

Why Hasn't North Korea Collapsed? Rational Choices in East Asia

By

Eric Dean Tesar

Chapter 1

Introduction

There are enough places in this world where war is only moments away from breaking out, but there is only one place that calls the attention of the world's largest powers to such a small set of circumstances that can decide the fate of an entire region. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is just such a place. Ruled by a single person with nuclear capabilities and a provocative style, North Korea is a focal point for East Asian affairs. It is China's communist brother, but also an economic investment and a military buffer zone to the Western powers. For South Korea, it is long lost family but also a direct threat to their security, be it social, economic, or military.

The provocations of North Korea have constructed a unique relationship with the rest of East Asia, one that begs the question of why there is support in the form of economic aid and agreements despite an overwhelming distrust, and unity despite the variety of interests. It is in this region that we see states that have produced some of the greatest advances in technology, while there are others that are more cut off from the outside than almost anywhere else in the world. This dynamic has not always been the case. Before there was North and South Korea, the country was one. The people were family and the only real difference was geographical. Today, the story has taken a much more dramatic course. These people who were once the same have taken two separate paths after World War II, when the country was split into two different systems by the countries that administered their recovery, the United States and the Soviet Union.

There is a distinction between how North Korea's neighbors act towards North Korea and how the North reacts to them. The East Asian neighbors of

North Korea are generally subject to a larger degree of public scrutiny. The freedoms that the press and people have are much higher than North Korea, and this helps to keep the governments more accountable to the needs of the people rather than the elite few. As such, these countries demonstrate a higher degree of rationality when confronting international problems. It would then follow that their foreign policy would reflect this and their actions would more typically show what would likely be in their best interest. Since there is a higher degree of rationality, more direct observations about the relationship between states can be made. There may be interests groups within each country, capable of influencing the country's interests, but none strong enough to wield the same degree of power that the Kim regime does in North Korea. The paper will assert the claim that these countries, and their various vested interests in North Korea, have worked toward agreements and policies that have perpetuated the North Korean state with the intent of maintaining stability in the East Asian region.

To gain a better idea of how North Korea may see their situation, it helps to look at a map with a fresh set of eyes. In doing so, it quickly becomes apparent that North Korea is in the middle of some very powerful actors. With China on the northern border, and the American-backed South Koreans on the southern border, North Korea finds themselves in a situation where they are largely forced to react to what their neighbors do rather than dictate the conversation or events. This means that the decision-makers in North Korea have lost a degree of freedom in dictating their situation. This may seem slightly trivial, as most would confront this fact by pointing out that they have not been the best neighbor. This is quite possible the result of East Asian doing what they feel needs to be done to ensure a secure environment. A loss of ones freedom to operate freely is still seen just as badly in the eyes of North Koreans though, and in all likelihood, it is not seen the same way by the Kim regime as it is by the rest of their neighbors. Keeping this in mind will help provide a reference point as to why their methods and actions might not be as extreme as we may perceive them to be.

Hypothesis

There are two different realms inside North Korea. There is the Kim regime, which includes their inner circle, and there is the realm that involves the people of North Korea as a whole. It is the difference of the populous and the ruling party. The reason these two have been separated is that these are two different views that one may take on the North Korean state in regards to what may be driving the interests of the country. One outside group looking in at North Korea may believe that they are acting in the same manner as the rest of the international community and working towards what is best for the country as a whole, while others may see how North Korea has a very small circle to appease, and policy is formulated at the strict benefit of that small circle. While some may assume that power is ultimately derived for the health of the country as a whole, this however is not completely true. When the state is viewed as a whole, it does not always act rationally or seemingly in their own best interest. The state has been able to survive while making decisions that have negatively impacted the overall population. Therefore, when the state is viewed as a tool for the regime then one can see how the actions taken and policy that was implemented may benefit the decision-makers. This line of thought has been a driver in assessing the rationality of North Korea's actions and the reasons behind their actions.

Despite the seemingly erratic behavior of North Korea, there is a sizeable degree of predictability towards North Korea. Although it may seem that unpredictability is the only known characteristic of the North, this paper will help to show how the veil of prediction lies more heavily on the shoulders of its neighbors than the North Korean state itself. When a set of circumstances that involves both the interests and a degree of influence on the final decision are aligned, then the predictability of the situation is reverted more towards the neighbors than North Korea itself. North Korea has the ultimate power to make their own decision when the decisions is strictly theirs to make, but when looking at the overall course of actions on the Korea peninsula in regards to the North,

there is a greater degree of rationality in the decision-making process among those who have a vested interest in North Korea.

Therefore, the status quo in North Korea has been more appealing to its neighbors than what North Korea could become if it were to collapse. For this reason, China, South Korea and the United States have pursued policies and actions that meet the bare minimum in trying to keep North Korea from collapse.

Methodology

This paper will incorporate a number of theories as a foundation, but none that completely dominate the final product. The basis for reasoning in this thesis will be on a more practical level with rationality as the main driver. This could be a difficult task, however, as the reality in North Korea could very easily be different than that of its neighbors. Rationality in this paper must therefore be seen in more than one way. First, there is the question of what is or is not rational when taking this country into account. Their isolation and overall mindset, including 'Juche' and 'Songun' policies, have created an atmosphere different than almost any other in the world. The concept that North Korea operates on a different playing field from the rest of its neighbors will be explored to demonstrate the difference of perception. Analysis into what type of people the conditions inside North Korea produce is critical for understanding why they behave in the manner we see. This can be used in a further analysis of why many decisions seem to not make sense to the rest of the world, and why the country appears to be acting outside of rational behavior. Secondly, there is the view that the North Korean state functions to serve the Kim regime more than its citizens. This can also provide insight into the country's seemingly irrational decisions. If they are made to suit the regime rather than the state, then an in-depth analysis of the regime's best interests is needed in order to begin to understand the basic principles of their interpretation of rationality. The idea of rationality here must be viewed with these potentially different views in mind. Once this is taken into account, the notion that neighboring countries bring a greater degree of predictability begins to make more sense. It is the stability of these larger

countries that helps to bring a degree of calm to an otherwise volatile decision-making process in North Korea.

This confusion concerning discrepancies in rationality will be mitigated as best as possible by providing a base of knowledge in the following chapter. This will help to provide the reader with a shared understanding of the subject matter and ensure that the reader has encountered this subject with a solid background of the topic. This is also done to ensure that the correct information is provided to allow for the best possible assessment. There are many misconceptions about the country and the information that is available is not always the most reliable, so it is the aim of this paper to provide as much accurate information as is needed to establish a base of knowledge so that the final sections can be fully and completely understood as conveyed.

The second chapter of this thesis begins to provide the information from which the rest of the paper should draw much of the material. Among the themes presented is the view that the North Korean state functions to serve the Kim regime rather than its people. This idea is important to the paper because it compares the process of rationality in North Korea with that of the rest of the states mentioned, and can also provide insight into their many seemingly irrational decisions. It will also include sections that give details about North Korea as a country, and will show two different perspectives of the North. The first will be from the perspective of the international community. This section will acquaint the reader with how the rest of the world views North Korea, as well as how the information upon which they are basing their opinions was brought to them. The second perspective will shift the attention towards how North Korea views the world and the influence it has on their country.

Lastly, the framework constructed by the previous chapters will materialize into a direct analysis of why North Korea has not collapsed. The main section will help to explain the situation in greater detail and then provide the arguments for what has helped the country survive as long as it has. These reasons will then be supported by three different case studies of how an interested party

has helped to provide support for North Korea and why doing so is in their best interest.

This paper will address the topic by utilizing two general frames of reference. First, there will be the short-term prospects, which are meant to present a period that is in the foreseeable future and one that is within a single election cycle for the countries involved. Second will be a longer-term approach and this will reference the time period of 20-plus years. In the short-term period, the paper will show how these neighboring countries have found the continuance of the North Korean state to be beneficial. There was always a hope that the regime would reform, or that it seemed imminent. The thinking here was to maintain order for just long enough for a peaceful resolution to come about. Ultimately, however, this has not happened. The longer period of reference calls attention to the time during which North Korea began to lose its edge and started to become the country that we see today. At one point, the North was seen as an economic superior to South Korea, but sometime in the late 1970s to early 1980s, this reversed and the country gradually became more isolated.

Primitive and Emergent Objects

Of the primitive objects alluded to in this paper, Game Theory would be the most applicable and useful to reference. For further research into this topic, this theory could help to provide a better base for understanding the motives of each country involved and where their predicted interests lie. The purpose of this paper is to provide a more general assessment of the circumstances as a whole. It does not attempt to delve too deeply into the rationality of each decision made, which would be an ideal application of Game Theory.

Literature Review

This paper will guide the reader through the argument on why North Korea has not collapsed quite yet. The way in which this argument will be structured throughout the paper will not always focus directly on the theory being used. Theory cannot fully articulate what needs to be discussed in this paper, so an understanding of the subject matter from different points of view is important. This means that many documents that rely more heavily on real world facts rather than ideas will play a major role in the explanation of why North Korea has not yet collapsed. There is an idea used in this thesis that explains cooperation with North Korea in order to sustain a more peaceful atmosphere for the region. This idea and the supporting material to explain the situation is more unique to the literature and because of this there will not be as many outside sources used. The purpose of this is to use focus on explaining the ideas that will come to define the direction of this paper. That being said, the rest of the paper will heavily incorporate a wide array of literature. These sources include military publications, which present a perspective that is more narrowly focused but provides insight that other sources cannot provide. There will be U.S. Congressional reports that have the ability to summarize some of the major issues in a concise manner. News articles will be used as well. They help to provide a perspective that is closer to the story than other sources. Journal articles will be the primary source for this thesis. The subject matter that is discussed here does not provide well for the type of material that is needed for journal articles, as much of the information is based off of first-hand accounts and information that has the potential of being compromised at some point in the process. There is little that the outside world knows for certain about North Korea, so the task of finding the proper information about this country has been challenging. The array of sources and ideas that have been brought together in the third chapter of this thesis provide the analysis through three case studies of countries with a direct interest in the state of North Korea.

Classic Literature and Theory

Realism

There is also the realist perspective, which will be a bit more straightforward. North Korea is fearful about its security, and it feels as though each of the surrounding states will seize any opportunity where weakness is shown. This frame of reference helps to explain the military first policies the state has implemented, which, consequently, lead to a large portion of the GDP being devoted to the military. A result of this policy is that a constant state of military readiness has been placed as the top priority.

Realism also helps to describe much of the North Korean perspective. They have heavily securitized, and for the most part, do assume that the world is against them. They have cornered themselves in their enclave and have ruined most all of their relationships. State policy has focused on defense and almost any effort to gain attention on the world's stage is by demonstrating their military force capabilities. They have detonated nuclear weapons, launched intercontinental ballistic missiles, assassinated high level South Korean cabinet members, shot down civilian aircraft, and waged acts of war by sinking a ship or shelling an island with artillery fire.

There is, however, a great deal of cooperation on the part of the surrounding countries. Though joint military drills do occur, the neighbors of North Korea do not act in the same provocative manner, and certainly do not use nearly the same rhetoric. The United States has provided much of the security for the region throughout modern history, and China, Japan, and South Korea have therefore had the ability to focus much of their efforts on growing their economies. There is also the line of thought that shows how the diffusion of power from the United States to China for situations like this may not be such a bad thing, which is articulated by Drezner on military primacy¹. This idea opens

¹Drezner, Daniel W. "Military Primacy Doesn't Pay (Nearly As Much As You Think)." *International Security* 38.1 (2013): 52-79.

the door for other states to play a more significant role in North Korean affairs. These individual countries have all tried to reason with the DPRK, and have also banded together to form a more unified front, or regional coalition, to let the North know that its neighbors do not approve of their actions. With international anarchy being a core belief in realism, this perspective does not address the multilateral, common goals of East Asia. There are concessions that are made based on the hope that such actions will create the environment for meaningful engagement. Realism does address international order based around a common interest such as engagement, but fails to assume the predictive nature of international relations as Rational Choice Theory does. It is based off the idea of anarchy, and the unpredictability of the resulting disorder. Therefore,

Classical realism argued that in order to most effectively promote our political morality through our foreign policy, we need to be cognizant of the constraints of power in an anarchical world. And we need to allow for agency in our interactions with other countries—we must not assume that we can predict accurately how others will respond to our foreign policy.²

The incorporation of realism into this paper is on the basis that it provides a more specified position where security is at the forefront, a position that is greatly engrained into the decision-making process of all involved. It does not play a role in the final assessment of the process, but it is rather a resource for such an assessment.

Liberalism

The volume of trade that exists between China, South Korea, and the United States is massive. There are also an ever-increasing number of cultural ties that are making relations among these powers all the more intertwined. This web acts as a safety net for liberal thinkers, and helps to ensure that the cost-benefit analysis does not favor regional conflict. It is statistically shown that

²Barkin, Samuel. "Realism, Prediction, and Foreign Policy." *Foreign Policy Analysis* 5.3 (2009): 233-246.

*Increasing economic interdependence from the 10th percentile to the 90th percentile reduces the risk of a fatal dispute by 32 percent. Finally, an increase of the same magnitude in the number of shared memberships in intergovernmental organization cuts the risk of fatal dispute by 43 percent.*³

This idea gives credence to the necessity for peace in East Asia—that there is too much at stake. It also helps to explain why a major conflict has not broken out. In the most basic of forms, the dependence upon each other that is seen with East Asia and the United States is not worth the potential disaster that would be experienced in another Korean War. It is in this sense that liberalism is used in the explanation of the overall situation. The connection it has with rational choice theory in that a greater economic dependence helps to provide a web of entanglement and therefore peace provides the backbone for continued relations with all actors aside from North Korea. Where this theory deviates is describing the actions towards the North. The use of liberalism is greatest in the side stories, but not as much in the main idea of this thesis.

