



TORONTO MODEL UNITED NATIONS II

DEATH OF KIM JONG IL

Topic Briefing

Today, it is December 19th, 2011—massive changes are underway in the world's most isolated country. The entire population of North Korea is seen sobbing and distraught. State-run television broadcasts huge ceremonies and memorials attended by top military generals, politicians, North Korean elites, and civilians. North Korea's leader—Supreme Leader Kim Jong Il—has passed away, ending his long-standing reign. Immediately after the death of Kim Jong Il, Kim Jong Un, son of Il, took charge of North Korea at the young age of 27.

Albeit North Korea is a dictatorial state, it still has a number of powerful and influential figures other than the Supreme Leader. Its leader, therefore, must ensure that all of these figures do not dislike himself. Kim Jong Il, taking office in 1994, spent years building trusted allies and friends; this, ultimately, allowed for him to rule over the country without being overthrown.

Kim Jong Il's adept management of allies and relationships extended beyond the political and military spheres. He also maintained a carefully cultivated image as the "Dear Leader" of North Koreans. Similarly, Il portrayed himself as a symbol of national unity and strength. Through extensive propaganda efforts, the North Korean regime displayed him as the guardian of the nation; this image was deeply ingrained in the minds of the North Korean populace. With Il's control of his narrative and crafting of a cult of personality around himself, he not only garnered the support of key elites but also maintained the allegiance of the general population.

Kim Jong Il was also known for his ability to play regional and global powers off against each other. By leveraging the geopolitical interests of countries like China and Russia, he secured economic and diplomatic support, which further strengthened his regime's stability.

Il's son—Kim Jong Un—has few long standing political allies. He, entering office today—on December 19th—makes global leaders and key figures question his qualifications and ability to assert dominance. Not only does his age and lack of allies inhibit his authority, many politicians who were too scared to revolt against his father are likely to take their chance now. With little guidance governing over an unstable country, one question prevails: "Will Kim Jong Un stand to hold the title of Supreme Leader, or will he be overthrown by North Korea's politicians and elites?"

Historical Timeline

September 9, 1948: The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) is officially established with Kim Il-sung as the leader.

June, 1950: The Korean War begins. This marks the start to years of devastating battle and war.

1955: Kim Il-sung consolidates his power through political purges—this also emphasizes his role as the "Great Leader."

August 1966: North Korea adopts the ideology of Juche; this prioritizes self-reliance, independence, and loyalty to the ruler.

December 1972: North Korea introduces the "Socialist Constitution of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea." This solidifies Kim Il-sung's leadership.

1974: North Korea inaugurates its first nuclear reactor. This marks the start to its nuclear program, which would later become a key concern for many countries.

July 1994: Kim Il-sung passes away in July. North Korea's citizens, displayed on state run news channels, are seen distraught and sobbing. Kim Il-sung's son, Kim Jong Il, assumes leadership. He continues to enforce the regime's strict control over information and the economy.

1997: North Korea experiences a severe famine, leading to widespread suffering and hardship among citizens.

1998: North Korea officially announces that it has successfully launched its first satellite into orbit. This raises concerns of North Korea's missile technology and capabilities.

June 2000: North Korea engages in diplomatic efforts with South Korea; this is marked by the historic first Inter-Korean Summit.

January 2003: North Korea announces its official withdrawal from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. (NPT) Immediately after, it also declares its intention to develop a nuclear arsenal.

2006: North Korea conducts its first ever nuclear test. The international community quickly condemns this, resulting in large scale sanctions being imposed on North Korea.

2007: As part of a six-parties agreement, North Korea agrees to shut down its Yongbyon nuclear facilities. This was in exchange for economic aid and the lifting of select sanctions. However, this agreement later fell through and North Korea promptly continued with its nuclear program again.

2008: The United States removes North Korea from its Terrorism list. This aimed to improve U.S-North Korea relations.

