

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: University of Leeds		
Unit of Assessment: History (28)		
Title of case study: Influencing Policy on the Chinese-North Korean Border Region		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2014-19		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Dr. Adam Cathcart	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Lecturer	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 2013-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014-20		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>During the period 2014-20, as North Korea embarked on high-profile weapons tests resulting in intense United Nations sanctions, the question of Chinese-North Korean relations and the border region between the two socialist states came into focus for policy makers. Dr Adam Cathcart channeled his expertise on this region and its issues [REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED] Facing a context in which many specialists focus on North Korea alone, for governments the issue of Sino-North Korean relations is easily lost in the space between diplomatic postings and bureaus in Seoul, Tokyo, and Beijing. Cathcart's research has played an important role in mitigating these structural deficiencies in the policy and journalistic communities, and in bringing together analytical communities of Sinologists and Koreanists. Cathcart's research has led to impacts in [REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED] explaining North Korean politics to wider audiences through online and media outlets.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Cathcart's research in two co-edited books [1, 4] and a number of articles [2, 3, 5 and essays in 1, 4] delves into the local historical complexities and global contemporary challenges presented by the Chinese-North Korean border region, from the 1930s to the present day. His research analyses close Chinese-North Korean interactions in the border region and at the broader bilateral level, rooted in histories of anti-Japanese struggle and the Korean War [1A, 4]. Along with co-author Dr Christopher Green (Leiden University), who during this period was the Korea analyst for the International Crisis Group think tank, Cathcart has produced a pathbreaking historical and interdisciplinary survey of the Sino-North Korean border [1]. His work on North Korea's Special Economic Zones (SEZs) abutting Chinese territory demonstrated how economic liberalisation was undermined by the purge of the North Korean leadership in 2013, and has led to think tanks asking Cathcart to produce a working paper and connected book chapter [1B].</p> <p>In the light of China's Korean War experience, the PRC's specific tendencies and options in the event of North Korean collapse have also been a theme in his research [6]. Cathcart has studied historical and contemporary anti-corruption activity in Chinese regions bordering North Korea, modifications to China's "contingency planning" for collapse or disorder in North Korea, and the evolution of Chinese strategy towards the Korean peninsula [2]. His work shows how North Korean ideology is changing to allow for more external market behaviours, within strict</p>		

limits, yet China has occasionally sabotaged its own progress in the relationship, with attempts to incorporate North Korea into its 'Belt and Road' global development framework [2, 5].

Studies of 'border security' along the Chinese-North Korean frontier have generally been framed around questions of North Korean famine. Cathcart brings a broader temporal perspective to this study, documenting how the Chinese and North Korean militaries have aided each other along the border at times of stress [1C, 6], and his granular readings of Chinese open sources have allowed for a clearer picture of how the PRC responds to security and crisis along the border [3]. Three substantial chapters of his most recent edited book [1], deal extensively with human rights questions, including a translated essay from a North Korean defector writing about Chinese law, the border, and the politics of citizenship.

The combination of **Cathcart's** grasp of the archives of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, the local Chinese sources, and his understanding of the role of ethnic Koreans in China on North Korean governing strategies in the border region, and on "grey zone" misinformation tactics [3] makes his research uniquely relevant to current political issues. His work over the assessment period has built cumulatively towards an enhanced understanding of North Korea and China's interactions and provide a new model for interdisciplinary studies of China's frontier politics.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1. (2021). **A**: "Ink and Ashes: Documenting the Sino-Korean Border Region and the Origins of the North Korean State, 1931-1953"; **B**: "Purges and Peripheries: Jang Song-taek, Pyongyang's SEZ Strategy, and Relations with China"; **C**: "Regions within the Yalu-Tumen Border Space: From Dandong to Tumen and Beyond," in *Decoding the Sino-North Korean Borderlands*, co-edited with Christopher Green and Steven Denney (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press), 59-81, 131-167, 289-311. (Output delayed by COVID, see REF2, UOA28-2944)
2. (2020). "Chinese Strategy in South Korea," in *An Emerging China-Centric Order: China's Vision for a New World Order in Practice*, Nadège Rolland, ed., National Bureau of Asian Research, NBR Special Report no. 87 (25 August), 19-32.
3. (2018). "Evaded States: Security and Control in the Sino-Korean Border Region" in *Routledge Handbook of Asian Borderlands*, edited by Alexander Horstmann, Martin Saxer, Alessandro Ripa (Abingdon and New York: Routledge), 422-433.
4. (2017). "Kim Jong-un Syndrome: North Korean Commemorative Culture and the Succession Process," *Change and Continuity in North Korean Politics*, co-edited with Christopher Green and Robert Winstanley-Chesters (Abingdon and New York: Routledge), 6-22.
5. (2017). "Xi's Belt: Chinese-North Korean Relations," with Christopher Green, in *Chinese Foreign Policy under Xi*, edited by Hoo Tiang Boon (Routledge; February), 130-143.
6. (2015). "North Korean Regime Stability: The Sino-North Korean Border Region as Test Case," with Christopher Green, in *East Asian Intelligence and Organised Crime*, edited by Stephan Blancke (Berlin: Köster Verlag), 291-302.