Constructivism

This paper also looks towards constructivism to gain insight into the subject of North Korea. Under this lens, we see how the East Asian regional powers have constructed the issues in North Korea through dialogue, sanctions, and military threats, to name a few, in order to frame the country as what we currently see in common discussion. The picture of North Korea has been painted based mostly on the narrative that others have constructed, and it is the image that most have imprinted in their minds, which directs opinions to follow the path of narratives that have already been tailored to portray a particular image of the country. This results in the rest of the world maintaining a preconceived idea about the country, and therefore subjecting the small amounts of information they

³Oneal, John R., Bruce Russett, and Michael L. Berbaum. "Causes of peace: Democracy, interdependence, and international organizations, 1885–1992." *International Studies Quarterly* 47.3 (2003): pp.388

have received to a country which is much more dynamic in nature than what many would be lead to believe from reports. This shared understanding of North Korea has the potential to alter foreign policy towards the North. This idea is based in part on a false reality, lending itself the ability to create a situation that snowballs on itself, further deepening the isolation. Where this theory helps, however, is through its “approach [which] aims at apprehending how the social practices and norms of states construct the identities and interests of the same.”⁴ North Korea is quite different than the rest of the world, and “conventional constructivism rejects the mainstream presumption that world politics is so homogenous that universally valid generalizations can be expected to come of theorizing about it.”⁵

The security focus that has been a foundational narrative of western thinking towards the North has not helped for the international community better understand North Korean intentions, it has created an environment of stress. This, however, does not exactly mean that there is a better way or that it is not an appropriate view to take. The North has, after all, largely been in a securitized state for some time now. As described in Balzacq’s ideas on Securitization⁶, the situation finds itself embracing all three phases. To make matters worse, they rarely let out any information that would help play an important role in the ongoing international conversation about them should they decide to join such dialogue. The information the outside world receives, along with the provocative nature of the DPRK, has created a situation where communication is rare and tends to focus on negatives more than positives. The lack of dialogue means that the second phase is strengthened and that North Korea becomes involved when it feels it must, such as the feeling that they are being threatened or misrepresented. This leave an even smaller amount of information on which to base a perspective, and the reality is that there is little positive information about the country, so the

⁴Hopf, Ted. "The promise of constructivism in international relations theory." *International security* 23.1 (1998): pp.192

⁵Hopf, Ted. "The promise of constructivism in international relations theory." *International security* 23.1 (1998): pp.199

⁶Balzacq, Thierry. "The three faces of securitization: Political agency, audience and context." *European journal of international relations* 11.2 (2005):

perception is shaped by a narrow set of facts. The North acts mostly defensively, and this feeds the idea to the outside world that there is something to hide. This idea, however, does not fully address the intricate details of the situation. It provides a good perspective on possible observations, such as how some actors may be showing their bias more than others, but it does not address the more complicated issues at play. How do the ongoing attempts at dialogue and acts of goodwill towards the DPRK factor into this theory?

Making the Classical More Applicable

Of the theoretical perspectives, almost all of them are established ideas that reach across a multitude of disciplines. Although they still have a great level of applicability to the material discussed here, they may not always pertain as appropriately to the subject matter as is required for direct analysis. To remedy this problem, this paper has used articles that take the form of these well-known perspectives, but their applicability has been modernized to relate to East Asia and more specifically to North Korea as well.

In the only academic journal devoted directly to North Korean affairs, an article discussing the North Korean motivations for nuclear weapons from multiple perspectives, including constructivism, liberalism, and realism, helps to demonstrate a modern application to this specific issue.⁷ It provides insight into the three lenses, each one framing the issue from their respective positions. The information gathered from this article has not been directly used in this paper through quotes, but its importance should not be underplayed. It has assisted in bridging the gap from the old to the new.

The ideas of rogue states and how language and media play a role in the formation of our perception of North Korea is addressed in Peter Howard's article on a North Korean invasion⁸. It brings a more applicable sense of constructivism

⁷Nah, Liang Tuang. "Explaining North Korean Nuclear Weapons Motivations: Constructivism, Liberalism, and Realism." *North Korean Review* 9.1 (2013): 61-82.

⁸Howard, Peter. "Why not invade North Korea? Threats, language games, and US foreign policy." *International Studies Quarterly* 48.4 (2004): 805-828.

to the issues discussed. When dealing with the use of threats and spread of fear to elicit a desired response, Carlson and Dacey's article⁹ provides insight into the effectiveness of displays of force and attempting to change foreign policy based on fear or threats. The direct use of the ideas in this article are not heavy, but it does provide a good basis for helping to understand why much of what has happened in the past has not succeeded.

Its outward appearance could suggest that North Korea is acting in an irrational manner much of the time. They provoke much larger world powers, and become involved in activities that do not seem to benefit their country. Although it may appear that way, it is hardly the case. The North Korean entity responsible for making decisions is actually acting within a set of guidelines, but it just may not be clear what those guidelines are. Two articles have helped in defining those motivations. The article by Yongho Kim on threat perception¹⁰, and Byman and Lind's¹¹ both help to define North Korean priorities. Kim's article in particular is presenting the idea that the Kim regime is using North Korea to preserve the dynasty more so than to help the North Korean people, a central theme to this paper.

There is a constant discussion of the option of using hard or soft power to steer North Korea towards a more tolerable existence. There are a number of articles that generally focus on security; Victor Cha's on preventative defense¹² takes a look more specifically at security issues, while Seong-Ryoul Cho's article on the security dilemma¹³ provides a more grounded idea of what kind of military

⁹Carlson, Lisa J., and Raymond Dacey. "The use of fear and anger to alter crisis initiation." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 31.2 (2014): 168-192

¹⁰Kim, Yongho. "North Korea's Threat Perception and Provocation Under Kim Jong-un: The Security Dilemma and the Obsession with Political Survival." *North Korean Review* 9.1 (2013):

¹¹Byman, Daniel, and Jennifer Lind. "Pyongyang's survival strategy: tools of authoritarian control in North Korea." *International Security* 35.1 (2010): 44-74;

¹²Cha, Victor D. "Hawk engagement and preventive defense on the Korean peninsula." *International Security* 27.1 (2002): 40-78.

¹³Cho, Seong-Ryoul. "North Korea's Security Dilemma and Strategic Options." *The Journal of East Asian Affairs* (2009): 69-102; Gause, Ken E. *North Korean civil-military trends: military-first politics to a point*. ARMY WAR COLL STRATEGIC STUDIES INST CARLISLE BARRACKS PA, 2006; Cha, Victor D. "Hawk engagement and preventive defense on the Korean peninsula." *International Security* 27.1 (2002): 40-78.

ideology the international community might be looking at in North Korea. The article on engagement or containment by Soon-ok Shin¹⁴ also lends support to the argument of making the transition away from hard power.

There are also articles that take more of the soft power route and focus more on integration and liberalization of markets as well. As set forth in Snyder's article—"In a system where most pursue liberalization and open trade, a strategy of isolation and autonomy is likely to be self-defeating as well. The absolute gains from open multilateral cooperation are likely to exceed whatever economic progress a state is able to achieve in isolation."¹⁵ The article goes on to mention that "to avoid North Korea's predicament you must pursue strategies adopted by South Korea."¹⁶ However, this ignores the reality of the situation. The Kim regime will not survive if the light was shown on their regime. Openness to the outside world is of benefit to North Korea, but not to the Kim regime. The power dynamic necessary for that to continue would not allow such a transition to occur in the near future, as such openness to the outside world could prove disastrous to the regime's legitimacy, and ultimately its survival. They have gone far too deep into isolation to welcome openness. A gradual transition is the only technique that could preserve the dynasty.

The greatest hope that North Korea has had in opening to the outside world is through trade. Of all the countries, China has proved to be the North's greatest benefactor. They are in the unique position of being able to understand their shared fears of the West, and to trying and make a socialist economy work. It has been through articles that talk about China's market influence¹⁷, and the

¹⁴Shin, Soon-ok. "Engagement? Containment?: The Role of Identity in the Formation of South Korea's Policy Toward Pyongyang." *North Korean Review* 9.1 (2013): 83-99.

¹⁵Snyder, Quddus Z. "Integrating rising powers: liberal systemic theory and the mechanism of competition." *Review of International Studies* 39.01 (2013): pp.221

¹⁶Snyder, Quddus Z. "Integrating rising powers: liberal systemic theory and the mechanism of competition." *Review of International Studies* 39.01 (2013): pp.221

¹⁷Reilly, James. "China's Market Influence in North Korea." *Asian Survey* 54.5 (2014): 894-917; Kim, Jae Cheol. "The Political Economy of Chinese Investment in North Korea: A Preliminary Assessment." (2006).

Rason Special Economic Zone¹⁸ that help to demonstrate the potential for an economic connection to the outside world through trade and special economic zones.

Government Documents and Publications

The use of government documents has been critical in the research of this topic. The information they provide is gathered with a different intent than it would be for academic journals. It gravitates around the idea that the information may, at some point, be used for policy formation or to inform for purposes of action. They are also often some of the only sources of information about specific issues relating to North Korea. The use of Congressional Research Service documents and United Nation reports has been used quite heavily in research on North Korea, as well. They do not provide for theory on the subject, but rather a well-informed situational report that helps to provide the basis for other ideas and theoretical perspectives.

News

Major News Sources

Many of the world's major news sources cover events in North Korea, but some provide this information more readily than others. There are two different styles of news covered in this paper. The first are those that feature the news as it happens. They are the places that the stories are brought to the user as quickly as possible. The articles that are presented in this category are published as quickly as they can because their purpose is to inform the reader of new events presently occurring. Examples of these news outlets include the British Broadcasting Channel (BBC), The Diplomat, Wall Street Journal, The Telegraph, Christian Science Monitor, New York Times, and Associated Press. The second type of news articles used in this thesis are those that cannot be classified as academic journal articles because they are closer to the rapidly evolving news cycle style.

¹⁸Abrahamian, Andray. "A convergence of interests: prospects for Rason Special Economic Zone." *Korea Economic Institute Academic Paper Series* 24 (2012).

These include Foreign Affairs, The Economist, and Foreign Policy Magazine. The last of which features an interview/conversation between two people, one a former teacher in North Korea and the other a former Governor who had gone on multiple visits to the North.¹⁹

¹⁹FP Staff. "The Exchange: Suki Kim and Bill Richardson Talk North Korea." *Foreign Policy, The Exchange Suki Kim and Bill Richardson Talk North Korea Comments*. Foreign Policy Magazine, 23 Mar. 2015. Web

Chapter 2

North Korea—What You Need to Know

The North Korean state has survived for much longer than most would have predicted. Since the late 1940s it has kept its sovereignty intact through war and famine. They remain at war with the country to its south, despite coming from the same families. Maintaining its sovereignty has not come easily, however. It has devoted great efforts to defending itself and has pursued policies that have placed the defense of the country as the top priority, as well as achieving nuclear weapon capabilities that provide a vital deterrent to invasion.

This paper will illustrate the East Asian security and economic concerns revolving around North Korea. It will show what the neighbors of North Korea have done to maintain a peaceful environment despite a provocative neighbor. It will also demonstrate how the domestic politics of the North have affected their foreign relations, and how spheres of influence from within the country have wielded their power, which has projected many of their interests to the outside world as those of the North Korean state and people.

There are two different worlds inside North Korea. There is one world in which the Kim regime and its inner circle exists. Then there is the world in which the people and state of North Korea exist. The international community tends to focus its policy and dialogue on the North Korean state, and assume that the leadership is along the same line of thought. However, this is not completely true. When the state is viewed as a whole, it does not always act rationally or seemingly in their own best interest. But, when the state is viewed as a tool for the regime, it is easier for one to see how the actions taken and policies implemented may benefit the decision-makers.

There are also a number of countries that have an interest in keeping regional stability, along with an eventual increase in trade with North Korea. The way those countries will manage that relationship make for a complex web that intertwines interests with decisions that cannot be delayed. In other words, the neighbors of North Korea have pursued policies that have been designed to minimize the chance of North Korean collapse. They have helped the DPRK survive for as long as it has, and if it were not for their help, then the Korean Peninsula would not be the same as it is today. Despite the seemingly erratic behavior of North Korea, we can more reliably predict the direction that this state will take. It may seem that unpredictability is the only known characteristic of the North, but this paper will argue that predictions depend more heavily on the actions of its neighbors rather than the North Korean state itself. They have the power to make the ultimate decisions, but other countries set the overall course simply by having a vested interest in the DPRK.

There is an aspect of securitization that has come to characterize the North Korean state. It builds on the level of risk that is associated with the country. This securitization has grown because the media and government are so closely aligned. All “conditions underlying the effectuation of securitization fall into at least three sets of factors - audience, context and securitizing agent.”²⁰ The audience is primed to attentively receive the messages from the government and whether or not they agree or believe in the message, they effectively treat it as if they do. The context refers to the trustworthiness of the source, and in North Korea, the source is the one and only source. Again, whether or not the people actually believe the source to be trustworthy does not actually matter—they must treat it as such. The securitizing agent deals with the ability of the agent to legitimize the narrative. In North Korea, the government has all of the power, and as the ultimate power, they have the approval for anything they wish to promote. This domestic narrative leads to extreme securitization trends. These trends are noticed by the international community, but without any context, and because

²⁰Balzacq, Thierry. "The three faces of securitization: Political agency, audience and context." *European journal of international relations* 11.2 (2005): pp.192

there exists no direct line of communication, it often times sends the wrong message.

The outlook for North Korea is bleak and the ‘military first’ temperament creates a very uneasy atmosphere. The following chart short shows the investment and political climate in North Korea compared with its regional counterparts and a few other countries to help illustrate a well-rounded perspective.

