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 The Director of Central Intelligence
 Washington, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

NIC #04156-87/2
 27 October 1987

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

VIA: Deputy Director of Central Intelligence
 Acting Chairman, National Intelligence Council

FROM: Carl W. Ford, Jr.
 National Intelligence Officer for East Asia

SUBJECT: NIE 14.2-87: North Korea: Prospects for the Succession
 and Stability

1. Attached for your review are the proposed Concept Paper and Terms of Reference (TOR) for NIE 14.2-87: North Korea: Prospects for the Succession and Stability. The Estimate will be drafted by DI/OEA.

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2. This will be the first Estimate that looks at the issue of succession in North Korea. Earlier Estimates on the North addressed North Korean foreign policy objectives; the North's proposals for reunification of the Peninsula; and possible North Korean reactions to potential instability in the South during the late 1970s. This Estimate is the third in a series on the Korean peninsula initiated by the NIO/East Asia. It will examine the prospects of the forthcoming succession in P'yongyang, establish some scenarios for political change, and assess the implications of the scenarios for political stability.

3. The Senior Review Panel did not have any substantive disagreements with the Concept Paper and Terms of Reference. At the suggestion of the SRP, however, we have dropped the word "Internal" from the title of the Estimate.

4. With your approval we will distribute the Concept Paper and TOR to the Community representatives for a 12 November 1987 coordination meeting.

Carl Ford

Carl W. Ford, Jr.

Attachments

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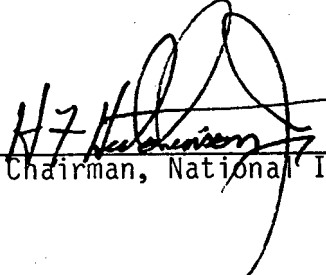
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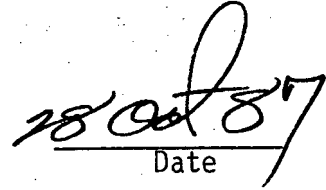
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SUBJECT: NIE 14.2-87: North Korea: Prospects for the Succession and Stability

CONCUR:



Acting Chairman, National Intelligence Council



Date

Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

Date

APPROVED:

Director of Central Intelligence

Date

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
VIA: Deputy Director of Central Intelligence
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FROM: Carl W. Ford, Jr.
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SUBJECT: NIE 14.2-87: North Korea: Prospects for the Succession
and Stability

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27 October 1987

NIE 14.2-87: North Korea: Prospects for the Succession and Stability*

PROBLEM

Kim Il-song hopes that by meticulously planning for his succession and by early-on handing some authority over to his son, Kim Chong-il, the younger Kim can avoid the internecine squabbles that have characterized transitions in other Communist countries. The elder Kim's hopes, however, are complicated by a number of uncertainties:

- It will be the first transfer of power since the founding of North Korea in 1948.
- No formal mechanism for determining a successor exists.
- It is the first instance in a Communist country in which a father will attempt to pass power to a son.
- The younger Kim's capability and temperament to rule remain a question mark.

In addition to trying to consolidate his power, establish his legitimacy, and firm up his credibility with Moscow and Beijing, Kim Chong-il inherits a North Korea beset by serious internal and external challenges:

- * -- The reform movements in China and the Soviet Union, and postwar generational change within North Korea are stimulating the desire among the public and within the Party for significant political and economic change.
- * -- The sluggish economy and serious shortfalls may force P'yongyang to reassess its longstanding emphasis on military spending at the expense of the civilian sector.
- A strong and vibrant South Korea--its confidence buoyed by a booming economy and its hosting of the Seoul Olympics--is establishing itself as the senior player on the peninsula and in the region, with North Korea relegated to a junior role.

* This will be the first Estimate that looks at the issue of succession in North Korea. Earlier Estimates on the North addressed North Korean foreign policy objectives; the North's proposals for reunification of the Peninsula; and possible North Korean reactions to potential instability in the South during the late 1970s.

