The Media of Political Communication in North Korea

Jana Hajzlerová (Institute of East Asian Studies, Charles University in Prague)

Often described as a known unknown, hermit kingdom or impossible state, North Korea remains a puzzling issue in the international arena with both policy makers and scholars struggling to understand what really lies behind the Pyongyang's poker face. The militarized one-party system, peculiar ideological doctrines of juche and songun, and the Kims' personality cult are often addressed in political sciences. However, the two successful hereditary successions enthusiastically accepted by loyal citizens, virtually sealed off between the state borders with no sign of any political resistance, in the era of economic dependency and the development of information technologies (that even North Korea is not spared from), urge us to focus our attention on the idiosyncratic nature of political communication in North Korea, for that might be where the success, or rather the survival, of today's North Korea lies. To this end, the article discusses the specific genres of political communication, currently employed in North Korea, and their historical roots (1), and elaborates on the role of traditional media in spreading the political message (2). To showcase a typical genre of a mediated political communication, the article further introduces a case study of Kim Jong-un's New Year's speeches, analyzed for framing techniques and storytelling patterns through rhetorical and narrative analysis (3).