Figure 1, Risk Comparison of North Korea with Other Selected Countries²¹

		Political Risk Short Term	Political Risk Medium/Long Term	Political Risk Special transactions	Commercial risk	War risk	Risk of expropriation and government action	Transfer risk
AFG	Afghanistan	7	7	7	C	7	7	7
CHN	China	1	2	1	C	3	5	2
HKG	Hong Kong	1	1	1	A	2	1	1
JPN	Japan	1	1	1	B	2	1	1
PRK	Korea (North)	7	7	7	C	6	6	7
KOR	Korea (South)	1	1	1	A	3	1	1
MEX	Mexico	2	3	2	B	2	2	3
USA	United States	1	1	1	A	1	1	1
						Export transactions		Direct Investments

1=lowest risk and 7=highest risk, A=low risk, B= medium risk, C= high risk

The above information tells the story of how the world sees the risks associated with North Korea. They most closely resemble that of a country currently at war, Afghanistan. The following chapter on case studies will demonstrate how some countries invest in the North for reasons other than direct monetary gains, but this chart shows how any actor, private or public, would most likely be at a loss if they were to invest in North Korea. However, this is not to say that the very environment that the chart is representing does not present the international community with opportunities. Where there is desperation, there is both opportunity and the potential for cooperation. The utilization of these depends heavily on which country that is and what it is asking. Pride still plays a large role in North Korea. One message many understand about North Korea is that “they’re a very proud, strong country. Nobody controls them — not China,

²¹ Chart created with data compiled from the Belgian Export Credit Agency, <http://www.delcredereducroire.be/en/search/?keywords=risk+assessment>

South Korea, or the United States. They want to be considered on par as a major power with the United States.”²²

There is an important note to mention when discussing what is in North Korea’s best interest. For many countries, the government acts in best interest of its people. The rationality of states can focus on the macro-level decision-making process as being something that is done for the best of whatever group is represented by the decisions. What the North Korean system presents is a duality in interests. There is what is best for the regime and then there is what is best for the country. The relationship between the two helps to explain how the country operates.

The hardest part of comprehending another’s behavior is figuring out all the possible variables and what the true objective may be. A typical country would operate under the assumption that it is doing what is best for its people, and those in charge typically project that thought process onto others when perceiving a situation. Therefore, the choices almost all countries make and the actions they take may not always work out for the best, but they are taken with the goal of attaining the maximum benefit for everyone. If the benefit outweighs the cost, then the benefit would be worth the cost. The utilization of this leads to many countries projecting their own system onto that of North Korea. As most countries operate under some form of accountability to their people, the strong authoritarian system of North Korea prevents the recognized and more familiar systems of countries from fully understanding what the true objectives of North Korea might be. It is still working correctly, but as mentioned, it is about knowing what the true objectives are in order to accurately view the bigger picture. North Korea operates to serve the Kim regime. The Kim regime does not operate to serve North Korea. This often overlooked aspect of the country is important to keep in mind in order to make sense of the habitually confusing situation on the Korean

²²FP Staff. "The Exchange: Suki Kim and Bill Richardson Talk North Korea." *Foreign Policy The Exchange Suki Kim and Bill Richardson Talk North Korea Comments*. Foreign Policy Magazine, 23 Mar. 2015. Web. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/03/23/the-exchange-suki-kim-and-bill-richardson-talk-north-korea/?utm_content=buffera7630&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_campaign=buffer>.

Peninsula.

The Kim Dynasty is possibly the most important factor in North Korean affairs. It is not just simply the leadership, or the authoritarian regime. They take the form of living deities. This presents the regime with a mixed set of challenges and opportunities. They have the loyalty of their people, whether it be out of fear or admiration, but they do so only to the extent that they can maintain this god-like persona. The regime does not have the interest of the people at heart though; they have “prioritized their political survival over the survival of the North Korean state.”²³ This helps only the regime, not the country, and one might assume that as soon as the people begin to see the faults in the system the government will have little more than violence and fear as tools to hold back the much needed reform. However, considering the system in place, this will still be quite a challenge. Speaking of her students, former North Korean teacher Suki Kim says:

*It was very clear that they had a total devotion to their leaders, the structure of the party, the military — they were paramount in any of their discussions. They never made a decision on the spot. In negotiating with them, their idea of a concession was not a quid pro quo, like in Western countries. Their idea of a concession was they're not going to budge, but what they will budge on is they will give you enough time to come to their conclusion, eventually. Time for them is not of the essence.*²⁴

The degree of government control in North Korea is particularly unique in the world. They rely on “several tools to stay in power: restrictive social policies; manipulation of ideas and information; use of force; co-optation; manipulation of

²³Kim, Yongho. "North Korea's Threat Perception and Provocation Under Kim Jong-un: The Security Dilemma and the Obsession with Political Survival." *North Korean Review* 9.1 (2013): pp.7

²⁴FP Staff. "The Exchange: Suki Kim and Bill Richardson Talk North Korea." *Foreign Policy The Exchange Suki Kim and Bill Richardson Talk North Korea Comments*. Foreign Policy Magazine, 23 Mar. 2015. Web. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/03/23/the-exchange-suki-kim-and-bill-richardson-talk-north-korea/?utm_content=buffera7630&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_campaign=buffer>.

foreign governments; and institutional coup-proofing.”²⁵ This style of domestic policies can only be carried out if stability is, to an extent, maintained, and if there is a sort of threat that North Korea poses which necessitates help from their neighbors. This is because “the DPRK is maintaining [a] ‘rent-seeking economy’ that consists of posing a nuclear threat and possibly flooding their neighbors with refugees.”²⁶ The other countries do not want to deal with the possibility of what a collapse may bring, so they allow and enable these policies to be prolonged.

Irony of Juche

One of the core guiding principles of North Korean philosophy is the idea of self-reliance, or Juche ideology. Kim Il sung, the founder of North Korea, stated,

*The government of the Republic will implement with all consistency the line of independence, self-sustenance, and self-defense to consolidate the political independence of the country, build up more solidly the foundations of an independent national economy capable of insuring the complete unification, independence and prosperity of our nation and increasing the country’s defense capabilities, so as to safeguard the security of the fatherland reliably by our own force, by splendidly embodying our party’s idea of Juche in all fields.*²⁷

Being such a core principle of the North Korean state, it would seem that this ideal would be applied very rigorously. Its outward appearance suggests that it has, as North Korea is very wary of anything western and makes their distrust publically known as often as possible. This paper, however, identifies a strong reliance on their neighbors for support. This does not meet the standards of true Juche though, and “as an appealing legitimating principle, Juche often has been

²⁵Byman, Daniel, and Jennifer Lind. "Pyongyang's survival strategy: tools of authoritarian control in North Korea." *International Security* 35.1 (2010): pp.54.

²⁶Cho, Seong-Ryoul. "North Korea's Security Dilemma and Strategic Options." *The Journal of East Asian Affairs* (2009): pp.96.

²⁷Lee, Grace. "The political philosophy of Juche." *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs* 3.1 (2003): pp.105

turned on its head to conceal a high degree of dependence on Soviet and Chinese aid. Between 1948 and 1984, Moscow and Beijing were Pyongyang's first and second most important patrons, supplying \$2.2 billion and \$900 million in aid, respectively."²⁸

This is hardly the independence that was originally called for. As the North further isolates itself from the world, so the world does to North Korea. They do not need the products that the North produces, as there is nothing in particular they have a competitive advantage over. The North needs the world more than the world needs the North. In addition, even as North Korea's weapons programs begin to define the country's outward image, the technology they garner their pride from is not exactly home-grown, because "Korea remains dependent on foreign procurement for certain items, especially some that figure in nuclear and ballistic missile programmes. In particular, it lacks sufficient domestic precision machine tool manufacturing capability and it purchases off-the-shelf items for its ballistic missile-related programmes."²⁹ The figures presented in the rest of this paper will help to call attention to one of the biggest ironies of the Juche policy. They have tried to become self-reliant to help showcase the might of North Korea, but as a result, they have come to depend on the international community in order to avoid collapse. It has evolved into a system of reliance by the very policy that sought to characterize North Korea as a system of self-sustainment.

Illicit Networks Are Harming the State

The illicit activities that the North Korean government has been involved in have been shortsighted and constitute an unsustainable plan to bring in foreign currency. These policies have benefitted the country to a small degree. It has provided a sizeable portion of the foreign currency that makes its way into the

²⁸Kim, Samuel. *North Korean Foreign Relations in the Post-cold War World*. Maroon Ebooks, 2015. Pp.90

²⁹United Nations Staff, and Martin Uden. "United Nations Official Document." *UN News Center*. UN, 06 Mar. 2014. Web.
<http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S%2F2014%2F147>. Was created by a panel of experts, coordinated by Martin Uden

country, and it has allowed the country to operate their more secretive operations with untraceable money. For example, “in April 2005, U.S. officials estimated North Korea’s total income from criminal activities at \$500 million, an amount roughly equal to income from arms sales and 35–40 percent of the income provided by legitimate exports.”³⁰ This is a sizeable portion of North Korea’s economy, and it is one that is open and not subjected to any form of international review. The money that is earned through these illicit networks can be spent on any number of illegal programs or items. It can also be used by the regime to help pay for gifts or incentives that they would wish to keep from the rest of their people. By

operating through front companies and illicit affiliates, Bureau 39 is one of several Central Committee offices that procure luxury items for party and military elites, obtain technology and components for weapons programs, and pursue illicit activity to fund the first two tasks.”³¹

This organization helps to keep the elite happy and the pet projects running. It is also money that could be used very effectively in alleviating many of the country’s agriculture and infrastructure problems. Here lies the problem. This is an area where the activities, which have very narrowly benefitted the country, turn into policies that undermine it instead. If the money they earned through the illicit networks were used on developing the country rather than for regime survival and enjoyment, then North Korea would be in a much better position than they are today. This idea will be discussed in greater detail later, but this method of governance essentially leads to many more problems than it solves.

The participation in an enterprise such as this has resulted in cases of North Korea’s direct involvement in “at least 50 documented incidents in more than 20 countries around the world, many involving arrest or detention of North

³⁰Chestnut, Sheena. "Illicit activity and proliferation: North Korean smuggling networks." *International Security* 32.1 (2007): pp.92.

³¹Chestnut, Sheena. "Illicit activity and proliferation: North Korean smuggling networks." *International Security* 32.1 (2007): pp.90.

Korean diplomats.”³² This direct involvement by the state would, in almost any other circumstance, create an atmosphere of distrust, which would lead to further punishment and isolation, but North Korea is different. “The Department of State has consistently been cautious not to pin an ironclad label of ‘state sponsorship’ on North Korean drug trafficking activity.”³³ This would require the imposition of foreign aid sanctions on Pyongyang, which would limit the tools the United States has to deal with the rogue state and could also be seen as putting drugs at the forefront rather than focusing on much larger issues such as nuclear proliferation.³⁴ Even though these issues are known, they are often overlooked in the hope that progress on more important issues can continue.

The quantifiable aspects of the illicit networks have worked in the North’s favor; they have earned hard foreign currency. What has hurt the North Korean state is the actual knowledge of such activities by the outside world. The government’s involvement in these illegal actions discredits the Kim regime greatly in the eyes of the world. Meaningful deals are likely not willing to be made if there is no trust, and in order to engage in serious discussion state to state, a mutual respect must be achieved. As this paper argues, the deals will most likely be made in spite of all the distrust and knowledge of such behaviors because the intent is to ensure the country does not collapse. This behavior can be tolerated by the international community to an extent, but what is perhaps causing the greatest harm in these actions is the influence this has on the fairness of deals reached with North Korea, and how much further behind their country has become as a result of continuing to take short term gains over long term investment.

³²Perl, Raphael F. "Drug Trafficking and North Korea: Issues for US Policy." LIBRARY OF CONGRESS WASHINGTON DC CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE, 2006. pp. Summary

³³Perl, Raphael F. "Drug Trafficking and North Korea: Issues for US Policy." LIBRARY OF CONGRESS WASHINGTON DC CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE, 2006. pp.CRS1-2

³⁴Perl, Raphael F. "Drug Trafficking and North Korea: Issues for US Policy." LIBRARY OF CONGRESS WASHINGTON DC CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE, 2006. pp.CRS1-2

North Korean Stability Control Methods

Key to the survival of the Kim Regime is the ability to control the direction of North Korea. The public's ability to dictate their own path can quickly lead to the public forcing changes that are unfavorable to the regime. Therefore, it is paramount for the Kim regime to make sure that reform is done strictly on their terms and to have the ability to restrict any attempts to subvert their process.

Stability is not only important for North Korea's neighbors, but it is also highly important for an authoritarian government to exert as much control over its population as possible. Having this mindset of always fearing instability, the list of what can potentially disrupt the system vastly increases. Stability is maintained through a variety of systems, but perhaps one of the most severe is something called the *songbun* classification system. This system

*subdivides the population of the country into 51 categories or ranks of trustworthiness and loyalty to the Kim family and North Korean state... [They] are grouped into three broad castes: the core, wavering, and hostile classes. Kim Il-sung gave a public speech in 1958 in which he reported that the core class represented 25%, wavering class 55%, and hostile class 20% of the population.*³⁵

This is highlighted by reports on North Korea showing that “in mid-1998 the World Food Program, UNICEF, Save the Children, and the European reported that 32% of the children showed no evidence of malnutrition, 62% suffered from moderate malnutrition, and 16% suffered from severe acute malnutrition, with an error rate of 5%.”³⁶ Loyalty to the party is directly tied to the chances of survival. This makes obvious the connection party loyalty and the ability to eat has in North Korea. It is also a very clear example of how North Korea exists to serve the Kim regime and not the other way around.

³⁵Collins, Robert M. *Marked for Life: Songbun, North Korea's Social Classification System*. Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2012.

³⁶Collins, Robert M. *Marked for Life: Songbun, North Korea's Social Classification System*. Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2012.

If instability has the ability to cause so much damage to the Kim dynasty, it would mean that the ways in which instability could manifest are much more numerous than in more stable countries where the economic and political mechanisms have a greater chance of absorbing turmoil. In terms of popular politics, Park Young-ja argues that there are eight types of instability in North Korea:

1. Excessive expenditure of public funds for consumption-oriented projects in accordance with Kim Il-sung- and Kim Jong-il-ism
2. An economic structure which cannot develop without foreign investment
3. The United Nation's increasing burden on North Korea's nuclear development
4. Limitations in its self-reliance policies in the absence of public investment
5. The spread of non-socialist phenomena due to marketization and the spread of information
6. The North Korean people's growing desire for reform and opening and changes in lifestyle
7. Mid-to-lower class bureaucrats and emerging capitalists' utilitarianism
8. Class, regional and generational cleavages³⁷

To help prevent or stifle these forms of instability there needs to be an illusion of some type of reform framework in place, just as much as the government needs to ensure that no real reform networks arise that are not government sponsored. If there appears to be a method towards progress already in place, then there will be less public desire to create one outside of the government's control. For this, "there exist about 100 'mass groups' in North Korea today... However, all these social groups without exception perform such roles as 'extensively educating and indoctrinating the public,' 'serving as the transmission belt connecting the mass and the party,' and 'working as the faithful assistant of the party.'"³⁸ True reform is a distant prospect though, as it is often linked to outside forces that the government does not want to penetrate North Korean society. As the mouthpiece of the DPRK, "the Korean Central News

³⁷Park, Young-ja. "Kim Jong-un's Ruling Style and Structure." *Online Series*. Korea Institute for National Unification, 15 Jan. 2014. Web.

