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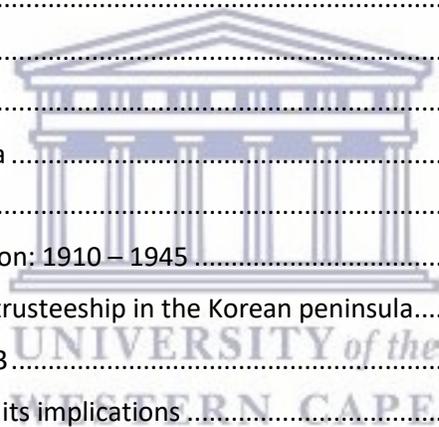
Political culture and nuclear proliferation: *Juche* and North Korea's foreign and nuclear policy.

A minithesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Magister Political Science, in the Department of Political Science, University of the Western Cape.

I declare that "Political culture and nuclear proliferation: *Juche* and North Korea's foreign and nuclear policy" is my own work, that it has not been submitted before any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

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Abstract

North Korea has against the numerous warnings of the international community, protocols and sanctions tested nuclear and missile devices. The purpose of this study is to explain how the political ideology of *Juche* informs North Korea's nuclear weapons programme. Using a qualitative analysis, this study analyzed the origin of *Juche* and its impact on North Korea's foreign and nuclear policies through the years. The social values underlying *Juche* were found to be the foundation of North Korea's nuclear and missile ambitions. *Juche* itself has evolved as a framework that informs North Korea's international relations and the study traces this evolution through the different Kim presidencies.



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DECLARATION

I declare that *Political culture and nuclear proliferation: Juche and North Korea's foreign and nuclear policy* is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Craig Darren Hendricks

May 2018

Signed:



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Abbreviations

CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CPV	Chinese People's Volunteers
DRPK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
ENR	Enrichment and Reprocessing
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IR	International Relations
KPA	Korean People's Army
KWP	Korean Worker's Party
LWR	Light Water Reactors
MTCR	Missile Technology Control Regime
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
P5	Permanent 5
PRC	People's Republic of China
ROK	Republic of Korea
UN	United Nations
UNC	United Nations Command
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNTCOK	United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea
US	United States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1. Problem Statement/Background

Against the numerous warnings given by the international community, including the United States, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) or North Korea¹ has tested nuclear and missile devices. These actions are seemingly disregarding various international protocols and policies to prevent states outside of the five Permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (P5) from acquiring nuclear weapons. North Korea has a peculiar political ideology, *Juche*, which guides its economic, political and social objectives. This thesis explores to which extent *Juche* may be informing North Korea's drive to acquire nuclear weapons and missiles.

According to Lee (2003, p.105) the political ideology of *Juche*, the holding fast of one's independence and rejection of dependence on others, evolved over hundreds of years of conflict and colonial occupation, of North Korea by external forces. Japan, perceived by North Korea as one of the external threats and main antagonists to their sovereignty, had annexed the Korean peninsula in 1910 and coerced the Korean population into serving the Japanese state during war times. The Korean people had been forced to assimilate into Japanese culture, against their will, with disregard of the Korean language, culture and history (Blomquist & Wertz, 2015, p.1). These coercive actions that befell the Korean state had created a resistance amongst the Korean people, led by Kim Il-sung in the 1930s (Blomquist & Wertz, 2015, p.1).

Following the Japanese defeat in World War 2 from the late 1930s to mid-1940s and the ending of its occupation, and after the Korean War of 1950-1953, the Korean state was divided by the Soviet Union (USSR) and the United States (US) into North and South through the Korean Armistice Agreement.

¹ The thesis will use the name North Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) interchangeably.

Having seen South Korea move towards a more western ideology at the end of the Korean War, the North Korean state believed that its values and traditions are threatened in an ever globalizing world. The *Juche* ideology fostered by the Kim dynasty is a belief that protecting North Korean values by any means necessary is paramount to North Korea's sovereignty and survival. With the creation of a nuclear and missile program, the Kim regime may believe it could provide the best way to deter imperialist influence, mainly from the hegemonic United States with whom it is technically still at war. Despite the North's quest for reunification with South Korea, the *Juche* narrative guiding the North has isolated them, but still North Korea has not veered from the ideology as a guideline to survive in a system dominated by their hegemonic "nemesis", the US.

1.2. Research Question, Aim and Objectives

The research question that the thesis aims to answer is: How does the political ideology of *Juche* inform North Korea's foreign policy, in particular their nuclear and missile weapons programme?

The objective given the research question is threefold. Firstly, the thesis will provide an historical overview of North Korea's politics to explain the origin and essence of *Juche* as political ideology and worldview of the North Korean leadership. Secondly, the thesis will outline North Korea's pursuit of nuclear weapons and missile delivery systems for these weapons against international non-proliferation rules and norms. Thirdly, the thesis aims to apply a constructivist theoretical framework to understand the impact of *Juche* on the issue of North Korea's nuclear weapons and missile programme.

1.3. Methodology

The study is qualitative and explanatory in nature and data collection was through a desktop study, which means the author did not conduct any interviews or field study. The qualitative research method allows the researcher to investigate and interpret various speeches, visual material and written sources of information. According to Terre Blanche *et al* (2006, p.47) "Qualitative researchers collect data in the form of written or spoken language, or in the form of

observations that are recorded in language, and analyse the data by identifying and categorising themes”.

The research conducted is also explanatory in nature. According to Terre Blanche *et al* (2006, p.45) explanatory studies aim to provide causal explanations of phenomena. Thus, the research has looked to explain the impact of the Democratic Republic of Korea’s (DPRK) *Juche* ideology on the proliferation of nuclear weapons to that state. It looked at how the ideology has changed the meaning of nuclear weapons to the DPRK over the years. Incorporated into this explanatory research will be the interpretative approach. This approach allows the researcher to identify a subject as the origin for a specific thought process that exist at a social level rather than just at an individual level (Terre Blanche *et al*, 2006, p.278). In this case, the research looked at the political ideology of *Juche*, why and how it came about, by studying the history of the state and the Kim dynasty, in particular, Kim Il-sung, the progenitor of the ideology.

The collection of data from primary sources in the form of foreign policy speeches, official documents about political ideologies and various audio visual pieces allows qualitative researchers to study issues in depth and in detail (Terre Blanche *et al*, 2006, p.47).

In this study propaganda material emanating from North Korea, especially a film titled “The Country I Saw”, which explores North Korea’s nuclear weapons and foreign policy, have been used. In particular, the film provides insight into the underlying motivation for North Korea’s actions in this area and has been analyzed in the context of the research question. Secondary sources will include various academic articles, books and reports by policy think tanks.

1.4. Conceptual and theoretical clarification

This section develops a conceptual and theoretical lens that is applied in the thesis to understand the role of North Korean political ideology in nuclear weapons proliferation.

In order to develop a conceptual and theoretical framework the section first addresses the role of social values in foreign policy in order to elaborate on the constructivist approach in International Relations. It then proceeds to clarify two concepts, namely *Juche* and the non-proliferation regime to lay the foundations for the discussion in subsequent chapters.

1.4.1. Social Values in foreign policy: A Constructivist approach

Realism is a mainstream theory in International Relations and is used by most scholars to interpret the DPRK's pursuit of nuclear weapons. A realist framing of foreign policy emphasizes the anarchic nature of the international system and argues that the absence of a world government forces states to secure their own survival through means such as nuclear weapons. In this sense, Realism does not prioritize looking towards state-level factors to explain foreign policy. However, Lerche Jr. and Said (1963, p.6) argues that national interest, which directs foreign policy, is informed by social values. In this sense the authors veer more towards a constructivist interpretation of foreign policy that prioritizes the worldview and values of a society when making foreign policy. This thesis follows Lerche Jr. and Said (1963, p.6) in arguing that the DPRK's foreign and nuclear policy can only be understood if social values and political ideology as a source of foreign policy is understood and therefore examines *Juche* in relation to these 'ideational' as opposed to 'material' sources of national interest. Temperley (2013) invokes Alexander Wendt to reiterate the ideational sources of national interest: "(1) that the structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces, and (2) that the identities and interests of purposive actors are determined by these shared ideas rather than given by nature".

According to Lerche Jr. and Said (1963, p.6) national interest is rooted in the "deepest soil" of social consciousness and cultural identity of a people. National interests, its value roots and synthesis are peculiar to a state's society and history (Lerche Jr. & Said, 1963, p.7). Lerche Jr. and Said (1963, p.7) note,

As the overriding purpose governing the state's relations with the outside world, it serves two purposes: it gives policy a general orientation toward the external environment, and, more importantly, it serves as the controlling criterion of choice in immediate situations. The dominant view of national interest, in other words, dictates the nature of a state's long-term effort in foreign policy and governs what it does in a short-term context.

Constructivism according to Flockhart (2012, p.80) is seen as an approach by many in the International Relations (IR) field, rather than a mainstream theory. It does not challenge the theoretical propositions of mainstream IR theories, such as Realism and Liberalism, but helps scholars to interpret various themes in international relations differently (Flockhart, 2012, 80).

Constructivism according to Keith S. Taber (2011, p.40) draws explanations of state behavior from how various societies perceive the world. These perceptions may vary dependent on the actor's experiences of events. In the current climate, actors may attribute the development of a nuclear and missile programme to a specific behavioural set, but has to understand what motivates that behavior by looking at actors' perceptions. An example provided by Taber (2011, p.41) holds that perception is recognizing the inherent meaning of what is experienced , such as how a chair has an inherent 'meaning' in the sense that it was created with a particular purpose in mind.

The constructivist theory can be applied to North Korea and the meaning it attributes to a nuclear and missile programme. Nuclear weapons are not only weapons that have the ability to ward off attacks as discussed in the realist camp, but they also are weapons of prestige and recognition (Hymans, 2006, p.456). Unlike a realist interpretation, the constructivist approach holds that nuclear weapons and the meaning attributed to them are constructed through interventions that are premised on insecurities (Weldes, 1999, p.92). Weldes (1999, p.92) asserts that insecurities are "reconstructed through discourse". She asserts that discourses provide society with the capabilities to reconstruct and represent a situation or the world in a certain way (Weldes, 1999, p.92). She notes: "Those capabilities give ways of naming and characterizing the subjects and objects of international relations, including states and collections of states such as the West". She continues: "They also provide ways of relating these subjects and objects, for example, in standardized narratives for how one state can threaten others through conquest, or how a community of states may collapse from internal divisions (Weldes, 1999, p.92)".

Thus, according to Weldes (1996, p.279) constructivism bases itself on the principle that actors relate to the world and other actors based on the meaning they have constructed for them within the state. Weldes (1996, p.280) continues:

"The meanings which objects, events and actions have for 'states' are necessarily the meanings they have for those individuals who act in the name of the state. And these state officials do not approach international politics with a blank slate on to which meanings are written only as a result of interactions among states. Instead they approach international politics with an already quite comprehensive and elaborate appreciation of the world, of the international system and of the place of their state within it".

To understand how social values have informed North Korea's foreign, nuclear and missile policies, the thesis will briefly relate the constructivist approach to the nation's political ideology of *Juche*.

1.4.2. *Juche*

Taking Weldes' idea that states are not clean slates when they engage in foreign relations to heart, this section provides a preliminary sense of *Juche* as political ideology in the DPRK. It grounds the argument of the thesis in the constructivist notion that social values inform a state's leadership's worldview and therefore contribute to understanding why the DPRK has chosen the nuclear path.

The DPRK's foreign policy aims are dominated and guided by its founding father's ideology, *Juche*. Kim Jong-il (1983, p.5)² states that the *Juche* ideology was the culmination of Korean experiences of colonialism, occupation of outside entities and the Korean revolution. It was the experiences of the working class, exploited during the Japanese occupation that had prompted a guide to ensure the prosperity of the Korean people, the DPRK's in particular (Kim, 1983, p.5). Kim Il-sung had identified the exploitative nature of imperialism globally and the ongoing battles for liberation, stating: "The masses of the people whose sovereign rights had been trampled upon by the imperialists and colonialists for a long time rose in a struggle for class and national liberation (Kim, 1983, p.6)".

As discussed, the *Juche* idea was the evolution of the peculiarities and complex nature of the nation's historical development (Kim, p.6). The idea was built on Kim Il-sung's belief in Korean traditional values in an ever globalizing international community where hegemonic powers were emerging and a notion of Korean self-determination had to emerge to protect the nation's sovereignty. The nature of Korean history and its forced subservience to Japan during occupation had created a notion of "flunkeyism", the worshipping of others blindly. The idea of *Juche* was to reject this notion of "flunkeyism" and the capitalist and hegemonic structures emerging in society. North Korea's bygone subservience to Japanese imperialism and the

² The book "Exposition of the Juche Idea" was published by the DPRK's Foreign Languages Publishing House. Kim Jong-il's contribution to the book would have been his knowledge of the Juche idea that had been passed on by his father, Kim Il-sung.

revolution was the basis of the idea, created by and for Koreans, the DPRK's in particular (Kim, 1983, p.7).

Since the split of the Korean state in 1945, the DPRK has constantly reiterated that US imperialism has brought much plight to the peninsula. To deter imperialism, which the DPRK leadership believes is a constant cause of war, various military means to combat imperialism and maintain independence needed to be established (Kim, 1983, p.120). It does not discount and discourage aid from "fraternal" countries, but reiterates that a country should be first and foremost self-reliant. *Juche* will be elaborated upon in chapter 3 and its impact on the DPRK's foreign and nuclear policy will be analyzed in chapter 4.

1.4.3. The nuclear non-proliferation regime

To understand why North Korea's foreign policy and especially its nuclear policy is controversial, this section will explain the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons regime that governs the international nuclear order.

The theory of non-proliferation is based on the prevention of the spread of weapons, in this particular case, nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons are the fissile materials developed that are eventually weaponized by integrating them onto delivery systems that are propelled towards a specific location or target (Bin, 1997, p.8). According to Lettow (2010, p.6) the origin of non-proliferation arose due to a growing awareness during the 1950s and 1960s of the inherent dangers nuclear weapons pose to international security. Nuclear weapons, as the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings graphically illustrated, are massively destructive and have dire environmental effects. An international nuclear non-proliferation regime comprising of the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and various other initiatives have been established to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons (Lettow, 2010, p. 6). The NPT is the corner stone of the non-proliferation regime (Lettow, 2010, p.6). The NPT was a follow up from the failed Baruch Plan that sought to outlaw nuclear weapons and internationalize the use of nuclear energy (US Department of State, 2010, p.3). By 1 July 1968, an initial 43 countries, including three of the five nuclear-weapon states namely the USSR, the United Kingdom and the US, had signed the Treaty that subsequently entered into force in 1970 (US Department of State, 2010, p.4).

The NPT rests on three pillars: non-proliferation, peaceful use of nuclear energy, and disarmament (US Department of State, 2010, p.4). The first pillar stipulates that nuclear-weapon states that had tested nuclear weapons by 1967, may not transfer nuclear weapons or devices, assist or encourage non-nuclear weapon states in the production or acquisition of nuclear weapons (US Department of State, 2010, p.4). The second pillar, disarmament, asserts the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and acknowledges that all parties are able to cooperate and benefit from the development of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes (US Department of State, 2010, p.5). The third pillar stipulates that all parties, including the five nuclear-weapon states must pursue effective negotiations on measures that would see the cessation of nuclear-weapons production to complete disarmament (US Department of State, 2010, p.5). Alongside the NPT and the IAEA, an informal (and voluntary) association exists, namely the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) (Missile Technology Control Regime, 2017, p.ii). The association was formed in 1987 in response to the ever increasing issue of nuclear and chemical weapon proliferation among non-nuclear weapons states and terrorist groups that threaten global peace and security (Missile Technology Control Regime, 2017, p.ii). The MTCR looks to control the transfer and performance of a delivery system's (missiles) payload and range that may exceed the required parameters (Missile Technology Control Regime, 2017, p. ii).

Although the DPRK acceded to the NPT in 1985, it withdrew from this treaty in 2003 and subsequently developed nuclear weapons and missile systems to deliver these weapons. This was despite the disapproval of the international community. So far international policy responses aimed to halt North Korea's nuclear plans have had little impact. This thesis argues that understanding the role of *Juche* in framing North Korea's foreign and nuclear policies may improve policy responses to this issue.

1.5. Significance of Study

Given the current tension and uncertainty about the DPRK's nuclear intentions, the study contributes to knowledge of the DPRK's motives. For decades the international community, especially western nations, has struggled with the issue of nuclear proliferation in the Korean peninsula. The study provides a lens for a better understanding of the DPRK's motives of nuclear proliferation.

1.6. Structure

The proposed structure of the mini-thesis is as follows:

Chapter 1 – Introduction

This chapter has presented the problem statement and background of the dissertation. It also presented the research question, aim and objectives. The methodology and theoretical and conceptual framework was outlined as foundational to the argument developed in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 2 – History of North Korea

This chapter will provide an overview of North Korea's political history. It will explore the Japanese colonial era and the postcolonial era, namely the Soviet Union and US division of the Korean peninsula. As such the chapter aims to provide the historical context for the development of *Juche*.

