



Asian Conflicts Reports

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Issue 21 | January-February, 2012

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Council for Asian
Transnational Threat Research

North Korea's Leadership Transition

Sarah K. Yun



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Many expect that Kim Jong-un will be named the Chairman of the National Defense Commission in mid-April

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North Korean leadership appears to be focusing on ensuring legitimacy through titles and public relations, and providing stability through trusteeship

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Kim Jong-un's leadership will be tested when he begins to cast visions and make policy decisions that may test the loyalty of the elites

The death of North Korea's "Dear Leader" Kim Jong-il on December 17, 2011 catapulted his young son, Kim Jong-un, to leadership. Some analysts say that the current calm in the new Kim regime is unsustainable, most likely only holding through until the 100th birthday of the late Kim Il-sung on April 15. Most agree that Kim Jong-un is not the sole authority in North Korea but operating under a collective leadership including Jang Song-taek, uncle of Kim Jong-un; Kim Kyong-hui, aunt of Kim Jong-un; Ri Yong-ho, Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission; Kim Yong-chun, Vice Chairman of National Defense Commission, and others. Realistically, it is unlikely that Kim Jong-un would be able to act as the sole authority at this juncture. He only began his leadership training in 2008 and public appearances in 2010. While it is difficult to predict North Korea's future path, the similarities and differences in the leadership consolidation of Kim Jong-il in 1994 and Kim Jong-un in 2012 provide a window. There are two main comparisons to draw from the leadership process – political context and speed of succession.

First, the circumstances that North Korea faces are now far from what they were in 1994. During Kim Jong-il's leadership, North Korea experienced deadly natural disasters, chronic food shortages, the breakdown of the public distribution system, and emergence of official and unofficial markets. Now, North Koreans are relatively more exposed to the outside world through cell phones, business ventures to and from China, and access to foreign products and broadcasts. In 1994, Kim Jong-il was not faced with the pressure of achieving the goal of a "strong and prosperous nation" by 2012. Although some of the problems that the father Kim struggled with will not be entirely different from those that the son will face – including the lack of food and energy, economic development, and security guarantee of the regime – Kim Jong-un faces a different contextual background today.

Second, there is a higher sense of urgency and speed with the Kim Jong-un leadership consolidation process. Kim Jong-un has been moving forward at a more rapid pace than did Kim Jong-il. Some argue that the process has been too rapid, since he had only been groomed as successor since 2008 – after Kim Jong-il suffered a stroke. Propaganda and publicity campaigns celebrating the young Kim in the military began in 2009. In September 2010, he was appointed Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission, then became acting Chairman in December 2010. Also in 2010, the young Kim was reportedly appointed to chair a committee tasked to fix the failed currency reform. In October 2010, less than two weeks after he became a Four Star General, Kim made his first public appearance at a military parade marking the 65th anniversary of the Korean Workers' Party (KWP). In October 2011, he reportedly established and led the Guidance Team to address energy shortages, manage food rations, economic development, and legal/security affairs. On December 26, 2011, Kim Jong-un became the acting General Secretary of the KWP. Four days later, the Politburo transferred the title of the Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army (KPA) to Kim Jong-un.

The sense of hasty urgency is also revealed in public statements and messages. The 2012 Joint New Year Editorial emphasized unity under Kim Jong-un's bequeathed *songun* (military-first) leadership. Keywords in the editorial included *songun*, bequeathed, and unity, which showed a window into North Korea's dire need to stabilize the new regime under the young leader. On Kim Jong-il's 70th birthday celebration on February 16, 2012, North Korea announced that the Korean Workers' Party will hold a party conference in mid-April where many expect that Kim Jong-un will be named the Chairman of the National Defense Commission. On February 22, Kim Jong-un visited the Korean People's Army Unit 842, which is related to their nuclear program, as not only an indication that Kim is fostering loyalty from the military, but also a reminder to the world about their nuclear program before the bilateral meeting between the US and North Korea in Beijing the next day.

Contrary to this very short consolidation period, Kim Jong-il was groomed for over 15 years before the death of Kim Il-sung. Moreover, a three year mourning period was declared in 1994 in contrast to the short mourning period for Kim Jong-il which essentially ended after his birthday celebration on February 16, 2012. He also held multiple positions within the Korean Workers' Party and the KPA in order to establish credibility. During this time, Kim Jong-il skillfully consolidated his power base by ensuring positions to the elites and old guard while leaving the top leadership positions vacant for years.