³⁸Fiori, Antonio, and Sunhyuk Kim. "Jasmine Does Not Bloom in Pyongyang: The Persistent Non-transition in North Korea." *Pacific Focus* 29.1 (2014): 44-67.

Agency tells its readers how to think about reform: the South Koreans ‘want to use their pitiful ‘humanitarian aid’ to lure us into ‘openness and ‘reform’ in order to destabilize our system from within.’”³⁹

The disconnect between the ruling elite and the people is much greater in North Korea than it is in other places, in part due to the focus the regime has on its own survival. The empathy they share with the average citizen is much lower than that of their neighbors. What they care about is how the people can better serve their party. Because of this, North Korea also has a very high cost tolerance. If a situation should arise where conflict is inevitable, North Korea is much more willing to bet the house, while their neighbors might only be willing to bet the car. This attitude results in more drastic measures being taken, because the public does not elicit the Kim regime to protect them out of duty. Combined with how the state dealt with reforms, much of the public does not fair well in times of distress. By being “trained under the old system, deprived of opportunities to organize, and ignorant about the outside world, North Korea’s starving farmers did not rebel. They just died.”⁴⁰

Since the beginnings of the country, the North’s leadership “has relied heavily on three tools: restrictive social policies that prevent potentially hostile social classes from forming and create society’s dependence on the state; manipulation of ideas and information to increase the regime’s legitimacy and weaken that of potential opponents; and the heavy use of force to deter or crush potential resistance.”⁴¹ It was quite traumatic for children to grow up amidst these conditions. Suki Kim taught at a school for North Korea’s elite youth, and she experienced first hand the outcome of these policies. She says,

I did really love my students so much, and I felt the degree under which they were controlled, and their humanity was completely

³⁹Lankov, Andrei. "Staying alive: why North Korea will not change." *Foreign Affairs* (2008): pp.15

⁴⁰Lankov, Andrei. "Staying alive: why North Korea will not change." *Foreign Affairs* (2008): pp.15

⁴¹Byman, Daniel, and Jennifer Lind. "Pyongyang's survival strategy: tools of authoritarian control in North Korea." *International Security* 35.1 (2010): pp.47.

*suppressed beyond belief. I actually did not feel any hope. You say, yes, we have to keep engaging, but we engage at what expense? Because I just didn't see any light at the end of the tunnel, and these were the elite. I don't know how we engage with a regime that does that to its people, because they don't behave any other way.*⁴²

This pertains mostly to the people still living in North Korea, however. North Korean defectors living in South Korea have a chance to experience a completely different lifestyle. Defectors suffer traumatic experiences in the North, but the different lifestyle helps to resolve many of those issues, as “both the prevalence rate and the severity of PTSD significantly decreased over the 7 years the NK defectors lived in South Korea.”⁴³ This gives hope to those who advocate for integration of defectors into international communities. It would seem as though integration into South Korean society would be an easier transition, but in reality, “the cultural aspect of the current stresses experienced by NK defectors in South Korea seems to be unique, despite their common ancestral background.”⁴⁴ As shown in a 7-Year Follow-Up Study on the Mental Health on North Korean Defectors in South Korea, many of the stresses the defectors felt were not specific to Korean culture. They include feelings that could be experienced anywhere the defectors could go. The study found that

differences in dialect, foods, or clothing styles were not reported as serious stress factors by NK defectors, but their most serious stressors included 'discrimination by South Koreans,' 'a lack of

⁴²FP Staff. "The Exchange: Suki Kim and Bill Richardson Talk North Korea." *Foreign Policy The Exchange Suki Kim and Bill Richardson Talk North Korea Comments*. Foreign Policy Magazine, 23 Mar. 2015. Web. http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/03/23/the-exchange-suki-kim-and-bill-richardson-talk-north-korea/?utm_content=buffera7630&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_campaign=buffer.

⁴³Jeon, Woo-Taek, Jin-Sup Eom, and Sung Kil Min. "A 7-Year Follow-Up Study on the Mental Health of North Korean Defectors in South Korea." *Journal of traumatic stress* 26.1 (2013): pp.161.

⁴⁴Jeon, Woo-Taek, Jin-Sup Eom, and Sung Kil Min. "A 7-Year Follow-Up Study on the Mental Health of North Korean Defectors in South Korea." *Journal of traumatic stress* 26.1 (2013): pp.161.

information about living in South Korea,' 'different value systems and lifestyles,' and 'feeling inferior due to incompetency in vocational knowledge and skills.' These seemed to be because of cultural and educational background of NK defectors (Min, Jeon, & Yoon, 1999). Accordingly, they are likely to experience identity issues, in that they are no longer North Koreans and also not yet accepted as South Koreans (Jeon et al., 1997).⁴⁵

Reform from within North Korea is highly unlikely. The regime has a tight hold on all aspects of the country, but that isn't to say that it will continue indefinitely. The powerful alliance between the Kim regime and Korean People's Army (KPA) is unsustainable. It forces North Korea to travel a path that can only result in the eventual destabilization of the country. The decline, however, "is prolonged by local factors (e.g., inability of people to mobilize) and global factors (e.g., regional-stability and investment needs), which allow the regime to adapt."⁴⁶ The question is: what has to happen to force a more rapid decline?

The Outsiders' View

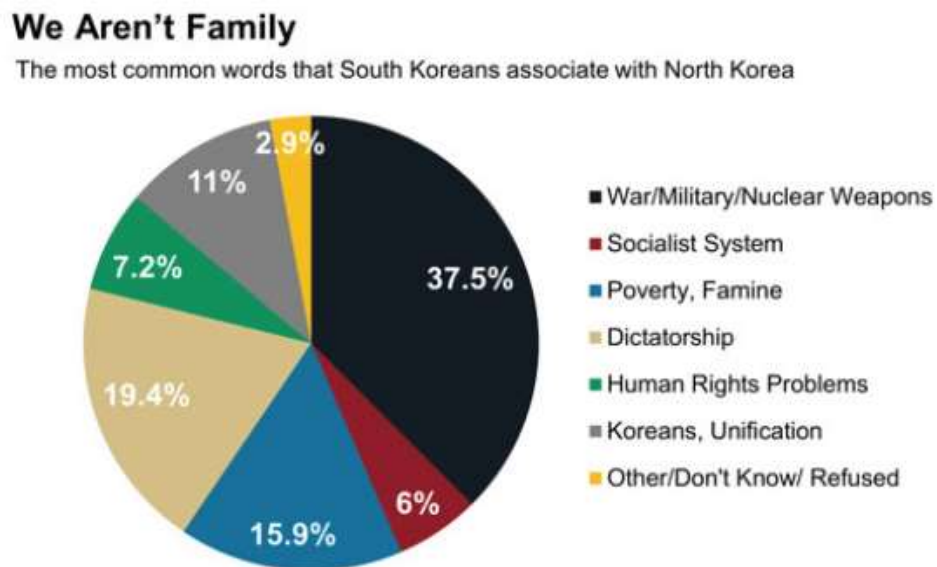
What the outside world sees of North Korea is probably not the most accurate portrayal of the country. The sources of information are not always the most reliable and because there is a general lack of information, the opinions are usually not as evenly balanced. Nonetheless, this does not stop outsiders from having an opinion on the country. This section will not spend too much time talking about what actions other countries are taking to deal with North Korea; that is reserved for the case studies. Rather, this section will tell the story of how information is received by the international community, along with some of the titles and stereotypes that have been associated with North Korea.

⁴⁵Jeon, Woo-Taek, Jin-Sup Eom, and Sung Kil Min. "A 7-Year Follow-Up Study on the Mental Health of North Korean Defectors in South Korea." *Journal of traumatic stress* 26.1 (2013): pp.163

⁴⁶David-West, Alzo. "North Korea and the Contradiction of Inversion: Dictatorship, Markets, Social Reform." *North Korean Review* 9.1 (2013): 100-113.

It is quite possible that China currently shares some of the greatest commonalities with North Korea. They know what it is like to be on the other side of American foreign policy, but South Koreans share a genetic line that binds them on a much deeper level. This genetic tie, however, is quickly disappearing. The younger generation in the South no longer associates itself with the North in the same fashion that their elders have. This newer South Korea has developed an association with North Korea that does not help the perception of the isolated country. The association they have with the North is generally negative in nature, as shown in the figure below.

Figure 2



Source: Asan Institute for Policy Studies (poll conducted Sep. 2014) | WSJ.com

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The focus on the negative aspects of the North impact the foreign policy of South Korea, and with the genetic linkages, geopolitical location, and desire among government officials to unify the peninsula, the South should naturally be the most advantageous ally for the North. However, “the resumption of economic aid is

⁴⁷Cheng, Jonathan. "In South Korea, Reunification Call Misses the Jackpot." *Korea Real Time* RSS. Wall Street Journal, 26 Jan. 2015. Web.

largely opposed by the South Korean public, with 67.8 percent in opposition unless there is a significant change in ‘attitude’ by North Korea.”⁴⁸ There is likely an attitude among South Koreans that the resumption of aid will have no effect on the relationship it shares with the North. It is simply furthering failed engagement policies, even while unification remains as the ultimate end goal.

The Information Flow

To understand how the outside world views North Korea, it is important to have an understanding of how information about North Korea is made available to the outside world. This section will help to provide the reader with the information needed to comprehend the difficulties of both importing and exporting information in and out of the DPRK.

The technology curve in East Asia is quite steep. Japan, China, and South Korea are at the forefront of many of the technological advances throughout the world. The age of the Internet has come in full strength and is a force that each country has come to embrace it in its own way. North Korea though, is not on the same page as its neighbors. The Internet age, however, has not completely ignored North Korea. There are two types of Internet usage in North Korea. The first is the real Internet, which is used mostly by “political leaders, their families, students at elite universities and the countries cyber warfare units.”⁴⁹ Then there is the Kwangmyong, which is the local intranet. It is free (provided there is a computer to use), and it has all the basic functions of an intranet including around 1,000-5,000 North Korean approved websites.⁵⁰ The use of computers is still quite low, and access to the truly global internet is still extremely limited, but the increased use of technology has the ability to help paint a picture in the minds of many North Koreans what may be possible and, therefore, what further

⁴⁸Kim, Jiyoan, et al. "South Korean attitudes toward North Korea and reunification." *Asan Public Opinion Report* (2015). pp.15

⁴⁹Sparks, Matthew. "Internet in North Korea: Everything You Need to Know." *The Telegraph*. Telegraph Media Group, 23 Dec. 2014. Web.
<<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/11309882/Internet-in-North-Korea-everything-you-need-to-know.html>>

⁵⁰ Ibid, this information was summarized from the telegraph article

exploration might bring. The United States is all for greater Internet usage in North Korea. President Barack Obama has said, speaking on the Internet's penetration into North Korea, "Information ends up seeping in over time and bringing about change and that is something that we're constantly looking for ways to accelerate."⁵¹

The use of mobile phones has also been on the rise in North Korea. Unlike the Internet, mobile phones need active personnel to monitor and conversations are difficult to understand if one does not have the correct linguistic knowledge, as words do not always need to maintain their dictionary meaning. North Korea's intranet is very limited, and people are only allowed to access a number of sites. Conversations take a digital form, which can be reviewed by both man and machine. With mobile phones, a conversation about walking in the garden, for example, can easily take on multiple meanings should the two involved know what is truly meant. Even now there is the capability for foreigners to make international calls⁵², which implies that if there is a will for the North Korean people to connect to the outside world there is now one more way. The number of cell phones in use is growing at a rapid pace—"the Koryolink network has grown in leaps and bounds: from 90,000 subscribers in late 2009 to one million in early 2012 and two million by the summer of 2013."⁵³

The youth are often very quick adapters to technology and in North Korea this is no different. In North Korea youth "are increasingly using their cellphones to communicate with photos, video and other multimedia."⁵⁴ With a generation of

⁵¹Williams, Martyn. "Obama Says Internet Could Bring down Kim Regime." *North Korea Tech*. North Korea Tech, 26 Jan. 2015. Web. <<http://www.northkoreatech.org/2015/01/26/obama-says-internet-could-bring-down-kim-regime/>>

⁵²O'Carroll, Chad. "Younger N. Koreans Increasingly Sharing Pictures, Video between Cellphones." *NK News North Korea News*. NK News, 26 Jan. 2015. Web. <<http://www.nknews.org/2015/01/younger-n-koreans-increasingly-sharing-pictures-video-between-cellphones/>>

⁵³Lankov, Andrei. "North Korea's." *NK News North Korea News*. NK News, 19 Aug. 2013. Web. 12 Mar. 2015. <<http://www.nknews.org/2013/08/north-koreas-schizophrenic-it-and-phone-revolution/>>

⁵⁴O'Carroll, Chad. "Younger N. Koreans Increasingly Sharing Pictures, Video between Cellphones." *NK News North Korea News*. NK News, 26 Jan. 2015. Web. <<http://www.nknews.org/2015/01/younger-n-koreans-increasingly-sharing-pictures-video-between-cellphones/>>

influential youth growing up having knowledge of the outside world (cell phones are still a luxury item), there is the possibility that the current method of repression will die out. As another sign of changing times and “despite significant restrictions and surveillance on usage, younger cellphone users are increasingly sharing multimedia files, with content often influenced distinctly from Japanese and South Korean culture.”⁵⁵ Additionally, as much as the ruling regime tries to stop this behavior, the technology behind it has been identified as critical to development and to increasing its status on the world stage, as “it has been identified...as a key component in plans for science and technological development.”⁵⁶ The government is interesting when it comes to technology. The very existence of it threatens their power. It adds a layer of freedom that can be accessed by an increasing number of people. This allows more average North Koreans to become familiar with the outside world, the very thing the government is most afraid of.

