectations.

Ordinary civilians’ patriotic fighting was not significantly different from military soldiers’. Defector interviewee Y. Kim (male, 70) was born in North Hamgyŏng Province and served as a province level party official. He claimed, “North Korea is a society that can be maintained by nationalist politics. We have learned to have a strong belief that individuals cannot live without the nation and that we must coexist with the nation. So nobody argued against the regime’s nationalist ideology, especially during the crises of war, even though some people did not like the regime for political reasons.” A publication of North Korean female defectors’ interviews (Institute of Korean Women’s Society 2001) introduces the story of Chŏnghae Kim. Kim grew up as a member of the Kim family, inheriting the surname of the great leader Kim Il Sung since she lost her parents and was sent to an orphanage. She was an ardent anti-American fighter from Kang Pansŏk Revolutionary Academy. Though she disagrees with the Kim Jong Il regime’s policies, her own ideology still puts an emphasis on the group and state and finds an individual identity in the group’s interest. She states, “I still think of us, the group, and country

first rather than myself. ... I will not abandon such ideology until I die (Institute of Korean Women's Society 2001:11-12).

This patriotic militant life of North Koreans was supported by their firm belief in victory in a war against America. Most defector interviewees agreed that the U.S. was the most powerful country, but they did not fear modern American military forces and equipment. In a U.S. journalist's collection of North Korean refugee interviews, male defector Seong-san Chung said, "Ordinary North Korean soldiers wanted war and they want to fight" (Martin 2004:385). He argued that most people believed in their ability to win the war against America. In relation to North Koreans' militant spirit and positive view of fighting, defector interviewee S. Hong (male, 70), who held fierce enmity toward the North Korean regime, claimed in his interview, "North Korea surpasses South Korea in terms of spiritual strength and social integration, while South Korea is more advanced than North Korea in terms of modern military forces and technology. The North Korean societal system is a military war system. All the people are militarily and mentally prepared to deal with war. Society is integrated into one. People believe that a good socialist must not fear war in order to contribute to the war of justice." Hong pointed out that the North Korean army was spiritually armed and that civil-military relations were also well integrated. North Korean soldiers' militant spirit and positive view of fighting were created when they maintained a firm belief that they would be victorious in war.

This mentality made no exception for civilians, even women. A defector interviewee (female, 57) resolutely said, "As a female laborer and member of the Workers-Farmers Red Guards, I was determined to become a fighter with a spirit of 'one for one hundred' for my country. This spirit took no exception to the differences of age, class, or gender." Defector interviewee C. Ch'oe (female, 65) immigrated from Japan with her husband T. Kim (male, 69) in the 1960s. She was impressed by female citizens' courage and positive view of fighting. She told

me the story of Yŏnghye, her neighbor's daughter, who was an ardent athlete and fighter when she was seventeen years old. After the Panmunjom Ax Incident, she was not supposed to attend a national track and field competition since she had been injured in an accident. However, she persuaded her coaches and colleagues that she could and must attend because she believed that giving up the competition meant losing to American "imperialists." Eventually, she participated in the competition even though she did not win. Ch'oe commented, "Everyone was a soldier and military culture was natural. Being a fighter was normal everyday life. Women were as brave as men."

Figure 17 "With the Spirit of One for One Hundred!"



Source: *Chŏllima* January 1973, p. 20.

Seen in this way, to borrow Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) terms, North Korea's militant nationalism is characterized by a union of the state's fascism and individuals' micro-fascism. Post-war militant nationalism came from the state's mobilization, but it also extended into

people's everyday practices. As a union of macro-and micro-politics, the DPRK's anti-American state power enabled an organic body politics of the state and individuals. How this politics operated is exemplified in defector interviewee P. Kim's (female, 64) statement. Kim fled to the South due to the political purge and persecution of her family, and the food crisis. She was a loyal supporter of the regime before the 1990s, but with the food crisis, she began to doubt her own ideology and realized that her thoughts were largely "brainwashed." She described the following:

North Korea's politics is a politics of deep emotion. Numerous propaganda and policies focused on this politics of deep emotion that awakened people to their ideology and aroused their voluntary participation. With the economic crisis of the mid-1990s, I have doubted my own ideology and found that my thoughts were largely brainwashed. I myself have changed my mind about North Korean society and ideology, but there are some ideas that can't be changed easily though I fled from the North and live a rich life in the South. Together, the state and individuals characterize the destiny of our nation. Even if the regime's politics is wrong, North Koreans would never abandon this idea. We seek our own selves within a nation and believe individuals develop with the nation. ... In the crisis of war, my nation's pain is like mine. If my nation spills blood, it is like I spill blood. So most people would give their blood for their country.

As shown in Kim's description, North Korea's nationalist politics of deep emotion sought a union of state and individual bodies, and this harmonious body politics was made possible by people's active acceptance and participation. She explained that since individuals functioned as cells of the organic state, most North Koreans would give their lives for their country. In addition, as a college student Kim joined the state's efforts to relieve the sufferers of the late 1960s' flood around Pyongyang. She and her colleagues found many wounded citizens bleeding and moaning with pain. Facing a horrific natural disaster in the same way they would a war, they realized the importance of the nation as a social entity that cared for and protected

individuals and their lives. In other words, North Koreans perceived themselves to be integrated with the state.<sup>17</sup>

In the DPRK's anti-American state power from the 1950s through the 1980s, a social domain of militant nationalism was managed by the state's fascist politics and people's micro-fascism, while other domains were controlled by Stalinist violence and forces. Defector interviewee C. Li's (male, 49) statement clearly shows North Korea's differentiated functioning of power:

When I was young, people's patriotism was amazing. All the people banded together for defense against the U.S. Although the economic situation influenced our lives and ideology over time, it never undermined our anti-Americanism until the mid-1990s. In North Korea, individuals could not organize themselves or group together. In many arenas, we were able to only think and speak under the guidance of the state. But, all things were not so. Fighting against American imperialists was a freedom that the state guaranteed individuals. Within this boundary, individuals were free and welcome to heighten hatred and enmity. The problem was that this freedom worked only in a limited arena.

As Li stated, North Korea had two faces of state power. While Stalinist power was represented by a violent politics controlled by the state from above, North Korea's militant nationalism extended into individuals' micro-fascism as a productive mechanism of state power. In Foucault's sense, the individual is a politically inscribed entity, shaped by practices of discipline and control. North Korean citizens actively participated in the state's nationalist

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<sup>17</sup> Most defectors I interviewed indicated that this state slogan has not worked well since the 1990s due to the food crisis that has threatened the North Korean regime. I interviewed some defectors who maintained extreme hatred against not America but the North Korean regime and thus consistently denied the historical fact of a harmonious relationship between the state and people within militant nationalism. Their perspectives were evidently shaped by their personal histories of purges, punishment, incarceration, and suffering from famine, harsh defections, and the horrors of being surrounded by death.

governance and created their own micro-politics in the social domain of anti-Americanism. As Foucault claims, the “technique of power functions not only from top to bottom, but also to a certain extent from bottom to top and laterally, as it assures the constant subjection of its forces and imposes on the docile subject” (Foucault 1977:176-177). In its post-war militant nationalism, North Korea created active fighters who were disciplined by the state’s power rather than terrorized citizens who blindly complied with the brutal state.

### **Chapter Summary**

From the 1950s through the 1980s, the DPRK epitomized Stalinist politics through a one-man dictatorship with political purges, gulags, surveillance, and thought control. Stalinist politics strengthened North Korea’s violent top-down domination of society that threatened citizens’ freedom and human rights. This Stalinist politics has persisted to the present. In particular, extreme punishment such as public execution has exposed individuals to the politics of horror. In this regard, existing studies have viewed North Korean state power as unilaterally top-down and coercive. Yet, the DPRK’s militant nationalism from the 1950s through the 1980s revealed a new aspect of North Korean state power, which was differentiated from Stalinist politics. The DPRK’s anti-American power operated not only from above but was also productive and diffusive in individuals’ everyday practices. In order to create anti-American militant socialist fighters, the North Korean regime heightened people’s sentiment of hatred against America by stimulating their collective memories of the Korean War and by establishing systematic lifelong education and full-scale mass armies for the whole citizenry. While the state tried to create anti-American socialist beings from above, citizens’ participatory militant nationalism of extreme hatred, patriotic fighting and deep emotion created their own micro-fascism from below. This union of

macro- and micro politics created a harmonious anti-American body politics of state and individuals in which North Koreans actively participated in the state's militant nationalism by maintaining their extreme enmity against the national enemy and by contributing as enthusiastic patriotic fighters, as "cells" of an organic state. In this way, the state's militant nationalism extended to individuals' micro-politics.

In conclusion, from the 1950s through the 1980s, before the severe food crisis occurred, the DPRK's violent Stalinist power and productive anti-American power coexisted. The DPRK's state power was reproduced from below through fighting against its national enemy as external "other" while the regime controlled domestic rival groups and the "hostile" class as internal "other" through a Stalinist politics. This dynamic trait of North Korean state power has been further complicated by the economic crisis and the resulting people's differentiated reactions to the regime's governance since the 1980s. In the next chapter I will examine how North Koreans' firm anti-American beliefs and ways of life have been renegotiated, questioned, and challenged during the economic crisis from the 1990s through the present.

