



# Understanding North Korea.



## Unification Education Standardized Lecture – Understanding North Korea

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# **Perspectives on North Korea**



01



# Balanced Perspective

## Inter-Korean Relations

- ✓ Ethnic Koreans sharing **history, language, and culture**
- ✓ Continued **systemic competition** and **confrontation** since division
- ✓ Heightened tensions due to North Korean **nuclear advancements** and **provocations**



that pursue unification  
together

**Partners for  
Collaboration**

VS

**Subjects  
of Vigilance**



**A balanced perspective is essential**

# Objective Perspective



## North Korea depicted on media

The intentional  
image  
projected by  
the North  
Korean  
government

VS

Reality of  
People



It is important to objectively understand the actual living conditions of North Korean citizens

# Universal Perspective



Why does North Korea continue to develop its military despite its economic hardships?



How does the actual life of an average North Korean look like?



We must evaluate North Korean society through the lens of universal values



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# **Characteristics of North Korean Regime**



02

# North Korean Politics

## Structure of Governance

Supreme Leader



Korean Worker's Party



**Socialist Constitution**

“The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea conducts all its activities under the leadership of the Korean Workers’ Party.”

**Justification for monopolistic leadership**



# North Korean Politics

## North Korean Ideology of Ruling

### Ideology of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il



Juche Ideology

+



Military-first

+



Leader-centered

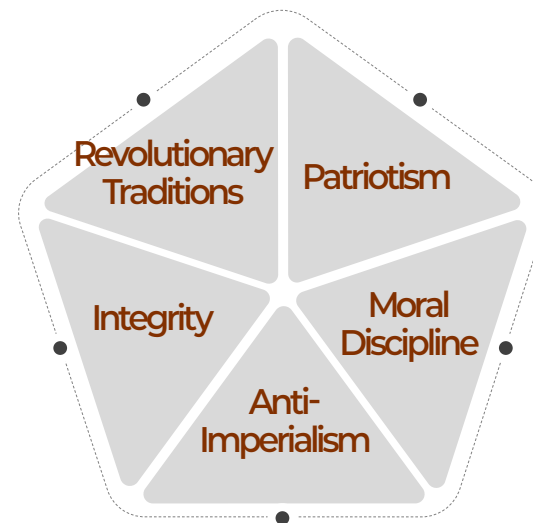
# North Korean Politics

## Governance Mechanism

### Socio-political organism theory (Three-in-one principle)

- **Supreme Leader** Mastermind
- **Party** The central nerve system delivering Supreme Leaders orders
- **The People** The actors and agents of revolution under the guidance of the supreme leader

### Emphasis on Five Virtues



## People-First



Emphasis on People



Respect for People



Love for People

# North Korean Politics

## Governance Mechanism



Supreme Leader



Party(黨)



Military(軍)

