



DATE: Wednesday, September 20, 2017

SUBJECT: North Korean Domestic Conditions and Human Rights, South Korean Press Briefing | The Asia Foundation

MAIN POINTS:

- The North Korean economy is growing, led by the private or quasi-private sector, Chinese direct investment, and North Koreans working abroad
- The Byungjin policy seems successful, and there is no evidence of political instability in the North
- Market development and human rights issues coexist
- There is no improvement on human rights
- We must look to South Korea first, as it must take the lead on the human rights issue, but it must be an international issue.

EVENT OVERVIEW

Date: Monday, September 11, 2017

Time: 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Location: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 7th Floor, 1779 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington, DC 20036

Attendees:

- **Speaker, Greg Scarlatoiu**, Executive Director, Committee for Human Rights in North Korea

Committee for Human Rights in North Korea (HRNK)
1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW · Suite 435 · Washington, DC 20036
(202) 499-7970 · Fax (202) 758-2348 · www.hrnk.org

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- **Speaker, Frank Jannuzi**, President and CEO, Mansfield Foundation
- **John Brandon**, Senior Director of The Asia Foundation's International Relations programs, Associate Director of the Washington, DC office
- **Choon Ho Yoon**, member of the press
- **Jae Ho Lee**, member of the press
- **Jai Hyek Choi**, member of the press
- **Seng Wan Choi**, member of the press
- **Gerald Martin**, member of the press
- **Cholhi Lee**, member of the press
- **Hyukhoon Jung**, member of the press
- **Ritaek Kim**, member of the press
- **Jung Keun Lee**, member of the press
- **Jeong Ho Nam**, member of the press

SUMMARY

Mr. Jannuzi began by introducing himself. It had been 8 years since his last visit to the DPRK and he was previously at Amnesty International. Now at the Mansfield Foundation, Mr. Jannuzi said the foundation had conducted two study projects on the DPRK, and that he would share some of their findings. He emphasized that there would not be many statistics, as the data is unreliable.

His first observation was that the NK economy is growing. This growth, he said, is led by the private or quasi-private sector. NK's economy is fueled by Chinese direct investment and by NK workers working abroad. Jannuzi mentioned that agricultural production is generally on an upwards trend, fueled by the growth of small markets, creating an incentive for increased production. The growth however, he said, is unequal, as Pyongyang enjoys higher standards from the rest.

His second observation was that the Byungjin policy appears to be working, as there are improvements in both the economy and nuclear forces, even with international pressure and sanctions.

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His third observation was that, while it is very hard to know, there is no clear evidence suggesting political instability in the North. KJU appears in charge, with no serious threat to his rule.

With regards to human rights conditions, Jannuzi said he sees no improvement. While it is true that standards of living for some is improving, he said, the state control of freedoms remain very severe, as do the punishments for criticism.

Mr. Jannuzi followed by discussing US policy on human rights. He said the Congress created the position of special envoy because the problem is multifaceted; the nuclear problem is solely one piece. He mentions that under the new administration, the envoy position will be combined with another, which he thinks is very unfortunate, as it evidences the overall retreat by the administration on human rights issues around the world. He added that it is especially unfortunate in this period of higher tension, when we should not signal that these issues are not important to us.

Mr. Scarlatoiu followed, by firstly emphasizing that each and every conceivable human right is violated in North Korea, and that it is the only country still running a political prison camp system in the 21st century, in which 120,000 men, women, and children continue to be imprisoned. He added that the mission of HRNK is to monitor, investigate, and report on the situation of human rights in North Korea, by using satellite imagery analysis, defector testimony, inside sources, and expert consultations. Based on this research and methodology, he said, HRNK has recognized several human rights trends under KJU:

- 1) The crackdown on attempted defections
- 2) The restructuring of the North Korean political prison camp system
 - o facilities close to the Chinese border have been shut down, prisoners have been relocated, inland facilities have expanded.
- 3) Disproportionate oppression of women
 - o married women have assumed primary responsibility for the survival of their families, women are mostly arrested and imprisoned for alleged wrongdoings in markets, mostly women who cross into China in search of possibilities and get arrested and repatriated
- 4) Aggressive purges since 2009 (transfer of hereditary power)
 - o 4 fundamental building blocks purged: military, party, internal security agencies, inner core of Kim family

