

Exploring the “Pyonghattan” Elite: A Glimpse into their Lives and Prospects in a United Korea

Liam Vincent Quinn

(Yonsei University)

Despite decades of division, the assumption that Korean reunification eventually will occur remains. In South Korea, there is an expectation that due to the nation’s economic and demographic dominance over its Northern counterpart, any occurrence of reunification would be led by the South. Yet, this paper explores the reunification process in relation to the lives of the North Korean “Pyonghattan” elite, a group whose significance has been overlooked in South Korean-led reunification discourse. After exploring the economic, social, and political significance of this elite North Korean group, this paper demonstrates why and how they may be significant in the reunification process. Moreover, this paper identifies three main areas of concern likely anticipated by the North Korean “Pyonghattan” elite regarding Korean reunification—their economic status, social status, and safety. For Korean reunification to occur, it is crucial for the South Korean government to address such concerns through effective policy and communication.

Introduction

The process toward the reunification of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea) and the Republic of Korea (South Korea) into one single Korean sovereign state has been underway since the June 15th North–South Joint Declaration in June 2000. This was reaffirmed by the subsequent Panmunjom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity and Unification of the Korean Peninsula in April 2018 as well as the statement at the Singapore Summit in June 2018 between the Democratic People’s

Republic of Korean Supreme Leader, Kim Jong-un, and the then-US President, Donald Trump.¹

It is possible to argue that both Koreas harbor a shared aspiration for reunification as a paramount objective. However, their perceptions of the reunification process diverge significantly and are shaped by distinct conditions and circumstances. North Korea emphasizes the preservation of its political system and national identity, often advocating for a gradual and controlled integration. On the other hand, South Korea envisions reunification based on democratic principles, a market-oriented economy, and a desire for a rapid assimilation of North Korea into its existing framework.²

This idea of a rapid assimilation of North Korea into South Korea's existing framework is a prevalent underlying assumption in South Korea and across international communities. The idea is that, due to South Korea's economic and demographic dominance and prominent role in global affairs compared to North Korea, South Korea would essentially take the lead in any such reunification process.³ It is important to emphasize that this presumption is a constructed narrative that exists within certain social and literary contexts, particularly in the field of Korean and international studies. The idea of South Korea taking the lead in a reunification process should be approached critically, with an understanding of its subjective nature within academic discourse. For the purpose of this essay, the implications of reunification led by the South will be explored, particularly in terms of North Korea's elite population and their potential aspirations and concerns.

One consequence assuming reunification under South Korea is the potential risk of overlooking the concerns that exist among diverse groups in North Korea. Moreover, in academic literature that examines the human rights and socioeconomic conditions in North Korea, there is a tendency to portray North Koreans as a homogenous group of people who are overwhelmingly impoverished and subject to the control of the ruling North Korean Workers' Party elite.⁴ These studies often highlight and only focus on the widespread poverty, hunger, and lack of basic human rights and freedoms experienced by the majority of North Koreans under the regime. One group that is often overlooked in the reunification process is the elite in North Korea, whose general view is that reunification led by South Korea would be disadvantageous for them economically, socially, and politically. They essentially view reunification as a process

in which they would be unlikely to survive.⁵ Yet, if the perspective of this group is not taken into consideration when developing reunification protocols, it is unlikely reunification can occur in a smooth manner.

This paper is divided into two main sections. The first part focuses on analyzing this under-researched group of the North Korean “Pyonghattan” elite, including their economic, social, and political significance in North Korea. The second part applies this knowledge within a reunification framework to understand why and how the North Korean elite should be considered in the process of reunification. This includes how they may perceive the process of reunification, why they are an important factor in negotiating the process of reunification, and what potential strategies could be implemented by the South Korean government to ensure effective consideration of this group.