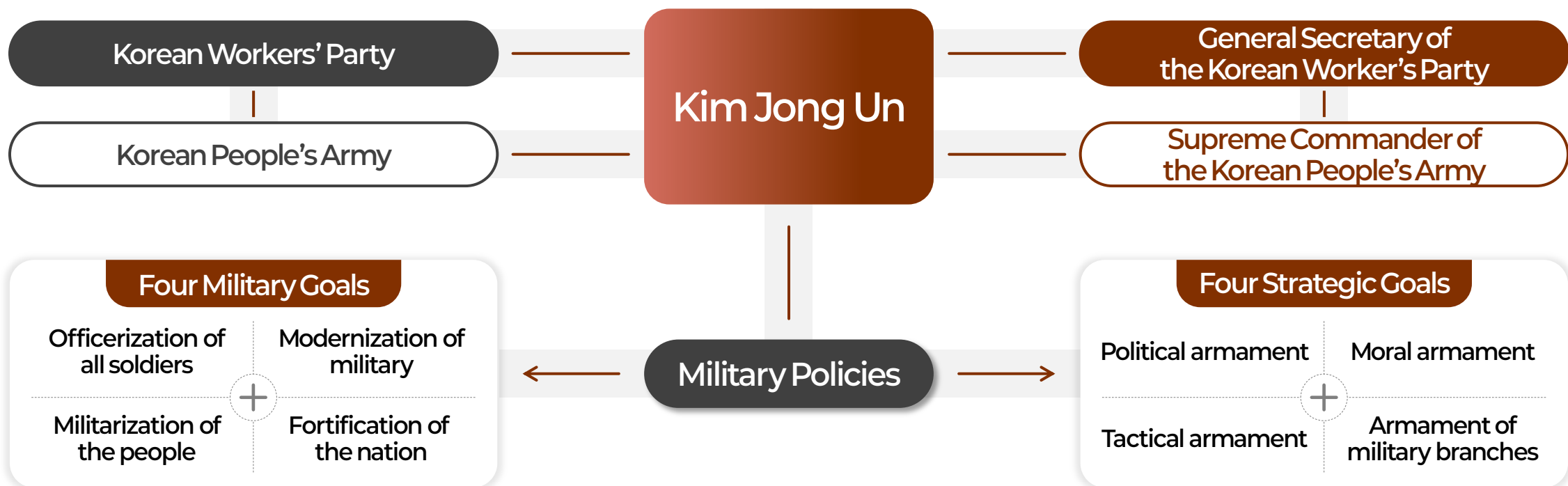


Politics(政)

Socialist Constitution

# North Korean Military

## Overview of North Korean Military Hierarchy



After Kim Jong Un's  
Rise to Power



Empowered the party



Reinforced conventional  
weapons



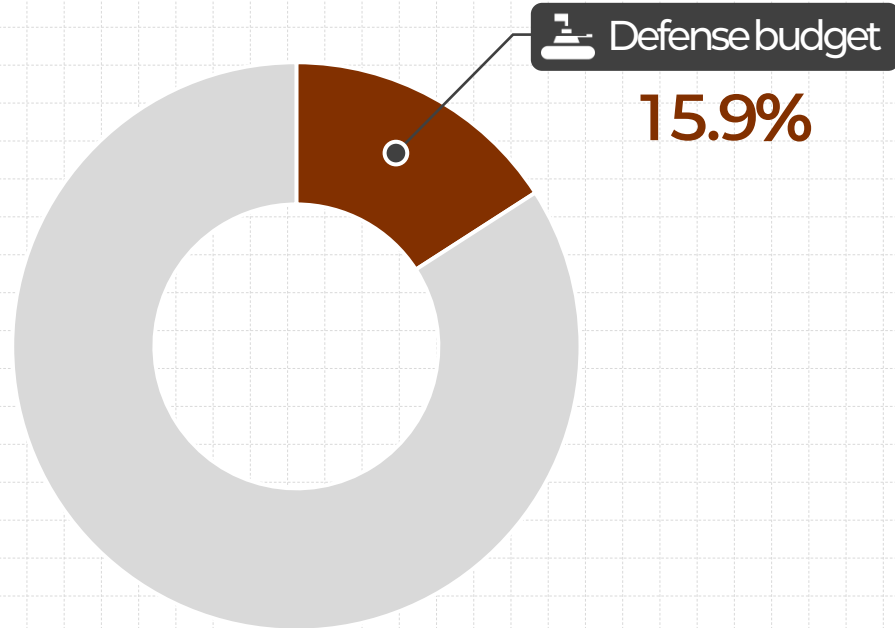
Increased asymmetric power  
(cyber-warfare, bio-chemical weapons, etc.)

# North Korean Military

## North Korean Military Policies

### 2023 North Korean National Budget

(Assigned in the 8th session of the 14th National People's Congress 2023)



Source: Rodong Sinmun

#### Military Service Act

National law regulating military service

#### Nation-Wide Mobilization Act

Presses every citizen to participate in military service

#### Military Service Period by Gender

Required

Male

10 years of active service

Female

7 years of active service

#### Number of servicemen (as of 2022)

Regular force

Approximately 1.28 million

Reserve force

Approximately 7.62 million

# North Korean Military

## Drive Nuclear Capability Development Strategy and Five Key Objectives

Conducted six nuclear tests  
Nuclear capability development  
strategy is underway

Announced 'Five-Year Plan for Defense Technology and  
Weapon System Development' on 2021  
Implemented five key objectives for strategic weapons

**"We will never give up our  
nuclear weapons."**

Adopted 'Democratic People's Republic of Korea's  
Nuclear Forces Policy Law' on September 8th, 2022

**'Will use nuclear weapons  
in case of emergency'  
'Total military subjugation of  
the entire South Korean territory'**

The 8th session of the 9th Central  
Party Committee, Dec. 2023



# North Korean Economy

## Overview of North Korean Economy

### Oriented Toward Centralized Planned Economy

#### Social ownership

Nationalization of machinery and equipment for production

#### Centralized, planned economy

Centrally allocate and ration resources

But

#### Dual economy

**Dual economy** where **market factors** and **state planning** coexist

### Key Basis of North Korean Economic Policy

#### Self-reliant ethnic economy

Economic development only with domestic resources  
=> Maintain insular structure