Chapter 3 - *Juche*: Origins, Assumptions and Evolution

This chapter will provide an overview of the political ideology of *Juche*. It will explore its origins, principles, evolution and application during successive North Korean presidencies.

Chapter 4 - *Juche* and North Korea's nuclear weapons

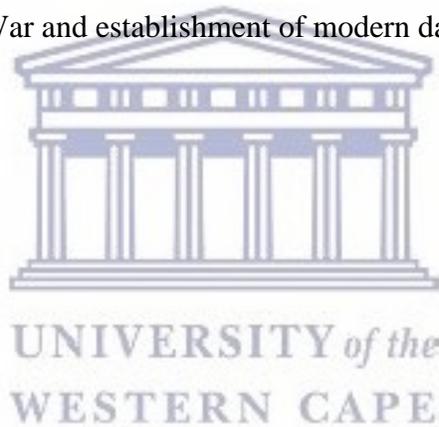
This chapter starts by describing the chronological development of the DPRK's nuclear weapons programme and the international community's engagement around this issue with the DPRK. The chapter then turns to the DPRK's motivation for the acquisition of nuclear weapons and specifically the role *Juche* has played in informing its nuclear weapons pursuit.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion

The final chapter will summarise the argument and present final conclusions.

1.7 Conclusion

Despite the efforts of the international community through the UNSC and individual states, North Korea acquired nuclear weapons. As such, North Korea can indeed be labeled a non-proliferation failure. To understand the nature of this ‘failure’, this thesis looks at North Korea’s political ideology of *Juche*, initiated by the founding father of that state, Kim Il-sung and invoked by his son, Kim Jong-il and grandson, Kim Jong-un, subsequent presidents. Moreover, the thesis argues that political ideology plays a fundamental role in how the external world and a state’s engagement with that world are constructed. Through this constructivist lens, the argument that will unfold in the thesis starts with a look at the political history of the DPRK to derive the context that leads to the exposition and intelligibility of *Juche*. It will provide an overview of the nation’s history from Japanese colonial occupation of the Korean peninsula to post-colonial Korea, the Cold War and establishment of modern day DPRK.



Chapter 2 – History of North Korea

2.1. Introduction

To understand the context in which *Juche* was formed and the context of North Korea's foreign and nuclear policy, it is imperative to understand the state's history. This chapter will be a descriptive chronology of the history of the Korean peninsula. It will depict the various events that played key roles in the split of Korea and the establishment of modern day DPRK.

2.2. Japanese Colonial Occupation: 1910 – 1945

The components of North Korea's political ideology of *Juche* can be traced back to the last Japanese invasion of the Korean peninsula and subsequent colonial occupation in the early 1900s (Stueck & Yi, 2010, p.180). The colonial experience for Koreans was a bleak and bitter one, and one that would be fundamental to the construction of what we know as the modern day North Korea. According to Hundt & Bleiker (2010, p.66) Japanese colonization for Koreans had been humiliating, not necessarily for the exploitation of resources, but more specifically for Korean culture and tradition. Under Japanese occupation, there had been a coercive substitution of everything Korean, tradition, culture, language amongst other things for everything Japanese. Like all victims of colonialism, Korean society had seen Japanese occupation as humiliating and illegitimate. This humiliation was intensified for a nation that had once had immense national pride in its culture and traditions and had now been subjugated and its dignity stripped, by a people whom they had historically deemed as "inferior" (Worden, 2008, p.30).

Once the Japanese protectorate over Korea had been established in 1905 followed by its complete annexation in 1910, various institutions and higher-class jobs in colonial Korea had become reserved for the Japanese (Myers, 2010, p.15). Koreans had now been classed as second-class citizens, a result of the legalized system of racial discrimination, enforced by the Japanese colonial central judicial bodies (Worden, 2008, p.31). Their Japanese overlords had recreated Korea in their image, with very little room if any, for ethnic Koreans to thrive, be it culturally or economically as they attempted to co-opt them into the Japanese culture of the "mainland" (Myers, 2010, p.16). Towards the latter part of the 1910s, one of the initial Korean

anti-Japanese colonial occupation movements occurred in mainland Japan (Worden, 2008, p.33). This movement, a fateful protest of about 33 intellectuals on the 1st of March 1919, a follow up of other anti-imperial protests across the globe, notified the Japanese colonial administration of the Korean desire for self-determination (Miller, 2015, p.2). According to Miller (2015, p.2) the Koreans were hoping to draw international to the situation in the Korean peninsula. According to Hundt & Bleiker (2010, p.66), the movement which premised itself on the demand for Korean self-determination, had been forcefully crushed by the Japanese administration. Their initial goal of independence had been destroyed, but in turn created a “watershed” that would eventually inspire future movements opposing imperialism.

The Korean protests of 1919 had created a ripple effect across the nation, spawning “radical” forms of anti-colonial resistance groups and mass movements nationwide (Worden, 2008, p.33). The continued repression of Korean self-determination had eventually given rise to Korea’s most important guerrilla fighter and eventual North Korean founding father and most influential leader, Kim Il-sung (Worden, 2008, p.34). According to Worden (2008, p.34), resistance to the Japanese under the guidance of Kim Il-sung became a legitimating ideology of the future North Korean state. World War II was another catalyst that would prove influential in the future division of Korea. The Japanese had experienced labour shortages in many sectors back in the homeland as a result of its war against China in 1937 and the US in 1941, and thus left colonial administrative spaces vacant for Koreans to occupy (Worden, 2008, p.34). This had left a massive incision and division amongst Korean dignity as many Koreans were now frowned upon and criticised by their own people for “collaborating” with the enemy (Worden, 2008, p.34). This incision would eventually play out after the “three great Allies” China, the US and Britain decided at the First Cairo Conference in 1943 to cease pacific territories controlled by the Japanese during the First World War and territories taken through violence (Bevans, 1968, p.858).

But, the ripple effects of Japanese colonization would continue to have dire consequences for Korean society in the long term (Jeon, 2011, p.50). The effects of Japanese divide and rule tactics in Korea had restructured the class statuses of Korean society and as a result Koreans had suffered material and status grievances during the decade long Japanese colonial occupation (Miller, 2015, p.3).

2.3. Post-colonial tensions and trusteeship in the Korean peninsula

Despite the abrupt termination of Japanese colonial occupation of the Korean peninsula, external interest in Korea had seemingly not subsided. During the early 1940s US President Franklin Roosevelt had been keen to place the vulnerable Korean peninsula under international trusteeship. The Tehran Conference in 1943 involving the British, the US and USSR had decided that it would be best for Korea to be placed under international trusteeship until it became fully independent from its Japanese colonists (Weatherby, 1993, p.11).

Shortly after the end of the Second World War, the US and the USSR had brought their geopolitical tensions to the Korean peninsula (Henneka, 2006, p.22). Communists and nationalists had gained control of the Northern and Southern parts of Korea respectively with both wanting the entire region under their respective authorities (Jervis, 1980, p.564). Towards the latter part of 1945 Soviet US tensions began to simmer. The US had deployed commanders such as General John Hodge, who oversaw the now American occupied South (Roehner, 2010, p.48). General John Hodge, a staunch anti-communist, had initially relied on the Japanese police and administrators to maintain the order in South Korea, whilst the North had seen a gradual development toward communism, supported by Stalin's USSR (Malkasian, 2011, p.12). The latter believed that creating a buffer between the US's interests in the Pacific would be enough to cool tensions over their presence in East Asia. A consequential US delegation had been dispatched from the capital to investigate rising tensions to its occupation in Southern Korea (Worden, 2008, p.39). Towards the latter part of 1945, the USSR and the US had, without the involvement of either the people of northern and southern Korea, formulated an agreement on the nation's future and divided the nation along a boundary labelled the 38th Parallel (Stueck & Yi, 2010, p.184).

The agreement allowed the USSR and the US to form provisional governments in northern and southern Korea (Park, 2009, p.81). Southern Korean resentment towards such an agreement had been forthcoming, as the Korean people now had their futures in the hands of those who knew very little of their history and traditions (Hundt & Bleiker, 2007, p.66). US authority in South Korea had created tensions amongst the powers involved, North Korea included (Goldstein, 2002, p.59). In the wake of Japanese withdrawal, there had been a growing belief within Korean

society that it was an opportune time for the nation to resolve longstanding issues that had crippled their nation. Koreans had wished to resolve the legacies of their colonial experience and recreate its displaced Korean cultural identity, but the US had moved against its traditional policy of non-involvement in the Korean peninsula by deploying 25 000 troops in the South after acknowledging a growing USSR presence (Worden, 2008, p. 38). The USSR had moved from the northern Korea border to the 38th parallel and agreed a trusteeship of the Korean state and in the same vein attempted to discuss their differences with the US (Worden, 2008, p.38).

Resultant clashes and the rapidly rising tensions between the respective Korean nations had begun to form ideological and economic differences between the Northern and Southern parts of Korea by the beginning of 1946. According to Worden (2008, p.40) during 1946, radical land reforms began to ensue, dispossessing landlords without compensation, followed by the establishment of the dominant Korean Worker's Party (KWP) in the latter part of the year. An economic programme based over two-years had been designed to follow the USSR model of central planning alongside the prioritizing of heavy industry (Worden, 2008, p.40). Only a year since liberation from Japan, the newly formed North Korean state with economic models in place, had seen considerable economic growth alongside a powerful political party led by Kim Il-sung (Worden, 2008, p.40).

September 1945 had seen the establishment of the interim "People's Republic" by southern Korean resistance leaders. The establishment had been in resistance to the current post-colonial occupation and violent attacks on former Japanese Korean collaborators had led the US to suspect that the USSR had a radical plan for the East Asian state (Stueck & Yi, 2010, p.284). Mass protests ensued, which had last been seen during Japanese occupation. These protests emerged in the face of interference in Korean affairs and disregard for unresolved historical Korean issues (Worden, 2008, p.39). Historical issues plaguing Korean society looked to have found a stepping stone towards healing in 1947 with the United Nations (UN) finally recognizing the nation's right to independence (Stueck & Yi, 2010, p.200).

By 1947 Washington had acknowledged that the Cold War had officially reached the Korean peninsula (Goldstein, 2002, p.59). The ideological war between the two superpowers had resulted in the termination of any attempt at negotiation toward multilateral administration in the region (Worden, 2008, p.39). The Korean peninsula had become an ideological battleground

for the USSR and the US. According to Kim (2012, p.8), the USSR believed that exporting their communist ideology across the globe, would ensure their security from the west and its ideologies. Along with the Chinese, the USSR believed that by implanting communism into Korean political DNA, they might be able to ward off American interest and aggression in the region. In the words of Malkasian (2011, p.7): “The Soviet Union and the PRC believed that a Communist Korea provided insurance against American aggression; hence the Soviet Union’s backing of the North Korean invasion and China’s later intervention in the war”.

A failed US attempt at multilateral negotiations with the USSR to establish administrative control in soon to be North Korea in 1947, had prompted US President, Harry S. Truman to formulate and instate the Truman Doctrine, the very same year (Goldstein, 2002, p.59). The Truman Doctrine, a policy of containment, enabled the US to officially intervene in the Korean peninsula’s political affairs and possibly prevent USSR expansionism in the region, particularly towards the South. The US had successfully requested backing from the UN for its policy in Korea, which had essentially resulted in the creation of the modern day Republic of Korea (ROK) or South Korea (Stueck & Yi, 2010, p.178). Following the founding of the ROK, the Sino-USSR backed North Korea had attempted to seize the newly formed state. This in turn had prompted a US backlash. Malkasian (2011, p.7) notes: “The USA reacted to the North Korean invasion as a threat to its influence in east Asia. More broadly, American leaders believed that if the invasion were not confronted, the Soviets would be encouraged to engage in military expansionism elsewhere in the world”.

As a result, a UN commission was established, the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK) to supervise the upcoming elections on the 10th of May 1948. The election overseen by UNTCOK produced a series of events that would lead the nation down a slippery slope and the rising of tensions between two superpowers. The USSR had not entertained UNTCOK’s national government elections for the nation which in turn prompted the US and the UN to authorize that the elections held in the southern part of Korea, to include the north. As a result of the USSR occupied northern part of Korea not participating in the elections, the rightist majority within the National Assembly had elected Rhee Syngman as its first president in a new democratic Korea (Croissant & Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2002, p.234).

The official establishment of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in the north occurred on 9 September 1948 less than a month after the establishment of the ROK in the south on 15 August. Both states' political leaders at the time felt that the other was not representative of the Korean people. These disagreements led to some of the initial skirmishes and raids between the two states that would later be known as the Korean War. The DPRK and ROK considered themselves the legitimate rulers of the Korean peninsula. As a result, violent skirmishes had broken out on the DPRK ROK border, a ploy by the Kim regime to internally subvert and attain control of the ROK since the Second World War (Stueck & Yi, 2010, p.203). These skirmishes orchestrated by the DPRK had resulted in the deaths of nearly 30000 civilians, south of the border at the beginning of 1949 and prompted the Rhee government to develop efficient counterinsurgency forces to repel the DPRK's insurgents (Malkasian, 2011, p.13).

2.4. The Korean War: 1950-1953

The Korean War was a conflict for political control of the Korean peninsula, geopolitical control in East Asia and the world, as Malkasian states, a period of "manoeuvre and attrition" (Malkasian, 2011, p.7). The Korean War according to Malkasian (2011, p.8) was a "significant turning point in the Cold War". The impact of the conflict in the Korean peninsula affected the international system and the balance of power between the US and the USSR (Weatherby, 1993, p.6). The war in the peninsula had a deep ideological tone. The US and its allies believed that massive rearmament was integral to ensure their interests, whilst the arms race in particular was not to be thwarted by Communist aggression (Malkasian, 2011, p.8). The Korean War was what Malkasian terms as the first example of a "limited war". All sides that were involved during the conflict, recognized that an escalation in war efforts, with the "nuclear arms race" underway, could have devastating consequences for millions of people (Malkasian, 2011, p.8).

In early 1949, tensions had heightened immensely between the USSR influenced DPRK and the US influenced ROK. These tensions prompted the heavy militarization of the DPRK and ROK respectively, leading to various border conflicts along the 38th parallel (Stueck & Yi, 2010, p.203). North Korea and the USSR had agreed to an arms pact in March 1949 with the USSR expansion of Korean armed forces. Despite the USSR providing Kim Il-sung with armed forces, the latter wanted an unwilling Stalin to aide his invasion of Rhee's ROK (Malkasian, 2011,

p.15). The USSR had eventually contemplated the merits of assisting the DPRK military wise and realized that it might have been an opportune time to do so. Stalin did so for four reasons, namely; the Chinese Communists came out victorious in the Chinese Civil War and increased the strength of the Communist bloc in east Asia. The second reason was the USSR's success in detonating its first atomic bomb which would prove vital in its war with the USA. The third reason was the worsening of relations with the West and the establishment of NATO, and finally the perceived weakening of Washington's resolve to fight a war over Korea (Malkasian, 2011, p.15).

With the USSR growing in belief that the US would reduce its presence in the peninsula, Truman's US administration believed that its presence in Korea was imperative to halt USSR expansionism in the region, and globally (Stueck, 1991, p.4). The US had feared that the rapid growth of the USSR and its ideology could lead to a potential nuclear weapons attack and thus threaten global security. Various suspicions from both sides of the 38th parallel had been further perpetuated by the ROK head of state, Rhee Syngman's desire to reunite Korea through whichever means necessary. These tensions were a result of Rhee Syngman's "north expeditions" to reclaim Korean land in the north that was lost after the Japanese occupation and the proceeding USSR and US intervention in the peninsula (Worden, 2008, p.43). Bleiker and Hoang (2006, p.6) states that the opening of conventional warfare between the two Korean states officially begun on the 25th of June 1950.

Amidst all the ideological warfare between the USSR and the US, the Korean War had now officially started and had implicated families on either side of a newly formed border on the 38th parallel. With the US adamant to force the USSR out of a peninsula which held a lot at stake for both sides, the DPRK under Kim Il-sung had initiated its strategy to reclaim and unify Korea by force. In order to repel the DPRK invasion of the ROK, the US went to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to urge member states in assisting pushing out of Northern forces back towards the 38th parallel (Malkasian, 2011, p.16). With assistance of fifteen states, Britain, New Zealand and Canada amongst others, the Korean War and Cold Wars had officially become intertwined (Stueck & Yi, 2010, p.206). As Malkasian (2011, p.17) asserts: "The Korean War had now begun as the first open war between the USA and a proxy of the Soviet Union. For the two Koreas, their political identity and the very survival of their peoples were at

stake. But for the superpowers, the US and the Soviet Union, their influence within East Asia was the concern. The Korean peninsula had become a regional battleground for ideological domination.”

