The North Korea Instability Project

Insurgency in the DPRK? Post-regime Insurgency in Comparative Perspective

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March 2017

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Insurgency in the DPRK? Post-regime Insurgency in Comparative Perspective

I. Introduction

Instability in the DPRK could have many sources, ranging from internal political strife to economic collapse to a renewal of intense armed conflict with the ROK and its allies. Regardless of origin, instability could lead to the collapse of the regime, which could in turn open the door to potential civil war inside the DPRK as well as resistance to an intervention seeking to reunify the Korean peninsula. Politicians and military planners alike must take seriously the possibility of insurgency in any state following rapid and violent governmental change.

Yet all states are not created equal in terms of the potential for insurgency. This paper uses a comparative approach to assess the likelihood of a serious insurgency and/or civil violence in the DPRK following a hypothetical collapse of the state. It proceeds in two main parts. First, it outlines the factors correlated with and seemingly contributing to the origin of insurgency in previous post-regime environments. The focus is heavily but not exclusively on Iraq, as Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath regime and the Kim regime have a number of similarities (though significant differences as well). Second, it briefly evaluates the DPRK in terms of these factors to determine how serious the possibility of insurgency is in a post-regime context. This analysis concludes the DPRK is ripe for a well-armed and virulent insurgency following the end of the current regime.

II. The Roots of Insurgency

In assessing the potential for post-regime insurgency there are six factors from a comparative examination of insurgency that stand out: 1) unsecured weapons stockpiles; 2) elite regime forces; 3) disbanded mass armies; 4) social network ties; 5) mobilizing ideology; and 6) sanctuary. While this list is not exhaustive, it captures some of the most significant factors. Note it excludes some commonly noted drivers of insurgency generally (such as the "greed vs. grievance" debate) as it is focused on the special case of post-regime insurgency.[1]

***1. Unsecured weapons stockpiles*:** Insurgencies need weapons and ammunition to confront any significant security force. In the early post-World War II period, access to weapons was often a serious impediment to insurgency against colonial powers. In Kenya, for example, the scarcity of military firearms available to insurgents placed a significant upper bound on the degree to which

1 For an overview of the literature and arguments why post-regime change insurgency is distinct see Seth Jones, "The Rise of Afghanistan's Insurgency: State Failure and Jihad," *International Security* v.32 n.4 (Spring 2008).

the insurgency could challenge British military forces. The British were able to limit both the number of military troops deployed as well as the level of firepower used against the insurgents due to the limited firepower of the insurgency.[2]

In contrast, the Viet Minh in Indochina after World War II were already relatively well-armed, as the Allied powers had equipped them to fight the Japanese. Following the Japanese surrender the Viet Minh retained significant arms, allowing them to conduct an effective insurgency against the returning French. Soon the Viet Minh were able to count on significant supplies from the Soviet Union and China as the Communist bloc provided support to "wars of national liberation." As a result, the Viet Minh were often (though not always) on an equal footing with French forces in terms of firepower.[3]

In the post-Cold War period, would-be insurgents often had no obvious patrons but were able to draw on the massive weapons stockpiles states had built up during the Cold War. The combatants in the wars following the break up of Yugoslavia, for example, were well-armed as they drew from the former government's stockpiles. Insurgents in Kosovo were also able to draw on a network of criminal arms suppliers in neighboring Albania as well as weapons from inside the former Yugoslavia.[4]

Some states have also distributed weapons widely as a means to arm potential resistance to outside invaders. For instance, Switzerland and Estonia have both adopted strategies that cache weapons in the homes of citizen-soldiers.[5] In some states, this creates an even greater opportunity for insurgents to avail themselves of these arms.

In Iraq, a combination of massive weapons stockpiles and a deliberate state policy of creating caches for arming paramilitary forces contributed greatly to the heavily armed insurgency. The size of Iraq's stockpiles was staggering, with huge facilities scattered around the country. Writing in 2004, more than a year after the US invasion, reporter Jon Lee Anderson noted:

> I met an arms dealer who boasted of having access to several underground warehouses full of war materiel that the Americans have never known about. In front of me, he took orders over the phone for various types of weaponry and then called the orders in to the warehouses. When asked what kind of arms he had at his disposal, the dealer said they included small arms, such as pistols and Kalashnikovs, rocket-propelled grenades and antiaircraft missiles.[6]

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2 On Mau Mau limits see David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: The Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005). On British tactics see Austin Long, *The Soul of Armies: Counterinsurgency Doctrine and Military Culture in the United States and United Kingdom* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016).

