Social Control System
and Autocratic Regime Stability in North Korea

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Abstract

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How do autocratic regimes maintain stability and why are some more durable than others? This study argues that the concept of social control adds value in explaining durable autocracies and attempts to connect the scholarship on social control with autocracy research. To that end, this study develops a theoretical framework of social control system, which combines ideological, physical, and daily life control. These control mechanisms can be implemented reactively or proactively and, depending on the circumstances, they either work alone or simultaneously to maximize the effect of control.

To test the theory of the social control system, this dissertation conducts an in-depth case study on North Korea. It uses North Korean publications and declassified documents on North Korea from its former communist allies as primary sources as well as secondary literature to provide background information and apply theoretical explanation. North Korea is a highly repressive and long-lasting dictatorship that has undergone three-generational hereditary succession despite various hardships. I examine three critical episodes when the stability of the North Korean regime was severely challenged. These three cases are examined chronologically and the chosen temporal periods match the periods of the three leaders of North Korea – from the founder Kim Il Sung to Kim Jong Il and the incumbent leader Kim Jong Un. I argue that the North Korean regime survived political shocks and maintained stability due to its social control system and its adaptation to the changing circumstances.

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List of Abbreviations

CC	Central Committee
KIS	Kim Il Sung
KIS-KJIism	Kim Il Sung-Kim Jong Il-ism
KJI	Kim Jong Il
KJU	Kim Jong Un
KPA	Korean People's Army
KWP	Korean Workers' Party
MIS	Monolithic Ideological System
MPS	Ministry of People's Security
MSC	Military Security Command
NDC	National Defense Commission
PDS	public distribution system
SSD	State Security Department
UNC	United Nations Command
WWC	Woodrow Wilson Center

1 Introduction

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea) is a fitting example of a highly repressive yet stable and long-lasting dictatorship. Since its founding in 1948, the North Korean regime has consistently maintained hard authoritarian control, decade after decade, through two hereditary leadership successions. North Korea has undergone a profound transformation, especially since the early 1990s. During the 1990s, the regime experienced various critical shocks that called its stability into question. With the global "third wave" of democratization, the international environment became less friendly to the Kim regime, which made maintaining the dictatorship in North Korea even more challenging. Domestically, the country's founder Kim Il Sung died and the leadership prepared for the transfer of power to his son Kim Jong Il. In addition, due to decades of poor economic policy choices and the reduction of economic aid from the Soviet Union, the state's economy found itself on the brink of collapse. The situation worsened from the mid-1990s when devastating famine and a series of natural disasters led to food shortages and mass starvation of the people, a period known as the "Arduous March." Nevertheless, the regime did not experience a complete collapse, and even managed to undergo another hereditary leadership succession to Kim Jong Un in 2011. Thus, the North Korean regime paints a picture of an autocratic regime capable of surviving extreme shocks. This raises the following question: How can we explain the stability of the North Korean regime?

Over the last three decades, autocracies have become one of the fastest growing topics in research on comparative politics. Scholars have embarked on data collection efforts and suggested different types of authoritarian regimes, thus reviving scholarly attention in authoritarian politics (see for instance Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland 2010; Geddes 1999; Geddes, Wright, and Frantz 2014). While the focus of most contemporary autocracy literature is on institutions, some studies have examined specific factors that explain autocratic regime stability. Among them, the so-called "three pillars of stability" – legitimation, repression, and co-optation – have gained prominent interest in recent literature (Gerschewski 2013). Previous scholarship has broadened the autocracy research spectrum and serves as a solid foundation for further research. Adding to this scholarship, the present study argues that the concept of "social control" adds value in explaining durable autocracies, and it attempts to

connect the scholarship on social control with autocracy research. It argues that different types of social control mechanisms are operating simultaneously under one system, contributing to the regime's stability. Consequently, this study proposes a theory of social control system. Although the control mechanisms may vary depending on the regime type and characteristics, this study argues that autocratic regimes mainly operate three control mechanisms: *ideological*, *physical*, and *daily life control*. These mechanisms complement each other and autocrats implement measures accordingly depending on the cause and level of threat.

This dissertation argues that the social control system has contributed to the stability and persistence of the North Korean regime. It demonstrates *how* the three leaders respectively overcame political shocks by operating the social control system. There were three critical episodes when the stability of the North Korean regime was severely challenged. The first case was Kim Il Sung's power consolidation period in the mid-1950s. The second case was the Arduous March period of the 1990s. Finally, the latest shock to the regime was the second leadership succession in 2011. Throughout the case studies, this study demonstrates that the social control system was established under Kim Il Sung, helped the regime to overcome the shocks of the 1990s under Kim Jong Il, and was finally adapted to better respond to the changing environment under Kim Jong Un.

1.1 Explaining Autocratic Regime Stability

Autocratic regimes account for a significant part of the world.[1] The "Democracy Report 2021" by the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) revealed that electoral and closed autocracies were home to 68% of the world's population in 2020. Furthermore, the number of democratizing countries has dropped by almost half over the last 10 years, and the "third wave of autocratization" is accelerating, affecting 25 countries and 34% of the world's population (Alizada et al. 2021). Moreover, according to a report by Freedom House, 54 countries were "not free" and 59 countries were "partly free" in 2020, which accounted for almost 80% of the global population. In addition, the number of "free" countries in the world in 2020 reached its lowest level since 2005, while the number of "not free" countries reached its highest level (Freedom House 2021). This suggests that the democratic decline has become

[1] Throughout this dissertation, I use autocracy, authoritarianism, and dictatorship interchangeably as the opposite of democracy, unless indicated otherwise.

increasingly global and many regimes have moved in an authoritarian direction, confirming the rise of “competitive authoritarianism” (Levitsky and Way 2002, 2020). It also indicates that full-scale autocracies have remained resilient. My first research question stems from here: How do autocratic regimes maintain stability?

The stability and longevity among autocratic regimes also vary. Some are unstable and exist for a short period, while others remain more resilient, and a small number even manage to transfer power to a successor. In addition, a dictatorship being long-lasting does not necessarily mean that it is protected from every threat. Both Muammar Qaddafi of Libya (1969–2011) and Hosni Mubarak of Egypt (1981–2011) had been in power longer than Kim Jong Il of North Korea (1994–2011); however, the two former regimes collapsed while the latter survived and transferred leadership to the leader’s son. My second and third research questions are based on this observation: What explains this variation? Why are some autocratic regimes more durable than others?

A pioneering study by Geddes (1999) on the relationship between different types of authoritarian regimes and the probability of regime change revived scholarly attention in autocracy research (Geddes 1999). Since then, autocracies have become one of the fastest growing topics in research on comparative politics (Croissant and Wurster 2013). Much of this work has focused on institutions in particular, such as parties, legislature, and elections. This focus has allowed scholars to shift away from exogenous shocks and “locate the reasons for authoritarian stability or breakdown in longstanding patterns of behavior, both formal and informal” (Art 2012, 352). Gandhi and Przeworski (2007) argue that authoritarian rulers frequently turn to nominally democratic institutions when they require cooperation from outsiders to deter a threat. The authors also argue that authoritarian institutions are not merely “window dressing” and have an impact on the survival of autocrats (Gandhi and Przeworski 2007, 1280). Similarly, Magaloni (2008) argues that institutions are “essential for understanding authoritarian politics, because they shape bargaining between the dictator and his ruling coalition” and can also be used for dictators to “spy, co-opt, or repress opponents” (Magaloni 2008, 718). For instance, the “Autocracies of the World” dataset indicates that authoritarian regimes that allow multiparty elections have increased dramatically since the end of the Cold War (Magaloni, Chu, and Min 2013). Elections serve multiple purposes in a dictatorship as they can “discourage and co-opt the opposition, manage elites, enhance regime legitimacy, acquire foreign support, and gain information about the strength of the opposition movement” (Ezrow and Frantz 2011, 69). However, such advantages of elections tend to be more visible in regimes with high levels of state capacity. As Croissant and

Hellmann (2018) argue, if regimes have low state capacity, elections can "spin out of control, forcing the regime to turn to more blatant forms of fraud or large-scale violence, which tends to cause regime destabilization" (Croissant and Hellmann 2018, 4).

While the focus of most contemporary literature has been on institutions, some studies have examined other factors to explain autocratic regime stability. Among them, three factors have gained prominent interest in recent literature, namely legitimation, repression, and co-optation, which Gerschewski (2013) refers to as the "three pillars of stability." In this section, I focus on discussing these three strands of scholarship.

First, legitimation used to be at the center of the totalitarianism paradigm. Then, along with the decline of totalitarianism studies, the legitimation dimension faded away. However, some recent studies have attempted to bring legitimation back and reincorporate it to explain authoritarian politics. In nondemocratic regimes, a leader can gain access to power by using repression and co-optation, but in the long run, all types of regimes, be they autocratic or democratic, must legitimate their rule (Dukalskis and Gerschewski 2017, 252). Kailitz (2013) argues that a political regime is durable when both the elite and the ordinary people believe in the ruler's right to rule; thus, the legitimation claims of the regime must be credible (Kailitz 2013, 41). Kailitz attempts to classify political regimes based on the patterns of legitimation and finds that three types of political regimes, namely monarchy, communist ideocracy, and liberal democracy, exhibit a relatively strong pattern compared with other regime types (Kailitz 2013).

Gerschewski (2013) argues that "we miss an important causal factor when we bracket out legitimation" (Gerschewski 2013, 18); therefore, to explain stable autocracies, this study views legitimation as one of the critical factors that keep autocrats in power and attempts to operationalize it as ideological control mechanisms. In this regard, some studies have pioneered the elaboration of ideology and legitimation into a framework. Dukalskis (2017), for instance, argues that the ruling ideologies contribute to authoritarian persistence and proposes an original framework for explaining how this occurs. To explain how authoritarian regimes manipulate the public spheres, Dukalskis schematizes ruling ideologies into six mechanisms of legitimating messages: concealment, framing, blaming, inevitability, mythologized origins, and promised land (Dukalskis 2017). Moreover, in a more recent study, Dukalskis (2021) diverges from the traditional approach of authoritarian regimes' claims to legitimacy as domestic means by examining how they use different tactics to influence their image perception abroad. These tactics include not only classical external propaganda but also extraterritorial censorship and repression (Dukalskis 2021, 4–5), as it is "more than just

telling a good story about the country" – it is "about cultivating specific individuals or groups to promote the government's perspectives" (Dukalskis 2021, 2–3). Dukalskis refers to this as "authoritarian image management" and proposes four mechanisms to explain how it operates, which vary in form ("promotional" and "obstructive") and intended target ("diffuse" and "specific" groups) (Dukalskis 2021).

Second, for autocrats, repression is probably "the most obvious strategy for political survival" (Frantz and Kendall-taylor 2014, 334). In that regard, an earlier generation of scholarship demonstrated that strong states and parties enhance autocratic stability (Huntington 1968; Skocpol 1979). As Davenport (2007a) states, research on repression is "fundamentally concerned with why and how political authorities use coercive power domestically amid potential and existing challenges and challengers" (Davenport 2007a, 1–2). In his work, he discusses four examples of state repression literature. Among them, two findings reflect the subfield's central interests and have gone relatively uncontested in the literature. First, the "Law of Coercive Responsiveness" argues that autocrats generally respond to rising threats with repressive actions to eliminate the threat. Second, the theory of "domestic democratic peace" argues that democratic institutions and activities decrease state repression. Two other findings have been less central and are highly contested, namely the influence of the domestic and international economies and the influence of international agreements on human rights practices (Davenport 2007a).

The role of state coercive capacity is critical to authoritarian stability. Thus, if a government has a greater capacity to prevent or crack down on opposition, it would be more likely to survive for longer. The leadership may employ various forms of repression. In this regard, Levitsky and Way (2010) offer an instructive distinction between high- and low-intensity coercion based on the people or institution targeted and the form of violence employed. High-intensity coercion refers to "high-visibility acts that target large numbers of people, well-known individuals, or major institutions," such as the violent repression of mass demonstrations, imprisonment, and attempted assassinations of opposition leaders (Levitsky and Way 2010, 57). By contrast, low-intensity coercion includes acts such as surveillance and low-profile physical harassment, and also nonphysical forms such as denial of employment and education opportunities or public services to opposition activists and those with ties to them. While high-intensity coercion is often a reactive measure to an imminent challenge, low-intensity coercion is a preventive attempt to contain such challenges from emerging (Levitsky and Way 2010, 58). In addition, to defend themselves better, autocrats create coercive institutions that are responsible for internal security and intelligence. These coercive

institutions demonstrate variations across different autocratic regimes. To explain why different autocrats make different institutional design choices, Greitens (2016) focuses on the dilemma of autocrats, namely whether to design their coercive apparatus to protect against a coup or to deal with the mass-oriented threat. Greitens argues that between these two threats, autocrats need to choose which one to prioritize "because coup-proofing calls for fragmented and socially exclusive organizations, while protecting against popular unrest demands unitary and inclusive ones"; therefore, autocrats cannot simultaneously tackle both threats (Greitens 2016, 4). In this respect, the present study argues that a coercive apparatus alone cannot lead to autocratic regime stability in the long run. Moreover, although it is certainly a powerful tool, repression alone cannot fully prevent or respond to threats as well. Instead, I argue that different types of social control mechanisms operating under a system can defend autocrats against both elite- and mass-based threats.

The third and the last pillar of autocratic regime stability is co-optation. In this context, following Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003), co-optation is broadly defined as the attempt to tie members of the "selectorate" to the "winning coalition" or, in Svolik's words (2009, 2012), the "ruling coalition." This means that actors who are important to the regime's survival need to be integrated into the elite before they become a threat to the regime. Gandhi and Przeworski (2006, 2007) make a strong case for co-optation via institutions. Democratic institutions such as legislatures, parties, and elections have vital functions for the co-optation of elites. These institutions incorporate the opposition into the regime apparatus and provide them with benefits in exchange for loyalty, thereby reducing opponents' incentives to overthrow the ruler and ultimately prolonging the survival of autocrats (Gandhi and Przeworski 2007). Gandhi and Przeworski (2007) introduce "a degree of institutionalization," arguing that autocrats must accurately perceive the threat level and respond accordingly. They use proxies such as the types of authoritarian leaders (monarchs, military, or civilian), frequency of past leadership changes, percentage of other democracies in the world, and mineral resource endowments as predictors of institutionalization. Then, they compare the predicted number of parties with the actual number and demonstrate that under-institutionalization drastically reduces autocrats' tenure, whereas correct institutionalization leads to rulers surviving in power for longer (Gandhi and Przeworski 2007).

According to Svolik (2009), the central problem of authoritarian governance is the conflict of interest between the dictator and his ruling coalition, which he elaborates as the problem of power sharing. While the dictator wants to acquire more power at the expense of the members of the ruling coalition, said coalition can then threaten the dictator with a coup.

However, the threat needs to be credible as a coup may fail; therefore, it is potentially very costly and the ruling coalition receives only imperfect signals regarding the dictator's actions. As a result, Svolik argues, two authoritarian power-sharing regimes occur: contested and established dictatorships. Unlike established dictators who are removed from office because of exogenous factors, such as popular uprisings or foreign intervention, and not because of a power struggle between the dictator and the ruling coalition, frequent coups can be observed in a contested dictatorship (Svolik 2009, 478). In contrast to Gandhi and Przeworski (2006), who view the function of institutions in authoritarian regimes as a tool for dividing and co-opting potential opposition, Svolik views them as tools for alleviating "the moral hazard associated with authoritarian power sharing" (Svolik 2009, 492).

Moreover, past scholarship has largely overlooked the less visible everyday mechanisms in autocratic regimes. Such mechanisms gained popularity in studies on the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany (Arendt 1951; Friedrich and Brzezinski 1965); however, with the decline of totalitarianism studies, research interest on this topic has somewhat declined as well. Since then, as discussed above, scholars have focused more on elite-level politics or institutions to understand autocratic regime stability. Although this approach is certainly valid, it ignores the daily realities of the vast majority of the populations under authoritarian rule (Dukalskis and Joo 2020, 3). In this dissertation, I argue that the ability to accumulate sufficient knowledge and control over the everyday lives of ordinary people is instrumental to the durability of autocratic regimes.

Autocrats use different types of mechanisms to control the population's daily lives. Slater and Fenner (2011) discuss four "infrastructural mechanisms" that authoritarian regimes employ to stay in power: coercing rivals, extracting revenues, registering citizens, and cultivating dependence. Among these mechanisms, registering citizens is a fitting example of everyday surveillance because it enhances the legibility of society as subjects of the state, thereby providing the capacity for large-scale social engineering (Scott 1998). Legibility is fundamental for operating an effective control system in an authoritarian regime. As Slater and Fenner argue, "registration and the legibility it produces are not only valuable to make repression *selective*; they also make state policies more *effective*" (Slater and Fenner 2011, 22; emphasis in the original text). In addition to registration, autocrats take advantage of social organizations and use them to monitor the population. These organizations conduct surveillance and indoctrination tasks, thereby becoming powerful assistants to the regime. In the case of autocratic regimes, the less visible government agencies are often more powerful. Therefore, this study argues that it is critical to look beyond the formal institutions and pay

more attention to the everyday control mechanisms of autocracies. Another measure for restricting people's daily activities is to control their movement. In their analysis of the relationship between international travel and authoritarian stability, Alemán and Woods (2014) find that restricting travel is more likely to lead to stability than not doing so. They argue that even though imposing restrictions on civil liberties, such as travel restrictions, increases complaints from citizens, autocratic regimes that impose restrictions are more stable than those that do not because restrictions reduce the cost of repression (Alemán and Woods 2014).

In sum, previous studies have broadened the autocracy research spectrum by tackling various factors that lead to regime stability. Nevertheless, more research is required for designing a systematic framework. Most relevant research has focused on one specific institution or strategy. Gerschewski conducted a study (2013) that was an effort to address this issue. He developed a theoretical framework for explaining the stability of autocratic regimes by focusing on three pillars: legitimation, repression, and co-optation. He argues that the exogenous, endogenous, and reciprocal reinforcement processes that occur both within and between these three pillars generate stability in autocratic regimes (Gerschewski 2013). Although the three pillars model is promising, it is unsuitable for explaining the daily life surveillance and control mechanisms imposed on ordinary people. I argue that autocratic regimes are more durable when they have sufficient knowledge and control over the population and their everyday activities.

Furthermore, I argue that the concept of "social control" needs to be incorporated to explain autocratic regime stability. Social control has been a vital concept in the field of social sciences for analyzing how to achieve social order and cooperation. From the 1960s onwards, the concept began to be widely used in the field of criminology to explain the factors that prevent deviant behavior. At that point, social control connoted a more coercive sense and changed its orientation from "cooperation to coercion" and "harmony to conflict" (Rothman 1983, 109). In nondemocratic regimes, leaders exploit the concept of social control in designing their survival mechanisms. When it comes to different forms of social control, a common approach in the scholarly literature is to classify the concept as "formal" or "informal" control (Bergemann 2017; Black 1984; Cohen and Scull 1983; Innes 2003). Formal social control refers to institutions that operate to prevent chaos in society, such as the police and military, whereas informal social control includes customs, social pressure, and peer group opinion. However, this dichotomous manner of classification cannot accurately explain the concept of social control because empirical situations exist where differentiating

formal control from informal control is often difficult. Consequently, in this study, I introduce an alternative approach for classifying social control, namely "reactive" or "proactive" control. This is based on Cohen (1985), who defines the concept as organized responses to crime and delinquency, which are conceived "whether in the reactive sense (after the putative act has taken place or the actor been identified) or in the proactive sense (to prevent the act)" (Cohen 1985, 3). From this perspective, control measures can be applied reactively or preemptively to episodes that challenge the stability of a regime. I argue that in more enduring autocratic regimes, various social control mechanisms operate simultaneously under a system that contributes to regime stability. Although the control mechanisms may vary depending on regime types and characteristics, this study argues that autocratic regimes mainly implement three control mechanisms: ideological, physical, and daily life control. These mechanisms complement each other and autocrats implement them accordingly depending on the cause and level of threats.

In conclusion, despite a resurgence of interest in authoritarian political systems, a theoretical perspective on the stability of autocratic regimes remains under-examined. This study argues that the concept of social control adds value in explaining durable autocracies and attempts to connect the scholarship on social control with autocracy research. Social control measures can be implemented reactively or proactively, which allows the agents to respond to threats more flexibly. In addition, this study argues that to explain the longevity of highly repressive regimes, it is crucial to diverge from a focus on overt repression and elite politics and pay attention to everyday control mechanisms. This dissertation is an effort to satisfy this need. It argues that the stability of autocratic regimes is due to the operationalization of a social control system that combines ideological, physical, and daily life control.

1.2 Understanding Authoritarian Control in North Korea

North Korea is a fitting example of a highly repressive and long-lasting dictatorship. Since its founding in 1948, North Korea has been ruled by a dictatorship under the Kim family. It is the only country in the world to have undergone three-generational hereditary succession. North Korea ranked 178 out of 179 countries in the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem)'s "Liberal Democracy Index 2020" and was placed at the bottom among 167 countries in the Economist Intelligence Unit's "Democracy Index 2020" for the 16th consecutive year. In

addition, North Korea scored 3 out of 100 in Freedom House's "Freedom in the World 2021" index and has been designated "the Worst of the Worst" for political rights and civil liberties. These rankings tell us that the North Korean regime has consistently maintained hard authoritarian control, decade after decade, through two leadership successions.

As described above, North Korea's repressiveness and lack of freedom place the country at the bottom of most democracy rankings. However, starting from the founder Kim Il Sung to the incumbent leader Kim Jong Un, the Kim regime has appeared to be capable of surviving extreme shocks. Therefore, North Korea is a useful case study. If a theoretical framework of autocratic regime stability can explain the durability of the North Korean regime, then it is likely that it can explain less repressive autocratic regimes.

Studying North Korea is challenging in many ways. Scholars are not able to conduct fieldwork, let alone enter the country, and constantly grapple with a lack of relevant and reliable data. Nevertheless, scholarship on North Korean politics and society has made great progress, especially since the 1990s. According to Song (2021), the number of North Korea-related articles in academic journals on JSTOR using "North Korea" as a keyword has almost doubled every 10 years since 1990. The themes have also diversified, with political science representing the dominant field followed by international relations, Asian studies, history, and military studies (Song 2021, 206–7). Methodologies used in North Korean studies largely include novel uses of data, interviews with defectors, and theoretical approaches (Song 2021). In addition, a growing body of work is attempting to engage the authoritarianism literature to understand the internal dynamics of North Korea. In this section, I discuss three strands of such scholarship, namely legitimation, repression, and everyday politics in North Korea.

First, there is a well-established research field on North Korea's legitimation claims. Chung (1993) divides legitimation into two categories, namely legitimation through rational or irrational means, and argues that North Korea would be ranked at the extreme irrational end. In Chung's view, the fact that Kim Il Sung was able to preserve "irrationally legitimated political order" was due to the "successful transformation of his 'extraordinariness' into charismatic authority" (Chung 1993, 89). He adds that this suggests the "efficiency not only of ideological manipulation and socialization but of the institutionalization of Kim's charisma" (Chung 1993, 93). Thus, in contrast to Weber's concept, Chung argues that original charisma can be institutionalized and transferred "under certain circumstances, occurring in a paired sequence and/or through a manufacturing process" (Chung 1993, 94).

Ideology is regarded as a critical dimension of authoritarian legitimation strategy, and it especially plays a larger role in closed authoritarian regimes (von Soest and Grauvogel

2017). The North Korean regime also relies heavily on ideology as its legitimation mechanism. The regime is "a near text-book example" of one that exploits ideology to indoctrinate its own people (Yoon 2016, 230). Kailitz (2013) argues that rulers justify their rule in two ways: (1) by claiming that they possess "a God-given natural, historical or religious *right to rule*" or that they have "a God-given natural, historical or religious *purpose to rule*"; or (2) "by procedures that guarantee that the people are able to select and control the rulers themselves" (Kailitz 2013, 43; emphasis added by the author). Obviously, North Korea's leaders have relied on the first method. Starting from the *Juche* ideology of self-reliance, to the *Songun* (military-first) ideology and *Kim Il Sung-Kim Jong Il-ism*, the leaders adapted the ideology to demonstrate their right to rule. Yoon (2016) describes the Juche ideology as one of the pillars of North Korean "ideocratic legitimation" that sustains the regime's "unusual political resilience" (Yoon 2016). Y. Park (2014) uses the path-dependence theory to explain how the ideological legacies of the regime, namely the monolithic system, Juche ideology, and military-first policy, still have great influence on North Korea's political processes. Park argues that the Kim Jong Un regime's policies and ideologies do not differ greatly from those of the previous regimes, and that they are in fact a continuation of existing policies. This is because it is far more reasonable and safer for the Kim Jong Un regime to preserve the status quo than to deal with disorder and opposition (Y. S. Park 2014, 11). On the other hand, using a ruling ideology to justify the regime's legitimacy has limits in territorial boundaries and does not often encompass overseas audiences. In this regard, in a recent study on authoritarian image management, Dukalskis (2021) provides an example of how the North Korean state crafts its image perception abroad to enhance or protect its legitimacy. He explains that North Korea maintains "a multidimensional image management strategy," which includes a network of Chongryon,[2] a network of North Korea sympathizers around the world, efforts to attract foreign tourists, and the use of official media and YouTube channels (Dukalskis 2021, 160). Dukalskis analyzes two specific examples, namely Chongryon's efforts to craft an appealing image of North Korea among Koreans in Japan and the global network of North Korea sympathizer organizations. He argues that although these efforts may have been effective in the past, they appear to be "outdated and ill-suited to the contemporary world because the country was slow and hesitant to adapt to new realities" (Dukalskis 2021, 160).

[2] The General Association of Korean Residents in Japan, abbreviated as Chongryon, was established in May 1955. It is a pro-North Korea left-wing organization.

Second, previous scholarship has enhanced our understanding of how the North Korean regime uses repression to maintain control. Some scholars have conducted in-depth analyses of the coercive security apparatus. Gause (2012) argues that despite economic hardship and various crises in the 1990s, the regime maintained its stability because North Korea is a "police state." He describes the origin and development of the following three agencies responsible for internal security: the State Security Department (SSD; also referred to as the Ministry of State Security), the Ministry of People's Security (MPS), and the Military Security Command (MSC) (Gause 2012). Chon (2003) focuses specifically on the origin and organization of the MPS, arguing that it is vital to understand its function as it is the main agency for closely monitoring ordinary people at the grassroots level (Chon 2003, 3). These studies have provided us with in-depth information on the North Korean coercive apparatus. However, they have tended to focus more on introducing factual findings, such as the organization and hierarchy of the agency, and less on analyzing its impact on the stability and durability of the regime. Moreover, some studies have focused on coercive control and purges at the elite level. Upon gaining power, new leaders and successors must build their own support base to deter political challenges. They attempt to coup-proof the regime by providing members of the elite with benefits and including them in the regime apparatus – in short by sharing power (Svolik 2012b). Haggard, Herman, and Ryu (2014) look closely at personnel changes in three core political institutions in North Korea – the National Defense Commission (NDC), the Politburo, and the Secretariat – from the beginning of the Kim Jong Il era through the first year and a half of the Kim Jong Un era. Their findings reveal that the military's overall representation increased in both absolute and relative terms, but it was mostly civilians who had been promoted into general ranks. According to the authors, both the incumbent Kim Jong Il and the successor Kim Jong Un recognized potential threats from existing military elites and attempted to coup-proof the political system. However, contrary to the literature on authoritarian institutions, coup-proofing was achieved "not through power-sharing but through purges, the appointment of new non-military loyalists, and the development of altogether new lines of hierarchical control" (Haggard, Herman, and Ryu 2014, 776).

In addition, political prison camps called *kwanliso* play an active role as a repression mechanism in North Korea. Although the North Korean regime officially denies their existence, five active camps have been identified as of 2021: Kwanliso No. 14 in Gaechon, Kwanliso No. 15 in Yodok, Kwanliso No. 16 in Myeonggan, Kwanliso No. 18 in Gaechon, and Kwanliso No. 25 in Chongjin (Kyung-sub Oh et al. 2021, 526–27). The management and

functions of the five camps differ in some ways. For instance, most of them are run by the Ministry of State Security except for Kwanliso No. 18, which is managed by the MPS. In addition, several categories, such as whether the prisoners can return to society or whether family members can accompany them, determine where prisoners are sent (Kyung-sub Oh et al. 2021, 528–29). The North Korean state practices *yeonjwaje* (guilt by association); therefore, when an individual is sentenced to a political prison camp, the rest of the family members must generally follow. For this reason, North Koreans tend to endure injustice and hardship rather than attempting to escape the country or publicly protesting, which ultimately makes it easier for the regime to keep people in line (Kongdan Oh and Hassig 2000, 139).

Lastly, a growing body of research studies everyday life in North Korea. Choi (2013) as well as Dukalskis and Joo (2020) have used the concepts of "everyday politics" and "everyday authoritarianism," respectively, to examine the effect of changes in the daily lives of North Koreans. Choi explains that when ordinary residents are faced with a dire reality in which they must seek resources and survive on their own, "they begin to resist against the regime through informal and private methods in passive but clever ways," defined as "everyday politics" or "everyday life resistance" (C. Choi 2013, 657). Through survival mechanisms such as illegal market activities, bribery, and sharing of information especially related to market activities, Choi argues, that North Korean residents seek to coexist with the leadership in a state of uncertainty (C. Choi 2013, 671). Dukalskis and Joo focus on three domains (marketization, outside information, and increased corruption) to understand how everyday practices diverge from official government priorities. Their finding suggests that while changes in these areas have altered the North Korean system to adapt to new realities, the state system still remains coercive enough to suppress collective challenges (Dukalskis and Joo 2020). They argued that life in North Korea is "dualised" into official and nonofficial spheres, "with people acting as if they are loyal citizens publicly while skirting rules and questioning the government privately" (Dukalskis and Joo 2020, 2).

Some studies have focused on specific aspects of the North Korean regime's everyday surveillance and indoctrination activities. Lankov et al. (2012) examine the "organizational life" of North Koreans. Every adult North Korean must be affiliated with one type of government-supervised organization depending on their age, gender, and employment. In every organization, ten to twenty-five members form one cell and each cell holds three meetings every week, which is referred to as organizational life. Two meetings focus on ideological indoctrination through lectures and political study sessions, while the purpose of the third meeting, which is known as *saenghwalchonghwa,* is surveillance. In

saenghwalchonghwa sessions, participants present a brief report of their misdeeds and the other participants offer criticism and suggest ways to improve their behavior. Lankov et al. argue that organizational life plays a major role in manufacturing consent in North Korean society as well as in maintaining domestic stability (Lankov, Kwak, and Cho 2012). According to Lee and Hwang (2008), however, the significance of organizational life began to decline from the 1990s (W. Lee and Hwang 2008). In the testimonies of North Korean defectors, a great deal of passive resistance to these meetings can be found, especially since the 1990s. For instance, some people may give bribes to the cell leader to skip the meeting or, in some cases, the cell leader may forgo the *saenghwalchonghwa* session by allowing participants to write down their mistakes and solutions on paper (H.-C. Ahn 2014, 129–30). Nevertheless, even though organizational life may have lost significance, it has not collapsed completely; people still participate in ways that are possible regardless of their feelings toward the regime. This demonstrates that organizational life operates as an effective control system at the grassroots level.

Furthermore, some South Korean scholars have focused on the various types of social control mechanisms in North Korea. Lee (1999) presents an early attempt to adopt the concept of social control to explain the political system in North Korea. He argues that despite the internal and external crises of the 1990s, the North Korean regime was able to maintain a high degree of social integration due to the social control system. He divides the regime's social control mechanisms into two parts: "physical control," which includes the coercive apparatus, the judicial system, and the penal system, and "social and ideological control," which includes ideological indoctrination, the classification system, and the ration system (Lee 1999). However, Lee does not clearly define and operationalize these two mechanisms, which makes it difficult to apply them to different cases or even different time periods within North Korea.

Other scholars have concentrated on a specific agency or period in North Korea to examine the social control measures. Choi and Lee (2012) focus on the role of the MPS in operating the social control system. The MPS plays a key role in monitoring and controlling ordinary North Koreans. For instance, it is in charge of the travel permit and resident registration systems. In North Korea, workplaces, organizations, and state institutions are closely intertwined, which means that moving to a new place of residence means changing one's workplace as well. Thus, it is not easy to move outside of one's original place of residence, and one must apply for a travel permit even for a short trip outside of one's region. As the state's ration system is based on the resident registration system, people are essentially

tied to their residence and workplaces (E.-R. Choi and Lee 2012, 204). This allows the regime to track and regulate the movement of people. In addition, Choi and Lee discuss other social control elements of the MPS, such as the operation of prison camps, the penal system and execution, and the classification system. Although they provide detailed examples of the MPS's role in social control, the authors concentrate on the role of one specific state agency and do not examine the social control system holistically. Ahn (2014), on the other hand, focuses on a specific time period in North Korea, namely the Kim Jong Il era, and argues that the regime's social control measures changed after the harsh "Arduous March" period in the 1990s. Ahn compares the changes in the regime's social control before and after the Arduous March period with three aspects: the agent, structure, and tactics of control (by persuasion or by force). According to Ahn, the agent of social control changed from the party to the military as the military substituted the party's role in times of crisis. In addition, the structure of social control became more pragmatic, which allowed decentralization in some areas. During the Arduous March period, the centralized planned economy virtually collapsed, which also led to the collapse of the ration system. In response, the regime introduced limited market elements. Lastly, regarding the methods of social control, Ahn argues that whereas "control by persuasion," such as ideological indoctrination and food distribution, was dominant in the pre-Arduous March period, "control by force" prevailed after the period with the engagement of the military (H.-C. Ahn 2014).

In sum, previous scholarship on North Korea provides a solid foundation and significant potential for further research. Adding to the scholarship, this dissertation is related to the strand of research on social control in North Korea. This study shares a similar argument with previous studies in that the social control system allows the North Korean regime to overcome challenges and maintain stability. On the other hand, this study diverges from previous studies on several points. First, it conceptualizes social control by dividing it into reactive and proactive control, and then attempts to construct social control as a system in autocracies. Second, it includes the most recent development of the social control system in North Korea by examining the period under the incumbent leader Kim Jong Un. Finally, most previous studies on social control in North Korea have been written in Korean and thus remain inaccessible to scholars without Korean language skills, and this dissertation attempts to accommodate for this limitation.

1.3 Aims of the Dissertation

This dissertation has two main objectives. The first objective is to provide a theoretical framework for explaining how autocracies maintain regime stability by using the concept of social control. Historically, a few autocrats have been proven to have defended themselves better than most others, thereby managing to prolong their time in office. This suggests that in the more enduring autocracies, a densely designed control system is operating throughout the whole of society. I define this system as the "social control system." According to my findings, although social control is not an entirely new concept for describing some functions of autocracies, it has not been clearly conceptualized. In this study, social control is theorized into "reactive" or "proactive" control. Reactive social control measures are implemented after an event has already occurred, whereas proactive social control measures operate to prevent the act or establish coping mechanisms. Based on these definitions, a ruler or an agency responds reactively or preemptively to an episode that has challenged or could potentially challenge the stability of the regime. Therefore, constructing social control into a system is a novel approach for explaining autocratic regime stability.

I argue that the social control system is established after a regime experiences its first major political shock. At this critical juncture, the regime constructs various mechanisms that could lead to stability. After the genesis of the system, the mechanisms operate either proactively or reactively to reach the outcome of stability. Then, when the regime experiences the next political shock, the system adopts self-reinforcing processes to follow the same path. However, if the shock cannot be managed with the existing mechanisms, they might undergo adaptation.

The social control mechanisms may vary depending on the types or features of regimes; however, this dissertation argues that there are overlapping mechanisms in autocratic regimes and identifies three common elements of the system: *ideological control*, *physical control*, and *daily life control*. Depending on the circumstances, these control mechanisms either work alone or simultaneously to maximize the control effect. First, ideological control is crucial for justifying the legitimacy of the regime. Ideological control measures include indoctrination through the ruling ideology and the control of media and education as tools of propaganda. Second, as for physical control, the regime rulers physically oppress the ruled and use instruments to maintain their grip on power. In autocracies, repression is one of the key instruments of regime maintenance. The operation of the coercive apparatus and repressive penal system could be examples of physical control.

Lastly, I consider control over everyday life to be one of the main pillars of autocratic regime stability. When autocrats possess sufficient knowledge over the population's daily lives, they can control or prevent potential threats against them and the regime. To control and regulate people's daily lives, autocrats implement a centralized registration system or develop policies to restrict people's mobility.

The second aim of this dissertation is to conduct a case study and apply the theory of the social control system to North Korea. The North Korean regime has proven its durability for over 70 years through three-generational hereditary succession despite various hardships. The regime's stability is challenging to explain. Its internal politics are well hidden and it is almost impossible to gather information from outside. Nevertheless, this study argues that with the appropriate theoretical framework, analyzing the stability mechanisms of autocratic regimes should be possible, even in an extreme case like North Korea.

Throughout the case studies in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, I argue that the North Korean regime survived political shocks and maintained its stability due to the social control system and its adaptation. There were three main episodes when the stability of the North Korean regime was severely challenged. As for the starting point of this study, I examine post-Korean War North Korea because, although the peninsula has been divided in half since the liberation in 1945, the civil war was the event that clearly divided the two Koreas. The first case was Kim Il Sung's power consolidation period in the mid-1950s. At that time, in post-liberation and post-war North Korea, different communist factions struggled to dominate the political scene. Among them, Kim Il Sung's Guerilla faction began to dominate, which triggered the opposing factions to conspire to launch a coup attempt at the August plenum in 1956 to potentially overthrow Kim Il Sung. Externally, the Eastern bloc was undergoing changes, starting with the de-Stalinization process, while the Soviet Union and China, the two biggest patrons of North Korea, clashed over different interpretations of socialism. Despite everything, Kim Il Sung gained full legitimacy as the absolute leader of North Korea and institutionalized the Monolithic Ideological System (MIS), which allowed him to remain as the leader until his death.

The second case was the "Arduous March" period of the 1990s. From the early 1990s, the regime experienced a series of events that seriously shook its stability. The Soviet Union collapsed and Eastern European countries started the process of democratization and economic liberalization, which left North Korea more isolated from the world. Meanwhile, the domestic situation was unfavorable. North Korea's founding father Kim Il Sung died in 1994 and the regime prepared for leadership succession to his son Kim Jong Il. In addition,

the country was hit by a series of natural disasters and suffered a severe economic crisis, which led to food shortages and mass starvation of the population. However, the regime survived and Kim Jong Il maintained his status as the supreme leader of North Korea until his son took over the position.

Third, the most recent shock to the regime was the second leadership succession. When Kim Jong Un became leader in 2011 after the death of his father Kim Jong Il, external North Korean watchers had doubts regarding his status as leader. He was young, inexperienced, and presumed to have a weak support base because of his time spent abroad. In addition, since the Arduous March period, an increasing number of North Koreans had defected from the country, which allowed outside information to flow into North Korea. Moreover, due to the collapse of the public distribution system (PDS), markets began to spread rapidly throughout the country. This was problematic, not only because it facilitated marketization but also because markets would increase the mobility of the people, which was strictly regulated. Nevertheless, the leadership transfer to Kim Jong Un was successful and today he stands as the sole legitimate leader of North Korea.

This study contributes to two different bodies of research. The first and foremost contribution is to autocracy research. While research on how and why autocracies maintain stability has been gaining an increasing amount of interest, a theoretical framework for explaining these questions remains underdeveloped. Previous studies have mostly focused on one or two elements; thus, a systematic theory that will allow researchers to conduct comparative studies requires further development. This study aims to provide an original theory of the social control system that can be applied to all autocracies. The goal is to contribute to the discussion of autocracies by describing the circumstances under which autocrats design a social control system, the conditions under which various types of control mechanisms emerge or adapt, and the intensity and the degree to which they are effective.

Second, this study also contributes to the field of area studies, particularly (North) Korean studies. Although an increasing number of studies are being conducted on North Korea, the country's social control mechanisms still remain an understudied subject. Based on this study's literature review, the term social control has been used by some academics in South Korea to describe the North Korean regime's maintenance strategy (Ahn 2014; Bae 2011; Jeong 2014; Lee 1999; Oh 2009b). They have referred to it as a "social control system" or "social control mechanism." However, this study finds two limitations here: First, these scholars have not precisely defined social control or conceptualized the term within the scope of political science literature; furthermore, their conceptualization and operationalization of

the social control system have been lacking in theory, which makes it difficult to observe the development of control mechanisms over different time periods. Second, by providing North Korea-specific examples, previous studies have been limited to the North Korean context and have not attempted to generalize the case in the broader context of autocracies. Therefore, this study provides a novel contribution to the literature by explaining North Korea's social control system with authoritarianism literature.

1.4 Plan of the Dissertation

The remainder of this dissertation is organized in six chapters. Chapter 2 discusses the theoretical foundation of the study. It first examines the origin and development of the concept of social control. In the early twentieth century, social control was at the center of discussion on how to achieve order in society. However, the concept experienced a rebirth in the 1950s and 1960s, when it began to connote a more coercive meaning. From that point on, social control has been widely used in criminology and represents a sense of repression and regulation. Building on this discussion, the chapter provides a definition of social control. Then, moving on to conceptualization, it classifies social control into "reactive" or "proactive" control and describes how it operates as a "system" in autocracies. Here, three major waves of autocracy research in contemporary political science are briefly reviewed along with the different types of survival strategies of autocratic regimes. Finally, the chapter proposes a new theoretical framework of the social control system to analyze the stability of autocratic regimes. The following section on the social control system's operationalization describes the three control mechanisms of ideological, physical, and daily life control. These control mechanisms are not static – they are reproduced and adapted to overcome the political shock and maintain regime stability. In addition, they complement each other and operate alone or simultaneously to maximize the effect. For each control mechanism, a definition is presented, followed by two of the most common means of control and how to measure its intensity.

Chapter 3 presents the research design and methodological foundation of this study. Based on the analysis, a case study approach is determined to be the most fitting choice for demonstrating the theoretical arguments of this study. By conducting in-depth empirical analysis, this dissertation attempts to trace how the three control mechanisms (ideological, physical, and daily life) contribute to the stability of autocratic regimes. This chapter then discusses case selection methods. It justifies the within-case analysis of the North Korean

regime and briefly summarizes the three cases. Then, data and data collection methods are discussed with a detailed description of the fieldwork.

The next three chapters (Chapters 4–6) present case studies of the social control system in North Korea. The cases are examined in chronological order. For each case study, the same structure is applied. First, the historical background of the period before the political shock is presented to situate the case in the right context. Second, the event that caused the political shock that challenged the regime's stability is discussed. Finally, the types of control mechanisms that the regime used to overcome the shock are analyzed.

Chapter 4 deals with the birth of the social control system in North Korea, which is the first case study of this dissertation. The 1950s and 1960s were a critical period in North Korea. The country was fresh out of colonization and civil war and had begun the process of state building. This chapter argues that the major events that occurred during this time ultimately designed the foundation of the social control system of North Korea. Four communist factions with different backgrounds and experiences were struggling to survive in the political arena. From early on, Kim Il Sung and his Manchurian guerrilla faction began to dominate. In addition, in the international arena, communist states were undergoing a turbulent period characterized by de-Stalinization and the Sino–Soviet split. The tension peaked in 1956 when some of the foreign faction members, who had close ties with the Soviet Union and China, planned to put a stop to Kim Il Sung's dictatorial leadership, publicly criticizing him at the August plenum. This chapter argues that, at this critical juncture, Kim Il Sung designed the social control system. It further argues that because the social control system was established during the regime's founding period, it became the self-reinforcing mechanism of the regime, which ultimately led to the stability of the Kim Il Sung regime. The chapter then proceeds to discuss each control mechanism. First, Kim Il Sung developed the *Juche* ideology of self-reliance, which became the fundamental element of North Korea's ideological control. Second, he conducted massive purges and established the coercive apparatus. Lastly, the regime designed a complex registration system and organizations to control the everyday life of the people. The chapter observes the time period up until the social control system achieved the outcome of the stability of the Kim Il Sung regime, which was the institutionalization of the MIS in 1967.