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Mr. Scarlatoiu followed by emphasizing that the Kim regime is a criminal regime and that the three Kims have been rational. He noted, however, that there were two caveats in Mr. Jannuzi's discussion regarding markets;

1) Market development and human rights issues go hand in hand; markets and tyranny have coexisted since time immemorial

2) Private property does not exist in North Korea, but private entrepreneurship is flourishing

- combination generated an unprecedented level of corruption
- regime needs the protection of government agencies in order to run almost all methods of activity

Scarlatoiu then discussed the construction of buildings in Pyongyang; emphasizing that there is an illustrative difference in and out of Pyongyang.

He made final points regarding the alliances surrounding North Korean policy, mentioning the ROK, the US, the EU, Japan, and many others, adding that without the US and the ROK, the coalitions would not survive.

Q&A

Q: (Jeon Ho-nam) So when it comes to the Moon Jae-in government, coming up with what they call the Moonshine policy in the spirit or context of the sunshine policy, which is basically quite similar vantage points, based on the philosophy that with tyranny, if we stimulate their economic reforms, it will promote civil society, which would be a cultivation of an atmosphere where democracy is desired, either resulting in democratization or the collapse of the regime. And that seems to be their conviction. But actually, after hearing from you, it seems that even though economy of the North is growing, there is no sign of democratization whatsoever. The growth of market economy in any shape or form is only resulting in corruption, nothing resembling democratization is on the horizon, but rather solidifying the strength of the North Korean regime. What is the utility of a Moonshine or Sunshine policy, because it seems that even though the economy is growing, there seems to be no true desire expressed towards democratization inside North Korea. In case of Arab spring, the economy was struggling, however people erupted in

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rebellion or in opposition. But nothing like this would seemingly happen in the case of North Korea. This is my conundrum.

A (Jannuzi): I began my interest in Asia by studying in China, and I was a student in China in the early 80s. And there was a lot of optimism about how openness, and market economy would lead to political liberalisation in China. And today, the conventional wisdom is that that optimism has proven to be false. In the case of China, of Vietnam, and Cambodia, it demonstrates that you can have economic growth and even the growth of market economy without having significant progress on democratization. Economic growth and privatization does not automatically contribute to the growth of democratic governance. This is true in communist systems, it's also true in authoritarian systems like South Korea used to have. I do think that the growth of the private sector in North Korea creates contradictions, and where there are contradictions, as Mao Tse-tung said, there would be resistance, and where there is resistance, there would be repression. So we see contradictions in North Korea, we do not see much resistance in NK, but hard to know, as we cannot see hearts of the people. But we definitely see repression. My view is it's too soon to say what's going to happen, it's too early in process of market reform. It's very hard to know what long term effect will be. I can't prove it, but my opinion is that there needs to be an information component and a mobilization component to go along with any economic component of change. But economic itself not sufficient to bring about mobilization. Like grassroots, or even top-down. Some kind of mobilization to propagandize and stir-up. Just one last thought; you know in China, people say that kai fung is a failure for democratization, but we did see Charter 08, this online democracy movement. There are political dissident voices in China today. So maybe they haven't had enough time.

A (Brandon): I just wanted to add to Frank's comment that, I think a big difference between North Korea and China, is that when China opened up in the late 1970s, you began to see Chinese studying in US, in Australia, in Europe, and so they were exposed to the larger world. That is not so much the case. Now I know there's a period of time where some North Koreans were studying in Australia, but not many. Is that enough in terms of a group of people able to advocate in a very careful way some kind of constructive reform? Today, it might lead to a death sentence.

Q: (Jeon Ho-nam) Personally, I just wish that North Korea would be a second China, similar to China.

A (Brandon): We should be that lucky.

