

North Korea's Ideology and Propaganda: Signs of Change

Konstantin V. Asmolov, Vasilii V. Lebedev

Konstantin V. Asmolov, PhD in History

Institute of Far Eastern Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia
Korean Studies Center
Senior Research Fellow

SPIN-RSCI: 9256-6834

Researcher ID: G-5161-2019

ORCID: 0000-0003-1584-2748

E-mail: kvasm@mail.ru; asmolov@ifes-ras.ru

Tel.: (+7) 499 129 00 77; (+7) 977 6435548

Address: 32 Nakhimovsky Prospect, Moscow 117997, Russia

Vasilii V. Lebedev

University of Tokyo, Japan
Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology
Postgraduate Student in East Asian History

SPIN-RSCI: 2096-5433

ResearcherID: AAZ-7916-2020

ORCID: 0000-0002-1969-9443

E-mail: kutuzkin21@korea.ac.kr; kutuzkin21@hanmail.net

Address: Japan, Tokyo-to, Bunkyo-ku, Sendagi-5-39-2, 101.

The research was carried out at the Institute of Far Eastern Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences with support from the Russian Foundation for Basic Research, Project #20-014-00020.

Korean names and terms in this text were Romanized according to the McCune-Reischauer system except for those that are widely used internationally (Kim Jong-il, Kim Jong-un, Pyongyang, etc.). The names of the authors listed in the References are written in the way they were spelt in their original works.

DOI: 10.31278/1810-6374-2021-19-1-70-97

Abstract

This article explores the evolution of the DPRK's ideology and propaganda and the channels of their transmission during Kim Jong-un's rule. The authors highlight several distinguishing features/markers of new trends in the DPRK's current ideology and propaganda.

The study indicates that the demand for change is related with both changes in Kim Jong-un's governance style and the current realities, such as North Koreans' growing knowledge about the outside world and external information pressures.

The most significant trends in North Korea's ideology today are: departure from the term *sŏngun*; the use of the umbrella term 'ideas of Kim Il-sung-Kim Jong-Il'; lower level of Kim Jong-un's personality cult in contrast to that of the previous two leaders; an attempt to delineate a watershed between purely metaphorical descriptions and qualities of the leaders and their real abilities; growing attention to domestic problems and greater openness in the discussion of pressing issues; new methods of propaganda (including social networks) addressed to the foreign audience.

Keywords: DPRK ideology, DPRK propaganda, Kim Jong-un, *sŏngun*, *ch'ukchippŏp*, personality cult.

Later, North Korea has held a noticeable niche in the world media space: apart from anti-Pyongyang propaganda and memoirs by defectors there has developed a distinct demand for books about the DPRK meant for the mass audience and not so much scholarly as travelogue-like and essayistic in style. Such works written from different angles include *Nothing to Envy* by Barbara Demick, *North Korea Confidential* by Daniel Tudor and James Pearson, *Forræderens Guide til Nord-Korea (A Traitor's Guide to North Korea)* by controversial Norwegian multimedia artist Morten Traavik, *Great Successor* by Anna Fifield, and books on North Korea by Oleg Kiryanov, Andrey Lankov, and Konstantin Asmolov.

In all likelihood this upsurge in interest is due not only to North Korea's media image of a "rogue state" as such: the DPRK's newly acquired nuclear-missile capabilities earned it the right to be seen

not just as a country that wishes to join the nuclear club, but to be formally equal to all of its other members. Also, the authors of all these books, directly or indirectly, look for the reason for the North Korean regime's unexpected resilience, which even the international community's sanctions have been unable to shake loose.

In the meantime, even in the eyes of competent observers the image of North Korea is largely stereotypical. In a situation like this it is hard to pay due attention to both changes inside the country and the pace of such changes. As a result, many onlookers—let alone politicians—tend to perceive the DPRK not per se, but rather its media image of ten years ago. This is fraught with the risk of building a wrong communicative strategy, misinterpreting certain actions, or making mistakes in judging Pyongyang's home and foreign policies.

With this in mind, the authors postulate that it is important to scrutinize the transformation of the DPRK's official ideology and propaganda, especially its content and its transmission channels, because alongside the traditional forms and methods some new ones have manifested themselves.

What are these changes due to? First and foremost, within the framework of the DPRK's political tradition the new leader is reformatting not only the political system, but also a number of ideological constructs. As far as Kim Jong-un is concerned, the generation factor has to be taken into account. Although from the standpoint of ethics and strategy he is a legal successor of his father and grandfather, a national leader who is still under forty and who has a better idea of how his generation sees the world. Consequently, his tactic looks more pragmatic.

Secondly, the imperatives of the current agenda play a role: although the DPRK is traditionally placed beyond the iron curtain, this curtain increasingly often turns out to be a mosquito net, and this cannot but be taken into account in both domestic policies and propaganda. According to the Future Strategy Research Institute of the Korea Development Bank (The Korea Times, 2020), North Korea has about six million mobile phone subscribers—a clear sign that the level of knowledge about the outside world is growing.

Thirdly, there has been soaring information pressure from the outside, with progress in science and engineering being used on a vast scale: South Korean NGOs systematically send to the North air balloons carrying not only leaflets, but also USB flash drives with “ideologically harmful” content (Birell, 2016; Greenberg, 2015).

It is noteworthy that in full conformity with the North Korean tradition one trend does not necessarily phase out another. As a matter of fact, *newly emerging structures and methods are used in parallel to the old ones*. The harsh statements by the leader's sister, Kim Yŏ-jŏng, made on June 4, 2020 and later, are quite consonant with traditional rhetoric.

However seclusive the country may remain, the number of publications about it (especially those made in the DPRK in the Korean language), has been growing steadily, which is a clear sign to an attentive onlooker that the changes in very different spheres of life—from history and education to literature and cinematography—are continuing. The authors believe this is a reason enough to point to certain developments they regard as telling signs/markers of new trends in North Korean ideology and propaganda.

Russia's main specialist on this issue is Alexander Zhebin, the author of several articles and a monograph entitled *The Evolution of the DPRK's Political System amid Global Change*. There is a PhD dissertation by Inna Pankina, devoted to the *sŏngun* policies and Olga Maltseva's article on “some special features of Kim Jong-un's strategic policy.” Andrei Lankov has written quite much on this subject as well, but generally speaking, this theme remains largely unexplored, particularly so when it comes to the changes of the past few years.

Among Western experts, it is worth mentioning Brian Myers (2015) who interprets the DPRK's ideology as radical nationalism; Cheng Chen and Ji-Yong Lee (2007) who proposed the idea of “National Stalinism” and in this context compared the DPRK with Ceausescu's Romania; and Woo Jongseok (2016) who maintains that the role of the army is the main factor of the North Korean regime's stability.

Special attention to studying the DPRK's ideology is paid in South Korea. Although the two systems have been engaged in a prolonged

standoff and the northern neighbor's image in South Korea's political circle is mostly negative, modern historiography has displayed a distinct trend towards abandoning Cold War clichés. Among the relatively recent studies Kang Hyesök's dissertation stands out. The author uses an impressive range of sources to examine the DPRK's ideological development process and arrives at the conclusion that there emerged a special form of "adaptive state nationalism" (*chögŭngjök kukka minjokchuï*) (Kang, 2017). Chön Miyöng points to qualitative changes in North Korea's nationalism under the new leader: culture and the arts in the DPRK are ever more strongly imbued with nationalism, while the preservation and development of national culture becomes an ideological task of "resisting capitalist culture which is penetrating into the country in the era of globalization" (Chön, 2018).