3 See Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* 2nd edition (New York: Penguin Books, 1997).

4 See Henry Perritt, *Kosovo Liberation Army: The Inside Story of an Insurgency* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2008).

5 Andrew Kramer, "Spooked by Russia, Tiny Estonia Trains a Nation of Insurgents," *New York Times*, October 31, 2016.

6 Jon Lee Anderson, "Weapons for the Taking in Iraq," *Los Angeles Times*, October 29, 2004.

In addition to this cornucopia of weapons, the ready availability of military explosives fueled the rise of the major threat faced by US forces: the improvised explosive device (IED). IEDs in combination with an ambush (a "complex attack") proved particularly deadly in many instances.

The lethality of the Iraqi insurgency in turn required the United States to undertake a variety of tactical measures that compounded the challenge of counterinsurgency. Insurgents in Fallujah in 2004 were so dug in and well-armed the United States had to level large portions of the city in order to retake it.[7] This did not endear US troops to the residents of the city. Similarly, the need for extensive body and vehicle armor to protect US troops as well as the substantial fortification of US bases made it difficult for US forces to interact with Iraqi citizens.

***2. Elite regime forces*:** Insurgencies benefit from having a nucleus of highly motivated and trained personnel to serve as a training and planning cadre. Cadre personnel can help turn highly motivated but untrained (or poorly trained) would-be insurgents into an effective fighting force. In some cases, these cadre can make up for weaknesses in their own training by having high morale—often to the point of taking suicidal risks. Defectors from the elite forces of a state are a major source of personnel for this cadre.

In Mexico, the Zetas, one of the most lethal of the criminal cartels contesting the Mexican state in the 2000s, was greatly strengthened by defectors from Mexico's elite Grupo Aeromóvil de Fuerzas Especiales.[8] These defectors had received international special operations training and were able to train other cartel gunmen while also serving as an elite bodyguard and hit squad. Similar elite defections helped fuel insurgency in Libya and Syria in 2011-2012.

While not a defector per se, Vang Pao, leader of the CIA-supported resistance to North Vietnamese forces in Laos in the 1960 and 1970s, had an elite military background. He had been recruited into the French Groupement de Commandos Mixtes Aéroportés, an elite unit, to fight the Viet Minh during the Indochina war.[9] He was thus well-prepared to lead the Hmong guerrilla war.

In Iraq, two different elite regime forces contributed to the insurgency. The first was the Iraqi military's Special Forces community, while the second was the paramilitary Saddam Fedayeen. Iraqi Special Forces provided the cadre for the welter of insurgent groups that emerged in 2003 after the invasion. With well-developed commando skills they were able to teach other insurgents the importance of ambush and evasion against the superior American forces.

One of the most notable of these was Iraqi Special Forces General Khadim Mohammed Faris al-Fahadawi. Khadim Faris was one of the most prominent Special Forces officers of his generation, with a reputation for both daring and discipline. After the US invasion, he led a resistance group in Anbar province before being captured by US forces.[10]

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7 Bing West, *No True Glory: A Frontline Account of the Battle for Fallujah* (New York: Bantam, 2006).

8 Samuel Logan and George W. Grayson, *The Executioner's Men: Los Zetas, Rogue Soldiers, Criminal Entrepreneurs, and the Shadow State They Created* (Piscataway NJ: Transaction, 2015).

9 Thomas Ahern, *Undercover Armies: CIA and Surrogate Warfare in Laos, 1961-1973* (Washington DC, Center for the Study of Intelligence, 2006).

10 Author interview, Ramadi, Iraq, July 2008.

Faris was also responsible for the effectiveness of the second elite regime force, the Saddam Fedayeen. The Fedayeen were a widely distributed paramilitary organization tasked with helping provide internal security. Faris had helped found the force in the 1990s following uprisings against the regime. While the Fedayeen lacked the elite training of the Iraqi Special Forces, they were selected for regime loyalty and discipline. When the US invaded, many Fedayeen launched suicidal attacks on US forces, while those who survived became cadre for insurgent groups. Crucially, the Fedayeen had access to the sort of distributed caches of weapons noted earlier, enabling them to arm the insurgent groups they joined or created.[11]

***3. Disbanded mass armies*:** A similar source of recruits for insurgency is a disbanded mass army. While lacking the discipline, morale and training of elite forces, the disbanding of a mass army creates a pool of potential recruits for insurgency that have some familiarity with the basics of military operations.

