

The Sudden Fall of Syrian Dictatorship and the Fate of North Korean Dictatorship

Woohyun Kim^{1*}

¹Seoul Science High School, Seoul, South Korea

*Corresponding Author: dj307701@naver.com

Advisor: Dae Yeon Cho, chodae@korea.ac.kr

Received December 5, 2025; Revised January 5, 2026; Accepted January 19, 2026

Abstract

In December 2024, the Bashar al-Assad regime collapsed after more than ten years of civil war, even though it had received strong military support from Russia, Iran, North Korea, and Hezbollah. This unexpected collapse raised new questions about how stable long-standing authoritarian regimes really are. Because Syria and North Korea have maintained close political and military ties for many years, the Syrian case provides a useful comparison for examining possible weaknesses in North Korea's dictatorship. Therefore, this study explores how the collapse of the Syrian regime can help us better understand the future direction of the North Korean regime. This paper compares the two hereditary dictatorships by looking at their dependence on foreign support, internal social conditions, and methods of political control. Both regimes relied heavily on outside allies such as Russia, pursued weapons of mass destruction, and used coercion to control their populations. However, there are also important differences. Unlike Syria, North Korea does not have organized armed opposition groups. Because the regime tightly controls people's beliefs and closely monitors their daily lives, a sudden collapse caused by large protests or armed conflict is unlikely. Even so, decades of repression have likely created deep social dissatisfaction within North Korea. As access to outside information slowly increases and younger generations begin to question the existing system, internal unity within the regime may gradually weaken. Although the Syrian case cannot be directly applied to North Korea, this comparison helps show structural factors that may influence the long-term survival of North Korea's dictatorship.

Keywords: North Korea, Kim Jong-un, Syria, Bashar al-Assad, Hereditary Dictatorship

1. Introduction

Despite significant advances in international law and human rights awareness today, dictators in various parts of the world still continue to rule their people with an iron fist, with the North Korean dictatorship being the most notorious example of a country that violates human rights. North Korea has been criticized around the world for its constant military threats to the democratic South Korea, its development of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons and long-range ballistic missiles, and its harsh repression of its people. North Korea is a one-party dictatorship ruled by the Workers' party, but it has passed power from father to son for three generations as supreme leader and is now preparing for its fourth generation of succession to a young daughter, which is truly a rare case in modern history.

In the meantime, Syria, along with North Korea and Iran, is a part of the so-called "Axis of Evil" countries (Carnegie Endowment, 2017). Like North Korea, Syria has been a powerful dictatorship with a family-based hereditary system, but the recent dramatic collapse of the regime has resonated strongly in the world. The Syrian dictatorship has not only had a very close relationship with the North Korean dictatorship from the beginning to the end as a key partner in the Middle East, but also shares many similarities in various areas, including politics, the military, and the diplomacy.

Therefore, this study aims to address a central analytical question: to what extent can the collapse of the Syrian dictatorship be used as a comparative framework for assessing the stability and potential vulnerabilities of the North Korean dictatorship? To answer this question, the paper first examines the structural characteristics of both regimes, including their hereditary succession systems, reliance on external patrons, and methods of internal control. It then analyzes the causes and process of the Syrian regime's sudden collapse and evaluates which of these factors are applicable to the North Korean case. This comparative approach clarifies both the similarities and the limits of comparison between the two dictatorships. It also helps illuminate the conditions under which long-standing authoritarian regimes may persist or weaken.

2. Methodology and Analytical Framework

This study compares the dictatorships of Syria and North Korea using a qualitative case study approach. It looks at key features of each regime, such as how power is passed down, how much they rely on foreign allies, how they control their people, and where their weaknesses lie. By comparing these factors, the study shows both similarities and important differences that influence how stable each regime is.

This research uses a mix of policy reports, news articles, and selected academic studies. Policy reports are used to explain the military, political, and economic background of each country, while news sources help describe recent events, especially the collapse of the Syrian regime. Academic studies are used to connect the analysis to broader discussions about how authoritarian regimes survive or change.

