Playing to Constraints: How Domestic Politics Determines the International Policies of North Korea

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Abbreviations

COMECON Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
CPC Central People’s Committee
DMZ Demilitarized Zone
DPRK Democratic People’s Republic of Korea
GDP Gross Domestic Product
HEU Highly Enriched Uranium
IAEA International Atomic Energy Agency
ICBM Intercontinental Ballistic Missile
KEDO Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organisation
KPA Korean People’s Army
KWP Korean Worker’s Party
LWRs Light Water Reactors
MFA Ministry of Foreign Affairs (North Korea)
MWt Mega-watt Thermal
NDC National Defence Commission
NKPC North Korean People’s Committee (Replaced by the SPA)
NKWP North Korean Worker’s Party (Used in the Kim Il Sung Era, replaced by KWP)
NPT Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
PC People’s Committees
PDS Public Distribution System
POW Prisoner of War
ROK Republic of Korea
SAC State Administrative Council
SPA Supreme People’s Assembly
SPTs Six Party Talks
UN United Nations
UNSC United Nations Security Council
US United States
USD United States Dollar
USSR Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WFP World Food Program
Declaration and Acknowledgements

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Government and International Relations, University of Sydney. This work is substantially my own, and where this work is not my own, the source has been footnoted for acknowledgement.

I would like to thank my supervisor Professor Justin Hastings for his expertise and help throughout the year. I would also like to thank Professor Darren C. Zook for his encouragement and for facilitating my access to North Korea’s constitution. This thesis is dedicated to Pamela Markham, without whom this could not have been done.
Use of Foreign Language Materials

Korean Names

All Korean names have been styled traditionally with the family name preceding the given name, unless the name is most commonly cited in the Western order.

Korean Romanization

This thesis uses the Revised Romanisation of Korean. The DPRK uses a variation of the Revised Romanisation of Korean which retains elements of the McCune-Reischauer system. For the sake of clarity, this thesis will use the Revised Romanisation of Korean as standardised by the Republic of Korea (ROK), as this is the most commonly used, internationally recognised romanisation. Geographical locations, people’s names and specific North Korean terminology will be edited to and appear in internationally recognised Revised Romanisation unless commonly known otherwise (i.e. Kim Il Sung as opposed to Kim II Seong).

Translations

All translations of primary and secondary sources of Korean material have been translated by the author.
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Chapter One

Introduction

For decades, analysts have dedicated themselves to decoding the hidden meanings behind North Korea’s provocations and its concessions. Aiming to induce cooperation and influence North Korea’s foreign policy, particularly regarding the country’s nuclear program, the international community have applied what should have been suffocating sanctions on a small, isolated nation with a crippled economy. Yet, the goals of nuclear disarmament and the economic, and eventually, political opening of the ‘Hermit Kingdom,’ remain elusive despite international action. Due to the current mode of engagement’s inability to achieve these outcomes, there is significant value and pressing urgency in conducting research into the driving rationale of North Korea’s foreign policies in order to retarget the international approach to North Korea.

This thesis refocuses considerations of North Korea to its internal politics, which lack attention as they are commonly perceived as inconsequential, or simply made ad hoc by the reigning supreme leader. Domestic politics however does play the key role in North Korea’s decision making, baring explanation as to why North Korea can give concessions under certain circumstances, or why North Korea otherwise continues to act in a way which provokes further external pressure. Throughout the leadership of the three Kims, the external constraints on North Korea have remained much the same. North Korea finds itself largely without allies outside of China, facing perceived strong and aggressive aversions, a widening material gap between itself and its adversaries and a balance of power that strongly favours
the US-South Korean alliance.¹ Yet, North Korean approaches to foreign policies have significantly changed over the years. It is these changes which require a consideration of how internal politics influences change in North Korea and what this means for international engagement.

**Question and Rationale**

External pressures, including the hefty sanctions placed on North Korea by the UN, seem to be largely disregarded or creatively adapted to by the North Korean regime. North Korea has been able to avoid complete economic collapse by orchestrating state criminal enterprise, modifying internal state operations and manipulating international donors in order to secure relatively reliable imports of food aid and other key resources. The ineffectiveness of employing external pressures to influence North Korean foreign policy requires a reconsideration of what constitutes the driving forces behind North Korean decision making. Hence, this study will be aiming to answer a two part question. *How do changes within North Korean domestic politics establish unique and varying sets of constraints on each generation of leadership? Further, how do these changes influence North Korea's outward behaviour in international negotiations?*

This thesis fits within a recent school of literature that suggests North Korea has a type of institutional pluralism which produces varying constraints on the supreme leader.² State ideology has also been examined by literature as an important tool to legitimise institutional

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change and regime decision making. There have also been numerous empirical analyses of critical junctures, domestic crises and their impact on the state, mostly revolving around famine and resource constraints. Yet, most research on North Korean domestic politics, especially regarding its influence on North Korea in the international realm, has previously focused on institutional structure, state ideologies or critical junctures individually. This thesis investigates these elements collectively as the constitutive elements of a domestic political environment which constrains the leadership and limits available courses of action in international negotiations.

Main Findings and Thesis Structure

This study finds with the evidence available that domestic politics, being the state institutional structure, ideology and the presence or absence of domestic crisis, is the pivotal determiner of North Korea’s foreign policy. The presence of critical junctures and crises determine whether the regime can give concessions, and this is then influenced by the state’s institutional structure and state ideology at the given time. In the absence of crisis, North Korea’s institutions and ideology are the key driver of its foreign policy outcomes. Yet, in the presence of crisis, added flexibility is given which allows for concession, however the

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concessions available are still dependent on the state institutional structure and ideology at the given time point.

This chapter will proceed to a literature review in order to situate this study within the current literature. Next will be an outline of the study’s theoretical hypothesis. Following this, the chapter will outline the methodology used in this paper and conclude with further considerations related to the unique data and information limitations on studies of North Korea. Chapters 2-4 will each focus on the leadership period of Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong Il and Kim Jong Un respectively. The final chapter will conclude and present an overview of the study’s findings.
Literature Review

Over time, literature on North Korea has shifted beyond the conceptualisation of the state as absolutely centralised and unconstrained by the domestic factors that preoccupy other nations. The literature shows that state institutional structure and state ideology have undergone significant changes over time, and that critical junctures have tested regime integrity on several occasions. There has also been analysis that has detailed how the regime must mediate domestic challenges in order to preserve the legitimacy of the Kim family. However this literature is yet to explain how these components work together to produce a domestic political environment, and what the ramifications of a changing domestic sphere are for North Korea’s behaviour in international negotiations.

Classifying the North Korean Regime

A significant portion of initial literature on the North Korean state considered it to be absolutely centralised, with all power bestowed upon one unrestrained source. Oh & Hassig (2000) characterise the North Korean state as a form of ‘totalitarian communism reminiscent of the days of Stalin,’ in which the supreme leader controls ‘virtually all fields of human endeavour, from poetry to potato farming.’ This view of North Korea has been echoed by several studies which characterise North Korea as a personalist regime. Another model by Cummings (1982) characterised North Korea as a neo-socialist corporatist state where the party, the family and the populace are incorporated into the state which acts as the basis for

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6 Oh & Hassig (2000) p. 13
all political interaction. Other studies such as Asher (2005) liken the Kim regime to an organised crime group, due to calculated state involvement in criminal activity.

There are, however, significant issues with absolutely centralised conceptualisations of the North Korean state. Reducing North Korea to a sub-state entity such as an organised crime group overlooks the significant capabilities of the state, including the size of territory it occupies, its military capacity and its ability to mobilize nationalism and ideology. The personalistic model is limited for a similar reason – the model does not explain the broader and constantly enforced ideological goals of the North Korean state such as re-unification, anti-imperialism and anti-capitalism. Although the neo-socialist corporatism model may have some utility, the North Korean state’s ability to incorporate all facets of political and economic life into the state wavered significantly after the great famine of 1991, where the state had to turn a blind eye to the rise of black markets and citizen entrepreneurialism.

Byman and Lind (2010) make an important break from previous literature that considered North Korea to be ‘a highly centralised… bureaucratic regime organised under an all-powerful leader.’ Although Byman and Lind (2010) evidence that North Korea still functions in an authoritarian capacity, they demonstrate regime co-optation in North Korea – where the regime must appease the North Korean ‘selectorate,’ or the group of elites that allow the Kim regime’s continuity. This need for co-optation evidences that North Korea is not a completely centralised entity and that significant elites, particularly from the military or

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9 Scobell (2006) p. v
the KWP, receive not only economic benefits but also a limited stake in decision making in exchange for their support.\textsuperscript{10} For example, North Korea’s nuclear program is evidenced as a tool to cultivate the imperative support of the military. The heightened prestige and appeasement offered by the program ensures acquiescence and boosts morale of ‘an institution challenged by hunger and shortfalls.’\textsuperscript{11} This argument importantly challenges the previous conceptualisations of the North Korean state as absolutely centralised, with one unrestrained figure wielding a complete monopolisation of power.

These ideas further materialise in McEachern (2008, 2010) who introduces the concept of institutional pluralism to the North Korean context. This model allows for institutional competition within the framework of the state as respective state organs compete for prestige, power and resources.\textsuperscript{12} If an institution has dominated this process or gained preferential status, its influence in decision making becomes more pronounced. Although it is important to recognise that this system of competition still exists under the tight supervision of the leadership, it creates a diffusion of power which is contrary to the assertion all decision making in North Korea emanates from one source. This process of institutional competition creates a domestic institutional environment, which evidences that the activities of the North Korean state are better explained by a model that references its domestic institutional groups and the constraints they impose on the leadership. This thesis is a continuation of this literature, considering the institutional pluralist model to be the most apt at depicting the workings of the North Korean regime.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., p. 63
\textsuperscript{12} McEachern (2008) p. 239
State Institutional Structure

Previous literature has investigated the changes of state institutional structure over time, producing solid evidence of both the existence of institutional pluralism and how it has developed throughout the successions of leadership. Constitutional analysis has been frequently used to pinpoint the institutional hierarchy within North Korea at a given time point.

Yoon (2003) and Zook (2012) monitored the institutional change prescribed the 1992 constitutional amendment, referred to as ‘the succession amendment,’ enacted two years before the death of Kim Il Sung in 1994. In this amendment, the powers of the National Defence Commission (NDC), previously a subcommittee of the Central People’s Committee (CPC), were enhanced significantly to make the institutional a vehicle through which Kim Jong Il could inherit power. The institutional restructure made the chairman of the NDC the second most powerful position in the country and gave Kim Jong Il a military backing separate from Kim Il Sung. With the military’s support Kim Jong Il had no direct rivals, and after he consolidated power, he would lift the status of the military producing years of North Korea’s Songun or ‘military first politics.’ Kim Jong Un’s transfer to power was similarly safeguarded by an institutional restructure, where a pre-succession constitutional amendment elevated the ability of the KWP to make a binding succession order. These institutional changes worked to safeguard each succession and the institution which received the most

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power during this restructure became significantly more pronounced in the policies of the leaders once they had consolidated.

As discussed by Haggard, Herman and Ryu (2014) critique does exist which suggests that institutions are often arbitrarily created, or their status significantly altered ad hoc.\(^{15}\) Although this may indeed be correct, the co-option needed to prolong any kind of authoritarian regime places several elites into formal institutional positions to prevent coups and secure the legitimacy of leaders and the continuity of the regime. This institutional environment must be managed by the leadership to preserve their status and control. Although purges play a role in this management, an average military regime survives approximately 11 years and a single party regime around 18 years,\(^{16}\) yet the North Korean regime has existed for 72 years and has survived two hereditary successions. In order to prolong this continuity, strategies outside purging must be pursued.

Previous investigations into state institutional structure collectively demonstrate that the structure of North Korea is fluid and responsive to the need for some domestic legitimacy. Kim Jong Il sourced this from the military and Kim Jong Un like his grandfather would source it from the party. There is solid evidence to suggest the existence of institutional competition within North Korea, as the leader has to continually manage the institutional environment to safeguard both their own legitimacy as well as regime continuity. This thesis intends to answer what this means for the DPRK’s foreign policy.


State ideology and its development over time has also been a site for scholarly analysis on North Korea. State ideology is an important tool used primarily for the legitimation of institutional change and regime decision making. Through altering how ideology is operationalised, the regime is able to justify provocations and compromise.

Hale (2002) examines that the way the North Korean state deploys Juche over time. Juche is the dominant ideology of the North Korean state, translated in its most simple form as ‘self-reliance.’ Initially, the principle of self-reliance was used to legitimise the consolidation of Kim Il Sung’s reign and to justify his initial policies, such as the decision to pursue heavy industry at the expense of light industry and agriculture after the end of the Korean war. However, the ideology of Juche extends beyond self-reliance, as the characters are also interpreted as ‘subject’ or ‘principle body.’ Using the flexibility of the term, Juche was re-operationalised after the death of Kim Il Sung as a quasi-religious ideal that unites the subject, the people, into the principle body of the party, to be led by the legitimate successor and sole qualified interpreter of the Juche idea, Kim Jong Il.

