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ETHNIC NATIONALISM IN NORTH KOREAN
POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AND CULTURE

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Abstract

This study examines nationalism in North Korea through an exploration of that country’s political ideology and culture throughout time. It argues that a nationalist consciousness has always existed in North Korean history, but that it has been purposely changed and manipulated in form to deal with at-the-time difficulty and circumstance that the regime was faced with. This study asserts that state ideology was more state-focused and subtle in nature in the earlier decades, and more *ethnic*, or ethnic-group oriented, and extreme in latter decades. More concretely, a state-based patriotism is seen to have *constructed* the nation in the 1950s and 1960s, and an ethnic-based nationalism is seen to have *maintained* the nation from the mid-1970s onwards. This claim is illustrated in the thesis by various primary material of a propagandistic nature sourced from the time and published in North Korea, and supported by a recreation of the political and social milieu in which these data were domestically consumed. A theoretical base underpinning the argument is provided in opening, and an elaboration into the main themes of the structure of North Korean ethnic nationalism is given in closing.
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Chapter 1. Introduction

Having defied countless predictions of collapse in recent decades, North Korea is now viewed by scholars as a problem to be dealt with in the somewhat indeterminate future. In defining its longevity, one could put forth various notions of a state buttressed by a strong military, or a society completely closed off from the perils of the outside world, but the viewpoint that this study employs is one of an ideological perspective. This study upholds the belief that viewing North Korea through its software, or its ideology, is key to understanding the durability of its past, present and possibly future.

Traditional focus on North Korean ideology has centred on Juche, the much lauded line of self-reliance that emerged in the mid-1950s and became of great prominence from the 1970s onward. Helpful it is in allowing us to learn how the North Koreans view themselves officially, yet not so effective it is in actuality when defining its most meaningful and passionate rhetoric. Looking at North Korea as the last remaining hardline socialist state devoid of its internationalist league, scholars have now come to turn a more detailed eye to its ideological composition.

In characterising a nature supremacist and isolated, the literature is in consensus when categorising North Korea’s true ideology as nationalism.1 Seeing through the veneer of the official line, a new wave spearheaded by North Korean literature specialist Brian R. Myers is going beyond this basic definition, elucidating that it is a nationalism of specific form; precisely, ethnic. The idea of ethnic nationalism, or its more extreme form, ethnic supremacy, historically conjures up overwhelmingly negative sentiments, as evidenced by Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan, and other countless ethnic cleansings. The position this study takes however, is that there is more to be gained. One must view the pleasures as well as the pains of such history, and evaluate them from both sides for the value that they yield. Along these lines, this study endeavours to bring to light the glories and prides of such phenomenon in North Korea; long discarded, yet arguably very definitive sentiments in its progress and identity.

In saying this, it is imperative to first point out that ideology is not formed well and fully intact from the beginning of a nation’s existence. North Korea is currently identified by a collection of adjectives the likes of rogue, isolated and backward, but a look into its history reveals that at one point in time it in fact was a great deal of the

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1 Scalapino & Lee, Armstrong, Park (2002), Suh, Myers
opposite; progressive, functioning and a successful model state in mid-20th century post-colonial Asia. In progressing along these lines, North Korean ideology has undergone a shift throughout time, most likely in accordance with the situation at hand. It has been hardly stagnant and fixed, rather, malleable and buildable to accommodate to specifics of the day.

Having said this, the present study aims to reinterpret the history of North Korean ideology, inclusive of its theory, development, conceptual framework, and manifestation in the sources. In doing so, it seeks to make accessible to the field the complexities of the North Korean ideology, usually only available to North Koreans domestically, in a concise yet nuanced way. Its goal is not only to substantiate the claim that will be put forth, but also to contribute to a new way that North Korea is being viewed in academia. That is, to see it as a state more successful and engineered than appearances give off, due to its intricate ideological construction. It is a government-centric study, meaning, it bases its pivot of analysis on the official construction of ideology at-the-time. It is difficult to incorporate a view truly representative of the average citizenry due to the unyielding iron wall the regime enforces, but second hand accounts of defectors and past residents alike will be touched on to provide broader context. All primary data therefore, will be from the one official North Korean government source, upholding a constant plane from which to extract information. A main variable, as will be explored, will be time. A further objective of the approach of this study is to help us gain a deeper understanding of the language, logic and impulse of the regime, equipping us with tools to predict policy movement through ideology, or perhaps merely to react quicker and more astutely to such changes. It is a political, ideological and cultural study, upholding that in the case of North Korea, all three, and more, are inextricably connected in the one totalitarian system.

In order to set a context for the study argument, it is fitting to first address the major themes of this study, which can be essentially narrowed down to nationalism and patriotism. To simply define and distinguish them, renowned nationalism scholar Anthony D. Smith states that “Nationalism...above all, is love of an ethno-nation, [and] patriotism, is loyalty to the territorial state.” Many, including those in academic accounts, often confuse or lump the two together, but as this study will elucidate, they

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2 Smith (2001), p. 70
are differing and complimentary notions, however used and abused together in the same vein (which is often the case in North Korea). Nationalism has a focus on the ethnie (ethnic group), inclusive of issues defined by terms such as nation, homeland, race and land, whereas patriotism is declared through a group of terms the likes of the state, the republic or simply the government. In theory, a clear line does exist between the two, but in practice, shrewd politics and its cunning disregards all correctness to exploit whatever works, accounting for seeing the two often exercised in tandem. A helpful and more clear way to differentiate the two would be to associate nationalism with ethnic nationalism (as defined above), and patriotism with civic nationalism (national identity based on citizenship).

Acknowledging that ethnic nationalism is the only (truest) nationalism, another adjoining theme of the study is ethnonationalism.\(^3\) It is a theory put forth by Walker Connor in his 1994 book *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding*, and asserts that subjective elements such as symbol, memory, myth, value, tradition, and love for an ethno-nation are all the combined engine of the vehicle that is nationalism. It principally delineates the rationalisation of nationalist behaviour based on sentiment and emotion, and places an emphasis on family, kinship, ethnicity and believed ethnic ancestry. It is essentially “to think with one’s blood.”\(^4\) Patriotism and (ethnic) nationalism will comprise the bulk of this study, serving to substantiate the argument, but some minor themes in support of the argument will also be explored.

In the last section of the study, the six sub-themes of Love and Hate, Purity and Unity, Nature, and *The Child Race*\(^5\) will be discussed to shed light onto how the political ideology of nationalism manifests itself in specifically structured ways to achieve its goals. These notions will be introduced below in the next chapter, and further onwards, in subsequent chapters.

A last intangible yet very important theme that this study bases itself on is time. It views the historical trajectory of North Korea as active and having undergone much change, naturally, as a response and countermeasure to an ever-changing global, and domestic environment. Time and the changes it brings require different responses and new strategies, so a nuanced view of this in the case of North Korea and its political ideology is paramount to the cause of this study.

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3 Ibid, p. 70
4 Connor, p. 37
Now I shall clarify my argument. The argument that this thesis will set in motion is that nationalist sentiment, or rather, nationalism, has been utilised by the government of North Korea to deal with at-the-time socio-economic difficulty and strain being inflicted on the populace. Along this line, I see that this ideology has been moulded and manipulated throughout the decades, intentionally intensified and intricately decorated in order to meet, and counter, increasingly unfavourable conditions. Nationalism is accepted to have always existed in North Korean history, yet I argue in differing forms and degrees; in the earlier decades, state focussed and relatively subtle, and in the latter decades, ethnic focussed and relatively extreme. The reasoning for this is that patriotism was seen to be sufficient in the early decades when the state was functioning well, yet not in the later decades when faced with a legitimacy crisis, consequently spurring on the more intense and emotionally enveloping ethnic nationalism. I conclude the argument by expounding on how the main themes of this ideology buttress the ideology in perilous times, and how they contribute in general to the regime’s ultimate interest of political survival and far-fetched aim of national reunification under its own terms.

This thesis is one that has been born of five years’ reading on North Korea. Although the field of North Korean Studies is not large, it is capable of providing illuminating accounts and interpretations born of fine scholars themselves experienced in varied backgrounds and areas of expertise. There have been none however, that have yet combined nationalism studies with North Korean studies, so this is what I hope to contribute in this endeavour. Nationalism and patriotism in North Korea have been mentioned in the sense that I am seeking to do (more often nationalism and less often patriotism), but not in such great detail. Author of Ethnically Nationalism in Korea, scholar Gi-Wook Shin has said that the difference between nationalism and patriotism in the early years was only semantics (meaning there was no difference at all), Dae-Sook Suh in his book Kim Il Sung: The North Korean Leader has explicated the failure on the part of Kim Il Sung to clearly explain the two, and Brian Myers in an Acta Koreana article has asserted that the ‘Juche Speech’, the most polarised event of December 1955, was in fact

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6 Armstrong, p. 169; Suh, p. 309
7 Shin, p. 88
8 Suh, p. 309
not nationalist, and that it contained elements of patriotism. These three references comprise the most similar, and more importantly, only, points of departure for my thesis, showing the originality and uniqueness of my line. My line strives to classify the evolution of the North Korean ideology and provide a broader context as reasoning, beyond what the three abovementioned instances do.

The method by which this study will be undertaken will be a combination of theoretical application and textual analysis. The 1994 theory of Ethnonationalism by Walker Connor explicated above will frame the argument, providing a structure from which to appreciate the ethnic peculiarities of North Korea's political ideology. This theory will solidly ground the latter decades of the North Korean historical trajectory, but in regards to the earlier decades, which were not as developed and distinct, enquiry into another form of patriotic-type, civic nationalism is necessary. Civic, or civil nationalism, is known in nationalism studies to be the opposing yang to the ethnic yin. Elements of patriotism are not excluded from civil style nationalism in the viewpoint of this study, so shall serve to better contextualise and understand the earlier decades in comparison to the later ones.

As for textual analysis, a wide range of sources will be used and closely read for the messages of communication they yield. North Korea is perhaps the most dedicated and prolific of propaganda publishers, so a perceived dearth of sources becomes a vast and untapped reservoir of coded messages waiting to be conveyed. This study will incorporate sources of a political nature (official writings, newspapers, speeches), artistic nature (literature, poetry, posters) and cultural nature (custom, song, everyday imagery) to holistically illustrate how nationalist ideology in North Korea is both constructed and employed as a tool for self-serving accord throughout the decades. Propaganda will not be consumed wholesale, but instead scrutinised to detail for its active as well as implied/potential intention.

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10 Data has been dependent on archival availability yet every effort has been taken to seek editions of the same publications in order to make data as constant and representative as possible. Also, the heavy use of propaganda in this study should not be interpreted in any minute degree as support or lenience towards the regime, nor a desire to re-propagate its rhetoric. The author upholds objectivity in utmost importance and in no way is pro-North Korean as has been criticised in the making of this study.
Data Collection

In order to gather data for this study, three main field trips were undertaken. The first was done at the National Library of Australia, in Canberra, Australia. Here, the quite decent collection of North Korean newspapers, journals and poetry books were looked at. Earliest editions of the daily newspaper *Rodong Sinmun* are kept in microfilm form, so months were spent perusing the whole catalogue in existence in Western stacks (editions from 1952 to the present, with few missing editions intermittently). This unquestionably was the most laborious and tedious investment of the study, yet proved invaluable in materialising to me the real change and transition that undoubtedly occurred from the early to later years in the life of the regime and country. While I boast an undertaking most have not, I do not reserve the right to say that I have a full command over this vast body of data and its incredible detail. There certainly would have been an article I missed, or a date that slipped. I am, however, confident that I extracted important events and significant trends, treating on average a period of three months’ editions per day of research (of a 6-page newspaper). Copying large numbers of articles was not practically viable, so in this substitution, general notes were taken along the way, and these notes comprise a few exercise books.

The second field trip was undertaken at the Academy of Korean Studies in Bundang, South Korea. Having been granted a graduate research fellowship in 2011 to research in residence for three months, I perused their small, but welcome collection of North Korean materials that comprises three back to back shelves in a secluded room in the main library building. The *Rodong Sinmun* is also to be found both in limited hard copies, and in full in microfilm form, and rummaging through dusty boxes pushed up against the wall I found exquisitely rare scrapbooks containing personal photographs and handwritten commentary from 1950s North Korea.

I also took this opportunity being in South Korea to frequent the North Korea Resource Centre run by the Ministry of Unification, which is located on Level 5 of the National Library of Korea in the Seocho district. This is by far the most sizable collection of North Korean materials found anywhere outside of North Korea. It boasts almost complete and unbroken collections of all newspapers and a wide range of journals (technical, artistic, etc.), and is the premier place to visit when in search of North Korean publications of both a common and random nature. Textbooks, handbooks, comic books,
musical scores, dictionaries and practically all types of publications are available there. I benefited greatly from a select few art and culture journals that pertained to my research, and perused every monthly edition in house. A note to make however, is that security has greatly increased in the years since my first trip in 2009, so visitors now are expected now to fill in forms and impart with personal information, letters of approval and even passports if you are foreign and hope to copy and/or borrow anything.

The last place of interest in Seoul was the University of North Korean Studies; an arm of the Institute for Far Eastern Studies at the Kyungnam university nestled atop a hill near Gyeongbok Palace in the city’s centre. Here again I perused their stacks and filled in any missing editions of journals I did not have. My time in Seoul was also advantageous in that I was able to meet a few prominent North Korea scholars active in South Korea, and participate in their, and various other related seminars and meetings.

The third research trip was to the United States in 2012. Having been awarded a small research grant from the Harvard-Yenching Institute at Harvard University in Boston, Massachusetts, I spent a few months on the eastern side of the United States researching not only at Harvard-Yenching library, but also at the National Archives and Records Administration in Baltimore, Maryland, as well as the Library of Congress at Washington D.C. At Harvard and the Library of Congress I viewed and requested materials on an individual basis, but it was the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) that would prove to be the most exceptional place of interest in this trip. NARA is known to North Korea scholars for its collection of documents seized by U.S. forces from North Korea during the Korean war (1950-1953). It is most notably used in Charles K. Armstrong’s *The North Korean Revolution* (2004). It is an immense collection of any and every kind of document that could be confiscated, taken back home and used to possibly make deductions about the North Koreans. I found all from news clippings and old magazines, to scribbled handwritten notes and workplace attendance and productivity charts. It is very crudely catalogued into one English reel, which in fact proves to the researcher to be both its strength and weakness. One may not get what one ordered, or at least something wholly different, but on the other hand, one may inadvertently be delivered with something of a higher value than that of what was expected. It is a collection that I think no one has mastered yet, perhaps being in due part to the sheer commitment it requires time-wise, patience-wise, and in addition
to a flawless, native-like ability with the Korean language. This collection advanced my knowledge of the founding years of North Korea, and significantly equipped me with the scope to recreate the time as much as is possible having not been there or knowing anyone that was.

A last important set of trips to be mentioned are those of the ones to North Korea itself. I do not classify these as “research trips” but rather more appropriately as tourist cum passive observation trips with an academic eye. Notes were not taken, but impressions were indeed set, and in this manner, these experiences will not be referred to in this study as they are not quantifiable. Rather, they have served to contribute to my knowledge bank on North Korea in both a general and specialist way, which I believe in turn has enriched my research otherwise. Common things were confirmed, yet complex, nuanced intricacies were sensed in the way that books and film, etc. cannot convey. What these trips in 2010 and 2012, both facilitated via the Korean Friendship Association, taught me is first, the climate in which the mountain of propaganda resides and how it positions itself in this matrix, and secondly, that working with the North Korean system and not against it results in a more insightful and gainful experience. Too many investigative figures go into the country aiming to expose “realities” of North Korea, yet end up merely embarrassing themselves in the endeavour, uncovering nothing new. I am an advocate of engagement with North Korea, believing that this is the most beneficial way to enact change, so have carried this approach over into my academic pursuit.

**Thesis Outline**

Along the lines alluded to above, this study will endeavour to meet a few core agenda: to theoretically ground the main tenets of North Korean ideology, to critically trace its development from the earliest founding years until the recent decades, and to delve into a selection of pivotal themes which embody the overriding nationalist line. As mentioned, this will be done by exemplifying the main nationalist issues of the time, and by surveying their manifestation in the various primary sources. This agenda set therefore is reflected in the structure of the study. After this Introduction, the second chapter titled “Nationalism in North Korea: Theory” delves into the theoretical
grounding of the core issues of this study, and as already introduced, will include Nationalism, Patriotism, and Walker Connor's Ethnonationalism. Stepping out of the frame of academic theory, the second half of Chapter 2 takes on theory emanating from North Korea itself, analysing Kim Jong Il's seminal writings on nationalism, as well as the crucial concept of reunification and its theoretical construction and significance in the North Korean ideological mould. Chapters 3 and 4 of the thesis are complementary in that they instigate the claim of this study and offer a look into each side of the North Korean nationalist coin. Chapter 3 titled “Nationalism of the early Decades: State focused and subtle” sets in motion the line that nationalist ideology grew from a national identity based on the state and statehood, and exemplifies the cases of a nation in founding, a nation in war and reconstruction, and a legitimate Korean nation in opposition to an illegitimate Korean nation. Chapter 4 titled “Nationalism of the Later Decades: Ethnie focused and extreme” then examines the change that this ideology underwent, having transformed itself from a state-based entity to an ethnic-based entity, and makes the cases of the nation as the native land of ethnic apex figure Kim Il Sung, and the nation as the land of the ultimate and promised race. Chapter 5 goes deeper into the ethnonationalist well and examines the main themes that make up its construction, being Love and Hate, Purity and Unity, Nature, and The Child Race, and these will be illustrated once again with various sources and observations from North Korea, with secondary context. Chapter 6 then follows, offering the study's concluding remarks as well as some reflections on the outlook of nationalist-oriented ideology in North Korea.

Literature Review

Many texts have helped shape my conceptions and impressions of this line of study, and the six most influential shall comprise the literature review. The first is the publication of Walker Connor's 1994 theory, titled Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding, and the second is The Ethnic Origins of Nations; Anthony D. Smith's seminal piece written in 1986. The third and fourth are the equally important The Cleanest Race: How North Koreans See Themselves and Why It Matters by Brian R. Myers written in 2010 and Ethnic Nationalism in Korea: Genealogy, Politics, and Legacy written by Gi-wook Shin and

11 From B. R. Myers' The Cleanest Race
published in 2002, and the fifth and sixth are *Communism in Korea*, first printed in 1972, co-written by Robert A. Scalapino and Chong-sik Lee, and *War Without Mercy*, written by John Dower in 1987. Following will be a review of these texts, including words on their relevance to this thesis.

To being with Walker Connor’s *Ethnonationalism*, it is a collection of essays divided into three parts that treat his particular perspective on nationalism in varied ways. Part one deals with previous British and American scholarship on the issue, part two expands on his theory with aid of terminology clarification and a case study, and part three explains his stance on the ethnic view of nations and national identity. Of particular relevance to my study have been three chapters, one extracted from each part (chapters 3, 6 and 8) that deal most specifically with ethnonationalism. The first explained his theory in its most clear and basic manner, the second gave a differentiation of ethnonationalism from other common forms of nationalist explanations, and the third then solidified his view of man as a being that prioritises his nationality, or his ethnic bond to the nation, over his sense of rationality. As mentioned, this text and its adjoined theory have been indispensable to my study, serving as one of the main building blocks to the understanding of the claim that this thesis makes.

Second of six, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, is one of renowned nationalism studies scholar Anthony D. Smith’s earliest comprehensive books on his view of nations as unions definitively bound by ethnicity. He traces the evolution of the ethnie over time by looking at ethnic communities in pre modern eras in Part 1, and then by viewing them as nations in the modern era in Part 2. Nationalism is a modern phenomenon, but in this account Smith contributes to the field that nations in fact have pre modern roots to be found in olden elements of myth, memory, value and symbol. Apart from his already impeccable understanding on the sensitivities of ethnic identity, Smith’s valuable insight into the romance and poetry of nationalism too, has bode me very well in the course of this thesis. His chapter titled ‘Legends and Landscapes’ in particular delves into the drawing of nature, nostalgia, golden ages, and nation-building into nationalism – correspondingly all notions that are heavily relied upon in North Korean political ideology, and ones therefore that are reflective of my determined avenue of study.

Third of six, *Ethnic Nationalism in Korea* by Gi-wook Shin, is a text that received much acclaim on the base of its original contribution to the field of Korean
studies. Divided into three parts, it tracks the origins and development of ethnic nationalism in Korea, the political mill that it processed through in modern history, and the current manifestations of it in contemporary Korean society. It has proven invaluable to me in approaching this thesis, most obviously because it deals specifically with the very nature of my study. The only drawback however, was the mere 1-2 chapters out of an odd 11, that I was directly able to extract from – the reason being that these were the only chapters that dealt with the North Korean state. Putting that aside though, it presents a solid, insightful and very convincing account of the occurrence of nationalism in both North and South Korea as being a phenomenon based on ethnicity, and is no doubt a work that my thesis aims to emulate.

Fourth of six, *The Cleanest Race: How North Koreans See Themselves and Why It Matters* written by Brian R. Myers, released in 2010 much conversation and controversy, not only in academic circles, but also in a media so entrenched in two-dimensionally representing North Korea and its nuclear weapons saga. Myers vehemently negates the traditional Marxist-Leninist/Communist line in defining North Korea, and makes instead a compelling case for it to be characterised more as a far-right, racist and xenophobic nationalist state. He views the regime’s premise to legitimacy as based on its adherence to olden ethnic virtues, and sees the Korean people as a pure, naïve, and infant race requiring of a parental figure to survive in the world. This parental figure is none other than the Kim leader of the day, and is one that in fact *maternal* and not paternal. Myers has stimulated a new way of thinking about North Korea with this landmark volume, and proves to be the most synonymous account to date of what I aspire to achieve in this thesis.

Fifth of six, the two-volume set titled *Communism in Korea* co-written by Robert A. Scalapino and Chong-sik Lee, seems to be as revolutionary an undertaking as it was ambitious. It is known that only in recent years a good picture of North Korea is starting to emerge due to its highly secretive nature, so the fact that this work was completed in 1972, with its contribution and content still holding relevance (and still maintaining its prime position in English language academia on North Korea), is the reason for its immense value. Among the fifteen chapters that broadly and very comprehensively cover all aspects of the North Korean state, the chapter titled 'Ideology and the Intellectual' was of most benefit to me in this thesis; being that it allowed me
varied perspectives in understanding the ideology i.e. ideology and goals, ideology and the doctrine of Marxism-Leninism, ideology and the personality cult, and so forth.

Lastly, *War Without Mercy* is a text that I was recommended to read, not initially sure on what I was to encounter, yet soon certain on how much of a significant piece it would be to this study. The book is perhaps the most definitive title on race and hatred in the Pacific War, dealing with the cultural and ideological battles the Japanese fought with the white American and British enemy during World War Two. The author undertakes a considerable study on the last year of the war, viewing it through the eyes of both the Japanese and the Western Allies via their propaganda and behavioral traits. Posters and cartoons in particular are used to full effect, and through the analysis of these and other materials, insight is provided into how the Japanese were viewed by the Allies as primitive, childish, moronic, and emotionally disturbed, and conversely, how the Allies were perceived by the Japanese as demonic, bloodthirsty, carnal and beastly. The book brings to the fore strong notions of the self versus the other (“East” versus “West”), and clearly resonates with the North Korean approach in its own propaganda – being highly racially provocative, starkly polarising in terms of “us” versus “them”, and enmeshed in a constant fixture of combat. This text greatly opened up my eyes to a non-Korean case study analogous to this study, and for this reason was extremely illuminating and influential.

**Before we start**

Before we start, it is important to address one last concern. It is a collective of questions that almost all people engaged in North Korea to any degree, ask each other and themselves to some extent. The recent funeral of deceased leader Kim Jong Il with its participants disabled by apparent grief and hysteria stimulated precisely such flurry of speculation; *Do they really believe the stuff? Are they true believers or just brainwashed and scared hostages of a dictatorship of terror?* Rather than a straight black or white answer, it is more likely a shade of grey. In this study I do not claim that the people are true adherents of the regime due to the ideology, but instead seek to illustrate that if they were, that this is how it would be facilitated and nurtured. Of course, in the course of many shades of grey there are a myriad of factors influencing the North Korean
people and their inclinations. One would be social status. Living in the capital is known to be a privilege, so such elements of advantage would merit a sense of more genuine satisfaction with the regime in comparison to a disenfranchised countryside resident living in shabby dwellings without necessary amenities. This example could be representative of the greater issue of the North Korean people’s material needs, and their assumed sense of approval or belief in the government according to the extent that these needs are being met.

But it is not only this rational choice theory type of scenario that prevails in North Korea. Another consideration that this study very much incorporates is the latent nature of the ethno-being. We may live in ultra-modern metropolises, but the primitive instincts embedded in our genetics as human beings cannot be erased no matter how evolved we become. These instincts include the urge to survive as communities, the gathering of resources to guarantee this survival, and even the desire to thrive and dominate as communities. And this, when put in perspective, can easily be appropriated to the ethnocentric mindset. North Koreans have not only been socialised in a way that perpetuates the alleged injustice of their modern history and greatness of their ancient history, but they also reside in ethnically homogenous surrounds that cannot help but engender a worldview limited to their national borders. It is only natural therefore, for them to want to have positive impressions of their country. A positive national identity facilitates a positive self-identity, and this in turn feeds the flame of the totalitarian establishment, enabling it to develop to a stage not possible without such widespread support. And this of course, originates back to the latent nature of the ethno-being, which un-coincidently finds very fertile grounds in North Korea. It is an idea that the regime whether consciously or not, seems to well grasp, and therefore uses its ideology as the tool that taps at the innate and dormant, to make real the inner potential.

When speaking of North Korea in such a way however, it is common that someone may move to compare it to other fascist or totalitarian regimes and simply ask what the difference is. Indeed, similarities do exist. Like Nazi Germany’s Aryan race and Imperial Japan’s Yamato race, North Korea too, pursues a race supremacy line that lives off the support and participation of the people. Other commonalities include the high level of emotive rhetoric in propaganda, the espousal of purity in blood and sacrifice in mission, the martial nature of the regime, and the symbolism of the absolute leader. These are not denied. The difference however, is that, at the time of writing in 2013,
North Korea still stands, and has endured despite all rational explanation. This warrants a more detailed investigation into its ideological construction, in hopes to find out what it is about North Korea that really allows it to defy the odds. Could it just be luck?

Indeed it seems not to be luck, but instead, in simple terms, a sheer balancing act; an ideological construction with very unique historical and current intricacies that has the ability to move a people to their core (the scope of this study), in tandem with a degree of control and terror that no doubt keeps people overtly obedient and non-questioning. When pondering over whether North Korea is a simple dictatorship or not therefore, issues such as the ones touched on above and the ones that will be put forth in this thesis clearly compel us to believe that it indeed is not.

Having established an introduction to the topic of study, inclusive of its main components, the argument in claim, a review of the chief literature being used throughout the thesis, and other related necessary notes, we conclude the Introduction and now turn to the second chapter.
Chapter 2. Nationalism in North Korea: Theory

Nationalism and Patriotism

1. What is nationalism

Nationalism, like the nation, can be defined in a myriad of ways according to each person and what it means to them. More concretely however, is that the nation is a group of people who share a common language, culture, history, territory and government.\textsuperscript{12} From this, we can say that nationalism is the quest to put one's nation's sovereignty, interest and identity first among other nations. It is both tangible and intangible, forming not only an ideology and set of ideals, but also a basis from which to act and accord behaviour, and has innate within it an intricate web of emotional allegiances and conflicts. Being a vast field of study, nationalism is viewed upon by different scholars in various ways. Such views encompass nationalisms of an economic, political, social/cultural, and ethnic nature, to name a main few.

Economic nationalisms, such as those put forth by Tom Nairn and Michael Hechter see the ideology as understood in materialist terms,\textsuperscript{13} where uneven economic development\textsuperscript{14} in certain discriminated and exploited regions is essentially seen as the catalyst to the movement. These scholars exercise neo-Marxist views of modernism and rational choice theories in approaching nationalism, and gear strongly towards contexts born of third world anti-colonialism. Political nationalists on another hand, such as John Breuilly, Paul Brass and Eric Hobsbawm, define nationalism as political constructs, contrived, distorted and fabricated in order to protect bureaucrats' political and economic well being and existences.\textsuperscript{15} These accounts encompass the role of elites and their power struggles to explain nationalism,\textsuperscript{16} and contend that the nation cannot exist without nationalism.\textsuperscript{17}

Social/cultural nationalists such as Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson contrarily see nationalism as manifestations of broader phenomena originating from

\textsuperscript{12} Smith (1986), p. 24
\textsuperscript{13} Ozkirimli, p. 74
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, p. 80
\textsuperscript{15} Brass, p. 8
\textsuperscript{16} Ozkirimli, p. 83
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid, p. 96
society and culture. Gellner with his high cultures theory sees that nationalism is “the
general imposition of a high culture on society [and]...the establishment of an
anonymous, impersonal society, with mutually substitutable atomised individuals, held
together by this shared culture,” and Anderson’s well-known theory of imagined
communities puts forward the notion that members of a nation, although not all
personally and individually known to each other, still maintain an “imagined” bond as
likeminded members of the one and same national community. These two
social/cultural theories are some of the most influential works on nationalism to date,
having even been acknowledged for their originality and importance by their critics in
the field.

The last main strain of nationalism that I will present is the one that is
relevant to the argument of this thesis, being ethnic nationalism. Scholars who hold the
contention that nationalism is above all an ethnic construct include Walker Connor,
Anthony D. Smith and John Armstrong. An ethnic group, or group of people bound by
ethnicity is known as an *ethnie*, so elaborating on this, an ethnie in this school of thought
is defined as “a named human community connected to a homeland, possessing
common myths of ancestry, shared memories, one or more elements of shared culture,
and a measure of solidarity.” Ethnic nationalism is seen as the one nationalism that
wields the most heightened sense of emotional influence over its subjects, accounting
for a great majority of extreme and non-rational behaviour, both past and present.

2. What is patriotism

Having established the tenets of nationalism, it is now time to treat patriotism.
Accepting that patriotism is a loyalty to the territorial state and allegiance to one’s
country and establishment, we learn of the centrality of the state or the government in
this notion. Not generally referred to as an ideology inclusive of its own doctrine,
patriotism is better defined as the motivation that influences the individual to serve the

18 Gellner, p. 57
19 Benedict Anderson’s 1983 theory ‘Imagined Communities’
20 Ozkirimil, p. 98
22 Ibid, p. 70
object of his devotion – being his country – in defending it from invasion, protecting its rights, or in maintaining its laws and institutions in an upright manner.²³ It most certainly includes a sense of pride and valour in its structure, and appeals to all peoples born and/or residing in that country. An individual’s citizenship is the ultimate crown of patriotism, and its value is celebrated via symbolic measures as the national flag and anthem.

Patriotism can be so deep a sentiment that it can be considered a love, which is why it is often seen by its most ardent subscribers as a worthwhile justification for the sacrificing, or the putting of one’s life on the line in a military theatre for its well being or beliefs. In identifying oneself with one’s country in a patriotic way, not only does one embrace that love, but one also assumes the virtues and morals espoused in that country’s conventions and constitution. No nation would allow its founding charter to host disgrace or dishonour, so that grandeur and loftiness intertwined in its words of majesty are often bestowed upon and accepted by its citizenry as ennobling.²⁴

Ennobling as it may be, patriotism too can easily fall victim to manipulation by governments, leading to an exploited and abandoned population. A trust and confidence in the governing structure by individuals is undoubtedly what enables this, and in fact is one of the criticisms of patriotism when looking at it from a socialist’s point of view. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels denounced patriotism as an instrument of capitalist exploitation and imperialist war, having categorically stated that “the proletariat has no fatherland.”²⁵ Elaborating on this, patriotism is also termed by social scientists collectively as “political socialisation,” mostly in efforts to highlight the control that the state wields in the sphere of public education, and particularly the control over the content of history and its instruction.²⁶

Lastly, congruent with the consciousness of a true patriot is a sensitivity towards treason. Treason is the act of betraying, or committing a serious crime against one’s country, so this contrasting notion too, is something that the patriot would be mindful towards by way of endeavouring to avoid it. When one attempts treason, one not only is ostracised from their community and looked down upon, but one also has

²³ Snyder, p. 148
²⁴ For further discussion of this see “Patriotism as an Ennobling virtue” in Snyder, p. 151.
²⁵ Snyder, p. 153
²⁶ Connor, p. 207
their position of security from the country put at risk, and their important sense of belonging and identity too, shaken.

3. The similarities and differences between nationalism and patriotism

Having elucidated both nationalism and patriotism in a separate manner, a discussion into their combined similarities and differences is important. From the outset, many similarities surface. Both can be said to be a form of love for a notion characterised by a national entity. A nationalist and a patriot both treasure what could fit under the rubric of “Korean” or “Italian,” and such convention when speaking in a contemporary and broad way would not be contested. Both nationalism and patriotism also influence culture, society and people’s behaviour within it. Certainly policy, and often media, are disseminated nationally, so these stimuli, either directly or indirectly prove to have an effect on people’s daily lives. In progressing along these lines, it can also be said that both nationalism and patriotism also serve to give collective identity and a sense of belonging to its adherents. One country becomes unique in its own right, and a shared feeling of destiny and communal cooperation or attachment to that concept too, finds its place in both nationalists and patriots. Both are also however, seen to house an innate vulnerability to be exploited and abused by power holders of a country, namely its political leaders. They are invoked compellingly in times of war and peace, and often used in tandem, stirring up greater commitment and sacrifice for the cause at hand.

Such are the similarities, but now, for the differences. When speaking of the differences, the defining factor that sets them apart is the object of their admiration. For nationalists, it is the *natio*, or the race, or people that takes precedence, where as for patriots, it is the *patria*, or the country, state or territorial governmental entity, which reigns supreme.27 The *natio* is an organically constructed entity throughout time, evolving as the natural process of human habitation and settlement did, whereas the *patria* is a political construct; contrived, organised and more socially scientific or systematic in its core. Critically, nationalism appeals to all members of an ethnic group, regardless of their country of residence, whereas patriotism bases itself on citizenship.

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and residence, regardless of ethnicity or even country of birth. These two points form the basis of the distinction between nationalism and patriotism, and is how they will be used in this study.

To investigate deeper into the divide between the two notions is to tap into the depth of their consciousnesses and the type of reactions that they incite in the person. Nationalism is seen to delve deep into the being of a person, harking at his or her innate sense of sentimental memory, myth, value and tradition. Due to its overriding force of emotion and subjectivity, it elucidates reactions of an extreme and in certain cases inhumane nature, stripping its holder of their rationality with its inherently primitive elements of tribalism (or family) and blood. Patriotism on the other hand, generally stirs its greatest response via elements of national symbology such as national flags, anthems, coats of arms and citizenship rights. It is the mark of a civilized man, one who is a productive and equal member of society, and one and who usually exercises his rationality in the course of his endeavours. Racial or shared ancestry has no bearing on a patriot, instead, more likely, it is the forefathers and figures who enacted the development, strength and prosperity of the country and state, that hold significance and prominence.

From these points, we can deduce that nationalism commands the “inner world” of an individual, whereas patriotism instructs his or her ‘outer world’. Both are compelling and important attributes in their own right, but a vital question to enquire into is which one of the two ultimately prevails when both are seen in conflict. They are not always seen in conflict, but when are, both Walker Connor and Anthony D. Smith concede that nationalism indeed succeeds, due to the lack on the behalf of patriotism to muster the level of emotional commitment and potency that nationalism can. To all effect, the reason we learn is that in the study of nationalism, what is important is not what is, but what is felt to be, the case.

To further clarify the definitions of patriotism versus nationalism and why the distinction is important in the case of North Korea, the following reflections surface. First of all, as maintained throughout this chapter, nationalism is a love for the nation comprising of all members of the primordially conceived ethnic body (the ethnie), while

28 Ibid, p. 149
29 Smith (2001), p. 57
31 Smith (2001), p. 71
patriotism entails an allegiance or loyalty to the state structure, with its manifold manmade bureaucratic and administrative institutions. In definition form, and indeed in the literature cited throughout this chapter, these two notions are different and disparate. However, as is acknowledged in this thesis, the two entities are often manipulated by the North, worked and reworked, and used selectively to achieve maximum impact of political ideology. This distinction therefore, becomes significant in understanding the never-static, changing and even malleable ideological apparatus that the North Korean regime wields in so securely controlling the country. As will be treated in the following chapters, when conventional elements of legitimising their rule subside, namely the state of economic affairs in the 1980s and 1990s, ideology, and North Korea’s lack of orthodoxy regarding the correct espousal of it, is effectively employed to maintain power of supremacy.

4. The role of nationalism and patriotism

In learning what nationalism and patriotism are, and how they compare and contrast, it is important to recognise why they actually exist; what their role is, in what contexts they develop, and why they have been assumed and patronised by whole groups of peoples for ages. A little asked question to which a response was alluded to above, the concluding answer may lie in the conferring of all-important identity and meaning upon its followers.

Humans are inclined to reflect on their existence. They scan their past, present and future, classify it into categories, and ultimately identify with themselves whatever they choose to be as their representation. Nationalism and patriotism are examples of such tools. In a modern world of many countries, nationalism and patriotism allow each country to stake its claim on the world stage as a valid, worthy and unique unit. It is a manifestation of the path of communal struggle and cooperation they have come on to survive, and a form of assertion of the credibility and integrity of the culture that they have cultivated, whether in reality it be truly unique or not.

Nationalism facilitates an understanding and interpretation of the past, and patriotism facilitates an understanding and interpretation of the present. Nationalism, having its base in the ethnie, forms its backbone in blood lineage and evolution, and
patriotism, having its base in citizenship, extracts its crux from the current state of progress and development. Nationalism is yet again the more powerful force in this interpretation, as the full extent of the past with its omnipresence, still bears effect on the present day. Nationalists aim to uphold the legacy and heritage of history, whereas patriots, in their patriotic zeal, usually tend to look ahead to an ever-greater and more prosperous future.

This matrix of identification that spans time, as well as the mortality of an individual's life, indeed bestows upon people a great sense of meaning in their lives. As alluded to above, it appreciates each individual's contribution and creates for them a legacy, convincing them of their utility and value, not only in good times, but more importantly in difficult times when their way of life is being challenged.

5. Nationalism and history

Having mentioned the importance of legacy and heritage to nationalists, it is worth examining deeper, as broadly speaking, the role of history in nationalism is absolutely critical in allowing it to function and thrive.

A history is the documentation of the past, and historians are the ones who seek and record it, but in the case of nationalism and ethnic histories, history is not a mere factual recording and reciting, but instead an act of “social and political archaeology.”32 By this, Anthony D. Smith contends that nationalists are “social and political archaeologists whose activities consist in the rediscovery and reinterpretation of the ethnic past and through it the regeneration of their national community.”33

Essentially connoting the selective construction of history in order to benefit the social and political present, this view holds that ethno-histories are indeed ‘historical dramas’34 whose motives lie in the desire to emotionally appease and applaud its members, rather than to provide a truthful account of times gone. In the process of such an undertaking, historians “forget as well as remember the past”35 and

32 Idea from Smith (1995) article
33 Ibid, abstract
34 Smith (1986), p. 179
indeed falsify where needed to meet the needs of the present. Key events in an ethnic community's history such as its founding and golden ages solidify and substantiate that community's uniqueness, serving to affirm its identity and provide a rallying point for the whole ethnic group to unite around.

In the reconstruction of ethno-histories, another trait important to note usually included in them is the inclination to appeal to nature or the natural order. We are told that they are sought to be made as organic as conceivable, and meant to be interpreted as if they were extensions of the natural world in which communities lived obeying the laws of. Such elements make clear the sense of authenticity and legitimacy that an ethnie so requires to ground its basis on, and once again shows how their value in existing in the present day is extracted. It is within this two-way relationship between ethnic past and nationalist present, we are told, that lies the secret of the nation’s explosive energy and great power that it exerts over its members.

6. The politics of nationalism

Mentioned earlier was the idea of the exploitation of people through the abuse of nationalism. This in fact gnaws at the fundamental issue of nationalism in the context of political science studies so it is indeed important enough to be clearly spelled out and discussed. The exploitation of people through the abuse of nationalism essentially entails intoxicating them with the highly rousing rhetoric of ethnicity and blood, stripping them of their rationality, and inducing them to act and commit in accordance to the will of the political leaders.

The first step in understanding this dilemma is to inquire into how it is that people can be fooled, or compelled into such questionable positioning. Several scholars find consensus in the simple answer that it is down to human nature. The argument that James G. Kellas puts forward is that: “nationalism and ethnic politics display characteristics of emotion and intensity which appear to derive from instinctive behaviour, and from a human predisposition to show loyalty to ‘ingroups’ and hostility

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36 Conversi, p. 74
37 Smith (1986), p. 179
39 Kellas, pp. 6-8 and p. 10, and Connor, pp. 9-10 and p. 198
to ‘outgroups’ (ethnocentrism),” and the contribution that Walker Connor offers is that we are all born with these genetic characteristics and instincts in life that we simply cannot escape from. Tampering with the very core of what it means to be human, nationalist passions, probably the most powerful in the whole political spectrum, are inserted into the fold for full and explosive effect. Human nature provides the necessary condition for ethnocentric behaviour, and politics converts this into the sufficient conditions for nationalism to thrive as we see it today.

Having clearly established this base, the way in which it translates from notion to effect is via a widespread refashioning of vernacular ethnic values into politicised popular, public cultures. This is delivered by media the likes of speeches and visual/literary propaganda, and serves to systematically construct an environment wholly harmonious to the ethno-political line. This vast pool of energy in turn lends itself to the cause of political mobilisation, and this is the case whether it be nation building at home or war mongering abroad.

In such a situation, the nation is seen as the source of all political power, so loyalty to it overrides all other loyalties. People become trapped in an elaborate and numbing psychological state, which can probably only be truly broken with the obliteration of a titan regime, and a dissolution of the nationalist-cum-ethnic leaders and their corresponding persona façades. History has witnessed many prominent fascists and their regimes fall in this way, but it is yet the case in this day and age for the nation in question, North Korea.

7. The economics of patriotism

Alluded to above in few of the discussions was the idea of economic mobilisation in the context of nationalist ideology. Not impossible in regards to nationalism, but more relevant in regards to patriotism as patriotism centres around the state and its institutions, economic mobilisation is the motivating of people to expend physical

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40 Kellas, p. 6.
41 Connor, pp. 9-10
42 Kellas, p. 1
43 Ibid, pg. 19
44 Smith (2001), p. 142
labour and toil for the sake of the state. It is a straightforward notion that essentially entails the usage of fuel in the form of patriotic ardour to create state industry and development, and hence, state strength and prosperity.

In fascist regimes where economic wealth is generally not equally distributed, it could be said to be a propaganda ploy, much like the politics of nationalism outlined above. One small group of political elite abuse power and resources, and manipulate the masses into working in their favour, in turn, creating a state entity more powerful at their hands. It was mentioned above that patriotism facilitates an understanding of the present as it extracts its significance from the current state of progress and development. In such a case, economic mobilisation then becomes a vicious cycle of increased development paired with increased tyranny, quite possibly continuing until the state itself implodes or explodes into nonexistence.

Patriots moreover, tend to look ahead to greater and more prosperous futures, and are seen to be rational actors in comparison to nationalists, so how is it then that they could be caught up in such potentially detrimental situations as well? Patriotism too, is a love, it must not be forgotten, embodied not necessarily by lineage and blood, but by virtue and nobility, pride and honour, and bravery and sacrifice; elements potent enough to inspire a rational being on their own accord to rise and fight.

8. The myth of nationalism

As mentioned in defining nationalism above, myths comprise an important part of the ideology's structure. Mythology represents a collective historical memory of events significant to the ethnic group inclusive of its origins, golden ages, present and future, but there is a myth about nationalism that is seldom spoken of outside the realm of ethnic type nationalism accounts.

Revealed by Walker Connor, this is the myth of shared ethnic descent. Very beneficial in allowing us to gauge ethnonational psychology, this idea maintains that the conviction of common kinship ties that members hold, and the myth of shared ethnic descent, need not, and usually does not, accord with real biological descent and what we
know of factual history. It essentially debunks the ethnic base of nationalism, but in turn, illuminates more clearly the ideology’s machinations as a predominately emotional and subjective entity, with its primal needs and tendencies.

Extraordinarily yet understandably, this myth is still present when data proving ethnic division has been shown and rationally accepted by an ethnic party. This, we learn, is because even a conscious knowledge of something can not necessarily alter what is already a deep conviction in the subconsciousness. The only irreducible requirement is the shared intuitive sense of relatedness that the members hold, and a staunch belief in this to its utmost. The reasoning here once again, is because it is not what is, but what people perceive as is, that has behavioural implications in a practical sense.

So all the while knowing one’s believed ancestors may and probably are not the true source of one’s gene set, why would groups seek to perpetuate such falsities? Few reasons come to mind, which much resemble what has been spoken about above. A specific genetic strain allotted to a specific people gives identity and that all important sense of individuality and uniqueness in the world. It not only identifies a group, but also contra-identifies them in opposition to undesirable others, and especially in times or battle or hardship, serves to solidify solidarity based on that interdependence they all have on each other as common entities. A further reason why the myth of nationalism carries on could be due to its nurturing through the ages. Generation after generation is told the stories of the great, and propagated well long to a point where they take on a life of their own, no longer occupying the realm of fiction, but instead, assumed as fact in and of themselves.

9. Divine nationalist missions

The divinity of the ethnie has faintly been alluded to a few times so far. This in fact assumes a key component in the strong appeal and romance of nationalism so it too, shall be exemplified and explained.

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46 Connor, p. 71
47 Smith (1992), p. 49
48 Ibid, p. 50
49 Smith (2009), p. 28
Nationalism is a political ideology, but at the height of its fanaticism, one would not be blamed for thinking it a religion or anything else as non-secular. The pious idealisation of the nation, the worship of national heroes and martyrs, the singing of nationalistic hymns, the construction of national monuments, and the urge to defend national customs and traditions all exude a semi-religious tone that cannot be ignored. In looking at religion through an ethnic nationalist lens, there are several compelling points on hand to vouch for its association and quasi-application.

First of all, religion, like ethnic nationalism, is a non-logical and non-rational belief that is predominantly emotional and spiritual in nature. There can be no “absolute untruth” as it is not scientifically assessable, and for the most part, is down to subjective interpretation by nationalist ‘priests’ (i.e. national leaders, ethnic figureheads, etc). This emotional element draws in adherents by their inherent (instinctual) weaknesses, and fills within them a void that mundane life simply cannot satisfy. Both nationalism and religion espouse their own doctrine of happiness that can be attained by following a certain criterion, to which ultimately, the meaning of life is made known.

Once the meaning of life is attained, the reality of the inevitability of death is both unsettling and unfashionable. To this end, the notion of immortality is applied. Unquestionably being a central tenet in religion, immortality is implied in the unshakable belief of a religious person that upon death they will live on in the glory of their creator. The standard that nationalism holds too, is similar: “By linking oneself to a ‘community of history and destiny’, the individual [hopes to] achieve a measure of immortality which will preserve his or her person and achievements from oblivion; they will live on and bear fruit in the community.” Finding immortality in the idea of posterity, nationalism fulfils its ethnic component, all the while interweaving an all-important romance of divinity. It not only guarantees their existence “throughout time, but also beyond time.”

Immortality is vital, but the illusion of ‘destiny’ too, is heavy in significance. The idea of destiny could be reflected in the religious notion of ‘salvation’, where no matter what, as long as one has faith, one believes they will be saved. Destiny, or rather, a shared and collective ethno-destiny, also holds true to the nationalist myth. History is

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50 Snyder, pp. 23-4
51 Smith (1986), p. 175
52 Connor, p. 202
the precondition of destiny,\textsuperscript{53} we are told, so in the context of rich and vibrant ethno-histories, the sanctity of destiny would be held high to that very extent. Destined to the future of the ethnie is an inevitable glory, one complete with as much value as has been imbued in the past, and one which stirs the ethnie as a collective into action for its attainment.\textsuperscript{54} Only then will they be able to figuratively claim their rightful place in the sun.

10. Ethnic superiority

When an ethnie assumes the type of psychology detailing that they are of honourable descent, glorious outlook and possible immortality, a whiff of superiority often becomes apparent. Nationalist nations from the outset are not very inclined to acknowledge another nation on the same terms as its own, so this segregation and somewhat isolation already puts it in prime position to exacerbate whatever ethnic superiority complex was originally there. Ethnic superiority, or supremacy, can come in several forms, and of them, two include ‘biological racism’ and ‘chauvinism’ or ‘jingoism’.

Biological racism (also known as scientific racism) is the endeavour to justify racial inferiority and correspondingly, racial superiority, with the use of pseudo scientific experiments. It ignores cultural and social elements of a people and simply classifies them into disparate groups of desirable or non-desirable based on their physical attributes. Aspects of this practice hark back to the primal nature of human beings in the context of natural selection or ‘survival of the fittest’. Very much in resemblance to this is a staunchly nationalist country – one that acts wholly on its instincts and ventures foremost to propagate its ethnic gene pool in the next generation, not polluting it in any way. Hitlerite Germany is perhaps the best example.

‘Chauvinism’ and ‘jingoism’ have also found their way into the lexicon of accounts of ethnic superiority. They are “terms denoting the belief, policy, or practice of a vainglorious, exaggerated patriotism, which boasts of the country’s preparedness to fight and supports a bellicose policy in foreign affairs. Both terms indicate a blend of patriotism, nationalism, militarism, and imperialism...and are designed to appeal to the

\textsuperscript{53} Smith (1986), p. 208
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid, p. 182
emotions...so that they can be used instantly for attack or defence.” This definition too, resonates clearly with the raison d'être of an ethnie at the extreme right-end of the political spectrum. Aiming to uphold its belief in its divinity as a, or the, ‘chosen people’, nations wage wars and pursue aggressive policies, often engaging in violence considered inhumane by any standard. It is an emotional mission as much as an instinctual one, where even a small taint in the ethnonationalist narrative cannot, and is not condoned at all.