There is also the section of society that one would assume has access to any and all technology that was available. Suki Kim recounts, “I taught at a school for science and technology computer majors. They had no idea what the Internet was. It’s not possible to open that world up to the Internet, because then that would break the myth of the great leader.”⁵⁷ The transition from a very homogenous existence to gaining access to unimaginable amounts of information is a process that the government is in no rush to hasten.

There are also other ways that information is brought from within the North to the outside world. The North Korean transnational criminal smuggling network is one that was a long time in the making, but is now being used for something different. What was once the domain of the Kim regime transformed

⁵⁵ Ibid

⁵⁶Bruce, Scott Thomas. "A double-edged sword: information technology in North Korea." (2012). pp.3

⁵⁷FP Staff. "The Exchange: Suki Kim and Bill Richardson Talk North Korea." *Foreign Policy The Exchange Suki Kim and Bill Richardson Talk North Korea Comments*. Foreign Policy Magazine, 23 Mar. 2015. Web. http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/03/23/the-exchange-suki-kim-and-bill-richardson-talk-north-korea/?utm_content=buffera7630&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_campaign=buffer.

into networks for the transnational criminal elements to operate. The networks that were once used to make money for the state were partially taken over to provide more of a personal benefit to those involved.

These networks serve a dual purpose though. They can be used for what they were intended, or they could be adapted for the use of getting information in and out of North Korea. If a drug is just as illegal in one country, for example China or North Korea, and it will benefit the smuggler in the same manner, what would stop this smuggler from transporting a memory stick versus a drug? If the networks are in place and the nature of the game is inherently secretive, then what the smuggler brings is not strictly confined to what the network was originally intended for.

The information that is gained from illegal methods presents the world with some of the most sensitive information about North Korea. It is the information that people are willing to die for in order for it to reach the outside world. There are other ways that people learn about the country, but the information that is gained from more legitimate methods is also subject to more government censorship. There are a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and diplomatic missions that are located in North Korea. These NGOs from “several American and international NGOs have provided assistance to North Korea in humanitarian relief, development, health, informal diplomacy, science, communication and education,” but as such, the regime’s filter applies to much of the information they receive.⁵⁸

Although they do have a small capacity to relay information back to the outside world, doing so would compromise the activities of nearly all the organizations there. It is in the best interest of the North Korean people and the NGOs to remain focused on the mission at hand and not to mix politics with the work they are there to complete. There is the possibility that some of the governmental or, in some cases, non-governmental, organizations are able to

⁵⁸Taylor, Mi Ae, and Mark E. Manyin. "Non-Governmental Organizations' Activities in North Korea." Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, 2011.

obtain information in a more covert manner. Doing so while in North Korea is a very dangerous endeavor, however, especially for a diplomatic mission or an NGO that is operating within very strict parameters. There is also the fact that the more people that are involved in the collection of such intelligence, and the more steps that the process involves, the less effective the operation will be. The risk of exposure in this country is very high, so these more covert methods are much less likely to be successful. Therefore, the use of illegal networks by well-intentioned people is the best chance that the outside world has at collecting meaningful intelligence about North Korea.

Going Rogue and Its Consequences

The U.S. National Security Strategy of 2002 helps to provide the most “authoritative” definition of a “rogue state.” The list states that

in the 1990s we witnessed the emergence of a small number of rogue states that, while different in important ways, share a number of attributes. These states:

-Brutalize their own people and squander their national resources for the personal gain of the rulers;

-Display no regard for international law, threaten their neighbors, and callously violate international treaties to which they are party;

-Are determined to acquire weapons of mass destruction, along with other advanced military technology, to be used as threats or offensively to achieve the aggressive designs of these regimes;

-Sponsor terrorism around the globe; and

-Reject basic human values and hate the United States and everything for which it stands.⁵⁹

Practically all of these seem to be targeting North Korea. According to the United States, North Korea is as deserving of the status of rogue state as any country. The

⁵⁹Kim, Yongho. "North Korea: A Perpetual Rogue State." *Ikenberry. G. John and Chung-in Moon (Eds.), The United States and Northeast Asia: Debates, Issues, and New Order* (2008): 144
Also used for reference was the original source from the State Department's website, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/63562.pdf>

definition that was presented in that particular National Security Strategy helped to frame the way many Americans view the DPRK. This same definition applies to countries that the United States has gone to war with, so dependent on this is the question of whether or not the United States will also go to war with North Korea. The United States, for 12 days, sat on the intelligence that North Korea was cheating on the deal to freeze their nuclear program, keeping it covert and out of the news. In that time, it successfully won passage of a Congressional resolution authorizing the president to use military force against Iraq, in October of 2002, and further pressed its case against Iraq in the UN.⁶⁰

The lack of a military response towards North Korea as a result of their provocations helps to shift the focus away from an inevitable conflict to reveal a more benign mission. North Korea can often be viewed as a rogue state rather than an enemy, “yet as defined in image theory, an ‘enemy’ is perceived as possessing substantial power capabilities on par with one’s own. In contrast, rogue states, *are often* painted as regional bullies capable of threatening their neighbors.”⁶¹ They do not possess substantial conventional power, but they do rely most heavily on their nuclear deterrent, which indeed threatens the region, but not in the same way the U.S. or China could. They are instead viewed more as a regional bully, reminding East Asia from time to time that there is a country capable of drastically disrupting the peace. This places North Korea in the category of rouge, more so than enemy, which is evident in the relatively calm regional attitude and widespread tolerance of frequent harassments by the North.

Standing Up to the Wolves

The world must seem quite unsettling when positioned as a barrier between two of the worlds largest powers, and there exists a cartoon that helps to convey these feelings. The North Korean cartoon *The Squirrel and the Hedgehog*

⁶⁰Howard, Peter. "Why not invade North Korea? Threats, language games, and US foreign policy." *International Studies Quarterly* 48.4 (2004): pp.807

⁶¹O'Reilly, Kelly P. "Perceiving Rogue States: The Use of the “Rogue State” Concept by US Foreign Policy Elites." *Foreign Policy Analysis* 3.4 (2007): pp.301

presents the dynamics of East Asian relations from a North Korean perspective. It involves the squirrels, which are the North Koreans, the hedgehogs, who represent the military, and the ducks, which are the Navy. They are locked in a constant struggle against the much more powerful forces of the weasels (Japanese), mice (South Koreans), and lastly, the wolves (Americans). Despite the overwhelming power of these opposing forces, they squirrels manage to outsmart their enemy and continue to survive despite the overwhelming odds against them.

This clearly demonstrates how they view their geographic position in East Asia. North Korea is quite literally the obstruction between the American military and China and its capital. This means that they have less autonomy over the decisions about their fate, and also that, in times of distress, North Korea becomes a bit more important to China. They react to what the situation dictates rather than dictating the situation. Therefore, there have been attempts by North Korea to take charge of the situation and decide the direction in their terms. Also, by utilizing techniques that intimidate rather than incorporate, the international community could actually do more harm than good when trying to be stern with North Korea. This is because “instilling fear not only fails to induce the decision-maker to choose the risk-averting act, but actually incites the decision-maker to move from the desired risk-averting act to the undesired risk-seeking act.”⁶² The North quite possibly feels that it has been backed into a corner, while also being used as a buffer zone. These are feelings of anger and belittlement, and they could easily make the North feel as though they have no real voice and are being made a tool by the larger powers. Using fear as an intimidation technique gives the North a fight to call their own.

Let’s take a look at the numbers.⁶³ The North Korean economy is estimated to have a GDP of \$40 billion. In comparison, South Korea has a GDP \$1.6 trillion. This is with only roughly twice the population, the North having 24

⁶²Carlson, Lisa J., and Raymond Dacey. "The use of fear and anger to alter crisis initiation." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 31.2 (2014): 168-192. Pp.18

⁶³ The following facts are taken from the CIA website *Central Intelligence Agency*. Central Intelligence Agency, n.d. Web. <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kn.html>>

million and the South having 49 million. The North Korean system has not even come close to producing the same economic results as South Korea. The two powers that it is most concerned with, though, are in two completely different economic categories. The United States has a GDP of \$16.7 trillion while China's is \$13.4.

The military spending for these two countries is equally as daunting. The United States spends roughly 4.35% of its GDP on its military, while the latest figures show China at 2%. This shows the United States spending more than twice the percentage of GDP on defense than China; however, the numbers presented here are an anomaly. While the United States "spends more on its armed forces than the next 8 countries combined," China's "relentless growth in military spending—double-digit increases almost every year for the past two decades, and now the biggest in three years—" represents an "official" growth of 12.2% or \$132 billion.⁶⁴

North Korea has always taken a military posture. The Korean War never officially ended, and is currently under a half century long cease-fire. This constant state of war, which is perceived to be stronger in the North, has led North Korea to find themselves practicing 'military first' policies that "gives the leading role to the KPA."⁶⁵ The idea of 'military first' "has been used to signify the privileged status the KPA holds throughout North Korean society and to stress that the regime's sovereignty rests upon the military's shoulders."⁶⁶ The country is highly militarized, spending "about a third of its national income on its

⁶⁴Wong, Edward, and Chris Buckley. "China's Military Budget Increasing 10% for 2015, Official Says." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 04 Mar. 2015. Web. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/05/world/asia/chinas-military-budget-increasing-10-for-2015-official-says.html>; "At the Double." *The Economist*. The Economist Newspaper, 15 Mar. 2014. Web. <<http://www.economist.com/news/china/21599046-chinas-fast-growing-defence-budget-worries-its-neighbours-not-every-trend-its-favour>>

⁶⁵Gause, Ken E. *North Korean civil-military trends: military-first politics to a point*. ARMY WAR COLL STRATEGIC STUDIES INST CARLISLE BARRACKS PA, 2006. Pp.v

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, pp.vi

military.”⁶⁷ Are these the hallmarks of paranoia among the decision-makers or is this an appropriate reaction to what it perceives to be a very realistic threat to its security? A military build-up does not necessarily lead to a safer state, and in a country that has multiple economic issues, one may wonder if it is all money that would be better spent somewhere else. There is only so long a country can maintain that direction, however, and “for his own long-term survival, Kim will, if he is able, eventually have to reduce his reliance on the military.”⁶⁸

The international community recognizes that “it is almost impossible to recover DPRK’s economic health with nuclear weapons, though those can secure its security. There is a dilemma between national security and economic restoration in DPRK’s strategic options.”⁶⁹ The question is whether or not the Kim regime understands the issue in the same way. The pendulum’s shift from one of these facets to the other is a definitive characteristic of the Kim regime should they decide to tackle their economic issues and begin to comply with the non-proliferation requests. The perceived security that nuclear weapons provide and the ‘military first’ policies signal the priorities of the regime. Economic restoration takes second priority to security, but one can often be tied to the other. North Korea insists to its people that “imperialists used economic cooperation and aid as baits to pressure socialist countries to adopt a capitalist market economy to infiltrate its economy, which ultimately led to its collapse.”⁷⁰ This is quite far from the truth, as one would expect. Instead of welcoming engagement and opening up to the world they closed off, “it experienced a ‘siege mentality.’”⁷¹

⁶⁷"North Korea Spends about a Third of Income on Military: Group." *Reuters Canada*. Ed. Robert Birsel. Reuters, 18 Jan. 2011. Web.

<<http://ca.reuters.com/article/topNews/idCATRE70H1BW20110118?sp=true>>

⁶⁸Gause, Ken E. *North Korean civil-military trends: military-first politics to a point*. ARMY WAR COLL STRATEGIC STUDIES INST CARLISLE BARRACKS PA, 2006., pp.48

⁶⁹Cho, Seong-Ryoul. "North Korea's Security Dilemma and Strategic Options." *The Journal of East Asian Affairs* (2009): 69-102.

⁷⁰Kim, Kap-sik. "North Korea's Perception and Policy on a Northeast Asian Order." *North Korean Review* 8.1 (2012): pp.24

⁷¹Kim, Kap-sik. "North Korea's Perception and Policy on a Northeast Asian Order." *North Korean Review* 8.1 (2012): pp.24

This emphasis on a wartime focus and the ‘siege mentality’ penetrates the country in more than one way. The children grow up with this as a part of their daily lives,

*yet the development of such a sense of collective identity in North Korean primary-school children must be seen as tenuous, as it is based on misrepresentations, myths and political dogma. If and when this ideology is challenged by readers, the legitimacy of the North Korean Communist regime will be called into question.*⁷²

It is only a matter of time before walls are unable to hold back access to the massive amounts of information that is common throughout the rest of the world. It is hard to say what would happen once this information becomes available, but it is safe to say that it would not be a desirable outcome to the Kim regime.

What Does North Korea Need to Survive?

The facts presented thus far have helped to secure the reader with a level of understanding about North Korea that aids in further analysis. A simple yet critical question still remains, though—what does the North need to survive? To merely answer security is not enough. In order to connect with the later chapters on what the neighboring countries are doing to assist North Korea, concrete requirements for survival must first be established.

The concept of what North Korea needs in order to survive suggests there is something they cannot attain on their own. They must seek the help of an outside entity for help with such a need, and there must be a reason why that need exists in the first place. For North Korea, the most basic of needs is indeed security. There is a great extent of military buildup and isolation because of large fears stemming from a lack in security. The securitized nature of the state is enormously pervasive. However, should the need for security diminish, the country could quite possibly do well on an international level. It is a self-fulfilling

⁷²Lee, Dong-bae. "Portrayals of non-North Koreans in North Korean textbooks and the formation of national identity." *Asian Studies Review* 34.3 (2010): pp.367.

prophecy of sorts. This is in part due to the heightened emphasis placed on security measures in the state. If this energy were to be diverted to other, more directly productive, measures, than the country could easily find itself with much fewer problems. The security focus has become such a large part of their policy that it permeates every aspect of their existence, including their dealings with other countries. This is not good for business, nor is it good for foreign relations, which only ends up perpetuating the securitization cycle.

