

4-26-2018

# Who is Really Pulling the Strings? Personality Profile and Threat Assessment of North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un

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## Recommended Citation

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**Who is Really Pulling the Strings?**

**Personality Profile and Threat Assessment of North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un**

Jacob J. W. Wankel

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## Acknowledgements

To begin I would like to thank I would like to thank my advisor and mentor, Dr. Aubrey Immelman, whose guidance and assistance in this project was absolutely invaluable. It has been a pleasure working with him on this project and others throughout my time at Saint John's University.

I would also like to thank all the student researchers who assisted in the data gathering process for the Dr. Immelman's initial study of Kim Jong-un and this recent study. Their work greatly assisted my own and allowed me to start this project with a solid foundation to build upon. In particular, I would like to thank Megan Keaveny, whose tireless work and dedication to my project and Dr. Immelman's was incredibly helpful.

Additionally, I would like to thank my friends who reminded me that it is possible to balance a thesis, schoolwork, a job, and a social life. Their support and pestering kept me from locking myself in my room every night this past semester (for the most part.)

Lastly and most importantly, I would like to thank my parents, Martina and David, who were constantly and consistently supportive and loving throughout this process. Thank you for putting up with my occasional stress induced breakdown over the phone, and thank you for always reminding me that the end goal will be worth it. Your support has kept me strong throughout this project and throughout these four years of college. I know you will always be my biggest fans!

## Introduction

North Korean Supreme Leader Kim Jong-un has been called “a total nut job” by current U.S. president Donald Trump (Choe, 2017). In China, internet search engines suddenly turned up empty for the popular nickname given to the leader by young Chinese citizens, “Kim Fatty the Third,” although a spokesperson for the country denies that the government initiated the censorship (Domonoske, 2016). Arizona senator John McCain recently labeled the North Korean dictator a “crazy fat kid” who is irrational (McLaughlin, 2017). A simple internet search will bring up hundreds of articles with similar stories, many labeling the young marshal of North Korea as dangerous, irrational, impulsive, and inexperienced. However, one must not forget that North Korea is one of the world’s most isolated and inaccessible countries in part from severe travel restrictions and complete control of the press and media (Lee, Lew, Lee, Yu, & Hahn, 1999). The outside world knows very little about the inner workings of North Korea and all we really know about Kim Jong-un is what can be derived from defector accounts, the few foreigners who have been allowed inside the country’s borders, or North Korean state media which, as stated before, is completely controlled by the ruling Korean Workers’ Party (WPK).

With the rapid escalation of North Korea’s ballistic missile program, deteriorating North Korea–U.S. relations, and the specter of nuclear war, it is important to gain as much information regarding North Korea and its leader as possible to enable a proper threat assessment. In the wake of recent nuclear tests and launches of intercontinental ballistic missiles potentially capable of delivering a nuclear warhead to the continental United States, the media have been quick to label Kim dangerous, impulsive, and unstable. The main issue with these claims are that they are based on the assumption that Kim Jong-un is directly responsible for policymaking and issuing orders, which has not been officially confirmed. A secondary, though related, issue is that these

claims, at base, are descriptions of regime behavior, with little if any direct, empirical evidence that Kim actually possesses these personality traits.

This paper will attempt to shed light on three important questions that as of yet do not appear to have been empirically resolved. The first is questioning who is truly in charge of decision-making in the North Korean regime. This question is incredibly important as it is directly relevant to determining the source of the military threat posed by North Korea. Second, with the working assumption that Kim is in charge or plays an instrumental policymaking role, this paper offers a personality profile of Kim Jong-un using a theory-driven method whose heuristic value has been established in previous studies (Immelman, 2012). Finally, the personality profile will be factored into a threat assessment of North Korea and employed as the conceptual basis for proposals designed to mitigate the military threat posed by the country.

This paper conceptualizes *personality* and *politics* as construed by Fred Greenstein (1992). Therefore, *Politics* by his definition, “refers to the politics most often studied by political scientists — that of civil government and of the extra-governmental processes that more or less directly impinge upon government, such as political parties.” and *Personality*, within the confines of political psychology, “excludes political attitudes and opinions ... and applies only to nonpolitical personal differences” (p. 107). Immelman (2002, 2003, 2005), following Millon (1996) defines personality as:

a complex pattern of deeply embedded psychological characteristics that are largely nonconscious and not easily altered, expressing themselves automatically in almost every facet of functioning. Intrinsic and pervasive, these traits emerge from a complicated matrix of biological dispositions and experiential learnings, and ultimately comprise the

individual's distinctive pattern of perceiving, feeling, thinking, coping, and behaving.  
(Millon, 1996, p. 4)

Conceptually, the study is informed by Theodore Millon's (1969, 1986a, 1986b, 1990, 1991, 1994, 1996, 2003; Millon & Davis, 2000; Millon & Everly, 1985) model of personality as adapted by Immelman (1993, 1998, 2002, 2003, 2005) for the study of personality in politics.

Methodologically, the present assessment of Kim Jong-un replicates clinical psychodiagnostic procedures in an archival research setting, mainly through extracting psychologically relevant data available in the public domain such as biographies and unbiased media reports. Only data from which the personality attributes of the subject can be inferred are included in the data set.

The primary assessment tool is the third edition of the Millon Inventory of Diagnostic Criteria (MIDC; Immelman & Steinberg, 1999; Immelman, 2015) which was compiled and adapted from Millon's (1969, 1986b; 1990, 1996; Millon & Everly, 1985) prototypal features and diagnostic criteria for normal personality styles and their pathological variants. The research instrument yields 34 normal and maladaptive personality classifications on 12 scales congruent with Axis II of the fourth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV) of the American Psychiatric Association (APA; 1994) and coordinated with the normal personality styles in which those disorders are rooted, as described by Millon and Everly (1985), Millon (1994), Oldham and Morris (1995), and Strack (1997).

The profile constructed in the study is interpreted on the basis of theoretically grounded descriptions, explanations, inferences, and predictions provided by Millon's model of personality (1969, 1986a, 1986b, 1990, 1991, 1994, 1996, 2003; Millon & Davis, 2000; Millon & Everly, 1985) with the ultimate goal of evaluating whether Kim Jong-un truly is the dangerous leader

portrayed in the media, or whether actors behind the scenes are really pulling the strings, essentially using Kim Jong-un as a dynastic puppet to ensure regime survival.

The secretive nature of North Korea demands that any conclusions be treated as tentative until verified by direct evidence. Therefore, the present personality profile of Kim Jong-un, although backed by copious amounts of evidence gathered and a solid theoretical basis, must be regarded as speculative rather than the final word.

## Political History of North Korea

Humans have inhabited the Korean Peninsula since prehistoric times, but it was not until the Silla dynasty that the people of Korea were unified for the first time in 676 A.D. Silla was one of three kingdoms of ancient Korea and following its conquest of the other two kingdoms became the sole rulers of the Korean Peninsula (Seth, 2016a, p.1). Coincidentally, the Silla kingdom also had a hereditary monarchy led by a family with the surname Kim (“Silla,” 1999). The Silla kingdom was then renamed Koryŏ which is what the modern English word *Korea* is derived from. This kingdom stood from 918 through 1392 when Koryŏ was renamed Chosŏn. Chosŏn was ruled by the Yi family from 1392 until the Japanese colonization of Korea in 1910 (Seth, 2016a, pp. 54, 83). In 1897, King Gojong proclaimed the rise of the Korean Empire with the goal of freeing Korea from its domination by China, Japan, and Russia. He hoped that this course of modernization and independence would bring stability. This independence would be short lived as the Korean military was not modernized and proved to be no match for the Japanese invaders in 1907. Japan required Korea to become a protectorate of its empire. Only three years later, in 1910, Japan annexed the Empire of Korea forming it into a colony of the Japanese Empire. Thus began a 35-year period in which Japan ruled the Korean Peninsula (“Korean Empire,”).

The Japanese ruled over the Korean people with an iron grip. Michael Seth writes in his book *A Concise History of Modern Korea* (2016b), “The first decade of colonial rule was particularly harsh, what Koreans have called the ‘dark period’ (*amhŭkki*). It was characterized by harsh political repression that stifled cultural as well as political life” (p. 52). This brutal treatment sparked resistance groups that adopted leftist politics to oppose the right-wing Japanese administration (“History of North Korea,” n.d.). On March 1, 1919, a series of



nationwide protests erupted against Japanese colonialism forcing the ruling power to reform its harsh military rule (Seth, 2016b, pp. 53–55). This allowed a limited degree of freedom of expression for the Korean people. Despite strained relations with Japan, the colonial rule allowed Korea to concentrate on growing, modernizing, and industrializing. This trend continued, and as one observer noted, “By the time of the Japanese surrender in August 1945, Korea was the second-most industrialized nation in Asia after Japan itself” (“Korea as a Colony,” 2009).

With the onset of World War II in Japan in 1937, the Japanese Empire reintroduced its repressive rule over its Korean colony (Seth, 2016b, pp. 79–80). This allowed them to put Koreans to work in Japanese factories and send Korean soldiers to the front lines (“Korea as a Colony,” 2009). At this time, one Korean guerrilla leader, Kim Il-sung, achieved some fame by occupying a Korean town. He would later go on to lead North Korea and establish a personality cult strikingly similar to the cult the Japanese emperor displayed in North Korea (Seth, 2016b, p. 65 & 85).

Following Japan’s defeat by Allied Forces in August 1945, Korea at last gained independence from Japan. The United States and the Soviet Union both tried to claim an independent Korean government through their individual political methods, respectively democracy and communism. The two nations failed to reach an agreement regarding a unified Korean government and agreed to split control of the Korean Peninsula evenly. In August 1945, two U.S. military officers designated the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel to separate the U.S.-controlled zone from the Soviet zone to the north. George McCune, chief of the Korean section in the Office of Far Eastern Affairs in the U.S. State Department, regarded the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel as “an arbitrary line, chosen by staff officers for military purposes without political or other considerations” (Seth, 2016b, p. 94). This solution was meant to be temporary; however, as the Cold War emerged the

38<sup>th</sup> parallel would prove to play a defining role in the split identity of the Korean Peninsula (“History of North Korea,” n.d.). Talks with the Soviet Union continued to make little progress, which was not surprising, for as Seth (2016b) explains, “It was unrealistic to think that the U.S.-supported regime in the South that had been repressing the Communists would accept a Communist victory or that the Soviets would accept a non-Communist government on their side of the border” (p. 105). The only solution seemed to be division. In August 1948 the Republic of Korea (ROK) was proclaimed in the south Seoul as its capital and less than a month later the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) was declared in the north, with Pyongyang as its capital (Seth, 2016b, p. 105). The United States gave control of the ROK to Syngman Rhee while the Soviet Union gave Kim Il-sung the DPRK (“History of North Korea,” n.d.). Both sides claimed to be the legitimate government and representative of all Korean people.