Ethnonationalism in North Korea

Having clearly elucidated the study’s understanding of nationalism and patriotism, this next section will set out to analyse ethnonationalism in a more concentrated manner. It will explore and explain the phenomenon of ethnonationalism in the specific context of North Korea, conducted via Walker Connor’s elements of symbol, myth, memory, tradition, value, and the fundamental ‘love for the ethno-nation’.

1. Symbol

To begin, symbols are signifiers in that they tell us something about what they signify. As long as one has not a severe visual impairment, one can reach an interpretation of a certain symbol based on the society of their socialisation and the nature of the symbol. ‘Meaning’ can be seen as the partner of symbol, because without meaning, symbols can lead only an insignificant existence. For this reason, ‘meaning’ typically represents larger and more complex phenomena, such as rules/regulations (i.e. traffic lights), human associations (i.e. soccer team flag) or socially valued currency (i.e. cash), just to name a few. Hardly any community would want to associate themselves with backwardness and degeneration, or even stagnation and inactivity, so symbols are usually adopted to represent that of a community/nation’s positive elements or esteemed ideals. From this we are able to grasp an understanding of that nation’s fundamental nature, and more importantly, deeper issues such as its interests,

Snyder, p. 149
objectives and manner of administration can be surmised. North Korea is not an exception.

North Korea could be symbolised by a number of things. Even a cursory survey sees symbols such as the red star, hammer and sickle of communism (inclusive of North Korea’s unique intelligentsia-representing brush), the two colours of red and blue on its flag (respectively symbolising the activeness and responsiveness of traditional East Asian philosophy), the consecrated Baekdu Mountain, the indispensable lapel badges, possibly the internationally recognised annual Arirang mass games, and most definitely the three Kim figures themselves. All of these symbols have taken on dimensions that somewhat surpass their mere physical existence to become, more than anything, conceptions that serve the populace’s mood and sentiment. Among this fervor though, the government of North Korea must administer itself as a functioning nation-state, so maintaining both emotional support and economic development at the same time is of heightened importance. State ideals, and hence its interests, which are being encased in an effective ideological shell, is precisely how I think the regime succeeds in doing this. Cumings speaks of North Korea’s (chief) state priorities as being heavy industry, military preparedness, and the city. The way in which these three major government portfolios are exploited for their symbolism will now be addressed.

a) The city

To start with the city of Pyongyang, the North Korean regime has not hesitated to hark back its ancient origin to being one of the few locations of the first Korean kingdom of Gojoseon (2333BC-108BC). Since some four hundred years before Christ Pyongyang has had historic association with Goguryeo (37BC-668) as its last capital from 427-668, and then also during the Joseon/Yi Dynasty (1392-1910) as the capital of the Pyongan province in northwest Korea. Shortly prior to, and throughout the Japanese occupation period (1910-1945), Pyongyang saw itself remain the provincial capital, but of a South Pyongan province, for in the mid to late 1940s then becoming solidified as the principal city of the newly emerging Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. From this historical lens we see that the territory of present Pyongyang has played role to a considerable

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56 Cumings (1997), p. 396
amount of Korean civilization. The advent of post-1948 however, seen itself surpass everything that had been bestowed upon it hitherto, to ascend to becoming the grand ‘capital of the (Korean) revolution’.

Pyongyang is the nucleus of North Korea, the throne of its royalty, the centre of all political, social and cultural life, the residence of the privileged, and the place all aspire to associate with. This splendor simply cannot contain itself to the above description, and so sees itself profusely manifest in unmatched symbolism, primarily in Pyongyang’s grandiose buildings and monuments. International visitors are escorted to elaborate statues and towers during their time in Pyongyang, and the commonly arising conundrum of such elaborateness in an impoverished country is one that is still completely warranted.

It is generally seen to have started in the 1970s. The 20-metre bronze statue of Kim Il Sung that stands atop Mansu Hill was built in 1972, to commemorate his 60th birthday. The 1980s then, seen this spending spree take full throttle with the construction of the Juche Tower, the Arch of Triumph and the Grand People’s Study House all unveiled in 1982, the commencement of the 330-metre Ryugyeong hotel in 1987, and some time later the Worker’s Party of Korea Monument in 1995 (celebrating its 50th anniversary). At a time when economic warning signals were ringing increasingly loud, this set of symbols were disregarded for a more important set of symbols. Indeed, these are not just bricks and mortar to the North Korean people. Excluding such places as a house of study or a sports stadium for their apparent usefulness, these are significant places where pilgrimages are made, where tributes are laid, and most importantly, where internal submissions and unbounded loyalties are ever-confirmed. Whether it be placing flowers by Kim Il Sung’s feet on a distinguished day of the year, or admiring the brightly lit Juche Tower on a night time stroll down the Taedong River and feeling some sense of awe, pride or belonging to its creed, it is a physical housing of this psychological notion, situated in the heart of Pyongyang, that effectively makes the North Korean people feel they are at the very core of this sacred ideology. Indeed a concentric circle from the heart of Pyongyang is figuratively drawn around the city itself, often being referred to as the heart of the nation or the “heart of Korea” due to its geographic location mid-way in the peninsula. Coupled with associated emotive and nationalist rhetoric that they are constantly bombarded with (which is explored in chapter 4), this monolithic grandness seeps itself into the psycho-emotional
construction of these buildings in the people’s nationalist mindset, and by way of unspoken law, reveres their degree of symbolism to a height immeasurable.

b) Military preparedness

We see parallels with the military. The lauded Korean People’s Army, the decreeing of the principal Songun ‘Army First’ policy, the everyday militaristic way of life of ordinary people, and the notorious development of nuclear weapons production facilities. All of these symbolise the central but simple notions of defending the homeland against foreign aggressors and strengthening the domestic armed capability. Citizens are told they know not the preciousness of the fatherland until they wear an army uniform and males and females alike, being pictured imbued in festive ticker tape parades and sporting the Kimjongilia (Kim Jong Il flower) on their right breasts, are emphatically urged to serve their honourable stretch in the army with a salute and a smile. The four examples symbolising military preparedness mentioned above in opening shall now be addressed in succession.

The Korean People’s Army is doubtless the most favoured institution in North Korea. Receiving preferential treatment in terms of political influence, economic resources, and social standing, it is a known fact that the life of an army related personnel is one that is highly sought after. Among many, some reasons surface. In an environment where it is one of only few paths where one can make a success of him/herself, where avenues of real opportunity exist, the army has risen in superiority to claim status of national representative. The Songun ‘Army First’ policy, which is the decreeing of the army supreme in all national matters, could be an outgrowth, or a quantified intensification of this military superiority complex that always existed in some way; even since before the founding of the administration in Kim Il Sung. It was declared only in the mid 1990s as a policy framework, but this well trumpeted militaristic culture bears deeper roots and more sensitive motives. Convinced of the notion that a violent means will bring about reunification, “the ultimate dream of every

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57 Heather, p. 160
58 Ibid, p. 144
Korean”\textsuperscript{59}, and subsequently delivering this rhetoric to the populace, previously Kim Il Sung, and followed by Kim Jong Il, the regime manipulates this dearly held sentiment for their interest of maintaining national military prowess.

We see this conviction illustrated in numerous state propaganda poster creations. “The reunified fatherland is at the tip of our bayonets!”\textsuperscript{60} we are induced to believe, an unnumbered amount of hands clenching guns elevated high in the air in front of a glowing silhouette of the undemarcated Korean peninsula. The intensity and fervor of the fiery sunset colours stirring our senses, only then to be guided down to take in the caption below. We turn the page and then are enthused to learn that “Both happiness and a strong country come from the barrel of the Army First gun!”\textsuperscript{61}, one big green army uniform clad wrist clenching a correspondingly big gun, having it take up the poster’s whole foreground, with a light blue background, white profiled children peacefully playing among water fountains and doves. We are convinced at last however, when we discover the following: “The great Army First politics is truly patriotic, nationalist, and caring.”\textsuperscript{62} With one of the scene’s hosts donning the headband “Reunification of the fatherland”, and the recurring symbols of the clenched elevated fist, the determined expressions and the silhouetted undivided peninsula, coupled with such emotive language, we notice this set of signs that are constantly being employed to forge, and then to reaffirm the link between the Songun ‘Army First’ idea and the idealised/romanticised notion of reunification.

Continuing on, North Korea is often described as the most militaristic country in the world. Apart from the formidable size of their armed forces, this description is perhaps granted credibility through their espousing of a highly regimented approach to possibly all facets of life. A former Swedish diplomat resident of Pyongyang notes a similar observation: “From a Western point of view, the Koreans lived a sort of communal barracks life where work, food, clothes and lodgings were provided/assigned to them and whereby wages were more like pocket money.”\textsuperscript{63} In addition to this, people at work, even at places of a manufacturing nature, are symbolically organised into cohorts of platoons and battalions, and constantly assigned to ‘speed battles’ or

\textsuperscript{59} Kim (2002), p. 7
\textsuperscript{60} Heather, p. 259
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid, p. 155
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid, p. 148
\textsuperscript{63} Cornell, p. 105
infamous (non-stop) 100-day battles, making it almost impossible for them to block out their surroundings and not associate their actions with some type of military exercise, or even war itself. So from such militaristic overtones, we too cannot help but notice the extensive degree to which this daily disciplined rigour is widely and commonly practiced in North Korea.

Last of all, when speaking in the context of nuclear weapons, but indeed pertinent to their whole arsenal of armaments, Han S. Park offers some insight; “North Korea’s military buildup was made, or has been made at the expense of [an] enormous amount of sacrifices in the area of economic development, human sufferings and so on. In other words, their weapons are much more precious, or regarded as precious than we think [of] weapons in other countries.” To extend this response one step further, this preciousness that is referred to, I contend, is representative of what these arms are perceived to be able to bring; namely, the glory of reunification. So as investment into weapons in North Korea continues deep underway, investment into the desired nationalist interest and objective, to that very same extent, not only is in motion, but is also being embodied as a symbol of themselves to the rest of the world.

c) Heavy industry

Heavy industry is another source of pride to the North Koreans. Having the country devastated by the Korean War in the early 1950s, North Korea took pleasure in watching the rejuvenation of itself by its own efforts (albeit unacknowledged Soviet, East European and Chinese sponsorship), by way of one of its own mottos describing precisely that virtue (jaryeok kaengsaeng). For some time the country boasted a gross domestic product level that surpassed its arch rival in the South, and lavished in elevated living standards and constitutional equality of the sexes. The fate of the national industrial economy as has eventuated until the present is clearly disastrous, but the importance of it here lies in the manner in which this industry is still held - being the esteem, the importance, the idealism, and the subsequent symbolism of it as a notion wholly. These notions shall now be elaborated on and explained.

64 Park (2003), Interview: 10:31 ~ 54
As just alluded to, industrialisation in the decades following North Korea’s founding was equated with nation building. The drive on both the northern and southern sides for economic as well as ideological legitimacy was intense, and construction in these terms was dramatic and remarkable. The successes of this period sustained the South, which saw continued progress, but the mid 1970s saw the North stray off from this course of exponential growth to begin its downward descent. One would assume that economic deterioration would cause a legitimacy crisis, but Han S. Park is adamant that this is not the case in North Korea. His constant assertion is that because the North Korean ideological structure is sound and sturdy, so too is its degree of stability and control. To extend this notion once more, I find that despite its rendering almost redundant with the decline of industry, it is this same ideological campaign that has continued to live on, still retaining the same appeal that it enjoyed so genuinely in previous decades. And of course, the rhetoric of nation building embodies the causes of patriotism and nationalism, inspiring people to work diligently for a cause they believe, or more importantly, feel they have vested interests in.

Although it has been said to not be as important as the Kim Il Sung song, one needs also to view the national flag’s colleague, the official coat of arms, to see these state priorities openly illustrated. Centerfold are images of heavy industry including a large hydroelectric dam and associated electricity stand, surrounded by ears of rice, all under the red socialist star. The focal point where these industrial images lie could be interpreted as the centrality of their significance to the regime via their functioning role in the government’s aims, interests and ideals. The naming of the Kim Chaek iron and steel complex after the revolutionary who fought alongside Kim Il Sung in pre-liberation times moreover, can be viewed as an act to channel the prestige and heroism of the guerilla alumni with the sophistication and grandeur of such engineering/industrial feats, and the same could also be said for the Kim Chaek University of Technology. So in themselves, these examples work by way of deliberate linkage and association to idealistic virtues, not just of modernisation, but also of “strength and prosperity” of the nation; precisely what the national motto ‘gangseong daeguk’ specifies.

To link these symbols with the theory of ethnonationalism, it is not that they are actually ethnonationalist symbols, but that these are examples that have been

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65 Park (2002), p. 87 and p. 118
66 Lankov (2007-a), p. 38
constructed as ethnonationalist symbols (specific to North Korea) by their association
to the state’s aims and interests, which then have been placed in the larger context of
nationalism. That is, the grand city of Pyongyang as the befitting national capital,
military preparedness as the facilitator of national reunification, and heavy industry as
the insurer of the prosperity of the (reunited) nation. These aims/ideals are
interwoven into the ideological fabric and then combined with exploitation of sensitive
ethnicity-related rhetoric to see the weaknesses of the populace further weakened and
the strengths of the regime further strengthened.

In this way, the regime combines the strength of a powerful ideology and the
strength of a set of grand structural visuals to present to the North Korean people a
compelling case of Korean nationhood. Korean nationhood not only denotes pride of
blood and heritage in the official representation, but it also therefore, commands a
sense of dignity and respect on the worldwide stage in the present and into the future,
symbolised by its sophisticated capital city, formidable army, and advanced industry.

2. Myth

When speaking of myth and of Korea, the date 2333BC is simply indispensable. Being
the date of the myth of the earliest Korean kingdom’s founding by Dangun, grandson of
the Lord of Heaven, it boasts the alleged 4000+ year long history of the Korean nation.
Not only are we told that it is a date that holds so close a place in the hearts of Korean
nationalists,68 but the fact that the North Koreans in 1993 claimed to have found
Dangun’s bones, and consequently erected an elaborate mausoleum in dedication, is of
even more significance. The persona of the legend-founder, being portrayed as the
utmost nationalist of them all, has been inflated and exaggerated for domestic
consumption through a clear orchestration of the regime.69

One way this has been done is through the location of the apparent discovery.
Claimed to have been found in the Kangdong County close to central Pyongyang, this

67 Kim Il Sung urged his people to produce more tractors to compensate for the purported poorer South’s
lack of them upon the event of reunification.
68 Lankov (2007-b), p. 65
69 A detailed examination of Dangun is provided in the last section of chapter 4, but exploration relevant
to his significance regarding myth is treated here. Information overlap does occur.
position contains overtures of the legitimacy of the regime that is enthroned in the capital. In addition to this, the instance of Dangun allows us to see the notion of purity evident; manifest in the natural, the organic or the ‘divinity’ of Dangun, inevitably being linked to the regime. Coupled with this notion of purity, Changzoo Song informs us on the importance of the sense of unity that the Dangun tomb brings. He mentions that among the visitors to the tomb, there have been archaeologists, historians and religious leaders from South Korea, viewing the finding positively, and even that there has been a society for the research on Dangun ‘as historical fact’ set up in South Korea by a group of scholars, seemingly in common aspiration as their compatriots in the North.

As explained in the previous section, the theory of ethnonationalism indicates the importance of the myth of origin (all the while acknowledging that it usually fails) as essential for the maintenance of a sense of community. To review, this is reasoned by the fact that it marks the foundation point of the group’s history, and hence its individuality. From that particular shared culture and ancestry, we are also told, is where the sense of solidarity emerges. The ensuing entourage of the myth of Dangun mentioned above sets the stage of the products produced by the North Korean myth factory, and we shall now move on to those that are more characteristically North Korean.

Fabrications and falsifications of events surrounding Kim Il Sung’s life, even before North Korea was founded, have been generally acknowledged. His activities in Manchuria during the colonial occupation period as a guerilla fighter have been depicted by North Korean officialdom as extraordinarily brilliant and stunningly heroic, but modern historians concede his record to be nowhere near the height as has been elevated, though indeed impressive. His successful raid at the town of Pochonbo in the summer of 1937 in particular has been hailed as one of the most ingenious military operations in the history of Korea, but once again modern historians are quick to descale its supposed magnanimity. An abundance of myths of various degrees of severity do adorn the pages of North Korean history, but just a few of the overriding ones will continue to be mentioned.

70 Song, p. 9
71 Failure in corresponding to a real biological descent – Smith (2001), p. 16
72 Smith (1981), p. 66
73 Ibid
74 Suh p. 322
75 Lankov (2002), pp. 53-4, and Suh pp. 34-5
The return of Kim Il Sung to a newly establishing North Korea after liberation in 1945, if North Korean sources would have us believe, was a grand homecoming befitting only that of the greatest national hero. A Soviet official of the time however, clearly recalls that a feisty Kim Il Sung was in fact reluctant to lead the new administration, preferring more so to wield power in the armed forces, than expend efforts into establishing a politically and ideologically pristine socialist state.

Additionally, we are intrigued with an official photograph of the homecoming speech, picturing Kim Il Sung standing exclusively atop a pedestal of his own right professing to a crowd juxtaposed to the original; the future ‘Sun of the Nation’ as just another face in a gathering of the many other co-administrators at the time. The official version had blatantly been distorted to the likening of the regime’s interest of extolling a sole Kim and depreciating any others that seemed to stand in competition, or even of equal footing.

The deeper ingrained, and gradually institutionalised myth of the immortality and super-humanness of Kim Il Sung moreover, cannot go unmentioned. ‘Eternal President’ as his title still brightly beams across the chosen land some two decades after his death is one that is arguably un paralleled in any other country, with official organs still being fettered with phrases eulogising his everlasting life. Stories of corresponding natural phenomena including dramatic weather changes and stars over Baekdu Mountain appearing upon the birth of Kim Jong II, are not uncommon to the North Korean people, and such is the extent of this indoctrination that citizens are compelled to both credit “miracles” and express gratitude to Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong II for all things worthy of being appreciated.

The idea that North Korea in fact needs this supply of myths for ensuring its survival has been raised. Considering the degree to which it has exerted efforts to the perpetuation of this deception therefore, reflects only their staunch desire to maintain power. The methods and specific sets of rhetoric that are employed nonetheless, avail

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76 Lankov (2002), p. 59
77 [http://redbannerofsongun.org/July-8/Start.htm](http://redbannerofsongun.org/July-8/Start.htm) (scroll down 4th photograph)
78 Litner, (online article)
79 In particular, see Lisa Ling report where upon receiving sight again from minor eye surgery North Korean citizens overtly and vigorously praised above hanging portraits of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong II, crediting the “miracle” to them as opposed to the foreign surgeons who entered the country to perform the surgery; ‘Inside North Korea’ National Geographic, 2007.
80 Lankov (2007-a), p. 313: That the myth of South Korean poverty has been fundamental to the survival of the North Korean state.
us perspective into the particular emotional strings that are being pulled, and namely, they are the ones that incorporate elements of purity and the divinity (as is in Dangun). This higher order therefore compels a compliance that is unthinkable to be disobeyed, seeing as it transpires the pettiness of mortal reality to a higher realm of a sacred existence; something to which North Korea has purposely likened itself. To ethn nationalism then, the significance is seen in the fact that these myths are supportive of, and act as integral components to the construction of it, observed in the deliberate attachment of supposedly unique Korean ethnic elements and nationalist sentiments to the larger body of the propagated myths.

3. Memory

Memory can be a powerful force upon the human mind. It allows us to retain information about a specific time or event, but its inaccuracies mean that the interpretation of these events can be skewed by biases of the viewer or by influences of an external party. When speaking of North Korea and of memory, a few main examples could be placed on the table. These include Kim Il Sung’s pre-liberation spell in Manchuria, the Korean War, and the earlier decades of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. These three examples shall now proceed.

As mentioned when referring to the 1937 Pochonbo raid, Kim Il Sung’s time as a guerilla fighter in the anti-Japanese resistance is described as fearless and gallant. Some truth could be attributed to this claim as in his aptly titled book The Guerilla Dynasty, Buzo notes that these formative years to Kim “instilled in him the habits of self-reliance, perseverance and unremitting struggle.”81 To characterise this time in Manchuria in conflict, and in the Soviet Union in exile, as the womb of what was soon to be given birth to, would not be a far cry because Han S. Park also affirms that the North Koreans believe this laid the foundation to what was to evolve into Juche.82 To illustrate this dated yet prevailing importance, we revisit the symbolic Arch of Triumph. The salient dates visible on the front sides of the structure (1925 and 1945) are said to specifically delineate Kim’s years devoted to the anti-imperialist cause. From this we see

81 Buzo, p. 10
82 Park (2002), p. 19
the imprinting of this epoch on a monument of such scale, but more importantly, we notice the deeper mark that it makes in the consciousness of all generations that continue to pay tribute to it.

The Korean War is one of the most significant and dramatic events in the history of both Koreas. It profoundly affected Kim, altered the way he went on to rule the country, and has become a central component in the nationalist historical landscape. Doubtless it was destructive and devastating by anyone’s account, but the affect that it continues to leave on North Korea over half a century later, is what will be addressed. Those who lived through the conflict still retaining memories would now be in their 70s or over. In addition to the prevalent Confucian tradition that serves reverence to elders, this war experience has stood them on higher social/ideological ground owing to their first hand knowledge of such an ideology-moulding epoch.\(^8^3\) We notice the deference that is bestowed upon an elderly man by his daughter-in-law upon his recollecting of specific instances during the war,\(^8^4\) and the ones that did die fighting are indeed considered martyrs; being eternally remembered in the consciousness of all of society’s members by virtue of a memory-based association called the ‘political-social body’.\(^8^5\) From this, we see that memory is the vehicle being used to perpetuate events experienced in past generations, with that being transported down generationally by nurturing and supportive environmental conditions.

Progressing linearly from colonial occupation, to temporary subjugation to a super power, then to an increasingly totalitarian state, the only nostalgic bygone, or ‘heydays’ that could be said of what became North Korea are the earlier decades after its founding, namely, the 1960s and 1970s. It was a time when the economy was prospering, when food was available, when average people’s hard work was materialising in front of their eyes, and when the country perceived itself to be a successful state. The decline that soon ushered in evidently started to weave a different pattern into the social fabric, and journalist Bradley K. Martin in his book *Under the Care of the Fatherly Leader* met with defectors and diplomats alike, who educated him first hand on how things were changing. We learn of a particular story where the concerned foreign diplomat’s child swam out too far at a beach resort, prompting him to ask the

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\(^8^3\) Park (2002), p. 14 informs us that the Korean War is one of the few historical contexts that reinforced and further refined the belief system of Juche.

\(^8^4\) Fleury, (Video Documentary, last 10 minutes)

\(^8^5\) Park (2002), pp. 36-7
lifeguard to row out and retrieve the child. The first time this happened in the mid-1970s, “the lifeguard was pressed to accept some lollipops as a gesture of thanks.” However, “when it happened again more than a decade later, the lifeguard refused the proffered candies, asking to be rewarded instead in U.S. dollars.” In striking coincidence of the same happening occurring, just in different time frames, and with completely different outcomes, this is one example that paints a bigger picture of how people, and society in general, are being recollected in a more friendly manner in the earlier period as opposed to the latter.

4. Tradition

A community’s tradition could be said to be one of their most definitive characteristics. Evolving over centuries, it holds within it a specific recipe of that community’s identity, culture, values, practices and temperament. The state of North Korea, although not a nation of centuries, did not evolve out of a vacuum, and so sees its tradition as a medley of a number of traditions that it had previously been exposed to. These include the Confucian tradition of the Joseon dynasty, the guerrilla tradition of the anti-Japanese resistance period, the socialist tradition of the former Soviet Union, and the said to be indigenous, although unoriginal, more recent tradition of Juche. Explanations of these four traditions in the North Korean context shall proceed.

In the larger Confucian phenomenon in North Korea, family is one of the most salient features. The succession of paternal-like supreme heads of state, the carrying over of power from various levels of officialdom to their similarly socialised offspring, the practice of whole family imprisonment for the wrongdoing of a mere one member, and the highest regard that is placed upon seongbun - the (political-ideological) nature of one’s family background in relation to employment and social prospects. All of these highlight the importance of the notion of family, so much so that it goes beyond the internal realm of family to becoming embedded in central institutions. ‘Socialism-in-one-family’ and corporatist/family state are some terms that have been used to

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86 Martin, p. 360
87 This convention of seongbun is frequently spoken about in North of the DMZ (Lankov, 2007-a) however the author conceded in late 2009 that this is being superseded in importance by money in recent years.
88 Kenneth Jowitt cited in Shin, p. 84
describe this well-observed occurrence, and it is not difficult to believe when considering the fact that even Kim Jong Il, like his father did, only truly trusted his family in situations of true urgency. Han S. Park also informs us about the cultural context of Confucianism in North Korea. He notes that it has been an integral constituent in the process of the formation of the system, and says, when speaking of North Korea's political culture, that primary importance must be placed on Confucianism,\(^90\) further attesting to this prevailing cultural tradition in the contemporary North Korean context.

When speaking of tradition, “the only tradition we must inherit,” Kim Il Sung asserted, “is the revolutionary tradition of the anti-Japanese guerrilla forces who struggled under Marxist-Leninist banners for the interests of the toiling people.”\(^91\) The common analogy placed on North Korea and its elite as ‘frozen in time’ and/or ‘static’ proves relevant to the notion of the guerrilla tradition, as remnants of this historic epoch still shine through clearly in present-day North Korea. This is embodied in an administration that could be characterised as unconventional and anti-establishment, dangerous and risky, persistent and ‘self-reliant’, and dexterous and stealthy. A weapons superiority complex that was born of Kim Il Sung’s marvel at Japanese nuclear capability during the Cold War guerrilla period\(^92\) moreover, could be said to be manifest in the deep commitment on the part of the administration to the production of indigenous nuclear weapons, showing that the guerrilla tradition too, still lives on in present form in North Korea.

The socialist tradition that evolved from the October Revolution of 1917, as alluded to above, could be said to be the political-ideological name under which the North Korean state was formed. The initial years of the regime saw prominence being placed on the figures of Marx, Engels, and Lenin, and although this was discontinued as official state ideology, North Korea still visibly exhibits traits of its traditional framework in the present tense. The continued mainstream rhetoric of proletarianism and equality that Lenin espoused, the personality cult that surpassed even that of Stalin, the agricultural and industrialisation methods assumed from Russia, and the broader ‘creatively adapted’ “Socialism of our style” all form a key group among numerous

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\(^{89}\) Cumings (1993), p. 199
\(^{90}\) Park (2002), p. 11
\(^{91}\) Scalapino & Lee, p. 867
\(^{92}\) Park (2003), Interview: 2:15 ~ 40
examples of the still healthily functioning North Korean tradition of the original Soviet conception.

Juche however, has now evolved to ostensibly take utmost precedence in all issues of ideological practice and tradition in North Korea. It was first introduced as a mere slogan in the early years of the nation, but over the course of political progression vis-à-vis China and the Soviet Union, has come to be solidified as a core creed of beliefs and values representing the nation.93 As was said in relation to the nation of North Korea, Juche is not a tradition that enjoys an origin of centuries gone, however up until now, it has been so rapidly and thoroughly implemented, or rather, trumpeted, throughout the country, to the extent that gives it firm grounding for perpetuation as long as the country remains governed the way it is. An uncontaminated conception as it was by the person who is most commonly referred to as its architect, philosopher Hwang Jang-yop, Juche developed from being a simply advocated national ideal to becoming an all-encompassing and highly pervasive dogma that dictates a wide set of daily activities and thought-conditioning - one that with each step sees its existence become ever more concreted as every bit the North Korean tradition.

5. Value

From the above discussions, we notice the values of North Korea coming to the surface. In addition to the ideas of military sophistication and technological modernity, we construct a compilation that is inclusive of the two notions of purity and unity. Purity is evident in the conventions of family and nativism, and unity is demonstrated in loyalty and communalism.94 Among the many others, these are values that are not meaningless, and are ones that intimately reflect the culture, history and disposition of the Korean people, combined with the interests, aims and objectives of the regime. The way that people who have done certain actions are responded to in North Korean society, whether it be in a positive rewarding manner, or in a negative reprimanding manner moreover, enacts this value system, which in turn continues to reinforce itself with the gradation of time and incidence.

93 Park (2002), p. 40
94 Purity and unity are discussed in detail in their own section in chapter 4.
6. Love of the ethno-nation

Initial glances at the overriding hard-line symbols discussed above make it difficult for one to envisage North Korea as a nation that embraces a culture of love and/or affection, but as established early on, this is not the case. North Korea has nurtured a wholesome, albeit peculiar structure of emotional provisions that flow centrally from the administration down to the populace, nourishing it in its pursuit of all its everyday activities. “A communist is a man of sentiments with the most beautiful and rich feelings and emotions”, Kim Jong Il tells us, and “there is no greater feeling than patriotism”, says Kim Il Sung. That Juche has even been called “an emotion masquerading as an idea” shows the extent to how crucial some see this emotional dimension is to the North Korean ideological constitution, and that Kim Il Sung used his life to teach a love for the nation under the name of Juche in his travels as well, is not a difficult image to envisage. Love of the ethno-nation is a main theme of this study, and therefore is threaded throughout many sections in varying degrees of detail.

Kim Jong Il on Nationalism

Having provided my interpretation of ethnonationalism in North Korea, this next section will deal with how North Korea itself understands nationalism. It will base itself on an important and very relevant piece of text published in the DPRK titled “On Having a Correct Understanding of Nationalism.” It is a talk that Kim Jong Il gave to the senior officials of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea on February 26 and 28, 2002, and is perhaps the most key piece of propaganda that this study should extend itself from. It is offered in both Korean and English, the former, a five-page document, and the latter, a seven-page document, and is incredibly peculiar in that is does not

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95 Kim (1989-a), p. 1
96 Martin, p. 15
97 Cumings (1993), p. 223
98 Suh, p. 159
assume the standard haughtiness that all North Korean propaganda readers are all too familiar with. Indeed it does promote the government line, with its fervent cries, but strives evidently to elucidate very clearly and rationally the ideological mastery and prowess that the regime lauds itself on.

Regardless of whether Kim Jong Il wrote it, had partial input on it, or merely read it out, the piece maintains a high sense of value in it serving as a kind of manifesto on nationalism from the North Korean perspective, in the North Korean context. Having analysed both the Korean and English versions, there are no fundamental differences that I would like to take issue at. They do in most part reflect each other as accurate and genuine translations, but also yielded value in terms of the terminology that was used. Key words were paid close attention to, and having done so, “nation” is indeed confirmed as minjok, “state” is gukka, and “country” is nara. Minjok is interchangeable in the Korean language with the two terms of “nation” and “race,” so to my perception, this accounted for an increase in the numerical incidence of this word in the Korean version as opposed to the English version. One last stylistic difference is that Korean key words and meanings were abbreviated in single character clusters, whereas the English did not share this same convenience convention, and so had to offer explanatory sentences, e.g. aeguk aejok (애국애족) literally “love country love people,” translated as “loving the country and the people.”

This section will go on to critically explore five key issues raised in the text. They include nationalism and/versus patriotism, the North Korean distinction and justification of the ideology of nationalism, the harmony of nationalism with communism and internationalism, Kim Il Sung’s personality cult in the text and his ideas regarding the nation, and the notion of anti-imperialism with its related globalisation and integration. In closing, the theme of reunification of the country will be initiated to make way for further exploration in the subsequent section.

1. Nationalism and/versus Patriotism

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99 It is well known that in North Korean propaganda oftentimes the Korean versions are not completely congruent with their English counterparts (See Myers p. 17), having been altered and specialised to stab deeper at the (North) Korean ethnic nerve by use of different terms and expressions.

100 The English version will be used, so all quotations will be direct (untranslated) extractions.
Having gone to lengths to define and distinguish nationalism and patriotism in conventional academia in a previous section, the next most important task is to establish this in the North Korean context. From this we not only understand how they are understood, defined and distinguished, but also we may deduce the gap, if any, that divides them and established academia as indicated above. To start off with nationalism, we first refer to the text ("the text" from here on shall denote “On Having a Correct Understanding of Nationalism” by Kim Jong Il):

Nationalism came to being as an ideology for defending the interests of a nation in the course of the latter’s formation and development. Although nations differ from one another in the period of the formation, every nation is a social community which has been formed and consolidated historically on the basis of a common kinship descent, language, residential area and culture, and is composed of various classes and strata.\(^{101}\)

This definition can very comfortably correspond itself to the basic definition of nationalism in Western academia given previously. The North Koreans note that nationalism arose from the course of a nation’s development in defence of its interests, and indeed, the significant majority of nationalism scholars in the West too, believe that nationalism is a modern phenomenon – one arising from the convergence and conflict of proto-nations in the modern era. The North Korean definition also includes an historical component in a nation’s origin and social fabric, basing it on common kinship, language, land and culture. The very framework that this thesis employs, Walker Connor’s ethnonationalism, is too, one that defines nationalism as based on these elements and more, making the North Korean definition of nationalism thus far quite compatible and conventional. The North Korean basic definition then adds that a nation is composed of various classes and strata. There are various theories of nationalism, primarily political and economic but not ethnic, that delineate a sense of stratum in their line, but seeing as North Korea officially considers itself a classless society, the inclusion of this is odd. Here, an element of definition does not correspond to the ethnic nationalism of Western academia, accounting for slight incongruence, yet not complete divergence.

The idea of the destiny of a nation is pivotal in the structure of nationalism, and hence was covered in the section above titled ‘Divine nationalist missions’. How the

\(^{101}\) Kim 2002, p. 1
North Koreans account for nationalist destiny is therefore important, and fortunately also included in the text. To offer a quote on this topic:

All the members of a nation have the same stake in championing the independence and character of the nation and attaining national prosperity without distinction of the interests of their classes and strata. This is because the destiny of a nation is precisely the destiny of its individual members; in other words, the latter is dependent on the former. None will be happy with the sovereignty and honour of his or her nation being trampled upon and national character disregarded.102

This excerpt details the autonomy and sovereignty of a nation – both critical elements in the psychology of nationalism. The North Koreans connote that individual members of a nation are reliant on their nation, as it is the nation that facilitates their destiny (this destiny being comprised of national honour and much valued character). This too could be comparable to Western academic accounts, as in the literature, an ethnie’s destiny is designed to be a certain ultimate and inevitable glory. The North Koreans too, hold the sanctity of sovereignty and honour in high regard, and with the line explicitly linking individual members to the collective fate, these account for additional points of similarity between North Korean and Western understandings of nationalism and destiny.

Divine nationalist destinies are usually lofty tales, somewhat analogous to legends of the future, so for this reason, they almost always conjure deep emotion and extract strong commitment from members. Explored previously was how love of an (ethno) nation is facilitated by beliefs in ethnic greatness, both past and future. The North Koreans also do have love of country as indispensible to nationalism, and below, a quotation from the text on this is offered:

It is the common ideological feeling and psychology of the members of a nation to love their nation, cherish its characteristic and interests, and yearn for its prosperity. Nationalism reflects this feeling and psychology. In other words, nationalism is an ideology that advocates love for the nation and defence of its interests.103

102 Ibid, p. 1
103 Ibid, pp. 1-2
As evident, the North Koreans show love of country in nationalism and acknowledge the fact that it is a psychological, as well as an emotional, phenomenon. The peculiar thing however, is their convention of terming it an “ideological feeling.” To most, ideology would be a rational system of socio-political organisation, whereas emotion would be a non-rational impulse or feeling. To the North Koreans however, these two contrasting notions appear commonly as partners in what could be seen as an example of the North Korean style of ideological doctoring. By engineering ideology to its accord, the regime professes a doctrine which is wholly justifying of its own agenda but consequently, completely incoherent when compared to real standards. From the standpoint of this thesis, the regime is endeavouring to keep the all-important emotional component of nationalism, yet package it in an ideological shell for the purpose of political legitimisation. This gives us more insight into the construction of nationalism in North Korea, seeing the manner in which it is framed and delivered to the populace.

The text is predominately about nationalism, but patriotism too, affords some mentioning. The following quote offers the part where it is included:

Since people carve out their destiny while living within the nation-state as a unit, genuine nationalism constitutes patriotism. The progressive nature of nationalism lies in the fact that it is a patriotic ideology which advocates the defence of national interests.¹⁰⁴

This excerpt, the only one to offer some definitive content on patriotism, shows how nationalism and patriotism are jumbled and not clearly distinguished from one other in the North Korean understanding. This by no means is a unique creation, as this manner of articulation has often been reiterated in various forms of North Korean propaganda from earliest times to this day. Nationalism is being equated with patriotism here, but as has been elucidated in above sections, according to established Western scholarship, they are very much separate and different entities however used and abused in tandem. North Korean ideologues clearly do not have an accurate understanding of patriotism and the differences between it and nationalism, or if they do, they are choosing to conceal it and further engineer the original doctrine for their own stylistic and self serving accord. From here, the divide begins to significantly widen.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 2
2. The North Korean distinction and justification of the ideology of nationalism

Nationalism, being an ideology positioned on the right of the political spectrum, is often and correctly interpreted as being conservative and traditional, and not ‘progressive’, as the North Koreans or any others may think. Throughout modern history, extreme forms of right wing nationalism have manifested themselves in German National Socialism and Japanese Imperialism among others, and the lessons learnt from these two cases in particular, is why the ideology of nationalism is looked upon with suspicion, fear and disdain. Nationalism is not the item of choice for advanced democratic nation-states, but appeals to national unity under the banners of race, history, citizenship, common land or monarch head, or some other characteristic unique to that country, is definitely not unheard of, even in those who denounce nationalism as simply violent and backwards. They do not explicate it, but leaders do channel nationalism to benefit from the awe-inspiring effect it has on a mass of people, and in this regard, North Korea is not different. While remaining as politically correct and consistent as it can, North Korea takes this precedence to a entirely new level, arguably, to an extent surpassing both Nazi Germany and early Showa era/wartime Japan. It sees nationalism as not a primordial, bourgeois or supremacist ideology, but instead, an enlightening and strengthening energy, one that is simply misunderstood and therefore abandoned, due to an incapability on the behalf of the rest of the world in interpreting it with correct ideological skill.

To start, let us be informed by the text on how nationalism came to be universally misconstrued:

As capitalism developed and the bourgeoisie became the reactionary ruling class after victorious bourgeois revolutions in various countries, nationalism was used as a means of defending the interests of the bourgeois class. The bourgeoisie disguised their class interests as national interests, and used nationalism as an ideological instrument for solidifying their class domination. This led nationalism to be understood, among the people, as a bourgeois ideology that runs counter to the national interests.105

To the minds of the North Koreans, nationalism historically was always associated with the bourgeoisie and therefore came to be synonymous with it, in turn,
serving as a tool for the rich and a form of oppression for the poor. Masking class interests as national interests, the capitalists pillaged and plundered, all the while advancing their personal economies on the exploitation and manipulation of the people. Those familiar with the history and development of nationalism in modern times would probably not disagree with this view, citing it both credible and convincing, but the critical point of scepticism needed to be made here, is elucidated in the next offering; firstly, how North Korea distinguishes the ideology of nationalism as not the traditional bourgeois dogma, and secondly, how they justify it as one that is befitting of their own country:

We should distinguish clearly between true nationalism that loves the nation and defends its interests and bourgeois nationalism that advocates the interests of the bourgeois class. Bourgeois nationalism reveals itself as national egoism, national exclusivism and big-power chauvinism in the relationship between countries and nations; it is reactionary in that it creates antagonism and disagreement between countries and nations, and checks the development of friendly relations between the various peoples of the world.106

As evident in this quote from the text, the North Koreans see true nationalism as positive – love of country and defence of homeland, whereas bourgeois nationalism is negative – national egoism, national exclusivism, big-power chauvinism, inter-nation antagonism, disagreement, and obstruction to cordial relations. What they are failing to grasp however, is that nationalism as a whole, is an ideology that encompasses all of these reactions, both positive and negative. Nationalism, having its base in the belief of shared ethnic ancestry and bloodline, naturally incites egoism, exclusivism and chauvinism upon the encounter of a perceived threat, in the very same way that it is able to arouse deep and moving sentiments of love, attachment and commitment when ethnic heartstrings are pulled in certain ways. North Korea distinguishes the ideology of nationalism as not the traditional bourgeois dogma by selectively detaching its unfavourable facets, as patent, and by constructing an ideal definition that promotes the positive emotions of love, pride and honour. In this way, the North Korean populace are made to rally around the nation, believing that what they are doing is right, and even more so, believing that what they are doing is thus far the best, as national spirit has

106 Ibid, pp. 2-3
never in history been so brilliantly harmonised with communism or socialism before. In this way, nationalism, albeit a misconstruction of it, is justified, and seen as an idea that is befitting of their country and cultural disposition. To summarise it simply however, what we are seeing is an extension of sheer ideological engineering and blatant doctoring, one that is allowed to flourish around the North Korean people due to an enforced dearth of awareness of anything else.

3. The harmony (“compatibility”) of nationalism and communism and internationalism

It is widely accepted in general understanding that nationalism and communism are antonyms of each other; complete and conflicting opposites. Nationalism advocates the interests of the nation primarily, whereas communism subsides the national entity for the more broadly pertinent whole of humankind. Communism, Karl Marx’s revolutionary idea of the inevitable creation of a classless, stateless and completely harmonious society, was one that enchanted many around the world; not only those Leninists who incited the October Revolution of 1917, but more so those oppressed under colonial bondage in many parts of Asia during the twentieth century. The ideals of communism and internationalism encountered northern Korea at a time of this very nature – when Japanese colonialism was in dear affect and when a yearning for justice through equality was mounting.

It came from Russian sources and via both Russian and Chinese channels. Being politically active in the region at the time, Kim Il Sung, future leader of North Korea, was to be influenced by it. Kim adopted the tenets of communism, and while he did not overtly contest it, did selectively employ it as impetus for the furthering of his national campaign to liberate Korea from the Japanese. From here began the contradictory relationship of nationalism and communism in the North Korean ideological configuration. The text by Kim Jong Il, written well over half a century later, well reflects this. Two sections in particular treat the apparent incongruence of nationalism with communism and internationalism, so to them we turn attention. Firstly, on nationalism and communism:

It is wrong to view communism as incompatible with nationalism. Communism does not advocate only the interests of the working class; it also
advocates the interests of the nation – hence it is an ideology of loving the country and the people. Nationalism is also an ideology of loving the country and the people, as it defends the interests of the country and the nation. Love of the country and the people is an ideological emotion common to communism and nationalism; herein lies the ideological basis on which they can ally with one another. Therefore, there is no reason or ground to pit one against the other, and reject nationalism.\textsuperscript{107}

From the above quotation, one sourced because it most definitively treats the anomaly head-on, it is evident that there is little to no ideological rigour being exercised in attempts to credibly take on the doctrine of Marx. It is not explained at all how communism advocates the interests of the nation, and not explained to a sufficient degree how the “ideological emotion” common to both communism and nationalism allows them to be exempt from being “pitted against one another.” “Ideological emotion” moreover, is not even defined, despite, as mentioned above, being mentioned on a regular basis in such discussions. What is left to be deduced from this excerpt, is the continued appropriation of selective tenets to a selected situation, for political advantage.

Love of country is reiterated several times in the North Korean version – despite love of country/nation bearing no degree of importance in the original communist creed – and the North Koreans exhibit an emotional fixation on the people, whereas in the original Marx version, focus extends not on this, but instead on the economics and philosophy of the product and modes of production. The North Koreans state that nationalism is incompatible with communism, but having taken the chance to explain this claim, they have failed to do so, most perceptibly because their ideological credence is negligible and exercised only in altered forms to serve domestic political agendas. In many propagandistic pieces they tout a “nationalist in form, socialist in content” motto, but as substantiated, it is indeed socialist in form, and nationalist in content. Now to treat nationalism and internationalism:

Nationalism does not conflict with internationalism. Mutual help, support and alliance between countries and nations – this is internationalism. Every country has its borders, and every nation has its identity, and revolution and construction are carried on with the country and nation as a unit. For this reason, internationalism finds its expressions in the relationships between countries and between nations, a prerequisite for which is nationalism.

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid, p. 3
Internationalism divorced from the concepts of nation and nationalism is merely an empty shell. A man who is unconcerned about the destiny of his country and nation cannot be faithful to internationalism. Revolutionaries of each country should be faithful to internationalism by struggling, first of all, for the prosperity of their own country and nation.108

The North Koreans commence their discussion of internationalism by exhibiting a better understanding of it than of communism. Indeed, internationalism is the mutual help, support and alliance of countries, and although not mentioned was that these countries are limited only to those who actually believe in the ideology, i.e. non-capitalists, it still is a palatable, albeit incomplete definition of the idea. It is only when they continue on to explain that nationalism is the necessary prelude, or prerequisite to internationalism, that they concede authority and make more visible their nationalism-at-all-costs position. The text acknowledges the uniqueness and identity of a nation, and consequently, this assumes an embracing of its history, often one fraught with feudalism and its undesirable customs and culture. Legitimating this, all the while professing commitment to internationalism therefore, becomes blatantly contradictory on the part of the North Koreans. Lenin famously sought a complete eradication of feudalism and its residue on the revolution, working for the total unification of the world’s workers, and not just the one of Soviet Russia and various peripheries. Kim in this text undermines that original cause, seeking to command the vast pool of the masses in a fascistic and extreme nationalist way by appealing for a struggle for the prosperity of the nation and its destiny principally before the internationalist cause. This is read as an unequal and egocentric stance, one that resembles dictator Joseph Stalin’s infamous “Socialism in one country” and one that is no doubt wholly antithetical to the original revolutionary creed envisioned by Karl Marx.

4. Kim Il Sung’s personality cult in the text and his ideas regarding the nation

Having mentioned Joseph Stalin and his betrayal of the communist creed to pursue a more personal autocracy, it is now time to turn to the North Korean version of this figure, precisely, Kim Il Sung. The text was produced in the early 2000s – the Kim Jong Il

108 Ibid, pp. 3-4
era – so contextualising it in comparison to the Kim Il Sung era yields important information from which to extrapolate.

Kim Il Sung ruled unmatched from the 1960s, but it was during the 1970s and 1980s that his personality cult very much progressed unabatedly. At this time, the political and economic state of affairs were stable and doing well and this meant that an amicable air of satisfaction and contentment amongst the people within society existed. Kim, perhaps owing to a combination of morally corrupt qualities, began to shower himself with praise and adulation, and then started to expect the same from others until it reached an extreme and fear-provoking proportion. Unrivalled and untouched, he came to assume god-like status by the 1990s, and in his old age, dwelled as a deity among men in North Korea. Kim Jong Il, long groomed for succession since the 1980s, was the main instigator in the elevation of his father. Realising he tallied very little points of political legitimacy in contrast to his father, he sought to claim legitimacy by intimately associating himself with his father, and extolling him even higher. He succeeded, and the Kim Jong Il era dawned from the late 1990s onwards.

The following quote from the text demonstrates this sycophantic behaviour, one that by that time and still to this day, is the norm. In fact, anything other than the glorification and immortalisation of Kim Il Sung in daily vernacular is looked upon suspiciously, and indeed punished with severe consequence. Kim Jong Il:

For the first time in history, the great leader President Kim Il Sung gave a correct explanation of nationalism, and elucidated the relationship between communism and nationalism and between communists and nationalists in his revolutionary practice of carving out the destiny of his country and people...Attracted by his broad magnanimity and noble personality, many nationalists took the patriotic road to national unity and national reunification, making a clean break with their erroneous pasts...We can say that there has been no man in the world as great as him, who devoted his whole life to the nation’s independence and prosperity, and a bright future for mankind. He was the most steadfast communist and, at the same time, a peerless patriot, true nationalist and paragon among internationalists.109

From these few excerpts above, it is clear that the praise attributed to Kim Il Sung surpasses mere meritorious acknowledgement and instead reaches unrealistic and preposterous heights. He is credited for historic ideological profundities despite the fact

109 Ibid, pp. 4-5
that he never finished secondary school and spent his formative years in the Manchurian forest as a guerrilla fighter, and is lauded as a magnanimous and noble persona, despite being crude, tough and an instinctual survivalist. Indeed, people were attracted to him, but not because of his broad benevolence or caring nature, but more likely for his wit and resolve, if not his intimidation and bullying of them. In regards to those of his followers, it is well known that they had to be completely loyal and obedient to him, or as good as useless. Even some of his staunchest supporters coming into the early years of the Republic were purged for alleged disloyalties, so from this, we can see that he held very little of an empathetic and forgiving quality. Kim Jong Il says that he was the greatest man in the world, working for Korea’s independence and for mankind’s liberation. He did work for Korea’s independence, but cared scant for the international revolution, and indeed enriched himself dearly at the expense of the nation as soon as he was able to. His devotion was to his psychology of power and lifestyle of luxury, and his concerns for the future were the staving off of the United States and the conjoining of South Korea with his Korea, under his own family bloodline. He was neither a constant communist, patriot, nationalist or internationalist, as his conduct during his life, as elucidated, displayed all sorts of conflicting loyalties and corruptive tendencies.