#### Focus on heavy industry

Drive agriculture and light industry development based on heavy industry  
=> Leading cause of economic slump

#### Drive economy and defense industry at the same time

Focus on economic development and defense industry at the same time

# North Korean Economy

## North Korean Economic Development Plan

### North Korean Five-Year Plan for Economic Development (2021~2025)

#### Strategic goals

- Revitalizing the country's economy and lay the foundation for sustainable economy

#### Strategic direction

- Building economy and nuclear arsenal  
Solving energy crisis Increasing the agricultural and light industrial output

### Formalizing the Regional Development Policy 20x10

Plan to build 20 municipal factories in 20 cities and **counties every year for the next 10 years,** starting in 2024



Reduce  
imbalances  
among  
regions



Improve the  
quality for  
local  
residents



Enhance  
self-  
sustaining  
economy



# North Korean Economy

## Spread of Marketization and Reinforced Control

### Marketization in North Korea

mid-1990s



People began relying on the 'Jangmadang' (unauthorized street market) to cope with the lack of national distribution and severe food shortage

July 2002



Implemented economic management improvement measures

March 2003



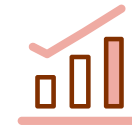
Existing farmers' markets became permanent markets

Nov. 2009



Reformed currency system and closed the dollar-based market, but the effort failed Within two months due to hyperinflation

2012



'Introduced the Korean Economic Management Method', allowing more autonomy and incentives

# North Korean Economy

## Current State of North Korean Economy

### Growth of Private Sector



**Explosive growth of private economy**  
during the 1990s economic crisis

Source: Tongil News, Report on North Korea's Economy and Society

### Spread of Marketization



About  
**414**  
markets  
(as of 2022)

- Formed a nationwide distribution network in the 2000s
- Legalized street vending and accelerated marketization
- However, market control coexists under the motto of 'restoration of the socialistic planned economy'

Source: Yonhap News

# North Korean Economy

## Spread of Marketization and Reinforced Control

### Current State of North Korean Economy

2020s

- ✓ Reassert **state control over** the distribution system operated by privately run markets
- ✓ To **curb ideological divergence** among citizens and **tightening oversight over economic activity**

- ✓ Reinstated policies such as the state monopoly on **grain sales, reinforcing top-down market control measures**

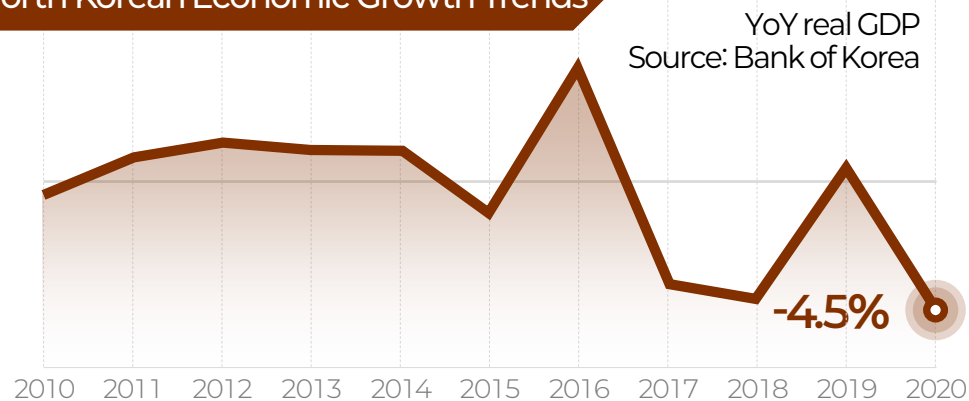


# North Korean Economy

## Current State of North Korean Economy

### Economic Downturn

#### North Korean Economic Growth Trends



Economic growth rate  
- 0.2% in average

Gross national income per capita  
1/30th of South Korea

### Chronic Food Shortage

- Suffers chronic food shortage
  - FAO(World Food and Agriculture Organization) designated DPRK as a country with food insecurity(2007-2024)
  - Introduced ban of food exchange and price caps in 2023

North Korean authorities' measures

Efforts to increase agricultural production  
Distribution system readjustment  
Ban on food distribution in the market and introduction of a price ceiling