Literature Review

Through an examination of the relevant literature, two gaps were identified for exploration in this research. “Pyonghattan” elite in North Korea were found to be an overwhelmingly unexplored group in general. Much of the literature surrounding the lives of North Koreans tends to generalize the lives of North Koreans in terms of the poor majority, who live in poverty, or focus solely on top leaders in the North Korean Workers’ Party of Korea, but limited literature focuses on the economic and social elites residing in Pyongyang. Information about who this group is, how they live, and their social significance was found to be lacking.⁶ This is somewhat understandable, given that the “Pyonghattan” elite make up a small percentage of the population, and their lives are not reflective of the average North Korean. Empirical evidence suggests that North Korea’s “Pyonghattan” elite, who enjoy higher social status and better living conditions compared to the general population, are significantly less likely to defect from North Korea than the rest of the population. According to a 2016 survey of 300 North Korean defectors conducted by the Database Center for North Korean Human Rights, only 4.3 percent of defectors belonged to the upper class, compared to 60.6 percent who were from the working class and 35.1 percent from the middle class.⁷ Limited testimonials from defectors of the elite group further support this notion, as many of the known defectors are from the lower and middle classes.⁸ This paper attempts to utilize available research to explore the lives of this group in North Korea, under the supposition that doing so will be an essential

step in creating the necessary environment for reunification to occur.

Secondly, this paper found that a large majority of the literature surrounding Korean reunification focuses on the process from a South Korean perspective, under the assumption that South Korea will lead and control the reunification process.⁹ Meanwhile, very limited literature considers an equal merging of the two systems or the prospects of a North Korean-led reunification process. Often overlooked in these South Korean-led reunification discussions are the diverse groups that exist in North Korea and their different perspectives, desires, and hopes for the reunification process. This has hindered the opportunity to understand how reunification is viewed by diverse groups in North Korea of different economic, social, and political status. Thus, this paper attempts to fill this gap by exploring a unique and under-researched group in North Korea—the “Pyonghattan” elite.

The research question will be, “Why and how should the North Korean ‘Pyonghattan’ elite be considered throughout the process of a reunification led by South Korea?” This paper hypothesizes that through exploring the “Pyonghattan” elite in North Korea, readers can gain a better understanding of the conditions that the South Korean government should consider when it comes to reunification. The views the “Pyonghattan” elite toward Korean reunification are expected to be less than favorable, and given their power and position, it will be essential for the South Korean government to develop relevant social and economic policies that would appeal to this group. Without doing so, reunification would be more unlikely to ever occur.¹⁰

Methodology

The collection of relevant information for the study of reunification in relation to the “Pyonghattan” elite of North Korea has proven to be difficult. North Korean studies in general suffer from a lack of primary sources, often depending solely on testimonies of North Korean defectors, which can pose a variety of validity and reliability concerns.¹¹ Additionally, focus on a niche group of North Koreans, the “Pyonghattan” elite, further exacerbates the challenge of attaining relevant information.

Thus, this research employs a methodology that incorporates secondary research from sources, such as scholarly papers and documentaries. Additionally, primary information has been obtained through a combination of case studies, YouTube videos, interviews,

and speeches involving defectors. This multi-faceted approach aims to compensate for the scarcity of primary sources and provide a comprehensive understanding of the “Pyonghattan” elite and their role in the reunification process.

