

THE EVOLUTION OF PYONYANG'S POLITICAL SYSTEM AND ITS IMPACT ON NORTH KOREAN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

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Abstract:

Since the formal establishment of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in 1948, the Korean Peninsula has witnessed regular crises, repeated tensions, and occasional if infrequent attempts at negotiation and conflict management. Despite this inauspicious record and the very limited progress toward conflict resolution, there has been no outbreak of a major military conflict since the end of the Korean War in 1953. Most scholars and analysts focus on balance-of-power dynamics between the two Koreas, with particular attention to the evolving alliance and adversarial relationships of Pyongyang and Seoul, to explain the past five decades of Korean history. Perhaps equally important in comprehending the Korean conundrum is to understand the internal dynamics in the countries concerned over the past half century. This paper examines the historical evolution of the DPRK's political system to analyze what, if any, impact domestic political realities have had on that country's approach to conflict management on the Korean Peninsula.