According to Worden (2008, p.44), had the ROK not been backed by the US and its allies during wartime, the Rhee regime would have been easily defeated by the DPRK and its Sino-USSR backing. Fortunately for the Rhee regime, this was not to be the case, as the US had supported the ROK during the war and moved from a policy of containment to a “rollback” policy (Worden, 2008, p.44). This policy gave the US, with control of UN forces, a chance to displace the communist regime that had taken hold in the DPRK and replace it under Rhee Syngman’s rule. Unfortunately for the US and the ROK, the charge into the DPRK eventually resulted in a stalemate, a result of Chinese backing of the DPRK in pushing the United Nations Command (UNC) back into the ROK territory (Worden, 2008, p.44). The stalemate had ironically rolled back the “rollback” policy to that of containment and entrenched a new reality of two separate Korean entities (Worden, 2008, p.45). Malkasian (2011, p.7) reiterates the stalemate that would prove decisive in the eventual reality of two separate Korean nations, “The remainder of the war, from 1951 to 1953, was marked by indecisive attrition. The UNC’s (United Nations Command) object was to hold the Communists on the battlefield while seeking a resolution of the conflict from spiralling into a Third World War, the USA abandoned its goal of attaining a total victory and decided to fight a limited war in December 1950”.

The following year, on the 10th of July 1951, the initiation of military cease-fire negotiations had officially begun and the creation of the Kansas-Wyoming cease-fire line was instated (Schnabel & Watson, 1998, p.252). By 1953, North Korea had begun feeling the economic burden after three prolonged years of modern warfare, also a result of their poorly industrialized economic systems (Malkasian, 2011, p.73). The nation had now found itself in tatters; famine had begun to take effect, many civilian lives had been lost due to air raids and its industrial facilities, decimated. This led to South Korea’s Rhee declining an Armistice Agreement as he believed that the nation and its allies could have displaced the DPRK by force and reunite a once united nation. Malkasian (2011, p.86) notes, “Rhee vociferously opposed the armistice. He wanted Korea unified and all Chinese forces withdrawn from Korea. Koreans filled the streets of Seoul and other cities throughout South Korea to demonstrate against the armistice”.

2.5. End of the Korean War and its implications

The DPRK's industrial facilities were all but destroyed due to UNC air strikes, leaving the north unable to provide nourishment for its citizens and army. An impasse had been reached by June 1951 and an armistice concluded by 27 July 1953 (Mitter, 2004, p.19). The continuing bloodshed on the peninsula had prompted the respective leaders of the UNC, military leaders of the DPRK and China to sign an armistice on 27 July, 1953 (Schnabel & Watson, 1998, p.261). The armistice sought to cease hostilities in the peninsula by initiating a political conference until an agreement could be reached between the warring sides (United States Forces Korea, 1953).

By the end of the Korean War, Korean society, both in the northern and southern parts of the peninsula, had experienced tremendous losses. Millions of lives had been lost at the cost of ideological warfare and their industrial base had been destroyed. The unofficial end of the war came as the Chinese and DPRK found it impossible to support their armies due to a massive strain on their poorly industrialized economies and the death of Joseph Stalin, who had previously refused to end the war (Malkasian, 2011 p.73). The war had been the physical depiction of the West and the USSR's paranoia, with their respective proxies feeling the brunt of the war. By the end of the war the ROK had secured a mutual defense treaty, economic aid and constant US military presence with the stationing of its Eighth Army there (Malkasian, 2011, p. 88).

Following the culmination of the Cold and Korean Wars, Worden (2008, p. xxxii) stated that the DPRK had for a time, experienced an economic boom, something the ROK had not yet managed to achieve. This was not to be long-lived as the DPRK had begun experiencing downturns in these booms during the 1960s. (Worden, 2008, p. xxxii). At this point, Kim Il-sung felt that his political authority had been undermined by various individuals within the DPRK's political sphere. Kim Il-sung had begun to construct a personality cult to propel him upward politically. Kim Il-sung's introduction of the *Juche* ideology in 1955 and its principle of self-reliance had begun to hinder the nation's desire to modernize and compete with nations on the open market. The DPRK had become as Malkasian (2011, p.88) states, "intensely Communist". The Korean War had also been instrumental in forcing Western powers to bolster

their militaries' offensive and defensive technologies for international security and to deter Communist expansionism.

Nuclear threats made by Dwight Eisenhower during the Korean War also showcased a development towards a “deterrence” strategy (Malkasian, 2011, p.88). Total warfare, the tactic of decisively annihilating one's enemy forces during the Korean War nearly became obsolete for three reasons (Malkasian, 2011, p.10). Firstly, the destructiveness of atomic weapons illustrated the carnage that conventional means of war could not possibly produce. A losing side in its last ditch attempt could use atomic weapons to obliterate the enemy forces on the battlefield or even on the enemy's homeland. Secondly, conventional warfare had shown itself to be an exhausting affair (Malkasian, 2011, p.1). The various players in the First and Second World Wars, such as the USSR, Japanese, Chinese and Europeans, were prime examples of the economic and physical drain on resources that had left them far weaker by the time of the Cold War (Malkasian, 2011, p.1). Thirdly, peripheral conflicts had the possibility to escalate into full scale wars.

Not long after, the DPRK's allies and former ideological partners, the Chinese and the USSR, had begun to disagree with one another. The effects of war had worn the Sino-USSR relationship thin, leaving the DPRK to determine its own form of communism,

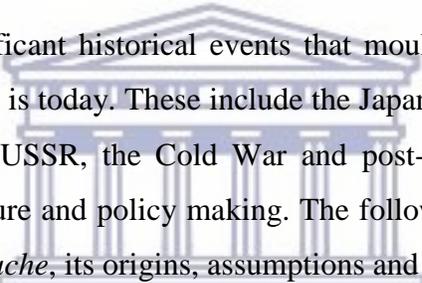
“The Korean War also had implications for China's relationship with the Soviet Union. In the short term, fighting the USA reinforced the Sino-Soviet Alliance. The level of military and economic assistance provided during the war continued after 1953, with a tremendous amount of technology being transferred to the PRC. However, the war also caused the beginning of cracks in the alliance. The Chinese had fought the war largely on their own and were disappointed by the limited military involvement of the Soviet Union. The Soviet demand that China pay for all of the military equipment provided was particularly galling. More fundamentally, by the late 1950s, Mao found deep Soviet involvement in Chinese economic development and military affairs to be curtailing the PRC's independence. By the mid-1960s, these cracks would widen and the Sino-Soviet Alliance would break apart (Malkasian, 2011, p.91)”.

The Sino-USSR fallout would have vast implications for the future of the DPRK. The fallout was to be a catalyst in the trajectory of the DPRK's politics, ideology and the Kim Il-sung dynasty for more than half a century. The DPRK could also no longer rely on its regional allies, China and the USSR, as it once did. The DPRK's hopes of having the Korean peninsula unified under one banner had been crushed. According to Person (2017), the Chinese People's

Volunteers (CPV) who had taken control of all field operations in the Korean peninsula during the Korean War had vetoed its continued offensive against the US and the ROK, going against the DPRK's wishes. Further interactions between the DPRK and the Chinese had only put further strain on an already fragile relationship. Incidents, such as the Chinese criticism of hereditary succession in the DPRK and their later abandonment of their revolution for a place in the modern international system, were seen as the ultimate act of betrayal (Person, 2017). These incidents were to be instrumental in the formulation and idea of Kim Il-sung's *Juche* ideology and policy making. This experience also explains how *Juche* frames nuclear acquisition, because the DPRK cannot trust a Russian or Chinese nuclear umbrella as the ROK and Japan can trust US extended deterrence.

2.6. Conclusion

This chapter explored the significant historical events that moulded the Korean peninsula, in particular the DPRK into what it is today. These include the Japanese colonial occupation to the occupation of the US and the USSR, the Cold War and post-Cold War tensions that have factored into North Korean culture and policy making. The following chapter will look at Kim Il-sung's practical ideology of *Juche*, its origins, assumptions and evolution over the years.



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Chapter 3 – *Juche*: Origins and Evolution

3.1. Introduction

To better understand the DPRK's nuclear and foreign policy making, it is imperative to gain an understanding of the origins and evolution of the nation's founding father Kim Il-sung's ideology of self-reliance, *Juche*, in the present day DPRK. The section will explore the origins of the ideology, the principles that guide the DPRK's society and its evolution through subsequent presidencies.

3.2. The Origins of *Juche*

The creation of the *Juche* ideology was the culmination of the Korean colonial experience, the occupation by outside entities and the Korean revolution. The colonial experience on the Korean peninsula provided fertile ground for the composition of the *Juche* ideology. Juetten (2008, p.18) notes that the experiences of the Korean War and anti-imperialist perception notably toward the US has amplified the principles stipulated in the *Juche* ideology and laid the foundation for an “eternal truth” for North Korean society. The term *Juche* is traceable to ancient Korea and Neo-Confucian virtues of loyalty, order and the power of mind and heart (Juetten, 2008, p.3). *Juche* was founded upon the experiences of Korean society; exploited during the Japanese occupation which had prompted for a political philosophy to ensure the prosperity of the Korean people, North Koreans' in particular (Kim, 1983, p.5). The ideology has its roots in Marxism-Leninism, but with Kim Il-sung's influence a version tailor made for the North Korean experience (Lerner, 2010, p.48). Marxism-Leninism prescribed that a communist party's task is to infuse the masses with a revolutionary consciousness (Myers, 2010, p.22).

Kim Il-sung had identified the exploitative nature of imperialism globally and the ongoing battles for liberation, “The masses of the people whose sovereign rights had been trampled upon by the imperialists and colonialists for a long time rose in a struggle for class and national liberation (Kim, 1983, p.6)”. According to Lee (2003, p. 105) the political ideology had become the “official autarkic state ideology” in 1972.

As mentioned, the *Juche* idea was a result of the culmination of the peculiarities and complex nature of the nation's historical development (Kim, 1983, p.6). The idea was created that the nation had to survive in an ever globalizing system where hegemonic powers were emerging and a notion of self-determination had to emerge to protect the nation's sovereignty. The collapse of their ideological and economic Sino and USSR allies at the end of the Korean and Cold Wars proved to be a catalyst in the promotion of its core principle of self-reliance. Worden (2008, p. 206) reiterates this, "These developments emphasized self-reliance -the need to rely on domestic resources, heighten vigilance against possible external challenges, and strengthen domestic political solidarity. Sacrifice, austerity, unity, and patriotism became dominant themes in the party's efforts to instil in the people the importance of *chuch'e* and collective discipline".

The history of forced subservience to Japan during occupation had created a notion of "flunkeyism", the subservience to a seemingly superior power. The idea of *Juche* was to reject this notion of "flunkeyism" and the subordinate nature of the capitalistic, exploitative and hegemonic structures emerging in society caused by the West. The problems that were raised during the Korean revolution were to be solved in an "original" way, and North Koreans bore these responsibilities in their own situations (Kim Il-sung, 2011, p.18).

Lee (2003, p.105) reiterates this independence of "one's own" revolution based on the *Juche* idea, that

"Establishing *juche*, in a nutshell, being the master of revolution and reconstruction of one's own country. This means holding fast to an independent position, rejecting dependence on others, using one's own brains, believing in one's own strength, displaying the revolutionary spirit of self-reliance, and thus solving one's own problems for oneself on one's own responsibility under all circumstances".

According to Lee (2003, p.107) there are three main schools of thought that have been adopted regarding the genesis of the *Juche* idea, the following section will investigate these origins.

3.3. Schools of thought

There are various theories as to how and why the *Juche* philosophy was established. The following section will look at the three main schools of thought behind its creation. Lee (2003, p.107) discusses three schools of thought, namely the instrumental perspective, the influence of traditional Korean politics and lastly that *Juche* was the original political thought of Kim Il-

sung's life experiences (Lee, 2003, p.107). The first school of thought, the instrumental perspective, focuses on domestic and international issues that gave rise and consolidated Kim Il-sung's *Juche* ideology. Domestically, *Juche* was established as a means to consolidate his political position in the newly established DPRK, alongside the creation of a personal cult following through the philosophy of national solidarity (Lee, 2003, p.108).

The Sino-Soviet conflict was an important era in the formulation of *Juche*. Kim Il-sung drew his inspiration for *Juche* from the Sino-Soviet ideologies of *Maoism* and *Stalinism*, the latter which drew upon Marxist-Leninist influences (Seong-Chang, 2000, p.133). Seong-Chang (2000, p.136) states that during the Sino-Soviet conflict, Kim Il-sung pursued a line independent of *Maoism*. By 1955, Kim Il-sung had seemingly forgone Sino-Soviet influences altogether by introducing *Juche*. But this was false, as Kim Il-sung had drawn upon the influences to formulate *Juche*, such as the cult of personality. Through the implementation of the *Juche* philosophy, Kim Il-sung was able to forbid the teaching of any other ideology and further consolidating him with "absolute political power" (Lee, 2003, p.108).

During the Cold War period, *Juche* was used as a foreign policy tool to limit the Sino-USSR influence in the DPRK (Lee, 2003, p.108). Initially, the DPRK had natural relations with the USSR, acknowledging the economic and military aid they had provided during the Korean War (Lee, 2003, p.108). But, as a result of the seemingly gradual coexistence with the Western imperialists on the peninsula, the US, Kim Il-sung had become increasingly wary of foreign intervention and the intentions of these nations. This later led to the DPRK using certain principles of the *Juche* ideology, namely; foreign non-intervention and national self-determination to "cordon off" Sino-USSR interference in the state, alongside their belief that they had compromised their socialist beliefs for capitalist enterprise (Lee, 2003, p.108).

Detailed in the *Juche* ideology is the pursuit of self-sufficiency. As *Juche* being the antithesis of imperialist ideals, it stipulates the establishment of an economy which serves the people and which makes use of a state's own resources, rather than being overly reliant on external aid (Kim, 1983, p.113). If states were to meet these economic ideals it would solidify their political and economic sovereignty and there would be no need for imperialist forces. This is also fundamental for countries that had suffered at the hands of imperialist plunder and domination to deter future neo-colonial policies. According to Kim Il-sung, the economic independence of a

nation was integral to political sovereignty and integrity (Lee, 2003, p.106). Kim Il-sung feared that an aspiring socialist nation that cannot rely on itself economically is extremely susceptible to flunkeyism and dependence on the hegemonic powers in the global community (Lee, 2003, p.106). Lee (2003, p.106) discusses Kim Jong-il's sentiment towards economic independence, "building an independent national economy means building an economy which is free from dependence on others and which stands on its own feet, an economy which serves one's own people and develops on the strength of the resources of one's own country and by the efforts of one's people". Despite Kim Il-sung's desire for an independent economy, he believed that it did not necessarily have to be isolated from the entire international community (Lee, 2003, p.107). He believed that all nations that share an ideological unity and those newly emerging should encourage "close economic and technical cooperation" (Lee, 2003, p.107). This belief of ideological unity emanated from his observations of US aid to the ROK, and believed that if the DPRK and fellow socialist states did not aid each other, their revolution may be doomed (Lee, 2003, p.107).

Various scholars believe that the DPRK's *Juche* ideology has been used as a tool to consolidate authoritarian power within the Kim lineage since the end of the Korean War, by fabricating mythology of the nation and *Juche's* founder, Kim Il-sung and his descendants. The premise of *Juche* was to keep the nation self-reliant in a hostile political environment by having North Korean civilians as the focal point of the revolution and its future prosperity. The regime had endured the Cold War and collapse of other ideological allies during the 1990s (Byman & Lind, 2010, p.51). Byman and Lind (2010, p.51) argue that the fabricated mythologies of its leaders are a clear illustration of an ideology used to mask an absolute monarchy. The *suryong* system, an aspect of the *Juche* ideology reiterates their argument, namely: "Another aspect of North Korean ideology is the Supreme Leader (*suryong*) system, which established Kim Il-sung as the 'son of the nation' and the 'eternal President of the Republic'".

IR scholars have argued that the ideology had created an image of the DPRK as "childlike innocents" in a world dominated by hostile forces (Byman & Lind, 2010, p.52). The *suryong* system is assumed to be propagated by a cult of personality, where the late Kim Il-sung has been constantly celebrated throughout the DPRK's calendar year. Byman and Lind (2010, p.53) discuss the importance that this fabricated mythology provided by *Juche* and *suryong* has

played in ensuring the protection and legitimation of the Kim dynasty for decades: “The mythology serves as the DPRK’s ‘Genesis,’ justifies Kim’s position as *suryong*, and legitimates the exalted status of the guerrilla elite, without which the DPRK could not have expelled the imperialists and achieved its liberation”.

The DPRK’s leadership has also used mass media as a conduit, through which it espouses “*Juche* democracy” to consolidate its regime, as they decide what the masses are allowed to know and think. The media is used to strengthen the dictatorship of the proletariat and bolsters political unity and ideological conformity of the people behind the Party and their Great Leader in the cause of revolution (Darewicz, 2013, p. 139).

According to Darewicz (2013, p.139), the DPRK has placed an enormous amount of importance on its mass media. The emphasis on mass media had been the result of experiencing the role mass media had played in toppling their ideological soulmate, the USSR and its proxies (Darewicz, 2013, p.139). The regime seems to believe that the mass media, with its potential to guide the masses through anti-imperialist propaganda, will enable the regime to persist with its agenda. The second perspective, traditional political ideology uses Korea’s age old history of independence from foreign powers (Lee, 2008, p.108). Korean people have since its earliest recorded history, have fought for their independence in the face of numerous invaders and may as well be regarded as one of the most oft-invaded territories in the world (Lee, 2003, p.108).

