North Korean Government and Foreign Policy

2012 Yonsei International Summer School

Professor Seok-soo Lee
Department of International Relations
Korea National Defense University
Tel: 300-2156, E-mail: sslee@kndu.ac.kr

I. Course Description

This course is designed to enable students to better understand North Korean politics and foreign policy. Toward such ends, students will acquire knowledge about (1) Historical development of North Korean politics under Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il regime (2) Kim Jong Il’s death and power succession to Kim Jong Un; (3) North Korea’s foreign relations with major powers; and (4) prospects for North Korea after Kim Jong Il’s death.

Understanding North Korea is critical for students of international relations with a focus on East Asia and the Korean Peninsula. It became more so due to Kim Jong Il’s sudden death in December 2011. While the course is going to cover the rise to power of Kim Il Sung and his son and 3rd hereditary power transition to Kim Jong Un, we will also analyze the inter-Korean relations and North Korea’s foreign relations with key regional powers such as the United States, China, Japan and Russia. Given the reclusive nature of North Korea, however, discerning change is always a challenge. It is hoped that students who take this class will be able to have a better grasp of the nature of the North Korean regime, its foreign policy, and contrasting future scenarios.

The course is mainly divided into three parts. The first part put focus on the politics of North Korea. Independence activities under the Japanese colonial rule are first traced to have background knowledge of state-build up and power struggle in North Korea since National Liberation in 1945. Against this backdrop, this class overviews historical evolution of Kim Il Sung’s power consolidation, Kim Jong Il’s politics and the emergence of Kim Jong Un. In doing so, consolidation of political leadership, power elites, political ideology, and control over society are closely examined.

The second part of the class is devoted to North Korea’s foreign policy. Diplomacy has
played an important role for political regime resilience and economic survival. It seems that North Korea attempts to achieve core national interests by nuclear diplomacy. The second part consists of overview of North Korea’s foreign policy, investigation into the five pairs of bilateral relations (inter-Korean, North Korea-the United States, China, Japan, Russia), and in-dept analysis of North Korea’s nuclear diplomacy. Discussions on explanatory factors of foreign policy are conducted.

Last part of the class is preoccupied with forecasting politics and foreign policy of North Korea after Kim Jong II’s death. The structure of crisis in North Korea is explored as a starting point of forecasting. The crisis structure is characterized by a vicious cycle of crisis, including elements of policy environment (internal and external environments), policy response, and policy performance. Student is strongly encouraged to participate in discussion.

II. Grading and Assignments

Students are strongly urged to read the required reading materials before class. The final grade is determined by (1) mid-term exam (40%); (2) class participation (10%); and (3) final exam (50%).

III. Required Readings


IV. Weekly Topics and Readings

Week 1:

*Topic: Struggle for Power in North Korea (1945-1960)*

Required
**Topic: Construction of Socialist State (1961-70)**

*Required*


*Required*


**Week 2**

**Topic: Juche Ideology**

*Required*


**Topic: Political Leadership of Kim Jong Il Regime**

*Required*


**Topic: Power Elites and Institutions**

*Required*

Shim Sun-ah, “North Korea's Reshuffle in Key Military Posts,” *Vantage Point* (March 2009), pp. 24-26

Cheong Seong-chang, “The Role of Key Institutions and Elite in another North Korean Power Succession,” *Vantage Point* (September 2009), pp. 46-57

**Topic: Military First Politics of Kim Jong Il**

*Required*


**Week 3:**

**Topic: State-Society Relations under Kim Jong Il Regime**

*Required*


**Topic: Kim Jong Un’s Power Succession**

*Required*


Park Hyeong Jung, “Kim Jong Eun’s Activities in 2010 and Their Political Implications,” Online Series CO 11-7

Kim Jin Ha, “The North Korean Workers’ Party Charter Revisions and Their Political Dynamics,” Online Series CO 11-08

**Topic: Kim Jong Un’s Era after Kim Jong Il’s death**

*Required*

Cheong Seong-chang, “Kim Jong-Un’s Early Life and Personality,” *Vantage Point* (July 2009), pp. 8-12

Scott Snyder, “Kim Jong-il’s Successor Dilemmas,” *The Washington Quarterly* (January 2010), pp. 35-46


**MID-TERM**

**Week 4:**

**Topic: Understanding North Korean Foreign Policy**

**Topic: South-North Korean Relations**

Required

**Topic: North Korea-the United States Relations (I)**

Required
Robert A. Scalapino, “U.S. Relations with North Korea,” Pacific Focus, Vol. XXII, No. 1 (Spring 2007), pp. 5-17

**Topic: North Korea-the United States Relations (II)**

Required

**Week 5:**

**Topic: Video presentation and Discussion**

**Topic: North Korea-China Relations**

Required
Jin Moo Kim, “North Korea’s Reliance on China and China’s Influence on North

**Topic: North Korea-Japan Relations**

*Required*


*DPRK-Japan Joint Statement* in September 2002

**Topic: North Korea-Russia Relations**

*Required*


**Week 6:**

**Topic: Assessment of overall Conditions**

*Required*


**Topic: Forecasting North Korean Politics and Foreign Policy in the Future**

*Required*

Walter C. Clemens, Jr. “Alternative Futures for North Korea,” *Global Asia* Vol. 4, No. 2 (Summer 2009), pp. 40-47


**Final**