The formation of the DPRK was the cornerstone by which the Kim dynasty would carve its name deeply into North Korea’s history. Kim Il-sung credits himself with being the founder of the DPRK and fashioned the first constitution for the Republic in 1948. This constitution not only established the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, but also named Kim Il-sung the first premier of the North Korean communist regime. A year later Kim further consolidated his power by becoming the chairman of the Korean Workers’ Party (KWP), which was created from a number of communist parties founded earlier (Lee, Lew, Lee, Yu, & Hahn, 1999).

However, Kim had his eyes on more than just controlling North Korea. On June 25, 1950, North Korean forces crossed the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and invaded South Korea, shocking the world and igniting the Korean War (Seth, 2016b, p. 112). The war goal for Kim Il-sung was to unify Korea under his communist rule (Richards, n.d.). To assist in this goal Kim found powerful allies in Stalin’s Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China (Millett, 2017). With two

communist allies, the United States saw this war as the first step of a worldwide communist takeover led by the Soviet Union. In response, President Harry Truman gained the backing of the United Nations along with 16 of its members and joined South Korea in an effort to repel the communist threat back across the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel (Seth, 2016b, p. 112–113). Both sides fought ferociously, trading control of territory beyond the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel on numerous occasions. After a year of bloody fighting, the two sides agreed to meet and begin talks regarding ending the war as they both came to the realization that peace could not be attained through a military victory without incurring an unacceptable cost. Allan Millett describes the later years of the war in his *Encyclopædia Britannica* entry regarding the Korean War:

From the time the liaison officers of both coalitions met on July 8, 1951, until the armistice agreement was signed on July 27, 1953, the Korean War continued as a “stalemate.” This characterization is appropriate in only two ways: (1) both sides had given up trying to unify Korea by force; and (2) the movement of armies on the ground never again matched the fluidity of the war’s first year. Otherwise, the word *stalemate* has no meaning, for the political-geographic stakes in Korea remained high. (Millett, 2017)

Despite the unified effort of North Korea, China, and the Soviet Union, the Korean War ended on July 27, 1953 with the signing of an armistice, not a peace treaty. North Korea, China, and the United Nations Command (UNC) all signed the armistice while South Korea only went so far as to agree to the armistice but never officially signing the document (“The Korean War armistice,” 2015). The resistance of South Korea to sign the document was due to its leader, Syngman Rhee, refusing to end the war without the reunification of the Korean Peninsula. This was but one instance of Rhee interfering with the plan of the United States (Seth, 2016b, p. 119). This

armistice was meant to be a temporary step to gaining peace and talks began in Geneva, Switzerland to draw up an official peace accord. However, the opposing sides could not agree to a peace agreement and as BBC News reported, “Decades on, the truce is still all that technically prevents North Korea and the US — along with its ally South Korea — resuming the war, as no peace treaty has ever been signed” (“The Korean War armistice,” 2015).<sup>1</sup>

The conditions of the armistice immediately suspended all open hostilities between the two sides. Additionally, it officially created a fixed demarcation line with a 2.4-mile buffer zone in almost the exact location as the border created by the U.S. and the USSR following World War II. This area is popularly known as the demilitarized zone (DMZ). No hostile action can be taken anywhere within or against the DMZ. The armistice also addressed the problem of transferring the numerous prisoners of war captured by either side as it fashioned a mechanism to handle this problem. To ensure this armistice would be upheld, a Military Armistice Commission (MAC) was established. Comprised of members of both sides, the MAC continues to meet regularly to ensure the armistice is maintained. Despite all these measures, the DMZ remains the most heavily militarized area in the world (“The Korean War armistice,” 2015). The Korean War left both North and South Korea with their independence, but at a very heavy price.

Following the Korean War, Kim Il-sung instituted his infamous *juche* ideology, which promotes patriotic self-reliance (Campbell, 2017). With this belief, Kim committed his country to emphasize political independence as well as economic and military self-reliance (Seth, 2016b, p. 137). This belief in North Korean autonomy was padded by the construction of the Kim dynasty personality cult, which would secure the Kims’ hold on North Korea through the

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<sup>1</sup> North Korea and South Korea have agreed, as of April 2018, to begin talks to officially end the Korean War with the United States (Choe, 2018).

generations. It accomplishes this by painting a picture of a family that is beyond human and practically divine. According to the Kim family history found in their memoirs, both Kim Il-sung and his son Kim Jong-il were born on top of Mount Paektu and descended from heaven. Mount Paektu is a holy mountain in North Korean history as it is supposedly the ancient birthplace of the founder of the ancient Korean Kojoson dynasty. In his eight-volume memoir, Kim Il-sung describes his family's struggle as being symbolic of the Korean struggle under Japanese feudalism and imperialism. The memoir describes specific stories in which the young Kim rebels against Japanese rule and gains victories despite his tender age. These actions and feats are carefully constructed to reflect his early age in order to be believable (Richardson, 2015). This personality cult has become cemented in the North Korean way of life and has grown along with the changes in the Kim dynasty.

Along with *juche* and the personality cult, Kim Il-sung implemented the *songbun* system, which essentially was a scoring system for one's status in society. Those that are loyal to the Workers' Party are rewarded with higher *songbun* status while those with low *songbun* status suffer the consequences of disloyalty. These consequences affect every aspect of the individual's life and carry on to subsequent generations (Seth, 2016b, p. 142). Kim Il-sung managed to create a nation that was strictly controlled to his liking while painting a picture of himself as a paternal figure to North Koreans (Choi, 2017). He centralized power under the Korean Workers' Party (KWP) and began a vicious process of purging those who resisted. Despite this strict rule, North Korea flourished in the postwar reconstruction ("History of North Korea," n.d.). This revitalization gradually declined over the decade and ceased upon the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union. Although North Korea declared autonomy with its *juche* policy, they had still relied heavily on Soviet and Chinese assistance (Seth, 2016b, p. 236). At the same time, China — who

had been pulling away from the North due to diminished relations with the USSR for a while, turned their back on that country and became friendly with South Korea (Lee, et al., 1999). The final event that triggered North Korea's descent into chaos came in July of 1994 when Kim Il-sung died unexpectedly of a heart attack at age 82 (Worden, 2008, p. 73). His son Kim Jong-il took over but North Korea was already heading toward famine.

Kim Jong-il was well prepared for his ascension to power because he had been groomed by his father for more than two decades. Anyone who had plausibly resisted his succession had been purged and therefore the transition was rather smooth (Seth, 2016b, p. 237). When he took power in the post-Cold War era of July 1994, he inherited the economic difficulties seen at the end of his father's rule. The son of the so-called "Great Leader" did not immediately assume all the titles his father had but instead consolidated his power over the first few years. He did not officially become the head of the KWP until three years into his rule. In 1998, Kim eliminated the position of president from the North Korean constitution and declared his deceased father Kim Il-sung the "eternal president." Instead, he made the position of chairman of the National Defense Commission the highest position until a 2009 constitutional revision that created the position of "supreme leader." By doing this, he shifted political power away from the KWP and gave it to the military, which was unique as "[n]o Communist state ... had ever made the military the highest governing organ" (Seth, 2016b, p. 238).

This shift in power was to support Kim Jong-il's institution of "military first" politics with the belief that a strong military was needed to safeguard North Korea's accomplishments (Lee et al., 1999). According to Liberty in North Korea, a nonprofit organization based in South Korea who rehabilitate refugees from the DPRK, although Kim Jong-il hoped his military first politics would solve the economic disaster his country was facing by favoring the military and

elites to handle the threats, the policy only made the situation worse. The economic collapse and subsequent famine peaked in the mid-to-late 1990s causing an estimated one million deaths (about 5% of the population). The effects of the famine can still be seen today as those that were born or grew up in this time period experienced stunted growth. North Koreans lost trust in the government during this time and illegal food markets sprung up in towns while many citizens fled to China for hopes of a better life. Liberty in North Korea writes on this period in time, “What was once a highly ordered and controlled society gave way to a disorganized and fluid society, with new independent paths to wealth and power for those who defied the regime and pursued the markets.” (“History of North Korea,” n.d.). The country began to recover from the famine and economic dismay in the early 2000s with some help from South Korea’s Sunshine Policy, which gave unconditional aid and increased economic cooperation with North Korea (“History of North Korea,” n.d.).

During the first years after the turn of the century rumors circulated that the supreme leader was in poor health. Stories of strokes and pancreatic cancer led to increased speculation as to who would succeed Kim Jong-il. Four possibilities seemed likely to the outside world. The first option was Kim Jong-il’s brother-in-law Jang Song Thaek who was considered the second most powerful man in the country (“Next of Kim,” 2010). The next two options were the initial focus of analysts: Kim Jong-il’s two oldest sons Kim Jong-nam and Kim Jong-chol. However, Kim Jong-nam was deported from Japan in 2001, which seemed to torpedo his chances of being the successor. Kim Jong-chol, on the other hand, was often marginalized by his father for being too unmanly (“Profile: Kim Jong-un,” 2016). This led to the final option for succession — the youngest son of Kim Jong-il, Kim Jong-un. The Korean tradition of a hereditary succession along with a 2001 Korean Workers’ Party newspaper article titled “A Brilliant Succession,”

outlined how a father–son succession was a “pure tradition.” The Party fully endorsed the successor being from the Kim bloodline (Higgins, 2009). Seth (2016b), writes, “It seemed almost a necessity that the succession would remain in the Kim family. The entire ideology of the state was so centered on the Kim Il Sung family that it was difficult to conceive of how anyone outside the family could comfortably serve as the legitimate leader” (2016b, p. 252). In 2010 Kim Jong-un was named his father’s heir apparent (“North Korea Profile,” 2016). One year later, in December of 2011, Kim Jong-il died from a heart attack, aged 70 (Lee et al. 1999).

Although the world was unaware of who the successor was going to be until 2010, according to his aunt, Ko Yong-suk, Kim Jong-un had been aware he would be the successor since 1992 (Fifield, 2016). With his father’s death, the 26-year-old heir assumed the title of supreme leader and continued the Kim dynasty into its third generation (Leet al., 1999).



## Government Structure of North Korea

The North Korean government has 3 distinct branches that work to keep the state running; these branches are the executive branch, the legislative branch, and the judicial branch. The executive branch of the government is responsible for implementing national policies; enacting, amending, and/or supplementing regulations regarding national administration; and the overall running of day to day state operations (Worden, 2008). The head of government is given the title of Premier which is currently held by Pak Pong-ju ("North Korea," n.d.). This position represents and oversees the cabinet which is composed of vice premiers and cabinet members (Worden, 2008; see also Lee et al., 1999). Although the head of government is in charge of the cabinet, as of June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016, the highest organ of governmental power is now the State Affairs Commission (SAC). This new organization replaced the former highest organ of power, the National Defense Commission, which also stood above the Premier and his cabinet. The SAC is now in charge of mapping out and guiding all policies (Madden, 2016). As chairman of the SAC, Kim Jong-un is given the title of Chief of State.