In order to mitigate existing and potential factions within the Kim family, military and the party, Kim Jong-il opted for three strategies. The first was an inclusive appeasement strategy whereby the old guards were kept in position while younger generation was also given power. In other words, Kim Jong-il did not change the ruling system for a number of years. The second was a divide-and-conquer strategy whereby the military and the party maintained competition. Within the three-year mourning period, Kim Jong-il suspended political institutions – Politburo, Central Committee, Central People’s Committee, Supreme People’s Assembly and others. As a result, Kim was able to navigate around the decision-making apparatus away from formal procedures. He was the acting head of state during this time which allowed him increased leverage. He also elevated the military agencies after realizing that he needed to build his legitimacy through the military. When the military gained too much power, however, Kim enacted a checks-and-balance system by elevating the party apparatus. This overlapping and competitive command structure ultimately induced loyalty to Kim Jong-il. The third strategy was to realign institutions after his power was consolidated. In 1998, Kim Jong-il reconvened the suspended Supreme People’s Assembly since 1995 in order to reshuffle power, such as elevating the National Defense Commission to the highest ruling institution for which he had been its chairman since 1993. After his leadership was consolidated, Kim Jong-il focused on other issues such as the economy and food shortage.

There has been a conscious effort for Kim Jong-un to appear in the public eye. Since the death of his father until February 23, 2012, Kim Jong-un has already made 26 public appearances to military units, industrial parks, funeral ceremonies, and others. Kim Jong-il, in contrast, did not make any public appearances until four months after the death of Kim Il-sung. It is apparent that the North Korean regime is launching a public relations campaign for the new leader. The Korea Central News Agency is displaying photos of him smiling lavishly and linking arms with ordinary North Koreans. Kim Jong-un’s documentary was quickly released on January 8, 2012 to highlight his role in the military prior to Kim Jong-il’s death. Herein lies a big similarity between the two Kims. If Kim Jong-un struggles to build his image as a respectable, mature, and competent leader, Kim Jong-il also struggled with his image as a reclusive and irresponsible playboy. Utilizing his experience in the party’s propaganda and film department, the elder Kim underwent a dramatic makeover to a hands-on, engaged, and well-informed leader. Both Kims have undergone dramatic public relations makeovers as leaders, which implies that in North Korea legitimacy is influenced by propaganda and the cult of personality.

From assessing the political context and speed of succession of Kim Jong-il and Kim Jong-un’s leadership consolidation process, North Korean leadership appears to be focusing on two aspects - legitimacy through titles and public relations, and stability through trusteeship. In both cases, the Kims are largely following their respective fathers’ footsteps in the early stages, not to disrupt the Kim family legacy and garner support from older military leaders. In the case of Kim Jong-il post-1994, he carefully crafted his ascension and power base by appeasing the old guard. The Kim Jong-un ascension will take a similar route, but in a much more expedited fashion, evidenced by his sudden and frequent public appearances. For now, Kim Jong-un’s policies will remain within the boundaries set by his father. It will most likely lean towards minimizing competition rather than managing cooperation.

Although there appears to be surface calm, Kim Jong-un’s leadership will be tested when he actually begins to cast visions and make policy decisions that may test the loyalty of the elites. If Kim Jong-il garnered support from the elites through power, position, luxuries and built his legitimacy through the nuclear program and military-first policy, Kim Jong-un will need to decide what his legacy will be. A possible scenario could be a Kim Jong-un model of a hybrid between military-first and economy-first policy, since 2012 is the year they aimed to achieve a “strong and prosperous nation”. At the moment, Kim Jong-un seems to be focusing largely on establishing roots with the existing military-first policy. In the near future, however, we should watch for any signs of new emerging economic policies. ●

'King Kim the Third' at the Crossroads

Er-Win Tan



The announcement on Monday, 19 December, that the leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Kim Jong-il had passed away, sent international media into a state of frenzy. Anticipating regime factionalism in Pyongyang, or even conflict, the Republic of Korea (ROK) military was placed on alert, whilst Seoul, Tokyo and Washington entered into close consultations with one another.

Yet, without denying the significant implications of Kim Jong-il's passing, some level of regime stability can be anticipated for now. The fears of instability that may result from factionalism in Pyongyang have been overblown. The founding father of North Korea, Kim Il-sung, passed away in 1994, following which the mantle of Supreme Leader passed to the late Kim Jong-il without internal turmoil in Pyongyang. Moreover, the late Kim Jong-il's stroke in 2008 served as a wake-up call to the North Korean establishment to ensure an eventual smooth leadership transition. This was reflected by the elder Kim's naming Kim Jong-un as heir apparent, as well as promotion of the younger Kim to the rank of Four-Star General (Sojang). Furthermore, in the days that followed Kim Jong-il's passing, the Korean Central News Agency in Pyongyang released statements through which the DPRK military establishment affirmed its allegiance to Kim Jong-un. There is no doubt in Pyongyang as to the position of the younger Kim as head of state.