May 2009: North Korea conducts its second ever nuclear test, facing international condemnation.

Late 2009: North Korea receives sanctions from the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

September 2010: The Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) convenes its first party conference in over three decades. In this, Kim Jong-un is formally designated as the successor to Kim Jong Il.

December 2011: This crisis committee begins.

Historical Analysis

Inception of North Korea and Early History (1945-1953):

The creation of North Korea— following the end of World War II in 1945— was deeply influenced by the geopolitical changes of the post-World War II world. In August of 1945, when Japan surrendered to Allied forces, the Korean Peninsula— which had been held under Japanese colonial rule since 1910— was liberated. The Allies, led by the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union, struggled to decide the fate of Korea. However, following a series of negotiations and agreements, it was agreed that the Korean peninsula would be divided along the 38th parallel. In this agreement, the Soviets would occupy the northern part and the Americans would occupy the southern part. At the time, this division was meant to be temporary. The ultimate goal was intended to be Korean reunification.

North Korea emerged as a separate entity in 1948 when the Soviet-occupied North officially became the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), with its capital in Pyongyang. The establishment of North Korea was accompanied by a large political vacuum and a power struggle; this, ultimately, led to the rise of Kim Il-sung.

Kim Il-sung— prior to his role in North Korea, was a guerrilla leader who had fought against Japanese occupation during World War II. Kim Il-sung, prior to his rise, had close ties to the Soviet Union. He developed close connections with many top Soviet leaders and became very popular within elite Soviet political circles. Moreover, he mobilized popular support with different key figures. Kim's leadership marked the beginning of the “Kim Dynasty”, which would completely control North Korea and its affairs for the coming decades.

Despite the key impacts of World War 2 on the two Koreas, the division was also heavily related to the Cold War. During the early years of the Cold War, the United States and Soviet Union— both locked in competition— had contrasting visions for Korea. Neither the U.S or Soviet Union were able to compromise on their visions— heavily impacting how North and South Korea's tense diplomatic relationship developed.

Although North and South Korea already had tense relations, this escalated further when North Korea, being ruled under Kim Il-sung's leadership, launched a large-scale invasion of South Korea. This invasion— commencing on June 25th of 1950— marked the beginning of the Korean War. The Korean War, which quickly gained global attention and concern, drew in international forces— including support from superpowers. At the time, the United States was the main ally of South Korea. It is also important to note that much of the United Nations also backed South Korea. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union and China provided support to North Korea. This conflict quickly escalated, with 2 global superpowers involved in a conflict on opposite

sides. In the coming years, the Korean War would result in massive casualties and losses in both lives and equipment— for both North and South Korea.

Finally, following three years of grueling fighting, a ceasefire agreement was signed in 1953, marking the end of active combat. However, it is crucial to note that a formal peace treaty was never signed. Consequently, the Korean Peninsula still remained divided at the 38th parallel; this is also now known as the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ).

The Korean War was a turning point in North and South Korea's relationship. Both sides developed mistrust towards the other side and now viewed each other as clear enemies. It also, notably, solidified the division of the two Koreas with the DMZ. The DMZ, being one of the world's most guarded areas, effectively isolated North Korea from South Korea. North Korean leadership also quickly isolated North Korea from the rest of the world.

During the early periods of North Korean history, Kim Il-sung focused heavily on establishing a strong foundation for an authoritarian regime. This, mainly, meant the creation of a cult-like population, where all the citizens would portray Kim Il-sung as a heroic leader—the “Great Leader.” Kim Il-sung also ensured that political ideologies and opinions were heavily controlled. He permitted only state run news, boasting propaganda, to be shared among citizens. Kim Il-sung’s strict control of the nation shaped the coming decades of North Korean history. His extreme authoritarian control was continued by his successors.

Consolidation of Power and Implementation of Juche Ideology (1953-1970s)

After the Korean War, Kim Il-sung solidified his position as the undisputed leader of North Korea. He made sure that any opposing enemies were either jailed or simply killed, resulting in no competition for him. Not only did this eliminate direct competition, it also prevented future competition from arising; everyone saw what happened to those who opposed Ki Il-sung and thus, would be too scared to oppose him. His focus following the Korean War— after he established himself— was the development of a North Korean identity. This was mainly achieved through the development of the Juche ideology.

The Juche ideology emphasized self-reliance, nationalism, and most importantly—the supremacy of the state. Juche essentially became the guiding philosophy of North Korean governance. One of its key focuses was to reduce North Korea’s dependence on foreign powers; it aimed to achieve self-sufficiency.

During the 1960s and 1970s, North Korea focused on industrialization, education, and the development of a strong military. The North Korean government, during this time, suppressed any private enterprises. It ensured that all major and profitable industries were controlled

completely by the state. However, despite its rapid development and economic aid from the Soviet Union and China, North Korea's economy struggled. Food shortages, alongside the lack of other key supplies, were present periodically during these two decades. Moreover, tensions with South Korea further continued, with frequent skirmishes occurring at the North-South border. Numerous assassination attempts on Kim Il-sung were also reported. During this time, Kim Il-sung also began grooming his son Kim Jong Il for leadership.

Leadership Under Kim Jong Il (1994-2011)

Kim Il-sung, in 1994, passed away. This was a huge turning point in North Korean history, with the founding father of North Korea no longer being present. This also marked the first ever transition in power in North Korea; Kim Jong Il assumed power and replaced his late father. Kim Jong Il had been groomed for many decades prior to his father's death. Despite this, however, Kim Jong Il quickly faced a number of challenges during his ruling—one of which was the North Korean famine, taking place most prominently in the mid 1990s. The country, during this time, lacked adequate food supplies. It was, for many years, unable to feed its population, resulting in the death of hundreds of thousands of North Koreans. This famine marked one of the darkest periods of North Korean history. During this time, North Korean leadership continued to exercise tight control of the country and ensured that its population was isolated from the world.

Under Kim Jong Il's rule, North Korea's pursuit of a functional nuclear arsenal further developed; in 2006, following decades of development and engineering, North Korea conducted its first ever nuclear test. This immediately sparked international condemnation and sanctions, most notably from the United States.

North Korea in the Early 21st Century (2000s-2011)

Entering the 21st century, North Korea faced increasing isolation from the international community. Its nuclear ambitions—mixed alongside human rights abuses—sparked anger and discontent among many countries. Moreover, the Six-Party Talks— involving North Korea, South Korea, China, Japan, Russia, and the United States—made significant progress in denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula. Additional nuclear tests after its first test in 2006 made nuclear negotiations difficult to even discuss and facilitate.

Economically, North Korea continued to be heavily reliant on domestic industries, which were all completely controlled by the state. This stressed the importance of self reliance, aligning with its Juche philosophy. However, international sanctions that were imposed on North Korea limited its access to most foreign markets and trades. Despite economic challenges, Kim Jong Il continued to maintain and grow North Korea's militaries. He invested a significant amount of North Korea's monetary supplies to the military. During Kim Jong il's rule, he also worked

closely with key North Korean figures, many of which were high profile family members. A notable person was Jang Song-thaek; Jang held important government positions while also acting as a power broker.

In December of 2011, Kim Jong Il passed away, marking yet another key juncture in North Korea's history and development. A year prior to his death, Kim Jong Il had already nominated Kim Jong-Un as his successor. This nomination took place in a party conference, which was the first to take place in over 30 years. Kim Jong-un, at the time of assuming power, was only 28 years old. Kim Jong Un's youth and comparatively lacking amount of political experience raised concerns and questions among elite North Koreans.

Initiating Crisis

North Korea's Kim Jong Il's successor had been nominated long before his death— over a year prior. Kim Jong Un, son of Kim Jong Il, was chosen as the successor. High ranking officials of the Workers Party of Korea, (WPK) at the time of Kim Jong-un being nominated, displayed little to no objection. This, however, was likely due to the immense power and fear that Kim Jong Il—who was still alive at the time—exercised over WPK members. Kim Jong Il's death, taking place on the 19th of December, 2011, quickly changed the perception that top WPK officials had on their leader.

Contrary to his father, Kim Jong-un was extremely young and relatively inexperienced in the political field; Kim Jong Il had been groomed for leadership for decades prior to taking his role as supreme leader. Kim Jong-un, also unlike his father, had relatively few powerful allies when taking office. This, for many top WPK members, meant a potential chance for a power grab. Kim Jong-un recognized immediately how vulnerable he was; he, while taking office, had already begun brainstorming bold moves that would solidify and establish himself as the supreme leader.

Speculation of Kim Jong-un's plan to initiate a series of purges and political maneuvers quickly spread among North Korean officials—this only intensified the situation by adding an aspect of limited time and opportunities to potentially overthrow Kim Jong-un. Not only were WPK politicians relevant in Kim's plans to reform roles of leadership, high ranking military generals were also at risk. Kim Jong-un's plans, although being brainstormed as ways to establish himself, likely endangered him even more; top officials understood that if they did not destabilize or overthrow him, they would be at risk. Top politicians and officials, thus, were desperate to allude to being punished, fired, or reformed by Kim Jong-un and consequently considered sabotaging him.

Kim's plan of orchestrating such large scale changes in government raised questions and concerns among many global figures. He, despite being young and new, targeted not only general WPK members, but also powerful officials. Kim Jong-un also had unstable ties with many of the high ranking politicians that his father had previously appointed. For instance, Kim did not like Ri Yong-ho, who was the "Chief of the General Staff of the Army" at the time that he assumed power. His focus on political reform was also seen heavily favoring the military, with many generals fearing dismissal from their duties or further punishment.

Alongside plans that angered many of North Korea's politicians, Kim Jong-un was also noticed by powerful politicians across the world, mostly due to his aggressive plans for North Korea's nuclear program. Immediately upon assuming power, Kim made his intent to further develop and broaden his nuclear arsenal clear.

Kim Jong-un's bold plans for reform and change within North Korea made its politicians both scared and angered—one of the most dangerous combinations of sentiments. His—alongside the decisions of other North Korean politicians in the coming weeks—would be instrumental in his fate as a leader. He, although striving to establish dominance, could also be overthrown at any moment; Kim Jong-un must ensure that he continues wielding power, like his father and grandfather had.

Current Situation

Economic Hardships

North Korea—immediately following Kim Jong-il's death—faced significant threats of economic hardships; this, an issue impacting the entire nation, immediately became one of Kim Jong-un's first challenges. North Korea had been, for the past decades, grappling with economic sanctions and crisis, including food shortages, energy shortages, and limited available foreign aid. Mass scale famines were also seen throughout the 90's and the general population was suffering with what they had. Hundreds of thousands of deaths occurred due to lack of food and other necessary supplies. Healthcare in the country is also almost nonexistent; it is a luxury provided only to the select few elites. Kim Jong Il, having been fighting this issue for decades prior to his death, was able to display only minimal results. This raises a crucial question about Kim Jong-un: If his father was only barely able to maintain the country's economic status, how would the inexperienced Kim Jong-un do?

Internal Power Struggles

Kim Jong-un, when first assuming power, faced reasonable threats of being destabilized or even being overthrown by top North Korean officials. However, it was not only Kim Jong-un that top officials were trying to destabilize; politicians and military figures were also trying to destabilize each other. Mutual loyalty among North Korea's elites and politicians was also almost nonexistent, with many willing to backstab others in an instant—as long as doing so entailed self gain. Kim Jong-un, immediately after assuming office, also relied heavily upon some other key figures—including family members. This further heightened his risk of being overthrown or destabilized. However, while some powerful North Koreans saw an opportunity to rise in power by destabilizing and overthrowing Kim Jong-un, others did not have the same intentions. For many, Kim Jong-un was seen as the son and rightful successor of Kim Jong Il—someone that they respected dearly and associated with utmost respect. The internal power struggle, therefore, was extremely complex—while some want to overthrow Kim Jong-un, others want to protect him.

