

**developments in a
divided nation**

&

North Korea

**From Pariah to
Partner?**

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Overview of the presentation: **Developments in a divided nation**

Part 1:

- Very brief political history
- South Korea, from mock-democracy over military rule to democratization.
- North Korea, from success to set-back and crisis (ongoing), and then?

Part 2:

- North Korea: from Pariah to Partner?

Part 3:

- Photos from the North, and some reflections and questions.

A Political Culture based on:

Confucianism



Shamanism



Buddhism



Part 1: Koreas broad line of development:

- One country for more than 1000 years.
- Strong relations with China, problematic relations with Japan.
- Buddhism strong influence from around 600 to 1300.
- **The Yi Dynasty (1392 – 1910) holds Confucianism as state ideology.**
- Korea is a centralize state (kingdom), it accepts Chinese suzerainty.
- **From 1910 to 1945 colonized by Japan (with Western acceptance) (!)**
- The national resistance in Korea was strongly influenced by socialism and communism.
- The allied forces (prim. USA and Soviet Union) divided Korea in 1945.
- The North tried to reunify Korea by force in 1950.
- The resulting Korean War lasted from 1950 to -53.
- **The two Korea's have since developed within two different world systems.**

South Korea's post-war political development

- Nationalist forces were identified with socialism and communism and abandoned by the US occupation government.
- People with experience from the Japanese colonial administration were re-appointed, because they were experienced, and, to avoid the political left and people with Northern sympathies. Syng-man Rhee President.
- **The political scene was distorted, as only the conservative, the right, was legally allowed.**
- **Anti-communism cum anti-North Korea became the state ideology.**
- Students and workers were politically alienated, the political process aborted, and political unrest prevalent.
- Many Christian groups and leaders continued their opposition to the authorities.

From Rhee to Park: from mock-democracy to military authoritarian rule

- Widespread militant demonstrations, strikes and violent clashes under an incompetent political leadership made the military under general Park Chung-hee seize power in 1961.
- **Park, a school-teacher turned general, (partly educated in Japan), changed the political landscape in South Korea. Authoritarianism prevailed, but he sought to Koreanize politics as well as education.**
- Park created a New Village Movement to push for a change in the countryside, enhance production, and establish a strong support base for himself among farmers.
- **A close cooperation between the political leadership, the banking system, and entrepreneurial, wealthy families created the Chaebol system and with it the economic miracle.**

Imbalance between the economic success and the authoritarian rule, growing discontent and unrest.

- The economic success gained first and foremost the elites, but other groups in society also experienced growing wealth. A middle class was created.
- Wealth were, as expected in a Confucian society, translated into education.
- **As the future elite, the masses of students felt an obligation to protest the unjust conditions: military authoritarian rule, US dominance, and the continued division of the country.**
- In 1979, still with Park in charge, protests were exploding and he was shot and killed by his own chief of security.

South Korea in the 1980s: Towards democracy:

- The assassination of Park sparked a political turbulent period, which provoked another coup d'état and the military continued its rule under Chun Doo-hwan (1980) and Roh Tea-woo (1987).
- **The 1980's were characterized by continued growth and continued unrest.** While Chun had been nick-named "Iron-fist" for his harsh treatment of dissidents, (particularly the Kwangju uprising in 1980), his predecessor Roh got the nick-name "Water" due to his "indecisiveness".
- From the beginning Roh promised to step down after his term, and that no military person would take over. Finally he accepted all the demands from a fairly united opposition, demands also supported by the USA, as their support of the military rule in South Korea had become problematic.

Democracy and Authority in Korea

The Cultural Dimension of Korean Politics

- From the later part of 1800 democracy was the dream of intellectual political active circles in Korea.
- **Anti-colonial movements and anti-authoritarian resistance fought under the banner of democracy.**
- **South Korea's democratization was nevertheless not a clear break with the authoritarian past.**
- The authoritarian rulers became democrats, in still not a fully open and free society. Even Kim Dae Jung and Roh Moo-hyun, former dissidents, have had to accept the National Security Law and its consequences.

North Korea up until 1990, comparatively successful

- **Successful collectivization in agriculture, including extensive irrigation systems.**
- **Successful development of the heavy industrial sector.**
- **Electric energy based on hydro-, coal- and oil power stations.**
- **Planned urbanization with almost “free” housing and transportation.**
- **Extensive, widely distributed and free health care systems.**
- **Compulsory and free education on all levels.**
- **Successful balance between the neighbors to the North, China and Soviet Union.**

- **And, almost total isolation from the rest of the world.**

The Great Leap Backwards

- 1990s: collapse of Soviet Union. China introduces a capitalist economy.
- North Korea's socialist barter trade comes to an end, and trade almost stops.
- 1994, the Great Leader dies, and a leadership vacuum arise.
- North Korea experiences floods and draughts, the global climate change have hit the isolated country.
- With floods, draught, and no oil the energy sector collapses.
- Without Chinese and Soviet support the industry, the infrastructure, the agriculture, every aspect of North Korea's economy is in ruin.
- Due to the tense situation, the US have considered a first strike, and in North Korea the military consume all available resources, a military first doctrine is developed.
- 1995: North Korea appeal for international aid, and gets it.

North Korea's despair illustrated



...and why it still survives (What is North Korean *Juche*?)

- A simplified translation holds that the meaning is self reliance.

