

The North Korean leadership and the future of North Korea

Introduction

The following paper will deal with the Political System of North Korea. I will present the successor of the actual leader of North Korea and the elites that are conducting North Korea. These elites are all connected to the Kim Jong Il's family. According to Jae Cheon Lim, a south Korean analyst, the Kim Jong Il's family can be divided in branches¹. The main branch control the power and symbolized legitimate descendants who could accede to the throne. They are directly connected to Kim Jong Il and to his biological sister Kim Kyung Hee and to their natural mother: Kim Jong Suk. The "lateral branches" are completely isolated from the power and are generally living abroad. Members of this branch are connected to the last wife of Kim Jong Il: Kim Sung Ae and to Kim Jong Nam, Kim Jong Il's son who indirectly criticize his father by disapproving the hereditary succession process in North Korea².

1. The main branch of the Kim Jong Il family

1.1. Kim Jong Il's children

1.1.1. Kim Jong Chol (1981 - ...): The unchosen successor

Kim Jong Chol , Kim Jong Il's 29 year second son, was considered during a time to be the leader's chosen successor. Kim Jong Chol reportedly began work at the propaganda and agitation division of the Workers Party after studying at an international school in the Swiss city of Bern. In 2003, efforts had begun to propagate a cult around North Korean leader Kim Jong last known legal wife and mother of Kim Jong Chol, Ko Yong Hee. A similar campaign had been created for Kim Jong Il deceased mother, Kim Jong Suk, ahead of his succession. However Ko Yong Hee died in 2003 from a breast cancer. During a time he was support by the First Vice Directors of the Guidance Department Ri Je Gang and Ri Yong Chol. However both of them died in 2010. For a number of years Kim Jong Chol was the rumored successor. However, he does not have any interest in politics, and may have removed himself from consideration. Kenji Fujimoto, Kim Jong-il's personal sushi chef, wrote in his memoir *I Was Kim Jong Il's Cook*, that Kim Jong Il disloved Kim Jong Chol because his son was too effeminate and had a passive personality. Kim Jong Chol works now in the Propaganda and Agitation Department CC KWP³.

¹ Jae Cheon Lim, *Kim Jong Il's Leadership of North Korea*, Routledge Contemporary Asia Series, New York 2009, p. 51.

² *Does Kim Jong-nam's Criticism Reflect Chinese View of N.Korea?*, "Chosun Ilbo", 14th October 2010.

³ CC KWP: The Central Committee of the Korean Workers' Party (CC KWP) is the KWP's is a politician body. It advises on government policies. *A handbook of North Korea*, Naewoe Press, Seoul 1996.

1.1.2. Kim Jong U (1984 - ...): The next leader

He's supposed to be the next leader of North Korea. Kim Jong Un, who is the successor of Kim Jong Il will just be a puppet of the north korean leadership. In 2009, Kim Jong Un took up a junior level post at the National Defense Commission⁴ a few days before the Parliament reappointed Kim Jong Il as the National Defense Commission's chairman on 9th April 2009. Kim Jong Un was expected to assume higher level NDC posts in preparation to succeed his father. Like Kim Jong Un, he was educated at the International School of Berne and is a fan of NBA basketball. More than 20 directives have been signed about the succession of Kim Jong Il by the Korean Workers Party.

It seems improbable that the most powerful organizations in North Korea would accept a leader without military background. That's why Kim Jong Un was Given 4-Star General Status at age 28 and then was elected Vice Chairman of the NDC, the most powerful organization in North Korea. In spite of having these positions, Kim Jong Un is in very different situation in comparison with his father and grandfather. Kim Jong Il was nominated, but Kim Jong Il began his ascension working first in the party's elite Organization Department before being named a member of the Party Politburo in 1968 and promoted to deputy director of the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the Party Headquarters in 1969. Until 1980 he added positions to his leader background and was finally confirmed as Kim Il Sung's successor during the Sixth WPK Congress in 1980 at the age of 38. It means that Kim Jong Il worked at least during 12 years in order to get the approval of other North Korean Elites. In comparison, Kim Jong Un, who is just 28 years, has no long military and politic significant experience. His tutors Ri Je Kang and Ri Yong Chol died also in 2010 in mysterious conditions⁵, which seems to indicate, that the position of Kim Jong Un is not fully secured. Kim Jong Un lacks close associates who can help him. Kim Jong Il had during its succession process some close assistants, Kim Il and Choi Hyun, who truly advise him, considering him even as a nephew. In comparison Kim Jong U got everything and is the second most powerful person in North Korea. He doesn't dispose of real advisors and he's in a way alone. Without any power base, Kim Jong Un has to obey to North Korean elites, especially in a case of his father's sudden death.

1.1.3. Kim Jong Nam (1971 - ...): the exiled son

⁴ The North Korean military is directly controlled by the National Defense Committee, which is the most important political organization in North Korea. .

⁵ *Close Aide to Kim Jong-il Dies*, "Chosun Ilbo", 27th April 2010.

Kim Jong Nam was born on 10 May 1971 to Song Hye Rim, Kim Jong Il's second wife. At the age of 10, Kim Jong Nam moved to study at an international school in Geneva. Kim Jong Nam was at one time believed to be the successor to his father to take the helm of the communist North. He had been appointed to a senior post in the domestic intelligence agency, and was also a computer enthusiast. As of 2001 he led North Korea's committee on computing in cooperation with South Korean People, and was believed to be responsible for information technology policy. However a big event occurred in 2001. On Tuesday 1st May 2001 Japanese authorities detained Kim Jong Nam, the eldest son of Kim Jong Il, at Narita airport for attempting to enter the country illegally. Kim Jong Nam's weakened position became apparent in 2002, when he spent much of the year in Russia, tending his mother. Although Kim Jong Nam had previously been touted as Kim Jong Il's heir, after the Tokyo airport incident and the death of his mother, he appeared to be out of the leadership race. As of early 2003 he was believed to be residing in China. Kim Jong Nam's travel habits almost certainly demonstrate that he is not in line to succeed his father to the leadership of North Korea. He travels by commercial scheduled passenger aircraft. There is however a precedent for the regime reinstating disgraced figures after a period of atonement, and in this case, his rehabilitation cannot be excluded. Oldest sons are generally favored in North Korea, where Confucian traditions that honor seniority still hold sway. Kim Jong Nam was supported by Kim Kyung Hee and her husband Jang Song Thaek, because this couple participated to his education.

1.1.4. Other potential Kim Jong Il's children

Kim Jong Il is supposed to have other unofficial sons and daughters⁶, who may not be at the head of the country, but may play key roles in the future of their country. Pak Se Bong, a supposed son of Kim Jong Il is a member of the NDC. Another son Kim Hyun was supposed to be killed a few years ago. Kim Sul Song, a daughter of Kim Jong Il, is often with her father during public inspections. She's born in 1974 and is fluent in French and English due to her education in Switzerland. She works in the 99 room (IT department) of the CC KWP⁷ and is a Kim Jong Il's favorite⁸.

⁶ Kim Jun Song is another potential daughter of Kim Jong Il (b. in 1975). Kim Jong Il may have other children issued from unofficial relationships.

⁷ Alexandre Y. Mansourov, *Inside North Korea's Black Box: Reversing the Optics*, [w.] *North Korean Policy Elites*, (red.) Hassig, Kong Dan Oh, Ralph C. Hassig, IDA Paper P-3903, Institute for Defense Analyses, Alexandria June 2004, p. 16.

⁸ Andrew Scobell, *Kim Jong and North Korea: The Leader and the System*, Defense Department of the United States of America, Washington 2006, p. 15.

1.2. Kim Jong Il's closest family members

1.2.1. Kim Kyung Hee: the younger sister

Kim Kyung Hee is the daughter of Kim Il Sung and his first wife Kim Jong Suk, and the sister of Kim Jong Il. She's a key member of Kim Jong Il's inner circle and a director of the Light Industry Department of the Workers' Party of Korea. On September 27, 2010, she was made a general in the Korean People's Army (The Korean People's Army is the North Korean Army). and emerged as a member of the Political Bureau of the CC KWP. In the 70's she worked in the CC of the Korean Women's Association. Since 1993 she's at the head of the planification department and of the heavy industry of the CC KWP⁹. This department includes now also the light industry section¹⁰. In 2004, she lost her position but she remained a CC KWP member.¹¹ In march 2009, she was nominated to the Supreme People's Assembly¹². With Her husband, they've got two children. Their son Jang Kim Song studied in Sweden and work actually in the Organization and Leadership Department CC KWP¹³ and is a member of the CC KWP¹⁴. Their daughter Jang Kum Sung committed suicide in 2006¹⁵, she used to work with her father in the planification of the construction of Pyongyang.