Byman and Lind (2010, p.53) assert, “The Kim regime also rests on the mythology of the anti-Japanese insurgency in Manchuria: the heart of Korean propaganda, storytelling, and arts”. These were the building blocks of the seemingly isolationist principles of *Juche*. These isolationist principles espoused by *Juche* are not recent, as a period of invasion under the Yi Dynasty from the late 1300s until the end of Japanese occupation in 1910 had manufactured an extremely defensive and isolated Korean foreign policy (Lee, 2003, p.108). Therefore, as a result of these complexities and the knowledge of Korean colonial history, Kim Il-sung incorporated these “pre-modern” policies of an isolated and sovereign Korea.

The third perspective of *Juche*’s origin is that of Kim Il-sung’s original thought. This perspective on the origin of the *Juche* ideology revolves around the North Korean peoples’ belief that the *Juche* idea was born out of Kim Il-sung’s romanticised resistance of the Japanese occupation (Lee, 2003, p. 109). This alongside Kim Il-sung’s frustration of the revolutionaries’

shunning of the proletarian masses during Japanese resistance and the flunkeyist behaviour of the DPRK toward the USSR is what birthed the philosophy. According to Lee (2003, p.109) Kim Il-sung's *Juche* ideology has its roots heavily entrenched in Maoist thought. Korean history that has been discussed so far, has depicted their age old resistance to occupation and subjugation of foreign entities. Ironically the *Juche* idea had been heavily influenced by a nation, China, which had once vied for control of the Korean peninsula. During the waning years of Japanese occupation, Kim Il-sung had trained under the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) (Lee, 2003, p.109).

This aspect of the *Juche* ideology, the resistance of imperialism suggests that the DPRK does not want to engage in war by focusing on the military. The focus on the resistance of imperialism was Kim Il-sung's belief that in order for a newly formed nation such as the DPRK at that specific period of time, it was imperative for the nation to protect itself from any potential aggressor, "We do not want war, nor are we afraid of it, nor do we beg peace from the imperialists (Lee, 2003, p. 107)". The aspect of self-reliance according to Lee (2003, p.107) involved mobilizing the nation under the *Juche* ideology for war on the home front. It also placed an emphasis on the second principle of economic independence to help the nation become materially prepared for war (Lee, 2003, p.107). Kim Jong-il emphasised self-reliance in defense as the basis for Songun politics. He believed that the party and military should be linked rather than distinguished and that both should share the responsibility to promote *Juche*. He believed that the nation should rely on modern technology to complement the KPA's 'politico-ideological superiority' (Quinones, 2008, p.4).

Kim Jong-il (1983, p.119) states, "It is man's nature to protect himself. Likewise, a country should also have a means to defend itself. As long as imperialism exists, a state without self-reliant armed forces capable of defending the country from the internal and external enemies cannot, in fact, be called a completely independent sovereign state". With the exploiting capitalist ideology perpetuating class struggles around the globe, the DPRK believes its advanced idea of *Juche* should be protected at all times to maintain the sovereignty and freedom of political thought of its people. By the end of the Korean War, Kim Il-sung had been heavily influenced by Mao's political ideas and teaching, which by the end of the Korean War had influenced various spheres of North Korean society (Lee, 2003, p.110). Lee (2003, p.110)

reiterates Mao's influence, "By the end of the Korean War, Chinese influence in North Korea had overtaken that of the Soviet Union. Kim closely followed Mao's political thought and action, which heavily influenced the development of the DPRK's political institutions in the late 1940s and 1950s". Kim Il-sung had also admitted that the inspiration he had drawn on was not entirely his own, but from previous Korean scholars who drew inspiration from Confucian ideas (Lee, 2003, p.110). The intense nationalism espoused by *Juche* is seen to be a reaction to what Lee noted as a "slave mentality" or "*sadaechui*", where elite officials in the past would subordinate themselves for foreign aid (Lee, 2003, p.110).

3.4. *Juche*: Evolution under the Kim dynasty

The international system has changed since the formulation of *Juche* and the inception of the Kim Il-sung regime in the early 1900s. As decades have continued to pass, Kim's hereditary descendants have continued to rule the North Korean state with their own interpretation of the ideology. They have adapted *Juche* to a constantly changing political and economic landscape. Since the North Korean state's inception, the US has labelled it a hostile and unpredictable nation which has consequently been on the receiving end of various sanctions and warnings from the US and other members of the international community.

3.4.1. Kim Il-sung

The creation of a guiding ideology was born out of the DPRK's peculiar historical development (Kim Il-sung biography, 2001, p.17)³. The premise of the *Juche* ideology was that the masters of the revolution were the Korean masses. Kim Il-sung closely followed the experiences of the international communist movement and acknowledged that the Korean experience was unique and the experiences of other communist nations could not provide the answers to questions raised by the Korean revolution (Kim Il-sung biography, 2001, p.18). Kim (Kim Il-sung biography, 2001, p.20),

"Kim Il-sung defined the motive power of an anti-imperialist, anti-feudal democratic revolution as the broad anti-imperialist forces involving workers, peasants, youth and students, intellectuals, petty bourgeoisie, conscientious national capitalists and religious persons, and that the target of the revolution was the Japanese

³ The Kim Il-sung biography was published by the DPRK's state run Foreign Languages Publishing House and acquired on the internet.

imperialists and the landlords, capitalists, pro-Japanese elements and traitors to the nation who were in collusion with them”.

Perhaps more interestingly, Kim Il-sung’s declaration for an anti-Japanese armed struggle would eventually lead to the heavy militarisation of the nation,

“He set forth the line of anti-Japanese armed struggle. He made it clear that, in view of the historic experiences and lessons of the anti-Japanese struggle in Korea and the law-governed requirement of the national liberation struggle in colonies, violent actions of the masses should be developed into an organized armed struggle. He taught that, as an immediate task, the Korean Revolutionary Army, a revolutionary armed organization, should be formed with young communists to accumulate a variety of experiences for an armed struggle (Kim Il-sung biography, 2001, p.21)”.

Included in the philosophy envisioned by *Juche*’s pioneer, Kim Il-sung, was that Korean society should not rely on foreigners to resolve issues that do not pertain to them, as it may lead to flunkeyism and the potential compromising of the revolution which they have worked so hard to achieve (Kim Il-sung biography, 2001, p.20). The Kim Il-sung regime believed that *Juche* and its core principle of self-reliance could provide a blueprint, not only for themselves but for other former subjugated nations to prosper in a seemingly post-colonial environment, “For many countries, especially those freed from colonial domination in the first few decades after World War II, the idea of self-reliance—and North Korea’s apparent success at self-reliant development – held a powerful allure (Armstrong, 2009, p.3)”. Scobell and Sanford (2007, p.vii) state that since the inception of the DPRK under Kim Il-sung, the various regimes that have been at the helm have had two national strategic objectives; the first being the continuation of the Kim dynasty and secondly, the eventual reunification of the Korean Peninsula under the control of the DPRK.

According to Scobell and Sanford (2007, p.vii) Kim Il-sung had espoused a military ideology of “People’s War”, heavily influenced by *Juche*. This ideology espoused “Four Military Lines”: firstly, the militarizing of the entire population, secondly the fortification of the entire nation, thirdly, training the military as a cadre army and fourthly, modernizing weaponry. This ideology would pave the way for his successor, Kim Jong-il to continue the militarization of the nation, and North Korea’s budding nuclear programme.

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.

North Korean military official] said that the North Korean military must prepare itself to fight for the supreme commander who advocates ‘military-first’ politics under the revolutionary red banner”.

Kim Jong-il had clearly prioritised the KPA and the state’s defence in the face of the Bush policy and the uncertainty that surrounded the South in the Korean peninsula. The “military-first” politics of Kim Jong-il is a political method which he believed would help the DPRK maintain its self-reliant politics in the wake of free trade, globalization and imperialism (Suh, 2002, p.149). The “military-first” policy was a change from *Juche*’s original focus on the party. This shift is indicative that Kim Il-sung’s successor had chosen to interpret the idea to what he believed was necessary for the nation at the time, where the nation felt it was being threatened by imperialist forces.

This clear reinterpretation and tweaking of self-reliance under Kim Jong-il’s regime is illustrated by a statement made on 8 July 1994 at a seminar on modern imperialism, of his wariness of neo-colonial intentions of western powers (Kim Jong-il biography, 2005, p.141),

“...Modern imperialism is imperialism based not merely on monopolistic domination but whose political and economic basis is state-controlled monopolistic capitalism, depending not on old colonialism but on neo-colonialism, existing not in parallel with each other but reorganized in subordinate relation with US imperialism as the ringleader, and not growing in strength but making a last-ditch effort even while declining rapidly to its downfall”

The wariness of foreigners stipulated in the *Juche* ideology had been constantly reiterated by Kim (Kim Jong-il biography, 2005, p.141), as he warned of the changing nature of imperialism in modern society. Kim (Kim Jong-il biography, 2005, p.141) through *Juche* explained the aggressive nature of modern-day imperialism and how imperialists are obliterating socialist countries and revolutionary forces through underhanded means of ‘peace’ and ‘cooperation’.

Kim Il-sung believed that the role of the KPA was to protect the state from external threats, internal insurgencies and to have no political power. Under Kim Jong-il, its new purpose was to lead his political revolution within his ‘military-first’ idea by developing the government and North Korean society (Suh, 2002, p.149). Kim Jong-il believed that in order to sustain the Korean revolution with *Juche* as its base, it needed a backbone, and the prioritising of the military provided that. Kim Jong-il stipulated that there would have been no revolution without

the military, and that in order to maintain a harmonious relationship for the benefit of the revolution they would need to ensure this relationship.

As mentioned earlier, the target of Kim Jong-il's interpretation of the self-reliant aspect of the *Juche* ideology and his own *Songun* or "military-first" politics, was the goal to achieve prosperity for the Korean people, which he believed only the military could achieve (Suh, 2002, p.159). According to Suh (2002, p.159), a heavily militarized and fortified nation will embolden the Korean people and prevent them from fearing or envying foreign nations and would allow the nation to foster the socialist political ideology and the idea of collectivism. Koreans are also told to follow three pillars which will guide them to achieve this target, namely; ideology, military, science and technology (Suh, 2002, p.159). Suh (2002, p.159) discusses the first pillar, ideology, and that the Korean people are required to follow both the teachings of Kim Jong-il and the ideas of his father, Kim Il-sung. Hence they would follow both the people-centred ideas of Kim Il-sung's *Juche*, and Kim Jong-il's *Songun* politics.

The second pillar is that of the military. Under the supreme commander Kim Jong-il's regime and his *Songun* politics, Koreans were required to follow the guidance of the military and the supreme commander himself. The third pillar, of science and technology focuses on the Korean citizen's ability to sustain themselves via their technical skills in economic production (Suh, 2002, p.199). According to Park, the DPRK in the 1980s had begun to assert a more pragmatic outlook on the *Juche* ideology of self-sufficiency under Kim Jong-il. Prior, the ideology had made it extremely difficult to manufacture and develop a so-called "*Juche* economy" (1987, p.31). Park (1987, p.31) continues to reiterate this, "Obviously, not every country is equally endowed with natural resources and the same level of technical development, and that the exchange of goods, services, and transfer of technology would be inevitable in the contemporary world. In this light, one might conclude that North Korean efforts could prove futile".

The DPRK at the time of Kim Jong-il seemed to have made the *Juche* ideology flexible to the point where the nation did not need to subjugate itself to flunkeyism and compromise its identity for foreign capital or aid. Despite the seeming inconsistencies with self-reliance and the acquisition of Western capital and technologies from the West, the *Juche* ideology has still maintained its legitimacy (Park, 1987, p.33). Park (1987, p.33) notes that the DPRK had also

seemingly mocked the ROK's flunkeyism towards Western powers for economic development, hence they sold their "identity".

With the indoctrination of the DPRK's masses with *Juche* the state has become extremely cautious when trying to keep abreast with scientific and technological standards of their ROK and Western counterparts. Serious issues to the progression of a *Juche* oriented state will arise in the pursuit of scientific and technological advancements. Park (1987, P.33) notes that an author even suggests that North Korea has to 'approach the world' market in the same manner as China had in their pursuit of the 'Four Modernisations Program after Mao's death. The DPRK will be unable to avoid serious political and social problems in its pursuit of modern society and technology.

With the DPRK's nuclear weapons program and its constant fears of imperial capitalist and democratic ideologies penetrating the state, it is understandable that they fear what Park (1987, p.34) assumes to be a "spiritual pollution" or "brain drain". As mentioned earlier and also reiterated by Park, is that the political ideology of *Juche* does not tolerate "value conflict" and "cognitive dissonance". This indicates that it may have already become or could eventually be increasingly difficult for the DPRK to sustain, in their view, a "utopian", "classless" society. A society whose political ideology and regime has been sculpted around mythologies without empirical foundations, leaves the nation at a big disadvantage in an extremely competitive and globalized world. The increasing difficulty to keep the nation self-sufficient and citizens ignorant will become an ever more arduous task for the state.

As the *Juche* ideology is the main consideration for the DPRK's foreign policy goals, the North Korean state might have to compromise if it were to achieve some of its targets. The danger of maintaining the myths created around the foundation of the *Juche* ideology could be detrimental to the DPRK and the Kim dynasty as time marches on. Park (1987, p.34) states,

"The danger is quite likely in view of the *Juche* belief systems that are largely artifacts and empirically unfounded. *Juche* has taught North Koreans that their society is the ultimate utopia on earth and they are a chosen people. Further, they have been conditioned to believe that Kim Il-sung and now Kim Jong-il are admired throughout the world. More dangerously, they have been told that capitalist societies, particularly the United States, are impoverished and economically underdeveloped. Under these circumstances, the North Korean regime has all the reasons not to expose its citizens to the West, nor does it wish to expose the society to foreign visitors".

Armstrong (2009, p.14) states that *Juche* has been anything but a blueprint for technological and economic development for the state as it was seen to be more for domestic propaganda and diplomatic rivalry with the ROK. *Songun* politics also incorporates principles of *Juche*. These principles are to be used together, as having each of their own may not ensure the sustainability of the DPRK's regime and way of life. These principles of self-reliance, self-sustenance and profit making are to ensure that all spheres of Korean life are implicated (Suh, 2002, p.160). The first principle of self-reliance was originally created in the *Juche* ideology but interpreted differently under Kim Jong-il's rule. It pertains to their own ideology and way of life that differentiates itself from capitalist societies in the international community which they believe does not create political or ideological development (Suh, 2002, p.159).

The second principle is self-sustenance. It maintains the original *Juche* thought of Korean solutions for Korean problems. The principle emphasises its disbelief that economic development stems from an open market economy. Suh (2002, p.160) reiterates this principle,

“Economic development based on foreign capital and loans cannot sustain real economic development. In order for economic development to have a solid foundation, it must depend on self-sustaining power. Building a strong and prosperous country does not depend on whether the country is reformed. Nor does it depend on whether its markets are open. It depends on whether economic development is based on the principle of self-sustenance”.

Under Kim Jong-il, a new principle had been introduced alongside the original ideas of *Juche*. The principle of profit making (Suh, 2002, p.160). This principle had been introduced as economic circumstances had changed since the Korean War's aftermath. During the 1990s, many factories had closed and only those who were able to realize a profit with modern technological equipment were revitalized (Suh, 2002, p.160). Robert L. Worden explains Kim Jong-il's reimagining of self-reliance in the modern era, “However Kim Jong-il declared that ‘self-reliant revival is not possible apart from science and technology.’ while talking with party officials in December 2000. A February 28th, 2001, Nodong Shinmun article claimed that ‘building a self-reliant national economy does not mean building an economy with the doors closed’”. This was a clear indication of a departure from the nation's self-imposed ban on trading with countries outside of the peninsula, whether socialist or capitalist, and that the principle of *Juche* could be adapted to changing domestic and international circumstances.

According to Suh (2002, p.162) the introduction of a “military-first” politics and the reinterpretation of certain aspects of the *Juche* ideology was the culmination of numerous external factors such as natural calamities, but mainly Bush’s policies. It was the ensuring of the regime survival after various natural disasters that had occurred and inflicted the society Kim Jong-il had inherited from his father. The results of these disasters introduced *Songun* politics and the integral part the military would play in dealing with internal and external threats to the longevity of his regime (Suh, 2002, p.162). The emphasis on the DPRK’s military capabilities, the result of the reinterpretation of self-reliance within the *Juche* ideology, is to support the goals of the state and the party, which are to reunify the peninsula with its communist ideals (Worden, 2008, p. xxxiv).

This emphasis on the DPRK’s military capabilities would only be realized through the development of science and technology as noted by Kim (Kim, 1983, p.105) “It is also necessary to actively develop science and technology and raise the cultural and technical standards of the masses, thus enabling the working people to become the true masters of nature and society and get rid of the idea of worshipping and depending on others in the matter related to science and technology”. He continues to reiterate his stance on self-sufficiency by discussing how science and technology can counter flunkeyism, “Only when the popular masses possess independent thinking and a high level of science and culture, can they cherish national pride and free themselves from flunkeyism for ever (Kim, 1983, p.105)”. Kim Jong-il had constantly taken subtle jabs at the ROK throughout his exposition of the *Juche* ideology. The reiteration of his father, President Kim Il-sung’s depiction of those who fall into flunkeyism as “fools”, illustrates that he was intent on maintaining his father’s legacy.