Now for Kim Il Sung’s ideas on the nation as articulated by Kim Jong Il:

I also assert, as the leader instructed, that one must be an ardent patriot, a true nationalist, in order to become a genuine revolutionary, a communist. The communist who fights for the realization of the independence of the masses of the people must first of all be a true nationalist. Those who fight for their people, their country and their homeland are genuine communists, true nationalist and ardent patriots. Those who do not love their own parents, brothers and sisters cannot love their country and compatriots. Likewise, those who do not love their own homeland and people cannot become communists.\footnote{Ibid, p.5}

Here, Kim Jong Il reiterates Kim Il Sung’s wisdom regarding the nation, agreeing with it and legitimising it for officialdom once more. It is the common line that was encountered previously, the one stating that in order to be a communist and revolutionary, one must first be a nationalist and patriot; essentially putting the nation ahead of the international cause. It continues on to espouse not only a love of nation and

\footnote{Ibid, p.5}
people, but also a love of family – parents, brothers, and sisters – in the course of coming to love the nation, and consequently, in the becoming of a communist.

Once again, recurring rhetoric of this North Korean nature would almost certainly be foreign to Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin, making clear the specialised construction of North Korean communism in comparison to the few others. A confusion, or non-distinction between nationalism and patriotism is evident, a flawed commitment to internationalism is deducible, and rather than communism or patriotism, the ideology of Confucianism is most apparent, seen in the love of family and loyalty to authority.

Kim’s words on the nation are being hailed as original and unique contributions to creative and innovative spheres of ideology, but in this study, as in the great deal of academic accounts in existence, it is accepted that his utterances are circular, unenlightening and riddled with inconsistencies – purely meant for propagandistic effect, but nonetheless valuable in that we are able to gain insight into their modes of thinking and governing. Both Kims seem to think that having a certain sound byte and consistently pitching it however long makes it ultimately true, but as has been shown here again, this could not be further off the mark.

5. Anti-imperialism, with its “globalisation” and “integration”

Apart from having its own personalised pseudo-ideology, another reason why North Korea succeeds in perpetuating its existence is due to its closed and cordoned off physical nature. Despite having its southern border some fifty kilometres from Seoul, it remains for all intents and purposes inaccessible to most both transport-wise and communication-wise. Outsiders and the alien and subversive information they bring is neither wanted nor condoned, and incoming foreigners at the capital airport are routinely screened for this very reason. The populace do not have access to the Internet or even to an average amount of foreign publications, and such has been enforceable law for the last few decades. Speaking with foreigners is illegal for the great deal of the citizenry, and only those trusted and qualified to associate with internationals do so via strict protocol.
All these restrictions allude to a xenophobic and ethnocentric country, one that is paranoid and petrified of instability and change. A restrictive physical environment is sought because of a perceived hostile outside world, one that is thought to be scheming in all manners to attack and dissolve the DPRK. The offenders are the so-called imperialists, and the main instigator amongst them is the United States. North Korea has extensive and elaborate propaganda campaigns created for conjuring anti-American sentiment, and one can be sure that at certain times of the year, including war anniversaries and supposed events of victories and atrocities, campaigns resurface to maintain a regulated state of society. The text demonstrates this sentiment. Kim Jong Il expounds on who he thinks the real culprits are, and speaking on globalisation and integration, he informs us why they are necessary of second thought:

It is not communists but imperialists who oppose nationalism and place obstacles in the way of the independent development of nations at present. The imperialists are manoeuvring cunningly to realise their dominationist ambition on the plea of “globalisation” and “integration”...The manoeuvres of the US imperialists for “globalisation” and “integration” are aimed at turning the world into what they call a “free” and “democratic” world styled after the United States, and thus bringing all countries and nations under their domination and subordination.111

What could be said about this excerpt is that it is marginally true. Indeed, imperialists do go out to colonise and expand their empires at the expense of the local population, but as history has shown, imperialists are more often than not themselves nationalists. Therefore, it is not imperialists who oppose nationalism, but rather, communists who do so, and this has been substantiated previously several times. The North Korean version of ideology has selectively nominated a party (the United States) and demonised it in attempts to bolster its own credibility on the world stage. They frame America’s prominent position as the world’s largest economic, cultural, political and military superpower as “dominationist” and read their economic and political models of reform and liberalism as rude impositions on others who may want to govern their countries in other ways. North Korea ridicules American-style “freedom” and “democracy,” saying that it is only a ploy to bring everyone under their dominion, but it is quite remarkable of them to do so, seeing as they employ one of, if not the most

111 Ibid, pp. 5-6
repressive systems in the world despite naming itself the "Democratic People's Republic of Korea" (emphasis intended).

Another reason for the orchestrated reaction is more domestic focussed and intended. A theme that runs through scrutiny of North Korean propaganda is the invented and/or perceived threat, and this precisely is the role that the assaulting rhetoric and imagery of the United States takes on. Habitually stirring peoples’ senses of fear and uncertainty for the benefit of the establishment, the regime urges its people to summon more hatred and divulge more effort to develop and defend the country from such threats. Anti-imperialism and anti-Americanism doubtless are major wellsprings for political mobilisation, and for this reason are used proficiently to achieve the desired effect. The next quote gives insight into the other side of the anti-imperialist crusade:

We should resolutely oppose and reject the manoeuvres of the imperialists for “globalisation” and “integration,” and staunchly fight to preserve the excellent characteristics of our nation and safeguard its independence. We frequently emphasise the Korean-nation-as-best ideology so as to preserve the national character and defend the independence of the nation.\textsuperscript{112}

We are told from the viewpoint of the regime that the reason why they must oppose and reject American sanctioned globalisation and integration into the world community is because of its national sovereignty that it must uphold. A perceived threat being responded to with caution and some manner of retort is understandable, but the frequency and intensity that North Korea continues to tout these threats from the US renders them no longer very credible. Considering they also often arise unprovoked and in relation to no event in particular, we are left to deduce that the regime engages in strategic aggression, one that is aimed at rallying the populace around the regime under the pretext of the nation, serving to strengthen its core and hence maintain its existence.

Also mentioned were the “excellent characteristics” of the nation that must be preserved, and the “Korean-nation-as-best ideology” that is frequently emphasised. Slogans of this nature serve another corresponding purpose. Functioning to ideologically justify an invented supremacy of the (North) Korean race, they hark at, as explored previously, ethnic sentiments and instincts that can be extremely influential in behaviour of an impassioned or non-rational nature, i.e. hatred for evil foreigners and love for pure Koreans. The Korean-nation-as-best ideology is explored at length in the

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid, p. 6
latter section of chapter 4 and themes including purity and unity too, are discussed further in chapter 5.

6. Reunification of the country

In closing this section, and in concluding the Kim Jong Il text “On Having a Correct Understanding of Nationalism,” the last issue that is to be raised is national reunification. Before any remarks proceed let us first be introduced to the sentiment that is held in regards to national reunification:

A most important task facing us today in championing and realizing national independence is to reunify the country. Our nation, which has inherited a time-honoured history and culture and the tradition of patriotism, has been divided into north and south by foreign forces for more than half a century. The division of the territory and the nation is blocking the way for the nation’s concerted development, and inflicting untold misery and hardship upon it. National reunification is not only a vital demand of our people but also the unanimous will and aspiration of the entire nation.113

From this we notice the importance and urgency that is placed upon national reunification. Not only is it a national tragedy inflicting untold misery on the people, but it is a severe injustice, one that has been caused by outsiders, and one that the North Koreans are going to great lengths to correct. The issue of division symbolises the fraying of the long heritage of the ethnically homogeneous Korean nation; a country that is now wracked by conflicting patriotisms and confused nationalisms, and one that reunification is seen to be able to solve.

National reunification has been a recurring theme in North Korean publications and propaganda since the earliest years until now, and although the slogans have remained the same, their strategic uses indeed have not. National reunification, much like everything else in North Korean officialdom, is constructed selectively and tactically, and not always so well intended. The next section aims to

113 Ibid, pp. 6-7
explore this very theoretical construction of national reunification in North Korean officialdom, so to there attention is now turned.

Reunification

National reunification has always been touted by the North Korean regime as the supreme desire of the Korean people. Whether that is true of every individual Korean is impossible to say, but indeed it could be said to be the supreme desire of the North Korean regime; and not on mutually conceived terms with the South, but on its own terms, which it perceives to be mutually beneficial with the South. In endeavouring to understand the construction of reunification from the perspective of the North Korean regime, a collection of five treatise on reunification given by Kim Il Sung from the early 1990s has been approached and analysed. Titled “On Achieving the National Reunification by the Great Unity of the Nation,” and compiled by Pyongyang in 2008, this collection consists of three talks given to the annual Pan-National Rally events of 1990, 1991, and 1992, a speech to a women’s group attending a similar event in 1992, and Kim’s much lauded 10-point Programme, or prospectus, on proposing how unification could, and should be achieved in the immediate future, published in 1993.

The collection is valuable in that the timing of it represents the coming of the ideological full circle in the development of North Korea in the context of the lifetime of all-encompassing leader Kim Il Sung. Here, and at this point, he is seen to be qualified and erudite enough to comment on such weighty issues, and essentially, in this hallowed collection, lays down a set of advanced and well framed thoughts matured from a span of over 40 years of life in politics before he dies in 1994. I believe it is beneficial to view reunification in such a manner, so below, I shall theoretically deconstruct the collection in two ways; first, from an internal perspective, looking at how reunification is seen and officially constructed inside of North Korea, and secondly, from an outward-looking perspective, looking at how external ‘enemies of reunification’ serve to strengthen the rhetoric of North Korea’s claim to reunification. This way, two sides of the North Korean reunificationist cause will be able to be seen, importantly
understanding both the positive and negative motivations that construct its existence. 
The last treatise, the 10-Point Programme, will be treated on its own.

1. Reunification: The supreme desire of the Korean people

The descriptive terms that North Korea uses to define reunification are indeed
unmistaken and hard to confuse. They include: [the] ardent desire, [the] cherished
desire, [the] burning desire, [the] historic cause, [the] cause for independence, [the]
most pressing task for the Korean people, [the] supreme task of the nation, [the] most
honourable and worthwhile cause, [the] noble cause, and [the] struggle...[that] is
difficult.114 Such abundance of resolute, potent and lofty adjectives gives first insight
into how reunification is held inside North Korea. Not simply existing in a vacuum in the
present, this pitch towards reunification is born of decades of troubled division, which
in itself is more deeply implicative of centuries of older Korean civilization. Acutely
sensitised to this, North Korea with Kim Il Sung as leader has created a multi-
dimensional and time-transcending construction of reunification, one th\at to its North
Korean audience is too good to question or refute. A North-style reunification package is
reasonable, necessary, and morally and pragmatically right, all the while being romantic,
emotionally moving, and making real of the people’s most dearly held dreams and
desires. This type of rhetoric takes precedence in all utterances on reunification, where
Kim provides the Korean people with reasons why reunification should take place, how
it can take place, and a detailed image on what a reunified Korea on his terms will look
like and stand for.

The aim of the reunification of our nation is to realise the independence of
our nation, to achieve the common development and prosperity of the nation
and to ensure that all the Korean people lead happy and worthy lives in one
reunified land.115

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114 These descriptions are extracted intermittently from the first three treatise of the collection titled Let the Entire Nation Unite and Hasten the Reunification of the Country, Let Us Achieve the Great Unity of Our Nation, and Let Us Realise the Country’s Reunification Independently through the United Effort of the Whole Nation.
115 Kim, 2008: Let Us Achieve the Great Unity of Our Nation, p. 26
Kim’s purported aim of reunification as exemplified above, is one that is difficult to fault. The desire to be independent, in historical light of 35 years of Japanese colonialism (1910-1945), as well as his perceived occupation of South Korea by US military forces, is understandable, as too is the aspiration for a prosperous and contented standard of living for the people, in light of a devastating and divisive war (1950 to 1953). Alluding to a reunified land though, the issue runs deeper:

Achieving the reunification of our country means linking the nation’s severed blood vessels, bringing about national harmony and gaining national independence across the country. In other words, it concerns the fate of our fellow-countrymen; it is a matter vital to our nation.\textsuperscript{116}

Having already identified with the desire for independence, we learn from this excerpt of the more meaningful issue of linking severed blood ties across the north and south. Reunification is not merely about material standards of living and political autonomy we come to see, but more so now about reconnecting the broken ethnic group and reuniting family members rightfully with each other. It concerns no smaller than the fate of the nation and its countrymen, and exudes a level of importance, that if ultimately achieved, would reap a reward to such extent. This matter is vital and transcends politics, representing an historic injustice that Kim champions to correct.

Our people are a homogeneous nation. They have lived in the same land down through the ages, creating their own culture and making their own history. Our nation was divided artificially by foreign forces and is still divided because of the foreign forces’ obstructive moves against reunification. The division of the nation has not only caused immeasurable misfortune and suffering to all our compatriots in the north, south and abroad, but also obstructed the coordinated development of the nation and the prosperity of the country. This is the age of independence, and divided nations are all advancing towards reunification. There is no reason or condition whatsoever that in this age our nation should continue to live divided. We must not let the tragedy of national division continue any longer; we must reunify the country as soon as possible.\textsuperscript{117}

Above, Kim Il Sung substantiates the injustice of division and elucidates why Korea should be reunited. This is, above all, a cause of morality, and has at stake no less than the age-old tradition of the Koreans’ culture and history. Kim notes that this state

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid, p. 20
\textsuperscript{117} Kim, 2008: Let the Entire Nation Unite and Hasten the Reunification of the Country, p. 3
of division is artificial and engineered by outside forces (which will be gone into more depth in the next section on reunification enemies), and is such that it has caused immeasurable misfortune and suffering on the people, as well as the obstruction to their development and prosperity. What effect this manner of rhetoric has no doubt, is to incite the sentiment of righteousness and resolve on the part of the North Korean audience to go out and reclaim their past, present and future with the reclaiming of their nation from ‘foreign hands’. Their time-honoured identity, as well as the livelihood of their descendants is alluded to be put in danger, but by adhering to Kim’s words and simply reunifying the country, all this is able to be solved. Kim emphasises the futility and wrongness of being divided on hostile terms, and instead, tactfully advocates a stance of his own, one that is well planned and selectively guiding.

Kim makes reunification all the more appealing by painting it an image of complete harmony. He highlights unity and commonality over difference and disparity, even with capitalist South Koreans who support national reunification, and subsides everything in favour of coming together to realise national reunification. He draws himself as a Christ-like figure, forgiving of national traitors who ultimately see the light and return to his embrace in the North, and tells the tale of Choe Dok-Sin, of whom, having been a commander in the South Korean forces, eventually sees the real patriotic way to follow in the path of the North and not the South. Kim stresses the “genuine harmony and unity of the whole nation” over “procedures and methods” in achieving reunification, and is openly inclusive of nation-loving Koreans of all stripes – in the North, South, abroad, intellectuals, capitalists and even men of religious belief. He then makes the examples of Reverend Mun Ik-Hwan and student representative Rim Su-Gyong, of whom both from the South, took illegal measures to visit the North to participate in pro-reunification activities. Hailing their patriotic and progressive efforts, Kim underscores the strong and unshakable desire of the people for national reunification as symbolised by these figures, enveloping them subliminally with nationalistic charm and allure.

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118 Ibid, p. 17
119 Ibid, p. 33
120 Ibid, pp. 31-33
121 Ibid, p. 27
122 Ibid, pp. 12-13
123 Ibid, p. 3
Kim continues to illustrate the success that is being championed through unity in the instance of inter-Korean sports events. Various football matches and table tennis competitions are lauded, and according to Kim, it “delighted all the brethren in the north, south and abroad and led them to gain national pride and confidence.”\textsuperscript{124} He then changes gear and makes an interesting note on religion:

> It is very important to have a correct understanding of religions and to work properly with religious believers. People believe in a religion because they take their sufferings and misfortunes in this world as predestined, and they yearn for happiness in the next world. Therefore, we cannot call them bad. What is bad is the anti-popular politics that misleads people about the situation and reactionary rulers who misuse religions, making them an instrument for paralysing the people’s consciousness of independence and ensuring that the people obey their rule.\textsuperscript{125}

Being head of a non-religious country, one would not expect Kim Il Sung to comment on religious issues, let alone to advocate for a cooperation with the religious groups in South Korea. However, in order to widen his reunification pitch to as many willing South Koreans as possible, it is important for him not to alienate the large swathes of North sympathising people of religious belief in the South. He understands the plight that may have led them to assume faith, yet compels them to believe that they are not completely free to pursue their religious lives due to the politically domineering environment they live in. It is ironic in the least for Kim to say this, seeing as he advocates a screening process style approach to all foreign things (“We must chew foreign things and eat them if they agree to our taste or spit them out if they do not.”\textsuperscript{126}) and punishes evangelising with severe consequence, as is the case of American national Kenneth Bae, who after a non-disclosed trial, received a 15-year hard labour sentence in North Korea in May, 2013.\textsuperscript{127}

Apart from drawing the situation out to be overwhelmingly in support of his viewpoint from the varied visits, events and ideals mentioned above, Kim Il Sung does the reunification cause what he feels is an historic contribution by clarifying three major principles of reunification, as well as a proposal to reunify the country as the

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid, p. 28
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid, p. 30
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid, pp. 11-12
“Democratic Federal Republic of Koryo”. His three principles of reunification, to start off with, include independence, peaceful reunification and great national unity.\(^{128}\)

The three principles of national reunification are the nation’s common programme of reunification, agreed upon jointly by north and south and declared to the public at home and abroad. ...In my interview with the south-side delegate who came to the north-south high-level political talks in 1972...I told him that the country should be reunified, first, independently without depending on foreign forces or without foreign interference, second, peacefully without recourse to the force of arms, and third, on the principle of promoting great national unity by transcending differences in thought, ideas and systems.\(^{129}\)

Here, Kim puts forth his honourable yet very fanciful proposal to reunify the country. This three-pronged scheme was expounded in 1972, but in the year of writing in 2013, more than forty years later, these simple ideals have not developed nor prevailed in any way, and in fact, the possibility for reunification remains never so distant than as of now due to recent prolonged and heated hostilities. His “Democratic Federal Republic of Koryo” schema, similarly, is more likely to attract amusement and/or scorn rather than genuine consideration.

Our idea of the Democratic Federal Republic of Koryo envisages setting up a supreme national assembly of confederation, represented equally by north and south, and a permanent federal committee, its standing body, under which north and south exercise autonomy, leaving the two systems in the north and south as they are on the principle of coexistence. The head of the reunified state may be called President or Chairman, and the office of head of state can be held alternately for one year by the north and the south. The federal state should not be a satellite of any country, but must be a neutral state and pursue an independent line.\(^{130}\)

One could applaud Kim Il Sung for his tenacity to uphold Korean autonomy and determination in the face of major political powers to all sides of the peninsula, but the idea of a confederation, essentially “two states in one”, is more likely to prove problematic in practice than as is drawn up in his theoretical musings, ones of a propagandistic nature at that. He continually emphasises unity and commonality over difference, but evidently to that same extent does not seem to appreciate the immense


\(^{129}\) Ibid, pp. 7-8

\(^{130}\) Ibid, p. 13
complexities and profound divergences that have evolved over more than sixty years of division and antagonism in existing as South and North Korea. These differences of course, would make it difficult at best to commune on issues such as national defence and international relations, due to the very fact that both countries from their earliest inceptions have had relationships of reliance with reciprocally rival countries. How must the Democratic Federal Republic of Koryo be neutral then, when the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, first of all, are contenders for control of the whole peninsula, and second of all, are tied evermore into their own regional and international strategic alliances? Where will the house of the “national assembly of confederation” be located, furthermore? At the truce village of Panmunjom, where even initial stage talks routinely cannot be advanced?\textsuperscript{131}

Kim somewhat comes undone then, when, in the course of his 20-page speech ramblings, cannot help but let slip the colours of the staunch socialist that truly resides in him. As each speech progresses, socialist undertones gradually heighten, and allusions to the infamous humanist principles and political utopias steadily increase. A refrain that is constantly repeated is the following, found in the collection of five treatise, a number of six times:

\textbf{People with strength should contribute strength, those with knowledge should offer their knowledge, and those with money should give their money.}\textsuperscript{132}

Here, Kim initiates his real agenda with this rather innocent, yet still, socialist-styled appeal. Whatever resource one has, he urges it to be put forth for the cause of achieving reunification, creating an ‘all for one, one for all’ type atmosphere which is egalitarian, harmonious, caring and committed. It is quite blameless at this point, but soon enough, Kim abandons almost all air of perspective for a pan-Korean audience and launches into 4-6 page-length heated lectures of another nature. He very familiarly goes into detail about his personal history, emphasising the proud revolutionary history of himself and fellow partisans, and essentially takes the


opportunity to showcase his own alleged prowess in fighting the Japanese in the pre
and post-liberation decades of the 1930s and 1940s. At this point, Kim loses a great
deal of the credibility that was earned up until then, ceasing to put the spotlight the
important issue of achieving reunification, and instead, using the platform to promote
himself and his regime.

Kim’s time-transcending visions for a great nation do not stop there. Not only
does Korea have a proud history, Kim convinces us of, but it also has a future destined
for unbounded greatness.

Once the country is reunified, our nation will be a dignified and strong nation
and our country will emerge on the world stage as an independent and
sovereign country with more than seventy million people, a brilliant national
culture and a powerful economy. Our nation is industrious and resourceful,
and our country is a beautiful land of three thousand ri in which it is good to live. When the whole nation is united as one, and when the country is
reunified, there will be nothing for us to fear or envy. Our people will proudly
display the resourcefulness and greatness of the Korean nation and nobody
will dare to encroach upon our sovereignty.

Kim is unambiguous in his outlook of Korea becoming a major world power
upon reunification. South Korea is indeed competent on the economic front, but North
Korea, due to the regime’s ignorance and inexperience in navigating a conventional
economy through the global market, would very much be useless. In fact, upon
reunification, most likely not so romantic as Kim envisions, capital would be required to
be poured in to North Korea in vast amounts just to stabilise the situation. The same
certainly goes for the political establishment. North Korea, contrary to its self-
perception, does not command respect or exert rightful clout on the international scene.
Instead, it continues to exist in the world as an unyielding menace and threat to all
parties concerned. How then, the two opposites could come together to be strengthened,
and not weakened, defies logic. The immeasurable cost of reunification that will
inevitably be borne by South Korea is now widely recognised, and Kim’s daydreams of a
great and reunified Korea under his influence, as exemplified above, are likely to
eventuate valuable in terms of propaganda and nothing else.

133 Ibid, pp. 43-49
134 Ibid, pp. 37-38
And so it does. To those with access to information from overseas and the skills to interpret it in the context of North Korea, the points pushed of an historic, most honourable and worthwhile cause, as well a noble present and gloriously destined future for the reunified nation, simply do not stand credible. But to those confined North Koreans who are socialised in no other way, the construction of the perfect image of life in a socialist style reunified Korea with its material and emotional fulfilments, is the ultimate they could ever want for.

2. The enemies of reunification

Kim Il Sung does his best in glorifying reunification and making it look as appealing as possible, but he also is very adept at doing something else; namely, constructing “enemies of reunification”. An equally elaborate schema of negativity in the form of a supposed danger to reunification, this construction serves to complement the “angels of reunification” (Kim and company) by suggesting that the object of value is under threat, and that that threat must be neutralised immediately. Kim makes most effective use of this approach, first by exploiting the gullibility and lack of knowledge on the part of the North Korean people, and second by taking it to degrees of extreme. He crafts yet again a time-transcending construction of enemyhood that is epic and emotive, and makes it relevant to the everyday lives of the people that they eventually come to engender a sentimental and psychological matrix of fear, hatred, anger and resolve to stay on the defence for their nation’s supreme cause. It is important first of all, to establish North Korea’s viewpoint on the origins and general status of division in understanding its construction:

As is well known, our country was divided not because of contradictions within our nation; its division was imposed upon it exclusively by foreign forces. After the Second World War the Korean question was dealt with to suit the interests of the great powers, contrary to our nation’s desire and will to be independent, and the United States occupied south Korea. As a result, Korea was divided into north and south. It is because of continued interference and obstruction by foreign forces that Korea has not yet achieved her reunification.\(^{135}\)

\(^{135}\) Ibid, pp. 20-21
Here Kim Il Sung makes very clear that Korea is at no fault from the beginning for her division, and that the injustice was inflicted upon her solely by foreign forces. Kim mentions that this fact is “well known”, alluding to his people that the rest of the world knows about this too, but he conveniently does not also mention that both sides of the ideological divide, all Koreans, were already engaged considerably in their own struggles at the time, and refused to concede to each other’s ideological foe. He nonetheless shifts the blame of national division to outside elements, and proceeds with the line that it is because of their continued interference that the country is still divided. He takes no accountability for the actions on his behalf that have impeded reunification through the decades, incidents such as inter border skirmishes and terrorist attacks,\textsuperscript{136} and instead, carries on with his sheer one-sided approach in propagandising.

To spell out the “enemies of reunification” from the collection in question, Kim basically delineates them as the United States, Japan and South Korea. He speaks at length on these enemies, educating his people on why these countries are enemies, and how much they should hate and distrust them. He takes greatest and most prolonged swipe at the United States, so to initiate that matter, we turn to the initial stages of one of his speeches from the collection:

The United States is the main force standing in the way of Korea’s reunification. The United States has occupied south Korea by force of arms and is lording over it. It keeps 40,000 troops in south Korea on a regular basis, with the prerogative of high command of the south Korean army...The essence of the United States’ Korea policy is to manufacture “two Koreas” and keep south Korea forever as a colony. The United States badly needs south Korea as a strategic war base for domination of Asia and the rest of the world...[T]he Americans consider south Korea a tasty piece of fat and with it between their teeth, will not let it go. That is why the reunification of Korea is a difficult problem.\textsuperscript{137}

We learn that the United States is the main force impeding Korean reunification, and that this is why Kim is exhausting in his scornful attack on them. His qualms essentially boil down to the reality of US troop presence in South Korea; a fact that has been the case since the Korean War, and a complaint of Kim’s that has

\textsuperscript{136} Referring to the Axe Murder Incident of 1976, apparently incited by the North, as well the bombing of Korean Air flight 858 in 1987, targeting South Korean nationals and committed by agents from the North.

\textsuperscript{137} Kim, 2008: \textit{On the Three Principles of National Reunification}, p. 4
consistently been echoed throughout the decades. He maintains that the grievance centres around the “lording” of the US over the South Korean army, essentially entailing an unjust bossing around of South Korean personnel at the whim of the Americans, but it is more likely that the threatening posture that the US poses on North Korea being so proximally close, and with no small cohort of tens of thousands of troops, is at the real core of the protest.

Putting aside the supposed occupation issue, North Korea perceives the United States’ international policy regarding Korea as equally as diabolical. In the North Koreans’ view, the US officially schemes to prolong division in order to keep South Korea as a submissive base from which to propel its greater Asia interests. North Korea paints the US much like an Imperial Japan of the 1930s; aggressive, domineering and self-serving in instinct, where it is the faultless and defenceless Koreans who are bearing the brunt and paying the price in dear terms. He then very much channels the ghosts of the colonial past when he refers to the Americans as chewing South Korea between their teeth like a “tasty piece of fat.” This resembles the barbaric view of the Japanese in the eyes of their enemies, uncivilized in nature and wild and ravaging in their quests for consumption.

Speaking of Japan, this country too, does not make it out unscathed when it comes to Kim Il Sung. Being archenemy number two, Kim, on Japan, has the following to say:

Japan is a formidable force that also hinders the reunification of our country...Japan considers Korea’s reunification to be an obstacle to realizing her wild dream of Asian leadership. The Japanese reactionaries are afraid of the reunification of our country. Our country will be a powerful country when its north and south are reunified. When the economies of the two parts of the country are merged, the economic capabilities will be great, and our country’s population will be 70 million. That is why the Japanese reactionaries are opposed to Korea’s reunification...Because the Japanese reactionaries refuse to discard their wild dream of reinvading Korea, we must heighten vigilance against both the United States and Japan... We must not forget our people’s unbearable sufferings under the colonial rule of Japanese imperialists, though a past event. During the 36 years of their occupation of our country the Japanese imperialists clamoured that Japan and Korea were one and that they shared the same ancestors and were of the same stock. They even forced the Koreans to change their surnames in Japanese fashion and tried to assimilate the Korean nation...As long as the Japanese
reactionaries keep dreaming of reinvasion of Korea, we must remain alert to its danger.\footnote{Ibid, pp. 4-6}

Kim raises manifold issues in this extract which has been condensed from a length of two-pages. He raises the issues of a) a perceived militaristic intent on the part of Japan not only to prolong division, but also to rein invade Korea, b) the scorn that Japan will surely instigate upon the joining of both North and South economies, and c) the historical issue of Japan’s colonisation of Korea (1910-1945) and the resentment that is still harboured in relation to it.

Regardless of whether Kim’s perceived militaristic intent of Japan is a proven accusation or not, he surely exaggerates every suspicion of hostility in order to present them to his people and perpetuate the sentiment. Kim works not in the realm of fact and reality, but more so under the pretences of sentiment, emotion and instinct, which in high likelihood explain why his reality does not usually correspond to what is general reality for everyone else. This way, he unnecessarily heightens angst amongst his people, conveying not the fact that these enemy countries are nonetheless countries that are foremost occupied with governing themselves most of the time, but that they spend most, if not, all of their time scheming to invade and conquer the little Korea just for their sick pleasures. Having said that, it is necessary for Kim to do this, as this matrix of fear and hatred most importantly facilitates his reign and warrants him and his clan longevity. Kim’s recants on Japan’s colonial era in essence are done to put to his people that the Japanese, once colonisers, are always colonisers, no matter the change of colours or stripes.

The economic issue is also one that Kim mentions. Most likely another one of the distorted musings in his head, or probably something that does have some shred of credibility to it, Kim claims that Japan is doing all in its power to prevent a unified Korea from becoming an economic powerhouse so that it does not infringe upon Japan’s economic position in the region. The rationale of economic competitiveness indeed may taint this true, but the sheer disparity between the economies of North Korea and Japan make it so incredibly hard to believe. Instead, North Korea rides on the back of South Korea’s economy for propaganda purposes, which again, accord to his fanciful personal views and not the view of the wider reality. He nonetheless does stretch this rhetoric
out for what it is worth, passing on to his people the notion that because Japan is ill-willing on Korea, that the Korean people must rise up and fight to achieve reunification, spiting the Japanese and eventually becoming economically prosperous.

In addition to military and economic Japanese threats, Kim complements this duet with a more affecting memoir from the past, namely, the Japanese atrocities of their colonisation of Korea. Repeated so often as if it happened yesterday, the North Korean people are never bidden to forget this epoch and the scar that still so indelibly remains. Having built up the desire of reunification so highly and divinely, Kim assaults his people’s sensibilities by reminding them of the insulting acts that Japan committed in aim of merging the two peoples as one under assimilation. He purposely does this, once again to incite hatred, excite motivation, and shore up stronger support for his reunificationist drive.

The South Korean government is the last enemy Kim clarifies in the collection, and his grievances with them make up a considerable list. They include: the South’s inappropriate proposal of reunification and their negligence in not attending pan-national rally events, their permission to have US troops housed in their country as well as the impact that this is having on young serving South Koreans, and lastly, the unsavoury nature of the South Korean administration with their infamous National Security Law. These issues will be addressed below with provided extracts on Kim explaining his stance.

Asserting that only one system can exist in one country, some people in south Korea now insist on the “doctrine of system unification”, which means reunifying the country by extending one side’s system to the other. This is not feasible in our situation. We shall not yield the socialist system in the north to anyone. The “doctrine of system unification” is, in essence, an attempt to perpetuate national division and make “two Koreas.”

[The South Korean authorities] are dead set against compatriots from the north, south and abroad meeting together to talk about reunification. That the representatives from the south side failed to attend the Pan-National Rally this time is ascribable to the south Korean authorities’ fascist oppression. They mobilized tens of thousands of police and suppressed by force of arms the south side representatives who were trying to go to the north to participate in this rally.

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139 Ibid, p. 15
140 Ibid, p. 50
Here North Korea channels the aggression of the US in South Korea by equating their “doctrine of system unification” as very much in line with the United States’ policy of prolonged division. Being the true enemies of reunification that they are, they are uncooperative and antagonistic, not willing to compromise on such a mutual decision, and even fascistic in nature. Kim makes this assessment on behalf of the North Korean people, and without giving them the chance nor the evidence to make up their own minds, creates a reality that once again is skewed by his agenda. Kim’s effect in speaking such rhetoric is to juxtapose himself with the South Korean authorities – himself, an advocate and activist of reunification doing all he can to achieve it, and them, an obstructive and negative corresponding force scheming to undo his sincere efforts.

Along these lines, Kim’s approach could be explained under the social identity theory put forth by Gi-wook Shin in his book *Ethnic Nationalism in Korea*. Shin explains a type of ‘black sheep effect’ where “the pressure to maintain a coherent group identity in the face of intergroup or external challenges actually results in internal pressures to conformity that are themselves divisive.”141 Or put more simply: “when behaviours of undesirable in-group members are perceived to threaten the in-group identity, the black sheep effect [is] activated to preserve or restore the perceived positivity of the in-group as a whole.”142 Viewing the whole ethnic Korean nation as the group, under this rubric, each side is interpreted to be engaged in the fiercely contested war of being titled the rightful and positive representation of the nation. In this way, we can see clearly why Kim draws himself as the positive and progressive force for reunification, and correspondingly why he draws the South as the obstructive and negative force regarding reunification.

Continuing on in relation to the South Korea-US military issue:

It is mortifying that in south Korea young people, the sons and daughters of the nation, serve in the “ROK army” under the command of Americans who use it as a tool for their neo-colonialist domination and for the implementation of their policy of keeping our nation divided. We must awaken the officers and men of the “ROK army” to the anti-national and anti-popular nature of the imperialists and their minions so that they stand firmly by their own nation and people and cooperate with their parents and

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141 Shin, p. 158
142 Ibid
brothers in the struggle for independence, democracy and national reunification.\textsuperscript{143}

Continuing on with the rationale of the social identity theory, the above quote could also be interpreted in such manner. Apart from Kim’s grave injustice of having young Korean blood at the disposal of not only a bastard nation such as South Korea, but also the most monstrous imperialist nation of America, Kim sets in motion the line of independence, pushing his nativist mindset and personal benchmark of national sovereignty and dignity. He underscores the South’s incompetence in military regards and more importantly, highlights their betrayal therefore, of the essence of the ethnic nation by being reliant on foreign elements for national defence. Strengthening his claim to be the rightful and positive representation of the Korean nation, he asserts his lofty morals and ideals, ones that in theory are more ideal than they are in practice.

He then speaks on what could be called one of his most passionate pet hates:

[S]outh Korean authorities should pull down the barrier of division and remove all obstacles that hamper free travel, contact and dialogue among the fellow countrymen in the north, south and abroad. Today the “National Security Law” of south Korea is a major obstacle to free travel, contact and dialogue between north and south. In south Korea those who have been to the north or who have discussed reunification in foreign lands with people from the north are punished under the “National Security Law”. The Rev. Mun Ilk Hwan, who is over 70, a young girl student Rim Su Gyong and other visitors to the north, as well as a large number of those working for reunification, are currently imprisoned under this law. If this wicked law is not repealed, there can be neither free travel and contact nor free dialogue between north and south. That is why the “National Security Law” must be abolished as soon as possible.\textsuperscript{144}

Kim may detest the National Security Law but he definitely knows how to make it work for him. Put in place for all intents and purposes to restrict unofficial contact of Southerners with Northerners, this Act, as old as Korea has been divided, aids Kim in his characterisation of the South Korean administration as anti-reunification agents and conspirers. It is a “barrier of division” and a “major obstacle” that obstructs Koreans of opposing stripes from coming together to get acquainted and bridge the divide, and has also been the unpleasant stick by which even the most guiltless of youth

\textsuperscript{143} Kim, 2008: On the Three Principles of National Reunification, p. 31
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid, p. 35
and religious people have been punished. Kim upholds this law as the embodiment of the South Korean government’s aversion to reunification, and in turn, effectively constructs himself as the lodestar of reunification, one who is always open and unconditional for the cause of the unity of the Korean nation. He conveniently forgets to mention however, his own harshly enforced restrictions on people movement in his country, in addition to the constitutional illegality of unsanctioned contact of North Koreans with foreigners, ironically.

3. Kim Il Sung’s 10-Point Programme

Having gone through both components of North Korea’s claim to reunification, Kim Il Sung’s 10-Point Programme, or prospectus for reunification, will now be addressed. It is a ‘10 Commandments’ style list of directives based primarily on the notion that complete unity of the nation must first be attained in order for the country to achieve reunification. They will be listed below and followed by analysis considerate of the context set in the previous two sections.

1. A unified state, independent, peaceful and neutral, should be founded through the great unity of the whole nation.
2. Unity should be based on patriotism and the spirit of national independence.
3. Unity should be achieved on the principle of promoting co-existence, co-prosperity and common interests and subordinating everything to the cause of national reunification.
4. All political disputes that foment division and confrontation between fellow countrymen should be ended and unity should be achieved.
5. The fear of invasion from both south and north, and the ideas of prevailing over communism and communization should be dispelled, and north and south should believe in each other and unite.
6. The north and south should value democracy and join hands on the road to national reunification, without rejecting each other because of differences in ideals and principles.
7. The north and south should protect the material and spiritual wealth of individuals and organizations and encourage their use for the promotion of great national unity.
8. Understanding, trust and unity should be built up across the nation through contact, exchange visits and dialogue.
9. The whole nation, north, south and overseas, should strengthen its solidarity for the sake of national reunification.
10. Those who have contributed to the great unity of the nation and to the cause of national reunification should be honoured.\textsuperscript{145}

As is noticeable in the list above, and equally in the words that Kim uses to elaborate on each point in the piece, overall, it is a highly idealistic and unrealistic proposal to reunify the country. Kim puts forth a worthwhile idea in Point 8 with engagement in the form of exchange visits and dialogue, but apart from this rather basic tenet, the list would be more appropriately termed Kim’s philosophy to reunification, and not his Programme, or some type of action plan.

Kim exhibits more inconsistencies in the Programme. He advocates for a bipartisan approach to ideology in Points 5 and 6, but all the while in the earlier speeches in the collection consistently established his base by upholding the brilliance of socialism over the lowliness of capitalism in reunifying the country.

In Point 2 furthermore, he espouses to the Korean people a patriotism that does not seem to equate to patriotism, considering that by definition, patriotism is based on loyalty to a singular state all the while Kim advocates for a disunified form of government in the form of a confederacy and not a full federacy.

In Point 3 Kim pushes for the promotion of co-existence, co-prosperity and common interests for both South and North. Although he was not able to see that this was very much achieved in the years of the South’s Sunshine Policy (1998-2008), the important thing to note is that reunification was \textit{not} achieved, and the vast majority of the North Korean common people of regional areas still lived in direct poverty, hoping to get their hands on any indirect food resources that trickled down haphazardly from higher levels.

In Point 6 Kim then speaks highly of democracy and elaborates on the treatise with an appeal to release and reinstate political prisoners. Selectively seeing only the long term unconverted communists interned in South Korea, he neglects to acknowledge the thousands of political prisoners of his own creation, of which human rights organisations across the board, including a 2014 United Nations Commission of Inquiry, concur do exist in vast and torturous facilities around the nation.

These points among others highlight the hypocrisy and simplicity that Kim routinely employs when drafting so-called documents of immense importance for the

cause of reunification. He seems ignorant in understanding the multitude of factors and their complexities in overcoming division and achieving reunification, and instead, uses his platform to pay propagandistic lip service to ‘trust,’ ‘unity’ and ‘reunification’ of the land, and not sincerely reflecting on his own practices that could be, and indeed are hindering the very thing.
Chapter 3. Nationalism of the Early Decades: State focused and subtle

When tracing nationalist ideology of the early decades in North Korea, Ethnic Nationalism in Korea author Gi-Wook Shin contends that between nationalism and patriotism, there was no distinction, and that they were seen as one and the other.\textsuperscript{146} I do not enthusiastically agree with this contention, for the reason of its simplistic approach in painting North Korean ideology of the time with the one broad brush. Indeed, North Korea has shown on occasions that it did confuse the two, using them in any rhetorical way that it pleases for propagandistic effect (see chapter 2 section Nationalism and Patriotism), but the sheer disparity of the years from nation founding in the late 1940s, to the years of war and reconstruction in the 1950s, to the dynamic and aggressive years of the 1960s, show a wealth of political and ideological development that cannot help but resist such crude defining. Of course, North Korea with Kim Il Sung as leader has always been at its core an inherently nationalistic entity, motivated by national reunification and self esteem, but this does not necessarily mean that the ideology of the time reflected or channeled this. Kim was in charge, but he had no choice but to subside his personal desires for the good of the country, be it by way of advocating for the development of industry and the economy, or by paying due respect and adulation to the Soviet Union. This chapter explores this very notion. It acknowledges that North Korea was always nationalistic in latent nature, but argues that a state-based patriotism-type ideology at the time was the crucial tool by which to advance and develop the nation in institution, in war, in reconstruction, and in identity. Nationalism could not reign unabated, but the next best and safest thing, being patriotism, and a patriotic relationship to the nation, was exploited in full.

\textsuperscript{146} Shin, p. 88
1940s/50s: Nation as a new state, and nation in war and reconstruction

1. Nation as a New State

When the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea was founded in early September 1948, it was inaugurated as expected, with a national flag of patriotic significance to represent the country. Commonly known as the Flag of the People’s Republic (ingonggi), it hosts a five-point red star encased in a white circle, amid the backdrop of a dominating red panel and two accompanying blue and white stripes. According to DPRK official online information portal, Naenara:

The five-point red star symbolizes the traditions of the anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle led by President Kim Il Sung and the prospect of the country, and the red panel represents the Korean people’s loyalty to the Party and the leader, their socialist patriotism, their indomitable fighting spirit and their invincible might of single-minded unity. The white circle and the white stripe represent that the Korean people are a homogeneous nation and that they are a heroic people. The two blue stripes reflect the ardent desire of the Korean people to make staunch efforts for peace, democracy, national independence and victory of the socialist cause by closely uniting with the revolutionary peoples around the world under the banner of anti-imperialist independence.\textsuperscript{147}

Although this description, most definitely produced in the last decade, presents a highly stylised and glorified account of the flag and its connotations, it is still valuable in that it houses the early and original elements of when it was first made in 1948. These elements include most dominantly the presence of the colour red, and the star, universally known to be the representation of communism in corresponding to what had by then become established tradition\textsuperscript{148} among the socialist fraternity. North Korea then somewhat bucks the trend however, by including white and blue in the flag, respectively representing the unity of the Korean nation, and its propensity towards peace. This shows that although they were committed to the internationalist cause of the Soviet Union, they also subtly defined themselves in nationalist terms, albeit in a patriotic way, by preserving the colours of the previous pan-Korean national flag with


\textsuperscript{148} Lankov, 2007-a, p. 37
its Taegeuk symbol of blue and red, four trigrams of black, and background of white. Extrapolating from the flag, we can see that Kim Il Sung did set out in priority to establish North Korea ostensibly as any ordinary member of the internationalist movement, represented by the communist star and colour red, but that he also evidently desired to maintain national Korean values; not discarding them, and instead taking them on in patriotic form in his new state and structure of representation. Kim often said that his was an ideology nationalist in form and socialist in content, but from the perspective of this thesis, these early decades present an ideology instead more patriotic in form and nationalist in nature.

This sets the tone of how a latent nationalist nature had no room to flourish but in patriotic form; one more state focussed and subtle. Contexts in which such nationalist patriotism is evoked give us meaningful insight into how and why it is used, and how effective it can be in achieving its benefactor’s cause. The next two sections will go on to expound on this therefore, in the contexts of North Korea in war, and North Korea in reconstruction, in the 1950s.

2. Nationalist State in War

The Korean War is one of the most significant and dramatic events in the history of both Koreas. Being launched on June 25, 1950, it was Kim Il Sung’s terribly misguided attempt to right the wrong of the state of affairs on the peninsula as he seen, and join the ailing South to his so called Northern socialist paradise. The result of it as a tragic, inconclusive and still simmering conflict is plain for all to see, but Kim, even at the time, cowardly to admit the grand failure of his judgement, assumed the righteous ground and played rhetoric and ideology to sustain his claim to govern the state. Mustering all the support he could, he and his already established agitation apparatus turned to the people via all means of media and appealed to their sense of patriotism to do their part and contribute to the warfront. They were essentially to turn out and provide more materials, more resources and more hatred for ultimate victory.

Kim’s first radio broadcast on the day after the outbreak of the war, June 26, 1950, is an apt place to start assessment. Such medium was very effective, not only due

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149 Ibid, p. 37
to its ability to capture the urgency of the moment in voice, but also because the population at the time was mostly illiterate, making radio broadcasts crucial in delivering announcements to as many people as possible. This first address is as expected, active in nature. Kim addresses his fellow compatriots, informing them of his untruthful claim that the South with Rhee Seung Man as president had invaded the North, and tells them that the Northern forces had already partially subdued them. He continues to rally them around his cause, vigorously asserting his state in more instances that one, and upholds the Republic as the vanguard, or guarantor of victory in the war. Kim initiates his speech with the following:

Dear fellow countrymen,
Dear brothers and sisters,
Officers, noncommissioned officers and men of our People’s Army,
Guerrillas operating in the southern half of the Republic,
On behalf of the Government of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, I make this appeal to you.  

Noticeably, Kim does refer to his people as brothers and sisters, a typical family-oriented nationalist expression, but seems more to set the tone of his speech after this, by going on to use language heavily laden with reference to arms of the state, and organs of state power of the Republic (symbolised by the subsequent opening phrase, “On behalf of the Government of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, I make this appeal to you”). After some standard condemnation of Syngman Rhee for his supposed provocation of the war, Kim goes on to tout a 1948 “Joint Conference of Representatives of Political Parties and Social Organisations of North and South Korea,” a 1949 “Democratic Front for the Reunification of the Fatherland,” as well as the might of the “Presidium of the Supreme People’s Assembly of the DPRK” just the week before on July 19, 1950 to highlight the official efforts that he had gone to thus far to avoid war and plead for peace and reunification on the peninsula. As established earlier, this is interpreted as Kim’s way of achieving his nationalist ambition via state-based and ostensibly patriotic means, not only the way deemed most legitimate at the time, but also one that is reflecting positively of his regime.

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Kim extends his Republic’s mission by constructing his national assembly as superior to that of Rhee’s in the South. It becomes a war not of nations, but of states, when Kim belittles South Korea’s National Assembly by placing it in inverted commas (i.e. south Korean “National Assembly”), connoting a farcical and “so-called” claim to legitimacy in the form of such shammed pretense. This is common also for the title of President, as well as the intentional non-capitalisation of ‘south’ in “south Korea,” connoting them both legally illegitimate entities, as opposed to his fully just state and Republic.

If the battle of the representative fulcrums of power of each state was not enough to compel one into seeing the state war raging at the time of the Korean War, then Kim’s next comment extracted from the radio broadcast, should go some way:

In this war against the Syngman Rhee gang the Korean people must defend the DPRK and its Constitution with their lives, wipe out the traitorous puppet regime and liberate the southern half of our country from the reactionary rule of the traitorous Syngman Rhee clique, restore the people’s committees, organs of genuine people’s power, in the southern half and win the cause of the country’s reunification under the banner of the DPRK.¹⁵¹

In this excerpt, Kim highlights multiple elements of state-based power that he asserts for the nationalist cause of reunification. The first and most illuminating is the Constitution, which will be elaborated on, the second is the people’s committees, the local organ of state power, and the third is the overall banner of the state of the DPRK.

In addressing the first, a Constitution is perhaps the most quintessentially defining component of a state and its premise to legitimately exist, so the fact that Kim asserts it, and moreover urges his people to defend it with their lives, is telling. As mentioned in the previous chapter, prominent ethnic nationalism scholar Walker Connor states that people do not sacrifice their lives for things rational,¹⁵² so Kim’s inciting of his people to die for the Constitution can be seen more accurately as a reflection of his innate nationalist tendency (signified by the sacrificing one’s mortal life for the immortal nation), as opposed to the ideal of simply fighting valiantly for the defence of the state (as the convention of a Constitution would normally incite). In continuing the argument established previously, this once again shows a wartime Kim managing his nationalist tendencies.

¹⁵¹ Ibid
¹⁵² Connor, p. 206
urges and tendencies in the only way viable at the time, not in a spontaneous and instinctive manner, but instead in a structured state-based and patriotic way.

Kim promotes his Supreme People’s Assembly and his Constitution, but one other arm of the state that he would never miss an opportunity to parade, is his much lauded army:

Our People’s Army must prove itself brave and devoted in our just struggle to defend the successful democratic reforms in the northern half of the Republic, liberate our compatriots in the southern half from reactionary rule and reunify the country under the banner of the People’s Republic.153

For an armed force with a mere two and a half year existence at the time, Kim places great confidence and responsibility in the ability of this institution to be the facilitators of his grand vision of success in war and in the task of reunification. Although he urges the populace of workers and peasants to participate by way of such roles as the provision of food, clothes and other supplies, it is the army who are the shining stars – as representatives of the Republic and as uniformed soldiers who fight the just mission. The just mission, as Kim describes, is the protection of the successful democratic reforms achieved in the North, as well as the liberation of the compatriots in the South living in perceived adverse circumstances under Rhee. The importance of the army, as alluded to above, is interpreted to be in the insignia imprinted on the soldiers’ uniforms (“under the banner of the People’s Republic”). Notwithstanding being severely downgraded less than three months into the war at the Battle of Incheon and having had to rely on the personnel of the Chinese People’s Volunteer Army to not be completely eliminated out of contention of the war, Kim still lauds his army throughout the conflict (as will be further explored), not in attribution of their fine skill or purported bravery and devotion, but solely for the sake of his state and Republic, of which emblems their uniforms bear. Kim demonstrates that it is the merit of the state on an absolute basis that is extolled, and not the real substance or material benefits that are born as a result of it. He then concludes his appeal to the people with the following:

Dear compatriots, brothers and sisters, I call upon the entire Korean people to unite more closely around the Government of the DPRK in order quickly to

destroy the armed forces and the police system of the traitorous Syngman Rhee clique...The time has come to reunify our country...Long live the Korean people who have risen in a just, all-people war! Long live the Democratic People's Republic of Korea! Let us march forward to victory!154

It is evident that Kim uses his last lines to rouse the people and rally them around his government of the DPRK. Resurfacing his nationalist appeal in the recurrent terms of familial endearment, he reminds his 'brothers and sisters' that it is the Republic that is safeguarding their and their nation's wellbeing. Upholding the institutions of the state, he well constructs a vibrant image of glory at war and fulfillment at home as a united country, only regrettably, to a populace that for the most part, was uneducated, naïve, and still with the terrors of colonialism fresh in mind.

