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STATE, SOCIETY, AND MARKETS IN NORTH KOREA

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State, Society, and Markets in North Korea

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Abstract: Under Kim Jong-un, North Korea has experienced growing economic markets, an emerging 'nouveau riche,' and modest levels of urban development. To what extent is North Korean politics and society changing? How has the growth of markets transformed state-society relations? This Element evaluates the shifting relationship between state, society, and markets in a deeply authoritarian context. If the regime implements controlled economic measures, extracts rent, and subsumes the market economy into its ideology, the state will likely retain strong authoritarian control. Conversely, if it fails to incorporate markets into its legitimating message, as private actors build informal trust networks, share information, and collude with state bureaucrats, more fundamental changes in state-society relations are in store. By opening the 'black box' of North Korea, this Element reveals how the country manages to teeter forward, and where its domestic future may lie.

Keywords: North Korea, political economy, authoritarian rule, civil society, marketization

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Contents

1	Introduction: State, Society, and Markets in North Korea	1
2	Authority, Legitimacy, and the Totalitarian State	15
3	Rising Markets	28
4	State, Society, and the Question of Legitimacy	42
5	Conclusion: Contingency and Change in North Korea	59
	References	68
	Acknowledgments and Afterword	79