Chapter 5 discusses the survival of the social control system under the rule of Kim Jong Il, the second leader of North Korea. Starting from the late 1980s, the North Korean regime experienced a series of shocks that severely challenged its stability. The Soviet Union collapsed and communist states in Eastern Europe began the process of democratization and

economic liberalization. This resulted in North Korea becoming more isolated and its economy suffering greatly due to the reduction in aid from the Soviet Union. The mid-1990s was the watershed period. The country's founding father Kim Il Sung died in 1994 and the regime prepared for the first hereditary succession to his son Kim Jong Il. In addition, the state economy was on the brink of collapse, and the situation grew much worse due to famine and a series of natural disasters. This period is referred to as the "Arduous March," which is regarded as the toughest period in the country's history since the Korean War. This chapter defines the Arduous March period as the second political shock to the regime. The series of events that occurred during this period influenced the development of the social control system in causally significant ways. The previous system was no longer able to guarantee increasing returns. Therefore, this chapter argues that the social control system was reinforced and adjusted at this juncture, which ultimately led to the survival of the regime and the second hereditary leadership succession. As for ideological control, Kim Jong Il layered the new ideologies of Songun and "Our-style socialism" on top of the Juche ideology to reactivate the ideological indoctrination. Regarding physical control mechanisms, the regime increased the level of repression and the military became deeply involved in state affairs, including the daily lives of the people. Lastly, the economic shocks during the 1990s in particular had an impact on the daily life control mechanisms. As the PDS broke down, controlling people's movement became more difficult. Nevertheless, the new government adopted coercive measures to oppress people.

Chapter 6 focuses on the final case study of this dissertation, namely the adaptation of the social control system under the incumbent leader Kim Jong Un. This chapter focuses on the period from 2011 when Kim Jong Un became leader until 2019 before the global COVID-19 pandemic began. Since the Arduous March period, many Pyongyang watchers had predicted that the North Korean regime was nearing its end. This argument intensified when the North Korean media announced the death of Kim Jong Il in 2011. The successor Kim Jong Un was young, inexperienced, and did not have a solid political base in North Korea. This chapter views this event as the third shock of the regime. It argues that due to the adaptation and modification of the social control system, the new Kim Jong Un regime recovered from the shock. Some control mechanisms were adapted to more effectively accommodate the changing environment, while some have been strengthened to maximize their effect. First, a new state ideology called "Kim Il Sung-Kim Jong Il-ism" was introduced to highlight the successor's family roots and emphasize the foundational myth element. Despite the new naming, this ideology is essentially a reinterpretation and modification of the

existing Juche and Songun ideologies. In addition, the new leadership attempted to incorporate nonideologically based legitimation mechanisms to counter the diminishing effect of bloodline-dependent succession logic. Second, the new leader removed and reshuffled high-ranking officials to consolidate his status and rebalance the party and military. The regime facilitated the operation of the coercive apparatus and unpredictable elite purges were observed, which even included family members. Third, the daily life control mechanisms were modified to allow some flexibility inside the country; however, the regime tightened border control to prevent North Koreans from leaving the country.

Finally, Chapter 7 concludes the dissertation by discussing the theoretical and empirical contributions of this dissertation. First, it evaluates the theory of the social control system. It stresses the importance of analyzing autocratic regime stability with a system that is not static but can adapt to changing circumstances. It also discusses the limits of the theoretical model and suggests avenues for future research. In addition, it tests the generalizability of the social control system by conducting a brief comparative case study. Moving on to the empirical cases, the chapter presents a comparative analysis of the three cases as well as the development of the three control mechanisms. Then, it discusses the contributions of the study as well as its limitations before providing ideas for possible future research projects. Lastly, the chapter concludes by discussing the outlook of post-2020 North Korea under the social control system.

2 A Theory of the Social Control System

2.1 The Origin of Social Control as a Sociological Concept

2.1.1 The Birth of the Idea of Social Control

Social control has been a key concept in the field of social sciences. This concept has been used to analyze various aspects of society and how to achieve social order. Its basic idea can be traced to Comte, and even further to Plato and Aristotle. Then, starting in the nineteenth century with Durkheim and his inheritors and passed on to Marx and Weber, the concept of social control remained at the core of answering the question of "how to achieve a degree of organization and regulation consistent with certain moral principles, but without an excessive degree of purely coercive control" (Cohen and Scull 1983, 5).

In the early twentieth century, sociologists such as E. A. Ross and George Herbert Mead greatly contributed to further developing the idea of social control. They used the concept to capture the meaning of "cooperation, of voluntary and harmonious cohesion" and attempted to "promote a greater appreciation of the role of subjective and qualitative values in an understanding of society" (Rothman 1983, 107). Ross is widely known to have introduced social control into sociology. In his book on social control published in 1910, he explains that at the bottom of the notion of social order lies the idea of the absence of collisions. That is, members of an orderly community will not go out of their way to attack each other, and whenever their paths to objectives collide, they will make the necessary adjustment by following the conventional rules. Certain social instincts, such as sympathy, sociability, and a sense of justice, work as ground rules of control. Ross, nevertheless, argues that there must be a recognized authority to draw the line between conflicting interests. Based on his analysis, methods of control include – most importantly – public opinion, law, belief, education, custom, and religion (Ross 1910). In *The Genesis of the Self and Social Control*, Mead claims that "in so far as there are social acts, there are social objects, and social control is bringing the act of the individual into relation with this social object" (Mead 1925, 273). He adds that social control then "depends upon the degree to which the individuals in society are able to assume the attitudes of the others who are involved with them in common endeavor" (Mead 1925, 275). In sum, Ross and Mead were concerned with understanding

how people engage in common efforts to achieve harmony and how that cooperation has an impact on society.

Karl Mannheim used social control as a focal point of interpretation in his collection of studies titled *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction* (1940). Mannheim's main thesis was that society is undergoing swift transitions, so it requires planning. The purpose of such planning is to achieve social order. Social control, whether exercised by a central group of leaders or democratically diffused throughout society, is then vital in its connection with the process in acquiring the order. He views freedom as a particular type of social control and claims the importance of freedom and self-expression if social planning were not to fall into an authoritarian rule (Mannheim 1940).

Janowitz defined social control as "the capacity of a society to regulate itself in accordance with desired principles and values" (Janowitz 1975, 82). According to him, many previous empirical writings about social control have frequently portrayed norms and normative behaviors as its indicators. However, Janowitz argues that social control does not solely rest on this concept, but rather incorporates the "ecological, technological, economic, and institutional dimensions of social organization" (Janowitz 1975, 88).

The idea of social control continued to be a topic of discussion among social scientists who were searching for a more adequate approach to problems of social change and social order. More specifically, they posed the following question: "[H]ow do social actors, both intentionally and unintentionally, on a personal level and when acting in groups, come to conform with norms and rules so that the social world can be understood as ordered, rather than chaotic?" (Innes 2003, 2). Cohen and Scull argue that the standard method for perceiving the concept of social control is "to erect a typology of the 'means and processes' by which social conformity is achieved" (Cohen and Scull 1983, 6). Moreover, Meier claims that social control can be found in the following three contexts in the sociological literature: "(*a*) as a description of a basic social process or *condition*; (*b*) as a *mechanism* to insure compliance with norms; and (*c*) as a *method* by which to study (or to interpret data about) social order" (Meier 1982, 35). He adds that due to the absence of a common definition of social control, an adequate theory is still missing.

2.1.2 Social Control in a Coercive Sense

The concept of social control experienced a rebirth in the 1950s and 1960s and emerged into a critical concept for explaining the factors that prevent deviant behavior (Black 1984; Cohen

and Scull 1983; Innes 2003; Rothman 1983). Consequently, the concept connoted a more coercive sense in its meaning and was widely accepted in the field of criminology from the late 1960s onwards. At this point, social control had little to do with its traditional meaning and had reversed its orientation from "cooperation to coercion" and "harmony to conflict." From this perspective, the meanings of "social order" and "social cohesion" represented the outcomes of manipulation and regulation (Rothman 1983, 109).

To be able to understand the concept in the roots of criminology, it is crucial to look to the classical argument of Thomas Hobbes. That is, in the state of nature, there is no right and no wrong for there are no laws, no rules, and no restrictions. Every man in a state of nature is governed by his reason and acts out his interests, and if necessary, destroys others when disturbed. As Hobbes argued in *Leviathan* (Hobbes 1651), men live in a perpetual "war of all against all" and the life of man will be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" as they relentlessly seek power and require more power to secure it. There is only one solution open to men: to put a powerful individual – a sovereign – or parliament in charge to make laws and give orders to the subjects.

On the contrary, we question ourselves by asking the following: Why do men obey the rules of society? Why do most people do what they are expected to do without even considering deviant alternatives? First of all, we must explain what deviant behavior is. One of the most widely quoted definitions is by Albert Cohen, who asserted that deviant behavior is "behavior which violates institutionalized expectations – that is, expectations which are shared and recognized as legitimate within a social system" (Cohen 1959, 462). Cohen saw that the factors that produce deviance have implications for social control. In addition, he argues that social control is used to refer to "anything that people do that is socially defined as doing something about deviance, whether that something is prevention, deterrence, reform, vengeance, justice, reparation, compensation, or the moral enhancement of the victim" (Cohen 1966, 39). In short, deviant behavior refers to something that ought not to occur, and social control is the effort to respond to these violations (Horwitz 1990, 10).

Travis Hirschi is known to be the first to have systematically proposed social control theory in his book *Causes of Delinquency* (1969), which had a profound influence in criminology. Unlike most criminology theories, which aim to explain why people offend, social control theory offers a justification for why people obey rules. In his book, Hirschi defines delinquency as acts that are thought to result in punishment of the person committing them when detected by agents of the larger society (Hirschi 1969, 47). According to Hirschi, delinquency could be explained by the absence of social bonds. He classified social bonds

into four elements: *attachment, commitment, involvement*, and *belief*. First, “*attachment*” refers to a person’s emotional need to belong to society. Members of the same society share norms, and violating them is to act contrary to other people’s wishes and expectations. However, when an individual is inconsiderate of others’ opinions, then he or she will not be bound by the common norms but will have a free desire to deviate. Second, “*commitment*” refers to the investment in our relationship with others. When an individual is considering performing a deviant behavior, he or she must consider the costs of this behavior and the risk they will face. Third, “*involvement*” relates to the fact that a person may simply be too busy with appointments, deadlines, work hours, and plans, so opportunities to commit deviant behaviors are rare for them. Lastly, “*belief*” refers to the extent to which a person is committed to the rules of society. If one believes that obeying the rules is right, then he or she is more likely to abide by them (Hirschi 1969). Hirschi argues that when an individual’s bond to society is weak or broken, delinquent acts will follow.

More recently, the scope of the term “social control” has been narrowed down and used more or less synonymously with repression and coercion in many contexts, especially in those that link social control with organized reactions to deviant behavior. Here, social control refers to the purposive mechanisms used to regulate deviant, criminal, worrying, or troublesome behaviors without the use of coercive physical control (Innes 2003; Meier 1982).

Building on this discussion, I define social control as *repression and coercion imposed by the ruling elite on the general public*. The idea is that social control is deeply embedded in society through subtle forms of repression mechanisms through which “stabilization” can be achieved.

2.2 Conceptualization of the Social Control System

Following my definition of social control, this section draws on the theoretical insights underlying the social control system. States differ in their strategies for pursuing political order. In democratic regimes, leaders follow the rule of law and legitimate means of control. By contrast, autocratic regime leaders tend to adopt repressive measures to secure their place. This raises the following question: How do these autocrats maintain political order despite the lack of a democratic system? What is assisting them in ruling? In this section, I argue that leaders of nondemocratic regimes have exploited the concept of social control as their

survival tool. The main objective of this section is to propose a theoretical framework of the social control system, which can explain the stability of autocratic regimes.

2.2.1 Theorizing I: Social Control as Reactive or Proactive Control

In the past, scholars have attempted to break social control down into more detailed parts. Classifying the concept of social control into "formal" or "informal" control is one of the most common measures in the scholarly literature (Bergemann 2017; Black 1984; Cohen and Scull 1983; Innes 2003). This division is based on the principal agent perspective, where the agent (i.e., the controller) decides the "formal" means for regulating society.

Formal social control focuses on the institutions that are produced and enforced by the state and its representatives to prevent chaos in society, such as the police, military, mental hospitals, and juvenile courts. They are designed in elaborate and organized forms compared with informal social control because principal agents perform assigned duties either with force or implied force. In general, when a person violates the law, commits a crime, or performs a deviant behavior, formal social control regulates this act with specially trained professionals (Cohen and Scull 1983; Horwitz 1990).

Moreover, informal social control includes measures such as social pressure, peer group opinion, and customs. It refers to people's conformity to the norms, customs, and values of society that they learn through the process of socialization. It is a societal member's attempt at self-regulation outside of the boundaries of force and the legal system, and it affects both the macro- and micro-sociological levels. In the case of informal social control, persuasion, rhetoric, and rewards are possible measures for controlling behaviors (Mayer 1983, 24–25). This type of control mostly relies on societal customs, such as how an individual might hesitate to act on something because of his conscience telling him not to do so or because he is simply afraid of other people's judgment, even though there is no legal obligation to act.

One of the main differences between formal and informal social control is that under formal social control, active agents such as the police, courts, prisons, and social organizations operate to control deviant behaviors. By contrast, under informal social control, the existence of a control agent is vague. Informal social control is usually enforced by family, peers, and authority figures such as teachers. In addition, this type of control is enforced by rewards and sanctions. Rewards often take the form of praise or compliments, but also other forms such as high grades on school assignments or a promotion at work.

Furthermore, informal control is not legally binding most of the time. Unlike formal control, where breaking a rule will be met with punishment or even prosecution, with informal control, members of a group voluntarily form collective goals and comply with them, and not necessarily to follow an order from an authoritative figure or a coercive force.

Although formal and informal social control are commonly accepted forms in sociology, this dichotomous manner of classification fails to explain the complexities of the term when it comes to certain empirical situations. Due to some ambiguities in the definition, it is often difficult to differentiate what exactly formal or informal social control is. Consider a school as an example; it is a form of social organization and agents, such as teachers, are assigned to perform duties. Therefore, a school itself is a formal social control institution. When students are at school, they must comply with rules and regulations designed by these agents; otherwise, they will be punished or at the very least lectured. However, within the school's territory, students are educated and socialized not only through formal education but also through interactions with classmates and teachers. Thus, informal means of social control will also affect a student's behavior. Consequently, the division of formal and informal control is not particularly clear in such a case. If so, an essential question that should be raised in the next step is as follows: *Who* applies control to *whom*? Shaw (1996) explains this by analyzing inter- and intra-organizational relations. According to him, from a structural perspective, there are three typologies of social control: organization-to-organization, organization-to-division, and organization-to-individual control.

My focus in this dissertation is the third type, namely organization-to-individual control. According to Shaw, this type of control takes various forms, including "control in the form of ideology through political study and self-criticism; control of behavior through residency; creation of enduring official identities through confidential records; and sanctioning of deviance through civil rewards or penalties, administrative disciplining, quasi-justice, and para-security" (Shaw 1996, 21). With this concept in mind, an alternative way to understand the classification of social control is that it can be performed as either a reactive or proactive measure from the controller's perspective. This approach is based on the work of Cohen (1985), who defined social control as

> …those organized responses to crime, delinquency and allied forms of deviant and/or socially problematic behaviour which are actually conceived of as such, whether in the reactive sense (after the putative act has taken place or the actor been identified) or in the proactive sense (to prevent the act). (Cohen 1985, 3)

To be more precise, reactive social control measures are reactions to an incident that has already occurred. An example of such a measure is the conduct of a police investigation at a crime scene. On the other hand, proactive social control measures anticipate the probability of an act in the future and establish some kind of prevention mechanism. Depending on the situation and how the control agent perceives the matter, both reactive and proactive control can be applied together. It could be that a proactive control measure is required as a response to a certain event to ensure that the same mistake is not repeated again. For instance, assume that a person has been continually stealing a particular item from a grocery store and eventually gets caught by the store owner. The owner calls the police and the result is that the robber must pay a fine. This would be the owner's reactive response to a criminal act. However, because of the frequent theft occurring in the neighborhood, the mayor of the town decides to launch a public campaign with the following message: "Robbery is an illegal act and will therefore be treated with punishment." This is a proactive control measure. Thus, as a result of the robbery, both reactive and proactive control measures have been implemented. From this perspective, how an agent perceives the act matters the most. It is up to the actor to decide whether to conduct reactive or proactive measures or both at the same time. If we apply this to a larger unit such as society, the ruling elite gets the power to impose reactive and proactive social control to achieve what they view as social order.

In sum, the term "social control" in the present study bears the meaning of reactive and proactive control. Control measures are applied from the organization (*controller*) to individuals (*subject*). Therefore, a significant focus of this study is on determining how and with what intention agents apply social control mechanisms to individuals. Whether a ruler or an agency responds reactively or preemptively or even applies both methods to an episode that has challenged the *stability* of the regime is a critical concept of social control in the present research. In the next section, I briefly provide an overview of the three major waves of modern autocracy research and explain how I developed social control into a system that can explain the stability of autocracies.

2.2.2 Theorizing II: Constructing Social Control as a System in Autocracies

In modern political science, autocracy research has seen three waves. Studies in the first wave concentrated on the concept of totalitarianism (Arendt 1951; Friedrich and Brzezinski 1965). Arendt (1951) identified ideology and terror as the two dominant features of

totalitarian regimes. In *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, Friedrich and Brzezinski (1965) argue that a totalitarian ruler is "not accountable to anyone else for what he does" as he is the one that "makes the decisions and reaps the results" (Friedrich and Brzezinski 1965, 4). They proposed the following six features of totalitarian dictatorships: an ideology, a single political party that is typically led by one man, secret police, party control over all means of effective mass communications, party control over the military, and a centrally directed economy.

The second wave of autocracy research developed along with the concept of authoritarianism (Linz 1964, 1975). Studies expanded through further variations and subcategories, such as bureaucratic authoritarianism (O'Donnell 1973), military regimes (Nordlinger 1977), and sultanistic regimes (Chehabi and Linz 1998). During this period, a particular focus was placed on conducting case studies on countries in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa. In sum, these studies "varied greatly from the totalitarianism paradigm" by not relying solely on ideology and terror and "searched for more nuanced and tailored explanations for new (regional) phenomena" (Gerschewski 2013, 16).

The pioneering study of Geddes (1999) marked the beginning of the third wave of autocracy research. The attempts to analyze different forms of autocracy and the probability of regime change triggered the emergence of new theories and research methods, which eventually became useful for the comparative analysis of autocracies (Croissant and Wurster 2013). Most prominently, the role of institutions has gained more attention in explaining the stability of autocratic regimes. Building on the abovementioned scholarship, I use "autocracy" as a general term for nondemocratic regimes (Tullock 1987, 1–16).

All autocrats risk challenges from society (vertical threats), regime insiders (horizontal threats), and the international environment (external threats). In an ideal world, autocrats would simultaneously tackle all of these challenges. In the real world, however, they must prioritize whichever threat they consider to be greater or more imminent. Many studies have analyzed the survival strategies of autocratic regimes. Additionally, many have tackled the questions of why some autocratic regimes last longer than others and how they maintain their stability. Notably, stability meanings differ in the contexts of autocratic and democratic regimes. Slater and Fenner (2011) stated the following: "[T]he ultimate form of stability does not entail *meeting* and *overcoming* crises, but *avoiding* and, when they cannot be totally avoided, *resolving* crises decisively in the regime's favor" (Slater and Fenner 2011, 17; emphasis in the original text).

Recent literature on autocratic stability has analyzed various factors, including the intentional use of institutions such as elections and political parties (Brownlee 2007; Gandhi and Przeworski 2007; Magaloni 2008; Wright and Escribà-Folch 2012); operation of the coercive apparatus (Bellin 2012; Greitens 2016); and the use of strategies of repression (Davenport 2007a; Levitsky and Way 2010; Svolik 2012a), co-optation (Frantz and Kendall-taylor 2014; Gandhi and Przeworski 2006, 2007; Svolik 2009), and legitimation (Dukalskis and Gerschewski 2017; Dukalskis 2021; von Haldenwang 2017; Kailitz 2013). Most previous studies have focused on one or two of these strategies. However, these factors often complement each other and can make regimes even more durable when operated simultaneously. Accordingly, attempts have been made to combine some of these factors. For example, Johannes Gerschewski (2013) offers a theoretical framework of the so-called "three pillars of stability," namely legitimation, repression, and co-optation. Gerschewski argues that the three pillars are causal for the stability of autocracies, and that they not only reinforce within themselves but also interact with each other (Gerschewski 2013).

First, legitimation was at the core of classic works on totalitarianism by eminent scholars such as Hannah Arendt, Carl Joachim Friedrich, and Zbigniew Brzezinski. Arendt (1951) argues that ideology and terror are the very essence of the formation of totalitarian governments. According to her, totalitarian propaganda has become "as real and untouchable an element" in people's lives, and "the organization of the entire texture of life according to an ideology can be fully carried out only under a totalitarian regime" (Arendt 1951, 474). Friedrich and Brzezinski (1965) also highlighted the importance of ideology as working mechanisms of totalitarian regimes and claimed that ideology is present in political as well as daily life (Friedrich and Brzezinski 1965). However, most contemporary autocracies do not follow this logic anymore. The ideocratic regimes that dominated the era of totalitarianism research have become rare, and only Cuba and North Korea remain in this perspective (Backes and Kailitz 2016). In the long run, the indoctrination mechanism fades since autocrats cannot completely block exterior influences. Thus, Gerschewski claims to go beyond ideological indoctrination and includes "performance and output legitimation as a different legitimation source" (Gerschewski 2013, 19). Manfred Schmidt explains that this "output legitimacy" requires "demonstrable results in policy output and policy outcomes, such as in social and economic policy," and adds that these products and outcomes "must be observed by a large portion of the citizenry and interpreted as a success of the autocratic regime that is worthy of recognition" (Schmidt 2016, 294).

Second, repression is a distinctive feature that defines autocracies and operates as "one of the backbones of autocracies" (Gerschewski 2013). However, the definition of repression is not always clear. In most cases, repression refers to a form of coercive socio-political control practiced by authorities to detect activities that they perceive to be threatening or challenging to the political order against people within the same territorial jurisdiction (Goldstein 2001; Davenport 2007b). In this context, repression could be interpreted within a broader concept of social control in that societal actors (in this case the leader and the ruling party) attempt to control others (rival party and citizens) by utilizing both coercive and non-coercive methods (Davenport 2007b, 36).

Lastly, Gerschewski defined co-optation as "the capacity to tie strategically-relevant actors (or a group of actors) to the regime elite" (Gerschewski 2013, 22). Dictators, no matter how powerful they are, cannot rule alone but need support in a manner that fits their interests. In autocratic regimes, political institutions usually fulfill this task by working as supporters of the regime. The institutions also work as a bargaining tool between the dictator and his "winning (or ruling) coalition," which is formed by individuals who support the regime and hold enough power to ensure the survival of the government (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003; Svolik 2009). Dictators delegate selected members to government positions, so the privileged ruling coalition will have less desire to conspire or rebel. Thus, the more a dictator is threatened by elites, the more benefit he will get from creating institutions that are fragmented, internally competitive, and socially exclusive. This type of institutional co-optation is common in autocracies as "of the 460 dictators in power from 1946 to 2004, only 11% (50 out of 460) chose *not* to create a party or legislature at some point while in office" (Frantz and Kendall-taylor 2014, 333).

Throughout history, most autocratic regimes have had internal security agencies. Their main purpose is to monitor people and prevent them from developing networks, which might be used as a basis for mobilized political opposition. Therefore, the performance of the security agencies not only determines the longevity of the ruler in office but also affects the level of violence experienced by ordinary citizens in their daily lives (Greitens 2016, 17). However, theoretically speaking, it is almost impossible to create a coercive apparatus that can protect a regime leader from both the elite and mass threats. The apparatus cannot be completely bulletproof, and furthermore, its lack of fragmentation will increase the risk of a dictator being removed through organized actions of the opposition. In autocratic regimes, the less visible government agencies are often more powerful. Therefore, certain repressive measures exist in long-lasting dictatorships that are difficult to describe only with formal

institutions. This is why a coercive apparatus alone cannot solve the question of autocratic regime stability. Instead, we must focus on specific types of strategic control mechanisms that autocrats incorporate to tackle the challenges they face. I argue that these control mechanisms work in a form of a "system" that affects the ideology and even daily life.

Humans naturally wish to do things without constraints, and sometimes they might take whatever actions are necessary to get what they want. The possibility that some individuals will act more violently than others in fulfilling this desire poses a great risk to any group. Accordingly, all societies are faced with the problem of violence. Therefore, members of society demand measures to regulate people and their behaviors that threaten society and its members' security. However, no society "solves the problem of violence by eliminating violence; at best, it can be contained and managed" (North, Wallis, and Weingast 2009, 13). Based on the previous discussions, the general underlying goal of social control is to maintain the social order on which societal members base their daily lives through the enforcement of norms and regulation, and sometimes even by applying coercive measures. Innes distinguished the meanings of social control and social order as follows:

> [I]f social order refers to the state of a society, and the organized arrangement of its key knowledge, values, actions, institutions and establishments, social control refers to the process by which attempts are made to manage that which deviates from or conflicts with the social order. (Innes 2003, 6)

Consequently, in every state, a ruler must practice certain control measures. If there is no regulated control in society, the desires of every individual might collide and society would become chaotic. However, people are less willing to comply with rules without supervision. Therefore, no matter how much of an effective social control system a society has, it will still require an element of coercion to a certain extent. In this regard, it is clear that social control implies a parallel meaning of repression or stability in that a highly effective social control measure either pressures or motivates members of society (Janowitz 1975, 84–85). One of the most significant figures in the development of this approach to the concept of social control is Michel Foucault. Foucault rarely mentioned the term "social control" itself, but he employed several concepts, including "panopticism" and "discipline," in an attempt to discover how control can be exercised in different settings and dimensions. The Panopticon, which was introduced in his work as the main example, was a design of an architectural prison by Jeremy Bentham in the eighteenth century. Its major purpose was to ensure that all

inmates were clearly visible through constant surveillance. Foucault explained the Panopticon in detail as follows:

> At the periphery, an annular building; at the centre, a tower; this tower is pierced with wide windows that open onto the inner side of the ring; the peripheric building is divided into cells, …they have two windows, one on the inside, corresponding to the windows of the tower; the other, on the outside, allows the light to cross the cell from one end to the other. All that is needed, then, is to place a supervisor in a central tower… By the effect of backlighting, one can observe from the tower, standing out precisely against the light, the small captive shadows in the cells of the periphery. (Foucault 1975, 200)

The key principle of the Panopticon is that power should be “visible and unverifiable.” It should be visible in that an inmate will “constantly have before his eyes the tall outline of the central tower from which he is spied upon,” and unverifiable as an inmate “must never know whether he is being looked at at any one moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so.” In other words, it is a mechanism in which “in the peripheric ring, one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen” (Foucault 1975, 201–2).

Every state takes a different approach to performing social control. In particular, autocrats exploit its coercive nature. Control is a key instrument in autocratic regimes as it is one of the most efficient ways to minimize the various threats that autocrats receive, whether from society (vertical) or elites (horizontal). Therefore, with the intention to maintain their status and the political stability of the regime, autocrats *control* society with a forcible system. To them, maintaining social order is vital because it ultimately keeps the regime politically *stable*. Thus, the quest for social control is obvious for autocrats who exhibit a high threat perception.

Looking back on the literature review on how autocrats maintain regime stability, no perfectly adequate theory was found that could explain the driving questions of my research: How do autocrats stay in power? What is the driving force of the stability in autocracies? How do some autocratic regimes survive longer than others? This is especially the case when examining an extreme case like North Korea, one of the world’s most isolated regimes, which survived approximately 70 years without serious turmoil. Therefore, a need exists for a more substantive and conceptual debate regarding this topic.

2.2.3 Social Control System as a Theoretical Framework

In this section, I propose an alternative theoretical framework for analyzing the stability of autocracies. I introduce the social control system as a survival toolkit of autocrats. By combining the legacy of social control's definition with the main arguments of autocracy research literature, I argue that the foundation of *stable* autocracies can be explained with the social control system. The basic idea is that, after all, every institution in all aspects of society, from the family to the office, is an institution of social control, which is either an agent of socialization (from the perspective of Ross and Mead) or an agency of coercion (from the later perception of the term in criminology) (Rothman 1983). Furthermore, reactive and proactive measures of social control fit the definition of stability in autocracies by Slater and Fenner (2011), as discussed in the previous section, in that a regime achieves stability by *avoiding* (proactive) crises and, when they cannot be avoided, by *resolving* (reactive) them.

In sum, I define the social control system as *a system that is operated by an autocrat and the ruling coalition in order to repress and control until the very bottom of society under the system's territorial boundary*.

The social control system is a system of "ubiquitous spying" in which everybody may be a police agent and individuals within the territorial domain of the system feel constantly under surveillance (Arendt 1951, 563). Under this system, people have a hard time believing in others. In addition, there is a leader with mighty power who watches over everything that goes on. It is a system in which a well-established disciplinary apparatus exists that ensures that nothing can escape and every activity is constantly monitored (Foucault 1975, 173).

I argue that in autocratic regimes, the social control system emerges after a regime experiences its first major political shock. I define a political shock in a regime as a dramatic change that could potentially alter a regime's path completely. This moment of political shock could be seen as a critical juncture of the regime. In the scholarly literature, a critical juncture refers to the "relatively short periods of time during which there is a substantially heightened probability that agents' choices will affect the outcome of interest" (Capoccia and Kelemen 2007, 348). This means that the duration of a juncture or a period of significant change must be brief relative to the path-dependent process it initiates, and the probability that agents' choices will have an impact on the outcome must be higher than before the juncture (Capoccia and Kelemen 2007). I find that the moment at which an autocrat has his status severely threatened or his regime greatly challenged represents a critical juncture, one that empowers him to engage in constructing regime stability mechanisms.

When a regime encounters a critical juncture, it adopts "a particular institutional arrangement from among two or more alternatives," and "once a particular option is selected it becomes progressively more difficult to return to the initial point when multiple alternatives were still available" (Mahoney 2000, 513). Therefore, to generate an effective social control system, it is crucial that the system arises immediately after the political shock. It must be operated at the right time and moment. Otherwise, the final result would be dramatically different and, in the worst case, the regime might not be able to survive the shock.

The duration of critical junctures depends on the "immediate causal mechanisms involved" (Collier and Collier 1991, 32). Thus, it is up to a leader to decide what types of control mechanisms are suitable for keeping him secure in the position and for how long they should be in operation. Depending on the choices, regimes may "in some cases be in power for only a few years and in others for much longer" (Collier and Collier 1991, 32). In the end, some autocratic regimes are more durable than others because they were prompt at responding at the moment of the critical juncture with the right tool.

After the genesis of the system, the composing mechanisms are reproduced, either proactively or reactively, until the desired outcome is achieved – namely *regime stability*. When a regime is faced with another political shock, the system adopts self-reinforcing processes to move down the same path (Mahoney 2000; Pierson 2000). Eventually, the system will be consolidated when it has successfully defeated the political shock. However, when a crisis that cannot be managed with the current system occurs, the system might switch to an alteration or modification process. Depending on the leadership's choices in times of crisis, the social control system can either strengthen regime durability or lead to regime collapse. Therefore, it can be assumed that the longer the lifespan of a regime, the more intense and the broader the spectrum of the social control system.

Pierson (2000) claims that the path-dependent processes will likely be the most powerful "not at the level of individual organizations or institutions but at a more macro level that involves complementary configurations of organizations and institutions" (Pierson 2000, 255). Thus, following this argument, the operationalization of the social control mechanisms as a system implies the persistence of a powerful tool. In addition, the social control system is not based on the assumption that the elements that compose it have equal importance at all times. Instead, depending on the circumstances and needs, autocrats implement control mechanisms to different extents. This is possible because the elements operate under a

system, which means that if one component fails to successfully operate, then another is ready to enhance its performance.

Mannheim claims that present control measures in society should not be regarded as final and unalterable (Mannheim 1940, 311). As society experiences various events, it is natural that forms and means of control evolve. Moreover, depending on the regime type and characteristics, there could be several elements that form the social control system, and they may vary from a ruler to their successor. Nevertheless, I argue that autocratic regimes, in which autocrats aspire to have absolute control over society, would most likely share common elements. This is because even though various forms of social control exist, they are embedded in interpersonal relationships. Therefore, if the direction of control efforts and motivations are the same, similar types of control mechanisms should be generated as a result, regardless of time or place (Horwitz 1990). Consequently, I argue that there are overlapping control mechanisms in autocracies. The elements that I believe best represent them are *ideological control, physical control,* and *daily life control*.

In sum, the social control system described in this study explains autocratic regime stability from a new perspective, not only by embedding the three-pillar model of legitimation, repression, and co-optation, but also by covering a *denser* and *wider* range of society and the daily lives of people. In addition, the division of social control into reactive and proactive control enables these elements to respond to deviant acts more flexibly, which eventually paves the way for the stabilization of autocratic regimes.

In the next section, I move on to building the three mechanisms of the social control system. These three elements complement each other and operate alone or simultaneously to intensify control. Moreover, they are not static but rather develop over time depending on the autocrats' needs.

2.3 Mechanism Building: Operationalization of the Social Control System

The social control system is like Bentham's *Panopticon* in that an individual is "seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject in communication" (Foucault 1975, 200). In this section, I examine the most common elements that form the social control system in autocratic regimes. The social control system can be broadly classified into three elements according to control methods: ideological control, physical control, and daily life

control. It should be noted that these elements are not completely distinct, but may overlap and are often used in conjunction with one another.

2.3.1 Ideological Control

Definition

No definitional or conceptual consensus exists for the word "ideology." Questions such as what an ideology is, in what contexts it is applied, and how its effects should be measured have been frequently raised in the fields of philosophy and social sciences. Among others, Gerring's (1997) seminal work – a comprehensive review of ideology in contemporary social science discourse – determined seven major features of the term: the location of the ideology, its subject matter, subject, position, function, motivation, and cognitive/affective structure. These seven attributes also have several logically related components (see Table 2.1).

The objective of this section is not to introduce the history or debates about ideology. Instead, the aim is to define ideology as a control and repression mechanism of autocracies. Based on Gerring's framework, ideology is broadly defined here as the dominant legitimation strategy of the ruling class, located in (1) the mind as "a set of beliefs, values, principles, attitudes, and/or ideals – in short, as a type of political thinking" (Gerring 1997, 967); (2) political behavior; and (3) the language of everyday life. Therefore, ideology "functions to bind individuals to a community by establishing an authoritative set of norms and values" as well as distorts "in defense of dominant social groups" (Gerring 1997, 972).

Table 2.1. A Comprehensive Definitional Framework of Ideology by Gerring

1. Location	(b) Subordinate	(c) Abstraction
(a) Thought	**5. Function**	(d) Specificity
(b) Behavior	(a) Explaining	(e) Hierarchy
(c) Language	(b) Repressing	(f) Stability
2. Subject matter	(c) Integrating	(g) Knowledge
(a) Politics	(d) Motivating	(h) Sophistication
(b) Power	(e) Legitimating	(i) Facticity
(c) The world at-large	**6. Motivation**	(j) Simplicity
3. Subject	(a) Interest-based	(k) Distortion
(a) Social class	(b) Non-interest based	(l) Conviction
(b) Any group	(c) Non-expedient	(m) Insincerity
(c) Any group or individual	**7. Cognitive/affective structure**	(n) Dogmatism
4. Position	(a) Coherence (internal)	(o) Consciousness
(a) Dominant	(b) Contrast (external)	(p) Unconsciousness

Source: Gerring (1997), p.967.

Ideology and indoctrination in particular were at the core of classical studies of totalitarianism. Since then, scholars have gradually placed increasingly less emphasis on ideology and its impact on legitimacy. However, in contemporary research, there have been efforts to reincorporate legitimation into explaining the stability of autocratic regimes. Most scholars working on autocratic regimes and political stability would agree that a regime based solely on repression and coercion cannot survive (von Haldenwang 2017; Schmidt 2016). Some forms of *justification* need to be made to support the legitimacy of the regime. One could argue that a "legitimate autocracy" is normatively "nothing more than an oxymoron" and not every political order is legitimate (Gerschewski 2013, 18; von Haldenwang 2017, 270). One might also see the irony in the legitimation mechanisms of autocracies being regarded as illegitimate (Gerring 1997, 972). However, from an analytical point of view, every political order "attempts to legitimize itself" and it is merely "more or less successful in procuring legitimacy" (von Haldenwang 2017, 270). In this sense, ideology legitimates actions and legitimation is considered to be "the process of gaining support" (Gerring 1997, 972; Gerschewski 2013, 18).

Friedrich and Brzezinski (1965) defined ideologies as essentially "action-related 'systems' of ideas." They argued that ideologies have an "operational code," which is a type of program and a strategy for the realization of ideas, and its essential purpose is "to unite (integrate) organizations that are built around them" (Friedrich and Brzezinski 1965, 88). Ideologies are also the hidden potent forces that "penetrate all aspects of social life and form a spiritual basis for the existence of every social struggle" (Roucek 1943, 36). Thus, the operation of ideology as a control mechanism is not a new approach. It has been continuously exercised in different periods of history in various parts of the world. In particular, an intensive level of ideological control has been observed as an essential part of the governance in some autocratic regimes. In these regimes, the ideological control mechanism attempts to indoctrinate the minds of the public and integrate them under the regime's umbrella.

The world and society in which we live reflect a set of perceptions and culturally ingrained ideas and norms. Therefore, even within the scope of autocratic regimes, ideological control mechanisms can vary widely depending on the culture and the state's history. For example, a study on social control in China mentioned that ideological control is known as "spiritual control" (Shaw 1996, 42). Shaw added that "the core of communist spiritual control is composed of Marxism, Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng's talks, and party documents," and around the core lie "patriotism, internationalism, worship of communist leaders, reverence for revolutionary history, and other rhetoric of socialist

ideology." The author argues that spiritual control is deeply rooted in Chinese culture and tradition and is a basic component of ordinary citizens' everyday lives. In explaining this, Shaw wrote the following:

> To propagandize the masses about socialist spirit and current political situations is customarily seen as a sacred task of the work unit, a task that is inseparable from its business or professional duties. There exists, both implicitly and explicitly, a general perception that every division, department, or section of the work unit, every leader or party member positioned in the unit system, even every conscientious unit member, has responsibility to pass along the party and governmental policies to the ordinary masses. (Shaw 1996, 43)

Althusser (1970) introduced what he termed the "Ideological State Apparatus" (ISA), which operates in conjunction with the "Repressive State Apparatus" (RSA). The RSA consists of state apparatuses such as the government, administration, army, police, and prisons, which belong to the *public* domain. The use of "repressive" here suggests that the apparatus may "function by violence" (Althusser 1970, 142–43). He then describes the ISA as "a certain number of realities which present themselves to the immediate observer in the form of distinct and specialized institutions" and proposes a list of apparatuses, including the legal system, political system, media, culture, and trade unions, and even ones in the *private* domain, such as religion, education, and family (Althusser 1970, 143–44). While the RSA functions *by violence*, the ISA functions *by ideology*. Nevertheless, Althusser added that a "purely ideological apparatus" does not exist, but "they also function secondarily by repression, even if ultimately, but only ultimately, this is very attenuated and concealed, even symbolic" (Althusser 1970, 145).

Ideology is especially critical for ideocracies. Ideocracies are "essentially one-party regimes" and the party needs to be grounded in ideology, which is used for "social transformation, control, monitoring, and effective combating of enemies" (Backes and Kailitz 2016, 3). The main characteristic of ideocracies is a totalitarian ideology, where the rulers not only "claim to have the right to rule" but also "claim to be free to control and (radically) transform all aspects of society" (Backes and Kailitz 2016, 1). Based on this definition, only a few modern autocracies can be classified as ideocracies (e.g., China, North Korea, Iran, and Cuba).

In this study, ideology is considered one of the mechanisms of the social control system. It is a necessary and important element of control for the legitimation of the regime.

First of all, it integrates the regime's foundational myth and nationalism claims to justify the current regime. It also combines Weber's notion of traditional authority to justify the hereditary succession and charisma of the ruler in order to fully achieve an "identity-based claim to legitimacy" (von Soest and Grauvogel 2017). Second, with the intention of claiming legitimacy, control measures start by planting a fundamental idea of the state ideology into each and every individual. In other words, ideological control mechanisms include how a ruler and the elite choose a specific ideology to indoctrinate people, how they take advantage of the media as a propaganda tool, and what schools teach pupils as education.

In the following subsection, specific means and measurements of ideological control are discussed. The control mechanism is implemented either in a reactive or proactive sense. In addition, control measures differ depending on every state and culture. Even within the same state, variations may exist depending on the ruler's perception of how a particular control should be executed.

Means of Control (Reactive/Proactive)

1) Ruling Ideology and Indoctrination

The first means of ideological control is through the ruling ideology. Dukalskis (2013) defines a ruling ideology as "a set of ideas on which a regime bases its legitimacy and which it privileges by (1) actively disseminating it, and (2) attempting to regularly censor or block sources of information which may call that ideology into question" (Dukalskis 2013, 142).

The ruling ideology not only helps to legitimate the regime's identity but also works as an efficient tool for repressing citizens as a pretense of governance. Furthermore, the ruling ideology helps the leader to manage the elites. Before joining the ruling coalition, they are first required to demonstrate their loyalty and commitment to the ideology of the regime. This means that they were only given their current position as they pledged allegiance to the ruler and his governing ideology (Kailitz and Stockemer 2017). Therefore, to avoid the risk of being removed, they must comply with the ideology, even if only ostensibly.

Several elements are embedded in building the ruling ideology. One of the main components is the regime's foundational myth. As Beetham argues, "historical accounts are significant and contentious precisely because of their relationship to the legitimacy of power in the present" (Beetham 1991, 103). Therefore, when constructing legitimacy, a regime's foundational myth plays a vital role because it not only gives past tales a specific meaning and importance for the present but also reinforces "the authority of those who are wielding power in a particular community" (Friedrich and Brzezinski 1965, 91).

Moreover, a foundational myth established on violent struggles, such as revolutions and liberation movements, has proven to be an effective narrative of legitimacy, which can even affect the durability of regimes (Levitsky and Way 2013). In the case of North Korea, the founder of the country Kim Il Sung's anti-Japanese struggle and battles have been exaggerated and his activities deified. Following Weber (1978)'s definition, the "charismatic authority" of Kim Il Sung has been amplified to show his "exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character" (Weber 1978, 215). Therefore, the overflowing foundational myth about Kim Il Sung and the deification of his family have continuously been the main pillar of the North Korean regime's legitimation strategy (von Soest and Grauvogel 2017, 298).

In totalitarian systems, ideologies are the source of legitimacy. A charismatic leader or party creates or revives an ideology that contains "absolutely true supreme values" in an attempt to win the maximum number of believers (Bernholz 2015, 74). Even though the characteristics of totalitarian regimes are now mostly left in the past to examine, I claim that it could still be useful to bring the focus back to some of their traits when explaining today's rather durable autocratic regimes. The active application of ideology continues to be present in some autocratic regimes, such as Communist, National Socialist/Fascist, and Islamist regimes, which have claimed ideology-based legitimacy (Backes and Kailitz 2016, 1–10). Relatedly, some recent studies have focused on the role of ideology to understand the resilience of the remaining communist regimes (Dimitrov 2013; Dukalskis and Gerschewski 2020).

One of the key instruments of indoctrination is education. In fact, in totalitarian regimes, the entire educational structure and programs are built upon efforts to facilitate propaganda and nurture the younger generation to be future leaders of the regime (Friedrich and Brzezinski 1965). A school is normally presented as a place free from ideology, where the young students are educated and socialized. However, under a dictatorship, all teachers are forced to follow the guidance of the regime, or they are already a member of the party or related governmental organizations. Therefore, education becomes an instrument of the regime and schools operate as an adequate disguise for the ideological control mechanism.

2) Media and Propaganda

Another common strategy used to control the minds of the public is through media and propaganda. All autocratic regimes attempt to either own or control media outlets to shape the dominant political narrative in favor of their system. On the one hand, they fill the mass media with propaganda and pro-government messages, while on the other hand they impose

censorship, provide license, and even enact regulations to match their needs (Geddes and Zaller 1989). In particular, in a closed society like North Korea, where control of outside information is at an extreme level, there is no freedom of the media and the state jams external television and radio signals. On top of that, entertainment, films, art performances, and even school textbooks are all used as common means of spreading propaganda.

Furthermore, authoritarian regimes use their power to impose control over private online platforms. The evolution of the Internet and social media has made it extremely difficult for dictators to rule their regimes. For instance, social media has completely changed the dynamics of collective action by allowing information to be disseminated without people actually gathering in person. Citizens can have access to alternative sources of information from the Internet rather than relying on the censored traditional media produced by the regime. Therefore, in some authoritarian regimes, Internet access is heavily restricted. For example, a study on censorship in China found at least three methods of social media censorship: (1) the banning of certain websites (e.g., Facebook and Twitter) from operating within the country, which is known as "the Great Firewall of China"; (2) "keyword blocking," which prevents users from posting text that includes banned words or phrases; and (3) "hand censoring," where censors go through the text and manually remove objectionable items. Even if users were able to pass the first two barriers, the last round blocks them because censors can spot clever phrasing (King, Pan, and Roberts 2013, 3).