Instead of trying to predict whether a regime will collapse, this study focuses on comparing cases under different conditions. The Syrian case is used as a reference point. It examines which factors related to regime collapse might also apply to North Korea. It also considers which factors are limited by differences in society, ideology, and political systems. This approach allows the study to discuss possible weaknesses without assuming that the same outcome will occur in both cases.

3. The North Korean dictatorship

3.1 Political aspects

The Korean Peninsula was freed from Japanese colonial rule at the end of World War II in 1945. However, after Russia established a communist state in the northern part of the peninsula with 35-year-old Kim Il-sung as its leader, it was divided into a democratic country in the south supported by the United States and a communist country in the north supported by Russia. Backed by Russia and China, Kim Il-sung launched an invasion of South Korea in 1950, sparking the Korean War, which was countered by a U.S.-led United Nations coalition. The war ended in 1953 but resulted in an estimated three million casualties on both sides, including civilians (Republic of Korea National Archives, n.d.).

As a result of post-war political purges, by 1956 Kim Il-sung had established a powerful one-man dictatorship in which he monopolized all state power, including the political party, the military, the parliament, the administration, and the judiciary. In 1974, Kim Il-sung named his 33-year-old son Kim Jong-il as his successor. When Kim Il-sung passed away from heart disease in 1994, Kim Jong-il formally took over, beginning the second stage of the dictatorship (Republic of Korea Ministry of Unification, 2024). Kim Jong-il ruled with an iron fist like his father, and frequently carried out political purges, but died suddenly of a heart attack in 2011 at the age of 71. His third son, Kim Jong-un, then only 28, assumed power with backing from Jang Song-thaek, his uncle by marriage and the regime's number two, marking the start of a third-generation dictatorship (Yonhap News, 2011).

Kim Jong-un had studied in Switzerland and received a Western-style education. However, once in power, the fear of losing power drove him to even harsher oppression. In 2013, he brutally executed Jang Song-thaek, who had supported his rise to power (Dong-A News, 2013). Four years later, in 2017, Kim Jong-un arranged the assassination of his half-brother Kim Jong-nam in Malaysia (Yonhap News, 2017). Later, in 2018 and 2019, he held summits with South Korean President Moon Jae-in and U.S. President Donald Trump. However, their differences were too wide, and the talks ended without results (Monthly Chosun, 2019).

Since bringing his eldest daughter, Kim Ju-ae, who was just 10 years old, to an intercontinental ballistic missile test launch site in 2022, Kim Jong-un has been officially treating her as a figure of greater national importance than even his spouse. This is believed to be a part of Kim Jong-un's preparations for a fourth-generation succession, as he has long been reported to suffer from serious health problems (KBS News, 2024).

3.2 Military aspects

Since the Korean War, the North Korean regime has maintained a large military presence near the armistice line, ready to invade the South again at any time (Republic of Korea Ministry of National Defense, 2022). During Kim Il-sung's time, small groups of North Korean soldiers often slipped across the border to conduct sabotage in the South. Later, during Kim Jong-il's rule from 1999 to 2010, North Korea repeatedly crossed the maritime boundary, attacked South Korean naval ships, and even shelled Yeonpyeong Island, South Korea, in a surprise strike that left many civilian casualties (Pressian News, 2024).

At the same time, as the economic gap with the South grew, Kim Jong-il's regime found it difficult to gain superiority in conventional military power. Instead, the regime focused on developing nuclear weapons and long-range missiles with the help of China and Russia. Kim Jong-un's regime has intensified these efforts, and North Korea is now believed to have dozens of nuclear weapons in addition to intercontinental ballistic missiles with ranges of more than 10,000 kilometers (Republic of Korea Ministry of National Defense, 2022).