## **Chapter VI Anti-Americanism and Change during the Recent Crises**

How have North Koreans' firm anti-American beliefs and ways of life been contested, and what have North Koreans sought during the economic crisis? In this chapter, I examine how North Koreans' responses to the regime's militant nationalism have shifted during the crisis of socialism from the 1990s through the present. While there has been no change in North Korea's aggressive militant nationalism from above, people's reactions to the regime's anti-American power can be described as persistent, conflicting, and challenging. Most North Koreans have strengthened their militant way of life through fatalistic patriotism. Some have hoped to overcome their hardships through war or other alternatives. Others have demonstrated passive resistance toward the regime by departing from their previously militant lives or by revealing their previously concealed antagonism toward the regime. However, although the economic crisis of North Korea has threatened the regime by making people's lives worse and thus negatively affecting their reactions to the state's militant nationalism, the nuclear crisis has created an alternative to contestation arising from the food shortages. While the impact of the economic crisis on citizens' daily lives has threatened the regime's stability, the DPRK has used the nuclear card to pursue its economic interests through diplomatic negotiation while at the same time reinforcing anti-Americanism at home. Thus, in spite of the fatal food crisis, the DPRK has been able to encourage widespread fatalistic patriotism against America's "threat" of nuclear war. This has been achieved because social disintegration and civic disobedience arising from the food crisis have been limited to the border areas between North Korea and China around Hamgyŏng and Pyŏngan Provinces. As mentioned previously, social integration has remained stable in the capital Pyongyang and inland provinces. This is one of the main reasons why the contemporary DPRK still maintains its regime based upon majority support and

reinforced anti-Americanism. This chapter delves into how the DPRK's anti-American state power has been renegotiated, questioned, and challenged through the social processes of both change and persistence in micro-fascism from the 1990s through the present.

## **The Economic Crisis and Social Changes**

### **(1) The Food Crisis and Capitalist Changes**

Since the 1980s, the North Korean economy has declined because of an excessive arms budget and the cessation of economic aid from socialist allies. Since the collapse of Soviet communism and its satellites in the late 1980s and the death of Kim Il Sung in 1994, the DPRK has had to find its own means of survival, while facing a devastating food crisis. Reliable figures on North Korea are difficult to obtain, given the lack of access and barriers to information gathering, but estimates of the number of deaths that resulted from the 1990s famine varied widely from 220,000 to 3.5 million (Amnesty International 2004). According to Yim (2004), starvation killed over one million North Koreans from the mid-1990s through the early 2000s. Indeed, the food crisis has resulted in an explosive increase in the migration of North Koreans to Northeast China, other Asian neighboring countries, and from there to the ROK. It is estimated that approximately 100,000 North Koreans have moved to China (Lankov 2004). Many North Korean refugees in China have lived in hiding from crackdowns and forced repatriations by China and neighboring countries, vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Despite many risks, North Koreans have been defecting to South Korea via China and other Asian countries. According to a survey including interviews with 1,346 North Korean refugees in China, among a total of 1,248 respondents, 802 preferred to go to South Korea in order to make a living or to live comfortably

(Haggard and Noland 2006:22). This reality sharply contradicted Kim Il Sung's promise, as he had often said, "In the near future North Korean people will live in tile-roofed houses, eat rice and meat, and wear fine clothes."

The food crisis has significantly destroyed the North Korean economy. During the long-term economic depression, North Korea's industrial output has declined radically. Deprived of industrial input including fertilizers, pesticides, and electricity for irrigation, agricultural output started to decrease even before North Korea had a series of natural disasters in the mid-1990s. Natural disasters such as floods in the mid-1990s and droughts in the early 21st century have contributed to the partial collapse of the agricultural system in North Korea. The North Korean government estimated that 5.4 million people were displaced, 330,000 hectares of agricultural land destroyed, and 1.9 million tons of grain lost (Amnesty International 2004). North Korea's public distribution system has not covered workers on cooperative farms. The number of children suffering from the effects of food shortages rose dramatically, with some 80,000 children severely malnourished and in imminent peril of succumbing to starvation or disease in the early 21st century (Amnesty International 2004). According to defector interviewee M. Ch'a (male, 82), during the mid- and late 1990s, as the standard government ration in cities was cut drastically, the price of rice rose to nearly three to four times its price in the 1980s. Many people resorted to scavenging for wild fruits and vegetables, including seaweed, grass and roots, contributing to a rise in malnutrition. Defector interviewee Y. Ch'oe (female, 72) was born in North P'yŏngan Province and had a "bad" family background because her father came from the South and was a sincere Christian. She and her family secretly maintained their Christian religion but they had to flee from the North in 1999 when this was detected by the security police. Ch'oe disliked the junior Kim regime but did not actually want to leave her hometown. She believed that most refugees fled from the North in order to look for food. She insisted, "If we could have

eaten even grass-gruel, we wouldn't have fled from the North. Who wants to leave one's hometown?"

Indeed, contemporary North Korea's food crisis has increased the numbers of refugees and *kkotchebi*, which refers to starving North Korean children wandering around the border areas between North Korea and China. In an interview study of North Korean refugees (Good Friends 1999:53), a nineteen-year-old North Korean youth was detected stealing corn and was almost beaten to death by the cornfield owner. As a *kkotchebi*, his misfortune was followed by his parents' and young brother's death from starvation and infectious disease, and eventually he left North Korea for China to look for food. According to defector interviewees, numerous wandering children who have lost their parents have been exposed to crimes and abuse, especially in the border areas. Defector interviewee U. Ch'oe (female, 75) sadly said, "They lost their parents and didn't have any place to live. It cut me to the quick to see them." Some starving out-of-control soldiers have stolen residents' food and belongings. Contemporary North Korea's military has become an object of fear and hatred for people, even though it commanded respect and envy in the past.

This miserable situation has been further aggravated by social anomie and human rights violations such as prostitution, human trafficking, rape, infanticide, and public executions. According to an interview study of North Korean refugees who stayed in 2,479 villages in Northeast China (Good Friends 1999:14), women accounted for 75.5 percent of refugees and most female refugees were involved in involuntary marriage, the sex industry, and human trafficking. Defector interviewee Y. Kim (male, 70) was born in North Hamgyŏng Province and served as a province level party official. He was involved in misappropriation of the government's funds and had to flee from the North in 1999. After his defection, his wife and children were sent to a forced labor camp. Even though he was dismayed that the North Korean

regime punished his family, he did not criticize the regime severely. Regarding the change of social reality in North Korea during the economic crisis, he regretted that one of his acquaintances was forced into prostitution by a Korean Chinese for the sex industry in China. He admitted that many female refugees were voluntarily and involuntarily involved in the sex industry in order to survive and flee to the South. Actually, defector interviewee U. Ch'oe (female, 75) saw some women tempt male passers-by, putting on sexy dresses with luxurious makeup in order to make money around the rail station of the city of Sinuiju, the border area between North Korea and China. Ch'oe said, "The capital areas were OK, but in the border areas, the government's control and social morals were almost destroyed." Defector interviewee S. Hong (female, 71) had a "bad" family background and was incarcerated in a local prison when she was captured in China and repatriated to North Korea. In the prison, she came to know three co-prisoners who engaged in prostitution and were captured by the police. Her co-prisoners told her that they tempted male passers-by, signaling prostitution by saying "Buy flowers." Another defector interviewee I. Kang (male, 69) was born in Kangwŏn Province and served as a county level government official. He was charged with fraud and bribery and fled from a labor camp in 2003. He claimed that North Korea's amoral situation has gotten out of control. He told me that at his primary school alumni association's annual party he was surprised to see his male friends bring to the party some beautiful women who worked as white-collar workers but needed extra money. According to a report on North Korean human rights abuse (Hawk 2003:46), female defector Ji Hae Nam was arrested, beaten, and sexually abused by a young detention-facility guard because she taught her friends a popular South Korean pop song, "Don't Cry for Me, Hongdo" at a party and this was overheard and reported by neighbors. Mortified at her mistreatment by the young guard, she tried to commit suicide by swallowing pieces of cement. I

also interviewed some North Korean defectors who were charged with watching South Korean TV programs or listening to South Korean radio programs and who fled from the labor camps.