Autocratic regimes actively publicize their policies through media, bulletin boards, and street posters to ensure that the ruler's voice reaches every corner of the street. Normally, simple language is used to ensure that ordinary citizens can easily understand. Language is a critical tool in political discourse and is used differently in autocratic regimes because it functions as "an instrument of social control" (Gross 1984). The rulers do not simply "aim at preventing some information (considered adverse to the state's interests) from being disseminated," but instead they impose "a radical imprint on the entire structure of the language, modifying its syntax and semantics" (Gross 1984, 72). Gross provides an example by referring to a period under Stalin:

> When in the middle of forced collectivization and widespread famine and at the peak of the purges Stalin utters his famous "Life has become better, life has become happier," it is a statement totally divorced from evidence provided by the surrounding reality of collective life. No one else could have made such a claim but he who had a copyright on Soviet reality. (Gross 1984, 75)

Like the abovementioned example, every statement of the ruler is "a definition and act of creation" and it "produce[s] 'the thing' and the truth about it" (Gross 1984, 75). Consequently, the ritualization of the ruler's speech, use of particular keywords and phrases, and repetition of and emphasis on the ruling ideology all function to form an even more effective ideological control mechanism.

Moreover, pictures of a leader with loud font and intense colors are designed to capture the attention of readers. The use of specific symbols is also a common instrument, especially in communist and totalitarian regimes. Symbols such as the hammer and sickle or the faces of certain ideological representative figures are well known to many people, even to those who have no clear conception of the meaning. Each of these symbols "give[s] concrete form and focus to an abstraction, while the abstraction serves to illumine for the faithful the 'meaning' of the symbol" (Friedrich and Brzezinski 1965, 89). Therefore, symbols carry equal importance to the ideology without even going into details of the meaning with a description. In totalitarian regimes, caricatures of enemies using negatively stereotyped images are also a crucial element of propaganda (Friedrich and Brzezinski 1965). These regimes aggressively utilize the existence of real or imaginary enemies for the purpose of ideological manipulation.

Measurement

Measuring how much ideology played a part in regime legitimation remains a challenge (Gerschewski 2013) as there is no definite consensus among scholars on the matter. Ideology usually functions as an assistant to other repressive measures because it provides a ruler with *legitimate* reasons to punish citizens. Consequently, in this research, I do not attempt to suggest an alternative measurement tool; instead, I describe whether the ideological control was strong or weak, depending on each case study. For instance, in reference to the ruling ideology, if there was a shift in the main ruling ideology from one to another, then what caused this change? Was the new ideology more or less effective at securing the autocrat's status? How did the citizens react to this change? In addition, how did the government advertise the ideology? What kinds of platform and media were used? These are the questions that I consider when determining the level of intensity of the ideological control mechanism. This is certainly not the most accurate measurement method, but this narrative approach would be potentially valuable for linking the more isolated autocratic regimes and a rather abstract concept of ideology.

2.3.2 Physical Control

Definition

Dictators live in constant fear of being ousted from their position. They face a number of different threats within the regime, such as the possibility of coups or betrayals at the elite level and mass mobilization of citizens at the mass level. Consequently, they must develop solutions to eliminate such risks. Dictators can either purge or co-opt elites to eliminate horizontal threats. In addition, they may use force to deter or crush potential resistance, thus avoiding vertical threats. By using brute force, not only it is possible to accomplish results in a relatively shorter period of time but also to prevent future uprisings, as these measures alert other citizens to refrain from following the same course of action. Therefore, in authoritarian politics, the option of using violence is "never off the table" (Svolik 2012b, 15) because it plays a decisive role in keeping the regime under control. In this regard, I argue that one of the control mechanisms of the social control system is physical control.

Physical control refers to a regime's ability to oppress, punish, or even physically harm individuals using repressive measures. It involves the use of physical sanctions, whether by actually applying them to an individual or merely operating them as threats. The key to effective physical control is to make citizens believe that the regime could and is fully prepared to apply repressive measures whenever necessary.

Repression is one of the most – if not the most – critical elements in autocracies. Research on repression attempts to identify how political authorities use coercive power to avoid potential challenges and challengers and to oppress existing ones (Davenport 2007a). One of the most widely adopted categorizations of repression is Davenport's (2007c) two forms of repression. The first is "civil liberties restrictions," which involve state or state-affiliated limitations such as "arrests, banning, and curfews, being placed on expression, association, assembly, and beliefs" (Davenport 2007c, 487). The second is "personal integrity violations," which are intended to modify the behavior of people by threatening their lives. The second type of repression aims directly for the physical repression of the person, such as torture, political imprisonment, disappearances, and mass killings (Davenport 2007c). The main difference between the two types is that the former type of repression (civil liberties restrictions) typically affects the larger population, whereas the latter type (personal integrity violations) usually targets specific individuals who are identified by the regime as threats to its stability. In sum, autocrats operate repression as a survival tool by "increasing the costs associated with opposing the dictator, and making disloyalty a less appealing option and collective action more difficult" (Frantz and Kendall-taylor 2014, 334).

In autocratic regimes, governmental agencies work as partners of the regime and go beyond the general policing and prevention of crimes. Most autocrats construct coercive apparatus that take over such measures. The coercive apparatus can be targeted at controlling the behavior of both the elites and ordinary citizens. When it comes to dealing with the elites, purging is a crucial and unique instrument of autocratic regimes. The purge is usually restricted in scope and can be applied only against those who are already part of the system and who have accepted the ruling ideology. Thus, the purging activity may be understood in the sense of "rejuvenating the movement, its cadres, and the apparat" (Friedrich and Brzezinski 1965, 183) and it functions as a kind of reminder to other members of the elite.

Moreover, autocrats are more than willing to use extreme physical control measures such as torture and killing when citizens are considered to be a threat. Therefore, physical control mechanisms include "official" measures from operating state security agencies to all means of violent control, such as forced disappearance, imprisonment for one's political views, the operation of inhumane concentration camps, and the use of brute force or even weapons to suppress mass mobilization.

Means of Control (Reactive/Proactive)

1) Operation of the Coercive Apparatus

The operation of the coercive apparatus, also referred to as the internal security apparatus, is what shapes the fundamental form of the physical control mechanism in authoritarian regimes. Greitens (2016) defines coercive institutions as "the cluster of organizations collectively responsible for domestic intelligence and internal security" (Greitens 2016, 21). The coercive apparatus may consist of "parts of the military, local or national police, intelligence organizations, state security agencies, and presidential or praetorian guards" (Greitens 2016, 21).

In autocratic regimes, institutions are one of the essential instruments through which autocrats spy, repress, and co-opt opponents (Magaloni 2008, 718). Autocrats pay particular attention to coercive institutions. They carefully construct the apparatus to defend themselves from both mass- and elite-based threats. Autocrats design the apparatus based on the primary perceived threat. Then, over time, the apparatus is developed in numerous ways to cope with emerging threats. The operation of the coercive apparatus allows the regime to "make its threats against opponents highly credible and predictable" (Slater and Fenner 2011, 20). Therefore, once it is established, it greatly enhances the durability of the regime.

When designing a coercive apparatus, an autocrat should consider two things. First, the higher the degree of fragmentation that a coercive apparatus has, the higher the chance of a ruler's survival. A tightly divided organizational structure will prevent collusion. It will also prevent one single agency from accumulating enough power to take over the regime. Second, tasks related to internal security must be assigned to "multiple organizations that have overlapping or competing responsibilities" without having "clear lines of coordination and communication" (Greitens 2016, 25). For instance, in North Korea, the organization of the coercive apparatus is structured in combination with the Korean Workers' Party (KWP), the police, and the military. There is no clear division of tasks and it is designed to be that way on purpose to ensure that no department can gather enough power to challenge the regime.

Similar to the North Korean case, autocrats sometimes integrate the military into the coercive apparatus. Dictators feel more threatened by their own secret services or political opposition than by any other foreign institution (Arendt 1951, 550). One study demonstrated that more than two-thirds of dictators were removed by government insiders between 1945 and 2002 (Svolik 2009, 478). To refrain from such a horizontal threat, dictators often choose to include the military in their coercive apparatus. However, heavy reliance on the military entails a great danger. Once soldiers become indispensable to the survival of the regime, they require political leverage, which they use to exploit power. Hence, the military will demand privileges and perks that exceed the permissive boundary of the ruler, and the soldiers will "claim a seat at the table" (Svolik 2012b, 10). Otherwise, the same individuals who were hired to protect dictators, those fully equipped with weaponry, may turn against them at any moment. Therefore, dictators must calculate in advance the costs and benefits of the repressive strategies they employ for their survival (Frantz and Kendall-taylor 2014). This is why when it comes to day-to-day physical control, most dictatorships rely on a specialized internal security apparatus instead of solely on their militaries (Svolik 2012b).

2) System of Punishment

The system of punishment involves the incarceration of people in places such as prisons, concentration camps, and gulags. It also includes physical harm and torture perpetrated against people in the name of "justice." The penal system in autocratic regimes is vastly different from that in democratic regimes. It operates in a more repressive manner and is nearly always co-opted by the regime. Dictators use the penal system as a physical control measure, which is why citizens and dissidents are often imprisoned for abstract reasons in autocratic regimes.

Furthermore, the corrupted penal system in autocratic regimes places overwhelming pressure on citizens. In the process of obtaining confessions, the system inflicts physical and mental torture on people. A person accused of a crime sometimes must confess or agree to having committed activities that he or she has not even done to avoid receiving a more severe punishment. One of the ultimate punishments is to be sent to a concentration or labor camp. The operation of such camps is a significant feature of totalitarian regimes. It is one of the unique aspects of totalitarian systems that cannot be compared to coercive institutions. In fact, one of the factors used to determine whether a regime is totalitarian is the presence of concentration camps (Friedrich and Brzezinski 1965). The official purpose of these camps is to re-educate those who are regarded as enemies of the regime. This categorization of "enemies of the regime" is quite flexible and depends on how the ruler defines them. It can refer to political enemies of the regime, criminals, or even members of races considered inferior. In concentration camps, sinners are given the opportunity to redeem themselves and make themselves "useful" to society again. During this process, some people never come back to society, at least not alive, which is regarded as merely incidental from the totalitarian point of view (Friedrich and Brzezinski 1965, 197–98).

In autocracies, elites are not exempt from the punishment system and they live under the fear of being purged. Once a ruler becomes suspicious of a certain individual, it is highly likely that this person will be purged. Even without specific motives, a ruler occasionally performs purges to keep the fear element going. Therefore, purges demonstrate to the elites what will happen if they ever go against the ruler.

Measurement

For measuring the level of repression, scholars have developed various methods. Greitens (2016) focuses on two dimensions when measuring state violence, namely scope and intensity. In her argument, the key elements are to determine how exclusive the coercive institutions are and to what degree they are fragmented. Moreover, Gerschewski (2013) applies Levitsky and Way's distinction between high- and low-intensity repression, which is divided based on "the targeted people or institution and the form of violence used" (Gerschewski 2013, 21).

> High intensity coercion can be defined as visible acts that are targeted either at well-known individuals like opposition leaders, at a larger number of people, or at major oppositional organizations. Concrete measures include the (violent) repression of mass demonstrations, (violent) campaigns against parties, and

> the attempted assassination or imprisonment of opposition leaders. Lower intensity coercion would then aim at groups of minor importance, is less visible, and often takes more subtle forms. Concrete measures can be the use of (formal and informal) surveillance apparatus, low intensity physical harassment and intimidation, and also non-physical forms such as the denial of certain job and education opportunities as well as the curtailment of political rights like the freedom of assembly. (Gerschewski 2013, 21)

Similarly, to measure the physical control mechanism, possible options include analyzing visible data such as the organization of the coercive apparatus, size of the police force, number of concentration camps, and number of political prisoners. In addition, databases such as the Freedom House report and the Cingranelli–Richards Human Rights Dataset (CIRI) provide a general idea of the level of repression. However, in the case of extremely secluded regimes, obtaining such data is in itself almost an impossible task. Therefore, one must determine how to incorporate data that cannot be objectified or measured.

In sum, this study measures the physical control mechanism by the intensity of its operation under the social control system. Crucial tasks here are to define whether physical control was stronger or weaker in each corresponding case and to determine how it was operated in conjunction with other control elements. Some conditions to look for include whether the size of the coercive apparatus expanded; whether a massive purge occurred; and whether the number of concentration camps increased or decreased.

2.3.3 Daily Life Control

Definition

Autocratic regimes implement policies and craft institutions to control the everyday lives of ordinary people. Through such measures, the leadership aspires to not only influence people's behaviors to fit the government's needs but also to limit the population's everyday activities through surveillance and indoctrination mechanisms. In this study, I refer to these measures as the "daily life control" mechanism.

What makes autocratic regimes more or less durable is whether they possess sufficient knowledge and control over the everyday lives of citizens to prevent autonomous collective action against the regime's interests before it begins. For autocratic regimes, the less visible government agencies are often more powerful. Therefore, to examine the durability of autocratic regimes, it is critical to look beyond the ostensible functions of visible

authoritarian institutions and "be sensitive to the everyday demands of authoritarianism" (Ong 2015, 382).

Autocratic regimes use the family, neighborhood, and other social elements to effectively control people's lives. This is vital because even a mundane task like sweeping the street in front of one's house or going to a grocery store can be a base for establishing relationships of cooperation and solidarity among the people. When groups and communities are formed outside of state control, citizens can share their opinions on various subjects, not only on social and economic activities, for example, but also – and most importantly – on politics. This could potentially lead to social organization outside of state control. Thus, a regime will deliberately undermine social bonds among the population, except for those it creates to produce "a powerless, passive society" (Arendt 1951; Moore Jr. 1954, 158; Fitzpatrick 2007, 80). This type of deterrent is common in totalitarian regimes. In such regimes, society itself "becomes an instrument of coercion" where "the memory of mass terror, the elimination of autonomous intermediary groups between state and individual, and the continued reliance on informers breed an atmosphere of social intimidation that undermines any collective activity not officially sanctioned by the state" (Bahry and Silver 1987, 1069). Under such a system, people are constantly having their every move watched. In the end, the main mechanism here is not the fear of punishment *per se*; rather, people are intimidated by the very knowledge that the state *can* punish them.

Autocratic rulers use a variety of measures to monitor the population, such as control through resident registration systems; mutual surveillance among citizens through regular meetings and gatherings; and political study and self-criticism sessions. For instance, the Soviet regime gave the population "a thorough political education in how to think, talk, and act 'correctly,' and it is expected on appropriate occasions to indicate its acceptance and support of the system by politically 'correct' behavior and pronouncements" (Inkeles and Bauer 1959, 282). Hence, the main objective of the Soviet leaders was "to assure reliable *behavior* regardless of how the citizen might *feel* about the regime" (Inkeles and Bauer 1959, 283; emphasis in the original text).

Meanwhile, some individuals under a dictatorship will cooperate with the regime and voluntarily (or involuntarily) spy on other people. Mutual surveillance gives individuals the impression that "risks lurk not only in the overt activities of the agencies of coercion but also in one's most ordinary contacts with coworkers, bosses, friends, and even relatives" (Bahry and Silver 1987, 1066). Bergemann (2017) refers to this as "participatory repression" and

states that these dynamics "facilitate greater levels of overall repression and social control" (Bergemann 2017, 386).

In sum, to maintain stability, autocratic regimes cannot apply only ideological indoctrination and physical repression to control the public. They require everyday surveillance methods invisible to most citizens – the "intimidation factor" (Bahry and Silver 1987) – to fulfill the task. Consequently, a ruler implements what I refer to as the daily life control mechanism to prevent deviation among citizens. In the following subsection, I explain in more detail the means of daily life control.

Means of Control (Reactive/Proactive)

1) Registration System and Organizations

Even for autocrats who have total control over society, regulating people's daily lives is a challenging task. There are limits to how effectively institutions and agencies can monitor citizens. Therefore, regimes design several systems that require all citizens to be registered. I define such a system as a registration system.

The registration system is basically a database of citizens' lifetime activities. Keeping population registries such as "national censuses to local voter lists, and from birth registries to school rolls to marriage certificates" offers the regimes "an enormous potential source of infrastructural power" (Slater and Fenner 2011, 21). Registration and the legibility it produces carry deeper importance in autocratic regimes. Some regimes will "fine-tune" population registries to learn not only people's names and addresses but also much more detailed personal histories, such as ideological commitments and personal connections (Slater and Fenner 2011, 22). In the end, by making citizens aware or assume that they are legible to the regime, threats to use coercion becomes "more credible," which makes not only repression "selective" but also state policies more "effective" (Slater and Fenner 2011, 22).

Moreover, establishing a standardized registration system allows the ruler and central bureaucrats "to manage affairs in peripheral areas without relying on untrusted local intermediaries" (Slater and Fenner 2011, 22). In this context, the registration system is more commonly found in communist regimes because it can be related to the ration system. Owing to the registration system, communist regimes already have a population database, which makes the distribution of goods much easier. As for the public, because they receive their necessities based on this system, they have to abide by the rules.

An example of the registration system is China's "*hukou,*" household registration system. The system was established in the late 1950s as the government's new measure to

solidify administrative control (Wu and Treiman 2004). The system has "collected data on Chinese citizens for the purposes of policing and resource allocation" and has been studied by social scientists as "an institutional mechanism that fosters profound social inequalities in China" (Cassiano 2017, 405). In China, every citizen has a pocket-sized booklet that includes cards with detailed information about the person and their family. This booklet functions as "primary proof of identity and citizenship status" (Cassiano 2017, 404). Details of the booklet are as follows:

> The first card registers general information: family classification, either "agricultural" or "non-agricultural," depending on whether you live in the countryside or in the city; the name of the family head; and current and former addresses, which indicate the police station responsible for managing your family's information. The following cards in this booklet contain information about each family member: religious affiliation; birthplace; ancestral origin; relationship to the family head; ID number; military service; blood type; height; and individual address changes and date. (Cassiano 2017, 404)

Hukou status is considered primarily to be "ascribed, rather than achieved" because it is "defined at birth on the basis of the mother's status and cannot easily be changed" (Wu and Treiman 2004, 365). During the state-planned economy period, the household registration system drew a clear divide between the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors and formed two distinct categories of citizens (Cassiano 2017; Wu and Treiman 2004). This division restricted citizens from migrating from rural to urban areas, which led to fixed inequality and job choices. Today, as China leans toward a market economy, the hukou system "assists the country in unifying its population into a single category organized around citizenship, not place of origin or occupation" (Cassiano 2017, 415). The North Korean regime also implements a resident registration system similar to hukou, which is referred to as the *songbun* system. The *songbun* system is discussed in Section 4.5.1.

In addition, autocratic regimes form different types of organizations and use them to monitor and direct citizens' daily lives. For the state to effectively control and monitor people's activities, the citizens must first be grouped into social units through which they can be mobilized. These organizations function as powerful assistants to the regime and ensure that all citizens remain faithful to the party and the government by conducting detailed surveillance jobs and indoctrination. Mutual surveillance between citizens is a particularly crucial tool. It gives citizens reasons to be afraid of and not trust other people, which is "because the decision about their freedom or incarceration was left to the discretion of

anyone at all from among their fellow citizens" (Gross 1984, 70). Gross (1984) describes this as "the great equalizer" because "everybody shared the power to bring down and destroy anybody" and "nobody was able to provide for the security of one's own person, whereas anybody was able to ruin anybody else's life" (Gross 1984, 72).

When the organizational activities are repeated as a matter of routine, people come to regard that form of life as "normal" because to them, it is simply a part of ordinary life. To citizens in such countries, it is just another required task to get through their everyday lives. As Linz (2000) argues, "in a nondemocratic and particularly in a stable totalitarian society, many ordinary people are not necessarily aware of their lack of freedom; for them, that is the way life is" (Linz 2000, 28). For instance, in North Korea, there are five centralized organizations – the KWP, the Youth Union, the Trade Union, the Farmers' Union, and the Women's Union – and every North Korean belongs to one of them, depending on several variables such as age and place of employment. These organizations hold weekly meetings for political study and arrange mutual and self-criticism sessions.

2) Movement Control

According to a previous study on travel restrictions in authoritarian regimes, "from the regime's standpoint, freedom of movement could bring some rewards, but it can also result in less domestic control as citizens connect the freedom of movement to other human rights such as the freedom of speech and assembly" (Alemán and Woods 2014, 1). Therefore, regimes that impose limitations on mobility tend to be more stable than those that do not, despite the fact that the restrictions increase grievances among the public against the regimes (Alemán and Woods 2014). Moreover, these measures allow the regime to manage the mass exodus and defection of key figures in economic sectors or those who are closely involved with the regime's top secrets.

Some variation exists in travel restrictions depending on how isolated a regime is. At the extreme level lies North Korea, possibly the most isolated country in the world, where ordinary citizens are not allowed to travel abroad or even freely move around within the country (Alemán and Woods 2014; Gause 2012). First of all, for ordinary citizens, leaving North Korea is almost impossible. Second, even when they wish to travel within the country but outside of their native city or province, they need to apply for a travel permit. The problem is that even if one applies for the permit, getting it approved is not guaranteed. Since the Great Famine era of the 1990s, however, it seems to be that a travel permit can be acquired with a bribe (Gause 2012). However, this does not apply to Pyongyang because

entry into the capital city is still strictly controlled. The authorities routinely conduct checks on travel documents at checkpoints and on public transportation. In addition, the two borders of North Korea, one in the north with China and the other in the south with South Korea, are the most heavily guarded places in North Korea and attempts to defect result in grave consequences.

Another example of travel restrictions, but less severe ones compared with North Korea, can be found in China. In China, citizens are able to travel abroad for their own private reasons, such as for study, tourism, and business. However, the Communist Party controls travel visas beforehand for specific categories of groups, including academics, dissident intellectuals, and ethnic and religious minorities (Alemán and Woods 2014, 4). Furthermore, the Chinese government implemented an "Approved Destination Status" policy, which allows Chinese citizens to visit a country in organized tour groups that have been previously authorized by the government. This policy allows the government to take control of which countries people visit, for how long, and the purpose of the trip (Alemán and Woods 2014, 4).

Measurement

Each regime adopts different daily life control mechanisms that are appropriate to its rule. Some regimes might have more detailed registration system than others. In addition, some might organize regular meetings in small groups at the local level, whereas others might use a more centralized government system. Therefore, it is difficult to set one standard measurement system for determining the intensity of control. However, what we can do instead is to look at the process from a case-specific point of view. Then, we can examine whether the level of intensity or frequency increased in a case and, if so, why and under what circumstances.

2.4 Conclusion

For the purpose of developing the theory of the social control system, this chapter has two implications. First, it introduced an alternative approach for explaining autocratic regime stability, thus contributing to the vast body of literature on autocracy. I argued that autocratic regimes utilize three distinctive types of mechanisms – ideological, physical, and daily life control – to maintain stability. These mechanisms operate alone or sometimes together to

increase the level of effectiveness. The operationalization of certain element such as legitimation and repression are not new to the literature. On the other hand, developing these elements into social control mechanisms as well as including daily life control as one of the elements could be regarded as a meaningful attempt to contribute something new to the literature.

Second, the theory suggests a more case-specific approach to studying autocratic regime stability. The three elements of the social control system are developed and reproduced within the regime. Therefore, the elements are designed to consider individual regimes' circumstances. Even if the control mechanism is similar, each regime will have a different approach when operationalizing it. After all, even though "concepts form the building blocks for theory, they only become useful if they can explain and predict empirical phenomena" (Horwitz 1990, 11). Consequently, for this dissertation, I chose to conduct an empirical study on North Korea. I planned to test a theory of the social control system and prove whether the operationalization of the system indeed led to the stability of the North Korean regime. In the next chapter, I describe the overall research design and methodology for my empirical study.

3 Research Design and Methodology

In Chapter 2, I defined the concept of social control in this study, introduced a theory of the social control system, and analyzed its operationalization under autocracies. The social control system consists of ideological, physical, and daily life control mechanisms, and autocrats apply different means to maintain the stability of their regimes.

In this chapter, I evaluate whether the theoretical arguments are able to answer my research question. This chapter proceeds in four steps. In the first section, I present the design and methodological foundation of my empirical analysis. I argue that a case-based approach is the most appropriate choice for demonstrating my theoretical arguments because it allows me to conduct an in-depth empirical analysis to test the theory. In the second section, I discuss the case selection methods and justify the within-case analysis of the North Korean regime to test the theory of the social control system. In the third section, I discuss the data and data collection methods. Lastly, I briefly summarize the methodological discussion to conclude this chapter and present the general structure of the following empirical chapters.

3.1 Research Design

Most social science research is built on two different research foundations: large-N analysis and case studies (Van Evera 1997, 29). When searching through the research methods literature, one will easily encounter the famous *N* question among researchers, which concerns the definition of exactly what "N" means (Gerring 2007; Rohlfing 2012, 27). In this research, I followed the conventional definition that "N" refers to the number of cases. From this perspective, large-N methods equate to quantitative analyses and small-N methods with qualitative case studies.

Gerring (2007) defines a case study as "an intensive study of a single unit or a small number of units (the cases), for the purpose of understanding a larger class of similar units (a population of cases)" (Gerring 2007, 37). In recent years, large-N studies have enjoyed advancement due to the developments and sophistication of statistical techniques. Nevertheless, case study research is still widely applied in small-N research designs, and numerous articles and books have been published on the subject (Beach and Pedersen 2016a;

Blatter and Haverland 2012; George and Bennett 2005; Gerring 2007; King, Keohane, and Verba 1994; Rohlfing 2012; Yin 1984). Qualitative research projects tend to focus on one or a small number of cases, which allows the researchers to invest their time and intellectual energy into digging up enormous amounts of materials in search of the relationships among abstract concepts, theories, and empirical observations (Blatter and Haverland 2012; King, Keohane, and Verba 1994). In addition, because in case studies researchers are able to "more easily employ context-specific indicators for theoretical concepts," empirical research validity is further enhanced (Blatter and Haverland 2012, 20). Consequently, some even argue that case study methods are superior to large-N studies because they help the investigator "to understand the perceptions and motivations of important actors and to trace the processes by which these cognitive factors form and change" (Blatter and Haverland 2012, 6).

In sum, the case study method allows causal inferences to be drawn in episodes by going through a large amount of empirical data and applying theoretical arguments. Therefore, for this research, I believed that a case study approach was best suited to the empirical application and testing of the theory of the social control system.

The central argument tested in this study was as follows: autocrats aspire to have total control over society. Autocrats face several different threats: internal elite-based threats from the horizontal level, internal mass-based threats from the vertical level, and external threats from the international community. History shows us that a few autocrats have defended themselves better than others from these threats and managed to prolong their time in office (Croissant and Wurster 2013). Then, how did these autocrats keep their regimes durable? To answer this research question, I constructed a theory of the social control system. As I discussed in the previous chapter, there are three elements in this system: ideological control, physical control, and daily life control. I argue that autocratic regimes that operate the social control system are more likely to exist for longer than other regimes because the control mechanisms function reactively or proactively until stability is achieved. Based on this argument, I formulated the following three hypotheses, which formed the center of the examination for each of the three case studies:

- ***Hypothesis 1****: Autocratic regimes that operate ideological control mechanisms are more likely to maintain stability.*

  In totalitarian states, as defined by Friedrich and Brzezinski (1965), ideology is present in political and daily life. In addition, in contemporary autocracy research,

scholars agree that a regime based solely on repression and coercion cannot survive; rather, some type of justification needs to be made to support the legitimacy of the regime. Therefore, ideological control should contribute to the stability of autocracies by operating mechanisms such as the ruling ideology, education, and media.

- ***Hypothesis 2****: Autocratic regimes that operate physical control mechanisms are more likely to maintain stability.*
  In repressive societies, physical control mechanisms are the most effective measures for controlling the people. Physical control appears in many forms. First, most autocrats construct a coercive apparatus, which can be used to control both the elites and the masses. In addition, autocrats are often willing to implement extreme measures such as torture, imprisonment, and killings.

- ***Hypothesis 3****: Autocratic regimes that operate daily life control mechanisms are more likely to maintain stability.*
  Autocracies are truly durable when the leaders have absolute control over citizens' everyday lives. In this context, daily life control mechanisms refer to measures that hinder people's daily activities. Regime leaders control people's daily lives by limiting their mobility. In addition, they institutionalize registration systems and use organizations to monitor the everyday activities and behaviors of citizens. This makes autocratic regimes much more resistant to public uprisings.

By conducting in-depth empirical analyses, this research aimed to trace how the social control system produces an outcome of autocratic regime stability through the operation of the three mechanisms. This type of research design is known as a "mechanism-centered design." In this design, mechanisms are regarded as "more than just intervening variables but instead are viewed as a system of interacting parts that transfers causal forces from causes to outcomes" (Beach and Pedersen 2016b, 3). Therefore, in a mechanism-centered design, "theorized mechanisms are front and center in analysis, with the analytical focus on assessing how the causal arrow(s) in-between X and Y actually works in particular cases" (Beach and Pedersen 2016b, 4). In this research, theorized mechanisms of the social control system operated as key analytical tools for explaining the outcome.

Since theory played the main role in this research and the case studies were designed to assess its ability to explain the outcome, I found that the congruence method was the most appropriate fit for conducting this research. A congruence analysis is a small-N within-case method, the essential feature of which is that a researcher starts with a theory and then seeks to evaluate its feasibility in a particular case (George and Bennett 2005, chap. 9). In contrast to the process-tracing method, which is a "case-centered" approach that reveals temporal interplay among mechanisms leading to the outcome, the congruence analysis approach is "theory-centered" and attempts to spot "cohesion and consistency on the level of the abstract concept and not on the level of the empirical case" (Blatter and Blume 2008, 334). In congruence analysis, each part of the causal mechanism linking causes and outcomes is not explicitly investigated; thus, it requires a minimal understanding of mechanisms. Instead, a researcher aligns all observations and draws inferences that either confirm or disconfirm the existence of a causal relationship (Beach and Pedersen 2016a, 271–72; Wauters and Beach 2018, 296). The minimalist way of understanding mechanisms here is a "deliberate choice" depending on what type of research situation one is facing. For instance, in situations where a researcher does not feel the need to flesh out details of a causal mechanism as a system or one is not too confident in finding a causal relationship (Beach and Pedersen 2016a, 72–75), a theory is emphasized instead. Theories play vital roles in social sciences. They help us to explain the process and causal relationships of empirical observations and build structures for scientific discourse (Blatter and Haverland 2012, 148). The congruence method acknowledges that theories are valuable in understanding the process because they operate as guidance for research. Based on this understanding, I believed that congruence analysis was the most suitable method for conducting this case study research. In the next section, I explain my case selection strategy.

3.2 Case Selection

Before selecting cases, it is necessary to define the scope of the research. This research focused on explaining the regime stability mechanisms of autocracies. I chose to limit the scope of this study to autocratic regimes because although leaders of democratic regimes also implement certain types of control measures through legislature or institutions to maintain the political and social order, they are fundamentally different from that of autocratic regimes. We should expect to observe much more frequent violence and coercive control measures in

autocracies than in democracies. Since the mechanisms of the social control system are designed to explain repressive yet persistent rules of autocracies, it seems logical to focus on autocratic regimes.

The next step is to choose appropriate cases. When selecting cases, I had several criteria in mind. First, I wanted them to have variations across time so that I could observe the development of the system over different historical periods and possibly under different leaders. In this sense, the within-case design was particularly suitable for my research as it would allow me to compare cases at the same analytical level as well as to secure high context homogeneity. Second, I wanted national attributes such as historical background, regime type, and the personality cult of the leader to remain as consistent as possible across cases. This would allow me to compare and analyze cases under the same background condition. Finally, I sought typical cases to test my theory and hypotheses. When researchers aim to make strong within-case inferences, typical cases are "the *only* type of cases where it makes sense to test whether a hypothesized causal mechanism was present or build a theory about the mechanism linking X and Y, irrespective of whether one theorizes that X is a sufficient condition or not" (Beach and Pedersen 2016b, 14). Therefore, the cases must be typical for mechanisms to be traced. Moreover, as this project was the first experiment to test the relevance of the theory of the social control system leading to autocratic regime stability, I found that selecting typical or even extreme cases was a natural choice. It is useful to look into extreme cases for analytical purposes because they indicate causal factors better than other cases. In sum, based on these criteria, one country offered a strong fit for my theoretical arguments and empirical testing: North Korea.

Consequently, in this research, I chose to conduct a within-case analysis by examining the case of North Korea. Choosing North Korea to conduct the case study research had several advantages. First, the North Korean regime has gone through three-generational hereditary succession, each occurring from father to son. This means that three leaders from the same bloodline have ruled the regime for over seventy years in total. Therefore, it is relatively more straightforward to compare each period of the three leaders and the operation of the social control system under similar national factors. Second, North Korea is an extreme example of a repressive yet stable and long-lasting dictatorship. Therefore, focusing on the North Korean case could emphasize my argument. Lastly, even though a growing number of studies are being conducted on North Korea, theoretical explanation of the regime's stability mechanisms remains a relatively understudied subject. Therefore, this research would be able to contribute to the scholarly literature.

On the other hand, there are also unfavorable aspects of conducting a case study on North Korea. Due to the fact that the regime is so isolated, it is often difficult to obtain reliable data. Therefore, North Korea, probably more so than other cases, exhibits "gray-boxed" areas of mechanisms where the researcher will have low prior confidence in the existence of a causal relationship (Beach and Pedersen 2016a). This makes it difficult to apply the process-tracing method because generating numerous empirical observations that could explain the case is difficult. However, in the congruence method, the researcher does not have to trace the in-depth process leading from the independent variable to the outcome; hence, gray-boxed areas can be accepted (George and Bennett 2005, chap. 9). In short, because the North Korean case offers a clear empirical puzzle and a sufficient fit to the theory's expectations, I argue that it was the best choice for this study.

When choosing the specific episodes, following the previous chapter on theorizing the social control system, I adopted the concept of "political shock" to identify the events that have significantly challenged the stability of the North Korean regime. The goal of this research was to analyze how the North Korean regime has overcome political shocks and maintained stability by implementing the social control system. Based on this case selection strategy, I identified three cases. These cases are examined chronologically and the chosen temporal periods matched the periods of each of the three leaders of North Korea.

The first political shock experienced by the North Korean regime was the August Faction incident of 1956. This event is known to be the first and last attempt by the opposition to openly criticize Kim Il Sung and his policy choices. The shock of this event contributed to the design of repressive control mechanisms and, as a result, the social control system was formed.

The second political shock was the Great Famine and the economic crisis. From 1994 to 1997, North Korea experienced multiple shocks including the death of its founder and leader Kim Il Sung, a series of natural disasters, and severe economic crisis. However, despite this difficult period, the regime did not collapse and ultimately managed to carry out the second leadership succession. I argue that the social control system had been fully consolidated by this period, which ultimately led to the survival of the regime.

The third and most recent political shock to the regime was the second hereditary leadership succession. Despite the state already having successfully conducted one hereditary succession, the second time was much more challenging to the stability of the regime. In contrast to his father Kim Jong Il, who had many years of training and preparation to be the successor, Kim Jong Un was young, inexperienced, and had no solid support base within

North Korea due to his time spent abroad. Nevertheless, the regime once again recovered from the political shock. I argue that this was due to the adaptation of the social control system, which was adjusted to the changing environment. A brief summary of the three cases is provided as follows:

Case 1*: The birth of the social control system (1956–1967)*

For the first case, I focused on the period of Kim Il Sung's post-war power consolidation from the mid-1950s to the late 1960s. During this period, the Kim regime underwent what is known as the largest purge in North Korea's history after the failure of the first and last meaningful coup attempt by the opposition. There were conflicts among different factions (Domestic faction, pro-Soviet Union faction, pro-Chinese faction, and Kim Il Sung's Guerrilla faction), and ultimately, only the core members of Kim Il Sung's faction survived. As for the international environment, there was a major shift of division in political and diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and China, which was caused by their different interpretations and applications of Marxism-Leninism. Since North Korea was receiving economic aid and political support predominantly from these two countries, Kim Il Sung was stuck in the middle between them. I argue that the fundamental structure of the social control system in North Korea was formed during this period to overcome the political crisis and consolidate Kim Il Sung's status as the one and only leader. Eventually, this resulted in the institutionalization of the MIS. The establishment of this system at that time continues to have a significant impact on the durability of the North Korean regime.

Case 2*: The survival of the social control system (1994–2009)*

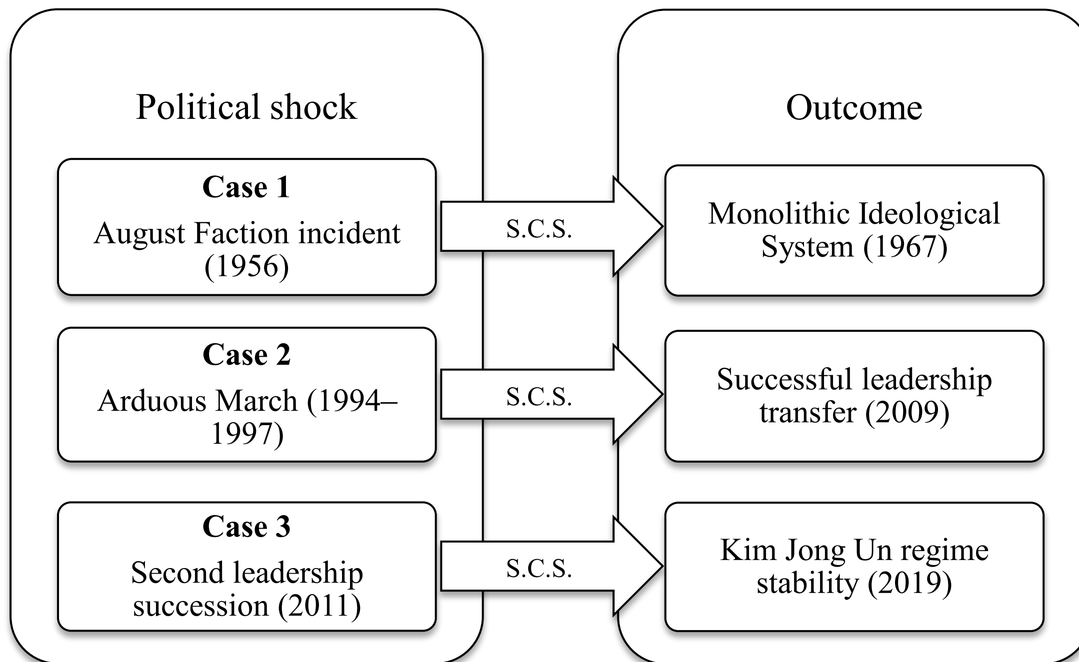
The second case examined the period of the Great Famine and severe economic crisis during the 1990s, which is commonly referred to as the Arduous March in North Korea. First and foremost, the founding leader of North Korea, Kim Il Sung, died on July 8, 1994. Although his son Kim Jong Il succeeded him shortly after, the death of the symbolic leader had a profound political impact throughout the nation. At the same time, the regime was faced with a severe economic crisis and a series of natural disasters. From some time in the early 1990s to the end of the decade, North Korea experienced famine. The famine is estimated to have killed between 600,000 and 1,000,000 people, which equated to approximately 3%–5% of the entire population of North Korea (Haggard and Noland 2007). The external environment was not favorable to North Korea either. The fall of the Communist bloc from the end of the 1980s to the early 1990s left North Korea more isolated from the world. The Kim Jong Il

regime had to find out ways to survive in a hostile environment while preserving its foundation. I argue that the social control system had been fully consolidated by this time, and therefore, ultimately led to the survival of the regime and the second leadership succession.

***Case 3**: The adaptation of the social control system (2011–2019)*

The final case examines the time period from the second successful leadership succession in 2011 until 2019 before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The second leadership succession was a political shock to the regime and there were various signs of instability. However, the new regime overcame said shock and demonstrated its durability once again. First, the regime had to justify another hereditary leadership succession after the death of Kim Jong Il on December 17, 2011. The successor Kim Jong Un had to come up with a justification for his legitimacy. Second, when it was revealed that Kim Jong Un was going to be the next leader, criticism and doubts were voiced, not just from the outside but possibly also from within North Korea. To secure his place, Kim Jong Un purged high-level government officials and replaced the older generation with the younger generation. I argue that the social control system had to be modified to accommodate the changing circumstances. As a result, Kim Jong Un was able to secure his status as the leader of North Korea and the regime maintained its stability. Figure 3.1 provides a summary of the design of the case studies.

Figure 3.1 Design of the Case Studies



Note: S.C.S = social control system

In conclusion, all three cases had a time span of approximately 10–15 years. They also have similar background conditions, such as the historical foundation of the regime, the same ruling family (the Kim family), the personality cult of the leader, and a hostile international environment. By applying the theory of the social control system, this study attempted to determine how the control mechanisms were operated in each case.

The structured analyses of the case studies that follow in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 demonstrate that the social control system indeed worked as a key instrument of the North Korean regime's stability. For each control mechanism, I chose one or two elements within the specified timeframe that may have had the greatest impact on the stability of the regime. In the next section, I discuss data and data collection methods of this study.

3.3 Data and Data Collection Methods

Conducting in-depth research on North Korea is challenging for researchers due to the extremely secretive nature of the country. In general, data on North Korea are more difficult to access than in open societies and even the handful of data provided by the North Korean

government cannot be fully trusted without being extra cautious. Therefore, the pursuit of systematic data has been a challenging task for many researchers working on North Korea.

Accordingly, scholars have been keen to spot relevant evidence from different sources. These include the archive of North Korean documents captured during the Korean War (Cumings 2010); documents that are preserved in the states' archives, especially from the Soviet and Eastern European archives (Lankov 2005; Paik 2010; Person 2008; Szalontai 2005); and text analysis of North Korean state propaganda (Myers 2010). In addition, some researchers have conducted surveys or interviews with North Korean defectors (Dukalskis and Joo 2020; Fahy 2015; Hassig and Oh 2009; Haggard and Noland 2011; Lankov, Kwak, and Cho 2012), while one researcher pursued a more in-depth case study on the city of Hoeryong, North Hamgyong Province, by interviewing its former residents (Kim Seok-Hyang 2013). Furthermore, documentary films, TV dramas, and literature have also been adopted as valuable data sources to help to understand the North Korean regime.

Building on these scholarly works, this study used two main sources of data to maximize its arguments and draw inferences. First, primary sources officially published by the North Korean state were used as evidence for causal inference. The North Korean publications used in this study were acquired during fieldwork to South Korea, which I write about in more detail below. In addition, official data and reports from the Ministry of Unification in South Korea can illuminate some of the darkness caused by data deficiency. There are also other organizations in South Korea, either government-funded or private, that conduct research on North Korea. For example, the Hana Foundation (North Korean Refugees Foundation) is one of the very few organizations that conducts large-N surveys of North Korean defectors. They publish lengthy annual surveys titled the "Settlement Survey of North Korean Refugees in South Korea," which is a meaningful resource. There are also think tanks and organizations outside of Korea that are devoted to studying North Korea. The Woodrow Wilson Center's North Korea International Documentation Project (NKIDP) is one of them, and it provides collections of declassified documents on North Korea from its former communist allies. The documents from NKIDP were especially useful for the present research when conducting the first case study on the Kim Il Sung era (1956–1967).

Second, secondary material provided this study with background information. In particular, previous studies on various aspects of political or economic shocks, historical episodes, and legitimation questions in North Korea were vastly helpful. In addition to the scholarly literature on North Korea, I used concepts and theories from autocracy research

literature. This allowed the empirical part of the study to be firmly grounded in political science literature.

Fieldwork

The primary data for this research were collected during two fieldwork trips to South Korea, from April to June 2019 and from February to April 2021. I obtained North Korean publications at the Information Center on North Korea, which is located at the National Library of Korea in Seoul. The Information Center on North Korea has a vast collection of over 112,000 North Korean publications and videos. It has one of the largest collections of North Korean publications in the world and is updated regularly. The center is a governmental institution under the Ministry of Unification of South Korea. It was opened in 1989 amidst a thaw in inter-Korean relations to make North Korean documents, which were formally banned under the National Security Law, available to the general public. Since then, the center has served as an important archive for researchers working on North Korea. Notably, under the National Security Law, it is still illegal to possess or share North Korean political documents. In addition, the center does not provide an online viewing service. Therefore, the only way one can have access to the materials is to visit the center in person. Visitors are allowed to make copies, but for documents marked "special," they are required to submit a signed consent form and a recommendation letter from their affiliated organization.