Songun or ‘Military First Politics,’ is an extension of Juche where the priority of the ‘self-reliance’ strategy lies within the capability of the military, which was used extensively as a legitimating tool during the Kim Jong Il era. The institutional settings during the ascendency of Kim Jong Il saw that his legitimacy was heavily interwoven with the NDC and the military. Songun, which was integrated into the constitution in its 2009 amendment,

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18 Hale (2002) p. 301
advocated for the military to be the centre of governance, and ensures the military has priority in the allocation of state resources. Songun gave a legitimating discourse for the prioritisation of the institution that provided Kim Jong Il with the baseline of his power.

Some studies have previously investigated state ideology as a constraint on North Korea’s foreign policy. Park (1987) argues that although Juche is readily adapted to justify the decisions the regime makes, the flexibility of Juche is limited. Park (1987) considers how North Korea’s complete commitment to self-reliance has constrained the state’s options in particularly economic negotiations, eliminating options which require any kind of interdependence. Park (2010) in a later work extends this idea to Songun, explaining how the pursuit of ‘military first’ politics ideologically commits the regime to certain positions, making the state unable to relinquish any security gains for economic incentives. Bolton (2017) also similarly argues that North Korea is locked into certain commitments, particularly surrounding its nuclear program in order to protect its ontological security and the communal narrative that props up the regime.

Although these studies are crucial to understanding the operation of ideology in North Korea, this thesis will investigate ideology as a part of the domestic political environment. Ideology in North Korea exists to justify certain institutional prioritisation, such as Songun determining the primacy of the military during Kim Jong Il’s leadership. There is also a gap in the knowledge as to how the Byungjin line, the primary ideology used by Kim Jong Un, currently influences North Korea’s foreign policy. Promising the simultaneous development

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19 Zook (2012) p. 146
21 Ibid., p. 104
of nuclear weapons and the economy, Cheon (2013) argues that Byungjin is an attempt to pursue economic reform whilst remaining adamant on the inevitable nuclearization of North Korea. Lankov (2017) begins to explore what Byungjin means for North Korea’s foreign policy, concluding it leads to economic reform without openness, noting that through intensified information control North Korea hopes to restructure its economy without sacrificing political surveillance, leading to a repressive variety of the developmental dictatorship. Yet, more consideration is needed on the foreign policy implications of the Byungjin ideology in relation to other aspects of domestic politics, such as institutional change and domestic crisis.

**Critical Junctures**

North Korea is no stranger to domestic crisis, and literature has responded with several studies on the impact of critical junctures, and to what extent domestic crises influence North Korea’s actions.

Aaltola (1999) in study of the 1994 famine argues that attempts to manipulate North Korean policy through both the donation and withdrawal of food aid are largely unsuccessful. When giving famine relief, the expectations of both the US and South Korea were clear; North Korea was not to break from the 1994 Agreed Framework or restart its nuclear program. However food aid as a leverage tool proved ineffective when North Korea did withdraw from

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the agreement and restart its nuclear program almost immediately after a relative recovery from the famine. Manyin (2010) through his analysis of aid figures demonstrates that North Korean aid diplomacy seeks out donors with limited to no monitoring and has been relatively successful in securing ongoing, non-invasive supply from China and South Korea. Kim (2014) agrees that the politicisation of aid to North Korea has done little to address the gatekeeping nature of the North Korean state, which prevents the successful use of aid to influence the regime.

This is not to argue however, that critical junctures and crisis do not impact the North Korean state in a significant way. Noland (2004), Haggard and Noland (2005), and Soh (2017) all evidence that the breakdown of the Public Distribution System (PDS) in the early 1990s led to the emergence of some marketisation, which had to be tolerated by the state in order to ease the impact of shortages. Several studies including Chestnut (2007) and Kan & Betchol (2010) also highlight state involvement in criminal enterprise, mostly drug trafficking and counterfeiting, in order to retain some form of income during times of crisis. Despite international strategies that use food aid to strategically influence the regime largely failing, the North Korean state still must respond to critical junctures domestically by tolerating some marketization, gathering additional resources through clandestine sources and using bilateral ties to secure food aid which will not come at the cost of state goals or sovereignty. It is the goal of this study to further contextualise how these critical junctures impact North Korean decision making in international negotiations, and the relationship between critical junctures and compromise.

This thesis hypothesizes that domestic politics are the key constraint on North Korean behaviour in international negotiations. The continuity of the North Korean regime demands that the leadership must make decisions in international negotiations in order to effectively manage the domestic sphere and foster enough legitimacy to prevent dissatisfied party or military elites developing the capability to topple the regime. This works in terms of both North Korea’s provocations and its concessions. This thesis defines a ‘provocation’ as an offensive policy or the testing and use of weaponry. A ‘concession’ is defined as a compromise that results in an economic, ideological or bargaining loss for North Korea.

Although the supreme leader still wields paramount influence in regime decision making, the domestic political environment constituted by the state institutional structure, state ideology and critical junctures restrain regime decision making, preventing otherwise ideal courses of action. A critical juncture is defined as a momentous crisis with significant domestic consequences, for example, famine or a nuclear crisis. The North Korean state must consider the available options and subsequently alter its priorities and preferences in international negotiations to suit the domestic situation. This would mean that changes in international negotiation strategy result from shifting pressures and dynamics in the domestic realm, rather than from external pressures. It would also implicate that external pressures alone cannot force an alteration in North Korea’s international behaviour.

Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the theory proposed by this study. The three constitutive elements of North Korea’s domestic politics in this model are state institutions,
state ideology and domestic critical junctures. Changes to the domestic institutional structure are made in order to promote regime stability and to respond to critical junctures. Changes in state institutional structure and state ideology are interlinked, as updated justifications are needed for regime behaviour and the prioritisation of some institutional groups over others. The presence of critical junctures act as a prompt. In the absence of crisis, North Korea’s institutional structure and ideology run unchecked as the driving force of negotiation strategy. In the presence of a domestic critical juncture or crisis, however, the regime can produce more concessionary agreements, although still within the framework of North Korea’s institutions and ideology. Changes in institutions and ideology produce different approaches to foreign policy as opposed to external pressures. Without domestic changes, certain outcomes remain impossible, regardless of the external incentive or pressure. The main purpose of investigating these three elements together is because they are inextricably linked, meaning the examination of a singular facet of the North Korean domestic political environment cannot resolutely explain the how domestic politics influences the international negotiation decisions of the leadership.
Figure 1

Presence of domestic critical junctures/crisis?

- Yes → Concessions mediated by state institutional structure and state ideology
- No → Uncompromising and unconstrained influence of state institutional structure and state ideology. Usually resulting in provocations.
Methodology: Process Tracing and Casual Direction

This research on North Korea is an intrinsic case study, conducted in order to gather knowledge about the case itself rather than to appropriate generalities from the North Korean context. As a culturally specific analysis of the North Korean context, the critical goal of conducting this case study is to determine between contesting explanations of North Korean behaviour using the available resources. This study has deduced a theory from previous literature and observable events and aims to investigate if the hypothesised casual mechanisms of the theory are present within three cases – the leadership of each Kim respectively. This will be done by providing the foundations, or descriptive priors, relevant to each case and then investigating the casual mechanisms of foreign policy outcomes, which have been selected as examples of provocations and concessions.

Determining between evidenced explanations of particular case studies requires a methodology that clarifies why one explanation may have more analytic leverage than other. Process tracing determines between explanations by outlining a main hypothesis and challenging it with plausible, alternate hypotheses, then using collected data as evidence to affirm the hypotheses consistent with the evidence and eliminate those which are not.

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Alternative Explanations

Process tracing assists in the prevention of confirmation bias when conducting research. This thesis has identified two alternate plausible explanations of North Korean decision making to test against the main hypotheses.

The first competing explanation is that of the structural analysis – that North Korean behaviour in international relations is based on material cost-benefit analyses prompted by systemic pressures. Nah (2013) outlines credible evidence that the US has previously considered using nuclear weapons against North Korea both during the Korean War and after the Cold War. Contingency plans for employing nuclear weapons against the North Korean state appeared in the 2001 Nuclear Posture Review of the George W. Bush administration.  

With no security guarantee from China and after the collapse of the Soviet Union, North Korea exercised risk adversity by developing a nuclear deterrent. The structuralist argument considers North Korean decision making as influenced by perceived strong and aggressive adversaries and a balance of power favouring the US-South Korea alliance. This approach would prioritise the external, structural concerns, with domestic politics largely classified as unimportant when formulating conclusions about why the North Korean state makes certain decisions regarding its nuclear programme or other areas of international negotiation.

The second is that of an opportunistic analysis – that North Korean state behaviour in international negotiations largely operates by taking advantage of conducive external situations. An opportunistic analysis as a rival hypothesis acts as a kind of null, as it would

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28 Nah (2013)p. 65
implicate that there is no real pattern that can explain North Korean decision making, as the regime is simply taking advantage of conducive environments when they arise. Previous literature which investigates why countries escalate military conflicts despite their relative weakness has revealed that states with the lack of capability to prevail militarily will seek external intervention and influence to secure a more favourable settlement.\(^{29}\) In attempts to attain these kinds of favourable settlements, states like North Korea can engage in deliberately provoking tensions in times of external favourability in order to engage or commit outside powers to a desired cause of action.\(^{30}\) This approach implicates that decision making largely does not follow any kind of pattern, and changes in the domestic situation would be unlikely to alter the external strategy of the regime.

*Operationalising Theory and Competing Explanations*

*Figure 2* outlines the expected evidence if the main hypothesis of the study is consistent with the evidence, and the expected evidence if it is not. In *Figure 3* appears the implications for both the presence and absence of certain evidence for both the main and rival hypothesis. The study will confirm or eliminate hypotheses based on their consistency with the collected evidence.

*Data Collection and Caveats*

In order to create the priors, or the descriptive foundations upon which processes are analysed, this study draws upon two primary sources – the North Korean constitution and its

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\(^{30}\) Ibid., p. 185
relevant amendments and transcripts from North Korean media outlets. As the constitution is one of the only documents from the regime that is relatively accessible, this thesis uses several constitutional amendments in order to pinpoint the formal institutional structure of the North Korean regime at a given time period. As argued by Yoon (2003) and Goedde (2003), the North Korean constitution is made up of programmatic statements which reflect the regime’s current political ideals, rather than existing as a foundation of law and justice.31 The constitution of North Korea is regardless a valuable document, not for what it achieves in practice but for what it reveals about North Korea’s response to a given time period and the workings of its political ideology and institutional structure.32 The use of media transcripts builds on what can be garnered by constitutional analysis and provides additional insight into the state narrative at particular time periods. As it is beyond the scope of this study to have direct access to the regime, secondary academic sources will play a key role in mediating this lack of accessibility. The role of these sources is to supplement access to primary data and provide in-depth information about critical junctures and their impact on the North Korean state.