In fact, contemporary North Korea under the Kim Jong Il regime has significantly disintegrated morally, considering that such amoral conduct was regarded as a felony by the senior Kim regime (Lee 1975). This reflects contemporary North Korea's regulation-less situation or "anomie" in Durkheim's (1951) term. North Korean society's anomie has occurred where the breakdown of social norms and lack of moral regulation have led to people's seriously deviant behaviors. This amoral and horrific situation has reached its peak in human rights violations such as public executions. Famous defector Chol Hwan Kang fled to South Korea via China in 1992 and published his prison memoirs in South Korea. Kang's memoirs, *Aquariums of Pyongyang: Ten Years in the North Korean Gulag*, was the first detailed account of a North Korean labor camp. This book describes the horrific life at Yodök camp from the viewpoint of a teenager attempting to comprehend the perniciously bizarre situation in which he grew up. His so-called "Yodök story" has been widely read by South Koreans and Westerners. Due to his family's political purge, they were sent to the Yodök camp for compulsory labor. After his defection to the South, Kang met U.S. President Bush in Washington in 2005, and his story was utilized for America's political propaganda against North Korea's human rights situation (*Chosön ilbo* June 14, 2005). Kang wrote the following about a public execution in his memoir:

Our two heroes were brought forward with their heads sheathed in white hoods. The guards led them up to the scaffold and slipped nooses around their necks. The first fugitive was nothing short of skeletal, but the second one, the one who had gotten as far as Dandong, looked like he still had some reserves of energy. Yet, he was quicker to die. The other one clung to life, wriggling at the end of his rope like some crazed animal. It was a horrible sight. Urine started trickling down both their pants. I had the strange feeling of being swallowed up in a world where the earth and sky had changed places. (Kang and Rigoulot 2001:140)

The number of these public executions was at its highest from 1996 to 1998, when famine gripped North Korea (*The Washington Times* January 20, 2004). The revival of this cruel premodern punishment has been the main target of criticism by Western politicians and the mass media. Defector interviewee Y. Kim (female, 74) who experienced the Yodök camp said, “We were always so hungry and resorted to eating grass in spring. ... When someone died, fellow prisoners took his belongings such as clothes and delayed reporting his death to the guards so that they could eat his allocated meals.” Defector interviewee H. Ch’oe (male, 78) told me a more horrific story of contemporary “cannibalism” in North Korea. A starving woman in Ch’oe’s neighborhood could not stand her hunger and starvation, and finally killed her neighbor’s two-year-old son playing outside and ate his flesh. Her inhuman deed was detected and reported by neighbors, and she was secretly executed by the security police.

In addition, the food crisis has led to significant socio-economic changes, even though they have been limited to the border areas between North Korea and China. Under Kim Il Song’s rule until the early 1990s, the DPRK maintained a centrally planned economy along Soviet lines. Private economic activities were discouraged or banned. People lived on government rations with almost no free trade. However, North Koreans around the border areas were forced to find creative ways to generate income. According to an empirical study (Yi and Ku 2005) of North Korean urban women’s lives in the cities of Ch’öngin, Sinŭiju, and Hyesan, most residents except for high-level officials earned a living by engaging in small-scale trade, border smuggling, or trading across the border.<sup>18</sup> In this situation, a black market economy has

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<sup>18</sup> The border areas around North Hamgyöng Province and North Pyöngan Province have gradually shifted in a capitalist way because those who live in and near the border areas have been able to gain access to and deal with Chinese and South Korean capitalist products. Over two thirds of a total of 62 interviewees I met came from or resided in these border areas. Some interviewees benefitted from this capitalist change. Defector interviewee T. Kim (male, 69) and his wife were born in Japan and migrated to North Korea in

developed from below. Many defectors I interviewed mentioned that the Stalinist economic structure and system in North Korea has collapsed significantly, while the black-market system has played a great role in maintaining North Koreans' economic lives. The North Korean authorities have also responded by tolerating the development of informal black markets called *changmadang*. This change in North Korea's economic system has been marked by the partial but dramatic revival of private market activities along with booming black markets and prevailing bribery and corruption. Actually, the dual price system of food through black markets has taken the place of the socialist economic control system in certain ways. The government officials' rationing corruption and bribery and the state's differential rationing system—which has put an emphasis on the military, officials, and Pyongyang citizens—have aggravated the distorted rationing system. H. Ch'oe and his wife, a defector couple, stated that when American relief rice was released to public markets, the price of rice went down significantly. However, most ordinary people did not benefit from this because they did not have money to buy grain, while officials benefited from dealings in grain that they bought through their personal business and bribery. In contemporary North Korea, bribery and corruption have been covertly and overtly chronic and ordinary people's lives have been badly affected.<sup>19</sup>

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the 1960s. Before they escaped from the North in 2006, they were able to use Japanese and South Korean electronic goods and enjoy South Korean drama and films such as the famous South Korean TV drama “All In” through a Samsung DVD player. Defector interviewee H. Kim's (male, 51) daughter had watched many South Korean movies and listened to South Korean pop songs before she fled from the North. She already knew many famous South Korean stars and benefited from this when she made friends in the South.

<sup>19</sup> In this social atmosphere, unlike the past, ordinary North Koreans have been able to miss political meetings, buy and sell their state owned apartments, or travel around for business by bribing officials (Good Friends 2000; Institute of Korean Women's Society 2001). Likewise, promoting one's work position, entering university, or changing children's school grades has been made possible by personal

## (2) The Nuclear Crisis and Military-First Politics

Since the turn of the century, the DPRK's socio-economic crisis has exacerbated its political one, and thus the Kim Jong Il regime has further reinforced militaristic nationalism in a desperate bid to maintain the status quo. The DPRK revised its constitution in September 1998; the senior Kim, "Eternal President" and the junior Kim, Chairman of the National Defense Commission, emerged as the nation's most powerful figures. The junior Kim regime formulated the "military-first policy" to overcome the social and political crises in the late 1990s (*Nodong sinmun* January 1, 1999). This politics is based upon the political philosophy that the military is synonymous with the party, the country, and people; it is the subject of the revolution as an ensemble of a great leader, the party, and the masses (Kim 2000). This style of politics that puts an emphasis on the military forces has even been called the "philosophy of firearms" (*ch'ongttae ch'olhak*) by the junior Kim. The 21<sup>st</sup> century DPRK's state system represented by this military-first politics is not different from that of a "regular army state" that Wada (2002) defined in his recent work.

In order to overcome external threats and internal crises under the national slogan of military-first politics, the DPRK has utilized the issue of nuclear weapons that its regime has managed since the 1980s as a political means for regime maintenance as well as a diplomatic negotiation card for economic aid from the U.S. A diplomatic and military confrontation between the DPRK and the U.S. occurred amidst the conflict between the International Atomic Energy

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bribery and corruption. Even those who have committed a felony have been able to be excused from conviction or avoid the government's cruel punishment by bribing the security police.

Agency (IAEA) and the DPRK in 1993.<sup>20</sup> The ROK-US Combined Forces resumed the Team Spirit military exercise. This was enough to threaten the DPRK militarily, and in response, the DPRK's regime ordered the entire nation and armed forces to shift to a state of readiness for war, and held mass rallies denouncing the "treacherous" act led by America (*Nodong sinmun* March 18, 1993:5). The Pyongyang regime criticized the Team Spirit exercise as "playing with nuclear fire" and "America's nuclear war rehearsal" (*Nodong sinmun* January 15, 1993:5). This antagonistic relationship between the DPRK and the U.S. was further intensified in the early 21st century when the Bush regime abandoned negotiations with North Korea without proposing an alternative policy. The September 11, 2001 attack led the U.S. to wage a "war against terrorism," and the DPRK was labeled by Bush as part of the "axis of evil" in 2002. North Korea announced its withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) on January 10, 2003, in response to America's aggressive diplomatic war. The U.S. even considered using military force to attack North Korea. The military tension and mutual antagonism between the DPRK and the U.S. came to a head with North Korea's attempt to test its nuclear weapons on May 25, 2009.

With this sharpened antagonistic relationship between the two countries, North Korean militant nationalism has evolved into a spirit of self-sacrificial *ch'ongp'okt'an* (literally

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<sup>20</sup> In the 1980s, the DPRK began to operate facilities for uranium fabrication and conversion, focusing on practical uses of nuclear energy and the completion of a nuclear weapons development system. In 1985, the DPRK signed on to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which allowed it to acquire nuclear reactors for energy production. However, in July 1990, *The Washington Post* reported that new satellite photographs showed the presence in Yŏngbyŏn of a structure which could possibly be used to separate plutonium from nuclear fuel. Under pressure from the U.S., the DPRK had to agree to grant the IAEA access to its plutonium-production reactors in January 1992. However, after a tug-of-war of diplomatic negotiations with the U.S., the DPRK finally refused the IAEA substantial access to the two suspected nuclear waste sites and rejected the ROK's suggestion of the joint nuclear declaration's provision for an inter-Korean nuclear inspection team as well. North Korea announced its withdrawal from the IAEA in 1994.

translated as a “human bomb”), in which a militant socialist would serve the country through a suicide attack (*Nodong sinmun* March 17, 1993:3). Male defector Suhyök Yi (Yi 2003) recalled in his essay that when North Korea proclaimed its withdrawal from the NPT, the entire region was transformed into a semi-war state as it had been before the 1990s, and the majority of North Koreans were prepared to die for their country with the spirit of *ch'ongp'okt'an*.<sup>21</sup> For a couple of months, North Korean citizens made provisions for emergent conflict and hid in air defense facilities upon hearing an air-raid siren once a day. In this awe-inspiring atmosphere, young people put on the uniform of the Worker-Peasant Red Guard with its camouflage net.

In this way, the contemporary DPRK’s “war nationalism,” centered on nuclear weapons, has reinforced people’s anti-Americanism at the same time that the regime has suffered from the economic crisis and the resulting partial social disintegration. In the next section, I will analyze how three types of people’s reactions have differentiated their previous solid micro-fascism.