The legislative branch is composed of the unicameral Supreme People's Assembly (SPA). Constitutionally, the SPA is the highest organ of state power and the primary legislative body. The SPA has the power to amend the DPRK Constitution, approve laws, make government personnel decisions, and approve general domestic and foreign policies (Madden, 2017). It is composed of 687 members that are each elected to a 5 year term. The head of the SPA is therefore the titular head of state as the chief of state is still the true leader (Lee et al., 1999). Currently, the Chairman of the SPA is Choe Thae-bok (Madden, 2017). The SPA is supposed to have two sessions a year, each lasting two to six days (An, 1983). In addition to the SPA, a 15 member SPA Presidium (standing committee) exists and is selected from within the SPA.

Michael Madden of *38 North* comments on the SPA Presidium saying, “The SPA Presidium, or standing committee... carries out the same functions of promulgating laws and making government personnel decisions between the convocation of full SPA sessions.” (Madden, 2017). The DPRK Constitution specifies that the Presidium is the highest organ of power while the SPA is out of session which is most of the year due to the infrequency of SPA sessions (Lee et al., 1999). The current SPA Presidium president, Kim Yong-nam, also serves as North Korea’s nominal head of state. Under him are two vice presidents, two honorary vice presidents, a secretary-general, and 10 members, all of whom make up the Presidium (Madden, 2017).

The judicial branch of the DPRK government is composed of a series of courts and public prosecutor’s offices at different levels of authority. Lee et al. (1999) write in their entry on North Korea for the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, “Judicial authority rests with the Central Court, whose judges are elected for three-year terms by the SPA and a number of lesser provincial and peoples’ courts.” The Central Court is the highest court in the judicial branch and is made up of a chief justice, two people’s assessors, and for some cases, three additional judges (“North Korea,” n.d.). A Central Procurator’s Office and the provincial and city public prosecutor’s offices handle criminal cases and maintain surveillance over all citizens of the DPRK. These systems are headed by a procurator-general who is selected by the SPA (Lee et al., 1999).

Although these are the three branches of government specified in the DPRK constitution, an effective argument can be made that there is a fourth branch of government that has power over all three branches of government. This unofficial branch is the political branch headed exclusively by the Korean Workers’ Party (KWP, also known as the Workers’ Party of Korea or WPK). The KWP is dated from the 1920’s (Worden, 2008) but North Korea claims it was founded in 1946 by Kim Il-sung and members of the North Korean government that would soon

become the DPRK government (Murray, 2010). The KWP quickly gained popularity and soon it gained control over the government itself. As Tai-sung writes in her book *North Korea: A*

*Political Handbook:*

North Korea has a typical Communist administrative structure, and the center of decision making lies in the Korean Workers' Party (KWP), outside the constitutional framework. In fact, the government merely executes party policy, as all important leaders of North Korea hold concurrent positions in the party and government. ... In the final analysis, the constitution serves two purposes: 1) it lends the Communist regime in Pyongyang an air of legitimacy and an appearance of popular democracy, and 2) it plays an important propaganda role both at home and abroad. (1983, p. 37 – 38).

Power in the DPRK government is now highly centralized around the KWP through an interlocking system of parallel hierarchies (An, 1983). All political activities are directed by the KWP or require its sanction (Lee et al., 1999). Its power reaches to all parts of the DPRK government as key government positions are party loyalists who are trained in the North Korean system (Worden, 2008).

The highest authority in the KWP is the Party Congress which is led by an elected Central Committee (Lee et al., 1999). The Central Committee is the chief policymaking body and deliberates and advises government policies which are then sent to be ratified by the SPA or cabinet. Within the Central Committee are key institutions of power that each serve a specified purpose. The most powerful of these institutions is the Political Bureau which is also known as the Politburo. It is officially responsible for managing and coordinating KWP political activities. The Politburo is made up of a Presidium which consist only of important members in DPRK politics such as Kim Jong-un, Kim Yong-nam and Vice Marshall Hwan Pyong-so (“The Party,”

n.d.). Below them are 14 members who have the authority to vote and nine alternates who do not have the authority to vote. Members and Presidium members of the Politburo are specially selected based on their record of long and faithful service to the party as well as their variety of backgrounds granting them the ability to provide experienced and expert advice on a variety of fields when the Presidium is tasked with making a decision (An, 1983).

The Secretariat of the Party is, along with the Politburo and Central Control Committee, one of the three power organizations subordinate to the Party Central Committee. It is responsible for managing, implementing, and enforcing the party's decisions. There are 25 subordinate departments that report to it and assist in managing administrative, personnel, financial, and housekeeping needs for the Party. Former leader Kim Jong-il used the Secretariat along with the Politburo to manage the entirety of the KWP. Currently, Kim Jong-un bears the title of First Secretary with 11 secretary members below him.

The last major institution within the Party Central Committee, although not the last institution within the Committee, is the Central Control Committee (aka Control Commission). The Central Control Committee is responsible for regulating membership in the KWP. It is also tasked with disciplinary issues involving party members as well as investigating members for anti-party and anti-revolutionary activities and other violations. Currently the Chairman of the Central Control Committee is Hong In-bom with a 1<sup>st</sup> vice chairman, vice chairman, and four members below him ("The Party," n.d.).

### **History and Description of Personality in Political Psychology**

Immelman (2005) describes personality in politics as having “a long past, but a short history as a distinct specialty within an organized academic discipline.” (p. 198). Possibly the first account of relating a political leader’s foreign policy to that leader’s personality occurred when 19<sup>th</sup> century psychoanalyst Hanns Sachs gave a short interpretation of a dream had by German chancellor Otto von Bismarck. (Freud, [1901], 1953, 378-81, as cited in Winter, 2003, p. 12). The usage of personality in political psychology emerged from obscurity during World War II with the rise of Hitler and the Nazi Holocaust. In the Cold War era of the 1960’s, the field thrived and an important shift occurred in which political psychology turned its attention from the politics of the masses, to the politics of foreign-policy decision making by leaders. It was during this era that the *Handbook of Political Psychology* was first published in 1973 with a chapter on personality in politics being included; William F. Stone published his groundbreaking introduction to a political psychology textbook in 1974; and the International Society of Political Psychology was founded in 1978 (Immelman, 2003, p. 601 - 602). Winter (2003) accounts for this progress when he writes that “The last few decades have seen great progress in academic research and practice for profiling and assessing political leaders,” (p. 36).

The main issue that researchers have had to overcome when attempting to study a political leader’s personality is summarized by Winter (2003) when he writes, “The important leaders and masses of the past are dead and, to adapt a quotation from Glad (1973), have taken their personality characteristics—Oedipus complexes, authoritarianism, or power motivation—with them.” (p. 113). Even if the leader being researched is not dead, as is the case of the present study, gaining access to administer a personality test, inventory, or other tool is next to impossible for anyone in a higher office (Winter, 2003, p. 113). To overcome this barrier,

researchers have relied on indirect (at-a-distance) methods of assessment. According to Immelman (2003, 2004), there are three categories that most indirect assessments of personality in politics fall into. These are: content analysis, expert ratings, and psychodiagnostic analysis of biographical data (2003, p. 613; 2004, p. 9).

Content analysis is the most widely used of the three categories as the words of political leaders both past and present are well documented (Winter, 2003, p. 114). Content analysis assumes “that it is possible to assess psychological characteristics of a leader by systematically analyzing what leaders say and how they say it” (Schafer, 2000, p. 512, as cited in Immelman, 2003, p. 613; 2004, p. 9). Content analysis first began with psychobiographical analysis, meaning written texts such as speech transcripts, letters, etc. were analyzed to reveal the personality traits of leaders. However, in the 1970’s content analysis shifted to verbal material with such works as those of Margaret Hermann (1974, 1978, 1980, 1984 as cited in Immelman, 2005, p. 199). The content analysis of verbal material “has proved to be an effective method of measuring the achievement, affiliation, and power motives—both in people to whom psychologists have direct access, using a ‘projective’ test such as the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), and in political leaders, historical figures, and other persons studied at a distance.” (Winter, 2003, p. 121). Although content analysis has high reliability with Winter (2003) finding the percent agreement and correlation to be  $\geq 85$  (p.114), the main problem comes with the validity of the method. Winter (2003) writes on this critical issue in a footnote saying:

Of course most documents and speeches that bear the name of a major political leader are actually written by one or more speechwriters, and even ‘spontaneous’ press conference responses to questions and ‘informal’ comments may be highly scripted. Thus one may ask whether a content analysis of such materials produces personality estimates of the

leader or of the speechwriters. Suedfeld (1994) and Winter (1995) discuss this issue, and conclude that because leaders select speechwriters and review their drafts, and speechwriters “know” their clients, personality “scores” based on content analysis (at least of major speeches) can be taken as a valid indicator of the personality and psychological state of the leader—a claim that has generally been validated by research with such scores. (p. 134).

Immelman (2005) labels this claim of validity as “an article of faith.” (p. 216) and in his 2003 article for the *Handbook of Psychology* writes how “content analysis does not offer a congenial frame of reference for comprehensiveness, clinically oriented psychological assessment procedures capable, in the words of Millon and Davis (2000), of capturing the patterning of personality variables ‘across the entire matrix of the person’ (p. 65)” (p. 613; see also Immelman 2004, p. 9). Although the reliability is high, content analysis does have issues that may interfere with its ability to accomplish the goal it intends. Immelman (2004) writes in his paper on the personality profile and threat assessment of the late Kim Jong-il:

From a more practical perspective, content analysis may face insurmountable obstacles with regard to the remote assessment of foreign leaders in closed societies such as North Korea, where the problem of ambiguity of authorship—a validity problem even in Western-style liberal democracies—is greatly magnified by the extent of government-sponsored propaganda and agitation in closed societies. Furthermore, there may be a dearth of precisely those data sources deemed most valid by content analysts, namely unscripted interviews and press conferences.” (p. 9).

Content analysis is simply not the best choice to accomplish the goals of this particular study.

Expert ratings drew attention in 1996 when Paul Kowert attempted to differentiate from the content analysis method that was dominating political personality inquiry. His method draws on the knowledge of experts of the individual or individuals targeted for the study and solicits ratings on personality measures from them. This method has the advantage of high interrater reliability at the cost of the validity of the study. The largest validity issue being that the ratings are subjective judgements and not based on empirical personality assessments. Additionally, this approach can prove to be uneconomical, cumbersome, and impractical as finding and committing enough experts for the study is no easy feat (Immelman, 2003, p. 613; 2004, p. 10). This method could be used to create a personality profile of Kim Jong-un, however, it may be difficult to obtain commitment from enough experts without the ability to provide a financial or equally convincing incentive.