3.4.3. Kim Jong-un

The Supreme Commander Kim Jong-un, the third Kim in the hereditary line of North Korean leadership and current leader of the DPRK, officially assumed office on 30th December 2011. This announcement was unexpected as Kim Jong-il had suddenly passed away, leaving his son little time to be groomed into his position. According to Lim (2012, p.561), Kim Jong-un has seemed to follow Max Weber’s notion of “traditional leadership” of reinforcing his own authority within the DPRK by strengthening the traditions and legacy left by his father, who had in turn followed Kim Il-sung. Kim Jong-un’s role in the evolution of *Juche* is however

markedly different than that of his father. Kim Jong-un did not have the expectation of creating a nationalistic ideology to sustain his regime, but had to develop his father's "military-first" adaptation of *Juche*, "For example, Kim Jong-il's main objective as the successor to Kim Il-sung was to develop his father's anti-Japanese revolutionary tradition and construct a socialist state based on *Juche*, whereas Kim Jong-un's main objective is to nourish or reinvent Kim Jong-il's 'military-first' politics (Lim, 2012, p.567)".

Kim Jong-un has continued the reinterpreted aspect of "self-reliance" or *Songun* politics that his father had introduced to maintain the Kim dynasty's regime (Lim, 2012, p.562). This continuation of *Songun* politics can be attributed to Kim Jong Un's education at the Kim Il-sung Military University, further entrenching this regime type (Lim, 2012, p.562). Lim (2012, p.563) explains this continuation:

"Given that Kim Jong-un graduated from Kim Il-sung Military University, it appears that his father wanted him trained as a military leader. Immediately before the September 2010 Third Party Conference, Kim Jong-un was appointed a four-star general. His first official post was also military related: vice-chairman of the Central Military Affairs Committee of the Party Central Committee. His career trajectory implies that his most important task as successor is to preserve his father's military-first policy".

With the influence of *Juche* ever present throughout the Kim dynasty since its inception, Kim Jong-un has seemingly persisted with the same foreign policy ideas provided by his forefathers (Aoki, 2012, p.17). Aoki (2012, p.18) states that as Kim Jong-un had been suddenly instated as leader of the nation following the surprise passing of his father, he would not have been able to change any policy even if he would have wanted to. Since his inception, Kim Jong-un has been surrounded by senior members of the Korean party who have been in position since his father's administration. These members would still approach foreign policy decisions with *Juche* as the blueprint for interacting with the international community.

3.5. Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the origins of the DPRK's guiding philosophy of *Juche*. It explored the founding principles, evolution and adaptation through the years of the Kim dynasty, from Kim Il-sung's founding principles to Kim Jong-il's military first politics and the maintaining of its principles under current leader Kim Jong-un. The following chapter will investigate *Juche*'s role in informing the DPRK's nuclear weapons pursuit.

Chapter 4 – *Juche* and North Korea’s nuclear weapons

4.1. Introduction

This chapter will be divided into two sections. The first section will provide an overview of the DPRK’s nuclear weapons programme and how the international community has responded to it. The second section will look to explain how *Juche* and *Songun* politics have influenced an ever evolving nuclear strategy in what the DPRK perceives to be a hostile international environment. It will look to investigate the nation’s approach to nuclear weapons from its focus on the defensive capabilities nuclear weapons are able to afford the state in the face of imperialism and asymmetric warfare. It will look to explain how *Juche* has provided a platform for the DPRK’s nuclear weapons as a valuable asset to its foreign policy goals of creating a self-sufficient economy through the development of a nuclear and missile weapons programme.

4.2. Early evolution of North Korea’s nuclear weapons and missile programme

The US nuclear threat that affected its people and indirectly, the DPRK regime, led to what could be perceived as reactionary steps that were put in place by Kim Il-sung to defend the nation against a possible nuclear weapons attack, and also for the later development of their own nuclear weapons infrastructure (Bermudez Jr., 2015, p.8). The DPRK did not have the capacity to develop its own nuclear weapons program at the time but rather sought to establish its infrastructure to defend the nation in the eventuality of an attack with the cooperation of the USSR during the latter part of the 1950s (American Security Project, 2012, p.2). The DPRK in conjunction with the USSR had signed a nuclear agreement to provide the nation’s scientists and engineers with the basic knowledge and technologies required to build a nuclear weapons arsenal. The latter part of the 1950s saw the DPRK and the USSR agree to a treaty whereby the DPRK would receive technical assistance for the production of a nuclear research center in the nation’s capital, Pyongyang (Scobell & Sanford, 2007, p.72).

In the years that followed, the DPRK had been involved in various incidents that appeared to have pushed the Kim Il-sung regime to focus on the modernization of their military (Bermudez Jr., 2015, p.9). Bermudez Jr. (2015, p.9) explains,

“During the mid-to-late 1960s, tensions on the peninsula escalated as the North oversaw an increasing level of aggression – guerrilla warfare operations and the assassination attempts in the South – as well as acts against the United States – the capture of the USS Pueblo in 1968 and the shooting down of an American EC – 121M reconnaissance aircraft in 1969. This escalation brought what the North Korean leadership perceived as new US nuclear threats and renewed fears from the Fatherland Liberation War”.

4.2.1. Kim Il-sung’s strategic vision

A strategic vision was declared by Kim Il-sung, born out of his frustrations of the DPRK’s inability to take advantage of the tensions on the Korean peninsula during the 1960s (Bermudez Jr., 2015, p.8). Bermudez Jr. (2015, p.8) describes this vision as Kim Il-sung’s “Four Military Lines”. The vision prescribed four principles: the arming of its society, the fortification of the nation, training of soldiers as a cadre force and the modernization of the nation’s arms (Bermudez Jr., 2015, p.8). These four military lines were stepping stones that led to the establishment of the DPRK’s chemical defence units that would prepare the army and its people in the eventuality of a nuclear attack. The creation of an “Atomic Weapons Training Center” was established to train military units in both offensive and defensive forms in an atomic warfare environment (Bermudez Jr., 2015, p.8). Bermudez Jr. (2015, p.8) asserts that the DPRK had eventually laid the foundation for their own nuclear weapons infrastructure. The DPRK with the assistance of the USSR, had trained various individuals that would play a role in the development of their budding nuclear weapons programme (Bermudez Jr., 2015, p.8). Their role in the development of a nuclear and missile weapons programme could be seen by the creation of a nuclear research programme in the city of Hungnam (Bermudez Jr., 2015, p.8).

DPRK scientists born during or in the immediate aftermath of the Korean War were determined for the country to push on with its nuclear weapons programme, as it bore a great importance to the nation’s security interests (Bermudez Jr., 2015, p.10). They viewed the US as wanting to use its nuclear programme that razed two Japanese cities against them and their way of life, thus emboldening their desire for nuclear weapons as protection. This desire for protection changed the way nuclear weapons would be used by the DPRK. A DPRK scientist by the name of Dr. Lee Sung Ki pioneered the development of the nation’s chemical industry and later became part of the chemical weapons programme (Scobell & Sanford, 2007, p.102). Dr. Lee Sung Ki returned from Japan after the Korean War and produced a polymer called Vinaylon or “*Juche*

fiber”, an important step in the DPRK’s efforts to produce an indigenous nuclear programme and an acknowledgement of Korean self-sufficiency based on the *Juche* ideology (Scobell & Sanford, 2006, p.102). This fledgling interest in chemical agents depicts the nation’s initial drive that would later foster the development of their chemical weapons programmes, a prelude to the nation’s pursuit of nuclear devices (Scobell & Sanford, 2007, p.102).

The Korean experience during the Korean War prompted the DPRK’s nascent nuclear programme according to Bermudez Jr. (2015, p.9),

“By the end of the decade [1960s], it appears that the North had begun production of chemical weapons, a decision probably meant as a response to the threat of US nuclear weapons and the belief that these weapons could help deter such threats. Further manifestations of this concern over the US nuclear threat were the establishment of a systematic program for the construction of underground facilities and a new emphasis on operations on the chemical and nuclear battlefield in KPA training”.

The nuclear weapons programme expansion was reinforced by their national pursuit of a ballistic missile program in the 1960s (Scobell & Sanford, 2007, p.110). This pursuit was accelerated and advanced with the cooperation of the then USSR, who helped modernize their surface-to-air missile and later, their missile arsenal (Scobell & Sanford, 2007, p.111). The DPRK’s relationship with the USSR which led to the establishment of the Hamhung Military academy to research and develop missiles later soured and cooperation had been shifted to the Chinese (Scobell & Sanford, 2007, p.111). The latter part of 1971 led to a “wide-ranging military agreement” with Beijing which would ensure that Pyongyang could procure surface-to-air and cruise missiles (Scobell & Sanford, 2007, p.111).

4.3.3. The DPRK’s early missile programme

A couple of years later, the DPRK commenced their “multi-faceted ballistic missile program” that stood side by side with their nuclear program as a national priority (Scobell & Sanford, 2007, p.111). During this period, the DPRK’s relationship with the USSR began to sour. As Scobell & Sanford (2007, p.112) state, the DPRK had now begun to turn to other cities for technical assistance for their missile program, “Moreover, in the course of building its missile program, it appears that North Korea has obtained technology, components, and materials not just from the Soviet Union and China but from Japan and a number of European countries as

well”. This move is seemingly out of character for a reclusive nation that had stuck to its principles of self-reliance from imperialist forces. A result of these new relationships, the DPRK had a “world laboratory” afforded to them to track and test the success of its missile program, also by selling “complete missile systems, components, and production technology” to other proliferating nations (Scobell & Sanford, 2007, p.112).

By the end of the 1970s, the DPRK had begun the production of its own chemical weapons with nuclear weapons being an aspiration at the time. The continued USSR assistance during the Kim Il-sung regime led to the provision of advanced defensive nuclear training and also the capability for offensive chemical warfare (Bermudez Jr., 2015, p.9). Through the Korean People’s Army’s (KPA) study of US and Sino-USSR warfare concepts and strategies, the DPRK had eventually developed a rudimentary deterrence strategy aimed at political and diplomatic utility (Bermudez Jr., 2015, p.10). The first phase of the DPRK’s ambitious nuclear and missile programme saw the production and testing of short-range missiles. As mentioned, their missile programme became equally important to their nuclear program that had initially begun in the 1980s. The DPRK had become a “major ballistic missile producer and exporter” (Scobell & Sanford, 2007, p.116).

With the objectives of attaining international recognition as a separate state from the ROK and sovereignty from external power, by the 1980s the DPRK had been well under way to produce its first nuclear weapons arsenal. Bermudez Jr. (2015, p.10) discusses this development,

“By the late 1970s, planning was well underway for the second phase development of the North’s nuclear infrastructure that would take place through the 1980s. This phase included the construction of new reactors, a radiochemical separation plant, the establishment of additional research centers and a host of supporting developments. By the end of this period, the nuclear program had transitioned to the production of weapons-grade plutonium and the design of a weapon”.

Following the acquisition of its first USSR ballistic missiles from the Egyptians in the late 1970s, the Korean nation had begun reverse engineering to manufacture its own and by the mid-1980s had constructed the *Hwasong-5* prototype (Scobell & Sanford, 2007, p.117). This milestone had later led to fruitful deals involving the Iranians and the United Arab Emirates, whereby the DPRK made an estimated hundreds of millions by selling the Hwasong-5s to the respective nations (Scobell & Sanford, 2007, p.117).

The desire to increase the distance of its missile programme prompted the development of the *Hwasong-6*. The DPRK wanted to ensure that its missile arsenal would be increasingly capable of reaching targets further away. The DPRK had eventually developed a missile that had seemingly trumped their successful *Hwasong-5* missile, by creating a lighter version that reached 180 km with a maximum distance of 500 km (Scobell & Sanford, 2007, p.117). According to Scobell and Sanford (2007, p.118), the DPRK had multiple motivations in the pursuit for a ballistic missile programme but this had changed since the initial production and testing of its arsenal. These motivations for the ballistic missiles were to be used as an offensive and defensive, sword and shield. Other motivations included using ballistic missiles for enhancing the regimes prestige and diplomatic and economic leverage (Scobell & Sanford, 2007, p.118).

The focus had later shifted from short-range to medium-range missiles with work having begun in 1988 on the *No-Dong*, Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile (Scobell & Sanford, 2007, p.112). According to Scobell and Sanford (2007, p.112), the Research and Development team in the DPRK had three objectives that needed to be achieved, namely the production of a 1000 to 1500 kg prototype warhead, the production of a “base” missile system and lastly, a prototype missile that could deliver a nuclear warhead. These developments fit in well with the DPRK’s desire to level the asymmetric playing fields with hegemonic nations whom the DPRK had constantly identified as potential aggressors, most notably the US and Japan. These developments coincided with the implosion of the USSR by the late 1980s to mid-1990s, prompting the North to evolve its security strategies in the eventuality of an invasion, especially as its allies had lost the ideological war with the West (American Security Project, 2012, p.3). The dawn of the 1990s prompted Kim Jong-il’s regime to begin work on their new longer range “*Packtusan*” series of ballistic missiles (Scobell & Sanford, 2007, p.113).

4.2.3. The DPRK joins the NPT

The mid-1980s saw the DPRK accede to the Non-proliferation Treaty as a non-nuclear weapon state (Kirgis, 2003). By 1992 the DPRK entered into the Safeguards Agreements required under Article III of the NPT (Kirgis, 2003). The agreement allowed mandatory inspections of nuclear materials of all its members by IAEA inspectors. IAEA inspections during the 1990s did not go as smoothly as anticipated. The IAEA and the DPRK were involved in constant disagreements

about “special inspections” of its nuclear holdings which later resulted in the Agreed Framework (Carrel-Billiard & Wing, 2010, p.29). The Agreed Framework was the result of bilateral talks held in Geneva between the US and DPRK from September 23 to October 21, 1994 to resolve the nuclear crisis in the Korean peninsula (Yong-Joong Lee, 2004, p.106).

4.2.4. The DPRK’s reinforced justification for a nuclear weapons programme

The Kim Jong-il regime studied the various “operations” the US undertook in the Middle East, especially Operation Desert Storm (Bermudez Jr., 2015, p.11). The studies that were undertaken reinforced the DPRK’s pursuit of a nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programme. To deter further US interference, the DPRK’s leadership believed nuclear weapons could offer the deterrence and prestige the regime so desperately craved (Bermudez Jr., 2015, p.11). In the words of Bermudez Jr., (2015, p.12) “The bloody lesson of war in Iraq for the world is that only when a country has physical deterrent forces and massive military deterrent forces that are capable of overwhelmingly defeating any attack by state-of-the-art weapons, can it prevent war and defend its independence and national security”.

Orcutt (2004, p.19) reiterates the DPRK’s lessons from US policy in the Middle East and its paranoia that any particular evidence could be used to compromise the DPRK and its sovereignty,

“Experts have proposed that North Korea learned two important lessons from U.S. policy toward Iraq. First, North Korea may have determined after the first Gulf War that allowing United Nations inspections simply permits the collection of evidence that will lead to further military intervention. Second, North Korea may believe that chemical weapons will not deter U.S military action; only nuclear weapons will effectively stop U.S. military action in the Korean peninsula. There are several possible motivations for North Korea’s pursuit of nuclear weapons: prestige, blackmail, or military use, but a leading theory is to deter a U.S. invasion”.

4.4. Timeline of the DPRK’s recent brinkmanship

4.4.1. Non-proliferation under Clinton

After the perceived justification that the first Iraq war gave the DPRK the motivation to pursue nuclear weapons, the 1990s proved to be a turbulent period for the DPRK. The nation had entered and left various agreements during this period, entering into the Nuclear Non-

proliferation Treaty in 1992 and the Agreed Framework in 1994. Paik(2003, p.20) notes a critical choice the DPRK made during this period, the DPRK had made a critical choice in the early 1990s shortly after the collapse of the USSR and its proxy states to ensure the survivability of the regime and socialist system. Pyongyang looked to expand contact in pursuit of economic and political cooperation with the West, Japan and South Korea.

The mid-1990s saw the DPRK's switch from chemical to nuclear weapons development. The switch had put the US and its allies on the Korean peninsula on red alert, and prompted the first nuclear crisis in the peninsula (Volpe, 2015, p.45). According to Volpe (2015, p.45), the DPRK identified the US's "fear of plutonium production" and used it as blackmail for economic and energy packages, a way for the regime to stay afloat economically. It has proven to "extract concessions" from big players in the international community who may have previously not yielded to the DPRK's demands.

Volpe (2015, p.48) notes that the DPRK's policy of proliferation blackmail during the mid-1990s was integral in the long-term survival of the regime, its political and economic objectives and capabilities. Hence, a result of the DPRK's nuclear weapons programme and capabilities saw the introduction of the Clinton administration's ill-fated Agreed Framework on 21 October 1994. The framework was introduced in the hope of ensuring the DPRK's compliance with non-proliferation regulations of the NPT and its nuclear weapons designated states, but also provided the DPRK with an open door to ensure its post-Cold War survivability.