### **Contested Anti-American Power and Changes in Micro-Fascism**

Since the 1990s, North Koreans’ reactions to the regime’s militant nationalism have been simultaneously persistent, conflicting, and challenging. The majority have supported their regime even while some have questioned, doubted, or challenged its governance mainly due to the food crisis. Hirschman (1970) examined people’s reactions to economic decline and social crisis and described the resulting recuperative mechanism of social organization. This recuperative

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<sup>21</sup> Yi wrote, “A majority of North Koreans take the ownership of nuclear weapons for granted and consider them necessary even though it might stimulate a nuclear war between North Korea and America. They do not doubt the regime’s propaganda that American nuclear weapons in South Korea aim at North Korea” (Yi 2003:203). Yi’s statement shows that a majority of North Koreans still accept anti-American ideology with the spirit of *ch'ongp'okt'an* in spite of the food crisis.

mechanism works through the interplay of “exit” and “voice,” in which the choice between them is influenced by a third factor: “loyalty.” An increase in the “exit” response due to economic hardship or political dictatorship leads to a decrease in “loyalty” to the regime. In contrast, the likelihood of “voice,” resulting in reform, increases with the degree of new “loyalty” (Hirschman 1970:77). The fall of the Berlin Wall in East Germany exemplifies Hirschman’s model of exit, voice, and loyalty. When East German citizens resisted the communist regime by voicing demands for free exit or democratization, the regime accepted people’s voice over exit and this change led to the communist regime’s collapse and people’s loyalty to the new regime (Brubaker 1990). However, Hirschman’s study overlooks two points: first, the mechanism of voice can be strongly influenced by political reform from above even though it comes from people’s resistance from below (Brubaker, 1990). Second, people’s loyalty exists before the recuperative mechanism works (Hirschman, 1970: 38). These two points may influence the relationship between exit and voice and may undermine the latter. Although it is necessary to acknowledge this problem, it is useful to apply Hirschman’s model to the three types of North Korean reactions (persistence, conflict, and challenge) to the DPRK’s power during the economic crisis. First, Hirschman’s exit is congruous to some North Koreans’ defections arising from the food crisis. The silenced voice of the people has been channeled into passive resistance. Second, as the social mechanism of voice for better lives has rarely worked, other North Koreans have experienced some conflicts between loyalty and exit. Finally, the majority of North Koreans have still maintained and reinforced their loyalty to the regime in spite of the economic crisis. Here, another recovery mechanism in the DPRK’s socio-economic crisis, which is distinct from East Germany’s, has operated through people’s fatalistic patriotism toward the regime.

With this in mind, I examine how the DPRK’s anti-American state power has been renegotiated, questioned, and challenged through the social processes of both change and

persistence in people's micro-fascism from the 1990s through the present. First, I analyze the type of persistence that has characterized people's militant spirit and behaviors of fatalistic self-sacrifice.

### **(1) Persistence: "Still We Will Fight with the Spirit of a Human Bomb!"**

In spite of the fatal economic crisis, North Korea has still tried to maintain the politics of national hatred against the U.S. and to heighten people's fatalistic patriotism (*Inmin kyoyuk* March 2005). Anti-American education and propaganda about the Korean War, the Sinchön Incident, and the *Pueblo* Incident have been connected with Kim Jong Il's military-first politics (*Ch'öllima* June 2000:4-9). According to a North Korean magazine's analysis of children's songs during the "military-first" era, children's songs such as "A Human Bomb," "A Hand Grenade to Preserve the General," "Three Million is a Human Bomb," and "We Will Become Human Bombs" have been broadly known to students (*Inmin kyoyuk* January 2005:31-33). This militant culture on the level of state discourse has been further reinforced even though ordinary citizens' reactions have been differentiated in their everyday lives. For instance, a family's wedding ceremony was described as a celebration day of *ch'ongttae kajöng* (militant family) (*Nodong sinmun* February 12, 1998).

As in the past, North Korea has depended on anti-Americanism for military mobilization of the entire population. The regime has blamed America's economic influences and military threats for hardships suffered by North Koreans, and most citizens have continued to be convinced by this state propaganda and ideology. More importantly, most have also developed their already solid micro-fascism of hatred, patriotism, and emotion. The DPRK's nuclear crisis has not only sustained but also reinforced militant nationalism for the majority of North Koreans,

even while some individuals have rejected it. Defector interviewee U. Han (female, 59) firmly maintained her militant way of thought and life until the 1980s, but she changed her mind after facing the economic crisis that resulted in the deaths of numerous people. In my interview, Han mentioned the two Kims' political addresses. In a political meeting in the early 1990s, Kim Il Sung asked top ranking officials if the DPRK would win a war against America. They all said that North Korea would win the war. However, when Kim Il Sung asked them what would happen if North Korea lost the war, they hesitated to answer his question. Kim Jong Il claimed resolutely that he would destroy the entire world by dividing it in two because he could not imagine the world without the DPRK. As shown in Han's anecdote, Kim Jong Il's militant politics is represented by what he called a "human bomb spirit." Han has had extreme hatred for the North Korean regime since she fled from the North, but she acknowledged that over two-thirds of North Korean citizens support Kim Jong Il's nationalist policies.

Almost all defector interviewees' testimonies indicate that the military, the party, social organizations, officials, and citizens in the capital and inland provinces continue to be the backbone of North Korean society and loyal supporters of the regime. In Martin's (2004) publication of North Korean refugees' interviews, male defector Chung-song Ko asserted: "Everybody in North Korea believes a war will break out sooner or later. A hundred percent want war to occur. ... They are even prepared to die in a nuclear war. A hundred percent believe that North Korea would win, so they support war. They were brought up to worship Kim Il Sung. No matter what changes occur, they always worship Kim Il Sung. ... They are willing to die for the country" (Martin 2004:391). Although Ko's statement is exaggerated, we can see that a majority of North Koreans support the regime and believe that they may overcome their currently terrible lives through war. Facing hunger and nuclear threat, they would choose to die for their country. Y. Kim, a defector interviewee (female, 43), was born in the capital Pyŏngyang and her

family was in the “core” class. She resided in the capital where she worked at a clinic, and had a “good” family background as a loyal follower of the regime. She defected from the North in 2007 but she is still a strong supporter of North Korea. She clearly exhibited the spirit of *ch’ongp’okt’an*:

I defected in 2007, but I still support the North Korean regime. I believe that I should live with the spirit of a human bomb. I am proud of our nuclear weapons. I have always believed that we would win a war and that if we lost it, I would die after breaking up America with a nuclear bomb. This spirit has been firmly internalized by ordinary people.

Kim’s testimony concerning the human bomb spirit reflects the regime’s self-sacrificing ideology. She has maintained the spirit of *ch’ongp’okt’an* that she had in the North. Interestingly, she is working as a reporter for a right-wing institution established by North Korean defectors that have distributed propaganda against the North Korean regime in the South. I was unable to learn from her why she defected because she was unwilling to reveal this information. Even though her inmost thoughts toward the North Korean regime significantly contradicted her current work’s goals, she seemed to have no choice but to work there in order to make her living in Seoul. While many other defectors have become anti-North Korean, and some are even pro-American, Kim’s North Korean ideology and anti-Americanism have persisted even in the South. She has not been able to open her heart to other defectors or South Koreans. Whenever she has watched the TV news about North Korea with her colleagues or South Korean neighbors, she has been at a loss. To some extent, she has understood South Koreans’ hostility toward North Korea’s attempts to develop nuclear weapons, but at the same time, she sees the North’s defensive acts against the U.S. as just and righteous.

Many defector interviewees have expressed similar thoughts toward North Korea. Among these defector interviewees was T'. Kim (male, 59), formerly a top-ranking official in the North Korean foreign consulate. Since his defection from the North, he has worked in Seoul as a counselor for a right-wing South Korean civic organization for North Korean human rights. He has changed the beliefs he had in the North and has developed an anti-North Korean ideology. However, concerning the nuclear issue, his belief is that it is natural that the people of a small and weak power try to defend themselves against a great power such as America. On the other hand, I also met some defectors who liked the U.S. and hoped for a new life in America. For instance, H. Ch'oe (male, 78) and his wife directly asked me after my interview if I could help them immigrate to America. I found many differentiated situations in which North Korean defectors have abandoned or changed their previous thinking, or have maintained some previous attitudes along with their current thinking. What I emphasize here is that human subjects' perceptions and behaviors cannot be unilaterally evaluated. Through my in-depth interviews, I found that regardless of whether defector interviewees have been "brainwashed" or not, they have made their own decisions in various ways. This complexity of response illustrates why North Korean refugees have difficulty in adjusting in the South and why they have some mixed thoughts and feelings concerning South Korea and America.