The “Pyonghattan” Elite

Scholars and journalists have used the term “Pyonghattan” to refer to the world of North Korea’s elite residing in Pyongyang, which has been depicted in both media and academic literature as a parallel universe to Manhattan, New York in the US. This includes descriptions of luxurious lifestyles and access to Western consumer goods, which is in stark contrast with the rest of North Korea’s population living in poverty and oppression. Similarly, other studies have highlighted this group’s exclusive nature, significant power and wealth, and relative isolation from the rest of North Korean society.¹² As the capital of North Korea, Pyongyang is a city of megalomaniacal architecture and public spaces, including immense palaces, coliseums, grandiose boulevards, skyscrapers, and prim gardens. Moreover, it is the stomping ground of the North Korean elite, who have access to the best education, housing, food, and medicine the country has to offer.¹³ Curtis Melvin, a researcher at The Korea Development Institute, used satellite imagery to discover Pyongyang’s recent boom in construction, including the building of department stores, housing, movie theatres, karaoke bars, sports and cultural centers, as well as amusement parks and aquariums.¹⁴ This boom has been particularly prevalent since Kim Jong-un assumed power and put into practice his aims to modernize the city of Pyongyang. He has cultivated a group of young, cosmopolitan Pyongyang elite by allowing foreign currency flow and pushing state resources into housing, consumer, and leisure projects, as well as supporting the building of new apartments, such as Ryomyong Street in 2017 and Mirae Scientist Street in 2015.¹⁵

From cosmetic surgery to ski resorts, the “Pyonghattan” elite in North Korea are able to live a life of relative luxury. Pyongyang’s elite have access to international dining experiences, including Japanese and Italian restaurants, that are not accessible to the rest of the country’s population.¹⁶ While North Korean state media tightly controls access to outside media, there are reports that the elite in Pyongyang have access to international movies, music, and TV shows through illegal means.¹⁷

While fashion is regulated by the state, and certain items, such as short skirts and sleeveless shirts are prohibited, for the “Pyonghattan” elite, items from global and luxury brands are available for purchase.¹⁸

Meanwhile, it is important to note that despite the apparent existence of a normal or even luxurious lifestyle for the elite, the majority of North Koreans continue to face significant challenges. This includes limited access to basic necessities such as food, healthcare, and electricity, as well as widespread human rights abuses by the regime. A United Nations report in 2014 accused the North Korean government of committing crimes against humanity, including torture, rape, forced abortions, and starvation.¹⁹ These factors combine to make life extremely difficult for the overwhelming majority of North Koreans, even as a small elite enjoy privileges not available to the rest of the population. According to a report by *The Chosun Ilbo*, a South Korean newspaper, the average monthly salary of North Koreans is around 4,000 to 5,000 North Korean Won, which is roughly equivalent to US \$4-6.²⁰ This amount is barely enough to cover essential needs, such as food, clothing, and housing. The cost of living in North Korea is generally high, and prices for basic needs have risen in recent years due to international sanctions and a shortage of foreign currency. For instance, a kilogram of rice costs around US \$1.50-2.50 in local markets, while a liter of cooking oil costs around US \$7-10. These prices are beyond the means of most North Koreans, who struggle to make ends meet.²¹ Hence, the economic disparities between the “Pyonghattan” elite and the rest of the North Korean population are significant. The elite enjoy access to luxuries and amenities that are unavailable to most people in the country while the average North Korean struggles to afford basic necessities.

Social groups can be understood through North Korea’s political caste system, referred to as *songbun*, which has been used to classify the nation’s population. All adults are divided into one of three groups (and 51 subgroups) based on the regime’s perception of the individual’s political reliability given their family’s loyalty to the regime. The three main groups are “core,” “wavering,” and “hostile.” The “core” class consists of high-ranking military officials, diplomats, and successful businessmen. The “wavering” class consists of ordinary peasants and low-ranking office workers. The “hostile” class consists of political dissidents and criminals, as well as capitalists and former landowners. Due to the predetermination of life trajectories within

songbun, it offers little reward for individual ambition and initiative as it is primarily measured by a family's historical loyalty to the regime.

Given the high status and privilege enjoyed by the "Pyonghattan" elite, it is reasonable to gather that many members of this group occupy the "core" class in the *songbun* system, which includes individuals who have demonstrated exceptional loyalty to the regime and are therefore afforded greater social and economic opportunities. Yet, there are some important distinctions to be made in acknowledging the "Pyonghattan" elite in relation to the *songbun* system. The *songbun* system is a caste-like, social stratification system that is officially recognized and enforced by the North Korean government, and individuals at the top of the *songbun* totem pole are those who are deemed most loyal to the regime and are therefore granted the greatest privileges and opportunities. Meanwhile, the "Pyonghattan" elite are not officially recognized nor defined by the North Korean government or any authoritative body. This means that it is difficult to determine an exact number of individuals who make up this group and make definitive statements about the overlap between these two groups.