Psychodiagnostic analysis of biographical data attempts to link personality and political leadership using individual traits taken from biographic data with the idea that “biographical materials ‘[not only]’ ... supply a rich set of facts about childhood experiences and career development ... ‘[but]’ such secondary sources can offer the basis for personality assessments as well” (Simonton, 1986, p. 150 as cited by Immelman, 2003, p. 614; 2004, p. 10). The information required for this type of assessment is easily available and, depending on the leader being assessed, in high quantity. Due to a large variety of sources available for use, there are multiple different approaches that fall under this methodology. Lloyd Etheredge (1978) is credited by Simonton (1990) as being the first to use this method of assessment. Etheredge (1978) combined psychodiagnostic with an expert rating approach in order to tackle personality from an atheoretical, dimensional view (Immelman, 2003 p. 613; 2004, p. 10). Post (2003a) uses an integrated psychodynamic approach which uses a combination of psychodynamically oriented



approaches to psychobiographically render a profile. In contrast to these two approaches, the method I have employed is an empirical, theory-driven, categorical approach known as the Millon Inventory of Diagnostic Criteria (MIDC). This approach is but one method that falls under psychodiagnostic analysis of biographical data (Immelman, 2004, p. 11). However, I believe it is best suited for the task of painting a complete personality profile of an individual such as Kim Jong-un.

### **Kim Jong Un Life Story to Date**

Very little is known about the young Marshal of North Korea's life. The world was completely unaware of his existence until he emerged from anonymity in September of 2010 (Ruediger, 2010). According to Sarah Childress (2014), a senior reporter for Frontline by PBS, "When North Korea announced its new leader, the CIA's dossier on Kim Jong-un contained only a single childhood photo." Most of what we do know about Kim Jong-un comes from reports made by defectors from the "hermit kingdom". Even Kim's birthdate is disputed amongst intelligence agencies. According to Kim Jong-un's aunt, Ko Yong-suk, who defected to the United States in 1998, Kim was born in 1984 (Fifield, 2016). He is the youngest of Kim Jong-il's three sons with his mother being the third wife of the supreme leader. Kim began school in Switzerland at the English language International School of Bern (Seth, 2016b, p. 252). However, Kim was pulled from the top private school and put into a nearby state school, Liebefeld-Steinholzi Schule where he attended from 1998 to 2000 (Hall, 2011). During his schooling he went by the alias "Pak Un," the son of an employee at the North Korean embassy in Switzerland. During this time, he capitalized on the chance to play on a competitive basketball team, a sport that he has always loved (Higgins, 2009). It was on the court that Kim revealed his competitive side. An NBC news article entitled "Who is North Korea's secretive Kim Jong Un? Here is what we know" interviewed former teammates of Kim, "One high-school buddy described him as 'explosive' and a 'playmaker.' Another said he was fiercely competitive: 'He hated to lose.'" (2013). In 2000, Kim was suddenly pulled from his Swiss school (Hall, 2011) and enrolled in Kim Il Sung University back in his homeland for a degree in physics followed by a degree from the Kim Il Sung Military Academy (Seth, 2016b, p. 252).

Aside from his education, very little is known about Kim Jong-un's life before becoming leader of the DPRK. Kim Jong-il officially announced his youngest son as his heir in 2010, just one year before the senior Kim would pass away. Along with being named heir to the North Korean rule, Kim gained the title of 4-star general in the Korean People's Army (KPA) which further consolidated his position as a man of power within the political and military structure of the country ("North Korea Profile – Leaders"). When Kim Jong-il passed away in late December, 2011, the young Kim Jong-un took the title of supreme leader (Murray, 2009). Unlike his father before him, Kim Jong-un did not have over two decades to be groomed into the position. Although his aunt, Ko Yong-suk, claims that Kim knew about his role as the successor to his father from a very young age (Fifield, 2016). Even if this was the case, when Kim officially took control of the country he was accompanied by "an inner core of leaders thought to serve as the young son's mentors or regents." (Seth, 2016b, p. 252). In particular, it was believed that Kim's uncle, Jang Song-thaek, was to play a key role as a mentor. Jang was often considered to be the second most powerful man in North Korea behind the former leader Kim Jong-il ("Next of Kim", 2010).

With his mentors in tow, Kim began consolidating his power through purges, executions, and reshuffling the government. Seth (2016b) remarks on this when he writes, "Not long after taking power Kim Jong-un began to purge the military. During the first two years in power, about half of all the top-ranking generals were removed from their positions, including Ri Yong-ho, seen as one of the most powerful men in the regime." (p. 253). Only one year after assuming power, Kim purged and executed his Uncle, Jang Song-thaek, who was the very man that was supposed to be his key advisor and mentor (McKirdy, 2017). Jang was charged with attempting to overthrow the government; state media marked him as a "traitor for all ages." (Kwon &

Westcott, 2016). More recently, Kim Jong-un's half-brother, Kim Jong-nam, was murdered in a Malaysian airport under mysterious circumstances. He was killed with VX Nerve agent in February, 2017, and fingers were subsequently pointed at North Korea ("VX marks the spot", 2017). North Korea denies any involvement in the case (Choi, 2017).

Kim has worked hard to create a country that fits his goals. Each leader thus far has had a specific goal in mind for North Korea. Kim Il-sung sought to establish a country that was independent and self-reliant, thus his heavy emphasis on *juche*. Kim Jong-il took the *juche* policy and added his own focus on developing the military of North Korea as the dominant power, therefore he established the *songun* policy. Now Kim Jong-un is taking power away from the military and giving it back to the KWP. His policy appears to be a mixture between continuing to develop North Korea as a nuclear power while also building up the economy, therefore it can be called *byungjin*. In order to accomplish this goal Kim replaced his father's highest organ of power, the National Defense Commission, with his own organ, the State Affairs Commission (Madden, 2016).

## Method

### Materials

The materials used for this study consisted of biographical sources gathered from various mediums, journal and newspaper articles containing personality relevant data, and expert opinions of Kim Jong-un. All the data are then compiled and assessed in order to create the personality inventory using the Millon Inventory of Diagnostic Criteria (MIDC) as adapted by Aubrey Immelman (Immelman & Steinberg, 1999) for at-a-distance assessment of personality in politics.

**Sources of data.** Diagnostic information pertaining to Kim Jong-un was collected from a variety of sources all of which were critiqued in terms of validity and authoritativeness. Sources that did not meet these criteria were not included in the final MIDC. Due to the secretive nature of North Korea, primary sources were hard to come by and those that were encountered proved to be valuable sources of information. These sources primarily came in the forms of defector accounts and experts who were given the chance to visit the country.

**Personality inventory.** The assessment instrument used in this study was the second edition of the Millon Inventory of Diagnostic Criteria (MIDC; Immelman & Steinberg, 1999). It was compiled and adapted from Millon's (1969, 1986b; 1990, 1996; Millon & Everly, 1985) prototypal features as well as the diagnostic criteria for normal personality styles and their pathological variants. The Millon Inventory of Diagnostic Criteria manual (Immelman, 1999) contains information concerning the construction, administration, scoring, and interpretation of the MIDC. Millon's personological model as provided in a comprehensive review by Immelman (2003, 2005), encompasses eight attribute domains: expressive behavior, interpersonal conduct,

cognitive style, mood/temperament, self-image, regulatory mechanisms, object representations, and morphologic organization (see Table 1).

**Table 1**  
***Millon's Eight Attribute Domains***

Attribute	Description
Expressive behavior	The individual's characteristic behavior; how the individual typically appears to others; what the individual knowingly or unknowingly reveals about him- or herself; what the individual wishes others to think or to know about him or her.
Interpersonal conduct	How the individual typically interacts with others; the attitudes that underlie, prompt, and give shape to these actions; the methods by which the individual engages others to meet his or her needs; how the individual copes with social tensions and conflicts.
Cognitive style	How the individual focuses and allocates attention, encodes and processes information, organizes thoughts, makes attributions, and communicates reactions and ideas to others.
Mood/temperament	How the individual typically displays emotion; the predominant character of an individual's affect and the intensity and frequency with which he or she expresses it.
Self-image	The individual's perception of self-as-object or the manner in which the individual overtly describes him- or herself.
Regulatory mechanisms	The individual's characteristic mechanisms of self-protection, need gratification, and conflict resolution.
Object representations	The inner imprint left by the individual's significant early experiences with others; the structural residue of significant past experiences, composed of memories, attitudes, and affects that underlie the individual's perceptions of and reactions to ongoing events and serves as a substrate of dispositions for perceiving and reacting to life's ongoing events.
Morphologic organization	The overall architecture that serves as a framework for the individual's psychic interior; the structural strength, interior congruity, and functional efficacy of the personality system (i.e., ego strength).

*Note:* From Disorders of Personality: DSM–IV and Beyond (pp. 141–146) by T. Millon, 1996, New York: Wiley; Toward a New Personology: An Evolutionary Model (chapter 5) by T. Millon, 1990, New York: Wiley; and Personality and Its Disorders: A Biosocial Learning Approach (p. 32) by T. Millon and G. S. Everly, Jr., 1985, New

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The MIDC then takes the first five “noninferential” attribute domains and expands them into 12-scales which correspond to major personality patterns as established by Millon (1994, 1996). All are consistent with the syndromes listed on Axis II of the fourth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV)* released by the American Psychiatric Association (APA, 1994). It is also coordinated with the normal personality styles in which the *DSM-IV* contrives its disorders from, as described by Millon and Everly (1985), Millon (1994), Oldham and Morris (1995), and Strack (1997). Scales 1 through 8, which is comprised of 10 scales and subscales, each have three gradations labeled: a, b, and c. These yield 30 personality variants in all. Scales 9 and 0 have only two gradations labeled: d and e. Therefore they yield four variants. Overall the scales yield a total of 34 personality designations. Table 2 contains the full taxonomy of the 12 MIDC scales.

