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A historical approach to the leadership of the Organisation and Guidance Department of the Workers' Party of Korea

Abstract

North Korean political organisations have produced a system which is automatically connected to the cult of the Kim family. The paper assumes that North Korea is ruled by an alliance of people affiliated with Kim Il-sung family and two political organisations – the Organisation and Guidance Department and the Personal Secretariat, both of which are sub-branches of the Party Central Committee.

Keywords: Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il, Kim Jong-un, Kim Kyong-ok, North Korea, Organisation and Guidance Department, Workers' Party of Korea.

Introduction

North Korean² political organisations have produced a system which is automatically connected to the cult of the Kim family. Starting from the 1970s the system began to focus on the needs and wants of the Kim Royal Family³ by reorganising the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK). One of its key political structures is the Organisation and Guidance Department (OGD) of the Central Committee of the Korean Workers Party (CC WPK).

The thesis of this paper is that the OGD is the most important department of the Korean Workers Party Central Committee and that it was significantly changed after the nomination of Kim Jong-il as its head in the mid 1970s. The OGD runs North Korean policy behind the political scene. It is responsible for organising and managing the WPK. The hypotheses of this article concern 'doubles'. Firstly, North Korea is ruled by a coalition composed of people belonging to the Kim family and by two political structures: the OGD of the WPK CC and the Personnel Secretariat (PS). Secondly, the role of the WPK

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2 North Korea is officially the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

3 The Kim family is the family of Kim Il-sung, the "eternal" North Korea President. Kim Il-sung was born in 1912 and passed away in 1994.

was never subordinated to the North Korean Army, the Korea People's Army (KPA).

This paper is organised into three substantive chapters, following this introduction. It begins with a chronological approach to the development of the OGD. The second deals with the organisational structure of the OGD. The third examines the controlling nature of the OGD. The paper concludes with an epilogue that discusses the future of the OGD in the context of the Kim Jong-un era. In order to understand the nature of the North Korean regime, there is also an annex to this text which includes 'propaganda vocabulary', which is considered as necessary by the Author to understand the nature of the political system of North Korea. The names of North Korean politicians are indicated following the North Korean version in the Korean language.

Aim of the article

According to the author's knowledge, there are no papers in Western languages dedicated to the OGD, and especially summarising the latest cadre changes within this department of the WPK. In order to fill this gap, the author proposes a historical approach to changes which occurred within this political structure of the North Korean political apparatus. The author also aims at providing a list of people who were or are at the head of the OGD.

Hypotheses

The paper proposes two hypotheses. The first assumes that North Korea is ruled by an alliance of people affiliated with Kim Il-sung family and two political organisations – the Organisation and Guidance Department and the Personal Secretariat, both of which are sub-branches of the Party Central Committee. The second hypothesis postulates that the WPK is no longer a subordinate of the KPA.

1. An historical approach to the OGD

Following the defeat of Japanese imperialism (1910-1945), North Korea was established on the 9th September 1948. Starting from this date North Korea struggled to build a model socialist state under the guidance of the WPK, a communist party which was organised according to the Soviet model. In the Soviet Union, at the 8th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) held in March 1918, two structures of the Central Committee were created. These were a Politburo of five members and an Organisational Bureau (Оргбюро/Orgburo) for matters related to Administration and Personnel.⁴

4 Bruno 2007: 180.

Stalin was an original member of both bodies.⁵ As in the Soviet era, the OGD was one of the first political substructures which were created in the WPK in 1946. Every communist country has a Party Organisation or Organisation Secretariat. The Soviet Union had an Organisation Bureau, which Stalin abolished in 1951, because these two organisations were interconnected. In European Communist Parties, there were some Organisation Departments, which were subordinated to Central Committees. This is the same for China. Regarding North Korea, the OGD became a kind of authority which has had an enlarged role in comparison to the Politburo.

Originally the North Korean OGD was part of the General Affairs Department (GAD) of the WPK. As in the case of the CPSU, the OGD eventually spun-off from the GAD.

From 1946 to 1981, the OGD address was the headquarters of the WPK. Since 1982 The OGD has been localised on the ground of the Namsan School, a former school for children of party officials, which was demolished in the same year. The OGD is settled in front of the main offices of the WPK.