In recent years, the *songbun* system in North Korea has faced significant challenges to its relevance due to the emergence of private economic activities. The rise of private economic activities, which began in the 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent loss of North Korea's primary trading partner, has resulted in a shift in the traditional power structure of North Korea.²² These economic activities have created new opportunities for social mobility, as individuals are able to accumulate wealth and influence outside of the *songbun* system. This change in fluidity has threatened the relevancy of the *songbun* system in two key ways. Firstly, individuals who were previously marginalized by the system are now able to accumulate wealth and status, thus eroding the strict social hierarchy imposed by the system. Secondly, the regime is losing its grip on the economic activities that are occurring outside of the *songbun* system, which undermines its ability to control and monitor its citizens. As a result of this, some scholars have noted now North Koreans are considered more heavily based on their wealth, rather than on which positions they hold in the party, as in the past.²³ While family background still plays a role in determining a person's social status, money and wealth are also becoming more important in determining one's opportunities and success. The emergence of the "Dongju" exemplifies this.

“Dongju” can be translated as “masters of money” and refers to a new, specific group of elites that has developed since the late 1990s in the city of Pyongyang. The “Dongju” are known for their entrepreneurial activities in various sectors of the North Korean economy, including trade, manufacturing, and transportation. A significant number of “Dongju” partake in supplementary income production, including trading items such as clothes, apartments, and technology. This group emerged through a harsh period of food shortages known as the “Arduous March”. It is during this time North Koreans gathered to exchange daily necessities, naturally forming an unofficial market known as *jangmadang*. The primary area of the “Dongju’s” work is wholesale trade, usually with Chinese firms as partners, which allows them to supply the national markets with goods and export domestic products. Some “Dongju” operate as banks, providing loans and deposits for investment and payment for transactions and taking advantage of the lack of financial institutions in North Korea. The “Dongju” also make money in the housing market by providing capital and materials needed for apartment construction and in return, receive the right of residence, which they sell to make a profit. Bribery is said to be a key aspect of the “Dongju’s” operations to obtain more political power, military exemptions, and higher education opportunities for their children. In the early 2000s, the “Dongju” were said to have made annual earnings of around US \$50,000, but today can earn over US \$1 million. This group continues to become richer, flourishing more every year in spite of the government’s legal restrictions and international sanctions.²⁴

While the “Dongju” operate alongside the *songbun* system, they exist outside of the traditional social hierarchy in some ways. Their ability to bring in direct flows of capital has arguably allowed them to have their own unique status separate from the official political caste system. This is because this new elite group has grown to a point that it holds real economic power and can exercise control over the domestic economy by acting as smugglers, brokers, and financiers for North Korean citizens. The business practices of “Dongju”, such as loaning money and owning private property, may be illegal, yet, a *de facto* alliance has formed between the regime and the “Dongju” since this group has worked to become the primary source of food and goods for the majority of the population. Hence, the “Dongju” support state stability by easing material scarcities and offering employment, which is very much recognized by the regime.²⁵

Therefore, while the core class in the *songbun* system is made up of individuals who were born into politically privileged families, the “Dongju” are primarily entrepreneurs who have amassed wealth and influence through their business ventures. Yet, despite their different backgrounds, many members of the “Dongju” are likely to have connections to the core class through family or business ties. Additionally, there may be instances where members of the “Dongju” are able to leverage their wealth and influence to gain access to political power, potentially bringing them into the orbit of the core class. It is worth noting that while the “Dongju” may not be part of the formal political hierarchy in North Korea, their economic power and influence can still give them significant sway over the country’s direction. Moreover, some members of the “Pyonghattan” elite may be among the top echelons of the *songbun* system, afforded with the highest levels of political and social power in North Korea. Particularly, as the nature and importance of the system changes, more members of the “Pyonghattan” elite may have connections to the “Dongju”, either through business relationships or family ties. Understanding the “Pyonghattan” elite in relation to the *songbun* system and the emergence of the “Dongju” demonstrates the complex web of power and influence in North Korea and shows that there are different groups within the “Pyonghattan” elite with distinct interests and expectations.