There will be five basic ‘needs’ presented in this section that North Korea must have satisfied if it is to feel more secure and continue to function as a state. They are: a credible nuclear deterrent, a conventional military force that is capable of rivaling South Korea at the very least, the illusion of political stability, economic growth to fuel the revolutionary atmosphere, and international assistance for natural disasters.

Military security is one of the most basic of needs, and in the case of North Korea, the perceived need for this particular type of security is of much higher precedence. As shown by the ‘Songun’ (military first) policy, the North has focused more heavily on security than most other countries. Why, then, must such an exaggerated need exist? Throughout this section, the needs that North Korea has deemed necessary for its survival will be outlined.

Nuclear Weapons

The nuclear deterrent is formidable to any would-be enemy. It has the unique potential to destroy cities, and although the likelihood of such a weapon being used is fairly low, the devastation that it threatens is enough to cause a second guess of any invasion plan. The key for North Korea in providing this layer of security is to have the ability to pose a credible nuclear threat. This means that not only must the world know they have to capability to produce these weapons, but they also but know that they are actually producing them and have the means to deliver such weapons.

A nuclear weapon is also a ground invasion deterrent, and a promise to inflict maximum damage regardless of the classification of the target, be it civilian or military. A weapon used to instill this much fear as a defensive measure can also be seen as a bargaining tool as well. It presents other countries with a rational fear of North Korean collapse, due to the possibility of those weapons falling into the wrong hands. It allows the North to make deals with other countries in exchange for halting weapons programs, which are typically restarted again in the near future anyway. From other countries' perspectives, the Kim regime may be one of the least desirable actors to have weapons such as these, but it is a more readily understood factor than what may happen should the country collapse.

Having a nuclear weapon is a status symbol among the North Korean people, boosting the country's morale. It is also a display of the prowess of the regime to the people, to help show the greatness of the regime, which in turn also assists the regime in subduing potential revolt.

In all, the possession of nuclear weapons forces neighboring countries to recognize North Korea on a more serious level than they might have otherwise. It also means that there is a greater distance put between them and possible peace with their neighbors. It would be hard to find any country that trusts North Korea with a nuclear weapon, but it would be even harder to find a country that would prefer to have a nuclear arsenal on the loose in the midst of a power vacuum.

Conventional Military Force

The Songun policies result in large portions of the budget being devoted to the military. This not only draws money that could be used on more practical applications like agriculture, but it also shows their neighbors how serious they really are about military action. It sends the signal that they are ready to attack or defend at any point. It is difficult to say whether or not this truly provides a strong enough deterrent against a potential U.S./South Korea invasion, though, as the North has the advantage in numbers with roughly 1.2 million troops to South

Korea's 700,000.⁷³ The early stages of this hypothetical war are thought to show a North Korean advantage, but the strength of the American and South Korean air forces would quickly switch the advantage to the South.⁷⁴ The need for a conventional military reinforces the overall security needs of North Korea. They are willing to give up much of their resources in order to defend against what they perceive to be the greatest threat, the United States and South Korea. In fact, this may not be what they actually need, however it does grant the regime a better perceived sense of stability, thus helping them maintain control of the country.

Political

The survival of the Kim regime is quite possibly the largest focus in North Korea affairs. As this paper has previously mentioned, the Kim Dynasty has historically taken precedence over the overall health of the country. Since the morale of the people is not of great concern, the focus reverts to keeping the people subdued. This means showing them how unified and powerful the regime can be. It is keeping the people satisfied rather than happy, and fearful rather than frustrated.

Domestic stability is the ultimate goal of political need. The appearance of stability in North Korea appears to be just as important, if not more important than, actual stability. There are great efforts taken to promote the image of stability among both the domestic and international audiences. Instability could be seen as a weakness that the opposition powers (United States, South Korea, and domestic challengers) could possibly take advantage of. These countries undoubtedly know the true nature of North Korea, but as this paper will continue to show, there is little action taken to do anything about it.

Economic

⁷³Laurence, Jeremy. "North Korea Military Has an Edge over South, but Wouldn't Win a War, Study Finds." *The Christian Science Monitor*. The Christian Science Monitor, 4 Jan. 2012. Web.

⁷⁴Laurence, Jeremy. "North Korea Military Has an Edge over South, but Wouldn't Win a War, Study Finds." *The Christian Science Monitor*. The Christian Science Monitor, 4 Jan. 2012. Web.

The prospects for the North Korean economy are hardly positive. Despite the continued focus on Juche and market planning, the North's economy has had little success on their own. A sizeable portion of the homegrown methods for bringing in foreign currency involve illicit activities, which is not exactly a sign of strength. Whether it is in the drug trade, through the use of their citizens as slave labor overseas, or refurbishing weapons for other countries, as was the case in Cuba in 2013, the use of these techniques demonstrates that there are few solid and morally just tactics in the North Korean economy that reliably benefit the country.⁷⁵ This clearly presents the economic need of the North. They require more means of production, more technology, and more relief from sanctions, all of which can be arranged for by the two largest economies, China and the United States. This, however, has also fallen under the security need umbrella. The securitization of the North has penetrated the country so deeply that these economic functions are also seen through the security lens. Economic relief and technology is gained through secretive bargaining, not openness. The acquisition of such technology or material must be seen as a victory over other powers rather than adopting a better technology from abroad.

Relief from Natural Disasters

As a country that has encountered a difficult time maintaining security on all other fronts, a natural disaster could quite easily mean the difference between survival and collapse. One of the more pressing needs that North Korea faces during these disasters is aid from other countries. Given that they exist on the verge of collapse and ration out supplies under normal circumstances, obtaining and administering assistance in a disaster situation is extremely vital. As important as that be, however, security still remains the highest priority, even in dire times. Receiving the aid is practically mandatory for survival, but doing so can make the regime seem weak and give the impression that they are unable to

⁷⁵Staff. "Cuba Admits Sending Weapons to North Korea." *Al Jazeera English*. Al Jazeera, 17 July 2013. Web

provide for their people. It also potentially gives foreign countries leverage against the North. If any aid is to be given (and received), then, it must be done with this in mind.

Much of the relief that is needed in North Korea is in the areas of agriculture and infrastructure. These are not easy fixes, however, and many of the needs that North Korea has are patched up in the form of temporary relief/aid rather than full scale projects to renovate old systems.

The following chapters will help answer the question of what North Korea's neighbors are doing to assist them with their needs. It must be understood that these neighbors are generally not there to promote North Korea's ways or policies, but instead are simply attempting to not make matters any worse than they already are. Overall, then, there is a strong desire to strike the delicate balance of carrying the stick in one hand and a dove in the other.

Chapter 3

Application of Theory

A Collective Approach

The East Asian actors have a vested interest in keeping the status quo. They have experienced tremendous growth in recent history. China's GDP has expanded from \$202 billion in 1980 to a projected \$11.7 trillion in 2016, equaling out to nearly double-digit annual growth on average.⁷⁶ South Korea and Japan have both seen enormous growth as well. A peaceful and predictable environment is good for business and when business is going well, the people are generally happy. Simply put, the reason why the status quo is to be maintained is to perpetuate peace and prosperity in the region.

The odd one out in all of this is North Korea. Not only did they fail to reap the same economic rewards as their neighbors through trade with the West, they also unsuccessfully invested their money and resources in ideas and allies that did not garner the desired level of economic prestige. North Korea has a survivalist mindset, and survival of the regime is paramount. Their revolutionary frame of mind precludes them from behaving in the same way as their neighbors. They must always be at odds against the 'aggressors,' always fighting the fight and paving the way for their unique "Juche" style to succeed in what they view as an unforgiving world. Most other regional actors, however, do not share the same enthusiasm for those particular policies. North Korea has consistently been the single actor that stands to ruin the profitable economic climate that has benefitted the region for so many years.

This climate is good for everyone involved, and any disruption to the status quo could result in enormous upsets in the markets. It would be to the

⁷⁶Sedghi, Ami. "China GDP: How It's Changed Since 1980." The Guardian, 23 Mar. 2012. Web. <<http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2012/mar/23/china-gdp-since-1980>>. Data source is original from World Bank, IMF

benefit of East Asia to have the problems of North Korea stay in North Korea. The problem with this lies in the threats and complications that cannot be contained within the isolated country, which is where the main argument of this paper begins to shed light on regional motivations for action or inaction.

Let's take a moment to look at this situation from a more simplistic perspective. China, South Korea, and Japan have all been quite commercially prosperous over the last couple of decades, in large part to regional stability. North Korea, on the other hand, is a time bomb ready to release on the region an arsenal tied to a state with "military first" policies, along with millions of refugees who have spent the better part of a century distinguishing themselves from their southern counterparts in both physical and mental characteristics. What this could do to regional stability is anything short of productive. When looking at the short-term consequences of such an event, the regional powers have avoided conflict in favor of the status quo. They have also taken an approach that limits their perspective. It is hard to look past the disaster that could unfold should North Korea collapse, but not seeing the other side of the argument in a serious manner also limits the available options.

When framing the issues in North Korea, or even attempting to observe the state, the issues are generally seen in one of two time spans. There is the short-term, which is generally in the range of four years, and there is the long-term, which is closer to a time span of 20 years. Comparing what happens in North Korea under these two perspectives provides for two very different outlooks. The problem with looking at North Korea in such a short period is that they always seem to be on the verge of reform. This near state of reform, however, has lasted for generations. Additionally, the fact that a revolutionary atmosphere exists inside North Korea means that they will always be attempting to create a sentiment or perception of progress to keep citizens distracted from the 'comedown,' or the realization of the world in which they live. This mindset that North Koreans demonstrate has the potential to influence other actors in the region as they attempt to gain insight into the method of the regime. The attitude taken that there is always the potential for some change just around the corner

helps to delay the perceived need for outside action to be taken to actually change the system.

This is the predicament that East Asia finds itself in. The actions of the Kim Regime are well known, and so are the threats it poses. Action on the issue may seem like an inevitable choice, but deferment of decisions also gives the region that much more prolonged peace, and hopefully a more undisturbed resolution to the issues.

The East Asian countries all have choices to make. Ignoring the issue is a choice just as much as launching an attack. With this, models can be built to better predict what these choices would most likely be, but there is an unpredictable factor at play. The general idea is that everyone in the region is operating on the same level and playing the same game, but it is quite possible that the game North Korea is playing is different from the rest. This does not refer to what their interests are, but rather to something deeper within the psyche.

In a conversation with the author of *Without You There is No Us*, Suki Kim and former New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson, the world in which the North Korean elite youth live becomes increasingly clear. The youth seem to have a mindset that ignores the realities of their situation, developed in a world foreign to their neighbors. “Everything was number one: They are Number One Hospital, Number One District. Every student had a number. The hierarchy was so labeled with each existence; they’re all soldiers. It is an incredibly vigilant way to live.”⁷⁷ In addition, Kim tells us how “[her] students didn’t know the existence of the Internet. [She] taught at a school for science and technology computer majors. They had no idea what the Internet was. It’s not possible to open that world up to the Internet, because then that would break the myth of the great leader.” This may seem to contradict with the previously mentioned emergence of cell phones and increased communication to the outside world. However, it simply points out some of the extreme restrictions that exist inside this country. There are people who are not seen as much of a threat should they gain access to the outside world,

⁷⁷FP Staff. "The Exchange: Suki Kim and Bill Richardson Talk North Korea." *Foreign Policy The Exchange Suki Kim and Bill Richardson Talk North Korea Comments*. Foreign Policy Magazine, 23 Mar. 2015. Web

but then there are the people who the government may wish to keep in the dark for as long as possible. With this type of environment, it is entirely plausible for a group of elite youth to exist in the country with one particular worldview and knowledge base, while another group exists with another.

The mindset that helps to differentiate North Korea from the rest of the countries in play also creates a situation where the rational choice model applies in a different way. As we look at China, the United States, and South Korea, we see that the government typically functions for the benefit of the people. There is a mechanism that holds the leaders. Whether it is the democratic process in the United States and South Korea or the fear of revolt in China, the governments are tied to their people. In North Korea, the system is wholly different. As mentioned earlier, the Kim Regime is at the forefront of North Korean affairs and the state functions to serve them regime rather than the regime functioning to serve the state. This means that there is a complicated approach one must take when dealing with North Korea.

To apply a rational choice method to this issue we must first identify what the Kim Regime finds to be its core interest, or what it will direct its policy toward in order to produce the desired outcome. The focus of their policy lies in the preservation of the Kim Regime, so the decisions will likely reflect this priority. Evidence of this exists in “the second nuclear crisis, [when] North Korea reversed its confrontational stance four times, in March 2003, June 2004, June 2005, and February 2007. Ironically, all these reversals coincided with the U.S. dispatch of F-117 stealth bombers to South Korea.”⁷⁸ The fact that the de-escalation came after the deployment of the F-117 proves this point not because of an increased military presence, but specifically because “F-117 bombers...are the delivery system for bunker-busting bombs.”⁷⁹ It was only after presenting a direct threat to the regime rather than the people did the situation change course.

⁷⁸Kim, Yongho. "North Korea's Threat Perception and Provocation Under Kim Jong-un: The Security Dilemma and the Obsession with Political Survival." *North Korean Review* 9.1 (2013): pp.13.

⁷⁹Ibid

This complicates the perception of what decisions will be made by other countries when they are forced to deal North Korea. They operate under the assumption that, like their own system, the government will do what is best for the people. This creates two separate and distinct variants of rational choice in regards to North Korea. There is the one in which the international community operates, and then there is the standard for North Korea.

The traditional application of rational choice is largely non-existent in the North. Nonetheless, it is important to discuss due to the fact that the dynamic between what is perceived to be happening and what is actually happening helps to provide a more accurate assessment of what the future holds for North Korea, and therefore a more accurate prediction of the decision-making process for the state. To utilize this particular observation it must be placed in the context of regional and domestic events. When dealing with domestic affairs, or international events in which the direction and dialogue are dictated by the Kim Regime, the degree of predictability is much less apparent. The secretive nature of the regime makes for a larger degree of unpredictability. There are also a relatively small number of people who are included in the decision-making process. Better predictions of behavior could transpire if these individuals were better understood, but the facts of the matter are that who these individuals even are is not well known, let alone what drives their decision-making process.