It is much more:

- The state ideology called *Juche* includes political dogma, social morality and even the frame of accepted feelings, strongly imbued by traditional cultural traits.
- Through primary and secondary socialization and education *Juche* has become the world outlook of the North Korean people.

Juche is Social Engineering

- **“Without interruption in the progression of socialization for several decades, *Juche* has been able to deeply penetrate and assimilate itself into the mass belief system. The degree of rigidity and saliency of beliefs may have reached a point at which external disturbances may not easily cause psychological dissonance.”**

(Han S. Park: *North Korea. The Politics of Unconventional Wisdom*. 2002:63)

Part 2: Present state of affairs: Pariah or Partner?

"Outpost of tyranny"....or:

a consumer society in the making?

The changing North: New laws and regulations

- **A majority of the laws and regulations issued after the 2002 reform package deals with the economy and support the reform policy.**
- **An inheritance act has been passed that secure private property, including ownership of houses and apartments.**
- **A central tax collecting agency has been established. Taxation is carried out locally according to fixed rules, and the states revenue is also fixed.**
- **The minimum wages have been lowered so that North Korea can compete with other low-income countries in the region.**
- **Company tax, and the price for energy, land and water has been lowered of the same reason.**

General reorientation:

- **Party and military influences in the economy are declining.**
- **To gain profit is no longer detestable, but is seen as a goal in production and trade.**

Markets and market economy

- **The number of free markets is increasing.**
- **The markets are operated by independent agents who rent space and pay tax from the surplus of their activity**
- **The state is no longer seen as the only welfare provider.**
- **State companies in economic difficulties are transferred to other companies or sold to private entrepreneurs.**

International cooperation

- **New department stores and shopping centres are planned established as joint ventures with Chinese and Russian support.**
- **New industrial zones beside those already established are underway for Koreans living abroad.**
- **Foreign consulting companies in the field of international law will be set up in Pyongyang. At present treaties have been signed with British, Singaporean and Italian companies.**

The “cadres” of the new economy

- Younger civil servants are now **educated abroad**, in China, Vietnam and in some EU countries.
- **Courses in market economy** have been introduced at Kim Il Sung University.
- Company **managers are hired according to their economic insights** and foreign language abilities.
- In the central administration **younger civil servant are promoted**.
- **Housewives** are increasingly **entering the labour market**.

Reforms and change: will it succeed?

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- Reforms are necessary.
- Kim Jong Il promotes reforms.
- The process has continued since 1995, (the first joint-venture law was passed in 1984)
- North Korea is less isolated than before.
- Selected young people are educated abroad.
- The younger generations want and support reforms.
- China and South Korea have invested in the reforms.

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- Some among in the leading elite are anti-reform hardliners.
- The military may be divided in this case.
- Reforms have been sought developed within restricted areas, to avoid ideological pollution.
- The ongoing change undermine the in principle egalitarian North Korean society.
- The political and security interests of the neighbors may block the NK development.

Reform by Stealth or “Change without Change”

- **Will Western delegations and teachers, consultants, investors, news media, NGO's, aid agencies, foreign ministry representatives, the EU and the US have the patience that will be needed to see North Korea coming all the way in from the cold?**

Democracy and dictatorship in East Asia: worlds apart?

Common traits:

- **Strong nationalism**
- **Benevolent leadership**
- **Loyal followers**

Differences:

- **Different ideological preferences**
- **Isolation versus international orientation**

Part 3: Glimpses of Pyongyang and the North Korean countryside

- The *Juche* tower symbolizes North Korea's ideology of independence. The torchlight on the top is the only light that really flames at night. *Juche* saved North Korea during the times of the Sino-Soviet dispute, and it helped the country to survive embargo and isolation. Now, the ideology has come to work as a hindrance for necessary change and development.

Part 3. Future Korea: Questions to consider

- Have 60 years of division created different identities in North and South?
- 60 years of experienced different life versus 1000 years of common history, which have more impact?
- How does tradition affect people, compared to modernity. Can it at all be compared?
- Can existing differences be bridged, and can what has been learned be un-learned? How?

Prospect: From Pariah to Partner?

(questions to consider)

- **Is it naive to expect North Korea to denuclearize?**
- **What will happen with the one million+ military forces?**
- **And the missiles?**
- **Can one trust a country with a military first doctrine?**
- **Will Korea be reunited?**
- **(Will Japan and China allow that to happen?)**
- **Will the regime ever change?**
- **(How different is it actually from those in the neighboring countries?)**
- **What kind of leader is Kim Jong II?**
- **Will one of his sons take over? (..and so what?)**

Further Questions:

- Will the rich South be willing to accommodate the poor North?
- Will regional animosities continue despite unification of some sort? Or will they grow?
- Will the North Koreans revolt when they find out that they have been trapped?
- Or, is it South Korean that have been trapped by the US?

External problems:

- North Korea is an issue in Japanese politics, will Japan support Korean unification?
- The US troops in South Korea may be there, not because of North Korea, but rather because of the growing power further North, China. If so, will the USA support unification of Korea?
- In South Korea the dividing lines between political groups are often informed by their position with regards to North Korea. Will this prevent them from supporting unification?
- In North Korea the leadership is not democratically elected, but nevertheless they may have strong popular support. Will this continue in a united Korea, and if not, will the North Korean leadership opt for unification and thus sign their own dismissal?