In addition to radio broadcasts, newspaper was also an important channel of communication between Kim and his populace during the war, owing to its ability to carry not just official announcements, but also other varied articles on a daily basis to those who could read, and those that could not reach radio broadcasts. Articles utilised their space to remind people of the benefits they enjoyed in their egalitarian society thanks to the state, the forbearers of high repute that they were descended in the likeness of, as well as the image of the full glory and potential that could be attained by winning the war and reunifying with the South. The abhorrence of the US imperialists too, was constantly refreshed, and being but only the newest ones bent on destroying the Koreans' honest progress and stifling the nation's destiny, were used as pivot points to incite hatred in the campaign and strengthen patriotic resolve. Some slogans that streamed upper sections of the daily pages during the war are as follow:

- All patriotic brethren! Rise up and give until your last drop of blood for the honour, freedom and independence of the homeland! Fight until the US imperialists and their units are entirely swept of our land!155
- Brothers and sisters! The abhorrent US imperialists are invading our homeland with arms. Rise up at once to exterminate the heinous thieving aggressors and defend the honour and freedom of the homeland!156
- Compatriots! Brothers and Sisters! There is no happiness without the homeland. Reach for your arms toward victory! Devote all to the front!157

154 Ibid
155 Rodong Sinmun, 1950.7.6, p. 3 (Sourced NARA: RG 242 SA 2006 Box 814 Item # unlisted) (My Trans.)
156 Rodong Sinmun, 1950.7.7, p. 2 (Sourced NARA: RG 242 SA 2006 Box 814 Item # unlisted) (My Trans.)
157 Rodong Sinmun, 1950.1.18, pg.3 (Sourced NARA: RG 242 SA 2006 Box 814 Item # unlisted) (My Trans.)
- For the nation, all to the front!  
- "We Korean people will never forget the atrocities the armed American aggressors perpetrated on our nation and people. We will continue to remember, cursing them for ten thousand generations." (Kim Il Sung)

The above quotations broadly represent the early months of the war, when Kim’s army were succeeding, but not to hold this position for very long. He still persists with his patriotic push, but perhaps due to the increased urgency of the moment, amplifies his nationalist tone, not only with the routine familial titles, but now with references to the ‘homeland’, ‘the nation and people’, and its ‘happiness’ – terms that strike at the core of people and stir far greater emotion than a simple ‘state’ or ‘government’ pitch.

The overriding argument that this thesis posits is that in times of national turmoil (namely the latter years of the mid-1970s onward) Kim utilised ideology in emotional and ethnic nationalist ways to compensate for his material failings and in turn to justify his rule. Although the Korean War sits firmly in a time outside of the mid-1970s-onward trajectory of economic decline, it is perhaps one of, if not the most acute emergencies that Kim was to face in his long tenure in ruling the country. For this reason, it could be seen that he in fact did revert to his instincts to survive, advocating for the ethnic Korean nation irrespective of whether his Soviet benefactors would approve of it or not. Perhaps in the chaos of wartime, all politically correct socialist convention was to go out the window for the principal objective of winning the war and keeping the Republic, or at least, not losing the war and losing the Republic.

Posters chimed similar themes as the newspaper did at the time, and an exquisite and extremely rare offering of the National Archive and Records Administration at Baltimore, Maryland, USA, illustrates this. Known to researchers in North Korean studies as the records seized or captured collection (as introduced in chapter 1), this vast body of material seized by US forces from North Korea during the war provides valuable insight into early 1950s North Korea by way of books, posters, data sheets and other documents of an assorted kind. Among them, a group of roughly 20 posters exists,

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158 *Rodong Sinmun*, 1950.7.22, pg 3 (Sourced NARA: RG 242 SA 2006 Box 814 Item # unlisted) (My Trans.)
159 *Rodong Sinmun*, 1950.9.16, pg 1 (Sourced NARA: RG 242 SA 2006 Box 814 Item # unlisted) (My Trans.)
160 Sourced NARA: RG 242 North Korean Propaganda Posters, ca. 1950- ca. 1950 ARC Identifier 540203 Local Identifier 242-P /and/ RG 242 North Korean Propaganda Posters and Tabloids Captured War, 1950-1953, ARC Identifier 609526 Local Identifier 242-NK.
propagandistic in nature and highly illuminating, not only in terms of North Korea's early and long gone artistic style, but more fortunately, in its ideological depiction of the war as it raged on. Eight have been drawn for exploration and analysis at this point, as they have been seen to be supportive of the claim that this thesis makes.

The first two of the eight depict military figures of the war in honourable ways. The first of the two is a portrait of Kim Il Sung, suited in attire, and stern in expression, framed in a rather lavish picture frame of ears of rice and ribboned national flags and coat of arms. An inscription below the photograph says, “Chairman of the Military Committee of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Supreme Commander of the Korean People’s Army, and agitator of victory, Premier of the Cabinet, General Kim Il Sung.” The second of the two depicts six notable participants of the war; two fighter jet pilots, two senior figures, and two other military personnel, whom are all deemed to be national heroes. Their names are engraved in ribbon under their individual photos, and linked by a medal of some form of national award, they are adorned with national flags and flanked by ears of rice and tanks. An inscription on top says, “Heroes of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea” and on the bottom says, “Let us mow down the enemy, like these heroes!”

In interpreting these images, it is clear to see that they are national heroes being lauded for their sacrifice, bravery and prowess in their respective fields of battle at war. In the case of Kim Il Sung however, his position of exclusivity and the numerous titles bestowed upon him as referenced above, serve this same effect without him having to physically serve himself. Going beyond this, and delving more into the prevailing theme of heroism in these posters, what is noticeable is the grandeur of it and the fact that it is being attributed solely to the state. National (read: state/patriotic) heraldry such as the flags, ears of rice and coat of arms, in addition to the medal and tanks, all support this in this highly structured style of formality. Unlike previous newspaper slogans where urgent desperation seemed to bring out the ethnic instincts in the regime, these well-deliberated images stand to depict the ideal image that the regime wants to present.

In complement to saying that heroism is being channel towards the state, it is also important to clarify how heroism is not being seen as a race-based quality. No
All Images Copyright to: National Archives and Records Administration: RG 242 North Korean Propaganda Posters, ca. 1950- ca. 1950 ARC Identifier 540203 Local Identifier 242-P, and, RG 242 North Korean Propaganda Posters and Tabloids Captured War, 1950-1953, ARC Identifier 609526 Local Identifier 242-NK.
traces of an ethnic or traditional Korean quality exist in the posters, and indeed “heroic race” (영웅적인 민족) or “hero of the race” (민족의 영웅) are not only phrases that are not used, but phrases that would sound odd in the context of North Korean propaganda. War is not a scuffle initiated by competing ethnic tribes or factions amongst each other, but a battle declared by states of governance with their own armies, resources and vengeances – precisely what Kim seeks to convey in such image manipulation and presentation.

Continuing on with the second two of the eight posters, we see the notion of bravery extended in breadth, and witnessed in action. In the first, a soldier takes full centre stage; his legs are planted in stance, his arms and hands are in clutch of a large rifle and his face is animated in a shout of anger. “Use your gun bravely!” the inscription below says, while in the background, a scene of war with billowing smoke unfolds, planes falling out of the sky and a dead US soldier in presence on the ground in the fore. In the center background, two forthcoming Korean soldiers appear, armed in hand with a gun in one, and a fluttering DPRK flag in the other. In the second poster, similar to the first, one soldier is in main focus, and towers over a feeble US Army general, who is fumbling with a wrecked plane in his hand. He is being grabbed by the wrists by our main Korean protagonist, and in his support, three additional Korean personnel back him up, one military, with a bayonet hoist in position ready to pierce, one possibly rural, clutching sharp and destructive farming tools, and lastly, a female figure, elevating a DPRK flag to air in prime view. The caption below them reads: “The valiant People’s Army are defeating the US forces and bravely marching forward. To all of the people! Together with the People’s Army let us completely rid the thieving US imperialists out of our land!”

Whereas the previous images illustrated bravery in honourary principle, these ones articulate bravery in practice. The Korean soldiers are pictured strong and courageous in their determined battle against the US forces, clearly engaging themselves in dominant and superior positions of power. The depiction of the Koreans in physically larger form, and the US personnel in much smaller form also, goes a long way in constructing a perception of them in complement to the nature of the captions written below in the posters. Not only is the might of the Korean People’s Army on show in these images, but also the strength that they wield as being supported by the rest of
their society, and the unity born of that, is something that features markedly. In contrast to a mere one US figure in each poster, the Koreans are pictured in packs, never depleted, and always turning out in the historic cause against the US. Their accessories too, speak volumes of the philosophy and ideology at the time. With naught but guns and flags, they agitate for the cause of the Republic, not representing an ethnic entity with an historical precedence of culture and custom, but rather, a state with an Army and a Premier, competing in the moment in a hotly contested battle for a land that is capable of accommodating only the one, and not two, divergent political entities.

The third two of eight posters present stylised images of an actual, or rather re-imagined progression of events during the war, being the march of the North Korean forces down to South Korea in aims of reaching Busan and Jinhae; Busan being the south-east tip of the peninsula that was never taken, and Jinhae, another ward close to the city region of Busan. The first presents in familiar fashion the bust of a lunging North Korean soldier; hard hat on head and strapped with a weapon, his mouth is widely opened in a shout. He looks down to the recognisable figure of a lampooned US army general (here explicated as MacArthur), this time being squeezed by two huge battle plan arrows directed at him, and accompanied by a caricatured South Korean president Rhee Seung Man. The top background is a scene of the wall of force that the Northern Army are putting up, consisting of soldiers, flagged tanks on the ground, and countless planes in the sky, and the bottom foreground shows a picture of US carnage – wrecked planes and equipment, dotted with dead US soldiers. The caption reads: “Let us strike like lightening and edge closer to ultimate victory! To Jinhae, to Busan! To Busan!!” The second, in similar theme, presents a large North Korean tank in centre focus bulldozing over a sea of bumbling US army personnel. Among them include their broken B-29s and falling jeeps, as well as the oft flying about dollar bill. The top half of the image presents victorious North Korean soldiers, hoisting weapons, tools and flags in celebration, with aircraft flying in their backdrop. The header above them reads: “Let us wipe out the enemy with utmost ruthlessness! Busan and Jinhae are near! Let us raise high the flag of victory and march forward! March forward!” and a streaming banner amongst them cries: “Long live the DPRK!”

Not just presenting conceptual images of heroism and bravery, these posters extend themselves by providing supposed actual events and locations of the war, making tangible to the North Korean people a link between the realm of fantasy
propaganda and reality. Blurring the lines between objective information presentation and subjective/manipulated interpretation, these posters contribute to the event becoming almost certainly personified in the minds of North Koreans by such effective imagery. Soldiers of the push are presented active, aggressive, positive and jubilant, supplied in hardware by the powerful state, and inspired in spirit by the meaningful symbols they hoist high in their flags and banners. The enemy is identified and eliminated, and the objective of reaching Busan and Jinhae is in sight. Busan and Jinhae in these posters take on immense symbolic significance, as figuratively, no further than “the ends of the earth” (i.e. the end of the peninsula) is traversed by Kim Il Sung for the sake of the nation and its well being. Busan and Jinhae are celebrated as very much the such achievement by the regime, too bad too sooner than it was in actuality meant to be. Nonetheless, being propaganda that by nature disregards the ethics of impartiality, these posters earn their weight in value to the North Korean regime by propagating an image highly conducive to its state-based political agenda.

The last two of eight posters revert back to the theme of heroism and bravery of the Korean People’s Army, focusing more on presenting them rather than any specific place, event or enemy. The first pictures a side shot lineup of five military personnel, all with guns in hand and solid expressions on faces, and backed up by numerous elevated barrels of tank guns. A large DPRK flag emblazons their backdrop, and a main caption reads: “For the homeland, everybody to the front!” A small caricature of the familiar MacArthur and Rhee discreetly occupies the bottom left hand corner. The second frames a sole North Korean soldier; body active in a charging position and face firmly fixed in determination. He wields a large rifle in his left hand, elevated above his head, and in his right hand, carries a cylinder hand grenade for use ready when needed. Once again, a large national flag flutters in his background, and the text below simply but boldly reads: “For the homeland.” A small scene of soldiers operating tanks adorns a top narrow panel above the main protagonist.

Being such similarly simple yet potent posters, what can be deduced from these two images are three main elements of the soldier, the flag and the text. The soldier is the figure of stately bravery and heroism, the flag is again, the most exemplary symbol of the Republic, yet the text, undoubtedly alluding to the nation by the word “homeland,” is a manifestation of nationalism. These posters, unlike the previous six, seem to play a subtle balancing act, juggling both the grandeur and valour of the state,
with the urgency and emotion of the nation and its ethnic entity. The result, is an evoking of both patriotic devotion and nationalist emotion around the symbols of the soldier, the flag and the homeland. The nation is accorded to, yet in the more dominant context of the patriotic state, very much in support of the argument that this thesis makes, whereby nationalism did exist in these early decades, yet just submerged in a more dominant identity based on the state and its institutions.

As a mirror reflection of the above discussion, another point worth mentioning is the depiction of the actual Americans in the posters. Perhaps a precursor to the finely tuned ethnic representation skills the North Koreans went on to adorn themselves with in later decades, a strong message about the American race is seen to be made in these posters. Beady eyes, hook noses, feeble bodies, and wicked tendencies all consistently demean them, constructing a clear collective image of the American race as racially inferior and culturally immoral. Their skin may be white but they are not pure, and they may have tanks, guns, dollars and other material prosperities, but they are not civilized. This rubric reflects closely the analysis of John Dower in his landmark title *War Without Mercy* (1986), where he makes the case of Japan during World War Two viewing the American enemy as bestial, demonic and devil-like. The North Koreans were far from claiming solidarity with the Japanese at this time not much long after the war, but their iconographies were not a far stretch from theirs at all, as indeed depicted, and still to be seen, in the posters presented above.

3. Nationalist State in Reconstruction

Having come out of the war in mid-1953 with a ravaged country and weary population, nonetheless power in his hands, Kim Il Sung set the North Korean government on a task of nation rebuilding and reconstruction, or rather, state rebuilding and reconstruction. With immense aid from the Soviet Union, this nationalist state in reconstruction set about revitalisation in both industrial and bureaucratic terms. Industrial might would guarantee a strong economy, and a bureaucratic fortress would ensure firm political power. This is reflected in the sources and political ideology of the time. Ranging from the earlier years to the later years of the decade, media such as speeches and imagery, as well as certain political initiatives, mirror this. The following section will delve into
this notion; North Korea in the post-war reconstruction era, and not in expression of the
technology or race, but more so as a reflective impression of the state in such relatively
unestablished and Soviet-dependent times.

To start with speeches, two speeches that Kim made in the mid-1950s are of
interest. The first, given on November 3, 1954 deals with agriculture and the
government’s policy for its future development. When viewing this speech,
prominence of “the party” is clear from the outset, being mentioned a full seven times
only in the opening section. In partnership to the notion of the party, the phrase,
“improving the people’s standard of living” too, continuously appears, perceptibly
creating an early connection in the audience’s mind as the party being the one, and
possibly only, entity to ensure this standard of living for the people. Such impression
continues to prevail, as going along. Kim goes on to exert effort into detailing production
statistics in grain and meat that have increased in the year since the end of the war,
owing to the implementation of more sophisticated and scientifically advanced
technological methods, no doubt, in credit to the state.

He also praises cooperatives in the course of the successful agricultural
rejuvenation. Agricultural cooperatives, or socialist styled grouped farming
communities, became the norm in agrarian organisation in North Korea at the time,
styled after the well known Soviet Union ones, and initiated after the nationalisation of
land in the early years after founding. Below is an anecdote from one such cooperative
that Kim warms his audience’s hearts with (speaking in first person):

We began to organize agricultural cooperatives on an experimental basis this
year. Some comrades think we have done so because we are afraid of making
mistakes. But that is not the case. We have done so not because we are afraid
but because we aim to do better by accumulating experience. One year’s
experience has proved more clearly that the cooperativization of agriculture
is the only correct path for us to follow. Here is an example. This year we
visited the Chunchawa Agricultural Cooperative three times. In the spring,
some peasants received us with heads lowered; in summer when farming
was picking up, their faces were beaming with joy; and in autumn they were
so full of joy that their faces were all smiles. An old man said, “I’ve been
farming since the end of the Li [Yi] dynasty, then under Japanese rule, and

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Kim, On Our Party’s Policy for the Future Development of Agriculture, Concluding Speech at a Plenary
Meeting of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea November 3, 1954. No longer
accessible at original source of Naenara website, yet referenced and available in book form via the
following: http://www.amazon.com/development-agriculture-concluding-delivered-
November/dp/B0007I1JME. Alternatively, see author for full item.
now in the era of our Republic, and I have never seen such fine crops as this year’s. In fact, as this old man said, the crops in this district are really fine this year thanks to the cooperative. Where a cooperative has been formed and farming has been done well, the worker-peasant alliance has been consolidated and the work of the united front also proceeds successfully.¹⁶²

In this tale, Kim reflects on the success of the state in the form of harmonious cooperatives, bumper harvests, and happy farmers. The symbolism of the simple old man as a faithful steward of the benevolent state further illustrates the good will of Kim to his people, and their equally intimate reception of him in his position of office. Not only is this state caring, but it is also courageous, proving surrounding cynics wrong, and prevailing eventually successfully due to bold decisions that were calculated and executed. Kim further persists in this anecdote on the legitimacy of his state by being the first one in over half a century to be attributed with a fine harvest – indeed, as the old man says, it is thanks to the “Republic” and its structure of the cooperative. According to this measure of the state therefore, not only does the economy and the people’s standard of living flourish, but so too does the quality of society and relations amongst different groups within it as well, e.g., the worker-peasant alliance. Kim takes more time in the speech to recite statistics and preach ideology, but then reverts back to his prevailing agenda of state power and its branches in reconstruction in the following excerpt:

In order to strengthen the cooperatives and raise the ideological and political level of their members, it is necessary, above all, to strengthen the Party organizations in the cooperatives. Otherwise, it will be impossible either to consolidate their economic base or to remold the outdated thinking of their members.¹⁶³

In this excerpt, Kim more underhandedly seeks to strengthen the state by adorning itself with the successes of the cooperative. Much to a similar effect as the anecdote mentioned previously, the excerpt above shows Kim affirming the positive strides achieved thus far, and channelling them parallel to the party – the utter representation of the Republic. He pushes the line that it is the party that is at the nucleus of the success of the cooperative, and that in order to further succeed, that party

¹⁶² *Ibid*
¹⁶³ *Ibid*
organisations in the community should be strengthened. He seeks clearly to widen the
repute of the state and its achievements in agricultural reconstruction, and not
attributing it to national traits or ethnic values, but to his very own good governance
and prudent planning.

Kim uses the end of his speech to remind all of the country’s overriding goal,
being its mission of reunification, and the unending resolve that must be adopted until
that day is realised. Why he chooses to do so is indeed unsurprising and very favourable
to him, given that here he is able to regroup his state troops, civilian and military alike,
for his greater national goal ahead. Reconstruction strengthens the economy and the
party, and in turn, strengthens the state under Kim, most critically in his premise to
legitimately rule a reunified Korean nation.

The second speech of the two goes into a general review of the situation in all
other heavy industry sectors as of the (day prior to the) tenth anniversary of liberation
on August 14, 1955. Kim takes the opportunity again to trumpet the forward strides
the country has made in terms of production, and indeed uses the majority of his speech
to speak such content. Prior to that however, Kim opens the speech with remarks
incredibly significant, and ones that would be considered blasphemous by today’s
standard:

Ten years ago, our nation was liberated from nearly 40 years of colonial
slavery. Since then the Korean people have enjoyed national freedom and
independence and set out on the road to creating a new history. The Soviet
people not only sacrificed blood to help our people in their liberation struggle
against the Japanese imperialist marauders, but are also giving them material
and moral aid. On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the August 15
liberation today, on behalf of the entire Korean people, the Workers’ Party of
Korea and the Government of the Republic, I would like to express profound
thanks and regard to the Soviet people, who are the intimate friends of our
people, and to the Communist Party, Government and army of the Soviet
Union. I also express deep gratitude and regard to the Chinese Communist
Party, the Government of the People’s Republic of China, the Chinese People’s
Volunteers, as well as the Chinese people who waged a long-drawn-out
struggle jointly with the Korean people against Japanese imperialism; who
sacrificed blood for us by sending to the Korean front the Volunteers formed
with their best sons and daughters, under the banner of “Resist US aggression
and aid Korea” in the most difficult period of the Fatherland Liberation War

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164 Kim, Report at the Celebration of the Tenth Anniversary of the August 15 Liberation, August 14, 1955.
No longer accessible at original source of Naenara website, or any online other. See author for full item.
waged by the Korean people against the US imperialist aggressors; and who continue to aid our people in postwar reconstruction.\textsuperscript{165}

This piece acknowledging, and indeed sincerely thanking and professing deep gratitude to both the Soviet Union and China for their help in the Korean War and for their continued support in reconstruction, is something that ceased to exist beyond the decades of the 1950s/1960s, and is another element in support of the claim that this thesis makes. By the 1970s/1980s, the “Fatherland Liberation War” as it became known in North Korea, was a war that was won proudly by the forces of the Korean People’s Army without such critical help from outsiders. But at this point in time in the mid-1950s when North Korea’s ethnic national identity was not even a fraction of what it came to be in later years, there was indeed scope to thank these friends, and even to do so happily, as it strengthened solidarity and built relations amongst each other like conventional and cordial states. Information of this kind is erased from North Korea’s national narrative of the present day in time, unquestionably due to the challenge, or rather conflict, that it presents in conforming to the ethnic superiority line, and the danger that it may prove in possibly inciting non-government sanctioned free thought. This shows that North Korea of these early decades, regardless of its nationalist heart, was conscious as a state entity first and foremost, behaving itself as an equal in a league of states, and not as a self-distinguished and racially consecrated existence.

Having said that, there is more data in the speech to support the argument that North Korea in the 1950s was a country that had its identity and significance extracted principally from the state. Because not only does the government continue to tout its miracle agrarian, democratic and equality reforms, but it also now asserts self success in only the first year of the first “Three-Year Plan.” Kim remarks:

The war toughened our people, increased their trust in the Workers’ Party of Korea and the Government of the Republic, and strengthened their political-ideological unity. With the ceasefire they were confronted with the urgent and difficult tasks of speedily restoring and developing the war-ravaged national economy and stabilizing and improving their deteriorated lives. With a view to tackling these tasks, the Party and the Government formulated the postwar Three-Year Plan and mobilized the entire people for its implementation. The Three-Year Plan envisages the restoration of the national economy to the prewar level in order to stabilize and improve the war-ravaged livelihood of the people and solidify the country’s economic

\textsuperscript{165} Ibid
foundations. It also envisages the creation of conditions for socialist industrialization of the country through the elimination of the colonial lopsidedness of industry. Under the leadership of the Workers’ Party of Korea and the Government of the Republic, our people participated as one man in reconstruction work to carry out the postwar Three-Year Plan in the same spirit with which they had fought against the enemy during the war. Thanks to the creative efforts and devoted struggle of our people, the assignments for 1954, the first year of the Three-Year Plan, were fulfilled successfully, and this year’s assignments, crucial for the implementation of the plan, are being carried out with credit.\textsuperscript{166}

Kim leaves nothing to chance in speaking in the above manner, and makes sure all know that it is the hard work and prudent planning of the government that is delivering a recovered standard of living via the Three-Year Plan. Kim says that the war made the Korean people turn to the government, so it is now he and his government who are returning the favour and rewarding them for their political-ideological trust and loyalty. Inclusive of the restoration of the national economy and the solidification of the country’s economic foundations, this plan, the first of many Soviet-derived multi-year plans, reflects the priority and atmosphere of the time – overwhelmingly economically focused and firmly located in the matrix of a state-based existence. The might of the Korean people’s participation in the assignment would amount to nothing without the coordination of the state’s central planning agency, and the failure of such a task would not be an option. The success of this Three-Year Plan (1954-56), as well as the few other multi-year plans that ran on into the 1960s and in a limited capacity into the 1970s, mirror a robust economic situation in North Korea where industrialisation targets were being met owing to the ability to access and regenerate these resources via trade with major international allies (with aid also no doubt propping up this figure considerably). The following plan, the Five-Year Plan of 1957-61 too, successfully filled its aim of extending the foundations of industrialisation, yet it was at the next, the Seven-Year Plan initiated in 1961, where things started to run aground, suffering delays and extensions that meant that it could not be fulfilled any earlier than 1970. Subsequent plans lost their ideological zeal and ambitious targets, and marked economic shortages entering into the late 1970s and early 1980s meant that the populace had to devise more creative and resourceful ways to make their supplies stretch that little bit further. Such ideological situation in complement to the economic

\textsuperscript{166} Ibid
The Government of the Republic has disbursed lots of funds for the strengthening of the material foundations of agriculture. In the first half of 1955, capital investment in the rural economy rose 3.6 times over the same period of 1953. Because the Party and the Government paid great attention to increasing farm machine hire stations, their number increased 2.6 times and that of tractors more than doubled after the war, and many ox and horse hire stations came into being in different places. With a sharp growth in the production of daily necessities, the Government cut down their prices on three occasions in a short space of time after the war. As a result, in the first half of 1955, the price level in state and cooperative trade dropped by some 55 per cent compared with the same period of 1953, benefiting the population by more than 11,000 million won. Thanks to the fourth postwar price cut effected on August 1 this year, our working people got an additional benefit of 3,400 million won. With a lowering of prices and an increase in wages, the real incomes of factory and office workers rose considerably.

In the postwar years the state built houses with a total floor space of over two million square meters for workers and office employees. The Government of the Republic has given enormous state assistance to the peasants as well. It exempted them from the payment of irrigation fees and the arrears in taxes in kind and the repayment of bank loans, lent out hundreds of millions of won to help them in farming, and provided them with necessary seed grains, provisions and chemical fertilizers. Some time ago it also reduced the rate of tax in kind to a certain degree. All these measures are a clear expression of our Party’s and Government’s unfailing concern for the improvement of the livelihood of the peasants.  

The government’s purported unfailing concern for the improvement of the livelihood of the peasants sounds more like a set of favours and a scheme of indebtedness rather than a truly genuine people and society-centred administration. Kim goes to exasperating lengths to recount to even the smallest detail all the ways in which the government is injecting initiative into the economy to please the populace.

More importantly though, this approach legitimates its rule, enhancing the country as one where the state lies at the nucleus of the livelihood and life of the people.

Not all countries are as magnanimous as Kim’s, and he goes on to substantiate this by enlightening his people on the ways of just across the border, where

\[167\] Ibid
the United States is unabatedly plundering “south Korea,” leaving the administration in
shambles and in no way fit for a potential and much desired reunification. Propaganda
reams of this nature stream until Kim reaches the end of his August 1954 speech with
the following:

Comrades, today our people are summing up with great satisfaction the
results of their efforts and struggle during the ten years since liberation, and
are confirming their resolve to endeavour devotedly for greater success and
victory in the future. Let all of us Korean people unite more closely around
the Workers’ Party of Korea and the Government of the Republic and
vigorously march forward towards a fresh triumph in socialist construction
and the peaceful reunification of the country! Long live the Workers’ Party of
Korea, the organizer and inspirer of all our victories! Long live the
Government of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea! Long live the
Democratic Front for the Reunification of the Fatherland! Long live the
unbreakable internationalist friendship and solidarity of the peoples of the
camp of peace, democracy and socialism! Glory to the Democratic People’s
Republic of Korea, our beloved fatherland!

It is clear here that Kim again affirms the successes achieved to date as
reflections of the government, and uses them to further vigorously rally the people
around the government and party in a patriotic way. Coming from a deplorable
precedent in the form of Japanese colonialism still in vivid memory, Kim exploits his
triumps as mere glances of greatness destined into the future, meagre though they
may be in actuality be when considering that a large portion of it was foreign aid. A
prominence to the state and its arms of power is unambiguous even so, where Kim’s
claim to his ultimate nationalist goal of reunifying the country is indeed bolstered due to
the material situation of his jurisdiction speaking volumes for itself.

Apart from Kim’s words in speeches and other forms of text-based propaganda, North
Korea of the 1950s employed few mass campaigns that served the same effect. State life
was not by any stretch just a passive experience, as in receiving information from the
top down, but it was also an active one, and this included the participation of the people
in such campaigns as the work-based ‘Chollima Movement’, as well as the general
political festivities that evolved around the electoral process, or voting for candidates
representative of the state. Both gaining significant momentum in the 1950s, these two
mass campaigns, the former, a specific one, and the later, a general one, will now be
addressed.
Chollima, or the ‘Chollima Movement’ was an initiative that Kim Il Sung started in 1956 to promote continued economic growth and reconstruction in the post-war period. It was born of a mythical Pegasus-like winged horse that is fabled to have traversed a thousand li (roughly some hundred kilometres) in a day, and is symbolic in North Korea of rapid progress and ideological can-do. It was a state sponsored movement, with its own set of achievement and award levels, and to this day is still emblematic of economic growth and industrial development. The most well known representation of the Chollima Movement is the prominent 46-meter high statue sitting atop Mansu Hill in central Pyongyang, which was built during this early reconstruction period and completed in 1961. The Chollima statue survives the Chollima Movement in the present day, but in order to gauge its impact at the time, sources from that era are to be consulted. Few pieces come to light showing its authentic representation; an account more pertinent to this chapter and one undiluted by the changes in time. These include a well-known poster and song, both created at, and for the mid to late 1950s time.

The original Chollima poster168 is one that would be familiar to those who have insight into either this era of North Korea, or into the history of North Korean propaganda art. In the older, less sophisticated style of aesthetics, the propaganda poster depicts a blue collar worker in overalls, riding atop a flying brown horse, and fixed in a gaze directed at the viewer. His arm extends out and his finger is pointed in the same direction, with the assumed communication emblazoned in front of him and the horse: “Comrade, have you ridden the Chollima horse? Let us set fire to the negativity of conservatism!” A developed agricultural and industrial spread appears below, and in the background, held aloft discernibly by the other hand of the worker, is a large red flag aflutter; text partially covered, but what can be made of it is a mentioning for some sake of socialist reconstruction. A general scene motivating, uplifting and indeed politically charged.

The aim of this poster is of course to stimulate workers into vigorous labour, hence inciting economic growth and reconstruction. State-sanctioned socialist ideology is employed for effect, contrasting the negativity of conservatism with the positivity of socialism, all the while creating a hero-like halo around the figure of the everyday worker. The ordinary person can be extraordinary simply by working hard and fulfilling

his quota, or he can even attain greatness by surpassing his quota and earning various state merited awards. Such image of Chollima is supported by various other supplementary images often encountered in various periodicals. Accompanying the familiar horse-figure, typical elements included are of economic statistics; soaring arrows illustrating raised production levels over time, as well as multi-digit numeral amounts, detailing to the specific tonne how much gross grain or steel, for example, was achieved. Although the Chollima Movement was destined to eventually fall short due to its quantity over quality approach, the iconic poster mentioned above, as well as the many others also alluded to, capture the affirmative essence of the movement at the time; inspirational and ideal, yet state-sanctioned and unreliable.

A song too, must be mentioned. Penned in 1960 and still a favourite among North Koreans and non-North Koreans alike, Chollima dallinda, or ‘Chollima running’ is presented in lyric form below.

Unbeatable Korean Workers’ Party, has heralded in a new era  
Let us make known the world over, the air of Chollima  
Let us go, quickly go, riding the Chollima
Let us go out, bringing forward the 7-year plan  
E-heh e-ya-cha e-ya-cha  
The new hill of Communism is visible over there  
E-heh e-ya-cha e-ya-cha  
The new hill of Communism is visible over there

The warriors of the Korean Workers Party, are united as one  
A dazzling new victory, is calling us  
Let us go, quickly go, riding the Chollima  
Let us herald a miracle, on the back of creativity and innovation  
E-heh e-ya-cha e-ya-cha  
A new day for reunified Korea is beaconing  
E-heh e-ya-cha e-ya-cha  
A new day for reunified Korea is beaconing

Tens of years flown through in a day  
Let us raise the flame of construction and increase production  
Let us go, quickly go, riding the Chollima  
Let us adorn a paradise where our descendants can be happy  
E-heh e-ya-cha e-ya-cha  
Let us go out following the flag of the Korean Worker’s Party  
E-heh e-ya-cha e-ya-cha  
Let us go out following the flag of the Korean Worker’s Party

What is most noticeable about this song is the many governmental elements that appear in it, and the fact that they are very favourably dressed in the cloak of the fantastic figure of the Chollima horse. The mentioning of the Korean Workers’ Party, the 7-year economic plan, of communism, of the dazzling victory, of creativity and innovation, and of construction and increased production all attest to this, showing once again North Korea’s skill in effective association. It is clear that it is an economic push sanctioned by the state and party, and one that is being praised and glorified to the attention of the people. Another interesting note to be made however, is the mentioning of the fourth line in the third verse, “Let us adorn a paradise where our descendants can be happy.” The just previously mentioned “reunified Korea” is a familiar refrain in national rhetoric up to this point, but the allusion to the creation of a new generation and its “happiness” cannot help but exude nationalist, or rather ethnic nationalist overtones. Continuing on the bloodline and guaranteeing their standard of living via the wonders of socialist economics is precisely the connotation received, whereby at this point time in 1960 it could be said to be the beginning of the transition towards a more

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169 Accessible: Youtube [http://youtu.be/DGmmADPzYK0 “화면음악 천리마 달린다” (My Translation)]
truly national, or *ethnic-based* national entity. Far from perfect, but indeed very well functioning, the North Korean economy is paying dividends and now allowing room for a higher order of emotional and cultured living.

The sources above give insight into the political campaign of the Chollima Movement and its agenda set by the state, but the also mentioned electoral events too, went far in creating political festivities attuned to state-sponsored national reconstruction. Kim Il Sung for the most part was secure in his position by the end of the war in 1953, so voting was done not in attempts to review his tenure or any of those of his main cabinet, but instead to determine, or rather just to confirm (with “affirmative” ballots), party-backed candidates for provincial and municipal government posts. When they would happen, campaigns would be set up with flags and local community events, much like celebrations of national holidays. Women would don traditional costume and men, formal suits, to take part in the honourable event, with children being allowed to let loose and enjoy snacks and entertainment.

According to election imagery and rhetoric from the 1950s in comparison to that of present day North Korea, content has not undergone significant change, but the context indeed has, making it important to explicate. The reconstruction years of the mid to late 1950s, as previously mentioned, were a time when Japanese colonialism was very much still remembered; a time when Koreans were oppressed and had no legal right to participate in any political process. Kim Il Sung was here to make that all change. Maintaining his rigid economic campaign over the people, yet taking the state in the ostensibly right direction, he and his government were able to create in the elections an air of democracy – a feel of emancipation and liberation that the citizenry would have taken very well to. In the propaganda people of all walks are pictured happy and proud to cast their ballot, and although in reality a severely limited and very deceptive venture it was, the perception indeed trumped this, making the people in high likelihood proud and entitled to assert their newfound legal status.

Another vital point that Kim must have been acutely keen to exploit in the course of his election endeavours was the political and civil rights shambles in the South. Being greatly more bureaucratically organised and civilized than South Korea at the time, Kim could have been easily communicating to his people the superiority of the

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170 Elections relevant to this include the 2nd and 3rd parliamentary elections of 27th August, 1957 and 8th October, 1962.
North, with their people and democratically-centred administration, as opposed to the weak excuse of a government that he seen in Rhee Seung-Man; a figure that Kim purported allowed his land to be invaded by foreign military attachés and his people to be abused by them. Kim provided the overwhelmingly desirable alternative, and if anyone ever forgot or failed to recognise how this was possible, the plethora of flags abound (national, party, army, etc.) and the symbolic significance that they would impart, would leave wonderers unsure for not too much longer. North Korea was being reconstructed industrially, with multi-year economic plans, but also as importantly bureaucratically, with regular electoral opportunities (read: performances), as explored above.

State founding, state conflict, and state reconstruction were complete. A period of just over a decade saw Kim establish a political entity, attempt to expand that entity, and upon such failure, endeavour to succeed completely if but only in half of that sense. The critical point to add, is that it was all done with Soviet support. The Soviet Union deployed administrators to help establish the state, they provided weapons to assist in the war, and they provided raw materials and factories to restart economic production post-1953. They even made available their culture and arts. And for these reasons, Kim, although nationalist and reunificationist at heart, could not afford to market such deep desires overtly. His focus was on building a sturdy political and economic state, and establishing himself as a figure fit and capable of managing the entire peninsula.

The government and economy spoke well of themselves, stabilising the internal situation, but the issue now turned to the external situation, and neutralising the concerns that grew no weaker to the south of the 38\textsuperscript{th} parallel. Although always engaged in a relationship of antagonism and hostility, a battle of legitimacy with South Korea and a claim to the whole nation began in earnest in the 1960s. Reflected in the sources and available for all to see, this ideological battle of ‘legitimate Korea’ versus ‘illegitimate Korea’ will be explored below in the second half of this chapter.
1960s: Legitimate Korean nation vis-à-vis illegitimate Korean nation

As established in the previous section, North Korea by the end of the 1950s had for the most part succeeded in domestic political and economic stabilisation, affording it time and scope to now attend to its international agenda. After all, it was not a state created out of a vacuum, and for that reason very much had its own presuppositions and preferences. Looking from a North Korea-centric sphere, the 1960s was a decade with much hostility and conflict. The Sino-Soviet split emerged and widened as time went on, implicating North Korea in a particularly sensitive position between the Soviet Union and China, and the conflict in Vietnam was waged and being fought out between the Soviet Union and the United States and each of their allies. Most importantly however, North Korea had the endlessly troubling state of South Korea on its own border that it had to contend with. And so this took precedence.

The 1960s according to the view of this study was a decade whereby North Korea started to assert its perceived legitimate, and prepared claim to the whole peninsula. ‘Prepared’ meaning that it was no longer a default counter-claim to South Korea at the point of liberation from Japanese colonialism, and instead now was a substantiated claim, one born of years of hard work in reconstruction in every facet of economics, state administration and governance. It was a claim that was just and honest, and most significantly, legitimate and wholeheartedly justifiable over the perceived corrupt US-client state of the Republic of Korea. Kim Il Sung was convinced it would only be a matter of time before his cause would prevail, and so to that end, his campaign was launched. Not noticeable in the 1950s, but literally bursting onto the scene in the archives in the 1960s was a patent bellicosity of North Korea towards South Korea (and naturally too, the United States). I interpret this as an overriding attempt on the part of the North to demonstrate to all Koreans, both North and South, the supremacy of Kim and his system, and through that, a ploy to gain their support and effort towards his ascendancy to presidency over a unified Korea.

A show of strength in the form of bellicosity towards wrongdoers was indeed part of the plan, but Kim now came to associate himself with more refined methods and ways. The 1960s was a time when we see the first coherent constructions of him dabbling in ideology of his own accord. Communism and socialism were always things he touted in the late 1940s and 1950s, but the 1960s seen the advent of “Socialist
Patriotism”; an idea that Kim ran off as his own (although Marxist-Leninist in origin), and one that can be seen as an early stage in the development of North Korea’s later ideological conventions (much more prevalent than Juche at the time). The next half of this chapter explores this. Not only will this chapter look into the struggle of the “legitimate” Korea (North) versus the “illegitimate” Korea (South) in the context of North’s bellicosity towards South, but it will also do so via the novel idea of Kim’s own “Socialist Patriotism”. Through this it will observe the emerging transition from the current point towards a more ethnic based national identity as will be treated in the next chapter, and offer in closing, summary remarks.

1. Bellicosity towards South Korea and the United States

The bellicosity that North Korea exhibited towards South Korea and the United States in the 1960s was indeed heated and intense. Any mentioning of one or both of the two would incite a flow of rage and hatred; unabated and ever more creative and elaborate as time went on. A military theme is most dominant in the general milieu, and events of such North Korean aggression towards the US and South Korea are indeed considerable (USS Pueblo seizure and Blue House commando raid in 1968, Korean Air flight YS-11 hijacking in 1969, as well as a set of skirmishes along the DMZ from 1966-69 known as the ‘Second Korean War’). A common and quite representative image of the North Korean citizenry at the time is one of them marching in fierce demonstration down the main plaza of Pyongyang, holding up poster sized placards of caricatures of at-the-time South Korean President Park Chung Hee and American generals being squashed by oversized North Korean soldiers. The demonstrators raise their fists in anger at the reality, and protest the criminality of the enemy. This is the typical image of 1960s North Korea. 171 Going beyond this image however, it is important to grasp the other and

171 Indeed North Korea to this day still enacts angry “anti-enemy” rallies, but they sit amongst a whole host of other and varied ideological performances, whereas in the 1960s they were very much an encapsulation or abbreviation of the general political and social atmosphere of time. To further comment on the fabric of such rallies from then as opposed to now, the 1960s exhibited a higher likelihood of North Korean protestors to hold up placards inclusive of the internationalist bloc in tandem with their efforts in opposition to the US and South Korea, as opposed to such posters of later and more recent decades which bear no impression at all of internationalist solidarity with fellow socialist states, of course, by now it being solely their own ethnonationalist crusade. The former half of this line will be advanced in the second of four sub-themes in reflection to posters from the time, on the following page.
more thorough ways anti-South Korean/US bellicosity made its way into the lives of North Koreans, and for what reasons.

Exploring various media such as the newspaper, songs and poster imagery, a great deal of correlation in terms of specific content amongst these three types has been found. Interestingly, it is as if posters were born of repeated newspaper slogans, and songs were written reflected in the light of posters. In assessing them collectively, four sub-themes or points emerge. They are: a) to destroy the US enemy and reunify the Korean land, b) to destroy the US enemy in unison with internationalist comrades, c) to vilify the national traitor Park Chung Hee, and, d) to express consideration and care for the South Korean brethren. Each of these points will be explored.

a) To destroy the US enemy and reunify the Korean land

The first is the most pervasive and comprehensive of the four, perhaps owing to its ability to encompass the vast degree of hatred that North Korea holds so centrally in its ideological construction. Its immense value in being able to convey simple yet highly charged political and emotional messages is also what makes it such an important and necessary element. Anti-Americanism appears in all places and in all forms in everyday life, and these are not limited to newspaper articles, high level speeches, songs, propaganda posters and other imagery.

To start with newspaper data, it is one of the most crucial forms of media due to its role in consistently delivering on an everyday basis the same anti-American message to the North Korean people. A survey into representative headlines of the time yields the following:

- Those in South Korea who are committing murder, robbery, fraud, and inciting the winds of American immorality, the sworn enemy American imperialist aggressor army, go away at once!  
  
- Punish immediately the American army jackals who have committed beastly atrocities against the people of South Korea!

- To the American army aggressors who have made our hometown villages into real life prisons, get out of South Korea!

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172 Rodong Sinmun, 1960.1.30 p. 3 (Sourced: National Library of Australia: Microfilm, ID#1518507) (My Translation)

173 Ibid, 1960.2.23 p. 3 (My Translation)
A jackal can never turn into a lamb\textsuperscript{175}

The American beasts cannot escape a dignified punishment!\textsuperscript{176}

Overthrow the American military imperialists, the culprits of aggression and war\textsuperscript{177}

Let us get rid of the American imperialists and reunify the homeland independently!\textsuperscript{178}

The American imperialist murderers will pay the price with their blood!\textsuperscript{179}

Let us smash the schemes of the US imperialist militarists for a new war!\textsuperscript{180}

If the American imperialist aggressors dare to make a move, the heroic Korean People’s Army and people will inflict on them an annihilating blow!\textsuperscript{181}

From these headlines alone, we notice that North Korea’s grudge with America is over their military interference in the war (the atrocities that they are said to have committed) as well as their continual harmful presence in South Korea (murder, robbery, fraud, etc). They not only wreak havoc, but also are being seen to infect the Korean people with their unholy culture and immoralities. North Korea and Kim Il Sung are vehemently protesting this, setting themselves up in the process as the perfect alternative by opposing all that is bad in the South Korean structure of governance. The headlines above are varied and animated (and indeed abundant during this period), but all can be classified in the same category for the purpose of bolstering the North’s premise to govern the peninsula. South Korea fronted no significant change to prompt such heated campaign at this time, but rather it was the internal situation of North Korea itself, that warranted and necessitated such crusade. We do see the North transfer its ridicule from Rhee Seung Man to Park Chung Hee in 1961 reflected in the newspaper, but prior to 1960 North Korea was simply too busy reconstructing its own state to be engaged in such a dedicated hatred effort.

In complement to articles of the above nature, posters often accompanied them in the newspapers, or appeared on their own in various other lifestyle periodicals. In perusing the archives, many were found apt for the purpose of this study and a selection of eight will be explored. Four feature Americans being destroyed by North

\textsuperscript{174}Ibid, 1960.2.4 p. 5 (My Translation)
\textsuperscript{175}Ibid, 1960.5.29 p. 1 (My Translation)
\textsuperscript{176}Ibid, 1966.7.4 p. 1 (My Translation)
\textsuperscript{177}Ibid, p. 1 (My Translation)
\textsuperscript{178}Ibid, 1966.3.9 p. 3 (Sourced: NLA: Microfilm, ID#1518507) (My Translation)
\textsuperscript{179}Ibid, 1967.4.7 p. 1(Sourced: NLA: Microfilm, ID#1518507) (My Translation)\textsuperscript{180}
\textsuperscript{180}Ibid, 1968.1.28 p. 1(Sourced: NLA: Microfilm, ID#1518507) (My Translation)
\textsuperscript{181}Ibid, p. 1 (My Translation)
Korean fists or hands, two feature Americans being stood over by tall North Koreans, and the remaining two feature a show of North Korean strength and American weakness in various forms.

Recalling the headlines, three of the four posters featuring North Korean fists have their captions very much in resemblance to the headlines mentioned above. The first is an image of a US soldier being torn up by oversized hands in front of a silhouette of the Korean peninsula. It reads: “American army, go away!” and “Korea is one.” The second shows an oversized North Korean man lifting a fierce fist in front of a demonic yet petrified-looking US soldier. The adjoining captions read “Aggressor American imperialist, go away at once!” and “Independent reunification.” The third, similar to the second, shows that fist in motion, with a few miniscule US soldiers being swiped at. The caption reads: “Let us get rid of the US imperialists and reunify the country!” The last, yet again, is another angry-looking North Korean who has just thumped two small US soldiers with some large instrument and embodies the featured caption: “(Go forward) With the heart to pierce your bayonet through the chest of an American imperialist!”

The two posters featuring North Korean soldiers trampling over Americans are of first, an oversized marine in navy uniform stepping on the 1968-seized USS Pueblo and its crew, captioned “American imperialist, don’t even try to make a move” and the second is of a regular soldier standing tall over a lifeless US soldier’s body, American flag beside ripped, and soberly captioned: “If the American imperialist provokes a war all they shall receive is only dead bodies and death.” The last two of the lot show firstly a North Korean soldier in a prepared state with the bayonet taken off his rifle and ready to thrust, captioned: “Let us greet the grand event of the homeland reunification prepared” and the second features a wolf US soldier being lynched off a pole, captions reading: “Let us rid South Korea of the American imperialist murderous

182 *Chollima* (Winged Horse), 1965. 3 (My Translation)
183 *Chollima* (Winged Horse), 1966. 11 (My Translation)
184 *Rodong Sinmun*, 1967.4.7 p. 1 (My Translation)
185 *Rodong Sinmun*, 1968.3.30 p. 3 (My Translation)
186 *Choson Yesul* (Korean Art) 1969. 1 (My Translation)
187 *Choson Yesul* (Korean Art) 1969. 7 (My Translation)
188 *Choson Yesul* (Korean Art) 1969. 8 (My Translation)
fiends” and “Let the whole of the Korean people join forces, expel the American imperial aggressors and reunify the homeland!” 189

The visuals that these posters have been created from are consistent and unambiguous, and so too is the message that they are aiming to impart. The message is that the US establishment who are reigning in South Korea are unjust and barbaric and that ‘we’ as the legitimate (North) Koreans must correct this and ultimately save the nation. The message also rubs off on South Korea, as it gives off the connotation that they, although Koreans, have been too impotent and incompetent to rectify the situation for the sake of their own nation and people. The North exploits this endlessly, strengthening their claim to the nation as not only the legitimate Korean candidate, but also the most competent and well established one.