Moreover, despite tabloid portrayals of the DPRK leadership as irrational war-mongers, the government in Pyongyang has actually shown a general consistency and rational formulation of its security and diplomatic policy. The DPRK leadership is well aware that undertaking armed provocations against the ROK and the US is bound to result in armed retaliation. Whilst the author is mindful of the *Cheonan* and Yeongpyong incidents in 2010, debate remains over the extent of DPRK culpability in these incidents; as Tim Beal and other scholars note, these episodes may have been in response to what Pyongyang perceived to be provocative US-ROK military exercises. For the immediate future, it is unlikely that Kim Jong-un will deliberately provoke a confrontation with either the US or the ROK, but instead focus on the consolidation of his domestic power base in Pyongyang.

What do these developments signify for the years ahead? The DPRK leadership is aware of the need to reform its archaic economy. The 'Arab Spring' of 2011 has highlighted the urgency of economic reform to Pyongyang, and that repression alone may prove insufficient in ensuring regime survival. For instance, in March this year, it was reported that Kim Jong-il had nightmares of "being stoned ... by North Koreans". Whilst the absence of a civil society and the extent of censorship in the DPRK means that a popular challenge to Kim Jong-un's leadership is unlikely to emerge for now, it is also clear to the younger Kim that he cannot hope to maintain power indefinitely through the use of repression. Rather, given how the Arab Spring had resulted from the disillusionment of Arab youths over corruption and poverty in their homelands, the DPRK leadership is doubtless aware that long-term regime survival will also require them to address the basic living requirements of their people, particularly food security.

Further underlining the urgency of the latter is evidence that suggests that North Korea's deteriorating food situation may be having an impact on the military. On 15 December, six DPRK soldiers posted to the border with China to prevent defections themselves fled across the border, whilst increasing reports from aid agencies have noted that malnutrition is beginning to affect significant portions of the DPRK military. The prospect of a politically unreliable army of starving soldiers doubtless underlines the precariousness of the younger Kim's grip on power, all the more so given the need for the young leader to maintain the loyalty of the DPRK military in consolidating his regime's authority.

Seen in this light, the transition to from Kim Il-sung to Kim Jong-un places the DPRK at a crossroads, which presents Pyongyang and the international community with opportunities as well as obstacles. The late Kim Jong-il had, during the late 1990s, undertaken a limited move towards encouraging foreign investment, as reflected in the opening of the Kaesong Industrial Complex and the Mt. Kungang Resort with the assistance of ROK capital. It is hopeful that the younger Kim's education in Switzerland may have granted the new Supreme Leader a more enlightened perspective into the West and thus, a willingness to embrace reform.

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It is unlikely that Kim Jong-un will provoke a confrontation with either the US or the ROK, but instead focus on the consolidation of his domestic power base

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The 'Arab Spring' has encouraged leadership to concentrate on long-term regime survival and address basic living requirements for their people

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Reports from aid agencies are noting that malnutrition is beginning to affect significant portions of the DPRK military



Even whilst recognizing this opportunity to engage the DPRK, however, three significant obstacles to undertaking engagement with the DPRK must be acknowledged. The first of these concerns is the potential for factionalism within the DPRK. Given the youth and political inexperience of Kim Jong Un, as well as the importance of seniority in the Confucian tradition that underpins North Korea's political culture, older members of the DPRK political establishment, such as Vice-Chairman of the National Defense Commission Chang Sung Taek (considered the most powerful figure in the DPRK after Kim Jong-un himself), and senior North Korean generals, are likely to resent being headed by a comparative youngster. Moreover, given that Mikhail Gorbachev's attempt at economic reform under *perestroika* during the late 1980s led to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, conservative hardliners in Pyongyang are doubtless wary of reform for fear of opening the DPRK to external influences that may bring regime collapse.

A second obstacle to engaging the DPRK concerns political sentiment in Seoul. As a result of North Korea's alleged culpability in the *Cheonan* sinking and in the Yeongpyong Island bombardment, there is little interest in South Korea for rapprochement with Pyongyang. As the ROK will be holding presidential elections in 2012, it is probable that the South Korean public will oppose economic and diplomatic engagement with the North unless Pyongyang explicitly apologizes for the aforementioned incidents. This is complicated by the fact that the North Korean leadership will regard issuing such an apology as a humiliating loss of face, all the more so for Kim Jong-un, given the need to affirm his leadership amongst the DPRK military establishment. It is thus doubtful that the younger Kim will be willing to appear irresolute or weak by apologizing to the ROK over the Cheonan and Yeongpyong incidents. Hence, the ongoing diplomatic impasse between Seoul and Pyongyang is likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

The third obstacle to engaging the DPRK relates to political sentiment in the US, as an ally of South Korea as well as direct enemy of the DPRK. The Obama Administration, also facing an election year in 2012, faces domestic political dynamics similar to those that constrain Seoul's options. The Obama Administration's lack of progress in addressing domestic unemployment has led to the increasing appeal of the Republican presidential nominees. Due to the conservative anti-Communist credentials of the Republican Party's ideology, along with intense criticism of Obama's responses to Iran's nuclear program, any move by Obama to undertake a posture of diplomatic engagement with Pyongyang without a resolution of North Korea's nuclear weapons program could be politically damaging for the Democratic Party in the forthcoming election year.