NEW RHETORIC

Departure from the term *söngun*, traditionally translated as the "military first" policy is a trend that is the first to catch the eye. In accordance with the *söngun* policy, it is the army and not the working class, that is the "backbone" and "driving force of the revolution" (Kim Jöngün, 2003).

Under Kim Jong-un, the *söngun* mobilization rhetoric, which could be heard on any occasion during the period of severe challenges, began to fade into the background together with the term as such. In the new version of the Constitution *söngun* is mentioned only once and only in the past tense (it was removed from other parts of the preamble and also from Articles 3 and Article 59) and has practically disappeared from day-to-day propaganda (Constitution, 2019).

Starting from March 2013, the term of the 1960s—*pyöngjin*—came into use again. This term implies parallel development of the defense potential and the economy, although during Konstantin Asmolov's stay in the DPRK in 2016-2017 Professor Kim Changgyöng explained that *pyöngjin* was merely a continuation of *söngun* in the new conditions (Asmolov, 2018, p.180). However, on April 20, 2018, the 3rd Plenary Meeting of the Workers' Party of Korea's Central Committee issued a statement that the tasks of parallel economic development and creation

of nuclear forces had been “brilliantly translated into life” and the focus now should be on building a socialist economy (KCNA, 2018).

In June 2016, the State Defense Committee (*kukpang wiwŏnhwe*) was replaced by the State Council (*kungmu wiwŏnhwe*), which would be more appropriately rendered into English as Committee for State Affairs (Chosŏn Sinbo, 2016a) (a name consonant with China's State Council).

However, the army remains one of the ideological pillars of North Korean society and enjoys Kim Jong-un's unflinching attention.

Another trend in ideology and propaganda is ***not so much putting Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-Il on an equal footing as mentioning them jointly, as the “Paektusan leaders.”***

On all occasions when the term ‘Kimilsungism’ (Kim Il-sung's ideas) was mentioned before, the newly-coined notion ‘ideas of Kim Il-sung—Kim Jong-Il’ is in use. The Kimilsungist Youth League in August 2016 was renamed to Kimilsungist-Kimjongilist. The most significant illustration of this policy is the renovation of the sculptural group on Mansu Hill. Next to the statue of Kim Il-sung there emerged a statue of Kim Jong-Il. Kim Il-sung's head was altered to portray him at a later age. Monuments to Kim Jong-Il began to be built mostly at places associated with his activity, for instance, Kim Il-sung University.

In accordance with amendments to the 2019 Constitution, “great Comrade Kim Il-sung” was renamed to “great leader (*suryŏngnim*) Comrade Kim Il-sung”, and “Comrade Kim Jong-Il” to “great leader (*ryŏngdoja*) Comrade Kim Jong-Il” (Constitution, 2019). Just like Kim Il-sung, who enjoys the title of the country's eternal president (correctly translated as “chairman”), Kim Jong-Il will remain in history as eternal General Secretary and Chairman of the Defense Committee.

Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism is interpreted as an “integral system of Juche ideas and the related theories and methods concerning the revolution and ways of building a new society, ‘elucidated’ by great Kim Il-sung and ‘developed in depth and in an all-round way’ by the great leader Kim Il-sung and the great leader Kim Jong-Il” (Constitution, 2019). It incorporates Juche ideas proper as the philosophical basis of the DPRK's home and foreign policies, the Juche theory of revolution, and Juche methods of administration.

In a word, the introduction of the term *'Kim Il-sung-Kim Jong-Il ideas'* by no means phases out the Juche ideas, but is an attempt to propose a broader umbrella notion that would cover everything that has been proposed by the leaders, with the Juche ideas remaining the frame and handle of this umbrella.

Another significant trend should be seen in the publication, started in 2017 on Kim Jong-un's personal instructions, of an enlarged collection of Kim Il-sung's works, which, as follows from the contents of the volumes released by now, will contain far more texts than the 100-volume collection of 1992-2012. There are three explanations for this, and they do not necessarily contradict each other.

Firstly, a greater share of Kim Il-sung's legacy consists of "remarks on certain issues," which as a rule were written down by the leader's entourage. Collecting and cataloguing them is a no easy task, but it seems plausible that the publication was partially driven by the necessity to include newly found statements. Secondly, it should not be ruled out that in this way some new texts are generated intended to support the current changes with reference to "the founding father's predictions worthy of a genius." Lastly, in the process of collecting and cataloguing different sources the already known statements can be reinterpreted "for the purpose of creative analysis of the leader's testament."

Moreover, on July 7, 2020, the DPRK announced the release of the first book of a multi-volume edition entitled *Together with the Nation* (*Minjokkwa Töburö*), devoted to Kim Il-sung's activity after Korea's liberation (Chosön Sinbo, 2020a). This multi-volume collection was ordered by Kim Jong-un personally and is in effect a continuation of Kim Il-sung's memoirs, which cover the period until 1945, with the author's own narration leading until the second half of 1937. The fact that this new series is a continuation of the memoirs is underscored in many ways. The title itself, *Together with the Nation*, is an allusion to the title of Kim Il-sung's memoirs *With the Century* (*Segiwa Töburö*).

As for attempts to create a cult of Kim Jong-un equal to that of his father and grandfather, there is no such trend at all. Although the new leader has accepted the rank of marshal and the songs in his honor

in which he was referred to as a “young general” are now performed without the lyrics, no other traits of a personality cult are in sight. There are no ceremonial portraits or badges with his image, and even such titles as Brilliant Comrade or the Genius of all Geniuses, mentioned by North Korea watchers, are now practically absent from *Rodong Sinmun* pages.

Although in 2013 Kim Jong-un inherited from his father the title of the “great leader” (*widaehan ryōngdoja*) (Chosŏn Ilbo, 2013), after the introduction of amendments to the Constitution this title was exclusively reserved for Kim Jong-Il, while Kim Jong-un has been mostly referred to as the “respected supreme leader” (*kyōngaehanŭn choego ryōngdoja*), with the word “respected” (*kyōngaehanŭn*) (which is more correctly translated as “respected and loved”) also used in relation to Kim Jong-Il, when he was the “beloved leader” during the rule of the “great leader”.

Another remarkable detail is that North Korean shops have on sale special notebooks for writing down both leaders' quotes. The covers of notebooks for Kim Il-sung's and Kim Jong-Il's quotes are of the same color but differ from that meant for Kim Jong-un's quotes.

Departure from the term *sŏngun* and the assertion of the term ‘Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism’ reflects certain changes in the DPRK's political practices. On the one hand, the authorities are keen to stress that the emergency period in the country's life is over; on the other hand, Kim Jong-Il takes a worthy place next to his father in terms of personality cult, while Kim Jong-un has shown no signs of creating his own cult so far. It would be hardly correct to state that the whole mythology is beginning to undergo a mild revision. Rather, it would be more appropriate to say that Kim Jong-un, while staying within the framework of tradition, positions himself not as a sacral leader but as a head of state, and nothing human is alien to him. Suffice it to recall his speech at the military parade on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the Workers' Party of Korea on October 10, 2020, which the authors regard as a characteristic feature of new rhetoric (Chosŏn Sinbo, 2020b). Kim said aloud that he was unable to rise to the people's expectations to the full extent, occasionally showed

he was lost for words, and curtly said “Thank you.” This mode of behavior contradicts the previously shaped image of a leader who coins impeccable definitions. It is quite significant that Kim Jong-un ended his speech with words of praise addressed not to the Workers’ Party of Korea, but to the people.