The regularity and simplicity of the nature of these posters and related rhetoric make them devastatingly hard to shake off after a long period of saturation to, and this is perhaps how the overwhelming atmosphere of hostility towards the US and South Korea was able to be maintained for well into a decade. As seen, posters affirm newspaper media and create a non-conflicting and wholly harmonious environment from which to condition people’s minds. Songs too, feed into that mix and some ‘60s hits include: Death to the American Imperialist Aggressors (1960), American Imperialist, Take This! (1960), Pierce Fire Into the Chest of the Enemy (1964), Death to the American Imperialist (1968) and Rip off the American Imperialist’s Face (1969). 190 Let us take a closer look at Death to the American Imperialist Aggressors:

Comrades, let us awaken our senses
The American imperialists are in front of us
The aggressor wolves thirst for blood
They howl for war, creating a frenzy
The American imperialists are our sworn enemy
The enemy of our generation after generation
The blood of our anger and rage is boiling over
Let us eradicate them, let us sweep them away, let us give them death

Comrades, let us awaken our senses
The American imperialists are in front of us
Having occupied our land in the South
They are trying to invade our socialist homeland

189 Chosso Munhwa (Korea-Soviet Culture) 1962.7 (My Translation)
190 Some late 1950s songs with familiar sounds include Get Out, American Imperialists! (1957)
The American imperialists are our sworn enemy
The enemy of our generation after generation
The blood of our anger and rage is boiling over
Let us eradicate them, let us sweep them away, let us give them death

Comrades, let us awaken our senses
The American imperialists are in front of us
Falling into the grave of destruction
Every step they take is evil
The American imperialists are our sworn enemy
The enemy of our generation after generation
The blood of our anger and rage is boiling over
Let us eradicate them, let us sweep them away, let us give them death

The song lyrics above follow the familiar trend of the posters and newspapers explored above. They employ a great amount of visceral hatred in full in the piece, which is personal, emotional and unabated. The strong imagery created by the repetition of the words blood, war, anger, rage, imperialist, enemy, death, etc. continues the pattern of the approach employed in other media, clearly and in an unobstructed manner delivering the intended message and sentiment to the North Korean audience. The message yet again is simple and uncomplicated. It is that the US is causing the national tragedy of division, and so by hatefully destroying them, the North Koreans will be able to reunify their land and ultimately be happy.

The North Koreans do believe that it is their predestined mission to eliminate the US presence from South Korea and liberate the Korean peninsula, but that does not mean they cannot have moral support from other likeminded nations. This brings us to the second point, being to destroy the US enemy in unison with internationalist comrades.

b) To destroy the US enemy in unison with internationalist comrades

In terms of international relations, the 1960s was a time of crossroads for North Korea. The Sino-Soviet rift incited Kim to maintain an equidistance from both China and the Soviet Union, extracting privileges from both while at the same time not completely committing itself to either, and the growing commitment on the part of Nikita

Khrushchev to peacefully co-exist with the United States deeply concerned him. Kim's hostility towards the United States and South Korea was abating none but instead of continuing to rely on old allies who were all of a sudden seemingly changing colours, Kim turned to another front to bolster his political push: the downtrodden Non-Aligned Movement member states of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Although more pronounced in the 1970s, North Korea's interactions with the Non-Aligned states in the 1960s were somewhat more honest, well-intended and worthy of mentioning. The much touted friendship and solidarity indeed rang true in the 1960s; a time when North Korea was shopping for real and viable alternative allies, whereas going into the 1970s, these relationships became more skewed, North Korea-focused and propagandistic in nature. Few pieces of data from the 1960s reflect this sentiment.

Five images that have been found of internationalist camaraderie all feature a joining up of forces from Asia, Africa and Latin America in opposition to American imperialism. The first, a full page spread from the newspaper Rodong Sinmun of June 16, 1964, features a picture of three male figures (one Asian, one African, one Latin American), clutched in arms and with rifles in hands, with the caption reading: “Long live the friendship and solidarity between the people of Asia, Africa and Latin America!” They look to a distant point in the future, ready to take on together whatever may come. The second and third appear together in November 1969 edition of Choson Yesul (Korean Art) as paired images, one showing once again the token Asian, African and Latin American, but now collectively loading a large missile to be fired at a US target, caption reading: “Annihilate the US imperialists!” The third shows a scene full of guns being pointed at an American soldier pictured in front of the presidential White House. Various banners in the representative languages read insults towards America, and the main caption reads: “Let all the revolutionaries of the world join forces and destroy the American imperialists!” Both posters are from 1969.

The fourth, another image from Rodong Sinmun, is of the group of three, now oversized and lunging intimidatingly over a minuscule American soldier. The Asian and Latin American have their guns readied and the African has his fist outstretched in the direction of the American. All with fierce faces. The caption reads: “Give the spearhead

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192 Buzo, pg 97
193 Rodong Sinmun, 1964.6.16 p. 4. (My Translation)
194 Choson Yesul (Korean Art), November 1969. (My Translation)
195 Ibid
(L) See footnote 193 for citation (R) See footnote 194 for citation

(L) See footnote 195 for citation (R) See footnote 197 for citation

(Above) See footnote 196 for citation
to the US imperialist aggressors!" The last is a coloured poster appearing on the back cover of November 1968 edition of the abovementioned Choson Yesul. It shows a group of six men; two Asians, two Latin Americans, an African, and perhaps an Eastern European, all circled around a falling US soldier who is being pierced by the blades of their bayonets. The American flag is ripped to pieces beside him and the group of men all stare menacingly at him. Recalling a song name mentioned earlier, the caption of this poster reads: “Let us rip the faces off the US imperialists everywhere in the world!” The meaning yet again is clear and the sentiment stark.

A few notes are to be made in response to these posters. First of all, we see the continuation of the approach used in newspaper article headlines and songs. The US is scorned but interestingly, North Korea does not move to place itself any higher than its internationalist friends. This shows North Korea’s remaining capacity into the 1960s to act as a self-respecting state amongst others. The fact that pieces of this nature are not as profuse going into the 1970s as they are in the 1960s then, tells us that the relationships of respect and mutuality amongst equals becomes skewed and abused; exploited for ulterior motives, being to bolster the North Korean nation/Kim-centric ideology that comes to rapidly develop. The additional fact that North Koreans do not feature defined, centre stage and/or most prominently in these 1960s images as they do in the 1970s is another indication of the ideological crossroads that North Korea faced in the process of negotiating (and eventually trumping) its own state and national identity in relation to others. The last point to make at this time is the drastic decrease in North Korea-Soviet friendship and rhetoric. Such odes and accolades were once commonplace and abundant but now indeed become few and far between. In the course of establishing itself as a viable country and exposing itself to the wider world, North Korea now started to assert its own self – not to be subordinate to a higher power, but to be independent and strong in order to pursue its own political agenda.

c) To vilify the national traitor Park Chung Hee

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196 Rodong Sinmun, 1965.9.14 p. 4. (My Translation)  
197 Choson Yesul (Korean Art), December 1969. (My Translation)
The United States bears a great deal of the brunt of North Korean bellicosity, but when it comes to South Korea and its henchmen, it gets personal. Park Chung Hee, president of South Korea from 1961 to 1979, at this time is well posed to assume this position. Being same but only in race, Kim Il Sung and his propaganda apparatus expend many an effort to vilify Park, demonising him, and construing it as a reflection of the state he runs as a US-puppet, and the approach he takes in treating his own people. As mentioned earlier, demonstrations were a common way to express angry tirades at Park, but seeing as it was a usual and routine type of hatred, more everyday data would be helpful to look at. The daily newspaper proves yet again to be the most valuable resource. A few full page spreads and articles that are relevant will be exemplified.

The first full page spread is from the June 5th, 1964, edition of Rodong Sinmun, page 3. It is a whole feature on political unrest in the South and spews the following headlines:

- Youth of South Korea! Oppose the oppression of the fascistic clique of Park Chung Hee and uphold ever higher the flame of patriotic resistance!
- Police deployed as Chuncheon Agricultural University students protest: ‘Repeal martial law and get out!’
- Incheon and Mokpo high school students protest: ‘Alleviate the people's poor standard of living!’
- Daegu City students protest: ‘Out with the Park administration’
- Wipe out the fanatical fascist Park Chung Hee clique!

Two photos are present on the bottom of the page depicting protesting university students being violently repressed, and an illustrated image on the top right hand corner is also included, assumedly being South Korean students who are breaking free in protest against oppressive conditions, holding perceptibly North Korean-style banners reading: “Down with Park.” The second text is from an edition a few days later on the 9th of June, 1964, page 3, featuring a poster image of male figure devastated, yet angrily holding up the limp body of a slain friend or family member. Quite disturbing an image it is, the caption reads: “By this curse etched in blood destroy the Park Chung Hee clique!” The third and last is an article that appears on the bottom of page 6, August 25th, 1968, titled: “Traitor Park Chung Hee who sold the country and one nation’s blood and amassed a fortune from it; his sins will never be forgiven for a thousand years!”

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198 Rodong Sinmun, 1964. 5.5, p. 3 (My Translation)
Hatred and scorn towards Park and his regime are clear, whether the allegations made by North Korea are true or not. The North is obviously going to great lengths to sow seeds of discontent in the youth of all people – a section of society that is impulsive, passionate, often radical and progressive as it is. Essentially the same style of rhetoric is used in denigrating Park – the usual attack on his political character and competency – but by the late 1960s, as evidenced in the last article of 1968, Kim Il Sung now moves to enhance his offensive by evoking the more sensitive elements of blood, race and the nation. The youth are patriotic and so still is the movement, but the nation and its ethnic importance now start to become integrated into the fold. This could be said to be an example of the way, on a micro level, that North Korea is ideologically transitioning itself from a state-based entity to a nation or ethnic-based entity. In doing so, Kim posits himself as the legitimate Korean candidate for the nation; one who is politically generous, economically established, socially aware and culturally sensitive.

d) To express consideration and care for the South Korean brethren

In contradistinction to the wicked South Korean administration, there is indeed a suffering South Korean populace in there; a people who chose not the reality they face, and one that for all their desires to be free are cruelly trapped under the yoke of the joint US-South Korea dictatorship – or so Kim says. Kim Il Sung very much does construct the just described image, but rather than writing it all off as yet more propaganda, evidence and examination into the context of it shows that Kim very likely believed this vision and that true to that, he held deep sympathy and care for the South Korean people. Not as citizens, but indeed as brethren, Kim, through the daily avenues open to him, displayed much genuine consideration for Koreans south of the 38th parallel. This is reflected in the sources, and many pieces, again, a combination of newspaper text and imagery, come to bear. Headlines and posters proceed:

- In order to save our South Korean brothers and sisters let us hold ever higher the flame of the struggle for increased production!199
- Release at once the illegally arrested patriotic students of South Korea!200

199 Rodong Sinmun, 1960.11.27, p. 1 (My Translation)
200 Rodong Sinmun, 1961.9.27, p. 4 (My Translation)
- Let us not forget our compatriots and brothers and sisters of the land of the South who are moaning the real life prison of death and starvation created by the American imperialist occupation!  

- Let us all come out more decisively, ever more decidedly, in support of the entire patriotic people of South Korea in their struggle for salvation from the US imperialists!  

- Let us not forget our South Korean compatriots under American occupation!  

- Cease the fascistic oppression being put on the South Korean media at once!  

- Let us decidedly smash the enemy’s oppression on the South Korean patriots!  

In complement to the first headline provided, a small poster image accompanies it on the same page; it is of a stocky North Korean man engaged in some type of heavy industry work with the words ”Towards increased production” behind him, and the caption “For the brothers and sisters of the land of the South!” underneath him. The other poster seen in Rodong Sinmun June 24, 1962 is of another burly North Korean man, with a large republic flag in hand and using the stick of it to strike a US military general figure. The American flag is yet again in tatters (in contrast to the large fluttering North Korean one), and the caption in the centre urges: “Let us get rid of the US imperialists and save our Southern brethren!”  

Indeed there are undertones of Anti-Americanism and again a wholesale shift of the blame onto the imperialist obstruction, but the approach, or rather the intent that the North Koreans employ here is different and unique. Kim has no reason to feign affection for the South Korean citizenry; for all intents and purposes they are detainees of a hated neighbour regime and pose no threat to the security and/or stability of his country. The flipside however, is that they are still, a mass of separated families and friends, all of whom have unforgotten memories of each other and each other’s lives before division only twenty years ago. Indeed to embellish his own state, but much more likely in pursuit of his own instinct and desire, Kim now sets out to repair the broken ethnie. True compassion ensues as he provokes his people to empathise with their siblings to the South, who by no fault of their own are lamentably tied down to a

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201 Rodong Sinmun, 1962.1.27, p. 5 (My Translation)  
202 Rodong Sinmun, 1962.6.8, p. 3 (My Translation)  
203 Rodong Sinmun 1962.8.13, p. 3 (My Translation)  
204 Rodong Sinmun 1964.11.24, p. 2 (My Translation)  
205 Rodong Sinmun 1968.4.6, p. 3 (My Translation)
demonic establishment, despite being piously Korean in blood. The important note to make at this time is the real possibility Kim would have seen in reunifying the nation under his command. The combination of an incapable administration and a discontented public would have been too compelling an image to Kim to resist taking a stab, where the stage was set politically and economically to swiftly respond to a South collapse and North takeover.

2. Socialist Patriotism

a. What is North Korean Socialist Patriotism?

North Korean Socialist Patriotism according to Kim Il Sung is: “a patriotism of the working class and the labouring people towards socialism and communism, which combines class consciousness with the consciousness of national independence, and includes a love for one’s class and system, as well as a love for one’s people and homeland.” Not spoken about greatly or widely in Western academic circles, the quotation above (although rendered slightly differently) appears in Scalapino and Lee’s 1973 monumental volume *Communism in Korea*, on page 871. Apart from this mentioning, the other most useful discussion of socialist patriotism relevant to this study is done by Dae-sook Suh, in his 1995 *Kim Il Sung: The North Korean Leader* from pages 309-311. Suh’s contributions will be explored in a later section, but for now, a critical reflection on the definition and essence of socialist patriotism is warranted.

From the basic quote supplied above, inconsistencies already arise in relation to its ideological credence. “A patriotism of the working class and the labouring people towards socialism and communism” is odd considering patriotism by definition is an entity directed at a state or governmental structure and not towards an ideology, and the double jumbling of tenets of internationalism with nationalism further incite more questions than they do provide clarification.

A 1963 self-titled definitive treatise on socialist patriotism written by the North Korean state however, elaborates deeper, and to the benefit of this study it has been tracked down and examined. The Korean language book is a quaint 60-page

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publication containing four basic chapters that provide stunning coherence and even sincerity in approaching the subject matter. It is surprising in that most who are familiar with North Korean ideological treatises will notice the lack of roundabout and empty rhetoric in this text, yet unsurprising in that as per the line of this study, the 1960s were a time of political and ideological sincerity, not as in good heartedness, but by way of genuine and wholehearted attempt to construct ideology and politics for the sake of creating an ideal nation, thus resulting in a piece actually coherent and readable. The four chapters are 1) Our nation of historically abundant sources of pride, 2) There is nothing more precious than the homeland, 3) New homeland founded with blood, and 4) Patriotism of the highest form.

The first chapter opens the book by reminding its audience of the beautiful nature, clever people and sophisticated technology that Korea has always been known for. Historically, the Koryo people are conveniently attributed patriotic quality in their military exploits in protecting the nation, and this is seen as the base of the firm and deeply rooted tradition of patriotism in the Korean people. Kim chimes in periodically, expounding that patriotism is about knowing one's past, tradition and culture, and professes that it is not an abstract notion – that it is simply a cause of loving every blade of grass, tree, one's hometown, parents, and so forth. The chapter concludes by stressing the ultimate importance of protecting the homeland from invaders. The second chapter is where we find out in its simplest form, that patriotism is love of the homeland. It is an ode to the Korean people who suffered under cruel Japanese colonialism and the grand theft of the nation that occurred in relation to that. The book clarifies that it was not a case of lacking patriotism that led to the loss of the country, but instead caused by the intrigue-ridden and incompetent royal Yi household that submitted to the imperialists out of fear. The Koreans' bravery is highlighted, detailing such pan-national events as the March First Movement of 1919.

The third chapter then makes tribute to the anti-Japanese guerrilla resistance of the 1930s, of which no doubt Kim is celebrated for. These fighters are acclaimed for their courage and sacrifice, never thinking of their own lives for a minute, and to the very last moment giving every drop of blood that they had. Chapter 3 tell us that these men were not only fighting to reclaim the nation, but also that they fought a class war in the goal that they may return to build a socialist paradise on the new land. The preciousness of the nation is shone through the heroic resistance of this era; one that is
widely viewed to be formative in the life and character of North Korea itself. The last chapter is where the most noble form of patriotism is elucidated, being none other than that of socialist patriotism itself. Unfortunately here is where the familiar propaganda run picks up, giving growing space to the trumpeting of the glory of society and greatness of Kim. An increasing sensitivity to the nation in the form of "(ethno-)national pride" (minjokjok geungji) becomes apparent in this chapter, and an extended ode to the party and political system is what closes the book.

The point in reviewing the book was to get the information straight from the horse’s mouth, so to speak. If this is deemed to be what the North Korean establishment turns to in order define and detail their idea of socialist patriotism, then we can be certain that socialism and internationalism (the same of which could almost be said for patriotism as well) exist substantially in no way in the idea but in name, and name alone. Boasting of national prides, lamenting of national tragedies, immortalising of nationalist resistances, and conjuring up of pseudo ideologies that are in name one thing and in substance another, speak all in one concerted voice of nationalism and very little else. Having established that, a relevant issue however, is how socialist patriotism existed on the ground at the time in North Korea; being its presence, its manifestation and its permeation into the social fabric. This is the angle of the discussion of the next section, so to there we turn.

b. Its manifestation/presence on the ground in North Korea at the time

Going through various manners of public data in scope of socialist patriotism, such as the daily newspaper, magazine periodicals, songs and propaganda posters of the 1960s, a clear consensus was reached entailing that little was to be found in songs, nothing was to be found in posters, some was to be found in magazines, and most was to be found in the daily newspaper. Posters often publicised “socialism” and “patriotism” separately, ‘Our Style Socialism’ (Urisik Sahoejuui), and even ‘Agriculture First Ideology’ (Nongsajeiljuui), but for some reason no mentioning of socialist patriotism was commissioned. This is very odd considering communism and Marxism-Leninism received their fair share of propaganda airtime in the 1950s, as did Juche, Kim Il Sung-Kim Jongilism and the Our-nation-as-best ideology (Uri minkoj jeiljuui) too, later in the 1970s, 1980s and
1990s. A look into what was found is warranted, and for this we turn to the plethora of headlines that featured time and time again in the daily newspaper, the *Rodong Sinmun*:

- Let us educate even better on Socialist Patriotism!\(^{207}\)
- Let us put ourselves in the best position to educate Socialist patriotism well\(^{208}\)
- Let us furthermore intensify Socialist Patriotism education!\(^{209}\)
- Let us tie Socialist Patriotism education with education of the revolutionary tradition!\(^{210}\)
- Let us strengthen Socialist Patriotism education among youth\(^{211}\)
- Let us substantially educate on Socialist patriotism among party members and workers!\(^{212}\)
- Tying Socialist Patriotism education with the principle of Marxist-Leninism\(^{213}\)
- Let us furthermore strengthen Socialist Patriotism education!\(^{214}\)
- Under the guidelines of the Generalissimo Kim Il Sung’s teachings, let us strengthen the improvements of Social Patriotism education!\(^{215}\)
- Shining tradition of Socialist Patriotism that Comrade Kim Il Sung erected during the period of the anti-Japanese armed resistance.\(^{216}\)

From the headlines above, there is a clear focus on “Socialist Patriotism education,” however, we are not really educated on what this education in fact entails! No definitive piece was found in the newspaper thus far comparable to the book reviewed above, so from the perspective of the North Korean audience, it is possible to surmise that for the most part, they may be accepting it repeatedly as a mere slogan party line.\(^{217}\) Brief mentions of “revolutionary tradition,” “Marxist-Leninism,” and the “anti-Japanese armed resistance” are made and herein lie the few defining elements of the idea – and not done through explanation, but instead by association. In this way North Koreans who have not read the manifesto mentioned above are very likely to have an unclear and hazy understanding of the idea. This manifesto on that note, only had a print order of 100,000 copies (as explicated on back detail), making it easy to

\(^{207}\) *Rodong Sinmun* 1966.6.16, p. 1 (My Translation)
\(^{208}\) *Rodong Sinmun* 1966.7.3, p. 1 (My Translation)
\(^{209}\) *Rodong Sinmun* 1966.8.2, p. 1 (My Translation)
\(^{210}\) *Rodong Sinmun* 1966.8.14, p. 1 (My Translation)
\(^{211}\) *Rodong Sinmun* 1966.8.19, p. 1 (My Translation)
\(^{212}\) *Rodong Sinmun* 1966.8.29, p. 1 (My Translation)
\(^{213}\) *Rodong Sinmun* 1966.9.15, p. 1 (My Translation)
\(^{214}\) *Rodong Sinmun* 1966.9.19, p. 1 (My Translation)
\(^{215}\) *Rodong Sinmun* 1969.6.10, p. 2 (My Translation)
\(^{216}\) *Rodong Sinmun* 1969.6.12, p. 2 (My Translation)
\(^{217}\) Articles are scantily substantiative in nature, often, if not always employing the common roundabout, excessive praise type rhetoric.
deduce that its penetration level amongst the public was not incredibly high, in contrast to the million-plus copies of publications that are commissioned for pieces that are deemed politically significant.

In addition to the newspaper data, journal articles found were also mentioned, and their content must be assessed. The noteworthy bulk of these were an assortment of four articles from the Korean language *Worker (Kulloja)* journal spanning 1964-1968. The articles, briefed below, appear to offer precious more detail than the newspaper to the discerning reader.

The first, a 9-page article simply titled “Socialist Patriotism” that appeared in the August edition of 1968 (from page 2), offers the most comprehensive approach of the group. It takes the teachings of Kim Il Sung on the idea quote by quote and expresses an elaboration and understanding of certain points. It starts off with the basic definition provided in the opening of this section. They go on to give lip service to socialism and proletarian internationalism and construe why their socialist patriotism is one that is agreeable with it (it is a “patriotism advocating for the peasants and workers, not the bourgeoisie”). The article then acknowledges Kim’s teaching of combining class consciousness and nationalist consciousness in the idea, emphasising the need to assume pride in the revolution, in socialism and in communism. It is because of this pride we learn, that adversity is able to be overcome; yet another strength of the system. Propaganda intensity levels elevate soon thereafter, and a sincerity and love for the *Suryong*, or supreme leader that is Kim, is now stressed. It is under his wise leadership that the country is advancing, and thanks to his inspiring guerrilla activities that the people now have a glorious tradition to turn to. Kim advises his people then, to never forget the misery of the past, and to never forget the South Korean people. The first, lest that the people’s hatred for the everlasting enemy ever subside, and the second, due to the immorality of only half of the nation living happily while the other half suffers. The article concludes by advocating *jibdanjuui*, or collectivism, in socialist patriotism, and by yet again extolling Kim coupled with the success of the system.

The second article is a 7-page main piece found in the November, 1964 (from page 2 again) issue of *Kulloja (Worker)*, titled “Socialist Patriotism and the Education of History,” and is a rather more simple piece in comparison to the aforementioned one. It starts off with the never far away quote of Kim Il Sung clarifying that patriotism is not an abstract notion; that it is simply about knowing one’s country, history, tradition,
nationalist traits, lifestyle, and people, and the love that naturally flows from that. It also
starts off by stating that it is the study of history itself that instills the pride and
integrity that people feel for their homeland and country. The bulk of the article then
elaborates at length on the importance of being diligent in researching and being proud
of the nation’s ancestors and their legacies left for them today. The article extols the
history of Korean science, technology, art and culture, allegedly well known worldwide,
and ends by stressing the responsibility of history teachers and publishers in playing
their central role as educators of history. The article never adopts an objective stance,
scantily attempting to view itself outside the prism of its own premeditated image.

The third is a 7-page article found in the April, 1967 edition of *Worker* (from
page 41), titled “Socialist Patriotism Education and Literature and Art.” This piece is
significant in that it is likely to be the first instance illustrating the intentional stitching
of ideology and emotion to date. It starts off by going over the basic and often recited
definition of socialist patriotism by Kim Il Sung. It mentions that socialist patriotism is
the force behind social development, and alludes to the fact that art and literature, in
their capacity to influence people, are important tools in the making up of people’s
lifestyles and worldviews/perceptions. Keeping in sync with the ideology’s evolution,
unambiguous cant ensues, where the reader is told that the most important element of
the idea is to instill in themselves a consciousness of appreciation for the wise
leadership of Kim, as well as an awareness of the excellence of the nation, its integrity,
and cause for independence. Here is where emotive rhetoric in regards to the nation
takes off, where Kim quotations on loving the homeland, adopting an independent
stance about it, and precisely upholding its traditional heritage and culture, come into
prominence. All the while Kim complexifies his ideological and emotional notions, he
conversely stresses that they are not abstract, but in fact simple, to which he urges
writers and artists to ground their works in the socialist realities of the common people.
The article explains that incorporating historical tales into art and literature contribute
to socialist patriotism education by aim of inspiring love of the nation and its tradition.
Elements such as the natural beauty of Korea, its wonderful language and proud and
glorious future are proffered therefore, to embody this. Individuals can be
revolutionaries *and* patriots at the same time, the article ends on, in a reunified place
where American imperialists are none, and the future is bright thanks to socialist
patriotism education.
The fourth is another 7-page piece from 1967, this time from the June edition of *Worker* (page 9), and is titled “Socialist Patriotism Education among Workers.” It is interesting in that at first glance it seems to be the perfect complement to the art and literature article above: being very much geared to manual workers and labourers, consisting of no emotive rhetoric, and mostly in content along the lines of economic development and progress, worker and class consciousness, and socialist modes of production. Delving deeper into the article however, it becomes increasingly apparent that the mid-bulk section is devoted to the familiar love for homeland, nation, class and system intertwined into the working class rhetoric. Interestingly enough also, the article discusses ideology head on, negating national exclusivism, and promoting the North Korean brand of socialism and socialist patriotism. The mid-bulk of the article then recedes to reclaim the original air of the article, instilling pride amongst workers for themselves, their class, and socialist system, not only for the sake of their country, but also for the less fortunate South Korea come reunification.

Such is what could be collated on the presence of socialist patriotism in the North Korean public sphere at the time; not a great deal in terms of quantity, but still an amount that is able to be interpreted in a meaningful sense. The most deducible conclusion no doubt, is the increasing amount of nationalist content despite the socialist front. Some articles were more upfront with their nationalist content, whereas others needed more probing to eventually find it. Continuing along nonetheless, some speculation on why socialist patriotism was not as prominent as one would think can be done. Could it be because the regime did not want to incite the people to think, allowing them to use their still non-oppressed faculties to critically assess the haphazard ideology? It is important to remember that at the time society was still more comparatively liberal, where people were fairly free to pursue such intellectual desires. Or could it be that it simply was not of that much significance to the regime as an ideology? The lack of content in posters, songs and other more permeating popular media and culture speaks volumes of this. There may be an alternative explanation to the two pitched above however, that could explain the reason why not only it was such an inconsistent and manipulated ideology, but also how it was a beneficial tool in paving the way for the next era of North Korean ideology. The reason I interpret is because it acted as a transitional sub-ideology, the viewpoint of the next section.
c) How it functions as a transitional sub ideology

Having established in the previous section that socialist patriotism was a theoretical discussion taking place for the most part in isolated books and not in the open popular cultural sphere, it is important to mention that its legacy nonetheless indeed did not end there. In viewing socialist patriotism as a transitional sub-ideology, I infer that it acted very well as a bridge in the evolution of North Korean ideology, linking Marxist-Leninism and socialism of the 1950s and 1960s to nationalism and dogmatism in the 1970s onwards. The way this was done was via such methods as the very newspaper headlines provided in the previous section – in more descriptive terms, *via the delivering and repeated feeding of intentionally vague and obtuse ideological rhetoric*. This way, a literate, but by no means sophisticated populace would comprehend and internalise the content, but not question or be in a position to critically assess it. Soon thereafter, Marxist-Leninism would be pushed out of the equation, socialist patriotism would take its attention, and the ‘socialism’ in socialist patriotism would become all but relevant in name, being in substance replaced by ideas more pertinent to the Korean nation (such as the 1930s anti-Japanese guerrilla resistance, the colonial occupation, etc). The completely biased and self-motivated view that the North Korean regime was pushing on to its populace therefore, served in effect to disable them intellectually, freezing their critical faculties in constant gradation due to lack of opposition, coupled with intensification of non-rational emotion-based campaigns (i.e. hatred/outrage at enemy, love/appreciation for homeland – see chapter 5 for further detail). In this way, socialist patriotism was but a tool of the fox that North Korean political ideology was developing into, most fatefuly succeeding in setting the stage for the rise of none other than Juche in the 1970s.

Another way such conditioning was possibly achieved was by blatantly confusing the North Korean populace. Socialist patriotism in the manifesto text of 1963 and additional journal articles of the mid 1960s continuously amalgamated a love for socialism with love for the homeland – a love for the revolution with love for the *minjok* (nation/race). Combining all elements of socialism (class consciousness), communism (the revolution), patriotism (loyalty to state), nationalism (“(ethno-)national integrity and pride” i.e *minjokjok keungjiwa jabusim*), Kim personality cult (Kim as the utmost
patriot), anti-imperialism and anti-capitalism, it is clear that it became a setting obstructive to an uncontaminated learning of ideology. This is how an environment conducive to selective ideological engineering was effectively established in the 1960s, via the use of such tools as the sub-ideology of socialist patriotism itself.

d) Original Socialist patriotism versus its later mini revival

While casting my net far and wide in search of socialist patriotism in the archives of North Korea spanning more than half a century, it became the case that content on the subject in an inconsistent sense, was encountered, and determined clearly in accordance to time. Most who are familiar with North Korean ideology would have at least heard of socialist patriotism in the course of their studies, if not knowing in detail the path of its evolution, and they would also be aware of North Korea’s habit of editing and reinventing history to their select liking in accordance to conditions of the time. Here I propose to shed some light on the variation that socialist patriotism underwent in its lifespan as found, and to reflect on that in retrospect of its original prime time in the 1960s. Five periodical articles were found, in addition to a full page of collated quotes on the subject given by Kim Jong Il. These pieces post-date the Kim Il Sung era by a great deal, all being localised in a short span of the mid-2000s, precisely, 2005-2007, and so aptly, are able to be viewed as a ‘mini-revival.’

Instead of individually briefing the five articles as was done in the previous section, here they will be treated together, as certain similarities among them all allow me to do so. Proceeding that will be a review of Kim Jong Il’s quotes, (very conveniently collated by the North Korean government publishers for the benefit of this study), and given deeper attention considering they are a set of various pieces of concentrated and politically/ideologically significant statements.

It would be fitting first to look at the titles of the articles to gauge their nature, so below they are listed.

– Socialist Patriotism Education and Morals of Humanity Education\textsuperscript{218}
– Socialist Patriotism Education and Morals of Humanity\textsuperscript{219}

\textsuperscript{218} Choson Nyosong, April 2005, p. 42 (My Translation)
\textsuperscript{219} Chollima, June 2005, p. 37 (My Translation)
The familiar phrase of “socialist patriotism education” remains, and the same type of energetic prose is evident, yet the most distinct observation is the new presence and indeed regularity of the notion of “morals of humanity.” This is something that has no grounding in the original socialist patriotism of the 1960s, so it must be the case that later ideology of the 2000s would have influenced its reintegration, if not reinterpretation. Reading into the articles, one must not wait very long until being brought into the idea, understanding what is meant, and possibly even why such idea has now taken precedence. All articles that mentioned ‘morals of humanity’ spoke in one voice on their definition and interpretation of the idea – the elegant figure of a person in society who holds themselves with ethics and morals. That person is one of esteem and pride, and of course, one who loves his/her socialist homeland and would willingly sacrifice their life for it. As the articles draw on, a tone of honesty subsides and a tone of haughtiness takes over. People without such composure are worthless, and the standard lowers for no one, lest the homeland be degraded with them. Looking back on socialist patriotism of the 1960s, such tone of chauvinism was not the standard. Indeed ideological appropriation was made, yet a consciousness towards class and the proletariat, however tokenistic, was evident. In socialist patriotism of the 2000s, such rhetoric is wholly absent, and a consciousness towards the “mother homeland” and its preciousness very much takes over. In every article, the opening paragraphs define socialist patriotism as a love for the homeland, and no longer “a patriotism of the working class and the labouring people towards socialism and communism etc.” like the 1960s original. The political and ideological milieu of the time (2000s) would indeed permit nothing else. As will be the focus of next chapter’s exploration, the period of the 1990s onwards was a time of great political and ideological constraint in comparison to the ‘liberal’ 1950s and 1960s era. Intellect, or rather ideological persuasion is now no longer employed, and instead emotion, or rather as North Korea calls it “ideological

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220 Choson Nyosong, June 2005, p. 43 (My Translation)
221 Choson Munhak, August 2005, p. 4 (My Translation)
222 Choson Nyosong, January 2007, p. 36 (My Translation)
emotion” (sasang gamjeong) forms the new norm and takes sway of people’s non-rational faculties for political education.

Let us now turn attention to the full page of quotes provided in the December 2007 edition of Choson Nyosong, page 3. If one was to read it directly after the articles of the 1960s, as I did, one would not recognise the two, or at least not be compelled into believing they are one and of the same idea. From the page of 16 quotes, the theme of the homeland is (unsurprisingly) recurring and apparent. Loving one’s hometown and homeland, thinking of it as their mother’s embrace, sacrificing their effort and fighting for it, and always nurturing an appreciation for it, is clear. The wonders of Korea’s socialist system, the national savior that is Kim Il Sung, and the safeguarding of Korea’s traditional culture and heritage are all promoted – hardly “a patriotism of the working class and the labouring people towards socialism and communism etc.” A sharp note to make is even the mentioning of Choson Minjok Jeiljuui (the Korean-nation-as-first/best ideology)223 in the page of quotes, which is, by self titled definition, an(other) exclusivist and ethnic supremacist sub-ideology born of the mid 1990s that explicitly promotes the view of Korea as simply “first” or best among other nations and races. How the North Korean government can inject such blatantly conflicting content and still pass the idea of socialist patriotism as a legitimate entity is a testament to how perverse the ideological landscape of North Korea indeed became by then. Why the North Korean government chose to revive socialist patriotism at this time is unclear, but their reintegration and reinterpretation of it leaves no doubt as to its role as a malleable sub-ideology that functions to carry the regime line throughout time in ever more innovative and effective ways.

Concluding Remarks

Nationalism of the early decades therefore, was state focused and subtle. North Korea’s proclaiming itself as a new state in 1948 granted itself political legitimacy to administer the nation, and its instigation of the war in 1950 was a show to prove to its people and the people of the South that this state was pan-nationally conscious and caring. The

223 This idea is made the focus of an in depth exploration in the latter half of chapter 4.
failure of that attempt led to the subsequent post-war reconstruction period, one that was adorned in patriotic dress, predominantly for the revival of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, yet never straying from the underlying one-nation line. The majority of the 1960s too, perpetuated this. Success in reconstruction meant that Kim Il Sung was in a confident position to economically dominate the nation, bolstering his claim to the South, and indeed doing it convincingly. Perhaps it was his deep agitation at the South continuing to hold on and not succumb that drove his ever increasing bellicosity to them and the United States. Indeed the United States along with Japan were always the eternal enemies, but when it came to South Korea, as mentioned, it was more personal. Still, Kim did not play the race/ethnic card, and instead remained steadfast to the state oriented strategy. His strategic patience would be tested greatly though, as it was not long thereafter that he started to come undone, primarily, seen via the sub-ideology of socialist patriotism of the later 1960s. Conscientious to maintain a socialist front, yet much more intent (whether he was aware of it or not) to inject his own desires into a republic that started to resemble more of a personal kingdom than communist utopia, socialist patriotism was a mere front for a growing nationalism that consisted of the beautiful homeland, the wicked foreign aggressors and the heroic anti-imperialist exploits of Kim and his clan.

It was not only Kim’s impulses that lead the path of political and ideological evolution. Development on the international front, such as the precarious Sino-Soviet rift and the Vietnam War too, gave him pause to reflect, both in a hesitant and active stance, but all for his benefit. The Sino-Soviet rift opened Kim’s eyes to the fact that his once greatest benefactor in the Soviet Union may not be as constant and reliable in the future as times gone, making him take a step back and seek to not allow his country to be utterly dependent on them for support and resources, and the discord between the two ideological giants of the USSR and China meant that Kim seized the opportunity to aptly place himself in a position to play the two off of each other – feigning commitment, then resistance, etc. Through this equidistance he exploited both relationships for all the gains he could muster, all the while strengthening his Machiavellian skills that he increasingly employed, not just in an international arena, but also in his domestic sphere. Success of the communist forces in Vietnam too, gave Kim confidence in the cause that he was pushing. So, such was how North Korea’s nationalism of the 1950s and 1960s was state focused and subtle – channeled through the medium of the nation,
yet never overtly forced or vigorously campaigned until ends started to fray in the late 1960s with socialist patriotism.

It is well and good to make a claim and substantiate it, but it is another to be absolutely resolute and blinded to exceptions and inconsistencies that challenge this line. In saying this, I do uphold the claim that nationalism of the early decades in North Korea was state focused and subtle, but as just alluded to, exceptions and inconsistencies did become apparent in the course of research – an isolated poem or journal article genuinely professing a love of the homeland in the 1950s, for example. Apart from explicating the crucial point that these odd articles were for the most part non-politicised pieces, the response to this that I offer is that through this research, I aim to reveal patterns and trends; regular, consistent, developing and ultimately influential of proceeding events, and not an absolute micro-history of North Korean ideology. This would indeed require manifold doctorate thesis-sized volumes, and is simply far beyond the expanse of this study. While several scholars in the field have touched upon this topic merely by interpreting ideology of the 1950s as simply “nationalist”, in this chapter I hope to have provided a more textured and nuanced view of North Korean ideology of the time, indeed not just “nationalist”, and instead more patriotic and suspended in the matrix of nationalism and socialism-communism. This has been sought by scouring the archives, combing edition after edition of publication, and overall, reflecting on lasting impressions received from each, and then collectively from all research sessions.

In solidarity with the abovementioned and well established scholars, one does see how patriotism and nationalism could be viewed interchangeably at the time (indeed Kim Il Sung did not even seem to know the difference himself), but when comparing this period to such an undoubtedly and overtly nationalist decade as the 1990s (as will be explored beginning in the very next pages), one cannot help but see harshly vast differences. The early decades had a showing of few representations of genuine non-manufactured nationalism, but indeed it was by no means at all comparable to the commonly accepted notion of North Korean nationalism that we attribute to contemporary North Korea today. It did however, ultimately prevail in the late 1960s, and succeeded to stake its sure place from the 1970s onwards. It went from 224 Shin, p. 88, Suh, p. 309, Armstrong, p. 169
being nascent therefore, to somewhat standard; state focused and subtle, to ethnie focused and extreme. Let us turn to chapter 4 to explore this.
Chapter 4. Nationalism of the Later Decades: Ethnie focussed and extreme

Looking at North Korean ideology of the later decades in comparison to the early decades, many differences appear. Indeed, the same leader and regime remained, but a plethora of internal and external factors could not help but lead Kim and his company to adjust the sails. Of course the destination was the same, but the winds came thick and fast from many a direction. And when one senses danger, or is thrown in a battle to survive, it is more likely than not that they revert to their instincts to do so. This thesis sees that in Kim Il Sung. Having not the foresight to grasp that an increasingly extravagant personal autocracy would not bode well in the long term, Kim regressed back to his ethnic instincts (not to mention his own self conceitedness). Building on the industrial progress of the 1950s or fighting out the legitimacy war with South Korea fair and square for however long it took were not things he was evidently keen on.

The 1970s are notable for their cultural renaissance of opera and film, but in the 1980s, serious cracks in the way of political life in North Korea were appearing. By the mid-1990s, disaster was present in full force and people, even those privileged in the capital, felt the pinch of deprivation, to put it mildly. To put it rather coarsely, famine had struck the countryside, and people were dying en masse. Neglected by the state they were in their physical health, but maltreated they also were in their psychological and emotional state. If one was not a slave to the daily feat of finding food, then communication that they would be receiving from the state would be wholly perplexing. The 1970s and 1980s were filled with the persona of Kim. He was the champion of Juche and the sun of the race. In the 1990s then when the regime was in a prolonged state of crisis management, the propaganda became more engaging and enveloping. The Korean nation became the land of the promised race, and the people were encountering an historically unique moment in their hallowed history, as the “best” race/nation in the world (Uriminjok jeiljuui). A national genesis in the form of Dangun was reignited, and this in turn gave the Koreans impetus to endure to reach their destiny. These ideological campaigns will be the subjects of discussion in this chapter.
1970s/80s: Nation as native land of ethnic apex figure Kim

1. Jucheui Nara 'Land of Juche'

a) Juche in Essence

Juche is one of the most discussed topics on North Korea, beginning perhaps from the very dawn of North Korean Studies' inception as a field of study some decades ago. For the majority of that time, a general consensus was established on it, perhaps as epitomised by Han S. Park as North Korea’s "system of beliefs and values...[its] grand ideological structure." More recently however, a new viewpoint emerged with the 2010 publication of The Cleanest Race: How North Koreans See Themselves and Why it Matters, challenging the traditional line and gaining converts at that. Author of the title, B.R. Myers, made headlines when he put forth his book asserting (among other things) that Juche was nothing but a sham doctrine that is meant to be praised and celebrated, and not in substance employed or adhered to. Scholars and interested individuals should not have been so surprised though, because in 2008 and 2006 Myers had already published on his deep cynicism on Juche, respectively with Ideology as Smokescreen: North Korea's Juche Thought, and The Watershed That Wasn't: Re-evaluating Kim Il Sung's “Juche” Speech of 1955. It is along these Juche-sceptic lines that this study proceeds. Before this commences though, it is possible to empathise with those observers who see Juche as the all-encompassing and highly pervasive ideology that it ostensibly presents itself to be. Juche is enshrined in the 1972 constitution, it is adorned in propaganda, and is upheld so highly that even the nation is called by it (Jucheui Nara ‘Land/Country of Juche’). This interpretation however, leaves itself prone to a one-dimensional view of North Korean ideology; an actual feeding into the cant of the government and not a critical and well scrutinised assessment of what is in fact being sold to North Koreans and outsiders alike. For this reason, B.R. Myers’ work is very important. He suffers from no obligation of loyalty to convention, and views North

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225 Park (2002), p. 40
226 As explained in Myers, Preface, p. 17
228 Acta Koreana Vol 9, No 1, December 2006: pp. 89-115
Korea via its own propaganda – a methodology long overlooked and a resource long untapped.

Having said that, the premise of this study, as has been established, is based on ethnic nationalism, and here is where that assertion takes on added visible qualities. Juche, in the view of this study, unlike the official definition of self-reliance and independence in politics, economics and defence, is much like a tool of great functionality. To my discerning it is a malleable brand of rhetoric that the regime uses to achieve its agenda of the day and bolster its ruling seat, or in short, another sub-ideology (or sub-ideological front) in the greater context of North Korean nationalism. It has evolved from a certain group of variables; as explored in the previous chapter, from the increasingly inward-looking regime, coupled with a degrading and inefficient set of economic conditions.

In speaking on the closed nature of North Korea beginning in the 1970s, a great role of “Juche” has been to frame the personality cult of Kim Il Sung. Both Juche and the Kim cult developed in strength and prominence around the same time in that decade, so the connection is indeed a dubious and suspicious one. Rather than upholding the ideals of Marx and Lenin in the original intent of architect of Juche, Hwang Jang Yop, the slogan was gradually perverted, coming to be known at its peak as the doctrine associated with and represented by Kim and his greatness. This topic will be dealt with in the next section, but for now, the topic of interest on Juche here is its ability to channel none other than ethnicity.

Juche is not ostensibly associated with ethnicity; nothing of its core dogma explicates nationalism or chauvinism and nothing of the word ‘Juche’ denotes primordialism. However, resting on this assessment would precisely be taking Juche on its face value as explained above, risking perpetuating an orthodox and limiting view of it. For this reason, Juche of its heydays in the 1970s and 1980s must be viewed in its entire context for it be wholly understood. This way, the role that it played and the impact that it made in terms of political and ideological influence and development in North Korea can be deduced.

The 1970s onwards is known to be a time when North Korea for all intents and purposes ceased relations with the Soviet Union and stood on its own feet, supporting itself politically, economically and militarily. As mentioned in the conclusion of the previous chapter, world affairs were polarised into a socialism versus capitalism.
divide, and although Kim identified himself as a member of the socialist camp, he did not allow himself to become reliant on his foreign community, however friendly they were. Kim did however move to pursue an opportunity he saw in the mix, and this was a role in the Non-Aligned Movement; a group of mostly developing countries spanning Asia and Africa that held no loyalties to either Eastern or Western bloc. Sensing the vacuum, Kim launched a campaign making an unprecedented number of relations with countries of the two continents, no matter how ruthless and/or scant their leaders’ regard for true egalitarianism was. This was in addition to a mass sending of books and materials on Juche and on his works, essentially ideological texts and propaganda translated into English if not the local language for locals to read. A select few would also be invited to Pyongyang as guests on “study” or “friendship” tours, being received with high hospitality by the regime, but also at an equally high cost to their integrity. Foreigners were not escorted into halls of learning for discussion or debate on Juche, but merely used as valuable photo opportunities for the regime to demonstrate to its people that the so-called idea was well received and indeed praised abroad. This would speak volumes on the greatness of the revolutionary home grown creed, as well as frame Kim as the ‘saviour of the downtrodden peoples of the world’. By the time such relations developed over a period of several years however, the North Korean population had already been fed in copious amounts the nascent elements of a North Korean supremacy, meaning that their true perception of these friendly international peoples would have been more of a low and unadmiring one in reality. In this way, I see that the development of Juche coincides undoubtedly with a meaningful closing of North Korean society.

It is not only in these political terms that North Korea was enacting its purported desire for autonomy and excluding outsiders. The decades of the 1970s and 1980s are also known to be the artistic peak of distinctly North Korean-style culture and arts, where a set of “Immortal Classics” took grand sway over the population. These and other artistic and literary pieces will be explored in the next section, but the point to be made here is that in this ‘cultural renaissance’ of the 1970s and 1980s, the regime exalted the ideals of loyalty to the state (and through that, as will be explored, a loyalty to the race, or ethnie), sacrifice for the nation, and obedience to the established orthodoxy in terms of ideology and daily practice. People were being guided on how to live, but it was a happy life; a culturally nourishing and uplifting experience, and a self-
identity that they were proud to wear. The problem was however, that it was not destined to last long.

Another element of this thesis asserts that the state of economic affairs in North Korea had a direct impact on state-issued ideology. Coming out of the industrialised and prosperous decade of the 1960s, the 1970s were in a good position to ride off the back of that success. Economic practice going into the 1970s however, did not automatically follow on from its predecessor. As Juche and the Kim cult widened into the 1970s and burgeoned in the 1980s, ‘special works’ were commissioned, and they precisely were large, non-functional structures the likes of the now removed 20-metre bronze statue of Kim Il Sung atop Mansu Hill built in 1972, as well as the Juche Tower and Arch of Triumph, both built in 1982. Noticing the corresponding years of construction, indeed a large portion of these great follies were built in tribute and celebration of Kim Il Sung’s birthday; respectively, on his 60th and 70th birthdays. Such projects were no doubt costly, especially when viewed in the context of severely downgraded international trade and therefore, scarcity of funds. This was not to be an impediment however, as officials gladly “borrowed” any funds needed, racking up vast amounts of international debt that is still yet to be paid to this day.229

Workplace practices too, by now, had been saturated by ‘Juche economics;’ a rather laden title for a convention that put economic efficiency on the back foot of ideological subservience and dogmatism. Quality suffered in order to meet quantity quotas, and vital infrastructure upgrades and rejuvenation ideals lay victim to an amplified and indeed earnest investment into nuclear technology. No doubt corruption would have been rife, and economic favouritism most likely would have prevailed as well. This is a snapshot of what national economics denigrated into. For all the gusto and hard work of the 1950s and 1960s, "Juche", backed by an ever strengthening Kim, reared its head in a major way from the 1970s onwards and demanded full devotion at the peril of everyday economic sense. Strain was becoming widespread, yet no one was in a position to question such system, or at least overtly. Kim’s ideas were hallowed and his word was final, and there was very little anyone could do to stop the impending catastrophe that inevitably lay ahead as a result of such prolonged and severe economic backwardness.

When taking into account a wide variety of factors as the ones explored above, Juche does not shine in its purported capacity as a remarkable, revolutionary idea, because for all the talk of self-reliance, it is well known that the country has been surviving off aid for quite some time now. Nor do I think it is anything grander or more profound than we could make it out to be, for example “a means of defining what is simultaneously modern and Korean...everything that makes Koreans Korean...really untranslatable”\textsuperscript{230} or “an emotion masquerading as an idea.”\textsuperscript{231} These interpretations limit our understanding of the machinations of North Korean politics and ideology by restricting us by default as “non-(North) Koreans.” They also cast the ideology into a certain haze of abstraction that is untouchable, and therefore, un-assessable \textit{to academia, which is ultimately self-defeating in purpose.} So rather than such points of view, I concur with the approach of scholar Dae Sook Suh. Suh exhibits a perspective on Juche inclusive of both its historical perspective and practical groundings. He remarks on a history of foreign dominance that gave birth to a desire for autonomy, and a cutting off of preferential Soviet treatment (in the mid-late 1960s), that forced Kim (albeit unsuccessfully) to grow an economic backbone essentially from the 1970s onwards.\textsuperscript{232} Juche’s strength lies not in the idea itself but in the process of its development,\textsuperscript{233} Suh also tells us. In this way, upon the advent of the 1970s with its increasingly closed off nature of society and economic dysfunction, most rationality in officialdom was discarded and ethnicity moved to the fore. A frank nationalism campaign could not be waged, but true to the regime, the ever present Juche had an inherent capability about it that was able to create and drive along something very much to that effect.