Threatens people's right to **secure food**

# North Korean Society

## Changes in North Korean Society

### Social Hierarchy in North Korea

- Before the economic crisis of the mid-1990s-

#### Core class

General public  
ex) Family of Revolutionary Martyrs

#### Basic class

Complex public  
ex) Families of Landowners and Criminal Offenders

#### Complex class

The remaining dissidents  
ex) Descendants of Landowners and Collaborators with Imperial Japan

### The Emergence of 'Donju'

- After Economic Crisis-



**Newly affluent** individuals who earned significant wealth through market activities

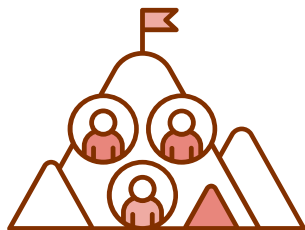
**Donju engage in unofficial trade activities and also participate in investment and management.**

# North Korean Society

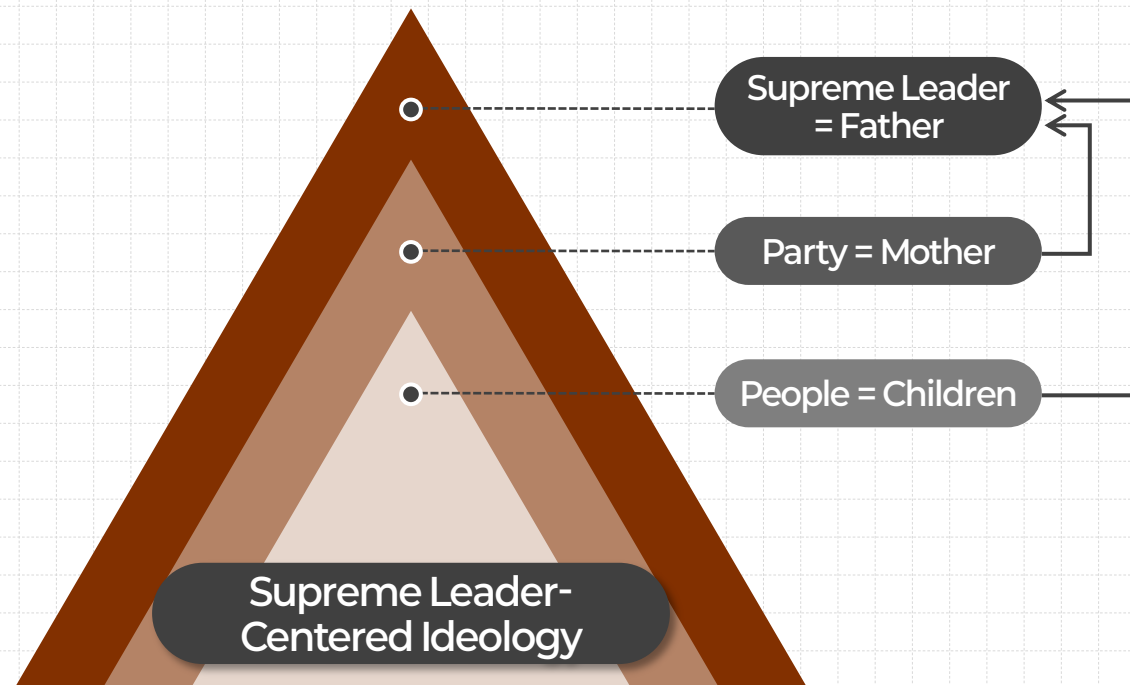
## Basics of North Korean Social Policies

### Collectivism

“Article 63 of the  
North Korean  
Constitution  
‘One for all and all for one’”



### Big Socialist Family



Supreme Leader-  
Centered Ideology

# North Korean Society

## 'Nation First'

Tighten the policies to prevent discontents,  
yearning for the outside world, anti-socialist movements,  
and non-socialist phenomena

Law on Rejecting  
Reactionary Ideology  
and Culture of 2020

Youth Education  
Guarantee Law of 2021

Law on the Protection of  
Cultured Pyongyang  
Dialect of 2023

Establishing legal grounds for punishing the distribution of foreign  
media and cultural contents