There are two key challenges this study confronts, limitations on access to data and the possibility of evidence misinterpretation. The type of data used by this study requires the researcher to make interpretive deductions about the meaning of evidence with regards to the political context it was created in. Evidence misinterpretation and the incorrect weighting of evidence is also recognised as an issue within process tracing as a methodology more broadly.33 This means that the assertion of conclusions that are final or definite is

31 Yoon (2003) p. 1290
33 Goedde (2003) p. 1266
impracticable, and this research will recognise these limitations when presenting its findings. This research also acknowledges that process tracing observations must remain provisional and should be reconsidered if the explanation can be analysed at a finer degree of detail or new, unconsidered evidence emerges.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{34} Bennett (2008) p. 705
### Hypothesis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Implications</th>
<th>Expected Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1: In the absence of domestic crisis, the state institutional structure and state ideology of the DPRK drive foreign policy decision making.</td>
<td>H1(a): The state is prevented from making contradictory agreements in an international setting in the absence of crisis no matter the economic or other benefit.</td>
<td>Evidence to Support Theory: Cases in which the state is unable to pursue desirable courses of action in an international setting if it contradicts state institutional structures or ideology. Evidence where changing domestic circumstance or emerging crisis has led to changing international behaviour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H1(b): Unless a change in domestic institutional structure or state ideology occurs, certain foreign policy outcomes remain impossible.</td>
<td>Evidence to Disprove Theory: There is no/limited evidence of decision making which has regard for domestic politics as defined by this study. No evidence to suggest international behaviour is affected by changes in domestic sphere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2: In the presence of domestic crisis, North Korea makes concessions that are influenced by its state institutional structure and ideology.</td>
<td>H2(a): The state cannot always take preferred material/ideological or otherwise desirable actions.</td>
<td>Evidence to Support Theory: Evidence of DPRK concessions which contradict formal institutions and state ideology. Evidence that such concessions are engineered only in crisis and to prevent as much as possible destabilisation of domestic sphere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H2(b): Even under duress the state institutional structure and ideology still influences the regime, however more freedom is given to the DPRK in crisis.</td>
<td>Evidence to Disprove Theory: There is no/limited evidence of concessions which consider domestic politics as defined by this study. Concessions follow no pattern/are at whim of leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3: Domestic politics is the key constraint on North Korean behaviour in international negotiations.</td>
<td>H3(a): Systemic pressures have little influence over North Korean state decision making.</td>
<td>Evidence to Support Theory: The regime remains stable despite changing international/systemic settings. There is evidence that domestic concerns outweigh systemic/international pressure in decision making.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H3(b): A reconsideration is needed as to the driving rationale of North Korean politics, and to how the international community responds to North Korean action.</td>
<td>Evidence to Disprove Theory: The North Korean state is destabilised by changing international/systemic settings. There is evidence that systemic/international pressure outweighs domestic concerns in decision making.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypotheses/Implications</td>
<td>Prediction of Main</td>
<td>Predictions of R1: Structuralism</td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>H1: In the absence of domestic crisis, the state institutional structure and state ideology of the DPRK drive foreign policy decision making.</td>
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<td>Very Unlikely</td>
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<tr>
<td>H2: In the presence of domestic crisis, North Korea makes concessions that are influenced by its state institutional structure and ideology.</td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Unlikely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2(a): The state cannot always take preferred material ideological or otherwise desirable actions.</td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Unlikely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3: External pressures are not correlated with changes in negotiation strategy.</td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Very Unlikely</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Foundations

Kim Il Sung and The Foundations of the North Korean State

Kim Il Sung, having created the original settings of North Korea’s institutional and ideological structures, enjoyed the most freedom from constraint in international decision making. Just prior to the 1945 occupation and divide of the Korean peninsula, numerous self-governing organisations emerged across the country to fill the void left by the collapse of Japanese colonialism, called ‘people’s committees’ (PCs).\(^{35}\) The PCs in the North were centralised and became the basic organs that would eventually constitute the separate North Korean state, with the highest government organ becoming the North Korean People’s Committee (NKPC). Kim Il Sung was made Chairman of the NKPC in an election on 3 November 1946 conferring the leadership of the North Korean Workers Party (NKWP), which received the highest percentage of the popular vote.\(^{36}\) Through this institution, Kim Il Sung delivered the most domestically popular reforms which constituted his popular support and made the NKWP the centre of governance.\(^{37}\)

In the initial phases of developing the North Korean state, socialist ideology was easily fused with long awaited traditional peasant reform. The skeleton of the North Korean state was dependent on the anti-Japanese struggle, and the successful movements of Kim Il Sung’s Manchurian guerrilla faction during the creation of the NKWP allowed them to dictate the institutional and ideological foundations of North Korea.\(^{38}\) In June 1946 three communist

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\(^{36}\) Ibid., p. 5


parties merged with Kim Il Sung’s Manchurian faction to create a ‘united front,’ with leaders of the absorbed parties being rewarded with favourable institutional positioning. After the merge was completed, the NKWP became the highest leadership institution and the undisputed source of ideology in North Korea, eventually producing Juche, which made policies based on uncompromising ‘self-reliance.’

Outside assistance from the Soviet Union was paramount in the early stages of the construction of the North Korean State. In the initial stages of the Soviet occupation, North Korea’s major industry was controlled by the Soviets, with the majority of loans targeted to increase Soviet economic control over North Korea.\textsuperscript{39} The Soviet Union also armed and trained the Korean People’s Army (KPA) which had newly formed out of remaining anti-Japanese leftist forces and returnees from China.\textsuperscript{40} However, although the Soviet occupation had an imperative impact on the shape and economy of the North Korean state, North Korea was uncompromising in international affairs. Moscow expected some conformity, especially regarding economic cooperation and participation in the Soviet-led Council for Mutual Economic Aid (COMECON). Wary of the required integration and production specialisation to join COMECON, North Korea refused to sign the agreement causing Moscow to criticise Pyeongyang much in the same way as the west, accusing North Korea’s policies as nationalist, isolationist and closed. Rising feelings of betrayal and resentment grew as the Soviet Union used its great power status and nuclear umbrella to attempt to pressure and interfere with North Korean affairs.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., p. 20
\textsuperscript{40} Shin (2017) p. 205
Just prior to the Korean war, the party, the NKPC, which would later become the Supreme People’s Assembly (SPA), and the military emerged as the dominant institutions of the North Korean state. These institutions and North Korea’s ideology was dedicated to strong, anti-Japanese sentiments, nationalism, and a determination to be independent from foreign influence, including both socialist giants the Soviet Union and China. This led to foreign policies which kept North Korea isolated, avoiding integration and only compromising if there was a pressing domestic need. However, as economic downturn approached in the twilight years of the Kim Il Sung era, the initial institutional and ideological settings failed to respond to crisis, leading to their overhaul and extensive domestic constraint on Kim Il Sung’s successor, Kim Jong Il.

*The 1948 Constitution*

The original constitution of the DPRK was enacted on the 8th of September 1948 and operates on a socialist legality which is reflective of the influence of the 1930s Soviet Union. The SPA, which developed out of the NKPC, is accorded as the ‘highest organ of state power in the DPRK.’[^32] The SPA holds several powers, notably the ability to amend the constitution, establish domestic and foreign policy, organise the cabinet, budget and elect the Supreme Court.[^37] The constitution also outlines the institutional role of the SPA Presidium, which is ‘the highest organ of state power when the SPA is not in session.’[^47]

[^37]: DPRK Const. 1948 Art. 37
[^47]: DPRK Const. 1948. Art. 47
‘responsible to the SPA for its activities,’ the SPA mostly ‘rubber stamps’ the Presidium’s decision making.

Several scholars that investigate the first constitution of North Korea note its conciliatory tone, which reflects the position of the regime at this period. Yet to have consolidated completely under Kim Il Sung, there are elements of the constitution which indicate some negotiation was needed when establishing the first formal institutions. This was noticeable in articles surrounding the economy, which protected private ownership of small and medium enterprise, income savings, household goods and also the right to inherit property. Citizens are ‘free to run medium and small enterprise,’ and also must pay tax according to means. Later to be abolished under the Socialist Constitution of 1972, these concessions mark a period of time in North Korea where socialism was still in a consolidation period.

The 1948 Constitution also affords a significant amount of rights to its citizens. The Constitution affords citizens the right to vote, freedom of speech, press, association, assembly religion and the right to demonstrate. Another right that oddly features in this constitution is rights for national minorities in the DPRK to practice their own language and culture. This reveals the Soviet influence over the constitutional drafting process, as there are no national minorities in North Korea, and this article was likely copied from the constitution of the Soviet Union. Whether these rights were actually ever protected is questionable, however it

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44 DPRK Const. 1948 Art. 50
46 DPRK Const. 1948 Art. 8
47 DPRK Const. 1948 Art 19
48 DPRK Const. 1948 Art. 29
49 DPRK Const. 1948 Art. 2., 13., & 14.
50 DPRK Const. 1948 Art. 31
51 Zook (2012) p. 135
demonstrates the desire for the regime to co-opt the populace into satisfaction with the leadership and believing that socialism is the best path to take in order to organise and modernise the North Korean state.

The Korean War and the Post-War Rebuild

The material damages of the Korean war were devastating. Physical infrastructure was destroyed, and industrial production was reduced to 36% of the pre-war level. However, the post-war period was also an opportunity for the North Korean leadership to consolidate domestic power and reduce the influence of foreign nations on domestic affairs, despite extorting significant amounts of rebuilding aid from the socialist bloc.

Post-war reorganisation had two important facets at this time; the removal of foreign influence in North Korea’s domestic politics and economic reconstruction which led to arguably the most successful economic period of North Korean history. Factionalism was still present in the post-war period, however Kim Il Sung was able to either co-opt or eliminate rivals to his own guerrilla faction. The 1946 merger had already achieved this consolidation to a degree, however, to further the dominance of the guerrilla faction in the NKWP, the influence of two particular factions had to be minimised. These were the Soviet faction which was partial to Khrushchev-type reform and the Chinese Yanan faction, made up of Korean leftists which had fought with the Chinese Red Army in the 20s and 30s. The Soviet faction formed the greatest threat to Kim’s power, as it was the first oppositional group to criticise

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the developing cult of personality surrounding Kim Il Sung. To minimise the influence of the Soviet faction, Kim Il Sung channelled Korean peasant workers into institutional positions which held significant cultural value in pre-colonial Korean society. By April 1956, 56.8% of the NKWP were poor, local peasants, and as a result of a significant amount of this demographic holding party positions, Kim Il Sung was re-elected party chairman.

On December 28, 1955 Kim Il Sung made a now infamous speech which proclaimed the Juche ideology for the first time. Juche emerged as a political justification for the isolationist tendencies of Kim Il Sung’s regime and although in the mid-50s Juche was only in the initial phases of its development, the ideology helped significantly in balancing North Korea’s relationship with China and the Soviet Union. The speech also worked to delegitimise the Soviet and Yanan factions, as Kim states ‘some advocate for the Soviet way and others the Chinese way, but is it not time to construct our own way?’ In an appeal to nationalist sentiments, Kim argues ‘If we… apply foreign experience, disregarding the history of our country and the traditions of our people… we will do much harm to the revolutionary cause.’ Although during this time period in particular North Korea was majorly reliant on industrial aid and has since never been a self-sufficient country, Juche was not literally about self-reliance. Juche is a mobilisation of anti-colonial fear to justify isolationist international politics and was significantly popular with Korean peasants after having endured 35 years of Japanese colonisation.

54 Snyder & Lee (2010) p. 165
55 Ibid., p. 166
57 Kim (1955)
58 Hale (2002) p. 293
Juche continued to be operationalised to support Kim Il Sung, his faction and his economic program whilst working to delegitimise factional competitors. North Korea was determined to follow the Stalinist model of rapid industrialisation, which operated on a command economy, the prioritisation of heavy over light industry, and industry over agriculture. The Post-war Three year economic plan was constructed in light of this strategy and produced impressive output with technical assistance and aid from the Soviet Union and China. Central planning struggled with the availability of raw materials, however during the following Five Year Plan (1961-1967) the first three years saw no expansion of heavy industry in order to allow the rest of the economy to catch up. Mining became the primary economic focus, with investment diverted into ‘non-productive investment’ such as light industry, agriculture and cultural investments, which rose the standard of living and enjoyed popular support.

Kim Il Sung was targeted by both the Soviet and Yanan factions in an attempt to remove him from power which occurred at the August 30, 1956 NKWP Central Committee Plenum. However, the majority of Central Committee members which were mainly the local Korean peasants Kim Il Sung had elevated to party positions, voted to support Kim and the instigators of the attempt were expelled from the party. The USSR and China initially sent a joint delegation in September of 1956 to demand the reversal of the August decision, and although initially the DPRK accepted, the leadership framed this as foreign interference in

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61 Kim (1965) p. 262
North Korea’s internal affairs.\textsuperscript{63} As both China and the USSR were interested in securing North Korea’s favourability or at least neutrality in the Sino-Soviet split, both countries were reluctant to reintervene and several political refugees from the Yanan and Soviet faction fled to China and the USSR respectively.\textsuperscript{64}

By the end of 1956 Kim Il Sung had the consolidated institutional grounds of the country to support his guerrilla faction. Additionally, Juche was an effective mobilisation of Korean nationalism, fear of external threats and anti-colonialism to act as justification for regime politics.\textsuperscript{65} After the war, the Soviet Union ceased to be able to directly control the internal politics of North Korea and the country’s decision making. Although China was still able to secure North Korean support, they too lost the ability to do so during the 1960s as the two regimes began to diverge on political, economic and ideological issues.\textsuperscript{66} North Korea by the late 1960s enjoyed the benefits of the ‘non-productive,’ cultural investments made during the first five year plan, relative economic success and a much higher yearly growth rate than South Korea. By the time of the new constitution, Kim Il Sung and the guerrilla faction were ready to proclaim the success of indigenous socialism in North Korea.

\textit{New Socialist Constitution of 1972}

The Socialist Constitution of 1972 was a formal restatement of the power structure after Kim Il Sung had consolidated power post-war.\textsuperscript{67} After the relative economic success of the 1960s,

\textsuperscript{63} Lankov (2002) p. 91
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., p. 109
\textsuperscript{65} Park (1987) p. 42
\textsuperscript{66} Lankov (2002) p. 109
\textsuperscript{67} Zook (2012) p. 137
the new constitution was intended to represent the success of the socialist program in North Korea and solidify the institutional dominance of the NKWP as the centre of politics.

