



North Korea's Juche Myth

By B. R. Myers

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For decades the North Korean regime has preached a virulent race-nationalism to its own people. At the same time, however, it has succeeded in making outsiders believe that it is guided by a solipsistic, inward-directed ideology of self-reliant communism. This in turn has nurtured the wishful assumption that the regime no longer has serious designs on South Korea. In this book, his follow-up to *The Cleanest Race* (2009), B.R. Myers shows that although the myth of Juche has done great service for the regime at home and abroad, the ideology's content has never played a significant role in policy-making or domestic propaganda. The North Korean nuclear program must be grasped in the context of the regime's true ideological commitment, which is not to self-reliance, but to "final victory" over the rival state. The book's appendix contains an English translation of the oldest extant version (from 1960) of Kim Il Sung's so-called Juche speech of 1955; this as an effort to discourage the prevailing academic practice of relying on more recent, "emboldened" versions instead.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Makes a compelling case for its own interpretation of Juche should draw attention back to Myers' contrarian arguments about the nature of the North Korean regime, which deserve to be taken seriously by anyone interested in the DPRK." - Columbia Political Review

"Relying for the most part on Korean language sources, Myers makes a convincing case that what the DPRK has boasted for decades to international audiences as its unique guiding ideology of self-reliance is actually a sham doctrine, bearing no relevance to the actual policies of the DPRK, either domestically or internationally.... The whole book is rich with citation and influences from psychology, the history of ideas, political history and literature." - Gianluca Spezza, NK News, October 2015

"Outstanding....The actual content of juche sasang may not be worth studying, but Myers' account of how it evolved is...Myers has once again written a must-read account." - Stephan Haggard, August 4, 2016 (Witness to Transformation/PIIE)

About the Author

B.R. Myers was born in the US and educated in Bermuda, South Africa and Germany, where he received a Korean Studies Ph.D. with a thesis on North Korean literature. He now specializes in the research of North Korea's ideology and propaganda, subjects on which he has written for peer-reviewed academic journals in the US, Canada and South Korea, as well as for the New York Times, Newsweek and the Wall Street Journal. His book *Han Sorya and North Korean Literature: The Failure of Socialist Realism in the DPRK* (Cornell East Asia Series, 1994) was the first English-language academic book on North Korean cultural history. He is also known for "A Reader's Manifesto" and other essays on literature and animal rights in *The Atlantic*. His book *The Cleanest Race: How North Koreans See Themselves and Why It Matters* (2009) was praised by Christopher Hitchens as "finely argued and brilliantly written," and by South Korea's Yonhap News Agency as "perhaps the most significant work on [North Korea] since Kim Jong Il came to power." It has since been published in French, Chinese, Korean, Czech and Polish versions. Myers teaches in the international studies department at Dongseo University in Busan, South Korea.

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