\textbf{b) Juche in manifestation}

Juche manifests itself abundantly in 1970s and 1980s North Korea. Han S. Park termed it a way of life; “a vocabulary that is inseparable from North Korean life.”\textsuperscript{234} He then

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\textsuperscript{230} Cumings (1997), p. 159
\textsuperscript{231} Cumings (1993), p. 223
\textsuperscript{232} Suh, p. 310
\textsuperscript{233} Ibid, p. 309
\textsuperscript{234} Park (2002), p. 75
\end{flushleft}
goes on to outline Juche in music, architecture, literature, sports, medicine and in other both banal and large ways. Agreeing with half of the premise of the above citation, this section will endeavour to explore the expressions of Juche as mask, or front, for ethnic instruction, acculturation and leisure. Again, Juche is officially broadcast in North Korea and abroad as “self-reliance” but a more detailed examination of it surfaces nationalism, chauvinism and increasing xenophobia. The following will delve into the aforementioned theatrical productions known as the ‘Immortal Classics,’ as well as a number of other forms of what is known as ‘Juche Art’. Both provide content and aesthetics relevant to Juche and the nation, and so bear significance in this section.

First of both, the ‘Immortal Classics’ is a group of five opera/theatrical works produced in the early 1970s that gained a degree of popularity and acclaim that some are still run to this day in form of film, drama, and literature. They are representative of the decade due to the height of artistic sophistication and ideological depth that North Korea had achieved by then, so came to be reflective of society at large in its most ideal way. The five titles and their basic plots proceed, to be followed by the stand out themes of these pieces most relevant to Juche and the nation.

The first, Pibada, or Sea of Blood (1971), tells the story colonial Korea. Set in a rural village in the North, the plot centres around main character, Mother, whose transformation from an ordinary housewife into a revolutionary hero is what forms the storyline. Her political awakening is the dramatic climax of the production and along the way it does its best to expose the atrocious conditions the Korean peasants suffered under the Japanese. The second, Kkotpaneun Chonyeo, or Flower Girl (1972), also set in colonial Korea, is the story of Kkotbun, a young girl who picks flowers and sells them at the market everyday to collect money for her sick mother. Her father is deceased, her sister is blind, and her brother is away in the army. After ceaseless harassment, she stages a struggle to depose the dreaded landlord and company, and emerges successful and liberated. The third, Dangui Chamdoel Ddal, or True Daughter of the Party (1971), “tells impressively of the heroic exploits of Nurse Kang Yon Ok, a woman fighter who devoted her youth and life without hesitation to the Party and the Leader and to the revolution during the Korean War against the U.S. imperialist armed aggressors.”

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235 Kim (2010), p. 223
236 Ibid, p. 116
is dedicated to the extent that she would extract her own blood and inject it into a dying patient in service, and willing at the cost of her own life to realise Kim Il Sung's teachings through such deeds.\textsuperscript{238} The forth, \textit{Oh, Tell the Forest!} or \textit{Millima Iyagihara} (1972), follows the story of Choe Byong Hun in his rather interesting predicament of being on the outside an official of some rank serving the Japanese colonial administration, but in truth, a loyalist of the Kim band whose cause lies in collecting intelligence from amongst the Japanese and supplying it back to the guerrilla camp. No one in his village, including his own daughter, knows his true identity, and this impossible situation causes conflict not only with his self-shamed daughter and potential in-laws, but also with himself as he struggles to achieve his split missions. The last, Song of Mount Kumgang, or \textit{Geumgangsanui Norae} (1973), deals with the story of a family who, separated during Japanese occupation, come to be reunited 20 years later in developed socialist Korea. The deed is indeed credited to Kim Il Sung and the leadership, and in the course of it, shows the spectacular transformation of the capital and the countryside from once stunted and derelict plains to now prosperous and joyful places in which to live and grow.

The five stories outlined above clearly resonate with the cause of the Korean nation accurately, no matter to what degree of non-fiction they were created. Main themes include: anti-Japanese colonialism, anti-American war crimes, anti-exploitation of the higher class toward the lower class, national autonomy, self-sacrifice, dedication, commitment, political loyalty, and eventual justice and liberation through struggle. All these descriptors sum up for the most part the modern history of Korea and its interpretation by the North Korean political establishment. Threading such themes through leisure and entertainment not only poises society and culture to emulate such idealism, but it also in turn buttresses the regime in its agenda due to the high political potency of the content of the productions. Strength of the party therefore equates to strength of the nation, and as performance scholar Suk-Young Kim affirms for us, “revolutionary operas were obsessed with defining the identity of the nation, to create a sense of unity.”\textsuperscript{239}

Yet again, it is socialism in form, nationalism in content. The unity of the nation, and the preserving of traditional and nationalist elements trumped socialism

\textsuperscript{238} Kim (2010), p. 189  
\textsuperscript{239} Ibid, p. 174
and internationalism. Another form of tradition that Suk-Young Kim informs us of in her research is in the depiction of females and joseonot (traditional Korean dress clothing). Most female protagonists in the productions wear the traditional clothing all the while their characters are progressive and revolutionary ones. To explain the conflict, Kim says “tradition, in this particular situation, is not regarded as remnants of the feudal past, but a rich reservoir where nationalism could be reinstated in the service of the new socialist state.” In this way, the blur in the line between the state and the ethnie is created and loyalty is pledged to the nation as represented by the state.

Another point to make in the exploration of these productions and nationalism is the construction of familial relationships, for example, in the self-explanatory titled “True Daughter of the Party.” It is known that Kim Il Sung is the father of the nation, the party is portrayed as the “mother party,” and that the people of the country are the children of that arrangement. Kim Suk-Young again provides fine insight with her observation in the following: “This circular love, exchanged between the father and his children, remains a political mechanism fostering – metaphorically speaking – collective incest, and reinforces the purity of political bloodline and loyalty gene pool.” Politics takes on literal familial dimensions, and as seen in Oh, Tell the Forest! characters undergo cognitive dissonance in negotiating their biological parental loyalties with their political parental loyalties.

In ending this discussion on theatre and cinematic productions, a last point to make is one that I yet again turn to Suk-Young Kim for. In the opening of her book, she makes the astute point that Kim Jong Il’s kidnapping of South Korean director and actress Shin Sang-Ok and Choe Eun-Hee in the mid-1970s for filmmaking accorded much more to his ethnic sentiments and tendencies rather than to his intellect in objective. She posits:

If all Kim Jong Il wanted was to innovate North Korean cinema and achieve international claim, he could have made exceptions by sending a few North Korean directors to the Western world to bring back advanced filmmaking technology or by inviting directors from Japan or other advanced countries to North Korea for a limited time. Instead, Kim Jong Il decided to choose South Koreans for reasons dictated not entirely by the aesthetics of filmmaking but by the ethnicities of the filmmakers. The fact that Shin and Choe were Koreans must have been a determining factor in Kim’s decision precisely for

240 Ibid, p. 236
241 Ibid, p. 156
the reason that Kim envisioned the couple functioning as a cultural buffer filtering and bringing in Western cinema through the disguised forms of Korean ethnicity.  

In this way, artistic productions of theatre and cinema, to the aspiration of the central government, could be seen as ultimately ethnic and national in intent. Plots were important, as were character personas and stage sets, but the underlying themes of national sovereignty and repute continued to embody the majority of revolutionary and hallmark Juche productions into the 1970s and beyond, as exemplified by the ‘Immortal Classics.’ In calling them Juche-style creations, the cultural office of the regime spearheaded by Kim Jong Il for all intents and purposes were putting together nationalist odes and epics, celebrating the ethnie and canonising it eternally in the socio-cultural consciousness of the nation.

To now address “Juche art”, a good place to start would be the front door of one of the biggest and most reputable art factories in North Korea, the Mansudae Art Studio. Upon walking through the gates and heading up to the building entrance, a considerably-sized decorative stone stands to the left and engraved in bold beautiful font is: *Juche-seong Minjok-seong*. This means “Juche-essence, Nation essence” and can basically be interpreted into comprehensible form as ‘the essence of Juche and the essence of the nation/ethnie are as one and of the same’. This sets the tone for the following section. The word ‘Juche’ and purported ‘Juche arts’ fill North Korea in all spheres, but yet again, evidence of self-reliance is scant, and impressions of nationalism, collectivism, ethnicity as represented by the regime, and related dogmatism surface. The following will explore Juche Art/Socialist Realism, street art, nature, collective performance art, and the ‘Seed Theory.’

North Korean art historian Jane Portal has termed North Korea’s Juche Art as basically its socialist realism.  

243 Originating from the Soviet Union, the convention of socialist realism seeks to portray artistically the everyday lives of workers in the socialist republic. Common imagery would be of industry and agriculture in progress, as well as the physicality of workers, both men and women, in the midst of engaging in such work. Strength and ingenuity of the people is a major theme in socialist realism,
and weaknesses or even truthful depictions of disabled or handicapped elements of society are non-represented. North Korea could very much be said to follow such typical rubric. Men are portrayed burly and happy on construction sites, and women, despite working under the sun in farms, are pictured plump and fair skinned, joyful at reaping the bumper harvest. Interesting to note about North Korean socialist realism, in contrast to that of the Soviet and Chinese, is the complete exclusion of content of a licentious or promiscuous nature. In the early to mid-1970s as China was experiencing its cultural revolution, and from then on as it opened up, a relaxation of staunch political ideals was noticed, with even scantily Western-style dressed popstars being shown in dance mode.244 Young girls were pictorially celebrated for their “smiles”245 and “sweethearts” walking down the aisle in full Western wedding attire too, are featured.246 Such imagery would be unthinkable in 1970s and 1980s North Korean Juche art, not only because it would distract the citizenry from their all important everyday work, but more maliciously because it would celebrate Western culture, undermining traditional and revolutionary Korean culture. North Korea crafted very well the balance of tradition and revolution in its Juche brand socialist realism art, and for this reason, reflected insularism and nationalism, and not self-reliance or internationalism.

Street art too, in North Korea is a dominant form of Juche art, so much so that the city of Pyongyang could be termed a living Juche exhibition. Examples of street art include murals and tile mosaics, grand monuments and the elaborate Pyongyang underground metro, as well as other various outdoor architecture, statues and signs. Wall paintings, both large and small, dot the city on prominent corners and large intersections, and depict most regularly imagery of the leaders and/or their corresponding flowers. Advertising is unheard of (with the one exception of one locally produced car Hwiparam) and the state, as the regulator of society and culture, sanctions all public works, usually commissioned to the Mansudae Art Studio. Monuments also, speak great volumes on Juche, and three prominent ones are the Arch of Triumph, the Grand People’s Study House, and of course the Juche Tower, all unveiled in 1982. The Arch of Triumph is, for all intents and purposes, a non-functioning concrete structure that commemorates the homecoming of Kim Il Sung to Korea after liberation from

244 Landsberger, p. 238
245 Ibid, p. 240
246 Ibid, p. 244
colonialism. It has inscribed on it not the Internationale or the song of the Republic, but the song of Kim Il Sung in celebration of his anti-Japanese pursuits in the 1920s and 1930s. The Grand People’s Study House, however much more useful in that it serves somewhat as a place of learning, combines traditional exterior architecture with modern interior functionality; an apt manifestation of a tendency on the part of the North Korean regime to adopt what they want of something and discard the rest. A selection of foreign books and tapes are housed in the library, but locals would be hard pressed to gain access to them, rendering the place not so much a grand house of learning in the free sense of the word, but more so a grand channel for further propaganda propagation. The Juche Tower, standing tall on the bank of the Taedong River, is said by Jane Portal to “reflect the efforts made in the 1970s and 1980s to establish Juche as a worldwide philosophy.”

Considering the failure of Kim’s Third World campaign, this should very much render the thing obsolete but indeed it is not. It still stands tall in the psyche of the North Korean people as a symbol of the grandeur and capability of the regime, and ultimately an object of awe and pride in the nation. In addition to the abovementioned art forms, it is here in the 1970s/1980s period that propaganda posters start to become a more prevalent and active presence on North Korean streets and in daily life. This will be treated in detail in future sections.

Turning to art historian Jane Portal again, she notes that from the 1970s onwards, Kim Jong Il permitted landscape and nature to be included in Juche art, and that it was, in his words, done to heighten national pride and confidence of the public in living in a socialist country. At least he was frank about it. Nature is indeed used as a powerful means by which to enhance the essence of the leadership and the country, but not as Kim says as the socialist one, but more accurately, the ethnic one. Nature’s evocative scale and beauty is channelled to strongly associate the Kims with its strength and timelessness, and many paintings illustrate this in the form of the two Kims in front of deep forests, raging waves, and/or high peaks. This is greatly reminiscent of Choson-era kings, officially canvassed with major natural elements such as mountains, the sun and moon behind them. A full discussion on nature will be reserved for chapter 5.

Collective performance art in contemporary North Korea is highly popularised by the outside world and by touring foreigners. One of, if not the biggest

247 Portal, p. 142
248 Ibid, p. 124
highlight for tourists to North Korea is a trip to the Arirang Festival, a mass games spectacular of performing children and students through dance, gymnastics, and synchronised coloured placards carried out in a large stadium. Again, based on old Soviet precedents, the North Koreans took to the convention with great zest, soon coming to make it uniquely their own, and with wide repute. A closer look into this seemingly harmless performance reveals rather more menacing aspects of it. Correlating to the ‘Juche art’ philosophy, content is thickly political. Regular content includes themes of anti-colonialism and anti-Americanism, and scenes often do show suffering that Koreans endured under those eras. Attire also, is indicative of a nationalist consciousness. Apart from children dressed as fun characters or objects, standard attire for women and men are respectively, joseonot (Korean traditional dress) and military uniform; women representing traditional Korean character and men representing modern Korean character, via their duty in national defence. Native martial arts is also featured, where boys are seen to engage in Taekwondo exercises wearing the customary white tunic and pants. It is not only imagery that constructs nationalism, but text does so as well, and quite unambiguously at that. Placard pixels routinely spell words of Korean unity and reunification, as well as the even somewhat xenophobic refrain of “Keep one’s foot firmly planted on the land (Korea), and one’s eye across the world.” The Arirang Festival is often viewed by its function to condition its sea of participants into conformity. In addition to noting that the North Koreans interpret dance as a performative outlet to express nationalism, Suk-Young Kim notes that this large scale performance is an “organising principle that connects the multitude to the single perspective through which the collective recognises itself as a coherent nation.” In this way, nationalist propaganda under the brand of Juche art is not only displayed in a passive sense, but also very much performed in an active sense.

The last manifestation of Juche art to be mentioned in this section will be the idea purportedly made up by Kim Jong Il himself, being the ‘Seed Theory’. Supplied by Jane Portal, the definition of the Seed Theory is: “a way of producing the ‘national form with socialist content’, or applying thought to practice...it is called ‘a thought kernel of life in which basic concepts are rooted’ and aims to unite subject and thought in an

249 Kim (2010), p. 290
250 Ibid, p. 293
The Seed Theory is said to have been discussed extensively in literary circles in 1980s North Korea, and again according to Portal, is accompanied by the 'Speed War'; “a state of heightened self-awareness, [where] devotion of all creative energy and passion is given to the work at hand, with a high degree of tension, concentration, strong organisation and order.” Such extended definitions on the one hand tell a lot but on the other tell very little. They construct sophisticated underpinnings and abstract philosophies to daily activities, but down to the crux of them, essentially push for greater immersion of artists into the political and ideological dogma, and an accelerated one at that. ‘Nationalist form with socialist content,’ as exemplified on various occasions thus far, in fact details the opposite, and the “organic way” too, bolsters the line that the Kim regime’s stance is in fact more primordial and ethnic than it is progressive and revolutionary. The Seed Theory, although not as publicised as Socialist Patriotism, seems to be just another sub-ideology; a new façade on an old idea, contextualised within Juche, and specifically directed at artists. Because after all, as Yeon-hong Choi remarks: “the seeds, in their classic works are class struggle, national liberation, permanent revolution, Kim Il Sung’s fight against the Japanese army and the U.S. army, and his victories” – in essence, as has been illustrated in many ways thus far, nationalism and not much else.

2. Minjokui Taeyang ‘Sun of the race’

Having detailed the significance of Juche in the previous section, it is now time to turn to the persona or personification of Juche, being precisely and solely Kim Il Sung. The rise of Juche and the rise of the Kim personality cult in the 1970s is indeed not a coincidental one, so for that reason the construction of Kim in propaganda is integral to understanding the full package that was the political ideology at the time. Kim existed in the physical environment, but he also existed in literary and artistic form. He was praised as he sat chairing large parades and processions, but he also was lauded in abstract quality and attribute. Little noticed in academia also, is the observation that the

251 Portal, p. 125
253 Portal, p. 125
newly and elongated celebration of Kim may have in fact been the catalyst for the drastic decrease in ideological hatred and cultural hostility of the Koreans towards their enemies seen so dominant in the decade of the 1960s. In the 1970s they had now something better to do; it was mass feel-good frenzy, a communal cathartic experience realigning the Koreans to more of the good things, and not all the bad things of the world (or of their world). Following will be an exploration of Kim’s existence in the 1970s and 1980s in the physical realm, as well as in the literary and artistic realm in relation to the nation.

a) Kim Il Sung in the physical environment

Kim stood tall in his physical world. His physique was outstanding in the rank and file of the average modest Korean build, with shoulders wide and stride, from a very early period on, resolute and unhalting. His charisma and self-regard no doubt contributed to the character he built for himself, and extending from that, the edifice that his aids and propaganda apparatus in turn built for him. Well known is the idea that his own son, Kim Jong Il, was his most avid supporter and promoter. Vying for succession rights in the 1970s with his opposition in the form of siblings, Kim Jong Il went about a grand and lavish campaign of flattery and enlargement of the repute and grandeur of Kim so that he may be chosen as heir. It worked, and indeed by 1980, Kim Jong Il was named successor. For those ten years of Kim Junior’s hard work, and the next ten that proceeded it, the physical presence of Kim would come to pervade the country in a way like no other dictatorship could rival.

First of all, a place of ritualised worship came to be established in the Kim birthplace home of Mangyongdae. Renewed and restored, this small group of huts came to put on display portraits of Kim and his elder family members, as well as the few modest farm and kitchen utensils they used as humble people. It was visited in the 1960s, but by the 1970s and throughout the 1980s and onwards it became a major shrine of worship, with queues reaching hundreds of metres on regular occasions with utmost reverence and attentiveness devoted to the spirituality of the place. Kim’s parents are allotted revolutionary status, and their religious backgrounds are conveniently discarded out of the narrative. Family members and background would
not usually be relevant in a so-called communist ideology, but in the case of 1970s
North Korea, family successions and heritages were evidently proving more and more
important and decisive.

Statues too, are patent in every way. The 20-metre bronze statue of Kim Il
Sung that stood atop Mansu Hill until 2012 was built in 1972 to commemorate his 60th
birthday. It was originally gilded in gold, but then later downgraded upon a certain
piece of advice from Mao. North Korean art historian Jane Portal tells us that by 1980, as
many as 500 bronze life-sized statues of Kim adorned the land.255 These were and are
still places where flower tributes are laid, where bowing is performed, and even where
wedding photos are taken. Nationally significant events are planned to revolve around
such focal points, and other similar statues, such as those made of stone, occupy the
entrances to important government or cultural buildings, as the International
Friendship Exhibition and so forth. The same goes for portraits of Kim. The official
likeness of Kim adorns most prominently the Square of Kim Il Sung in central
Pyongyang, as well most public buildings and all private homes. Portraits must be
maintained to the utmost degree and failure to do so represents a political crime.

Another interesting physical manifestation of Kim often found in North Korea
are engraved placards placed above doors that memorialise his visit or visits to that
location, with dates alongside. These sites come to be treated as hallowed premises, and
certain benches or tools that Kim sat on or used himself while there are typically
cordoned off or placed behind glass to be preserved and deeply appreciated. Naturally
these are places where “on-the-spot guidance” has been given, with words uttered from
such visits remembered and reproduced verbatim to tourists.

Lapel badges are another unmistakeable physical symbol of North Korea and
its devotion to Kim. Portal notes that they were first worn in 1972, to then be
completely in distribution by 1980.256 The 1970s is indeed when the convention
stabilised, enduring throughout the proceeding decades with what we know today as
not only the small thumb sized pin featuring Kim’s face in front of a red party flag, but
also a similar one of the joint Kim Il Sung-Kim Jong Il faced ones. Stamps, as Ross King
details in an article of his,257 as well as local currency banknotes, are other forms of

255 Portal, p. 82
256 Ibid, p. 80
257 King. Ross, Monuments Writ Small: Postage Stamps, Philatelic Iconography, and the Commercialisation
micro-manifestations of Kim in physical North Korea, but turning focus back to large
scale expression, there are still few more to mention.

Large scale street murals and art galleries form a major part of Kim in
material expression in North Korea. Once again being undertaken in earnest in this
period, major corners and intersections came to host large mosaics and paintings of Kim,
and often both Kims, at all stages of their lives. Kim Il Sung is seen atop Mangyong Hill
as a child, he is seen as a young man near the Arch of Triumph, he is seen as a middle
aged man in the various depictions of him in the underground metro transport system,
and he is seen as an elderly statesman in the vicinity of, and visible from the balcony of
the Grand People’s Study House. Street imagery, if not in form of likeness, often also
does come in floral form. Kimilsungia, the violet coloured orchid type flower gifted to
Kim, is also given its own public space, leaving none to guess what and who it
represents. Art galleries too, by nature as places of viewing and exhibition, endeavour
to display what is beautiful. In addition to other countless facilities that in part devote
adoration to Kim, his own former office building of Kumsusan Sun palace soon upon his
death came to be transformed into a personal museum and gallery of his life and times.
The experience culminates into the ultimate physical manifestation of Kim in North
Korea, being his preserved dead body lying in state for all to see.

Indeed the abovementioned examples ring clear and in concert; though dead,
Kim Il Sung is still present, and if not in living and breathing terms, then in spirit and in
omnipresence. To whatever degree Kim was or is loved, the extent of his perpetuation
in North Korea is no doubt excessive, wholly politically motivated and ill-intended.

The most patent reason is political legitimacy. Kim Il Sung is seen as the
legitimate founder of the country. He fought the Japanese and steered the country
through war, reconstruction and cultural renaissance, and was dearly loved by a great
deal of the population for most of North Korea’s existence. In the mid-1990s, he died
and with that, bequeathed a disastrous mess of economic stagnation, infrastructural
shambles, and miserable poverty and widespread starvation. His son and successor,
Kim Jong Il, became the face of such turmoil, and in addition to his lacklustre image and
reclusive tendencies, it is no wonder that the North Korean population came to
associate Kim Il Sung with the good times, and Kim Jong Il with the bad. Again, coupled
with Kim Jong Il’s reluctance or sheer inability to woo the people as Kim Senior did, he
heavily relied on his close proximity to his father to succeed by association. “The
Generalissimo [Kim Il Sung] and the General [Kim Jong Il] are the same person” is a common refrain used to bolster Kim Jong Il’s demure stature, and although nowhere near his father’s popularity as seen in the 1970s and 1980s, Kim Junior astutely navigated the turbulent years of his tenure and got away with his life in the end. Not only is Kim Il Sung technically ‘eternal president’ in the constitution, but politically, he is still central to the deeply embedded structure of power play amongst conflicting factions in North Korea. Kim I constructed a system tailored to himself and his biological descendants, and no amount of rational reform possible will detract from the fact that without him, North Korea would not today be the way as we know it.

Another reason observed is to function to regulate people not only politically, but also socially. North Korean performance scholar Suk-Young Kim in her book Illusive Utopia explains an interesting observation of hers whereby such public monuments as the Revolutionary Martyrs Cemetery exists in dual-purpose – not only to honour the dead, but to that same degree to discipline the living:

The most powerful virtue the stage and screen personas possessed was their determination to die willingly for the Party and their leaders. And if a glorious place like Revolutionary Martyrs Cemetery was what waited them, then it must be worthwhile to die willingly for the Party and the leaders. In this light, the cemetery’s objective is to discipline the living as much as it is to honour the dead.258

Although Kim Il Sung is not an actor in a movie, he is indeed the main protagonist of the nation; performed, displayed, watched, reproduced and emulated. His stage therefore, is essentially Pyongyang and North Korea, and he performs not of his banal self, but to a heavily constructed and ideally advertised image that is made to sell a certain state of political, ideological and social consciousness. People come to be caught up in the struggle of such unattainable glory, reminded of their own banality, but nonetheless are unrelenting in their desire to be worthy. Kim models this for them in his many micro and major physical manifestations, and even beyond death, still manages to do it successfully. Kim’s presence in the form of literature and arts too, is constructed effectively, so to there attention is now turned.

258 Kim (2010), p. 189
b) Kim Il Sung in the literary and artistic form

As exemplified in the physical form, Kim Il Sung's personality cult in North Korea was far reaching and pervasive at this time in the 1970s/1980s. A material expression of Kim would mean nothing however, if it was not rooted in a more conceptual context capable of reaching deeper into the minds of people. This is where the vast field of literature and arts proved invaluable. Indeed there were songs of Kim pre-1970s era, but the meaningful bulk of incredibly sensitive and heavily emotion-laden lyrics made their entrance in the 1970s. Previous pieces were generally military or basic in nature, not conjuring up elements and imagery of deep love, family, tradition, and most importantly, the nation. This section will endeavour to explore such notion – the essence of the Kim cult in regards to the nation, and in turn, its contribution to the wider prevailing political ideology of ethnic nationalism at the time, as per the argument of this thesis. Newspapers will be treated first, songs and poems next, and lastly, propaganda posters, all from the time and published in North Korea.

i) Newspapers

Newspapers carried the news of the day, or so it would seem. Collating a considerable list of headlines inclusive of both elements of Kim and the nation/ethnicity/people – some articles even quite sizable and on the front page of the 6-page newspaper – I soon came to realise that they were not news pieces, not news events, but sheer daily propaganda. Especially in the case of prominent page 1 editorials and large multi-page spreads, it quickly came to show how much North Korea was increasingly turning inward in scope, closing off from the outside world and focussing only on Kim; celebrating him and his extensive existence in North Korea’s past, present and future. Below is the list, a tiresome one indeed, but chosen to be presented in such a way to preserve authenticity of content in terms of chronological progression. Eighteen headlines steadily span the decade of the 1970s, and all translated (by me) to capture verbatim the expressions and sentiments of the original texts. (Dates are provided in-text for easy tracking – all from the daily Rodong Sinmun).
1970/2/4 (page 4) - Only when we the Korean nation rally around Premier Kim Il Sung will we be able to achieve national reunification.

1971/6/1 (page 4) - Premier Kim Il Sung is the great sun who holds utmost honour in our nation's history.

1971/9/5 (page 3) - If we do only as Premier Kim Il Sung suggests we will soon be able to achieve South-North reunification.

1972/1/24 (page 1) - Inside the Generalissimo's words, overflowing is his love for the nation and homeland.

1972/3/3 (page 2) - Kim Il Sung: "My heart is always with our Southern compatriots."

1972/3/14 (page 3) - Under the wise leadership of the great Generalissimo, we are one family, all brothers and sisters.

1973/1/20 (page 4) - Sun of the nation, general Kim Il Sung is the architect of reunification of the homeland.

1973/2/15 (page 1) - General Kim Il Sung is truly the leader of our all our brethren, and the sun of the nation.

1973/9/15 (page 3) - In that we have the great Generalissimo Kim Il Sung, the day of national reunification is surely soon coming.

1973/12/11 (pages 3-4) - Leader Kim Il Sung's National Treatise (Essentially a two page spread full essay written by a Japanese journalist including clippings from Kim Il Sung's works)

1975/2/5 (page 2) - The great Generalissimo comrade Kim Il Sung is the architect of our people's liberation.

1975/4/14 (page 5) - In so far as we have the great Generalissimo Kim Il Sung, the day of national reunification is surely soon coming.

1975/5/1 (page 6) - Let us live and fight upholding the sun of the nation general Kim Il Sung with loyalty!

1975/11/19 (page 5) - The only one who can reunify the divided nation is the sun of the nation, General Kim Il Sung.

1976/7/19 (page 1) - The Korean people who live and work upholding the fatherly leader as the sun of the nation are a happy people.
1977/7/19 (page 1) - Upholding as the sun of the nation the great leader Kim Il Sung, who is unprecedented in our national history, is the greatest glory and the greatest happiness.

1978/9/6 (page 3) - Because we have the parental Generalissimo, we have a glorious homeland.

1978/12/10 (page 4) - The future path of Korea that receives the wise leadership of the great Generalissimo comrade Kim Il Sung, is dazzlingly bright.

It is clear from the headlines that an intimate association of Kim to the nation and ethnicity is made. He is the most legitimate and perfect of sources to comment and profess on issues of the nation, and among them most evidently, on reunification. Doing what Kim says regarding reunification, rallying around him for that reason, trusting in him as the architect of reunification, and lastly his mere presence alone, all tell the North Korean people that reunification – such complex and colossal undertaking – can simply be achieved in that way, if you believe. Such rhetoric gradually moulds them into a fairytale-like state regarding reunification, stripping them of important rational details involved in the path of going about such endeavour. Indeed at least in the South at this time, discussions on reunification did include issues of economic disparity and political conflict. The North Korean apparatus paints reunification not as a viable option or realistic possibility for them in the future, but more so as an extension of, and flattery tool assigned to Kim. Because he is seen to love the nation in his characteristically magnanimous way, and can encompass not only the North, but also the Southern compatriots in his “heart”, he is interpreted to be able to perform such feat naturally. Reunification becomes increasingly mentioned and heightened in intensity because it is the one lingering open ethnic wound that the North Korean official narrative is so desperate to have resolved by Kim. It gradually becomes pressing, and with that, Kim’s stature is inflated to fit the match and deliver the fairytale ending from a current reality so far off the mark. Kim’s stature is heightened as visible in the headlines with his elevation from premier, to jusok (leader), to the more prominent wonsu (marshal), and then the very familial oboi (parental) title, and the promised destiny, once fulfilled, is built up to be completely utopian.

Time is also used by North Korean propaganda journalists to bolster Kim’s connection to the nation. He holds greatest honour in the nation’s history, he is
unprecedented in national history, he is the liberator of the people (from Japanese colonialism) and is the guarantor of reunification, with a path for future Korea dazzlingly bright. Kim in this way is situated not only in one static place in history, but across time, universal and undying. Whipping up the North Korean people into such mania of course is an effective method to distract them from their steadily degrading state of everyday economic affairs. Not so apparent in the 1970s, but undeniably from the 1980s, a culture of shortages of essentials becomes noticeable, so much so that the only distinct propaganda campaign that I could find in the body of data to allot to the 1980s was the "With 1980s speed" (palsibnyon sokdoro) campaign. In essence an economic shove campaign, this campaign is much like the 100 and 150-day speed battles; pushing for intense levels of productivity in limited amounts of time. Such crusades are indicators of dire economic straits, artificially injecting production into the system in short bursts, rather than steadily and reliably achieving economic improvement over time. Of course however, soon enough it no longer becomes about economics. Another reason for Kim’s personality cult to be heavily propagated in this way is to condition North Koreans emotionally. At this juncture, it is obvious that funds are no longer being prioritised towards the development of the state and the well being of the people, but instead to Kim’s personality cult and private life; elements of his tenure that come to justify his rule. In other words, it no longer becomes truly about the people’s standard of living and their future prospects, but instead about a perpetuation of elaborate myths and ideological pretences about the Koreans’ view of the world that they become trapped in. Such is the nature of Stockholm Syndrome, where hostages are completely reliant on their captors for life that they become utterly helpless to their whims, to the degree of forming an unhealthy emotional attachment to them, even love. North Koreans by the end of the 1980s have scant idea on how to live and possibly think and feel in any other way, being stripped of their rights to information, expression and emigration, now coming to “love” Kim Il Sung. Kim Il Sung and the nation so dearly and frequently propagated to them facilitates no stage in their emotional and cognitive development without him, allowing them not to create their own free modes of thinking themselves, but instead, likely leaving them in a struggle to negotiate emerging ones of their own, incessantly bombarded by the one prepared for them. In this way, ethnicity is the glue that binds all people together to the ideological cant, where they are unable to
relinquish their ethnicity, and so because of that, unable to relinquish their North Korean citizenship.

ii) Songs and Poems

Songs and poems take headlines to another level. Staying true to the same intent, such lyrical pieces ode Kim in ever more poised and pretty ways. Two songs and two prominent poems of the time will be explored and analysed for their significance in relation to Kim and the nation.

To start with the two songs, the first is *My beloved homeland is the embrace of the great leader*, and the second is *My homeland is the benevolent embrace of the great leader*, both from 1978. Lyrics are as follow.

*My beloved homeland is the embrace of the great leader*

There is an embrace that holds me  
It knows not snow and rain, and goes on and on  
Oh, my beloved homeland  
It is the boundlessly benevolent embrace of the great leader

My dear workplace is here  
Our bright hopes blossom here  
Oh, my country, a wonderful place to live  
It is the boundlessly benevolent embrace of the great leader

My homeland, with its warm sunlight  
Is a paradise where we envy nothing in the world  
Oh, my socialist country  
It is the boundlessly benevolent embrace of the great leader

*My homeland is the benevolent embrace of the great leader*

Why is the embrace of the motherly homeland that affectionate  
I did not know of any of this when I was a child jumping around  
My homeland that held me and raised me  
Is the benevolent embrace of the great leader

259 사랑하는 내 조국 수령님 품이여 (*My Beloved Homeland is the Embrace of the Great Leader*)  
How precious the land is that birthed and raised me
I came to know while dodging gunfire
No matter where I go my unforgettable and love-filled homeland
Is the benevolent embrace of the great leader

The further I go into the blue sky
I miss even in my dreams, my heart runs towards
My homeland, land of Juche shining over the whole world
Is the benevolent embrace of the great leader

Starting with the titles, they are both similarly, and in fact unequivocally equating the immense notion of the nation to the “embrace” of Kim Il Sung. Expression of a vast love is not questionable, but why in fact they chose the nation to characterise Kim’s love, and not the grandness of a mountain, or the height of the sky for example, speaks volumes of the deliberate strengthening ideology of nationalism at the time with Kim at its pivot. Content very much chimes titles. Images evoked are abstract and stirring, not negative in the slightest, and wholly uplifting – based on the beloved homeland, which of course is the embrace of the leader. The grasp of the warm embrace is not just an occasional occurrence, we come to know. The lyricist moves to shine this phenomenon through the everyday context of the workplace location. Figuratively, here is where hopes are made and dreams come true, but in actuality, it is where citizens are tied to their monotonous grind, serving the national economy that evermore is coming to resemble Kim’s personal family purse, and not their own. The nation is a paradise, always sunny, and never faulty in its socialist helm. This comes to be a plausible view of the world to the North Koreans, as by now, their access to information from not only around the world, but also on the original and seminal works on communism and socialism, is quashed completely.

In the second song in particular, the regime propagandist seeks to enhance or rather upgrade the construction of the nation and the embrace of the leader. By alluding to it as a concept that can only truly be grasped with maturity of age, the song functions to substantiate the depth and profundity of the emotional construction of the nation, which yet again, is intimately connected to Kim. Also, much like the mentioning of the workplace, the inclusion of the element of military service contributes to deifying the

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260 내 조국은은혜로운 수령님 품이라오 (My Homeland is the Benevolent Embrace of the Great Leader)
North’s nationalist agenda of national defence at all costs. Extrapolating from these two songs, studiously attending the daily workplace and sacrificing oneself for military service equates to the notion of the beloved nation, which reveals itself to be the embrace of the leader. This way, not only is Kim an embodiment of the nation in news they consciously read, but also subconsciously in the songs they sing.

To turn attention now to poems, the two that have been chosen are *My Homeland*, by Kim Sang Oh in 1979, possibly one of the best known poems of the time, as well as the similar *Soil of the Homeland*, written by Heo Nam Gi in earliest known date of 1980. To start with *My Homeland*, it is a 21 stanza poem rhyming of the beauty of the homeland. Sentiment is deep much like the above songs, with the homeland being a profound notion captured dearly in the heart of the poet. Imagery of the nation is conjured via the small hometown and village home, the young girls’ laughter and the baby cows feeding on the hill, as well as the journey that the homeland has lived up until then. Its poor past is lamented, yet its preciousness, even in the figurative one handful of earth, is treasured and vowed never to be turned back upon. Never say you love the homeland, the poet emotively urges, until you have given it your heart. The poem then ends in the 20th and 21st stanzas in the following way:

That’s right, the homeland is,
Our lives that the Great Leader found for us
Our dignity that the Great Leader embraced for us
Everlasting, everlasting, his embrace.

Oh, how it is that embrace!
Oh, homeland, oh, my homeland.261

*Soil of the Homeland* is a 10 stanza poem, similar in nature to *My Homeland*, but more simply emotionally expressive. The poet starts off by exclaiming his sheer love for the land. The soil of the homeland, alone, is worthy of high adulation. He then steps into the darkness of the old days, when he and his people grudgingly had to leave their beloved land due to the difficult political circumstance. No, it wasn’t turning their back on it, but accepting reality and seeing its lifelessness. Then the Great Leader came and

liberated the land, found it again for them and how very much more it became perfect again. The last two stanzas end in the following way:

From here, 1000 miles to the South,  
In dark clouds, in the trembling failures, 
This sentiment, this happiness 
That the Great Leader wants to share  
Let us wish for his good health  
Let us bid for his good health, and bid again.

Oh, the Korean people’s Benevolent parental figure, 
It is Marshal Kim Il Sung!²⁶²

The most dominant point that needs to be made in regards to these two poems is a point that they more or less have in common, which is, the majority of the poems construct themselves centred around the profound importance of the homeland, creating emotive images of quaint home town villages and pride of soil, but then in ending, they essentially cap off the poem with the main point in question, which is, incidentally, Kim Il Sung and his personality worship. It is as if the entirety of the poems are being built up in height to then bestow that magnificence on none other than Kim. Such shows the by now very strong alignment of Kim with the ideals of the nation, associating elements very real to the Korean people of their homes and history, to the now new and contrived phenomenon of Kim and his own existence. A reinvention of history in relation to Kim and the nation is no doubt in progress, with prose of this nature indeed being a contributing force to its entrenchment at this time.

iii) Posters

Refuting the statement that “posters never portray the leaders” by very well placed Korea specialist Koen De Ceuster in the indeed widely known publication of the David Heather collection of North Korean posters published in 2008,²⁶³ I did not have to try

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²⁶² Found in Choson Munhak 1980. 4, p. 50 and Choson Munhak 1975. 8 p. 5 (My Translation)  
²⁶³ Heather, and De Ceuster, 2008. North Korean Posters: The David Heather Collection, p. 15. In addition to this, author of Art in Control in North Korea, Jane Portal, also says in her book on p. 87 rather less (cont →)
very hard at all to find not only one odd, but in fact numerous posters featuring Kim Il Sung in the history of North Korean posters. Not only did they depict Kim in an “omnipresent” or “subliminal” way as De Ceuster suggests, but in fact they also featured him in lucid, and indeed very physical forms, being imbued in typical propagandistic bodily contortions like any other protagonist in regular North Korean posters. To my knowledge, these have never been treated in the literature, so in this section, not only do I intend to give such important data light of day and correct such tacit myth that the leaders are too sacrosanct for posters, but I also intend to further substantiate the claim that Kim’s personality cult at this time in the 1970s/1980s was developing rapidly and intimately in tandem with the ideology of nationalism and the nation.

Among the six to be discussed, all are centred on Kim, and all have indirect if not direct references to the nation. All portray him at his stage of middle age in life, which corresponds to the economic peak North Korea experienced in the era of the early to mid-1970s. It is no coincidence therefore, that Kim is pictured in association with many indicators of national economic prosperity, alluded to as the mastermind of it all. His personal demeanour is also one that incites much discussion, so in addition to the national economic factor mentioned above, Kim’s personal depiction in the posters will also be explored.

To briefly perform a rundown of the six posters in question, the first is an agricultural themed affair. Kim stands centre left of the poster in front of the background of a vast farm with a group of about eight female farmers and male farm technicians. He wears a sleek coat and hat, and holds in his hand a large outlined map. The caption below reads: “Let us thoroughly carry through with “The Thesis on the Question of Our Nation’s Socialist Agriculture”!”

In the second, Kim forms the dominant figure standing in the background of more than eight people of all sectors of society; a welder, a technician, an architect, a soldier, a female farmer, etc. He has a slight grin on his face, and his arm is widely outstretched to the left hand side distance. Flags of the three revolutions flank the sides and the caption below reads: “March in full force forward for the complete victory of socialism”.

In the third, Kim’s broad smile headlines the poster, being surrounded by upstanding members of society including

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concretely than De Cuester, that “Posters usually portray workers or soldiers rather than Kim himself, but they often feature his words or display exhortations...”

264 Choson Misul Nyongam (Korean Art Yearbook), 1989
265 Ibid
See footnote 264 for citation

See footnote 265 for citation
See footnote 266 for citation

See footnote 267 for citation
distinguished veteran military personnel and highly decorated female figures dressed in traditional Korean clothing, with bright-eyed children carrying flowers. Scenes of celebration serve as his backdrop and the caption below extols: “Long live our Juche homeland!”.

The forth poster features Kim alone in presence, with again, his broad toothy smile. He dons a sharp Western-style gray suit and blue tie, holding a pencil in one hand and a rolled out design map in the other, backgrounded by scenes of a grand hydroelectric plant in construction. The caption below reads: “Let us march in full force in accordance to the grand plan of the great leader!”

The fifth is very interesting in that Kim features not in his usually stately demeanour, but in fact as any other propaganda protagonist would; overcome by a state of urgency and imbued in the physical contortion of arm outstretched and finger pointed, with face solidly fixed in strong will and determination. He is surrounded by a plethora of people of similar resolve, and the caption below reads: “Let us march forward in accordance to the call of the great leader!”

The last again features Kim alone, this time viewed from a low angle giving off a tall imposing view of himself. He is once again his stately figure, holding a pencil in one hand and a large map in the other, gazing out into the future to come. He has sun rays emanating from behind him and throngs of people in the far background, with the caption below simply saying: “Long live the great leader, comrade Kim Il Sung”.

From the above descriptions, it is clear that Kim is very much present in propaganda posters. He is indeed the main feature of all posters he presides in, and extolled to a highly distinguished degree, but clearly not too sacrosanct to appear in them as De Ceuster alludes to in the aforementioned publication. In addition to his presence being a fixture in posters, Kim’s appearances are in fact concerted and regular in theme. Of course the machine of his personality cult is being oiled, but he is consistently being attached to the nation. The glory of the Juche homeland, its agricultural and industrial successes, the happiness of the people, and the bright future embodied in the children and the future piercing gazes are all strong messages being conveyed in the posters. It is difficult to speculate on why the North Korean propaganda apparatus chose to include Kim in these posters, and even more problematic to know

266 Choson Yesul (Korean Art), 1989. 9
267 Choson Yesul (Korean Art), 1988. 4 p. 5
268 Ibid, 1984. 10
269 Ibid, 1988. 9

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whether they were publically displayed on the streets of Pyongyang at the time, but the regime has certainly stayed faithful to the convention of presenting Kim in them in his seat of national prestige. He is physically prominent and impressive, his attire and personal appearance is always impeccably groomed, and he seems to seamlessly combine intellect and wit (as seen via such props as his spectacles and the oft wielded pencil/mast/map) with allure and magnetism (as seen in his strong personal presence and wide smile). His nation’s people illustrated rallying around and behind him speaks more of his “sun-like” position in the North Korean constellation, and the literal rays of light that are beamed from his back also, set up his aura in a subtle yet effective fashion as pivot of the nation. Propaganda posters have always been one of the core traditional socialist forms of ideological agitation, and although Kim in his real life representation proves more stirring, the instigators of these posters would have in high probability seen the value of using Kim in his illustrated form to further their drive of extolling the nation and extolling him with it.

Perhaps an apt quotation to end this section on the nation as the native land of ethnic apex figure Kim would be with one that encompasses an angle of what has been explored thus far. Ingeborg Gothel, in describing the 1960s, but still relevant to the 1970s and 1980s, writes that “the personality cult had a deleterious effect on the national identity, since national identity is, in the long run, impossible to maintain without a consolidation of everybody’s own identity and dignity, something which the personality cult serves to undermine.”270 Kim’s personality indeed may have eroded any authentic national identity that would have existed in the people independent of him, but from the seed of that, it served to create a whole new one. The 1990s are emblematic of this. It became a heightened politico-ethnic identity of ancient hallowed beginnings, of richness in blood, and of glorious of destinies. To this we shall now turn.

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1990s onwards: Nation as land of the promised race

1. *Uriminjok jeiljuui* ‘Korea as Number One-ism’

Having traversed the 1970s and 1980s with their focus on Juche and personality cult of Kim, it is time that the 1990s dawn. Continuing in the same inevitably disastrous trajectory, the 1990s is a time when a lot of the aforementioned built up dysfunction would come to reek its havoc. This decade is defined by a number of things: the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the death of Kim Il Sung, the rise of Kim Jong Il, terrible natural disaster in the form of floods and droughts, a famine that decimated anywhere from hundreds of thousands to millions, and amongst all of that, an unprecedented and equally vigorous intensification of nationalist political ideology and propaganda on the heads of the common people. No longer did the ideal to merely love the nation suffice, but in the 1990s, nothing short of ethnic fanaticism was being demanded to meet the mark. Having said this, in the following section I will go on to treat the decade of the 1990s for the few most defining and prevailing ideological campaigns that it gave birth to, being the line of “Korean-nation-as-best-ideology” known in Korean as *Choson minjok jeiljuui*, as well as the resurgence of the legend of Dangun, mythical progenitor of the Korean people. Bearing significant resemblance to the ethnic supremacist line displayed in the Imperial Japanese Yamato line, a discussion of this in comparison to *Choson minjok jeiljuui* will also be made in ending.

a) Kim Jong Il Texts: construction and theory

Briefly said, *Choson minjok jeiljuui* is the integrity and pride of the greatness of the Korean nation, as well as having the consciousness and will to go out and widely glorify that even more so as the precious ideological emotion that it is.271

The above quotation is the most often cited basic official definition of *Choson minjok jeiljuui* (Korean-nation-as-best ideology). It is provided in opening to set the tone for what lays ahead. To track its evolution in North Korea’s ideological history however, it

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271 Kim (2003), p. 1 (My Translation)
was first mentioned in name in a speech given by Kim Jong Il to party cadres in July 1986 called “On Some Problems on the Instruction of the Juche Ideology”. It was not until three years later then, in September 1989 that the first book exclusively dedicated to the topic titled *Uri Minjok Jeiljuuiron* or *The Theory of Our Nation as Best Ideology*, was published. Penned by Ko Young Hwan, this volume provides us with the original construction of the idea. A few months subsequent to that seen the next seminal speech on the idea by Kim Jong Il, in a speech given to central committee party members entitled “Let us Highly Cultivate the Korean Nation as Best Idea Mindset” on December 28. News articles in between continued to pull the cause, until in July 2003, Kim Jong Il’s own rendition of the idea was put together and published in a title called *General Kim Jong Il’s Theory of the Korea Nation as Best Ideology*. Written by Kim Hyun Hwan, he is a North Korean philosophy doctorate living in America running North Korean expatriate associations of an ideological nature. The inner jacket of the book mentions that Kim penned the work and sent it to North Korea, having been published thereafter unaltered.

The idea of *Choson minjok jeiljuui* seen its manifestation in daily life and culture in the years of the 1990s, however originating in theory in the late 1980s. Many articles in the 2000s furthered the cause, but nothing seminal on the idea has been known to be published in book or speech form since the 2003 book. In approaching this section, the two aforementioned books, as well as the December 28, 1989 speech will be synthesised and analysed for their worth in critically viewing this idea. Before initiating this however, a few words on the significance of these texts is called for. These texts are significant because they deal directly with the sub-ideology itself, clarifying its origins in time and explicating its tenets in manifesto-form, and not in arbitrary slogan form in North Korean propaganda dispersed throughout the decades. As much as is possible, these texts provide the field with an unrivalled coherence on the Korean-nation-as-best idea, allowing for a proper treatment of it, for a contextualisation of it in the 1990s, and for a tracking of its rise and demise in time. Additionally, what it does provide is a clear and documented backdrop in the case that this idea recurs in the future (as was the case with ‘socialist patriotism’; being first noted in this thesis in the 1960s and then retraced in the mid-2000s).

Now on to the two books in question. Both follow basically the same format and content, going over chapters on clarifying the meaning of the nation, as well as elaborating in extended discussions on the main topic of the Korean-nation-as-best
ideology. Each book ties in elements of socialism and the oft trumpeted revolution with the mostly nationalist content, but the second book, published in 2003 as opposed to the former in 1989, is patently more politically dogmatic in fashion and Kim family cult intensive. It is also more fanatical in that it now includes in the Choson minjok jeiljuui definition the sub-ideologies of "Our Great Leader is Best", "Juche Idea is Best", "Korean People’s Army is Best", and "Juche Socialism is Best". Leaving the point that fourteen years clearly ‘ripened’, or rather exaggerated the original idea, points that have remained the same warrant scrutiny. These include: (ethno-)national consciousness (minjokjok jakak), (ethno-)national will (minjokjok uiji), (ethno-)national pride (minjokjok jabusim), (ethno-)national self regard (minjokjok jajonsim), (ethno-)national mindset cultivation (minjok uisik baljon), and the so-called rejection of national nihilism and exclusivism (minjokheomujuuiwa minjokbaetajuuiui baegyok). These discussions provide insight into the core elements of the idea behind the Choson minjok jeiljuui Korean-nation-as-best slogan, however self-explanatory and one-dimensional it may seem.

