

North Korea's Refugees: A Window into North Korea and A Source of Humanitarian Concern

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Overview

- ☐ North Korea presents national security and broader human security challenges
- ☐ Refugees of interest for two reasons
 - Humanitarian concern
 - As "window" into North Korea
- ☐ Two surveys
 - China, 2004-05, 1,300+ respondents, Yoonok Chang and associates
 - South Korea, November 2008, 300 respondents, Haggard and Noland
- ☐ Caveat self-selection, representativeness
- ☐ Policy recommendations

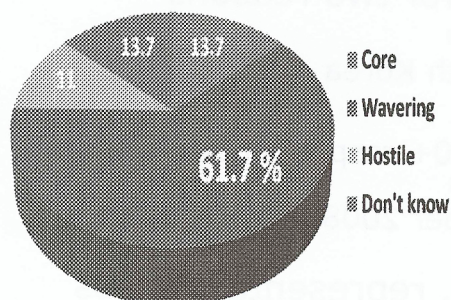
Who are the refugees?, I

- ☐ Mostly prime age adults
- ☐ More women than men
- ☐ Mostly from the Northeast provinces



Who are the refugees?, II

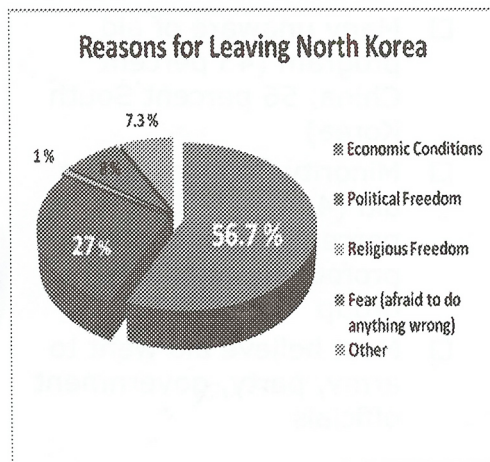
Political Classification



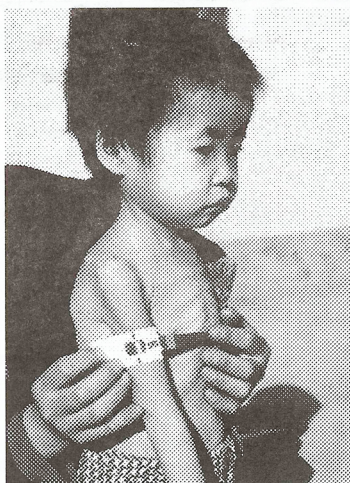
- ☐ Typically high school educated worker—responses contradict regime educational attainment claims
- ☐ Most from “wavering” class
- ☐ Parental backgrounds suggest little socio-economic mobility

Why do they leave?

- Mostly “economic motivations” bound up in regime practices
- North Korea criminalizes exit-refugees sur place
- Reveal considerable anxiety about repatriation



Life in North Korea: Background

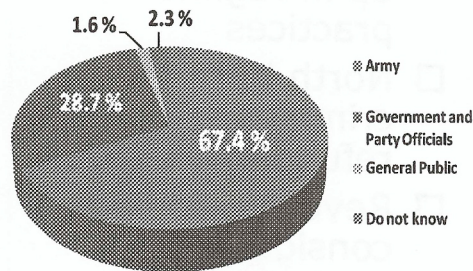


- Famine largely product of state failure
- 30 percent of respondents in China survey and 33 percent of respondents in South Korea survey report death of family member during 1990s famine
- Marketization from the bottom up to survive
- State attitudes toward reform ambivalent

Life in North Korea: Hunger & Aid

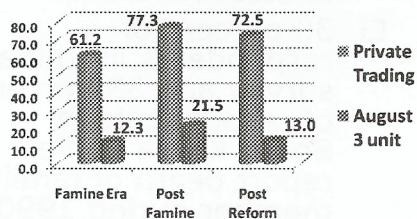
- Many unaware of aid program (43 percent China, 56 percent South Korea)
- Minority believe receive aid (4 percent China, 33 percent South Korea)—profoundly embittered group
- Most believe aid went to army, party, government officials

Who Receives Most of the Food Aid

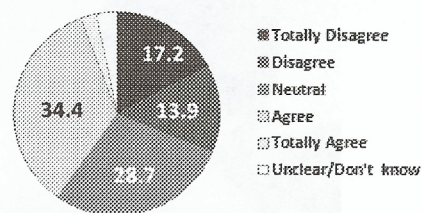


Economy: Grassroots Marketization and Policy Ineffectiveness

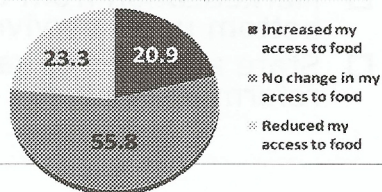
In addition to regular work duties, I engaged in the following activities...