In spite of the extreme economic crisis, North Korean citizens' fatalistic, militant way of life has persisted until now. This way of life has been reinforced by the nuclear crisis that has helped create a social military unity in the DPRK. According to defector interviewees, most people in the North have been proud of having nuclear weapons as a necessary right for national defense. A defector interviewee (female, 41) who was a poor laborer argued, "We all believed we would not lose wars because we have our great leader and nuclear weapons. We believed if we fired a shot, we would win." Another defector interviewee (female, 39) who was also a poor

worker agreed with this. She was proud that her country had nuclear weapons and she was determined to “fight to the last drop of her blood against America.” Defector interviewee S. O (male, 32) fled to the South because of food shortages in 1999. His mother and sister starved to death and he determined to leave his hometown. He explained, “North Koreans have fatalistic attitudes because they have not had anything that they could lose.” According to his comment, this fatalistic belief has been possible because most North Koreans have still supported the regime, ascribing their suffering to the U.S. An essay of a civic activist who helped and interviewed hundreds of escapees from North Korea in China includes a twenty-eight-year-old North Korean refugee’s testimony:

I would say that 80 percent of the soldiers are also fully ready to die for their country. Even civilians have that kind of mentality. I would say that most civilians have the mindset, “Let’s go to war and die for our country!” There is only a small fraction of people that don’t want war. Usually, it’s the people who are well-off or in higher positions that don’t want war. They don’t want war because they’re content with their situations. I think that the people’s desire for war is born out of both love for their country and discontent regarding their current lifestyle. (Kim 2008:22)

This male refugee served in the military, but fled from the North because of the food crisis. Although he abandoned his country for economic reasons, he did not enter South Korea but stayed in China. He believed that most North Korean citizens still maintain or continue to heighten their patriotic nationalism. As seen in these examples, the primary way of life is characterized by people’s fatalistic self-sacrifice. A majority of people in the North maintain and reinforce their previously solid micro-fascism that worked through the politics of hatred, patriotism, and emotion. This provides us with a clue as to why the “cruel” DPRK is still alive despite the defections and the serious economic crisis.

## **(2) Conflict: “We Want Some Change!”**

The second type of human reaction shows that North Koreans have sought change through war or other alternatives. Most North Koreans have demonstrated a militant way of life devoted to fatalistic self-sacrifice. However, some people hope for a different future. This implies that not all North Koreans have firmly maintained the past’s militant way of life even though this differentiation does not represent a minority of people’s reactions. Some North Koreans have supported the regime only passively and have envisioned a future that would relieve them of their current hardship. In a U.S. journalist’s publication of North Korean refugees’ interviews, female defector Su-hyon Pak said:

The problem is that people want war. They believe they are living this hard life because there is going to be a war. If there is going to be a war, why not just get it over with? They believe they will die either way, from hunger or war. So the only solution is war. What Kim Il Sung and Kim Jung Il are saying now is that even if foreign nations force economic sanctions on the nuclear issue, we can survive. The ordinary people say, “OK, let’s have a great harvest.” (Martin 2004:434)

According to Pak’s account, North Koreans believe that they will die from either hunger or a nuclear war. This testimony implies that although most people support the regime’s policies, some people believe that war could be the last chance to break through the current hardship. In the same publication of North Korean refugees’ interviews, male defector Myung-nam Choi, who served in the 124<sup>th</sup> Special Forces, commented on the recent situation of the DPRK, “They [North Koreans] constantly shouted Kim Il Sung’s slogan, ‘We do not want war but we are not afraid of war.’ All my comrades wanted war to break out—partly because they wanted to flaunt their potential, but also partly because the economic situation was so harsh they just wanted some

change” (Martin 2004:514-515). According to Choi’s statement, North Koreans have continued to support their regime even under the threat of nuclear war and economic hardship. However, some North Korean supporters have had a dual psychological mindset toward their current crisis and lives. Since they believe that they could die either way, from hunger or from a nuclear war, they have not maintained their fierce hatred against the U.S. or positive view of war and patriotic fighting as in the past. Defector interviewee S. Yi (male, 27) was born in North Hamgyŏng Province and fled from the North in early 2000. He told me that during the economic crisis, some seniors complained overtly and in public about the regime’s policies and some privately began to blame the regime for their bad situation. Yi fled to the South without his family. The economic hardship was severe for him, but he did not have any antagonism against the regime. He still believed that North Korea would manage to overcome its current crises, as the regime has ascribed all its faults to America and most people have been persuaded by this political logic. At the same time, however, he emphasized that the number of people who hope for and seek change is increasing. He said, “Most North Korean citizens ascribed their current unhappiness to American imperialism. But, over time, some of these people began to complain about such situations as hunger and war. It is true that they want to change the current bad situation but they criticize America for it rather than wanting to abandon their country or overthrow the regime.” As shown in Yi’s statement, some North Koreans simply hope for change rather than offering to die for their country or resisting the regime.

This situation is closely related to people’s individualistic ways of life due to the economic crisis. According to defector interviewee P’. Yun (male, 56), who served as an army officer and fled to the South in 1998, many citizens in the border areas have adopted an individualistic or egoistic lifestyle, and this has taken the place of the past’s collectivist way of life. They have realized that they need to find alternatives for survival because their “great”

leader has not been responsible for their lives and futures. This has led to two different reactions to the regime in general: to seek change and to disobey the regime's policies. The former is indirectly found in the individuals' perceptions and behaviors, while, as will be illustrated in the next sub-section, the latter is clearly expressed through citizens' acts, such as anti-socialist activities and political defections. Defector interviewee Y. Kim (male, 70) was born in North Hamgyŏng Province and defected in 1999 because he was involved in criminal activity. He worked as a local government financial official who dealt with cultivating and selling opium. Facing extreme economic crisis and the U.S.'s economic blockade policy, the Kim Jong Il regime was secretly exporting cultivated opium to acquire foreign currencies, and these foreign currencies would be used to strengthen military forces for a nuclear war with the U.S. Although Kim understood his country's political and economic situation, he gradually came to criticize the state's policies because he believed that dealing opium was immoral. However, eventually, he also became involved in government opium sales because of his own economic difficulty. Kim examined his own behavior critically:

I believe that I have tried to live an honest life. But, I had no choice but to do so [sell opium] in such a situation. Cultivating and selling a drug is bad. I had a critical view of the government's policy, but I eventually committed a crime. ... I underwent an emotional conflict. What is right? Anti-Americanism? Money? War? Well, fighting against America is right, but committing a crime is wrong. Stupidly, I became a criminal as well.

Kim was conscience-stricken, and his compunction reflects the conflict some North Koreans face between the collectivism that is so highly valued in their country and the reality of their individual lives. Under extreme poverty and the crisis of war, some citizens of North Korea

have experienced confusion about their values and have departed from their previously firm collectivist lifestyles and beliefs in various ways.

This situation has led to some citizens' pessimistic attitudes toward their lives. A defector interviewee (female, 68) worked as a central government newspaper reporter and fled from the North due to her family's economic hardship. She explained, "The present situation is driving many North Korean people to despair. Such despair would throw them into an extreme situation. They would rather bomb everyone when they face a nuclear war." This woman felt desperate about her dark future when she saw some of her family members and other neighbors starve to death. Before she fled from the North in 1995, she was busy participating in North Korea's full-scale military practices against the ROK-U.S. military exercise in her village. She had been an enthusiastic anti-American fighter, but she did not actively participate in military practices during the food crisis. She only participated in a nominal way because of her fear of war. She argued, "North Koreans have died of hunger and been weakened physically. They have also been horrified by fear of war. In this situation, many people desperately hope for some change. ... People say, 'Oh my! I die or you [Americans] die.' This is their 'hope' from their hopeless situation."

Evidently, some North Korean people's militant micro-fascism has been weakened or partially dissolved since the 1990s. This has been further differentiated by the final type of reaction that shows people's passive resistance and challenges toward the regime.

### **(3) Challenge: "Clear Everything Up!"**

Since the 1990s, the food crisis, the nuclear issues, and the resulting social disintegration largely around the border areas have threatened the regime's political legitimacy, have partially

destroyed its social control and surveillance systems, and have significantly weakened social moral regulations. Some North Koreans have demonstrated passive resistance and challenges toward the regime by departing from their previously militant lives or by revealing their original antagonism toward the regime. In particular, those who were persecuted due to their “bad” family backgrounds have covertly and overtly revealed their innermost negativity toward the “brutal” regime.

Unlike in the past, citizens have put a sharp emphasis on the interests of individuals and families rather than the state and society. For example, in a publication of North Korean female defectors’ interviews, Suryŏn Ch’oe stated, “I had always thought that I was supposed to devote myself to the country and the country was more important than myself, and that it was right. But, after the late 1980s, such thoughts were completely gone and I felt that I would rather live under Japanese colonial rule several times or several hundred times” (Institute of Korean Women Society 2001:316). What was important for Ch’oe was only to survive the food shortage. A defector interviewee (female, 43) worked as a guide for foreign tourists at Mt. Paekdu. She had a liberal and very individualistic mindset and way of life. She only accepted or participated in some of the government’s anti-American policies. North Korea’s economic crisis and cruel policies of punishment caused her to dislike the regime’s incompetency and cruelty. While she pretended to follow official propaganda, she tried to find some chance for defection. For her, the country or nation meant nothing when she determined to leave her hometown. When she fled from the North, she still maintained some anti-American sentiment and regarded America as an unfavorable entity. However, she is now a pro-American South Korean citizen who is trying to migrate to America for a “better” life.