In October 2024, the North Korean regime sent about 12,000 combatants to Russia to support Russia in the Russia-Ukraine War, which began with a Russian invasion in 2022, leaving Russia short of troops. However, due to insufficient preparation for modern, drone centered warfare, the North Korean forces have reportedly suffered heavy casualties, with more than 4,000 dead or injured as of January 2025 (SBS News, 2025). Since then, as its combat experience has accumulated, the North Korean forces have greatly improved their ability to respond to modern warfare, which has increased South Korea's burden of responding to North Korea's military threats (The Guardian, 2025).

3.3 Economic aspects

North Korea operates a planned economy under a socialist ownership system. Its system is highly closed and inefficient, with slogans like “self-sufficiency” and “self-renewal” used to maintain the dictatorship (Republic of Korea Ministry of Unification, 2024). As a result, North Korea's economy remains among the poorest in the world, with a GNI per capita that is about one-thirtieth that of South Korea, and a volume of international trade that is only one-four-hundred-sixtieth that of South Korea. Specifically, between 2019 and 2023, South Korea's GNI per capita was \$34,093, \$33,928, \$37,898, \$35,229, and \$36,194, while North Korea's GNI per capita was only \$1,208, \$1,168, \$1,243, \$1,107, and \$1,217. In terms of international trade volume, South Korea's total was \$1,045.5 billion, \$980.1 billion, \$1,259.4 billion, \$1,414.9 billion, and \$1,274.8 billion, while North Korea's total was \$3.25 billion, \$0.86 billion, \$0.71 billion, \$1.59 billion, and \$2.77 billion (Bank of Korea, 2025).

Around 50% of North Korea's population suffers from serious food shortages and malnutrition (Welthungerhilfe, 2025). Under the pretext of responding to this crisis, many young people are being mobilized for forced labor under harsh conditions (Wall Street Journal, 2025). Nonetheless, The North Korean regime has maintained a focus on luxury consumption (Fox News, 2025) and on developing long-range missiles and nuclear weapons (Republic of Korea Ministry of National Defense, 2022).

3.4 Human rights aspects

The North Korean regime educates its citizens from an early age to be absolutely obedient to the supreme leader. Through various social organizations with compulsory membership, the regime monitors people and controls their daily activities, and anti-regime activities and expressions of dissent against the regime are strictly punished. Residents' phone calls are intercepted; Communication with the outside world is extremely limited; and access to TV, radio, and the internet is severely restricted. In addition, residents are not allowed to travel to other parts of the country without official permission, and international travel is nearly prohibited. North Koreans are executed for various

crimes, including watching South Korean television, theft, drug dealing, and pornography distribution. Public executions are frequently held in North Korea to frighten citizens (Republic of Korea Ministry of Unification, 2024).

Many North Koreans continue to escape the country, facing dangers such as harsh political prisons and possible death sentences, driven by extreme poverty and systemic human rights violations (Korea Institute for National Unification, 2023). The UN Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in North Korea, established by resolution of the UN Human Rights Council, describes the human rights situation in North Korea as follows (United Nations, 2014):

“Systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations have been and are being committed by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, its institutions and officials. In many instances, the violations of human rights found by the commission constitute crimes against humanity. These are not mere excesses of the State; they are essential components of a political system that has moved far from the ideals on which it claims to be founded. The gravity, scale and nature of these violations reveal a State that does not have any parallel in the contemporary world”

4. The Syrian dictatorship

4.1 Second-generation hereditary dictatorship

Most of Syria’s population is Sunni Muslim, while Alawites, which is a branch of Shi’ite Islam, account for about 10%. In 1963, Alawite military officers from the Arab nationalist Ba’ath Party seized control of the country in a coup d’état, and set up a single-party government. Hafez al-Assad, who had previously served as a fighter pilot, played an active role in the coup and later became defense minister. In the 1967 Six-Day War, Syria was defeated by Israel, and after that, fierce power struggles erupted within the Ba’ath Party. In 1970, Hafez al-Assad seized power in a coup, transforming the one-party system under the Ba’ath Party with his own one-man dictatorship. Hafez al-Assad granted the Sunni majority some prominent positions in an effort to co-opt them. However, to safeguard his rule, he filled important positions, such as in intelligence, with Alawites and depended on them as regime supporters (The Asan Institute for Policy Studies, 2019). In 1973, Hafez al-Assad launched the Yom Kippur War against Israel with Egypt to avenge the defeat of the 1967 Six-Day War but was defeated again (Kunieda, 2012).

The Ba’ath Party, which espouses Arab nationalism, has long been in bitter political conflict with the Muslim Brotherhood, which espouses orthodox Islamism. After the Muslim Brotherhood made a failed attempt to assassinate Hafez al-Assad in 1980, Hafez al-Assad harshly repressed the Muslim Brotherhood. In 1982, when the Muslim Brotherhood led an armed uprising in the Syrian city of Hama, Hafez al-Assad mobilized his army to raze the city, killing more than 10,000 civilians in the “Hama massacre” (Lee, 2022).

Hafez al-Assad's second son, Bashar al-Assad, studied in the United Kingdom to become an ophthalmologist. In 1994, Bashar al-Assad's elder brother, who was supposed to succeed his father, died in a car accident, and he returned home to assume his role as successor. When Hafez al-Assad died of heart disease in 2000, 35-year-old Bashar al-Assad took power. In 2007, Israel bombed and destroyed a facility in Syria's al-Kibar region, which was reportedly a nuclear reactor that Syria was secretly building with North Korean help (Kunieda, 2012).

Influenced by the Arab uprisings that began in Tunisia in 2010, a massive civic movement, dominated by Sunnis, emerged in 2011 demanding the end of the dictatorship. Bashar al-Assad responded to the protests with severe force, leading to numerous casualties, and the unrest eventually developed into a civil war between the Alawite-led regime and Sunni-majority opposition forces. The civil war has been long-lasting and highly complicated, involving foreign actors such as Russia, Iran, Israel, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the United States, and Hezbollah, as well as ISIS (Lee, 2022). During this period, the regime detained, tortured, and executed the opponents, frequently without fair legal procedures. At the notorious Sidnaya prison alone, more than 30,000 people are believed to have been executed without a trace (BBC, December 17, 2024). In addition, Bashar al-Assad's regime has used chemical weapons at least 85 times to carry out mass killing of civilians. Between 2011 and 2018 alone, the civil war killed an estimated 510,000 people and displaced more than 10 million (Human Rights Watch, 2019).

4.2 Close tie to the North Korean regime

North Korea and Syria established diplomatic relations in 1966, and in the immediate aftermath of establishing ties, they focused on military cooperation. During the 1973 Yom Kippur War, North Korea not only supplied tanks and other weapons to Syria but also sent fighter pilots. When Hafez al-Assad visited North Korea in 1974, he was impressed by the statues and photographs of Kim Il-sung erected across the country to glorify him, and he copied the practice in Syria (Weekly Chosun, 2024).

Since then, North Korea has continued to supply Syria with various missiles and chemical weapons, and has cooperated with Syria's nuclear development program. The 5-megawatt reactor at North Korea's Yongbyon nuclear center served as a template for Syria's Al-Kibar reactor, which had the same configuration as Yongbyon. When Israel attacked the Al-Kibar reactor in 2007, ten North Korean nuclear scientists who had helped build the reactor were reportedly killed (Ramani, 2021).

When the Syrian civil war broke out in 2011, North Korea provided significant assistance to the Syrian regime, including dispatching large number of troops and supplying weapons. As a gesture of gratitude for North Korea's support, in 2015 Bashar al-Assad opened Kim Il-sung Park near the presidential palace in Damascus (Weekly Chosun, 2024). Until recently, a large photograph of Hafez al-Assad and Kim Il-sung holding hands was displayed in the Syrian presidential palace. Syria is one of only two countries in the world that maintain diplomatic relations with North Korea but not with South Korea (BBC Korea, 2024).

4.3 Sudden collapse

In the early days of the Syrian civil war, Bashar al-Assad's regime was on the brink of defeat. However, with the active military support of Russia, North Korea, Iran and Hezbollah, the crisis was almost over and the regime was very close to victory in 2019 (The Asan Institute for Policy Studies, 2019). In return, to assist Russia in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine War that began in 2022, Bashar al-Assad's regime sent several thousand fighters to Russia (BBC Korea, 2024). However, in December 2024, the rebels in northern Syria near Turkey launched a large-scale counterattack against government forces with Turkey's support. The government forces' response was lethargic, and the rebels surprised the world by capturing Damascus, the capital located in southern Syria, in just 10 days. This led to the collapse of Syria's hereditary dictatorship after 54 years, and Bashar al-Assad fled to Russia (BBC, December 10, 2024).

Throughout the civil war, Bashar al-Assad's regime has received strong military support from Shi'ite ally Iran, Lebanon's pro-Iranian militant group Hezbollah, as well as Russia and North Korea, which have used Syria as a base for their Middle East expansion. However, recently, Hezbollah and Iran have been greatly weakened by military clashes with Israel, and Russia is already burdened by its ongoing war with Ukraine, making it difficult for the Syrian regime to obtain military support from them. These circumstances have been analyzed as the direct causes of the sudden collapse of the Syrian regime (BBC, December 9, 2024).

5. Impact on the North Korean dictatorship

5.1 Similarities and differences

In common, as explained above, both the Syrian and North Korean dictatorships are long-running hereditary dictatorships that have harshly repressed their people in order to maintain their power. Just as Kim Jong-un inherited power at the young age of 28 after studying in Switzerland, Bashar al-Assad inherited power at the young age of 35 after studying in the United Kingdom. Both regimes also prioritized the development of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. Both regimes relied heavily on Russian support to maintain their dictatorships and, in return, sent fighters to assist Russia in the Russia-Ukraine War.

On the other hand, Syria has religious and ethnic tensions between the rulers and the ruled, while North Korea does not have such problems. Furthermore, unlike Syria's neighbors, such as Turkey, Israel, and Saudi Arabia, which support anti-government militants inside Syria, North Korea has no anti-government militants yet, and China and

Russia, which are the only countries other than South Korea that are connected to North Korea by land, are its most active supporters. In addition, North Korea has a much more intense level of control, brainwashing its people to serve the dictator like a parent, and monitoring their movement in almost every aspect of their lives - political, economic, social, and cultural (Weekly Chosun, 2024).

5.2 Implications of the fall of the Syrian dictatorship

Syria has long been an important partner for North Korea in the field of military cooperation, which has been carried out in various areas, including the trade of regular weapons, help with missile technology, and sharing know-how for building underground military sites. The North Korean regime has relied on this route to obtain foreign currency and sustain its military presence in the Middle East. However, the collapse of Bashar al-Assad's regime could lead to the rapid weakening of this network and expose the North Korean regime to the possibility of serious economic losses and a decline in military influence. Furthermore, given that Syria was a key link in the anti-Western alliance connecting North Korea, Iran, and Hezbollah, the collapse of Bashar al-Assad's regime could require the North Korean regime to make significant changes to its diplomatic strategy. In other words, it could pose a structural challenge to North Korea's overall foreign policy strategy, going beyond the simple loss of a diplomatic partner (NK News, 2024).

Furthermore, after the collapse of the Syrian dictatorship and the weakening of Hezbollah in Lebanon, which were Iran's regional proxy forces, the United States and Israel launched a surprise air strike against Iran in June 2025. Since the North Korean regime has had very close relationships with Syria, Hezbollah and Iran, this situation must have made the North Korean regime worry about its survival. Ultimately, it could conclude that only nuclear weapons can guarantee its survival, and focus on advancing its nuclear capabilities, including the development of nuclear submarines (Radio Free Asia, 2025).

In the meantime, due to oppression of its people, Bashar al-Assad's regime was alienated from the international community. The regime relied mainly on Russia and a small number of undemocratic countries to maintain its power, but received little help from them when it collapsed. This situation is undoubtedly very unpleasant for the North Korean regime which is also heavily dependent on Russia, and may cause the North Korean regime to reconsider such relationships. Nevertheless, the collapse of the Syrian dictatorship is likely to lead to expanded military cooperation between Russia and North Korea. Russia, seeking to make up for its failure in Syria, may aim to achieve a more complete victory in the Ukraine war, and to this end, it may request expanded military support from North Korea while offering in return more advanced technical support for North Korea's nuclear, space, and missile programs, which could be a very attractive card for the North Korean regime (RAND, 2025).

Finally, the North Korean regime is strictly controlling information to prevent the spread of news among its citizens that the North Korean army has suffered heavy casualties in the Russia-Ukraine War. However, news is gradually spreading through the families of deployed soldiers, and this situation could become another source of discontent toward the dictatorship among North Korean citizens, including the bereaved families (Dong-A News, 2025).

6. Conclusion

As such, with the rapid changes in the domestic and international situation surrounding North Korea, the risk to the survival of the North Korean dictatorship is increasing. Internationally, the collapse or weakening of the so-called Axis of Evil such as Syria and Iran, as well as their protector Russia, has greatly weakened North Korea's political, diplomatic, military, and economic positions. Domestically, the ongoing severe economic crisis, coupled with Kim Jong-un's deteriorating health and the push for a fourth-generation succession centered on his daughter, who is only in her teens, is exacerbating political uncertainty. Nonetheless, it is difficult to find any analysis that anticipates the North Korean dictatorship to collapse in the short term due to large-scale citizen movements or armed struggles, as there is no core or foundation for an anti-regime movement in North Korea at this time, unlike in Syria.

However, given the length of time that North Korea's hereditary dictatorship has been in place for three generations, the vast accumulation of suffering and dissatisfaction with the regime, including its harsh repression and

ongoing economic hardship, is likely to have built up. Thus, should that latent frustration erupts at some point in the future, the explosive power is bound to be enormous.

Furthermore, regarding the North Korean dictatorship's use of indoctrination and heavy-handed control to suppress opposition to the regime, in an era where advances in science and technology have made the dissemination of information faster and more convenient, it is questionable whether the regime will be able to maintain its strong control over the younger generation in the long term. As the younger generation continues to emerge, instinctively questioning the established order, challenges to the authority of the North Korean dictatorship are bound to increase. The more anxious a dictator feels about maintaining his power, the more he will strengthen his control and oppression of the people. This will lead to further accumulation of discontent, which will eventually explode outward. Thus, the dictatorship, which once seemed eternal, could collapse in an instant, even in North Korea.

Unlike in democratic systems, where the government is maintained by the support of the majority of the people, history has clearly shown that the power of a dictator cannot last forever in a system where the regime is maintained through the oppression of its citizens (Nathan, 2003). From an analytical perspective, this comparison suggests that the prospects for alleviating the oppression experienced by North Korean residents are likely to depend on specific external conditions. In particular, the findings indicate that developments such as sustained constraints on the regime's access to financial resources, the expansion of external information flows amid the regime's information blockade, and the emergence of divisions within the ruling elite constitute key factors shaping the internal vulnerability of the North Korean dictatorship.

Finally, this study recognizes that it relies mainly on news articles and policy reports, with limited use of academic research papers. This is because it is difficult to find scholarly studies on fast-changing events in closed countries like North Korea, and because the paper focuses more on recent political developments than on long-term theories.

References

- Bank of Korea. (2025). *Bank of Korea Statistics System*. <https://ecos.bok.or.kr/#/>. Accessed: August 3, 2025.
- BBC News. (2024, December 9). *Bashar al-Assad: Sudden Downfall Ends Decades of Family's Iron Rule*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/10338256>. Accessed: August 3, 2025.
- BBC News. (2024, December 10). *What Just Happened in Syria and Who's in Charge?* <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c99x011d432o>. Accessed: August 3, 2025.
- BBC News. (2024, December 17). *Jeremy Bowen: Assad's torture prison is worst I have seen*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c62w5q52pngo>. Accessed: August 3, 2025.
- BBC Korea. (2024, December 13). *무너진 시리아 독재정권, 북한에 주는 의미는? [What the Fall of Syria's Dictatorship Means for North Korea?]*. <https://www.bbc.com/korean/articles/cx26534kdx3o>. Accessed: August 3, 2025.
- Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. (2017). *The "Axis of Evil" Is Back*. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2017/02/03/axis-of-evil-is-back-pub-67892>. Accessed: August 3, 2025.
- Dong-A News. (2013, December 13). *北 장성택 처형... 파란만장한 40 여년 정치인생 처참한 종말 [Execution of Jang Song-thaek: A Tragic End to a Turbulent 40-Year Political Career]*. <https://www.donga.com/news/article/all/20131213/59522549/1>. Accessed: August 3, 2025.
- Dong-A News. (2025, March 27). *정보당국 "입막음에도 파병 소문 확산, 내부 동요 커져 [Intelligence Agencies: Despite Cover-up, Rumors of Dispatch Spread, Internal Unrest Grows]*. <https://www.donga.com/news/Politics/article/all/20250327/131291052/2>. Accessed: August 3, 2025.
- Fox News. (2025, March 3). *North Korea's Kim Jong Un Splurges on Luxury Goods While Pushing Weapons Development*. <https://www.foxnews.com/world/north-koreas-kim-jong-un-splurges-luxury-goods-while-pushing-weapons-development>. Accessed: August 3, 2025.

- Human Rights Watch. (2019). *World Report 2019*.
https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/world_report_download/hrw_world_report_2019.pdf. Accessed: August 3, 2025.
- KBS News. (2024, December 28). *Close Up North Korea*.
<https://news.kbs.co.kr/news/pc/view/view.do?ncd=8140319&ref=A>. Accessed: August 3, 2025.
- Korea Institute for National Unification. (2023). *White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea*.
https://www.kinu.or.kr/main/module/report/view.do?idx=125349&nav_code=mai1674786121. Accessed: August 3, 2025.
- Kunieda, M. (2012). *The 40-Year History of the Assad Regime in Syria* (Y. Lee, Trans.). Hanul.
- Lee, S. (2022). A Study on Political Changes in Syria. *Local and Politics*, 5(2), 1-25.
<https://data.doi.or.kr/10.22979/LOCALANDPOLITICS.2022.5.2.2>. Accessed: August 3, 2025.
- Monthly Chosun. (2019, April). *하노이 회담에서 드러난 북핵 문제의 진실 [The Truth of the North Korean Nuclear Issue Revealed at the Hanoi Summit]*.
<https://monthly.chosun.com/client/news/viw.asp?ctcd=H&nNewsNumb=201904100026#top>. Accessed: August 3, 2025.
- Nathan, A. J. (2003). China's Changing of the Guard: Authoritarian Resilience. *Journal of Democracy*, 14(1), 6–17.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2003.0019>. Accessed: August 3, 2025.
- NK News. (2024, December 9). *North Korea Loses Key Middle East Partner*.
https://www.nknews.org/2024/12/with-assads-ouster-north-korea-loses-a-key-partner-in-the-middle-east/?utm_source=chatgpt.com. Accessed: August 3, 2025.
- Pressian News. (2024, February 21). *제2의 천안함 연평도 우려 커지는 한반도 [Rising Concerns over a Second Cheonan or Yeonpyeong Incident on the Korean Peninsula]*.
https://www.pressian.com/pages/articles/2024021918305201810?utm_source=naver&utm_medium=search. Accessed: August 3, 2025.
- Radio Free Asia. (2025, June 23). *US Strikes on Iran May Strengthen North Korea's Nuclear Resolve, Experts Warn*. <https://www.rfa.org/english/korea/2025/06/23/north-korea-iran-nuclear-strikes-impact/>. Accessed: August 3, 2025.
- Ramani, S. (2021, March 23). The North Korean-Syrian Partnership: Bright Prospects Ahead. *38 North*.
<https://www.38north.org/2021/03/the-north-korean-syrian-partnership-bright-prospects-ahead/>. Accessed: August 3, 2025.
- RAND. (2025, January 16). *The Fall of Assad Could Be a Turning Point for the Axis of U.S. Adversaries*.
https://www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2025/01/the-fall-of-assad-could-be-a-turning-point-for-the.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com. Accessed: August 3, 2025.
- Republic of Korea Ministry of National Defense. (2022). *Defense White Paper*.
https://www.mnd.go.kr/cop/pblicitn/selectPublicationUser.do?siteId=mnd&componentId=14&publicationSeq=1040&id=mnd_040501000000. Accessed: August 3, 2025.
- Republic of Korea Ministry of Unification. (2024). *Understanding North Korea*.
<https://www.unikorea.go.kr/books/understand/understand/>. Accessed: August 3, 2025.
- Republic of Korea National Archives. (n.d.). *Korean War Damage Statistics*.
<https://www.archives.go.kr/theme/next/625/damageStatistic.do>. Accessed: August 3, 2025.

SBS News. (2025, January 18). *러시아 파병 북한군, 이대로면 4 월 중순 궤멸* [North Korean Troops Dispatched to Russia Could Be Wiped Out by Mid-April]. https://news.sbs.co.kr/news/endPage.do?news_id=N1007953115&plink=ORI&cooper=NAVER. Accessed: August 3, 2025.

The Asan Institute for Policy Studies. (2019, June 17). *시리아 세습독재 정권의 생존과 다종파 엘리트 연합의 역할* [Survival of Syria's Hereditary Dictatorship and the Role of Multi-Faction Elite Coalitions]. Issue Brief. https://www.asaninst.org/bbs/board.php?bo_table=s1_1&wr_id=219. Accessed: August 3, 2025.

The Guardian. (2025, July 24). *North Korea's Military Is Being Transformed on the Battlefields of Ukraine – So Why Is Seoul Silent?* <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jul/24/north-koreas-military-is-being-transformed-on-the-battlefields-of-ukraine-so-why-is-seoul-silent>. Accessed: August 3, 2025.

United Nations Human Rights Council. (2014). *Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea*. <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g14/108/66/pdf/g1410866.pdf>. Accessed: August 3, 2025.

Wall Street Journal. (2025, January 27). *Kim Jong Un Is Doing Everything He Can to Keep North Korea's Youth in Line*. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/kim-jong-un-is-doing-everything-he-can-to-keep-north-koreas-youth-in-line>. Accessed: August 3, 2025.

Weekly Chosun. (2024, December 22). *세습독재 시리아와 북한의 58 년 밀월관계* [The 58-Year Close Relationship Between Hereditary Dictatorships in Syria and North Korea]. <https://weekly.chosun.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=38970>. Accessed: August 3, 2025.

Welthungerhilfe. (2025). *Food Security in North Korea Remains Critical*. Welthungerhilfe. https://www.welthungerhilfe.org/global-food-journal/rubrics/crises-humanitarian-aid/food-security-in-north-korea-remains-critical?utm_source=chatgpt.com. Accessed: August 3, 2025.

Yonhap News. (2011, December 20). *김정일 사망, 장성택 섭정체제* [Kim Jong-il's Death and the Jang Song-thaek Regency System]. <https://n.news.naver.com/mnews/article/001/0005427676?sid=100>. Accessed: August 3, 2025.

Yonhap News. (2017, February 14). *장성택에 이어 김정남... 김정은 친족 측근의 줄 잇는 죽음* [After Jang Song-thaek, Kim Jong-nam: A Series of Deaths among Kim Jong-un's Relatives and Aides]. <https://www.yna.co.kr/view/AKR20170214201000014?input=1195m>. Accessed: August 3, 2025.