Some of the publications here include *Rodong Sinmun* (the official newspaper of the Central Committee of the KWP) and other newspapers, periodicals, school textbooks, biographies of the leaders, works of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il, and the *Journal of Kim Il Sung University*. During the fieldwork, I went through publications from the relevant case study period and collected documents that I believed would be applicable to my research. For instance, I collected and cited pieces from Kim Il Sung Works. This book contains nearly 50 historic writings – reports, speeches, lectures, and talks – by Kim Il Sung in chronological order. In North Korea, the words of Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong Il, and Kim Jong Un carry significant meaning and policy implications. The official publications or newspapers in North Korea usually begin with a quote from the leader, followed by what kind of lessons one can learn from them. In this regard, researchers can refer to Kim Il Sung Works "not as raw, quantitative data, but as a body of discourse that needs to be further analysed in connection to wider aspects of the society, on the one hand, and to the social effects that are produced thereby, on the other" (S. Ryang 2000, 324). To make sense of Kim's works, I only cited

them if the information was backed up by other documents or if it could function as useful evidence for my theoretical model.

The publications in the center are originally in Korean, but some also have English versions published by the Foreign Language Publishing House in Pyongyang. When the English version of the publication was available, I compared them with the Korean version, and if there were no significant translation errors or differences, I cited the English version. When English versions were not available or believed to carry different meanings, I translated the Korean version into English.

Limitations

One of the limitations of this study was that I could not travel to North Korea to conduct field research. There is no doubt that fieldwork in North Korea would have contributed immensely to the development of this study. However, as a South Korean, it was legally and realistically not possible for me to travel to North Korea. Nevertheless, this hindrance was partially mitigated as this study aimed to analyze and explain North Korea using a theoretical model instead.

In addition, I had originally planned to conduct interviews with North Korean defectors in South Korea, but this plan had to be canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Fortunately, after moving forward with the empirical part of the study, I concluded that interviews would not have been necessary for my case studies. However, if and when I have a chance to develop this dissertation into a book, I wish to include defector testimonies as they could provide detailed evidence, particularly for the daily life control mechanisms sections.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter addressed the methodological foundations for the empirical part of this research. I argued that a case study approach was best suited to testing the theory of the social control system. Based on the theoretical model, I developed three hypotheses that ideological control, physical control, and daily life control mechanisms contribute to autocratic regime stability. Then, I explained the decision to adopt a congruence method because the theory played a key role in this study.

As for the case selection, I chose North Korea as a typical case of a stable autocratic regime. Based on the concept of political shock, I chose three episodes to conduct case studies on. The first case was the August Faction incident of 1956 in which Kim Il Sung faced challenges to his leadership. This event, which I described as the first political shock to the regime, eventually led to the establishment of the social control system. The second case was the Great Famine and the economic crisis, which devastated the Kim Jong Il regime, yet despite these hardships, the regime survived and ultimately carried out the second leadership succession. I argue that this was possible due to the consolidated social control system. The final case was the second leadership succession in 2011 from Kim Jong Il to Kim Jong Un. The social control system entered a modification phase to support the regime's smooth transfer and to maintain the stability of the Kim Jong Un regime.

Finally, I presented data and data collection methods for the empirical analysis. I used primary sources of North Korean publications that I collected from fieldwork in Seoul at the Information Center on North Korea. State documents of South Korea, the United States, Russia, and former allies of North Korea were also used. In addition, I used secondary materials to add flesh and background explanations.

In the following empirical Chapters (4, 5, and 6), I present the three case studies on the North Korean regime's stability. In each chapter, I first provide a brief historical overview of the pre-shock period. Then, I provide a detailed historical background of the political shock event. Lastly, I test my theoretical model and analyze how the three control mechanisms were operated in each case and whether they were effective.

4 The Birth of the Social Control System (1956–1967)

This chapter deals with the first case study of this dissertation: the birth of the social control system in North Korea. The mid-1950s to the late 1960s marked a critical point in North Korea's history. Internally, different communist factions struggled to survive in the political scene. As a result, the first and last meaningful attempt to potentially overthrow the North Korean leader of the time, Kim Il Sung, was staged. Externally, communist states were undergoing major changes starting from the de-Stalinization processes in 1953 to the growing tension between the Soviet Union and China. I argue that the basic structure of the social control system in North Korea was established after the August Faction Incident of 1956, the event that I define as the first major political shock to the regime. Due to the operation of the social control system, Kim Il Sung was able to consolidate his position as the one and only leader (*Suryeong*) of North Korea, and ultimately, institutionalized the MIS in 1967.

4.1 Historical Overview: North Korean History Pre-1956

This section provides the historical background to situate the case study. Before Japan colonized Korea, the Korean Peninsula had been ruled by the Choson Dynasty, the Kingdom of Lee, for approximately 500 years. It was founded by Lee Seong-gye in 1392 and was replaced by the Taehan Empire in 1897. The Choson Dynasty strictly followed Confucian ideals and doctrines, of which a substantial legacy remains in modern Korea. In addition, most modern Korean norms, culture, and language are also inherited from this period.

Colonization and Independence

After victory in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895, Japan rose as a new regional power. The Japanese military then occupied Seoul and, in October 1895, invaded the palace in the middle of the night to assassinate Queen Min, the symbolic leader of the anti-Japanese forces, in a terrible manner. Following her murder, King Gojong sought refuge at the Russian embassy in early 1896 for one year. This incident eventually marked the end of the Choson monarchy. After leaving Russian protection, King Gojong renamed the Kingdom the "Empire of the Great Han" (*Taehan Jeguk*) and adopted the title of Emperor in order to assume equal

nominal status with his Chinese and Japanese counterparts. However, after the Russo-Japanese war of 1904–1905, Japan coerced Korea into signing a protectorate treaty in November 1905. This treaty deprived Korea of its diplomatic sovereignty and it became a protectorate of imperial Japan. In 1910, the Korea–Japan Annexation Treaty finalized the full annexation of Korea. Shortly after the annexation, the new colonial state of the Government General of Korea (GGK) was established. The GGK "not only dominated Korea following the usual paternalistic logic of colonialists, but they also believed they could actually 'assimilate' Koreans culturally" (Robinson 2007, 36).

The Japanese colonization period is commonly divided into three distinct phases. The first decade of the rule (1910–1919) is known as a period of the "Military Rule" as the colonial state relied heavily on force to deter any Korean resistance. During this period, cultural and political life was heavily restricted. For instance, all privately run newspapers were shut down and private organizations were abolished (Robinson 2007, 41). Nevertheless, Koreans remained resistant. On March 1, 1919, they demonstrated their desire for independence with a peaceful national protest. As a result, Japanese leaders realized that using only coercion was not going to work and they needed to change their methods.

From mid-1919, the colonial state initiated the period of "Cultural Rule." During this second period (1919–1931), the Japanese replaced pure repression with a softer policy of manipulation, employing tactics of appeasement and allowing limited cultural and social freedoms (H. Y. Lee, Ha, and Sorensen 2013, 6). On the other hand, the colonial state aimed to "Japanize" Korea and to make Korea become one with Japan in every aspect. The GGK sponsored research institutes to prove how it was only natural for the culturally "more advanced" Japan to absorb "the lesser" Korea into itself (Robinson 2007, 44).

The third period, "Forced Assimilation Rule" (1931-1945), began with the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, the northeastern part of China, in 1931. During this period, Japan began to invade other countries in Asia and used the Korean Peninsula as military base. Numerous young Korean men were taken to war and, at the same time, young Korean women were dragged, kidnapped, and mobilized into sexual slavery. In addition, the colonial state implemented policies to "completely assimilate Koreans into Japan and to eradicate Korea's ethnic and cultural identity" (H. Y. Lee, Ha, and Sorensen 2013, 6). For instance, in 1939, a name-change policy was implemented to pressure Koreans to adopt Japanese names. Due to the repression and discrimination, civilians had no choice but to change both their first and family names. In addition, speaking or learning Korean was forbidden. At schools, all classes

were taught in Japanese and teaching Korean language and Korean history were also banned (Robinson 2007, 95).

Meanwhile, Koreans' opposition to Japanese colonial rule continued. Following the March 1st Movement of 1919, leaders of the independence movement went into exile in China or abroad. On April 11, 1919, activists in China formed the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea in Shanghai. It operated as the headquarters of the resistance movement until the independence of Korea. In addition, Koreans with communist ideas had been mobilizing in Manchuria since at least 1918 (Scalapino and Lee 1972, 6). One of the guerrilla fighters in Manchuria was Kim Il Sung, who would become the first leader of the North Korean state. Although Kim's guerrilla experience has been exaggerated by North Korean propaganda, he did gain a certain level of notoriety for his successful Bochonbo battle in 1937 when guerrilla fighters under his command defeated the Japanese. He was even put on a wanted list as "the tiger" (*tora*) by the Japanese (McCormack 1993, 23). Kim Il Sung's anti-Japanese guerrilla experience in Manchuria would later play a central role in the building of his personality cult.

On August 15, 1945, following the atomic bombs being dropped in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan surrendered to the Allied forces. Korea became free from Japanese rule. However, Koreans did not achieve independence; instead, they were liberated. American forces under General John R. Hodge arrived at the southern part of the peninsula on September 8, 1945, while the Soviet Army was stationed in the northern part. As a result, Korea was divided in half at a latitude of 38° north. The 38th parallel, as it became known, was an arbitrary line on the map chosen by officers for political reasons (Cumings 1981, 121) without considering the country's geography, culture, or history. Soon after, millions of Koreans from Japan, Manchuria, China, and other countries repatriated (Robinson 2007, 100). Among them were Kim Il Sung and his fellow Manchurian guerrillas who arrived in the northern part of Korea on a Soviet ship, the *Pugacheff* (McCormack 1993, 23–24). On October 14, 1945, at a welcoming ceremony for Soviet troops, Kim Il Sung appeared for the first time in front of the public.

The Reoccupation of Korea and Trusteeship

Following the liberation, Korea was reoccupied by two great powers – the USA and the Soviet Union – that possessed very little knowledge of the local conditions and politics. The three years of occupation affected the two Koreas greatly in two ways. First, in the U.S. occupied south, the capitalist development model was implemented, whereas the northern

part of Korea adopted the Soviet model of economic development. Second, in South Korea, liberal democracy became the institutional foundation of its politics, whereas North Korea adopted a socialist path.

In the northern part of Korea, the "North Korea Provisional People's Committee" was established with Kim Il Sung as its chairman on February 8, 1946, to implement several decolonization reforms, such as the arrest of national traitors and those who had collaborated with the Japanese. One of the most critical reforms during this period was land reform. Based on the Land Reform Act of March 5, 40% of the total of over 1 million farming households registered at the time had their land confiscated in whole or in part. Those classified as "pro-Japanese and reactionary," less than 1%, were sent to forced labor, possibly in Siberia, and some landlords and rich peasants (approximately 10%) as well as their families were forced to resettle outside of the district (to avoid close connections with their former tenants) (Scalapino and Lee 1972, 1022-1023). The implementation of land reform was made easier by the fact that a large number of rich landlords had already fled south of the 38th parallel.

At the beginning of the occupation, both powers were stationed "under the theory that the occupation was temporary" and that Korea would "in due course" be fully independent (Robinson 2007, 109). However, a Joint Commission established by the Soviets and Americans failed to reach a concrete decision. The U.S. then asked the United Nations to form a commission, the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK), to supervise general elections. The idea was to hold an election so that power would be transferred to the new political authority and the Soviet and American forces would withdraw, leaving Korea to achieve its full sovereignty. This plan seemed unrealistic from the beginning because two separate political systems were already taking shape on the peninsula.

In the end, the Soviet Union refused UNTCOK entry to the northern part; therefore, elections were held only in the South on May 10, 1948. Ultimately, on August 15, the Republic of Korea (ROK) was formally established with Syngman Rhee as the first president. Meanwhile, on August 25, an election for representatives of North Korea's Supreme People's Assembly was held. A few days later, the first Supreme People's Assembly was held between September 2 and 10, which adopted the first constitution of North Korea. On September 9, the DPRK was proclaimed with Kim Il Sung as the first premier. Consequently, the ROK and the DPRK, more commonly known as South Korea and North Korea, respectively, came into being as sovereign states.

The Korean War (1950–1953) and the Division

The Korean War broke out on June 25, 1950. It began with an attack by the North over the 38th parallel. From the start of the war and throughout the summer and fall of 1950, the better-equipped and trained Korean People's Army (KPA) of North Korea had clear military superiority over the poorly equipped and trained South Korean Army. Seoul, the capital city of South Korea, was taken by the KPA in only three days. The KPA advanced south and by September, the ROK and UN forces were cornered in the southeastern part of the peninsula near Busan. The combat stabilized at what came to be referred to as the "Busan Perimeter."

Meanwhile, General Douglas MacArthur, who had been put in command of the UN forces, came up with a daring plan to launch a surprise landing at Incheon on the northwest coast of South Korea. The "Incheon Operation" was a success and the UN and ROK forces fought their way back into Seoul and crossed the north of the 38th parallel taking all major cities. However, Chinese forces intervened, and Chinese and North Korean troops retook almost all of North Korea before crossing back to the south and retaking Seoul. Eventually, the battle came to an impasse roughly around the 38th parallel, and armistice talks started in July 1951. However, the war continued for two more years.

On July 27, 1953, three of the four primary parties to the war signed the armistice agreement: U.S. Army Lieutenant General William Harrison, Jr. representing the United Nations Command (UNC), North Korean General Nam Il representing the KPA, and the Chinese People's Volunteer Army. South Korean President Syngman Rhee refused to sign the agreement. The war is considered to have ended at this point. However, no peace treaty has been signed as of 2021, leaving the peninsula technically in a state of war.

4.2 First Shock: The August Faction Incident of 1956

4.2.1 Internal Factional Struggles and the Changing Communist World

Timing is a decisive factor for institutional variation (Pierson 2004). For North Korea, it was the period of the 1950s when domestic and international events coincided that triggered a path-dependent process. Path-dependence theory tells us that once an institutional pattern is adopted, over time it gets increasingly difficult to change the pattern or select other available options (Mahoney 2000; Pierson 2000). According to this logic, "earlier events matter much more than later ones" – therefore, history matters (Pierson 2000, 253).

In the early period of North Korean history, one of the most distinctive features was the existence of rival political factions in the party. Boundaries of factions were not always

clean cut (Scalapino and Lee 1972, 479-480), but the main point here is the fragmentation of the party. Four main factions can be identified to have competed for dominance in the 1950s: the Domestic faction, the Yan'an faction, the Soviet faction, and lastly Kim Il Sung's Guerilla faction. These factions, as indicated by their names, differed greatly in their background and experiences.

The Domestic faction mainly consisted of former underground communists who fled the US-controlled South to join their Northern comrades. The group was led by Pak Hon-yong, one of the founding members of the first Communist Party of Korea in 1925. This faction appeared to have the most power in the early days of the liberation.

The Yan'an faction was formed by Korean left-wing intellectuals who had emigrated to China in the 1920s and 1930s to escape colonial rule. They were closely connected with the Chinese Communist Party and most had spent many years at the Chinese Communist headquarters in the town of Yan'an, which is where the name of the group comes from (Lankov 2002, 89). In Yan'an, they formed the "Independence Alliance" and carried out independence movements that "received direct support and guidance from the Chinese Communist Party" (Guangxi 2012, 48).

The Soviet faction consisted of ethnic Koreans from the USSR who were brought to North Korea by Moscow following the liberation to work in party and government institutions. One important difference between the Soviet and Yan'an faction was that while most of the Yan'an faction members were born and had lived in Korea for a long period, the Soviet faction members mostly consisted of those who were born in the Soviet Union and had never even been to Korea (Lankov 1995, 106).

Lastly, there was the Guerrilla faction led by Kim Il Sung. Its members were former guerrillas who had fought the Japanese in Manchuria in the 1930s and escaped to the Soviet Union around the 1940s, remaining there until the liberation. Most of them had served in the 88th Brigade of the Soviet Army during 1942–1945. After the liberation, the Guerrilla faction was the first to return to Korea. Interestingly, at that time, this group appeared to be the weakest and least significant (Lankov 2005, 13).

Kim Il Sung began attacking other faction members as early as 1953 while the country was still recovering from the war (Lankov 1999, 45). The Domestic faction was the first to be eliminated. Kim argued that the battle situation had worsened because there were no mass movements in the southern part to support the North, as the Domestic faction had predicted would happen (Suh 2001, 23). He condemned the Domestic faction for false intel and denounced its leaders as "U.S. spies." Members of this faction were executed or at the

very least removed from the party. Around the same time, some of the prominent members of the foreign factions were also eliminated. For example, Pak Il-u from the Yan'an faction was purged and Ho Ga-i from the Soviet faction committed suicide in 1953. In sum, soon after the Korean War, Kim Il Sung succeeded in getting rid of almost the entire Domestic faction and vastly weakened the Yan'an and Soviet factions (Lankov 1999, 45).

Meanwhile, in the international arena, the mid-1950s was a period of great significance for the Communist camp. Khrushchev launched the de-Stalinization campaign and attempted to create a new model of socialism. Most Eastern European countries followed in the footsteps of Moscow and adopted a more liberal version of socialism, albeit still repressive. This changing environment triggered mass riots, such as in Poland and Hungary in 1956, in the hope of liberalization measures. On the other hand, North Korea was one of the few communist regimes, along with China, Albania, and Romania, to reject the new decision from Moscow and remain more or less loyal to the old Stalinist model (Lankov 2005).

De-Stalinization reached a new stage when Khrushchev delivered a secret speech on February 25, 1956 to criticize Stalin for his abuse of power against the Communist Party. The criticism of the personality cult circulating in the Soviet Union and the civil uprisings in Eastern European countries must have placed enormous pressure on Kim Il Sung. In March 1956, the Central Committee (CC) of the KWP was held and the members listened and translated Khrushchev's secret speech. Upon hearing the speech, party members stopped referring to Kim Il Sung as "*Suryeong*" (supreme leader) for a brief while (Suh 2001, 18). Through this experience, Kim Il Sung must have learned an important lesson about how outside powers could influence domestic politics.

Another major event that occurred during this period was the Sino–Soviet split. From the late 1950s, the Soviet Union and China clashed over the correct interpretation of socialism amidst the de-Stalinization campaign in the Soviet Union and the ongoing cult of Mao in China.

Following these events, tension reached its peak in 1956 when some of the key members of the Yan'an and Soviet factions publicly criticized Kim Il Sung at the August Plenum of the KWP CC. In sum, factional struggles and the changing international environment were the antecedent conditions that operated as a "base line" (Collier and Collier 1991, 30) for the upcoming critical juncture of 1956. In the next section, I describe the August Faction Incident of 1956, which was the first shock to the North Korean regime, which ultimately triggered the birth of the social control system.

4.2.2 The August Faction Incident of 1956

Cleavages

As depicted above, the domestic situation in North Korea was fragile due to the power struggle among different factions. In addition, externally, the Communist camp was undergoing major changes. At this moment, Kim Il Sung had three major tasks to achieve: (1) strengthening and preserving his power as the supreme leader; (2) crushing his rivals; and (3) achieving full independence from Moscow. These three tasks were in fact "closely connected and inseparable" (Lankov 2002, 92). The Yan'an and Soviet factions had maintained close ties with China and the Soviet Union even after they returned to Korea. Therefore, getting rid of these two factions would allow Kim Il Sung not only to eliminate his rivals but also to dodge foreign interference. However, Kim encountered a major political challenge in the August Plenum in 1956 (hereinafter the "August incident").

Based on the insights from previous studies on the August Plenum and newly released documents from the Russian State Archive of Contemporary History,[3] scholars have discovered that the incident was more than a power struggle among different factions, but rather it should be viewed from at least three different perspectives: (1) the competition on different policy lines of post-war recovery and development; (2) the ideological debate; and (3) Kim Il Sung's growing personality cult and changes in the power dynamics (Paik 2010; Person 2008; Yoo 2017).

First, one of the causes of the August incident was a dispute over socialist development strategies. Soon after the Korean War, two economic development policy lines emerged. Following the Stalinist development model, Kim Il Sung and his followers advocated a policy that gave priority to heavy industry development. This model attempted to achieve high economic growth in a short period by investing resources in the heavy industrial sector rather than consumer goods, such as light industry and agriculture. Kim Il Sung saw industrialization as a means of gaining the upper hand in a post-war development battle with South Korea. At that time, South Korea had a massive influx of aid coming from the United States. In addition, Syngman Rhee, then President of South Korea, continued to threaten to wage war. This made Kim believe that gaining strength through industrialization was a priority. On the other hand, his opponents thought otherwise. They argued that a supply of

[3] The declassified documents of conversations that took place at the Soviet Embassy in Pyongyang are regarded as the most authoritative primary material when it comes to the August incident (Paik 2010, 317).

consumer goods was urgently required to improve the people's extremely impoverished post-war lives. Therefore, they argued that the development of light industry and consumer goods should come first (Person 2008, 448; Yoo 2017, 13). Kim Il Sung was critical of this view and even criticized them by saying that "our comrades must direct more effort to the organizational and propaganda work of the Party, instead of being engrossed only in economic campaigns" (KIS December 28, 1955, 411).[4]

Second, one of the major motives that made the Yan'an and Soviet factions form an alliance was their ideology. Within the party, there was a dispute between dogmatism and formalism vs. establishing *Juche* (which roughly translates to 'self-reliance')[5] in ideological work. It was a debate about whether to inherit Marxism-Leninism in principle or to adapt the ideology to fit North Korea's reality. In other words, it was a debate about "succession vs. originality," and Kim Il Sung used this logic to attack the opposition (Yoo 2017, 11). The conflict was made official in Kim Il Sung's historic speech on the idea of Juche in 1955. In this speech, Kim argued that the propaganda works "suffer in many respects from dogmatism and formalism" and that "the principle shortcomings in ideological work are the failure to delve deeply into all matters and the lack of Juche" (KIS December 28, 1955, 395). He then added that "many comrades swallow Marxism-Leninism raw, without digesting and assimilating it" and they had "no intention of studying our realities" (KIS December 28, 1955, 402).

Lastly, the event was an outcome of a power struggle. The political scene after the Korean War consisted of dynamics among the Guerrilla, Yan'an, and Soviet factions. However, Kim Il Sung's Guerrilla faction gradually started to dominate. Members of the Guerrilla faction were appointed to key positions in the party and state organs. For instance, at the election of a new Politburo and CC at the Third Congress on April 23–29, 1956, "of the eleven members of the new Politburo (renamed as Standing Committee), only two (Kim Tu-bong and Choe Chang-ik) harbored critical views with regard to Kim Il Sung's policies" (Szalontai 2005, 88). At the same time, the personality cult around Kim Il Sung continued to flourish. Despite the de-Stalinization process in Moscow, Kim retained his Stalinist ways of leadership, which provoked dissatisfaction from the Soviet and Yan'an factions. The title of *Suryeong* was adopted to refer to him, which undermined the collective leadership (Yoo 2017, 10–11). Suryeong not only means the highest position of the party, government, or military

[4] "Kim Il Sung Works" publications are cited as "KIS original document date" throughout this dissertation (the same goes for Kim Jong Il [KJI] and Kim Jong Un [KJU]).
[5] The Juche ideology is discussed in detail in Section 4.3.1.

but also refers to the status of absolute ruler who is above all of those positions (Paik 2010, 643). Moreover, Kim Il Sung's past anti-Japanese guerrilla activities began to be exaggerated and glamorized. For instance, a biography of Kim, which was distributed in party organizations, referred to him as "the savior of the Korean people" and "a great military leader," and the entire history of the Korean people's struggle came down to "the revolutionary activity of Kim Il Sung" (WWC April 30, 1956).[6] This was especially troubling for the Yan'an faction because they perceived their history of revolution to be much greater and much larger in size than the Guerrilla faction. However, the Yan'an faction's history and tradition had been ignored and Kim Il Sung's guerrilla activities, which accounted for only a tiny fraction of the national liberation struggle in the Korean Communist camp, were magnified and advertised as the greatest struggle of all time (Paik 2010, 288).

Eventually, the abovementioned three "cleavages" generated tensions that led to the critical juncture (Collier and Collier 1991, 32) in August 1956. Moreover, the foreign faction members were unhappy about Kim Il Sung's increasing cult of personality – so much so that the released Russian State archives reveal that at almost every meeting with the Soviet diplomats, they complained about the idolization of Kim (Person 2008). Thus, the Yan'an and Soviet factions decided to form an alliance under a shared interest and attack Kim Il Sung at the August Plenum in 1956.[7]

The August Plenum of 1956

From June 1 to July 19, 1956, Kim Il Sung embarked on a trip to communist countries in Eastern Europe. The North Korean delegation led by Kim Il Sung visited eight countries (East Germany, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Albania, Mongolia, and the Soviet Union), starting and ending the trip in Moscow. The main purpose of his prolonged trip was to acquire more aid and cheap loans in order to procure enough resources for the newly embarked-upon Five-Year Plan, which was about to begin in 1957. As Lankov highlighted, Kim's rather extended absence from the country probably encouraged his opponents to organize a conspiracy (Lankov 2005, 76).

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[6] Documents from the "Woodrow Wilson Center Digital Archive" are cited as "WWC original document date" throughout this dissertation.

[7] Person (2019) agrees that the August Plenum in 1956 marked one of the most pivotal events in political history of North Korea; however, he argues that the goal of Kim's critics was "to stimulate – through criticism – an honest discussion of shortcomings to promote policy changes" and they "did not originally seek to replace Kim" (Person 2019, 262).

Yi Sang-jo, who was the DPRK's ambassador to Moscow and a member of the Yan'an faction, was at the forefront of the anti-Kim Il Sung coalition during the entire period of the August incident (Paik 2010, 206). During Kim Il Sung's trip abroad, Yi appealed to Moscow for support. On June 16, Yi met a high-ranking Soviet diplomat and informed him of the personality cult building around Kim Il Sung, repressive measures taken by his clique, and the dire living conditions of the North Korean people. Yi then encouraged Moscow to put pressure on Kim during his stay so that when he returned, a certain degree of political liberalization would be facilitated in North Korea (Szalontai 2005, 94).

At the end of July, several members of the opposition group, including Pak Chang-ok, Yi Pil-gyu, Choe Chang-ik, Kim Sung-hwa, and Yun Kong-hum, visited the Soviet Embassy and disclosed their intention to remove Kim Il Sung and his clique at the next plenum of the KWP CC. They hoped to "secure the support, or at least the neutrality, of the Kremlin, but the embassy adopted a wait-and-see attitude" (Szalontai 2005, 94). On the other hand, Lankov claims that it is highly likely that the Soviet and Chinese governments were "mildly supportive" or at least aware of the plot (Lankov 2013b, 12). In fact, he argues that it is possible that "the entire affair was instigated by the Chinese" (Lankov 2005, 111). This is because the core members of the opposition consisted of the Yan'an faction and, when the plan failed, some of them fled to China and were given asylum.

Meanwhile, Kim Il Sung had learned in advance of what was going on behind his back. While he was still overseas, Choe Yong-gon, a member of the Guerrilla faction and a close friend of Kim's, sent an urgent telegraph to Kim with details of the conspiracy. Choe warned Kim that the opposition had planned to speak against him and his policy at the next CC plenum. Therefore, when Kim Il Sung returned to North Korea, he postponed the plenum, which was originally scheduled to be held on August 2, 1956. He then announced the opening of the plenum only one day before to create confusion (Guangxi 2012, 56; Paik 2010, 385), forcing the opposition to rearrange their plot and wait in the dark.

In the end, the August Plenum was held on August 30, 1956, after a month of delay. There were two official agendas: the outcome of Kim Il Sung's recent visit to communist countries and the situation of the national health service and how to improve it (August Plenum 1956 resolutions). However, the main event was an open challenge to Kim Il Sung and his policies by the opposition. Originally, the plan was that when the Yan'an faction started to speak up, the Soviet faction would follow. Yun Kong-hum of the Yan'an faction criticized Kim Il Sung for the personality cult and highlighted how little the party leadership had done since the de-Stalinization campaign. Yun also pointed to Kim's unjust appointment

of his loyal yet allegedly incompetent cadres. He was referring in particular to Choe Yong-gon's appointment to the post of vice-chairman of the party. In addition, Yun argued that the government should have devoted itself more to improving the people's living standards and criticized the policy of the development of heavy industry at the expense of light industry. Meanwhile, members of the Soviet faction, who had promised to attack Kim Il Sung together, remained silent as the situation seemed unfavorable to them. Only a few joined in, but they accounted for a small minority (Suh 2005, 561). When the assembly resumed in the afternoon, Kim Il Sung declared them factionalists. Yun Kong-hum, Yi Pil-gyu, and So Hwi were instantly expelled from the party and Choe Chang-ik and Pak Chang-ok were dismissed from the CC.

In sum, there were three primary reasons why the August incident was unsuccessful. First, the conspiracy had been leaked in advance so Kim Il Sung was able to postpone the plenum and prepare a response (Paik 2010, 384). Second, the alliance itself was problematic. From the beginning, the so-called "August group" was an "interest based anti-Kim Il Sung coalition rather than one based on a common ideology and identity" (Guangxi 2012, 56). In addition, the opposition failed to obtain support outside of the Yan'an and Soviet factions. They were unable to recruit members of the Guerrilla faction or the very few remaining members of the Domestic faction. At the same time, some influential members of the Soviet and Yan'an factions turned their backs and sided with Kim Il Sung (Szalontai 2005, 95). Furthermore, the opposition failed to properly assess the political situation. By 1956, Kim Il Sung already had the majority of support in the government. He had eliminated important figures in each faction and the title of Suryeong was widely spread to refer to him. He also had the support from the younger generation cadres, who were deeply nationalist and eager to see their country be less dependent on foreign powers. Therefore, "rather arrogant 'foreigners' from both the Yan'an and the Soviet factions" were not exactly viewed positively by the younger generation (Lankov 2005, 218). Lastly, the group failed to prolong foreign interference. Both the Soviet Union and China worried that the riots in Eastern Europe might spread to other communist countries and disrupt the entire Communist camp. After the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, Khrushchev announced that "the Soviet Union would no longer interfere in the internal affairs of comrade nations" (Guangxi 2012, 59). Consequently, the August group's hope that the external powers would sustain their support was lost.

The Aftermath of the August Faction Incident

In the aftermath of the August Faction Incident, Kim Il Sung declared an "anti-factional struggle" and thoroughly purged the opposition. Four of the opposition members (Yun Kong-hum, So Hwi, Yi Pil-gyu, and Kim Chang-il) sought refuge in China on the very day of the plenum for fear of their personal safety (Paik 2010, 388). Later on, Kim Il Sung justified the purge by arguing that it had to be done for North Korea to be free of external forces (Suh 2005, 567).

On September 3, 1956, Yi Sangjo, the DPRK's ambassador to Moscow, informed Khrushchev of the event by writing a letter, in which he asked Khrushchev to interfere in North Korea's domestic politics (WWC September 3, 1956). Khrushchev agreed and dispatched the Soviet delegation to Beijing to discuss how to deal with the situation in North Korea. At a meeting with Anastas Mikoyan, Mao Zedong "expressed his deep concern about the North Korean situation and condemned the recent actions of Kim Il Sung and the new purges" (Lankov 2005, 138). Finally, both parties decided to dispatch a joint delegation to North Korea. Mao advised the Soviet-Chinese delegation to "persuade Kim Il Sung to adopt a conciliatory attitude toward those who were purged from the party and admit his own errors," but simultaneously to make it clear that "they had come to help Kim Il Sung rather than overthrow him" (Guangxi 2012, 57).

The Soviet-Chinese joint delegation led by Mikoyan and Peng Dehuai arrived in Pyongyang on September 19. At the meeting, Kim Il Sung admitted that the party's decision had been rushed and accepted the delegation's proposal to call a new plenum. At the September plenum, held on September 23 with Mikoyan and Peng Dehuai as observers, Kim Il Sung "agreed to rehabilitate" those involved in the August incident and "promised not to undertake any wide-scale purges of high-level functionaries" (Lankov 2005, 142). Consequently, Choe Chang-ik and Pak Chang-ok were reinstated as members of the CC, and Yun Kong-hum, So Hwi, and Yi Pilg-yu's party registration was restored. However, a few months later, Kim Il Sung revoked the decision and purged the opposition. The purge of the 1950s led to a "nearly complete reshuffle" of the leadership in North Korea. All top positions in the party were occupied by the Guerrilla faction or Kim Il Sung's family (Lankov 2013b, 15). In sum, the collapse of the foreign factions and the de-Stalinization process marked a decisive step toward a single-leader system domestically and the Juche system internationally.

4.2.3 The Formation of the Social Control System in North Korea

In the theory chapter, I argued that when an autocratic regime experiences its first major political shock, the social control system is constructed to maintain regime stability. I defined the August incident of 1956 as the first political shock to the North Korean regime. In a comparative sense, this event might not be regarded as a significant challenge to the regime; however, from a case-specific point of view, it remains to date the first and last attempt to openly challenge the supreme leader of North Korea. Therefore, I found it an adequate case for examining the emergence of the social control system.

Furthermore, the abovementioned event is especially critical because, according to the authoritarianism literature, "the consequences of developments during a regime's founding period may subsequently become important causes of regime durability" (Levitsky and Way 2015, 101). In other words, to understand the longevity of the North Korean regime, it is necessary to examine the original legacy that reinforced and reproduced the particular path of development. The August incident occurred during the post-liberation and post-war period, when the regime was still vulnerable and Kim Il Sung was in the process of actively consolidating power. The timing and sequencing of events are crucial. Kim Il Sung was able to lock his power and authority because he promptly developed control mechanisms at the beginning of the regime. Consequently, the birth of the social control system at this critical juncture generated "institutional or coalitional configurations" (Levitsky and Way 2015, 101) that became the initial self-reinforcing mechanism of the regime.

I argue that the control mechanisms were operated to achieve the outcome of regime stability, which was achieved with the institutionalization of the Monolithic Ideological System (MIS; *yuil sasang chaegye*) in 1967. Jong-seok Lee (1995) distinguishes the monolithic leadership system from the unitary (or monistic) leadership system. According to Lee, the unitary leadership system operates under the power of one leader, whereas the monolithic leadership system not only concentrates power in one person but the entire society is also centered around the absolute leader and equipped with a theoretical justification that supports the system. In other words, while the unitary leadership system is "mainly dependent on the rule of power," the monolithic leadership system "reproduces not only power but also ideology and socio-cultural sentiment that rationalize the system" (Lee 1995, 16). The leadership of the KWP began to shift from the unitary leadership system to the monolithic leadership system in 1967 (Lee 1995, 16). Eventually, after the purge of the final rival faction, Kim Young Ju, the younger brother of Kim Il Sung and heir apparent at the time, proposed the "Ten Principles for the Establishment of the Monolithic Ideological System" in

1967. The MIS, or the so-called “Suryeong system,” was later formally institutionalized in the enactment of the “Socialist Constitution” in December 1972 (Paik 2010, 629; Ryoo 2017, 180–81).

In the following sections of this chapter, I explain how each control mechanism was formed and produced. First, Kim Il Sung developed the Juche ideology of self-reliance, which he used to justify achieving independence from foreign powers. Second, as for the physical control mechanisms, Kim Il Sung conducted massive purges at the elite level to eliminate rivals and potential threats. The regime also established the coercive apparatus to prevent potential elite and mass uprisings. Lastly, the opposition’s public attack against Kim in August 1956 set forth purges and loyalty checks within the party and among the whole population. The Kim regime designed a complex registration system and organizations to control the whole population.

4.3 Ideological Control Mechanisms

From the mid-1950s, Kim Il Sung began to position himself as the one and only leader of North Korea. In doing so, he embarked on shaping the state ideology. During the 1950s and 1960s, the Kim regime developed the Juche ideology of self-reliance, which would fundamentally shape the ideological control system of the country. In the end, Kim Il Sung justified his legitimacy by formally institutionalizing the MIS in 1967.

4.3.1 The Juche Ideology of Self-reliance

Timing is critical. In this case, the period of the 1950s provided the Juche ideology with a comparative advantage. The term ‘Juche’ was not Kim Il Sung’s grand invention. Its literal translation in Korean is ‘subject’ and the term had been in use long before its first official appearance in Kim’s now-famous speech “On Eliminating Dogmatism and Formalism and Establishing Juche in Ideological Work” on December 28, 1955.[8] What Kim did was to “introduce a new meaning with a new set of connotations” (Lankov 1999, 63).

[8] The historical significance of this speech is disputed. One of the most notable critics is B. R. Myers. Myers argues that Kim Il Sung’s “Juche speech” of 1955 was “the watershed that wasn’t” and the speech “neither deviates from the Marxism-Leninism of its day nor does it exceed levels of patriotism that were then considered acceptable throughout the East Bloc” (Myers 2006, 92). In this study, I did not focus on the significance of the speech itself, but rather on the development of the Juche ideology as a legitimation mechanism.

The political scene of North Korea following the liberation was dynamic with the existence of different factions. However, after the Korean War, Kim Il Sung's Guerrilla faction gained the upper hand in the factional struggle. By this time, the majority of the Domestic faction had already been eliminated from the party. At this juncture, Kim Il Sung began to emphasize the notion of "Koreanness." He claimed that the Korean revolution could only be achieved by Korean communists, and that only those who are aware of the history, geography, and customs of the Korean people can claim the Korean revolution (KIS December 28, 1955, 396). He added that Koreans should "study our own things in earnest and get to know them well" (KIS December 28, 1955, 401). This measure of "our way of development" began to receive an increasing amount of attention, and official media emphasized the superiority of North Korean culture (Lankov 1995, 40).

When the Yan'an and Soviet factions raised objections to Kim Il Sung's policy choices and rapidly expanding personality cult, Kim heavily criticized them and blamed them for copying other countries without coming up with a "Korean way."

> Those from the Soviet Union insisted upon the Soviet method and those from China stuck to the Chinese method. So they quarrelled, some advocating the Soviet fashion and others the Chinese way. That was sheer nonsense… It is important in our work to grasp revolutionary truth, Marxist-Leninist truth, and apply it correctly to our actual conditions. There should be no set rule that we must follow the Soviet pattern. Some advocate the Soviet way and others the Chinese, but is it not high time to work out our own? (KIS December 28, 1955, 403)

Moreover, Kim claimed that power does not take the exact same form in socialist countries, and therefore, "the form of our government should also be suited to the specific conditions in our country" (KIS December 28, 1955, 401). This statement stimulated the underlying nationalism of the North Korean cadres. At that time, the majority of low- to mid-level cadres, who had climbed the career ladder during the war, were the largest support base for Kim Il Sung. To them, "the ideas of liberal reform were perhaps less attractive and comprehensive than straightforward notions of nationalism" (Lankov 2002, 92). Therefore, Kim had confidence in stressing the "Koreanness" in the party work and ideology. He argued that they are "not engaged in any other country's revolution, but solely in the Korean revolution," and therefore, "all ideological work must be subordinated to the interests of the Korean revolution" (KIS December 28, 1955, 395-396).

When problems of post-war recovery and development were raised, which involved giving priority to the heavy industrial sector rather than to light industry and agriculture, the Soviet Union called Kim Il Sung to Moscow in May 1955 and advised him to adopt a new policy. This was a rather serious intervention in North Korea's internal affairs and Kim felt personally attacked (Im 1999, 309). Through such experiences, he learned an important lesson on how outside powers could influence domestic politics. Thus, he initiated a transition process in ideology, "from internationalist, fraternal socialism to an indigenous version of Marxism-Leninism, or 'Korean-style socialism' and the anti-hegemonic Juche ideology" (Person 2008, 449).

Juche ideology as a reactive measure of ideological control

Lipset, in a typically Weberian vein, defined legitimacy as "the capacity of a system to engender and maintain the belief that the existing political institutions are the most appropriate ones for the society" (Lipset 1960, 77). In North Korea, the legitimacy of the leader is regarded as the legitimacy of the whole political system due to the fact that the leader is made up of the ideas of country, nation, and state combined (Frank and Park 2012, 34).

I argue that the Juche ideology was implemented as an ideological control mechanism to consolidate Kim Il Sung's rule. Juche as an ideology was revealed to the public for the first time in April 1965. Kim, who was visiting Indonesia to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Bandung Conference,[9] delivered a speech at the Ali Archam Academy of Social Sciences of Indonesia. In his speech, he said that the party had "made every effort to establish Juche in opposition to dogmatism and flunkeyism towards great powers" (KIS April 14, 1965, 259). Kim also outlined the four fundamental principles of Juche: Juche in ideology (*juche*), independence in politics (*jaju*), self-support in the economy (*jarip*), and self-defense in national defense (*jawi*).

The main philosophy of Juche was man-centeredness. However, over time, it developed into a system where the masses "must submit to the guidance of the Suryeong" to fulfill their duty (Y. S. Park 2014, 6). In sum, Kim Il Sung's struggle to "preserve and

[9] The Bandung Conference was the first large-scale meeting of newly independent Asian and African states and was held on April 18–24, 1955 in Bandung, Indonesia. The participating states aimed to promote economic and cultural cooperation between Asian and African states and to oppose colonialism or neocolonialism by any nation.

increase his own unrestricted power" became institutionalized as an ideology that portrayed "a fight for national dignity and Korea's right to choose its own destiny" (Lankov 2002, 92).

As a post-colonial regime, North Korea relies strongly on nationalism as its legitimation strategy. Therefore, the idea of self-reliance and independence from foreign powers form a fundamental base of the ideology. Nationalism often entails a "xenophobic nature" and authoritarian regimes make use of this characteristic to "cultivate legitimacy by denouncing foreign enemies" (Byman and Lind 2010, 50). Kim Il Sung was described as a national hero fighting against the evil Japanese and Americans to save the innocent Korean people. Moreover, the elimination of the foreign factions was made easier with nationalist sentiment. Kim associated the Soviet and Yan'an factions with foreign interference. In 1965, he talked about this incident in a speech, an excerpt of which is provided as follows:

> As everyone knows, the period of 1956-57 was the time when modern revisionism raised its head on a wide scale in the international communist movement and the world imperialists and international reactionaries, taking advantage of it, unleashed an extensive "anti-communist" campaign… The anti-Party elements and their supporters abroad – revisionists and great-power chauvinists – joined forces in opposition to our Party and engaged in conspiracies to overthrow the leadership of our Party and Government. (KIS April 14, 1965, 238)

In addition, in a speech to officials of the Departments of Organizational Leadership and Propaganda and Agitation in 1966, he said that "people of a certain country have set up their faction here, and those of another country are trying to bring pressure to bear upon us" and the factionalists "each with the backing of its foreign masters, oppose the Party" (KIS October 18, 1966, 420). The Juche ideology thus operated as an "effective tool" for Kim Il Sung to "purge his political competitors with the slogan of anti-factionalism and anti-imperialism" (Woo 2018, 235).

The 1960s was a rare period in North Korean history, in which the external situation had a major impact on the development of the KWP. In particular, the Sino–Soviet conflict had a significant influence on the implementation of Juche as an official ideology of the KWP (Lee 1995, 74). After the Korean War, North Korea's economy was heavily dependent on the Soviet Union and China. Therefore, Kim Il Sung had to figure out how to be politically independent from these two countries while maximizing economic assistance from both sides (Lankov 1995). In the end, the hostile relationship between the Soviet Union and China worked in his favor because the two countries were occupied with dealing with each

other, so they did not meddle in North Korea's domestic politics. Furthermore, the Sino–Soviet split gave Kim a chance to cultivate the ideology of self-reliance. He criticized both the revisionism of the Soviet Union and the dogmatism of China (Paik 2010, 568).

In the early days of its formation, the Juche ideology was used as an ideological control measure to prevent external threats to the regime, such as the de-Stalinization process, liberal reform measures, and the Cultural Revolution in China. The ideology also provided Kim Il Sung with a pretext to purge the foreign factions after they challenged his authority at the August Plenum in 1956. In this regard, the Juche ideology could be seen as a reactive control mechanism to the regime's crisis (Suh 2001, 44). Since the 1960s, however, I claim that the Juche ideology operated as a proactive ideological control measure. The ideology did not remain static. On the contrary, it continuously evolved, depending on changes in the domestic and international environment, until it was finally codified in the Socialist Constitution and declared the official ideological doctrine of North Korea in 1972 (Woo 2018; Yoon 2016). When the regime was faced with a major crisis, the North Korean leadership came up with a new ideology to justify the regime's legitimacy. However, the Juche ideology did not become obsolete. The new ideologies were in fact a "newer version of Juche" and did not deviate from its fundamental idea.

4.3.2 The Institutionalization of the Monolithic Ideological System

At the 15th Plenary Meeting of the Fourth CC of the KWP in May 1967, the last remaining non-core Kim Il Sung faction was purged. This event marked a critical turning point in North Korean history because it led to the formation of a strong personal dictatorship under the MIS and a high degree of personality cult, which are the fundamental features of the North Korean regime (Paik 2010, 643; Yoo 2017, 16).