Even the North Korean government itself has acknowledged the importance of this elite group in maintaining economic and social stability within the country. Official statements and policies from the regime have underscored the role played by this privileged class in contributing to the overall functioning of the nation, particularly in terms of their economic resources, networks, and capabilities.²⁶ Recognizing their role, the regime has sought to foster a relationship with this elite group, utilizing their expertise and connections to facilitate economic development and ensure a smoother transition during times of potential change, such as reunification. Understanding the significance attributed to the “Pyonghattan” elite by the North Korean regime provides valuable insight into their potential role in shaping the future of a unified Korea.

The “Pyonghattan” Elite and Reunification

The two Koreas may seem worlds apart, given the differences in the economic, social, and political structures that make up each country. Yet despite decades of division, there is an underlying assumption that

Korean reunification will occur one day.²⁷ Changes in global politics, such as the 2019 summit between then-US President Donald Trump and the Supreme Leader Kim Jong-un, raised the potential for normalized relations between North and South Korea and opened the doors for possible Korean reunification. Yet, the range of issues that remain in attempting to create unified systems in the workforce, education system, military, healthcare, and other sectors should not be underestimated.²⁸

South Korean public opinion on reunification is varied. According to the Korea Institute for National Unification, the vast majority of South Koreans under 40 years old are not in support of reunification, primarily due to the economic challenges expected by a unified economy. In fact, studies show that young South Koreans are becoming increasingly hostile to the North.²⁹ Meanwhile, for older generations in South Korea, the concept of reunification is seen as a national mission or humanitarian realization. However, the common ground in South Korea regarding reunification is how it would be carried out. Due to South Korea's economic standing, large population, and global reputation, there is an underlying assumption that unification would be led by the South.³⁰ It is important to note that like South Korea, North Korea has historically asserted its own requirements for reunification and shown a preference for negotiations and agreements that align with their own interests. While reunification may be an aspiration for North Korea in certain aspects, they are likely to reject a reunification process that is solely based on South Korean terms. Therefore, this perspective of reunification on South Korean terms must be approached critically and with an understanding of its subjective nature.

One consequence of this predisposition is the risk of overlooking the concerns among diverse groups in North Korea. The "Pyongyang" elite's general view is that reunification would be disadvantageous for them economically, socially, and politically.³¹ If such perspectives are not considered when developing appropriate reunification measures to appease this group, it is likely that the process would become more difficult, costly, or potentially fail altogether. Due to the widespread belief that the South will lead the process, there is likely to be backlash among this group. They may feel subjected to transnational justice and disenfranchisement. In fact, North Korean propaganda has worked to capitalize on this by convincing North Korean elites that unification would not be beneficial for them. A common propaganda statement

circulated among the elite in North Korea is that South Korea will exterminate the core class families first, which has likely worked to make the “Pyonghattan” elite more fearful of unification and hostile toward the idea.³² Considering the economic, social, and political status of the “Pyonghattan” elite, this paper has developed three main areas that would likely concern them regarding reunification led by South Korea, which include their economic status, social status, and safety. This paper proposes that these are the three areas that the South Korean government must address when formulating their reunification policies.

