

A Kim in his counting house

一位在账房的朝鲜领导人

The regime suffers none of the consequences of its misrule

朝鲜政权没有受到暴政所带来的恶果

A powerful army usually depends on a strong economy. Not in North Korea. Per head, the country has more soldiers than any other: 1.2m out of a population of 25m. As well as a huge conventional arsenal, it also has a dozen nuclear warheads and spends perhaps \$3 billion a year on a nuclear programme that involves rocket launches and nuclear tests—the latest took place last week, the fourth since 2006. Yet the performance of the economy over the past four decades has been little sprightlier than that of the Great Leader, Kim Il Sung, since he was embalmed in 1994.

一支强大的军队通常依赖于经济繁荣。但在朝鲜却不是这样。如果算人均军人数，朝鲜比任何一个国家军人数量都要多：2500 万的人口中有 120 万名军人。除了常规的大批军械外，朝鲜还拥有 12 枚核弹头，每年花费大约 30 亿美元在核项目上，其中包括导弹发射和核武器测试—就在上周朝鲜进行了最新一次测试，这是自 2006 年来的第四次测试。但是在过去的四十年里，朝鲜经济仅仅比 1994 年被防腐处理的“伟大领袖”金日成在位时稍稍富有生机一点点。

North Korea suppresses most economic data. But as far as we know, from the 1950s to the 1970s its economy outgrew capitalist South Korea, as a Stalinist state marshalled all resources towards production. Today the North's per capita GDP is only one-40th of the South's—a wretched \$600 a year or so, by UN estimates. The blame rests squarely with the Kim dynasty's ruinous policies. Yet the regime of Kim Jong Un, the third Kim on the throne, pays no penalty for the people's suffering. Rather, it funnels money to itself, the elites and the nuclear programme.

朝鲜封锁了其大部分经济数据，但就我们了解，从上世纪 50 年代一直到 70 年代朝鲜的经济增长速度要快于资本主义国家韩国。这是因为作为一个斯大林主义国家，朝鲜那时将全国的资源都投入到了生产当中。如今朝鲜的人均 GDP 只有韩国的四十分之一。据联合国估计，其人均 GDP 大约只有可怜的 600 美元每年。这直接归咎于金王朝毁灭性的政策。。但是金王朝的第三代当权者金正恩的政权却没有为人民所受的苦痛付出任何代价。甚至，它还在为自己，为朝鲜精英层，为其核项目敛财。

In a recent paper for South Korea's Asan Institute, Nicholas Eberstadt of the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, DC tries to estimate the scale of North Korea's economic catastrophe. Given the paucity of data, Mr Eberstadt used “mirror statistics”: estimates of the country's trade divined from other countries' records. He then made adjustments for population growth and inflation. It is no straight proxy for output, but useful nonetheless.

来自华盛顿特区美国企业研究所（the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, DC）的尼古拉斯·埃伯施塔特（Nicholas Eberstadt）在其最近为韩国峨山研究院（South Korea's Asan Institute）撰写的一篇报告中试图估计出北朝鲜的经济灾难的规模。由于缺乏数据，他使用“镜像统计数据”：也就是用与他国的贸易记录来估计朝鲜的贸易量。然后他再根据国家的人口和通胀情况对估计出来的数据做出调整。得出的结果虽然不是朝鲜产出的直接指标，但是却是有用的。

Mr Eberstadt found that North Korea's per-capita exports last year were no higher than at their peak in the late 1970s, while per-capita imports were two-fifths lower. North Korea's

economic underperformance is remarkable for a country that is neither a failed state nor at war, he says.

埃伯施塔特发现，朝鲜去年的人均出口没有上世纪 70 年代达到贸易顶峰的时候高，人均进口则下降了五分之二。他还说：朝鲜经济既没处在动荡中，也没处于战乱中，但经济却萎靡不振，这实在太不寻常。

What went wrong? The collapse of the Soviet Union, upon which the North had long relied for cheap machinery and oil, certainly hit it hard in the 1990s. Weakened by bad weather, centrally run agricultural production collapsed in the 1990s, leading to a famine in which hundreds of thousands of people died. International sanctions in response to North Korea's nuclear bomb-testing have also hurt.

究竟哪里出错了呢？朝鲜过去长期依赖前苏联低价进口给他们的机器与石油，上世纪 90 年代苏联解体对它造成了严重打击。在同一时期，糟糕的天气使由朝鲜中央领导运营的农业生产产量猛降，饥荒袭来，致使成千上万人丧生。由于朝鲜进行核弹实验，国际社会对其进行制裁，这对其经济低迷也有影响。

But the biggest problem, Mr Eberstadt argues, is that North Korea has the worst business environment of any functioning state: worse even than Cuba, Venezuela or Zimbabwe. It has no property rights or rule of law, no legal private trade and a currency prone to confiscation: in 2009 the government wiped out small traders' savings by declaring old banknotes invalid and swapping only a few for new ones.

但是埃伯施塔特认为，朝鲜最大的问题在于该国的商业环境是所有运作正常的国家中最糟糕的，甚至比古巴，委内瑞拉和津巴布韦还不如。在朝鲜没有产权，没有法制，没有合法私营贸易，而且你的钱还很有可能遭到充公。2009 年，朝鲜政府宣布旧钞作废，进而没收了小型贸易商的积蓄，并只交换了少量的新钞。

A striking feature of the North's economic decline is the quantities of foreign aid that accompanied it. North Korea has a long history of shaking down donors—first the Soviet Union, then, after 1991, America and South Korea, and most recently China. The total amount of transfers is impossible to quantify. But Mr Eberstadt estimates the sum from the North's two biggest historical backers, Russia and China, by taking its balance of trade deficits with each of them as an approximation of net resource flows into the North—assuming that the surplus is a debt that will not be repaid. That surplus amounts to \$45 billion, in today's money, between 1960 and 2013.