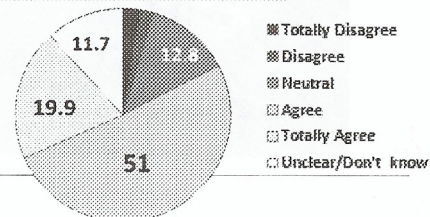
The nature of my work changed



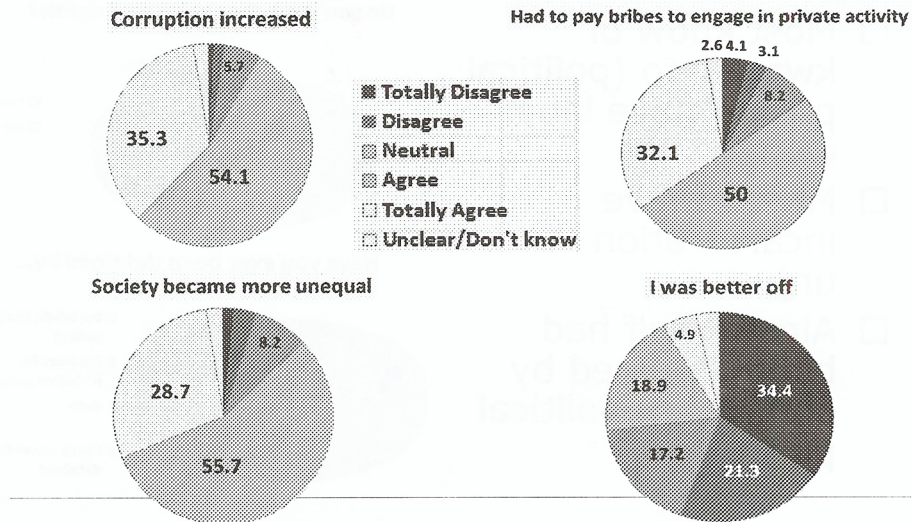
Government's 2005 attempt to revive PDS—Effect on your access to food?



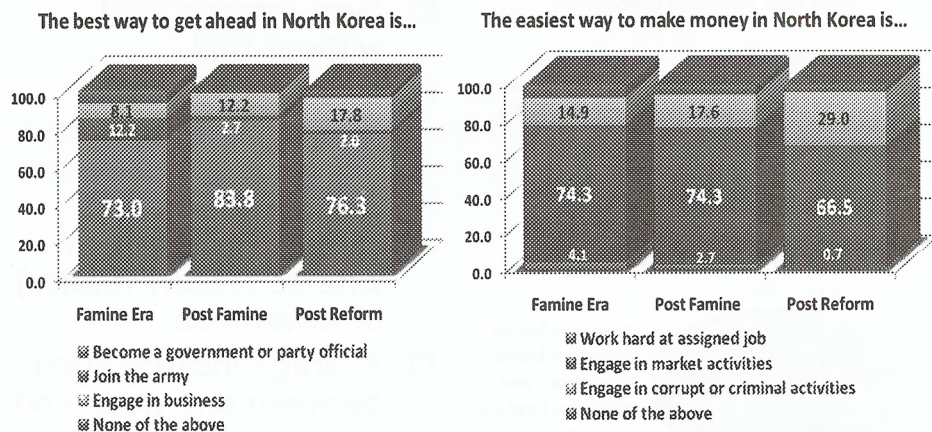
The Government frequently changed the rules governing market activities



"Partial" Reforms Associated with an Increase in Corruption, Inequality and Disaffection



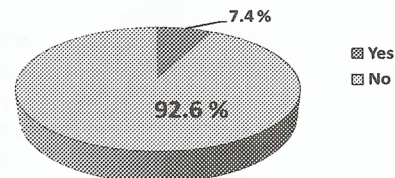
Changing Pathways to Advancement



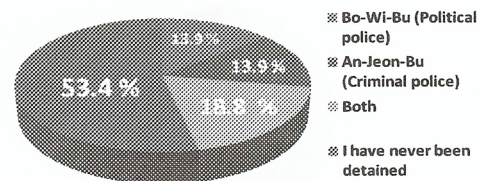
Crimes and punishments, I

- ☐ Most know of kwan-li-so (political prison/slave labor camp)
- ☐ Most believe incarceration unjust
- ☐ Almost half had been detained by criminal or political police

Do you think they were sent rightly?

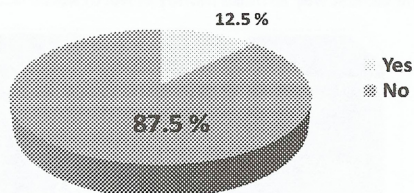


Have you ever been detained by...