I argue that the MIS was established as a proactive ideological control measure to preserve Kim Il Sung's legitimacy and protect him from any future oppositional threat. Chung (1993) divides the major components of legitimation into two categories: legitimation through rational versus irrational means. Legitimation through irrational means includes "(1) personal (original or/and manufactured) charisma; (2) ideological manipulation, coercive socialization and indoctrination; and (3) cooptation" (Chung 1993, 82–83). The author adds that if the degree of the states were to be measured, "North Korea would rank towards the extreme irrational end of such a scale" (Chung 1993, 83). Based on this definition, toward the

end of 1967, North Korea had one charismatic leader, developed the Juche ideology, purged the opposition, and filled the state organizations with loyal followers of Kim Il Sung.

When it comes to North Korea, I agree with Chung (1993)'s argument that "an original charisma can be institutionalized to preserve its vitality in the modern political system, especially in the totalitarian society, contrary to Weber's concept that its vitality will gradually deteriorate through its routinization in bureaucratic societies" (Chung 1993, 110). With the establishment of the MIS, Kim Il Sung's charisma and authority were systematically institutionalized. Kim was now perceived "not as a mere founder of the country" but as "a divine figure at the center of the entire nation" (Yoon 2016, 227). Accordingly, Kim's personality cult intensified and the whole society gradually transformed to support his legitimacy. For instance, the statements replaced "Party" with "Suryeong" and "loyalty to the Party and Suyreong" became "loyalty to Suyreong." In 1968, the "KWP History Research Office" was renamed the "Kim Il Sung Revolutionary History Research Office." In addition, the Kim family history was rewritten. The family cult was traced back to Kim's great-great-grandfather, which was done to stress the "inevitability of Kim Il Sung's rise to leadership of the state" as well as to "legitimize Kim Jong Il's succession as one born into and raised by the revolutionary family" (Lim 2009, 44). This shows that there was already a plan for designing the succession from Kim Il Sung to Kim Jong Il. The whole education system was also redesigned to focus on Kim Il Sung's revolutionary activities. Publications such as Kim's biographies and *Kim Il Sung Works* were mass-published during this period, while simultaneously other faction members' memoirs were removed from a collection of *Reminiscences of the Anti-Japanese Guerrillas* (Lim 2009, 44; Paik 2010, 596-597).

4.4 Physical Control Mechanisms

Following the August incident of 1956, Kim Il Sung began to thoroughly purge the opposition. He later purged the Gapsan faction in the 1960s and, by the end of the decade, successfully monopolized power. In addition, the coercive apparatus, which was fully institutionalized during this period, became a vital tool of the North Korean regime for deterring or crushing any potential resistance.

4.4.1 The Establishment of the Coercive Apparatus

The coercive apparatus is one of the most crucial components of the physical control mechanism in autocracies. Because maintaining internal security is a vital task for autocrats, they design organizations that are responsible for domestic intelligence and security. These organizations monitor individuals' behavior and activities and detect who may be a threat to the regime and the leader. Dictators are aware of various types of potential threat and they construct coercive apparatus based on "what they perceive to be the dominant threat at the time they come to power" (Greitens 2016, 32). In other words, dictators who are more concerned about elite threats will design a coup-proofing security apparatus that is highly fragmented and exclusive. On the other hand, a coercive apparatus designed to deal with a mass threat will be centralized and inclusive (Greitens 2016, 17-74).

When Kim Il Sung first came to power, the first dominant threat he perceived was other political factions in the party. Therefore, organizations comprising the coercive apparatus were designed to be "deliberately blurred and overlapping" (Bermudez Jr 2001, 7). Thus, each organization was unable to accumulate enough power to become the dominant one and, in fact, they competed against each other to prove their loyalty to Kim to receive more benefits. Eventually, the coercive apparatus was established as a proactive measure of physical control in North Korea. Three organizations make up the coercive apparatus: the Ministry of People's Security (MPS), the State Security Department (SSD), and the Military Security Command (MSC). Tasks related to internal security, intelligence, and espionage missions are distributed across these three institutions. Over time, the coercive apparatus operated not only at the elite level but also in the daily lives of ordinary people. Unfortunately, due to the limited availability of data, I was unable to gather detailed information on the actors and structure of the coercive apparatus in the establishment stage appropriate for the current case study period. Thus, in this section, I describe a brief history and general tasks of each of the organizations.

Ministry of People's Security

Almost immediately after the liberation, the Soviet army set up protection and security units (*boandae*) in each province to keep the population under control. These units were placed under the command of the "Five Provinces Administrative Bureau," which was established in November 1945. Under this Bureau, 10 bureaus were set up, which respectively dealt with industry, transportation, agriculture, commerce, finance, postal services, education, public health, judiciary, and security. In March 1951, in the midst of the Korean War, the security

bureau was separated and became an independent body. The security bureau eventually came to be the founding body of what is today's MPS (Chon 2003, 17–18).

The MPS is one of the most powerful institutions in North Korea. It is in charge of the security operations of the party and the state and manages confidential documents on government projects. It is also responsible for internal security and day-to-day policing. A vital task of the MPS is to conduct background investigations and surveillance to detect anti-regime and anti-Kim family activities. The MPS is also in charge of operating the *songbun* system (classification system),[10] the resident registration system, and the public distribution system (ration system) (Gause 2012). In addition, the MPS is in charge of local-level management. It manages traffic order and conducts checks on individual travelers for appropriate travel permits. In sum, the main task of the MPS is to detect and remove anti-state elements, strengthen and prolong the KWP dictatorship, and monitor the entire North Korean population.

State Security Department

Originally, the SSD, also referred to as the Ministry of State Security (MSS), operated as one of the agencies under the MPS. However, with the adoption of the new Socialist Constitution in December 1972, Kim Il Sung gave an order to separate the tasks of establishing public order and political security. Therefore, the political security bureau was separated from the MPS and became an independent agency in 1973 as the SSD (Chon 2003). In addition, the MIS was officially institutionalized in the Socialist Constitution and the regime began to pave the way for the Kim Il Sung-to-Kim Jong Il succession. To that end, it can be assumed that the reason behind this separation was not only to enhance the internal security level but also to support the smooth leadership transition to Kim Jong Il by detecting and eliminating potential threats at the elite level (Lim 2009, 73).

The SSD conducts a wide range of domestic and foreign counterintelligence operations as well as internal security duties. Its structure was created based on the Soviet KGB. The SSD is in charge of searching for anti-regime and anti-Kim elements and economic crimes as well as keeping track of North Korean personnel abroad. Political prison camps are also under its jurisdiction (Fiori and Kim 2014, 59; Gause 2012, 17). The functions of the SSD often overlap to some extent with those of the MPS. This is because MPS personnel are more likely to be the first to detect suspicious activities since they are more

[10] The songbun system is discussed in detail in Section 4.5.1.

involved in the day-to-day lives of the population. Once a case has been discovered by the MPS, it is then handed over to the SSD for further investigation (Chon 2003, 24).

Military Security Command

The MSC is the investigative organization within the KPA, which monitors the activities of military commanders and officers. Some of the duties of the MSC include identifying and arresting anti-party, anti-state, and counter-revolutionary elements in the military; conducting independent counterintelligence missions; guarding the supreme leader when he visits a military unit; and operating the registration system in the military (National Institute for Unification Education 2016). The MSC officers are dispersed within the KPA and often operate undercover (North Korea Leadership Watch 2010). They conduct "investigations, surveillance, and wiretapping of high-ranking general officers in their offices and homes" (Gause 2012, 37) to search for any evidence of corruption and disloyalty to the leader and regime. In sum, the MSC provides "an additional layer of surveillance" in the KPA (Gause 2012, 11) for the personal protection of the leader.

4.4.2 The Purge of Rival Factions

The Purge of the Foreign Factions in the 1950s

In the aftermath of the August incident of 1956, Kim Il Sung "perfected the method of isolating and applying the label 'factionalist' to malcontents" (Person 2019, 272). In the August Plenum 1956 resolutions, Kim argued that the factionalist activity in the party should be banned unconditionally and, no matter how trivial, must be firmly rejected as a criminal act that undermines the unity of the party (August Plenum 1956 resolutions, 783). The second document of the resolutions contained a direct criticism of the people involved in the August incident. The document revealed their identities and condemned them for holding secret meetings and attempting to "win hegemony" in the party (August Plenum 1956 resolutions, 785).

> Comrades including Choe Chang-ik, Yun Kong-hum, So Hwi, Yi Pil-gyu, and Pak Chang-ok… in order to accomplish their wicked conspiracy, they condemned the party's policies, slandered leaders of the party and the government, and attempted to confuse public sentiment by fabricating and disseminating various rumors that discouraged our party. They have continued to engage in anti-party activities by all means and methods, such as frequently holding secret meetings in hospitals, resorts, houses, and offices, and

> assembled their close associates to provide secret tasks for organizing anti-party conspiracy. (August Plenum 1956 resolutions, 784)

To their luck, So Hwi and Yun Kong-hum along with a few others managed to escape and sought refuge in China,[11] while the rest were declared "factional elements" (*chongpa bunja*) and punished for their acts. They were given new posts: "Pak Chang-ok became deputy director of a sawmill, while Choe Chang-ik, in a rude and presumably quite intentional gesture, was appointed manager of a state-run pig farm" (Lankov 2005, 132).

However, following the Soviet-Chinese delegation's visit, the September Plenum was held and Kim Il Sung, who was under pressure, admitted that the decisions were rushed and reluctantly agreed to reinstate them in the party.

> The mistakes made by the comrades were, undoubtedly, serious. However, this meeting admits that the decisions of the August Plenum were lacking in prudence in dealing with the problems of these comrades and the handling measures were simple, and there was a lack of patience to correct misunderstood comrades in a refined manner. (September Plenum 1956 resolutions, 796)

The document further reveals that the party "generously embraced" the comrades and would continue to "educate them in order to reflect on their mistakes and get back on the right path" (September Plenum 1956 resolutions, 796). Based on these statements, it can be assumed that Kim Il Sung still perceived the opposition's act to be wrong and harmful to the party, but unwillingly accepted the delegation's demand. As a result, soon after the Soviet-Chinese delegation left North Korea, the decisions of the September Plenum were completely revoked. Party cadres who had connections with the opposition leaders were purged. Moreover, even though no connection was found, simply being members of the Yan'an or Soviet factions became a reason to be purged. Ultimately, 3,912 members were expelled from the KWP and 6,116 members died between July 1, 1957 and July 1, 1958. In combination, 10,028 members either died or were purged, which precisely equaled the number of newcomers (10,029) to the party (Lankov 2005, 153).

In the end, the Yan'an and Soviet factions were eliminated from the political scene as a reactive measure of the August incident. After purging the foreign faction members, Kim Il

[11] However, it is believed that both So Hwi and Yun Kong-hum's families were probably executed (Lankov 2005, 154).

Sung turned the Guerrilla faction into his own "ruling coalition" (Svolik 2012b). This was the beginning of Kim Il Sung's personal autocracy.

The Purge of the Gapsan Faction in the 1960s

The Gapsan faction consisted of communists who fought against the Japanese alongside Kim Il Sung and other guerrillas in Manchuria in the 1930s. Their geographical background was the Gapsan region in South Hamgyong Province (in present day Ryanggang Province), North Korea, hence the name the Gapsan faction. They conducted anti-Japanese struggle activities under the "Gapsan Operations Committee" and provided logistical and intelligence support to Kim Il Sung's group (Lee 2001, 428; Person 2013); therefore, they were very close to Kim Il Sung. For this reason, the Gapsan faction is often classified in a larger scope as part of the Guerrilla faction, but in a strict sense, they should be distinguished from Kim Il Sung's core Manchurian Guerrilla faction (Lee 2001, 428).

During the process of reconstructing the party and the state in the 1950s, the Gapsan faction played a significant role in consolidating Kim Il Sung's power. They had been "undoubtedly loyal to Kim Il Sung" and played a key role in purging the Yan'an and Soviet factions after the August incident (Ryoo 2017, 181–83). Therefore, they enjoyed economic benefits and a political status as members of the ruling coalition. They held key positions in the party, including – and most importantly – Pak Geum-chol (the fourth-ranking member of the KWP CC's Political Committee who was in charge of ideological and political matters in the Politburo, and was in fact Number 2 after Kim Il Sung), Ri Hyo-soon (the fifth-ranking member of the KWP CC's Political Committee who was in charge of organizational affairs and South Korea-related matters), and Kim Do-man (Secretary of the CC and Head of the Propaganda Section of the CC) (Lee 1995; Person 2013; Suh 2001; WWC June 13, 1967).

However, conflicts and confrontations began to arise between the Guerrilla faction and the Gapsan faction from the mid-1960s when Kim Il Sung began the process of establishing the MIS. One of the main disputes involved the economic policy. Kim Il Sung pursued heavy industry development, arguing that "heavy industry is the material basis for the country's political and economic independence without which we can neither talk about an independent national economy nor strengthen our national defense capabilities" (KIS April 14, 1965, 248). The Gapsan faction disagreed with this policy and instead advocated for the development of light industry and consumer goods along with the Soviet-style pragmatic line based on profit (Lee 2001, 428–431; Yoo 2017, 20–21).

Moreover, there was an ideological debate between Kim Il Sung and the Gapsan faction. The Gapsan faction perceived the Juche ideology as a creative application of Marxism-Leninism based on the experiences of Korean communists and not as Kim's personal ideas. Therefore, they began to question the idolization process of Kim as the one and only leader (Lee 1995, 294–296; Suh 2001, 37–39). Simultaneously, the Gapsan faction attempted to magnify their revolutionary history and challenge the expansion of Kim's personality cult. In particular, Pak Geum-chol was "greatly frustrated" that "everyone but Kim Il Sung was being written out of the history of the anti-colonial struggle" (Person 2013). Outside observers who were familiar with North Korea's domestic situation shared the same sentiment. In a conversation between Romanian and Vietnamese diplomats, Van Pen, the Charge D'Affaires of the Chinese Embassy, said the following:

> It is perfectly reasonable for Pak Geum-cheol, the only leader from the current structure whom during the harshest years of anti-Japanese fighting operated and endured with great heroism inside Korea, not to accept that all the credit for the revolutionary and socialist construction in the DPRK goes to Kim Il Sung, who spent the entire period of the revolution in China and in the Soviet Union, in much milder conditions. (WWC July 28, 1967)

During this period, Kim Il Sung was promoting his younger brother Kim Young Ju as his successor. However, the Gapsan faction, particularly Pak Geum-chol, strongly resisted this decision. They claimed that Kim Young Ju had not participated in the fight against the Japanese, so his "resistance career in the colonial era was doubtful" (Ryoo 2017, 205). Eventually, the Gapsan faction decided to push Pak as the successor. Kim Do-man, head of the Propaganda Department, and Ri Hyo-soon were at the forefront of creating a personality cult around Pak Geum-chol. They began to promote Pak's anti-Japanese activities and commissioned the film "An Act of Sincerity" (*Ilpyeon dansim*), which was about the colonial-era activities of Pak and his devoted wife (Person 2013; Suh 2001, 38). In addition, the Institute of Party History rebuilt Pak's birthplace in Gapsan into a historical site (Lee 2001, 435–436). These acts were a direct challenge to Kim Il Sung. Ironically, Kim criticized the rise of personality cult in his country:

> Many of our officials display extreme "individual heroism" and are fond of showing off… Some comrades take them for great revolutionaries and greatly admire even their ordinary words as being something very stylish and worthwhile. These are all dangerous practices which will, in the end, tend to grow into nepotism, parochialism and factionalism. Furthermore, they will

> only make people become arrogant and rule over the Party organization. (KIS March 17–24, 1967, 119)

> Some people even rebuilt the house where a certain person was born. As I said at the Political Committee of the Party Central Committee, we should evaluate the merits only of those who died while making revolution… We should never do such things as rebuild a birthplace or erect a stone monument for those who are still living. (KIS March 17–24, 1967, 119)

In the end, Pak Geum-chol, Ri Hyo-soon, and Kim Do-man were all purged at the 15th Plenary Meeting of the Fourth CC of the KWP, which was held from May 4 to 8, 1967 (Lee 1995, 304; Suh 2001, 37–39). According to a document from the Archive of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ri Hyo-soon and Pak Geum-chol stopped making public appearances in the second half of April 1967 (WWC June 13, 1967). In the same document, the Hungarian diplomat reported that, "the North Koreans avoid directly answering any questions about the reasons for the purge of these officials. They only say that while they can tolerate deviations from the party line, they can't tolerate a lack of respect for the leader – Kim Il Sung" (WWC June 13, 1967). Later, it was revealed that Pak Geum-chol was found guilty of "not understanding the political line of the party, for which he was removed from his function and appointed the head of a factory in the countryside" (WWC August 3, 1967), while the others were charged with even more serious crimes, such as "thwarting the revolutionary movement in South Korea" (Person 2013).

I argue that the Gapsan faction was purged as a proactive measure to prevent potential challenges to Kim Il Sung. With the purge of the Gapsan faction, Kim Il Sung became an "established autocrat" and effectively monopolized power so that he could no longer be threatened by the ruling coalition (Svolik 2012b). Eventually, the ruling coalition almost exclusively consisted of either members of the extended Kim family or the former guerrilla fighters who fought alongside Kim in Manchuria. Therefore, the size of the ruling coalition was very small and the members were also less likely to challenge Kim. In sum, the purge of the opposition led to the transition from collective authoritarian rule to personal autocracy and Kim's uncontested power (Svolik 2012b, 54–55).

After the purge of the other factions, political prison camps began to play an active role as a repression mechanism of the North Korean regime. In North Korea, prison camps were first established in 1947 after the liberation. In the beginning, landlords, pro-Japanese, and religious people were sent to prison and later, during and after the Korean War, people who were accused of being South Korean or American spies were also sent to prison. It was

after the August incident of 1956 that political prison camps were officially established. The so-called factionalists and their family members who were purged were sent to political prison camps in remote areas (G. S. Lee et al. 2013). From then on, these camps were used to incarcerate people with anti-Kim Il Sung ideas. After the purge of the Gapsan faction in 1967, there was a need to expand political prison camps to accommodate more people. As a result, the number of facilities continued to increase, and by the end of the 1970s, there were eight political prison camps in North Korea (Kil 2010, 11).

4.5 Daily Life Control Mechanisms

In addition to ideological and physical control, the new Kim Il Sung regime designed measures to monitor and control the everyday lives of the population. The regime established government-led registration systems during this period. By exchanging party identification cards, the regime investigated the elite's background and loyalty to Kim Il Sung once again. For the general North Korean population, a classification system, which divided people into three categories, was established. Furthermore, inspection of people's private lives was meticulously conducted with the operation of *inminban*, or neighborhood units.

4.5.1 Party Identification Cards and the Songbun System

Party Identification Cards Exchange Campaign

The factional attack on Kim Il Sung in August 1956 set forth a large-scale investigation of party members. In December 1956, Kim Il Sung launched a five-month campaign on exchanging party identification cards. North Korean officials explained the reasons behind the campaign to Samsonov, 1st Secretary of the Embassy of the USSR, as follows:

> a) Among the existing cards there are still many old ones from before 1948. There were many cards with the old name of the party, the Korean Workers' Party of North Korea (beginning in 1948, the party's name was changed to the Korean Workers' Party of Korea). Also, in the war period about 450,000 new party members were accepted, and they received substitute cards (certificates, 450,000 is nearly half of the number of members of the party, which in April 1956 had 1,154,000 members).
> b) There was bad paper in the old cards and many had been destroyed or were in poor condition.
> c) The exchange of cards was combined with an education campaign for the party members.

d) On the occasion of the card exchange, the rehabilitation of wrongly punished comrades is being conducted.
(WWC December 24, 1956)

However, the campaign's political implications were more than simply exchanging old cards for new ones. The KWP CC formed an organization dedicated to this task and it interviewed every member of the party to check their ideological and political stance. Interviews were conducted in a strict manner in the form of investigations and tests, and party members were also questioned about their past mistakes. In particular, a heavy emphasis was placed on reminding them of the crimes of the August incident and making sure that they were aware of the factionalists' identities (Suh 2005, 569-570). The party card exchange measure proved to be of great assistance in checking the reliability of all party members and thoroughly inspecting for any anti-Kim Il Sung elements at the elite level. Eventually, this resulted in the expulsion of nearly 300 members (Lankov 2005, 146; Suh 1988, 152).

The Songbun System – Improving the Political Legibility of Society

After conducting thorough background checks on the elites, the regime moved on to the rest of the population. It launched massive investigation projects across the entire population to determine people's origins, background, and ideological inclination. This eventually led to the establishment of the North Korean version of the social classification system, which became instrumental in enhancing the legibility of the population as subjects of the state (Scott 1998) and in rearranging and relocating them to protect the supreme leader.

The investigation project began in full swing from 1957, immediately after the party card exchange campaign ended. The North Korean leadership embarked on a mission to divide the entire population into "those who can be trusted" and "those who cannot be trusted" (Suh 2001, 27). On May 30, 1957, the party issued the "May 30th Resolution" of "On Transforming the Struggle against Counterrevolutionary Elements into an All-Party, All-People's Movement," which eventually laid the foundations for the classification of the entire North Korean population.

The May 30th Resolution was followed by a large-scale campaign to sort out those who were deemed politically unreliable. In December 1958, the "KWP Intensive Guidance Project" was officially launched and lasted for two years until December 1960. This project was led by Kim Young Ju, Kim Il Sung's younger brother and head of the Organization and Guidance Department, and approximately 7,000 personnel were involved (Suh 1996, 72–73). From Pyongyang to rural areas, these personnel traveled to investigate people through using

various tactics, such as interviewing, holding trials in courts, and making people confess and self-criticize (Hyun 2008, 13). Eventually, the KWP Intensive Guidance Project found one-third of all North Koreans to be the "hostile class," namely those disloyal to the socialist revolution, the party, and its leadership (Collins 2012, 22). Based on North Korean Cabinet Decree No. 149 at this time, those who were judged to be "impure" were forcefully removed "from areas within 20 km from the coast or the Demilitarized Zone between North and South Korea, from areas within 50 km of Pyongyang or Kaesong, and from areas within 20 km from other large cities" (Collins 2012, 22–23). In sum, this decision brought the "red city plan" to success by excluding counter-revolutionaries and hostile elements from Pyongyang and the military: "Approximately 5,000 families were removed from Pyongyang, 600 families from Kaesong, 1,500 families from Hwanghae South Province, and 1,000 families from Kangwon Province" (Collins 2012, 23; Suh 1996, 74).

In February 1964, the official re-categorization measure of all North Korean people was approved at the 8th Session of the 4th Party Congress. Thereafter, the Resident Registration Project (RRP) began in April 1966 and finished in March 1967. Kim Il Sung argued that due to Japanese colonial rule, the partition of the country, and the war, the "social and political composition of the population of our country has become very complex" (KIS October 5, 1966, 369-370), thereby justifying the investigation into the population's background. Based on the RRP, the North Korean regime classified its people into three classes (the core class, wavering class, and hostile class) and 51 subcategories based on property-ownership and individuals' loyalty during the Japanese occupation, the Korean War, and toward Kim Il Sung during the waves of purges of the 1950s and 1960s (Hyun 2008, 13–14). In the end, this came to be known as the *songbun* system.

The Korean word *songbun* means "ingredients" or "material" in substance. In South Korea, the word does not have any special meaning and is mostly used as a scientific term in natural science. However, in North Korea, the word connotes a political meaning and refers to an individual's socio-political background, namely where one comes from.[12] There are two types of songbun: *chulsin songbun*, which is based on one's parents' property and occupation, and *sahoe songbun*, which indicates one's occupation in society. Chulsin songbun is inherited

[12] In the "Great Dictionary of the North Korean Language" (*Chosunmal Daesajon*), the North Korean regime states the first definition of songbun as follows: "Each person is heavily influenced in his or her class ideology through his or her ideological background. Each is socially classified based on origin, occupation and lifestyle, which provides an understanding of one's class ideology. A person's songbun is not completely static; it can change based on the environment and conditions" (Chosunmal Daesajon 2017, 1357).

through the male line and it is very rare for a person to be reclassified or promoted to a higher class (Lankov 2013b, 42). Sahoe songbun is determined based on the longest occupation one has had by the time of the investigation (Hyun 2008, 31).

The Korean War had a significant impact on the division of the classes. Those who sacrificed themselves for the country were naturally regarded as high-class. On the other hand, those whose relatives fled to the south or even mildly supported the South Korean regime or the UNC forces were designated as the permanently hostile class (Collins 2012). Furthermore, the categorization is based on the assessment of one's reliability to the socialist revolution and, more importantly, to the Kim family. Consequently, while discrimination in other societies includes factors such as race and religion, in North Korea, the primary source of discrimination is based on "one's presumed value as friend or foe to the Kim regime" (Collins 2012, 6).

Consequently, every North Korean belongs to one of three classes: the "core" (*haeksim*) or loyal class, the "wavering" (*dongyo*) class, or the "hostile" (*jeokdae*) class. The core class consists of those who will support the Kim regime under any circumstances and remain loyal to the regime. The wavering class consists of those whose loyalty to the regime is deemed questionable in times of emergency but can remain reliable under the proper guidance of the party and constant ideological indoctrination. Lastly, the hostile class, the lowest class of songbun, consists of those who are considered disloyal to the Kim regime and branded as "potential anti-revolutionary elements." They are regarded as enemies of North Korea and discriminated against in almost every sector, including housing, food, education, employment, and general opportunities.

The songbun system functions within a tight security network of the police (the MPS), the secret police (the SSD), and the military's security apparatus (the MSC). In addition, Resident Registration Bureau coordinates all songbun-related investigations. The bureau conducts investigations at a minimum of every two years on all North Koreans except for the core Kim family (Collins 2012, 17–19). The details of every North Korean's background and personal information are registered in a system and carefully monitored by the regime. This information is then used to physically relocate people of the hostile class as well as to screen and select candidates for party members, soldiers, higher education, and Pyongyang residency (Collins 2012; Hyun 2008). With the songbun system, the Kim Il Sung leadership designed a social control mechanism that can proactively control the everyday lives of the whole population.

4.5.2 Operation of the Inminban (Neighborhood Units)

Origin of the Inminban

In the "Great Dictionary of the North Korean Language," the *inminban* is defined as "one of the foundational organizations of society formed by binding a certain number of 'households' in order to implement policies of the party and the state, and to carry out national projects." The Korean word *inmin*, which is only used in North Korea and not in South Korea, means "people," while *ban* means the smallest form of organization; therefore, the combined word inminban literally refers to the smallest organization of the people. However, in North Korea, the term is structurally used to describe "a unit of households grouped by geographic neighborhood" (Gause 2012, 43).

Because official documentation by the North Korean government on the origin of the inminban is scarce, its historical roots are debated. Some scholars have argued that the "Five Households Responsibility System" (*o ho damdang je*), which was introduced in 1958, developed into the current form of the inminban and institutionalized the system (Bae 2018, 199; Lankov 2005, 181). In this system, five households were grouped into one unit and among them, one household leader who was perceived to be the most loyal to the party monitored the rest of the households and reported the members' daily lives and any suspicious behaviors to the authorities (Bae 2018, 200).

On the other hand, other scholars have argued that the inminban was based on the *aegukban* (Chae 2008; Gause 2012, 43; Zhebin 1994), an institution established in 1938 by the Japanese colonial government to effectively manage resources and mobilize manpower for the war. The colonial government assigned 10 households per one unit and each unit conducted regular meetings and chores. In addition to being an effective mobilization tool, the aegukban was used by the Japanese government to spy on any suspicious activities (Gause 2012, 43). Some scholars have argued that the remnants of the aegukban became the inminban after the liberation in 1945. Chae (2008), who has conducted the most detailed study on the inminban to date, claims that the Five Households Responsibility System was implemented mostly in rural areas and was not applied to city residents; therefore, it cannot be the foundation of the inminban, which started in cities (Chae 2008, 17). Moreover, articles on the inminban can be found in a daily newspaper of North Korea prior to 1958, the *Rodong Sinmun*, which backs up the argument that the inminban existed before the Five Households Responsibility System. For instance, an article from February 24, 1955 describes an ordinary day of the inminban holding a meeting and discussing neighborhood sanitation (Rodong Sinmun 1955, 3). An interesting takeaway from this article is that it mentions the participants

already exchanging mutual criticism and advice during the meetings. Such evidence disproves the claims that the Five Households Responsibility System provided the current form of the inminban system.

Chae states that the current form and function of the inminban were shaped in the early 1960s (Chae 2008, 24). During that decade, Kim Il Sung was in the final process of establishing the MIS. This was achieved in 1967 when the Gapsan faction, the last remaining non-core Kim Il Sung faction, was purged. While conducting massive elite purges, broader social control was central to Kim. For this purpose, the inminban system could have been a reliable tool for use as a control mechanism to group residents and monitor their activities.

Inminban as a Proactive Measure of Daily Life Control

The inminban has a unique structure in which collective life and private life coexist. A typical inminban consists of 20–40 families in the same neighborhood. They hold a meeting once a week in general, which is mainly attended by housewives. Each of them shares the duty of monitoring fellow members of the inminban. It is a tightly knit community and people belonging to the same inminban know each other's personal lives in detail.

Although administratively the inminban is affiliated with the Regional People's Committee, they are strictly operated under the orders of the KWP (Chae 2008, 25). The local party committee appoints a leader or inminban head (*inminbanjang*), who is almost always a middle-aged housewife, after a staged election (Lankov and Kwak 2011, 10). This is to ensure that the leader devotes her attention to her inminban without other labor duties. Under the main group leader, an inminban also has a "sanitation leader," who is responsible for sanitation in the streets and villages as well as the health management of residents, and a "household leader," who is in charge of monitoring the heads of households within the inminban and mobilizing them for various tasks. The sanitation leader and the household leader are appointed by the head of the inminban and confirmed by the District (*Dong*) Office (Chae 2008, 25-26).

The inminban heads have various duties, which include civic duties such as neighborhood maintenance and even light surveillance tasks. They are required to learn in detail about families under their jurisdiction to the extent of how many spoons and chopsticks a family has, which is a common metaphor used in Korea to describe how well they know such a detailed part of someone's private life. They also randomly visit houses and check the seals on the radios to make sure they are disabled so that people cannot listen to foreign broadcasts (Chae 2008; Lankov 2013, 39).

One of the inminban head's major tasks is to maintain a travel register and conduct random checks on households at any time, day or night. The North Korean state has tight control over people's mobility and travel and ordinary citizens are not allowed to travel abroad or even freely move around within the country (Alemán and Woods 2014; Gause 2012). If they wish to travel within the country outside of their native city or province, they need to apply for a travel permit. The inminban heads check to see whether everyone who should be living in that household is there as well as whether any outsiders (i.e., from outside of that particular inminban) who have not registered their travel are present. In addition, all guests must be reported to the head of the inminban prior to their visits. This type of travel permit system, which regulates travel between domestic provinces, is a unique feature of North Korea that did not exist in other communist countries, including the post-Stalinist Soviet Union. According to Lankov, "there *were* areas within the Soviet Union that were closed to the average travelling person, but these areas were few and far between" and "the right to reside in a city of one's choice was restricted indeed, but short-term domestic travel was essentially free in the former USSR" (Lankov 2013, 38; emphasis in the original text).

In sum, the inminban is an example of government intervention and policy enforcement institutionalized in an ordinary day-to-day life organization (Bae 2018, 195). Inminban heads work closely with agents from the MPS and the SSD and report any suspicious activities. However, they can only report problems and do not have any authority to solve them as it is up to the police or SSD agents to conduct the investigation (Gause 2012, 46). Nevertheless, the inminban operates as a critical surveillance system, which proactively controls the people's everyday lives. Other organizations in North Korea, which is discussed in Section 6.4.1, is formed based on unified criteria, such as age, gender, and occupation. However, the inminban is different in that it is formed based on residence, while all other criteria do not matter. Therefore, one could say that the inminban is possibly the largest and most thoroughly designed organization when it comes to the daily life control mechanism in North Korea.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that the social control system was formed in North Korea as a result of the first political shock of the regime: the August Faction incident of 1956. The period from the mid-1950s to the late 1960s was a critical time in North Korea's political

history. Externally, a division occurred between the Soviet Union and China, so Kim Il Sung had to play his cards wisely in order to keep both countries as close allies. Internally, there was a power struggle among different factions, which eventually peaked at the August Plenum in 1956. At the plenum, some of the members of the Yan'an and the Soviet factions publicly criticized Kim Il Sung's policy and challenged his authority. However, the opposition was brutally crushed and those who were involved in the incident faced severe punishment and eventually were purged from the party.

I argued that the social control system was established at this juncture and guided the regime's path to achieving the outcome of the institutionalization of the MIS, which symbolized Kim Il Sung's totalitarian rule. The social control system was composed of three control mechanisms.

First, as an ideological control mechanism, Kim Il Sung developed the Juche ideology of self-reliance and independence from foreign powers. He emphasized the notions of "Koreanness" and the "Korean way" of development, which were conveniently used to argue against foreign interference in domestic politics. In addition, they helped Kim to eliminate his rivals who had close ties with those foreign powers. Eventually, after eliminating all potential rivals in the party, Kim established the MIS and declared himself the one and only leader of North Korea. The remaining members of the party and government were now all pro-Kim and, if not, co-opted to support him. By the end of the 1960s, Kim had fully legitimized himself as Suryeong.

Second, physical control measures were also implemented as a repression mechanism. During the 1950s and 1960s, Kim conducted massive purges at the elite level, and eventually only members of Kim's core faction survived. In addition, a coercive apparatus was established to deter any deviant activities and punish those who were caught. The apparatus operated as a combination of three organizations, namely the MPS, SSD, and MSC.

Third, the Kim regime used registration systems to control people's daily lives. The regime issued new party identification cards after conducting background checks and thoroughly interviewing the elite. This measure allowed the regime to purge the remaining party members who were involved in any way with the August incident and the foreign factions. In addition, the regime established the songbun system, which classified North Koreans into three classes and 51 subcategories. This system has greatly contributed to the legibility of the population and, as a result, North Koreans are discriminated against in their daily lives. Furthermore, inminban operated as a daily life control measure based on residence.

In conclusion, domestic and international events that occurred during the short period around the 1950s ultimately affected Kim Il Sung's decision-making to form the basic foundation of the social control system in North Korea. As Table 4.1 shows, I argue that the intensity of all three control mechanisms was strong during the period of the 1950s and 1960s as no real threat was observed to achieving the outcome of the institutionalization of the MIS in 1967, a definitive event that defined the Kim Il Sung regime's stability.

Table 4.1 Case Study 1 Outcome

<table>
<tr><th></th><th>Control mechanism</th><th>Intensity of control</th><th>Outcome</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Case 1:
August 1956</td><td>Ideological control</td><td>Strong</td><td rowspan="3">Monolithic Ideological System 1967</td></tr>
<tr><td>Physical control</td><td>Strong</td></tr>
<tr><td>Daily life control</td><td>Strong</td></tr>
</table>

5 The Survival of the Social Control System (1994–2009)

This chapter examines the second case study of this dissertation, namely the survival of the social control system in North Korea under Kim Jong Il's rule. In the 1990s, the North Korean regime experienced a series of critical shocks that severely threatened its political and social stability. When the Soviet Union collapsed and Eastern European countries began the process of democratization and economic liberalization, North Korea became more isolated from the world. In addition, the country's economy suffered greatly as the economic aid from the Soviet Union was cut. Domestically, Kim Il Sung died in 1994 and the regime had to prepare for the leadership transfer to his son Kim Jong Il. Moreover, due to decades of poor economic policy choices and an inefficient political system, the state economy was on the brink of collapse. The situation worsened from the mid-1990s when famine and a series of natural disasters led to food shortages and mass starvation.

Despite the aforementioned consecutive shocks, the regime survived and Kim Jong Il successfully succeeded his father to become the next Suryeong. Therefore, I defined this period as the "survival" of the social control system. Although some control mechanisms failed to operate or even collapsed, other mechanisms were reinforced to keep society under firm control.

5.1 Historical Overview: Kim Jong Il's Rise as Successor

This section briefly reviews the domestic politics of North Korea from the late 1960s to the late 1980s. In particular, it focuses on one of the most significant developments during this period, namely the rise of Kim Jong Il, son of Kim Il Sung, as the successor.

Following his graduation from Kim Il Sung University in March 1964, Kim Jong Il officially began his first post at the Organization Department of the CC of the party in June 1964. In September 1967, the younger Kim moved to the Propaganda and Agitation Department and began to play a key role in shaping the MIS. He ordered party propagandists to "massively produce publications about Kim Il Sung" and designated locations that were meaningful to his family as "revolutionary sites" (Lim 2009, 43–44). As a result, every item

of art, film, and literature focused on propagating the cult of Kim Il Sung and his revolutionary activities.

From the early 1970s, Kim Jong Il began in earnest the process of consolidating his power under the "Monolithic Guidance System." This implied that Kim Jong Il had full authority to make important decisions, including military affairs, and party cadres were obliged to comply with his orders. This system was designed to gradually transfer power from Kim Il Sung to Kim Jong Il (Lim 2009, 66). Once Kim Jong Il had secured his position as successor, one of his first tasks was to eliminate potential threats. As a result, Kim Song-ae, Kim Jong Il's stepmother and second wife of Kim Il Sung, was removed along with her two brothers. Moreover, Kim Song-ae's two sons Kim Pyong-il and Yong-il were "dropped out of the succession race" and appointed as diplomats to overseas embassies, which virtually meant living in exile. Eventually, they remained as *kyot-kaji* (the extra branch) when Kim Jong Il and his younger sister Kyong-hui secured their positions as *won-kaji* (the main branch) (Lim 2009, 51).

The year 1973 marked a critical period for Kim Jong Il as he took on a senior party role. The North Korean media began to refer to him as *dangjungang* (party center) (McEachern 2010, 64). That same year, Kim Jong Il took over the Three-Revolution Team Movement, established in February 1973 by Kim Il Sung. The three revolutions here referred to the ideological, technical, and cultural revolutions. Groups referred to as "Three-Revolution Teams," composed of 20–50 young loyal zealots, were formed and dispatched to the countryside and to factories to boost production as well as to introduce new methods and technologies (Lim 2009, 75; Paik 2010, 636–37). The movement was established for several purposes. It aimed to "replace old cadres with the younger generation in order to speed up economic development" as well as "overcome the shortage of manpower" through technical development (Lim 2009, 76). Furthermore, the movement contributed to expanding Kim Jong Il's support base to the masses and raising his status as successor (Paik 2010, 636–37). The Three-Revolution Team Movement was later followed by other mass mobilization campaigns, such as the Three-Revolution Red Flag Movement, which began in December 1975. These two movements were similar as they both dealt with the three revolutions, but different in that the former concerned "generational change, technological renovation, and the

establishment of Kim Jong Il's guidance system," while the latter was "a production competition campaign similar to what the Chollima Movement[13] had been" (Lim 2009, 79).

Kim Jong Il's very first public appearance was at the 6th Congress of the KWP held in October 1980. Several critical changes were implemented at this congress. First, Juche replaced Marxism-Leninism and became the primary ideology of the party. In addition, the graduates of the Mangyondae Revolution Academy[14] were given new party membership, which symbolized a replacement of generations and that younger revolutionaries would play a leading role in supporting Kim Jong Il's leadership in the future (Lim 2009, 83–84). However, the most crucial event at this congress was Kim Jong Il being publicly announced as Kim Il Sung's successor. Kim Jong Il was elected a standing member of the Politburo, a secretary of the Secretariat, and a member of the Central Military Commission of the CC. He became the only official, except for Kim Il Sung, with seats in all three party-leading organizations. After the congress, the regime accelerated the cult of Kim Jong Il. By the mid-1980s, Kim Il Sung "semi-retired and retained the role of guardian of his successor in domestic politics and dealt primarily with diplomatic affairs" (Lim 2009, 84).

5.2 Second Shock: The Arduous March of 1994–1997

5.2.1 The Collapse of the Soviet Union

For the Communist Bloc, the events of the second half of the 1980s were a stepping-stone to a major transition in the early 1990s. In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev became the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev soon embarked on a program of social, economic, and political reforms, known as the policy of *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring), which would trigger the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Gorbachev rejected the "Brezhnev Doctrine," a foreign policy that stated that the Soviet Union had the right to intervene militarily in case of a political crisis in its Central and Eastern European allies. This decision triggered the Eastern European democratization

[13] The Chollima Movement, launched in the 1950s, was a state-sponsored movement in North Korea to promote rapid economic development.

[14] The Mangyongdae Revolution Academy is a prestigious institution in North Korea established in 1947 in the Mangyongdae district of Pyongyang. Mangyongdae was the birthplace of Kim Il Sung. Originally, the academy sheltered children who had lost their parents to revolutionary causes. They were educated and trained to be the most loyal followers of Kim Il Sung. Kim Jong Il also attended the academy.

movement. Toward the end of the 1980s, the Eastern Bloc went through a series of revolutions. In 1989, political movements in Poland and Hungary caused a chain reaction in East Germany and, eventually, on November 9, 1989, the Berlin Wall – symbol of the "Iron Curtain" separating the West and the Soviet Union – fell. A few weeks later, U.S. President George H. W. Bush and Gorbachev held a summit in Malta and declared an end to the Cold War. In the end, the Soviet Union officially ceased to exist in December 1991 after the resignation of Gorbachev.

The series of events during this transition period also shaped the choices and changes that emerged in the two Koreas in causally significant ways. For South Korea, the events provided an opportunity to engage in new diplomatic relations with the Eastern Bloc. In 1988, South Korea's President Roh Tae Woo pursued a new diplomatic policy of "Nordpolitik," which was named after West Germany's Ostpolitik. The goal of this policy was to establish diplomatic relations with North Korea's traditional allies. Eventually, South Korea established diplomatic ties with Russia in September 1990 and with China in August 1992.

On the other hand, the dissolution of the Soviet Union made North Korea more isolated from the world. Its fellow communist states in Eastern Europe were undergoing democratization, while Russia and China, the two big brothers of North Korea, established diplomatic relations with South Korea despite North Korea's strong opposition. Furthermore, beginning in 1987, the Soviet Union began to cut aid and support while demanding that "North Korea pay world market prices – and in foreign exchange – for Soviet goods" (Haggard and Noland 2007, 27). Therefore, the collapse of the Soviet Union not only provided a political shock but also a profound economic shock to North Korea. Eventually, the sudden reduction in Soviet and Chinese aid, structural problems of the planned economy, and a series of bad harvests all contributed to the food crisis of the 1990s. The crisis worsened to the point that the central government launched a "Let's eat two meals a day" campaign in 1991 (Natsios 1999, 2).

In addition, certain events may have strongly alarmed the North Korean leadership. The first event was the execution of Nicolae Ceausescu of Romania on December 25, 1989. After witnessing what happened to Ceausescu, Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il might have determined to take total control of the military, which would be later reflected in Kim Jong Il's policy and ideological choices. The second event was the German reunification, which was, as a matter of fact, West Germany's absorption of East Germany. This might have been one of the biggest fears of North Korea, especially since South Korea's per capita GDP far

surpassed that of North Korea by the 1990s, not to mention that South Korea had begun to expand its diplomatic relations to North Korea's closest allies.

In sum, from the late 1980s, the North Korean regime was faced with a rapidly changing international environment. However, the regime failed to cope with changes and became more isolated from the international community, suffering a great deal in terms of its economy as a result of the reduction in aid. This ultimately led to the second political shock, when a series of domestic shocks severely threatened the stability of the regime. The following section deals with the Arduous March period, which was economically and socially the toughest period in North Korean history since the Korean War. I argue that because of the multiple shocks to the regime during this period, the social control system had to be reinforced for the regime's survival.

5.2.2 The Arduous March

The aforementioned conditions ultimately played a causal role in the build-up to the second political shock, as the regime suffered multiple shocks in the 1990s. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, North Korea lost its largest food and energy benefactor. Since the North Korean economy was heavily dependent on Soviet and Chinese aid, the economy became more vulnerable. From the beginning of the 1990s, the North Korean economy was in a downward spiral. The Bank of (South) Korea estimated that North Korea's GDP growth rate was −4.3% in 1990, −4.4% in 1991, −7.1% in 1992, and −4.5% in 1993. Kim Il Sung even acknowledged the failure in the country's economic policies, which was an unprecedented remark. In his 1994 New Year's speech, he designated the following three years "a period of 'adjustment' in socialist economic reconstruction, endorsing 'agriculture-first, light industry-first, and foreign trade-first' policies" (S. S. Kim 1996, 65). However, with Kim Il Sung's death in 1994, such policies were not implemented.

Moreover, decades of poor policy choices and the inefficiency of the Suryeong system contributed to the breakdown of the economy. The state established all economic plans, which based on political reasoning rather than economic principles. For instance, too many resources were spent on constructing or redesigning buildings and monuments to maintain the personality cult of Kim Il Sung. In addition, under Kim Il Sung's order, resources were mainly distributed to heavy industry and the military.