PROPAGANDA METAPHYSICS

Of special interest to many (including the mass media) is the component of the propaganda mix that would be very appropriately described as “metaphysical.” One of the brightest examples is the special “ability” of the leader to instantly travel in space by deforming (warping) it, which creates a feeling of his omnipresence (*ch’ukchippöp*) (Chang Ŭngyöl, 2020).

Such metaphorical descriptions are widely spread in the hagiography of the North Korean leaders. However, the official narrative has never literally attributed supernatural qualities to any of them. They remained products of the “folk epos,” which emerged during the anti-Japanese war and were reframed in journalistic essays and adventure books.

The DPRK’s official periodicals publish such articles from time to time. On the official website of the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland one can read a digest of a story about a “warping leader,” which says that Kim Jong-un, too, uses “the same *ch’ukchippöp*” (Uri Minjokkiri, 2019). Earlier, a similar editorial was published in *Rodong Sinmun* (Rodong Sinmun, 2018a). The emphasis on the metaphorical nature of *ch’ukchippöp* is invariable. It is noteworthy that the coverage of these episodes in the Western press, which took note of them after Kim Jong-un in 2020 had “disappeared from the radar screens” for some time (Stickings, 2020; Heath, 2020), can hardly be called sensationalist by the current standards. Commentators remark in a matter-of-fact fashion that the North Korean media deny that the “great leader” possesses supernatural abilities (albeit “widely believed in the reclusive country”). Failing to notice the original message, they speculate that the personality cult propaganda is getting “more scientific and rational” (Mok, Wong and Jun, 2020).

Another widely spread misunderstanding concerns ***blood rhetoric*** as the nation's distinguishing feature. The term 'bloodline' (*p'itchul* as genuinely Korean; *hyölt'ong* of hanmun origin) has been officially in use in the DPRK's socio-political discourse at least since 1973. The latest version of the definition found in dictionaries states that the nation is a "unit of social life, which took shape historically on the basis of the consanguineous, linguistic, cultural and territorial commonality, which constitutes a stable collective of people sharing a common destiny" (Chosönmal Taesajön, 2020a).

At first sight this definition looks unambiguous: the nation is formed on the basis of biological kinship, but deeper analysis of Korean publications on this score provides enough reasons to suspect that the issue is far more complex. In 1985, the third volume of a 10-volume *Anthology of the Great Chuch'e Ideas p'itchul* was defined as a product of a "long historical process." It was also stated that "the nation has a common *p'itchul* but is not a consanguineous entity (*chojikch'e*) such as a clan or tribe" (Kim Ki-bong, 1985, p. 73). This definition has developed further in the 2014 book *Minjok Chungsimüi Kyöngnyun* (*Nation-Centric Governance*), where 'bloodline' is described as follows: "*p'itchul*... in contrast to the commonality of clans and tribes, ... formed in a natural way as a result of blood bonds between relatives and members of the family, is determined historically within a certain territory" (Rim, 2014).

Alongside this, as many researchers note, in the Kim Jong-Il era the understanding of *p'itchul* as an entirely biological (physiological) parameter prevailed not only in media publications, but also in some academic works (Krupyanko and Akulenko, 2017; Lee, 2018; Son, et al., 2009). However, lately this term has become metaphorical and does not necessarily indicate a biological link between individuals (KCNA, 2015). The trend towards certain "debiologization" of *p'itchul* is seen in modern ideological works. The 2014 book *Study of the Chuch'e Nation Theory*, while recognizing the biological aspect of the term *p'itchul*, stresses that with respect to the nation it can be interpreted as a "sociological concept" incorporating "ideological achievements, experience and traditions passed to next generations." The author

stresses that this interpretation of *p'itchul* “is not identical to *p'itchul* that is understood biologically” (Ch'oe, 2014, p.55). The author arrives at the conclusion that the biological aspect “is merely a physiological basis, and not a seed or sprout of spiritual qualities,” in other words, sociological *p'itchul* (Ch'oe, 2014, p.57).

It should be noted that in contrast to the early concept of “blood and soil” (Blut und Boden), which in the first half of the 20th century developed into full-scale Nazism, sacralized soil and called for getting back to the “roots” (Hildebrand, 1984), becoming, in fact, an antagonist of the ideology of modernity (Frøland and Irons, 2020). The commonality of territory (*ryŏngt'ŏui kongtongsŏng*), however, in accordance with the Kimjongilist interpretation of the Juche ideas is not believed to possess nation-forming qualities as such, but merely sets a spatial framework in which other processes take place.

Naturally, the DPRK maintains that the Korean nation has an innately common bloodline, but at the same time points out that in this particular case this applies to the specific features of the Korean nation, whose consanguinity in the direct sense and in the Jucheist sense overlapped, and not to nations in general. Moreover, they especially note: “Our nation does not postulate that its biological structure was developing somewhat differently from other nations. The assertion of national supremacy on the account of biological racial features is a reactionary racial theory, while the absolutization of merits of one's own nation and spiteful attitude to other nations is national chauvinism” (Rim, 2014). Departures from this definition, which appeared in North Korea's official media these days should be seen from the angle of socio-political rhetoric and not as signs of changes in the domestic ideology.

The images of the “revolutionary bloodline” (*hyŏngmyŏng hyŏlt'ong*) or Mount Paektu bloodline (*Paektu hyŏlt'ong*) are an even more widely known traditional narrative of the DPRK. They are usually believed to be the exclusive markers of the ruling Kim family. However, as mentioned above, starting from a certain moment in the DPRK discourse the word *hyŏlt'ong* (and its vernacular Korean version *p'itchul*) alongside the basic meaning, including the consanguineous or genetic bond, acquired an interpretation that in the North Korean

vocabulary is explained as a “figurative expression synonymous with a connecting thread that transmits the tradition of revolutionary activity through generations (Chosŏnmal Taesajŏn, 2020b). Kim Jong-un used this term in his speech at the 9th Congress of the Kimilsungist Socialist Youth League in August 2016. He said that Kim Jong-Il “opened a new period of complete thriving of the youth movement, which brings up young people to be devout successors of the great cause of the Juche revolution, who continue the Paektu bloodline” (Chosŏn Sinbo, 2016b). For this reason, in the Korean discourse the meaning of the expression ‘bloodline’ is sometimes very different from the first idea that may spring to an unprepared Western reader’s mind.

In a word, of all the newly developed trends in the DPRK ideology we should first of all list the “rationalization of propaganda” and the official narrative’s departure from fantastic plots, which are gradually transformed into metaphors to highlight a certain virtue. Traditional images and stories are being reconsidered in a sense, but without being profaned. The bloodline rhetoric is a bright example of such metaphorization, which turns the ideological discourse towards more common notions.

NORTH KOREAN PROPAGANDA IN THE INFORMATION ERA

Next, a few words about the new forms and methods of propaganda. In 2014, Kim Jong-un for the first time mentioned the idea of information wars on the Internet, which, he said, “must become a scene for the propaganda of our ideology and culture” and called for implementing plans for upgrading and informatizing the means of massive foreign propaganda, but at the same time “to put up a tight double and triple mosquito net” to prevent “capitalist poison” from getting into the country. He warned that defeatist attitudes were the worst risk in ideological work and stressed that WPK members should “change the party’s image” and analyze successes and setbacks (Kim Jŏngŭn, 2014).

In studying Kim Jong-un era propaganda foreign analysts tend to focus on the “digital trenches” or campaigns for maintaining a sound moral image of the nation, but for us it is far more important to examine *the emphasis on internal problems and more open discussion*

of burning issues, which used to be discussed only within “the inner circle.” His speech at the stone-laying ceremony on the site of a future hospital in Pyongyang in March 2020 is one vivid example. Kim frankly and in very harsh terms spoke about typical construction flaws and examples of sloppy work and negligence (as well as the ensuing consequences, both economic and political ones) and warned in advance that he would be very upset should such things happen at this very important construction site again (Chosŏn Sinbo, 2020c).

On February 29, 2020, at an enlarged meeting of the WPK Central Committee’s Politburo, devoted mostly to measures for preventing a coronavirus epidemic, Kim Jong-un said that “within the framework of the state-run anti-epidemic system any privileges should be prevented by all means” (Vorontsov, 2020) and “slammed the manifestations of antiparty, antipopular and antisocialist behavior” (Zwirko, 2020a).

Articles critical of bureaucracy and corruption appear in the North Korean media regularly. For example, *Rodong Sinmun* published such stories on December 10, 2018 (Rodong Sinmun, 2018b). In 2020, such publications were more frequent. Several more followed in March (Kim Byŏngjin, 2020; Kim Jeongmin, 2020a, 2020b), in May (Kim Jeongmin, 2020c) and in June (Kim Jeongmin, 2020d). The authors warned that corruption could cause the ruling party to lose credibility with and support of the people.

The plenary meeting of the WPK Central Committee in Pyongyang on August 19, 2020 said outright that the targets of the current five-year development period, set at the 7th WPK Congress in May 2016, had not been met, for which there was no excuse, even though the country had “encountered unexpected and unavoidable problems.” For this reason, the lives of the people, “faced with adverse internal and external circumstances,” saw no improvement (KCNA, 2020).

Another example of such openness was the frank recognition that the youth was vulnerable to enemy propaganda. On April 3, 2020, *Rodong Sinmun* stressed the importance of ideological upbringing of the younger generation, which, the paper said, was a key target for the “ideological and cultural infiltration of our enemies.” The newspaper warned that young North Koreans were more prone to external

influences because “they are inquisitive and sensitive and have not been taught to endure hardships” (Han, 2020).

Moreover, in an article published on May 26, 2020, the newspaper said that attempts to imitate even a single film or song without critical attitude to entertainment will leave a stain on national culture and result in the proliferation of “rotten bourgeois culture.” It was stated outright that in some countries that had been building socialism the government’s neglect of ideological work with the new generation resulted in a situation where the youth was the first to develop an addiction to “corrupt culture spread by the imperialists” and that the younger generation was particularly vulnerable to cultural “decadence” (Sö, 2020).

But at the same time it would be wrong to say that North Korea fights Western culture as a phenomenon. The Moranbong Band (which, in a sense, is North Korea’s riposte to Vanessa May) is an example of how an increasingly popular “foreign” form can be filled with Juche content and an unmistakable reincarnation of the good old rule “If you cannot beat them, join them.”

As far as the “digital trenches” are concerned, the North Korean Internet meets the needs of an undemanding user well enough. K. Asmolov’s interviewees said there were noticeboards, dating sites, and even a MMORPG.

Responsible for the “digital trenches” is the operating system Kwangmyŏng (Shining Star), which has at least two important features. Firstly, the screenshots of viewed content are saved, and not deleted, which enables the personnel of the security services to instantly see what sites the user visited. Secondly, the digital signature system—the so-called “authentication files” (Ji, 2019)—prevents downloading of ideologically undesirable content from a flash drive picked up on a street.

In this context special mention should be made of *the new methods of propaganda via social networks*, addressed to foreign audience. This resource has been active for a rather long time already, but it was mostly filled by official propaganda content. Now it contains videoblogs allegedly made by North Koreans themselves, in an informal style that is pretty close to international or South Korean standards.

Firstly, there is the Echo of DPRK, which was just recently renamed to the Echo of Truth (2020). This channel, launched on August 20, 2017, at first offered mostly “impressions shared by American students” or videos of performing artists with disabilities, but in 2020 its format became more informal and diversified. Besides newscasts or extracts from Kim Il-sung’s memoirs (usually less than one thousand views) now there is a classical vlog (My favorite Grocery in Pyongyang), with more than 23,000 subscribers and 1.7 million views since its launch in August (Park, 2020).

A young woman vlogger, Un A (Ўна), walks about Pyongyang and briefs the audience on the city’s places of interest in fluent English; Un A is fashionably dressed and looks to be 25 years of age. Researcher Meredith Shaw, of the University of Tokyo, says her videos look very much like Japanese or South Korean tourist vlogs (Zwirko and Hotham, 2020). The greatest attention of South Korean and other international media was attracted by Un A’s video of April 25, 2020, in which the young woman visited a supermarket to dismiss foreign media rumors about panic buying in Pyongyang amid speculations about the national leader’s failing health. “I think fake news is the last thing we need in the time of such a fierce battle with COVID-19, and it is another reason why we should remain vigilant,” she says in the video (Kang, 2020).

Another YouTube channel called New Korea (Yi, 2020) was launched in April 2020. It chronicles the day-to-day life of a seven-year-old girl, Ri Su-jin, and her family—the girl has breakfast, washes hands, plays the piano and speaks about her “abundant and happy life” (Roh, 2020). In one of the videos Ri Su-jin takes the viewers on a tour around her apartment building and the surroundings. She shows her piano, a fan, a velvet sofa, and an aquarium.

One more example of the same sort is the Twitter account @coldnoodlefan, which appeared in the summer of 2017 and, according to NK News, is believed to be connected with the company Sogwang involved in several lines of business, such as restaurants and the media. @coldnoodlefan promotes Un A’s videos in Twitter and in China’s Weibo (Zwirko and Hotham, 2020).

NK News says this format replicates methods employed by Russia's RT and China's CGTN. It speculates that its emergence was prompted by the results of visits to Pyongyang by the chiefs of Russian and Chinese government-run mass media and the conclusion of agreements on cooperation in the struggle against fake news (Zwirko and Hotham, 2020). It should be noted, however, that such propaganda would have had no chances to succeed without some tangible improvements in the quality of life. No outright public eyewash attempts were noticed. At least, according to Konstantin Asmolov, who had a chance to see for himself apartments of this class in the elite neighborhood Mirae during his visit to the DPRK.

Next, we should note changes in the *methods of struggle against anti-North Korean statements made by defectors*. The exposure of Shin Dong-hyuk—the central personality of “Escape from Camp 14” (Harden, 2012) is the best example. In October 2014, the North came up with video statements concerning Shin's real biography and video footage to confirm it. According to Pyongyang's side of the affair Shin was born not in a penitentiary, his father is still alive, the injuries he suffered were purely household ones, his mother and brother were executed in 1996 for killing a woman neighbor, and Shin defected after facing criminal charges for raping a 13-year-old girl. It is quite remarkable that the content's presentation was somewhat different from North Korean television's customary style: statements by his father and the victim's mother in the studio sounded very sincere and natural (Kim Hanber, 2014). This by no means indicates that North Korea's disclosures were not pre-rehearsed and are 100-percent trustworthy. But the new presentation format undoubtedly produced the desirable effect. After that Shin began to be openly criticized even by other defectors (Feast and Kim, 2015). In the end, in January 2015 Shin contacted his coauthor Blaine Harden to confess that he had incorporated some “fictive elements” into the story. Harden eventually acknowledged that in some respects Shin “moved things around” (Fifield, 2015). After some time, Shin quit big politics and social networks.

North Korea's *updated historical series* is another trend that is worth mentioning. On July 22, 2018, North Koreans were offered the

premier show of an eight-episode historical TV-series entitled “The Wild Ginseng Gatherers of the Imjin War” (*Imjinyŏn-ŭi simmanidŭl*), which instantly drew much attention worldwide.

The series tells the life story of a peasant who gets involved in the events of the Imjin War (1592–1598). Cruel Japanese invaders, assisted by a Korean defector, invade Korea to get hold of the secret of cultivating Korean ginseng. Along with the class contradictions of Korean society of that time, the series brings up the issue of national traitors and stresses the sacred duty of each Korean to struggle for the freedom and independence of their homeland.

This series has many remarkable features that are absolutely new for the DPRK’s ideology and propaganda, and deserves a separate article, but here let us mention just some of them. Firstly, the visual picture made with the use of the latest technologies is of a very high quality and seems to replicate contemporary South Korean or Japanese TV-dramas. Special visual effects and martial arts fight scenes are no less impressive. Secondly, the plot is multilayered and intriguing, which makes it strikingly different from all previous products of this kind.

Unlike the movies of the 1970s and 1980s, “Ginseng Gatherers” is almost free from traditional playing up the role of the national leader. Of course, all positive characters in the series are outstanding personalities, but the focus is not centered entirely on them. The main message is the struggle for the homeland against external and internal enemies and the necessity of unity for the sake of victory. Another very important feature of the series is the name of the Imjin War, which is not referred to as the Imjin Patriotic War (a standard term widely used in the DPRK), but is described by a more traditional common Korean phrase *Imjin waeran* (Imjin Japanese Disturbance).

Most remarkable is the fact that the series was created with support from the North Korean trade company Changsu (Longevity), whose main line of business is the production and export of ginseng. The main theme of the serial, ginseng’s protection from external enemies, is in fact the company’s hidden advertising. The authors of the “Ginseng

Gatherers” went as far as to make an open product placement. In the final scene the main character looks at a ginseng-shaped cliff, and seconds later the cliff transforms into a ginseng. The film ends with captions and subtitles that brief the viewer on the whole line of the company's products, videos showing different stages of ginseng production, and documentary clips from the film sets.

The South Koreans' reaction to the “Ginseng Gatherers” is quite remarkable. The next day after the airing of the first episode South Korea's main news agency Yonhap published a lengthy review. In particular, it stressed the up-to-date presentation, the next episode's teaser⁶ and some other novelties.

The series earned praise from Chŏn Yŏng-sŏn, a research professor at Konkuk University's Institute of the Humanities for Unification. He said that recent North Korean films and dramas, unlike previous products, had a sense of color and were quite flexible in terms of content and form (Yonhap, 2018). The author of another lengthy article on the South Korean portal Tanji ilbo (2018) put it even more frankly. He said that despite all the drama's flaws, it is so well-made that it was not for the National Security Act it would have already had a million views on YouTube alone.

* * *

It would be appropriate to conclude that the transformation of ideology and propaganda during Kim Jong-un's rule proceeds along several tracks.

First. The attempts to upgrade the language of ideology and propaganda are largely targeted at the younger generation. They follow several guidelines and are implemented resolutely and successfully by and large.

Second. The content of propaganda is being changed far more moderately than its language, and its continuity and links with the ideals and doctrines of the past remain intact. Some elements of the propaganda machinery are rationalized and somewhat desacralized: instead of an impeccable leader there emerges a leader enjoying popular support. At the same time, the current ideology's conformity

with the doctrines of the previous leaders is not called into question. On the contrary, the media keeps saying that Kim Jong-un “continues the thoughts and intentions of the great leaders completely, without the slightest changes and in the original form” (Tang, 2014, p. 6).

Third. On the one hand, it is postulated that the period of emergency measures is over; on the other hand, the country’s problems are now discussed more frankly, and the permissible level of public criticism has grown. True, it is still way below the Soviet era’s *glasnost*, but quite a few critical statements that could previously be heard only within a circle of select few nowadays are pronounced *ex cathedra*.

Counterpropaganda is being changed, too. The videos slamming defectors look less bombastic and outspokenly scripted and rehearsed. Also, the nature of the charges put forward is addressed, above all, to the Western and internal young audiences, which are very sensitive about sexual abuse against minors.

At the same time, it would be wrong to say that the new trends unequivocally replace the old ones. They are rather a supplement to what is already in existence.

How can one gauge the effects of the change in North Korean propaganda? For the time being there are three indicative facts. First of all, this development is now monitored by such major media resources of great authority as NK News, which has released a series of detailed stories (Zwirko and Hotham, 2020).

Secondly, starting from June 4, 2020, Facebook began to supply the DPRK-related accounts of this type with warnings that publishers “are wholly or partially under the editorial control of their government.” And in August 2020, Twitter first “temporarily restricted” the account @coldnoodlefan and then suspended it for “violating the platform’s rules and publishing propaganda” (Zwirko, 2020b).

Also indicative are the lamentations by South Korea’s radio international KBS that experts believe it is practically impossible to stop the influx of North Korean digital content, particularly if it comes from such platforms as YouTube, Twitter or Instagram, whose servers are in third countries (KBS, 2020).

A large article in *The Korea Times*, published on August 21, 2020, noted that “in this way the regime is trying to dispel its status as a pariah state and instead promote itself as ‘a normal country’” (Park, 2020), and the question arises as to what extent this content may be subject to the National Security Act.

As far as the content and tactics are concerned, the presented material may be analyzed within the framework of constructivist concepts, which will prompt the most promising guidelines for further research into this remarkable phenomenon.

It might be worth examining the method of imitation and mirroring, which was thoroughly analyzed by Stephen Holmes and Ivan Krastev (Krastev and Holmes, 2019). In this context, at the propaganda level North Korea mirrors its southern neighbor (including soft-power elements and work through unofficial actors); at the strategical level it follows China's example (a combination of the image of a responsible and independent country and a variety of restrictions, including technical ones, on hostile propaganda); and from the standpoint of ideology it imitates/introduces the practices observed in the Soviet Union in its last years and China (open criticism of corruption and bureaucracy at the official level).

Or it might make sense to employ Marshal McLuhan's conceptual construct to identify certain changes in both information channels (official ones are coupled with unofficial ones and there emerges a certain distinction between internal and foreign propaganda, with greater emphasis on counterpropaganda as an attempt to defeat the opponents' arguments not through defamation but with counterarguments), and in the target audience, which is younger and more foreign.

In his book entitled *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* McLuhan says: “Today, the backward countries can learn from us how to beat us” (McLuhan, 1964, p.374). It looks like North Korea may well become a quick and capable learner. Although there are no signs it might attain a global victory in the information war, it is already quite capable of scoring tactical points on the domestic and foreign fronts.

References

Asmolov, K., 2018. *Ne tol'ko rakety: puteshestvie istorika v Severnuyu Koreyu* [Not Just Rockets: A Historian's Trip to North Korea]. Moscow: Russky Fond Sodeistviya Obrazovaniyu i Nauke.

Birell, I., 2016. How Could Our Country Lie So Completely? Meet the North Korean Defectors. *The Guardian*, 27 August [online]. Available at: <www.theguardian.com/global/2016/aug/27/north-korea-defectors-ian-birrell> [Accessed 6 September 2020].

Chang Ŭngyöl, 2020. Ch'ukchippop-üi pigyöl [A Mystery of "Ch'ukchippop"], *Rodong Sinmun*, 20 May [online]. Available at: <www.rodong.rep.kp/ko/index.php?strPageID=SF01_02_01&newsID=2020-05-20-0008> [Accessed 6 September 2020].

Chen, Cheng and Lee, Ji-Yong, 2007. Making sense of North Korea: "National Stalinism" in Comparative-Historical Perspective. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 40(4), pp.459–475. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.postcomstud.2007.10.003>

Ch'oe Huiyöl, 2014. *Chuch'è Minjok riron yöngu (che 2 p'an)* [Study of the Chuch'è Nation Theory (2nd Edition)], Sahoe kwahak c'hulp'ansa.

Chön Miyön, 2018. Kim Jöngün sidae Pukhan Minjokchuüi; tamnon, munhwa, chöngchaek [Nationalism in the Era of Kim Jöngün: Discourse, Culture, Policy]. *Pukhan Hakpo*, 43(1), pp.218-249.

Chosön Ilbo, 2013. [Chang Söng-t'aek sukchöng] Puk, Ch'öegün Kim Jöngün-e 'widaehan yöngdoja' hoch'in sijak [(The Purge of Chang Songt'aek) North Korea Recently Began Calling Kim Jong-un the 'Great Leader']. *Chosön Ilbo*, 11 December [online]. Available at: <www.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2013/12/11/2013121100255.html> [Accessed 6 September 2020].

Chosön Sinbo, 2016a. Choego inminhoeüi Kungmu wiwonhoe wiwonjangüi immuwa kwönhanül kyujöng. Sahoejuüi hönppopül sujöng poch'unghame taehan pogo [The Supreme People's Assembly Sets the Duties and Authority of the Head of the State Affairs Commission. A Report on the Correction and Supplement of the Socialist Constitution]. *Chosön Sinbo*, 30 June [online]. Available at: <chosonsinbo.com/2016/06/sinbo-k_160708-2/> [Accessed 6 September 2020].

Chosön Sinbo, 2016b. Kim Jöngün wönsunim-kkesö Kim Ilsöng sahoejuüi chöngnyön tongmaeng che 3 ch'a taehoe-esö hasin yönsöl [Speech of Marshall Kim Jong-un at the 9th Congress of the Kim Ilsung Socialist Youth League].

Chosŏn Sinbo, 29 August [online]. Available at <www.chosonsinbo.com/2016/08/kcna_160829-2/> [Accessed 29 November 2020].

Chosŏn Sinbo, 2020a. Hyŏnmyŏng Silhwa Chongsŏ «Minjokkwa Töburö» je 1 kwon / Kim Ilsŏng chusŏgnimüi haebanghu öbjökül sösul [Volume I of “Together with the Nation” from the “Genuine Revolutionary Tales” Series Narrates President Kim Il Sung’s Post-Liberation Achievements]. *Chosŏn Sinbo*, 10 July [online]. Available at: <www.chosonsinbo.com/2020/07/10suk01/> [Accessed 6 September 2020].

Chosŏn Sinbo, 2020b. Chosŏn Rodongdang ch’anggŏn 75tol kyöngch’uk yölböngsik-esö hasin Kim Jöngün wönsunim-üi yönsöl [Speech of Marshal Kim Jong-un at the Parade Celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the Workers’ Party of Korea]. *Chosŏn Sinbo*, 11 October [online]. Available at: <www.chosonsinbo.com/2020/10/11-33/> [Accessed 28 November 2020].

Chosŏn Sinbo, 2020c. Kim Jöngün wönsunim-kkesö Pyöngyang chonghap pyöngwön könsöl ch’akkongsin-esö yönsölül hasiyötta. [Marshall Kim Jong-un made a speech at the ground-breaking ceremony of the Pyongyang general hospital]. *Chosŏn Sinbo*, 18 March [online]. Available at: <www.chosonsinbo.com/2020/03/kcna_200318/> [Accessed 29 November 2020].

Chosŏnmal Taesajön, 2020a. Minjok [Nation]. *Chosŏnmal Taesajön* [online]. Available at: <www.uriminzokkiri.com/index.php?type=ckodic&skey=민족> [Accessed 6 September 2020].

Chosŏnmal Taesajön, 2020b. Hyölt’ong [Blood Line]. *Chosŏnmal Taesajön* [online]. Available at: <www.uriminzokkiri.com/index.php?type=ckodic&skey=혈통> [Accessed 06 November 2020].

Choy Min Chao, 2020. Facebook Issues New Warnings on North Korean Propaganda Pages. *NK News*, 5 June [online]. Available at: <www.nknews.org/2020/06/facebook-issues-new-warnings-on-north-korean-propaganda-pages/> [Accessed 6 September 2020].

Constitution, 2019. Socialist Constitution of DPRK. *Naenara* [online]. Available at: <naenara.com.kp/main/index/ko/politics?arg_val=constitution> [Accessed 6 September 2020].

Echo of Truth, 2020. *Echo of Truth* [video online]. Available at: <www.youtube.com/channel/UCP5_cAbRgjsZjkhRHBq84xQ/videos> [Accessed 6 September 2020].

Feast, L. and Kim, J., 2015. Video from Father May Have Compelled North Korea Defector to Change Story. *Reuters*, 19 January [online]. Available at:

<uk.news.yahoo.com/video-father-may-compelled-north-korea-defector-change-095246797.html#VNQsWPx> [Accessed 6 September 2020].

Fifield, A., 2015. Prominent N. Korean defector Shin Dong-hyuk admits parts of story are inaccurate. *The Washington Post*, 17 January [online]. Available at: <www.washingtonpost.com/world/prominent-n-korean-defector-shin-dong-hyuk-admits-parts-of-story-are-inaccurate/2015/01/17/fc69278c-9dd5-11e4-bcfb-059ec7a93ddc_story.html> [Accessed 6 September 2020].

Frøland, C. M. L. and Irons, J., 2020. *Understanding Nazi Ideology: Its Historical Roots, Evolution and Consequences*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers.

Greenberg, A., 2015. The Plot to Free North Korea with Smuggled Episodes of 'Friends'. *Wired*, 1 March [online]. Available at: <www.wired.com/2015/03/north-korea/> [Accessed 6 September 2020].