The first major institutional development in the new constitution was the creation of the Office of President. The president of the DPRK was to act as head of state, and also control the newly created Central People’s Committee (CPC) as well as the armed forces. The CPC is described as the ‘highest leadership organ of state power in the DRPK,’ and controlled a raft of subsidiary committees including the National Defence Commission (NDC), which would later become the institutional vehicle for Kim Jong II to inherit power. Institutional roles in the CPC and its subsidiary committees functioned as rewards for close supporters of Kim Il Sung, who filled positions with party cadres from the now unopposed Manchurian guerrilla faction.

The heavy revision of the constitutional articles surrounding the rights of citizens and economic structure in the new constitution further revealed that most opposing actors had either been co-opted or eliminated. Although most of the rights afforded to citizens in the 1948 constitution remained the same, these rights were now framed alongside responsibilities to the collective under the principle ‘one for all and all for one.’ The articles from the 1948 constitution protecting private ownership and the right to engage in commerce were also removed, and the tax system was abolished and described as a ‘relic of the previous society.’ These changes were intended to demonstrate North Korea was now a fully formed

68 DPRK Const. 1972 Art 91 & 93
69 DPRK Const. 1972 Art. 100
70 McEachern (2008) p. 243
71 DPRK Const 1972 Art. 67 & 68
72 DPRK Const. 1972 Art. 33
socialist economy and that the ‘the historic task of industrialisation has been brilliantly realised.’

A signal of reduced Soviet influence also manifested in this constitution. The 1972 constitution diverged significantly in structure from the Soviet constitution, and although Marxism-Leninism is referenced, it is not credited as the foundation of the North Korean state. Juche was instead constitutionalised as a ‘creative application of Marxism-Leninism to the realities of our country.’ Additionally, many of the articles that were likely borrowed from the Soviet constitution, including the articles regarding the rights of national minorities in North Korea, were removed. The DPRK endeavoured to demonstrate its ability to ‘exercise(s) complete equality and independence in its foreign relations.’ As a declaration of political independence, the new constitution commits the DPRK to ‘repel foreign influence on a nationwide scale,’ and uses Juche as a signal of independence from the Soviet Union as well as a justification for the restructure of institutional power.

1992 Amendment for Power Succession

Before the onset of the 1992 constitutional amendment, Kim Il Sung had been clearing the way for hereditary succession. The North Korean state media had been producing propaganda images of Kim Jong Il as the ‘Party centre’ since the mid-70s, and the younger Kim’s presence in the NKWP had been increased significantly. The 1992 amendment is regarded

73 DPRK Const. 1972 Art. 24
74 DPRK Const. 1972 Art. 4
76 DPRK Const. 1972 Art 16
77 DPRK Const. 1972 Art. 5
as the ‘succession amendment’ which put in place the institutional mechanisms to allow Kim Jong Il’s unopposed succession.

The choice of vehicle through which Kim Jong Il would garner legitimacy would have a significant impact on North Korean policy for the next decade. Importantly, NDC, previously a subcommittee of the CPC, was given independent autonomy and its own section in the constitution. Given the position of ‘highest military leadership body,’ \( ^{79} \) in the DPRK, the NDC Chairman had the ability to issue decisions, orders and make alterations to military ranks. \( ^{80} \) The chair of NDC controlled all of the armed forces and was the second most important figure in the DPRK, giving no opportunity for potential rivals to secure the numbers or power necessary to attempt to interfere with the succession. \( ^{81} \)

Emerging anxiety over economic downturn can also be observed in the 1992 constitution, which was much more flexible regarding particularly foreign investment. ‘Independence, peace and solidarity,’ \( ^{82} \) became the ideals of foreign policy and Article 16 ‘guarantee(s) the legal rights and interests of foreigners in its region,’ \( ^{83} \) which was unprecedented in previous versions of the constitution. The state also ‘encourages institutions, enterprises and organisations to (pursue) joint ventures… with foreign corporations and individuals.’ \( ^{84} \) Although this more conciliatory approach reflects the DPRK’s economic anxiety, the result was not far reaching reform. The superiority of Juche was re-affirmed in this amendment and

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\( ^{79} \) DPRK Const. 1992 Art 111
\( ^{80} \) DPRK Const. 1992 Art 114 & 115
\( ^{81} \) Zook (2012) p. 140
\( ^{82} \) DPRK Const. 1992 Art. 17
\( ^{83} \) DPRK Const. 1992 Art 16
\( ^{84} \) DPRK Const. 1992 Art 37
the regime publicised that the downfall of the Soviet Union was in fact a result of their reformist tendencies.\textsuperscript{85} North Korea’s ‘creative application’ of its superior socialism was the regime sanctioned reason as to why North Korea was able to survive the collapse of its biggest ally and trading partner.

\textbf{Outcomes}

\textit{The Beginning of Nuclear North Korea}

The origins of North Korea’s nuclear program can be traced back to the state formation period. Before the official Soviet occupation of North Korean territory in late 1947, the USSR conducted a geological survey of North Korea’s natural resources and monazite mines.\textsuperscript{86} After the establishment of the North Korean state and during the mid-50s as Kim Il Sung was consolidating power, the USSR and the DPRK signed two agreements on nuclear cooperation for research projects.\textsuperscript{87} DPRK scientists received formal training in the USSR, and upon their return to North Korea in the early 60s the government had established both the Nuclear Physics department at Kim Il Sung University, and a research complex on the outskirts of Pyeongyang which would later eventuate into the Yongbyon Nuclear Research Facility.\textsuperscript{88}

Under a deal signed in 1959, in August 1965 the Soviet Union sent a 1 mega-watt thermal (MWt) critical assembly and two MWt research reactors which was set up in the Kuryong

\textsuperscript{85} Hale (2002) p. 298
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., p. 25
\textsuperscript{88} Mansourov (1995) p. 26
River and made operational in 1967. Due to relative economic prosperity, the nuclear programme truly took form in the 1970s. DPRK scientists were working on nuclear fuel enrichment technology, designs for nuclear devices and potential delivery systems, as well as upgrading the physical infrastructure of nuclear sites and establishing a uranium mine in the Yongbyon region. In the mid-80s, US intelligence satellites detected the growing capacities at Yongbyon, as well as discovering that North Korea was conducting high-explosive tests that would be needed to produce a nuclear warhead. In 1989 South Korea leaked this satellite data, for the first time making the world truly aware of the capacity of North Korea’s nuclear programme and technology.

**Nuclear Free Treaties of 1992**

Before the leaked satellite data, North Korea had signed the NPT in 1985 but was yet to sign a safeguard agreement that would allow any kind of international monitoring. In January 1992, North Korea agreed to sign a nuclear safeguards agreement (INFCIRC/403) with the IAEA. The continually growing programme and upgrading capabilities caused the US to offer the withdrawal of tactical weaponry from South Korea, the suspension of the *Team Spirit* joint military exercise between the ROK and the US in 1992, and opportunity for diplomatic engagement in exchange for North Korea signing the 1992 nuclear safeguards agreements.

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89 Mansourov (1995) p. 26
90 Ibid., p. 27
93 Mansourov (1995) p. 27
agreement.\textsuperscript{94} After the agreement was ratified by the SPA, in May 1992, the first international inspection team arrived at its nuclear facilities at Yongbyon.\textsuperscript{95}

During every visit, international inspectors found additional evidence of the DPRK's noncompliance with its NPT obligations.\textsuperscript{96} The IAEA after these visits was particularly vocal about North Korea’s disregard of its NPT, and in February 1993 demanded the North to agree to ‘special inspections,’ - meaning agreeing to allow the IAEA to investigate facilities in North Korea that are not declared nuclear facilities. It was the first time in the IAEA’s history that it made such demands.\textsuperscript{97} As a result, during March 1993 North Korea announced it would withdraw from the NPT and not allow any further international investigations into its nuclear facilities, triggering the 1993 North Korean Nuclear crisis.\textsuperscript{98}

\textit{1993 Nuclear Crisis and Test Firing of Rodong}

North Korea engaged in several provocations in the year 1993. Three days prior to the announcement of North Korea’s intent to withdraw from the NPT, Kim Jong Il as commander of the KPA ordered that North Korea prepare for a state of war.\textsuperscript{99} Senior officials were informed that an attack may be forthcoming and citizens in the countryside were ordered to commence digging trenches to prepare for air attack.\textsuperscript{100}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[94] Mazarr (1995) p. 95
\item[95] Mansourov (1995) p. 27
\item[96] Ibid., p. 27
\item[97] Mazarr (1995) p. 95
\item[98] Ibid., p. 95
\item[100] Ibid., p. 48
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Two weeks after the North made intent to withdraw from the NPT, its Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) called for bi-lateral talks between the DPRK and the US, in order to resolve tensions and ‘start negotiations on principles of equality and reciprocity.’\textsuperscript{101} Although the US initially attempted to resolve the issue with the talks structured through multilateral institutions, the MFA stated that it would consider the involvement of the UNSC to be a ‘declaration of war.’\textsuperscript{102}

Just before the DPRK engaged in high level bilateral talks with the US in New York to resolve the nuclear issue, North Korea escalated tensions further by conducting its largest ballistic missile test on 29-30 May 1993.\textsuperscript{103} The launch involved three Scud type missiles and the test launch of Rodong 1, North Korea’s most advanced missile at the time which had a range of around 500 miles.\textsuperscript{104} The missiles were launched into the Sea of Japan\textsuperscript{105} and had the reported capacity to reach Osaka.\textsuperscript{106} This missile test marked the beginning of an increasingly aggressive North Korean foreign policy, yet the bilateral talks between the US and the DPRK that commenced in 1993 would lay the foundations for the Agreed Framework, the first meaningful international agreement between the two countries. A few months into the negotiations and before a productive outcome could be reached, Kim Il Sung died. Kim Jong Il came to power amid the negotiations, having to remediate a nuclear crisis.

\textsuperscript{101} Michishita (2003) p. 48
\textsuperscript{102} Mansourov (1995) p. 27
\textsuperscript{105} Note most Korean sources refer to the Sea of Japan as the East Sea in both North and South Korea.
\textsuperscript{106} Sanger (1993) p. 7
under severe international scrutiny, and with the looming possibility of military intervention on the Korean peninsula, as well as an oncoming famine.  

**Domestic Politics: The Least Constrained Kim**

Kim Il Sung was the least constrained Kim in terms of foreign policy, having created the original settings of North Korea’s institutional and ideological structures. Through co-option and the creation of Juche, Kim was able to eliminate the two biggest factional threats to his leadership and also consolidate a polity independent from the political influence of both the USSR and China. The period surrounding the 1972 Socialist Constitution was when domestic politics provided the most minimal constrain on the regime’s decision making, with the party as the undeniable leading institution and with most potentially influential actors co-opted or removed. This point was also defined by economic success and a significantly higher annual growth rate than South Korea. This period saw the beginning of North Korea’s nuclear program and was the height of the DPRK’s socialist economy.

The domestic situation was still however the key consideration when North Korea began to make international decisions. Although the DPRK depended heavily on the Soviet Union, the regime was particularly apparent that the Soviets could have an economic and strategic role, yet not one which would dictate North Korea’s external policies. The Juche ideology worked to justify North Korea’s international isolation, and to diminish Soviet and later Chinese influence over North Korean policy. Even in its most dependent phase, the DPRK appeared

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largely unconcerned about external pressure, making its intentions about COMECON clear, and rejecting the attempted Sino-Soviet involvement in North Korea’s factional purges. It is clear that even from the state’s beginnings, North Korea only provokes or concedes when it is clearly in its domestic interest to do so.

North Korea’s Juche ideology and its party centre institutional structure, however, later constrained how the regime could manage its deteriorating economic situation. In 1992 the North Korean economy had significantly stagnated, and the regime was aware that without adjustment serve economic downturn was oncoming. With this emerging critical juncture and economic anxiety, North Korea agreed to international monitoring under (INFCIRC/403) with the IAEA. The oncoming crisis forced adaption in Kim Il Sung’s policy settings in order to lift some of the economic pressures on the country. Yet as critical junctures in North Korea began to arise, the original policy settings were not responding appropriately. The NKWP was growingly corrupt and ineffective, and the military would soon replace the party as the primary institution after Kim Il Sung’s death. Constraint would impact Kim Jong Il and Kim Jong Un significantly more, pressured to adapt institutions and ideology by critical junctures to keep the regime afloat.