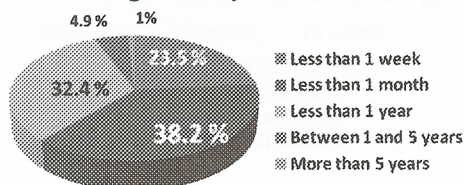


Crimes and punishments, II

First had Trial and Conviction

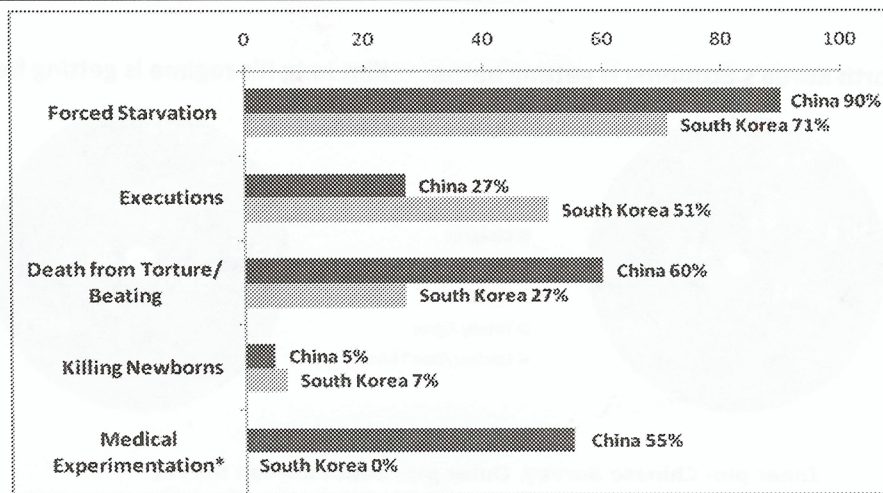


Length of Imprisonment



- ☐ Most incarcerated without trial
- ☐ Most in jip-kyul-so (misdemeanor facility) or no-dong-dan-ryeon-dae (labor training camp), some in kyo-wha-so (felony facility) or kwan-li-so.
- ☐ Average incarceration between one week and one month

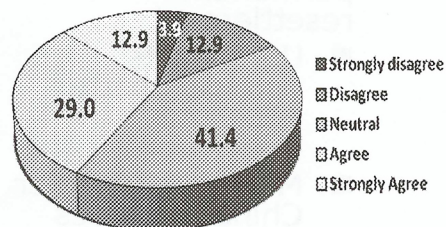
Crimes and Punishments, III



Psychological dimensions

- ☐ Most would be diagnosed with PTSD in clinical setting
- ☐ Experiences in North Korea highly correlated with current psychological state, particularly
 - Denial of aid
 - Famine experiences
 - Incarceration
- ☐ Demographic correlates
 - Age, gender
 - But not regional origin--reassuring

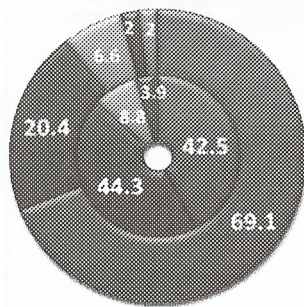
"Current Situation is Hopeless"



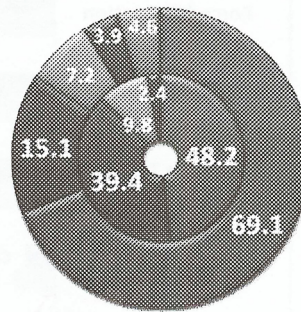
The Exit Poll: "Are You Better Off Today?"

North Korea's Economy is getting better

Kim Jong Il's regime is getting better



☒ Totally Disagree
 ☒ Disagree
 ☒ Neutral
 ☒ Agree
 ☒ Totally Agree
 ☒ Unclear/Don't know

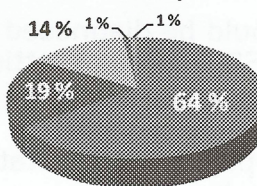


Inner pie- Chinese Survey, Outer pie- South Korean Survey

Life Beyond North Korea

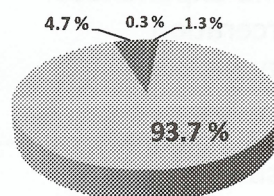
- ☐ Frequent complaints about exploitation in China
- ☐ Preferences for permanent resettlement
 - US attracts younger, better educated respondents
 - More might prefer China if policies changed
- ☐ Most want unification

Country of Preference



☒ South Korea
 ☒ USA
 ☒ China
 ☒ North Korea
 ☒ Other

Which statement most accurately represents your view today?



☒ Maintain the Current Government
 ☒ Have a different government but stay independent as NK
 ☒ Unify with South Korea
 ☒ None of the above/Don't know

Policy recommendations

- ☐ Continue to attempt to engage North Korea
 - Emphasize inevitability of a human rights discussion
 - Demand UN/ICRC access to prison camps
 - Emphasize integrity of humanitarian aid program
 - Develop Sullivan-type Principles
 - ☐ Reach out: Break down information barriers
 - ☐ In absence of North Korean willingness to engage: get people out of North Korea
 - Encourage China to uphold commitments
 - Work with South Korea and others
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Thank you for your attention

