

Future of media in north korea assignment



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Distraction & Media Final Paper 12/22/10 The Future of media in North Korea

The North Korea's brutal regime began on June 25th 1950, when the North Korean People's Army (KPA) launched a surprising military attack and crossed the 38th parallel border. The Korean War often referred to as the "forgotten war," caused the United States to suffer 142,000 casualties including 33,000 deaths. In total, the entire war killed around three million people. On July 27, 1953, the war was finally cease-fired and both South and North Korea are under armistice ever since.

Supported by the United States, the southern part of the peninsula went through numerous reformations to adopt democracy. On the other hand, since North Korea was initially aided by the Soviet Union and later by Mao Zedong's Chinese People's Volunteer Army (CPV), it also became a Communist country and it is now the two remaining major Communist countries in the world along with Cuba. Consequently, in order to maintain stability in North Korea, censorship and propaganda are integral devices used every day to manipulate their own citizens, allowing the Kim family's totalitarian regime to stay in power for generations.

Unlike the party's expectations, however, the current citizens of North Korea are aware of the extensive censorship in their own country. But what is even more troubling than its repressive environment is that the rigors of daily life and routine make North Koreans disinterested from actively acquiring the true information. As a result, the freedom of media in North Korea in the foreseeable future seems impossible with such lack of fervor and interest in the search for the 'truth' by the public mass.

When North Korea's first Prime Minister and President, Kim Il-sung, first introduced the idea of combining Marxism and Confucianism, known as the Juche ideology, the citizens of North Korea were eager to follow in the footsteps of their "Eternal President." During his leadership that began in the 1950s, he was responsible for laying the foundation of the current North Korea's fabricated information environment by establishing the 'cult of personality' which is the use of mass media and propaganda to explicitly depict an individual as a "heroic public image. Subsequently, although Kim Il-sung died in July 1994, the North Koreans still pay great respect to their deceased leader as his birthday is one of the most celebrated holidays in the country. Furthermore, mainly during the 1950s and the 1960s, North Korean citizens actually believed in the socialistic paradise that the country's leader promised as the economy that they lived in was at the same level with China and South Korea in the past. which was more than fifty years ago) As remote as he was, Kim Il-sung's decision to portray himself as the "man of the people" directly earned him great respect and even the defectors in South Korea today do not necessarily hate Kim Il-sung, but they do openly express negative opinions about his son, Kim Jong-il and blame him for the disastrous economic crisis that has been continuing since the 1990s. North Koreans today live in two different information environments.

The Kim regime has designed the "public environment of party speeches, propaganda banners, and communist inspired culture for its own purposes." In fact, North Korea has dedicated an entire department within the regime that regulates all information flow in the country. MPS, also known as the Ministry of People's Security, is the responsible branch of the North Korean

government that “ concentrates on checking people’s ideological consciousness. ” Moreover, every single communication methods are regulated and the type of media in this communist state is extremely nationalistic.

Currently, North Korea has four major newspapers, one AM radio station, and three television stations that are all under the control of the Korean Workers’ Party (KWP). All information are carefully reviewed by the party before its publication because if an article or the information provided in the mainstream media turns out to have even the slightest hint of negative opinions towards the political party or Kim Jong-il himself, those responsible for the publication “ may lose their jobs and even be thrown in prison. In addition to these national media, North Korea has a third broadcasting system which is a “ wired network of speakers in homes, public buildings, and outdoor spaces. ” These speakers reside precisely in almost every single household in North Korea and the volume can be “ turned down but not off. ” Similar to George Orwell’s novel 1984, the citizens of North Korea live in a community where the ‘ Big Brother’ actually resides as their own government in the country.

Through these controlled media system in the government, North Korea was able to successfully manipulate their own citizens, blinding them from the information outside the world to create a false sense of happiness. The development of technology, however, made it strikingly difficult for the Kim regime to control the information environment. Often times when North Koreans working overseas finally come back from their duty, many of them secretly bring in new sets of radios to receive signals outside its country

because the domestic products are altered to receive only the signal from the one AM radio station the government operates.

Also, some residents in Pyongyang who own foreign-made television sets are able to receive South Korean television broadcast. Although the internet is probably the most effective way to gain large amounts of foreign information in a short amount of time, only five percent of the population has access to a computer and the five percent who has access to a computer are usually high class people related to the party or the government in some way.

As we can witness, although the North Korean government is trying very hard to regulate all sources of information, it is simply impossible for them to filter or inspect the entire population at all times. As more and more information seep through the sporadic holes that the Kim regime contains, people are becoming more aware of the fact that the Juche ideology has its limits. Perhaps the constant economic difficulty that they face is the most important factor in realizing that the socialistic ideals do not always correspond to the reality.

Since the 1960s, North Korea's economy has been rapidly declining and it is now one of the poorest countries in the world. This socialist government strongly relies on foreign aid to feed its own citizens but even such aid started to diminish as North Korea displayed behaviors that are extremely violent and inhumane in nature. For example, the recent torpedo attack of the South Korean warship, Chonan-ham, and bomb shelling the island of Yeonpyung were decisions made by Pyongyang to threaten the peace of the peninsula.

Also, the sole fact that the South Korean government started to send food aids in the mid 1990s, made North Korean citizens to doubt their own government's information because the party constantly told its citizens that South Korea's situation is even worse than their own. In a 2002 survey, defectors from North Korea told South Korean government officials that 40 percent of defectors thought " North Korea's choice of socialism as an economic system had been a mistake. Moreover, out of those 40 percent, half of the defectors said that it was the " government and party's mismanagement" that led to these financial difficulties within the country. Overall, it is evident that the North Koreans themselves have begun to realize the manipulations that the government is imposing. Many foreigners tend to believe that North Korea is a country where the public mass is completely brain-washed and do not know that their government is lying. This belief, however, was only true before the 1990s.

Relating to this idea, the situation then becomes more complex because we understand that even the country's own citizens are aware of the manipulations of their government, but the daily trials and hardships the citizens face are too burdensome, leading the North Koreans to not actively seek their rights. This vicious cycle continues to work today as people are dying from starvation, there is simply no time to talk about their freedom of speech or dwell upon the liberty of the press in their country; all these concerns are just a luxury to the lives of ordinary North Koreans.

The recent tensions in the Korean peninsula have been escalating since last march when a South Korean warship was struck by a torpedo, which Pyongyang is assume to be responsible, and killed 46 sailors on the ship. On <https://assignbuster.com/future-of-media-in-north-korea-assignment/>

November 23rd, the North Koreans attacked South Korean soil for the first time since the Korean War killing two soldiers and two civilians. Even these two major news was manipulated through the North Korean communication mediums and told its citizens that South Korea initiated the military provocations by conducting live-fire artillery drills.

Such claim is obviously fabricated as South Korea only went through routine drills emphasized on self-defense rather than trying to initiate conflict with the North. As more mistrust builds between these two countries, the citizens of North Korea have to go through longer periods of financial problems which will also postpone the liberation of the press and the role of media will only continue its regression. Thus, unless the life quality of the North Koreans improve, it seems very difficult for North Korea to go through its own reformations to improve their media culture. quotations need work cited.