**Conclusion**

This chapter outlined the foundations of the North Korean state and how it’s formal structures are organised. North Korea even since its beginnings has worked significantly to keep foreign influence out of its domestic politics, allowing its major partners to have strategic and economic roles, but not political ones. North Korea under Kim Il Sung was least constrained as Kim Il Sung gained legitimacy through the economic success of the 70s and 80s. Yet, as
the regime began to feel pressure from economic downturn in the 90s, North Korea’s
dedication to Juche and isolationism became significantly constraining in managing the
oncoming crisis. Action could not be forced by external pressures, and North Korea only
began to compromise in the early 90s out of dire domestic need. The role of domestic politics
as a constraint only grew as Kim Jong Il took power and began a leadership of crisis
management.
Chapter Three - The Kim Jong Il Era (1994-2012)

Foundations

The Beginning of the Kim Jong Il Era

Kim Jong Il’s emergency management style and focus on political survival would be the characteristic feature of his leadership. Kim Jong Il inherited a volatile and potentially disastrous political environment. The KWP was leaderless, the bureaucracy was ineffectual and growingly corrupt, and the economy was on the verge of complete breakdown. There were significant factional tensions between the older and younger generations within the KPA, as well as dissatisfaction amongst older generation Japanese guerrillas that were loyal to Kim Il Sung. Internationally, the DPRK was in the middle of significant talks with the US regarding its nuclear program and was on a diplomatic offensive in order to remediate the oncoming economic crisis.

Throughout his leadership, Kim Jong Il was severely constrained by domestic politics, as he pursued the institutional restructuring and ideological changes that were crucial to his survival. The institutional reorganization saw a significant increase in the political power of the military and the proclamation of Songun or ‘military first politics’ to build the ‘Kangsongdaeguk,’ the militarily strong and the economically prosperous nation, had significant impacts on the way North Korea was able to construct its international policy making over the next few decades. Critical junctures put additional pressure on the regime

110 Ibid., p. 763
and limited its decision making options, especially during the Arduous March Famine from 1994-1997. As Songun consolidated and as the critical junctures receded, North Korea’s international policy shifted from a diplomatic offensive to increased military provocation.

**The 1998 Amendment: Consolidation**

The way Kim Jong Il consolidated his leadership shifted government institutions and state ideology would have massive repercussion on North Korean policies for the upcoming decade. The 1998 amendment reflects an institutional restructuring to ensure Kim Jong Il could attain the leadership position smoothly, whilst managing domestic pressures, especially those emerging from the famine.

Kim Jong Il was vulnerable to already existing domestic actors as he ascended to the top leadership position. The generational tensions as well as the comparatively uncharismatic disposition of Kim Jong Il bore several predictions that North Korea would collapse before the end of the consolidation period. Kim Jong Il’s source of legitimacy was his connection to Kim II Sung, and this was made apparent through the added ‘preamble’ of the 1998 constitution. In this preamble, Kim II Sung is credited with the creation of the ‘immortal Juche idea,’ and the regime is likened to ‘one large family,’ where the DPRK will ‘uphold the great leader Comrade Kim II Sung as the eternal president of the republic.’ This rhetoric worked to present Kim Jong Il as a ‘caretaker leader;’ being the earthly representation of the eternal president Kim II Sung and his Juche ideas. This connection to

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111 DPRK Const. 1998 Preamble.
112 DPRK Const. 1998 Preamble.
113 Zook (2012) p. 143
Kim Il Sung pacified potentially dangerous actors that existed within the ruling circle. Although Kim Jong Il was essentially running the country during the final years of Kim Il Sung’s life, it was important to avoid a sudden generational shift and to create inclusionary politics which resulted in honour-power sharing arrangements.\textsuperscript{114} Honourable titles and positions were awarded to elders whilst positions that carried real power were offered to the younger generation.\textsuperscript{115} For example, the SPA was granted the ability to have ‘honorary vice presidents,’ who were being rewarded for ‘distinguished service.’\textsuperscript{116} This tactic prevented the predicted political backlash from Kim Il Sung era guerrillas and ensured Kim Jong II’s ascension to the top leadership role.

Although Kim Jong II did not significantly reshuffle the cabinet or formally reallocate important state and party posts, the beginnings of ‘military first politics’ emerged in this constitution. National Defence retained an entire chapter of the constitution and was promulgated as the ‘supreme duty and honour of citizens.’\textsuperscript{117} Kim Jong II also abolished most of his father’s Juche guided institutions, having their power redirected to the NDC. Most notably, the CPC was removed in this amendment. The position of president was also removed as Kim Il Sung became the eternal president, with the responsibilities accorded to the role being transferred to the NDC. The NDC whilst officially under the control of the SPA, remained the highest political and military body in the DPRK indicating the military’s role as the most powerful institution in Kim Jong II’s regime.\textsuperscript{118}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{114} Jeon (2000) p. 764
\bibitem{115} Ibid., p. 764
\bibitem{116} DPRK Const. 1998 Art 108
\bibitem{117} DPRK Const. 1998 Art 86
\bibitem{118} Zook (2012)p.142
\end{thebibliography}
The management of the Arduous March also led to the constitutional change of many economic articles as black market activities escalated. Consequences of the food shortage led to significant internal displacement and illegal border crossings in search of food. The earliest forms of private civilian marketisation began with families gathering wild food, selling assets and engaging in petty trade. Although private trading and markets were officially banned, the state did not have the resources during the famine to monitor or crackdown on market activity, and by 1992 the state had lost control over most petty offences. Constitutionally, citizens were officially granted freedom of travel and movement, and the right to earn a private income. Organisations outside the state, such as collective organisations, were accorded the ability to engage in foreign trade legally for the first time, and articles relating to the protection of foreign enterprise in North Korea were expanded. Although the changes to the economic chapter of North Korea’s constitution were largely representative of the already existing post-hoc legitimisation of market activity, the inclusion of this in the constitution evidenced the regime’s need to manage the domestic sphere and essentialised it into the document that functions as the state’s prescriptive political and structural manifesto.

2009 Amendment: Songun

Whilst the 1998 constitution introduced Songun, by 2009 the ideology had developed comprehensively and was clearly outlined in new constitutional articles.

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121 DPRK Const. 1998 Art. 75
122 DPRK Const. 1998 Art. 70
123 DPRK Const. 1998 Art. 38
124 Park (2010) p. 98
suffered a stroke in 2008, leaving doubts about both regime stability and his overall ability to continue ruling North Korea. However, the 2009 constitution clearly demonstrated that Kim Jong Il was firmly in control of the North Korean state and that Songun was undeniably its guiding ideology.

Songun is described as a ‘revolutionary mode of leadership that gives top priority to military affairs,’ which ‘deals with all affairs of socialist construction in a militant way with the People’s Army as the main force.’ This means the military does not just function as an institution that exists to defend the nation from external threats, rather functions as the centre of the political system which has all available resources directed to it. The role of the military expands from the domain of defence and into the everyday social and economic spheres, with soldiers purposed to assist farming workers, construction projects and deliver food and services. The military also had a key role in economic development and running enterprise, dissolving the line between defence and economics. The 2009 constitution made the role of military first politics explicitly clear as all references to Marxist-Leninist ideology was removed in favour of Juche and Songun. Songun was integrated into the chapter on national defence which defines the mission of the KPA as protecting ‘the freedom, independence and peace of the country from foreign aggression by implementing the Songun revolutionary line.’ Several changes also clarified and expanded the powers of the NDC. Article 100 explicitly states that the ‘chairman of the NDC … is the supreme leader of the

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125 Zook (2012) p. 145
128 Ibid., p. 100
129 Zook (2012)p. 146
130 DPRK Const. 2009 Art. 56
DPRK,' and it is their role to ‘direct the overall affairs of the state.’ The elevation of the military and its prestige came at the expense of the party, which was criticised as corrupt and incompetent in dealing with the challenges which rose from the Arduous March. This amendment made it clear that the military had not only safeguarded Kim Jong Il’s rise to power, it had become the backbone of his leadership and the guiding ideology of Songun had been constructed to justify this.

It is important to note that despite the demotion of the KWP in favour of the military, if any one institution was capable of overthrowing the Kim regime it was the KPA. There were several purges of military units, with the largest one dissolving the entire Sixth Army Corps. The power of the military would be later curbed to ensure Kim Jong Un’s succession, which depended on a revival of the KWP. However, throughout Kim Jong Il’s leadership, North Korea was locked into a variety of ineffectual international policy decisions, constrained by its military dominated state structure and ideology as well as its famine related internal critical junctures.

131 DPRK Const. 2009 Art. 100
132 DPRK Const. 2009 p. 103 (1)
134 Ibid., p. 118
135 Ibid., p. 123
Outcomes

The North Korea-US Agreed Framework

North Korea had already been negotiating with the US after threatening to withdraw from the NPT, however Kim Il Sung’s death meant that the agreement that manifested from these talks would be under the supervision of new leader Kim Jong Il. In the lead up to the Agreed Framework, the US also made it conditional that in order to access bilateral talks, North Korea must re-open dialogue with both the IAEA and South Korea. North Korea stalled negotiations with both the IAEA and South Korea by refusing to allow any constructive discussions with the South during joint special envoy meetings.\textsuperscript{136} When the South demanded the nuclear issue be discussed without the presence of the US, the DPRK walked from the negotiating table in March 1994, famously threatening Seoul with ‘a sea of fire.’\textsuperscript{137}

Negotiations recommenced in August 1994 after a four week pause for Kim Il Sung’s death. The US and the DPRK signed the Joint Statement in this month, which included several of the primary principles of the Agreed Framework. The Joint Statement offered North Korea a security assurance that the US would not use either nuclear or conventional weapons against North Korea and confirmed a commitment to further talks with the possibility of both diplomatic and economic benefits.\textsuperscript{138} The US also agreed to cancel the annual Team Spirit joint military exercise between South Korea and the US for 1994.\textsuperscript{139}

\textsuperscript{136} Michishita (2003) p. 54
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid., p. 54
\textsuperscript{138} Mazarr (1995) p. 98
\textsuperscript{139} Michishita (2003) p. 53
The Agreed Framework itself was signed on October 21, 1994 and agreed to provide a package assistance deal and the international financing of two 1,000 MWt light water reactors for energy production. Including these reactors, the agreement provided North Korea with approximately $4.5 billion dollars in potential economic assistance, including technological assistance and most importantly a 50,000 tonne shipment of crude oil which was delivered in 1995. The availability of economic gain was crucial to North Korea given that by 1994 the economic situation was dire and the country facing severe famine. In addition to the onset of a food crisis, North Korea’s inability to import the materials needed for its energy dependent heavy industry economy caused continual power outages and the collapse of the internal transport system. The import of oil would significantly help, propping up the regime’s ailing industry and improving the failing electricity grid.

In exchange, North Korea retained membership in the NPT, agreed to IAEA safeguard inspections and froze further development of its nuclear program. North Korea also cancelled construction of two further planned 50 MWt and 200 MWt reactors, halting further reprocessing of nuclear fuel and sealing the country’s radiochemical laboratory. As the agreement was enforced, the Clinton administration lifted some economic sanctions on North Korea and delivered the promised oil shipments.

Throughout this negotiation process North Korea forcefully pushed for bilateral negotiations with the US. Although the South Korean government under Kim Young Sam provided a

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140 Mansourov (1995) p. 28
141 Ibid., p. 33
142 Ibid., p. 36
143 Ibid., p. 33
relatively receptive and sensible partnership to reach a denuclearisation agreement, the North Korean negotiators refused to work productively with the South Korean government or the IAEA, attending the special envoy negotiations largely in order to merely satisfy the US requirement to access bilateral talks.\textsuperscript{144} With the regime’s decision making being driven by the critical juncture of the famine, the only option for North Korea was to engage the US bilaterally, despite the difficulty in doing so. The economic ailments in North Korea was only repairable by forcing the normalisation of relations between the US and the DPRK. This also explains why North Korea sought famine aid from almost any source aside from sensible partner South Korea and was increasingly hostile to the UN during the negotiating process, considering any influence from the agency, especially in the form of sanctions, as a ‘declaration of war.’\textsuperscript{145}

This agreement was highly significant to North Korea, as the successful negotiation between the US and the DPRK worked to provide much needed famine relief. It also pointedly enhanced the domestic credibility of Kim Jong II at a crucial time for his leadership. North Korea’s concessions in the Agreed Framework and persistence on working bilaterally with the US demonstrate their negotiation strategy emerges from their domestic critical junctures, however as Kim Jong II consolidated his power and developed Songun further, North Korea’s compromising diplomacy would ebb and be replaced with increasing military first provocations, locking North Korea into several more unfavourable and difficult to execute policy stances.