The external environment was also increasingly hostile to the regime. Russia and China established diplomatic relations with South Korea. Furthermore, the United States

"nearly went to war" with North Korea during its first nuclear crisis in 1993–1994 (Sigal 1997).[15]

The Arduous March and Decreasing Returns

The mid-1990s was the watershed period. In particular, the period of 1994–1997 is referred to as the "Arduous March" within North Korea. I define the Arduous March period as the second political shock to the regime because it was during this period that the causal chain of the social control system broke down and began to diverge in significant ways (Pierson 2004, 89). During this period, several events coincided and jointly triggered the social control system to lose its internal dynamic. At this point, the system was no longer able to guarantee increasing returns. Thus, I found it fitting to view this period as the beginning of the second political shock to the regime.

The Arduous March actually refers to two distinct periods of hardships in North Korea, one being the latter half of the 1990s and the other going back to the end of 1938, which is the origin of the term. In 1938, Kim Il Sung's Manchurian guerrilla members were forced to go on a long march, which is said to have lasted 100 days, all while fighting Japanese troops in pursuit, hunger, and the harsh winter. North Korean history depicts this episode as "the time of greatest trial for Kim and his early revolutionary comrades" and "a glorious time when the country's revolutionary ancestors struggled against impossible odds to succeed in a final victory and thereby lay the ground for the proud home of a revolutionary state" (Kwon and Chung 2012, 173). Therefore, it can be assumed that the Kim Jong Il regime referred to the crises of the 1990s as the Arduous March to evoke the revolutionary spirit of the people.

On July 8, 1994, North Korea announced that Kim Il Sung had died of heart failure. He had been receiving treatment for the hardening of the arteries in his heart for several years. Prior to his death, Kim Il Sung had maintained a busy schedule. He hosted foreign guests, including former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, and had planned to hold an inter-Korean

[15] North Korea became a party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in December 1985. In May 1992, North Korea submitted its initial report to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) based on the NPT safeguards agreement. However, the IAEA discovered inconsistences between the North Korean report and the IAEA's findings; therefore, it requested an inspection. North Korea refused access to the IAEA, to which the IAEA reported its noncompliance to the UN Security Council. Eventually, on March 12, 1993, North Korea announced its withdrawal from the NPT. After a round of talks, the Agreed Framework was signed between the United States and North Korea on October 21, 1994. Under the 1994 Framework, the U.S. government agreed to supply two light water reactors to North Korea in exchange for nuclear disarmament.

summit with then-South Korean President Kim Young Sam. In addition, he traveled frequently within North Korea, such as visiting cooperative farms and a resort where supposedly the upcoming inter-Korean summit would be held on July 25. Thus, as an 82-year-old man with deteriorating health, such a busy schedule and additional anxiety about the poor economic situation in North Korea might have caused extreme stress and fatigue, possibly worsening his heart condition (Lim 2009, 106). The death of the father of the nation was a national tragedy in North Korea. The state declared a ten-day mourning period, and the funeral was held on July 17 in Pyongyang, attended by thousands of people from all over North Korea. After the funeral, Kim Il Sung's body was placed at the Kumsusan Palace of the Sun, which had formerly served as Kim's official residence but was transformed into a mausoleum after his death.

Not long after Kim Il Sung's death, the regime was faced with famine and natural disasters. In July 1995, massive floods struck North Korea. The North Korean economy was hit so badly that, for the first time, the state appealed to the international community for food aid. The natural disasters did not stop there. Over the next three years, North Korea was hit by a series of floods and droughts. The disasters were the final blows to the fragile North Korean economy, which was already suffering from the reduction in foreign aid and failed economic plans. The agricultural sector had been in a continuous decline since the beginning of the 1990s. However, the government's approach was to continue the past policy of technical fixes rather than reforms that emphasized producer incentives. Haggard and Noland (2007) explained the process leading up to the catastrophe of 1995 as follows:

> Among the government's reforms were efforts to expand grain-sown areas, shift crop composition in favor of high-yield rice and corn, maximize industrial inputs (subject to availability), and intensify double-cropping and dense planting – in short, what it had done in the past. Continuous cropping led to soil depletion, and the overuse of chemical fertilizers contributed to acidification of the soil and eventually a reduction in yields. As yields declined, hillsides were denuded to bring more and more marginal land into production. These measures contributed to soil erosion and river silting and thus bear some responsibility for the catastrophic effects of the flooding that occurred in 1995. (Haggard and Noland 2007, 33–34)

Eventually, poor policy choices accelerated the natural disasters. In August 1995, the central government announced that the floods had led to "nearly two million tons of lost grain, the destruction of over 300,000 hectares of cropland, and the displacement of 5.4 million people" (Haggard and Noland 2007, 34). Although experts generally agree that the North

Korean government's claims were exaggerated, the results of the floods were indeed extremely serious (Haggard and Noland 2007). Furthermore, statistics on the demographic effects of the famine vary depending on the source, but it is estimated that from 600,000 to 1 million people died during this period, or approximately 3%–5% of the pre-famine population (Haggard and Noland 2007; Noland 2004).

Meanwhile, the flooding played a critical role in North Korea's external relations as it "provided the opening for the government to portray the problem as a natural disaster, to admit to catastrophic crop failures, and to seek international relief more openly" (Haggard and Noland 2007, 34). Therefore, the floods enabled the North Korean government "to save face while requesting aid" while simultaneously helping "the donors to deflect concerns about supporting a repressive regime that was itself the primary cause of the problem" (Noland 2004, 9–10). The primary food donors were the United States, South Korea, Japan, and the European Union, and North Korea became "the largest Asian beneficiary of US aid, receiving more than US$1 billion in food and energy assistance between 1995 and 2002" (Noland 2004, 10).

After Kim Il Sung's death, Kim Jong Il did not assume the position of leader immediately. Instead, he observed a traditional Confucian ritual for the dead by practicing a three-year mourning period. During this period, Kim Jong Il ruled by the so-called *yuhun tongchi*. Yuhun means the "instructions that a dead person has left" and yuhun tongchi means to "rule by the will of the dead" (Lim 2009, 106). Kim Jong Il thus prolonged his father's political life through yuhun tongchi and Kim Il Sung's words remained in the party as his legacy (Lim 2009, 106). Lim (2009) explained this further in detail as follows:

> The state promoted a variety of slogans emphasizing their leader's immortality, including the following: 'The Great Leader will be eternal,' 'Fatherly Great Leader is with us,' and 'Let's realize what the Great Leader instructed.' At the same time, the media began to identify Kim Jong Il with the dead Great Leader, insisting that 'For us, the Great Leader Kim Il Sung is the Dear Leader Kim Jong Il. Comrade Kim Jong Il is the Great Leader.' (Lim 2009, 106)

Various explanations exist for why Kim Jong Il enforced yuhun tongchi. According to Oh (2009), there are three major speculations. First, Kim Jong Il may have used the "Confucian ritual" and "filial piety and respect for his father" as justifications, but in reality he did it to prevent social disorder after the death of the Suryeong. Second, it can be assumed that there may have been opposition to Kim Jong Il's succession. Although he had been groomed as the successor for a long period, it may have required more time for a transition of

authority and power to Kim Jong Il, especially in the midst of the crises of the 1990s. He needed time to develop different mechanisms to control the public, who were starting to lose faith in the North Korean system. Lastly, Kim Jong Il may have maintained yuhun tongchi as a transition system and not as his official time in government to avoid the burden of economic hardships and unstable international relations (Oh 2009a, 91–92). In short, the three-year mourning period was, in reality, a convenient excuse for the new Kim Jong Il regime to avoid the blame of the shock.

Consequently, the position of the highest state authority remained vacant for three years on the surface. On July 8, 1997, the last day of the mourning period, Kim Jong Il officially became the new leader of North Korea. To construct his legitimacy during the process of hereditary succession, Kim Jong Il "transformed Kim Il Sung into a close to heavenly figure, thus granting himself an almost divine right to rule as the offspring of the founding father" (Tismaneanu 2013, 88). For instance, in 1997, Kim Jong Il introduced a "dynastic calendar" that counts from 1912, the birth year of Kim Il Sung, and named the calendar Juche (Kongdan Oh and Hassig 2000, 3). In addition, Kim Il Sung's birthday, April 15, was designated the "Day of the Sun" and it remains the most important national holiday in North Korea. On September 5, 1998, the Socialist Constitution of North Korea was amended at the 1st session of the 10th Supreme People's Assembly. In its preamble, Kim Il Sung was enshrined as the eternal President and the constitution itself was renamed the "Kim Il Sung Constitution."

5.2.3 Reinforcing the Social Control System

From the beginning of the 1990s, the North Korean regime was faced with challenges and multiple shocks that threatened its stability. In particular, the Arduous March period was a serious challenge to the successor Kim Jong Il. At this point, the social control system was bringing decreasing returns. After the death of Kim Il Sung, the personality cult declined. Therefore, it may have been difficult to keep up with the ideological control mechanisms. In addition, the power transfer may have required loyalty checks at the elite level. Moreover, the impact of the economic hardships and natural disasters caused the PDS to collapse, so the regime may have lost control over regulating the population. Despite these challenges, the transfer of power to Kim Jong Il was successful and he remained the leader of North Korea until his death.

Many Pyongyang watchers have wondered how Kim Jong Il was able to maintain regime stability after the Arduous March period. I argue that the social control system of North Korea had been reinforced and functioned as a survival mechanism. In the theory chapter, I argued that once the system has been established, the mechanisms that comprise it are proactively or reactively reproduced to achieve the outcome of regime stability. However, when a regime encounters a political shock that cannot be contained with the current system, the system must undergo modification. This adjustment of the system is critical in deciding the result it would bring – either regime survival or regime collapse.

Although the Kim Jong Il regime did not collapse, multiple shocks during the Arduous March period did alter the social control system. After this period, one can observe the control mechanisms to have diverged remarkably from the Kim Il Sung era. Some mechanisms had to be adapted and some became powerless. However, the system did not cease operating. The control mechanisms were reproduced and, in some cases, new sets of mechanisms replaced existing ones. Through this adjustment, the Kim Jong Il regime managed to overcome major threats and remained stable until the next large shock.

First, Kim Jong Il may have realized that the Juche ideology lost its momentum of self-reinforcement and that different legitimation strategies were required. The legitimacy of the North Korean regime comes from the legitimacy of the leader. To justify the incumbent leader's legitimacy, the new leader had to devise other ways to reactivate the system. For this reason, Kim Jong Il layered new state ideologies of "Our-style socialism" and *Songun* (military-first) on top of the existing Juche ideology to facilitate ideological indoctrination. In this regard, the Kim regime stressed the importance of continuing with its own style of socialism, similar to the rhetoric of the Juche ideology, and began to militarize the regime.

Second, the regime actively utilized the military as the main physical control agency. Specifically, the military became deeply involved in the daily lives of the people as the primary surveillance agency. In addition, during the process of power transfer, Kim Jong Il oversaw massive purges at the elite level and ordered a large-scale investigation into the population's resident registration system.

Lastly, due to the famine and economic difficulties, the centralized registration system was hit hard. The PDS broke down and people had to survive on their own. The PDS was what tied workers to their workplaces and kept people in their regions. Now that North Koreans could not rely on the state for food rations, they explored other methods to cope with the dire reality. For instance, they moved around the country in search of food. Some more audacious people smuggled food and resources from China, while some even left the country

for good. This sudden high increase in movement led to a crack in the state's daily life control system. However, in autocratic regimes, physical control mechanisms and repression come in handy in such crises. To make up for the loss in daily life control, the new government adopted coercive methods and used the element of terror to control and contain people's activities.

Based on the theory of the social control system, I argue that the adapted system operated until the Kim Jong Il regime began to lay the foundation for the second hereditary succession. Shortly prior to the second leadership transition, the regime experienced incidents that could have led to the breakdown of the system. Therefore, I consider the survival of the social control system to have ended at this point and the control mechanisms to have undergone another round of adaptation. The following sections describe how the Kim Jong Il regime reproduced or replaced the control mechanisms to survive the shock.

5.3 Ideological Control Mechanisms

From the late 1980s, the international environment surrounding North Korea began to rapidly change. To better respond to potential challenges, the new Kim Jong Il regime adapted the state ideology of Juche. While the rest of the world was witnessing the downfall of communism and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Kim Jong Il claimed that North Korea would continue its own path to socialism. This idea was based on the Juche ideology that North Korea should be independent of foreign powers. In addition, to effectively control people during the Arduous March period, the regime heavily relied on the military for internal policing and ideological indoctrination. As a result, the new ruling ideology of Songun (military-first) politics was introduced.

5.3.1 Our-style Socialism: Socialism in Name, Nationalism in Content

While its fellow communist states were undergoing reforms and opening up their borders, the Kim Jong Il regime chose to tightly close the country to maintain social control. Kim Jong Il "staunchly denounced any possibility of a 'third way'" because for him, "the only two ways were to be capitalist or communist" (Lim 2009, 97). The North Korean leadership viewed the collapse of communism in the Eastern Bloc as "the direct result of materialist corruption and the erosion of ideology"; therefore, "reform was the root of the problem, not the path to a solution" (Armstrong 2013, 101). Moreover, by the time of Kim Jong Il's succession, the

KWP consisted of old and corrupted first-generation Guerrilla faction members that had "no willingness to reform" (Woo 2018). In addition, for North Korea, adopting a reform measure was deemed too risky as it could potentially mean opening up the border to South Korea and risking unification by absorption. Consequently, the regime's response was to devise a corresponding ideology that backed up the decision to isolate from the changing external environment.

This was not the first time that the external environment had influenced the political ideology of North Korea. In fact, in the 1950s and 1960s, the Sino–Soviet split contributed to the emergence of the Juche ideology of self-reliance and independence from foreign powers. In a similar manner, the post-Cold War environment influenced the rise of nationalism in North Korea. Kim Jong Il argued that the greatness of North Korean socialism came from the Great Leader Kim Il Sung, the KWP, and the Juche idea (Lim 2009, 97). At this juncture, the leadership developed a new interpretation of the Juche ideology to promote the "Korea-first idea" (*Choson minjok cheil chuui*), which had been elaborated as the ideology of "Our-style socialism" (*Ourisik sahoe chuui*). It was adopted to declare that the reform measures of China and the Eastern Bloc were completely irrelevant to North Korea, and that the country would carry on with its own means of socialism (Suh 2001, 92–95).

The objective of Our-style socialism was not to show the superiority of socialism over capitalism, but to show the superiority of North Korean socialism over socialism in other countries. Kim Jong Il argued that it is important to know that North Korean socialism is "truly superior" to socialism in other countries (KJI January 11, 1990, 178) and that North Korea has "the best socialist institution in the world" (KJI January 11, 1990, 180). In reality, in a world where socialism was failing, what was crucial for North Korea was to contrast its system with other socialist countries, not capitalist countries.

On December 27, 1990, Kim Jong Il delivered a speech titled "Socialism of Our Country is a Socialism of Our Style as the Embodiment of the Juche Idea" to the senior officials of the CC of the KWP. In this speech, he reflected on why communism had "suffered setbacks" in Eastern Europe. Kim argued that it was due to the fact that they "imitated the Soviet experience in a mechanical manner" and "accepted Soviet-style socialism as it was" (p.177). He added that the Soviet model was based on its historical conditions and the concrete situation it was in; thus, "it is impossible to build socialism properly, as the times change and the specific situation of each country is different from another" (p.177). Kim Jong Il claimed that due to the "originality and superiority of the Juche idea, on which our socialism is based," North Korea would avoid such failure (p.178).

The precise content of the ideology was rather vague. The slogan of Our-style socialism seemingly indicated that North Korea had a unique political system, which was different from that of Eastern European countries. However, the North Korean leadership did not clarify what was different except to argue that it was based on the Juche ideology through relating to the elements of independence and self-reliance in politics. Moreover, the leadership neither confirmed nor denied the possibility that the country might develop relations with a capitalist economy. It was thus a "potentially flexible concept" due to the fact that, in reality, the Kim Jong Il regime "expanded its political and economic ties with the capitalist West and embarked on limited economic reform" (Armstrong 2013, 101).

In sum, the ideology of Our-style socialism was nationalism disguised as socialism. It was the new regime's defensive response to the hostile international environment. In fact, the name "socialism" here had "little to do with class struggle, economic redistribution, or social equality," but "everything to do with national independence and autonomy, and the primacy of ideas over material circumstances" (Armstrong 2013, 111). Our-style socialism was adopted as an ideological control mechanism to justify the legitimacy of the regime amidst an unstable period. In particular, it was a reactive measure to prevent external events becoming a further threat to the regime's stability. The leadership utilized one of its most favored legitimation mechanisms, namely nationalism, in an attempt to indoctrinate the public.

5.3.2 The Songun Ideology of Military-First Politics

By the time Kim Jong Il succeeded the leadership, Pyongyang had encountered multiple shocks that seemed almost impossible to recover from. In addition, as the Kim Jong Il era officially began, it can be assumed that a new political slogan symbolizing the new regime was sought. At this juncture, Kim Jong Il employed a "risk-management strategy" through the *Songun* (military-first) ideology and relied on the military to withstand the political shock (Lim 2012, 554). He shifted power from the party to the military as the "pillar of socialism" and the "forefront of the revolution" (Byman and Lind 2010, 63).

The military is not a distant abstract institution to the average North Korean. There is almost no separation between the military and civilian sectors. Due to the 10-year compulsory military service, a large portion of the population is serving at any given time; therefore, one could say that every family has at least one member serving in the military (H. S. Park 2007, 3). In addition, North Korean culture has many similarities with military culture since its cultural traits include "uniformity, obedience to authority, a clear definition

of a common enemy, and resolve and determination as the highest virtues" (H. S. Park 2007, 3).

The military-first idea "idealizes the role of the military" and implies that society "should emulate the revolutionary spirit of the military" (Lim 2009, 154). This concept demands that people must be willing to sacrifice themselves for their leader. However, Juche ideology did not disappear from the propaganda. Instead, Songun was introduced as "a more military-oriented version of Juche" (Armstrong 2013, 100). As Armstrong highlighted, "if Juche represented North Korean independence and autonomy, embodied in the great leader, Kim Il Sung, Songun placed the defense of that independence in the vanguard institution of the military, closely identified with General Kim Jong Il" (Armstrong 2013, 116). Therefore, Songun was layered on top of the Juche ideology to reinforce the legitimation of the regime.

The 1998 Constitution first codified Songun as the official ruling ideology of the Kim Jong Il era and made the National Defense Commission (NDC) the highest governing institution in the country. Kim Jong Il himself was inaugurated as the Chairman of the NDC, which was a clear sign that the military would play a critical role. In his 1999 New Year's Speech, Kim described how Songun politics aim "to build up the revolutionary squad with the Korean People's Army and to push forward the construction of socialism with the revolutionary military spirit as a weapon" (Rodong Sinmun 1999, 5).

Before the declaration of Songun politics, the KPA was perceived as "a politically insignificant institution that was under the firm control of the Korean Workers' Party (KWP) and merely carried out the party's will (i.e., party first or Sondang politics)" (Woo 2018, 229). However, once the regime experienced the shocks of the 1990s, Kim Jong Il might have realized that his regime would not be able to survive if it solely relied on the party. Therefore, Kim "utilized the military's resources and capacities to overcome the economic hardship" and "hoped to revive the party's weakening social control mechanisms through military institutions" (Institute for Unification Education 2017, 46). As a result, the KPA, not the KWP, was placed at the forefront in dealing with domestic matters, and military affairs were given the highest priority. This power transfer from the party to the military changed all parts of society, including the ideology, power structure, and economic policy directions (Woo 2018).

The political rise of the KPA was clearly reflected in key leadership positions, with military officials replacing party officials (Byman and Lind 2010, 63). In addition, Kim Jong Il's "on-the-spot guidance" tours, which held "important propaganda value" for both the elite and the public, were concentrated on military and defense-related facilities and mostly

accompanied by top officials in the KPA (Haggard, Herman, and Ryu 2014; Woo 2018). On the other hand, to prevent the military from gaining too much power and challenging his position, Kim Jong Il appointed his relatives and close aides linked by school ties to serve in top security organs for inter-institutional surveillance. They included Kim's brother-in-law Jang Sung-thaek and his fellow alumni of the Mankyungdae Revolutionary School (Byman and Lind 2010; Woo 2018).

In short, Songun was implemented as a reactive ideological control mechanism. At the core of the Songun ideology lies the justification of the military build-up, which protects the North Korean regime from foreign invasion. Kim Jong Il famously said that "there is peace and socialism in our guns" and "we can live without candies but we cannot live without bullets" (KJI July 5, 2001, 2). "*Kangsong taeguk"* (powerful and prosperous nation), another popular slogan during this period, supports this argument. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, North Korea's diplomatic isolation deepened. Meanwhile, the country found itself in a major confrontation with the United States regarding its nuclear program. Therefore, the Kim Jong Il regime justified high military spending and power transfer to the military by stressing self-defense in national defense (*jawi*) and independence in politics (*jaju*), two of the four principles of the Juche ideology.

5.4 Physical Control Mechanisms

After the harsh period of the Arduous March, the Kim Jong Il regime increased the level of repression to control the public. Under Songun politics, the military became deeply involved in people's everyday lives and directly engaged in social control. In addition, the government increased the intensity of punishment for individuals to generate fear. At the elite level, Kim Jong Il oversaw massive purges to consolidate his power after the leadership succession. In sum, the new leader resorted to repressive measures to maintain regime stability.

5.4.1 Rise of the Military and Tightening of Physical Control

In times of crisis, changes at the elite level are more frequently observed. When a leader feels insecure, he or she will react by engaging in actions, such as shaking up the elite or changing policies, to secure his or her position (Ishiyama and Kim 2020). In autocratic regimes, the use of repression is often prominent during this process. Regarding the main actors of repression in autocratic regimes, Svolik asserts the following:

> Most dictators do not rely on their militaries for repression. In fact, everyday repression in virtually all dictatorships is handled not by soldiers but rather by the police and specialized internal security agencies. However, when opposition to a regime is mass based, organized, and potentially violent, the military is the only force capable of defeating it. (Svolik 2012b, 127)

Svolik further explains that the reason behind this is that the police and internal security agencies "simply do not have enough personnel, equipment, or training to combat armed guerrillas or suppress an uprising of several tens of thousands of protesters" (Svolik 2012b, 127). When Kim Jong Il succeeded the leadership, North Korea was in a deep crisis. The successive natural disasters and the collapse of the PDS had completely devastated the economy and the livelihood of the North Korean people. This led to a sudden increase in people's mobility and a decrease in people's loyalty to the regime. Although the coercive apparatus designed in the Kim Il Sung era was in operation, it had to be strengthened to more effectively tackle the potential threat of a mass uprising. Therefore, with the declaration of Songun politics in 1998, Kim Jong Il utilized the military along with the coercive apparatus to stabilize the country and regain social order. As a result, the activities of military-affiliated institutions increased and the military began to directly engage in controlling the daily lives of ordinary citizens. For instance, military personnel were dispatched to factories and collective farms to monitor people's activities, and some personnel were stationed at universities to watch any suspicious movements of students (Lee 1999, 69). Furthermore, at that time, the military was the only organization that could systematically supply labor to various construction sites and factories. It was also the only organization that could secure resources in a self-sufficient manner. Since the food rations were cut, workers frequently left their workplaces in search of food, causing difficulties in securing the labor force for state projects. Therefore, the KPA was a "labor force in a military uniform" that played a critical role in economic reconstruction (H.-C. Ahn 2014, 149–50).

However, this change of political system, in fact, represented "the degree of political urgency in the state" (Lim 2009, 150). Lim explains this statement as follows:

> To depend on the military in normal situations means that other ordinary administrative organizations are dysfunctional and the military may be the last resort that the Kim Jong Il regime can organizationally rely on… In other words, his politics is a program based on the regime adapting itself to exacerbating socio-political situations. (Lim 2009, 150)

The successor had to form his ruling coalition to consolidate power. According to Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003), the sizes of the "selectorate" and the "winning coalition" have implications for the political survival of the incumbent. A small winning coalition is optimal for regime stability, especially when the economy is suffering because the leader has fewer resources to distribute (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003). By allocating key positions to members of the military, Kim Jong Il reduced the size of the winning coalition and co-opted military officials.

Songun politics gave the military various perks and privileges. One of them was the military being given priority over food distribution during the Great Famine era. Kwon and Chung (2012) explain this matter as follows: "[I]n the sphere of subsistence economy, therefore, military-first politics takes on, in principle if not always in practice, a more literal 'military-first' meaning in that the army should be given priority over the people in the allocation of scarce resources" (Kwon and Chung 2012, 171). However, the problem of relying heavily on the military for repression is that once soldiers realize that they play a pivotal political role, they will demand more privileges and immunity from the government (Svolik 2012a). For this reason, the NDC was designated the supreme military leadership that oversees military activities. Although senior generals hold many seats at the NDC, it is not the same institution as the KPA. In fact, the NDC is better represented as "an extension of Kim's inner circle than a broad, deep, and impersonal policy apparatus" and it "gains power from its direct and personal contact with Kim" (McEachern 2010, 88–89).

The 1998 Constitution expanded the authority of the NDC to include general control over national defense. The NDC had the authority to appoint or remove senior military cadres and to establish or abolish a national institution in the area of national defense. It also possessed the power to proclaim a state of war and mobilization orders in the country as well as to make state-level decisions. Furthermore, following Kim Jong Il's order, the SSD, which functions as an intelligence agency, was subordinated to the NDC (Bermudez Jr 2001, 199). Eventually, the NDC became the highest governing institution in the Kim Jong Il era.

In addition, with the implementation of Songun politics, the government began to actively use coercive measures to contain social unrest. Physical control methods produce more immediate results compared with ideological indoctrination. Therefore, they are some of the first measures to be implemented for reinforcing the social control system. The state upgraded the level of punishment on individuals who broke laws or conducted deviant activities. For instance, until the end of the 1980s, North Korea conducted public executions of approximately one case every 10 years on average in provinces, cities, and counties for the

purpose of "educating and awakening its residents" (E.-R. Choi and Lee 2012, 209). However, in the 1990s, when difficult economic conditions aggravated social disorder, the state ordered criminal acts to be punished more strictly. In some cases, public executions were conducted on a national scale. In a 2011 study on the changes in social control in North Korea, most recent defectors testified that they had witnessed public executions in North Korea (Bae 2011, 170). Thus, it can be assumed that the state increased the level of punishment and intentionally generated fear among the public to force them to obey the regime. Moreover, the North Korean state practice of *yeonjwaje*, or guilt by association, means that when an individual is sentenced to a political prison camp, all of their family members generally have to follow. For this reason, even those with little or nothing to lose will "endure injustice and hardship even to the point of death rather than escape or publicly protest," which ultimately proved to be "highly effective in keeping people in line" (Kongdan Oh and Hassig 2000, 139).

5.4.2 The Simhwajo Incident and a Nationwide Purge

After the three-year period of *yuhun tongchi* (rule by the will of the dead) following Kim Il Sung's death in 1994, Kim Jong Il officially became the leader of North Korea in 1997. However, Kim Il Sung's aides were still occupying important positions in the KWP and the KPA. Although they were loyal to Kim Il Sung, this did not necessarily mean that they would be as loyal to Kim Jong Il as they were to Kim Il Sung. In addition, the dire socioeconomic situation and food crisis caused a mass exodus of the population from the beginning of the Kim Jong Il regime. Even some high-ranking officials fled North Korea, including Hwang Jang-yop.[16]

At this juncture, Kim Jong Il devised a large-scale purge project. He attempted to use the element of terror to consolidate his position as the new supreme leader of North Korea. The most well-known incident during this period was the so-called *Simhwajo* incident, which occurred from 1997 to 2000. It is reported to be the bloodiest purge in North Korean history. *Simhwa* in Korean means "to deepen the understanding," and *Simhwajo* refers to an organization that investigated people's ideologies, careers, activities, and other personal information in the name of "eradicating spies" (Seong 2015, 81).

[16] Hwang Jang-yop, known as the highest-ranking North Korean defector to date, defected to South Korea in February 1997. He was largely responsible for developing the Juche ideology.

Kim Jong Il ordered the MPS to form Simhwajo and investigate the background of senior officials in the party, government, and military. They used irrational methods such as arresting people without evidence or torturing them to confess to crimes they had not committed. Under a brutal investigation, several senior officials known to be close aides of Kim Il Sung were charged with crimes, such as spying for the Americans during the Korean War. Most often, a minor crime became exaggerated and, in some cases, officials were captured under a false accusation. The investigation then quickly spread to family members of those senior officials. Eventually, Kim Jong Il ordered a nationwide investigation on the resident registration system to check for anyone who had connections to Simhwajo or who had any suspicious entries. In fact, those who had even a tiny gap in the system were coerced into making false confessions (*Daily NK* 2010).

Over time, Simhwajo's tyranny of power and reports of false accusations became excessive. Eventually, the SSD and MSC jointly submitted a report to Kim Jong Il on Simhwajo's activities. When Kim discovered that most of the accused were innocent and the extensive purge could in fact negatively impact his status, he quickly dissolved Simhwajo. He then blamed the MPS for the misconduct, although they were merely carrying out Kim's orders, and purged approximately 6,000 officials in the MPS who were involved in the Simhwajo incident. The key officials involved were given severe sentences of 10–20 years of imprisonment, life imprisonment, or even execution. Many others were deported and banished from the political scene (Seong 2015, 72). To this day, there is no official document or record from North Korea on the Simhwajo incident. However, it is estimated that a total of 8,000 people were installed in each province and city as well as at the country level to conduct the investigation, and that approximately 25,000 people fell victim to Simhwajo (E.-R. Choi and Lee 2012, 203).

5.5 Daily Life Control Mechanisms

In particular, the economic shocks in the 1990s challenged the daily life control mechanisms. The Kim Jong Il regime faced difficulties in controlling the masses as the PDS collapsed. Since food rations had been cut, people lacked motivation to go to their workplace and instead wandered around the country in search of food. Some even crossed the border into China and defected to South Korea hoping for better lives. Therefore, the collapse of the ration system also affected the regime's tight control of people's movement.

5.5.1 The Collapse of the Public Distribution System

In North Korea, like in all communist states, all economic plans and decisions are made by the central government. This allows the leadership to manage and control the national economy as well as the people. In particular, the operation of a centralized distribution system allows the state to justify its need to keep a detailed population registry. Consequently, the distribution system itself is a powerful social control mechanism because the state controls food and basic goods necessary for daily life, thus making it impossible for citizens who are not registered in the system to survive on their own.

North Korea operates the PDS, which is more thoroughly designed than the PDS in any other communist country (Lankov and Kim 2008, 55). It includes free education, a full employment system for people of working age, and a food rationing system. The core of the PDS is the food distribution system, which began in the early 1950s during the Korean War. In March 1952, North Korea enacted Cabinet Decision No. 56 "Regulations on National Food Distribution" and has implemented the food distribution system since May of the same year. However, in a stricter sense, it can be said that the food ration system was fully implemented after Cabinet Decision No. 102 "On making food sales as the state's monolithic system," which was adopted in November 1957. Based on this decision, all residents except for cooperative farm workers received food rations (H.-C. Ahn 2014, 89–90). Fahy (2015) explains the process of the food supply system as follows:

> This food came from the surplus production of farmers, purchased at low cost by the central government. In exchange, farmers were given seed, fertilizer, insecticides, and farming equipment, and they were permitted to grow a small plot of vegetables for personal household consumption. Farmers were also given a food ration from the harvest. The central government transferred the purchased food into the PDS. (Fahy 2015, 21)

A previous study discussed three possible reasons why the North Korean state implemented the PDS. The first reason was a shortage of supplies. For a long time, North Korea had invested heavily in heavy chemical industry and military production while neglecting to invest in light industry and agriculture. As a result, food and consumer goods were under-produced, making the ration system inevitable. The second reason was that the PDS was used as a subject of propaganda in terms of demonstrating "the superiority of socialism" (D. Han, Park, and Choi 2018, 153). The North Korean leadership promoted that

they were offering "free" food to everyone. The last reason was the usefulness of the PDS as a means of control. The food ration system maximizes citizens' dependence on the state as the state monopolizes food and other necessities, thereby strengthening its control over the people.

The PDS was indeed an effective tool for social control. The state's exclusive supply of necessities resulted in individuals being completely tied to the system. The food distribution system categorized recipients into four categories: office worker and general laborer, military, farmer, and others. The citizens received different amounts of food rations depending on their labor. Before the cut in rations, the amounts had been 600–700 grams for most adults and 700–800 grams for high-ranking officials, military personnel, and heavy-labor workers. Table 5.1 summarizes food rations in North Korea based on occupation and age group.

Table 5.1 Rice and Corn Per Capita Daily Rations in North Korea

		Ratio of rice to corn	
Occupation and age group	**Per capita daily ration (grams)**	**Pyongyang area**	**Other areas**
High-ranking government officials	700	10:0	10:0
Regular laborers	600	6:4	3:7
Heavy-labor workers	800	6:4	3:7
Office workers	600	6:4	3:7
Special security	800	7:3	7:3
Military	700	6:4	3:7
College students	600	6:4	3:7
Secondary school students	500	6:4	3:7
Primary school students	400	6:4	3:7
Preschool students	300	6:4	3:7
Children under 3 years	100-200	6:4	3:7
Aged and disabled	300	6:4	3:7

Source: Kim, Lee, and Sumner (1998), p.523.

The state distributed food as the basic form of payment for workers' labor. Every worker in North Korea receives a food stamp. On the right side of the stamp, the amount of food to be supplied depending on one's occupation is written, while the date of issue is stated on the left side. To prevent people forging the stamp, food distribution centers keep food supply cards for each household, which are annually updated by the agency and local inminban (D. Han, Park, and Choi 2018, 154–55).

Under the pretext of the distribution system, the North Korean state deeply intervenes in people's daily lives by tying their workplace to their residence. The system designates one household as a single unit and ties the rest of the family members to the head of the household (*saedaeju*). This means that the food stamps of the dependent family members come with that of the head of the household (D. Han, Park, and Choi 2018, 155–56). For this reason, it is crucial to show up to your workplace; otherwise, the whole family will not be able to receive supplies. In addition, the PDS limits people's mobility. If someone moves to another city without an official approval from the government, they would be unable to receive rations in that city.

However, North Korea's food distribution system started to function poorly from the late 1980s. When the Soviet Union terminated aid in 1987, daily grain rations were cut by 10%. From the early 1990s, North Korea's economic situation worsened and rations were cut by another 10% in 1992 (Noland 2004, 15). Another study revealed that around 1992, people were not receiving food regularly, and by 1995, the food rationing system had collapsed in most parts of North Korea except for Pyongyang (Lim 2009, 109). Eventually, a series of natural disasters in 1995 put a final end to the distribution system. For this reason, the period of the Arduous March is also referred to as the "era of non-distribution" (*bibaegup sidae*) at the grassroots level in North Korea.

The collapse of the PDS triggered a fundamental change in North Korea. Along with the collapse of the PDS, the movement control system was also affected. Since they were not receiving food rations from the state, local officials and households had to devise other strategies to survive. Haggard and Noland (2007) refer to this phenomenon as a "bottom-up process resulting from the very coping behaviors," which included "migrating, foraging for food, selling assets, and engaging in barter and market exchanges" (Haggard and Noland 2007, 165). These were activities that could "fundamentally alter the economic landscape" (Haggard and Noland 2007, 165). As a result, markets started to play an increasingly crucial role in the daily lives of average North Koreans. Throughout this period, one noticeable change was the active participation of women, especially married women with children, in economic activities. Under the patriarchal system, North Korean women have traditionally held gendered roles and had limited participation in economic activities. However, the Arduous March "displaced their gender position from the domestic to the economic sphere," transforming them from the "ideal mother" into the "main breadwinner" of the family (S. K. Kim 2020, 99). They were the main actors who took the initiative to form networks and create local markets (*jangmadang*) to sell whatever they could to survive. Most North Korean

men were employed in basic industries or state workplaces and tied to their workplaces, but women either worked as secondary labor in light industry or were forced out of their jobs in times of economic hardship, so they had more flexibility (K.-A. Park 2011; S. K. Kim 2020, 110). Furthermore, many of these women also crossed the border into China. However, it is important to note that these actions were driven by economic reasons and not by political motivations. Kwon and Chung (2012) elaborate as follows:

> Their objective was not to leave their home for a better life elsewhere (or to seek "freedom," a completely nonsensical notion in this context, as some outside media irresponsibly characterized the border crossing) but chiefly to help keep their families at home alive by taking on the role of breadwinner as temporary migrant laborers. (Kwon and Chung 2012, 168)

Although the PDS broke down and the movement control system suffered, one cannot argue that the Kim Jong Il regime lost the ability to control the population entirely. In fact, despite these challenges, the regime managed to control the situation and maintain its political stability. To tackle the crisis, the regime used coercive measures and physical control to repress citizens. It employed the military to monitor people's movement and increased the level of punishment. Moreover, one study argued that in North Korea, "the extreme level of impoverishment reduces the probability of regime failure" (Koo, Choi, and Kim 2016, 216). This is because the general public, who are too poor and in desperate need of food to survive, have no incentive to participate in anti-government demonstrations or riots. This is supported by a study by Przeworski et al. (2000), who stated that "impoverishment is positively associated with regime survival only under dictatorships" and "few extremely poor dictatorships with income per capita below $1,000 were democratized from 1950 to 1990" (Koo, Choi, and Kim 2016, 216). Hence, contrary to popular belief, Kim Jong Il may have in fact benefited from the poor economy and extreme poverty in terms of regime survival.

However, Kim Jong Il may have also realized that the government needed to adapt to the changes and allow a certain degree of flexibility. Eventually, this "de facto marketization" put pressure on the government, which led to a variety of economic reforms in the post-famine era as adaptation strategies (Haggard and Noland 2007, 165). The most important economic reform in this period was the "July 1 (7.1) measures." In July 2002, the government announced changes in economic policy, which included giving more autonomy to factories and enterprises, strengthening material incentives for workers, and raising wages and overall prices. However, reform in this context was not to liberalize the economy, but to

control the process of marketization. Thus, it can be said that the 7.1 measures introduced some market economy elements within the existing planned economy framework (Haggard and Noland 2007; Noland 2004).

5.5.2 Mass Defection and Relaxation of Movement Control

The North Korean state has firm control over people's mobility and travel. Most North Koreans are not allowed to freely move outside of their place of residence. In North Korea, where workplaces, organizations, and state institutions are closely intertwined, moving to a new place means changing one's workplace as well. Therefore, to move one must first obtain a letter of approval from the MPS and a confirmation from the workplace where one will be working. This makes it very difficult for people to move around for personal reasons (E.-R. Choi and Lee 2012, 205). Even for a short visit to a different city, they are required to apply for travel permits. It takes approximately one to three days for a permit to be issued for business travel, and approximately 7 to 15 days for personal reasons (D. Han, Park, and Choi 2018, 172). For personal travel, permission is only granted with a clear purpose or evidence. For instance, if one is attending a family event in another city, then one must submit a letter written by the corresponding family member (E.-R. Choi and Lee 2012, 204–5). However, if one wishes to travel to Pyongyang or borderland areas, a special approval number is required and the application will undergo a strict review process by the central authorities in the Ministry of the Interior (Han, Park, and Choi 2018, 172; Lankov and Kim 2008, 57).

Such strict regulations were in place until the late 1980s. Then, due to the consecutive shocks in the 1990s, the government lost its ability to control the movement of the population. The famine and natural disasters resulted in a food crisis and the state cut rations to almost zero. Therefore, to avoid starvation and obtain food, people had to leave their hometowns and wander around the country for their own survival. As it became clear to the government that it would not be able to provide food for the people, it had no other choice but to allow them to move around relatively more freely. Although there was still strict control of entry into Pyongyang, from the early 1990s, the government began to relax travel restrictions within the country for people who were searching for food. This was permitted on condition that they carried appropriate documents. However, over time, an increasing number of people either traveled without permits and paid a fine or bribed officials to get away (Haggard and Noland 2007, 169). Officials such as train conductors and border guards were also desperate for food, so bribery became an increasingly common phenomenon. As a result, travel within the

country became “almost free” as a travel permit was now only worth a bribe of a few dollars (Gause 2012, 138). This was a serious threat to the regime’s administrative system and policing.

Even more problematic was that people were not only moving around within the country but also increasingly crossing the border into China. While in China, they witnessed China’s economic development. In addition, they discovered the economic prosperity of South Korea through defector communities and media. After comparing the countries, they quickly realized that North Korean society is no longer a “paradise” like the Kim regime claimed it to be. The increasing number of defectors that resulted was an inherent threat to the regime’s security since “the act of defection or border crossing announces the limitations and failure of the state”; thus, “without saying a word, border crossers articulate the varied failures of North Korea” (Fahy 2019, 131). Thus, to prevent a further mass exodus, Kim Jong Il deployed the military to guard the border areas and increased the level of punishment. However, these measures were not particularly effective, and the control of movement had been severely challenged in the Kim Jong Il era. In fact, some of the people who crossed the border into China did not return to North Korea but rather defected to South Korea. This can be observed by the sudden increase in the number of North Korean defectors to South Korea. Until the early 1990s, fewer than 10 North Koreans defected to South Korea annually, most of whom defected for political reasons (Kil 2010, 50). However, in 1994, a decisive year in North Korea due to the death of Kim Il Sung, the number increased to two-digit figures. From then on, the number of defectors began to increase, doubling every year from 1999. One study demonstrated that economic difficulty was becoming an increasingly common reason to leave North Korea (Kil 2010, 50–51).

In addition, North Koreans who went to China started to smuggle goods and foreign products back into North Korea. As more people crossed the border, it became more difficult for the Kim regime to monopolize information about the outside world. The smugglers went back and forth and brought in, in particular, South Korean movies and television dramas. These products began to circulate within the country through markets and exchanges among people. This had the potential to pose extreme danger to the regime as it directly affected the regime’s indoctrination and ideological control measures.

5.6 Conclusion

From the end of the 1980s, North Korea encountered external and domestic shocks that severely threatened the stability of the regime. The period of the mid-1990s, commonly referred to as the Arduous March period, was exceptionally difficult for the survival of the regime. Externally, North Korea became more isolated from the rest of the world as the Soviet Union collapsed. In addition, the sudden cuts in Soviet and Chinese aid gave a profound economic shock to the regime. Internally, Kim Il Sung died in 1994 and the regime underwent its first hereditary succession to his son Kim Jong Il. Meanwhile, the country was hit by famine and natural disasters that led to food shortages and mass starvation.

I defined the multiple shocks of the mid-1990s as the second political shock to the regime. At this juncture, the social control system lost its internal dynamic and was bringing decreasing returns. Although the regime was on the brink of collapse, the successor Kim Jong Il maintained his position as the supreme leader and kept the regime somewhat stable until his son Kim Jong Un succeeded in his place. In this chapter, I argued that Kim Jong Il adapted the social control system and used it as a survival mechanism. The control mechanisms were reproduced and, when some failed to function, other mechanisms were reinforced to keep the regime stable.

First, two new state ideologies were introduced. As the world witnessed the downfall of the Soviet Union, the Kim Jong Il leadership argued that it would follow its own path to socialism and developed the ideology of Our-style socialism. This ideology has its foundation in the Juche idea that North Korea will remain independent from foreign powers and follow its own way no matter the changing external environment. In addition, as the domestic crisis worsened, Kim Jong Il transferred power from the party to the military to contain social disorder. A new ruling ideology of Songun (military-first) was also introduced. Songun justified the militarization of the regime by emphasizing self-defense in national defense and independence from foreign powers, which are two of the four principal elements of Juche. Therefore, Our-style socialism and Songun were not completely new ideologies, but they were adaptive forms of Juche.

Second, under the pretext of Songun politics, the regime incorporated the military to play a more active role in people's daily lives, thereby strengthening the physical control mechanism. In addition, the government implemented stricter measures to contain social unrest. Meanwhile, to consolidate his power and authority, Kim Jong Il oversaw massive

purges at the elite level. Kim also ordered a nationwide investigation on the classes of the population, which led to unlawful arrests and torture.

Lastly, the daily life control mechanisms were hit especially hard during the Arduous March period. The PDS, which operated as a control mechanism based on the registration system, completely collapsed. Moreover, the regime lost control over the people's movement and witnessed a high increase in defection. Some people even crossed the border into China and defected to South Korea. Nevertheless, the regime was able to control the crisis and remained stable due to the operation of physical control mechanisms and coercive measures. In addition, minor economic reform measures were implemented to adapt to the changing environment.

In conclusion, in the 1990s, North Korea experienced its toughest period since the Korean War. The social control system was under attack and some mechanisms, such as the PDS and movement control, collapsed. In addition, although new ideologies were introduced, the ideological indoctrination was becoming weaker due to the rapidly changing environment and the death of the founding father. At this juncture, Kim Jong Il adapted the social control system. In particular, the military became involved in domestic affairs and strengthened physical control, which complemented the collapse of the daily life control mechanisms. Consequently, the Kim Jong Il regime was able to survive the shock and remained resilient to prepare for the second hereditary succession.

