



# **The Korean Peninsula and International Relations in Northeast Asia**

**FALL, 2012  
WEEK 5**





# Democratic People's Republic of Korea

- Highly centralized communist state
- Democratic People's Republic of Korea (D.P.R.K., or North Korea) established on September 9, 1948



- North Korea has a centralized government under the rigid control of the communist Korean Workers' Party (KWP), to which all government officials belong. 4 million members.
- Kim Il-sung ruled North Korea from 1948 until his death in July 1994 as Secretary General of the KWP and President of North Korea.





- Kim Jong-il was named General Secretary of the KWP in October 1997, and in September 1998, the Supreme People's Assembly (SPA) reconfirmed Kim Jong-il as Chairman of the National Defense Commission (NDC).



- Kim Jong-un is Supreme Leader of North Korea, General Secretary of the Korean Workers' Party, Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army (December 2011), First Chairman of the National Defense Commission (April, 2012)

# Legislature

- Officially, the D.P.R.K.'s legislature, the Supreme People's Assembly (SPA), is the highest organ of state power.
- Its members are elected every 5 years. The SPA usually holds only two meetings annually, each lasting a few days.
- A standing committee elected by the SPA performs legislative functions when the Assembly is not in session.
- In reality, the SPA serves only to ratify decisions made by the ruling KWP.



# Legislature

## North Korea Supreme People's Assembly Election

(March 8, 2009)

List	Seats
Democratic Front for the Reunification of the Fatherland	687
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workers' Party of Korea (ChŏsonRodong-dang)</li> <li>Korean Social Democratic Party (ChŏsonSahoeminju-dang)</li> <li>CheondoistChongu Party (Ch'ŏndogyoCh'ŏng'u-dang)</li> <li>General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (Ch'ongryŏn)</li> <li>independents</li> </ul>	606 50 22 6 3
Total (turnout 99.98%)	687



# Judiciary

- North Korea's judiciary is "accountable" to the SPA and the president.
- The SPA's standing committee also appoints judges to the highest court for 5-year terms concurrent with those of the Assembly.





# Three Key Political Organs

- The cabinet, formerly known as the State Administration Council (SAC), administers the ministries and has a significant role in implementing policy. The cabinet is headed by the premier and is the administrative and executive agency.
- The National Defense Commission (NDC) is responsible for external and internal security.
- The Politburo of the Central Committee is the top policymaking body of the KWP, which also plays a role as the dominant social institution in North Korea.



# Principal Party and Government Officials

Eternal President: Kim Il-Sung

National Defense Commission of DPRK

- Eternal Chairman: Kim Jong-il
- First Chairman: Kim Jong-un  
(from April 2012)

KWP Central Committee

- Eternal General Secretary: Kim Jong-il
- First secretary of the WPK: Kim Jong-un





# Principal Party and Government Officials

## Presidium of the SPA of the DPRK

- President: Kim Yong-nam

## Supreme People's Assembly (SPA)

- Chairman: ChoeThae-bok

## Cabinet

- Premier: Choe Yong Rim



# Constitution

- Since 1948, four amendments:
  - ✓ 1972 - Create the Office of the president, Move the capital from Seoul to Pyongyang
  - ✓ 1992 - Delete Marx-Leninism, Emphasize Juche as a sole ideology, Eliminate the Office of the President, Create National Defense Commission
  - ✓ 1998 - Kim Il Sung Constitution, Kim Il Sung as an Eternal President
  - ✓ 2009 - Reject Communism, NDC as the highest office of state, Military-centered politics





# Juche (Self-Reliance)

- *4 Principles*

1. Domestic Politics: KWP as the highest political entity
2. International Politics: equality and sovereignty
3. Economy: autarchy (economic independence)
4. Defense: self defense without external help



# Party-Government relations

- Article 11 of the constitution stipulates that "the DPRK shall conduct all activities under the leadership of the KWP."
- The KWP has maintained a guiding role over the government



# Party-Military relations

- The party has controlled the military in North Korea since the Korean War.
- However, the military-centered political system (선군정치) of recent years may be damaging the party's control over the military.





# Defense and Military Issues

- An estimated active duty military force of up to 1.2 million personnel.
- Military spending is estimated at as much as a quarter of GNP.
- North Korean forces have a substantial numerical advantage over the South (around 2 to 1) in several key categories of offensive weapons
- The North deploys the bulk of its forces well forward, along the demilitarized zone (DMZ).
- North Korea's attempts to develop a nuclear weapons program have also been a source of international tension





# Human Rights

- North Korea maintains a record of consistent, severe human rights violations, stemming from the government's total control over all activity.
- North Korea is ranked second-to-last on the World Press Freedom Index.





Korean Peninsula at night

# Economy

- North Korea's economy declined sharply in the 1990s.
- Since 2002, the economy has stabilized and shown some modest growth in recent years.
- North Korea has been forced to tolerate markets and a small private sector as the state-run distribution system continues to deteriorate.
- One factor contributing to the economy's poor performance is the disproportionately large share of GDP (25% of the national budget) that North Korea devotes to its military.
- North Korea experienced a severe famine following record floods in the summer of 1995 and continues to suffer from chronic food shortages and malnutrition.







Ryookyung Hotel