This strategy that had been initially implemented by the Kim Il-sung regime had to be refined during a testing period for the Korean state. Allies to the DPRK, the USSR and China, had either collapsed or sought rapprochement with former foes. Coupled by the death of Kim Il-sung and other domestic issues had once again pushed the nation into a corner (Bermudez Jr., 2015, p.11). The DPRK had already in its possession, materials and technology to produce nuclear weapons and were able to capitalize and benefit from relations with the US for a number of years under the 1994 US-DPRK Agreed Framework (Bermudez Jr., 2015, p.11). Under Kim Jong-il, as noted above, the nation had shifted its attention from chemical to nuclear weapons which was deemed as the only sufficient way to deter nuclear states. The switch prompted urgency from traditional nuclear states to appease a seemingly reckless and "hostile" nation.

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

agreements stipulated the increased interactions between the DPRK and ROK's people, humanitarian aid and ROK investment in the DPRK to allay fears of dubious intentions (Kim, 2018, p.166). Hence the DPRK's posture towards the international community had perhaps prompted a shift in policy approach, acknowledging that hostile and aggressive policy formation towards the DPRK would compromise US and ROK's security concerns.

4.4.2. Resuming nuclear weapons programme under Bush administration

The 2000s saw the progressive improvement of US-DPRK relations that the Clinton administration had initiated. With the US announcing further relaxations on long-standing trade sanctions, the DPRK reciprocated the US stance by declaring its moratorium on missile tests (Pollack, 2003, p.22). The cessation of decades' long hostilities between the two nations seemed to have become an ever increasing reality with senior US officials seeking all avenues for rapprochement. With the visit of the DPRK's Vice Marshal Jo to the US, both governments pledged to improve their bilateral relations (Pollack, 2003, p.23). They reiterated that their intentions to build a new relationship would be free of past enmities and agreed to a resolution that would provide security in the Asia-Pacific region and the furthering of their bilateral relationship (Pollack, 2003, p.23).

Despite the progressive improvement of relations, the maintaining of the DPRK's isolation from most of the international community and the later inclusion of military-first politics and acquisition of arms had allowed the testing of missiles to be the DPRK's bargaining tool in negotiations,

“Pyongyang was also voicing mounting impatience with what it deemed laggard progress on the reactor project. As the 2003 target date for installation of the first reactor approached, North Korean statements assumed a sharper edge. On 22 February 2001, a DPRK Foreign Ministry spokesman stated: ‘If [the United States] does not honestly implement the Agreed Framework [...] there is no need for us to be bound to it any longer. We cannot but consider the existence of KEDO as meaningless under the present situation when no one can tell when the LWR project will be completed (Pollack, 2003, p.24)’”.

Nuclear leverage provided the DPRK with the ability to enact reciprocally. It provided the DPRK with the ability to discard bilateral agreements and preconditions which require the “banning” of missile testing and nuclear facilities, when they feel agreements are not being

fulfilled or have become protracted. Pollack (2003, p.24) reiterates the DPRK's decisions to renege on treaties, "But Pyongyang was also warning that it might decide to walk away from its obligations under the Agreed Framework if there were further delays in completion of the first phase of the reactor project". This indicates that the DPRK has not necessarily always dishonoured all of its agreements between themselves and those willing to come to the negotiating table. The instances of the DPRK seemingly dishonouring agreements by testing their nuclear program have been in response to perceived lack of sincerity from other parties involved in various agreements,

"If you actually observe their behaviour, we actually don't have evidence of unilateral renegeing by North Korea. North Korean actions have been in response to US actions...As early as 1997, North Korea warned the U.S. about its lack of implementation of the Agreed Framework, for instance in the slow delivery of HFO, delay in constructing the LWRs, above [all], not moving towards full political and economic normalization (Tan & Govindasamy, 2012, p.8)".

Historically, the DPRK's foreign policy stance towards other nations, especially hegemonic nations such as the US had been troubled since the Korean and Cold Wars. The Clinton administration had taken significant advances, negotiating with the DPRK. US-DPRK's postures towards honoured agreements took a drastic turn during the early 2000s under the Bush administration. With both sides during the Clinton administration trying to negotiate transparently despite their suspicions, the Bush administration emphasized the DPRK and in particular Kim Jong-il's untrustworthiness. This drastic turn in US policy towards the DPRK had dealt a serious blow to inter-Korean relations and the progress the Clinton administration had made with the communist nation (Paik, 2003, p.20).

Continuous provocations under the Bush administration had only toughened the DPRK's coercive bargaining strategy with the US, as any slight was seen as a threat to Korean self-determination and a threat to the Kim regime itself. The DPRK reiterated the US's historical involvement in East Asia, accusing the western nation of having used nuclear weapons to bully weaker nations, the DPRK included, into submission. The DPRK leadership was also offended by George W. Bush's statements, labelling the nation as one of the "axis of evil" along with Iran and Iraq.

The Bush administration's strategies toward the DPRK had thus become constrained. The US feared that any reckless decision could be detrimental to the regional security in the Korean peninsula and the alliance that the US had maintained with the ROK for decades (Pollack, 2003, p.39). Ironically, the US had already acted recklessly by slighting the Kim regime. The Bush administration had also ordered the US Department of Defense to formulate an emergency plan in case of a nuclear attack against the DPRK (Paik, 2003, p.21). The Kim regime had thus felt threatened by these reports as they believed that the Bush administration were contravening their respective agreements,

“A statement issued by North Korea's foreign ministry spokesman recalled that the United States gave specific assurances in the 1993 U.S.-DPRK Joint Statement and the 1994 U.S. – DPRK Agreed framework that ‘it would not use nuclear weapons against and threaten the DPRK with them, ’ and made it clear that the Bush administration's plan for nuclear attack was in ‘violation’ of the Agreed Framework (Paik, 2003, p.22)”.

As a result the Bush administration at the time believed that the best policy was that of isolation, and for the DPRK to “incur the international opprobrium that would inevitably follow its nuclear defiance (Pollack, 2003, p.39)”. The Bush administration's heavy-handed policy approach to the DPRK had therefore left the Agreed Framework in tatters and reignited the nuclear crises in the peninsula. Despite Bush's provocations, the DPRK had also reiterated that the US had never fulfilled any of its obligations aside from heavy-fuel-oil deliveries and immediately brushed aside non-proliferation obligations from the IAEA in December 2002 (Pollack, 2003, p.40). The DPRK's response to their resulting energy shortages, itself the result of the collapse of the framework, was the resumption of their nuclear operations and construction of nuclear reactors that had been suspended in the mid-1990s (Pollack, 2003, p.41).

The DPRK felt that it had seemingly placed itself in a vulnerable position during negotiations by declaring a moratorium on its nuclear programmes and had seemingly felt betrayed due to what they perceived to be a lack of effort, from the US. This sense of betrayal by the Bush administration can be illustrated by Pollack (2003, p.37), “According to the MFA statement, American characterizations of North Korea as part of the ‘axis of evil’ and as a prospective target for ‘pre-emptive nuclear strike’ were ‘a gross violation of the basic spirit of the Nonproliferation Treaty [and] reduced the inter-Korean joint declaration on denuclearization to a dead document’”.

US posture towards the DPRK during the Bush administration proved to be detrimental to the significant advances made under the Clinton administration. The Bush administration had reneged on the Clinton administration's engagement policies and validation of the DPRK leadership which prompted the DPRK's withdrawal from the NPT (Pollack, 2003, p.28). The Agreed Framework had found its demise by the latter end of 2002. The DPRK believed the US had deliberately delayed the construction of the agreed LWR's stipulated in the agreement which resulted in their failed nuclear and missile diplomatic efforts. Just as the DPRK had kept to the agreements stipulated in the Agreed Framework during the Clinton administration, it had also made good on the promise to resume its nuclear programme after a unilateral U-turn by the US. Pollack (2003, p. 29) discusses the DPRK's response to the US cessation of commitments to the framework, "As a consequence, leaders in Pyongyang quickly sought to exploit the opening presented by the US decision to cease its commitments under the Agreed Framework. DPRK officials made good on their past veiled threats to resume the North's long-frozen indigenous nuclear program".

Despite the provocations made by Bush, it was the decision not to honour the framework and renege on its promises that dealt a serious blow to progressive rapprochement with the DPRK. The DPRK took it upon itself to unilaterally roll back the restraints placed upon their nuclear program for almost a decade. The DPRK had continued to reiterate its narrative, that its actions are a response to the US's hostile policy towards the nation (Pollack, 2003, p.41). US actions under the Bush administration were essential to the DPRK withdrawing from the NPT a month later, on the 10th of January 2003. Volpe (2015, p.30) describes non-proliferation promises between two adversaries as "confidence building measures", which had failed. He discusses that nations, such as the US and the DPRK have a deep distrust for one another, and in order for the upholding of such deals, sequencing was integral to the deal's success. The DPRK, felt they had been cheated as a result of the US's incomppliance and therefore opted out of the Agreed Framework.

The DPRK had little reason to adhere to any obligations discussed during the Six Party talks. After the collapse of the Agreed Framework Beijing provided the DPRK with the energy assistance the DPRK desperately craved for more than a decade and therefore nullified any potential punishment the US thought would be able to sway the DPRK's hand (Volpe, 2015,

p.29). As historically ideological allies, the Chinese played an unproductive role as guarantor in the negotiations between the various nations. This could be attributed to the Chinese and ROK understanding of what Stratford (2005, p.130) labels as “sabre rattling” or posturing. The East Asian states’ may understand the context of the DPRK’s stance far better than that of the US. Unlike the US who perceives the DPRK’s posturing as “offensive” or “belligerent”, Asian nations in the ROK and China appreciate its behaviour arising from a general state of fear and insecurity (Stratford, 2005, p.130).

Very few nations that possess nuclear programmes or conventional force on the scale of the US, are capable of leveraging their way out of various treaties or pacts of this magnitude when they feel they are being slighted, without it being to their detriment. The DPRK’s nuclear programme had so far proven invaluable in its negotiating strategies with the US. Nuclear bargaining had provided the DPRK with a tool to manipulate power relations amongst the supposed greater nations. According to Stratford (2005, p.130) the DPRK’s nuclear bargaining strategy despite being incredibly risky, has the potential to reverse great power relations and its own place in the hierarchy of geopolitical relations. The DPRK’s nuclear weapons and missile program are indicative of the continuation of the North Korean strategy to leverage foreign aid as tribute and to maintain the rhetoric of *Juche* (Stratford, 2005, p.130).

Prior to the Agreed Framework stalling, the DPRK had constructed an underground nuclear facility to house its nuclear weapons construction. The facility could be seen as a strategic manoeuvre by the Kim regime to extract a significant amount of aid, and in the process not sacrificing its reputation domestically but rather bolstering the Kim dynasty, continuously projecting its legitimacy to the DPRK’s society. The construction of the nuclear facility had enabled the DPRK to avoid humiliating pleas for humanitarian assistance and at the same time invert its traditional status as a tribute-giver to a tribute-receiver (Stratford, 2005, p.13). The DPRK would now be able to change its historically subordinate status, having provided tribute to Japan to now being able to demand economic concessions based around its nuclear programme.

Despite the timing and circumstances which provided the DPRK with the opportunity and justifications to reactivate its plutonium program, it would not be far off to suggest that they would not have rolled back restraints on their nuclear program regardless (Pollack, 2003, p.43).

It would have been too naïve to assume that the DPRK would have left its nuclear program at a standstill given that it retracts whenever it feels threatened or slighted, and given that an historical enemy had accused and threatened it, it was inevitable.

27 August 2003 saw the Six Party Talks take place with various nations urging the DPRK to yield to American non-proliferation demands and cease all activities related to the production of nuclear weapons. According to Haggard and Noland (2011, p.40), the US presented the DPRK with a set of demands that they had to meet in order to acquire concessions they deemed necessary. The DPRK had agreed to negotiate US demands only if the US would reciprocate. The DPRK agreed to the abandonment of their nuclear program by requesting the resumption of oil supplies and humanitarian aid (Haggard & Noland, 2011, p.40). The second request was that the DPRK would freeze nuclear activities, allow inspections, only if the US would sign a “legally binding nonaggression treaty” and compensate the DPRK for energy supplies they would lose as a result of the freezing (Haggard & Noland, 2011, p.40).

The third request was that the DPRK would accommodate US’s missile concerns and in order for it to happen agreed to the resumption of diplomatic ties between the two nations (Haggard & Noland, 2011, p.40). The DPRK’s final request was for the LWRs that were promised under the Agreed Framework, to be completed in return for the dismantling of their *Yongbyon* nuclear facilities (Haggard & Noland, 2011, p.40). The supposed arrogance and nature of the DPRK’s requests had led to disagreements and the stalling of negotiations between themselves and the US for a number of months, leaving the shipment of heavy fuel oil to the ROK and Japanese. Proceeding engagements between the US and North Korea were not fruitful and further talks were stalled until 2007, when some progress was seen.

Moving on from a few years of stop start negotiations, the DPRK once again attempted to play its part in acquiring concessions. The nation would accept an exchange of concessions in an “actions for actions” approach with the US (Haggard & Noland, 2011, p.41). Various exchanges were made, the freezing for the eventual abandonment and dismantling of the *Yongbyon* facilities and the declaring of its facilities for resumption of diplomatic relations between themselves and the US. The resumption of ties were to be the initial steps towards the hope of eventual normalization, lifting of trade sanctions and the removal of the DPRK from the list of state sponsors of terrorism (Haggard & Noland, 2011, p.41). As promised, a year later, the

DPRK had its trade restriction lifted for some time in conjunction with a potential removal from the list of state sponsors.

This was not to be, as the US and its allies had begun to retract on its obligations, a result of certain criteria they believed the DPRK were not fulfilling. A mirror image of the events which had played out in the collapse of the Agreed Framework a few years earlier were once again setting up another nuclear proliferation crisis in the peninsula,

“On August 26, a foreign ministry statement announced that North Korea would stop and then reverse the disablement process at *Yongbyon* and, in a thinly veiled reference by its relevant institutions. On September 24, removed IAEA seals and surveillance cameras from its reprocessing facility and restricted international inspectors from its reactor site in a virtual replay of the events of early 2003 (Haggard & Noland, 2011, p.44)”.

As discussed earlier in the dissertation, the Clinton administration had seemingly fallen behind with its promise of its lifting of sanctions on the DPRK and the transition to the Bush administration with its seemingly aggressive approach had furthermore dented seemingly progressive DPRK and US relations. Tan and Govindasamy (2012, p.5) argue that observers have criticized Bush’s so-called suspicion of the DPRK’s “exaggerated” HEU facility as it has seen to be used as justification to implement coercive US diplomacy, “Notable North Korea observers, in particular Gavan McCormack, have argued that the DPRK’s alleged HEU facility had been exaggerated by the Bush administration in order to justify a posture of coercive diplomacy against North Korea”.

All the economic and political pressures the US and its allies placed upon the DPRK were deemed futile. Despite supposed breakthroughs at various points during the Clinton and latter part of the Bush administrations. Furthermore, sanctions placed upon by the latter’s administration only seemed to have provided the nation with greater suspicion and leverage to resume its nuclear programs. Haggard and Noland (2011, p.45) reiterate, “But the strategy of pressuring North Korea was not only futile, it was also counterproductive. North Korea responded to both military threats and economic pressure by accelerating their pursuit of weapons, most notably in early 2003, in 2006, and again in 2008-2009, leading ultimately to the second round of missile and nuclear tests in the first year of the Obama administration”. The DPRK’s nuclear proliferation failure would continue into the Obama administration.

4.4.3. Failure of strategic patience under the Obama administration

In a similar vein to that of the Clinton administration, the Obama administration was committed to extending an olive branch to all of its historical foes, the DPRK not being an exception. As Haggard and Noland (2011, p.48) state, the DPRK was in no mood to exchange pleasantries. Almost immediately, the DPRK had tested its nuclear weapons, a clear indication of its desire to withdraw from various forms of rapprochement. In response, the DPRK had once again had “wide-ranging multilateral sanctions” placed upon them by the US (Haggard & Noland, 2011, p.48). This was part of a “two-track” policy or “strategic patience” pursued by the Obama administration, by continuing with sanctions, but at the same time, urged the DPRK to return to the negotiating table. Unlike the Bush and Clinton administrations, the Obama administrations offered no incentives, but reiterated the benefits of reaching a settlement and obligations discussed at the Six Party Talks in 2005 (Haggard & Noland, 2011, p.48).

The DPRK responded to the imposing of these sanctions by escalating tensions (Haggard, 2011, p.48). They shunned the talks and sought to replace the armistice, which had been in place since the Korean War with a “peace regime” (Haggard & Noland, 2011, p.48). These hard line negotiating strategies were to the benefit of the DPRK, particularly as the bargaining chip which was its nuclear weapons had in fact provided them with the leverage they had so sorely craved and its nuclear facilities were not to be abandoned during these talks, “North Korea eschewed the Six Party process, and sought four-party (or, ideally, three-party) talks on a ‘peace regime’ that would replace the armistice. These talks would occur in advance of or, at best, in parallel with the Six Party process. In the interim, North Korea would remain—*de facto* if not *de jure*—a nuclear power (Haggard & Noland, 2011, p.48)”. The regime had for years prior, attempted to reach a point of diplomatic prestige that it might be able to come to the table with the US and its allies and put forward its terms without being rejected outrightly.