Han Ŭnil, 2020. *Chŏngnyŏn kyoyang saŏp-e hyŏngmyŏng-ŭi chŏndo-ga tallyŏitta* [The Perspectives of the Revolution Rests on the Educational Work [Towards the] Youth]. Available at: <www.rodong.rep.kp/ko/index.php?strPageID=SF01_02_01&newsID=2020-04-03-0010> [Accessed 29 November 2020]

Harden, B., 2012. *Escape from Camp 14: One Man's Remarkable Odyssey from North Korea to Freedom in the West*. Viking.

Heath C., 2020. North Korean Media Have Debunked the Long-Standing Myth that the Nation's Founder Kim Il-Sung Was Capable of Teleportation. *News Chain*, 28 May [online]. Available at: <www.newschain.uk/news/north-korea-finally-admits-actually-founder-kim-il-sung-did-not-have-magical-powers-10218> [Accessed 6 September 2020].

Hildebrand, K., 1984. *The Third Reich*. London; Boston: Allen & Unwin.

Ji Dagyum, 2019. Inside a (Censored) North Korean Tablet, from Karaoke Apps to "Samurai Hunter". *NK News*, 6 June [online]. Available at: <www.nknews.org/2019/06/inside-a-censored-north-korean-tablet-from-karaoke-apps-to-samurai-hunter/> [Accessed 6 September 2020].

Kang Hyessŏk, 2017. *Pukhan Minjokchuŭi yŏngu: chŏgŭngjŏk kukkaminjokchuŭi wa chŏngdangsŏngŭi chŏngchi* (The Politics of Legitimacy and Resilience: Adaptive State Nationalism in North Korea). Doctoral thesis. Department of Political Sciences, Seoul University.

Kang Seung-woo, 2020. North Korea's Propaganda Changes. *The Korea Times*, 19 May [online]. Available at: <www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2020/05/103_289769.html> [Accessed 6 September 2020].

KBS, 2020. Tijiŏl chipchunghanün pukhan ch'ejehongbo... ödikkaji poado twelkka? [Digital Promotion of North Korea System... How Far Can I Look?]. *KBS World Radio*, 1 June [online]. Available at: <world.kbs.co.kr/service/news_view.htm?lang=k&Seq_Code=356210> [Accessed 6 September 2020].

KCNA 2020. Chosön Rodongdan che 7 gi che 6 ch'a chönwönwiwönhoe Kyölchongsö — 2021-nyön 1wör-e tang che 8 ch'a taehoe sojip Chos [Decision of the 6th Plenum of the 7th Central Committee of the Workers Party of Korea — The Eighth Congress of WPK will be held in January 2021]. *KBS World Radio*, 20 August [online]. Available at: <kcna.co.jp/calendar/2020/08/08-20/2020-0820-002.html> [Accessed 27 November 2020].

KCNA, 2015. Kim Jöngün che 1 pisö chönt'u pihaengsa paektusan chigu tapsa haenggundae söngwöndul-gwa hamkke Paektusan-e orusoyötta [Kim Jong-un 1st Secretary Climbed Mount Paektu with the members of the Study Tour Party of the Paektusan Area Fighters Unit]. *KCNA*, 19 April [online]. Available at: <http://www.kcna.co.jp/calendar/2015/04/04-19/2015-0419-008.html> [Accessed 28 November 2020].

KCNA, 2018. Chosön Rodongdan Chungangwi che 7 gi che 3 ch'a chönwönwiwönhoe — Kim Jöngün wiwönjang chido [The 3rd plenum of the 7th Central Committee of the Workers Party of Korea [Is Held under the] Guidance of Kim Jong-un]. *KCNA*, 21 April [online]. Available at: <www.kcna.co.jp/calendar/2018/04/04-21/2018-0421-001.html> [Accessed 27 November 2020].

Kim Byöngjin, 2020. Uri tang-üi inminjök söngkyök-ül tturyösi kwasihan ryöksajök hoeüi [The Historical Meeting That Clearly Demonstrated the People's Character of Our Party]. *Rodong sinmun*, 2 March [online]. Available at: <www.rodong.rep.kp/ko/index.php?strPageID=SF01_02_01&newsID=2020-03-02-0001> [Accessed 29 November 2020].

Kim Hanber, 2014. Merzkaya lichnost' "bezhtensa" Sin Don Heka [Loathsome Personality of "Refugee" Shin Don-hyuk]. *DPRK TV, Youtube*, 16 December [video online]. Available at: <www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=3&v=pTFryv2buDo&feature=emb_logo> [Accessed 6 September 2020].

Kim Jeongmin, 2020a. North Korean State Media Warns Against "Poisonous" Corruption among Officials. *NK News*, 16 March [online]. Available at: <www.nknews.org/2020/03/north-korean-state-media-continues-to-warn-officials-against-toxic-corruption> [Accessed 6 September 2020].

Kim Jeongmin, 2020b. North Korean Official Purged for "Debauchery," Defying Quarantine: State Media. *NK News*, 23 March [online]. Available at:

<www.nknews.org/2020/03/north-korean-official-punished-after-disobeying-quarantine-measures-rodong/> [Accessed 6 September 2020].

Kim Jeongmin, 2020c. North Korean Media Warns Officials Against “Obsolete” Attitudes, Fame-Seeking. *NK News*, 19 May [online]. Available at: <www.nknews.org/2020/05/north-korean-media-warns-officials-against-obsolete-attitudes-fame-seeking/> [Accessed 6 September 2020].

Kim Jeongmin, 2020d. Kim Jong Un Will “Mercilessly” Punish Corrupt Officials, North Korean Media Says. *NK News*, 2 June [online]. Available at: <www.nknews.org/2020/06/people-first-kim-jong-un-merciless-to-corrupt-officials-lauds-state-media/> [Accessed 6 September 2020].

Kim Jöngün, 2003. *Söngun hyökmyöng-ün uri sidae-ül widaehan hyökmyöngrosön-imyö uri hyökmyöng-üi paekchönpaeksüngu-üi kich'üida* [The Line of Songun's Revolution Is the Great Revolutionary Line of Our Era and the Ever-Victorious Banner of Our Revolution]. Available at: <www.uriminzokkiri.com/idex.php?ptype=crevo4&mtype=view&no=7043> [Accessed 27 November 2020].

Kim Jöngün, 2014. *Hyöngmyöngjögün sasang kongse-ro ch'öehu süngni-rül aptanggyö nagaja* [Let Us Hasten the Final Victory by [Launching] the Revolutionary Ideological Offense]. Available at: <www.uriminzokkiri.com/index.php?ptype=crevo4&stype=1&mtype=view&no=7129> [Accessed 29 November 2020].

Kim Ki-bong, 1985. *Chuch'è sasang-üi sahoe yöksa wölli* [Anthology of the Great Chuch'è Ideas]. P'yöngyang: Sahoe Kwahak Ch'ulp'ansa.

Krastev, I. and Holmes, S., 2019. *The Light That Failed: Why the West Is Losing the Fight for Democracy*. UK: Penguin and Random House.

Krupyanko, A. and Akulenko, V., 2017. Jucheiskaya teoriya entogeneza koreitsev [Chuch'è Theory of Ethnogenesis of Korean Nation]. *Gumanitarnye issledovaniya na Dalnem Vostoke i v Vostochnoi Sibiri*, Vol. 2, pp.43–51. DOI: 10.24866/1997-2857/2017-2/43-51.