Kim Kyung Hee partners¹⁶

Identity	Key responsibilities
Kim Jong Un	Kim Jong Il's successor
Kim Ki Nam	Vice chairman of the Committee for Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland
Choe Thae Bok	SPA Chairman
Kim Yang Gon	Director of the of the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland
Kang Sok Ju	Vice Prime Premier of the North Korean Government
Choe Ryong Hae	KPA 4 stars general
Kim Chang Son	Deputy director of Kim Jong Il's personal secretariat
Kim Jong Nam	Kim Jong Il's son

⁹ Kim Jong Ju - http://www.nkeconwatch.com/nk-uploads/kim_kyong_hui.pdf

¹⁰ „Yonhap News”, 30th november 1998.

¹¹ Jung Chang Hyun, *Kim Jong Il of Korea*, Jun Hang Books, Seoul 2009, p. 319.

¹² The Supreme People's Assembly is parliament of North Korea. Michael Madden, *Kyung Hee* - http://www.nkeconwatch.com/nk-uploads/kim_kyung_hee.pdf, Suffolk University, Boston USA.

¹³ Alexandre Y. Mansourov, *Inside North Korea's Black Box: Reversing the Optics*, [w.] *North Korean Policy Elites*, (red.) Hassig, Kong Dan Oh, Ralph C. Hassig, IDA Paper P-3903, Institute for Defense Analyses, Alexandria, June 2004, p. 23.

¹⁴ Michael Madden, *Jang Song Thaek* - http://www.nkeconwatch.com/nk-uploads/jang_sung_taek.pdf University, Boston USA.

¹⁵ Michael Madden, *Jang Song Thaek* - http://www.nkeconwatch.com/nk-uploads/jang_sung_taek.pdf University, Boston USA.

¹⁶ Michael Madden, *Biographical Sketch of Kim Kyong Hui*, april 2010, p. 4.

1.2.2. Jang Song Thaek: The unloved half-brother

Jang Song Thaek, born in 1946, is often cited as a possible “regent” if Kim Jong-un rises to a top post after Kim Jong Il passes on. Jang owes his power to a certain measure to the influence of his wife, Kim Kyung Hee but also to his skills¹⁷. However Jang Song Thaek was not in favor of Kim Il Sung (Kim Il Sung didn’t accept the relationship between him and his daughter). Kim Jong Il has had to look after him. Mr. Jang rose through the ranks of the Workers’ Party but disappeared from view between 2004 and 2006. Then he came back to the political scene of North Korea. He was nominated to the NDC in 2009 and accompany Kim Jong Il during his trip to China. Jang Song Thaek is also the chairman of the Chinese-North Korean investment bank Taepung.

Main political partners of Jang Song Thaek

Identity	Key responsibilities
Jo Jun Hwang	Deputy director of Propaganda and Agitation Department CC KWP
Ri Kwang Gon	Responsible for economic cooperation with South Korea
Hyon Chol Hae	Deputy Director of the Politic Department of the KPA
Kim Yong Il	Secretary of foreign affairs CC KWP
Kim Jong Jun	KPA Minister
Ri Ha Il	Director of the KPA Military Department
Kim Myong Guk	Director of the KPA Operational Department
Choe Ik Kyu	Director of the Propaganda and Agitation Department CC KWP
U Dong Juk	Deputy Director of the National Security Department
Ri Yong Bok	Party Secretary of the city of Nampo
Ri Ul Sol	KPA Marshal. He was a tutor for Kim Jong Il and Kim Jong Nam
Jang Song Hwon	Jang Song Thaek’s uncle - KPA General
Jang Song Sop	Jang Song Thaek’s brother - Deputy director of the Kim Il Sung University
Jang Song Yol	Jang Song Thaek’s brother - director of the Kim Il Sung Party School
Jang Song Ho	Jang Song Thaek’s brother - Deputy director of the Mangyongdae Revolutionary

¹⁷ Madden Michael, *A Biography of Jang Song-Thaek: The Juche Jump (Hey, Mr. Jang!)* [in] Parallax, vol. VI, nr 1, fall 2009.

1.3. The lateral branch of the Kim Jong Il's family

Kim Jong Un is seemingly the next leader of North Korea, having been displayed to North Korea's cadres in September 2010. He has also apparently launched a purge of senior party and military officials in an attempt to cement his grip on power. In comparison, when his father Kim Jong Il was nominated to succeed Kim Il Sung, he had also to realize some purges and to compete with his half brother: Kim Pyong Il, who is now the ambassador of North Korea to Poland since 1998. We will present here the relations between Kim Jong Il and the members of the "lateral branch".