Iraq provides the most notable example of this phenomenon. While the Iraqi Army had, in many instances, chosen not to fight the United States invasion—with many soldiers simply taking off their uniforms and going home—the large mass army remained substantially intact. Rather than remobilize the Iraqi Army, the United States chose to disband the Army, creating a huge pool of unpaid recruits for the nascent insurgency.[12]

***4. Social network ties*:** One of the major factors scholars have identified as crucial to creating and sustaining insurgency are pre-existing social networks. These social networks, combined with communal norms of reciprocity, provide critical paths to mobilizing insurgency. Information can be disseminated and vetted through these networks, allowing recruitment to be shielded from state intelligence.

In Sri Lanka, Paul Staniland argues Tamil fishing collectives provided the social networks for mobilizing the rebellion against the Sinhalese government. These collectives had strong norms about cooperation and sharing, developed from the need to coordinate fishing efforts. When elements of the Tamil population sought to rise up, these cooperatives were a key component of generating a decades-long insurgency.[13]

Similarly, Roger Petersen highlights the importance of farming cooperatives and Catholic youth organizations as the networks that generated and sustained the Lithuanian resistance to Soviet occupation after World War II. These networks were reinforced by strong norms of reciprocity, where villagers whose neighbors had sons in the insurgency refused to inform the Soviets despite incentives to do so. The result was a sustained insurgency against the vastly larger Red Army, which lasted nearly a decade.[14]

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11 Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, "Even as U.S. Invaded, Hussein Saw Iraqi Unrest as Top Threat," *New York Times*, March 12, 2006.
12 James Pffifner, "US Blunders in Iraq: De-Baathification and Disbanding the Army," *Intelligence and National Security* v.25 n.1 (2010).
13 Paul Staniland, *Networks of Rebellion: Explaining Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014).
14 Roger Petersen, *Resistance and Rebellion: Lessons from Eastern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

In Iraq, tribal networks served this mobilization role for the Sunni insurgency. While modernization and urbanization had initially attenuated the strength of tribal networks in Iraq in the 1970s, the weakness of the Iraqi state after the 1991 Gulf War had led to a resurgence of the tribe. Tribes served as extended social support networks in many instances as the state receded, and norms of reciprocity became stronger. After the US invasion many Sunni tribes (or sub-tribal clans) began to mobilize against the invaders.[15]

***5. Mobilizing ideology*:** Insurgencies often begin with a cause, which can range from nationalism to political revolution. Absent a mobilizing ideology, collective action problems and the potential for defection can often swamp nascent insurgencies even when other supporting factors are present. In El Salvador in the 1980s, Elizabeth Wood argues many peasants ran significant risks to support insurgents because they mobilized around the idea of asserting their citizenship in the face of an oppressive oligarchy. These peasants could have reaped the same rewards of insurgent resistance without providing support but were infused with a variety of ideas, including rudimentary Marxism and Catholic liberation theology, which led them to willingly assume risk rather than shirk.[16]

In Afghanistan, in both the 1980s and the 2000s the mobilizing ideology was a powerful combination of Afghan nationalism and political Islam. The latter was important, as tribal values alone could not sustain the sort of impersonal violence modern weapons brought to Afghanistan. As David Edwards notes of the early days of resistance to the Afghan communist government and its Soviet allies:

> Thus, one of the long-term effects of [the massacre of unarmed men at] Kerala and of the government's general willingness to target civilians and to use impersonal means of destruction against its own population was to undermine the ways in which tribes interacted with the state. Honor was no longer a sufficient frame either to explain the conflict or to rationalize the death and destruction rained down on the tribes by government aircraft and artillery. Honor presupposes that those killed will be male combatants who willingly faced the risks that lead to their deaths. It cannot explain or justify the deaths of innocent civilians or of large numbers of combatants who die not in hand-to-hand combat but from machine-launched missiles, bombs, and artillery shells. In providing a framework for comprehending evil and valorizing the death of innocents, Islam proved much more effective than traditional tribal codes, and the eventual takeover of the uprising by Islamic parties is partly to be understood by this fact.[17]