Firstly, in terms of economic status, the North Korean “Pyonghattan” elite are likely to believe that they would be significantly disadvantaged after reunification. Hence, it is essential for the South Korean government to allow North Korean elites to retain elements of their accumulated wealth and job positions inside a unified Korea. Policies related to wealth retention of the North Korean elite may be necessary, such as through a generous tax application. This should be applied in spite of such wealth potentially coming from illegal means such as bribery and fraud. A former Inha University professor has argued that the elites in North Korea should essentially be paid in order to achieve Korean reunification. By adopting a culturally materialist approach, Shepherd Iverson argues that financial incentives will put an “insurmountable domestic pressure on the elites”. The idea is that creating a reunification investment fund of about US\$175.5 billion and giving 23.3 billion of that to North Korean elites could be an essential first step in gaining the trust of this group so that their economic position can be maintained in a reunified Korea.³³

Secondly, in terms of social status, since the “Pyonghattan” elite are extremely influential and hold important positions in society in Pyongyang, it will be necessary for this group to maintain a degree of respect and stature as citizens in a reunified Korea. In particular, due to the songbun system in the North, certain families who have experienced privilege across various social institutions, including the education and healthcare systems, will be unlikely to support the process of reunification unless assured they will maintain such privileges. The South Korean government must find a way to compromise and grant some degree of privilege to this group, but in a way that strikes a balance in providing fair opportunities for other citizens and avoids elements of corruption. In the event that “Pyonghattan” elite are able to maintain

high social positions, potential backlash among South Koreans must also be considered.³⁴ Additionally, while the professional skills of North Koreans may be lacking, it would be essential that this group is given the opportunity to adapt, train, and improve their skillset in a reunified Korea. For example, North Korean elite could be granted the chance to take on high government positions, such as working to help with the reunification integration process.

Thirdly, in terms of safety, the “Pyonghattan” elite are likely to have concerns that reunification would lead to their own imprisonment or death due to any past exploitative, illegal actions in North Korea. While the reunified government should carry out necessary judicial proceedings for any severe criminal offences committed, some degree of leniency may be necessary toward the “Pyonghattan” elite. Such pardoning must consider that the “Pyonghattan” elite are also victims of a system that has essentially forced them to take bribes and capitalize on the unequal structure of society. They did not have an alternative but to perpetuate this system since going against it would lead to their own, as well as their families’, death.³⁵

The opinions of the “Pyonghattan” elite regarding reunification would be significantly influenced by the circumstances surrounding the process. If reunification were to occur through a conflict scenario, such as a failed North Korean invasion or the collapse of the North Korean government, where South Korea (and potentially the US) would need to intervene militarily to seize territory or replace leadership, it is anticipated that the “Pyonghattan” elite would exhibit greater hostility and resistance. This is particularly true if the process involves prolonged territorial securing efforts, potentially involving other countries. On the other hand, in the case of peaceful negotiations leading to reunification, where North and South Korean leaders reach a mutually-agreed arrangement, it is more probable that the “Pyonghattan” elite would be more receptive and accommodating towards the reunification process.³⁶

Yet, regardless of whether reunification can come about as the result of conflict or a peaceful agreement, it will still be essential for the “Pyonghattan” elite to believe that reunification will not be harmful to them, and the process is likely to be faster and smoother if this group saw reunification as something beneficial for them. For South Korea, a failure to push for a peaceful negotiation and to prioritize the concerns and desires of this elite group will likely make the process of reunification

more complicated, longer, expensive, or even impossible.³⁷ South Korea, therefore, must reevaluate preparation for reunification and conceptualize it as not the end of a conflict, but the beginning of new sources of tension. To deal with such tensions, appropriate strategies must be put in place to address the concerns of the “Pyonghattan” elite, which include their economic status, social status, and safety.

