
The Lack of Information Communications Technology in North Korea

Information Technology (IT) and Information Communications Technology (ICT) can have a significant impact on the economic growth of a society. The use of Information Technology such as computers, laptops, etc. in a society can promote rapid growth because it allows the free travel of information with the internet and can allow more opportunities for connections to businesses. Information Communications Technology such as phones and other telecommunications systems allows for growth because it helps connect a society to the outside world by allowing everyone to share their own views, which leads to trade, and trade leads to growth. Information technology and the internet has become ingrained in almost every society and the societies without it can still have growth but there is a significant divide between the two being in that IT societies are usually more economically sound and thriving. However, Information Technology is becoming more advanced, allowing for cheaper IT systems, this means underdeveloped societies will soon have a chance to grow through the use of Information Technology. Information Technology also usually leads to a more democratic government which may not be the goal of some leaders in countries.

Background and observation were born and raised in Texas in the United States of America so the idea of some countries never having access to the internet or essential Information Technology that allows a society to become more modern and industrialized and how it can impact the society never affected or occurred to me. However, in my recent years, I have become very interested in technology, and I have seen how important Information technology is and how it will truly shape the future of our world. Also for the first time 2 years ago I had left the country and I had the privilege of visiting San Pedro Island in Belize. San Pedro is a small isolated island that is fairly underdeveloped and doesn't have much in the way of Information Technology, the only places with computers are the major businesses such as hotels, but they are fairly old and are limited in what they can do with the internet.

The businesses there are unique and small focusing on handcrafted products that don't require importation, there is no Walmart in San Pedro, there isn't even a McDonalds, as a matter of fact, there are no American fast food chains. My thoughts were that this would most likely be due to the lack of Information Communication Technology and other IT systems. This made me want to research other countries with a lack of information technology and find out how the country and its citizens are affected. This allowed me to come across North Korea, a very intriguing country because the North Korean government chooses to limit Information Technology to control the society, but upon further research, I found there also lots of economic

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problems and the citizens are affected by the lack of information technology. North Korea has a notable digital divide because the lack of ICT seems as though it affects economic growth. This brought me to my research question... How does the censorship of the World Wide Web and Other IT systems impact the citizens of North Korea and its Economy? Economic Impact North Korea's society has been suffering for many years due to the North Korean Government's lack of prioritization in outside trade and the care for its citizens. North Koreans are underfed because most of the country's money goes into militarization rather than Information Communication Technologies and general supplies so this means that import costs would be high and this leads to many North Koreans starving. In a recent study by the "Beyond Parallel project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C." shows that most North Koreans earn 75 percent of their money from the black market.

People illegally export fish, shoes, cigarettes, and cooking oil, this helps give the citizens opportunities that they otherwise couldn't afford. This increase in money could help families buy food and keep them from starving, but it's illegal so it will not diminish starvation because not everyone will do it. In fact, North Korea doesn't import many things because they don't want to run the risk of a security breach, possibly giving citizens a new outlook on North Korea focused on their freedom, this lack of import leads to increased starvation, also increased prices for things made within the country. North Korean black markets are almost becoming a normal thing because of this factor and also because prices are not determined by supply and demand but rather determined on how the North Korean Government sees fit.

Social Impact Information

Technology shapes the way for how humans communicate with each other and the rest of the world because they can freely express their views with one another with no regulation. However, this is not the case in North Korea because they have the most robust censorship laws out of anywhere in the world. This is the tactic of Kim Jong Un and his predecessor because if there was a free flow of information through the use of cell phones and computers using the internet then citizens would realize how terrible of a country North Korea is and uprisings would most likely start happening. North Koreans are taught from an early age that the internet is bad and no one should try to use it, the government tells them this because they don't want citizens to see the rest of the world and find out how different North Korea is... and not in a good way.