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Q: (Jeon Ho-nam) I want to bring up a careful counter argument, because though you said China is falling short of true democracy, but this may be strictly a US view. The Chinese themselves think they have full blown democracy with a lot freedom. They seem to be very satisfied with their leadership, not because they lack true knowledge on the global scale. In other words, the leader brought good things. Personally, sometimes I think there are South Korean leaders that are just as good as those Chinese leaders.

A (Scarlatoiu): There are political dissidents in China, many of them are jailed. A very interesting story, heard from my American students in classes I teach in South Korea. They were telling me they were taking classes in China, after a few months, they were beginning to think like the Chinese, their worldview was shifting. They were very happy to return to sanity in South Korea, in a free and democratic country. Perhaps a couple of very quick points about economic exchanges with North Korea, as we all know North Korea is an extraordinarily oppressive regime that knows how to limit the social side effects of interaction with the outside world. This applies to any interaction, business, humanitarian; extract maximum benefits with minimum social side effects. I suspect that the overwhelming majority of workers at the Kaesong Industrial Complex were wives of KPA officers and NCOs. Since 80% of the KPA is deployed South of the Pyongyang-Wonsan line. How many percent of 120 million dollars earned at Kaesong went to the Korean regime? All of it, it's US dollars, the workers are not paid in US dollars. So there is serious moral hazard here. Of course this is made even more complicated by North Korea's nuclear and missile developments. That said, I personally continue to believe in the power of transformation. The sunshine policy in my view had two fundamental goals:

- 1: By bestowing more or less unconditional investment and aid onto the North Korean regime, changed behaviour of Kim regime.
 - Failed.
- 2: Change the hearts and minds of North Koreans by exposing them to South Korea and South Koreans.
 - That objective did not have enough time for implementation, and I'm afraid it never will.

Of course you're aware of the pejorative meaning of the term Moonshine policy in English. Moonshine is a type of alcohol produced illegally.

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Q: (Jung Keun Lee) I am an editor and writer at Pyongyang Daily. I will try to answer the two questions raised by Mr. Scarlatoiu. Those issues are well detected by the media but not so much by the general public. However, as perhaps you know very well, there seems to be two opposing trends to how the South Korean government should approach nuclear and human rights problems. One good example, one trend, was when Moo-hyun was in power, it became such a sensitive issue whether we should be involved in decision making of UNHRC. However, things have changed much since then. I don't think there are two divergent views inside South Korean society. In other words, when it comes to the NK HR problem, I think the majority view is that we take it seriously, and that it is a problem. So when it comes to the issue of whether we want to keep this position of ambassador on the HR problem, depending on the political current, their strength may be weakened, but completely removing the position may not sit well, even with the Korean general population. I have one question: In your view, which is that economic effort for reform alone is not enough to bring true democratization, and we would need such things as mobilization or information inflow. When it comes to information inflow I understand the US government passed a bill to legitimize the inflow of information into NK and it mentioned some specific ways to do so, for example, short wavelength radio, the provision of some electronic gadgets... I was wondering if you could possibly give me a quick list of what some of those available means are and what are more practical tools.

A (Scarlatoiu): There are lots of available vehicles, as you said, first, radio waves, Radio Free Asia, Voice of America, staffed with NK defectors. USBs, mobiles, media storage devices and memory chips, are also being used. There are groups who have flown drones into NK, and of course there are groups that fly or used to fly balloons into NK. In my view, the vehicles are not a problem, technology will find a way, there is a lot of interest in NKHR in Silicon Valley, for example. Instead, messaging is the problem: it must be based on a solid understanding of how NK operates, of how North Korean society is structured, I'm sure you know *songbun*... But it is very important to understand that we, in the free world, go through different cognitive processes. N. Koreans are not necessarily taught how to analyze, how to draw conclusions based on available information. Watching SK drama is a great thing, it means the regime can no longer tell the NK people that S. Koreans are an impoverished people shining the boots of American GIs. But there is a long way to revolution. Knowledge is needed, knowledge of how to associate, social cohesion is needed, and courage is needed. They cannot all be acquired by the means of watching dramas. Most importantly, these groups need funding; the current funding allocated to these operations is rather dismal – it is a very small amount.