The weakening of social integration and control around the border areas has threatened the regime and social stability, thereby leading to political dissenters who have been involved in

“anti-socialist” activities. In particular, the existence of underground Christian group activities deserves to be viewed as a symptom of anti-North Korean ideology or counter-militant nationalism. Defector interviewees such as Y. Ch’oe (female, 72) and S. Hong (female, 71) organized some secret Christian group activities through networks for preaching the gospel with their close friends, relatives, neighbors, and colleagues. Both of them had “bad” family backgrounds in that their parents or family members were Christians or fled to the South before the Korean War broke out. They were influenced by their parents who were Christians. As citizens persecuted for their “bad” family backgrounds, they had maintained fierce antagonism toward the North Korean regime. Taking advantage of weakened social control, they smuggled Bibles through dealings with Chinese or Korean Chinese in the border areas of Hamgyŏng Province. They tried to secretly spread their religion to their neighbors, and argued for pro-Americanism. Obviously, Christianity has been a taboo for the anti-American communist DPRK. According to the defectors I interviewed, some people who possessed a Bible or served the underground church were publicly executed by the security police since this was regarded as a felony in the DPRK. For this reason, ordinary people did not easily accept pro-Americanism and Christianity. However, some North Korean people have not continued to obey the regime’s religious policies as they did before the 1990s. For instance, fortune-telling has been officially prohibited, as the government has regarded it as a counter-communist superstition (*Nodong sinmun* November 25, 1946; *Yŏksa kwahak* 1981, no. 2:34-39). However, many people have consulted fortune-tellers out of concern for their lives and futures. Since the activity has prevailed in public practice, the regime has tacitly accepted this “anti-social” crime. Christian activities are still “anti-socialist” or “anti-national” in contemporary North Korea but they are secretly being accepted by some ordinary people.

Furthermore, some North Koreans' unfavorable attitudes toward the regime's policies have evolved into strong political antagonism. For example, defector interviewee M. Kim (female, 46) was an ordinary poor peasant who defected from the North because of the food shortage in 2005. She accused state elites and officials of corruption and critiqued North Korea's reality of the-rich-get-richer-and-the-poor-get-poorer. She argued, "Citizens have been dying, yet the elites and executive members have had no problem. Since the political leaders haven't solved the economy and food problems, people don't care about politics any more. Ordinary people have become sick and tired of something like anti-Americanism. Their reactions to anti-Americanism have been quite different compared to the past." She blamed the inequality of North Korean society for the elites' and officials' corruption and ordinary people's hardships. Defector interviewee S. Kim (male, 59) was born in South P'yŏngan Province and fled to the South in 1999. He served as an army officer in the North and is working as the head of a civic organization for North Korean human rights established in the South. His negative response to the North Korean regime has been extremely political. In the North, he pretended to actively accept the state's anti-Americanism and to very diligently promote it to soldiers. However, he frequently complained about the regime and its policies when he talked with his close friends. After his parents were politically purged and his family fell into an "anti-revolutionary" class in the early 1990s, his ideology shifted from passively pro-regime to actively anti-regime. The economic and nuclear crises became decisive factors in his determination to defect from the North. He regarded anti-Americanism as only the "North Korean regime's stupid propaganda and show."

Another defector interviewee S. Chu's (male, 29) case shows how North Koreans came to have pro-American sentiments, abandoning North Korean ideology before they defected from the North. Chu was born in North Hamgyŏng Province and began to serve in the military in the

DMZ between the South and the North at the age of 16. He had a “good” family background because his parents served as high level air force officers. However, his parents were involved in some political activities in the military. They were politically purged, demoted from high level officers to the ranks, and finally sent somewhere for forced labor. Chu intuitively predicted his dark future and defected to the South, crossing the DMZ armed with a rifle in 2002. Indeed, he has become a young “hero” in South Korean society. His father sometimes told him that North Korea’s politics is not always right and America is not a vicious country to the degree that the North Korean regime has claimed in its propaganda. His father called Americans not *mijenom* (American bastards) but *miguk’in* (Americans). Therefore, while he benefited by his family’s privileged class, Chu sometimes doubted the regime’s propaganda and departed from ordinary people’s anti-American thoughts and ideology. He came to realize that American military equipment was stronger and more developed and North Korea deceived itself regarding its capacity to defend the country against America’s military power. He became gradually open towards America through his curiosity. He even admired what he knew of American lifestyles. He said, “An American officer chewing gum in a propaganda movie seemed to be awesome to me.” He was in effect a pro-American North Korean citizen even before he fled.

In the contemporary DPRK, some North Koreans have developed varying degrees of doubt, disagreement, antipathy or hatred toward the regime during the food crisis. Many defectors I interviewed had “bad” family backgrounds or their family was politically purged. Therefore, they had antagonism not towards America but the North Korean regime. It is not surprising that they hope that the junior Kim regime will collapse through war. Defector interviewee U. Han’s (female, 59) daughter-in-law (female, 34), whose father was from the South and whose family was severely discriminated against in the North, responded in short: “I hoped that North Korea would collapse completely by war. I wanted the U.S. and South Korea to

liberate North Korea and destroy everything completely.” As seen in this testimony, some North Koreans from the “hostile” class argued for North Korea’s collapse and national reunification through America and South Korea. However, this flow of resistance has not overcome the regime’s strong anti-American dominance from above and other people’s reinforced micro-fascism.

In closing, I argue that the contemporary DPRK has been able to overcome the crisis of regime maintenance through a majority of people’s fatalistic patriotism around the nuclear crisis, and that this has persisted even while some have doubted, contested, and challenged the regime’s governance. The 21<sup>st</sup> century DPRK’s anti-American state power has been created and recreated through the social processes of both change and persistence in people’s solid micro-fascism from the 1990s through the present.

## **Chapter Summary**

This chapter has examined the social changes in North Korea’s post-war militant nationalism and people’s ways of life during the economic crisis from the 1990s through the present. From the 1950s through the 1980s, North Koreans’ militant ways of life based on people’s politics of extreme hatred, patriotic fighting, and deep emotion were made possible by the state’s mobilization from above and individuals’ active acceptance, internalization, practice, and participation. However, North Korea has experienced a rupture in the way citizens have reacted to the regime’s anti-American policies during the crisis of socialism. While the North Korea regime’s aggressive militant nationalism has continued, people’s reactions to the regime’s politics have been simultaneously characterized as persistent, conflicting, and challenging. The majority of North Koreans have strengthened their militant way of life through fatalistic

patriotism. Some people have hoped to create some change to overcome their current hardship through war. Other North Koreans have demonstrated a passive resistance and challenge toward the regime by departing from their previously militant lives. Yet, although the economic crisis of North Korea has threatened the regime by making people's lives worse, the nuclear crisis has offered the regime an alternative to contestation arising from the food shortages. This chapter highlights the ways in which the contemporary DPRK's anti-American state power has been contested and reshaped in individuals' everyday lives.

## **Chapter VII Conclusion: Understanding the Dynamics of North Korean State**

### **Power**

State power is viewed as a complex multidimensional product between the state and individual (Lukes 2005; Scott 2001). In this dissertation, my focus has been on how the state legitimates its authority toward subjects. I have explored how the DPRK's state power has been exercised in people's everyday lives. I have analyzed how North Korea's anti-American power was reproduced in daily life from the 1950s through the 1980s and how this state power has been contested and recreated from the 1990s through the present. Going beyond the traditional totalitarian approach, I have shown how a "Stalinist" state's nationalist power has been shaped and reshaped with and by people's reactions to the regime's governance. My dissertation has delved into the internal dynamics of a closed communist state's nationalist governance by analyzing the formation and transformation of micro-fascism. In this analysis, I have tried to reveal the positive functioning of the DPRK's state power: how the regime's "violent" power is inscribed into individual subjects and how citizens actively accept and practice this "violent" power by and for themselves.

My dissertation has challenged the existing studies that have analyzed North Korea largely through a totalitarian or Stalinist prism. We can clearly see totalitarian or Stalinist traits in North Korean socialism from 1945 through the present. At the same time, however, we should recognize that the DPRK has defined a nationalist state and its anti-American nationalist power has been reproduced from below as a crucial ideological weapon of communism. In fact, "communist nationalism" was contradictory in itself because communists derided nationalism as bourgeois ruling ideology but at the same time they employed nationalist ideologies for their political legitimacy and governance. Early on, Lenin advocated the importance of "national

forces” in the colonies to combat capitalist “imperialism.” While he criticized nationalism as a bourgeois ideology, he accepted the positive roles of national forces in the colonies. The case of the DPRK has made notable this dualistic nature of communist power, and the DPRK’s state power has been strongly characterized by a nationalist force that has created and recreated people’s micro-politics.

As is well known, North Korea’s nationalist politics has been interrelated with totalitarian forces as it has come from anti-American mobilization, education, and practices from above. Existing studies of North Korea’s nationalist and communist governance have been preoccupied with the state as the primary determinant of the nation. They have assumed the state as a single actor or unique organizer and society as a collection of individuals, and have not paid attention to how the North Korean regime has made it possible for its citizens to participate in the regime’s politics of anti-American nationalism. Moreover, citizens’ reactions to the DPRK’s authoritarian rule have been overwhelmingly viewed through a prism of top-down politics without a careful consideration of the bottom-up politics.