North Korean landlines and cell phones cannot make international calls whatsoever and sometimes calls can be monitored. WIFI isn't an option in North Korea also because there have been reports of accidentally giving uncensored internet access. There are many laws set in place to prevent the use of the internet and foreign radio or any form of foreign media. If these laws are broken then the consequences can be dire. For example, North Koreans are only allowed to watch North Korean Propaganda and it has been reported that over 130 North

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Koreans have been executed because they watched South Korean Television. This is frowned upon because South Korean television can't present a better way of life that they don't want citizens wishing for. For the people of North Korea, it's illegal for them to leave their country without permission, this is so no information gets out of the country exposing North Korea for what it is. There still has been some people who have escaped though and that's where we get most of our intel on North Korea.

The regime even attempts to restrict movement within North Korea to avoid people finding confidential places. Its almost as hard to get in as it is out, for the people that do get in, like journalists or famous people, they are under heavy supervision and if they do anything to "disturb the peace" then they can have severe repercussions. North Korea has also sent thousands of citizens to worse parts of the country for punishment and re-education. Like as stated before there is absolutely no freedom of speech, and with that comes no freedom of learning the outside in any way. Also in North Korea, they do not allow anybody to have religious freedom because organized religion can be seen as a threat, and people discovered practicing religion can be publicly executed or sent to prison camps. Also, because of North Korean censorship and exclusivity, it is hard to get enough food without imports and dedicated most money to the military, so there ends up being chronic food shortages to the average citizen, there are millions of malnourished children and babies which leads to stunted growth and high risks of health problems. There is virtually no health care in North Korea so for those who get sick and can't afford medicine can suffer badly from simple and easily curable sicknesses.

The prison camps (there are 5) hold anywhere from 80,000 to 120,000 people. They have existed longer than the Nazi concentration camps. For some of the people in these camps, they have not even committed a crime but are related to someone who has, they are guilty because their blood is guilty. There are public executions for small petty crimes, and other varieties and everyone watches because the regime wants to inflict fear into the hearts of everyone so they learn that they should not do as the criminal did. As for the refugees, if a woman happens to escape then most of the time they become victims of sex trafficking because China lacks a number of marriable women. Even though there are severe reproductions people try to escape every year. The children birthed by the women North Korean refugees can wind up stateless because they are neither recognized by China nor North Korea, so they get no basic rights such as education and other state-provided services.

Ethical Impact

To most the ethics behind most of The North Korean Governments decisions are pretty cut and dry, everything that North Korea does is generally bad and prevents basic human rights, they redacted North Koreans freedom of speech, also there is starvation within the country due to its

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poor purchasing decisions. North Korea uses IT to create their own intranet called Redstar OS, an intranet is a more localized version of the internet. The few North Koreans that do get to use the intranet are usually limited to a public computer with surveillance over it and the intranet provided only gives citizens search results that the North Korean government wants them to see, meaning there can be no spread of new ideas and no true knowledge is actually gained. Also, North Korean propaganda is constantly being shown while one uses the intranet. This filtered intranet ensures that only certain media is seen and nobody can get any unwanted thoughts about North Korea.

In researching this more, I found out if North Korean citizens can get life in prison or even worse executed for trying to alter or look up things on the intranet or OS that they shouldn't look up. It would be like putting a person in one room since birth and never telling them there is more to life than that room, so in their head, they think they have total freedom because they don't know that they are trapped in one room in a big world. However, Intranet access is highly restricted and North Koreans only get to access it, if they are given a specific task and most of the time they are being watched. "The average citizen who wants uncensored news either illegally tunes into foreign radio or relies on rumors being passed around." International calls are also outlawed in North Korea and the can get 5 years of re-education in a prison camp where the highest penalty is death if they get caught making these calls. The free expression in North Korea is absolutely terrible, the country got a score of 96 on Freedom House's annual report on Press Freedom, and 100 is the worst score. The BBC reports that the radios and television sets in North Korea are pre-tuned to government stations, while radios have to be checked and registered by the police. The Internet is usually only permitted to be used by university students and regime elites. Not to mention that the foreign media is becoming less and less permitted and have more restriction so the outside world can't see North Korea for what it is but also North Korean citizens can't understand the freedom of the outside world.