**Table 2**  
***Millon Inventory of Diagnostic Criteria: Scales and Gradations***

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Scale 1A:	Dominant pattern
a.	Asserting
b.	Controlling
c.	Aggressive (Sadistic; <i>DSM-III-R</i> , Appendix A)
Scale 1B:	Dauntless pattern
a.	Venturesome
b.	Dissenting
c.	Aggrandizing (Antisocial; <i>DSM-IV</i> , 301.7)
Scale 2:	Ambitious pattern
a.	Confident
b.	Self-serving
c.	Exploitative (Narcissistic; <i>DSM-IV</i> , 301.81)
Scale 3:	Outgoing pattern
a.	Congenial
b.	Gregarious
c.	Impulsive (Histrionic; <i>DSM-IV</i> , 301.50)
Scale 4:	Accommodating pattern
a.	Cooperative
b.	Agreeable
c.	Submissive (Dependent; <i>DSM-IV</i> , 301.6)
Scale 5A:	Aggrieved pattern
a.	Unpresuming
b.	Self-denying
c.	Self-defeating ( <i>DSM-III-R</i> , Appendix A)
Scale 5B:	Contentious pattern
a.	Resolute
b.	Oppositional
c.	Negativistic (Passive-aggressive; <i>DSM-III-R</i> , 301.84)
Scale 6:	Conscientious pattern
a.	Respectful
b.	Dutiful
c.	Compulsive (Obsessive-compulsive; <i>DSM-IV</i> , 301.4)
Scale 7:	Reticent pattern
a.	Circumspect
b.	Inhibited
c.	Withdrawn (Avoidant; <i>DSM-IV</i> , 301.82)
Scale 8:	Retiring pattern
a.	Reserved
b.	Aloof
c.	Solitary (Schizoid; <i>DSM-IV</i> , 301.20)
Scale 9:	Distrusting pattern
d.	Suspicious
e.	Paranoid ( <i>DSM-IV</i> , 301.0)
Scale 0:	Erratic pattern
d.	Unstable
e.	Borderline ( <i>DSM-IV</i> , 301.83)

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*Note.* Equivalent *DSM* terminology and codes are specified in parentheses.



## Diagnostic Procedure

The diagnostic procedure used for this study is termed *psychodiagnostic meta-analysis*. It can be conceptualized as a three-part process consisting of *analysis*, *synthesis*, and *evaluation*. The *analysis* phase consists of collecting data by reviewing source materials and analyzing them in order to extract and code any diagnostically relevant content. The second phase, *synthesis*, consists of scoring and interpreting using the unifying framework provided by the MIDC prototypal features which are keyed for attribute domain and personality pattern. It is employed in order to classify the diagnostically relevant information that was extracted during the first phase. The final phase is *evaluation* which consists of making inferences based on the personality profile constructed in the previous phase. These theoretically grounded inferences in addition to descriptions, explanations, and predictions are extrapolated from Millon's theory of personality (see Immelman, 1999, 2003, 2005, for a more extensive account of the procedure).

## Results

The data accumulated is analyzed and reported in the following ways: a summary of the descriptive statistics yielded by the MIDC scoring procedure, the MIDC profile for Kim Jong-un, a diagnostic classification of the subject, and the clinical interpretation of significant MIDC scale elevations derived from the diagnostic procedure. The resulting data and graphics in the following section are taken with permission from the personality profile constructed by my thesis advisor, Aubrey Immelman (2018).

Of the 170-item MIDC, Kim Jong-un received 43 endorsements within the five attribute domains. When reviewing the endorsement-rate deviations from the mean (see Table 3), it is revealed that data on Kim's expressive behavior (which received 11 endorsements) were most easily obtained and therefore may be overrepresented within the data set. In contrast, data on Kim's mood/temperament (which received 7 endorsements) were most difficult to obtain and may be underrepresented in the data set.

Descriptive statistics for Kim's MIDC ratings are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3**  
*MIDC Item Endorsement Rate by Attribute Domain for Kim Jong-un*

Attribute domain	Items
Expressive behavior	11
Interpersonal conduct	8
Cognitive style	9
Mood/temperament	7
Self-image	8
Sum	43
Mean	8.6
Standard deviation	1.4

Kim's MIDC scale scores are reported in Table 4. The same data are presented graphically in the profile displayed in Figure 2.<sup>2</sup>

**Table 4**  
*MIDC Scale Scores for Kim Jong-un*

Scale	Personality pattern	Raw	RT%
1A	Dominant: Asserting–Controlling–Aggressive (Sadistic)	18	30.5
1B	Dauntless: Adventurous–Dissenting–Aggrandizing (Antisocial)	7	11.9
2	Ambitious: Confident–Self-serving–Exploitative (Narcissistic)	8	13.6
3	Outgoing: Congenial–Gregarious–Impulsive (Histrionic)	18	30.5
4	Accommodating: Cooperative–Agreeable–Submissive (Dependent)	5	8.5
5A	Aggrieved: Unpresuming–Self-denying–Self-defeating (Masochistic)	0	0.0
5B	Contentious: Resolute–Oppositional–Negativistic (Passive-aggressive)	2	3.4
6	Conscientious: Respectful–Dutiful–Compulsive (Obsessive-compulsive)	1	1.7
7	Reticent: Circumspect–Inhibited–Withdrawn (Avoidant)	0	0.0
8	Retiring: Reserved–Aloof–Solitary (Schizoid)	0	0.0
	Subtotal for basic personality scales	59	100.0
9	Distrusting: Suspicious–Paranoid (Paranoid)	4	6.0
0	Erratic: Unstable–Borderline (Borderline)	4	6.0
	Full-scale total	67	111.9

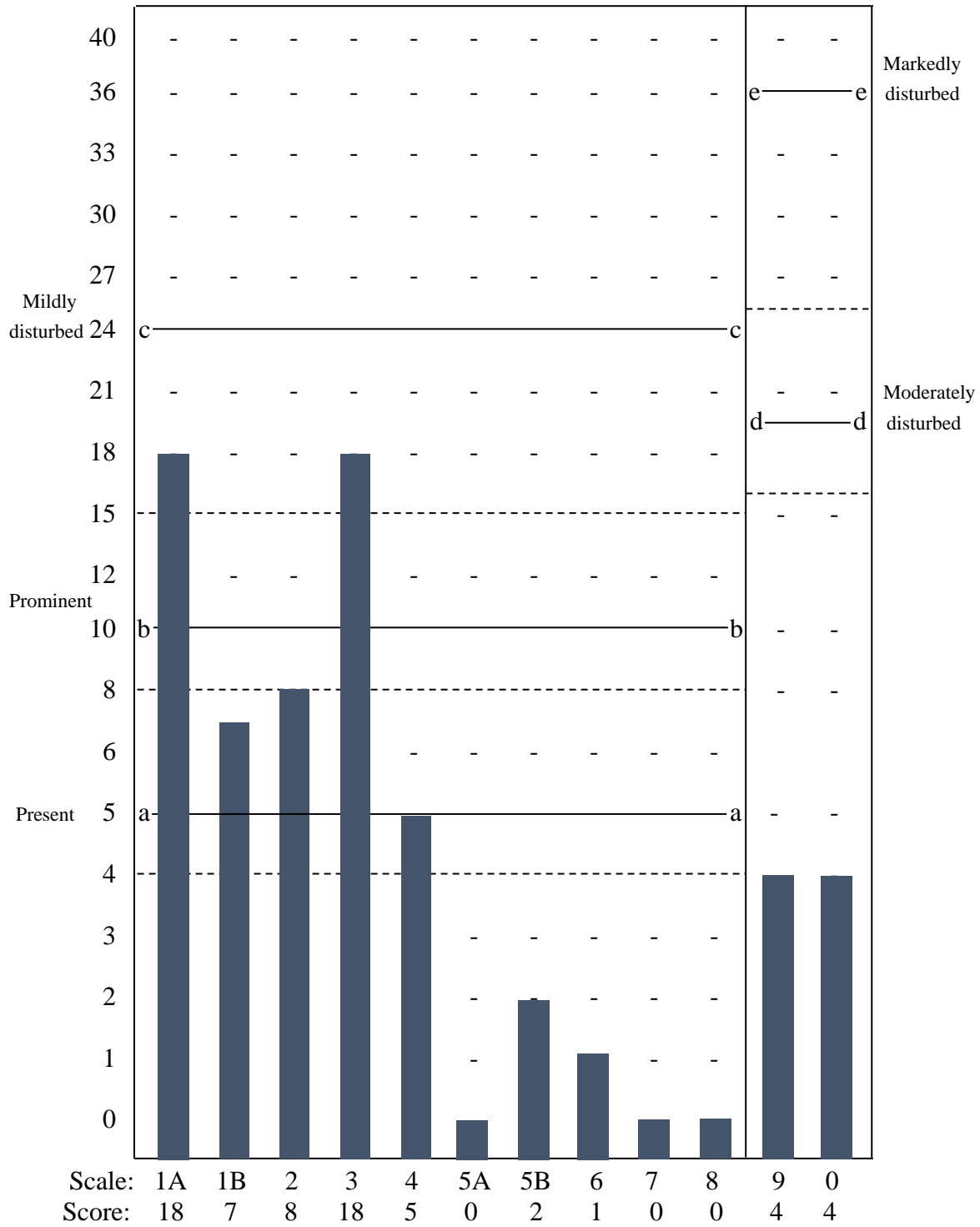
*Note.* For Scales 1–8, ratio-transformed (RT%) scores are the scores for each scale expressed as a percentage of the sum of raw scores for the ten basic scales only. For Scales 9 and 0, ratio-transformed scores are scores expressed as a percentage of the sum of raw scores for all twelve MIDC scales (therefore, full-scale RT% totals can exceed 100). Personality patterns are enumerated with scale gradations and equivalent *DSM* terminology (in parentheses).

The MIDC profile yielded by Kim's raw scores is displayed in Figure 2.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See Figure A2 for a comparison of the personality profiles of Kim Jong-un and his predecessor, Kim Jong-il (Immelman, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> Solid horizontal lines on the profile form signify cut-off scores between adjacent scale gradations. For Scales 1–8, scores of 5 through 9 signify the *presence* (gradation *a*) of the personality pattern in question; scores of 10 through 23 indicate a *prominent* (gradation *b*) variant; and scores of 24 to 30 indicate an exaggerated, *mildly dysfunctional* (gradation *c*) variation of the pattern. For Scales 9 and 0, scores of 20 through 35 indicate a *moderately disturbed* syndrome and scores of 36 through 45 a *markedly disturbed* syndrome. See Table 2 for scale names.

**Figure 2. Millon Inventory of Diagnostic Criteria: Profile for Kim Jong-un**



Kim's most prominent scale elevations occur on Scale 3 (Outgoing) and on Scale 1A (Dominant). Both scores are within the *prominent* (10-23) range with identical scores of 18. Following these two primary scale elevations are the secondary scales, Scale 2 (Ambitious) with an elevation of 8, Scale 1B (Dauntless) with an elevation of 7, and Scale 4 (Accommodating) with an elevation of 5. All are within the *present* (5-9) range. No other scale elevation reaches the *present* range and is therefore not of psychodiagnostic significance.

Following the MIDC scale gradation (see Table 2 and Figure 2) criteria and in conjunction with clinical judgement provided by Immelman (2018), Kim was classified as an Outgoing/gregarious and Dominant/controlling composite personality, supplemented by secondary Ambitious/confident, Dauntless/adventurous, and Accommodating/cooperative features.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> In each case, the label preceding the slash signifies the categorical personality pattern, whereas the label following the slash indicates the specific scale gradation, or personality type, on the dimensional continuum; see Table 2.

