



# Witness to Transformation: Refugee Insights into North Korea

*Marcus Noland, Stephan Haggard*

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Despite its nuclear capability, in certain respects North Korea resembles a failed state sitting uneasily atop a shifting internal foundation. This instability is due in part to the devastating famine of the 1990s, and the state's inability to fulfill the economic obligations that it had assumed--which forced institutions, enterprises, and households to cope with the ensuing challenges of maintaining stability with limited cooperation between the Korean government and the international community. The ineffective response to the humanitarian crisis triggered by the famine resulted in the outflow of perhaps tens of thousands of refugees, whose narratives are largely overlooked in evaluating the efficacy of the humanitarian aid program.

Exploiting Refugee Insights into North Korea; uses extensive surveys with refugees, who now reside in China or South Korea, to provide extraordinary insight into the changing pathways to power, wealth, and status within North Korea. These refugee testimonies provide an invaluable interpretation of the regime's motivations and they assess the situation on the ground with the rise of inequality, corruption, and disaffection in the decade since the famine. Through the lens of these surveys, preeminent North Korean experts Marcus Noland and Stephan Haggard carefully document the country's transition from a centrally planned economy to a highly distorted market economy, characterized by endemic corruption and widening inequality. Noland and Haggard chart refugees' reactions to the current conditions and consider the disparity between the perceived and real benefits of the international humanitarian aid program experienced by this displaced population. Finally, the book examines these refugees' future prospects for integration into a new society.

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