

LETTER

FROM THE EDITOR

Thus far, 2013 has been an eventful year in North Korea, for both the regime itself and those who follow it. January saw the UN Security Council pass Resolution 2087, a response to a missile launch the previous month. In February, North Korea conducted its third nuclear test, which resulted in the UN Security Council passing Resolution 2094 to condemn the test and apply further sanctions. In April, North Korea closed the jointly operated Kaesong Industrial Complex, an action which garnered much international attention. But in addition to the headline grabbing events, there have been other noteworthy developments in the discourse on the DPRK. Though the phenomenon itself is not new, coverage of marketization in the nominally communist country is both increasing and significantly affecting the discussion. By shifting the focus away from the regime and towards the people of North Korea, a whole new understanding of the North is developing.

From a bird's eye view, one can decipher two general narratives: one state-centered, the other people-oriented. Though there are merits and drawbacks to either perspective, it is clear that both are necessary to form a complete understanding of North Korea. This issue of the *Yonsei Journal of International Studies*, and its "Focus on North Korea," provides as complete a perspective as one can find. We have five papers, three essays, one interview and three reviews.

Even for the few non-North Korea specific pieces, the reader will find that each piece fits under one of the two broad narratives.

In the first paper, “Broadening the Picture: A Review of Chinese and English-Language Media Discourse on the DPRK,” James Pearson (University of Cambridge) appraises the English-language media discourse on North Korea. By looking at Chinese- and English-language media coverage of the Cheonan sinking and the Yeonpyeong Island shelling, Pearson finds that Chinese media coverage of North Korea can broaden the discourse and “plug some of the gaps in English-language coverage.” The second paper, co-authored by Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga (London School of Economics) and Jenny Jun (Georgetown University), covers the issue of United Nations sanctions on North Korea following the recent nuclear test (UNSCR 2087 and 2094). In “Getting China to Enforce Sanctions on North Korea,” the two authors argue that “many traditional roadblocks” are still preventing China from effectively enforcing UN Security Council-sponsored sanctions. They then identify ways that the Chinese government’s enforcement of sanctions can be improved, focusing on prudent statecraft and a rethinking of the way sanctions are perceived and implemented.

The third paper provides readers with an overview of the social structure of North Korea and focuses “upon the foundations of the society that we seek to understand.” In “Challenges to Reform: Structure, Agency and the Constitution of the Selectorate,” author James Burt (London School of Economics) makes good use of Anthony Giddens’ Structuration Theory to give ordinary citizens of the North something that often goes missing in the literature: agency. The fourth paper continues this approach. Shirley Lee (University of Oxford), in “Looking Past the Regime: a Revised Policy of ‘Engagement’ with North Korea,” maintains focus on giving agency to North Koreans. Taking a slightly different focus from Burt, Lee focuses on giving voice to North Koreans in exile, specifically those who have intimate knowledge about how North Korea functions—politically, socially and otherwise—and maintain connections inside the country. To her, “engagement” is about providing intellectual coherence for North Korean intellectuals writing about North Korea.

After whetting the reader’s appetite for alternative discourses, the fifth and final paper brings the focus back to the traditional statist understanding of North Korea. In “Why Does China Prevent North Korea From Collapsing,” Shawn Ho (Rajaratnam School of International Studies) revisits a common but always pertinent question: why does China continue to support North Korea and prevent its collapse? After giving the reader a thorough review of the contemporary literature on the issue, Ho concludes that “China’s North Korea policy is largely

driven by a pursuit of its own geopolitical interests and less so by its security and economics interests in North Korea.”

Though shorter in length and more focused in scope than the papers, the essays in this issue still provide the reader with unique insights and contentious claims. The first essay, written by Christopher Green (University of Cambridge), is a preview of a pioneering study in North Korean studies by the author. In “Marketization and Yuanization: Economic changes in the DPRK,” Green discusses, in the greatest detail permitted in an essay, North Korea’s marketization phenomenon. He focuses on the use of foreign currency in North Korea’s nascent but burgeoning market economy, especially Chinese yuan in the northern provinces. The second essay, “The Once Mighty Paradigm: a Critical Review of Modernization Theory,” is a theoretical overview and critique of stage theory, a subset of modernization theory. Professor Joel R. Campbell (Troy University) highlights the shortcomings of understanding economic, social and political development in stages—a patently Western way of viewing change. As such, Campbell’s essay nicely compliments the other pieces that focus on development in North Korea.

The final essay covers a crucial time period in China-Taiwan relations. In “Saving Face: China and Taiwan’s Bid for the United Nations Seat in the General Assembly and Security Council, 1950-1971,” Mycal L. Ford (Pacific Lutheran University) strips the veneer from over-romanticized views of policymaking and US-centric understandings of history. Through his exploration of the “array of back-alley talks and power struggles, Ford shows how the lead-up to Taiwan losing its seat at the UN to China was marked by waning US influence within the UN and a general balance of power shift in East Asia towards Beijing.

The interview for this issue is a stimulating conversation between Dr. Adam Cathcart, Lecturer of Asian History at Queen’s University Belfast (QUB), and Blaine Harden, author of the *New York Times* bestseller *Escape from Camp 14: One Man’s Remarkable Odyssey from North Korea to Freedom in the West*. Appropriately titled “In Need of An Icon,” the interview highlights, among other things, the book’s success in raising international awareness of major human rights abuses in North Korea. The selling point: Shin Dong-hyuk (the protagonist) and his life story. Whether it is he or Harden who has become the “icon” is left for the reader to decide.

The issue’s three book reviews provide a broad coverage of recently published books. In “All the World’s a Stage, and All the Men and Women Merely Players,” Peter Ward (Korea University) sends off volley of criticism towards the authors of *North Korea: Beyond Charismatic Politics* (Heonik Kwon and Chung Byong-Ho). Though many in academia warmly received the book, Ward

finds the book far too discourse-heavy. He asks whether the authors would have done better leaving much of the academic theories out, instead using defector interviews to corroborate their claims.

Ryan D. Schomburg (Yonsei University) reviews one of Dambisa Moyo's latest books, *How the West Was Lost: Fifty Years of Economic Folly—and the Stark Choices Ahead*. In "From American Dominance to the Rise of the Rest," Schomburg gives an honest and critical overview of the book. Though he finds the overall thesis agreeable, Schomburg takes issue with Moyo's sweeping generalizations and sensational prose. The last review, written by Matthew Bates (School of African and Oriental Studies, University of London), considers how the legacy of Ronald Reagan is remembered and has manifested itself in the policies of contemporary leaders. Drawing on recent histories of the end of the Cold War and memoirs of three leading members of the George W. Bush administration (Bush himself, Dick Cheney and John Bolton), Bates finds that, overall, Reagan's most significant characteristic—empathy—has "been lost on those wishing to emulate him."

Along the lines of memoirs and self-reflection, I must note that the present issue of the *Yonsei Journal* will be my last as editor in chief. Serving in this post has been a learning experience beyond measure, and has enriched my MA experience at Yonsei University. The Graduate School of International Studies (GSIS) administration provided strong financial and institutional support over the last two years. Without them, this enterprise simply would not exist, and they deserve thanks. I also want to thank the professors in Seoul who have given their support and guidance over the same period, especially Professors Matthias Maass (Yonsei University), Jennifer Oh (Ewha Womens University), and Kim Jangho (Yonsei University). Finally, I would like to thank the Yonsei Journal staff: the hard work of each individual staff member is vital to the Journal's success. Happy reading!



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