Faced with these circumstances, and given the international community's concern over potential instability that may arise from the collapse of a nuclear-armed North Korea, the ideal course of action in addressing the diplomatic and security implications of the death of Kim Jong-il would be one based on undertaking engagement with Pyongyang without preconditions. Under his leadership, the late Kim Jong-il had demanded that engagement with the US and ROK on the principle of simultaneous actions, particularly during the Six Party Talks. Thus, for instance, the US lifting of its sanctions on the DPRK's financial assets with the Macau-based Banco Delta Asia in 2007 was reciprocated by Pyongyang's concessions the following year, such as the demolition of the cooling tower at the Yongbyon nuclear facility, as well as North Korea's release to the US a series of key documents which provided specific technical data on their nuclear facility.

Given the conservative sentiment in Washington and Seoul, it is probable that any attempt to undertake such a level of engagement will meet with significant domestic resistance. Rather, it may be helpful to instead concentrate on increasing deliveries of humanitarian aid to Pyongyang. Given the severity of the DPRK's food shortages, such a gesture would enable the US and ROK to signal their defensive intentions to Pyongyang, whilst remaining defensible courses of actions in the face of conservative critics. Through such a process of incremental engagement in line with the DPRK's past calls for "simultaneous actions", dialogue with Pyongyang can be reinstated, enabling the airing of other diplomatic and security concerns such as conventional security, nuclear proliferation, and peace talks to replace the 1953 Armistice Agreement. This would be in line with growing voices in Seoul that have called for a change of policy towards the DPRK, such as Park Geun-hye's advocating of a "trustpolitik and alignment policy".

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The Taliban and Afghanistan's Future

Clive Williams



As the New York Yankees' Yogi Berra once said "When you come to a fork in the road, take it."

The United States and the Quetta Shura Taliban (QST) (otherwise known as the Afghan Taliban) seem to have reached that fork in the road with the announcement that the QST will open a political office in the Qatari capital, Doha, to facilitate direct talks with the US. This follows secret discussions over the past 12 months between the US, Germany and QST representatives in Qatar and Germany.

Because 2012 is a presidential election year, President Obama needs to be able to show progress towards peace and stability in Afghanistan in order to enhance his re-election prospects. More American casualties and pessimistic assessments - like last year's National Intelligence Estimate on Afghanistan, will obviously not help his cause.

This year, Americans will be concerned mainly about two issues: the Afghan war's continuing economic cost, and American casualties. For Americans the Afghan war is a conflict that has lasted three times longer than the Second World War. The US population does not really care what happens in Afghanistan in the longer term, any more than it does about Iraq, as long as there are no adverse economic or terrorism repercussions in the US.

For its part, the QST sees some value from direct talks with the 'Great Satan'. Talks will potentially put the QST in a stronger political position vis-a-vis the 'puppet' Karzai government, and should result in the release of five senior Taliban prisoners from Guantanamo. They could also secure US agreement to stop the targeted killing of Taliban leaders in Afghanistan. They will also give the QST greater international legitimacy - including the potential removal of Taliban leaders from US and UN terrorism lists.

The Quetta Shura Taliban's broad political aim over the next two years will be to position itself for domination of the post-2014 Afghan government and an eventual return to power in Afghanistan.

The main losers from the direct talks are the Karzai government and Pakistan. The US will now be in the driving seat, despite its rhetoric about an "Afghan-led" reconciliation process, rather than relying on the Karzai government to make the running on peace talks. President Karzai's displeasure at being undermined was indicated by his withdrawal of the Afghan ambassador from Qatar in December 2011. Following American pressure, he has since welcomed the direct talks as a "tension reduction" process.

Even so, the Karzai government will probably try to sabotage any aspects of the talks judged to be against its interests. One small example has been its unpreparedness to accept back Taliban Guantanamo detainees; Qatar has since said it will accept them and keep them under house arrest.

Pakistan sees the talks as a threat to its influence over the QST, and a reduction in Pakistan's importance to the US. Pakistan is concerned that a future Afghan government could be more closely aligned with India, to the detriment of Pakistan. It will probably exert pressure on the QST leadership not to do any deals with the US that might be against Pakistan's interests.