Very early on Kim Jong Il disliked Kim Pyong Il (b. 1954) due to his mother Kim Sung Ae. Kim Jong Il hated his stepmother because she was indirectly involved in the death of his natural mother, Kim Jong Suk, who died in 1949 from a hemorrhage during childbirth. Kim Jong Suk was jealous of Kim Sung Ae. She preferred to die than watching betrayals of her husband. 20 years later, when the succession topic emerged in the mind of Kim Il Sung, Kim Sung Ae proposed her husband that Kim Jong Il would be at the head of North Korea, Kim Pyong Il at the head of the army and Kim Yong Il at the head of the economy. Kim Jong Il, who was already a growing star of the Korean Workers' Party, was against this idea. He fears that Kim Pyong Il would be too powerful. Kim Jong Il defined then Kim Sung Ae and her family (including her brothers) and children as "lateral branch" of the Kim Il Sung family. He wanted to legitimate that he was the only who could carry the fate of North Korea. According to defectors, Kim Pyong Il was unsatisfied of this treatment - being considered as a member of the side branch family. Kim Pyong Il wanted to be at the head of the KPA. Kim Jong Il refused it and tried to find a reason for expelling Kim Pyong Il from North Korea. Differences between Kim Jong Il and Kim Pyong Il really started when he entered the Security Guard Bureau following the Panmunjon axe incident on 18th July 1976. According to Bradley J. Martin, the Author of *Under the Loving Care of the Fatherly Leader*, during these times, Kim Pyong Il started to lead a dissolute life with his friends, Kim Pyong Ha and Kim Chang Ha in his residence in the Taesong district or at his father's house in Amisan. He used to have some entertainment with female members of the People's Army ensembles, offering gifts including watches with his name-engraved. His supporters started to scream all over the country „long live to Kim Pyong Il". These acts were of course totally prohibited in the North Korean monolithic system. Kim Jong Il was informed about these events by 15 members of the older generation of the political department, and told Kim Chang Ha to be careful. Kim Jong Il gave also an order to Chon Mun Sop, a director of the Security Department, to launch an investigation on Kim Pyong Il. All material collected was then shown to Kim Il Sung who was angered by the reports. His reaction was immediate. Kim Pyong Il's removal demission was

ordered, and Kim Pyong Il was for a time discharged from the army. After these events, Kim Pyong Il was no longer able to maintain his dignity and authority in the army and probably since this moment his army's support for him was at least partially reduced. He was then sent to Moscow and to East Germany on the pretext of pursuing academic studies¹⁸. Next step was Yugoslavia where he was sent as a *military attaché* in 1980. He was then an ambassador of North Korea to Hungary, Bulgaria, Finland and now Poland. In these case and being far away, he was not able to coordinate actions against Kim Jong Il.

However, in the 90's, some of Kim Pyong Il's supporters conducted demonstrations on his behalf. In December 1994, fire was exchanged between the followers of Kim Jong Il and the followers of Kim Pyong Il in which eight major figures died and Kim Pyong Il's followers were repressed. In April 1995 there was a rumor which was sent from Seoul, in which Kim Pyong Il was summoned to North Korea because more than 50 of his followers were confined to their houses.

Kim Pyong Il may be under the protection of the Polish government, like the eldest son of Kim Jong Il, Kim Jong Nam, who is actually living in China and rumored to be under Chinese protection. Other sources even suggest that Kim Pyong Il is regularly flying to Vienna and Zurich, where he's running some Kim Jong Il's accounts. He was not present during the last Korean Workers Party Conference, which took place in September 2010. During this time, Kim Pyong Il was present during at a diplomatic party in Warsaw, and said in a perfect English, that "the longer I am in Poland, the better it will be". It shows us, how Kim Pyong Il is far away from the North Korean Political Drama.