So how can the international community predict what will happen on the Korean Peninsula? In the event that the decision that must be made is controlled primarily by the Kim Regime, one can assume that whatever would allow the regime the greatest degree of prestige might very well be the route. However, there is one trait that seems to be constant with regards to the DPRK, and that is uncertainty. The best route to having a more certain prediction, then, is when there is an interested party separate from North Korea. The ideas of rational choice apply more uniformly to the other actors of East Asia. For example, China, South Korea, and even the United States would all benefit from a stable atmosphere. The Kim Regime, on the other hand, remains in power based primarily on its method of control over the public, in the face of all problems that

exist— “one of the reasons for political continuity despite economic deprivation is the total control the regime maintains over society. North Korea is a police state.”⁸⁰

In North Korea, there is a small cohort of decision-makers that decide what freedoms people are granted. The strict enforcement of these decisions makes the system much less complicated and therefore more comprehensible for the average person. In a society where people are not able to speak freely there is a destructive cycle that plays out. The people below are too scared to tell the people above them that what they see is not going to work or that it may be a bad idea. The people above feel that what they are doing is correct, and out of the desire to tell their bosses what they want to hear, they only listen to the people that are only giving them the answers they want to hear. As a result, by the time information gets to the top it is so diluted of the truth that the only thing saving the system is a strong central leader that sets a course and hopefully gets something to work. There are many failures of policy instituted in this way, but there are a few ideas that do end up working, and those methods are held onto for a very long time.

Case Studies on Engagement and Assistance

⁸⁰Gause, Ken E. *Coercion, Control, Surveillance, and Punishment: An Examination of the North Korean Police State*. Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2012. Pp.10

The ideas previously expressed present the notion that the most rational of thought exists when there are multiple parties that have a vested interest in the outcome rather than solely North Korea. The upcoming section will discuss three circumstances that help to demonstrate this idea. They show that South Korea, the United States, and China all actively assist North Korea in just narrowly avoiding collapse, which presents an immediate threat to regional stability. Since conflict is in the recent memory of all East Asia, maintaining the relatively peaceful atmosphere is at the forefront of all those involved. The way in which each country views stability and how it decides to maintain it is what will be presented in the following pages.

South Korea's Engagement Policies

Up until only a half-century ago, Korea was a united country with a unified culture. The bond that links the two is deeper than a shared peninsula or a common goal of economic prosperity. There are people still alive in the South with immediate family members who are living in the North. For one generation, assistance to the DPRK means possible aid for a family member. For another generation who might be further removed from the immediate connection, assistance may accomplish a different goal entirely. There is a generational gap forming in South Korea, and this gap will change the course of relations between the two governments. What has bound Koreans together until now can also be the same factor that brings them together once again—"the high level of ethnic homogeneity and cultural commonality of the two Koreas was an obvious factor in facilitating the re-categorization of the North from 'enemy' to aspirational 'friend' in a relatively short period of time."⁸¹

The South Korean government has seen a great deal of improvement in the last few decades. They have gone from a GDP per capita of \$155.20 in 1960 to

⁸¹Shin, Soon-ok. "Engagement? Containment? The Role of Identity in Formation of South Korea's Policy Towards Pyongyang." *The North Korean Review* Spring 2013 9.1 (2013): pp.91-92. Web

\$22,424 in 2011, a remarkable trend that they surely wish to continue.⁸² Throughout this time they were still technically at war with North Korea, but there was also an American presence that helped to stabilize the region. For economic growth numbers like this to continue for South Korea, stability is critical. Investors shy away from hostile and unpredictable environments. They can also attribute their success to the model of government they employed, as South Korea's success "can best be understood by taking serious what...they were doing: namely, coordinating and encouraging private (and public) investments with a high degree of linkages within the modern sector."⁸³ Heavy coordination of private and public investment is only possible in a state that allows for a more free flowing trade market. This is something North Korea does not have, and in the event of chaos on the peninsula, it is also something that could be cut off with very little warning.

South Korea's policy towards the North has always steered toward the eventual direction of unification. In their inaugural addresses, "without exception, presidents of South Korea have always said that unification is the mission they intend to accomplish."⁸⁴ In the simplest of terms, there are two foreign policy routes that could be pursued with this eventual goal in mind. They can either build a healthy relationship with the North, gradually steering it in the 'right' direction to where a merging of the two states is possible, or there is the more violent option of open conflict. This more violent path also can include pushing the country to its breaking point before absorbing it and its problems in the midst of chaos. Inheriting a country in this state comes with many issues. Given the multitude of problems that North Korea faces, it would seem rational for South Korea to work towards the route of peace instead of violence. South Korea's economy has been doing well under the current circumstances, so they have the

⁸²"Korea - GDP per Capita." *Korea*. Index Mundi, n.d. Web.
<http://www.indexmundi.com/facts/korea/gdp-per-capita>

⁸³Rodrik, Dani. "Getting interventions right: how South Korea and Taiwan grew rich." *Economic Policy* 10.20 (1995): pp.97 (Taiwan was also used in the analysis, hence the reason two governments were mentioned)

⁸⁴Bae, Jong-Yun. "South Korean Strategic Thinking Toward North Korea: the evolution of the engagement policy and its impact upon US-ROK relations." (2010): pp.340

luxury of time. Bringing about unification is a long-term goal and “even if the South Korean government is pragmatic about not trying to unify the peninsula as soon as possible, while recognizing the value of maintaining and stabilizing the division, it has never shown any sign of giving up the goal of unification.”⁸⁵ For the North,

*there was no short-term prospect of disintegration or implosion, whatever pressure Seoul might apply. Moreover, the assessed risk was that if the regime were to collapse, heightened economic insecurity would ensue. In any case, military tension could be lessened through engagement in bilateral and multilateral frameworks.*⁸⁶

The South Korean government has been on a path to unification through engagement. The government saw that the consequences of military action presented an outcome that was clearly not in the best interest of South Korea. They saw that the formation of a policy of some form of engagement was necessary in order for regional stability to persist. Therefore, “South Korea’s national interest was conceived as securing its survival by protecting itself from potential aggression. The idea of the Sunshine Policy became plausible only when the relationship with Pyongyang was reconfigured.”⁸⁷ This approach was created with the best intentions in mind, but it was perhaps too trustworthy in practice. The idea behind the Sunshine Policy was to

break this provocation cycle by offering a constant stream of aid to North Korea regardless of its behavior. Since the aid was given on an unconditional basis, however, Kim could still engage in provocations in order to induce aid from the U.S. and serve secondary goals such as advancing its strategic deterrent and

⁸⁵Rodrik, Dani. "Getting interventions right: how South Korea and Taiwan grew rich." *Economic Policy* 10.20 (1995): pp.97

⁸⁶Shin, Soon-ok. "Engagement? Containment? The Role of Identity in Formation of South Korea's Policy Towards Pyongyang." *The North Korean Review* Spring 2013 9.1 (2013): pp.92. Web

⁸⁷Ibid, pp.91

*bolstering his credibility with the military.*⁸⁸

The Sunshine Policy was an attempt at cooperation with North Korea, and though the “Kim Dae Jung and Roh Moo Hyun government have for the past 9 years supplied North Korea with 1,785.9 billion won (US \$1.92 billion),” the overall success of the programs was not as effective as hoped for.⁸⁹ A white paper published by South Korea’s Ministry of Unification officially ended the decade-long Sunshine Policy in 2008, citing a \$4.5 billion cost to South Korean taxpayers and a lack of clear successes in the face of the North’s continuing nuclear program.⁹⁰ It is hard to say that it was a complete failure, however. Nothing negative resulted from the policy, and South Korea grew one step closer to reaching its overall goals. It was not a success, but it was also not a failure. It was popular among the South Korean people, however—69 percent of survey respondents supported the policy in February of 2002.⁹¹

Despite the diminished success of the Sunshine Policy, engagement was the theme, and it was a policy the government was intent on pursuing. The South Korean government had a “conception of the national interest and... implemented an engagement policy which aimed to increase inter-Korean economic cooperation and construct a security culture of peaceful coexistence, with no conditionality, such as reciprocity.”⁹² This policy was not going to stop at the breakdown of the Sunshine Policy. The situation was no different afterward as it was before. Although there was a growing discontent for North Korea, as

⁸⁸Keck, Zachary. "Strategic Sunshine: The Path To Stability on the Korean Peninsula." *The Diplomat*. The Diplomat, 06 June 2013. Web.

⁸⁹Park, Hyun Min. ""Sunshine Policy" Funds \$1.92bn in 9 Years, North Responds with Nuclear." *Daily NK*. Daily NK, 26 June 2007. Web.

⁹⁰Salmon, Andrew. "South Korea: Policy of Engagement with North Is a Failure." CNN. CNN, 19 Nov. 2010. Web.
<<http://www.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/Asia/pf/11/21/9/south.korea.sunshine.policy/>>.

⁹¹Kim, Sei-Hill, et al. "Talking on 'Sunshine in North Korea': A test of the spiral of silence as a theory of powerful mass media." *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 16.1 (2004): pp.56.

⁹²Shin, Soon-ok. "Engagement? Containment? The Role of Identity in Formation of South Korea's Policy Towards Pyongyang." *The North Korean Review* Spring 2013 9.1 (2013): pp.92. Web

“attitudes are often highly pragmatic, and seem to indicate a public generally suffering from North Korean fatigue”⁹³, South Korea in general still desired peace and stability to allow their economy to continue its growth.

The United States’ Engagement and The Agreed Framework

The United States sits in a unique position in regards to this issue. Of the four main actors, it is the only one that is not geographically a part of the discussion. It has assets in the region and has a strong interest in keeping the region safe and secure, but it does not face the same threat that China and South Korea do should the North collapse. Because of this, the United States does not view the situation with the same gravity that others may attach to it.

Of the possible ways that North Korea has to inflict damage on the United States, the best known working weapons delivery system is far from a true threat to the United States:

*Taepodong-1 (Paektusan-1) – two-stage liquid-fueled medium-range ballistic missile, modified to serve as a three-stage space launch vehicle; incapable of delivering nuclear payload to intercontinental ranges due to poor technical accuracy; estimated range of 2,000-2,900 km. Theoretically capable of delivering small 100-200 kg payloads to continental US.*⁹⁴

There are more systems that the North may be able to employ in the future, but since that particular system is the most credible threat, it presents the greatest danger.

Cyber attacks have become an ever-increasing threat to the United States and will continue to be so, but North Korea does not present as devastating of a

⁹³Kim, Jiyeon, et al. "South Korean attitudes toward North Korea and reunification." *Asan Public Opinion Report* (2015). pp.6

⁹⁴Kim, Duyeon. "Fact Sheet: North Korea's Nuclear and Ballistic Missile Programs." *The Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation*. The Center For Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, July 2013. Web.

threat in the cyber world as they can potentially be in the physical world. There have been attacks on South Korea, and they have even gained access to American networks, the most famous example being the Sony hack over the controversial movie, *The Interview*. There is no reason not to suspect that this will become a much larger issue in the future, but compared to the other issues that are play here, cyber is not currently nor has ever been the greatest concern. The focus has mostly been to stabilize North Korea and to provide a non-nuclear framework. However, how this is brought about is where the issue becomes more complicated. The United States has historically been divided on how to handle North Korea. As a prelude to the Agreed Framework,

*the Clinton administration believed that Washington needed to offer Pyongyang certain inducements, including fuel oil, light-water reactors, food aid, and relaxed sanctions, in order to persuade North Korea to make positive changes in its behavior. Many congressional Republicans, on the other hand, believed that the United States should employ fewer carrots and more sticks.*⁹⁵

Carrots were the preferred method for South Korea and China, so the United States would be mostly alone should they decide to take a more forceful approach. There were also many other momentous events occurring under the Clinton administration at this time, such as the disaster in Mogadishu and the Rwandan genocide. They were preoccupied, and some type of agreement was the most plausible solution. The Agreed Framework began to take shape, and “since 1995, the United States has provided North Korea with over \$1 billion in assistance, about 60% of which has paid for food aid and 40% or so paying for energy assistance.”⁹⁶ The Agreed Framework called upon

Pyongyang to freeze operation and construction of nuclear weapons suspected of being part of a covert nuclear weapons

⁹⁵Hathaway, Robert M., and Jordan Tama. "The US Congress and North Korea during the Clinton years: talk tough, carry a small stick." *Asian Survey* 44.5 (2004): pp.715

⁹⁶Manyin, Mark E., and Mary B. Nikitin. "US Assistance to North Korea." LIBRARY OF CONGRESS WASHINGTON DC CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE, 2008.

*program in exchange for two proliferation-resistant nuclear power reactors. The agreement also called upon the United States to supply North Korea with fuel oil pending construction of the reactors. An international consortium called the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) was formed to implement the agreement.*⁹⁷

The agreement seemed to have worked for a time. In the end it achieved at least some of the goals:

*Left unconstrained, the reprocessing facility would have enabled North Korea to separate substantial quantities of weapons-grade plutonium from the spent fuel removed from its operational graphite-moderated reactor. Had its ongoing activities not been halted, North Korea would have ultimately developed the means to fabricate significant numbers of nuclear weapons, as well as enabled Pyongyang to market weapons-grade plutonium to other parties.*⁹⁸

There was also a considerable aid that was sent to North Korea from the United States, as shown in the chart below.⁹⁹

Figure 3

⁹⁷Staff. "Fact Sheets & Briefs." *The U.S.-North Korean Agreed Framework at a Glance*. Arms Control Association, Sept. 2004. Web. <<http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/agreedframework>>

⁹⁸Pollack, Jonathan D. *The United States, North Korea, and the End of the Agreed Framework*. NAVAL WAR COLL NEWPORT RI, 2003

⁹⁹Manyin, Mark E., and Mary B. Nikitin. "US Assistance to North Korea." LIBRARY OF CONGRESS WASHINGTON DC CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE, 2008. pp. CRS-2

U.S. Assistance to North Korea, 1995-2008

Calendar or Fiscal Year (FY)	Food Aid (per FY)		KEDO Assistance (per calendar yr; \$ million)	6-Party Talks-Related Assistance (per FY; \$ million)		Medical Supplies & Other (per FY; \$ million)	Total (\$ million)
	Metric Tons	Commodity Value (\$ million)		Fuel Oil	Nuclear Disablement		
1995	0	\$0.0	\$9.5	—	—	\$0.2	\$9.7
1996	19,500	\$8.3	\$22.0	—	—	\$0.0	\$30.3
1997	177,000	\$52.4	\$25.0	—	—	\$5.0	\$82.4
1998	200,000	\$72.9	\$50.0	—	—	\$0.0	\$122.9
1999	695,194	\$222.1	\$65.1	—	—	\$0.0	\$287.2
2000	265,000	\$74.3	\$64.4	—	—	\$0.0	\$138.7
2001	350,000	\$102.8	\$74.9	—	—	\$0.0	\$177.7
2002	207,000	\$82.4	\$90.5	—	—	\$0.0	\$172.9
2003	40,200	\$25.5	\$2.3	—	—	\$0.0	\$27.8
2004	110,000	\$52.8	\$0.0	—	—	\$0.1	\$52.9
2005	22,800	\$7.5	—	—	—	—	\$7.5
2006	0	\$0.0	—	—	—	\$0.0	\$0.0
2007	0	\$0.0	—	\$25.0	\$20.0	\$0.0	\$45.0
2008	500,000 ^a	n.a.	—	\$106.0 ^b	—	\$0.0	\$106.0
2009 (Request)	—	n.a.	—	\$15.0	—	—	\$15.0
Total	2,586,694	\$701.0	\$403.7	\$146.0	\$20.0	\$5.3	\$1,276.0

Sources: USAID; US Department of Agriculture; State Department; KEDO (Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization).

a. Some of this 500,000 MT may be distributed in FY2009. 37,000 MT was delivered starting June 30, 2008.

b. As of the end of May 2008, \$53 million of this total had been allocated.