After 2001, a similar combination of Pashtun ethnic nationalism and Islam provided the motivating ideology for the resurgent Taliban insurgency.[18]

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15 Austin Long, "The Anbar Awakening," *Survival*, v.50 n.2 (April-May 2008).
16 Elisabeth Jean Wood, *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
17 David Edwards, *Before Taliban: Genealogies of the Afghan Jihad* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002) pp. 145-146.
18 Andrew Garfield and Alicia Boyd, "Understanding Afghan Insurgents: Motivations, Goals, and the Reconciliation and Reintegration Process," (Philadelphia: Foreign Policy Research Institute, 2013).

In Iraq, the motivating ideology for resistance was also a combination of Sunni nationalism and Islam. The Sunni nationalism was particularly strong due to a phenomenon Roger Petersen refers to as "status reversal."[19] While Sunnis were a minority of the overall Iraqi population they had long ruled the country. After the US invasion, the Shiite majority was empowered under the new democratic system while many Sunnis who had been part of the Ba'ath regime were banned from the government. Thus overnight the dominant group became disenfranchised, providing an intense resentment towards the Americans that made rebellion seem attractive—even necessary.

***6. Sanctuary*:** One of the most important factors in the creation and sustainment of insurgency is the existence of a sanctuary where counterinsurgent forces either cannot reach or cannot reach effectively. This sanctuary serves as the base area for the insurgency to build its initial strength as well as a place for leadership to survive and plan. A RAND Corporation report on how insurgencies end found nearly half of all insurgencies that enjoyed sanctuary succeeded in defeating the government. The authors conclude, "Insurgencies rarely survive or succeed without some kind of sanctuary."[20]

In Afghanistan in both the 1980s and 2000s, Pakistan provided sanctuary for insurgents. Absent this secure sanctuary it seems unlikely the insurgency could have been sustained for long periods of time (roughly a decade from 1979-1989 and then more than a decade after 2001). Similarly, the sanctuary provided by Laos, Cambodia and North Vietnam was vital to the success of the insurgency against South Vietnam and its allies including the ROK and United States. The insurgency against the French in Algeria also enjoyed sanctuary in neighboring Tunisia as well.[21]

Sanctuary need not be outside the state where the insurgency is conducted. Remote and inhospitable terrain can provide the basis for sanctuary. In a landmark study, David Laitin and James Fearon found a strong correlation between significant mountainous terrain and insurgency, as the state has much greater difficulty projecting power into mountainous hinterlands.[22] Jungles and swamps can likewise provide internal sanctuary as can simple remoteness from transportation infrastructure.

In Iraq, the Sunni insurgency benefited from both internal and external sanctuary. External sanctuary was primarily found in neighboring Syria, where both ex-Ba'athists and religious extremists found refuge after the US invasion. The United States was unwilling in almost all cases to conduct military action against insurgents inside Syria, with the sole exception of a raid in 2008. This external sanctuary was vital to insurgent logistics and planning.[23]

Internal sanctuary was more geographically scattered and varied over time. After 2007, when Sunni insurgents had been driven from most of the major urban areas of Iraq, they moved to various thinly populated hinterlands. In Anbar Province, many of them found refuge in scattered fishing

19 Roger Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence: Fear, Hatred, Resentment in Twentieth Century Eastern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
20 Ben Connable and Martin C. Libicki, *How Insurgencies End* (Santa Monica CA: RAND Corporation, 2010) p. xvii.
21 On efforts to interdict insurgency access to sanctuary in these conflicts see Austin Long, *On "Other War" Lessons from Five Decades of RAND Counterinsurgency Research* (Santa Monica CA: RAND Corporation, 2006).
22 James D. Fearon and David Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97, (February 2003).
23 Sean Naylor, "Killing Abu Ghadiya," *Foreign Policy*, August 31, 2015.

villages on Lake Thar Thar, a sprawling lake whose northern shores had minimal transportation connection to the rest of Iraq.[24]

III. Insurgency in the DPRK

The next section examines the potential for these drivers of insurgency in a post-DPRK North Korea.[25] It assumes an intervention by ROK forces to provide stability in this scenario. Some of the factors are structural in that they seem to be baked into the nature of the DPRK regime. Others, especially mobilizing ideology and sanctuary, are contingent.