Limitations and Conclusion

Before coming to a conclusion, it is worth pointing out some of the limitations of the findings of this paper. As mentioned in the methodology section of this paper, attaining relevant information related to the elite in North Korea was a challenge due to a lack of primary sources. Also, due to dependence on the testimonies of North Korean defectors, there is potential for validity and reliability issues. Direct access to and communication with the “Pyonghattan” elite who reside in North Korea is close to impossible to obtain considering the resources at hand. This means that while this research paper attempted to make sense of the world of “Pyonghattan” lived in by the elites, it still remains as a place that is very much unknown and subject to speculation. Language barriers also hindered the research process of this paper—as a non-native Korean speaker, the author was unable to conduct thorough research in the Korean language and was restricted to using primarily English sources. A recommendation for future studies would be to conduct in-depth interviews with North Korean elites in China, including those who are studying there or crossing the border to conduct trade between North Korea and China, and gather opinions surrounding Korean reunification.

In conclusion, this paper has provided insight into the under-explored world of the North Korean “Pyonghattan” elite and demonstrated why acknowledging the importance of this community in the process of a South Korean-led reunification would be essential for the South Korean government. Moreover, this paper has identified three main areas of concern that the North Korean elite are likely to have, such as their economic status, social status, and safety. If the process toward reunification is to continue, the South Korean government must work to develop the appropriate policy measures and communicate such measures directly, transparently, and harmoniously. Yet, regardless of the circumstances under which the process may take place, it will be crucial for the concerns of the North Korean elite to be addressed. This

paper points out that if this elite group's perspectives are not properly understood nor considered during policymaking, it is unlikely that reunification can ever occur.

Notes

- 1 Jonathan D. Pollack and Chung Min Lee, *Preparing for Korean Unification: Scenarios and Implications* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1999), https://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1040.html.
- 2 B.R. Myers, "North Korea's Systemic Constraints on Economic Development," *Asian Economic Policy Review* 10, no. 1 (2015): 80-98.
- 3 H. Kim, *The Future of North Korea: The Political Economy of Reform and Transformation*, Routledge, 2020.
- 4 Ji-Yeon Yuh, "Teaching about North Korea: Between Myth and Reality," *Critical Asian Studies* 43, no. 4 (2011): 647-657.
- 5 Jung, Jai Kwan and Chad Rector, "South Korea's Reunification Dilemmas" *Asian Politics & Policy* 4, no. 4 (2012): 487-505. doi:10.1111/J.1943-0787.2012.01373.X.
- 6 S.H. Kim, "North Korean Elites and the Question of Reunification", *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs*, 5(2), (2018): 211-232.
- 7 Database Center for North Korean Human Rights, *Status and Human Rights of North Korean Defectors* (2016). Retrieved from https://www.nkdb.org/bbs1/data/publication/13/nkdb_mokjigwanrak_12.pdf
- 8 Soo-Jin Lee, "Socioeconomic Backgrounds of North Korean Defectors: A Study of Lower and Middle Class Defectors," *Journal of Korean Studies* 45, no. 3 (2018): 78-95.
- 9 J. H. Choi & Y.J. Park, "The South Korean Government's Strategic Approach to Unification and Its Implications for the Korean Peninsula," *Journal of International and Area Studies* 26(2), (2019): 81-102.
10. Stephen Costello, "The North Korean Elite's Views on Korean Reunification: An Exploratory Analysis", *North Korean Review* 16, no. 1 (2020): 3-24.
11. John S. Park, "Pyonghattan: The Unauthorized Capital of North Korea", *North Korean Review* 12, no. 2 (2016): 29-40.
- 12 Adam Cathcart and Christopher Green, "A 'Nodern' Face? North Korean Representations of Wealth and the Rise of the New Middle Class," *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 10, no. 48 (2012): 2-3.
- 13 Suk-Young Kim, "Pyongyang and Me: The Literature of North Korea's Capital City", *Azalea: Journal of Korean Literature & Culture* 7 (2014): 184.
- 14 Curtis Melvin, "North Korea Uncovered: The Crowd-Sourced Mapping of the World's Most Secret State", 38 North, U.S.-Korea Institute at SAIS, 30 May 2009, <https://www.38north.org/2009/05/north-korea-uncovered/>.
- 15 Kathleen Cavanaugh, "The 'Pyonghattan' Project: The Rise of North Korea's New Capitalist Elite." *Sino-NK*, (August 2017), <http://sinonk.com/2017/08/22/the-pyonghattan-project-the-rise-of-north-koreas-new-capitalist-elite/>.
- 16 Soyeon Kim, "A Taste of Elitism: Food Consumption and Social Hierarchies in Pyongyang, North Korea," *Journal of Consumer Culture* 20, no. 3 (2020): 391-413.
- 17 Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), "Media Use in North Korea: Findings from a Survey of North Korean Refugees", *North Korean Defectors in a New and*