4. Details of the impact

Cathcart's unique historical research insights [1- 6] have led to him being invited to advise policymakers and the media in the UK, the US and in Seoul on the breadth of China's relations with North Korea. A central element of this advisory work has been to augment understanding of what is driving North Korea's policy of trade and interaction along its northern frontier, and whether its regime will adopt the Chinese model and eventually open up its economy to foreign investment.

The current environment has increased the demand for knowledge which provides context on North Korea's ability to evade sanctions along the Chinese border, and which fleshes out the detail of Chinese-North Korean relations generally. Between 2013 and 2017, North Korea undertook an escalating series of steps to build and test its nuclear and missile arsenals, leading to a series of United Nations sanctions which required buy-in and active participation from the Chinese side. Many officials believe China is the key to solving North Korea's problem and that more pressure from the Chinese would bring North Korea more sincerely to the negotiating table. **Cathcart's** expertise was called upon during this time to provide advice to [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The impact of his research can be seen in [REDACTED] media interpretations and representations of the North Korea-China relationship.

i) Advising UK governmental departments

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] **Cathcart** participated in multiple Cabinet Office roundtables and presentations sponsored by the think tank RUSI (Royal United Services Institute) to provide expertise and policy options on North Korea [E]. He has further participated in dialogues with North Korean diplomats in Parliament and at the British Council, worked closely with former UK Ambassadors to North Korea (including a debate on 1 February 2018 at the Cambridge Union) and given presentations at the Palace of Westminster which were sponsored by the House of Lords.

[REDACTED] **Cathcart** has advised the South Korean (ROK) Foreign Ministry, travelling to Seoul for an invited presentation in September 2016 and a structured debate on Sino-Korean relations (in Chinese) with top analysts from the People's Republic of China (PRC). [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] **Cathcart's** insights into how political purges in Pyongyang impacted on trade policy with China led to his invitation to the Korean Economic Institute, a think tank in Washington DC which sought his 'expertise, language skills, and experience [to] definitely elevate' a series of public lectures and reports [F]. His fieldwork and assessments of Chinese-language reports on PRC crisis preparations for a Korean contingency crisis have been drawn on by Whitehall think tanks [E], and an influential annual report to the US Congress on China's foreign policy included references to his work [H].

iii) Informing media representations

Cathcart has played a prominent role in shaping media representations of North Korea for the British public and international audiences. **Cathcart** was guest twice on the BBC Breakfast couch in May and June 2018 and helped audiences to interpret the Trump-Kim summit in Singapore. He was on air for 25 minutes while the events unfolded in real time, and also discussed his co-edited book on North Korean politics [4]. He has been interviewed over a dozen times since 2013 for the *Washington Post*, the paper of record on Capitol Hill. His own journalistic work for *NK News*, a site which provides intelligence on North Korea, has brought more documentation about North Korean firms working on Chinese territory into public awareness.

Cathcart is also the founder of the website SinoNK.com. This influential website, with 714,000 total views during the assessment period and a Twitter following of 9,200, is maintained by a scholarly collective of young Sinologists and Koreanists dedicated to documenting and analysing the borderland between China and North Korea, the nature of transnational ties and the history of Northeast Asia. Cathcart's leadership of this group has led to a range of publicly accessible articles and influential tweets on North Korea and the border since 2013, including multiple references by *The Economist* (2 Feb. 2013; 21 Dec. 2013; 20 Feb. 2014; 5 Sept. 2015) to his work on the Chinese response to Kim Jong-un's policies. In 2015, the *Washington Post* bureau chief in Seoul tweeted: 'Everything @adamcathcart writes, I read', and in 2013 **Cathcart**, who has 11,200 Twitter followers, was included among the top 100 'Twitterati' in the magazine *Foreign Policy*.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

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F: Invitation from Korea Economic Institute of America, Washington D.C., presentation handout and media of the event, Spring 2014, and evidence of FCO interest, August 2014.

G: E-mail from Director of International Affairs at the Institute for Far Eastern Studies (IFES) of Kyungnam University, Seoul, on behalf of Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Peace, and conference programme for Seoul, September-November 2017.

H: Excerpt from U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *2018 Annual Report to Congress*, 'Chapter 3 Section 5- China's Evolving North Korea Strategy,' September 2018, pp. 412-440.

[Redacted]

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