The problem with censoring the intranet in North Korea is that while it may blind the citizens of North Korea, it also blinds the rulers to because they aren't furthering their technological advances so they can't trade and deal with digital problems as well. With a free press, North Korea would be forced to deal with the overwhelming amount of famine and other problems, but until then there will be false reports playing down the actual weight of the problems at hand. An interesting bit of code is written to every page on the North Korean Intranet, that is when anytime Kim Jong Un is mentioned, his name appears slightly larger than the surrounding text. In a computer, the calendar doesn't read 2017 rather it reads 106 which is the number of years since the birth of Kim ill sung, the countries previous leader. The system that the computers are running on is called Kwangmyong and is run by the one and only service provider. The sites that are typically seen are news services like "the Voice of Korea" and the "Rodong Sinmun." The reporters for the news sites need extremely careful though because if they make any mistakes it could have dire consequences.

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Reporters without Borders, states, some North Korean journalists have been sent to “revolutionization camps just for putting a typo in one of their articles. The system that’s in place filtering out all the sites that are unwanted by the government is called a mosquito net. This makes only the bare essentials available so nothing unwanted by the North Korean government can happen. Unethical punishments in response to government censorship and actions, activists such as Kim Seung-Chul, a North Korean who fled to South Korea created North Korea Reform radio, which sends anti-government messages to the north. The system in place on mobile phones has recently set surveillance and better filtering in place. In 2008 There was also censorship in music, usually, North Korea performances are limited to music that has been approved by Kim Jong-Il. In 1992 during a party Ji Hae Nam, former propaganda officer sang a South Korean song, and as a result, she got sentenced three years in jail and was beaten badly.

Kim Jong-Il only allows music that praises him or praises the ideals of communism. Pushing further the fact that he wants the world to view him as perfect so it can hide the disastrous state of North Korea. Another example of an extreme punishment is that North Korea sentenced two South Korean journalists to death for “insulting the dignity of the country”. This was because they had reported on a book called North Korea Confidential. The journalist’s names that are sentenced to death are Son Hyo-rim and Yang Ji-ho. They are going to die just because they wrote critically about the regime, which is very undeserving in my opinion. According to the Court, the execution could be carried out at any moment and at any place. In an interview, according to Joo Sung-Ha, there were other reporters that reported on this same book and she does not know why Son and Yang were singled out. The fact that North Korea would plan to execute just because of a critical review shows that there is a whole bad world in the heart of North Korea.

North Korea is so sensitive of media that portrays as bad that, when the movie “The Interview” was about to be released, North Korea said there would be heavy retaliation if the interview was released. The movie happens to include the death of Kim Jong-un, which is what tipped North Korea off. Originally the movie was about meeting Kim Jong-il but when he died in 2011 and Kim Jong-un took power they changed the script so that the interview would take place with him. Heartless North Korea sentenced a U.S. student to 15 years of hard labor for removing a political banner from a hotel. The U.S. urged North Korea to let him go because the punishment is not justified based on his actions.

The trial lasted one hour where it shows the student crying and begging for forgiveness telling how his family needs him back home, and that he is only human and promises to never make the mistake ever again, but he was convicted anyway. If that wasn’t bad enough 17 months later he was released from North Korea in a coma and when he got home he later died in the U. S. The family claims that the student “Otto Warmbier” was brutalized and mistreated by North

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Koreans to ensure that one outcome. There are still prisoners that are in North Korea today, these include Kim Sang-Duk and he was taken in on April 23, and Jin Xue Song, on May 6; North Korea accused each man of “hostile acts.” Not much is known as in why the third prisoner Kim Dong-Chul was detained in 2015.