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This Estimate is the third of a series on the Korean peninsula initiated by the NIO for East Asia in support of policymakers at the Departments of State and Defense. It will examine the prospects for the forthcoming succession in P'yongyang, establish some scenarios for political change and assess the implications of these scenarios for political stability. The Key Questions are:

- What key domestic considerations--political, social, and economic--will affect the succession?
- How might the external environment affect the succession?
- What are Kim Il-song's plans and timetable for succession?
- How is the succession process likely to unfold?
- What are the domestic and foreign policy implications for P'yongyang?
- What opportunities and risks does the North Korean succession have for the United States?

OUTLINE

I. What key domestic considerations--political, social, and economic--will affect the succession?

- A. What is the status and condition of the ^{Korean's Worker} Communist Party?
- B. Do pressures exist within the society for a loosening of totalitarian controls?
- C. How will the North's serious economic problems affect the leadership's succession strategy?
- D. What role does the military have in internal party debates and decision making? The intelligence and security services?
- E. Are the recent developments in the Army, such as reduced levels of training, the apparent increased use of the Army in civilian projects and P'yongyang's announced unilateral reduction of its armed forces, linked to the succession?

II. How might the external environment affect the succession?

A. South Korea

- 1. Has North Korea put the reunification issue on the back burner for the time being to give priority to the succession?
- 2. To what extent will the political situation in South Korea affect the succession in the North?

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3. To what extent will South Korea's rising international stature influence the North Korean leadership's thinking as the transition approaches?
 4. Is P'yongyang using tension reduction on the peninsula as a means of smoothing the way for the Kim Chong-il succession?

B. The Soviet Union and China?

1. How are recent political changes and openness in the Soviet Union and China influencing North Korean thinking and attitudes?
 2. How does P'yongyang view its position vis-a-vis Moscow and Beijing?
- C. Which other countries--Japan, the US, or perhaps others--may affect the transition and how?
- D. How do the Olympics factor in to the North's thinking?

III. What are Kim Il-song's plans and timetable for the succession?

A. At what stage are we in the succession?

1. How has Kim Il-song been grooming Kim Chong-il?
2. How has the regime rationalized the father-son succession in terms of North Korea's ideology?
3. How extensive is support for the proposed mode of succession among the North Korean political elite?
4. What additional steps, if any, must father and son take to legitimize the transition?

B. How much political power does Kim Chong-il wield?

1. Is he completely in control?
2. To what extent does (must) he have Kim Il-song's approval for his decisions?
3. What is the present role of Kim Il-song?

C. What is the probable timetable for the succession?

1. Will it take place before Kim Il-song dies or after, and what are the consequences of each alternative?
2. How is Kim Il-song's health and how many more years can he maintain his fairly active role?

D. What do we believe are Kim Il-song's chief concerns concerning the succession process?

IV. How is the succession process likely to unfold?

A. A smooth succession in which Kim consolidates his power and exercises control?

1. What is the most likely timing?
2. What is the most likely process by which the elder Kim will transfer power?
3. What elements are needed for a successful transfer of power to Kim Chong-il?
 - a. What are the key constituencies in which Kim Chong-il needs supporters?
 - (1) Has he succeeded in cultivating them?
 - (2) Can we identify his key supporters in the Party Central Committee and the military?
 - b. What faction does Kim Chong-il represent and what policies and outlook would be associated with them? Who would represent competing or conflicting policy positions and what are those positions?
 - c. What must Kim Chong-il do to demonstrate his political legitimacy and consolidate his power?
 - d. What factors will facilitate the establishment of legitimacy and the consolidation of power?

(For example, the NIE would examine in this context Kim Chong-il's long apprenticeship, his control of the Korean Workers Party, the Youth League, administrative organs and the Three Revolutions Teams, effective and pervasive security organs, a disciplined populace and a regimented system of thought control and education, tight control of everyday life, and the extent to which Kim Il-song's aura and authority can be transferred to Kim Chong-il.)

- e. Does Kim Chong-il have the necessary credentials to succeed his father in terms of experience, revolutionary heritage, and ideology?
 - (1) What do we know about Kim Chong-il (his personality, leadership traits, strengths and weaknesses, and political-economic philosophy)?
 - (a) How does he compare in these areas with his father?
 - (b) What leadership traits does he possess?