Other members of the "lateral branch" were expelled from Pyongyang in the 70's and in the 90's. Kim Jong Ju, Kim Il Sung's brother is now living with his family out of Pyongyang was. In the 70's he was living in the northern part of North Korea. He return to politics in 1993, being nominated as honorary vice chairman of the SPA. In 2010 he lost his political position. Kim Sung Ae and her brothers, Kim Sung Gap and Kim Sung Ho, lost their political power (In the 90's Kim Sung Ae was vice-chairwoman of the CC of the Korean Women's Association). They were even forced to pay tribute to the biological mother of Kim Jong Il: Kim Jong Suk. Now nobody knows if they're alive. Kim Pyong Il's sister is living in Vienna and was expelled from North Korea in 1979. Her second brother Kim Yong Il

¹⁸ Bradley K. Martin, *Under the loving care of the fatherly leader, North Korea and the Kim dynasty*, St. Martin's Press, New York 2004 r., p. 281.

died of liver cirrhosis in 2000. He used to spend his time in nightclubs and casinos all over Europe. Kim Yong Ja, another Kim Sung Ae's daughter is married to a KPA general¹⁹.

2. North Korean elites

2.1. Definition

The elite at the top of the social strata almost invariably puts it in a position of leadership, In North Korea, people who are belonging to the elites have at least one major position in leading party, government, and military organs. This group includes all political leaders who are, directly involved in the preparation of major policy decisions and who participate in the inner circle of policy making. The ruling elite include Political Bureau members and secretaries of the KWP and member of the NDC. It's estimated that they represent a group of 20 thous. people²⁰.

2.2. Actual Elites

Kim Jong Un maybe the North Korea's heir apparent, but, as I explained before, he will be just a puppet of the system. The balance of power might be in a collective leadership — whether the Workers Party or the army would dominate. The power is actually in the hands of Kim Jong Il and in the hands of the members of the NDC. The North Korean military is directly controlled by the NDC which has been elevated to an independent organization next only to the President of North Korea. This organization is composed of politicians and generals. Its members are the most powerful people in North Korea including Jang Song Thaek, Ju Kyu Jang and Kim Jong Jun. These leaders concurrently hold multiple positions within the party, the government, and the army.

There also some new elites, who are connected to the business world such as Jon Sung Hun or Kim Yang Gon, who are at the head of business organizations such as the investment bank of North Korea. Members of the CC are senior managers and are also belonging to north Korean elites. They includes technocrats economists, managers, and technicians. Elites are directly connected to Kim Jong Il, Jang Song Thaek and Choe Ryong Hae. These people are on their 50s or 60s. These key persons are Kim Kwang Gon, Pak Saeh Bong, Pak Myong Chol and Kim Kyung Hee. They know Kim Jong Il since at least 20-30 years and that they are connected to the main political organizations in North Korea.

¹⁹ Alexandre Y. Mansourov, *Inside North Korea's Black Box: Reversing the Optics*, [w.] *North Korean Policy Elites* (red.) Kong Dan Oh, Hassig Ralph C., Center for Strategic Studies of the CNA Corporation -Institute for Defense Analyses, Alexandria 2004, s. 19.

²⁰ Interview with a defector. The interview was realized by the Author in Seoul in June 2008.

Top leaders share a number of common social characteristics. They belong to the same generation; According to my calculations, the average age of the party's top fifty leaders was about 68 years in 1990, 64 years in 2000 and 64 in 2010. By the end of 1989, aging members of the anti Japanese partisan group accounted for 24 percent of the Political Bureau's full members and in 2000 for 20 percent, and in 2010 for 15 percent. There is no clear evidence of regional under-representation. However many Hamgyung natives are included in the inner circle for example the former KPA Leader O Jin U, Pak Song Chol, Kim Yong Nam and Kye Ung Tae.

2.3. Future Elites

Future elites can be splitted in two categories. In the first category, we've got North Korea politicians, who are on their 50a's or 60's and belong to the second and to the third generation. They represent a group of senior North Korean Elites children, who are travelling abroad and more open-minded than the first generation. The second group of elites consist of young people who are in their 30's and 40's. They are illegally importing alcohols and other items from various locations. Their activities include the production and the distribution of counterfeit 100 dollars bills and drug trafficking. This group is lead by Oh Se Wan, the son of O Kuk Ryol, a North Korean general. Kang Tae Seung, Kang Jok Su's son (deputy prime minister of North Korea) is also involved in these issues²¹. This North Korean Group could be described to China's "princelings": Sons and daughters of Chinese Communist Party and military leaders amassed fortunes through businesses and their family connections within the ruling Communist Party system.