National consciousness, by way of summary and as exemplified in the opening quotation, is the obligation of the Korean individual to recognise the gravity and significance of such identity, and be worthy of it by exercising the will to extend its fame or legacy widely. One must also have the will to ‘pioneer’ the nation’s destiny as a single unit of that collective. Another essential clause in the idea is to know how to hold the nation in utmost precious regard, so this alludes to an unspoken responsibility on the part of the individual to not be reckless in any way lest they waste such gift. This then ties in to national pride and self regard. The uniqueness and magnitude of the Korean identity is interpreted to naturally inspire a national pride and high self regard, so to remain just to that order, the national mindset should perpetually be cultivated throughout the generations with proper ideological education. The last point the North Koreans assure their people is that their nation-as-best-ideology is neither nihilist nor exclusive. Non-nihilist, in that they acknowledge the elements of value that do exist in their predominantly feudal past and so do not discard them, and non-exclusive in that their ideology is touted to be not racist, or not exclusive on the premise of ethnicity/nationality.

Having summarised North Korea’s enduring elements of Choson minjok jeiljuui, harsh critique surfaces. When assessing such highly contrived yet wholly
simplistic cant, the ideology does appear to be racist and exclusive, first in that it advocates for an ethnic supremacist line, and second in that it pushes a deceiving ‘first among equals’ principle in viewing the world. Kim Jong Il stresses that he devised this idea for the construction of the revolution but in the same breath he says that the condition of achieving this is to love the country.\textsuperscript{272} Again, as evidenced by this, the propaganda apparatus still seems to be buoying its ‘socialist in form, nationalist in content’ approach. As alluded to in relation to national will above, Kim also says that the individual must be the creator of their own destiny, but then in the next clause of the same quotation slyly merges this with the destiny of the nation, making them indistinguishable. The reason, we soon come to learn, is that the necessity for achieving one’s personal destiny is dependent on one beforehand cherishing national pride and high self regard.\textsuperscript{273} Prose of this nature is both typical and tiresome in attempting to comprehend North Korean ideological tracts, as in the search for genuine points of substance one seems to only encounter continued roundabout and repetitive tokenistic sentences about the nation, national consciousness and destiny. This bears great resemblance to the preceding discussions on Juche, where swathes of text could very much be whittled down to a few lines of which in themselves clearly function to solely brainwash people. Complex ideological utterances that in substance are nothing but meaningless clichés are hard to be deciphered by thoroughly conditioned minds, and this unfortunately is what the regime continues to benefit from to a great degree.

Intent on thoroughly scrutinising Kim Jong Il’s seminal words however, on a few occasions in the books he makes the point that nations with low pride and self regard are weak and easily defeated.\textsuperscript{274} He essentially stresses that Korea arm itself firm with pride and self regard so that they are not left vulnerable to foreign invasion and takeover as did happen in the past. This too, follows the traditional pattern of propaganda, whereby a threat is created and soon nullified by way of adhering to the political line the piece is pushing. National pride and self regard in this case function not as the positive and harmless sentiments that they generally should be, but more so as chauvinist shields, previously penetrated and scarred yet sternly intent on prevailing via extreme fortification measures. Moving along, Kim stresses that his idea is not exclusive, not nationality based, and not supremacist in any kind, but the sheer amount

\textsuperscript{272} Ibid, p. 85
\textsuperscript{273} Ko, p. 67
\textsuperscript{274} Ibid, p. 73
of content and repetition on the nation, or the *minjok*, filling pages inevitably leads one into a trance-like cycle of familiar key words ordered and reordered in countless sentences. All nations are equal in the world, Kim is celebrated to have said, but the manifold adjectives\textsuperscript{275} showered on the Korean nation and none other yet again cannot help but give the reader pause to reassess.

The last point I would like to explore before turning to Kim’s speech of December 1989, is the notion of the “ideological emotion”, one that was mentioned in the opening quote, one that was spoken about in chapter 2 in relation to Kim Jong Il’s other seminal texts on nationalism, and one that holds great importance to this study. This by no means is a one-off or rare mentioning, but rather a commonplace addition to all ideological writings of this nature around this time in the 1990s. To treat it literally, the fact that it is an ‘ideological’ and an ‘emotion’ has the possibility to solicit puzzled expressions. To most, ‘ideology’ would be a rational system of socio-political organisation, whereas ‘emotion’ would be a non-rational impulse or feeling. To the North Koreans however, these two contrasting notions appear commonly as partners in what could be termed ‘artificial harmony’. The reason I say artificial, is related to the larger claim that this thesis makes. By underpinning its political ideology with an effectively manufactured emotional base of ethnic nationalism, the regime is granted unprecedented sway in manipulating, and hence in achieving its goals. This is opposed to a conventional government that uses the principle of free election, whereby citizens are able to rationally evaluate a range of administrations for themselves and cast their vote -something inconceivable in North Korea. The “ideological emotion” that North Korea is espousing therefore, is again, nothing but race based nationalism dressed in the garb of socialism and/or the revolution, but at heart is one that campaigns for the exclusive interests of the nation. Again, not unlike North Korea’s joint-use of socialism and nationalism as explicated in chapter 2, ‘ideology’ and ‘emotion’ are by definition, antonyms of each other, yet used by North Korea complementarily and in tandem for added effect in the tailor-making of an ideological apparatus completely congruent with their political agenda.

The 1989 speech of Kim Jong Il covers much of the content discussed above so here, other points of distinction shall be raised. Unlike the two books explored above, \textsuperscript{275} Such adjectives include: standing up to the foreigners and fighting bravely, not knowing laziness, treasures national solidarity like the pupil of ones eye, intelligent and inspirational nation, endowed with creative ability, outstanding and distinguished: Ko, p. 80, and Kim (2003), p. 54.
the speech provides a more textured expression of the ideology, even going slightly behind the ideology, uncovering the perspective not just of a passive reader, but of a party cadre who is expected to implement the idea and propagate it in their everyday activity with the grassroots people. The points that will be discussed in relation to the speech will be its strong lenience to historically basing the idea of Choson minjok jeiljuui, and the second is its few notes to propagandists and educators of the idea.

Apart from the general mentioning to stay armed lest the country befall foreign invasion as in the past, the speech, very soon into it, goes into detail on the historical inspiration of its inception. The atrocity of the Japanese occupation (1910-1945) was not strong enough to destroy the essence of the Korean nation (minjoksong), and the Korean War (1950-1953), no matter how murderous it was, was still no match for the Koreans who fought the enemy bravely to historic proportion. For this last reason alone, Kim unequivocally says, “we can honourably pride our Korean nation as the best”.276 How this was possible then, can easily be ascertained from an excerpt two paragraphs prior, indeed very much along the lines of the ethnic nationalism thus far so profuse:

Our people’s unique (ethno-)national integrity and pride formed from a long time ago. Indeed, from the dawn of humanity, our nation created a wonderful culture. From the beginning, our people were of one blood, shared the one language and culture, and were a homogeneous nation living on one land. We also are an intelligent nation of an unbroken 5,000 year history, and one that has a superior culture and tradition. Our people, through their own industrious creative activities, have invented wonderful material cultural riches, all the while claiming their destiny and retaining their intelligence and abilities as a nation.277

The second point is a type of prose not seen in the propaganda books, and generally not in any style of propaganda intended for average consumption. Kim Jong Il in this party central committee meeting appeals to party members and propagandists alike on the creation of such important pieces, saying that they should be “diverse”, “meaningful”, “persuasive” and “able to move people’s emotions.”278 This is understandable, indeed, the case that has been made throughout this chapter, but Kim

276 Kim (1989) (My Translation)
277 Ibid
278 Ibid
does not stop there. Soon in to the speech, Kim speaks more to his army of ideological instigators, educating them with tips on how to pull off the perfect propaganda coup:

Party officials and propagandists should not just give one or two seminars or study sessions on the nation-as-best ideology, but instead, must include all content and forms of such ideological instruction work in order to properly execute the task at hand. Also, do not just simply recite the ‘nation is best’ motto, but rather, with a more lively approach, awaken with logic so that workers and other party members alike feel deeply that our nation is best. We must do that so they will be compelled to fight to make known the honour and glory of our nation widely…However, if we go about indiscriminately saying that all is best, not only will people not come to believe, but the sincerity of our propaganda will incite serious doubt. In that case, the work of propaganda would in fact leave us with the opposite effect of what we intend…Propagandists must not exaggerate, nor completely turn their backs on the reality they see. They must sincerely attend to their nation-as-best ideology instruction, so that workers and party members alike may assume a deep (ethno-)national integrity and pride, and go out, making widely known our nation.279

Not groundbreaking, but still valuable, such insider’s perspective gives us the understanding that the regime, in all its ethnonational fervour, is still very much a rational actor wielding its tool (ideology) of choice to achieve its agenda of maintaining a wholly subscribed populace. For all the unbounded love for the homeland and the leader, they show great skill in negotiating the fine lines of nuanced and effective propaganda; material that neither flies too high nor too low over its people, and always manages to strike that right balance of content and intensity custom made to political ideology/agenda of the day, and social fabric of the time. Judging that social unity was at its lowest due to economic shambles and porous borders in the 1990s, the regime clearly sought the likes of the Korean-nation-as-best ideology to keep afloat its teetering ship, and indeed arguably, to much success. Initiating the topic of North Korean society nonetheless, texts of the abovementioned nature were not all that were transporting around Choson minjok jeiljuui. Music and their corresponding lyrics and music videos were another integral conduit of the idea, so to there attention is now turned.

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279 Ibid; emphasis added in *italics*. 

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b) Prominent songs: lyric and imagery

Music has always been an important component in North Korean culture, not only for its immense propagandistic value to the regime, but also for the joy it gives to the people. Koreans both North and South enjoy dynamic and colourful popular music industries, and although starkly different, are still placed in that same way as integral elements and agents of social recreation and leisure. Leisurely however, is far from an accurate descriptor when attempting to assess the following selection of songs.

Continuing on with the current state of North Korean society in the thick of the aftermath of the collapse of the USSR, as well as within dismal economic conditions hitherto never seen before, the regime interestingly turned to producing songs of an upbeat and very proud nature. This stimuli certainly could have been intended to divert people from their hardships, entertaining them with bright pictures and sounds, and in turn, allow the regime to uphold its agenda of retaining power uncontested. Three songs in particular will be explored in this section, and their lyrics and music video imagery will be treated.

The first is a song perhaps the most perfect embodiment of the Korean-nation-as-best ideology, so much so that the title of it assumes part of the name of the ideology: *Our Nation is Best (Uri minjok je’il’ilse)*. Released in 1993, this song is a historically based account of why the Korean nation is best. Lyrics follow.

With a five-thousand year history and culture  
We are a civilized nation with a bright etiquette  
Let us be proud of our nation, Let us love our land  
Search the world though you may, our nation is best

We are a country that values as best our own way  
A nation that is intelligent and dauntless  
Let us be proud of our nation, Let us love our land  
Search the world though you may, our nation is best

We are a nation with sun and starts shining bright  
Going out to show to the whole world our prestige  
Let us be proud of our nation, Let us love our land  
Search the world though you may, our nation is best

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(Our Nation is Best, 1993) Accessible:  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dOxsqEDkJJE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dOxsqEDkJJE) (My Translation)
From the lyrics above it is clear that modesty too, however, does not characterise the (North) Korean nation, as it does in the South. Starting off with a five thousand year history and culture, the North Koreans from the outset stamp their claim as an ancient and deeply embedded civilization on the face of the planet. They say not that their civilized and high etiquette ways have been allowed to evolve and refine over such long period of time, but rather allude to the notion that from the very beginning they were brilliantly and legitimately so. The chorus, which is the last two lines of each verse, too, conceals little in expressing the Korean-nation-as-best-ideology. National pride and love of the land are being exalted, and not in an unassuming way, but more so at the expense of every other nation in the world, as any attempt to find a nation as wonderful as Korea would be futile. Continuing on to the second verse, the North Koreans let up even less in proceeding to describe themselves. Intelligent and dauntless whether true or not, speaks of a fanciful or rather conceited view of themselves, and “we are a country that values as best our own way” speaks loudly of a certain insularism on the part of the North Koreans who are unwilling to interact or be conscious of the fact that other countries as meaningful as Korea (and every other) do exist too. The sun and stars opening the third verse may be indirect references to Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il, or may just simply be added elements of brilliance allotted to the Koreans, but the next line then removes any ambiguity, once again reiterating that in the world, the Koreans are outstanding. The chorus again rounds off the song, recapping the idea that the Korean nation is the best.

Although not militaristically supremacist, the above lyrics indeed exhibit signs and a general atmosphere of cultural supremacy, very much in line with the Korean-nation-as-best ideology. There are two music videos in public access for Our Nation is Best, an old version and a new version. They are both for all intents and purposes the same thing utilising the same imagery and the same sequence of content, but the newer one, perhaps with more advanced technology, is better put together. This one will be referred to. The music video opens with imagery of the tomb of Dangun, mythical progenitor of the Korean nation who holds high significance to this topic. The last quarter of this chapter is dedicated to Dangun, so there is to be found proper discussion. An historic Buddhist temple and pagoda is then featured, along with other

281 Old version: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=URRR3tUQqlM
New version: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dOxsqEDkJJE
olden remaining relics, panned from one side to another. A scene of the staging of an unclear type of historic procession then is seen, where men dressed in medieval military uniform march first and then women in traditional dress playing the traditional drum follow behind. A series of imagery of other traditional festivities including wrestling, swinging, see-sawing, stick game playing, tug-of-war, and samulnori instrument playing and head streamer dancing is shown. Amongst all this, customary autumn landscape so often seen in traditional Korean paintings is also featured. All of the above elements of description clearly explicate that alongside the lyrics of national superiority, the North Koreans are substantiating them with history and tradition. It is also important to mention of course that the sounds and tune of the song are very much folk, harmonising completely with the lyric and imagery. The last thirty seconds of the video then leaves one to pause for thought. Seemingly out of nowhere, a still of modern Pyongyang then appears, framing perfectly the Juche tower on a bright clear day, flanked by the city skyline glowing of modernity. This still remains for about ten seconds, until a slow panorama is then shot, across the Taedong River and along the majestic Pyongyang skyline, ending with a zoom into the new Changjon Street apartments. This to me is indeed the endgame of the piece, in typical official North Korean fashion, using whatever historical and cultural capital it has not to ultimately celebrate that for itself, but to allot it to the regime, thereby legitimising it in the hallowed name of the nation.

The second song, *My Country is Best (Nae nara jeillo joa)*,282 by title alone, insinuates much of what was said above in relation to *Our Nation is Best*, and one would not be blamed for thinking so. Released in 1991, this song takes a more generalist approach to substantiating that the country of Korea is best, intertwining both tradition and modernity.

Lalala~
The country I live in is best
Even a flower blooming on the plain of another country
Is not as pretty as a flower of my country
Even if you look around, to the wide wide world
The country I live in is best

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282 내 나라 제일로 좋아 (My Country is Best, 1991) Accessible: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bPqRJ6NVHUo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bPqRJ6NVHUo) (My Translation)
Lalala~
The country I live in is best
Even a cup poured by a (foreign) friend
Is not as sweet as the stream from my hometown
Even if you look around, to the wide wide world
The country I live in is best

Lalala~
The country I live in is best
When it comes to song, I like the tune Arirang
Even from afar away I sang it aloud with heart
Even if you look around, to the wide wide world
The country I live in is best

Lalala~
The country I live in is best
Sun and stars shining, this is a bright and loving place
When it embraced me yet again, I offered a bow
Even if you look around, to the wide wide world
The country I live in is best

Lalala~
Lalala~
Lalala~
The country I live in is best
Is best\textsuperscript{283}

To start with the chorus and bridge of the song, parts that are repeated in
every verse, we look to the first, and forth and fifth lines: “The country I live in is best,
Even if you look around, to the wide wide world, The country I live in is best.”
Representative of the whole song, these two lines effectively communicate to the North
Korean people that their country is best and that they need not even look to any others
because such attempt would be useless. As in the previous song, the same conceited
approach to self-depiction is evident, yet being a feel-good song indicated by the
abundant “lalala”s, any tone of haughtiness is virtually non-existent. To treat the content
of the four verses, verse one contrasts the flower of a foreign land to the flower of the
homeland, and in no uncertain terms downgrades the foreign flower to the Korean
nation’s flower. As Shakespeare famously wrote in Romeo and Juliet, would a rose by
any other name not smell as sweet? The North Koreans exhibit some arrogance in such
stanza. Thinking it may be a one-off, one does not need to travel long into the song to be

\textsuperscript{283} Ibid
faced with the same affront. The Korean word for ‘friend’ in this line used is beot, the non-general term for the word, and in North Korean texts one that always comes to connote friend ‘of a foreign nature’. Foreign water again, is sung to be not as sweet as the water of the Korean hometown in the second verse. The last two verses then turn more inward towards the nation. ‘Arirang’, the definitive folk song of Korea is hailed in the third, simply so, and understandably. The last verse then resurfaces the certain ‘sun and stars’. In this case it is not so ambiguous however, as according to the music video, for the entirety of those lines in the verse, a slow zoom out shot of the Worker’s Party Monument in central Pyongyang is made. The second line in lyric too, corresponds, imparting the interpretation that thanks to the bright and loving place that the sun (Kim Il Sung) and stars (Kim Jong Il) have unfurled for the people by way of the Party, such bow is offered in gratitude.

Other imagery in the music video too, should be addressed. It starts off by intertwining scenes of historical relics and nature together, and generally continues this approach throughout. The national flower of the magnolia is featured prominently, as do stills of happy workers and statues of revolutionary figures of an ideological nature. Later into the song people are seen enjoying traditional festivities, and yet again, that is juxtaposed to images of the Juche tower on a bright blue sky day. The last 20 seconds of the video adorns fully the big red Kimjongilia flower fluttering in the wind, and in closing, the Chollima statue in downtown Pyongyang with nearby skyline including prominent statue of Kim Il Sung atop Mansu Hill, is slowly panned out. What is noticeable in My Country is Best, as mentioned, is the non-discriminatory approach in combining nature and ideology, and tradition and modernity to showcase all that the regime believes the Korean nation has to be proud of. Traditionalism and socialism are antonyms of each other, but it matters not here, as a wholly positive and upbeat construction of the Korean nation is sought above else to be portrayed.

The third song, though not by title seeming ethnonational, has been somewhat chosen at the request of the North Korean government. Don’t Advance, Night of Pyongyang (Jisaeji maradao, Pyongyangui bama) is a song that was given its own editorial under the title “Fine Song that Captures Within it the Strong Emotion of the
Mindset of the Korean-Nation-as-Best-Ideology”. It was written in 1989, but seemed to me to have been a much more current hit while visiting the country in 2010. For these reasons, and of course for the excuse that it is a personal favourite, this song will be explored. All lyric, music video imagery and editorial content will be considered. The lyrics first of all, are as below.

The light flows over the tranquil river
My heart quivers embracing unforgettable memories
I want to walk endlessly, My love, night of Pyongyang
Please don’t advance, Beautiful night of Pyongyang

Sparkling beads of sweat, I did devote here
Blue dreams of youth too, Have bloomed right here
I want to walk endlessly, My love, night of Pyongyang
Please don’t advance, Beautiful night of Pyongyang

Hmm….Ahh

How can I speak all of the tale of the great exploit
Whispers of tomorrow, And the night deepens
I want to walk endlessly, My love, night of Pyongyang
Please don’t advance, Beautiful night of Pyongyang

Hmm….Ahh

Beautiful night of Pyongyang

Reading the lyrics alone, a clear picture is somewhat difficult to construct due to such seemingly undescriptive lines. The gist of the song is that someone (the female singer, presumably), is sitting on the bank of a river on a pleasant evening, fondly reminiscing over personal memories of a diverse nature; possibly all from love to her youth. She adores the night, and looks to the future. Or not. The song, when coupled with the music video, and more importantly, with the editorial in question, is yet another vehicle thick with political references and ideological undertones. The light that flows over the river is indeed the fluorescent bulb of the Juche tower reflecting off the Taedong river, and the unforgettable memories that she recollects are in fact allusions

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284 Choson Nyosong (Korean Woman) 1993. 2, p. 38. An almost identical article to this titled, "A Classic Embracing Within it the Strong Emotion of the Mindset of the Korean Nation as Best Ideology" was also found in Choson Yesul (Korean Art) 1993. 3 p. 24

285 Choson Norae Daejonjib, p. 952 (My Translation)
to the post-war reconstruction era of the 1950s so detailed in the previous chapter. The sparkling beads of sweat embody the labour that she too, a fine lady, participated in, in expression of her “loyalty” to the party and nation at the time, and the dreams of her youth that she mentions, she is now profoundly reflecting on as having been realized. The “great exploit” also, is the feat of reconstruction. Whittling the song down to its essential message, it becomes clear that Pyongyang is posed to be the ultimate representation of all of her positivity. It is the place where she wants to “walk endlessly”, and the place of whose night she never wants to end. The result of the early decades’ reconstruction is what she basks in now – tangibly, the impressively constructed capital, and intangibly, the satisfaction and happiness that she feels now. The focus of the toil of her youth, which incidentally also happens to be the locus of the regime and its stronghold, is being used as the centrepiece by which to boast the brilliance of the state and nation.

The point to make about this song is its scant ethnic nationalist content in spite of its heavy ethnic nationalist praise in interpretation. The editorial contains all the regular buzz words of the Choson minjok jeil juui ideology (including ideological emotion, love for the nation, nationalist pride and dignity, etc.) all the while the song alludes to the chiefly stately element of post-war reconstruction of the 1950s. This does not correlate, and we seemingly reach a dead end in interpretation. In absence of conclusive data, perhaps it would be beneficial to resort to experience and precedent in attempting to answer the question. Of course, getting into the minds of propagandists and song writers on such a micro level is impossible, but to initiate an alternative response, it is known that Kim Jong Il personally took to this song very dearly. Would it not be natural for him then to move to associate it with his own ideology, using it to make popular and more credible this otherwise insubstantial doctrine of his? As I mentioned in regards to the songs earlier, the regime is adept at mustering all the capital it can and use it to attach to its calculated nationalist lines. This may be another such case. If this does not suffice however, it is safe to say that the song celebrates its own country’s industrialisation feats as well as the Pyongyang capital city skyline in a superficial, albeit symbolic sense. Corresponding to the greater argument of this thesis though, by the 1990s, such shows of economic prosperity were indeed being used to conceal economic degradation and deny decreasing standards of living, rendering it all but, again, superficial, albeit symbolic. Symbolism of the city harks back to the
discussion in chapter 2 on the city as one of the supreme symbols of the regime and nation, with its landmarks of pride and prestige, not seen as static and lifeless, but indeed as active and living institutions in the lives of the people. This song is certainly an attempt made in the same vein by the regime, aiming to enhance its insubstantial ideology with otherwise substantial-looking imagery. To end recapping the music video, it is essentially a slow moving montage of nightscapes of the aforesaid Pyongyang landmarks, peppered with black and white stills of post-war reconstruction. This visual very much synchronises with the vocal of the song – timed, dreamy, poignant and hauntingly beautiful – all qualities the Kim regime exploits to guarantee its claim as chief of the nation.

c) Yamato issue

Having explored the Korean-nation-as-first-ideology in detail in this section, there is another perspective on the idea that would be beneficial to look through. Ethnic supremacism is by no means a novel ideology, nor is it claiming here to be limited to the Korean peninsula. World history is tainted with ethnic ideologies and their related violence and events, and perhaps none other more prominent than Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan during the World War II era. Contemporary North Korea has acknowledged both institutions as detrimentally nationalist and fascist, and has moved on many occasions in state media to condemn such hindrances to humanity’s political progress and development. Japan however, has bore more of this brunt, in high likelihood due to its direct interference with Korea in the colonial era, in contrast to Hitler’s Germany far resigned away in Europe. The most indicative of such articles was found in the May 16, 2005 edition of the Rodong Sinmun. It is an illuminating account of North Korea’s view on Imperialist Japanese Yamato Nationalism and provides implications on understanding to a greater degree North Korea’s own perspective on themselves and their Uriminjok jeiljuui ideology. The article’s official English translation will be referred to, as well as the original Korean version.²⁸⁶

The title of the article is “KCNA on Revival of Ultra “Yamato Nationalism”” and summarising it briefly, it is a heated condemnation of the perceived rise of the aforementioned Yamato named nationalism that most know to embody Japanese action during the Pacific War. The English version is a condensed version of the Korean, encapsulating all the main points in contention while refraining from the extended and emotive traditional Korea-centric view of victimhood vis-à-vis Japan. Japan’s scandalous history of treachery symbolised by the Hinomaru flag and the Kimigayo anthem are explored, as too is its contemporary history, manifested by the alleged butchering of history textbooks and continual existence of the offensive Yasakuni shrine. A few points are outstanding in their intent and delivery in the English version, so below, they will be quoted in order of appearance in the article, and commented on.

Japan’s advocates of "national spirit" are now vociferating about what they call the "purity of blood lineage" and "spiritual unification" of the Japanese nation.

Their loudmouthed "Yamato nationalism" is, in a nutshell, no more than extreme national egoism and national chauvinism as it is a national idea of underscoring only "superiority" of the Japanese nation to other countries and nations.

The conservative right-wing forces and reactionary historians of Japan claim that the Japanese nation is "the best nation" in the world.

The successive ruling quarters of Japan have worked hard to seek a way out in reviving the "spirit of Japan." ...The core idea of this notion is to overcome the mentality of being a defeated state, instil the awareness of being a big power into people and exalt the position of Japan in the world's political structure.

Therefore, "nationalism" of Japan has raised its head as a dangerous idea of aggression threatening peace and stability of the world, to say nothing of Asia.

"Nationalism" and the consciousness of being a big power are gradually raising their heads in Japan, encouraged by wrong education in history and the false propaganda by rightist forces.287

Every single quote listed above has been extracted because it could easily be appropriated to North Korea in the view of the Uriminjok jeiljuui ideology. From an article not terribly long, the quantity of excerpts as seen above is indeed telling. To

287 As above, http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2005/200505/news05/17.htm
address them individually, we start with North Korea’s accusation of Japan’s “national spirit”, “purity of blood lineage” and “spiritual unification” of the Japanese nation. It is hypocritical of North Korea to lambast such things, because these precisely are the values and ideals that North Korea itself upholds in the Korean-nation-as-best ideology. National spirit, if not used in those exact words, is connoted in their oft urged “(ethno-)national mindset (minjokjok jeongsin)” and purity of blood and unification are most certainly embodied in their desperate calls for reunifying the Korean peninsula, on their own, without foreign interference, and with all brethren “North, South, and abroad”. The Kim regime does tout that the Korean nation is already spiritually bound, but that they are merely politically and geographically demarcated, so when viewing with these points in mind, this first criticism that North Korea hurls at Japan is baseless. The second extract is interesting in that it articulates in absolutely exact words the idea of the Korean-nation-as-best ideology. What more else needs to be said? It would suffice just to substitute “Yamato” for “North Korean”. In the third, the North Koreans negatively characterise the Japanese as supremacist “right wing forces”. For all the trumpeting of socialism and communism, prominent North Korea scholar Brian Myers asserts confidently that North Korea is in fact right wing, and extreme at that. So North Korea accusing Japan of being right wing, all the while its own actions have been interpreted as the very thing, is groundless. In the fourth quote, North Korea slanders Japan’s nationalist spirit as a call to 1) overcome the mentality of being a defeated state, 2) instil the awareness of being a big power into people, and 3) exalt the position of Japan in the world’s political structure. These three elements resonate greatly with the North Korean cause and its historical back-story. Although both Koreas throughout their development have acknowledged being a victim of Japanese imperialism, North Korea, in contrast to the South, has never attempted to motion any form of conciliatory approach to Japan, and instead, has continued to intensify hatred and use history as its unending source of legitimacy. North Korea for most of its lifespan has adopted the guerrilla mentality that formed Kim Il Sung in the 1930s anti-Japanese years, all in the firm aim specifically to “break free from a position of weakness” and defeat vis-à-vis Japan (and America). This is how North Korea’s indictment of Japan on this point becomes baseless. “Instilling an awareness of being a big power into people” and

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288 In relation to references linking North Korean ideology to imperial Japanese ideology during the Pacific War in his book *The Cleanest Race*, and article *Ideology as Smokescreen*. 

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“exalting the position of the nation in the world’s political structure” too, are entities that are not far off from the way the North Korean regime has sought to configure its propaganda. Telling the citizenry in all forms of political, social and cultural communication that their nation is the best swells their self-regard, in turn harmonising with the denigration of the actual world political superpower, the United States. In the fifth extraction, North Korea then explains that Japan’s Yamato nationalism is dangerous, and that it threatens regional and global peace and stability. This in fact is the common refrain that is attached to all Western interpretations about North Korea in regards to its nuclear weapons ambitions. Unlike any other country who maintains a national army for conventional reasons, the North Korean state is constantly being viewed as volatile, irrational and for those reasons, a highly dangerous entity in the region and world. So once again, North Korea viewing Japan in such manner is deceitful. Flowing on from this, in the last quote, North Korea says that such nationalist consciousness is being wrongly planted in the minds of young people, who are growing up brainwashed by “false propaganda”. It has been made decidedly clear thus far on how the regime has and still systematically dominates information (not just to young people, but to all), and its access to its full benefit. Withholding, obscuring and manipulating knowledge on the past and present, very much like their assessment of Japan, most certainly results in false educations and high skewed, potentially dangerous perspectives on the world.

From the quotes and commentary above, it is clear that North Korea has the ability to critique political ideologies for whatever inherent and potential flaws they may house. It is a shame, however, that for all its astuteness and accuracy on this very topic, that it had not the aptitude (or willingness?) to recognise in itself the very same thing.

2. The Renaissance of Dangun

Dangun, mythical progenitor of Korea, is a central figure in the discourse of Korean nationalism. Held as the father-founder of the nation in both North and South Korea, the North’s patronisation of him in particular, in the context of its domestic politics and ideology, warrants discussion. Before details on the myth and its manifestations are explored, it would be useful to give an indication on Dangun’s place in contemporary
North Korea. Unlike songs and posters that have been surveyed above, Dangun belongs not to the creative realm, but instead, to the realm of fact. This means that he is not regularly sung about in popular songs or painted in propaganda posters, but rather, is the subject of television documentaries, factual history articles and established orthodoxy. Dangun’s characterisation is regal, a source of pride, and an object of which the North Korean regime constructs to bolster, or even underpin, its claim to nationalist legitimacy. Substantiating such statement will be done using materials both gathered in the course of research, and acquired in North Korea. Few articles have been encountered in journals, but two books, one pictorial in nature (Tomb of King Tangun) and the other a collection of 18 essays covering the whole spectrum of issues on Dangun (Tangun: Founder-King of Korea), both in English, will be employed to provide the official North Korean view on Dangun. This second book in particular, I believe, is the most valuable resource in approaching this discussion, so to there we turn.

a) The Myth, the Man and the Mausoleum

Dangun is said to be the son of a marriage between Hwanung (son of the “Lord of Heaven”) and Ungnyeo (the “bear-woman”). The myth as is generally known, is set originally with Hwanin, the Lord of Heaven, having his son (Hwanung) longing to live on earth amongst mountains and men. Hwanin permitted such request, sending Hwanung to earth, where he went and set up the first known proto Korean nation of Baedal. Meanwhile, there was a tiger and a bear who wished to be human. Praying to Hwanung, he instructed them to eat only garlic and mugwort and to stay out of the sunlight and in a cave for 100 days. Relenting after 20 days, the tiger gave up, whereas the bear prevailed, and was transformed into a beautiful woman. Lamenting now that she had no husband, Hwanung was moved by her plight and took her as his own wife. Lo and behold they gave birth to Dangun, who ultimately ascended to the throne, founding Gojoseon or “Old Joseon” – the first fully fledged dynasty in Korean history. This is accepted in both North and South Korea to have occurred in 2333BC, hence North Korea’s frequent refrain of their “5000 year long history” line.

Having said that, it is important to delve into what type of a person Dangun was as documented by the North Koreans. He was a brilliant military artist, among other
things, according to them, and is said to have strengthened the economy, developed culture, extended territory, and increased national power. General statements as these do not fulfil his personification, as other certain details have been unearthed by the regime in the book mentioned above, *Tangun: Founder-King of Korea*. A large tract has been supplied below, which serves to encompass his birth, upbringing, reign as King, and demise.

His birth and growing up were coincident with the period of incessant intertribal hostilities. In order to become the victor in these wars and dominate other tribes, one had to attain distinction in the military arts. Therefore, Tangun spent his childhood and youth in energetic practice to master the arts of archery, spearmanship, and swordmanship.

...The noticeable event in Tangun’s life and activity was his contribution to the cause of founding a state. This historical cause could have never been achieved in a short space and time. Tangun had been trying since his youth to grasp the laws of nature and society, but what attracted his particular attention when still young was the number of serious social disputes existing in the community. The members of society in his youthful days were divided as follows: the chief of the commune (Hwanung), aristocrats of the clan – Phungbaek (god of wind), Usa (god of rain), Unsa (god of the clouds) – and the ordinary members of the commune (a crowd of some three thousand). The chief of the community and the aristocrats of the clan were the privileged class standing over the commoners of the collective, and the communal headman presided over the ancestral memorial services and political affairs.

Since it was an agricultural society, primarily based on a settled cultivation of crops, farming occupied the main sphere of production. The gulf between the privileged class, which had fattened on the spoils of intertribal wars and amassed the greater part of the fortunes conquest of other tribes, and the ordinary members of the commune grew wider in the possession of wealth; the intertribal confrontations became aggravated, while the prisoners of war were turned into slaves.

Consequently, the existing ties of consanguinity were gradually replaced by ever-worsening contradictions and struggles between the ruling and ruled tribes, between the rich privileged circles and the poor communal members, including the slaves, which began constituting the basic relations in society. And, as a deterrent to such contradictions, punishment, though in embryo, was introduced. Now the primitive community was on the verge of its collapse, on the last point of its existence.

While growing up as the son of the chief of the commune, Tangun became familiar with this social reality, and sought a way out. As soon as he was made the chief in succession to his father, Tangun gradually transformed and developed the political skeletons of the commune into the machinery of violence aimed at curbing the interclass and intertribal struggles.

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289 *Tangun: Founder-King of Korea*, 1994, Pyongyang, pp. 43 and 46
After the foundation of the state, Tangun allowed the people to engage in such occupations as farming, weaving of cloth and the breeding of domestic animals which brought them to leading a new, civilized mode of life, after doing away with the former outdated way of living. For example, old records say that Tangun taught the people how to braid their hair and educated them in the etiquette to be observed between the king and his subjects, between men and women, in partaking of a meal, in wearing clothes and living in a house.

...Tangun, a long-lived man, died and was buried in Pyongyang, his birthplace. His lifespan is no more than a dot in the entire history of our nation. However, he was the one to set up a state for the first time in the East and this marked an end to the long primitive age in our country, and its entry into the age of statehood, the age of civilization. This is Tangun’s greatest feat for our nation and an event of epochal importance in our nation’s history.

The above tract has been presented in this way because it consistently exemplifies one thing that I would like to highlight, namely the total embodiment of Kim Il Sung in Dangun. Each paragraph contains content analogous to Kim’s life of each stage including birth, childhood, maturity, rise and fall, and to address each element is necessary to elucidate how this embodiment is achieved.

We start off by learning that Dangun was born in a time of “intertribal hostilities”. Although the Japanese occupation of 1910-1945 can not be considered intertribal, it can be considered a time of interstate or international antagonism, amongst which Kim Il Sung was born (1912). Dangun is said to have trained himself physically and militarily for such hostilities, and suffice to say that Kim too, underwent such training exercises in his early years in participation for the anti-Japanese guerrilla expedition of the 1930s. The second paragraph leads us to believe that Dangun was clever and wise from a young age. We learn that his formative experience was the founding of a state and that “this historical cause could have never been achieved in a short space and time.” Overcoming such limitation, Kim Il Sung indeed achieved that exact feat, within a mere few years of liberation founding the new republic of DPRK, and equipped it militarily, economically and agriculturally in less than a decade.

Dangun was acutely sensitive to the “serious disputes existing in the community” we learn. These included the aristocratic hierarchy of society, the unbalanced distribution of wealth, and the hostility that existed between the disparate echelons. What the regime is articulating here in its most basic form is the ideology of

290 Ibid, pp. 43-44, and 46
Marxist-Leninism and its theories of egalitarianism, socialism and class struggle. How could such a progressive and evolved political ideology be appropriated to 2333BC? The North Korean regime clearly has no qualms about misleading its populace in terms of the progress of civilizations and their true degrees of sophistication. Although sizeable peasant revolts were not entirely impossible in ancient times, the philosophical coherence that the regime is allotting to Dangun is too suspicious to leave be.

Growing up perceptive to such injustices, Dangun then, upon receiving chiefdom, sought to obliterate the embedded institutional bigotry. As too, did Kim Il Sung, when he famously marched back into Pyongyang upon liberation to proclaim a new state, one that was allegedly fully fair, non-discriminatory to any social group, and (un)forgiving to traitors. Dangun initiated farming, weaving, animal husbandry, and a new mode of civilized life to a simple population; exactly what Kim Il Sung is praised to have instigated upon the founding of the republic. At least the regime was not audacious enough to credit Dangun with industrialisation, as they did Kim. Another peculiar detail about Dangun is too difficult to be taken as something from thousands of years ago, as it strikes too familiar with the North Korea of today and its unique tendencies.

For example, old records say that Tangun taught the people how to braid their hair and educated them in the etiquette to be observed between the king and his subjects, between men and women, in partaking of a meal, in wearing clothes and living in a house.

This sentence cannot help but strike anyone familiar with contemporary North Korea as anything other than the infamous “on-the-spot guidance” routinely performed by the Kim figureheads. Taking an increduously meticulous approach, or “care” to the lives of the people, Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il bathed in “on-the-spot guidance”, advising locals and party functionaries alike on such important matters as the pruning of trees, the specific placing of a decorations in a house, the writing of greeting cards, and all of such like. How Dangun would have taken to the above quoted details, let alone how it could have been scribed in “old records” is simply too fantastic to be in all likelihood credible.

Dangun is believed to have died in Pyongyang, his birthplace. His life, though mortal and short in the span of Korean history, ushered the Korean nation into a new era of civilization and statehood – his legacy of greatest importance in the history of the
nation, as documented by the regime. The similarities here with Kim Il Sung are both identical and innumerable. Without Kim, there would be no nation worthy of speaking of, to the North Koreans, as they believe that he was the one who illuminated them into the way of ideologically conscious living, as opposed to the endemic slavery and exploitation of the previous Choson dynasty. Dangun was given a grand mausoleum (as will be discussed next), and so too is Kim, the Kumsusan Palace. Dangun is worshipped in death as builder of the nation, and the father of the nation, and so too is Kim. The parallels are clear and unambiguous.

In this way, it has not been difficult to uncover the political/ideological and personality cult undertones the regime has inserted in their writings on Dangun. Personifying him as a prehistoric Kim Il Sung, the regime provides the North Korean people with a figure both familiar and understandable, easily liked and promptly worshippable. Dangun’s myth not only animates North Korean historical dialogue of the present day, but as illustrated, it also functions in sync with the regime’s ethnic nationalist ambition of the day, which is to monopolise the ethnic claim to exclusivity, and hold hostage the populace within it. This air of personality cult which envelopes both Dangun and Kim serves as a vehicle to push the ideology of North Korean ethnonationalism, by creating, throughout time, a continuum of Korean, and also Pyongyang-centered indigenous historical figures. The symbolism of the primordialist cycle of life – being born of the land and returning to it – is rich in this case, where worshipping the personalities of Dangun and Kim are effectively one and of the same, strengthening the nationalist ideology and bolstering the political line of the regime.

Now to speak on the mausoleum. Having allegedly been discovered in October 1993, the bones of Dangun were deemed of such high significance that a befitting mausoleum was instructed to be built by Kim Il Sung himself. Documents relating to the project were in fact some of the last documents he signed before he died. Built throughout 1994, it is a white stone step-pyramid, reaching 50 metres high, 22 metres wide, and situated on the slope of Mt. Taebak in Munhung-ri, Kangdong County, Pyongyang. From what I can discern it faces north, and it has a long adjoining path and staircase leading up to the tomb. Large stone gateposts welcome visitors as they proceed up the path, and along the way they are greeted by stone sculpted “ministers” of Dangun. Such officials were allegedly responsible for facets of government including punishment, public health, the army, farming, etiquette and morality and so forth.
Flanking the tomb are stone lantern posts, a stone incense burner and offertory table, a bronze sword, and four guarding stone tigers in each direction. Images of the bones themselves are sketchy and unconvincing, and indeed in the 1995 pictorial publication they are not even shown. The 1994 essay collection publication does however, show them, and in entirety, they include 86 pieces, mostly arms and legs, and fractions of pelvis and neck bone. These are said to be both of Dangun and his wife, 42 of his, 12 of hers, and 32 in common. Despite them being in preserved condition, skulls are void, and why, because the “Japanese aggressors had stealthily dug up the tomb several times after their occupation of Korea.”

Delving into the significance of the tomb, many of the abovementioned elements impart some form of nationalist, or at least, traditional Korean heritage. To start off with the fact that it is white, and not any other colour, speaks of Korea’s traditional association of white with purity, humility, simplicity, all the while authenticity. These are all elements in traditional Koreana that are praised, and sought to be kept untainted. An oil painting that comes to mind in this instance is of Kim Il Sung, one where he is pictured in old age and wearing a regal white suit, poignantly standing at the window sill of a large lookout featuring prominently the tomb of Dangun. The image illustrates not only a rightful sense of joint linkage between the two national fathers of Dangun and Kim, but also exudes a sense of hallowedness and sanctity that the two, again, share, as such figures of immense nationally historic significance. The solemnity of Kim’s expression exemplifies the sheer gravity of the situation, and the background and foreground trees and flowers embody the beauty of the Korean nation. The painting is one that makes an impression on one’s memory, perfectly symbolising the regime’s effort to reconstruct a national identity deep and profound, poised and beautiful, and everlasting, all centred around both Dangun and Kim. Here again, the grand personas of both Dangun and Kim, divinely connected as they are, serve to pull North Korean ethnonationalism along through time, being never made redundant despite their demise, and being never replaced in stature; only survived and succeeded by the next Kim patriarch, and worshipped by the populace at large.

291 Ibid, p. 28
292 Ibid
293 Choson Munhak Yesul Nyongam (Korea Literature and Art Yearbook), 2004. (See next page for image)
Bones of Tangun (left) and his wife (right), extracted from *Tangun: Founder-King of Korea*, front photos.

Regular picture of Tangun's Tomb, extracted from *Tomb of King Tangun*, exact middle page.

*Choson Munhak Yesul Nyongam* (Korea Literature and Art Yearbook), 2004
Other elements too, can be interpreted as harking back to a Korea of long gone olden days. As mentioned, flanking the tomb are lantern posts, an incense burner, an offertory table, a bronze sword, and four tigers. The lantern posts and incense burners could be seen as symbols of (Korean) Buddhism, namely, from the dynasty of the Silla and Unified Silla eras, the bronze sword tower could be seen as a symbol of the warring Goguryo and/or Koryo dynasties, epochs that the regime constantly relates itself too, and the four tigers could be said to be extractions from the Confucian Choson dynasty, with its patronisation of that animal for its strength and valour, and therefore, its quality to guard the tomb of the king. The ministers too, are easily interpreted as manifestations of the esteemed civil service administration institution of the Choson dynasty, as it is known that the monarch ruled with his trusted and erudite ministers – clearly the parallel that the regime is channelling in aligning them in such formation in Dangun’s 1994 tomb. Apart from these points, another significant element represented in most of the objects listed above, is their function to facilitate ancestor worship – a ceremony of utmost weight to almost all and ideologically disparate dynasties of Korea’s past. The North Korean regime for all intents and purposes renounced ancestor worship officially, labelling it as backward and superstitious, yet has evidently moved to the contrary in this case by placing them in such formation of importance in Dangun’s tomb, therefore, indirectly approving them. In fact, few, if any of these objects would ultimately be granted approval from the DPRK's Supreme People's Assembly or the National Defence Commission if it came down to it, perhaps due to their primitive and regressive nature, but as demonstrated, it is not about socialism and the revolution here, but more so in substance instead, about ethnic identification and nationalism. This is how and why the tomb of Dangun, erected in the early 1990s, was allowed to achieve the level of exposure that it did, as it functioned to serve not only as one element of nationalist propaganda, but arguably, the underpinning basis of the nationalist propaganda campaign at this economically catastrophic time in North Korea’s history. Dangun and the issue of the homogeneity of the nation will be further explored in the next section.
b. The Korean Nation is a Homogenous Nation

The book publication utilised thus far, Tangun: Founder King of Korea, will once again be put to use in this section. Containing 18 essays on all facets of Dangun, a number of those chapters have proven immeasurably valuable in that they address issues directly relevant to the core of this thesis. Chapters 15 and 18 are titled respectively: “The Korean Nation – A Homogeneous Nation Whose Founding Father is Tangun” and “The Korean Nation is a Homogeneous Nation with a 5000-Year Long History”. From these titles alone, it is easy to sense that notions discussed in these chapters would centre around ethnicity/race, historical lineage, and validity of the “founder king” Dangun. And indeed they do. These two chapters, as all others written by professors and researchers from the "Academy of Social Sciences", seek to certify in no uncertain terms that Dangun was very much a real person who existed, as per the discovery of his bones, and that his kingdom should rightly be credited for the brilliant civilization of Korea that flourished at his behest. Three main points surface in these writings: 1) that Dangun is the genesis in the chain of Korean history, 2) that historically legitimate is the progression of Korean history all the way from Dangun’s Gojoseon to Kim Il Sung’s now Choson (North Korea), and 3) that Pyongyang is the cradle of civilisation of the Korean nation. These will be discussed.

i) That Dangun is the genesis in the chain of Korean history

Simply mythologising that Dangun was the genesis in the scroll of Korean history and passing that down to posterity was not enough for the North Koreans. Proving that he did exist provided firmer ground to the myth, but more importantly, it served to substantiate a common origin of Korea as an ethnic group, which then developed into the nation, albeit divided, that we see today. In essence, it is less about scientific accuracy and more about national identity and the precious unity that is born of that. The excerpt below gives insight into the North Koreans’ official understanding of this:

But now…the bones of Tangun had been discovered in the Tomb of Tangun and it was confirmed that they were 5011 years old, and an anthropological study had made it clear that Tangun was a native Korean; this gives the lie to
the theory that Tangun had come from some distant place, and proved this to be a completely groundless theory. Since Tangun, the founder of ancient Korea, was not a foreign conqueror but a native Korean who had lived in the land of Korea from his birth, so the Korean people were a single blood and, therefore, they were able to grow into a homogeneous nation earlier than any other race throughout the world.294

The quote above is situated in refutation of the alternative (and in most likelihood precise) commonly held understanding that the Korean race formed from migration from the north. The North Koreans are asserting here few points and presenting them as fact; that the bones found were Dangun’s, that they are 5011 years old, and that he was a native Korean. It suffices to say that no independent testing of the bones has been permitted by the regime to determine their reliable profile. They stated that the method they used to absolutely date the bones was the ESR (Electron Paramagnetic Resonance) method, but why they did not use Radiocarbon dating, the more widely used and accurate method, all the while acknowledging it295 is suspicious. They must have not had the costly resources. How too, then, that they could confirm the Dangun bones in question were “native Korean”, and not some other regional Asian with a similar skeletal profile, is dubious. What anthropological study confirming that the bones are native Korean are they referring to? In interpreting ancient bones, anatomists most often rely on the skull to reach such detailed conclusions as region of racial origin, so in this case, with no Dangun skull at all, the fact that they have labelled it so doggedly as native Korean is open to doubt. If they were so confident in the specimens’ authenticity moreover, rejection of requests to replicate the procedure would not be issued. Without having the need to delve further into the science of the bones, whose ever they are, the affair surrounding Dangun’s bones has always been rife with cynicism, and for valid reason. The latter half of the quote above demonstrates why. The results are not being published in an internationally credited scientific journal, but instead in such a highly questionable and subjective propagandistic text meant for domestic and foreign consumption. Assuming that the reader would not adopt such a critical viewpoint, the text, as seen in the quote above, then makes the sweeping connection linking Dangun’s bones to the homogeneity of the contemporary Korean nation. Dangun’s native Korean bones from 5000 years ago are being used to symbolise,

294 Tangun: Founder-King of Korea. 1994, Pyongyang, p. 109
295 Ibid, p. 19
or rather to substantiate, his role as factual father-progenitor of all of Korea. In all probability this is not a genuine discovery of epic proportion, but rather, an exceedingly unbelievable fabrication of the past on the part of the regime used to legitimate the present.

ii) That historically legitimate is the progression of Korean history all the way from Dangun’s Gojoseon to Kim Il Sung’s now Choson (North Korea)

In “The Korean Nation – A Homogeneous Nation Whose Founding Father is Tangun”, author Professor Son Yong Jong spends a considerable length of time recapping the history of ancient Korea from the time of Dangun. He mentions Koguryo, Baekje and Silla of the Three Kingdoms Period, as well as the proceeding Koryo dynasty, and then has the following to say:

The historical progress mentioned above clearly manifests that the tradition of the nation’s history, which originated from ancient Korea, passed on to the periods of the Three Kingdoms, including Koguryo, Paekje, Silla, Palhae and Koryo. This was because the successive dynasties of Koguryo, Paekje, Silla, Palhae and Koryo glorified and revered Tangun as their founding father and held memorial services in his honour. And the people adored him as the first founder king who led our nation to enlightenment and civilization.296

Clearly what the author is expressing is that the tradition of the nation’s history has been able to be passed down and preserved due in thanks to those successive dynasties who glorified and revered Dangun. No recognition here has been given to the passing down of tradition and custom from generation to generation, nor to the documenting of literature and/or various communication that did occur as part of religious and political practice during these periods. The author goes on to stress in great detail how these dynasties worshipped Dangun, erecting statues in renowned mountains across the country, and building temples and shrines in other places, that all now still stand as remains and relics.297 From this account, one cannot help but be aware of the author’s idealistic perspective on national history. There may indeed be

296 Ibid, p. 106
297 Ibid.
relics completely dedicated to Dangun remaining that those outside of North Korea may not be aware of, but one other point in his interpretation of history leaves a wider gap in which to raise questions. He says:

And Korean history shows that since Tangun’s Korea, no alien force of aggression had invaded our country on a large scale or had lived there for any long space of time, mixing with the Koreans.\(^{298}\)

Yet again, the author is clearly not acquainted with Korean history books outside of his own country, as it is known widely that Korea bore the brunt of many incursions, few of which did indeed result in “mixing with the Koreans”. Such is the case of the Mongol invasions, where as a result of six campaigns stretching 1231 to 1259, Koryo capitulated and became a vassal state of the Mongol Empire. In this case, Korean princes were obliged to marry Mongolian princesses, and likewise, Korean princesses were obliged to enter the Mongolian court.\(^{299}\) The most well known account of this is Queen Noguk (Queen Indeok); a Mongolian princess wedded to King Gongmin of Koryo, who later to ascended to the position of Queen and did indeed bear a child to the Korean court. Nonetheless, the point Professor Son Yong Jong seems to be making is that Dangun, in these ancient historic times, was as much the famed father figure as he allegedly is today. However, that simply does not stand parallel to established fact. Both the Three Kingdoms Period and the Koryo Dynasty were deeply religious, but not in the sense that he alludes to. Buddhism and Confucianism coexisted in the Three Kingdoms, Buddhism took over in the Unified Silla (668-935) and Palhae era (698-926), and in the Koryo Dynasty, officialdom reverted back to the coexistence of Buddhism and Confucianism. An avenue where the Dangun worship line may be pursued however, is in Korean shamanism; never obliterated yet never a mainstream force in the least. Dangun may well have been deified in shamanism, but this most likely would have been minor, perhaps sporadic, and eventually too weak to form into a considerable force.