(c) What are his strengths and weaknesses?

(d) What is his political-economic philosophy?

B. A contested succession, but one in which Kim manages to overcome opposition and win anyway?

1. What types of challenges might frustrate Kim Chong-il's quest for legitimacy and consolidation of power?

a. Where might challenges to Kim Chong-il most logically come from? Could they disrupt the succession?

b. Is popular discontent with the system growing and could it derail the succession process?

c. Would challenges to Kim Chong-il be based primarily on ideological grounds, such as the inappropriateness of hereditary succession in a Communist political system?

d. Might disagreement over policy become grounds for opposing the succession?

(1) Can we identify any potential factions or interest groups that might oppose Kim Chong-il?

e. At what point in the transition process would challenges be most likely?

(Before the death of Kim Il-song, soon after his death, several months or years after his death)

C. A succession that goes awry with someone other than the younger Kim consolidating control?

1. What is the most likely cause for things going wrong?

2. What other figures would be potential leaders should Kim Chong-il fail to consolidate his power?

3. What types of power-holding or power-sharing arrangements might emerge in lieu of one-man succession by Kim Chong-il?

4. Might jealousies and ambitions within the ruling family lead to an attempt to displace Kim Chong-il with another of Kim Il-song's sons?

✱ D. Might the Soviets and Chinese attempt to intervene in the succession process?

V. What are the domestic and foreign policy implications for P'yongyang and the other key players?

A. If Kim Chong-il consolidates power with a minimum of difficulty?

1. Would he continue to manage North Korea as a closed society or would he try to open society and make significant changes?
2. How might this impact on relations with the Soviets, Chinese, and Japanese?
3. How might Kim Chong-il deal with the problem of ideology and continuing the Kim Il-song line?
4. What changes might Kim Chong-il make in his policy toward South Korea and the United States?

B. If there is a turbulent succession?

1. What would be the consequences for dialogue and reunification?
2. Other foreign policies?
3. Would North Korea attempt provocations against the South to divert attention from domestic problems or to strengthen his position?
4. What role might the Soviets and Chinese play?

C. What would be the consequences of a failed succession?

VI. What opportunities and risks does the North Korean succession have for the United States?

A. How are US interests likely to be affected by our most likely scenario and various alternative scenarios?

1. If the succession is smooth and Kim Chong-il inherits power, how will the interests of the US and its allies be affected?
 - a. Specifically, will North Korea constitute a greater challenge or will the challenges to US interests diminish?
2. How would a period of prolonged instability in North Korea affect:
 - a. The US military presence in South Korea?
 - b. US relations with Moscow, Beijing, and Tokyo?
 - c. US security guarantees and economic ties with other states in the region?
 - d. The prospects for war on the peninsula?

The Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, D.C. 20505

NIC-04228-87
22 October 1987

Senior Review Panel

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: Senior Review Panel Comments on Draft
Concept Paper and Terms of Reference (TOR)
for NIE 14.2-87: North Korea: Prospects
for the Succession and Internal Stability,
internally dated 5 October 1987

1. The Panel considers the drafts comprehensive, well-elaborated, and appropriately addressed to the challenges, problems, and implications of the efforts of Kim Il-song to secure succession to power by his son, Kim Chong-il.

2. We flag two comparatively minor points: (a) the possibility of consolidating TOR-III and TOR-IV might be worth considering in order to assist in holding the ultimate text to desirable length; (b) the word "internal" might perhaps be dropped from the title in view of the extensive foreign policy considerations adduced in TOR-I, TOR-V, and TOR-IV.

3. We commend this initiative--the first estimate that examines this unprecedented succession problem--and look forward to the draft paper.



William Leonhart



John B. McPherson



Courtland D. Perkins



James D. Theberge

cc: Acting C/NIC (Mr. Hutchinson)
VC/NIC (Mr. Fuller)
NIO for East Asia

Signers
OADR

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**SUBJECT: Senior Review Panel Comments on Draft Concept Paper and
Terms of Reference (TOR) for NIE 14.2-87: North
Korea: Prospects for the Succession and Internal
Stability, internally dated 5 October 1987**

ODCI/SRP:thelma

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