## Discussion

The resulting MIDC scale elevations for Kim Jong-un are discussed from the perspective of Millon's (1994, 1996; Millon & Davis, 2000) model of personality and supplemented by Oldham and Morris' (1995) and Strack's (1997) theoretically congruent portraits. The discussion section concludes with a hypothesized threat assessment based on the personality profile of Kim Jong-un and North Korea's unique political structure and history.

It is extremely rare that an individual ever displays personality patterns in a "pure" or prototypical form. Generally, an individual personality contains a blend of two or more primary orientations. In the case of Kim Jong-un, his moderately elevated scores on Scale 3 (Outgoing) and Scale 1A (Dominant), lend him to emerge from the assessment as a combination of *gregarious* and *controlling* types which are variants respectively of the Outgoing and Dominant patterns.<sup>5</sup>

According to the Millon Index of Personality Styles manual (Millon, 1994), Outgoing personalities thrive on being the center of social events and are dramatic attention-getters. Individuals with this pattern will go out of their way to obtain a popular opinion from others, have confidence in their abilities to handle social situations, and can become easily bored, especially when faced with repetitive and mundane tasks (pp. 31-32). Dominant personalities —

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<sup>5</sup> *Note on clinical judgment vs. empirical observation:* Empirically, Kim Jong-un's score on Scale 1A (Dominant) is identical to his score on Scale 3 (Outgoing); however, on rational-intuitive grounds it is my opinion that Scale 3 should be accorded precedence when interpreting the personality profile within the broader political context. Specifically, totalitarian regimes serve as more of a conduit for the expression of dominant/aggressive personality traits than for outgoing traits, which raises the possibility that traits associated with dominance may be overrepresented in the universe of data in the public domain sampled for at-a-distance psychological assessment. Moreover, media reports sometimes conflate aggressive regime behavior with the personal psychology of the political actor, so it is conceivable that aggressive traits attributed to Kim Jong-un may be inflated in media reports.

labeled *Controlling* — thrive in their ability to command others and obtain obedience and respect. They come across as tough, competitive, and unsentimental, which are traits that lend themselves well to leading the masses (p. 34). Kim Jong-un's Outgoing-Dominant personality composite therefore leads him to be classified as a *high-dominance extravert* (Immelman 2018).

Although *Outgoing* and *Dominant* are the primary personality patterns of Kim Jong-un, one must also consider the secondary elevations on Scale 1B (Dauntless), Scale 2 (Ambitious), and Scale 4 (Accommodating). The Millon Index of Personality Styles manual (Millon, 1994), employs the label of *Asserting* when describing an Ambitious personality. This label carries with it a personality that is bold, competitive, and self-assured. These individuals can easily assume leadership roles and expect others to recognize their unique qualities. They also often act as though entitled (p. 32). Millon labels Dauntless personalities as *Dissenting* and describes them as having the tendency to flout tradition, act in a notably autonomous fashion, dislike following a routine, occasionally act impulsively and irresponsibly, and are inclined to elaborate on or shade the truth and skirt the law (p. 33). Accommodating personalities, labeled *Agreeing* by Millon, are notably cooperative, amicable, participatory, and compromising. They also convey a self-respecting and congenial obligingness — a distinct willingness to adapt their preferences to be compatible with those around them. They will reconcile differences in order to achieve peaceable solutions and will concede when necessary (p. 34).

This paper will only analyze the two primary scale elevations in depth. For a more complete look at Kim's personality see Immelman (2018) from which the following two descriptions are drawn from.

### Scale 3: The Outgoing Pattern

The Outgoing pattern, like all personality patterns, exists on a spectrum ranging from normal to maladaptive.<sup>6</sup> At the well-adjusted pole are personalities that are warm and congenial.<sup>7</sup> Farther along the spectrum are slightly exaggerated outgoing features in sociable and gregarious personalities.<sup>8</sup> The most extreme pole of the spectrum are features consistent with a clinical diagnosis of histrionic personality disorder and possess deeply ingrained and inflexible extraversion that manifests itself in impulsive, self-centered, and overdramatizing behavior patterns.<sup>9</sup>

When the Outgoing pattern (i.e., congenial and gregarious types) is in its normal, adaptive variants, it correspond to Strack's (1997) *sociable* style and Millon's (1994) *Outgoing* pattern. It overlaps with the *cooperative* segment of Leary's (1957) *cooperative-overconventional* continuum (which is actually more congruent with the Accommodating pattern). Millon's Outgoing pattern correlates highly with the five-factor model's *Extraversion* factor and moderately correlates with the *Conscientiousness* and *Openness to Experience* factors. In contrast, the Outgoing pattern correlates moderately negatively with the *Neuroticism* factor

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<sup>6</sup> Kim Jong-un's score of 18 on MIDC scale 3 (Outgoing) — a measure of extraversion — compares as follows with recent U.S. presidents: Donald Trump, 24 (Immelman, 2016); George W. Bush, 16 (Immelman, 2002); Bill Clinton, 15 (Immelman, 1998); Barack Obama, 3 (Immelman, 2010).

<sup>7</sup> Relevant to Kim Jong-un.

<sup>8</sup> Relevant to Kim Jong-un.

<sup>9</sup> Not applicable to Kim Jong-un.



and is uncorrelated with the *Agreeableness* factor in the five-factor model (see Millon, 1994, p. 82).

According to Immelman (2018), heads of government with an elevated Outgoing scale, in conjunction with prominent Dauntless (Scale 1B) and Ambitious (Scale 2) patterns and a low score on Scale 6 (Conscientious), may be prone to making errors of judgment related to “neglect of the role demands of political office, low resistance to corrupting influences, and impulsiveness. ... [as well as] favoring loyalty and friendship over competence-for-the-position in making appointments to high-level public office” (Immelman, 1993, p. 736). Kim only marginally fits this profile given his less-than-prominent elevation of Scale 1B (Dauntless) and Scale 2 (Ambitious).

Millon (1994) summarizes the Outgoing pattern as follows:

At the most extreme levels of the Outgoing pole are persons characterized by features similar to the DSM’s histrionic personality. At less extreme levels, gregarious persons go out of their way to be popular with others, have confidence in their social abilities, feel they can readily influence and charm others, and possess a personal style that makes people like them. Most enjoy engaging in social activities. ... Talkative, lively, socially clever, they are often dramatic attention-getters who thrive on being the center of social events. Many become easily bored, especially when faced with repetitive and mundane tasks. ... [Although prone to] intense and shifting moods, gregarious types are sometimes viewed as fickle and excitable. On the other hand, their enthusiasms often prove effective in energizing and motivating others. Inclined to be facile and enterprising, outgoing people may be highly skilled at manipulating others to meet their needs. (pp. 31–32)

Strack (1997) based the following portrait of the normal (*sociable*) prototype of the outgoing pattern on Millon’s theory, the results of empirical studies correlating his Personality

Adjective Check List (PACL; 1991) scales with other measures, and clinical experience with the instrument:

They are characterized by an outgoing, talkative, and extraverted style of behavior and tend to be lively, dramatic, and colorful. These people are typically viewed by others as spontaneous, clever, enthusiastic, and vigorous. ... Sociable individuals may also be seen as fickle in their attachments. They may have quickly shifting moods and emotions, and may come across as shallow and ungenue. These persons tend to prefer novelty and excitement, and are bored by ordinary or mundane activities. ... They often do well interacting with the public, may be skilled and adept at rallying or motivating others, and will usually put their best side forward even in difficult circumstances. (From Strack, 1997, p. 489, with minor modifications)

Political leadership ability may be full of individuals who “become easily bored, especially when faced with repetitive and mundane tasks,” and who are prone to “intense and shifting moods.” These limitations must be compared against the extreme skill at which Outgoing leaders are able to utilize their ability for “energizing and motivating” the public (Immelman, 2018).

The personality patterns in Millon’s model have predictable, reliable, observable psychological indicators (expressive behavior, interpersonal conduct, cognitive style, mood/temperament, self-image, regulatory mechanisms, object representations, and morphologic organization). As Millon’s model has a clinical emphasis, the attribute domains (Millon, 1996) accentuate the maladaptive range of the personality patterns in his taxonomy. In the case of the Outgoing pattern, the impulsive pole of the congenial-gregarious-impulsive continuum is accentuated. The “normalized” (i.e., de-pathologized; cf. Millon & Davis, 2000, pp. 238–240) diagnostic features of the Outgoing pattern are summarized below, in addition to the diagnostic features of maladaptive variants of the pattern. Generally, one would expect the designated traits

to be attenuated, less pronounced and more adaptive, in the case of well-functioning political leaders.

**Expressive behavior.** The core diagnostic feature of the expressive acts of Outgoing individuals is *sociability*; they are typically friendly, engaging, lively, extraverted, and gregarious. More exaggerated variants of the Outgoing pattern are predisposed to *impulsiveness*, intolerant of inactivity and inclined to seek sensation or excitement to prevent boredom; such individuals may display a penchant for momentary excitements, fleeting adventures, and short-sighted hedonism. As leaders, Outgoing personalities may be somewhat lacking in “gravitas,” inclined to make spur-of-the-moment decisions without carefully considering alternatives, predisposed to reckless or imprudent behaviors, and prone to scandal. (Millon, 1996, pp. 366–367, 371; Millon & Everly, 1985, p. 33)

**Interpersonal conduct.** The core diagnostic feature of the interpersonal conduct of Outgoing individuals is *demonstrativeness*; they are amiable and display their feelings openly. More exaggerated variants of the Outgoing pattern tend to be *attention seeking*, being attentive to popular appeal and actively soliciting praise and approval. In a political leadership role, Outgoing personalities display a substantial need for validation, one manifestation of which may be an overreliance on public opinion as an instrument of policy direction and formulation. (Millon, 1996, pp. 367–368, 371; Millon & Everly, 1985, p. 33)

**Cognitive style.** The core diagnostic feature of the cognitive style of Outgoing individuals is *unreflectiveness*; they avoid introspective thought and focus on practical, concrete matters. More exaggerated variants of the Outgoing pattern tend to be *superficial*, which is sometimes associated with flightiness in reasoning or thinking. They are not paragons of deep thinking or self-reflection and tend to speak and write in impressionistic generalities; though

talkative, they tend to avoid earnest or complex matters and their words may lack detail and substance. In politics, more extreme variants of the Outgoing pattern may be associated with lapses of judgment and flawed decision making. (Millon, 1996, pp. 368–369, 371; Millon & Davis, 2000, p. 236)

**Mood/temperament.** The core diagnostic feature of the temperamental disposition and prevailing mood of Outgoing individuals is emotional *expressiveness*; they are animated, uninhibited, and affectively responsive. More exaggerated variants of the Outgoing pattern are quite *changeable*, with occasional displays of short-lived and superficial moods. Leaders with an Outgoing personality pattern are skilled at staying in touch with public sentiments, but may be mercurial, volatile, or heedless, prone to periodic emotional outbursts, and easily angered or bored. (Millon, 1996, pp. 370–371)

