

Fingleton goes on to claim that in the early 1990s, homeless people were encouraged to come out of the ghettos and camp out in Tokyo's most upscale neighborhoods as a nice photo-op to demonstrate the deteriorating situation in Japan. Continuing to mislead, Japanese officials publicly lamented the supposedly disastrous deterioration in public finance, but omitted the "footnote" that Japan's official foreign exchange reserves had skyrocketed from \$85.1 billion in 1989 to over \$840 billion according to the latest available data.

Finally, aside from the gullible Western media and American public, the reason that this charade has been able to continue is that it benefits so many different entities and individuals. Foreign sales representatives who do not reach their quotas have an excuse, as do Japanese foundations that seek to reject solicitations from American universities and other needy nonprofits. The same goes for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs when tempering the expectations of foreign aid recipients. Most notably, Fingleton contends that American investment bankers also have reason to emphasize bad news because of the investment strategy, called the yen-carry trade, in which the well informed can benefit from periodic bouts of weakness in the Japanese yen. **PEAR**

NORTH KOREA AND INFORMATION: ON THE USE OF UNDERCOVER REPORTING IN NORTH KOREA ANALYSIS

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Perhaps out of all the former Communist Bloc states, North Korea remained the most impenetrable for outside observers to pierce. Using the pretext of an imminent US invasion and a contrived persecution complex, the North's dynastic rulers successfully kept prying eyes from learning too much about the veracity of the minutiae of daily life inside the country for most of the Cold War era. This, however, changed with the so-called "Arduous March," an unprecedented man-made famine caused by economic mismanagement and the collapse of Communist Bloc aid compounded by catastrophic natural disasters that by some estimates killed off as much as 15% of the North's population and left a great deal more disfigured from the effects of malnutrition. At the height of the famine, the North's rulers relented from their staunch socialist line and turned a blind eye to markets and informal cross-border trade with and travel to China. The result: the North's hermetic seal was permanently pierced. Not only was information about the outside world flooding in, but for the first time, a steady stream of information was getting out.

By the early 2000s, NGOs and other agencies such as the DailyNK, Radio Free Chosun, RFA, Imjingang and others were making use of a network of in-country informants and defectors armed with cell phones and other technology to bring to light the on-the-ground situation north of the 38th parallel. But with this flood of data came a new problem for Pyongyang watchers: how to gauge the reliability of this data. The difficulty of evaluating this type of citizen reporting is due to the fact that it is attributed anonymously to "sources" (soshikdong) and simply cannot be corroborated independently. Of course this is unavoidable when working in an environment with an all-pervasive security apparatus, and one in which speaking to foreigners without permission is tanta-

mount to treason. Also, relying solely on the testimony of individual defectors is unwise. Defectors naturally have an overly-negative view of the country; after all they did leave while possibly endangering the lives and livelihoods of their families, friends and coworkers. Their lives were so bad that they willingly left behind the “known” for a potentially very dangerous “unknown” and perilous trek through hostile China.

But these restrictions do not imply that all hope is lost and that such sources should be cast aside. Individual data points are not to be trusted, but the sum-totality of data points can help point us in the right direction. This process, borrowed from the natural sciences, is called “consilience.” In the words of English philosopher William Whewell, “The Consilience of Inductions takes place when an induction, obtained from one class of facts, coincides with an Induction obtained from another different class.” Or in less esoteric language: consilience occurs when multiple, independent strands of evidence point to the same conclusion. The classic example here is the link between smoking and cancer. When studies began emerging that showed a link between smoking and lung cancer, the tobacco companies were correct to point out that correlation is not causation and that other factors may be to blame for the link. But independent evidence began to mount: smoking unfiltered instead of filtered cigarettes increased the risk of getting cancer, quitting smoking was shown to decrease the risk, long-term smokers were more likely to develop cancer than short-term smokers and so on. Taken together, these strands of evidence proved beyond a reasonable doubt that smoking was not merely correlated with cancer, but was actually a major causative factor.

For the case of North Korea, individual defector testimony may not reliably tell us much about North Korean society, but when multiple defectors from different regions who are leaving at different times are painting the same broad picture, we can be relatively confident in the veracity of our understanding of domestic conditions. The same is true with undercover reporting. When multiple individuals working with different media sources start reporting on growing disgruntlement and unrest (or any other story), and this reporting is corroborated (directly or indirectly) by NGOs, Chinese businessmen who deal frequently with the North and diplomatic sources, we can be relatively more certain in our conclusions.