***1. Unsecured weapons stockpiles*:** The DPRK has a longstanding indigenous arms industry that has produced large numbers of weapons ranging from small arms to heavy artillery. Estimates vary but it seems the DPRK has stockpiled sufficient arms and ammunition for at least several weeks if not several months of sustained conventional warfare. This provides numerous large stockpiles that could be accessed by would-be insurgents following the collapse of the DPRK regime. Many of these might be challenging to locate as North Korea, according to Jennifer Lind and Bruce Bennett, "is said to have thousands of tunnels and underground facilities, which would need to be searched for conventional weapons, ammunition stocks, and WMD."[26] These stockpiles likely include large number of explosives and detonators, which could provide a ready base for an insurgent IED campaign against supply lines.

In addition to these large stockpiles of weapons and explosives there is reported to be a large number of small arms distributed in much smaller caches to the paramilitary Worker/Peasant Red Guards. These weapons are reported to be old and possibly in disrepair—some Red Guards units are not even armed. However, there are allegedly over 5 million Red Guards; thus, if even 1 in 10 has a functioning weapon, this is half a million small arms (and possibly other systems such as light mortars and heavy machine guns) scattered throughout the country.[27]

Securing these stockpiles will thus be an extraordinary challenge for the ROK Army. Even under the best circumstances—with no incipient insurgency and cooperation from the DPRK security services—Lind and Bennett assess that it would take at least 50,000 soldiers just to secure these stockpiles. In a plausibly worst-case scenario, such as the violent collapse of the regime, it would likely be impossible to secure many of these stockpiles, as looting of stockpiles would happen too quickly. As a result, any insurgency in the North would likely be well-armed.

Another complication is the DPRK's vast arsenal of chemical weapons, which could make both insurgent rocket attacks and IEDs much more lethal.[28] In Iraq the chemical threat from insurgents was not zero but was much more limited. The operational impact of chemical rockets and IEDs on US and ROK forces would be significant. Even if the chemical weapons caused no casualties,

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24 Connable and Libicki, p. 42.
25 See also David Maxwell, "Irregular Warfare on the Korean Peninsula," *Small Wars Journal*, November 2010.
26 Bruce W. Bennett and Jennifer Lind, "The Collapse of North Korea: Military Missions and Requirements," *International Security* (Fall 2011) p. 106.
27 Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., *The Armed Forces of North Korea* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2001).
28 Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., "North Korea's Chemical Warfare Capabilities," October 10, 2013; online at: http://38north.org/2013/10/jbermudez101013/.

the need to maintain a chemical protection posture and to decontaminate after chemical strikes would impose substantial burdens on logistics, mobility and the like. Thus even a relatively small insurgency in the DPRK could potentially be highly disruptive by using chemical weapons.[29]

***2. Elite regime forces*:** The DPRK has a large number of elite forces, said to number between 90,000 and 200,000 personnel. These include the special forces of the Reconnaissance General Bureau (RGB) and the 11th Storm Corps, as well as airborne and amphibious troops and sniper/light infantry units. Most assessments believe the special operations forces (SOF) in particular are highly motivated and effective. The US Department of Defense noted in 2016 that, "North Korean SOF are among the most highly trained, well-equipped, best-fed, and highly motivated forces in the KPA. As North Korea's conventional capabilities decline relative to the ROK and United States, North Korea appears to increasingly regard SOF capabilities as vital for asymmetric coercion."[30]

These units could readily provide the same type of cadre similar forces provided to the post-regime insurgency in Iraq. This would be particularly important in terms of being able to organize and train would-be insurgents in unconventional warfare. In particular, skill with explosives could facilitate an IED campaign.

***3. Disbanded mass armies*:** The Korean People's Army (KPA) numbers over one million personnel, a large army by almost any standard. Its post-regime future is a critical factor in the potential for insurgency and this future is highly contingent. The ROK must be prepared to deal with a range of scenarios, from a collapse of the KPA with no fighting (similar to the end of East Germany) to relatively modest fighting (like Iraq in 2003) to holding large numbers of KPA soldiers as prisoners of war following an intense conventional (and possibly WMD) campaign. Beyond the combat aspects of the KPA, it is also the largest employer in the country. As a consequence, total disbandment would throw hundreds of thousands out of work.