Smith (1991) views national identity as a collective cultural phenomenon. This perspective explains Koreans’ belief that they have been a homogeneous nation. Like Germany’s aggressive nationalism, Korea’s ethnic nationalism has offered a basis for the totalitarian organic system (Shin 2006:95). As Calhoun (1997) points out, nationalism is most powerful as it overrides other forms of categorical identities. However, the salient point is that North Korea’s militant nationalism has functioned as a collective ethos that causes individuals to create their own identities. From this perspective, we should go beyond a one-sided and unilateral understanding of totalitarianism. As Gramsci (1995) argues, the nationalist power may serve hegemonic power as the ruling class or regime creates national-popular collective will through a nationalist force. This productive nationalist power was or has been legitimated in various ways

in communist population's lives. As an empirical study shows, "Stalinism as civilization" was practiced as ordinary people's sets of values and ways of life rather than a mammoth communist country's violent governance (Kotkin 1995).

It is at this point that we should consider the importance of the dynamics of the DPRK's communist and nationalist power. The DPRK's nationalist nature has been clear in its origin and has displayed more peculiar traits. Since the national liberation of Korea in 1945, the DPRK has developed anti-Americanism as an ideology for both state and people. The DPRK's politics of national identity has been strongly rooted in ordinary people's perceptions and behaviors. Therefore, nationalism should be understood as a dual phenomenon that is constructed from above but also should be analyzed from below (Puri 2004). This analytical view of nationalism is provided by Gramsci's notion of hegemony, Foucault's perspective of disciplinary power, Deleuze and Guattari's ideas of micro-fascism, Bourdieu's concept of habitus, and so on. All these viewpoints move us beyond a fixed belief in the one-sided functioning of communist power. Scott (2001:1) defines social power as "an agent's intentional use of causal powers to affect the conduct of other participants in the social relations that connect them together." In this dissertation, I have focused on how state power is exercised by individuals and how it creates and recreates social power in the arena of nationalism and agency. To use Scott's (2001) term, the "second stream of power research" sheds light on the positive and productive functioning of power that affects and constitutes agency. Totalitarian, Stalinist, or communist societies have revealed a variety of dynamics of state power and agency. Issues such as the micro-politics of historical Fascism and Nazism, re-evaluation of historical Stalinism or Stalinist societies, and even micro-governance of liberal capitalist societies require us to scrutinize the internal mechanisms of state power and agency beyond the case of North Korean socialism and nationalism.

In a complex spectrum of power functioning that flows between classical and contemporary theorists, I have navigated the dynamics of the DPRK's state power. Up until now, the post-war DPRK's communism has been frequently viewed as "Stalinist," a one-man dictatorship with political purges, gulags, surveillance, and thought control. It is true that North Korea has depended upon its violent top-down domination of society that has threatened citizens' freedom and human rights. However, from the 1950s through the 1980s, the DPRK's militant nationalism operated not only from above but was also productive and diffusive in individuals' lives. While the regime tried to produce anti-American socialist beings from above, citizens' politics of extreme hatred, patriotic fighting, and deep emotion created their own micro-fascism within a harmonious body politics between the state and individuals. However, since the last decade of the 21st century, the DPRK has suffered a series of socialist crises arising from the collapse of Soviet Communism, food shortages, military tensions with the U.S., and the resulting defections and social disintegration, including the recent financial crisis and the issue of Kim Jong Il's succession. The Western media have predicted that the DPRK's failed communist economic system will shift to a capitalist system or the North Korean regime will collapse due to political dissenters' revolts or military coups. Along these lines, Lankov (2006) views the DPRK's recent changes as the "natural death of North Korean Stalinism." The partial collapse of the centrally planned economy, the unprecedented revival of small businesses, the uncensored information flow, and the considerable relaxation of police control and state bureaucracy are characteristic "post-Stalinist" symptoms of contemporary North Korea. It is obvious that North Korea has experienced some significant changes in its Stalinist economic and control systems. However, despite the fatal economic crisis, the overall social system of the DPRK is viewed as still being workable (Cumings 2004; Hassig and Oh 2009; McCormack 2002; Oh and Hassig 2000; Park 2002). The DPRK remains remarkably resilient and this stability stems from a durable

internal integration of North Korean society propped up by anti-American mass armies (Cumings 2004). The nuclear crisis has offered the regime an alternative to overcome social disintegration arising from the food shortages. The contemporary DPRK has been able to overcome the crisis of regime maintenance through people's fatalistic patriotism, and this has persisted even while some have doubted, contested, and challenged the regime's governance. The 21<sup>st</sup> century DPRK's military-first politics and citizens' self-sacrificing spirit show that the North Korean regime is still trying to overcome its current crises by reinventing the political mechanism of militant nationalism.

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## Appendix I

Demographic Information of 18 North Korean Refugees who Defected before 1953

Name	Age	Sex	Occupation at the Time of Defection	Parents' Social Background	Place of Residence (or Birth)	Year of Defection
Chu, S.	87	Female	Professor	Christian	South P'yŏngan	1948
O, I.	74	Male	Primary school student	Doctor, Christian	Hwanghae	1950
Pyŏn, Y.	85	Male	Local party official	Peasant	South P'yŏngan	1950
Yi, C.	77	Male	High school student	Pro-Japanese	South Hamgyŏng	1950
Yu, M.	77	Male	High school student	Rich peasant	South P'yŏngan	1950
a1	80	Male	High school student	Peasant	South P'yŏngan	1950
a2	81	Male	Student	Landlord, Christian	North Hamgyŏng	1947
a3	85	Male	Rail official	Peasant	North Hamgyŏng	1953
a4	71	Female	Primary school student	Fisherman	North Hamgyŏng	1953
a5	88	Male	Peasant	Poor peasant	North P'yŏngan	1947
a6	80	Male	High school student	Landlord, Christian	North P'yŏngan	1948
a7	84	Male	Air-force pilot	Independent business, Christian	South P'yŏngan	1947
a8	72	Female	Primary school student	Landlord	Kangwŏn	1950
a9	76	Female	High school student	Pastor	South P'yŏngan	1947
a10	91	Female	Housewife	Landlord	South P'yŏngan	1948
a11	90	Male	Local official	Landlord	Kangwŏn	1947
a12	89	Male	Unemployed	Landlord, Christian	South P'yŏngan	1947, 1950
a13	92	Female	Housewife	Peasant	Hwanghae	1950

## Appendix II

Demographic Information of 62 North Korean Refugees who Defected after 1953

Name	Age	Sex	Occupation at the Time of Defection	Parents' Social Background	Place of Residence (or Birth)	Year of Defection
Ch'a, M.	82	Male	Miner (war prisoner from the South)	Peasant	South P'yongan Kyongsang (birth)	2003
Cho, Ŭ.	24	Female	Student	Official	NA	2005
Ch'oe, C.	65	Female	Housewife	White-collar laborer	North Hamgyong Japan (birth)	2006
Ch'oe, H.	78	Male	Newspaper reporter (purged)	Official	South P'yongan China (birth)	After the 1980s
Ch'oe, H.'s Wife	72	Female	Housewife (purged)	Official	South P'yongan China (birth)	After the 1980s
Ch'oe, U.	75	Female	Housewife	Peasant	North Hamgyong	2003
Ch'oe, Y.	72	Female	Blue-collar laborer, Housewife	Anti-revolutionary class	North P'yongan	1999
Chŏn, K.	44	Male	Police officer	Official	North Hamgyong	2007
Chu, S.	29	Male	Soldier	Military officer (purged)	North Hamgyong	2002
Han, O.	70	Female	Laborer	Peasant	North Hamgyong	The early 2000s
Han, U.	59	Female	Housewife	Peasant, Christian, From the South	South P'yongan	2006
Han, U.'s Daughter-in-law	34	Female	Housewife	Anti-revolutionary class, From the South	NA	After the 1980s
Hŏ, K.	55	Male	Blue-collar laborer	From the South	North Hamgyong	1993
Hong, S.	71	Female	Design laborer	Christian	Yang'gang China (birth)	2006
Hong, S.	70	Male	Official (purged)	Official	North Hamgyong	2000
Kang, C.	43	Male	White-collar laborer	Peasant	South Hamgyong	1996
Kang, I.	69	Male	Official (purged)	Peasant	Kangwŏn	2003
Kim	63	Female	Housewife	Laborer	South P'yongan	1995
Kim, H.	51	Male	Professor	White-collar laborer	South Hamgyong	2003
Kim, M.	72	Male	Soldier	Landlord	South Hamgyong	1959
Kim, M.	71	Male	Official	NA	North Hamgyong	2005
Kim, M.	46	Female	Housewife	NA	NA	2005
Kim, P.	64	Female	Housewife	Pro-Japanese	North Hamgyong	1997
Kim, S.	71	Female	Laborer	From the South	North Hamgyong	2006
Kim, S.	69	Female	Housewife	Poor peasant	Yang'gang	2002