**Self-image.** The core diagnostic feature of the self-image of Outgoing individuals is their view of themselves as being socially desirable, well liked, and *charming*. More exaggerated variants of the Outgoing pattern tend to perceive themselves as stimulating, popular, and *gregarious*. Given their appealing self-image, these personalities are confident in their social abilities. In politics, Outgoing personalities, more than any other character types, are strongly attracted to the self-validation offered by adulating crowds. (Millon, 1996, pp. 369, 371; Millon & Everly, 1985, p. 33)

**Regulatory mechanisms.** The core diagnostic feature of the regulatory (i.e., ego-defense) mechanisms of Outgoing individuals is *self-distraction*; their preferred stress-management strategy is to engage in relatively mindless activities — for example, games, physical diversions, or other forms of amusement or recreation. Although healthy self-distraction is generally adaptive in coping with the stress of high-level public office, some of its political

implications may be troubling — including a leader's failure to face up to unpleasant or dissonant thoughts, feelings, and actions, which may be compounded by cosmetic image-making as revealed in a succession of socially attractive but changing facades. (Millon, 1996, p. 370)

**Object representations.** The core diagnostic feature of the internalized object representations of Outgoing individuals is their *shallow* nature. Outgoing personalities characteristically seek stimulation, attention, and excitement, presumably to fill an inner void. In politics, Outgoing leaders thrive on the thrill of political life and the international spotlight, and in office may not be averse to instigating a crisis for instrumental purposes. Thus, although generally conflict averse, they may engage in brinkmanship to force a desired outcome and secure a legacy — especially if narcissistic tendencies feature prominently in their personality profile. (Millon, 1996, p. 369)

**Morphologic organization.** The core diagnostic feature of the morphologic organization of Outgoing individuals is *exteroceptiveness*; they tend to focus on external matters and the here-and-now, being neither introspective nor dwelling excessively on the past, presumably to blot out awareness of a relatively insubstantial inner self. The personal political style of Outgoing leaders, hypothetically, may have a similar quality, with ad hoc strategies sometimes displacing the disciplined pursuit of carefully formulated policy objectives. (Millon, 1996, p. 370)

## Scale 1A: The Dominant Pattern

The Dominant pattern, like the rest, occurs on a continuum ranging from normal to maladaptive.<sup>10</sup> At the well-adjusted side of the continuum<sup>11</sup> are strong-willed, commanding, and assertive personalities. Forceful, intimidating, and controlling personalities contain slightly exaggerated Dominant features.<sup>12</sup> The most extreme pole of the spectrum are features consistent with Millon's (1996, chapter 13) description of sadistic personality disorder<sup>13</sup> and presents itself in domineering, belligerent, aggressive behavior.

When the Dominant pattern is in its normal adaptive variants, it corresponds to Oldham and Morris's (1995) *Aggressive* style, Strack's (1997) *forceful* style, Millon's (1994) *Controlling* pattern, and the *managerial* portion of Leary's (1957) managerial-autocratic continuum. Millon's Controlling pattern positively correlates with the five-factor model's *Conscientiousness* and has a modest positive correlation with its *Extraversion* factor. It negatively correlates with the *Agreeableness* and *Neuroticism* factors and has no correlation with the *Openness to Experience* factor of the five-factor model (see Millon, 1994, p. 82). Therefore, individuals with this pattern — though controlling and somewhat disagreeable — tend to be emotionally stable and conscientious. According to Millon (1994), Controlling (i.e., Dominant) individuals:

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<sup>10</sup> Kim Jong-un's score of 18 on MIDC scale 1A (Dominant) — a measure of aggressiveness — compares as follows with recent U.S. presidents: Donald Trump, 17 (Immelman, 2016); George W. Bush, 11 (Immelman, 2002); Barack Obama, 7 (Immelman, 2010); Bill Clinton, 7 (Immelman, 1998).

<sup>11</sup> Relevant to Kim Jong-un.

<sup>12</sup> Relevant to Kim Jong-un.

<sup>13</sup> Not applicable to Kim Jong-un.

enjoy the power to direct and intimidate others, and to evoke obedience and respect from them. They tend to be tough and unsentimental, as well as gain satisfaction in actions that dictate and manipulate the lives of others. Although many sublimate their power-oriented tendencies in publicly approved roles and vocations, these inclinations become evident in occasional intransigence, stubbornness, and coercive behaviors. Despite these periodic negative expressions, controlling [Dominant] types typically make effective leaders, being talented in supervising and persuading others to work for the achievement of common goals. (p. 34)

Millon's description is built upon by Oldham and Morris (1995) with the following portrait of the normal (*Aggressive*) prototype of the Dominant pattern:

While others may aspire to leadership, Aggressive [Dominant] men and women move instinctively to the helm. They are born to assume command as surely as is the top dog in the pack. Theirs is a strong, forceful personality style, more inherently powerful than any of the others. They can undertake huge responsibilities without fear of failure. They wield power with ease. They never back away from a fight. They compete with the supreme confidence of champions. ... When put to the service of the greater good, the Aggressive [Dominant] personality style can inspire a man or woman to great leadership, especially in times of crisis. (p. 345)

Finally, the normal (*forceful*) prototype of the Dominant pattern is describe by Strack (1997), based on Millon's theory, using empirical findings from studies correlating his Personality Adjective Check List (PACL; 1991) scales with other measures, and clinical experience with the instrument:

Like confident [Ambitious] persons, forceful [Dominant] individuals can be identified by an inclination to turn toward the self as the primary source of gratification. However, instead of the confident [Ambitious] personality's internalized sense of self-importance, forceful [Dominant] people seem driven to prove their worthiness. They are characterized by an assertive, dominant, and tough-minded personal style. They tend to be strong-willed, ambitious, competitive, and self-determined. Feeling that the world is a harsh place where exploitiveness is needed to assure

success, forceful [Dominant] individuals are frequently gruff and insensitive in dealing with others. In contrast to their preferred, outwardly powerful appearance, these individuals may feel inwardly insecure and be afraid of letting down their guard. In work settings, these personalities are often driven to excel. They work hard to achieve their goals, are competitive, and do well where they can take control or work independently. In supervisory or leadership positions, these persons usually take charge and see to it that a job gets done. (From Strack, 1997, p. 490, with minor modifications)

The personality patterns in Millon's model have predictable, reliable, observable psychological indicators (expressive behavior, interpersonal conduct, cognitive style, mood/temperament, self-image, regulatory mechanisms, object representations, and morphologic organization). As Millon's model has a clinical emphasis, the attribute domains (Millon, 1996) accentuate the maladaptive range of the personality patterns in his taxonomy. In the case of the Dominant pattern, the maladaptive range is the aggressive pole of the asserting-controlling-aggressive continuum. The diagnostic features of the Dominant pattern with respect to each of Millon's eight attribute domains are summarized below, along with "normalized" (i.e., de-pathologized; cf. Millon & Davis, 2000, pp. 514–515) descriptions of the more adaptive variants of this pattern. Nonetheless, some of the designated traits may be less pronounced and more adaptive in the case of individuals for whom this pattern is less elevated.

**Expressive behavior.** The core diagnostic feature of the expressive acts of Dominant individuals is *assertiveness*; they are tough, strong-willed, outspoken, competitive, and unsentimental. More exaggerated variants of the Dominant pattern are characteristically *forceful*; they are controlling, contentious, and at times overbearing, their power-oriented tendencies being evident in occasional intransigence, stubbornness, and coercive behaviors. When they feel



strongly about something, these individuals can be quite blunt, brusque, and impatient, with sudden, abrupt outbursts of an unwarranted or precipitous nature. (Millon, 1996, pp. 483, 487)

**Interpersonal conduct.** The core diagnostic feature of the interpersonal conduct of Dominant individuals is their *commanding* presence; they are powerful, authoritative, directive, and persuasive. More exaggerated variants of the Dominant pattern are characteristically *intimidating*; they tend to be abrasive, contentious, coercive, and combative, often dictate to others, and are willing and able to humiliate others to evoke compliance. Their strategy of assertion and dominance has an important instrumental purpose in interpersonal relations, as most people are intimidated by hostility, sarcasm, criticism, and threats. Thus, these personalities are adept at having their way by browbeating others into respect and submission. (Millon, 1996, p. 484; Millon & Everly, 1985, p. 32)

**Cognitive style.** The core diagnostic feature of the cognitive style of Dominant individuals is its *opinionated* nature; they are outspoken, emphatic, and adamant, holding strong beliefs that they vigorously defend. More exaggerated variants of the Dominant pattern tend to be *dogmatic*; they are inflexible and closed-minded, lacking objectivity and clinging obstinately to preconceived ideas, beliefs, and values. All variants of this pattern are finely attuned to the subtle elements of human interaction, keenly aware of the moods and feelings of others, and skilled at using others' foibles and sensitivities to manipulate them for their own purposes. (Millon, 1996, pp. 484–485)

**Mood/temperament.** The core diagnostic feature of the characteristic mood and temperament of Dominant individuals is *irritability*; they have an excitable temper that they may at times find difficult to control. More exaggerated variants of the Dominant pattern tend to be *cold* and unfriendly; they are disinclined to experience and express tender feelings, and have a

volatile temper that readily flares into contentious argument and physical belligerence. All variants of this pattern are prone to anger and to a greater or lesser extent deficient in the capacity to share warm or tender feelings, to experience genuine affection and love for another, or to empathize with the needs of others. (Millon, 1996, p. 486; Millon & Everly, 1985, p. 32)

**Self-image.** The core diagnostic feature of the self-image of Dominant individuals is that they view themselves as *assertive*; they perceive themselves as forthright, unsentimental, and bold. More exaggerated variants of the Dominant pattern recognize their fundamentally *competitive* nature; they are strong-willed, energetic, and commanding, and may take pride in describing themselves as tough and realistically hardheaded. (Millon, 1996, p. 485; Millon & Everly, 1985, p. 32)

**Regulatory mechanisms.** The core diagnostic feature of the regulatory (i.e., ego-defense) mechanisms of highly Dominant individuals is *isolation*; they are able to detach themselves emotionally from the impact of their aggressive acts upon others. In some situations — politics being a case in point — these personalities may have learned that there are times when it is best to restrain and transmute their more aggressive thoughts and feelings. Thus, they may soften and redirect their hostility, typically by employing the mechanisms of *rationalization*, *sublimation*, and *projection*, all of which lend themselves in some fashion to finding plausible and socially acceptable excuses for less than admirable impulses and actions. On the longer term, socially sanctioned resolution (i.e., sublimation) of hostile urges is seen in the competitive occupations to which these aggressive personalities gravitate. (Millon, 1996, pp. 485–486)

**Object representations.** The core diagnostic feature of the internalized object representations of highly Dominant individuals is their *pernicious* nature. Characteristically,

there is a marked paucity of tender and sentimental objects, and an underdevelopment of images that activate feelings of shame or guilt. (Millon, 1996, p. 485)

**Morphologic organization.** The core diagnostic feature of the morphologic organization of highly Dominant individuals is its *eruptiveness*; powerful energies are so forceful that they periodically overwhelm these personalities' otherwise adequate modulating controls, defense operations, and expressive channels, resulting in the harsh behavior commonly seen in these personalities. These personalities dread the thought of being vulnerable, of being deceived, and of being humiliated. Viewing people as basically ruthless, these personalities are driven to gain power over others, to dominate them and outmaneuver or outfox them at their own game. (Millon, 1996, p. 486)

### **Threat Assessment: Preamble**

When considering the threat that Kim Jong-un poses to the national security of the United States, one must not only take into account the situational circumstances of North Korea and its government, but also the country's past history as well as the personality of its current leader. Therefore, this threat assessment will take all of these factors into account in order to paint a hypothesized picture of the threat that Kim Jong-un and North Korea have on countries such as the United States. It is important to note that this threat assessment is speculative and I am in no way a professionally trained analyst. Therefore, this threat assessment should not be used in a tactical capacity. However, I have spent a great deal of time researching Kim Jong-un and therefore I am confident that the opinions I present are not unfounded.