Having said that, the author does gain support when he starts to speak of Dangun in the period of Japanese occupation (1910-1945); a period when the resistance movement against the Japanese colonisers incited a strong surge of Korean nationalism. This is where the faith of Dangun, *Daejonggyo*, was founded in 1909 by Na Cheol, and

\(^{298}\) Ibid, p. 109

where it indeed did make a contribution in aiding the nationalist movement in terms of unity and national identity. Dangun was not a celebrated and honoured figure continuously and in an unbroken nature throughout Korean history as the text intends to portray, but instead, in most general senses, a tool used when political turmoil called for desperate measures. Much as it was in the early twentieth century when Korea’s sovereignty was at peril, so too do we see a similar repeat of legitimacy crisis, this time, in the early 1990s and on the part of the North Korean, or rather “Kim dynasty” regime.

iii) That Pyongyang is the cradle of civilisation of the Korean nation

The last of three issues to discuss on Dangun is perhaps the most simple; that Pyongyang is the cradle of civilisation of the Korean nation. There are various reasons why the regime would move to substantiate such claim, but all are bound to ultimately end up in one, which is the legitimisation of themselves seated in the capital Pyongyang. Through “discovering” Dangun’s bones in Pyongyang, the regime attempts to validate that Korea started in Pyongyang, and that it should rightfully be in Pyongyang, and only Pyongyang. Undertones of the illegitimacy of Seoul and its inauthentic culture too, are abound, with the North’s touted “Daedong Culture” (referring to a cultural civilization that emerged from the Daedong River which runs through Pyongyang), being no coincidence. Knowing North Korea’s perspective on the origin of their capital city in relation to Dangun would be helpful in coming terms with the importance of the city:

At the beginning of the third millennium B.C. Tangun established the first ancient state in Pyongyang, a state which was the most advanced in all spheres and occupied a vast area including the northwestern areas of the Korean peninsula as the territory of ancient Korea. This had enabled the people in these regions to live, maintaining close ties with each other, under the rule of unitary power; this further strengthened their lineal, language and cultural commonness and made it possible for them to grow into a nation as a sound social community. ...Thus, the awareness that they are fellowmen and of the same brethren was further enhanced among the inhabitants of the ancient states. Then, with the passage of time, they were merged into a homogeneous nation.

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300 *Tangun: Founder-King of Korea*, 1994, Pyongyang, pp. 107-108
Few points are being asserted in the quote supplied above; that Dangun established his capital in Pyongyang, that it was the most advanced state around, that people’s livelihoods were guaranteed, and that through such communal living everyone grew to merge into one homogeneous nation. Such details ring conspicuously loud, as they all come to form a context highly resembling of North Korea’s own official image of the ideal society and nation, i.e. advanced, prosperous, close-knit (introverted/isolated) and culturally, linguistically, and racially common. “Unitary power” is also a very eye-catching element, mostly because of the North’s clear penchant for the centralised and controlled bureaucratic system, with the “single minded will and unity” that it demands of its people.

As is visible yet again, with these elements, the regime is interpreting Dangun’s time, an extremely primitive and unrefined era, as one that had perfect harmony and a well-functioning social and political system – all this based merely on a myth first recorded in the thirteenth century document, the Samguk Yusa. Unless they have some hitherto unknown primary text of incredible historical value that they are not sharing, it is safe to assume that such details are contrived, selectively constructed, and serve primarily to form the opinions of their people that the regime is historically benevolent, aware, and most of all, legitimate.

If doubt is still housed in relation to the analysis above, an extract taken on precisely the same page as the quote supplied above, will be cited for added support. It embodies North Korea’s scant respect for historical accuracy and authenticity, as well as the linguistic lengths that it will unscrupulously go to, to condition minds who have little intellectual protection against it.

Numerous races live on the globe, they have gone through both a rise and fall in history. Yet none but the Korean nation has come through the course of steady growth as a single nation, maintaining their lineal oneness from the dawn of history.\(^{301}\)

Indeed, numerous races live on the globe, and many empires and civilizations have risen and fallen, but all else that is said is simply untrue, or inaccurate at best. The Korean nation, like any other nation, has indeed experienced its share of highs and lows throughout its history. It is a book replete with challenges and achievements, and better

\(^{301}\) Ibid, p. 108
yet one still with empty pages that remain to be written. Steady growth as a nation has
not been a defining characteristic of Korea, nor has a "lineal oneness from the dawn of
history" been so either. The Korean nation has experienced undulating levels of stability
and instability, prosperity and poverty, invasion and nationalism, to reach now the
characteristically divided state that it is in. It is a nation at war with itself, at tragedy
with its people and at uncertainty with its future. The text unsurprisingly ends with the
North politically advocating for reunification on the historical basis of Dangun, but one
needs not too much insight into the situation to see that this appeal, politically correctly
sounding as it is, will not achieve much at all.

Concluding Remarks

Nationalism of the later decades therefore, was ethnie focussed and extreme. Evolving
from a state-based and subtle manifestation of nationalist sentiment and tendency in
the early decades of the 1950s and 1960s as explored in the previous chapter, the
1970s/1980s and 1990s mapped a path for North Korea that was drastically different –
excessive in nature, detrimental in result, and problematic in breaking free from. Juche
and the Kim personality cult forever changed the blueprint of the nation, making it
dogmatic, demanding and superficial in nature, and the various ideologies of
nationalism including Uriminjok jeiljuui (Korean nation as Number One-ism) and the
renaissance of Dangun made it desperate, dangerous, and permanently cornered. It is
no coincidence that all of these factors came to play in the 1990s, a time of economic
turmoil and social instability, and a time when national unity and cohesion were
urgently sought after in order to avert collapse. It is no wonder then that Brian Myers
says that during the famine in the 1990s the only department that did not skip a beat
was the propaganda department, showing where the regime indeed chose to pool its
resources in such perilous times. As mentioned in the study summary, this approach
was employed to maintain the nation, having been constructed in the early decades.

Having said that, the 1970s/1980s and 1990s of North Korea exhibit all that
can go wrong with a state. Well intended as he was in the early years of the 1940s and
1950s, Kim's hot head drove him into disaster after disaster, and without the permitting
of checks and balances (as perhaps the Soviet Union was to North Korea in the 1950s),
the country suffered immeasurably, and still does to this day. For reasons along these
lines, and historically speaking, nationalism generally has a worse reputation than it
does good. Embarking on this study I hoped to shine a light on more of the good,
alongside the bad, but in the end, to ultimately to reach an objective conclusion. North
Korean nationalism, as I have illustrated in this chapter, has indeed provided for its
people an uplifting, fulfilling and personalised political, cultural, social and artistic
experience, most notably in the 1970s. However, it is important to note that it has only
been for the adherents, and strictly not for the non-adherents. A currently unfolding UN
Commission of Inquiry chaired by the Hon. Michael Kirby will accuse North Korea of
crimes against humanity, with such indictment coming from a thorough investigation
into “unspeakable atrocities” committed by the regime in political prison camps against
prisoners, many of whom are not offenders themselves, but are children of, or family
members of the alleged criminals. This issue of human rights, not just of political
prisoners, but of all North Koreans, should never be extricated from any discussion on
North Korea due to its importance as such a compelling and telling personality trait of
the regime. Through this, the regime expresses physical violence, as well as political
oppression on its people, and does so with relative impunity. And this indeed is a
hallmark trait of North Korea of recent decades, in line with the amplified campaign of
enforced nationalism and its various mandatory obligations. To the people the regime is
communicating now, is that if you do not buy into the ideological structure that is set up,
there are consequences to be had. People are assumed to subscribe to the
establishment/nation for their own good, and although despotic and dictatorial as it is,
there may be some positives to bear, as will be explored in the following chapter.
Chapter 5. Nationalism in Full Bloom: Main Themes

Theoretically touched on in chapter 2, and demonstrated in motion in chapter 4, a certain number of themes become apparent in the course of critically reviewing North Korea politically, ideologically, culturally and socially. Indeed survival and prosperity is the end game for the regime, but amongst that, approaches, or rather techniques have been seen to be consistently employed to achieve such desire. Ethnic nationalism is upheld. But it is not a simplistic one, as indeed if it was, it would not have been able to be so malleable so as to survive the increasingly turbulent conditions that North Korea was to face in its recent decades. This nationalism is one that holds within it a range of uncomplicated yet powerful sentiments; ones that are accessible to all, all the while ones that serve to buttress the regime in its political and ideological pursuits. Love/Hate, Purity/Unity, Nature, and The Child Race make up the four main themes that I will delve into in reviewing the ethnic nationalism that North Korea cultivated for itself over the recent decades. This chapter will not be as exhaustive as the previous three, as it aims to provide in thematic style the issues that are worthy of attention in understanding North Korea’s political and ideological machinations on a macro stage. If it were to advance the argument of the thesis however, it would do so in the following way. Love/Hate, Purity/Unity, Nature and The Child Race (any rigid form of benevolent politics), in this organised fashion, are indeed themes that did not take centre stage, let alone any prominence, in the early decades of the North Korean state’s existence. One could point to love of nation, a nascent one as termed previously in this thesis, or even the sense of a Choson era (1391-1920)-esque traditional Korean organicism in purity, however, the important note to make here, as has been done once before, is that they were not politicised. As the country transitioned from a state-based well-functioning entity to an ethnie-based struggling and embattled nation, themes of such emotional potency were employed in propaganda – in essence, politicised – for strategic/political gain, so much so that they become integral elements to the ideology of the day, ethnonationalism. In producing this study it is my hope that once we come to firmly acknowledge and understand these four themes in the greater matrix of ethnic nationalism at least, that we will be able to more astutely respond to ceaseless strains on a regional and international scope – thereby and possibly positively contributing to an improved situation within North Korea itself. The four themes follow.
Love and Hate

Love and hate are the first two themes that appear most prominently in North Korean nationalism. As established, nationalism is an inherently emotional and non-logical sentiment where rationality is not typically exercised, so this makes love and hate very powerful means by which to recruit active support for the ideology. Love and hate generally follow a simple schemata in North Korea. The regime promotes a love for the nation and the people, and a hatred for national enemies embodied in the US and in Japan. Love is reserved for the internal, and hate is reserved for the external; love is a reflection of the self, and hate is a reflection of the other. In this way, they are incredibly complementary, acting as sentiments that are easily grasped, well balanced, and indeed wholly enveloping on each side of the emotional spectrum. Oftentimes in the sources, one will scant find some element of love without hatred, and hatred without love. Indeed as Kim Il Sung says, “A person who does not know how to hate the enemy is one who cannot love his class and his people.” Simply put, without love, there would be nothing that needs protection, and hence nothing to hate, and without hate, what is loved would not be held as dearly, as there is no threat to its safety or well-being perceived. This perfectly correlates to a love for the internal, and a hatred for the external, as mentioned above, given North Korea’s extraordinarily closed off and xenophobic nature. Love and hate will be overviewed in the sources, some already mentioned in previous chapters, and some new to be introduced. They all however, adhere to the nature of sources used thus far in the thesis, comprising of publications of a cultural and artistic nature, all accessible to North Koreans on a daily basis. Posters and music videos shall first proceed.

To start with posters, the ones that will be referred to will be the David Heather Collection, published in book form in 2008. Much more developed than the posters from the early 1950s that were explored in chapter 3, posters of the 1990s, which are those that people are most familiar with when it comes to North Korea, are far from simple sketches, and indeed in themselves potent pieces of propaganda. Based on some fundamental sentiment, these posters employ elements of imagery and text to drive home the particular political message the regime seeks to convey. Sentiments include pride, valour, bravery, happiness, and of course, love and hate. Love and hate

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302 Scalapino & Lee, p. 873
(L) Let's drive the US imperialists out and reunite the fatherland! (Heather, pg. 103)

(R) Let's be iron fists that mercilessly crush the enemies of the revolution! (Ibid, pg 98)

(L) American imperialists are the sworn enemies of our people! (Ibid, pg 119)

(R) Let's smash the Japanese dream of becoming a nuclear power! (Ibid, pg 100)
are very dominant, and as mentioned above, are exemplified in manifold ways. Hatred however, is visually the most prevailing.

Created to stir anger and hostility towards the American (and Japanese) establishment, a great deal of these visuals portray American army troops either abusing Korean civilians during the war, or being crushed by oversized North Korean soldiers. To construct this theme, various meaningful recurring symbols surface. One first cannot help but notice the facial dispositions of the main protagonists in the works. American GIs are pictured with devil-like evil faces, ridiculed enlarged noses and scheming expressions, whereas North Korean soldiers are viewed as strong-minded and determined, eyebrows clenched in concentration and teeth grit in resolve. In the posters where Americans are the terrorists, the hurt and horror of the unfortunate Korean race are depicted in the expressions of harmless children miserably crying, and the tenacity said unique only to the Korean race is reflected in the mothers’ expressions of will to not succumb to the aggressor. Scenes of carnage show falling missiles invariably carrying the “US” logo, with wicked men’s knives dripping pure blood, and American flags are blown apart amid blazes of fire in retort, with North Korean soldiers exalting their efforts.

This set of posters is contrasted with a very different set. A youthful girl in traditional Korean dress tenderly lays a wreath of flowers in tribute to the socialist cause in one scene, and in another we are inspired to become comrades of passion and conviction, like those prominent of the past who are being hailed. Both contain overtures of affection to the state and nation: in the first, by the accompanying comment of “We waited for you, fatherly General!” and in the second, from the prescribed context of “by going down the path out of deference to the Great General”. Jubilation fills the foreground of the familiar light blue undemarcated Korean peninsula with the banners of “Long live the Korean nation!” and “The Korean people are one!” and scenes of triumph remind us that “We win, if the Great General is with us.” Children appear plump and happy being nurtured by the traditional virtues of olden Korea, and

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303 Heather, p. 214
304 Ibid, p. 215
305 Ibid, 250
306 Ibid, 227
(L) Long live the reunited Korean nation! (Heather, pg. 250)

(R) One! One nation, one bloodline, one language, one territory, one culture, one history. (Ibid, pg 262)

(L) Let’s quickly build it up! (On the building blocks of independence, a peaceful reunification and the great unity of the people) (Heather, pg. 257)

(R) Let’s cherish what is ours! (Ibid, pg. 246)
another couple of toddlers are having a merry old time stacking up the blocks of reunification; “Let’s build it up quickly!” \(^{307}\) they say.

The contrast in the two types of sentiments that are being generated in the posters described above is clear. Complementary as they are, we observe the demonisation of the external other(s) and the affirmation of the internal self. The ways in which these messages and meanings are constructed are first of all by facial expressions, which set the human tone, or the human feeling to the poster. Supportive of facial expressions, there is also body language. Having practically all protagonists in the posters imbued in some type of physical action or pose, these figurines depict an activeness, a liveliness, or an essence of dynamism, which in addition to facial expressions, could incite that very same feeling among receivers. Even though viewers may not jump to their feet, raising high in full cry their guns, spades or even pens, this notion has been received to them in an effective psychological manner.

Colour also serves an implicitly powerful purpose in the posters. Widely known to both incite certain feelings and to represent certain groups of emotions, colours in the North Korean posters are used effectively for maximum effect. We are told “posters that deal with ideology, political mobilization, loyalty and self-sacrifice, as well as anti-Americanism use red as their primary colour, as it connotes conviction, determination, and ferociousness.” In addition, “blue, by contrast, suggests quiet, peace, and harmony”. \(^{308}\) These colours are used extensively yet selectively in the posters, and are utilised to deliberately excite such intended senses. As alluded to above, we observe red in all posters depicting military opposition with the United States (particularly employing the American flag and its dominant colour of red), and continuously see the harmonious blue depiction of the undemarcated Korean peninsula (connoting reunification and nationalism). Another element of the propaganda pieces that is used for extra effect is the caption. Incorporated into the bottom of the visual, captions contribute to the way in which meaning is constructed. Being a straightforward message, these phrases usually support their visual hosts by functioning to either encourage or advise viewers. Encouragement is seen in the most common grammatical form of “Let us/Let’s [do something]!” and guidance is given in the other prominent linguistic convention of “We are better off/more advantageous if we [do something]”. As

\(^{307}\) Ibid, 227
\(^{308}\) Ibid, pp. 14-15
established in earlier parts of this study, the visual endeavours to arouse the fear or threat on behalf of the viewer, with the slogan then coming to the rescue, and/or liberation of them, thus strengthening the espoused ideological line.

In this way, posters are prime examples of how the regime uses propaganda texts to propagate their strategic sentiments of love and hate. Basic yet powerful in nature, exposure to such material on a daily basis cannot help but engender a corresponding sense of emotion on the part of the North Korean viewer, thus bolstering the ideology of ethnic based nationalism.

Now moving on to love and hate in music videos. Though not as concentrated as in posters, songs and music videos are equally as effective a medium in the propagation of the regime agenda due to their general popularity and wide enjoyment amongst the people. Both lyrics and imagery from the music video contribute to the substance of the song, so it is important to view both in a holistic manner. Among the selection of themes that are displayed in the songs, prevailing are the themes of the homeland, of nature, of past sorrow, of socialist paradise and of the leaders. Even after watching a few, one is instilled with the aesthetic norm, having most music videos filmed in outside locations such as mountains, parks and recreations facilities, with all people adhering to the similar convention of modest attire and tidy hairstyles. Singing style is conservative with blends of traditional Korean folk, and none of the songs sport any type of modern audio or visual engineering. Lyrics (subtitled) with corresponding visuals are almost always the custom. Among a CD collection of collated popular songs, one verse from the song called *Smile of Love* is exemplified below:

Affectionate, affectionate, affectionate  
That smile of love  
Warmly, warmly, warmly  
That light that shines and flows  
That endlessly benevolent smile  
When one embraces it in one’s heart  
Just like a spring day  
Flutters in happiness  
Ah, that loving smile  
Shine, shine, shine bright  
That smile of the sun

309 Choesin Choson gayo - Disk 3 Song 11: Smile of Love (My Translation)
To refer to Brian R. Myers, he informs us that a lot of North Korea’s propaganda may seem apolitical to the foreign eye but in fact are “read” differently by North Koreans.\textsuperscript{310} The above song may be placed as an example. Although the reference to a certain “smile” personifies the piece to a certain extent, one could well be left with the impression that this is a song merely rejoicing a fine spring afternoon or the bright and warm nature of the sun. That smile however, does belong to someone, and someone very significant at that. Hidden in translation, the word “loving” of the first line in the third stanza is the adjective \textit{chin’aehada} in Korean. Having quite a few synonymous words in Korean all coarsely being translated into the English stem of “love” this Korean adjective is none other than the official term that is attached to Kim Jong II - known as the “Dear Leader” (\textit{chin’aehaneun jidoja}). Corresponding to this refrain in the music video, with a suspiciously extended and continuous zoom-in to the end of the song, is the visual of what could be described as just a simple and nice red flower. Not just a simple and nice red flower this is, for to the North Koreans, it is the aforementioned Kimjongilia - a specially cultivated begonia flower species by a Japanese botanist to celebrate the Dear Leader’s 46th birthday. To characterise this ‘smile’, evidently, no amount of sentiment has been spared - affectionate, warm, bright, loving, and inciting of happiness as well as life (by reference to the sun), to be precise. Such unconcealed joy cannot help but make one wonder how and why the North Koreans came to cherish this of their own so much. So let us be informed that:

\begin{verbatim}
Being robbed of country, being robbed of hometown  
How sorrowful was the slave life of grudge  
Repelling the enemy and reclaiming the motherland  
We sing that happiness! We dance that emotion!\textsuperscript{311}
\end{verbatim}

Here we realise the intention, or the motive of a previous era that has been carried on into the present. With no crime being considered more heinous in North Korea, the violation of national sovereignty and purported enslavement of the people are routinely stirred to never permit the chance of the North Korean people ever forgetting they have a cause or object that they must hate. This combination of sorrow

\textsuperscript{310} Myers, p. 87  
\textsuperscript{311} Choesin Choson gayo - Disk 3 Song 20: Sing the motherland! (My Translation)
and hatred once again prevails, and we consequently see the repurification of the homeland ushered in upon the repelling of the enemy. The extent to which they hold love for their country is matched only by the hatred of which they embrace toward the enemy, and this is precisely exemplified by the verse presented above. Moving on and forgetting the past, or even just letting it rest in peace does not seem to be an option for the North Koreans, for the perceived unjust past is as much a part of the present as it was in the past - perhaps owing to such media as the one above, in themselves, far from being or becoming rare commodities in North Korean culture and/or society.³¹²

Putting lyrics aside for a moment, the music videos of the popular music Video CD analysed also make clear another theme significant to this study. Although this section primarily deals with love of the ethnic for his/her nation, the complementary theme of ‘love’ in its more general sense, is also exhibited. Often described as one of the deepest and moving emotional experiences one could go through, it is North Korea’s depiction of romantic love that deems itself although strange to external viewers (most probably even to South Koreans as well), completely in line with its state-espoused ideology.

Shyness, being bashful or coy in the face of one’s love interest of the opposite sex is by all means not a new thing to historical Korean narrative. In the music videos however, North Korean protagonists are portrayed excessively innocent, naïve, immature and happy, to the extent that it often appears questionable. As Myers points out, females “behave girlishly even in adulthood, blushing at the drop of a hat and covering their mouths when they smile”³¹³ and males front no visible masculinity or bravado at all. They daydream of each other during their ways to and fro of a day with elated expressions and effortless footsteps, envisage each others’ faces even while working, and steal secret rendezvous when the chance permits.

This is contrasted to a different type of sentiment. Solitude walks down a flowered path immersed in thought, dazed, almost hypnotic-state expressions of sheer wonder and enlightenment, as well as compelling and completely consuming senses of conviction to one’s sense of life and their living of it. This is the juxtaposition of romantic love versus ideological love in North Korea, as observed in the music videos.

³¹² Myers also puts forth the insight stating that a common way anger is maintained during periods of relatively lesser tension (vis-à-vis the United States) is to demand vengeance for past injustices inflicted on the race (p. 148), with that hatred going so far as to even help unify the nation (p. 149).
³¹³ Myers, p. 86
From the starkly differing depictions of the two, one cannot help but form the impression of romantic love as being trivial, frivolous and simply not in the class of superiority of ideological love, which is shown as a deep, profound, meaningful and complex set of emotions. The state simply cannot afford its precious productive citizens to be distracted by such undesirables as romance and/or the wholehearted devotion to any other cause but itself, so it manifestly constructs the social concept of love as a severely downgraded and diluted version of what it has the potential to truly develop into. So in consulting Myers once again we realise clearly that “what may look to outsiders like a simple love story is thus as much ideological as everything else.”

To tie the findings of the music videos again to love and hate, we foremost notice the barrage of love in relation to the notions of hometown (at a micro level) and homeland (at a macro level). These are the places where the all-important racial bloodline is cultivated, the places where the fondness of one’s childhood is rooted, and the supreme symbolic physical manifestation of the larger psychological concept of nationalism. In line with this, the sense of hate in the music videos complements this, as it is the sentiment that has been produced as a result of the hometown/land being threatened and violated. Again, as clarified earlier, hatred defines the other and functions to alienate it from the in-group, with love being the embodiment of the self, delineating positive identity in the name of the nation.

Purity and Unity

Purity and unity, much like love and hate, are seemingly simple, yet potentially powerful sentiments. They appeal to the core of a person’s belief and value system, effecting behaviour of an impulsive and not always rational nature. Purity and unity, I see, are much like the partners, or rather, the by-products of love and hate. The nation is purified by the hatred that is embraced for the other, and it is unified by the love that is embraced for the self. In other words, hate acts as the method by which to purify the nation, and love acts as the method by which to unite the nation. These two notions will be explored, much in a similar way as love and hate were above.

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Ibid, p. 90
To start the discussion, the reason why nationalism in Korea in general has been a lasting and influential occurrence could be attributed to the fact of its strength in unity. Ethnic homogeneity from the outset lays a most ideal base, whereby construction upwards is facilitated by shared experiences, common aims and collective beliefs. This collective belief sees itself no more pronounced than in North Korean culture. Unity in all activities, especially those of a political-ideological nature, is emphasised so much that self-centered, individualistic, or behaviour that is deemed selfish, is either condemned or severely punished.\textsuperscript{315} In this vein, the notion of unity is crucial. While unity in political-ideological aim is emphasised, one must be certain that elements actually making up this unitary whole are of suitable or reliable composition. To this precisely, is what the administration of North Korea devotes a great amount of energy. The ideology of nationalism is seen to be the most pivotal keystone in the structure that is North Korea. For construction to continue, or at least to avoid destruction and to remain intact in a changing world, direction in terms of aim, objective and ideal must be well in sync. Divergent views, or “reactionary elements”, even at top official levels, are shunned and disposed of in a prompt manner, making clear the importance of a sense of cleanliness. It is the essence of an authentic, an organic, or a truth that is sought, and this precisely forms the corresponding theme of purity.

Purity therefore, is stressed in ideological state of mind. A sound ideologist in North Korea would be someone who is completely confident of, and tributary to the state, one who unquestionably receives and internalises its disseminated rhetoric, and one who holds the willingness to sacrifice their life for the cause of it. This is considered pure. Questioning why this is considered pure, the answer may lie in the nature of the concept of purity itself. Purity denotes the quality of the organic or natural order, a universal truth, or simply put, ‘the way it’s just meant to be’. It is the very ideology and ideological writings of North Korea that insinuate this very thing, that it itself is the truth, and that the chosen land of Korea, led by the chosen leaders of the Kims, will lead the chosen people to the inevitable victory of socialism and ultimately reunification. The holy blood line of that leadership therefore must be perpetuated at all costs, we come to believe, in order to ensure that the purity of the sacred mission is preserved. This is most obviously observed in the hereditary succession, most peculiar for a socialist state, but even this is set aside for the more important fact that impurity, in the form of

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{315}Park (2002), p. 48}
someone outside the Kim line, would be seen as wrong, illegitimate, and most importantly, impure.

Interestingly enough however, even the purest of proletariats can morph into the most impure of bourgeoisie by having bad or reactionary thoughts, we are told.\(^{316}\) Hope is not lost for these individuals however, as redemption through education and/or hard labour is the remedy the Kim company administer to redeem one's ideological soul. Processes of purification fortunately do vary to a higher degree, and the most common low-level form of this is seen through sessions of ‘criticism’ and ‘self-criticism’ conducted in one's place of vocation or employment. As was practiced in both the Soviet Union and in China, in these infamous assemblies, people in cohorts divulge their faults and blunders while at work, as well as those of others, and with a concluding swearing of allegiance to the state, vow to work ever-harder and ever-enthusiastically for the cause of the national objective. From the perspective of purity, the aim of this practice could be said to be relieving oneself from the impurity, and hence the strain created within one's consciousness from acts done improperly, or perceived to not have been fulfilled to its utmost in correspondence to ideological ideal. As an almost Jesus Christ-like figure, the most pure of them all in his divine omnipresence, forgives all, merely on the grounds that they repent their sins and plead forgiveness, having been all importantly re-purified.\(^{317}\)

As apparent in the context of criticism and self-criticism, purity and unity seem to be indispensable to each other, much in the same way as love and hate. With the state enforcing this system of obligatory purification and unitary/communal adhesion, it finds itself up against a quantifiably less and qualitatively weaker resistance, supporting the line that the government exploits its propagandistic clutch on the people to achieve its aims and objectives in the name of the nation. In this way, the ideological noose is firm but snug, suffocating but not strangling.

Revisiting propaganda posters and music videos, purity and unity, along with love and hate, are seen to be decisively present. To start with propaganda posters, unity is most obviously observed in the hailing of all by the “let us” slogans. Although posters are most likely being consumed individually, this style assumes a collective audience

\(^{316}\) Scalapino & Lee, p. 855

\(^{317}\) It is this state of purity that is sought, but in saying this, one could also note the important point that criticism deliberated/done by oneself would be simply meaningless. This is because it is not contributory to the group and hence not integrated into the all-defining political-social body.
and internalises in the individual a communal struggle. Unity is also visible in the common practice of proudly and gallantly rallying the whole nation’s strength and political consciousness for ridding the peninsula of the American presence. This is often pictorially depicted in the posters by teaming up one member of almost every social echelon in North Korea, being a steel worker, a soldier, a farmer and an intellectual, but it also appears unequivocally in slogan form. From these, we notice that all appeals for unity by the government are being made not only in a positive and empowering vein, but also for reasons that are perceived to benefit and/or in some way enrich the Korean nation; that is, preparatory positive sentiment being conjured up for the bigger fruits of what that struggle is deemed to bring, or eventuate as, namely, reunification. This interpretation supports the broader idea that the positive sentiment of love acts to unite the nation.

Purity too, is subliminally prevalent in the propaganda posters. By seeing the manner in which hatred purifies the nation, all anti-American posters seem to exhibit this most dominant and prevailing theme, which is exterminating the evil foreign other to reclaim the land back to the innate pure self. By maintaining that it is the other that is the warmonger and that the self is merely the peacemaker (ironically neutralising the warmonger’s provocations with retaliated violence), North Korea’s military ventures are justified, and even promoted, on the basis that they are the sole legitimate entity on the Korean peninsula.

Home life too, is a source of purity and unity in the propaganda posters. In these pieces, the average household is illustrated usually comprising a mother, a father and one or two small children; typically one boy and one girl. Undoubtedly bubbly, plump and in good spirits, various scenes show a mother and daughter arriving home from the grocery store having purchased an abundance of foodstuffs and candy, or an assiduous housewife not squandering even one drop of water that potentially leaks in vain from a tap. If not wearing traditional Korean joseonot dress, women wear comfortable feminine attire, and if even pictured in a familial situation, men usually look sharp dressed in a western suit. Children sport cute outfits or joseonot like their mothers.

To interpret these images, the nuclear family structure, and the preference towards it, is clear. Family members are all pictured content and happy, and infancy appears to define offspring. Gender discrepancy moreover, appears to be an issue in the
purportedly equal socialist society, for women are deserted in the past left wearing *joseonot* while husbands go off to attend to modernity wearing suits. Frugality is being espoused, yet the treat of consuming sweets seems to be the reward. Above all, it is the unity of the family, and the purity of cultural tradition that is being communicated to the North Korean people via these official depictions of family life. The family unit, whereby everyone is assigned a role and an identity within that system, and the perpetuation of historically mono-ethnic traditional family mores, is precisely this. Purity is also reflected through the children as they represent the infancy of *The Child Race*, and a detailed exploration of this in its own right will soon follow.

As in the case of love and hate, purity and unity also do appear in popular media by way of the preaching of single-hearted loyalty to the leadership and nation, but another more physical example other than those, is worthwhile exploring. The previous chapter ended with discussions on Dangun, mythical progenitor of Korea, and revitalised figure of North Korean nationalism of the 1990s. The instance of Dangun very much allows us to see the notions of purity and unity evident. Manifest in his element of nature, organicism and divinity, the god king-like figure is being represented as the truest origin of the Korean people via his blood lineage. He is seen as the genesis of the Korean race, and therefore the most purest form of it. For this reason, Koreans are urged to rally behind him in unison in order to preserve and uphold their treasured ethnic Korean identity. This characterisation of Dangun no doubt greatly contributed to, if not originated North Korea’s obsession with the “one nation, one bloodline, one language, one land, one culture, one history” line epitomised in the blatantly nationalist poster featured in the David Heather collection on page 262 (explored in chapter 4).

It does not however, end there. Coupled with this notion of purity, Changzoo Song informs us on the importance of the sense of unity that the Dangun tomb brings – not only amongst North Koreans alone, but in terms of the whole Korean peninsula itself. He mentions that among the visitors to the tomb, there have been archaeologists, historians and religious leaders from South Korea, viewing the finding positively, and even going back home to set up societies for the research on Dangun ‘as historical fact’. Although extremely suspicious in nature with such groups most likely being regime sympathisers, this does exemplify a rather indirect way that unity has been born

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318 Myers’ assertion that the North Korean people resemble a child race (requiring a parental figure to survive in the world); found throughout his book *The Cleanest Race* (2010), in particular, p. 166.
319 Song, p. 9
of the Dangun affair. However politicised the tomb may be, and certainly is, this innate aspiration on the part of compatriots both in the North and South has managed to come to some degree of fruition, finding common ground on somewhat common soil.

Speaking on such issue as the division of Korea, it would be fitting to end the discussion on purity and unity with the most plausible theory written to date in the literature explaining this very scenario. In addressing the puzzling reason that led to the division of Korea despite its strong sense of ethnic unity, Korean ethnic nationalism scholar Gi-wook Shin, drawing from social identity theory, mentions that the inter-Korean conflict, more than anything else, is a battle to “purify the ethnic community by cleansing foreign ideas and thoughts that are seen to contaminate or betray the community.”\(^{320}\) This is done when “behaviours of undesirable in-group members are perceived to threaten the in-group identity ...[done in order] to preserve or restore the perceived positivity of the in-group as a whole.”\(^{321}\) We see unmistakable parallels with all of the thus far mentioned resonations of purity and unity (also love and hate) and North Korean nationalism. Seeing himself and his state as the sole rightful representation of the Korean nation, Kim assumes an authority, all the while, an intimacy or affection, in representing a righteous and proper Korea, whereby unification under his way is only a matter of time. Tragically undermining their own innate senses of purity and unity, the Korean nation, divided as it is, seems locked in this impasse as long as this status quo remains.

Nature

Having traversed love/hate and purity/unity, there are few other notions consistently present in 1990s North Korean ethnic nationalist ideology that call for illustration. Among the two, the first is nature. Nature assumes a grand position in the North Korean political landscape, as according to Myers, it is seen to be a reflection of the characteristics of the race itself.\(^{322}\) Nature is a rather general notion, but it is used in North Korea for a very targeted purpose. Unlike much of the direct political and

\(^{320}\) Shin, p. 158
\(^{321}\) Ibid
\(^{322}\) Myers, mid book photo section
ideological content explored thus far, the content of nature has the ability to both convey a message and stir emotions, all the while in a seemingly unfettered and non-cumbersome way. Again, it is this sense of the organic, or natural, that is being transmitted via nature, which then, is ultimately being associated and aligned with the Kim regime.

Imagery of soaring peaks and strong waves symbolise the lofty virtues and indomitable spirit of the Koreans in the view of Myers, but then amongst that, the leader is at the apex, standing over creation as the divinely ordained God-like figure. Many official paintings exemplify this, with Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il routinely being painted behind grand natural backdrops of crashing waves and tall mountains, or even immersed within nature themselves. Such practice is highly reminiscent of the kings from the Choson dynasty (1392-1910), whose official portraits were always likened with the backdrop of natural phenomena such as mountains, rivers, and different phases of the moon. The allusion is the legitimacy of the emperor, chosen by the gods and ordained by nature. The Kim leaders’ symbiosis with nature does not stop there however, as, as is well known Kim Il Sung is referred to as the “sun” of the nation, and Kim Jong Il, the “star(s)”. This is in addition to both Kims each having their own namesake flower (Kimilsungia and Kimjongilia), as well as the significance of Mt. Baekdu, not only as the ‘cradle of the Korean nation’, but also, allegedly as the birthplace of Kim Jong Il.

Perhaps alluding to purity, another element of nature strikes a chord with not only traditional Korea, but modern, and somewhat proletarian North Korea. The glorification of country life in North Korea is noticeable, with posters and songs promoting an unrealistic and highly idealistic view of life on a farm. Women farmers in posters are pictured plump, rosy cheeked and happy picking apples off trees from a bumper season, and in another well known song, a trendy girl from the city is lauded for relocating herself to a rural area to marry a humble farmer (dosicheonyeo sijibwayo). Undertones of the purity and simplicity of nature ring through in these pieces, with the regime constructing the premise that the real, or authentic, essence of the nation is to be found amongst the soil and sky of the countryside – all moreover, stronger allusions to
the element of 'land' in the (ethno-)primordial sense, of which the ancestors too, tilled, and then bestowed to them from generations long ago.323

Nature is a very interesting notion in North Korean national ideology, because for all of its heightened appreciation in propaganda as established above, in reality, North Korea has scant concern for its own domestic environmental protection issues. Not only does it engage in unsustainable industrial and agricultural practices, but it is also known to import waste, namely rubber from China, and dispose of it in its own land for the purpose of earning foreign hard currency. For all its floral rhetoric and imagery therefore, the regime clearly prefers propagandistic value over genuine value, selling its ethnic nationalist/nature line first of all, and in turn selling the nation along with it too.

The Child Race

The Child Race was touched upon above in speaking of purity, making the example of children as representations of the infancy of The Child Race. The Child Race is an idea that was put forth by Brian R. Myers’ in his 2010 book The Cleanest Race: How North Koreans See Themselves and Why It Matters and asserts that the people of North Korea resemble a race of children – one that is naïve and innocent, instinctual, spontaneous, and, requiring of a parental figure to survive in the world. Or to use Myers’ words: “The Koreans believe that their childlike purity renders them so vulnerable to the outside world that they need a Parent Leader to survive.”324 It was an unconventional posit to the North Korean Studies field at the time, but soon gained much recognition, and indeed does provide a meritorious perspective in viewing the convention of interaction between the North Korean leadership and people. Basis of the idea is perhaps set in the traditional East Asian cultural tendency to respect elders and obey authority. A studious student studies hard and obeys their elders, but by the same token, is also vulnerable and defenseless on their own. Elders and those in positions of authority are seen as

323 Myers also provides the valuable insight that “glorification of country life as the repository of pure ethnic values undoubtedly has much to do with the fact that Korea experienced urbanisation at foreign hands.” p. 87
324 Myers, p. 166
repositories of wisdom and insurers of safety, and for that reason are preeminent figures of society who are to be admired and respected. To translate this into the political apparatus of a state and its administration, it is not difficult to see how North Koreans, of any stripe, would find it hard to view Kim and his regime in any other way but in the above described fashion. He cuts a fatherly figure; loving, caring and protective of his children against wrongdoers, all the while embodying the supreme leadership role; guiding, planning and dedicated to serving the country and cause of reunification. Myers takes heed of the Imperial Japanese precedent in evaluating North Korea and highlights the strong family-oriented mores of the loyal soldiers who, worshipping the Emperor as the universal father, would allow death to become of them before shame be brought to their hallowed circle. The Kim regime too, upholds such values, stressing national dignity and integrity before all else, in addition to the notion of the collective over the individual.

When viewing The Child Race in the context of North Korean propaganda, many correlations surface. Myers states that the North Korean leadership is maternal – caring, loving and nurturing – and indeed considering the fact that the regime itself calls the party the “mother party”, one would find this notion hard to challenge. With females/mothers being seen as more pure than males, there is little doubt why the leadership would instinctually move to characterise itself in this light, as opposed to one of an infertile and somewhat stagnant men’s club. In reality however, it is more of a rigid men’s club, so to alleviate this, fatherly rhetoric is framed in highest light to make best propagandistic use of the title of ‘father’. Here is where the manifold familial titles assigned to Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il are noteworthy, and among them, parental leader, fatherly leader, are dear leader are few of the prominent ones. It is interesting to mention that Kim Jong Il never addressed Kim Il Sung as his own father in public, but rather only in other general nation-centric terms such as ‘father of the nation’, etc. Kim Il Sung indeed was not only his father, but the father of everyone, the desired propagated image was, so this convention is understandable. Kim Jong Un too, adheres to this, in relation to both his father and grandfather, Kim Jong Il and Kim Il Sung.

Delving into the content of the idea of The Child Race, looking at the way the lives of North Koreans are managed, or rather “taken care of” from cradle to grave is again, in correspondence with Myers’ analogy. Babies are not permitted to be reared by their own mothers upon birth, perhaps for fear that they become reliant on their
mother and not the state. To this end, they are put into state run crèches as early as possible, indeed, able to be indoctrinated as early as possible. This way, the state assumes not only their physical well being, but also their emotional well being. As just alluded to, the state effectively becomes the mother of the child, where all children are taught to be thankful to the benevolent fatherly Kim leader for all they have.

In place of a parent who advises their child on what area of studies to take up, which vocation to pursue, what type of spouse to seek, and where to live moreover, in the case of North Korea, all of this is done by the state. Individuals have little influence over such matters, where prerogatives are not based on full free will, but instead on political and social standings. And of course as most would know, couples take the indispensable wedding photograph in front of the most grand statue of Kim Il Sung they have in their city or town. This way, they have the approval of the fatherly leader, granting them socio-political blessings to carve out their lives as good citizens from then on. Yet again this aligns with Myers’ view, showing that North Koreans require such parental figure whether they like it or not, to help them in all stages of their lives.

What all of these facets of The Child Race idea make clear, is a systematic nurturing of a disposition of submission to the state, in all ways possible. North Koreans’ physical well being is taken care of by the state, their schooling, their working and their leisure are too, but more importantly, their emotional compass is permanently pinned towards the familial nation-state and solely that. The party is not just an administrative body, it is the “motherly party” and Kim is not just the president, he is the “fatherly leader”. With countless repetition of ethnic homogeneity and unity, and a closed off society permitting citizens to know nothing else, it is little wonder how and why Myers views the North Korean people as ‘The Child Race’; something they may very well be.
Chapter 6. Concluding Remarks

North Korea is the perfect example of everything that can go wrong with a state.

A strong motivation in undertaking this study was the desire to illuminate that the North Korea that we know of today, a picture so rigid and hard to shake, was indeed not always the one that it started off as from the beginning. The achievements of post-war reconstruction in the 1950s and the drive to be the most rightful Korea in the 1960s ultimately devolved into the personality cult-obsessed, economically backward and politically oppressive dictatorship that it became from the 1970s, throughout the 1980s, 1990s, and still now to this day. And this is perfectly reflected in the ideology as we track its progression. As this study has explained, the early decades, ones that were high spirited, economically able and Soviet-supported, were state-based in focus. Industry, agriculture, economic plans, bureaucratic structures and citizen rights were the bases of society, where the young state was a beacon of success throughout much of decolonised Asia. The latter decades, ones that were now insular, recalcitrant, defiant, and wholly reliant on a comprehensive body of ethnic mythologies, quickly made clear of their nation the weaknesses, or rather, the sheer aversion that it had to coexisting in an ever increasingly interconnected world. Simply summarised, when the state was functioning well in the early years it had no need to justify itself, but in later years as serious structures started to fail, it moved to condition its populace ethno-emotionally, a method which would cost basically nothing, yet one that was just as effective, if not, profoundly more. It was patriotism serving to construct the country, and nationalism serving to maintain the county; patriotic construction at a time of economic plenty, and nationalist maintenance at a time of economic ruin/hardship. Indeed a nascent nationalism had always existed, and Kim Il Sung was inherently a nationalist minded figure, but the aforementioned idea is the general statement this thesis makes.

Criticisms may well be leveled. As previously acknowledged, exceptions may and do exist, and not all of this argument is an accurate representation of every single individual’s experiences in North Korea. As previously mentioned however, this study aimed to present a general picture of the entire transition of North Korean ideology, and not the portrayal of a micro-group and their particular experiences. Perhaps the scope was too ambitious. Another flaw vulnerable to identification would be the lack of economic figures throughout this work considering the argument’s significant
propensity towards incorporating it into the fold. Two reasons exist as to this. Firstly, because the North Korean state stopped publishing economic statistics in the 1960s, which would result in an unbalanced presentation, and secondly, because the study essentially does not need them. All my argument requires is the premise that a) North Korea did economically flourish in the early decades and b) North Korea did economically suffer in the later decades; facts which I believe are conventional and common knowledge to anyone in North Korean academia.

Another criticism that is valid is the almost full focus on North Korea and that alone. Indeed as acknowledged in opening the thesis, ethnic nationalism is by no means only a North Korean phenomenon, and with such history-shaping incidents of ethnic-related importance everywhere from neighbouring China to Eastern Europe, no comprehensive discussion of ethnic nationalism is complete without them. However, this study was never meant to be a comprehensive discussion of ethnic nationalism – it is meant to be a comprehensive discussion of ethnic nationalism in North Korea. As stated, my approach treats North Korea with its unique historical peculiarities, so detracting from this nucleus with supplementary content was not something I was intent on doing. Of course, Nazi Germany is acknowledged on few occasions, and Imperial Japan, where relevant, has been incorporated (the two most analogous cases that I see), but it is intentional that North Korea assumes centre stage throughout. There is no shortage of material on the Tibetans, the Uyghurs, the Mongols or the Han of China in the body of nationalism literature for one to peruse, nor are the Serbs, the Croats, the Slovenes, or the Macedonians of the Balkans unknown in the least in that same body of prose. Yet when it comes to North Korea, there is no doubt a dearth.

Other weaknesses of the thesis may be directed at interpretation of materials used. I am no psychologist, nor am I qualified to perform professional analysis on art, music or the like. I am someone however, who is familiar with the (North) Korean historical journey, and one that believes that my approach of assessing North Korea, again, from the inside out is most ideal in order to gain a valid understanding of the ideology and its complexities. Ethnic nationalism is a pressing and pertinent topic in the study of today’s North Korea and to that cause this study was undertaken.

So conversely, there are achievements. In this thesis I have provided a general roadmap on the history of North Korean ideology from the perspective of the regime. In an era where the regime is moving to purge all historical information
unflattering to its policy of the day, inquiries such as this, and expeditions into such collections as the seized documents housed at the National Archives and Records Administrations, Baltimore, become all the more important in understanding an evermore complicated today by looking into a somewhat less complicated yesterday. This is definitely in addition to such facilities as the North Korean Information Centre in Seoul, a rich repository of information on North Korea more relevant to its culture of today. Perhaps another achievement of this study is its shedding of light on the small pieces of history – poems, songs, posters, and articles, almost always washed over by the broad brush of grand historic events and tall figures. Everyday people and an empathy to their pleasures and plights of the time is what I hoped to have conveyed in this work, as undoubtedly history would not be as it is without them. The concluding achievement I hoped to have attained in this work is a sensitivity to the more than twenty million people currently in the North that stand to be shaken when their country collapses.

Reunification, contrary to the propaganda, will bring a myriad of problems to the North Korean people. For all the ethnic nationalism they have been taught unites them with their Southern brethren, it will be no surprise if their ethnic sentiments precisely, cause their ruin, or at least some significant degree of cognitive dissonance. Ethnic nationalism is a potential force of unity in a post-collapse scenario, but its inherent flaw resides in the fact that the figure of Kim Il Sung, or the whole Kim construct, has forever occupied its apex. How will the North Koreans be able to feel that sense of stability and ethnic identity outside of the way it has always been known to them? What if some reject the new nation and regress back into a state of nostalgia for what was once known (as seen in Germany’s Ostalgie)? It may even be the case that the Kim ideological apparatus has fixed people so deeply that they may only be able to survive physical hardship, and not psychological hardship. Issues such as these remain to be seen, and frankly, are considerably worrisome. However, there is cause for optimism. In the course of rehabilitation, Northerners will come to reengineer a new national identity. It will be difficult, and it may take generations, but it will be an authentic one; one bringing together the diversity and commonality of all the race, both North and South, hopefully, as one nation.
Reference List:


