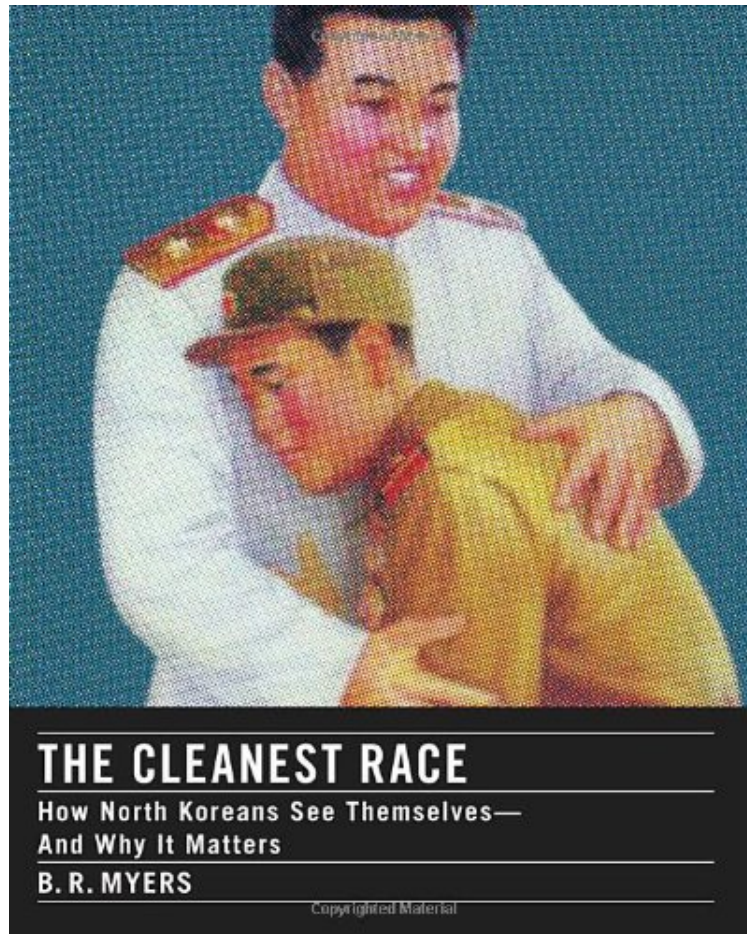


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The Cleanest Race: How North Koreans See Themselves and Why It Matters

B.R. Myers

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B.R. Myers : The Cleanest Race: How North Koreans See Themselves and Why It Matters before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Cleanest Race: How North Koreans See Themselves and Why It Matters:

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entertaining way. Enjoyed it greatly. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Four Stars By Orco Excellent book well researched and well written.

Understanding North Korea through its propaganda What do the North Koreans really believe? How do they see themselves and the world around them? Here B.R. Myers, a North Korea analyst and a contributing editor of *The Atlantic*, presents the first full-length study of the North Korean worldview. Drawing on extensive research into the regimes domestic propaganda, including films, romance novels and other artifacts of the personality cult, Myers analyzes each of the countrys official myths in turn from the notion of Koreans unique moral purity, to the myth of an America quaking in terror of the Iron General. In a concise but groundbreaking historical section, Myers also traces the origins of this official culture back to the Japanese fascist thought in which North Koreas first ideologues were schooled. What emerges is a regime completely unlike the Wests perception of it. This is neither a bastion of Stalinism nor a Confucian patriarchy, but a paranoid nationalist, military-first state on the far right of the ideological spectrum. Since popular support for the North Korean regime now derives almost exclusively from pride in North Korean military might, Pyongyang can neither be cajoled nor bullied into giving up its nuclear program. The implications for US foreign policy which has hitherto treated North Korea as the last outpost of the Cold War are as obvious as they are troubling. With North Korea now calling for a blood reckoning with the Yankee jackals, Myers unprecedented analysis could not be more timely.

From Publishers Weekly A particularly nasty strain of racist propaganda has enabled North Korea's dictatorship to maintain power, according to this fascinating cultural survey. An American-born, South Korea-based instructor of North Korean literature, Myers (*A Reader's Manifesto*) combines his cultural and linguistic fluency with sharp analysis to throw light on one of the world's most closed-off cultures. Examining North Korean books, news broadcasts, and films, Myers finds that the country's supremacist propaganda can be traced to imperial Japan, which sought to convince Koreans that they were part of the "world's purest race." Myers acidly discredits Western interpretations of North Korea as "hard-line communist" or "Confucian," noting the prevalence of maternal rather than paternal imagery and the societal scorn for the former Soviet bloc. Esoteric cultural markers-e.g., the heavy use of flashbacks in film and literature-are mined for compelling clues to the North Korean sensibility. Myers' greatest feat is his explanation of how the regime has maintained power despite its failures in almost every area of governance-how it has convinced average North Korean citizens that shipments of U.S. food aid, for example, are actually reparations for past "Yankee" crimes. A sharp and smart introduction to one of the world's most secretive societies. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. "Electrifying... finely argued and brilliantly written." Christopher Hitchens, *Slate* "Provocative... A fascinating analysis." Dwight Garner, *The New York Times* "[A] scary... close reading of domestic propaganda [that] goes a long way toward explaining the erratic behavior and seemingly bizarre thought processes of Dear Leader Kim Jong Il." *The Wall Street Journal* "Myers' book is worth buying and reading." *The Quarterly* "The definitive book on the subject." *The Atlantic* "There are few books that can give the world a peek into the Hermit Kingdom. *The Cleanest Race* provides a reason to care about how those in North Korea see themselves and the West. It is possibly the best addition to that small library of books on North Korean ideology." Andrei Lankov, *Far Eastern Economic* "Myers renders great service to the global foreign policy establishment with his lucid and well documented profile of the North Korean polity. If only it were made mandatory reading for all the stakeholder leaders, particularly the American establishment, who feel compelled to deal politically with North Korea. Maybe then, Myers' wisdom might lead them to adopt the only possibly policy toward North Korea that will work: that of 'benign neglect.'" Mike Gravel, US Senate 1969-1981 "In his new survey of North Korean propaganda, *The Cleanest Race*, B.R. Myers insists that the ongoing support of the North Korean public for the regime doesn't reflect any great faith in communism. Instead, he argues, it is rooted in a kind of paranoid racial nationalism adapted from the Japanese fascism that flourished before World War II.... Myers feels that the racialism at the heart of the regime's ideology will sustain it even as it fails to provide the prosperity it promises." Laura Miller, *Salon.com* "The text offers a clear picture of the peculiar worldview of this profoundly inward-facing country, its character and continuous subtle alterations, and its under-appreciated ramifications in world affairs." Reference Research Book News About the Author B.R. Myers was born in New Jersey and raised in Bermuda, South Africa and Germany. He has a Ph.D. in North Korean Studies from the University of Tbingen in Germany. His books include *Han Sorya and North Korean Literature* (Cornell East Asia Series, 1994) and *A Readers Manifesto* (Melville House, 2002). At present he directs the international studies department at Dongseo University in South Korea. In addition to writing literary criticism for the American magazine *The Atlantic*, of which he is a contributing editor, Myers regularly contributes articles on North Korea to the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal* and academic publications.