\textsuperscript{144} Michishita (2003) p. 54
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., p. 57
International Negotiations and Food Aid to North Korea

The way North Korea handled international economic policy and negotiations in order to provide famine relief reveals the regime’s primary concern with its own domestic politics as opposed to any external influences. North Korea’s military first state structure and ideology, as well as the need to retain domestic legitimacy, locked the regime into incredibly unfavourable economic strategy and negotiating positions, despite more productive options being available. Despite signalling vaguely for assistance in the early 1990s when the economy had seriously began to stagnate, North Korea was only able to successfully appeal for international help for the first time by holding the floods of 1995 and 1997 accountable for the famine.\footnote{Haggard & Noland (2005) Famine, Marketization and Economic Reform in North Korea. p. 5} By presenting the famine as a result of a disastrous natural catastrophe, the regime escaped clear responsibility for the crisis and made it increasingly difficult for neighbouring countries to not respond with humanitarian aid.\footnote{Aaltola (1999) p. 381} North Korea received approximately $2 billion USD in food aid from the international community in the decade of the famine.\footnote{Haggard, S. & Noland, M. (2005b) Hunger and Human Rights: The Politics of Famine in North Korea. Washington DC: US Committee for Human Rights in North Korea. p. 8}

The collapse of the Soviet Union created the need for a radical change in North Korean economic strategy, as access to concessionary imports to sustain the heavy industry economy were suddenly cut off. To fill the vacuum of the collapsed Soviet Union, China initially stepped in as North Korea’s primary benefactor. However, support dropped after a particularly bad Chinese harvest in 1993, leading China to begin demanding cash payment for the import of goods.\footnote{Haggard & Noland (2005) p. 4} Although the collapse of the Soviet Union and Chinese withdrawal

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\textsuperscript{146} Haggard & Noland (2005) Famine, Marketization and Economic Reform in North Korea. p. 5 \\
\textsuperscript{147} Aaltola (1999) p. 381 \\
\textsuperscript{149} Haggard & Noland (2005) p. 4 \\
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was the trigger point for famine, North Korean economic policies stressed the economy to the point of mass starvation. When looking at other client states of the USSR such as Cuba, it is obvious that these states suffered due to the collapse, yet only North Korea endured such an outbreak of famine.\textsuperscript{150} North Korea’s mismanagement of its agricultural sector, and insistence on a domestic economic strategy that pursued heavy industry and military growth was a product of its changing governance structure and military first ideology.

North Korean agricultural policy, attempting to compensate for the lack of input, focused on expanding areas where grain was able to be cultivated, switching to high-yield crops and double cropping which led to soil depletion and river silting.\textsuperscript{151} Further, due to North Korea’s large percentage of personnel employed as government officials, North Korea was unusually urbanised for a country of its GDP, leaving the majority of households vulnerable to a breakdown of the PDS.\textsuperscript{152} To sensibly achieve food security, North Korea would undoubtedly benefit from opening to external trade and reorientating its export strategy to favour manufacturing, mining products and minor agriculture such as fish, allowing for the return import of bulk grains.\textsuperscript{153} This is the same strategy followed by its neighbours South Korea, China and Japan which have similar mountainous terrains and a lack of arable land. Songun politics, however, demands the continuation of a militarised economy, which neglects light industry and agriculture with the military as its centre, sacrificing good economic strategy in order to maintain the institutional structure of the Kim regime and the ideology that supports it.

\textsuperscript{150} Moon (2009) p. 106
\textsuperscript{151} Noland, M. (2004) Famine and Reform in North Korean. \textit{Asian Economic Papers}. 3(2) p. 4
\textsuperscript{152} Haggard & Noland (2005) p. 3
\textsuperscript{153} Noland (2004) p. 27
Although food aid to North Korea remains politicised and reflects the interests of the donors, South Korea has more of a vested interest in assisting the North due to a shared history, cultural connection and goal of reunification, making South Korea the North’s most sensible target for soliciting aid. This is especially true during the Kim Dae Jung Presidency, when South Korea implemented the ‘Sunshine Policy,’ which aimed to soften North Korean perceptions of the South through increased cooperation and economic ventures. However, tension emerges from North Korea’s commitment to the military both institutionally and ideologically as an extension of self-reliance. This pressures the regime to limit direct and observable contact with its most sensible trading partner and source of assistance. Although the Sunshine Policy dictated a softer outlook towards North Korea, the ROK still desired to maximise visible exchanges to show the benevolence and success of capitalism to their counterparts. South Korean marked aid packages or cross border aid exchange would be a huge blow to North Korea’s Juche pride, and would also be counterintuitive to Songun politics, which emphasises the independent strength of the military and its ability to provide to the people as the centre of the political system.

Instead of cooperating with South Korea and reorientating the failing heavy industry based economic strategy, North Korea was forced to look for sources of aid in unconventional places. Korea’s prior coloniser Japan would seemingly be one of the last sources North Korea would look to solicit aid, however Japan provides North Korea fluctuating levels of aid targeting the North’s missile program, a significant concern for Japanese national security.

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155 Aaltola (1999) p. 372
156 Manyin (2010) p. 73
Japan’s aid could also be rebranded by the regime as colonial reparations, which does not cause loss of face for the military dominated institutional structure, nor does it conflict with ideologies of self-reliance or military first. The US also contributed more than $600 million USD in aid to North Korea through the WFP program which had limited control over distribution, and the regime was able to attribute US assistance to the Agreed Framework, and the negotiating skills of Kim Jong Il. The aid boxes had limited visual connections to the US, being labelled as ‘gifts,’ connected to the Agreed Framework,\textsuperscript{157} which again safeguarded military first politics and the institutional backbone of the regime. This strategy also re-emerged later in 2007 when the US recommenced providing aid to North Korea as a part of the Six Party Talks. Although significantly more difficult to execute than cooperating with an invested partner like South Korea, North Korea was forced by its institutional structure and ideology to manage the pressing critical junctures by successfully securing food aid from unconventional sources.

\textbf{A New Aggression: 2002 Nuclear Crisis and the Six Party Talks}

North Korea faced a relatively benign external environment after the famine and during the period in which the Agreed Framework was in effect. South Korea’s sunshine policy saw a marked improvement of North-South relations, with the first Inter-Korean Summit occurring in 2000. North Korea was wary of the US especially after being labelled as a part of the ‘axis of evil’ along with Iran and Iraq.\textsuperscript{158} However, US-DPRK relations had not soured completely, with the US still providing fuel and food aid as a part of the Agreed Framework. In addition to US aid, North Korea had proven to be apt at securing a relatively stable incoming supply

\textsuperscript{157}Haggard & Noland (2005b) p. 4
of aid from other donors, including Japan and the European Union.\textsuperscript{159} Despite this, North Korea throughout the mid-2000s demonstrated a marked aggression in its foreign policy, compromising significantly the inclusion, economic benefits and gains made in the Agreed Framework.

North Korea reportedly admitted in October of 2002 to US special envoy to the DPRK, James Kelly, that North Korea was operating a highly-enriched uranium program (HEU), destroying the relatively passive external environment it had enjoyed since the signing of the Agreed Framework in 1994.\textsuperscript{160} Following this admission, the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organisation (KEDO), which was facilitating the international fulfilment for LWRs to be sent to North Korea and some of the fuel deliveries given by the Agreed Framework, suspended its heavy oil delivery to North Korea.\textsuperscript{161} The DPRK interpreted the suspension of oil supply as a nullification of the Agreed Framework and triggered the onset of the 2002 nuclear crisis by reactivating the facilities at Yongbyon, dismissing the IAEA and again withdrawing from the NPT.\textsuperscript{162} The heightened tensions and provocations of North Korea led China to encourage initial three party talks between the US and the DPRK with China as the mediator in April 2003. Although these talks proved to be ultimately unsuccessful, it opened the path for the six-party talks (SPTs) which would commence in August 2003 and include North Korea, South Korea, the US, Japan, Russia and China.\textsuperscript{163}

\textsuperscript{159} Manyin (2010) p. 72
\textsuperscript{160} Moon & Bae (2003) p. 10
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid., p. 12
\textsuperscript{162} Moon & Bae (2003) p. 13
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., p. 16
During the first round of the SPTs, it was revealed that both the DPRK and the US remained in direct contrast to one another with little room for concession. North Korea called for an non-aggression treaty and US security assurance in exchange for a DPRK public pledge to abandon the nuclear weapons program.\textsuperscript{164} However the US under the Bush administration was unwilling to engage in simultaneous exchanges, following the policy of ‘disarmament first, discussion later.’\textsuperscript{165} North Korea was convinced to return a second round of the SPTs which occurred in February 2004 after China pledged 500,000 tonnes of fuel and 200,000 tonnes of food aid as an incentive.\textsuperscript{166} Although the atmosphere was significantly less hostile, no tangible agreements were reached and the key issues remained unresolved. Although the second session of the fourth round produced a Joint Agreement with general terms and principles for denuclearisation, the following round left the SPTs completely deadlocked after the DPRK advocated for the US to lift financial sanctions, especially on Banco Delta Asia, a North Korean client bank which was targeted in a large scale operation cracking down on North Korean counterfeiting of US bank notes.\textsuperscript{167}

The DPRK appeared significantly less willing to compromise, and several following provocations completely derailed the SPTs. On 5 July 2006 North Korea launched seven missiles including an unsuccessful test launch of the regime’s long range Taepodong-2 missile.\textsuperscript{168} This testing launch was met with UNSC resolution 1695 which condemned the launch and sanctioned all exchange of missile material and technology between North Korea

\textsuperscript{164} Moon & Bae (2003) p. 29
\textsuperscript{165} Ibid., p. 29
\textsuperscript{168} Ibid., p. 27
and UN member states. Following this, on 9 October 2006, the DPRK conducted its first successful underground test of a nuclear weapon. This resulted in resolution 1718 which furthered economic and commercial sanctions isolating North Korea from the international community. These sanctions did not prevent North Korea from conducting ballistic missile testing in April 2009, and officially declaring intent to develop a highly-enriched uranium program. The final provocation was a North Korean nuclear test which occurred in May 2009. After the success of this test, the MFA claimed that the SPTs “have become useless,” and it “will no longer be bound by any agreement made at the six-party talks.”

**Domestic Politics: From the Agreed Framework to the SPTs**

Kim Jong II in 1994 inherited a volatile political environment with a defunct KWP and restructured the institutional framework to use the military as a vehicle to power. The country was pressured into compromise by famine and was responsive during the Agreed Framework to compromise out of necessity, and even then, the response was carefully formulated around the DPRK’s institutional and ideological structures. North Korea in the mid to late 2000s was perceptibly different to the North Korea in 1994 during the onset of the Arduous March. The military centre institutional structure had consolidated fully, with the military as the forefront institution supported by the state ideology of Songun. This restructuring had significant consequence for North Korean policy making, as the DPRK had to refrain from contradictory international agreements such as cooperating with South Korea for aid or ceasing nuclear

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170 Kwak & Joo (2007) p. 27
172 Ibid., p. 219
development after the economy had respectively repaired after the famine. After considering the domestic situation, the regime had to realter to strategy that targeted the US and Japan. By the point of the 2002 nuclear crisis, military first politics had made the DPRK unable to relinquish key national security objectives in exchange for economic incentives.\footnote{Park (2010) p. 106}

Although the economic situation in North Korea was far from repair in the mid-2000s, there was no presence of a pressing domestic critical juncture to force compromise, and the state institutional structure and ideology of the time worked against it. In other words, no domestic justification existed for the North not to pursue nuclear weapons after 2002. This meant that regardless of significant international pressure, mounting UN sanctions and unfavourable external conditions, the regime continued to pursue its nuclear program and did not appear to engage in a responsive shift of international strategy. North Korea would not shift strategy until domestic restructuring under Kim Jong Un, where the party was re-elevated and the military was compensated, producing more opportunity for compromise, but also a more volatile policy then under Kim Jong Il’s crisis management leadership.

**Conclusion**

This chapter illustrated how through restructuring the DPRK to put the military at the forefront, the DPRK became increasingly locked into unfavourable policy positions in order to safeguard the structures and ideology that kept Kim Jong Il in power. Domestic critical junctures had the role in allowing compromise during the signing of the Agreed Framework, however as these issues dissipated and the economy relatively recovered North Korea became
markedly more aggressive in its foreign policy and determined to pursue its nuclear program, driven by its military first structure. The next chapter will outline how the domestic restructure under Kim Jong Un produced a shift in the available options for the DPRK in negotiations, allowing more opportunity to compromise but also a more unpredictable foreign policy than under Kim Jong Il’s military first arrangements.
Modern North Korea and Kim Jong Un (2011-Present)

Foundations

Transfer to Kim Jong Un

When Kim Jong Il died in 2011, Kim Jong Un was feared to be inexperienced and weak, and similar to the previous succession regime collapse was predicted. Yet, Kim Jong Un was able to consolidate his leadership of the DPRK and it is under this form that the regime persists currently.

The two successions differed greatly. Kim Jong Il used the military as a vehicle to consolidate power during a huge economic contraction, compromising by necessity to sustain the regime which significantly limited available choices in foreign policy. Although the transfer to Kim Jong Un was more sudden than to Kim Jong Il, the policy challenges and domestic environment that Kim Jong Un faced during his succession were significantly more favourable. In 2011, North Korea had moderate economic growth, far more favourable to the famine and economic collapse conditions of 1994.\textsuperscript{174} The second nuclear test had also occurred in 2009 which demonstrated that the DPRK mastered a Hiroshima-style nuclear weapon.\textsuperscript{175} Due to this more favourable domestic environment, Kim Jong Un deviated from his father’s emergency management style of leadership and downgraded the role of the military, instructing it to resume its role in national defence and exit the economic and social

\textsuperscript{174} McEachern (2019) p. 36
\textsuperscript{175} Ibid., p. 40
spheres. Kim Jong Un was able to resurrect Kim Il Sung’s style of government with a strong KWP and a more centralised government framework.\textsuperscript{176}

Songun, although never officially removed, was diluted significantly with the NDC eventually being dissolved altogether. Kim Jong Un would bring the ‘Byungjin line’ to the forefront which asserted that the pursuit of economic development and the pursuit of nuclear weapons were not counter-intuitive and were rather complementary.\textsuperscript{177} Despite the onset of significant institutional and ideological change, the military still had to be placated to ensure longevity of the regime, producing North Korea’s most extensive and uncompromising weaponry testing program. However, the separation of the military and economic spheres allowed Kim Jong Un to see-saw between compromise and provocation with ease, creating a more options for North Korean negation and hence a more volatile foreign policy than seen under Kim Jong Il.

\textit{Shifting from Songun: The Revival of the KWP and Constitutional Change Under Kim Jong Un}

Kim Jong Un hosted the first KWP Congress in 36 years in 2016. By reviving the party both constitutionally and through reinstating practices such as the New Year’s Address which had not taken place since the Kim Il Sung era, Kim Jong Un aimed to reduce the role of the military in the comprehensive set of national policy questions it engaged in during the Kim

\textsuperscript{176} McEachern (2019) p. 36
\textsuperscript{177} Ibid., p. 50
Jong Il period.\textsuperscript{178} It was imperative to the succession that the military’s power was downgraded, as the institution which had enjoyed unrivalled access to state resources and power during the Kim Jong Il regime constituted the most viable threat to Kim Jong Un’s new government. Kim Jong Il was also aware of the military’s threat and used an extensive system of security institutions to supervise its loyalty.\textsuperscript{179} Kim Jong Il also specifically instructed that the party had the power to make a succession amendment and by doing so, gave a brief indication of the military downgrading to follow.\textsuperscript{180}

Initially, Kim Jong Un had to be cautious in shifting the balance of institutional power, not to distance himself from his familial source of legitimacy. The first constitutional amendment made by the Kim Jong Un government in April 2012 demonstrated this caution. The constitution proclaimed in the preamble that the constitution should ‘be called the Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il Constitution,’ of the ‘socialist motherland of Juche.’\textsuperscript{181} The preamble made a point to include a lengthy description of the achievements of both Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il, through whom Kim Jong Un receives legitimacy to hold the supreme leadership. In a similar fashion to the first succession, Kim Jong Il was made the eternal Chairman of the NDC, and the leader of the NDC was the ‘First Chairman,’ whom was the ‘supreme leader of the DPRK.’\textsuperscript{182} It was apparent that Kim Jong Un was wary of distancing himself from his familial legitimising narrative by demoting the military role in the political apparatus too early. The preamble adds the narrative of Kim Jong Il to that of Kim Il Sung, with Kim Jong Il credited with producing an ‘invisible politico-ideological power, a nuclear state and an

\textsuperscript{178} McEachern (2019) p. 52
\textsuperscript{179} Woo (2014) p. 124
\textsuperscript{180} Zook (2012) p. 139
\textsuperscript{181} DPRK Const. 2012 Preamble.
\textsuperscript{182} DPRK Const. 2012 Art. 100
unchallengeable military power,’… ‘in the face of the… vicious offensive of imperialist allied forces to stifle the DPRK.’

It became apparent that Kim Jong Un was shifting the power balance in the institutional sphere when the KWP’s Central Committee was reshuffled in April 2013. Out of the 17 official members and 15 alternates of the committee, only five permanent members and six alternates were military and security personnel. Previous to this in July 2012, Vice Marshal Ri Yeong-Ho was purged as a result of military-party tension, with Ri opposing the transfer of the military’s economic engagements to the cabinet. By May 2013, two thirds of North Korean senior generals from the Kim Jong Il period had been removed, purged or demoted.

The 2016 constitutional amendment institutionalised the military demotion, as the NDC was replaced by a new organ, the State Administrative Council (SAC). The preamble in the 2016 amendment simply refers to Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il as the ‘eternal leaders’ of the DPRK, rather than specifying their roles, with any mention of the NDC being removed. The Chairman of the SAC is constitutionalised as the supreme leader of the DPRK and is responsible for directing the overall affairs of the state. Although more time is needed to determine the role of the SAC in practice, the creation of this institution gives credence to the idea that North Korea under Kim Jong Un would be a centralised party-led polity, rather than a military-led emergency management style regime. The military was still a vital

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183 DPRK Const. 2012 Preamble.
184 Woo (2014) p. 124
185 Ibid., p. 124
186 Park, Y. S. (2016) North Korea’s Military Policy Under the Kim Jong-Un Regime. Journal of Asian Public Policy. 9(1) p. 64
187 DPRK Const. 2016 Preamble.
188 DPRK Const. 2016 Art. 100, Art. 103 (1)
189 McEachern (2019) p. 59
institutional organ that had to be placated to ensure regime continuity, and although the institution lost a significant amount of formal power in the transition, it was compensated by an extensive nuclear and missile weapons testing program. However, it was the removal of the military from the economic sphere and as the centre of the government which allowed a substantial amount more freedom in foreign policy as opposed to Kim Jong Il’s Songun.

**Byungjin Policy**

The institutional changes under Kim Jong Un had to be accompanied by an justifying ideology producing ‘Byungjin,’ or parallel development, which dictates that the pursuit of nuclear weapons and economic development are complementary rather than incompatible state goals. The North Korean economic sphere is built to mobilise state institutional and ideological policies. The isolationism inherent in both Juche and Songun have seriously confined North Korea’s options in engaging in the world economy.\(^\text{190}\) Byungjin is a recognition of the desperate need for economic development to safeguard regime longevity, especially in the long-term. However, Byungjin also is a firm stance that no offered economic incentives or external pressures will force the DPRK to abandon the weapons program, which keeps its domestic political environment in order.

Byungjin was indispensable to Kim Jong Un in downgrading the role of the military and ensuring its leave from economic affairs. It was first debuted in May 2012 during a plenary session of the Party Central Committee, described as a measure to ‘promote economic

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construction and raising living standards of the people while strengthening national defence capabilities.'\textsuperscript{191} Byungjin does not contradict military first politics, as national defence still is the primary focus of the DPRK, however Byungjin reinterprets and dilutes Songun in a way which crucially separates the defence and economic spheres, and removes the military from the centre of governance.\textsuperscript{192} The Byungjin line creates the ideological foundation to disentangle defence and economics, allowing the military’s exit from economic affairs without being disingenuous to the legitimising legacy of Kim Jong Il and his ‘brilliant’ Songun idea.

Kim Jong Un pursued the Byungjin line by quietly engaging in relatively minor economic reforms, however they were significant by North Korean standards. Agriculture reform in July 2012 allowed for smaller agricultural work teams made up of one or two households, which were allocated land with no fixed grain rations.\textsuperscript{193} This was significant as it was a quiet introduction of household-based farming and profit motive in agriculture, with independent producers paying a sort of rent (a percentage of produced grain) to the state.\textsuperscript{194} Similar reforms allowed wage increases in manufacturing, funded by the earnings from selling manufactured goods in markets.\textsuperscript{195} Since the consolidation of the Kim Jong Un regime, there has been a proliferation of private and hybrid enterprise, particularly in the form of restaurants, entertainment facilities and department stores which take cash-free payment.\textsuperscript{196} The state reportedly encourages cooperation between government and market forces.

\textsuperscript{191} Cheon (2013) p. 1
\textsuperscript{192} McEachern (2019) p. 52
\textsuperscript{193} Lankov (2017) p. 28
\textsuperscript{194} Ibid., p. 28
\textsuperscript{195} Ibid., p. 28

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particularly in the construction sector, and has attempted to attract private foreign investment to North Korea by establishing 25 Special Economic Zones in 2015.\textsuperscript{197}

Yet, this newfound economic project does not exist outside carefully considered Juche rhetoric and nor did it prevent North Korea from pursuing an extensive nuclear and conventional missile testing regime, which continued regardless of UN sanctions. Military activity increased significantly over 2012-13, with the DPRK conducting rocket mounted satellite launches, nuclear tests and engaging in provocative behaviour towards South Korea. The Byungjin line demonstrates a recognised need for economic development in the DPRK, but it also represents the domestic reality that the leadership is constrained by a military and ideological hold on its decision making. The newly separated military and economic spheres however did allow Kim Jong Un to produce unpredictable foreign policies, which fluctuated between outright military provocation and charm offensives designed to extort resources for the North Korean economy.

\textsuperscript{197} Lankov (2017) p. 29
Outcomes

2012-13 Missile and Nuclear Testing Regime

On April 13, 2012 North Korea launched a long-ranged ballistic missile, the Taepodong-2, which the regime claimed was being launched to put an ‘earth observation satellite’ into orbit to be used for peaceful purposes.\textsuperscript{198} The launch was timed to coincide with large scale state celebrations of the 100\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the birth of Kim Il Sung. The launch however failed, the missile did not reach orbit and exploded over the Yellow Sea shortly after take-off.\textsuperscript{199}

This launch was proceeded by other aggressive provocations that severely deteriorated North-South relations. A North Korean torpedo attack sank the South Korean naval ship Cheonan in March 2010, killing 46 South Korean servicemen. Following in November, North Korean fire on South Korean artillery barrage Yeonpyeong Island caused significant damage, killed two South Korean marines and two South Korean civilians.\textsuperscript{200} Yet, shortly before Kim Jong Il’s death, North Korea launched bilateral negotiations with the US to restart denuclearisation plans, resulting in the ‘Leap Day Deal’ on February 29, 2012 which committed North Korea to a moratorium on nuclear testing and missile launches. In return the US pledged 240,000 metric tonnes of food aid, yet one week after the agreement was reached the DPRK announced its intent to launch Unha-3.\textsuperscript{201}


\textsuperscript{199} Ibid., p. 1


\textsuperscript{201} Chanlett-Avery, E., et. al. (2012) p. 7
The bilateral negotiations that brought forth the Leap Day Deal were initiated before Kim Jong Il’s death, likely as an attempt to secure a relatively peaceful environment to allow succession to Kim Jong Un. Yet, the decision to plan a missile launch so shortly after the agreement was made, coinciding with the eternal leader’s birth anniversary, was not only intended as domestic legitimacy campaign. This launch also demonstrates that despite the institutional centralisation and ideological restructuring that downgraded the absolute power of the military, the Kim Jong Un leadership was still significantly constrained by the fact that they were unable to abandon military-first projects during the transition period. Kim Jong Un was still pointedly dependent on the legacy of Kim Jong Il, and this launch occurring in the same month as constitutional restructuring indicates that there would be placation of the military needed due to both its formal loss of power and its forced exit from the economic sphere. Byungjin would have to be demonstrated as truly parallel development, with the military equal to the economy, yet just not a participant in it.

The UNSC Presidential Statement made on April 16, 2012 strongly condemned the launch as violations of already existing resolutions and moved to tighten sanctions on North Korea by listing new North Korean enterprises subject to asset freeze and through banning a more extensive range of materials being transferred to and from North Korea. These sanctions did not prevent North Korea from threatening the US and the ROK in October 2012 with ‘strategic rocket forces,’ that could strike Japan, Guam and the US mainland. By December of 2012, North Korea successfully launched a rocket carrying satellite into orbit, again

202 Chanlett-Avery, E., et. al. (2012) p. 1
violating its UN sanctions. In February of the following year, North Korea conducted its third nuclear test, and threatened to withdraw from the armistice that ended the Korean war. North Korea was intent on military provocation despite its internal economic reforms and led observers to conclude that North Korea under Kim Jong Un was best explained with the framework of path dependence.\textsuperscript{204}

\textit{Potential for Change? North Korea's Future in Inter-Korean Relations and US-DPRK Relations in the Trump Administration}

North Korea continued with its nuclear and conventional weapons testing program until a sudden shift in negotiating strategy in 2018. Previous to this change North-South relations were at a low, particularly after the Park Geun-Hye administration closed the Kaesong Industrial Complex in 2016 responding to North Korean missile tests conducted in early February of that year.\textsuperscript{205} On July 4, 2017 North Korea tested it first Hwasong-14 class ICBM, with a second test on July 28 demonstrating that the Hwasong-14 had a range over 10,000km, and actual potential to reach the US mainland.\textsuperscript{206} These tests attracted UN resolutions 2371 and 2375 which targeted North Korean principle exports such as coal, iron, seafood and textiles.\textsuperscript{207} It also drew North Korea into hostile and public exchanges of rhetoric with the Trump administration, which took aim at the regime over social media.