The natural sciences also provide Pyongyang watchers with two other valuable analytical tools for parsing undercover reporting and defector testimo-

ny: hypothesis prediction and falsifiability. After building up a constellation of data points, the next natural step is for the analyst to develop a hypothesis, and this hypothesis allows for the making of predictions. This can be accomplished simply by asking: “If the hypothesis were true, what would we expect to see happen?” Hypothetically, let us say we formulated a hypothesis to the effect that civil unrest was breaking out in the North’s third largest city, Chongjin. Such a story would be unlikely to be reported by Pyongyang’s propaganda organs, and it is even less likely that foreign reporters would be allowed to enter the city to independently report. Instead we would have to come up with a laundry list of indicators that would be consistent with an outbreak of civil unrest: quarantine of the city to prevent news from spreading, disruption in scheduled domestic transportation services to the city, a stepped up security presence and deployment of troops in the city’s vicinity, a change up in local government officials, nationwide editorials that call for stepped up national unity and hint at foreign interference in domestic affairs, stepped up ideological training for the general populace, government concessions and so on.

But no matter how exhaustive our laundry list may be, it is important to keep in mind that multiple scenarios may be consistent with the reported data. This is where the concept of falsifiability—a concept popularized by philosopher of science Karl Popper—comes into play. A viable hypothesis must be stated in such a way that a possible counterexample can be brought to bear that would, if proven true, render the hypothesis false. For our purposes, we must ask: what evidence, if found, would refute our hypothesis, and then search for that evidence. If we were working with the hypothetical hypothesis above, such evidence might include testimony from multiple defectors who left the area after the incident in question who were able to refute the claims, satellite imagery of the city that shows no obvious signs of unrest and testimony from trusted diplomatic and intelligence sources. It is important to spin multiple hypotheses out of a data set and tentatively accept those best supported by what we know while always keeping in mind Carl Sagan’s maxim, “absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.”

When reading undercover reporting and defector testimony, a healthy dose of skepticism is required, but this does not mean that these sources are of little value. Quite the contrary, if used properly, they provide an important and rare insight into North Korean society outside of the narrow and sugar-coated (and often false) picture presented in official North Korean government sources.

The use of consilience, hypothesis prediction and falsifiability are just three of the many tools that can be deployed to make full use of these sources. Thanks to those unnamed brave individuals who risk their lives to bring forth the truth, North Korea analysts are able to sink their teeth into new, illuminating data sets, and as a result, North Korean society is becoming increasingly less enigmatic.

PEAR

A WORLD POLITICS THEORY FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: CAN DICTATORS BE CIRCUMSCRIBED OF THEIR POWER?

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de Mesquita, Bruce Bueno; Alastair Smith. *The Dictator's Handbook: Why Bad Behavior is Almost Always Good Politics*. New York: Perseus Books Group, 2011. 325 pages. Kindle Edition. eISBN : 978-1-610-39045-3

The structural realist view on the world system provided by Kenneth Waltz is acclaimed for its brilliant parsimony.¹ Although it is the very attribute that becomes a target of criticism, this nevertheless counts to be a merit igniting further discussions. By the same token, the biggest merit of this book by Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and Alastair Smith is the simplicity of their theory on world politics. Based on the presumption that leaders want to obtain and maintain power: “politicians are all the same,” the authors focus on key domestic maneuvers of leaders to meet these ends (p. 20). The book, page after page, is filled with ample evidence, which the authors acknowledge was accumulated through nearly two decades of research (p. 283). The accumulated case studies of countries from all over the world that the authors present as sources of evidence are another strong point of this book in providing empirical support to their theory.

This book provides insights into today's world, in which civil violence in countries such as Syria, Libya, Iran and North Korea poses as one of the major threats to the security of world community. Contemporary global community (represented by the UN, for example) has evolved to develop the notion of security—which was narrowly used for indicating the absence of military

¹ Kenneth Waltz brings forth the world system model based on anarchy and states relying on self-help for aggregating power and eventually, their own survival.