Lee Jae Sun, 2018. *State Ideology and Language Policy in North Korea: An Analysis of North Korea's Public Discourse*. Doctoral dissertation, [pdf]. Graduate Division of the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. Available at: <scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/bitstream/10125/62321/Lee_hawii_0085A_10091.pdf> [Accessed 25 November 2020].

McLuhan, H. M., 1964. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. 1st Ed.: McGraw Hill, 1964; Reissued by MIT Press, 1994.

Mok Yong Jae, Wong, E., and Jun Leejin, 2020. North Korean Founder Kim Il Sung Did Not Have the Ability to Teleport, State Media Admits. *Radio Free Asia*, 22 May [online]. Available at: <<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/korea/chukjibop-05222020173452.html>> [Accessed 25 November 2020].

Park Han-sol, 2020. North Korea's Propaganda Efforts Evolving on YouTube. *The Korea Times*, 21 August [online]. Available at: <www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2020/08/103_294646.html> [Accessed 6 September 2020].

Rim Yich'öl, 2014. Minjok Chungsimüi Kyöngnyun [Nation-Centric Governance]. *Pyongyang Ch'ulpansa* [online]. Available at: <uriminzokkiri.com/index.php?ptype=cbooks&stype=0&ctype=0&page=1&mtype=view&no=2629&skey=민족중심의%20경륜> [Accessed 6 September 2020].

Rodong Sinmun, 2018a. Inmin taejunüi Ch'ukchippöp [Ch'ukchippöp of Popular Masses]. *Rodong Sinmun*, 07 February [online]. Available at: <www.rodong.rep.kp/ko/index.php?strPageID=SF01_02_01&newsID=2018-02-07-0009> [Accessed 6 September 2020].

Rodong Sinmun, 2018b. Ilkkundül-ün inmin-ül wihayö myölsa pongmuhaja (Let the Workers Selflessly Serve the People). *Rodong Sinmun*, 10 December [online]. Available at: <www.rodong.rep.kp/ko/index.php?strPageID=SF01_02_01&newsID=2018-12-10-0001> [Accessed 29 November 2020].

Roh Sökcho, 2020. Chönt'ujok Ri Ch'unhüi aenkö taesin kkoma yut'yubö Ri Sujin tungjang... [Child Youtuber Ri Sujin Appears Instead of Militant Ri Ch'unhüi...]. *Chosön Ilbo*, 1 June [online]. Available at: <www.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2020/06/01/2020060100128.html> [Accessed 29 November 2020].

Sö Söngböm, 2020. *Sahoe munhwa chinji-rül paekpang-üro tajinün saöp-üi chungyosöng* [The Importance of the Work for Comprehensive Strengthening of the Ideological and Cultural [Battle] Positions]. Available at: <www.rodong.rep.kp/ko/index.php?strPageID=SF01_02_01&newsID=2020-05-26-0012> [Accessed 29 November 2020].

Son Yönjong, et al, 2009. *Chosön t'ongsa sang (kaejöngp'an)* [Outline of the Korean History]. Vol 1. Revised edition. P'yöngyang: Sahoe kwahak ch'ulp'ansa.

Stickings, T., 2020. North Korea's Founder Kim Il Sung Did Not Have the Ability to Teleport, State Media Finally Admits. *Mail Online*, 5 October [online]. Available at: <www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8362191/North-Koreas-founder-Kim-Il-Sung-not-teleport-state-media-admits.html> [Accessed 6 September 2020].

Tang Kyönggho, 2014. Kyönggaehanün Kim Jöngün tongji-kkesö palkhyöjusin uri sik-üi kyöngje kwalli pangböp-üi ponjiljöc “ükching [Essential Characteristics of the Economy Management of Our Own Style Opened to Us by the Loved and Respected Comrade Kim Jong-un]. *Kyöngje yöngu* [Economy Studies], 163(2). Pyongyang: Kwahak paekkwajasajyönc’h’ulp’ansa.

The Korea Times, 2020. 6,000,000 Mobile Phones in Use in North Korea: Research. *The Korea Times*, 12 August, [online]. Available at: <www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2020/08/103_294266.html> [Accessed 6 September 2020].

Ttanji ilbo, 2018. Ribyu. Namhan ch’öech’o pukttü ribyu: ‘Imjinnyönüi simmanidül’ [Review. First North Korean Drama Review in South Korea: ‘Ginseng Diggers of the Year of Imjin’]. *Ttanji ilbo*, 5 December [online]. Available at: <www.ddanzi.com/ddanziNews/540501792> [Accessed 6 September 2020].

Uri Minjokkiri, 2019. Kip’un ttüt saegyö jusin chukjipöp iyagi (The Story of Chukjiböp with a Deep Meaning), *Uri Minjokkiri*, March 27, [online]. Available at: <uriminzokkiri.com/index.php?ptype=cgisas&mtype=view&no=1169599> [Accessed 6 September 2020].

Vorontsov, A., 2020. Severnaya Koreya — oasis v okeane Covid-19. [North Korea — an Island in the Covid-19 Ocean]. *Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC)*, 31 March [online]. Available at: <russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/severnaya-koreya-oasis-v-okeane-covid-19/> [Accessed 6 September 2020].

Woo Jongseok, 2016. Songun Politics and the Political Weakness of the Military in North Korea: An Institutional Account. *Problems of Post-Communism*. 63(4), pp.1-10. DOI: 10.1080/10758216.2016.1145065.

Yi Wonju, 2020. N. Korea Embraces YouTube as a New Tool for Propaganda Aimed at Wider Audience. *Yonhap News Agency*, 4 June [online]. Available at: <en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20200604008700325?section=news> [Accessed 6 September 2020].

Yonhap, 2018. Puk sae yönsokkük, tallajin hyöngsik nunkkil... sangöphwa yomdu-e twönna? [New North Korean Drama’s Changed Form and Looks. [Was It Devised with Commercialization in Mind?]. *Yonhap News*, 23 July [online]. Available at: <www.yna.co.kr/view/AKR20180723075100014> [Accessed 6 September 2020].

Zwirko, C., 2020a. Kim Jong-Un Sacks Top Officials for “Corruption” at a Meeting on Coronavirus. *NK News*, 28 February [online]. Available at: <www.nknews.com/2020/02/28/kim-jong-un-sacks-top-officials-for-corruption-at-a-meeting-on-coronavirus/>

nknews.org/2020/02/kim-jong-un-sacks-top-officials-for-corruption-in-meeting-on-coronavirus/ [Accessed 6 September 2020].

Zwirko, C., 2020b. Twitter Abruptly Restricts North Korean State Media's @coldnoodlefan Account. *NK News*, 12 August [online]. Available at: <www.nknews.org/2020/08/twitter-abruptly-restricts-north-korean-state-medias-coldnoodlefan-account/> [Accessed 6 September 2020].

Zwirko, C., 2020c. Twitter Fully Shuts Down North Korean Propaganda Account. *NK News*, 31 August [online]. Available at: <www.nknews.org/2020/08/twitter-fully-shuts-down-north-korean-propaganda-account/> [Accessed 6 September 2020].

Zwirko, C., and Hotham, O., 2020. What's Up Pyongyang? North Korea Experiments with Vlogging to Fight "Fake News". *NK News*, 18 May [online]. Available at: <www.nknews.org/2020/05/whats-up-pyongyang-north-korea-experiments-with-vlogging-to-fight-fake-news/> [Accessed 6 September 2020].