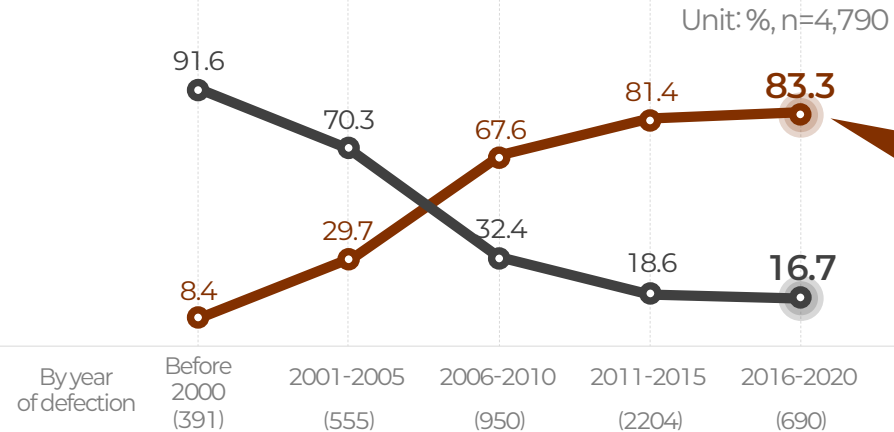
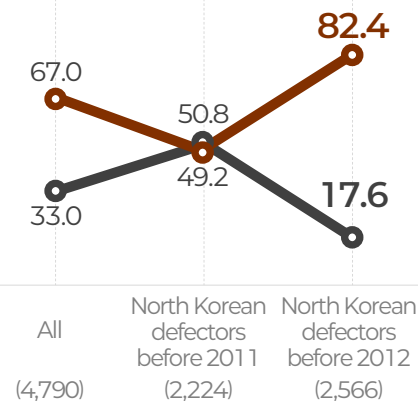
## Control over Daily Life

Manage and control all aspects of people's lives in  
the political, economic, social, and cultural aspects



## Fatigue from State Control

— Yes — No



**Over 83.3%**  
of North Korean  
defectors have watched  
South Korean dramas  
and foreign media  
content



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# **Human Rights in North Korea**

03





# Human Rights Conditions in North Korea

## North Korean Human Rights Issues

1981

Acceded to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights



1991 ~



Joined the United Nations

# Human Rights Conditions in North Korea

## North Korean Human Rights Issues

The UN Commission on Human Rights in North Korea released its 2014 report on human rights conditions in North Korea

**The human rights conditions in North Korea have been characterized as systematic and widespread ‘crimes against humanity’ committed by the North Korean regime**

# Human Rights Conditions in North Korea

## North Korean Human Rights Issues

Basic freedoms and human rights are inadequately protected

### Civil and Political Rights

Public executions, illegal interrogations, and arbitrary arrests

Poor detention conditions for political prisoners  
and excessive investigative methods

Freedoms of thoughts, religions, and expression are restricted

Forced migration and border controls to  
control ideas and block outside information

### Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

Uses food scarcity as a means of social control

Lack of medical infrastructure

Restrict job selection  
Poor working conditions, inadequate compensation

# Human Rights Conditions in North Korea

South Korea's Response and North Korea's Response

## North Korean Response

In response to the UN **North Korean Human Rights Resolutions**, North Korea commented, **"There are no human rights infringements and this is a serious interference in domestic affairs."**

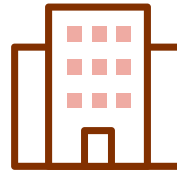
# Human Rights Conditions in North Korea

## South Korea's Response and North Korean Response

### South Korea's Response



**'North Korean Human Rights Resolutions'** - Every year since 2003, the UN Human Rights Council, UN General Assembly, and others have called for human rights improvements in North Korea



We support the enactment of North Korean human rights legislation and the **activities of NGOs (2016)**



Publication of the **2023 Report on North Korean Human Rights**

# **Future of North Korean Regime**

04

# North Korean Actions and Outlook

## Direction of North Korean Regime

### Domestic



Politics

Tightening ideological and political Organization control



Military

Advance nuclear capabilities Accelerating the implementation of the Five-Year Plan for Defense Science and Technology Development and Weapon System Development (2021-2025)



Economy

Achieving the tasks in the final year of the Five-Year Plan and encouraging achievement of the second year of the 20x10 Policy for Local Economic Development



Social

Disciplinary measures against those who consume or disseminate foreign cultural content

### External

U.S.

Strongest Response Strategy

China, Russia

Sustaining a dual-track diplomacy under a strategic partnerships

### Against South Korea

01

'Two hostile states, not ethnically related relatives' Declaration

02

Deleted the concepts of 'ethnicity' and 'unification'

03

In the future?



We must Think about unification and prepare for the future



**Thank you**

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**Understanding North Korea is the  
first step in preparing for Unification.**

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