					China (birth)	
Kim, S.	49	Male	Military officer (purged)	Official	South P'yŏngan	1999
Kim, T.	69	Male	Soccer trainer	Businessman	North Hamgyŏng Japan (birth)	2006
Kim, T'.	59	Male	Official	Poor peasant	North P'yŏngan	After the 1980s
Kim, T.	37	Male	Soldier	Laborer	South Hamgyŏng	2002
Kim, W.	54	Male	Laborer	From the South	North Hamgyŏng	2007
Kim, Y.	74	Female	Housewife, Political prisoner	Peasant	South P'yŏngan China (birth)	2001
Kim, Y.	70	Male	Party official (purged)	Peasant	North Hamgyŏng	1999
Kim, Y.	58	Male	Military officer	Official	South P'yŏngan	1988
Kim, Y.	43	Female	Clinic laborer	Official	South P'yŏngan	2007
Li	71	Male	Official	Official	South P'yŏngan	2001
Li, C.	49	Male	Laborer	From the South	North Hamgyŏng	2007
Li, C.'s Father	77	Male	Blue-collar laborer (from the South)	Peasant	North Hamgyŏng Chŏlla (birth)	2001
O, S.	32	Male	Student	Laborer	NA	1999
Pak, S.	45	Male	Writer	Professor	South Hamgyŏng	2000
Pak, Y.	46	Male	Laborer	Peasant	NA	2001
Sim, S.	61	Male	Army officer (purged)	Poor peasant	South P'yŏngan	1998
Sŏ, K.	51	Female	Housewife	Laborer	North P'yŏngan	2003
Yi, K.	45	Male	Military officer	Official	NA	2006
Yi, M.	54	Male	Agricultural scientist (purged)	Official	Hwanghae	1995
Yi, P.	50	Female	Kindergarten teacher	Anti-revolutionary class (from the South)	North Hamgyŏng	1999
Yi, S.	27	Male	Student	Peasant	North Hamgyŏng	After the 1980s
Yu, S.	53	Female	Blue-collar laborer	Peasant	North Hamgyŏng China (birth)	1998
Yu, Ŭ.	24	Female	Student	Laborer	North Hamgyŏng	1995
Yun, P'.	56	Male	Military officer	NA	South P'yŏngan	1998
A1	41	Male	Graduate student	Official	South P'yŏngan	1997
A2	81	Female	Housewife	Peasant, Christian	South P'yŏngan	1996
A3	74	Female	Housewife	Official	North P'yŏngan	1995
A4	79	Male	Official	Official	NA	After the 1980s
A5	52	Male	Laborer	Official	South P'yŏngan	1996
A6	57	Female	Housewife	Peasant	NA	1998
A7	43	Male	NA	NA	NA	After the 1980s
A8	43	Female	Tour guide	NA	NA	1993
A9	42	Female	Housewife	NA	NA	After the

						1980s
A10	21	Female	High school student	NA	NA	2007
A11	39	Female	Laborer	NA	NA	After the 1980s
A12	18	Female	Student	NA	NA	After the 1980s
A13	68	Female	Newspaper reporter	NA	NA	1995

1. Note: Aliases in Appendix I are numbered with the small letter “a” and those in Appendix II are numbered with capital “A.”

2. Note: “NA” (Not Available) indicates that the interviewees rejected or were not willing to reveal their particular personal information or there were some situations in which I was not able to ask for that.

### Appendix III Epilogue: North Korean Refugees

As shown in Appendix I and II, my data consists of two subsets of refugee interviews. As the first subset of data, Appendix I shows information about 18 refugees who defected before the end of the Korean War (1950-1953). In South Korea, these refugees are called *silhyangmin*, which refers to people who lost their homelands in the North. Most of them had parents who were Christians, landlords, or rich peasants or involved in pro-Japanese activities and thus were purged or discriminated against by the North Korean communist regime. Some refugees fled to the South only because of fear of war and for survival. Since these *silhyangmin* refugees have maintained strong antagonism towards the North Korean regime, they have supported the right-wing regimes in the South. Thus, their statements might have some limitations as reliable data because of this political bias. Nevertheless, their interviews provided some valuable information about the social reality in North Korea from 1945 to 1950. In the process of interviewing refugees, I inevitably gathered some testimonials that were filled with personal fierce antagonism, exaggeration, and distortion. However, the statements of refugees such as M. Yu helped me better understand the reality of post-liberation North Korea, as they provided me with more objective information compared to other refugees. This allowed me to compare various refugees' testimonies and reconsider controversial issues from multiple perspectives. Specifically, regarding North Korea's land reform in 1946, many refugees claimed that the Kim Il Sung regime was despotic, and communist reform's material incentives were not significantly different from those of the Japanese. However, considering all interviews and secondary sources, these claims were inaccurate. Although interviewees sometimes denied, exaggerated, or distorted facts relating to controversial issues, I was able to obtain a balanced and reliable perspective by asking the same questions to all interviewees. More importantly, I was able to gain access to "hidden facts" by repeatedly meeting and socializing with them in their social gatherings and daily lives. I joined numerous official and unofficial social gatherings, meetings, parties, and everyday life activities of the *silhyangmin* refugees. This ethnographic method also applied to North Korean refugees who defected after the Korean War. This method worked well for gaining the real stories of ordinary people's lives that official history has overlooked or intentionally ignored. For example, refugee Y. Pyŏn came from the Japanese Kwantung Army, but he served the early local communist party. Pro-Japanese activities resulted in severe punishment and purge in communist North Korea. However, Pyŏn worked as a cell party leader under the tacit consent of party committee officials in Chunghwa County, South Pyŏngan Province until his pro-Japanese record was officially detected by the central security police, and he then fled to the South in 1950. This shows that early communist state power did not completely permeate people's lives at the local and village levels.

While the first subset of refugee interview data was my source for the early socialist revolution of North Korea, the second subset of refugee interview data, as my primary research findings, was an important source of information about the DPRK's post-war militant nationalism. Appendix II shows information about 62 defectors who fled from the North after the Korean War. In South Korea, North Korean refugees who escaped from the North especially during the economic crisis after the 1980s are called *t'albukja* or *saet'ömin*, which can be translated as refugee or defector in English. The notions of *silhyangmin* and *t'albukja* are different from each other even though both can be translated as refugee in English. *Silhyangmin* refugees were naturally accepted as normal members of South Korean society as victims of "forced" migration by North Korea and the Korean War. South Koreans view them as pitiful people who lost their homelands in the North. Furthermore, the boundary between the South and the North at the time was not ideological but rather geographical for ordinary Korean people. Like *silhyangmin* refugees, *t'albukja* refugees are also viewed as historical victims of the politics of national division. However, South Koreans regard them as escapees from the North who were "brainwashed" by communism though they are now protected under the ROK's humanitarian policies. Therefore, these *t'albukja* refugees are pitiful but unfavorable beings for South Korean people. Although the South Korean government views the DPRK as a part of the ROK and the South Korean Constitution and legal stipulations grant North Korean defectors South Korean citizenship, many of them have difficulty resettling and adjusting in South Korean society as members of a politically unfavorable and economically poor marginalized group. Moreover, they are regularly monitored by the South Korean security police. Many North Korean defectors experienced the communist regime's severe surveillance and thus they tend to regard the South Korean policing as surveillance. Consequently, North Korean defectors do not tend to easily trust other people. For this reason, gaining access to North Korean defectors was the most challenging part of my fieldwork.

My three year fieldwork (2006, 2008, and 2009), with financial assistance from several funding institutions, was a long journey in which I overcame the above-mentioned challenges through rethinking, modifying, and reconstructing my methodological strategies through trial and error. In the summer of 2006, I began my dissertation research, thanks to the University of Minnesota Graduate Research Partnership Program Fellowship. I interviewed several defectors first through the help of South Korean police. However, as I mentioned above, the police were perceived as a threat by North Koreans, and my interviews were somewhat "forced" meetings. Although North Koreans defectors' distrust of the South Korean police differed from their severe antagonism towards the North Korean security police, they still perceived them negatively. Thus, my initial fieldwork did not create the kind of relationships or conditions most favorable for interviews. After my reflection on this methodological issue, I conducted in-depth interviews

with defectors through participating in North Koreans' social gatherings, visiting civic organizations established by either South Koreans or North Koreans, and using the help of personal contacts. All these interviews used a formal method that required scheduled appointments, but I was ultimately able to obtain reliable data from interviewees.

On my second visit to Korea for extended dissertation research in the summer of 2008, with the financial support of the University of Minnesota Sociology Department Bright Fellowship, I conducted informal in-depth interviews and ethnographic observations with defectors to whom I obtained access by socializing through various networks. After my initial experience of fieldwork, I realized the importance of ethnographic research in order to more deeply understand my subjects' real lives and thoughts. Thus I joined the social gatherings of South Korean civic organizations for defectors and South Korean church activities for helping defectors to resettle. In particular, my ethnographic observation in a South Korean church established by defectors themselves was very effective for understanding their innermost thoughts through their everyday lives. This research helped me further delve into what they felt and thought when they lived in the North. This also motivated me to explore their resettlement and present lives and status in the South. In addition, I became interested in North Korean refugees legally residing in Northeast China because many defectors experienced ideological and psychological changes while staying in China or defecting to South Korea via China.

In my final fieldwork, with the financial assistance of the National Science Foundation Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant in the summer of 2009, I conducted informal in-depth interviews with North Korean refugees in China and ethnographic research in a church in Seoul, South Korea, which I had visited in 2008. While my fieldwork in China explored North Korean refugees' status and human rights in China and South Korea through a comparative prism for another project, I found that my central research hypotheses were consistently proved through refugee data obtained in both South Korea and China.

My long journey exploring North Korea, a closed communist society, would have been impossible without these refugee interviewees. The understanding of refugees' lives as well as their statements was an essential part of my work, regardless of the difficulty in gaining access to the data needed to shed light on North Korean society.