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Q: (Choon Ho Yoo) I am an editor and writer with Seoul Broadcasting Service. I would like to begin by paying a true and heartfelt respect to you, since you are dedicated to resolving this problem of NK HR. Thank you so much. I believe everyone is on the same page that the NK situation is dismal, and that there should be efforts to improve that. I believe it is a faulty conclusion that on the part of the psyche of the NK leadership that the West, showing an interest, making interventions, making efforts and showing some action is not necessarily not the goal itself, but rather the means to eventually bring about some other process for the collapse of the regime. I couldn't really shake off the feeling that how come we had to fly 13 hours, with all due respect had to sit and hear from you, when we are in a better geographical position to discuss the situation north of the DMZ. This human rights approach almost by default goes hand in hand with suspicion of purposes, of possibly collapsing or changing the regime. Maybe because of that threat, maybe even some missionaries who worked in the North were detained and some even died, people who are not directly working in the human rights field. Having said all that, I am grateful and respectful for the interest and effort you make, but as a South Korean citizen I am slightly embarrassed.

A (Jannuzi): Well, it's the Korean peninsula, not the American peninsula. For sure, it's the Korean people who have to lead the process of managing North-South relations, and hopefully one day accomplishing reunification on the Korean peninsula. Mike Mansfield taught me that we should not question another person's motive, but it is certainly possible that some who portray themselves as champions of HR in the North, have a different priority, and may have ambitions for collapse. I won't speak for Greg, but I think it is fair to say that two of us are motivated only by a desire to improve the HR conditions in the North, and that's what drives us in terms of our concern. But in taking an interest in the HR situation in the North, South Koreans, Americans, the Commission of Inquiry, is necessarily involved in politics, because improving the situation in North will require political decisions by the NK government, so it is a political issue. It would be disingenuous to claim that an interest in human rights in the North is purely humanitarian, of course it has a political dimension. That's why when I was at Amnesty International, before we began our work in NKHR, I went to SK to speak to the Amnesty International chapter in Seoul which had been very silent on NKHR issues, to talk to them, to hear from them, and listen to their concerns. And not just Amnesty, I spoke to many many societal and political groups, because I think that South Korea has to lead on this issue. The Mansfield Foundation certainly cannot lead, I don't even speak Korean.

A (Scarlatoiu): There is no doubt that SK must lead, and there is no doubt that HR in NK must be an international issue. If it is only Koreans from South Korea, or ethnic Koreans

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from America or Canada are concerned, we are lost, there is no hope. I think the key word here is legitimacy. NK is a member of the UN, it is bound by the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, it is bound by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, it is bound by the International Covenant on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights. The DPRK has assumed international obligations in the human rights field, but it is not observing any of these obligations. Pakistan is not an oasis of freedom or human rights, and yet we are so much more worried about a nuclear NK than we are about Pakistan. In particular because this is a regime with an abysmal HR record. If it is doing such terrible things to its own people, what is it ready to do in the international community. My organization, I think Frank will agree that Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, many other human rights organizations, do not want regime change, we want to see improvement in HR situation, we want to see the UN Special Rapporteur visit North Korea, we want to see the OHCHR visiting NK, we want to see the UN High Commissioner for Refugees getting involved. But not regime change. And a very quick personal view, it is okay to remove tyrants from power as long as one has a semblance of a plan for the transition period. I have personally witnessed a violent, bloody, anti-communist revolution. What I wish for all South Koreans and in the North, is peaceful change, peaceful transition, whatever that might take. That said, we continue to be aware of the fundamental strategic objective of the Kim regime, of course survival. The only competitor, as we all know this is not a criminal cartel, this is a monopoly, the only competitor is a free, democratic, prosperous Korea. Unfortunately, the 2nd fundamental strategic objective in the mind of the regime, is acquiring hegemony of the entire Korean peninsula; it has not changed.

Report by: Chloe Pulfer, Research Intern

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