Table 5.2 Case Study 2 Outcome

	Control mechanism	Intensity of control	Outcome
Case 2: Arduous March (1994–1997)	Ideological control	*Weaker*	Successful leadership transition in 2009
	Physical control	*Stronger*	
	Daily life control	*Weak*	

6 The Adaptation of the Social Control System (2011–2019)

This chapter examines the third and the final case study of this dissertation, namely the adaptation of the social control system in North Korea under the incumbent leader Kim Jong Un. North Korea encountered another political shock when the regime underwent the second hereditary succession in 2011. First, the successor Kim Jong Un was young and had almost no real life experience in politics. Second, since the Arduous March period, a growing number of North Koreans had begun to leave the country in search of food and better lives. Lastly, after the collapse of the PDS, markets began to spread rapidly throughout the country, which undermined the government's control over the economy as well as the everyday lives of citizens. Relatedly, this unofficial marketization led to the birth of a new class called *donju* (meaning "masters of money") and increased corruption in daily activities. Despite these challenges, the leadership transfer to Kim Jong Un was successful and the new leader managed to keep the regime stable for a decade. I define this period as the "adaptation" of the social control system. The successor Kim Jong Un reinforced the physical and daily life control mechanisms and adjusted the state ideology to stabilize his rule.

6.1 Third Shock: The Second Hereditary Succession of 2011

6.1.1 Instability Prior to the Succession

In North Korea, the period leading up to Kim Jong Un's leadership succession had numerous signs of instabilities. At this juncture, the leadership attempted to raise international tensions on purpose to promote domestic solidarity and facilitate the succession process to Kim Jong Un (M. S. Ahn 2013, 20). In January 2009, when Barack Obama was inaugurated as the President of the United States, there were expectations for a return to talks between the U.S. and North Korea. However, shortly after, North Korea launched a long-range missile in April and conducted a second nuclear test in May. Furthermore, the North Korean military conducted two fatal provocations in 2010. On March 26, the South Korean corvette *Cheonan* was sunk by a North Korean torpedo attack and killed 46 sailors, and on November 23, North

Korea shelled South Korea's Yeongpyeong Island, which claimed the lives of two civilians and two soldiers.

In addition, the Arduous March of the 1990s had resulted in the collapse of state provision and control and vastly changed the economic dynamics. Across the country, grassroots markets called *jangmadang* began to greatly increase in number. Through these markets, people were able to obtain food and other necessities at a time when the state was failing to provide for them. Moreover, in an attempt to control market expansion, the government conducted a sudden currency reform on November 30, 2009. The essence of the currency reform was as follows: "1) the re-denomination of the North Korean won, where 100 old won equaled 1 new won; and 2) a requirement that residents exchange their old won for new won within a limit of 1,000 new won per household" (J. H. Hong 2018, 26). However, the results of the currency reform were devastating. It not only caused severe inflation and dollarization (or yuanization) but also amplified citizens' complaints. To appease the population, the regime made a scapegoat of Park Nam-gi, Director of the Department of Planning and Finance. Park was charged with the failure of the currency reform and executed in March 2010 (Y.-J. Park et al. 2018, 81–82). Along with the unofficial marketization, another interesting phenomenon emerged during this period, namely the birth of a new class of full-time merchants and entrepreneurs known as *donju* ("masters of money"). Some donju provide funds or resources to state-run enterprises in exchange for ensuring that their businesses run smoothly. Additionally, since corruption had started to grow in the 1990s, ordinary North Koreans had begun to bend rules and carve out space for greater economic autonomy (Dukalskis and Joo 2020; Haggard and Noland 2011; Yeo 2020, 642).

At the beginning of 2011, the world witnessed the Arab Spring. A series of anti-government protests occurred in the Middle East and North Africa, including in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. The protesters were motivated by a set of socioeconomic grievances, such as high inflation, rising unemployment, and falling wages, and had political aims to restore basic rights and freedom (Fiori and Kim 2014, 45). These events must have been alarming to Kim Jong Il. The government reportedly suppressed all public gatherings and even prepared tanks and troops in city centers as a precaution against public uprisings. It also threatened to shoot down NGO balloons from South Korea carrying news of the Arab Spring (Cha and Anderson 2012, 14). Nonetheless, compared with the pre-Arduous March era, more people in North Korea began to have access to the outside world, whether through family members who left the country or merchants crossing the border into China illegally.

Finally, on December 19, 2011, the North Korean media announced that Kim Jong Il had died from great mental and physical strain on December 17 on a train during an on-site guidance tour. Obviously, Kim's death was a topic of major debate among Pyongyang watchers as it could have had a major impact on the future of North Korea. The following section describes the leadership transition process from Kim Jong Il to Kim Jong Un, which I argue was the third political shock to the regime. During this period, the social control system had to be reinforced and adapted to achieve the outcome of stability under the new leader.

6.1.2 The Second Hereditary Succession

Apart from constitutional monarchies, North Korea is the only modern state to have successfully carried out two hereditary successions. The first succession process from Kim Il Sung to Kim Jong Il was rather straightforward as it had been decided long before the actual succession took place. In fact, Kim Jong Il made his debut in politics in the 1970s, so he had at least 20 years of practice when he became the leader in 1994. However, in the case of the second succession, it had not been planned for long. Instead, due to Kim Jong Il's deteriorating health, he had to make a decision on who would be the next Kim to lead at short notice. Kim Jong Il had three sons: Kim Jong Nam, Kim Jong Chol, and the youngest, Kim Jong Un. For a society that embraces Confucian values, the oldest son is expected to succeed the position. However, Kim Jong Nam was never really an heir apparent and it is assumed that he ultimately lost his chance to be the successor when he and his family were caught attempting to enter Japan in May 2001 with counterfeit passports, claiming that they wanted to visit the Tokyo Disney Resort (*Kim Jong Nam (Kim Cho'ng-nam)* 2012). On the other hand, Kim Jong Chol, Kim Jong Un's older brother from the same mother, is known to be apolitical and instead prefers music and concerts (Killalea 2017). Ultimately, the third and youngest son Kim Jong Un was selected to be the new leader of North Korea.

Among North Korea watchers, it is widely assumed that the second leadership succession process began internally when Kim Jong Il suffered a stroke in August 2008 (Y. S. Park 2014, 8). However, Kim Jong Un was mentioned in official North Korean media for the first time when he was made a four-star general on September 27, 2010, despite having no previous military experience. The following day, he was appointed Vice-Chairman of the KWP Central Military Commission at the Third Party Conference. By laying such institutional foundations, Kim Jong Un's power succession began to be formalized.

In this chapter, I define the second hereditary succession as the third political shock to the North Korean regime. As I will demonstrate in the following sections, at this juncture, the social control system underwent adaptation processes to more effectively accommodate the changing environment. When Kim Jong Un officially succeeded the leadership after Kim Jong Il's death in December 2011, there were assumptions from the outside that the North Korean regime was likely to collapse. Unlike his father, Kim Jong Un had much less experience and preparation to be groomed as the successor. Although Kim Jong Il officially took over power in 1994 when Kim Il Sung died, he had already emerged as the heir apparent in 1980, which gave him sufficient time to be trained. In the case of Kim Jong Un, due to the sudden death of his father, he took over the leadership only a few years after being nominated as successor. In addition, Kim Jong Un was young and spent his childhood abroad, so he did not have a solid support base in North Korea, not to mention that he was more distant from his grandfather's revolutionary myth. The year 2012 was also a notable period in East Asia as South Korea, China, and Japan all faced leadership transitions by the end of the year, so there was a possibility of change in political dynamics.

Eventually, North Korea successfully underwent the second round of hereditary succession. During this process, the leadership attempted to transfer charisma to Kim Jong Un by manufacturing his image and building background stories. Kim Jong Il stressed that "a revolution does not end in one or two generations" and argued for the importance of continuing the task of revolution from generation to generation (KJI October 8, December 15, 2011, 416).

> Dear Suryeong said that his greatest wish is to accomplish the revolutionary achievement of Juche and emphasized that should the generations of sons and daughters fail, the generations of grandchildren and great-grandchildren must complete the revolutionary achievement of Juche. (KJI October 8, December 15, 2011, 417; "Dear Suryeong" here refers to Kim Il Sung)

The New Year's editorial for 2012 also stressed the importance of establishing the continuity of the new regime with the old one. It referred to Kim Jong Un as the "successor to the revolutionary cause of Juche" and stated that the North Korean revolution, which was pioneered by Kim Il Sung and achieved victory under Kim Jong Il, would be under eternal victory under the leadership of Kim Jong Un. Moreover, it identified Kim Jong Un with the former leader with the following statement: "Dear Kim Jong Un is precisely the Great Leader Kim Jong Il." The 2012 editorial shared a similar logic with the 1995 editorial, the year after

the death of Kim Il Sung. Both expressed condolences to the deceased leader and swore loyalty to the successor, who was the son of the deceased leader. For instance, it stated that the whole party, the entire army, and all people need to unite behind the leadership of Kim Jong Un and "become human shields" in defending him.

The new leader's legitimacy was justified by stressing that he is a descendant of the *Baekdu* bloodline. On January 8, 2012, Kim Jong Un's birthday, Pyongyang televised an hour-long documentary on Kim Jong Un. The program verified Kim as the authentic heir by relating him with sacred places or monuments in North Korea, such as sites of Kim Il Sung's anti-Japanese guerrilla battles and Mt. Baekdu, Kim Jong Il's purported birthplace (Cumings 2012, 216–17). This could be seen as an attempt to prolong the foundational myth of the regime. Kim Jong Il even praised Kim Jong Un for making it possible to accomplish the revolution of Baekdu.

> Only **Comrade Kim Jong Un** can most accurately deliver and accomplish the Juche revolution, which our dear Suryeong pioneered in Baekdu. Because we have **Comrade Kim Jong Un**, the ultimate victory of the Juche revolution is firmly guaranteed and the future of our country is endlessly bright and prosperous… The Juche revolution pioneered in Baekdu will be brilliantly inherited by **Comrade Kim Jong Un** and the history of the Songun revolution will be continued eternally in this land. (KJI September 12, 2011, 377; emphasis in the original text)

In addition, Kim Jong Un attempted to inherit the charisma of Kim Il Sung by imitating his appearance. The new leader's physical appearance greatly resembled Kim Il Sung's younger self. His physique, haircut, and outfits were deliberately designed to remind the North Koreans of the founder of their country and stimulate nostalgia. Kim Jong Il said that a leader "must have outstanding leadership skills and leadership appearances" and that "Comrade Kim Jong Un possesses the outstanding skills and appearance that one should have as a leader" (KJI October 8, December 15, 2011, 419). This demonstrates that the leadership carefully chose to manufacture the successor's appearance as such.

6.1.3 Adapting the Social Control System

In this chapter, I argue that the new Kim Jong Un regime adapted and reinforced the social control system, which ultimately led to the stability of the regime. This chapter focuses on the period from 2011 when Kim Jong Un took over the leadership to 2019 before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Like every other country in the world, North Korea was heavily

affected by the pandemic, which resulted in a total border closure and severe food shortages. Since the situation is vastly different in the post-pandemic era, this chapter covers until 2019, while post-2020 North Korea is briefly discussed in the conclusion chapter.

First, Kim Jong Un amended the state ideology and devised "*Kim Il Sung- and Kim Jong Il-ism*." This ideology emphasizes North Korea's foundational myth with the deification of the two former leaders. It also justifies the succession of Kim Jong Un as their blood-related son and grandson. Kim Il Sung-Kim Jong Il-ism (hereinafter "KIS-KJIism") is not an entirely new ideology, but it claims to have its foundation in the two former ideologies of Juche and Songun. Meanwhile, as it was the second hereditary succession and the new leader was more distant from the nation's founder Kim Il Sung, it was becoming more difficult to reproduce ideological indoctrination and justify the legitimacy of the successor only with the ruling ideology. Therefore, the new leadership recently attempted to incorporate nonideologically based legitimation mechanisms, such as the economy and diplomacy. In addition, it defined ideological contamination by foreign influence as threats to regime security and launched campaigns to crack down on "anti-socialist behavior."

Second, Kim Jong Un increased the intensity of physical control both at the mass and elite levels. According to satellite imagery analysis by experts at the U.S.-Korea Institute at Johns Hopkins University SAIS, the existing political prison camps, such as Kwanliso No. 14 in Kaechon, South Pyongan Province, and Kwanliso No. 25 in Chongjin, North Hamgyong province, have been expanded and new camps have additionally been built (Jung 2017, 15). This indicates that the operation of the coercive apparatus is still active and the repression level is high. The new leader's reign of terror has been particularly visible at the elite level. Upon assuming leadership, Kim Jong Un reorganized the composition of the elite and conducted unpredictable purges. Furthermore, to consolidate his status, he eliminated high-ranking elites who might rise as threats to him. In this chapter, I focus on the physical control at the elite level and describe two major purge incidents: the execution of Jang Sung-thaek in 2013 and the assassination of Kim Jong Nam in 2017.

Third, the new regime reinforced daily life control. The "organizational life," in which every adult North Korean participates, has a dual purpose of indoctrination and surveillance. There are five centralized organizations and they hold regular indoctrination meetings as well as self- and mutual criticism sessions. Although organizational life has been challenged since the Arduous March, it has not collapsed completely. Rather, citizens participate in the system in ways that they can. Thus, such organizational activities have been "maintained and reinforced via daily practice – not only by top-down decrees but also by the

broad participation of the masses" (Sonia Ryang 2021, 200). In addition, although moving around within the country has become relatively easier since the late 1990s, border crossings have become more stringent in the Kim Jong Un era. The regime has implemented strict border control policies to prevent people from leaving the country.

In sum, the Kim Jong Un regime began with uncertainties. Some experts suspected that it may not last long or that Kim may need older and more experienced guardians to continuously guide him. Nevertheless, the young leader has managed to maintain the stability of his regime for a decade, even after purges of senior elite members. I argue that this was possible because the social control system had been adapted to overcome new challenges facing the regime.

6.2 Ideological Control Mechanisms

For the new Kim Jong Un regime, it was becoming increasingly difficult to justify the second hereditary leadership succession. Furthermore, the successor was young, inexperienced, and without a firm supporting base. Therefore, Kim Jong Un attempted to gain legitimacy through the deification of the two former leaders, namely his grandfather and father. He introduced the ideology of KIS-KJIism as a new state ideology. Additionally, the new leadership attempted to incorporate nonideologically based legitimation mechanisms, such as the economy, to counter the diminishing effect of bloodline-dependent succession logic while cracking down on foreign influence with harsh punishments.

6.2.1 Kim Il Sung-Kim Jong Il-ism and Performance-Based Legitimacy

When analyzing the ruling ideology of North Korea, it is crucial to examine its connection to previous ideologies. This is because the successor inherited his father's power and the justification of his succession comes from the bloodline; therefore, the successor cannot deny the predecessor's ideology and political discourse. Simultaneously, to proclaim his new era, the successor must devise his own ideology (B. Kim 2021, 142). Therefore, to initiate the Kim Jong Un system, a new ideology that supported this system was required. According to S. Lee (2014), three requirements were necessary in this process:

> Above all, the successor should have exclusive rights of interpreting the revolutionary ideology of *suryong*. Then, the successor should be the only one to further develop the revolutionary ideology, the *juche* (self-reliance) idea, of

> *suryong*. Last, the heir should create a new revolutionary idea to continue the revolutionary ideology of *suryong*. (S. Lee 2014, 58)

Shortly after the leadership succession, on April 11, 2012, Kim Jong Un revised the state ideology and declared KIS-KJIism the sole governing ideology of North Korea at the Fourth Conference of Party Representatives. By naming the ideology KIS-KJIism, Kim Jong Un highlighted his family roots and obtained exclusive rights to interpret the ideology as their blood-related successor. In addition, Kim Jong Un embarked on the task of deifying the former leaders. For instance, in April 2012, the Socialist Constitution was renamed the "Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il Constitution," and it pronounced Kim Il Sung "the eternal President" and Kim Jong Il "the eternal Chairman of the National Defense Commission" in the preamble. In December 2012, the "People's Security University" was renamed the "Kim Jong Il People's Security University." The institutionalization of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il as the eternal leaders of North Korea has been crucial to the country's political system because the legitimacy of the Kim family is directly related to the legitimacy of the regime.

According to an article from a philosophy and economics journal published by Kim Il Sung University, KIS-KJIism is "a new philosophical principle of man-centeredness that is fundamentally different from dialectical materialism of Marxism-Leninism" (G. Kim 2013, 8). The man-centered principle here refers to the Juche ideology. The article then continues to claim that KIS-KJIism "recognized the gun as the most powerful means of independence in the revolutionary struggle" and "clarified the most appropriate way to push forward the independence of the masses by declaring the Songun ideology and Songun political theory" (G. Kim 2013, 10). In addition, *Rodong Sinmun* cited Kim Jong Un as saying the following: "Kim Il Sung- and Kim Jong Il-ism is a holistic system of Juche ideology, theory, and method and it is a great revolutionary ideology that represents the Juche era" (Rodong Sinmun April 24, 2014).

Based on such statements, it can be assumed that KIS-KJIism is not an entirely new ideology, but rather a reinterpretation and modification of the Juche and Songun ideologies. A philosophy journal published by Kim Il Sung University confirmed this by stating that Juche and Songun are the ideological and theoretical foundations of KIS-KJIism (C. Kim 2016, 28). Furthermore, KIS-KJIism does not appear to have a clear doctrinal logic. Kim Jong Un needed to declare his own guiding ideology to justify his succession. However, he did not have decades of political experience like his father and his status may have not been firmly established in the party by the time of his succession. In addition, it was too early for

him to devise a completely new ideology to mark the beginning of his reign. It would have been "far more reasonable and rational – safer – for the Kim Jong Un regime to preserve the status quo than to deal with the political and socioeconomic disorder and opposition" (Y. S. Park 2014, 11). Therefore, the new ideology was introduced as having its foundation in the two former ideologies. This allowed Kim to be portrayed as a modest heir succeeding the former revolutionary leaders (S. Lee 2014, 66).

In North Korea, education is one of the main tools used for ideological indoctrination. In particular, the political ideology curriculum aims to emphasize the greatness of the Baekdu bloodline and justify the succession as a natural process. For instance, in the subject of "Kim Il Sung's revolutionary activities and history," students learn about the revolutionary ideology that Kim Il Sung supposedly created, his revolutionary experiences, and his achievements. Then in the subjects of "Kim Jong Il's revolutionary activities and history" and "Kim Jong Un's revolutionary activities," students are taught how the successors maintained the core revolutionary ideology but also developed other elements to accommodate the new era (Cho et al. 2015, 58). After Kim Jong Un took over the leadership, the education system and curriculum were revised. This resulted in the introduction of new subjects in 2013 such as "Kim Jong Suk's revolutionary activities" and "Kim Jong Un's revolutionary activities." The focus of "Kim Jong Suk's revolutionary activities" is not to teach students about her anti-Japanese guerrilla activities or her revolutionary acts, but rather to emphasize how loyal and supportive she was to her husband Kim Il Sung (Cho et al. 2015, 58–59). As for "Kim Jong Un's revolutionary activities," it focuses on Kim Jong Un's leadership skills and greatness. However, because Kim Jong Un had very few official political activities to his name as of 2013, some of the topics include unconvincing childhood activities, such as how he started shooting a gun at the age of three and demonstrated perfect shooting skills by the age of nine. Similarly, the Kim Jong Un subject focuses mostly on his love and affection for his people while focusing less on his revolutionary activities, which marks a difference from the subjects on Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il (Cho et al. 2015, 69–78).

Although ideology is a critical legitimation mechanism in North Korea, at some point the effect will wear off. As Kim Jong Un had become the third leader of North Korea from the same Kim family line, it was becoming increasingly difficult to justify the legitimacy of the succession. Therefore, for the sake of sustainability, as Frank and Park (2012) note, "the introduction of a less personalized and bloodline-dependent succession logic" became imperative (Frank and Park 2012, 43). For this reason, the regime recently attempted to

highlight nonideologically based legitimation mechanisms. This can be observed in the newly emerging slogans in official statements and media articles from 2015, such as "Improvement of the people's living conditions" (*Inmin saenghwal hyangsang*) and "*Imin Wicheon*," which means to serve the people devotedly like the sky. Kim also claimed in a 2015 speech that the basis of KIS-KJIism is "People-first" politics and that the party exists to serve the people (H. Kim 2021, 42). At the same time, Kim has appeared to define ideological contamination as threats to regime security. In a 2014 speech at a meeting for ideological workers of the party, Kim claimed that imperialists are "persisting in their attempts to infiltrate corrupt reactionary ideology and culture into our country with our service personnel and young people as the target" (KJU February 25, 2014). The regime has since launched campaigns to crack down on "anti-socialist behavior" to deter the influx of foreign media and culture and severely punish those who are caught in possession of such material.

In addition, Kim Jong Un took advantage of a foreign policy opportunity to hold multiple high-level meetings and summits in 2018. Kim held three summits (April 27, May 26, and September 18–20) with South Korean President Moon Jae-in. He also visited China on March 25–28 for his first summit with President Xi Jinping. Moreover, for the first time in history, the North Korean leader met with the President of the United States Donald Trump on June 12 in Singapore. Following these summits, the North Korean media was filled with praise for Kim's leadership and positive prospects of North Korea's diplomatic relations with other countries. To meet with the President of the U.S. without surrendering the nation's nuclear weapons was an "enormous boost for the legitimacy of the DPRK" and a major accomplishment of Kim Jong Un (Mahdavi and Ishiyama 2020, 236). Thus, even though none of the summit meetings achieved a fruitful outcome, they provided an opportunity for the regime to actively build more leader-like features of Kim to reinforce the ideological control mechanism.

In short, the ideological control mechanism in the Kim Jong Un era can largely be divided into two parts: the early period, when the new leader focused heavily on the foundational myth and his family roots, and the later period, when the focus shifted toward using performance-based legitimacy and cracking down on foreign influence.

6.3 Physical Control Mechanisms

Since Kim Jong Un did not have a solid support base among the elites when he became leader, using the element of terror at the beginning of his rule may have been necessary. Kim removed and reshuffled high-ranking officials to prove his political superiority and to elicit the obedience of other elites. In addition, he attempted to rebalance the party and the military and, as a result, the military's presence in key party institutions has reduced. Under the leadership of Kim Jong Un, unpredictable elite purges have been frequent, including those targeting family members. Soon after Kim succeeded the leadership, his uncle-in-law Jang Sung-thaek was executed. A few years later, his half-brother Kim Jong Nam was assassinated at an international airport in Malaysia. Based on the theory of the social control system, it is possible to assume that along with physical control, the ideological control mechanism has been operated to eliminate potential threats to Kim Jong Un's sole ownership of the Kim bloodline.

6.3.1 Elite-Level Purges and the Reorganization of the Ruling Coalition

To secure power, authoritarian leaders frequently remove opponents and reshuffle high-ranking members of the elite. In 2010, Kim Jong Il appointed two high-ranking officials as the younger Kim's patrons: Jang Sung-thaek, Kim Jong Un's uncle-in-law who led the Administrative Department, and Ri Yong-ho, chief of the General Staff who had a solid base in the military. This can be viewed as Kim Jong Il's attempt to instigate a loyalty contest between the two elite groups. Perhaps one of the most crucial concerns of Kim Jong Il was whether his son could maintain the regime after he was gone. Kim Jong Il had 20 years to prepare for the succession under Kim Il Sung's guidance. However, Kim Jong Un had only a few years of training and Kim Jong Il's health was declining rapidly. Therefore, Kim Jong Il designed a new elite structure of a pluralistic system in which the party and military elites competed for loyalty (S. Lee 2017, 440–42). According to S. Lee (2017), the party elite pursued a gradual transfer of power from Kim Jong Il to Kim Jong Un and opted for a return to the traditional party-military system to take control of the military's provocative activities; by contrast, the military elite pushed for a rapid transfer of power so that they could prolong the Songun policy from the Kim Jong Il era and thus retain their privileges (S. Lee 2017, 444–45). However, Jang Sung-thaek and Ri Yong-ho were both purged soon after Kim Jong Il's death. Ri was purged from the military and suspended from all duties in July 2012. Jang was also purged and immediately executed in December 2013.

The changes at the elite level became more visible under the new leader. Upon assuming political leadership, Kim Jong Un took bold steps to reorganize the elites as well as conducted unpredictable purges. By December 2012, one year into the new leadership, more than 40% of the elites' composition had changed in the party, cabinet, and military. The military exhibited the most visible changes as out of 30 key positions, 18 positions were replaced (S. Han and Lee 2013, 124–25). Moreover, it was notable that a civilian named Choe Ryong Hae was appointed Director of the General Politics Bureau of the KPA and the Vice-Chairman of the Central Military Commission. In the following years, more frequent institutional and personnel changes occurred, which appeared to be Kim's attempt at rebalancing the party and the military. More civilians had been promoted to general ranks, which suggest that Kim Jong Un had recognized potential challenges from existing military elites and was attempting to coup-proof the political system (Haggard, Herman, and Ryu 2014, 776). In addition, major purges of key senior officials have occurred under the leadership of Kim Jong Un. These have included not only the removal of family members, such as the execution of Jang Sung-thaek and the assassination of Kim Jong Nam, but also other key senior figures who had stood alongside Kim Jong Un at Kim Jong Il's funeral – of seven men, five had been purged or disappeared from public life by 2015 (Mahdavi and Ishiyama 2020, 234–35). The purges of military elites also continued. For instance, South Korea's National Intelligence Service reported that Hyun Young-chol, who served as Minister of Defense, was executed in April 2015 for insubordination and a bad attitude toward Kim Jong Un. In a well-established dictatorship with a low risk of coups such as North Korea, the purpose of purges could be "increasing the efficiency of dictatorial rule," as Kim Jong Un was able to demonstrate his political superiority and make the remaining elites more obedient by purging key senior officials (T. Kim 2021, 74).

In early 2013, the *byungjin* line, referring to the simultaneous pursuit of nuclear weapons and economic development, was announced. Some scholars view this as "a subtle departure" from the Songun (military-first) politics (Haggard, Herman, and Ryu 2014, 799). Kim Jong Un's on-the-spot guidance visits to military-related facilities had been relegated to the second priority by 2013. The North Korean leader's visits are often targeted at specific sectors of high political importance and reflect the policy priorities of the government. These visits are not spontaneous in nature or "on-the-spot" as they are called; instead, they are "carefully choreographed" and viewed as "a reward for 'model' units" (Mahdavi and Ishiyama 2020, 225). Kim Jong Un's public appearances in the military sector reduced from 32.5% in 2012 to 29.7% in 2013, while visits to the economic sector increased from 24.5% in

2012 to 34% in 2013, 36% in 2014, and 44.9% in 2015 (Kap-sik Kim et al. 2015, 90). In addition, Kim reduced the military's presence in party institutions, such as the KWP CC and the Politburo, and replaced them with party and cabinet officials who were younger and more reform-oriented. For example, at the 7th Party Congress in 2016, only one KPA general was elected in the Politburo Standing Committee (Woo 2018, 241). Moreover, Kim abolished the NDC, which was the highest governing institution under Kim Jong Il and had been the symbol of Songbun politics, and created the State Affairs Commission in 2016.

In a recent study, Ishiyama and Kim (2020) examine "elite churn," or changes in the elite composition, to understand elite dynamics in North Korea. After examining a panel data set of 351 members of the North Korean elite from 1948 to 2017, the authors find that elite churn in North Korea is not driven by challenges to the regime, but rather is very much leader-specific. For example, elite churn was much more pronounced under Kim Jong Un than under his two predecessors. This can be explained by the uncertainty of Kim's position when he succeeded the leadership because, as Ishiyama and Kim argue, "leaders who are generally less secure upon ascending to office are more likely to engage in personnel shakeups to consolidate power" (Ishiyama and Kim 2020, 163). In addition, Ishiyama and Kim find that under Kim Jong Un, the size of the elite has decreased while its internal volatility has increased. This is based on their findings that the likelihood of elite churn under Kim Jong Un increased by 53%–55% compared with under Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il, whereas the entry of new elites decreased by approximately 33%–34% (Ishiyama and Kim 2020, 169). In short, Kim Jong Un has used purges and reorganized institutions to proactively control members of the elite before they have a chance to become genuine threats.

6.3.2 The Elimination of High-Ranking Influential Elites

In a recent study on the factors that determine the risk of being purged in North Korea, T. Kim (2021) finds that elites with blood ties to the three dictators (Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong Il, and Kim Jong Un) are approximately 80% less likely to be purged than others (T. Kim 2021). However, as T. Kim adds, the effect of blood ties disappears over time, and they can be a "double-edged sword" for dictators as family members can be the most reliable but also the most threatening (T. Kim 2021, 87). Such an ambivalent view of blood relations can be observed under the incumbent leader Kim Jong Un. On the one hand, Kim's younger sister Kim Yo Jung has been working as a close aide, while on the other hand, Kim's uncle-in-law

Jang Sung-thaek was executed and his half-brother Kim Jong Nam was assassinated. In the following subsections, the purges of these two high-ranking elites are discussed in detail.

The Demise of No. 2 – The Execution of Jang Sung-thaek in December 2013

Jang Sung-thaek was married to Kim Kyong-hui, the only daughter of Kim Il Sung and sister of Kim Jong Il, which made him the uncle-in-law of incumbent leader Kim Jong Un. Since he had such a deep connection to the most powerful family in North Korea, Jang had held many top positions, including Vice-Chairman of the NDC and Chief of the Central Administrative Department of the KWP. Although the detailed extent of his power cannot be confirmed, experts on North Korea generally agree that he was one of the most influential figures in both internal and external affairs (Gause 2016; S. Lee 2017; H. Park et al. 2013). Internally, Jang commanded the security sector and was involved in multiple economic enterprises and investments within the country (Gause 2016, 39) as well as trade and foreign currency earnings (H. Park 2014, 10). As for external affairs, he was known as the “China man” as he had a particularly strong connection to China (Gause 2016, 39; Mansourov 2013). It is rumored that before Kim Jong Il died, he personally trusted Jang to assist his son as a guardian. Indeed, Jang was the one who made the greatest contribution to finalizing Kim Jong Un’s succession (H. Park 2014, 2). However, not so long after Kim Jong Un succeeded the leadership, Jang Sung-thaek was purged. Jang’s dramatic execution was shocking for various reasons. First, although not blood-related, Jang was a member of the Kim family. Second, the execution was unexpected and abrupt. As mentioned, Jang was in close proximity to the Kim family and regarded as “No. 2” of North Korea among Pyongyang watchers. Although there were some indications that Jang had been losing power since late 2012, in January 2013 for instance he was not present at the top officials meeting on security and foreign affairs despite being Vice-Chairman of the NDC (Mansourov 2013); foreign observers did not expect his execution. Lastly, Jang’s arrest was broadcast to the public, which is extremely rare in North Korea.

On December 9, 2013, *Rodong Sinmun* published a report on the enlarged meeting of the KWP CC Political Bureau, which had been held the previous day. The meeting adopted a decision to deprive Jang of all posts and titles and to expel him from the party. The Politburo decision stated the following:

> The party served warning to Jang several times and dealt blows to him, watching his group’s anti-party, counter-revolutionary factional acts as it has

> been aware of them from long ago. However, Jang did not pay heed and went beyond the limit of the party's tolerance. That was why the party eliminated Jang and purged his group… Our party will never pardon anyone challenging its leadership and infringing upon the interests of the state and people in violation of the principle of the revolution, regardless of his or her position and merits. (Rodong Sinmun December 9, 2013, 1)

A few days later, his death was published in *Rodong Sinmun*. According to the article, a special military tribunal of the MSS was held on December 12 against "wicked political careerist, trickster, and traitor" Jang Sung-thaek. He was sentenced to death and immediately executed. The article added that "despicable human scum Jang Sung-thaek" betrayed profound trust and warm paternal love shown by the party and Suryeong by "revealing his true colors in the generational transition period, thinking that it was finally the time to realize his ambition" and "standing in the way of the leadership succession" (Rodong Sinmun December 13, 2013, 2). One example the article provided was that he behaved insolently by "unwillingly standing up from his seat and half-heartedly clapping" when Kim Jong Un was elected Vice-Chairman of the Central Military Commission of the KWP at the Third Conference of the KWP.

North Korea has a long history of purging and eliminating people who disobey the supreme leader and regime. However, these purges have been conducted in secretive ways and made public long after the event, or even not mentioned at all (Lankov 2013b). Therefore, Pyongyang watchers presume that something might have happened when a certain official, who has often been seen accompanying the leader during on-the-spot guidance, has not been seen for a while in photos released by the North Korean media. Rarely has a clear and direct mention of internal purges been made, which is why the case of Jang Sung-thaek was even more surprising.

In South Korea, experts on North Korea generally analyze Jang's purge based on the two theories: (1) conflict of interest theory or (2) power struggle theory. First, proponents of conflict of interest theory, which is the main argument of the National Intelligence Service of South Korea, claim that Jang's execution was the result of a conflict of business interests between agencies. According to this theory, the military and party were competing on who would be in charge of North Korea's economy during the leadership succession process from Kim Jong Il to Kim Jong Un (H. Park et al. 2013). In North Korea, the agencies receive economic privileges based on their importance to the maintenance of the regime (H. Park 2014, 5). Kim Jong Il's main policy when he was in power was Songun (military-first), which ensured that the military received the most economic privileges. However, during the

process of the leadership transition to Kim Jong Un, the party elites backed by Jang Sung-thaek, mostly from the Administrative Department, started to dominate and take control of economic activities. In addition, Jang was "especially interested in obtaining the rights of the foreign currency-earning export companies run by the military elite" (S. Lee 2017, 447). Thus, the military and other agencies feared losing their privileges, so they plotted to eliminate Jang. Second, proponents of power struggle theory argue that Jang Sung-thaek was purged as a result of a political power struggle among the elites (Cheong 2014). In North Korea, under the absolute Suryeong dictatorship, it is the leader who ultimately has the final say in every matter. Therefore, the agencies compete with one another to prove their loyalty to the leader. This loyalty contest intensifies during leadership transition periods because there are uncertainties regarding whether power and privileges will remain in place or shift to a different institution (H. Park et al. 2013, 7). Some analysts have speculated that Vice-Marshal Choe Ryong Hae, who was a rival of Jang, was the main organizer of the event (Mansourov 2013).

Furthermore, based on the theory of the social control system, Jang Sung-thaek's execution could be viewed as a combination of physical and ideological control. First, the purge of a prominent figure and the use of force to eliminate him represent a definite use of physical control. The footage of Jang's arrest demonstrated that Kim Jong Un "fully controlled the situation without fear of any resistance from the senior cadres in attendance" (Mansourov 2013). This was to prove that Kim was not a puppet or his "uncle's pawn" (Ishiyama 2014, 146). This event must have generated fear among the elites and activated a loyalty contest toward Kim Jong Un; from then on, Kim managed to fully consolidate his status as the next Suryeong (Cheong 2014, 10). In addition, Jang's execution could also be interpreted as a reactive measure of ideological control. The North Korean regime maintains its legitimacy through the Kim family. Without the Kim family, the country would lose its fundamental base. Therefore, it is vital for Kim Jong Un to hold on tightly to the family legacy. Two findings can be highlighted as ideological control. First, as Jang Sung-thaek accumulated more power and responsibilities, the number of his own followers would have naturally increased. This can be confirmed in a statement where Jang was accused of attempting to convert his department into a "little kingdom" where his followers praised him as "Comrade No. 1" (Rodong Sinmun December 13, 2013, 2). Such an act is not acceptable in North Korea, where there is only one absolute leader from the Kim bloodline. Second, there was speculation among Pyongyang watchers that Jang always had sympathy toward Kim Jong Il's eldest son Kim Jong Nam and had originally pushed him as Kim Jong Il's

successor (Mansourov 2013). This must have caused Kim Jong Un to lack complete trust in Jang. Therefore, he ultimately made the decision to purge Jang.

Assassination of Kim Jong Nam in February 2017

Kim Jong Nam was the eldest son of Kim Jong Il's first wife and former North Korean actress Song Hye-rim, which made him Kim Jong Un's half-brother. He lived most of his life as an expatriate in various countries, including Switzerland, Russia, China, and Macau. On February 13, 2017, Kim Jong Nam was murdered at Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Malaysia. He died approximately 20 minutes after two women, a Vietnamese and an Indonesian, rubbed his face with their bare hands one after the other. An analysis by the Malaysian government confirmed that a modified binary system of VX nerve agent, which is classified as a chemical weapon under the Chemical Weapons Conventions, was applied to the face of Kim Jong Nam. Kim complained to the airport staff that he was suffering from pain in his eyes, which suggests that VX had entered his system through the eyes, which is why he died so quickly (Nakagawa and Tu 2018). Soon after, Malaysian authorities named several North Koreans as suspects behind the killing, including four from the MSS and two from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (M. Hong 2017, 1). Despite the North Korean government's denial, evidence strongly suggests that they were behind the incident. In South Korea, it is assumed that the decision to murder him was made by Kim Jong Un, planned by the Organization and Guidance Department, and carried out by the MSS (M. Hong 2017, 4).

This event could be understood as a process of finalizing Kim Jong Un's succession to eliminate a potential threat who could replace him. In this case, the social control system operated as a means of protecting Kim Jong Un's legitimacy as the sole successor of the regime by using the physical control mechanism. Despite having successfully succeeded the leadership, Kim Jong Un may have felt insecure about his status. His mother Ko Yong-hui was of Korean-Japanese heritage, which would make her part of the lowest hostile class according to the songbun system. The Kim dynasty is descended from the country's first leader Kim Il Sung, who rebelled against Japanese colonial rule. Thus, Kim Jong Un, who has a mother of Japanese heritage, may have realized that his succession cannot be fully justified. On the other hand, Kim Jong Nam was the eldest son of Kim Jong Il and his mother was Korean. Due to his heritage, some elderly elites who were in a close circle with the Kim family viewed Kim Jong Nam as "a kind of grandson figure" and treated him "with a special affection" (Madden 2017). Thus, it is possible to speculate that Kim Jong Un may have had an inferiority complex and viewed Kim Jong Nam as a threat.

In addition, Kim Jong Nam is known to have maintained a close relationship with his aunt Kim Kyong-hui and uncle Jang Sung-thaek (Madden 2017). Although he may not have been involved in the regime's internal affairs, it has been speculated that he had been managing some of the Kim family's financial accounts and illicit activities abroad (*Kim Jong Nam (Kim Cho'ng-nam)* 2012; Madden 2017). This suggests that supporters of Kim Jong Nam may have existed in North Korea and Kim Jong Nam could have had political as well as economic leverage to control them.

Under such circumstances, whether Kim Jong Nam actually desired to take over the leadership did not matter – his "existence itself" was a threat to Kim Jong Un's complete monopoly of the bloodline (M. Hong 2017). Therefore, he had to be eliminated as a proactive ideological control measure. Moreover, Kim Jong Nam was not afraid to voice his critique of North Korea's hereditary succession when he met journalists abroad. He once told a Japanese journalist that he thought Kim Jong Un would fail due to a lack of experience, his young age, and insufficient time to be groomed, adding that he wants North Korea to "embrace economic reform and open its doors" (Lah 2012). Finally, a murder of one of the most high profile individuals in public, who is even a member of the "royal family," could be seen as a warning to the members of the elite and defectors abroad. The incident conveyed a strong message that the regime was watching them no matter where you are or who you are. In addition, the fact that Kim Jong Nam was assassinated at an international airport in a foreign country demonstrated that the Kim Jong Un regime was not afraid to carry out such an outrageous act.

6.4 Daily Life Control Mechanisms

The North Korean regime uses organizations as a means to control the daily lives of citizens. One particular example, discussed earlier in Section 4.5.2, is the inminban system, which is based on residence. Another prominent example is organizational life, under which every North Korean must belong to one organization from the age of seven years. There are five organizations and they hold regular and frequent meetings, which function as surveillance and indoctrination mechanisms. However, since the Great Famine of the 1990s, an increasing number of people have begun to consider organizational life to be meaningless and have attempted to find ways to get out of it. Moreover, the new Kim Jong Un regime tightened the border and increased the level of control to prevent defection from the country.

6.4.1 Organizational Life and Saenghwalchonghwa (Self- and Mutual Criticism Sessions)

Compulsory Affiliation with Organizations ("Chochik Saenghwal")

In North Korea, there is no independent civil society and gatherings of intellectuals, students, and all other social groups are severely restricted. All existing organizations are formed by the KWP and, in fact, every adult North Korean must be affiliated with one type of government-supervised organization and participate in organizational life (*chochik saenghwal*). These organizations function as powerful assistants to the regime through holding regular indoctrination sessions and surveillance meetings, which severely impact people's everyday lives.

The compulsory affiliation with organizations begins at an early age. When a child turns seven years old, he or she joins the Korean Children's Union. However, as Lankov et al. (2012) argue, the Children's Union is "not usually considered an organization in its own right"; therefore, genuine organizational life begins with adult organizations (Lankov, Kwak, and Cho 2012, 195). There are five centralized social organizations: the KWP, the Youth Union (Kimilsungist-Kimjongilist Youth Union), the Trade Union, the Farmers' Union, and the Women's Union. Apart from the KWP, membership in other organizations is compulsory and granted automatically depending on age, gender, and employment. For starters, the Youth Union is responsible for the political indoctrination and mobilization of all youths aged 14–30 years. Only a minority are eligible to join the KWP when they turn 18, and most people remain in the Youth Union until they turn 30 years old, when they become members of the Trade Union at their workplace or Farmers' Union if a farmer. For those hoping for any kind of social advancement, party membership is necessary. Naturally, if he or she is from a bad songbun background,[17] it is not possible to join the party. In theory, only exemplary workers have the right to join the KWP; however, bribing party officials to join the party has become a common phenomenon in the recent period (Lankov, Kwak, and Cho 2012). Finally, housewives become members of the Women's Union.

Regular Indoctrination Meetings and "Saenghwalchonghwa"

In every organization, 10–25 members form one cell. Although there is much variation across the country and over time, according to North Korea's societal model, each cell holds three meetings every week that last one to two hours each. Two meetings of *kangyon* (lectures) and

[17] For a detailed discussion of the songbun system, refer to Section 4.5.1.

haksup (political study) are focused on ideological indoctrination. Some of the topics of discussion include the greatness of Kim Il Sung and his family, the achievements of the KWP, and the evil of the imperialist enemies (the United States in particular). Meanwhile, the purpose of one meeting is different from the other two. While the two former sessions are aimed at indoctrination, the latter one, officially known as *saenghwalchonghwa* (the self-criticism and mutual criticism session), focuses on the surveillance function. Thus, organizational life serves a dual purpose of surveillance and indoctrination. Through these regular meetings, every individual becomes an active coparticipant in the process.

Among the three meetings, saenghwalchonghwa is arguably the most significant function in organizational life. According to Lee and Hwang's (2008) detailed study on saenghwalchonghwa, its institutionalization can be traced back to the early 1960s. In February 1962, Kim Il Sung gave a speech in which he stressed the importance of reviewing one's language, behaviors, and activities on a daily basis to achieve the revolutionary spirit. A month later, at a plenary meeting of the KWP CC, a decision was made to increase the party's control over party members, including their private lives. However, it was not until March 31, 1962 that the word "*Dang saenghwalchonghwa*" (party saenghwalchonghwa) first appeared in an article in *Rodong Sinmun* (W. Lee and Hwang 2008, 130–31). Soon after it became institutionalized in the party, other organizations also began to follow and conduct saenghwalchonghwa.

In the beginning, saenghwalchonghwa seems to have been conducted once a month and participation was not strictly mandatory (W. Lee and Hwang 2008, 132). However, the current form of saenghwalchonghwa appears to have been instated by Kim Jong Il in the early 1970s. After the purge of the Gapsan faction in the late 1960s, Kim Jong Il revised the party saenghwalchonghwa under the pretext of strengthening the anti-revisionist struggle. In August 1973, he delivered a speech in which he said that the literature and arts sectors had already implemented saenghwalchonghwa, which were to be conducted every second day and weekly. Kim argued that this new system's superiority had been proven and urged the whole of society to follow (W. Lee and Hwang 2008, 135–36).

*S*aenghwalchonghwa sessions are conducted weekly on Saturdays except for those of the Farmers' Union, which meets once every 10 days. Furthermore, groups that work in critical departments in the party or who are deemed particularly vulnerable to ideological temptations, such as artists and novelists, have meetings more frequently up to once every two days (W. Lee and Hwang 2008, 126–27). The ritual normally begins by attendees quoting remarks by Kim Il Sung or Kim Jong Il. One by one, participants provide a brief

report of their misdeeds and unsound actions, although not things that will lead to penalties or severe trouble for obvious reasons, but rather minor things such as being late for work or not cleaning the neighborhood properly. The other participants then offer criticism and suggest ways for the person to improve his or her behavior. This procedure is repeated until every member has self-criticized their behavior, received criticism from another, and criticized a fellow member (Lankov, Kwak, and Cho 2012; W. Lee and Hwang 2008). This exercise indicates that "all members of a particular cell are required to act as a collective policeman, watching both their peers and themselves and reporting deviations in a formalized manner" (Lankov, Kwak, and Cho 2012, 205).

