

3.4.2. Kim Jong-il

Quinones (2008, p.2) states: “Kim Jong-il’s legitimacy rests on the three legged stool of: inheritance of his father’s authority, his father’s view of reality, *Juche*, and oversight of the military, *Son’gun chongji*”. Kim Jong-il, the son and successor to Kim Il-sung, developed and tweaked the guidelines formulated by his late father. According to Juetten, (2008, p.5), “Following Kim Il-sung’s death in 1994, the transition of power in North Korea amounted to a ‘bloodless’ coup. Like his father, Kim Jong-il asserted that he would be the ultimate authority in articulating the state ideology”.

The introduction of Kim Jong-il in the 1970s saw the introduction of “*Songun*” politics, or “Military-first politics”, in the face of increased tension at the time in the Korean peninsula (Kim Jong-il biography, 2005, p.1)⁴. Despite Kim Il-sung’s espousal of isolation through *Juche*’s principles of self-reliance and sufficiency from the international community, his successor Kim Jong-il had taken this principle a step further by focusing on the military strength of the nation and increased fortification of the nation (Suh, 2002, p.146). The Worker’s Party of Korea (WPK) had been replaced by the military under Kim Jong-il’s regime (Suh, 2002, p.146). The replacing of the party with the military occurred in 1995 (Worden, 2008, p. xxxiii). This focus on the military according to Kim Jong-il would strengthen the states protection from imperialist forces and ensure the nation’s sovereignty, a key principle of *Juche*.

Suh (2002, p.146) reiterated that: “Kim Jong-il had strengthened the military and fortified the entire country so that no one can ever challenge the North Korean state and its people”. Unlike Kim Il-sung who used the WPK as the instrument to govern the people, Kim Jong-il opted for a far more militaristic outlook. Under Kim Jong-il, he made it the Korean People’s Army (KPA) directive to ensure the preservation of the state’s commander and the socialist system (Suh, 2002, p.146). The emphasis of “military-first” was integral for the DPRK at a time of increased scrutiny from the international community according to Suh (2002, p. 147),

“The George W. Bush administration of the United States was openly threatening North Korea, and Japanese militarists were once again conspiring to dispatch their troops abroad. South Koreans were still subservient to foreign powers, and the South Korean military considered the North as its chief adversary. Cho [High-ranking

⁴ The Kim Jong-il biography was published by the DPRK’s state run Foreign Languages Publishing House and acquired on the internet.

Despite the nuclear crises on the Korean peninsula during the mid-1990s, various concessions were made by each side, complying with the framework. The US agreed to finance a pair of thousand-megawatt light-water reactors in exchange for the dismantling of the DPRK's graphite-moderated reactors (Pollack, 2003, p.18). The accords were to be severely hampered by the Republican Party capture of the US Congress in the 1994 midterm elections. This capture delayed the production of the agreed graphite-moderated reactors, and the US was subsequently criticised by the DPRK for the lack of progress being made perceived to be at its financial expense (Pollack, 2003, p.20). During the latter part of the 1990s, the DPRK had continued to use their nuclear and missile programmes as leverage to enable the partial lifting of economic sanctions that had constrained the nation for decades and the reducing of pressures that had been deemed "threatening" by the DPRK (Pollack, 2003, p.22). A missile test during the month of August of 1998 was a clear illustration of the DPRK's bargaining strategy, "Shortly afterwards Pyongyang declared a unilateral moratorium, and for almost the next 8 years sought largely successfully to extract maximum benefits from the gesture" (Scobell & Sanford, 2007, p.121).

The testing of Kim Jong-il's regime's missile and nuclear weapons programme were used as strategic means to extract concessions from the US and other actors. It had allowed the nation to engage in actions of reciprocity and a deepening of engagement with the US that had not been possible in years prior (Smith, 2015, p.8). Tan and Govindasamy (2012, p.9) note that if actors showed respect towards the Kim regime's interests and honoured agreements, it would comply. "Conversely, it is notable that the DPRK has proven to be willing to engage in reciprocal interaction with Washington when it believes that its interests are taken into account by the USA". The moratorium that the DPRK unilaterally declared, was reciprocated by the US and ROK regimes with pragmatic concurrent policies of engagement (Tan & Govindasamy, 2012, p.9).

These actions not only saw the improvement of bilateral relations between the DPRK and the US, but the DPRK and the ROK as well. One of the DPRK's ultimate foreign policy objectives was to reunite both nations behind one flag. Despite the difficulties in finding common ground to achieving reunification during the 1990s, both nations had been able to negotiate under the ROK's president Kim Dae Jung's Sunshine policy landmark agreements. The Sunshine policy