2. The structure of the OGD

The OGD is composed of three sections and 130 substructures. The three main sections are in charge of the Organisation of the WPK (당지도), the WPK headquarters (간부), the military (군부), and the last one focus on other political structures. There was also an administration section (행정부) until 2007, which was led by Jang Sung-thaek (장성택) since November 2005, and which has fulfilled some of the functions of the OGD.⁶ After his removal in 2010, the duties of the Administrative department were switched to the OGD under the auspices of the 7th group.

The WPK headquarter section is responsible for the ideological education and party life of all senior officials⁷ or members of the CC WPK (with approximately 3,500 members⁸). Interestingly this section is also responsible for the “information network” dealing with the military life of the KPA and other military structures of the DPRK. According to Hwang Yang-yop, a former North Korean WPK secretary who defected to South Korea in 1997, these reports consist of straight facts: “who did what and where”.⁹ Important reports go directly to deputy directors.

5 Bruno 2007: 180.

6 Lee Sang-yong 2015.

7 Cheong 2008a: 25; Kim Seongnam 2008: 25.

8 Cheong 2008a: 10.

9 Cha, Sohn 2012: 62.

The OGD military section has controlled the Ministry of People's Armed Forces and WPK organisations in the KPA since the 1970s.¹⁰ However, historically speaking, there was always a policy to place a priority on the party over the army. During an inspection of KPA Unit no. 324 on the 8th February 1958, Kim Il-sung said that, "The KPA is the revolutionary armed force of the party because it was organised by the Party".¹¹ During the same year the KPA held a plenary session on the 8th of March and decided to create a WPK committee in the KPA. In order to subordinate the KPA under the OGD, in the late 1960s Kim Jong-il applied a gift policy. Kim Jong-il and his OGD cadres started in effect then to corrupt the KPA leadership. Military officials started to receive their instructions from OGD instructors. This section also began to be responsible for assignments and promotions in the KPA and other military structures. Any criticisms regarding relations between the KPA and the OGD were accepted, apart from that of O Jin-u, a long term friend of Kim Jong-il, who considered that the KPA should be independent from the OGD. In 1987, O Jin-u was involved in an accident and saved only by the financial efforts of Kim Jong-il. Only after their relations improved did O Jin-u soften his critical approach to the OGD. However, they kept a certain distance until the death of O Jin-u in February 1995. This incident was due to the following fact. Starting from the 1970s, the OGD became the primary means of security of the Kim Jong-il regime. The OGD took the place of the KPA regarding security issues and this led to internal conflict in the KPA and the WPK. The OGD was also responsible for the career of Kim Il-sung in the 1980s and 1990s. OGD cadres decided which meetings Kim Il-sung would have with foreign leaders.¹²

Regarding the former administration section, this was responsible for some civilian organisations such as the Ministry of People's Security, the Ministry of State Inspection and the State Security Agency, among others, until its dismantlement in 2007. All these organisations were subordinated to the Administration section and now to this department. It's important to note that the military section was conjointly managed by a team of North Korean officials and not by a single person. Those in the 2000s who were at the head of this structure were Jang Sung-thaek's brothers Jang Sung-gil, Jang Sung-u and Ri Yong-chol (리용철). Jang Sung-u was working in the Ministry of Public Security (an organisation ruled by the Administration section of the OGD and later by the Administration Department). He later became the director of the Kim Jong-il guard command. Regarding Jang Sung-gil, he was also involved in the Ministry of the Public Security. Therefore, we can deduce that Kim

10 Cha, Sohn 2012: 62.

11 Suh 1996: 169.

12 Jang 2014: 197.

Jong-il was, to a certain extent, confident of the loyalty of the Jang family, who supervised the internal security in order to ensure the survival of the North Korean regime.

The latest section is devoted to local WPK structures and other WPK structures not included in the headquarter section.¹³ This section is also responsible (partially with the headquarters) for the Party economy (the SEC and the Office No. 39) and Party companies. In North Korea all companies and workplaces are governed by an OGD committee.¹⁴ These committees were created in order to ensure that policy and orders from Pyongyang are implemented. We can therefore deduce that the number of persons who are directly or indirectly subordinated to the OGD is very high. This section manages entities which can generate foreign currencies, such as companies dealing with the export of some specific goods (e.g. 'abalone and shiitake' mushrooms). One can assume that the biggest North Korean companies are partially managed by OGD cadres or people affiliated to the OGD. As an example, Cha Chol-ma (차철마), a son-in-law of the former senior deputy director Ri Jae-kang, was running an important OGD import-export company.