According to other prisoners that are now released, when you’re an American prisoner in North Korea you have a small cell, and you are underfed and you are stuck in there with no chance of seeing the outside world. According to the article Asia Pacific, a man named Mr. Kim spent 1 month at Pyongyang University of science and technology where he was teaching accounting, and when he was trying to leave the country before he could board the plane he was arrested, this is according to the university Chancellor, Chan-Mo Park. Chan-Mo Park was also reported saying that “The cause of his arrest is not known, but some officials at Pyongyang University of Science and Technology told me his arrest was not related to his work at Pyongyang University of Science and Technology. “He had been involved with some other activities outside P.U.S.T., such as helping an orphanage. “Kim Dong-Chul, a businessman, was sentenced to 10 years of hard labor in April 2016 because he was accused of spying and other offenses. A month before his trial, Mr. Kim appeared at a government-arranged news conference in Pyongyang and apologized for trying to steal military secrets in cooperation with South Koreans. The South Korean spy agency denied any involvement.” False Media and Its Influence While there isn’t much in North Korean media, the media that is existent is mostly false statements about the US and false pictures of the nuclear destruction of United States cities by North Korean Nukes.

North Korean news anchors say things like an upcoming conflict will leave Washington in a “Sea of Fire” There are also websites by communists that state they are waiting to demolish the United States to ashes. One North Korean television showed a video of a nuclear attack on the White House that was not real. The announcer talks about how “the American imperialists and the South Korean traitors ... will face the most absurd and painful self-destruction, digging their own tombs with their bare hands.” There is propaganda where the video ends with a bunch of graves overlaid on to an American flag. A month later, as a part of the day of the sun which is a holiday celebrated by North Koreans, once a North Korean TV broadcasted a military concert in front of a huge screen that happened to show a missile attack on San Francisco. North Korean imagery and words have a very numbing sameness about them but the messages are monitored closely by the US for any changes.

A second U.S. official said that, if the North Koreans stop talking about turning South Korea into a “sea of fire” and threaten things that are even more horrific, then the entire world, the government, and the intelligence community need to take note. Citizens of North Korea are now in the year 103. This different calendar shows the years since Kim Il Sung was born, and was introduced in 1997 by son Kim Jong-Il, and his own birth as people say, took place on Mount Paektu under a double rainbow at the same time a new star appeared in the sky. Kim Jong-Un

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allegedly scaled North Korea's biggest mountain on his own. He climbed Mt. Paektan, an active volcano, to meet with 100 soldiers at the summit for a photo shoot. North Korea's state-run news website KCNA indicated the invention of a generation, waterproof liquid. The country's Chosun Central Television channel pinpointed China as the happiest place to live on Earth, awarding them 100 out of 100 points, and humbly demoting themselves to second on 98 points. North Korean media is entirely produced and controlled by the State and by its ruling Workers' Party of Korea, which controls all power in the country.

Without access to the internet, the most exposure that any person in North Korea can expect is through the more established means like TV, radio, and newspapers, however, these are controlled by the government. Though the Constitution of North Korea grants freedom of speech and of the press, this is only true if the media is positive towards the government. There is only one 'source' for any news stories – the Korean Central News Agency, which provides a series of daily press statements for the news agenda for that day. The government uses the newspaper to try to show an ideal country that almost based on pure jealousy. The US is the main target, regularly sending the image the media is showing that an attack from the "imperialist" US is in the near future– but always reassuring the public that North Korea's own military might will offer easy retaliation. TV broadcasts which only begin every evening after 5 pm, when the public has finished its day's work unless there is emergency news such as Kim Jong Il's death which has many messages portraying North Korea as a paradise that everyone would want to be a part of.

Conclusion

Information Technology is used in a lot of places around the world, and there is a correlation between the success of an economy and its adoption of new Informational Technology. North Korea has a lack of Informational Technology and the economy is very poor with a lot of malnourished and starving people, instead of IT systems the government focusing on military and censorship which means that there is no money for citizens and they don't import need resources. North Korea uses the little Informational Technology it has to manipulate its citizens and censors all foreign media from coming into the country. Therefore, Informational Technology is a very powerful tool and it can help shape a country and the lack of it creates a digital divide from the more modern societies and it is more likely for that economy to fail.

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