Yet North Korea shifted strategy in 2018, engaging in a diplomatic charm offensive. North Korea first engaged the newly elected progressive Moon Jae In government in the South,

\textsuperscript{204} Park (2014) p. 11
\textsuperscript{207} Ibid., p. 35
conducting the third inter-Korean summit held on 27 April 2018. The Agreement led to the Panmunjom Declaration, which announced intent to improve inter-Korean relations, deal with Korean affairs without the influence of external parties and alleviate military tensions by agreeing to cease ‘hostile acts.’ As a result of the talks, a joint liaison office was built in Kaesong to establish direct contact between the two countries. Other joint economic and symbolic projects were also undertaken, such as marching together in the opening ceremony of the 2018 Asian Games. North Korea also sent a delegation to the PyeongChang Winter Olympics in Seoul. A later meeting between the DPRK and the ROK produced a further agreement, the Pyeongyang Declaration which emphasised the ‘shared the view that the Korean Peninsula must be turned into a land of peace free from nuclear weapons and nuclear threats.’

After successfully engaging South Korea, the DPRK reversed its approach to the US leading to the first ever summit between a North Korean leader and a sitting US president. The first meeting was conducted in Singapore where the US and the DPRK signed a Joint Statement, declaring a new DPRK-US relationship. The agreement also included intentions to denuclearise and an agreement to return the remains of US POW. After the summit there was a determinant change in US president Trump’s rhetoric towards the North Korean leader, who was able to shift his image from ‘little rocket man’ to ‘honourable leader,’ and also to

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209 Ibid., p. 208
210 Ibid., p. 208
212 Shin & Moon (2020) p. 38
convince the US to suspend joint military exercises with South Korea. During the summit Kim Jong Un was open to photography and went viral on social media taking a ‘selfie’ with Singapore’s Minister for Foreign Affairs. North Korea also attempted to transform its state image by elevating the status of Kim Jong Un’s wife, Ri So-Jul, from Comrade to First Lady and by deploying Kim Jong Un’s sister, Kim Yo Jong, to various diplomatic meetings.

Relations with China also markedly improved after Chinese disapproval of the 2017 ICBM tests which resulted in China actually implementing UN economic sanctions on North Korea. In 2018, Kim Jong Un met Xi Jingping three times. After the Panmunjom Declaration was made DPRK-Sino relations continued to improve, with Xi Jingping being the first Chinese visit to Pyeongyang in 14 years. Trade and tourism increased significantly over the rest of 2019.

Yet despite the recent shift to a charm offensive, the international community, the US in particular, continued to pressure North Korea for complete and irreversible denuclearisation. US strategy prevents any kind of complete normalisation of US-DPRK relations unless full and irreversible denuclearisation of North Korea takes place. Negotiations stalled after the following DPRK-US 2019 summit in Hanoi failed to produce a deal. North Korea argued to lift the last two years of UNSC sanctions on the North in exchange for vague denuclearisation commitments similar to those already previously made in exchange for aid. The US was

\[\text{Sonnevend \\& Kim (2020) p. 1398}\]
\[\text{Ibid., p. 1404}\]
\[\text{Ibid., p. 1409}\]
\[\text{Shin \\& Moon (2019) p. 36}\]

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determined that the North almost fully denuclearise irreversibly before sanctions relief was given, and no compromise could be made.\textsuperscript{220} Kim again tried to engage South Korea in its 2019 New Year’s address where offers to reopen the Kaesong Industrial Complete and the Mt Kumgang tourist resort ‘in return for nothing,’ but Seoul did not engage.\textsuperscript{221} Although Kim Jong Un met President Trump and Moon for a meeting at the DMZ in June 2019, no significant agreement manifested from talks beyond the 2018 Singapore Summit. In fact, North Korea reverted to provocation by resuming missile testing and further developing submarine-launched ballistic missile technology.\textsuperscript{222}

\textit{Domestic Politics: Explaining North Korea’s Consistent See-Saw}

Although the DPRK has often approached various foreign nations, particularly the US, with intentions of denuclearisation, it is now widely held that North Korea has no intention of irreversibly giving up the nuclear weapons or missile program in return for economic sanctions or international inclusion.\textsuperscript{223} Ideally, giving up or even reducing nuclear weapons program would produce massive economic benefit, yet North Korea’s refusal to do so is consistent with the need for the state to prioritise managing the domestic sphere and prevent an elite led social force developing with the capacity to topple the regime.

During Kim Jong Il’s reign, the military centred institutional structure and Songun politics would completely prevent any possibility of North Korea permanently relinquishing nuclear weapons. Only when pressured by intense critical junctures with massive domestic

\textsuperscript{220} Delury, J. (2020) North Korea in 2019. \textit{Asian Survey}. 60(1) p. 71
\textsuperscript{221} Ibid., p. 70
\textsuperscript{222} Ibid., p. 71
\textsuperscript{223} Chanlett-Avery, E., et. al. (2012) p. 8
repercussions such as the famine did the North reduce its nuclear capacity, but even so it was never irreversible. For Kim Jong Un, the party led institutional structure and the state ideology that safeguards his regime allows a significantly more flexible approach to foreign policy. After Kim Jong Un had consolidated power and enjoyed greater temporal distance from Songun, this flexibility to see-saw between military and economics only increased, allowing a transformation from outright military provocation to the diplomatic charm strategy beginning in 2018. However, a complete or irreversible reduction in military ability would still be forbidden by the party-led institutional structure and the Byungjin ideology that justifies its existence. The domestic placation of the military required by the dual development approach was responsible for locking North Korea out of meaningful agreements with both South Korea and the US. The attempts to come to an agreement in Hanoi mirrored the denuclearisation promised in the 1992 Joint Declaration, 1994 Agreed Framework, when receiving aid in the 2000s and during the Six Party Talks. The eventuation of these agreements depends on the complete and irreversible denuclearisation of the DPRK, yet no matter the external incentives, pressures, carrots and sticks, North Korea has never seriously engaged in irreversible denuclearisation.

The DPRK recently continues to attempt minor conciliatory gestures such as engaging with Seoul in its New Year’s Address calling for peace and reconciliation yet reverts back to military provocation when the desired response is not achieved. It is the domestic structure of the Kim Jong Un regime which gives the flexibility to offer an olive branch to open the Kaesong industrial complex in 2019 and then to blow up the inter-Korean office the following year. Kim Jong Un is significantly more able and willing to compromise to obtain economic benefit due to the institutional and ideological restructuring that allowed for separate economic and political spheres. Despite this, the constraining reality of having to
placate the military and maintain the state’s ‘parallel development’ ideology means that concessions on the nuclear program are unfeasible for the North no matter the economic benefit.

Domestic constraints and the institutional and ideological settings which preserve regime continuity take priority over external pressures. Extensive sanctions regimes only strengthen over time yet have been unable to successfully dissuade North Korea from continuing military provocation to some degree. North Korea under each Kim only approaches the negotiating table when in is pressured by critical junctures with domestic implications and when North Korea does engage, its options are restricted by its institutional and ideological structures. The DPRK under Kim Jong Un and Byungjin is still military first, just not military centre. If pushed by significant enough economic or other critical junctures with domestic repercussions, the regime may attempt to re-engage in denuclearisation negations, yet they are unlikely to eventuate into anything that has not been seen previously until there is a marked change in the domestic realm.

**Conclusion**

This chapter outlined that due to a favourable domestic environment and a less challenging policy scope, Kim Jong Un restructured the institutional sphere and updated the DPRK’s guiding ideology in order to separate the defence and economic spheres, creating significantly more options in foreign policy negotiations. Although initially the shift from military centre was slow as not to distance Kim Jong Un from his familial legitimacy, the party-led policy and parallel development strategy produced by Byungjin allowed for a shift
in negotiation strategy, making it easier to engage in the kind of diplomatic front needed to extort resources for the North Korean economy. Yet, the military in North Korea is still a vital institutional organ for regime stability, and hence there is little chance of a true reduction in North Korea’s military activity.

Although Kim Jong Un has a substantial amount more freedom in foreign policy especially to compromise for the sake of economic benefit as opposed to Kim Jong Il’s Songun, the constraints of placating the military to retain domestic order and maintain the state’s ‘parallel development’ ideology give little hope for genuine denuclearisation or even demilitarisation. Despite external pressure, North Korea’s domestic sphere prevents decision making for crucially needed economic relief. Further critical junctures that have the potential to impact the domestic sphere may push North Korea to attempt to defrost relations with the US or South Korea, but if it does, North Korea, if constrained by the same domestic situation, will unlikely be to unable to offer anything new.
Chapter 5 - Final Conclusion

*Domestic Politics as the Key Constraint*

This thesis has argued that domestic politics are the most significant constraint on North Korea’s decision making in international relations. When observing North Korea’s provocations and concessions over time, it is clear the state institutional structure and ideology determine the DPRK’s available options in negotiation, with more leniency afforded in crisis. This model gives explanation as to why North Korea gives concessions under given circumstances, and why North Korea otherwise continues provocative behaviour, or the creation of more problems to gain greater leniency.

This began with Kim Il Sung, who was the least constrained having created the original institutional settings of the state and enjoying performance legitimacy. Having removed the ability of Russia and China to interfere in North Korea’s domestic affairs whilst still extracting significant amounts of aid and technical assistance from both countries, Kim Il Sung remained unwaveringly committed to a strong KWP and Juche. Yet, it was this dedication to isolationism that constrained North Korea’s ability to manage the eventual economic downturn in the 1990s.

Kim Jong Il faced a significantly harsher policy environment with the pressures of domestic critical junctures influencing his crisis management style of leadership, however the famine provided the liberty to make concessionary agreements outside of Songun’s provocative sentiments. The DPRK was responsive during the Agreed Framework to compromise out of
necessity, closing Yongbyon and reducing the capacity of its nuclear development. However, even then, the DPRK’s response was carefully formulated around its institutional and ideological structures. Negotiations that provided the state with much needed food aid avoided North Korea’s most sensible partner, the South, and opted to turn to Japan and the US to disguise the inability of Songun to deliver the solution to North Korea’s crisis. After the consolidation of the military’s forefront role and a relative recovery of the economy, the DPRK became increasingly locked into unfavourable policy positions in order to safeguard the structures and ideology that kept Kim Jong II in power. North Korea in the mid to late 2000s was perceptibly different to the North Korea in 1994 and although the economic situation in North Korea was far from repair in the mid-2000s, there was no presence of a pressing domestic critical juncture to force compromise, and the state institutional structure and ideology of the time worked against it. The freedom found under earlier crisis dissipated and no domestic justification existed for the North not to pursue nuclear weapons after 2002. This meant that regardless of significant international pressure, mounting UN sanctions and unfavourable external conditions, the regime continued to pursue its nuclear program and did not appear to engage in a responsive shift of international strategy.

The next shift in the DPRK’s approach to foreign policy came when domestic restructuring occurred to promote Kim Jong Un to the supreme leadership. A re-elevated party and a pacified, yet compensated military produced more opportunity for compromise, but also a more unpredictable foreign policy than under Kim Jong Il’s Songun. Byungjin, the ideological justification for these institutional changes, allowed the separation of defence and economics, creating significantly more options in foreign policy negotiations and making it easier to shift North Korean negotiation strategy to engage in the kind of diplomatic front needed to extort resources for North Korea’s economy. Yet, the military in North Korea is
still a vital institutional organ for regime stability and the constraints of placating the military to retain domestic order and maintain the Byungjin line gives little hope for genuine denuclearisation. Regardless of the DPRK’s economic ails and external incentive to compromise and engage in what the international community truly requires, irreversible denuclearisation, the domestic structures of North Korea make this unfeasible. If pushed by significant enough critical junctures with domestic repercussions, the regime may attempt to re-engage in denuclearisation negations, yet until there is a domestic restructuring or a crisis on the scale of Great Famine to grant freedom for the regime to deter from its established institutional structure and the ideology that supports it, further negotiations are they are unlikely to eventuate into anything that has not been seen previously.

Using the evidence available, it can be determined that North Korea acts outside of the traditional pressures of the structuralist account. Changes in North Korea’s institutional settings and ideology produce significantly different approaches to foreign policy, yet external pressures are largely unable to force adaption. North Korea also does not always take advantage of conducive external environments and has engaged in provocations when the external environment was in fact favourable to North Korea, such as during the time period of the Agreed Framework. It has only been during period of internal crisis where the regime has given international concessions, which are carefully constructed around the state institutional structure and state ideology. Without internal crisis limited deviance is allowed, making domestic politics the pivotal constraint on the way North Korea interacts in the international sphere.
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