Most DPRK missile tests had displayed their “sanctions-defiance” strategy with the continued disregard for the various obligations. The missile tests were direct responses to the failure of those that were obliged to fulfil requirements agreed upon in various treaties and negotiations from the past few years. The cut-off of HFO shipments in 2002, the joint suspension of HFO shipments by the US, Japan and the ROK in 2008 were contributing factors to the DPRK’s bargaining leverage tactics by missile and nuclear tests (Haggard & Noland, 2011, p. 49).

Haggard and Noland (2011, p.49) state that despite the DPRK using their nuclear and missile tests for leverage and diplomatic power, the nation is not immune to complacency. As mentioned earlier, the DPRK's sanction-defiant posture may create a position where they find it difficult to recover a favourable position in potential negotiations Haggard and Noland (2011, p.49) reiterate this,

“A second variant of this argument sees the North Koreans as bargaining, but acknowledges that North Korea severely miscalculated the international reaction to the missile and nuclear tests, and later to the sinking of the Cheonan and shelling of Yeonpyeong Island. As a result, North Korea may have intended to negotiate but, in fact, set in motion the sanctions-defiance spiral from which it became increasingly difficult to exit. By overplaying their hand, Pyongyang made it politically difficult, if not impossible, for the United States, South Korea, and Japan to engage”.

The nuclear deterrence strategies that the DPRK eventually adopted seemed to evolve as time progressed. The DPRK believed that the US could not be trusted, and that regardless of any framework put in place, the likelihood of the US honouring it, coupled with US history in Korean peninsula, persuaded it to pull out of the NPT and the aforementioned Agreed Framework. Hence the DPRK's rhetoric toward nuclear weapons had become firmly entrenched as a political tool for deterrence of US nuclear threat in the Korean peninsula (Bermudez Jr., 2015, p.12).

In 2012, Kim Jong-un displayed his willingness to engage in potential rapprochement with the US under conditions more favourable to DPRK (Tan & Govindasamy, 2012, p. 6). Tan and Govindasamy (2012, p.6) note that the DPRK had requested the US and its allies to reciprocate the DPRK's gestures with humanitarian and economic assistance and as a result a possible change in diplomatic posture, “For instance, in March this year [2012], DPRK Vice Foreign Minister Ri Yong-ho indicated to the USA that Pyongyang was willing to open up the Yongbyon nuclear facility to IAEA inspection in exchange for food aid from the US”. This is definitely a marked shift for the DPRK, as they had previously claimed that IAEA inspections provided a platform for potential US coercive action on the DPRK. These bilateral demands on the part of the DPRK are a consequence of this very suspicion that, the multilateral approach of the Six-Party Talks may have been a strategy of US coercive diplomacy by maximising the amount of diplomatic pressure and one never about engagement (Tan & Govindasamy, 2012, p.6).

Despite the DPRK seemingly attempting more pragmatic policy decisions towards the US in their objective for rapprochement, rhetoric from those a part of the Six-Party talks have seemingly undermined the progress made. The hindrance to rapprochement was a result of the Obama administrations reluctance to have any dialogue with the DPRK outside of the Six-Party Talks context (Snyder & Byun, 2009, p.20). The DPRK rejected this approach. Kim Jong-un rejected any possible concessions with the US in the context of the Six-Party Talks. These concessions were rejected as President Lee Myung Bak of the ROK's conservative Grand National Party reiterated a desire for reunification of Korea through the absorption of the North and thus bringing about the collapse of the regime (Tan & Govindasamy, 2012, p.7). It is also important to note that the continuous conflicting foreign policy approaches by the DPRK had been apparent since the passing of Kim Jong-un's father, Kim Jong-il, in December of 2011.

Kim Jong-un, like his predecessor, has maintained the DPRK's army as his primary base of power consolidation. He has had to exploit the moves his father had taken in accepting foreign investment for the nation (Tan & Govindasamy, 2012, p.8). Kim Jong-un has had to seemingly contradict various principles stipulated by the *Juche* ideology. Tan & Govindasamy (2012, p.8) reiterate Kim Jong-un's complex predicament,

“Kim Jong-un is, no doubt, aware of the importance of the DPRK military as his primary power base in consolidating his regime's authority; the prospect of a politically unreliable army of starving soldiers no doubt underlines the precariousness of his grip on power. Seen in this light, it is notable that the late Kim Jong-il had, during the late 1990s, undertaken a limited move towards encouraging foreign investment in the country, as reflected in the opening of the Kaesong Industrial Complex and the Mt. Kumgang Resort with the assistance of ROK capital. Furthermore, it is hopeful that the younger Kim's early education in Switzerland may have granted the new Supreme Leader a more enlightened perspective into the West and thus, a willingness to embrace reform, however limited”.

Although this thesis does not cover the Trump administration's engagement with the DPRK, the final chapter will discuss some of the current developments on the Korean peninsula. The following section will look at the role *Juche* plays in informing the DPRK's nuclear and foreign policy making.

4.5. How *Juche* motivates North Korean nuclear and foreign policy making

The *Juche* ideology has entrenched a nationalistic, isolationist idea of the DPRK since the informal ending of the Korean War. The reinterpretation and development of one of its core principles, “self-reliance”, and the subsequent formulation of “*Songun*” politics under the Kim Jong-il regime, has been maintained under the leadership of the DPRK’s current leader, Kim Jong-un. Similar to how the *Juche* ideology has evolved, if ever so slightly to the changing global and domestic circumstances, the DPRK’s foreign policy evolved in step. The DPRK’s strategic objectives can be traced back to nearly half a century to the nation’s establishment (Quinones, 2008, p.4). According to Quinones (2008, p.4), Kim Jong-il’s strategic priorities remain today, through *Juche*: “national reunification, countering imperialism and building a self-reliant socialist economy, all goals echoed in Kim’s ‘Guiding Principles of the *Juche* Idea’”.

The DPRK has pursued a nuclear program for the best part of six decades (Bermudez Jr., 2015, p. 7). This pursuit, coupled with the DPRK’s constant reiteration of its stance of “self-reliance”, a core principle of *Juche*, had prompted a drive to level the diplomatic playing field. With the advancement of military technology, nuclear weapons had been created and possessed by global powers as a means of a shield and sword in modern society. The DPRK had acknowledged that this technology, capable of the utmost destruction, carried enough leverage to deter potential invasions or blackmail states into exacting various concessions. According to Bermudez Jr. (2015, p.8), the Korean people had first been introduced to nuclear technology during the bombings of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and following nuclear threats by the US in the 1950s. The destructive nature of nuclear weapons and the perceived US imperial threat, had backed the Kim Il-sung regime into a corner and halted the Korean War, with the negotiation of an Armistice Agreement (Bermudez Jr., 2015, p.8).

These unconventional threats can be understood within the framework of the *Juche* ideology and the acknowledgement that the DPRK would now have to ensure its sovereignty, by expanding its nuclear and missile weapons programme. Bermudez Jr. (2015, p.8) reiterates the link of nuclear weapons development and the overriding strategic principles stipulated by *Juche*; such as the survival of the Kim dynasty, deterrence of the US and its allies, elimination

of internal threats, the economic development of the nation and reunification of the DPRK and ROK.

The 1980s and 1990s saw the DPRK attribute its nuclear weapons program to foreign exchange income and the prestige that comes with having a ballistic missile program, in conjunction with its defensive and offensive attributes. Scobell and Sanford (2007, p.119) describes this stance by labelling the DPRK's weapons as a "*Juche*" sword and shield, as the original impetus was to create the regimes own offensive capability and deterrent to the US, Japan and the ROK. As the DPRK never officially "ended" its war with the US and its perceived "lapdog" and neighbour, the ROK, it has had to ensure that its defensive capabilities were able to deter any potential threat.

This desire for a nuclear weapons program confirms that the DPRK did not want to be indebted to the USSR or China for their own protection from potential aggressors. Their historical experience at the hands of their former colonialists Japan, who claimed to be their "protectorate" had only amplified their hesitance towards this Sino-USSR idea. The pursuit of a nuclear weapons arsenal over the years showcased by the DPRK's historical insecurities of subjugation but also their reliance on the *Juche* ideology (Scobell & Sanford, 2007, p.119). The various motivations provided above, illustrates the DPRK's *Juche* ideology as a tool to keep the nation afloat whilst isolated from the international community. The *Juche* principle of self-sufficiency is more than reiterated by the DPRK's manufacturing of missile equipment and technologies for foreign actors (Scobell & Sanford, 2007, p.119). Despite the DPRK's isolation from most of the international community, its membership to the non-aligned movement (NAM) was based on principles and objectives followed through years prior (Krishnan, 1981, p.300). The objectives and principles promoted by the DPRK fell in line with those promoted by the non-aligned movement, namely the opposition of imperialism, independence in domestic and foreign policy colonialism and neo-colonialism amongst other forms of domination (Krishnan, 1981, p.300). With the nation being cut off from the open-market, the manufacturing and selling of these technologies to other Third World nations within the non-aligned movement has proven to be beneficial and allowed them to survive whilst isolated. The NAM had allowed Kim Il-sung to propagate the ideas of *Juche* to the rest of its members, and had helped fuel his ambition for the DPRK to be seen as a model for Third World development (Armstrong, 2009,

p.2). Thus NAM provided Kim Il-sung the platform to promote the DPRK's *Juche* idea shared by fellow members of the global south and allow his regime to engage in diplomacy in the international arena that had previously been inaccessible. It had also allowed him to showcase not only to other Third World nations but to a local audience that the DPRK would now be a nation to be revered. Being party of the NAM also allowed the DPRK to show solidarity to members in their independence struggles through the 1950s and 1980s (Armstrong, 2009, p.4).

The production of nuclear weapons thus followed Kim Il-sung's *Juche* principle of "self-reliance" as the nation looked to deter possible imperialists rather than engage in full-scale war that could be to the detriment of the nation. *Juche's* reiteration of "self-reliance" and scepticism of allies provides another motivation for the DPRK's own nuclear arsenal as Scobell and Sanford (2007, p.83) state that a motivation for the DPRK to acquire its own nuclear arsenal was to reduce dependence on others and to be able to decide its own fate,

"Another motivation for North Korea to acquire its own nuclear weapons would be to reduce dependence on the Soviet Union and China. In the past, Pyongyang had to rely on the nuclear umbrellas of another capital. This left North Korea's fate in the hands of foreign country. Pyongyang was uncomfortable with this arrangement, since Moscow and Beijing have proved unreliable. Both of its patrons were suspect. Pyongyang reportedly was shocked when Khrushchev backed down during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, and betrayed when Moscow normalized relations with Seoul in 1990".

It would have been contradictory for the DPRK to rely on its allies to deter potential aggressors, since the *Juche* ideology stipulates self-reliance in defense. The experiences of unfruitful friendships with "so-called" allies, had entrenched their military first policy more than ever before. With communist regimes having capitulated towards the end of the Cold War, and the DPRK's feeling of betrayal by China when it compromised its socialist ideology for an open market, capitalist system when the realization that they were solely responsible for their futures, reached a peak (Scobell and Sanford, 2007, p.83). Scobell and Sanford (2007, 83) reiterate this, "Moreover, this desire to possess its own independent defense capability is consistent with *Juche* ideology. North Korea should never depend on another power for its own security. Nuclear weapons may represent for Pyongyang the ultimate *Juche* weapon".

As Volpe (2015, p.18) states, former non-nuclear states such as the DPRK acknowledged the costs and risks involved when switching from chemical to nuclear weapons, "Once a state

enters the ENR [uranium enrichment and plutonium] zone, the government is primed for coercive diplomacy because it has the technical means to issue credible threats of proliferation, even if it ultimately seeks other civilian or military ends”. Wit and Ahn (2015, p.11) reiterate the DPRK’s nascent nuclear strategy, “Confronted with external security threats – particularly from the United States and its nuclear arsenal – the country’s leadership and Korean People’s Army (KPA) devised a strategy that appears to have evolved over time in response to changing external and internal circumstances”. With the development and eventual possession of their own nuclear weapons, it has proven beneficial with regards to diplomatic leverage and prestige, something the DPRK had been lacking since its inception. Pyongyang had recognized by the 1990s that its missile program could be a useful bargaining chip to gain leverage in negotiations. The missile program allowed the regime to grab the attention of who they perceived to be as ‘prestigious nations’ such as Japan and the US. It would allow the DPRK to extract concessions from states far easier than prior to their missile program (Scobell & Sanford, 2007, p.12).

Pollack (2003, p.8) reiterates this, by describing the DPRK’s vulnerable stance in the international community and its attempts to punch above its weight in the international community, “It has parlayed its vulnerabilities, nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs, and the ever-present threat of a second Korean war into a finely honed negotiating strategy”. Volpe (2015, p.9) describes the DPRK’s coercive bargaining strategies as “Proliferation Persuasion”. The strategy involves a challenger in the DPRK, and targets in this particular case, the US. The challenger threatens to proliferate, either by selling weapons to other non-proliferation states or producing and testing their own nuclear weapons and missiles. The threat more often than not involves the desire for certain concessions, whether it may be political or economic in nature.

Volpe (2015, p. 10) illustrates strategies implemented by the DPRK to extract concessions from others in the international arena, “The first requirement is for the challenger to signal that its decision to forego nuclear weapons on the target’s compliance with a clear set of demands. The most blatant manifestation is blackmail. A challenger demands the target pay tribute in return for immunity from future harassment”. The 1990s was an era emblematic of these strategies, as they were seen to be policies of “reactive self-preservation”. By the early 1990s, Washington

was on high alert over the DPRK's proliferation potential as the nation had become well versed in coercive diplomacy and compellence. Their new strategy had allowed the DPRK to extract concessions from Washington and Seoul (Volpe, 2015, p.46).

The DPRK, and in particular the Kim Jong-il regime believed nuclear weapons could be used for more than just extracting concessions and buying time (Volpe, 2015, p.47). Historically, the DPRK has never had the prestige and diplomatic power of hegemonic states to negotiate for concessions with other actors within the international community. The DPRK's strategy of focussing on the development of its missile and nuclear programs have seemingly allowed the state to shun the pressures and critiques of the international community to sign the Non-proliferation Treaty. The DPRK has maintained a stance on nuclear weapons that has prevented their adversaries such as the US, whom they believe could use their own nuclear weapons, to pressurize the DPRK into submission and the Kim dynasty to collapse.

This can be illustrated through the DPRK's entering and exiting of the enrichment and reprocessing zones [ENR] through the production of fissile material and highly enriched uranium for nuclear weapons and therefore becoming a credible threat to nuclear proliferation (Volpe, 2015, p.12). The DPRK entered the ENR zone for two reasons. The first reason was to ensure that the regime could achieve its nuclear breakout capacity and using coercive diplomacy was a viable delaying tactic (Volpe, 2015, p.46). Volpe (2015, p. 47) notes that the second reason the DPRK waited in the ENR zone was that the Kim regime's survival depended on extorting concessions from foreign governments to sustain the military and political elite. The collapse of the left the DPRK in need of fresh sources of foreign aid, its nuclear latency provided the regime with an excellent tool to compel concessions from unwilling sponsors.

As has been illustrated in this dissertation, the DPRK's use of proliferation blackmail was integral to the regime's survival after the Cold War era and the end of communism on an international scale (Volpe, 2015, p.47). Since the DPRK's proliferation blackmail strategy had been able to extract concessions from "unwilling" sponsors during a testing period, it had more or less indicated to the DPRK's hierarchy that the possession of nuclear devices may indeed prove invaluable for regime survival in the years to come. As *Juche* has been a guideline for regime survival, North Korea's pursuit of nuclear devices that would provide this security, has not been in vain. Volpe (2015, p. 48) notes, "When a small weak country such as North Korea

pours large amounts of scarce resources into its nuclear structure, it is unlikely to trade away this latent capacity to proliferate for material concessions or political enticements”. As discussed earlier, a country realises the limitless potential a nuclear weapons programme could offer. One of the main objectives of the DPRK since its inception had been the Kim dynasty’s survival.

Lewis (2012) discusses the North Korean view of limitless potential of a nuclear weapons programme as portrayed by a 2012 four part sequel to a 1988 DPRK propaganda film, called “The Country I Saw”. The feature length film, available on Youtube, provides a unique opportunity to grasp nuclear weapons through the lens of the DPRK. Presented as a four part fictional film, produced by the DPRK’s own *Chosun* Art Film Studio, it depicts the nation’s use of nuclear weapons as a sword and shield through the dialogue of Japanese and DPRK characters. The plot revolves around a Japanese professor, Aiko Kayama, situated in Tokyo, urging Japanese students and those she meets during the film, that the DPRK’s pursuit of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles is justifiable (Lewis, 2012). The film illustrates how Professor Kayama explains the DPRK’s nuclear justification through the premise of nuclear-based politics and that there is a different lens to nuclear ambition than what is depicted by the West. The character, Professor Kayama, discusses the importance of physical power in current global politics for non-nuclear states to develop nuclear weapons as a way to deter potential aggressors (Lewis, 2012).

