

## North Koreans' Tears at Kim Jong-il Funeral After Years of Brainwashing

By Dr Kathleen Taylor, Oxford University researcher and writer on mind control



Mourners line the streets for Kim Jong-il's funeral

The funeral of North Korean dictator Kim Jong-il was held yesterday in Pyongyang, with thousands lining the streets in the snow. Expert Dr Kathleen Taylor analyses the public outpouring of grief.

In Britain we know how public events can trigger strong feelings. Tragedies like the death of Princess Diana can sweep away normal restraint, for a while. Strangers leave flowers, weep; the nation grieves.

Yet most people are not utterly distraught. Some don't care at all. They are free to say so, however much others disapprove. Do North Koreans have that choice?  
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In truth we don't know nearly enough about North Korea. Details of daily existence are hard to come by and harder to trust.

The state's grip on its people and media is so strong, that dragging facts out of Pyongyang is impossible.

So how are we to make sense of apparently inconsolable North Koreans?  
Brainwashing, terror-driven propaganda, or genuine - -feelings, expressed in a culture very different from ours?

One clue is how North Korean citizens behave when they do have a choice. If the state had perfected brainwashing, none of its people would ever attempt to leave. Yet leave they do.

Hundreds of thousands are thought to be living in China and Russia. Few defectors speak about their old lives. Those who do paint an Orwellian picture of prison camps, state surveillance and severe punishment.

The state controls their media, their activities, what they can and cannot say. Knowledge of the outside world is restricted and distorted. The government's spies make the citizens feel under constant threat.

Our brains are always changing, using new information to build models of reality. Control that -information, and you can change what a person thinks is real.

Control behaviour, and you take away the energy to rebel. North Korea has an entire state apparatus for systematic psychological abuse.

Keeping track of the difference between the state's view of reality and how things actually are must be exhausting.

Some North Koreans will be faking their public behaviour, for survival. That others react hysterically to their leader's death is unsurprising.

No technology is needed to force them into it. Just skilled techniques for exploiting the brain's inbuilt weaknesses.