Global Perception

Kim Jong Il's 2011 passing not only stirred unrest and uncertainty within North Korea, it also impacted global perception of the nation at the time. Transition of power from Kim Jong Il to his youngest son Kim Jong-un raised questions of how both regional and global security would be impacted. Moreover, many prominent countries monitored the rapidly evolving situation in North Korea closely, ensuring that they were aware of ongoing events. The fate of North Korea's

nuclear program was also heavily discussed; no one, at the time, knew what Kim Jong-un had planned for his nuclear arsenal.

Potential Solutions

Kim Jong Un

One of the most important aspects of asserting dominance— something that Kim Jong-un must focus on in this committee— is ensuring the loyalty of the North Korean military. The military is one of North Korea's most valuable and invested assets; Kim Jong-un needs to both recognize and leverage this to the best of his abilities. Loyalty of the military— if secured— would solidify Kim Jong-un's power. Moreover, it would make it nearly impossible for any politician to try and overthrow him. Kim Jong-un should focus heavily on gaining the trust and friendship of North Korea's top generals and military officials. Military figures will both recognize and attempt to utilize their importance in this crises— therefore, Kim Jong-un should consider offering benefits and valuable connections to military generals, in turn for loyalty

Other than just the military, it is imperative that Kim Jong-un gains the trust and friendship of top businessmen. North Korea, due to devastating sanctions, has resorted to working with some powerful businessmen; if Kim Jong-un intends to further develop the country's economy and status, he must ensure that he continues working with these key figures. Businessmen across the world that work with North Korea, greatly influence and benefit the North Korean economy. If Kim Jong-un is to lose the aid offered by these people, his regime— and consequently his popularity— will take a devastating toll.

North Korean Politicians, Generals, and Foreign Businessmen:

One of the largest issues that top North Korean officials will face is competition amongst each other. While many are working towards the same goal— overthrowing Kim Jong-un— they each differ because they want to assume power themselves. However, it is crucial that these key figures, instead of competing with each other, work together and destabilize Kim Jong-un as a collective coalition. Kim Jong-un's power, while being unmatched by any other North Korean, is only present if everyone under him is loyal. Therefore, by collectively banding together and opposing Kim Jong-un, North Korean officials will have a chance to overthrow him.

Similar to Kim Jong-un, it is crucial for politicians wanting to overthrow him to form connections and alliances with key military generals. If political figures are able to turn the military against Kim Jong un, he would lose almost all of his power and authority. Furthermore,

gaining the alliance of the military would allow for assassination attempts on Kim Jong-un to take place; this, basically, is the only way to overthrow him. Generals should be careful in considering who to support—a single wrong step could lead to severe punishment, including execution.

While it is important to consider forming connections and alliances within North Korea, political figures hoping to overthrow Kim Jong-un must also work with businessmen from outside of North Korea. North Korea's economy, as previously stated, is significantly influenced by businessmen across the world. Therefore, if politicians are able to turn these businessmen against Kim Jong-un, he would be greatly destabilized. The leveraging of the North Korean bank should also be heavily considered and discussed.

Guiding Questions

- 1) How does the Juche ideology impact North Korean leadership?
- 2) How are different members of the committee viewed by Kim Jong-un?
- 3) In the committee, what are the views of different members on Kim Jong-un?
- 4) How likely are different members of the committee able to overthrow or destabilize Kim Jong-un?
- 5) How close were different members of the committee with Kim Jong Il?
- 6) What are you able to offer to other members in the committee that could form alliances?
- 7) What changes do you want to make if you were to rise into power?