The US found it hard last year to establish contact with legitimate QST interlocutors because the QST is not a cohesive organization. One person who claimed to be acting for the QST disappeared with hundreds of thousands of dollars in facilitation funds. The US eventually settled on Tayeb Agha, former secretary to QST leader Mullah Omar.

At the same time, more extreme elements within the QST and Haqqani network have tried to sabotage the Afghan government's attempts to negotiate with the QST's leaders. The most conspicuous example was the September 2011 killing of Burhanuddin Rabbani, head of Afghanistan's High Peace Council that had been established to negotiate with the QST.

The QST's political presence in Qatar is likely to include Tayeb Agha and Obaidullah Akhund, former Defense Minister in the pre-2001 Taliban government (which was recognized only by the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan), along with at least three other Taliban envoys and family members.

1 The Afghan Taliban will open a political office in Doha to facilitate direct talks with the US

2 The Taliban's broad political aim over the next two years will be to position itself for domination of the post-2014 Afghan government

3 The most likely outcome for postwar Afghanistan will be Taliban and Haqqani domination of the south and east, warlord control in other parts, and a compromise Pashtun-dominated government in Kabul



Once the office opens, the US will be seeking confidence building measures from the QST. These are likely to include: renunciation of international terrorism and al-Qaeda links (neither of which is important to the QST); support for democracy and the Afghan constitution - which enshrines women's rights (the QST might pay lip service here), and; abandonment of violence (which would be in the QST's short-term interest in return for the US creating ceasefire zones).

Another issue that would play well at home for President Obama would be the release of Private (now Sergeant) Bowe Bergdahl, who has been held prisoner by the QST or Haqqani network since 2009. If the QST has him, release is possible. If the Haqqani network has him, release is unlikely until there is agreement about Haqqani participation in a future Afghan government.

Despite the US public perception of no US troops being left in Afghanistan, even after 2014 there will be 10-30,000 US military personnel remaining. Their main roles will be combat and logistic support to the Afghan National Army (ANA), and the provision of training. These activities will be relatively low profile and not likely to result in very many US casualties. The US expectation is that Australia will make a similar ongoing financial and military contribution to Afghanistan's security post-2014, and commit to that support until at least 2020.

For the QST, the Qatar office is an important development towards eventually overthrowing the corrupt and hapless Karzai government in Kabul. It shares a common interest with the US in a reduced level of violence over the next two to three years. We should expect the security situation to become more unstable after 2014 when foreign troop numbers are much reduced and different Afghan factions, including the ANA, compete for power.

The most likely outcome will be QST and Haqqani domination of the south and east, local warlord control in other parts of the country, and a compromise Pashtun-dominated government in Kabul. As Yogi Berra observed "This is like déjà vu all over again." ●

Strategic Communication in Papua

Jennifer Yang Hui



1 Two corpses were dumped near a military post after the forceful dispersal of the Third Papuan People's Congress in Abepura in December

2 Although Jakarta has been attempting to communicate differently with Papua, the national rhetoric still portrays the area as a security 'problem' hindering efforts at rapprochement

3 Jakarta needs to improve the image of the central government and security officials in the eyes of the Papuans

After many years of resorting to strict security measures in dealing with insurgency in Papua, Jakarta has recently begun making some small efforts to communicate directly with the volatile region. The Papua Peace Conference held in Abepura on 5-7 July 2011 represented a conservative but important step towards peace in the troubled portion of the country. However, the message coming out from the central government is still inconsistent. Despite the moderate success of the Conference, security-centric rhetoric prevailed, leading to renewed clashes. Also, a standoff between pro-independence Papuans and the security forces again took place in the lead-up to the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the independence of West Papua on the 1st December 2011.

The relationship between West Papua and Jakarta has historically been turbulent. After its success in declaring independence from the Dutch, Papua was forcefully annexed by Sukarno-led Indonesia in December 1961. In 1969, the UN sponsored a referendum which was won by pro-Indonesia Papuans. Although West Papua was granted the status of special autonomy in 2001, the move failed to satisfy pro-independence elements and secessionist movements such as the Free Papua Movement (OPM). Jakarta had traditionally responded to such movements with a security-centric focus, both in its rhetoric and in its action. This has proved inadequate and insufficient in addressing the grassroots issues that are at stake throughout Papua.

Harsh words and strong rhetoric from Indonesian security officials frequently pepper the media whenever unrest takes place in Papua. For example, the use of force was said to be justified in the dispersal of the Papuan People's Congress in Jayapura in November, 2011. The Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs, Djoko Suyanto affirmed that the raid was conducted because it was considered a *coup de'tat*. Some leaders had publically read out a declaration calling for the independence of West Papua from Indonesia, raised the banned Morning Star flag and installed a symbolic government headed by the chairman of the Papua Traditional Council (DAP), Forkobus Yoboisembut.