However, the significance of organizational life began to decline from the 1990s. Studies have indicated that during and after the Arduous March, the system demonstrated visible signs of weakness compared with the pre-famine era (H.-C. Ahn 2014; W. Lee and Hwang 2008). North Korean defectors have testified that the three meetings of lectures, political study sessions, and saenghwalchonghwa, which had been conducted weekly, were carried out once every 10 days or even once a month after the famine began. Moreover, lecture sessions were conducted as a mere formality. For instance, instead of hours of lectures and discussions, participants were given texts and only had to recite them (H.-C. Ahn 2014, 129). Of course, this development might vary depending on the region. In North Korea, a substantial gap exists between the country's capital Pyongyang and the poorer northeastern provinces. The regime expects those residing in the capital city to possess a much stronger belief in the system.

The changes were more visible in saenghwalchonghwa sessions. According to Ahn (2014), people seemed to demonstrate stronger feelings of rejection toward saenghwalchonghwa. This is because during the food crisis, the last thing people had in mind was participating in mutual and self-criticism sessions, when instead they could be searching for food or other ways to survive. Therefore, based on defectors' testimonies, much passive resistance to these sessions occurred, especially from the 1990s. Some people gave bribes to the cell leader to avoid attending the meeting while some exchanged what they would say and how they would criticize each other before the session to fulfill the mandatory task. There were even some cases where a cell did not actually hold saenghwalchonghwa, but instead the cell leader allowed the participants to write down their mistakes and solutions on paper as a substitute for the actual meeting (H.-C. Ahn 2014, 129–30).

On the other hand, in another study, defectors confirmed that saenghwalchonghwa was a very important ritual and "a solid shield that protects North Korean society," and also

that "it is due to saenghwalchonghwa that the North Korean regime did not collapse during the Arduous March period" (W. Lee and Hwang 2008, 124). They testified that no matter how dire the situation was, party officials had to participate in saenghwalchonghwa. In addition, some testified that as the food situation worsened, control actually became stronger (W. Lee and Hwang 2008, 141).

In sum, the intensity of organizational life appears to have declined since the 1990s, but its core model still remains. Nevertheless, what is clear is that although the system may have weakened as it passed the Arduous March period, it did not collapse completely. Even if the meetings were held once a month, they did not vanish from people's daily lives, and the citizens attempted to participate in ways that they could rather than entirely giving up regardless of their feelings toward the regime. In fact, rather than resisting and taking their demands out into the streets, North Korean citizens choose "to live with, within, and around the system" by utilizing the "'weapons of the weak' – through bribery, cunning, hiding, and stealing, all the while leaving the state-crafted official truth largely intact, in turn sustaining the legitimacy of North Korea's leadership" (Ryang 2021, 199; Scott 1987). Therefore, the North Korean regime has succeeded in making "the loyal and disloyal citizen behaviorally indistinguishable" (Inkeles and Bauer 1959, 282), and organizational life operates as an effective daily life control system at the grassroots level.

6.4.2 Relaxing Domestic Travel Restrictions While Tightening Border Control

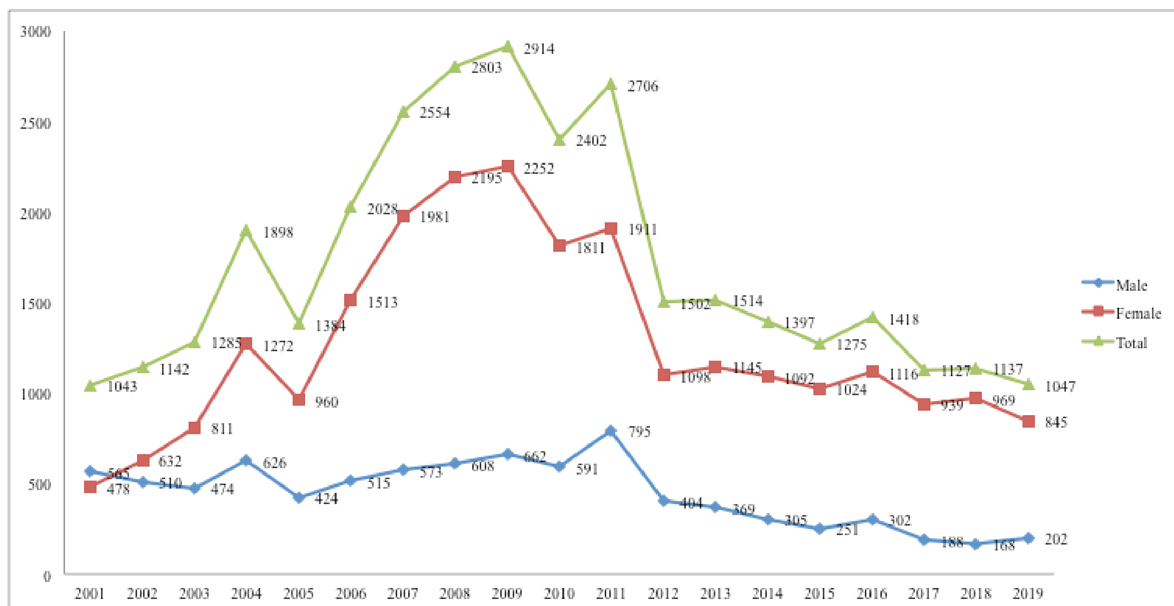
As a result of the multiple shocks in the 1990s, the government lost total control of the movement of citizens, except for in Pyongyang. The travel restrictions, which once prohibited the population from moving outside of their hometown, became significantly relaxed. In fact, defectors have testified that since the inauguration of Kim Jong Un, it has been possible to move freely within North Korea except for Pyongyang through illegal means. Officials ignore the procedure of travel permit issuance and actively participate in issuing illegal travel permits for commercial activities in exchange for bribes. These travel permits are sometimes sold to other merchants on the black market (Kwak 2016, 62–65).

According to a recent study, a widespread perception exists among the general public that money is necessary to obtain travel permits, which should be free in theory (D. Han, Kim, and Lee 2017, 16). A majority of defectors in South Korea have testified that they paid bribes back in North Korea. It seems that the issuance of travel permits and the amount of the bribes vary depending on the circumstances of each person and their destination. Many defectors

have testified that it is relatively easy to obtain a travel permit if one personally knows someone influential. One defector testified that they paid 80,000 North Korean won (KPW) to go to Hyesan, a city located at the border with China, in spring 2012, and that it costs 30,000 KPW to go to Pyongyang and 3,000–5,000 KPW for other areas. Another person testified that in around 2013, it cost 100,000 KPW to go to Pyongyang, 30,000 KPW for other areas, and US$ 30 dollars for border areas (D. Han, Kim, and Lee 2017, 16–19).

Moreover, since the Arduous March, people had not only been traveling within the country, but some had even crossed the border into China and defected to South Korea. The number of people crossing the border began to greatly increase in the 2000s. From 2006 to 2011, more than 2,000 defectors were entering the South annually, reaching a peak in 2009 of almost 3,000. While in the past North Korean defectors were mostly male, high class, often soldiers, and politically motivated, from 2002 the demographics of the defectors shifted to mostly female, working class, and borderland residents (S. K. Kim 2020, 98). This may be due to the internal changes in North Korea after the Arduous March period as poverty-stricken people escaped the country. In addition, women are relatively free of work-related burdens and some even travel to and from China for small trade activities, so they may have eventually decided to defect to South Korea while in China (H. O. Jeong and Kim 2016, 21). Figure 6.1 displays the number of North Korean defectors entering South Korea from 2001 to 2019.

Figure 6.1. Number of North Korean Defectors Entering South Korea (2001–2019)



Source: Ministry of Unification, Republic of Korea (https://www.unikorea.go.kr/eng_unikorea/whatwedo/support/)

However, the situation changed dramatically when Kim Jong Un became leader. Since 2012, the number of defectors arriving in South Korea has significantly dropped, as seen in Figure 6.1. This could be due to the tightened border control policy of the Kim Jong Un regime. In May 2011, the government banned private visits to China, which was a move that contradicted the easing of travel restrictions to China in 2010 as a "symbolic gesture intended to demonstrate the mercy of the heir apparent" (M. S. Ahn 2013, 19). Previously, residents living in the border areas were allowed to visit China for a short period to visit relatives or for small-scale trade once they were issued a "border area immigration certificate." Based on defector testimonies, people usually bribed officials to obtain this certificate; however, after Kim Jong Un took office, they said that the certificate had become more difficult to obtain even with a bribe (D. Han, Kim, and Lee 2017, 46–47). Moreover, according to some sources, Kim Jong Un gave the SSD sole authority over border control to prevent citizens from bribing border security guards to cross the border. In 2014, Kim even issued a shoot-to-kill order against any people attempting to flee North Korea (D. Han, Kim, and Lee 2017, 50–51). From around 2015, control of the border areas appears to have become increasingly tightened and random checks on households, which were normally conducted twice a week, have increased to daily checks (D. Han, Kim, and Lee 2017, 25).

In sum, it can be said that although the North Korean authorities have maintained control over people's movement through the travel permit system, to some extent they have also considered that the mobility of citizens is directly related to people's livelihood, especially since the Great Famine (D. Han, Kim, and Lee 2017, 20). On the contrary, the Kim Jong Un regime has tightened border control to prevent citizens leaving the country. Therefore, while movement control within the country has been relaxed, the border control system has become much stricter.

6.5 Conclusion

Following the Arduous March period, many Pyongyang observers predicted the end of the North Korean regime. There were many signs of instability, which could have potentially led to the collapse of the regime. The regime was preparing for the second hereditary succession to the young and inexperienced Kim Jong Un. In addition, a flow of outside information and unofficial marketization challenged the existing social control system. However, the regime

successfully transferred leadership and proved its durability to the world once again. In this chapter, I argued that the social control system was adapted to maintain the stability of the regime. Some control mechanisms were modified and some strengthened to maximize their effect.

First, a new state ideology known as KIS-KJIism was introduced. Kim Jong Un devised this new ideology, which highlights his family roots, in order to portray himself as a legitimate heir succeeding the former leaders. The ideology also emphasizes the foundational myth with the deification of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il. However, the ideology itself is not entirely new with a clear doctrine. Rather, it is a reinterpretation and adaptation of the two former ideologies of Juche and Songun. As it was too soon for Kim Jong Un to develop a completely new ideology, it must have been a rational or safer choice to preserve the status quo. However, it can be assumed that the ideology would bring decreasing returns as the incumbent leader moves further away from the country's revolutionary myth. Therefore, the new leadership attempted to incorporate nonideologically based legitimation mechanisms to counter the diminishing effect of bloodline-dependent succession logic. In addition, the regime defined ideological contamination as threats to regime security and embarked on a mission to crack down on foreign influence with harsh punishments.

Second, the new regime strengthened the physical control mechanisms. The regime actively used the coercive apparatus to repress the general population. The operation of physical control was more visible at the elite level. Kim Jong Un purged and marginalized high-ranking officials to consolidate his status as the absolute leader and achieved his goal of making the remaining elites more obedient. Kim also recognized potential challenges from existing military elites and attempted to diverge from the Songun policy and rebalance the party and military. In addition, unpredictable high-ranking elite purges have been observed, which included family members of Kim. In this chapter, I focused on two publicized events, namely the execution of Jang Sung-thaek in 2013 and the assassination of Kim Jong Nam in 2017. I argued that these events could be viewed as a combination of physical and ideological control mechanisms.

Finally, the daily life control mechanisms have been adapted to operate more effectively in the Kim Jong Un regime. In North Korea, every adult North Korean belongs to one organization, where they participate in regular meetings and self- and mutual criticism sessions. I argued that it is due to the indoctrination and surveillance function of these organizations that the North Korean regime still seems to have much control over citizens' everyday lives. At the same time, North Korean citizens live in a dual system in which people

act “as if they are loyal citizens publicly while skirting rules and questioning the government privately” (Dukalskis and Joo 2020, 2). They realize that they have no other option and simply do not want any punishment. Therefore, albeit reluctantly, they still follow organizational life. Meanwhile, the Kim Jong Un regime tightened border control and even issued a shoot-to-kill order against anyone attempting to flee the country. This has resulted in a sharp decrease in the number of North Korean defectors entering South Korea since 2012.

In conclusion, the stability of the North Korean regime was under a threat when the regime underwent another round of hereditary succession to Kim Jong Un. To overcome the shock, the existing social control system required adjustment. Ideological control could have brought decreasing returns over time because it was difficult to justify the legitimacy of the new leader with only ideological indoctrination. Therefore, the regime incorporated nonideologically based legitimation mechanisms to strengthen the effect. In addition, both physical and daily life control mechanisms were intensified and remained strong throughout the first decade of Kim Jong Un’s leadership. Consequently, I argue that the social control system of North Korea remained coercive enough to suppress challenges facing the Kim Jong Un regime.

Table 6.1 Case Study 3 Outcome

<table>
<tr><th></th><th>Control mechanism</th><th>Intensity of control</th><th>Outcome</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Case 3:
Second leadership succession</td><td>Ideological control</td><td>Strong</td><td rowspan="3">KJU regime stability</td></tr>
<tr><td>Physical control</td><td>Strong</td></tr>
<tr><td>Daily life control</td><td>Strong</td></tr>
</table>

7 Conclusion

This dissertation had two main goals. First, following a theoretical ambition, it aimed to introduce a theoretical framework for explaining how autocratic regimes maintain their stability and why some are more durable than others. Second, as a subsequent step to demonstrate the argument, this study applied the theoretical model to North Korea and conducted in-depth case studies. In this final chapter, I conclude the study by evaluating the theory and empirical analyses. Each assessment section proceeds in four steps: First, the main findings of the study are briefly summarized; second, the contributions of the study are discussed and what is new is identified; third, the study's limitations are discussed and finally, avenues for future research are suggested. In addition, this chapter tests the generalizability of the social control system by presenting a brief comparative case study. Finally, the chapter concludes this dissertation with an outlook on post-2020 North Korea under the social control system.

7.1 Evaluating the Theoretical Contributions

7.1.1 Evaluating the Theory of the Social Control System

This dissertation was the first attempt to understand the origins and development of the social control system to explain autocratic regime stability. Chapter 2 discussed the theory of the social control system. The theorization was conducted in three parts. The first part conceptualized the term "social control." Social control used to be one of the main topics of discussion among social scientists for explaining social order. From the 1950s, it began to be widely accepted in the field of criminology for explaining what prevents deviant behavior, and connoted a coercive meaning. In this context, social control refers to the organized reactions imposed by the ruler on the ruled to regulate deviant behavior. Recently, the term has been further narrowed down and used more or less synonymously with coercion and repression.

The second part theorized the social control system in two steps. First, I divided social control into reactive or proactive control. Traditionally, one of the most common ways to

classify social control was to break it down into formal and informal control. However, I argued that this dichotomous division fails to explain certain empirical situations in which it is difficult to differentiate what exactly is formal or informal. To answer the question of *who* applies control to *whom* and *how*, I argued that it makes more sense to classify social control into reactive or proactive control based on how the control agent perceived the act. Following this logic, a controller imposes control either after the act has taken place or to prevent the act from happening. In the second step of theorizing, I constructed social control as a system that can explain the stability of autocracies. After reviewing the literature on autocracy research and clarifying the concept, I defined the social control system as *a system operated by the regime leaders in order to control and repress every part of society under the system's territorial boundary*. This dissertation has argued that the social control system is established after a regime experiences its first major political shock. At the moment of the political shock, which represents a critical juncture that can alter the path of the regime completely, the regime constructs stability mechanisms. Once the system is established, the mechanisms that compose it are reproduced until the outcome of regime stability is achieved. When the regime encounters another political shock, the system adopts self-reinforcing processes to follow the same path. However, when a shock is not manageable using the current system, the regime leaders will adapt or modify the system to deal with the changing environment. Therefore, this theoretical model is able to explain the durability of autocratic regimes.

Finally, the last part discussed the building of the social control system's mechanisms. I identified three mechanisms that qualify as the most critical elements in explaining autocratic regime stability: ideological control, physical control, and daily life control. First, autocratic regimes cannot rely solely on repression. They need some type of justification to claim the legitimacy of the regime and prolong their rule. In this regard, ideological control mechanisms operate to indoctrinate the population and justify the regime's legitimacy. Second, dictators often use physical sanctions to keep the regime under control. They use "official" measures through state security agencies or "unofficial" measures of brute force. This study referred to these as physical control mechanisms. Lastly, I argued that autocratic regimes are more durable when they have enough knowledge and control over the everyday lives of ordinary people. Thus, regulating people's daily activities is one of the vital tasks for dictatorships. Moreover, these three mechanisms are not entirely distinct as some features may overlap and they are often implemented simultaneously to maximize the effect. In addition, the mechanisms do not have equal importance at all times. Depending on the circumstances and needs, regimes operate each mechanism to different extents. This is

possible because the three control mechanisms operate under a system; therefore, if one element does not prove efficient, then another one may enhance its performance. Therefore, there is no "superior" control mechanism, but only a "more efficient" one that exists in specific scenarios.

This study provides two theoretical contributions to the scholarship on autocracies. The primary theoretical contribution is a novel theory on autocratic regime stability. Over the past two decades, there has been a resurgence of research in autocratic regimes and their persistence. Despite this rising interest, many of these studies have focused on a specific institutional setting or strategy. While this approach is certainly valid, more research is required to develop a systematic framework that can be applied to conduct a comparative study. To address this need, I proposed the theory of the social control system. This study incorporated a concept of social control and described how it is exploited in the context of autocracies. Although social control is not an entirely new concept in describing a characteristic of autocracies, it has not been clearly conceptualized in previous literature. This dissertation proposed an alternative classification of social control – namely into reactive or proactive control – and demonstrated how it operates as a system in autocracies. In addition, the system's adaptability to the changing environment provided explanations for how regimes manage to overcome potential shocks.

The second contribution is how this dissertation's argument advances the existing theoretical work on the strategies of autocratic regime stability. In Section 2.3.3 on mechanism building, I argued that one of the key mechanisms of authoritarian persistence is daily life control. While previous literature has largely overlooked everyday repression and surveillance mechanisms in autocracies, this study argued that it is necessary to look beyond the visible institutions and identify everyday control mechanisms to explain the durability of autocratic regimes. When autocrats have sufficient knowledge and control over the daily activities of citizens, they can prevent oppositional collective action or mass uprisings. Therefore, they devise systems to register citizens or group them into centralized organizations. In addition, autocratic regimes impose travel restrictions and control border areas to limit people's mobility. This study argued that these daily life control measures play equally crucial roles in maintaining the stability of the regime.

On the other hand, this study's theoretical model has limitations, which provide avenues for future research. First, the social control system in this dissertation primarily focused on domestic challenges from society and members of the elite, and did not fully incorporate the roles that international factors may play regarding the stability of the regime.

This was because I restricted the scope of the system to operate within the regime's territorial boundary, so focusing on domestic factors made more sense. In addition, autocrats can deter or retaliate against domestic challenges more easily, whereas external threats are often difficult to predict and manage. Nevertheless, future research can explore the theoretical model further and determine approaches to more effectively accommodate external factors into the system. Second, the question of how to measure the intensity of control mechanisms needs to be further investigated. This study adopted a case-specific approach when analyzing the intensity of control for each episode. Future research could conduct comparative analyses of different countries or systematic large-N analyses and present a more standardized measurement method.

7.1.2 The Social Control System as a General Framework: A Brief Comparative Study

This dissertation has argued that the North Korean regime survived political shocks and maintained its stability due to the operation of the social control system. After constructing a theoretical framework in Chapter 2, I conducted in-depth case studies on North Korea throughout Chapters 4, 5, and 6. In this section, I test the generalizability of the theory of the social control system to determine whether it can be used to analyze other autocracies beyond North Korea. In Chapter 3, I defined the scope of the research and limited the scope of this study to long-standing autocratic regimes. Based on the case selection strategy, several countries can be narrowed down. From among those countries, I briefly discuss two with different control mechanisms: China with its ideological control and Cuba with its daily life control. The case studies in this section should be regarded as a pilot study. Thus, they focus on finding evidence in each case while minimizing historical and contextual detail.

"Xuexi Qiangguo" – Ideological Control in China

From 1949 to 1976, under the rule of Mao Zedong, China was a highly ideological society. Even after the Open Door Policy in 1978, ideology did not completely disappear in China. In fact, some scholars have argued that in contemporary China, "ideology has become more concealed, more nuanced, and in some spaces more flexible, but it has lost none of its importance to the Party and its mission to stay in power" (Brown and Bērziņa-Čerenkova 2018, 325). In China, the state plays an intrusive role in cultural and technological companies (de Kloet et al. 2019, 252). The current leader Xi Jinping has placed a heavy emphasis on revitalizing socialist ideology, and thus, state media and digital platforms have played crucial

roles in popularizing the ideology under him (Esarey 2021, 889). This subsection focuses on how the Chinese state under Xi intervenes in the platform society and uses a mobile app to spread ideology and propaganda.

A Chinese mobile app called *Xuexi Qiangguo*, which means "study and strengthen the nation," was released by the Publicity Department of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) on January 1, 2019. Users can download it from app stores, and a previous study reported that by June 2020, it had more than 180 million users (Liang, Chen, and Zhao 2021, 1856). This app has been primarily designed to teach Xi Jinping Thought, and users can read news about China as well as take weekly quizzes about Xi's life and the CCP. It is obligatory for party members and civil servants to download the app and users must create an account with their real names and phone numbers. Once created, they cannot hide their profiles or disconnect from their local entity members (Liang, Chen, and Zhao 2021, 1864). In addition, the app's interface cannot be customized, and its restrictive control modes prioritize ideological content and display specific information for users to read. This suggests that the Chinese state could turn the platform into "a centralized communication model for manipulating information circulation and directing user behavior" (Liang, Chen, and Zhao 2021, 1861).

The app provides scores for assessing user behavior. Users can earn up to 59 points per day through different activities, such as reading articles and taking quizzes. For instance, they earn one point per day when they log in to the app and earn one point by reading an article or watching a video.[18] Users are then ranked both nationally and within their group based on their scores. These features suggest that the app allows the Chinese state to not only insert propaganda but also assess and classify users based on their rankings. Moreover, scores can be exchanged for material benefits; for example, "users can trade in their scores for a wide range of goods, including books, groceries, and smartphone data packages" (Liang, Chen, and Zhao 2021, 1867). Furthermore, the app was developed in cooperation with Alibaba, China's tech giant, and the Alipay system is embedded in the app. This allows users to transfer money from their Alipay accounts to the app, which demonstrates "the intertwinement of capital and the state, and the mutual exchange of data" (de Kloet et al. 2019, 252).

Xuexi Qiangguo operates as a form of ideological control as well as daily life surveillance of citizens. Traditionally, the CCP used political education to manipulate public opinions, and citizens were required to study political materials and take ideological

[18] See Liang, Chen, and Zhao (2021, p. 1866), Table 1, for a detailed categorization of the point system.

knowledge exams in universities and workplaces (Liang, Chen, and Zhao 2021, 1863). Today, due to such mobile apps, the indoctrination techniques of the state have been further developed since there are no limits in time and location. This enables the state to "see" society in every situation (Scott 1998). On the other hand, a previous study found that the indoctrination mechanism of the app is not always effective because many users are not necessarily participating to gain political knowledge or to increase their loyalty to the CCP; rather, they are "motivated by extrinsic incentives and participate in propaganda-circumvention and gamification practices" (Liang, Chen, and Zhao 2021, 1857).

In short, similar to China's Social Credit System,[19] Xuexi Qiangguo demonstrates China's ambitions to construct "an indicator-based and data-driven society" (Liang, Chen, and Zhao 2021, 1868). It also suggests that the Chinese state has a vast interest in the use of the platform for social control and ideological indoctrination.

"Committees for the Defense of the Revolution" – Daily Life Control in Cuba

In Section 4.5.2, the inminban system of North Korea was introduced as a daily life control mechanism based on residence. One can find a similar structure in Cuba. Cuba's "Committees for the Defense of the Revolution" (CDRs) are organizations for neighborhood committees. On September 28, 1960, when Fidel Castro was giving a speech in front of the presidential palace, three bombs exploded near the area. In response, Castro ordered the establishment of a system of "revolutionary collective vigilance so that everybody will know everybody else on his block, what they do, what relationship they had with the [Batista's] tyranny, what they believe in, what people they meet, what activities they participate in" (quoted in Colomer 2000, 121). As a result, CDRs were launched.

CDRs deal with all kinds of local issues. Each unit appoints members to coordinate the following seven different areas: "vigilance, ideology, public health, youth, finances, recycling, and voluntary work" (Kruger 2007, 108). For instance, since the 1960s, CDRs have organized "voluntary" work on Sundays, which was regarded as a proof of loyalty to the regime (Colomer 2000, 123). In addition, CDRs have been in charge of food distribution and ration cards, as well as weekly "political study circles" in which members are indoctrinated with Marxism (Colomer 2000, 123). Although CDRs have many functions, the most important of their tasks is "the guard," that is, surveillance patrol through neighborhoods at night in regular shifts. A couple of members, usually men and women, are grouped as one

[19] The Social Credit System is a national credit rating system in China. By using big data, it aims to track and rate individuals and companies via a system of rewards and punishments.

patrol unit and inspect the neighborhood. When they find unusual activities, they must report them to the police and the CDR secretary, and although they cannot carry weapons, they are able to make arrests (Colomer 2000, 124). This is similar to North Korea's inminban, where the inminban head conducts random checks on households at night.

CDRs operate as surveillance assistants to the regime. Since the people are already grouped into units based on their residence, the state is able to effectively control and monitor them. CDRs monitor and report every activity within the neighborhood, such as "the arrival or departure of cars, baggage, and packages at every house; neighbors' guest visitors; church attendance; listening to exile radio stations; and expressions of dissatisfaction in private conversations" (Colomer 2000, 122). Therefore, CDRs must have contributed to the maintenance of control and stability at the grassroots level in Cuba.

7.2 Evaluating the Case Study of North Korea

This dissertation project is the first attempt to study the origin, design, and operations of the social control system in North Korea. North Korea is one of the most repressive and long-lasting authoritarian regimes in the world. Returning to the hypotheses, I predicted that autocratic regimes that operate ideological control, physical control, and daily life control mechanisms would be more likely to maintain stability. Thus, the case studies in this dissertation demonstrated the theory's strong validity in that the social control system has led to regime stability. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 each dealt with one leader and one case study in a chronological order. In each case study, a historical overview of the period before the political shock was presented to situate the case in the correct context. After discussing the main event of the political shock, I analyzed how the regime overcame the shock and maintained social control with the operation of the three control mechanisms.

Chapter 4 discussed the birth of the social control system under Kim Il Sung, the first leader of North Korea. The chapter defined the August Incident of 1956, at which Kim Il Sung was publicly attacked by the opposition, as the first political shock to the regime. I argued that major events that occurred during the 1950s and 1960s shaped what is now the foundation of the social control system in North Korea. This period was especially critical because it was the regime's founding period, so Kim Il Sung was able to secure his power at the right time to generate the self-reinforcing mechanism. First, Kim developed the Juche ideology of self-reliance, which became the fundamental base of North Korea's ideological

control mechanism. Second, the coercive apparatus, composed of the MPS, SSD, and MSC, was established, and it has continuously operated as the core physical control mechanism. In addition, Kim eliminated all of his rivals so that only his loyal supporters remained in the party. Third, the regime issued new party identification cards after conducting thorough background checks and designed the complex songbun system, which classified the population into three classes and 51 subcategories. Moreover, the inminban operated as a neighborhood surveillance system. The chapter viewed the institutionalization of the MIS in 1967 as the final outcome of the Kim Il Sung regime's stability.

Chapter 5 focused on the survival of the social control system under the second leader Kim Jong Il. The mid-1990s were the watershed period in North Korea. The Arduous March was its peak, following which some recognizable changes were implemented in the social control system. Based on the theoretical model, it is argued that once the social control system has been established, the mechanisms are reproduced proactively or reactively to reach the outcome of stability. However, when the system cannot defeat a new political shock, it may undergo modification. This is why I defined the Arduous March period as the second major political shock. Due to the fact that the original system was bringing decreasing returns, the successor adapted the control mechanisms, especially reinforcing the physical control mechanism. The dominant presence of the military both in the ideological domain and people's daily lives during this period are fitting evidence. At the elite level, Kim Jong Il conducted massive purges to consolidate his power after the leadership succession. Meanwhile, the daily life control mechanisms were the most heavily affected during this period. The PDS, which operated as a key registration system of the regime, collapsed and the regime lost control over the mobility of the people. Furthermore, an increasing number of people were defecting from the country. However, the strengthened physical control mechanisms and the adapted ideologies that emphasized nationalism and the revolutionary spirit of the military prevented the complete collapse of the social control system. Eventually, Kim Jong Il maintained his status as the supreme leader and transferred the position to his son.

Finally, Chapter 6 examined the adaptation of the social control system under the incumbent leader Kim Jong Un. The chapter viewed the second hereditary succession as the third political shock to the North Korean regime. Prior to the leadership transfer, there were several signs of instability as well as doubts about the young and inexperienced successor. In addition, the rapid spread of markets and outside information were growing challenges to the regime. The old social control mechanisms were generating decreasing returns and needed to

be modified again to respond to the changing circumstances. This chapter argued that it was due to this adaptation that the Kim Jong Un regime maintained its stability. First, a new ideology called KIS-KJIism was introduced to justify Kim Jong Un's succession as the blood-related legitimate heir. In addition, the new leadership attempted to incorporate nonideologically based legitimation mechanisms, such as the economy and diplomacy, to compensate for the diminishing effect of the bloodline-dependent succession logic. Second, like his predecessor, Kim Jong Un also increased the level of physical control mechanisms. He removed and marginalized high-ranking officials and reduced the military's presence in party institutions to rebalance the party and military. In addition, unpredictable elite purges were observed. In particular, the coercive apparatus operated to eliminate two members of the Kim family who could potentially have become threats to the leader. Lastly, the regime allowed some flexibility in organizational life and mobility within the country, but simultaneously tightened the border to prevent people defecting. Table 7.1 summarizes the empirical analyses of this study.

Table 7.1 Summary of the Empirical Analyses

	Case 1 (KIS)	**Case 2 (KJI)**	**Case 3 (KJU)**
Ideological control	• Juche • Institutionalization of the MIS	• Our-style socialism • Songun	• KIS-KJIism • Performance-based legitimacy
Physical control	• Coercive apparatus • Purge (factions)	• Coercive apparatus (+ Military) • Purge (Simhwajo)	• Elite-level reshuffle • Purge (high-ranking elites)
Daily life control	• Registration system • Inminban	• Collapse of the registration system (PDS) • Mass defection	• Weakening organizational life • Tightened border control

In sum, the social control system successfully contributed to regime stability in all three cases. The three control mechanisms were reproduced or adapted to achieve this outcome. First, the ideological control mechanisms can be best described as layering. The successors built new layers of ideology without rejecting the older Juche ideology as obsolete. Thus, the old legitimacy claims based on the foundational myth and nationalism were not officially rejected but remained intact. Instead, due to the changing circumstances, the emphasis has shifted. In the Kim Jong Il period, while Juche served as the ideological base, it was adapted with the Our-style socialism and Songun ideologies. Then, in the Kim Jong Un period, KIS-KJIism was introduced as an ideology that encompassed Juche and Songun.

However, these ideological adaptations were "eleventh-hour efforts at regime survival rather than proactively adaptive" (Dukalskis and Gerschewski 2020, 512). Along with the leadership succession, ideology-based legitimation mechanisms did not appear to generate increasing returns. This explains why the successors Kim Jong Il and Kim Jong Un amended other control mechanisms to reinforce the social control system. Kim Jong Il strengthened physical control and incorporated the military to play more active roles in key institutions and people's daily lives to regain social order. Kim Jong Un, as the successor, moved further away from foundational myth, and it became increasingly difficult to justify his legitimacy by only using the ruling ideology. Therefore, the incumbent leader incorporated nonideologically based legitimation mechanisms and launched campaigns to crack down on foreign influence with harsh punishments.

Second, the physical control mechanisms seemed to be the only element that demonstrated a strong relationship to regime stability throughout all three cases. In the first case, Kim Il Sung designed a coercive apparatus that would become the main repression tool of the country. In addition, the complete purge of the opposition allowed him to be the absolute leader. In the Kim Jong Il period, to compensate for the weak daily life control, physical control was reinforced with the addition of the military and harsher punishments. As discussed above, physical control mechanisms often worked together with ideological control to strengthen the regime's legitimacy. Kim Jong Il also conducted massive purges at the elite level to consolidate his power. As for Kim Jong Un, he used the element of terror to prove his political superiority and elicit obedience from the elites. He removed and reshuffled high-ranking officials and conducted unpredictable purges, which even included family members Jang Sung-thaek and Kim Jong Nam.

Lastly, the daily life control mechanisms were not always the most effective when operated alone. Therefore, when they were generating decreasing returns, physical control was strengthened to achieve the desired outcome. In the first case, Kim Il Sung devised registration systems and organizations to control the population in a more structured manner. The songbun system designed in this period greatly enhanced the legibility of the population, which allowed the regime to proactively control and monitor citizens. In addition, the inminban system, which grouped people based on residence, facilitated the surveillance function in the everyday lives of North Koreans. Meanwhile, the Arduous March period deeply challenged the daily life control mechanisms. The PDS collapsed and the regime lost control over people's movement. The famine of the 1990s "compelled people to live differently" and created a situation where an increasing number of people were engaged in

activities that “ran afoul of the state’s profoundly restrictive laws, simply to survive” (Fahy 2019, 45). Thus, a “dual system” was in place where the elements operated by the state and by the people were “the key to the former’s continuity” (Dukalskis and Joo 2020; Ryang 2021, 200). In some cases, the decision to live differently resulted in people defecting from the country. Nevertheless, the regime did not lose its ability to control people’s daily lives. Organizational life still remained in place for keeping track of citizens’ activities and continuing indoctrination sessions. The incumbent leader Kim Jong Un also tightened border control, which resulted in a sharp decrease in the number of defectors. Table 7.2 summarizes the development of the three control mechanisms throughout the cases.

Table 7.2 Summary of the Three Control Mechanisms

<table>
<tr><th></th><th>Control mechanism</th><th>Intensity of control</th><th>Outcome</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Case 1:
August 1956</td><td>Ideological control</td><td>Strong</td><td rowspan="3">Monolithic
Ideological System
1967</td></tr>
<tr><td>Physical control</td><td>Strong</td></tr>
<tr><td>Daily life control</td><td>Strong</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Case 2:
Arduous March</td><td>Ideological control</td><td>Weaker</td><td rowspan="3">Successful leadership
transition in 2009</td></tr>
<tr><td>Physical control</td><td>Stronger</td></tr>
<tr><td>Daily life control</td><td>Weak</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Case 3:
Second leadership
succession</td><td>Ideological control</td><td>Strong</td><td rowspan="3">KJU regime stability</td></tr>
<tr><td>Physical control</td><td>Strong</td></tr>
<tr><td>Daily life control</td><td>Strong</td></tr>
</table>

This study makes three main contributions to North Korean studies and the knowledge of the North Korean regime’s stability. First, this study was an attempt to unpack the social control mechanisms of the North Korean regime by applying a theoretical framework. Previous studies on social control in North Korea have not conceptualized the term within the scope of political science literature. In addition, they have not theorized and operationalized the control mechanisms, making it difficult to observe the development over time. With the theoretical model of the social control system, however, it is possible to explain the system’s self-reinforcing aspect and its adaptability to changing circumstances. In addition, previous studies have mostly concentrated on a specific period under Kim Il Sung or Kim Jong Il. Therefore, they have not been able to explain the development of the mechanisms throughout the three leadership periods. This leads to the second contribution of this dissertation – namely that the scope of the study covered all three leaders, including the incumbent leader Kim Jong Un. Lastly, by incorporating the daily life control mechanisms, this study attempted to move beyond the common factors of regime stability, such as

legitimation and repression, and demonstrated that everyday control and surveillance could be equally powerful tools for maintaining regime stability.

Nevertheless, this study had some limitations. First, the research design had certain limitations. It focused on understanding causal mechanisms at a detailed level, and therefore, a within-case analysis was conducted in one country. This was a deliberate choice since North Korea demonstrated a strong fit for my theoretical arguments and case selection criteria. However, because this study did not conduct a comparative case study on another country, it was not able to test the theoretical model's validity in a different country in different background settings. Second, as discussed in the section that evaluated the theoretical contributions, this study primarily concentrated on domestic threats and did not investigate how international threats can challenge the North Korean regime's stability in more detail. In general, there are three main sources of threats that cause autocratic regime breakdown: horizontal threats from the elite, vertical threats from the masses, and threats from external forces. The external threats include diplomatic or military threats, such as foreign invasion, imposition, or economic impacts, including international sanctions and foreign trade. In the case of North Korea, I argue that external threats are the least likely option to lead to the collapse of the regime. However, international sanctions could play quite a significant role in the survival of the North Korean regime in the future. Once sanctions are imposed, resources become less accessible to leaders; thus, Kim Jong Un would have fewer resources to distribute to the ruling coalition. Although China might continue providing aid to North Korea, which would make sanctions less effective, international sanctions and declining resources may gradually affect the Kim family's firm grip over the members of the ruling coalition.

In conclusion, this dissertation offers several possible avenues for future research. First, a comparative study of North Korea and another country with a similar or dissimilar background could be conducted to test the theory's universality. Second, future research could explore the North Korean regime's different social control mechanisms in more depth. For instance, the daily lives of North Koreans are still a gray area to the outside world. Even though a field trip to North Korea may not be possible, scholars could conduct interviews with defectors to understand North Korean society better. Through interviews, it may be possible to uncover more evidence and details about daily life control mechanisms in the country. Lastly, future research could attempt to discover a "fourth pillar" or a new mechanism of the North Korean regime's stability. For example, the country's expanding

cyber-intelligence capabilities and cyber operations could be defined as "technological control mechanisms."

7.3 Outlook: Post-2020 North Korea

This section discusses post-2020 North Korea and the development of the social control system. In early 2020, with the outbreak of COVID-19, the world witnessed dramatic changes. As of January 2022, North Korea officially claims to have zero coronavirus cases, although various sources indicate that this is not true. According to an article from *Rimjingang*, a magazine written by reporters within North Korea, at the emergency meeting of the Political Bureau of the KWP CC on July 25, 2020, Kim Jong Un apparently admitted that the country has "not been able to block the entry of the coronavirus" despite strong quarantine measures (Ishimaru 2020). There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on North Korea's social control system. Due to the unexpected circumstances, the control mechanisms must have been adapted or reinforced. Overall, I argue that the social control system has in fact helped the Kim Jong Un regime to deal with the impact of the pandemic.

First of all, daily life control continues to be strong. The pandemic intensified border control as North Korea reacted immediately to the spread of the unknown virus by essentially closing its borders at the end of January 2020. Since then, more soldiers have been deployed to border areas, preventing people smuggling goods and defecting. In early September 2020, it was reported that special military forces had been dispatched with a shoot-to-kill order. The tightened border control and COVID-19-related restrictions have also prevented North Koreans defecting. According to statistics from South Korea's Ministry of Unification, 229 defectors entered South Korea in 2020, whereas only 63 are estimated to have entered in 2021, which represents a sharp decrease from already declining numbers under the leadership of Kim Jong Un.[20] In addition, the regime has utilized inminban (neighborhood units). In particular, inminban heads have been given greater responsibilities in the maintenance of their neighborhoods. For instance, at the beginning of the pandemic, they had to provide general information to residents, disinfect their neighborhoods, and check for anyone with symptoms within the inminban (Rodong Sinmun April 22, 2020). Based on such evidence, it

[20] Refer to Section 6.4.2, Figure 6.1, for a more detailed analysis.

appears that the regime has enhanced social control over everyday life to contain the spread of the virus and maintain social order.

Second, as the successor moves further away from the country's founder and the revolutionary myth, it is likely that the ideology based on bloodline as ideological control mechanism will bring decreasing returns. Therefore, the incumbent leader Kim Jong Un may enhance the operation of nonideologically based legitimation mechanisms. In fact, Kim appears to be focusing more on practical tactics rather than relying on abstract ideologies and rhetoric. Recent official statements have mentioned less about ideologies and more about serving the people and improving their living conditions. For instance, in the report of the Eighth Party Congress, which was held in January 2021, Juche and Songun were not mentioned at all and KIS-KJIism was mentioned only twice. Additionally, the keyword of Kim Jong Un's speech at the military parade celebrating 75th anniversary of the founding of the KWP on October 10, 2020 was "thank you." Throughout his speech, words of gratitude to the people were mentioned 18 times in total. Kim thanked the people for being in good health without anyone falling victim to the virus and for overcoming the natural disaster (H. Kim 2021, 55). He even apologized for failing to live up to people's trust and his lack of effort to make people's lives better.

Furthermore, the new leadership recently embarked on a mission to crack down on foreign influence, thereby reinforcing ideological control. In December 2020, at a plenary meeting of the Supreme People's Assembly, North Korea approved several new laws including the "Reactionary Ideology and Culture Rejection Law." It is difficult to determine the full details of this law because the text was not made public; however, this law appears to have triggered a nationwide crackdown on foreign content and influence as well as outlined harsh punishments up to execution (Williams 2021). As the country essentially closed its border after the outbreak of COVID-19, this may have helped to control the inflow of foreign content. For example, *Daily NK* reported that a man in Wonsan was executed in April 2021 for selling CDs and USBs with South Korean content, and also that around May 2021, six students in Nampo were sentenced to five years in a re-education camp for watching South Korean dramas and movies (Jong 2021; C. U. Lee 2021).

Finally, the current Kim Jong Un regime is far more stable than many outsiders may think and a coup or an insurgency is highly unlikely at this moment. It appears that Kim Jong Un still holds firm control over the party and military and no visible opposition has occurred. In addition, the regime still actively operates the coercive apparatus and has increased the level of punishment, which can be observed in the border control and the new law on

ideological control. Therefore, physical control remains strong at the elite as well as mass levels.

In the recent period, Kim Jong Un has acknowledged on several occasions that the country is experiencing substantial economic difficulties. These are largely due to the self-imposed border lockdown to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and the devastating flood of 2020. In January 2021, at the Eighth Party Congress, Kim acknowledged in his speech that due to a failure of economic work, “people’s living standards could not be improved remarkably.” However, there are still no signs of market-oriented reform or liberalization. Kim ordered the party to approach economic management from a strictly political perspective at the Eighth Party Congress. Moreover, North Korea is essentially “a country of grassroots capitalism” today (Lankov 2013a). North Korean citizens engage in side businesses and bend rules to survive. Under the Kim Jong Un regime, markets have expanded greatly. Although the exact number of markets in North Korea is unknown, recent studies and satellite images have indicated that approximately 400 general markets existed across the country as of 2016, which represents a dramatic increase from approximately 200 in 2010 (Hong 2018, 33–34; K. Kim and Cho 2017, 174). Market activity has now spread into other sectors, such as housing and financial sectors, and it “has generated positive feedback loops which make it nearly impossible for the state to completely shut down markets” (Yeo 2020, 644). Therefore, the state depends on market activities, which it has banned, for its survival (Yeo 2020, 644).

In addition, corruption is rampant in North Korea. Corruption within the bureaucracy has been exploited by the regime as a systemic device for extracting tax from the public while simultaneously generating revenues for the ruling coalition to secure loyalty. The regime has frequently sent special inspection groups to lower units to fight “anti-socialist phenomena,” which include corruption. However, these groups have been more interested in taking bribes for themselves rather than stamping out corruption. In addition, anti-corruption campaigns have been conducted not to reduce corruption but rather to enhance political discipline and regain control. Although corruption at the elite level has been prosecuted in some cases, this has generally been done to justify political purges and elite-level reshuffles, not in relation to the aim for anti-corruption.

In conclusion, in this dissertation, I have argued that the North Korean regime survived political shocks and maintained its stability because of the social control system and its adaptation to the changing environment. Based on the case study in Chapter 6, the social control system has become stronger under the incumbent leader Kim Jong Un compared with his predecessor. Although challenges to the Kim regime remain, such as corruption, an

increasing inflow of outside information, and the COVID-19 pandemic to name just a few, they have not yet facilitated oppositional collective actions against the leadership. It appears that the social control system in North Korea remains strong enough to prevent potential threats to the regime and can react promptly to challenges.

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