Each section of the OGD is divided into subsections, which deal with specific issues such as censorship, the ten principles section, foreign issues, economic issues, the WPK central committee, unification issues,¹⁵ the cabinet, and cadres' nominations. The main cells are classified with numbers from 1 until 130. Some of these cells consist of two people. For example, the daily propaganda managed by the OGD was under the supervision of just two people. This subcell verifies the policy of the OFA in accordance with the Kim ideology. The OGD is also involved in the foreign policy of the DPRK. According to a North Korean defector, there are about 600 OGD spies abroad, mainly in China and South Korea.¹⁶ It's important to underline that the OGD is responsible for nominations in each of the structures of the North Korean system. In the OGD there are subcells dedicated to these nominations, which are later accepted or refused by cell managers and OGD structures directors.

The OGD is the most crucial department concerning the nomination of directors and WPK members. Recruitment is under the direction of the OGD and its local branches. In spite of some formal procedures for judicial

13 Cheong 2008b: 25.

14 Madden 2009: 48.

15 Interview with Lee Duk-haeng, Senior Policy Cooperation Officer from the Ministry of Unification (South Korea) realized on the 2nd July 2015.

16 Interview with a senior North Korean defector, who was a WPK member. The interview was realised in Europe in 2014. For safety reasons, the identification of the defector is not provided.

nominations, judges are ultimately nominated by the OGD. The OGD is also responsible for the nomination of KPA generals and for the nomination of non-military cadres to the Army. Until 2004, the OGD had an administration structure which was powerful enough to vet personnel appointments. The OGD verifies also the nomination of North Korean citizens to key-positions. For instance, Professor Kim Yong-nam of Kim Chaek University of Technology and his vice-chancellor Ryu Si-hyun, worked with Kim Jong-il on IT and economic issues respectively. Both of them were selected by the OGD.¹⁷

It also worth mentioning that the OGD also has a cell responsible for the private life of Kim Jong-un. This section called the fifth one (5 部) is totally responsible for the *kippeumjo*, a ‘pleasure squad’ of women from North Korea and abroad who provide varying forms of ‘entertainment’ to some members of the Kim family and North Korean elites.¹⁸

Historically speaking the OGD implemented two large-scale indoctrination movements. Both campaigns were aimed at purging North Korean society from disloyal and disobedient citizens who may have threatened the regime. The first was known as the ‘Three Revolutions Teams’, with the second referred to as the Songun policy (also known as the Military First Policy). The Three Revolutions movement was inaugurated in February 1973. It was a movement which managed the ‘loyalty’ towards Kim Jong-il and Kim Il-sung through three pillars: cultural, technical and ideological. Based on China’s Red Guards movement, this movement aimed at testing the loyalty of the North Korean population towards the WPK.

The Three Revolutions Movement also led to changes in the KPA. The Political Bureau of the KPA finally became an entity entirely subordinated in structure to the OGD. The Three-Revolutions Movement was a significant contributor to the WPK power in the 1970s. The ability of Kim Jong-il to lead a purge against his own family and the former wife of Kim Il-sung proved that his structure (and himself) ruled supreme over North Korea. Around the same time Kim Jong-il, through the OGD, not only manipulated his father but also exercised strict control and prevented him from being in touch with his family members. Kim Il-sung lived like a king but ‘a king in a golden cage’ from the mid 1970s onwards. The OGD and the PAD still depicted him as a leader, but in reality power was already in the hands of Kim Jong-il and the OGD.

17 Kim 2008.

18 Jang 2014: 168.

3. The leadership of the OGD

Starting from the Kim Jong-il's era in 1970, the first director of the OGD was Kim Yong-ju (김영주 born in 1920), the younger brother of Kim Il-sung. In the 1940s he studied in Moscow and in 1954 became an instructor in the OGD. He became a deputy director in 1957, closely working with Choe Yong-rim (최영림), a former NK Prime Minister in the 2000s, nominated as an OGD director in 1956.¹⁹ Kim Yong-ju was appointed as head of the OGD in September 1960.²⁰ In 1966 he became the secretary of the Political Committee of the WPK. He became one of the strongest potential successors of Kim Il-sung at that time. In the same year, another relative of Kim Il-sung was recruited by Kim Yong-ju: Kim Jong-il (김정일), who later became the successor of Kim Il-sung. Kim Yong-ju taught Kim Jong-il and provided him his first political education in the early 1960s.²¹ Kim Jong-il graduated from the Kim Il-sung University in March 1964. Kim Jong-il, who previously worked as an executive of the Cabinet was moved to the section "Leader-on-Duty, Central Headquarters, Instruction Section" of the OGD in June 1964.²² Interestingly, his father Kim Il-sung also worked in this department in the Korean communist Party in the 1940s²³ and it was through this department that he came to power. Already in this period, the power of the OGD was very strong but not comparable to its current strength. In this period the OGD was mainly related to personal matters and the execution of Party policies. In September 1973, Kim Jong-il was appointed deputy director of the OGD under the supervision of Kim Jong-ju.²⁴

Even if Kim Jong-il was only a deputy director, Kim Jong-il was already more powerful than his uncle for the following four reasons: firstly, Kim Jong-ju was frequently abroad for professional duties and health issues and therefore Kim Jong-il had to replace him during official meetings. Secondly, being the first deputy director of the OGD, Kim Jong-il was therefore naturally the leader of this structure. This also concerns the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the WPK, which was mastered by Kim Kuk-tae (김국태), who was also frequently abroad. Thirdly, Kim Jong-il took advantage of the frequent absences of his uncle and Kim Kuk-tae by promoting his followers and counterparts such as Choe Ik-kyu (최익규), Choe Thae-bok (최태복), Choe Ryong-hae (최령해), Han Sung-ryong (한성련), Jon Pyong-ho (전병호), Kang Song-an (강성안) and Kye Ung-thae (견웅태) among others.

19 북한 주요인사 -인물정보 2017: 583.

20 북한 주요인사 -인물정보 2017: 137.

21 Cha, Sohn 2012: 24.; 북한 주요인사 -인물정보 2017: 731.

22 북한 주요인사 -인물정보 2017: 25.

23 북한 주요인사 -인물정보 2017: 124.

24 Bruno 2007: 25.

Starting from the 1970s, Kim Jong-il took institutional measures aiming to intensify the power of the WPK and the OGD WPK over the structures of the North Korean Army. This can be seen as the result of competition among more than two groups, namely the pro-party group led by Kim Jong-il, and the anti-party group led by Kim Yong-ju. According to Cheong Seong-chang, a distinguished fellow from the Saejong Institute in Seoul, in the 1970s the military personnel management was transferred from the Army to the WPK.²⁵ Furthermore, the information section of the OGD was responsible for providing information to Kim Jong-il on any Army developments. According to Professor Cheong Seong-chang, in the late 1960s the WPK assigned a political officer, called a “commisar” (комиссáп) to each of the divisions and regiments in the army and placed all senior officials of the KPA under the control of the PS and the OGD.²⁶ Through the OGD Kim Jong-il had the opportunity to develop a comprehensive knowledge of political life in North Korea and the issues involved in running the country.

Since 1972, the constitution restricted the North Korean cabinet to the simple execution of the WPK’s decisions. In North Korea, no attempt was observed to distinguish between the party and the government, although there could be a variation of policy preferences among the leading party elites.²⁷

Meanwhile, Kim Jong-il organised the Second Economic Committee (SEC-제 2 경제위원회) and established Office No. 39 (39 오실) in the WPK, responsible for the private funding of the Kim family.²⁸

Both institutions are related to economic matters and are directly under the management of the OGD. The SEC is responsible for military-economic matters and the Office No. 39 is responsible for a foreign currency fund. In order to ensure the security of the WPK, Kim Jong-il established the ministry of Social Security (renamed Ministry of State Security in 1993) in 1973.²⁹ In 1973, Kim Jong-il ordered an intense songbun (성분)-based investigation (an assessment of the loyalty of the North Korean population toward the WPK) after becoming Director of the OGD.³⁰ Kim Jong-il also enforced the nomination of Ri Jae-kang (리제강 1930-2010), who started his career as an

25 Bruno 2007: 24.

26 Cheong 2015: 12.

27 Suk 1982: 567.

28 Hong Min 2014: 35.

29 Suh 2015: 29. 10% of agents have a background from families who fought during the Japanese Occupation, Interview with Kim Byeong-ro, an Assistant Professor at the Institute for Peace and Unification Studies of the Seoul National university. The interview was conducted on the 8th July 2015.

30 Cheong 2008a: 3.

instructor in the OGD in 1973³¹ and of Pak Song-bong (박송봉), a former DPRK orphan educated in Romania.³² Ri Jae-kang assisted Kim Jong-il in his rise in the OGD. Ri Jae-kang was named deputy director of the OGD in October 1982 (but also a member of the personal secretariat of Kim Jong-il),³³ and became a 1st director in July 2001³⁴ until his mysterious death in 2010.³⁵ At the end of his political career he was responsible for the headquarters section of the OGD.

Starting from 1973, the OGD became the main hub of power in North Korea as new created organisations were affiliated to the OGD and key counterparts of Kim Jong-il led these organisations. In 1974, Kim Jong-il was designated successor to the supreme leader (*suryong*) Kim Il-sung. Meanwhile, Kim Jong-il orchestrated the *Ten Principles for the Establishment of a Monolithic Ideological System* (노동당 유일사상 10 대 원칙), known also as the “Ten Principles”, aiming at magnifying the Kim Il-sung cult.

In order to maintain and strengthen his power, in the early 1970s, Kim Jong-il expelled his uncle from the OGD during a larger purge that will be explained more precisely later in this paper. During the same time Kim Jong-il nominated KPA Colonel Jang Sung-u (장성우) as a deputy director of the OGD in 1973.³⁶

In the 1980s, due to the growing influence of the North Korean Army, Kim Jong-il ordered the creation of a civilian OGD office focusing on military issues. The long-term idea was to put civilians at the head of the Army, which was realised in the 2000s with the appointment of Jang Sung-thaek, Kim Kyong-ok (김경옥) and others as generals. At the end of the 1960s/beginning of the 1970s a fierce battle started between Kim Yong-ju and Kim Jong-il. This had its roots in the fact that Kim Jong-il didn't appreciate the Kim Yong-ju entourage.³⁷ In order to prove his loyalty to Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il prepared different acts to idolise his father. Later, Kim Yong-ju stepped down because he was ill, and was sent for treatment abroad (probably to Romania). Thereafter, Kim Jong-il was appointed head of the OGD in September 1973 (succeeding his uncle Kim Yong-ju) and held the position until his death.³⁸ In February 1974 he removed his uncle to the Ryanggang Province.³⁹ In the same year,

31 북한 주요인사 -인물정보 2017: 756.

32 북한 주요인사 -인물정보 2017: 770.

33 북한 주요인사 -인물정보 2017: 756.

34 북한 주요인사 -인물정보 2017: 756.

35 Cheong 2008a: 27.

36 Madden 2009: 35; 북한 주요인사 -인물정보 2017: 756.

37 Levi 2014: 48.

38 Levi 2013: 74.

39 Levi 2014: 51.

Kim Jong-il rewrote the ten principles proposed originally by Kim Yong-ju in 1967. The 10 principles is a ‘benchmark’ set which establishes standards for governance in North Korea.

The management of the OGD was secured in the 1970s within a group of people who were comrades of Kim Jong-il when he was a pupil at the Namsan Primary School. Among them were Kye Ung-thae, Kang Chong-san, Jon Pyong-ho and Choe Thae-bok as well as some of his classmates of the Kim Il-sung University, including his sister Kim Kyong-hee and her husband Jang Sung-thaek. In the mid 1970s, Kim Jong-il increased the OGD powers by involving it in the nomination of ministers.⁴⁰ Starting from the 1970s and according to the new North Korean Constitution of 1972, the North Korean political system was no longer a dual system (WPK-government) and was solely managed by the WPK. In this period the system was already under the control of Kim Jong-il. According to the defector Jang Jin-sung, in this period even the children of the Guerrilla fighters were removed from the CC WPK and exiled to distant provinces from Pyongyang, despite the opposition to this from Kim Il-sung’s comrades.⁴¹ Meanwhile Ri Su-yong (리수용, also known as Ri Chol: 리철) was appointed director of the OGD and worked with Ri Hwa-son (리화선), a deputy director in the OGD. Ri Su-yong also cooperated with another former director of the OGD, Ri Myong-jae (리명재)⁴², who is the father of Ri Yong-ho (리용호), the current DPRK Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Interestingly, at certain periods, 84% of OGD cadres have had a background related to people and soldiers who were killed during the Korean War.⁴³

Therefore, those who generally accompany Kim Jong-un on his public inspections also appear to belong or belonged to the OGD, as trusted advisors of the Kim family. These are likely to include Kim Ki-nam (김기남), Jo Yong-won (조용원), Kim Kyong-ok, Ri Su-yong, and others. All of them are or were deputy directors of the OGD. Kim Kyong-ok was nominated in 2008 to the OGD and Jo Yon-jun in January 2012.⁴⁴ Kim Kyong-ok was made a director of the WPK CC in 1991⁴⁵ and thus was revoked in 2019. Kim Yo-jong, a sister of Kim Jong-un, is also thought to be an OGD senior deputy director.

40 Jang 2014: 100. This was done through the cell 9 of the OGD (9과 내각).

41 Jang 2014: 174.

42 Ri Myong-jae passed away in 2018. Ri Myong-jae was also the former director of Kim Jong Il’s Secretariat (1982–1992). Lee, Lim, Cho, Song 2013: 35.

43 Interview with Kim Byeong-ro, associate professor at the Institute for Peace and Unification Studies of the Seoul National university. The interview was conducted on the 8th July 2015.

44 북한 주요인사 -인물정보 2017: 521.

45 북한 주요인사 -인물정보 2017: 37.

Regarding the leadership of the OGD, there are believed to be at least seven deputy directors⁴⁶, divided into two groups. The first group are senior deputy directors who deal with the aforementioned sections. The next group comprises of deputy directors who are employed in the OGD in accordance to their connections with the Kim family and their political experience.

Table 1. Senior Deputy Directors of the OGD as of the 1st September 2019

Identity	Position	Year of nomination
Ri Man-gon	1 st senior deputy director	2019
Hwang Pyong-so	2 nd senior deputy director for military affairs	2018
Kim Jo-guk	3 rd senior deputy director for military issues	2008
Jo Yon-jun	4 th senior deputy director for WPK headquarters issues	2012

Source: own research

All of them are faithful followers of Kim jong-il and OGD instructors of the Three Revolutions Team. The Three Revolutions Team was a movement dedicated to the ideological indoctrination of the North Korea population in the mid 1970s. This movement implements the ideological indoctrination in three major fields, referred to as Ideological, Technological and Cultural. Kim Kyong-ok⁴⁷ is a '4 star' KPA general. Other deputy directors are supposedly involved in the Personnel Secretariat of Kim Jong-un. Members of the family also work in the OGD, such as Kim Jong-chol between 1999 and 2000.⁴⁸ Several rumours suggest that Kim Jong-chol was even a deputy director of the OGD, but these are hard to verify.⁴⁹ Some reports confirmed that Kim Jong-chol and Kim Jong-un were at least partially educated and trained by OGD officials. Both of them also worked on the PAD.⁵⁰ There are also some rumours that the Guidance Department is supposed to have adopted the expression, „Let us set up a business system for brethren Kim Jong Cheol”. From 1999 to late 2000, there were talks circulating about Kim Jong Cheol from the Party down to the provincial party sections.⁵¹

46 Madden 2009: 67.

47 Kim Kyong-ok was a senior deputy director of the OGD till 2019.

48 Cheong 2008a: 3.

49 Cheong 2008a: 25.

50 Madden 2009: 69.

51 Kim 2008.

There are two groups of deputy directors in the OGD. The first is composed of “senior deputy directors” and the second group of ordinary deputy directors. Some of the deputy directors of the OGD are trustees’ counterparts of the Kim family. Among others we can notice the presence of Choe Thae-bok, Hyon Chol-hae, and Kim Ki-nam. All of them are semi-retired and are rarely seen in public. This second list was even larger in the past before some of these deputy directors passed away, such as Jon Pyong-ho, Kim Jung-rin and Kim Kuk-tae, and were apparently not replaced. This may have led to internal friction in the OGD.

Table 2. Assumed directors of the OGD

Identity	Direction period
Choe Ryong-hae	2018–2019
Kim Jong-un	2011–2018
Kim Jong-il	1974–2011
Kim Yong-ju	1960–1973
Pak Yong-bin	1952–1959
Kim Il-sung	1949–1951
Ho Ka-i	1945–1948

Source: own research

4. The controlling role of the OGD

The OGD not only controls the loyalty of the North Korean population but also the degree of security risks potentially posed by this population. According to James Pearson, a researcher based in Seoul, the OGD has files on WPK members containing details on their private lives (habits, travels...). The controlling role of the OGD is connected to the Songbun policy, which prevents disloyal elements from becoming members of the WPK.⁵² The OGD is also responsible for purges in the WPK. According to Professor Cheong Seong-chang the OGD controls not only party organisations, but also all other power institutions existing in North Korea, including the military, the SPA presidium, the state administration council,⁵³ and the orchestre Wangjaesan.⁵⁴

⁵² Pearson, Tudor 2015: 98.

⁵³ Cheong 2008a: 33.

⁵⁴ Jang 2014: 115.

The OGD also controls some structures of the KPA. Starting from 1991, all generals were supposed to follow “Party Lectures” led by instructors from the OGD ‘Sub-section 13 (13 과)’⁵⁵ under the auspices of the of the Organisation of the WPK section (당지도). Section 13 is also responsible for KPA guidance. Interestingly, the Section 13 is located in the buildings of the Ministry of People’s Armed Forces. A corresponding Section 4 is responsible for KPA nominations. After enrolling in lectures, the generals live communally on OGD premises, where they undergo sessions of ideological indoctrination. During this time military appointments and promotions are decided upon. Interestingly, directors and deputy directors of the OGD also participate in the global policy of the DPRK. During the Kim Jong-il era, OGD deputy directors were ordered to attend all meetings of central WPK secretaries.⁵⁶ The senior deputy directors of the OGD also do not often accompany the North Korean leader during his ‘on-the-spot’ guidance, and do not sit on the President’s platform of the WPK. Sometimes they are visible, but their positions are clearly indicated in the North Korean media. There is, however, a new trend in which these senior and deputy directors are increasingly visible in the North Korean media than was the case in the past.

The controlling nature of the OGD underlines that there are some risky issues regarding the nature of the WPK. The more the OGD controls, the more the WPK is jeopardised by external factors. The power of the OGD may have been put in question in the past, especially in the late 1990s and the 2000s. In the late 1990s, in order to prove his loyalty, Jang Sung-thaek and his brother Jang Sung-u were responsible for a major purge in the OGD and the Ministry of Public Security.⁵⁷ They purged many KPA officials and Mun Sung-sul, the deputy director of the OGD responsible for the Headquarter structure. He was beaten to death⁵⁸ within the Simhwajo purge. Jang Sung-thaek also ordered the suicide of Kim Yong-ryong, the deputy director of the Ministry of State Security in 1998. In exchange Jang Sung-thaek was apparently nominated as a WPK secretary and placed at the head of the Administration Department of the WPK. This also led to the transfer of the Secret Police and the Prosecutors’ Office to the Administration Department,⁵⁹ which was previously managed by

55 Pearson, Tudor 2015: 98.

56 Cheong Seong-chang 2008: 9.

57 Madden 2009: 67.

58 The Simhwajo purge was started by the establishment of an identification system, which included work experience, and a list of relatives and their political history. So Kwan-hee, the agriculture secretary of the WPK, was executed in public and was the most significant high ranking official killed during the Simhwajo purge. This purge was co-organised by Kim Jong-il and Jang Sung-thaek.

59 Young 2011: 91.

the Administration structure of the OGD. A second wave of purges took place in the 2000s. The most recent ‘dust-up’ in the OGD occurred in 2004 when Jang Sung-thaek was removed from the department for his “factional behaviour”,⁶⁰ under allegations he had gathered too much power in the department, and was constantly feuding with Ri Jae-gang, another deputy director.⁶¹ Until 2004, Jang Sung-thaek was the head of the Administration Department, which was in reality a structure affiliated to the OGD.⁶² His closest allies were also removed such as Choe Chun-hwang, the first deputy director of the Propaganda and Agitation Department, Foreign Trade minister Ri Kwang-gun, Choe Ryong-su the minister of People’s Security was also dismissed, and finally Ji Jae-ryong who was demoted to work as a labourer in a local community.⁶³ Interestingly, Jang Sung-thaek returned to the political scene and was named head of the WPK department in charge of workers ‘organisations and construction projects’ in 2007. In 2010, two OGD senior directors passed away. A mysterious car accident led to the death of Ri Jae-kang, a deputy director of the OGD. Interestingly around the same time in April 2010, Ri Yong-chol (1928-2010), another OGD deputy director responsible for the military section of the OGD, also called the 13th Bureau⁶⁴, also passed away after being purged by Jang Sung-thaek. Ri Yong-chol became a director of the OGD in June 1993 and its first director in 1994. Ri was nominated with Hom In-beom (홍인범) in march 1993.⁶⁵

Table 3. The main purges of the OGD department

Leader of the Purge	Period	Main OGD cadres purged	Other persons purged
Kim Jong-il	1974–1977	Kim Yong-ju	Lateral branch of the Kim family (Kim Pyong-il, Kim Sung-ae, Kim Yong-il.)
Jang Sung-thaek	1997	Mun Sung-chun	KPA officials
Kim Jong-il/ OGD direction	2003&2010	Jang Sung-thaek	Pak Pong-ju, WPK officials
OGD direction	2010	Ri Jae-kang/Ri Yong-chol	WPK officials

Source: own research

60 Cheong, 2008b: 58.

61 Cheong, 2008b: 52.

62 Cheong, 2008b: 56.

63 Cheong 2008a: 30...Ji Jae-ryong is the current DPRK ambassador to China.

64 Kim 2006: 3.

65 북한 주요인사 -인물정보 2017: 752.

The power of Jang Sung-thaek in the OGD could be also compared to one Yun Sung-kwan, who partially dominated the OGD at the beginning of the 1990s. Yun Sung-kwan was probably expelled because he was blamed for the aborted putsch against Kim Il-sung in 1993.⁶⁶ As was the case with Jang Sung-thaek, who wanted to undertake deep reforms of the North Korean economy and was released from his duties and dismissed.

In conclusion, it should be stressed that in trying to determine who is actually at the head of North Korea, we cannot merely rely on public appearances by the North Korean leadership as providing a significant indicator. There are also important power brokers who operate behind the scenes, especially younger people who manage the OGD. Many people are trying to assess the potential of the OGD in terms of the North Korean political model. However, there are some limitations concerning the potential significance of these analyses. There could be certain disagreements between the core management of the OGD and the PS. We cannot forget that Ri Jaekang and Ri Yong-chol, both heads of the OGD, mysteriously passed away in “car accidents”. According to Cheong Seong-chang, the director of Inter-Korean relations Studies Program at Sejong Institute, both were purged because they played a relevant role in relieving Jang of his duties in 2004.⁶⁷ There could also be some conflicts or internal rivalries inside the OGD.

Conclusion

From an organisational perspective, I think that Kim Jong-un may launch a movement similar to the Three Revolutions Team in order to determine the future leaders of the OGD. Otherwise we could also speculate that those who led the Songun movement in the mid-1990s may become the new leaders of the OGD. From a different perspective, changes in the OGD leadership may also result from the North Korean policy of regularly switching elites within one political structure, in order to avoid any kind of factionalism. Therefore, the OGD leadership is also regularly assessed, demoted and updated.

Finally, it is important to note also that the OGD is not the sole department responsible for North Korean Propaganda. The PAD implements some propaganda tools, however the roots of North Korean propaganda stem from the Soviet Union. The cult of Kim Il-sung also did not start with the nomination of Kim Jong-il to the OGD and PAD. Already by the 1950s, the Kim Il-sung personality cult was strongly indoctrinated into the North Korean psyche, having already started in 1946 with the anthem *The Song of General*

66 Madden 2009: 67.

67 Cheong 2009: 14.

Kim Il-sung.⁶⁸ In a nutshell, the OGD is definitely responsible for the top-management of North Korean affairs, in spite of being at its inception merely a structure affiliated to the WPK. Now it appears to be the WPK that is affiliated to the OGD.

Annex – Vocabulary

Term in English	Term in Korean	Romanized version
Department of the Organization and Guidance of the Korean Workers' Party	조선로동당 조직지도부	Choson Rodongdang Jojikjidopu
Department of the Propaganda and Agitation of the Korean Workers's Party	조선로동당선전선동부	Choson Rodongdang Seonjeonseontongpu
New Thought	새관점	Sae Kwanjom
Paektu Bloodline	백두혈통	Paektu Hyoltong
Party Direction	지도핵심	Chido Haeksim
Personnal secretariat	서기실	
Social Stratification	출신성분	Chulsin Songbun
The Song of General Kim Il-sung	김일성장군의 노래	
Songun Policy	선군정치	Songun chonchji
Supreme Leader	수령	Suryong
Three Revolutions movement	삼대혁명	Samdae hyokmyong

68 Lim, Yoo, 2013: 109.

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