Lewis (2012) analyses Professor Kayama’s reiteration of the US’s determination to label the DPRK an outpost of tyranny that should not be able to exist in peace under the George W. Bush administration. For the DPRK regime, its nuclear weapons programme has carved a previously inaccessible avenue to deter hostile US actions and to legitimize and preserve the DPRK regime. Professor Kayama discusses the importance of the DPRK pursuing nuclear weapons as it was the only way to deter the US from threatening the DPRK after it left the NPT and peaceful coexistence on the peninsula. The film also depicts the DPRK’s nuclear test as a tactic to force an engagement with the US and to return to the Six Party Talks (Lewis, 2012). “The Country I Saw” provides a DPRK context of its ambitions for the justification of its nuclear weapons programme as a way for the regime to survive in a hostile environment and to gain the legitimization of the global powers that they believe seek to denounce it. The film ends with a

meeting between Bill Clinton and Kim Jong-il, then leaders of the US and the DPRK. This ending suggests that in the worldview of the North Koreans, nuclear weapons provide not only security, but recognition in international relations and the eventual outcome of peaceful coexistence with its erstwhile powerful nemesis.

Alongside the DPRK's nuclear weapons and constant reinforcing of *Juche's* isolationist principle of self-sufficiency, has paradoxically coincided with a seemingly gradual domestic economic reform and an increase in international relations (Stratford, 2005, p.130). The impact of *Juche* on the DPRK's nuclear weapons program has seemingly created a paradox within its foreign policy, whereby the DPRK has sought economic assistance and gradual diplomatic reforms, something that would not have been heard of in the early days of Kim Il-sung's rule. Stratford (2005, p.130) reiterates this shift from its original forms of militarism and isolation to economic reform,

“Significantly, while assisting in attempts to maintain an appearance of self-sufficiency and delaying the need for North Korea to open up to global economic forces, nuclear bargaining has increasingly coincided with measured, if somewhat reluctant, steps towards domestic economic reform. These reforms have been more than matched by increasing international diplomatic relations, further reinforcing a perceptible shift away from pure militarism toward a more traditional and diplomatically focused approach to strategic affairs”.

As explained earlier, the DPRK initially struggled to acquire the recognition they craved within the international community and as a result, Kim Il-sung believed that possessing nuclear weapons could potentially change this position. According to Wit and Ahn (2015, p.11) nuclear weapons could achieve five objectives that conventional methods of war could not achieve. Firstly it would be able to maintain the Kim family's leadership, by espousing the *Juche* ideology of self-reliance and the rousing of the masses to enable the production of a nuclear program for defence. Secondly, it would eliminate internal threats to leadership as it would legitimise the Kim regime, and maintain the myth of the heroics of the Kim family in the face of imperialism whilst brandishing internal threats to leadership as traitors to the DPRK's sovereignty and its ideals.

Thirdly, a nuclear weapons program could prove to be a deterrent for the DPRK's nemeses, the ROK and the US as it has proven to be. The DPRK feared that the might of the combined superior conventional forces of the US and the ROK were reasons in itself to produce nuclear

weapons, as a form of self-preservation and insurance (Scobell & Sanford, 2006, p.79). They seem to believe that the stockpiling of a nuclear weapons arsenal amongst powerful states, such as those in the P5 represents the defiance of the unequal distribution of power in the international community and thus gives the DPRK the grounds to protect itself. Scobell and Sanford (2007, p.80) depict the DPRK's emphasis of the contradictory nature of the possession of nuclear weapons in the international community by hegemonic powers such as the US by mentioning a discussion between a DPRK Foreign Minister, Pak Song Chol, and a USSR ambassador in August 1962, "The Americans...blackmails the people with their nuclear weapons, and with their help, rule on these continents and do not intend to leave. Their possession of nuclear weapons, and the lack thereof in our hands, objectively helps them, therefore, to eternalize their rule. They have a large stockpile and we are to be forbidden even to think about the manufacture of nuclear weapons".

Hence, the DPRK believes that states without unconventional means of power such as nuclear weapons, and inferior conventional means of protection would easily capitulate to the demands or agendas of hegemonic states in the international community. Thus, the production of a nuclear weapons arsenal is a means to deter invading forces and provide a suitable defence for weaker states if provoked. The DPRK's blighted history further reinforces its desire to possess nuclear weaponry. Scobell and Sanford (2007, p.80) state three reasons for the DPRK's pursuit of nuclear weapons for defence purposes. The first reason is the DPRK's paranoia; the DPRK, for decades, has been sceptical of the intentions of those seeking goodwill with the state and extremely distrustful of the US and other "enemies". Secondly, the DPRK feels they have been victim to threats and use of nuclear weapons for more than half a century. They cite the deaths of Korean slave labourers working in Japan during the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 and how an imperial force such as Japan was able to capitulate (Scobell & Sanford, 2007, p.81).

Thirdly, Scobell and Sanford (2007, p.81) cite the case of Iraq which had reinforced the DPRK's determination for a nuclear weapons programme, as it had taught them that by not having an insurance policy such as nuclear weapons leaves a nation open to attack and invasion from foreigners. They continue to cite the DPRK's ambassador to the UN, Pak Kil Yon's case of Iraq and other "weaker" nations who are not in possession of advanced military capabilities

ability to defend itself from others. During Kim Jong-il's regime, on the 6th of October 2006, the Foreign Ministry reiterated the necessity for the ability to deter war. Based on lessons learned around the world, they believed that a nation without the means of a war deterrent are bound to meet a tragic death and at risk of losing its sovereignty (Scobell & Sanford, 2007, p.82).

The experiences of Syria and Libya had seemingly played a vital role during the Kim Jong-il era to accelerate its nuclear and missile programmes, "A further evolution of North Korea's strategy, was spurred on by the acceleration of nuclear and missile programme's during the last years of Kim Jong-il's rule but also by external events – the 2007 destruction of a North Korean reactor under construction in Syria by an Israeli airstrike and the 2011 US-led attack on Libya eight years after that country gave up its WMD programs (Wit & Ahn, 2015, p.11)". These experiences may have only emboldened the principles stipulated by Juche, providing potential scenarios for the DPRK if it did not pursue and improve its missile and nuclear programs.

The fourth objective they believe nuclear weapons could achieve is the economic development of the nation and lastly the ultimate goal of reunification of the Korean peninsula (Wit & Ahn, 2015, p.11). Nuclear weapons are seen as the ultimate weapon to be had amongst the international community; it provides state might and the ability to ward off potential threats from seemingly hostile nations and more powerful adversaries. The DPRK's nuclear programme has already seen certain advances with the ROK that had been seemingly impossible prior to its development. Wit and Ahn (2015, p.12) states, "The key question for the future is whether Pyongyang has ambitions to establish deterrence based on a strategy beyond assured retaliation that includes options for the limited initial use of nuclear weapons in order to bolster credibility of deterrence".

This strategy would be the result of perceived hostile forces as Wit and Ahn (2015, p.12) reiterates, "Just like NATO was confronted by the Soviet Union during the Cold War and Pakistan faces a superior India today, Pyongyang is confronted by more capable American and South Korean conventional forces". A nuclear strategy for deterrence would have to be integrated into the DPRK's military ideology (Wit & Ahn, 2015, p.12). Wit and Ahn (2015, p. 12) continue by discussing that the evolving policy of the DPRK with regards to the role of their

nuclear and missile arsenal is that it may go beyond deterring high-end attacks, to being able to deter lower end levels of aggression too.

Furthermore, the impact of historical events that had cultivated the *Juche* ideology which in turn influenced the DPRK's nuclear weapons program can be divided into five specific historical periods (Wit & Ahn, 2015, p.26). As the *Juche* ideology is the culmination of the Korean historical experience, it is therefore equally important to acknowledge important periods that played a decisive factor in the acquisition of nuclear weapons program. Wit and Ahn (2015, p.26) describes these periods as; the fatherland liberation war and reconstruction period between 1950 and 1960, the substituting of chemical weapons for a nuclear deterrent between 1960 and 1976, the nuclear weapons as diplomatic symbols, between 1976 to 1989 and the refining of their strategy from 1989 to the early 2000s. The 1960s and 1970s led to the institutionalisation of practical defensive nuclear warfare capabilities (Wit & Ahn, 2015, p.26). The institutionalisation of the DPRK's defensive nuclear capabilities was a response to their continued concerns of the US nuclear threat (Wit & Ahn, 2015, p.26). The 1970s to late 1980s saw the DPRK develop a "rudimentary deterrence strategy" that focused on the diplomatic utility of their nuclear weapons arsenal than it being a "sword" or offensive tool (Wit & Ahn, 2015, p.26).

The *Juche* ideology has provided the DPRK with the framework to react to every decision or action by external forces, especially its adversaries, with a sense paranoia. This paranoia may have seemingly affected the DPRK's historical track record in its nuclear disarmament negotiations with the US and other international actors. The DPRK's paranoia may be indicative of its "simultaneous action" approach, a result of the belief the consequent regimes have acquired from the leverage a nuclear weapons programme can provide (Tan & Govindasamy, 2012, p.5). The DPRK's "simultaneous action" posture seems to point to the belief that the actors whom they had previously negotiated with, most notably the US, had not negotiated in good faith, thus prompting the nation's evolving diplomatic strategies. The DPRK's "simultaneous action" posture is not unfounded though. Tan and Govindasamy (2012, p.5) note the DPRK's rejection of preconditions were not baseless, "In previous episodes of interaction between Washington and Pyongyang, the DPRK had offered fairly significant concessions to US demands, only to be publicly rebuffed. For instance, following the signing of the Agreed

Framework of October 1994, the DPRK suspended activity at the *Yongbyon* nuclear facility and placed its stockpile of nuclear material under storage in preparation for removal from North Korea”.

Orcutt (2004, p. 16) notes that by the DPRK making use of its nuclear weapons as a negotiating tactic and ability to bring the US to the negotiating table, the Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-un regimes have been able to expand the scope of negotiations. The DPRK tactic could be seen as using the arsenal as a strategy to maximise their gains by providing minimal concessions (Orcutt, 2004, p.16). Hence, with the constant testing of their weapons program and missiles, they have over time, become skilled practitioners of brinkmanship, allowing them to acquire whichever gains they deem necessary (Scobell & Sanford, 2007, p.123). Scobell and Sanford (2006, p.123) reiterate this skill,

“In addition, the launches can pave the way for a return to dialogue by North Korea, providing key leverage for Pyongyang in negotiations. The missile tests express North Korea’s defiance but may also indicate a desire to talk. Pyongyang is a skilled practitioner of brinkmanship. The intent of provocative acts is to win concessions and material rewards for suspending the behaviour and/or showing up for talks”.

Economic sanctions placed on the DPRK had seemingly not forced its hand at any particular point in time. The DPRK had perhaps not only used the development of their nuclear and missile programmes to extract concessions and potential rapprochement, but perhaps used them as a continuous showcase of its political leverage in the international arena. Acknowledging the nation’s historical insecurities of subjugation, the nation has time and again reiterated that it will not be bullied in negotiations, in rapprochement with the ROK and the US.

By developing a nuclear and missile program the DPRK has been able to coercively negotiate its sovereignty and consolidate its regime by hurdling countless obstacles. Not only internationally but also on the home front by unofficially becoming part of the nuclear club. Whilst the administration espouses *Juche’s* nationalist rhetoric and demands utter loyalty to the regime, there are more than likely citizens who might view the regime in a negative light as a result of socio-economic circumstances, and the production of a nuclear weapons program may ensure their loyalty and acknowledge the regime’s accomplishments (Scobell & Sanford, 2007, p.85). Scobell and Sanford (2007, p.85) reiterate,

“North Korea’s status as a member of the exclusive nuclear club is a prestigious badge. But for North Korea, the domestic audience may be equally if not more important than foreign perceptions. There is little doubt that this prestige motivation is very important for Pyongyang. Would the legend of Kim Il-sung’s genius be complete unless the Great Leader could be lauded as the father of the DPRK’s very own nuclear program? The pursuit of nuclear weapons by countries such as Iran and Pakistan inspires intense feelings of nationalism and pride”.

As mentioned, the ensuring of regime legitimacy has been one of, if not the Kim dynasty’s ultimate goal on both the home and foreign fronts. With the nation having been under domestic and international pressures since its inception, nuclear weapons may strengthen the regimes position on both fronts,

“Very possibly, Pyongyang is responding as much to domestic pressures as it is to external pressures. Even if there are no real domestic pressures, Pyongyang’s leaders may perceive these to be present probably among the elites and perhaps even among ordinary North Koreans. In any case, the Pyongyang regime’s nuclear program is one instance in which DPRK leaders can take legitimate credit for a still unfolding success story (Scobell & Sanford, 2007, p.87)”.

4.6. Conclusion

This chapter provided a detailed description of the early evolution of the DPRK’s nuclear weapons and missile programme. The chapter also provided a chronological timeline of the DPRK’s brinkmanship with the various US administrations. The timeline ranged from the George W. Bush administration and its labelling of the DPRK as part of the “axis of evil”, rapprochement under the Clinton administration to the failure of strategic patience under the Obama administration.

5. Conclusion

This dissertation has looked to explain the claim that the political ideology of *Juche* has been integral to the DPRK's development of a nuclear weapons and missile programme. The ideology was born out of the DPRK's social values that were constructed over decades of turmoil in the Korean peninsula. These social values seemingly play an integral part in the national interests of the nation. As mentioned by Lerche Jr. & Said (1963, p.7) earlier in the thesis, *Juche's* espousal of national interests such as regime survival, national security, reunification and economic self-reliance play a key role in giving a nation a general policy orientation to the external environment. Through the Constructivist lens, we are able to see how *Juche* is the culmination of Korean experiences of colonialism and occupation of outside entities and the Korean revolution, it paved the way for survival of the Kim regime through militarization for almost half a century (Kim, 1983, p.5). It is clear to see that the DPRK's turbulent history with imperialists had influenced the way the regime and its people have reacted and continue to react, to the slightest provocation from various players in the international community especially the US and the ROK. Constructivism played an important role in deconstructing and understanding the events that impacted *Juche's* evolution since its inception under Kim Il-sung through to Kim Jong-un, that had only reaffirmed and bolstered the nation's resolve to pursue a nuclear weapons and missile programme through the refining of the *Juche* ideology and focus on the militarization of the state. The DPRK had identified that its foreign policy objectives of reunification and integration into the international community would only be a distant reality if it did not pursue an unconventional force that would allow the regime to survive for as long as it has.

The DPRK's nuclear and missile programmes have proven to be an invaluable asset to its strategic culture within the realm of international relations and domestic policy. This is apparent in the DPRK's membership to the NAM and how they've attributed a different meaning to their nuclear and missile programmes to assert itself in the international arena as a means to gain prestige and leverage. As mentioned in the dissertation, the DPRK's strategic use of force has been used as an "instrument of policy" in what Stratford (2005, p.131) describes as "an increasingly challenging and even hostile strategic environment". Despite the hostile environment, a probable effect of the nation's perceived posture, moulded by *Juche*, has been to

a certain extent to exercise an effective negotiating strategy. This has seemingly been made possible by the manipulation of real and perceived military power, despite the various barriers that have prohibited the nation from benefitting from an interconnected global system.

The dissertation has also illustrated how the DPRK has been able to tailor their traditional strategic culture with a nuclear and missile programme throughout the years, “At the same time though, the acquisition of such powerful deterrent capabilities can be seen as providing a very real opportunity to change the course and pattern of Korean history and by implication, its very own strategic culture as well, by providing the state with the ability to indefinitely deter future invasions (Stratford, 2005, p.131)”. Their ideologically based pursuit of a nuclear and missile programme coupled with tough-handed diplomacy tactics may have paradoxically paved the way for pragmatic foreign policy decisions and negotiations with the US and South Korea in the future. *Juche* has provided the Kim dynasty with a blueprint for regime consolidation and international recognition it has craved within the international community and has achieved economic self-sufficiency to a certain degree through strategic use of their nuclear and missile programmes throughout the years. The DPRK has shown that despite their traditional suspicions of the US and the ROK, it is willing to negotiate if all sides are able to honour agreements.

By the time this thesis neared its completion the DPRK had made tremendous steps in rapprochement with the ROK. Seemingly putting their tumultuous past behind them, the DPRK’s Kim Jong-un and the ROK’s president Moon Jae-in met and pledged to work together to formally end the Korean War and a possible cessation of nuclear weapons testing in the peninsula (Tan, 2018). History has shown that the DPRK will not agree to a unilateral disarmament unless it is given assurances that disarmament would be on a global scale. The US might have to follow the ROK blueprint of a “freeze for freeze” moratorium in exchange for concessions. The Trump administration might have to alter the traditional US approach of isolation and “maximum pressure” if there is to be any success in the upcoming summit between his administration and Kim Jong-un’s DPRK in Singapore on the 12th of June 2018 (Borger, 2018).

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