Thus even the most benign scenario—an intervention following a peaceful collapse—would still require the ROK to decide what to do with the former KPA soldiers. One option would be to detain these soldiers temporarily. While this would prevent those detained from joining the insurgency, it could incentivize those not wishing to be detained to join a nascent insurgency. Another option would be to remobilize the KPA and pay it to help the ROK keep order in the North (assuming most of the KPA is willing). If the ROK chooses this option, it must be prepared to supply and pay these soldiers and decide how to deal with the question of transitional justice for the former KPA, some of whom may be accused of serious crimes and other human rights abuses. On the other hand, if the KPA is not remobilized, then the ROK will face the same problem in terms of potential insurgents the United States faced in Iraq.

Here it is important to note the KPA is nearly an order of magnitude larger than the East German National People's Army (NVA) was at the time of German reunification. The size difference between the armies is also significant. The West German Bundeswehr (roughly 475,000 to 500,000

29 I thank participants in the DPRK Instability Workshop (December 2016), organized by the US-Korea Institute at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, for making this point.

30 Department of Defense, "Military and Security Developments Involving the Democratic People's Republic of Korea," 2015 Report to Congress, p. 12.

troops) was readily able to control and partially demobilize the much smaller NVA (roughly 150-175,000 troops).[31] In contrast, the KPA is roughly twice the size of the ROK Army.

***4. Social network ties*:** The DPRK appears to have a variety of social network ties derived from patronage and survival. At the elite level, analysts argue the regime is characterized by a variety of patronage networks connecting the elites to lower level military, security and other government personnel.[32] These lower tier individuals in turn have connections further down, creating widespread networks of reciprocity. These networks sometimes compete, with the overexpansion of the patronage network of Jang Song Thaek, Kim Jong Un's uncle by marriage, hypothesized as the leading cause of his execution. Yet by and large they co-exist peacefully, with the Organization and Guidance Department (OGD) of the Central Committee seeming to be the locus for managing the affairs of the state and these patronage networks.[33]

In parallel, there appear to be a variety of non-elite social networks, many of which extend across the border into China due to immigration, which have become crucial for survival. These networks are partly driven by black markets, many of which originated during the famine of the 1990s. These networks sometimes have a kinship basis and sometimes simply tie into the elite patronage networks.[34]

While it is unclear if these networks provide the same basis for mobilization as Iraqi tribes or Tamil fishing cooperatives, the potential cannot be dismissed. Certainly the Jang Song Thaek network seemed substantial enough to draw the ire of the rest of the DPRK regime leadership. Even then analysts argue dismantling the network was challenging to the regime and may not be fully completed even three years after Jang's execution.[35] These networks may prove even more resilient following regime collapse, as both elites and the mass public search for alternatives to the old order.

***5. Mobilizing ideology*:** The ideology motivating a potential insurgency in the North is unlikely to be *juche* ("self-reliance"), the current official ideology of the DPRK—any more than Ba'athism per se was a mobilizing ideology in Iraq. Instead, a combination of propaganda-driven xenophobia and a broader feeling of resentment driven by status reversal may provide the mobilization needed for an insurgency. As with the fate of the KPA, this will be in part contingent on the actions of the intervening force in the former DPRK.

DPRK propaganda has for decades cast the North Korean people as what B.R. Myers refers to as "the cleanest race," an indication of the racist nationalism that undergirds the official ideology,

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31 Frederick Zilian, *From Confrontation to Cooperation: The Takeover of the National People's (East German) Army by the Bundeswehr* (Westport CT: Praeger, 1999).
32 Patrick McEachern, *Inside the Red Box: North Korea's Post-totalitarian Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).
33 Keegan Hamilton, "Meet the Men and Women Who Help Rule North Korea From the Shadows," *Vice News*, October 17, 2014.
34 Markus Bell, "Ties that Bind Us: Transnational Networks of North Koreans on the Move," *Resilience* v.2 (2014).
35 Some accounts suggest an extensive purge of Jang's network but the case remains opaque. See Elizabeth Shim, "Analyst: North Korea Executed, Purged Thousands after Jang Song Thaek Killed," *UPI*, February 10, 2017.

which he refers to as window dressing.[36] While it is virtually impossible to discern the extent to which average North Korean citizens have fully internalized this ideology, it is important to note the extent to which other regimes have managed to inculcate similar racist nationalism. The Nazi party was able to stoke racist nationalism in broad segments of the German population yet was only in power a total of twelve years. In contrast the DPRK regime has had more than six decades to propagandize the North Korean population. Even if the regime has only inculcated 10 percent of the population with this xenophobic racist propaganda, this means it can provide a mobilizing ideology for over two million potential insurgents.