In addition, official statements saying that "We love Papua" from the police were overshadowed by reports of renewed security operations towards Papuans. Prior to the anniversary, some Papuans students were reported to have received threats via both SMS and phone, with some even claiming to have been followed by undisclosed characters. Troops in Paniai district were also reported to be conducting 'sweeping' operations against ordinary Papuans, searching for OPM members. From time to time, some Papuan protesters were also found dead under mysterious conditions, their bodies dumped in public areas. For instance, two corpses were found near a military post after the forceful dispersal of the Third Papuan People's Congress in Abepura in December 2011. This act referenced a number of historical precedents such as the 1980s *matius* ("mysterious corpses") phenomenon, or the New Order era state-sponsored killings of members of militias and criminals and the dumping of their bodies on the streets as a warning to citizens. Such operations act merely to further instill fear and resentment towards Jakarta's military presence in Papua.

Hard-line rhetoric breeds resistance. Protests by Papuans from different segments of the society over the years have showed the extent of discontent with Jakarta's security-centric approach. On 1 December 2011, for instance, members of the Jakarta-Bali Papuan Society and Students demonstrated at the Hotel Indonesia roundabout in Central Jakarta, calling for independence and demanding that a probe be conducted into mysterious killings in Papua. The protests explicitly rejected the idea of the Republic of Indonesia as a unitary state, with the Papuan protesters brandishing symbols of the Free Papuan Organization (OPM) such as the Morning Star flag.

The failure of the Indonesian government to win hearts and minds in Papua is thus tied to an inappropriate model of communication. The security forces have consistently projected a message conveying that Papua is a "security problem." Unsurprisingly, they are unable to persuade a local audience that is already hostile to the messenger and disenchanted with the message. As a result, the messenger has been discredited and the message was discounted by the Papuan population. Although there has been talk of "constructive communication," as suggested by President Yudhoyono's 2010 Independence Day speech, there has been very little constructive effort aimed at defining what exactly this entails.



While efforts towards reconciliation were beginning with the Papua Peace Congress in July, the Yudhoyono administration was simultaneously shifting its focus to a different but equally unhelpful view that the root of the Papuan conflict stemmed primarily from economic disparity. The Unit for the Acceleration of Development in Papua and West Papua (UP4B) was thus tasked with improving the economic infrastructure of Papua, which was seen to have suffered from years of endemic corruption.

This view, however, addresses only part of the equation. Since ‘Special Autonomy’ was implemented in 2001, this affirmative policy has been widely perceived to have led to inept individuals occupying public positions. The Papuan political elites appointed to these positions have frequently misused financial resources allocated from Jakarta, and in so doing eroded the legitimacy of the latter’s ability to close the region’s economic gap. Jakarta has thus far not responded to these criticisms. Instead, the reports of heavy-handed security operations continue to dominate the headlines, thus characterizing the tone of communication from the central government. It is difficult to see how an economic-centric solution alone can solve the fears raised by this on-going security rhetoric.

The UP4B, however, still represented the best communicative channel open between Jakarta and Papua to date. The International Crisis Group (ICG) had highlighted that the officials who were involved in the discussion group for the creation of the Unit recognized the importance of dialogue for the Papuan ‘roadmap.’ However, they differ as to the actual details of implementation. The Indonesian government and the UP4B, once it is finalized, need to attempt to define and implement constructive communication soon if the problem in Papua is to be resolved. Constructive communication, like strategic communication, is best thought of as a series of coordinated actions, messages, images, and other forms of engagement intended to persuade selected audiences in support of national objectives.

In Papua’s case, one of the most crucial messages to convey would be to improve the image of the central government and security officials in the eyes of the Papuans. The recent community service program held by the military in May 2011 was one such positive step. However, the deep-seated mistrust of the locals towards the military means that more needs to be done. The media also needs to be careful in reporting hard-line rhetoric from relevant officials. Jakarta might also take a leaf from President Thein Sein’s attempt at resolving issues with the ethnic minorities in Myanmar. First, there is a need to recognize ethnic Papuan minorities as an entity. Second, the central government ought to extend the invitation to dialogue to armed groups in Papua. The Yudhoyono government has been urged by the TNI (the Indonesian military), lawmakers and Papuan experts to conduct talks with the Papuans on the national level. However, this has yet to be initiated. Jakarta must recognize that such steps are imperative for the formation of and true national unity within the NKRI.