北朝鲜经济下滑的一个很明显的特征就是伴随着经济下滑而增长的外国援助量。北朝鲜在敲诈援助者方面可谓有经验老道了。它第一次敲诈的是前苏联，然后在 1991 年之后依次敲诈了美国，韩国，最近一次则是中国。朝鲜接受的援助总量无法量化估计。但是埃伯施塔特将俄罗斯和中国（两个历史上朝鲜最大的靠山）与朝鲜的贸易逆差看成是流入朝鲜净资源的近似值，从而估计出俄中对朝鲜的援助总量。这一方法的假设条件是将差额部分视作一项不用偿还的负债。从 1960 到 2013，这一数据换算成现值总计达 450 亿美元。

The money seems to have helped the Kims live like god-kings and still have enough left over to pay the army, the secret police and various suppliers of nuclear materials. Yet Rüdiger Frank, an economist at the University of Vienna, thinks that increased supplies of hard currency may also have helped the informal markets for food and basic supplies that burgeoned as a response to the famine. These black markets are the single most benign transformation in North Korea in the past few years. Most North Koreans now depend on them for their livelihoods. The state usually turns a blind eye, since its central planning

system, which is supposed to apportion goods, has broken down. Besides, the elites demand their cut.

这一大笔援助似乎让金氏家族过上了国王般的生活，还剩下足够的钱用来支付军队，秘密警察和各种核材料的供应商。但是维也纳大学的经济学家弗兰克（Rüdiger Frank）认为硬通货供应量的增加也助长了朝鲜的黑市交易。为了应对饥荒，这种供应食物和生活必需品的黑市快速发展壮大起来。在过去几年，朝鲜的黑市就是一场良性的变革。大多数朝鲜人依赖黑市来维持他们的生活。由于本来应该起到分配商品作用的中央计划系统崩溃，政府通常对此睁一只眼闭一只眼。另外，那些朝鲜精英们也想在黑市买东西时得到些折扣。

Some see in such markets the seeds of deeper economic reform. And Mr Kim seems keener than his father to promise prosperity to his people, and even a modicum of leisure. North Korea's capital, Pyongyang, now boasts a dolphinarium and a water park, and even a ski resort to its east. As high rises go up, the capital's fashionable sip espressos in upmarket bars.

有些人从这类市场中看到了深化经济改革的种子。并且相比于他的父亲，金正恩似乎更加热切的希望给他的人民带去繁荣昌盛甚至给他们一点休闲活动。如今平壤新建了一所海豚馆和一所水上公园，在其东边甚至建了一滑雪胜地。随着一幢幢高楼拔地而起，平壤的时尚饮品浓咖啡进入了高档酒吧。

Yet the regime's old habits are unchanged. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the state is squeezing the donju, North Korea's new successful class of traders. According to DailyNK, a news source with informants in the North, donju are worried that they will be forced to hand over hard-currency savings to make up for the "massive dollar bomb"—ie, the expensive nuclear test—that was detonated last week.

但是金氏政权的旧习仍未改变。民间传闻，政府正在打压 donju。donju 是指朝鲜新兴的成功贸易商阶层。据朝鲜新闻提供源“今日朝鲜”透露，donju 担心政府会强迫他们交出硬通货储蓄以此来资助“大规模美元炸弹”——例如上周进行的花销不菲的核试验。

In the absence of direction from the top, there are limits to how much can change. A new policy that seems to have been quietly rolled out from 2013 allowed farmers to retain 30% of a new production target, plus any excess over the target, to sell on informal markets. Yet local officials are not distributing the promised shares, perhaps to make up a shortfall at cooperatives, according to a report by Radio Free Asia.

由于缺乏高层的指挥，改变是有限的。一项似乎从 2013 年悄然开始的新政策允许农民保留新产量目标的 30%。另外超出目标的部分可以留下拿黑市出售。根据亚洲自由广播（Radio Free Asia）的一篇报导，地方官员并没有给农民之前所承诺的份额，这或许是为了弥补合作社产量短期下滑的影响。

Meanwhile, the few foreign investors brave enough to enter North Korea must contend with an unpredictable and predatory state. In November the biggest such, Orascom, an Egyptian telecoms company that set up the North's first 3G mobile network, said that it thought it had lost control of its joint venture, and has not been able to repatriate its profits.

同时，少数有勇气进入朝鲜的外国投资者不得不与这个无法预测并且损人利己的国家作斗争。其中最大的一家是埃及电讯公司 Orascom，该公司在朝鲜建立了首个 3G 移动网络。在去年 11 月，它宣称自己已经失去了对合资企业的控制，无法将其利润汇回埃及。

China remains North Korea's lifeline. Most products for sale in the North's informal markets are from China. Last year North Korea sold over \$1 billion of minerals to China, chiefly coal. As China's economy slows and the price of coal falls, the North will suffer. But the regime

has a solution: putting its scant resources into military power. This serves as a "battering-ram for international extortion", as Mr Eberstadt puts it. Alas, it seems to work. 中国仍然是朝鲜的生命线。北朝鲜黑市的大部分产品都是来自中国。去年朝鲜向中国销售了总价值超过 10 亿美元以煤炭为主的矿物。随着中国经济的放缓，煤炭价格逐下滑，朝鲜将受到重创。但是金氏政权有一个解决方法：将其匮乏的资源用于军事武器。埃伯施塔特将这种做法看成是朝鲜对国际社会进行勒索的一种强硬手段。不幸的是，这种方法似乎起作用了。