A component of this broad ideology is what Joseph S. Bermudez Jr. calls "the guerilla myth." This myth combines the historic heroic resistance myth of Kim Il Sung into a larger narrative about resistance to foreigners, especially the Americans. Bermudez likens this myth to the "George Washington and the cherry tree" myth in the United States in terms of its pervasiveness.[37]

In addition, this ideology could be amplified by resentment among those who currently make up the broadly defined ruling class of the DPRK. Like the Sunni Ba'athists who dominated Saddam Hussein's Iraq, there are hundreds of thousands if not millions of North Koreans who are well off in a relative sense in today's DPRK. Even if they are not wealthy in an absolute sense compared to their South Korean counterparts, they nonetheless are doing well compared to their North Korean compatriots.

After the collapse of the DPRK regime these individuals could lose their privileged status, producing resentment against the intervening force. This resentment would then interact with the racist ideology of the DPRK regime to produce a potent mobilizing ideology. The extent to which this happens will depend on choices about intervention. First, however much resentment would be directed against a ROK intervention, it would no doubt be compounded if US or other non-Korean forces were a significant component of the occupation. Second, the extent to which those currently empowered in the DPRK were disenfranchised by the intervention would also be crucial.

In Iraq, the massive status reversal of large numbers of Sunnis provided a major mobilizing ideology. In contrast, after World War II, only a relative minority of former German and Japanese elites were purged or tried for war crimes. Despite the extreme racist nationalism of both regimes, the resentment against the occupying Allies was limited (though there were surely other factors, such as war weariness, which contributed to the lack of post-regime insurgency).

Beyond this, the DPRK has a large prison population, with both political and common criminals. In many collapse scenarios, these individuals will be freed without oversight to exact revenge and otherwise contribute to instability.[38] Notably, Saddam Hussein preemptively emptied his prisons in October 2002, five months before the US invasion. It is opaque how much this contributed to the eventual insurgency but it probably exacerbated the security environment in Iraq to some degree.

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36 Brian R. Myers, *The Cleanest Race: How North Koreans See Themselves and Why It Matters* (Hoboken NJ: Melville House, 2010).

37 Joseph S. Bermudez Jr. remarks, DPRK Instability Workshop, December 2016.

38 Joseph S. Bermudez Jr. remarks, DPRK Instability Workshop, December 2016.

***6. Sanctuary*:** The potential for sanctuary for a North Korean insurgency is perhaps the single most important and highly contingent factor in a post-regime collapse scenario. While the mountainous and remote terrain of much of the North offers a possibility of internal sanctuary for insurgents, the choices of the government of China will weigh much more heavily. China is unlikely to view reunification of the Korean peninsula favorably if it brings a US allied ROK to the Yalu River.

China may therefore occupy a buffer zone in the North to limit the advance of the ROK and its allies as well as to secure DPRK weapons of mass destruction sites. This buffer area, as well as the immediate area across the China-Korea border, could provide a substantial sanctuary for an insurgency seeking to combat ROK-led intervention. Like Pakistan and Syria in the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, China would not overtly provide sanctuary, but the costs of raids into Chinese controlled territory to target insurgents could be substantial.

China would thus pay relatively limited costs while ensuring the post-regime consolidation in North Korea will be slow and costly. It could also tacitly use sanctuary for insurgents as a bargaining chip in an effort to achieve its objectives, such as a Korean peninsula free of external forces—including those of the United States. Given the high costs of reunification under even the best circumstances this could be a potent lever to achieve Chinese objectives.

IV. Conclusion

The potential for an insurgency beginning after the collapse of the DPRK appears contingent but significant. The ROK should plan accordingly, particularly in terms of how to treat elements of the former KPA and other mid- and low-level government officials of the DPRK. Substantial numbers of troops will be needed for an extended period of time just to secure weapons and demobilize the KPA even in the best circumstances. Track II diplomacy with China will also be important to lay the groundwork for what an acceptable reunification of the peninsula would mean in order to limit the potential for Chinese backed sanctuary.

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