In short, the Papuan problem deserves much more careful treatment than the simple operational and security-centric response that has been communicated by the government so far. President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has been advised to go down personally to Papua for peace talks, and there is a need to keep more issues on the agenda than just the NKRI. It may be helpful not to think of the issue of Papua as a security problem to be resolved within a certain timeframe. Rather, Jakarta might choose to see it as an on-going conversation, one necessary in order to understand a loved one as they learn to live together. Rather than simply looking into improving the economic development of Papua, as is currently the case, the Yudhoyono administration needs to conduct interactive communication with Papuan leaders and representatives. Strategic communication is thus crucial to create tangible rapprochement. ●

An 'Arab Spring' in the Southwest Pacific?

Julian Droogan & Karina Guthrie

Demographic trends have played a significant role in social and political change throughout history; including recently, in driving the series of popular uprisings currently flaring across the Middle East. As such, these demographic indicators can be used to compare the level of susceptibility to similar mass eruptions of popular discontent in other regions of the world, such as in the southwest Pacific.

Demographic trends including the emergence of youth bulges, the rising frustration of socially marginalized and discontented 15-29 year old males, increases in literacy, female emancipation and the breakdown of traditional family and religious structures have been theorized as the 'root' sociological causes for the process of social modernization and subsequent political upheaval. When these gradual processes of demographic change meet political resistance, either in the form of inflexible authoritarian regimes or dysfunctional political bureaucracies mired by corruption and a governmental deficit, the resulting demographic pressures have been shown to often result in violent outbreaks of popular frustration and political revolution, as has been witnessed in Arab states such as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria and Yemen through 2011 and 2012.

According to German sociologist and historian Gunnar Heinsohn, a society experiencing a bulge in population age structure (occurring when 15-29 year old 'fighting age' males make up more than 30 per cent of a state's population) is almost inevitably headed for social unrest as statistically there is a much greater than even chance of a youth bulge precipitating violence in the form of political revolution, terrorism, war, insurgency and popular uprising.

French historian and demographer Emmanuel Todd extends this thesis. He argues that the youth bulge phenomenon is only part of the explanation, because a surfeit of disaffected and underemployed young men will only become politically active once their society has begun to shift toward 'demographic modernity'. In 2007 Todd foreshadowed the current Arab Spring uprisings by charting three factors that showed that Arab societies were firmly on the path towards such 'demographic modernity': a rapid increase in literacy, falling birth rates, and a decrease in the widespread custom of endogamy.

According to Todd, political revolutions generally occur shortly after the population as a whole acquires the ability to read and write, and in concurrence with falls in the birth rate. In the last 40 years in the Middle East, population growth more than doubled and is now beginning to retreat in a similarly dramatic fashion leading to pronounced youth bulges in each of the Arab states affected by the Arab Spring popular uprisings.

Simultaneously, fertility in the Islamic world has collapsed over the last 30 years; from an average fertility rate (IFR) of more than seven children per woman in 1975, to just 3.1 children per woman in 2011. According to Todd, the major explanatory variable influencing fertility decline is literacy level. When more than 50 per cent of people between 20 and 24 are literate, especially women, a decisive and transformative literacy threshold is reached as literacy allows ideological concepts to be accessed by populations who were previously politically inactive. Across the Arab world this threshold was crossed within the past generation, for instance in Tunisia in 1975; Egypt in 1988; and Libya in 1978.

Thus, by applying these indicators to the southwest Pacific it is possible to gauge the possibility of similar unrest occurring in the region to Australia's immediate north. This region has always been geo-strategically significant for Australia because it dominates the main sea lines of communication from Australia to its major trading partners and allies in the Northern Hemisphere and consequently it has had a major influence on Australia's national security in one form or another since Federation in 1901.

The arc of islands to Australia's north includes the nations of Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea, the provinces of Indonesian Papua, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu. With the addition of Fiji to the east, these nations currently face a series of non-traditional security challenges including rapid population growth, youth unemployment, the breakdown of traditional family structures, rising educational standards not being met by sufficient lifestyle options, pervasive corruption, a deficit in state authority, dysfunctional parliamentary systems or (in the case of Fiji) the existence of an authoritarian regime.

The following table provides the most recent available data on population age structure (youth bulge), population growth rates, youth literacy rates and fertility rates for these states and regions.