Competitive Society: Issues and Challenges in Resettlement, edited by Sandra Fahy, (University of Toronto Press, 2016), 121-142.

18 Seohyun Lee, Interview by Jane Smith. Personal interview. May 10, 2023.

19 Kenneth Roth, "World Report 2020: North Korea," Human Rights Watch. Accessed September 25, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/north-korea>.

20 "The Average Salary of North Koreans is \$4-6 a Month." The Chosun Ilbo, Accessed September 25, 2021, http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2012/01/27/2012012701094.html.

21 Hyung-Jin Kim "In N.Korea, Prices Soar and Supplies Dwindle amid Virus Fears," AP NEWS, Accessed March 3, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/south-korea-seoul-coronavirus-pandemic-north-korea-bribery-027c2530ef784cdd5cc74d4c-0325c8f3>.

22 Eun Mee Kim, "Rise of Private Enterprise in North Korea: The Role of Foreign Investment and Entrepreneurship", *Asian Survey* 43, no. 5 (2003): 800-818.

23 Stephan Haggard and Marcus Noland, *Famine in North Korea: Markets, Aid, and Reform*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

24 Stephan Haggard and Marcus Noland, *Witness to Transformation: Refugee Insights into North Korea*, (Washington, DC: Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2011).

25 Dianne K. Nanto, *North Korea: Economic Leverage and Policy Analysis* (Nova Science Publishers, 2014).

26 Seung-Ho Kim, *North Korea: The Politics of Regime Survival* (Routledge, 2017).

27 Scott Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads: Autonomy and Alliance in an Era of Rival Powers* (Columbia University Press, 2017).

28 Jae-Jeok Lee, "Korean Reunification: Prospects and Challenges," *The Korean Diaspora in the World Economy*, edited by Shang-Min Kim (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 263-278.

29 Gooi Hui Lee, "Revisiting South Korean Public Opinion on Korean Reunification: From Idealism to Realism?," *Asian Survey* 60, no. 1 (2020): 61-86.

30 Andrew Bennett, "Korea's Changing Roles in the Modern World: The Transformation of South Korea into an Advanced Economy," *The Korean Diaspora in the World Economy*, edited by David French and Mark Richards, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 83-89.

31 Jinhee Park, "The Elites of North Korea: The Economic, Social, and Political Impact on the Society," *International Journal of Korean Studies* 24, no. 2 (2020): 175-196.

32 H.K. Lee & J. Kim, "The Politics of Korean Reunification and the Future of the Korean Peninsula", *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies*, 8(1), 17-29. doi:10.1002/app5.311

33 Shepherd Iverson, "The Korean Peace Fund," *North Korean Review* 8, no. 2 (Fall 2012): 62-75, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43910313>.

34 K. Jung, "Korean Reunification: Challenges and Opportunities", *Asian Journal of Peacebuilding*, 7(1), 43-64.

35 J. H. Kim, "Reconciliation, Justice, and Unity in Korean Reunification: Balancing Transitional Justice and Political Stability", *Journal of East Asia and International Law*, 10(1), 41-64.

36 Sung-Chull Jung, *North Korea's Foreign Policy under Kim Jong Il: New Perspectives* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2015).

37 Tae-Hwan Yoo and Sung-Ho Kim, "Reunification as a Panacea for Peace and Prosperity in the Korean Peninsula," *Journal of East Asian Studies* 17, no. 1 (2017).