Kim Jong Il's family lateral branch

Identity	Kinships	Key responsibilities
Kim Pyong Il	Kim Jong Il's half-brother	North Korean ambassador to Poland
Kim Kyung Jin	Kim Jong Il's half-sister	Wife of the North Korean ambassador to Austria
Kim Sung Ae	Kim Jong Il's step mother	Retired
Kim Jong Ju	Kim Il Sung's brother	Retired
Kim Jong Nam	Kim Jong Il's son	No responsibilities

²¹ Bill Gertz, *North Korean Elites linked to Crime*, „Washington Times”, 24th may 2010.

North Korea Elites connected to Kim Jong Il and Jang Song Thaek

Identity	Main position	Connections with Kim Jong Il	Connections with Jang Song Thaek	Other informations
Kim Kyung Hee	Director of the Light Industry Department KWP, KPA 4 stars General	Kim Jong Il's sister	Jang Song Thaek's wife	no information
Kim Yong Nam	Former North Korean Chairman of the Presidium of SPA	Kim Jong Il's cousin	Jang Song Thaek's cousin	no information
Kim Il Chol	KPA minister	Kim Jong Il's cousin	no information	Former counterpart of Jo Myong Rok
Kim Jong Jun	KPA Vice Marshal	Close advisor to Kim Jong Il	No information	Former counterpart of Jo Myong Rok
Ri Myong Su	KPA Vice Marshal	Close advisor to Kim Jong Il	Close advisor to Jang Song Thaek's brother	Jang Song U's mentor
Kang Sok Ju	Deputy prime minister	Close advisor to Kim Jong Il	no information	no information
Kim Kye Kwan	Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister	Translator's husband to Kim Sung Ae.	no information	Kim Kye Kwan is under the protection of Kim Yong Nam
Pak Kil Yon	Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister	Advisor to Kim Jong Il	no information	Counterpart of Ko Yong Hee and Kang Sok Ju
Ri Yong Mu	NDC Deputy director	Advisor to Kim Jong Il. His wife is a cousin of Kim Jong Il	no information	no information

The political leadership in North Korea

Identity	Key responsibilities	Date of birth
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Identity	Key responsibilities	Date of birth
Kim Jong Il	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairman of the NDC • KPA Marshal • General Secretary of the KWP • Director of the Organization and Leadership Department CC KWP 	1942
Ju Kyu Jang	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •NDC member, •Deputy director of the Organization and Leadership Department CC KWP •Deputy director of the 2nd Economic Committee 	Unknown date
Ri Myong Je	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Deputy director of the Personal Secretariat of Kim Jong Il • Deputy director of the Organization and Leadership Department CC KWP 	1929
Yom Ki Sun	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Deputy director of the Organization and Leadership Department CC KWP 	1935
Choe Ik Kyu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Director of the Propaganda and Agitation Department CC KWP 	1934
Ri Jae Il	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Deputy director of the Propaganda and Agitation Department CC KWP 	Unknown date
Choe Yong Rim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Korean Prime minister 	1930
Jon Pyong Ho	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secretary of the military industry department CC KWP •NDC member 	1926
Kang Kwan Ju	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Deputy director of the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland •Expert on South Korean and Japan issues 	1930
Ri Kwang Gon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for economical exchanges with South Korea • Central National Bank Chairman 	Unknown date
Jon Il Chon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of the room 39 (a bureau that manages Kim Jong Il's finances and an operator of North Korean companies) 	Unknown date
Jon Sung Hun	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Korean businessman (one of the wealthiest person in North Korea) 	In the 60's

The military leadership in North Korea

Identity	Key responsibilities	Date of birth
Ri Yong Mu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Deputy director NDC •KPA vice marshal 	1925
U Dong Juk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NDC member • Deputy director of the National Security Bureau • KPA General 	1942
Kim Jong Jun	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •KPA minister •NDC Deputy director 	1936
Ri Yong Ho	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KPA Vice marshal • Chairman of the Pyongyang KPA division 	1942
Kim Jong Gak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •KPA General •NDC member •KPA political department deputy director •KPA spokesman 	1945
Ju Sang Song	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •KPA General •Public Security minister 	Unknown date
Ri Ha Il	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •KPA vice marshal, • Secretary of the department of military affairs CC KWP 	Unknown date
Ri Myong Su	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •KPA General •NDC administrative director • Advisor to the NDC 	1938
Kim Kyuk Sik	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Close advisor to Kim Jong Il (Kim Kyuk Sik is often travelling abroad) •Central Army Commission member 	1940
O Kum Chol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Air Force Commander 	Unknown date
Ri Thae Il	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KPA general • Member of the National Security Bureau •KPA Deputy director 	Unknown date