The media has constantly changed its opinions of Kim Jong-un, ranging from calling him "crazy" (McLaughlin, 2017) and "impulsive" (Sik, 2017) to labeling him "cautious and calculating" (Lendon, 2016). As Mark Boden (2015) wrote in *Vanity Fair*:

In the world press, Kim is a bloodthirsty madman and buffoon. ... He is said to have had his uncle, Jang Song Thaek, and the entire Jang family mowed down by heavy machine guns (or possibly exterminated with mortar rounds, rocket-propelled grenades, or flamethrowers), or to have had them fed live to ravenous dogs. He is reported to have a yen for bondage porn and to have ordered all young men in his country to adopt his peculiar hairstyle. It is said that he has had former girlfriends executed.

This inconsistency of facts leads to a public who is unsure of what to believe in regarding the North Korean dictator as each media story paints a different picture of how Kim behaves. The truth of the matter is, no media reports can be perfectly confident in their description as the facts they retrieve are either from defectors from North Korea, the rare visitor allowed to travel to and from the country, or from the KWP controlled media reports that are occasionally released. None of the above sources can be deemed reliable and unbiased.

The personality profile constructed by Immelman (2018) which is being utilized for this study is backed by empirical research on a theoretically grounded basis. Therefore, the results of the profile — classifying Kim as a *high-dominance extravert* (Immelman, 2018) — can be used confidently to make inferences in regards to the national threat he poses. I will begin by putting the profile into context of recent events and then supplement that data with the knowledge I have gained from researching North Korean history, political structure, and current events.

### **Threat Assessment**

Kim's personality is classified as a *high-dominance extravert* (Immelman, 2018), which means that he scored highest on Scale 1A (Dominant) and Scale 3 (Outgoing). The public's common assumption that Kim Jong-un is a dictator with unlimited and unopposed power would be more supported if the profile came out with Scale 1A (Dominant) being elevated enough to meet the *mildly disturbed* or *markedly disturbed* levels. Had this occurred Kim's personality

would fit some of the clinical criteria to match the symptoms of a sadistic personality disorder. Costa and Widiger (1994) include the *DSM-III-R* criteria in their section on sadistic personality disorder which states:

The proposed criteria in *DSM-III-R* included (a) use of physical cruelty or violence for the purpose of establishing dominance; (b) humiliation of others; (c) harsh punishment of others; (d) amusement or pleasure in the suffering of animals and people; (e) lying for the purpose of inflicting pain; (f) intimidating and terrorizing others; and (g) fascination with weapons, injury, and torture. (American Psychiatric Association, 1987; as cited in Costa & Widiger, 1994, p. 54).

Had Kim Jong-un's personality fit the criteria he would be a selfish individual who would thrive on the misfortune and pain of others. However, Kim's Scale 1A (Dominant) elevation only reached the *prominent* criterion, meaning that he displays not only the well-adjusted traits associated with this scale such as being strong-willed, commanding, and assertive, but he also displays slightly exaggerated characteristics such as being forceful, intimidating, and controlling. Immelman (2016) determined U. S. President Donald Trump's Scale 1A (Dominant) elevation to be 17, which is marginally below Kim Jong-un's score of 18. Kim's score drives him to be a leader who will fight for what he wants and defend himself in times of opposition and could explain the saber rattling that has occurred between North Korea and the United States.

Although Kim's profile does have a high Scale 1A (Dominant) score, he also has an equally high Scale 3 (Outgoing) score. A large reason behind his Scale 1A score being elevated may be the overrepresentation of available data, as noted by Immelman (2018):

*Note on clinical judgment vs. empirical observation:* Empirically, Kim Jong-un's score on Scale 1A (Dominant) is identical to his score on Scale 3 (Outgoing); however, on rational-intuitive grounds it is my opinion that Scale 3 should be accorded precedence when interpreting the personality profile within the broader political context. Specifically, totalitarian regimes serve as

more of a conduit for the expression of dominant/aggressive personality traits than for outgoing traits, which raises the possibility that traits associated with dominance may be overrepresented in the universe of data in the public domain sampled for at-a-distance psychological assessment. Moreover, media reports sometimes conflate aggressive regime behavior with the personal psychology of the political actor, so it is conceivable that aggressive traits attributed to Kim Jong-un may be inflated in media reports. (p. 10)

This hypothesized overrepresentation leads to the assumption that Scale 3 (Outgoing) may be the true prevailing trait in Kim Jong-un's personality configuration. That would explain Kim's fondness of attention and apparently pleasant demeanor when in public. He has been known to treat his guests, such as former NBA star Dennis Rodman, with elaborate parties filled with alcohol and frivolity (Nelson, 2013). His outgoing persona also offers an explanation for Kim's proneness to impulsivity. In conjunction with his primary Scale 3 (Outgoing) elevation, Kim's secondary Scale 1B (Dauntless) elevation suggests that he is a restless individual prone to boredom. He is not someone who predisposed to paying much attention to intricate detail, nor is he an individual who likes to be tied down with policy particulars. I conjecture that his advisors cover these areas, leaving him the freedom to choose where to focus his attention. Therefore, it is concluded that his highly outgoing nature plays a key role in his decision making.

Jointly, the two primary elevations (Scale 1A, Dominant; Scale 3, Outgoing ), along with Kim's secondary elevations of Scale 2 (Ambitious), Scale 1B (Dauntless), and Scale 5 (Accommodating) lead me to conclude that Kim Jong-un likely functions as the de facto chief executive in the North Korean regime, though he likely does not have the unbridled, absolute power many believe and must rely on more experienced functionaries, bureaucrats, and advisers when making major decisions. Specifically, he must rely on his Politburo and the Presidium that leads them. I believe that when Kim Jong-un first came to power he had to rely heavily on these

state organs as he was underprepared and inexperienced due to his young age of 27 at the time of his father's death. However, his dominance and ambitious nature — reflected by Scale 1A and Scale 2 — assisted in his ability to consolidate his power over the ensuing years. With the guidance of his political elite he purged anyone who stood in his way and was able to win over the trust of other powerful members of the KWP. It is conceivable that these purges were not initiated by him personally as he is not particularly aggressive. However, the key members of his Politburo may well be. Kim's accommodating nature makes him more agreeable and therefore I believe he places great value in the opinions of his political elite. These are men he whom he trusts and who have the requisite experience to back up their position. To consolidate his power, Kim must retain their support just as they must remain in good standing with the other leaders of the KWP.

I believe Kim Jong-un currently plays a dual role as both a player in the political workings of the DPRK and a figurehead for its people to look up to. One of the foundational beliefs of the North Korean people is the deification of the Kim family. Kim Jong-un's outgoing, accommodating personality allows him to win over the public and maintain the personality cult that his grandfather, Kim Il-sung, started when the DPRK was first founded. If this image of Kim as a godlike figure faltered, the order that has been maintained for decades would crumble. Kim has to constantly reassure the public that he is the legitimate dynastic successor as embodied by the personality cult. If this personality cult did not play a role in the North Korean culture, anyone with sufficient power could assume leadership. Other powerful figures such as such as Kim Yong-nam, Pak Pong-ju, Choe Ryong-hae, or Vice Marshall Hwang Pyong-so could assume the title of Supreme Leader. Given the amount of power Kim Jong-il has placed in the North Korean military, I suspect this could have easily been the case for Vice Marshall Hwang

Pyong-so, who has close ties with the Kim family (Koo, 2014). However, the personality cult that Kim Il-sung entrenched in his people's culture preserves the power of the Kim family for the foreseeable future.

Given Kim's role as a spokesperson and a policymaker, the question of how much of a threat his regime poses, remains. I answer this with a simple analysis, given all the threats that North Korea has issued throughout the decades: How many times have they actually acted upon those threats? Very few. I concede that North Korea has successfully nuclear capability, which should not be ignored. However, one must only analyze the country's position to understand why it felt the need to undertake such an arduous and costly task. As one of the few communist countries remaining in the world and with China — with which their relationship has been strained in recent years — as its only ally — North Korea has struggled to thrive following the Korean War. In a desperate act to secure stability, security, and self-sufficiency, North Korea decided to pursue the coveted status of being a nuclear power, with the expectation that no country would easily enter into a war with a nation in possession of a nuclear deterrent. With only the armistice standing in the way of armed hostilities with South Korea and its ally, the United States, North Korea needed a security blanket and found one in nuclear weapons.

That being said, North Korea also understands that it is a minor player compared with other nuclear powers such as the United States, Russia, or China. If North Korea were to take preemptive action and launch an attack, retaliation by a major power such as the United States would be immediate and with overwhelming force. North Korea would have few if any allies that would back an unprovoked attack. China has made it clear that it would not back North Korea in this eventuality. On the other hand, if North Korea were attacked a different story would unfold and China would take action to defend its ally (Sterling, 2018). Therefore, North



Korea has little or nothing to gain from an attack of their own, but much to gain if they were attacked themselves, as they would reap the benefits of having a powerful ally. This could explain the saber rattling they have been displaying but not acting upon.

In conclusion, North Korea may be nominally under the leadership of Kim Jong-un, but only due to the support of the KWP and its elite representatives in the Presidium of the Politburo. He does not have absolute power and is far from an uncalculated madman. Every move that may appear brazen, such as the purging and execution of his uncle Jang Song-thaek or the assassination of his half-brother Kim Jong-nam (Kim, 2017), was a calculated risk. Kim Jong-un plays a very important role in retaining the support of the people of North Korea while also carrying on the tradition of having a Kim lead the country.

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