1

Demographic change appears to be an underlying factor in the Arab Spring, in particular a pronounced youth bulge, increased literacy and a falling birth rate

2

A string of mostly island nations to Australia's north all appear to be following a demographic trajectory similar to the Arab World

3

Domestic factors suggest this region will not emulate the Arab mass political protest model, but more likely suffer increasing low-level civil disobedience



	Population in 2009	Median Age in 2010	Fertility Rates in 2009	Maximum Fertility Rates	Year	Literacy Rate, Adult Males (most recent)	Literacy Rate, Adult Females (most recent)
Fiji	852 323	25.8	2.7	6.46	1960	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>
Vanuatu	233 790	24.6	3.92	7.2	1960	83.71 (2009)	80.31 (2009)
Solomon Islands	524 125	20	4.3	7.25	1974	84.7 (2007)	78.4 (2007)
PNG	6 703 361	21.6	4.01	6.28	1962	63.64 (2009)	56.52 (2009)
Tonga	103 519	22.7	3.96	7.36	1960	98.95 (2006)	99.02
Indonesia	237 414 495	27.9	2.15	5.67	1960	95.38 (2008)	89.1 (2008)
Timor-Leste	1 099 887	22.2	5.7	7.11	2000	58.5 (2007)	72.5 (2007)

Overall, it can be seen that there is high diversity in data on population growth, literacy and fertility across the region. Fiji and Indonesia have the lowest fertility rates (2.7 and 2.1 respectively), which are comparable with Western and many Middle Eastern countries, while Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea (5.7 and 4) still have rates that approach Sub-Saharan Africa; the highest in the world. Literacy shows similar variety, with Tonga and Indonesia in the high 90 percentiles while Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea appear to be only now crossing the 50 per cent literacy threshold, and in the case of Papua New Guinean and the Solomon Islander males they appear to in fact be declining.

The demographics of the countries in the southwest Pacific are in broad conformity with the youth bulge and demographic modernization models. Except for the contradictory case of declining male literacy in the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, it is likely that Fiji, Vanuatu, Tonga and Timor-Leste are in the middle to late stages of mass social transformation. However, although challenges associated with demographic modernization such as changing social structures, monetization of the economy and changing family structures, including the role of women, have become salient issues for Pacific countries over the past two decades, there are also a series of mitigating factors, specific to the region, which must be taken into account in assessing the likelihood of a series of Arab Spring type events there.

For instance, the likelihood that demographic modernization may result in the mass mobilization of youth in the southwest Pacific region is moderated by the geography of the region. The Pacific region comprises thousands of small islands spread over tens of millions of square kilometers of ocean, and countries within the region do not share a common religion or language. Furthermore, communication across the region is undeveloped; mobile phone and internet usage is low for all countries. With the exception of Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste, both of which have populations in excess of one million people, each of the countries in this study has a comparatively small total population, numbering in the hundreds of thousands, and although all of the countries are urbanizing, they remain predominantly rural societies and thus population density in urban areas remains relatively small. Finally, emigration to countries such as Australia and New Zealand has been identified as a means for alleviating stressors that have arisen that are associated with Pacific unemployment levels.

Thus, an examination of the underlying demographic factors that precipitated the Arab Spring is useful for quantifying and exploring the social drivers of regional insecurity in the arc of islands to Australia's north. However, though the populations examined show broad conformity with the model of demographic modernity and all that this entails in terms of the potential for mass political uprising, there are significant differences between the southwest Pacific and the Arab world that mitigate the likelihood of a series of mass popular expressions of dissent occurring in a similar vein to that of the Arab Spring. It is possible, therefore, that the trend toward modernization in southwest Pacific countries may manifest as relatively low-level civil disobedience or discrete instances of political mobilization rather than mass regional political mobilization, as we are now seeing in the Arab world. ●

Asian Conflicts Reports

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Editors

Dr. Julian Droogan | Macquarie University, Australia

Mr. Shanaka Jayasekara | Macquarie University, Australia

Dr. Kongdan Oh Hassig | Institute for Defense Analyses, Alexandria, Virginia

Dr. Caroline Ziemke-Dickens | Institute for Defense Analyses, Alexandria, Virginia

About the Authors

SARAH K. YUN is Director of Public Affairs & Regional Issues at the Korea Economic Institute, Washington

DR. ER-WIN TAN is Visiting Senior Lecturer, Department of International and Strategic Studies, University of Malaya

CLIVE WILLIAMS is Visiting Fellow at the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre ANU and Adjunct Professor at Macquarie University's Centre for Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism (PICT)

JENNIFER YANG HUI is an Associate Research Fellow at the Centre of Excellence for National Security, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore

DR. JULIAN DROOGAN is a Lecturer at Macquarie University's Center for Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism (PICT)

KARINA GUTHRIE is an Associate Lecturer at Macquarie University's Center for Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism (PICT)

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For inquiries about CATR or Asian Conflicts Reports:

Dr. Caroline Ziemke-Dickens,
SFRD, Institute for Defense Analyses,
4850 Mark Center Drive,
Alexandria VA, 22311, USA.
E-mail: cziemke@ida.org

ISSN: 1838-8574

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