3. The future of North Korea

The future of North Korea is uncertain. The system is in constant evolution, as far as new elites are ruling the country. The future of North Korea is dependant of the China's behavior. China is North Korea's most important ally, biggest trading partner, and main source of food, arms, and fuel. China is helping sustain Kim Jong Il's regime and is against international economic sanctions in the hope of avoiding regime collapse and an uncontrolled move of refugees. The number of refugees coming from North Korea is increasing but is still relatively limited. Most of those who leave do so for economic rather than political reasons. The reunification of the both Korea is still impossible, as far as South Korean organizations face problems with North Korean settlers.

The regime has survived many things such as war, famine, international isolation and many other problems. It should not be written off yet, even though there are more imponderables now than before. China, South Korea, and other countries such as Japan, do not wish to face with a political crisis in the peninsula, for fear of the consequences in terms of refugee outflows and consequences of a potential conflict. The future of North Korea is then depending of Kim Jong Il's successor and of North Korean elites, who will lead the North Korean system and of course of China and on a lesser point of Russia. The actual transition of power in North Korea is a also a vulnerable time for North Korean elites. Authorities are increasing their grip on society to prevent potential riots. Meanwhile, the nomination of Kim Jong Un as next North Korean leader and the presentation of the new elites may give a new impulse to relations between both Korea and China. Expectations and stakes are high. Recently, South Korean President Lee Myung Bak has urged the North Korean elites to adopt China's economic reforms, arguing that it can lead to eventual Korean reunification. Lee Myung Bak and his administration probably waited for the nomination of Kim Jong Un in order to pronounce these spectacular words. There are hopes everywhere, not only in South Korea, that the new leaders will make the perspective of unification more plausible.

Annex

Kinships in the actual North Korean leadership (as of november 2010)

Identity	Kinships with the Kim Jong Il family	Main position
Kim Jong Il	Kim Il Sung oldest son	Supreme leader of North Korea
Kim Jong Un	Kim Jong Il's son	Kim Jong Il's successor

Identity	Kinships with the Kim Jong Il family	Main position
Kim Kyung Hee	Kim Jong Il's sister	Head of the Light Industry Department CC KWP
Kang Sok Ju	Kim Jong Il's cousin	Deputy Prime Minister
Ri Yong Mu	Kim Jong Il's cousin-in-law	KPA General
Kang Kwan Ju	Kim Jong il's cousin, on his father's (Kim il Sung) side	Deputy director of the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland
Kim Ki Nam	Kim Yong Nam's brother	Vice chairman of the Committee for Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland
Yang Hyong Sop	Husband of Kim Il Sung's cousin	Chairman of the Presidium of the SPA
Kang Dok Su	Son of Kang Bo-sok, Kim Il-sung's uncle on his mother's side.	Chairman, Choson. Broadcasting Corp.
Kang Yong Sop	Kim Il Sung mother' cousin	Chairman of the Korea Christian Federation of North Korea
Kim Jong Su	Kim Il Sung's cousin	Deputy director of the Mangyongdae school
Kim Jong Suk	Kim Yong Nam's wife	Director at the Social Sciences University
Kim Tu Nam	Kim Ki Nam's brother	Director of the Kumumsan mausoleum, where Kim Il Sung is placed
Kim Il San	Kim Il's cousin	Kaesong Mayor
Kim Myung Hee	Kim Il Sung's cousin	Responsible for foreign affairs in the Cultural Department CC KWP
Kim Myung Woo	Kim Il Sung's cousin	Deputy Director of the Organization and Leadership Department CC KWP
Kim Sung Hwan	Kim Il Sung's cousin	Deputy director of the Chongjin University
Kim Jong Nam	Kim Jong Il's son	Director on the IT department of the KWP (the so-called 99 room)
Kim Sul Song	Kim Jong Il's daughter	Director on the IT department of the KWP (the so-called 99 room)
Son Song Pil	Kim Jong Il's cousin	Former North Korean ambassador to Russia
Kang Tong Yun	Kim Jong Il's cousin	KPA General

Identity	Kinships with the Kim Jong Il family	Main position
Ko Yong Ho	Cousin of the last wife of Kim Jong Il	KPA General
Kim Pyong Il	Kim Jong Il's halfbrother	North Korean ambassador to Poland

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