In 2004, the United States passed H.R. 4011, the North Korean Human Rights Act, which included a requirement that U.S. non-humanitarian assistance be contingent upon the North making significant progress on a number of human rights issues.¹⁰⁰ This was meant to present an opportunity for engagement with North Korea while still attaching conditions that would have to be met. It was a reaction to previous experiences with North Korea, as “the U.S. intelligence community concluded in the summer of 2002 that North Korea had undertaken a covert uranium-enrichment program, most likely initiated in the late 1990s.”¹⁰¹ This finding was the end of the good faith agreement made by the United States to try and engage the North, but with the knowledge of such activities and a general

¹⁰⁰Manyin, Mark E., and Mary B. Nikitin. "US Assistance to North Korea." LIBRARY OF CONGRESS WASHINGTON DC CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE, 2008.

¹⁰¹Pollack, Jonathan D. *The United States, North Korea, and the End of the Agreed Framework*. NAVAL WAR COLL NEWPORT RI, 2003, pp.24

dissatisfaction with North Korea, the Agreed Framework was nearing its end.

North Korea

*complained repeatedly that the United States was lagging far behind the scheduled completion of the LWR project, and Washington faulted the North for delays in clarifying its prior nuclear weapons activities. Neither government saw compelling reasons to sustain the 1994 accord. The intelligence findings thus enabled both governments to deem their prior obligations null and void.*¹⁰²

Although it may not end in total success, engagement “offers the DPRK opportunities to prove to the world that it seeks integration; but if this fails, the United States, the ROK and Japan, through these unsuccessful entreaties, are also tacitly building a coalition for punishment.”¹⁰³ It is a partial win-win. The United States, however, can view it as an accomplishment, or at least a reason for the legitimacy of implementing harsher punishments. However small of an excuse this may seem, it does play into the overall strategy that United States officials must formulate.

The larger picture that the United States is taking into account does not include just North Korea and their forces on the Korean peninsula. They represent the United States’ projection of power and interests in the Pacific. To the rest of the region,

the United States is the critical variable in the East Asia security question. The United States is not the world’s policeman, but our forward deployed forces in Asia ensure broad regional stability, help deter aggression against our allies and contribute to the

¹⁰²Pollack, Jonathan D. *The United States, North Korea, and the End of the Agreed Framework*. NAVAL WAR COLL NEWPORT RI, 2003, pp.24

¹⁰³Cha, Victor D. "Hawk engagement and preventive defense on the Korean peninsula." *International Security* 27.1 (2002): pp.78.

*tremendous political and economic advances made by the nations of the region.*¹⁰⁴

This projection of power could easily become a means to spend more resources than intended. When it comes to prioritizing budgets for other expenditures, a large military force located overseas might seem unnecessary, so the presence in East Asia can easily become simply a monetary issue in the eyes of the public. The “removal of troops from Asia would only save money if they were cut from the U.S. force,” not if they were only moved from one location to another.¹⁰⁵ The locations of these troops actually save the American public money—“because of the host-nation support provided by Japan and South Korea, it is cheaper to base the forces in Asia than in the United States.”¹⁰⁶ This helps to show that maintaining a conflict ready force overseas is not as detrimental to the United States’ budget as it would seem. This allows the United States to have the option of a stick instead of a carrot should agreements or negotiations fail, and this attitude is more unique to the American perspective. The United States has repeatedly tried to work through issues with North Korea, but to avail. North Korea shows no signs that their nuclear, ballistic or other programs for weapons of mass destruction are diminishing despite calls from the International Security Council to do so. Instead, they continue their business in arms trading, and prohibited activities, while the ballistic and nuclear weapons programs also continue.¹⁰⁷

The United States does not have the patience that North Korea’s neighbors possess, and they also have the option to be much more forceful with their actions due to the factors explained earlier. There is a great need for regional stability, but the luxury of not being as connected to the issues means that the United States

¹⁰⁴Nye Jr, Joseph S. "Case for Deep Engagement, The." *Foreign Affairs*. 74 (1995): pp.98

¹⁰⁵Nye Jr, Joseph S. "Case for Deep Engagement, The." *Foreign Affairs*. 74 (1995): pp.98

¹⁰⁶Nye Jr, Joseph S. "Case for Deep Engagement, The." *Foreign Affairs*. 74 (1995): pp.98

¹⁰⁷United Nations Staff, and Martin Uden. "United Nations Official Document." *UN News Center*. UN, 06 Mar. 2014. Web.

<http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S%2F2014%2F147>. Was created by a panel of experts, coordinated by Martin Uden

does not always share the opinions of the other East Asian actors who might be affected more directly by actions taken on the Korean Peninsula.

China's Involvement and Interests

Of all the states involved in North Korean affairs, China quite possibly possesses the greatest understanding of the North's fears. In some ways, the DPRK of today reflects Maoist era China. Granted there were more openings in the old China, and technology of that day did not require as tight of a grip on society to control messages, but North Korea is nonetheless a country that is hanging on to a few narrow ropes to survive. It is China that has the tightest grip on the other end.

Like South Koreans, there is a growing feeling among Chinese that North Koreans are becoming the 'other' more than a friend—

Only 13% of respondents view the bilateral relationship as an ally. Even a smaller percentage of respondents (4%) see their relationship as genuine "friends." Rather, almost half of them (47%) feel ambivalent about their relationship, as defined by the Chinese expression "半信半疑的朋友," [ban xin ban yi de peng you] which literally means "half-trusting, half-suspicious friend."¹⁰⁸

Although it may seem rather important for the people of China to view North Korea in generally a friendly way if they are to be the main supporter of the country, in reality the government is mostly supporting the North out of necessity and ideology. However, there have been a number of ways that China has promoted its relationship with the North. Attempts at linking the two countries together have included exchange programs among students and professionals—“some 130 Chinese students study annually in North Korea, while 400 North

¹⁰⁸Lee, Sunny. "Chinese Perspectives on North Korea and Korean Unification." *Korea Economic Institute Academic Paper Series* (2012).

Korean students study in China. Since the late 1990s, China has received and trained over 1,000 North Korean experts in areas related to market economics.”¹⁰⁹

In China’s efforts to deepen ties and guide the North along the same path they themselves took, they have also attempted to spur economic growth similar to their own in the late 1970s. Specifically, this has prompted China to help North Korea create Special Economic Zones (SEZs). Although

*North Korea’s interest in developing SEZs has been sporadic...several recent developments indicate that SEZs are becoming an increasingly important part of the country’s economic planning. Beginning in 2010, the DPRK renewed attempts to encourage investment and infrastructure developments in Rason, and more recently announced that new SEZs would be established in each province of the country.*¹¹⁰

These zones were meant to establish trade with the North and help improve their economic situation. It was also a way to ease the burden of China and the international community in providing assistance. One can “point toward China’s desire to develop its Northeast region and promote stability while increasing its leverage over North Korea’s economic growth” to demonstrate the value of the SEZs.¹¹¹ The establishment of trade in these areas with North Korea only encourages “economic reliance on China during a period where South Korea and Japan have written themselves out of the story [and] can only give Beijing greater influence in Pyongyang’s decision-making.”¹¹²

The SEZs are just one tool that China uses to assist North Korea, as “World Food Program officials based in Pyongyang explain, ‘No other country makes

¹⁰⁹Reilly, James. "China’s Market Influence in North Korea." *Asian Survey* 54.5 (2014): pp.901

¹¹⁰Staff. "Special Economic Zones in the DPRK." *National Committee on North Korea*. National Committee on North Korea, 14 Jan. 2014. Web. <<http://www.ncnk.org/resources/briefing-papers/all-briefing-papers/special-economic-zones-in-the-dprk>>

¹¹¹Abrahamian, Andray. "A convergence of interests: prospects for Rason Special Economic Zone." *Korea Economic Institute Academic Paper Series* 24 (2012).

¹¹²Abrahamian, Andray. "A convergence of interests: prospects for Rason Special Economic Zone." *Korea Economic Institute Academic Paper Series* 24 (2012). P.75

efforts the way China does' to connect North Koreans to the outside world."¹¹³ Their style does not always reflect that of their neighbors though. China's "approach has been quieter and more indirect. By devolving most policy implementation to local governments, Chinese leaders encourage policy creativity while reducing political sensitivity."¹¹⁴ They lend power to the more common, everyday interactions in their policy. This helps to keep the leadership out of the spotlight, reduces the risk of highly visible failures, and they feel that "local level interactions facilitate cross-border networking and expand mutual interests in economic cooperation through a dynamic of 'local liberalism.'"¹¹⁵ The partnership that this cooperation could result in involves reducing "the frequency of food shortages, while sheltering Pyongyang from the effects of sanctions," therefore "preventing an absolute and sudden collapse..."¹¹⁶ Linking local economies across the China-North Korea border achieved the dual purposes of advancing human security and spurring economic development, both of which contributed to stability in the region.

The geopolitical importance of North Korea is also worth noting here, as "Beijing cannot achieve its goals of regional stability or maintain North Korea as a buffer and as leverage against the U.S. position on Taiwan if it allows Pyongyang to collapse."¹¹⁷ North Korea serves as the buffer zone to South Korea, which is both influenced and protected by the United States. Should tension between the United States and China reach the levels seen during the Cold War, China desires the barrier that North Korea offers. Although a direct confrontation with the United States is highly unlikely, there is a fear that conflict in North Korea could spill over into China. As to what might dictate China's responses to events on the Korean Peninsula, Jooyoung Song presents a "Dual Threats Model," which explains that China's involvement depends on two variables-the probability

¹¹³Reilly, James. "China's Market Influence in North Korea." *Asian Survey* 54.5 (2014): pp.901

¹¹⁴Reilly, James. "China's Market Influence in North Korea." *Asian Survey* 54.5 (2014): pp.902

¹¹⁵Reilly, James. "China's Market Influence in North Korea." *Asian Survey* 54.5 (2014): pp.902

¹¹⁶Abrahamian, Andray. "A convergence of interests: prospects for Rason Special Economic Zone." *Korea Economic Institute Academic Paper Series* 24 (2012). P.75

¹¹⁷Dwivedi, Sangit Sarita. "North Korea-China Relations: An Asymmetric Alliance." *North Korean Review* 8.2 (2012): pp.90

of a United States military response and the stability of North Korea.¹¹⁸ It is the combination of these two variables that will serve as the greatest factor in any potential response from China.

China is undoubtedly concerned with security, but they exercise control in this area mostly via economics. Trade between the two countries is highly promoted. This is proven by their commitment to promote SEZs, and their patience with North Korea's slow pace of development—"China usually faces a problem when it tries to import the natural resources it produces in North Korea, that is, the lack of facilities through which it can carry them back."¹¹⁹ Because of this, "2 billion yuan (about \$240 million) out of the 7 billion China committed to invest was allocated to building roads and railways from Musan to Tonghua in China."¹²⁰ This can help predict the future of these two countries' relationship. The assistance in development of infrastructure implies that there will be a growing need for North Korea's resources. Although North Korea would like to see even more money put into their country, "there exist differences between what North Korea expects from China and where China actually invests."¹²¹ While this is to be expected, since they are dealing with a regime that does not wish foreigners to have any sort of control over their affairs, it presents a difficult reality for both sides to face.

Foreign aid and trade with China has been keeping the North Korean economy afloat.¹²² They have ironically become a factor in North Korea's Juche ideology—"by some estimates, China provides 80 percent of North Korea's

¹¹⁸Song, Jooyoung. "Understanding China's Response to North Korea's Provocations." *Asian Survey* 51.6 (2011): pp.1135

¹¹⁹Kim, Jae Cheol. "The Political Economy of Chinese Investment in North Korea: A Preliminary Assessment." (2006): pp.902.

¹²⁰Kim, Jae Cheol. "The Political Economy of Chinese Investment in North Korea: A Preliminary Assessment." (2006): pp.902.

¹²¹Kim, Jae Cheol. "The Political Economy of Chinese Investment in North Korea: A Preliminary Assessment." (2006): pp.914

¹²²Shambaugh, David. "China and the Korean peninsula: Playing for the long term." *The Washington Quarterly* 26.2 (2003): pp.46

consumer goods and 45 percent of its food.”¹²³ For Juche to be followed in its original intent, then it must be a completely self-sustaining process. It cannot exist if, for example, “by 2011, 67% of the DPRK’s trade was with China, although North Korea provided only 0.2% of China’s total trade.”¹²⁴ What has happened is that rather than simply being a strong trading partner, China has become the dominant benefactor in North Korea’s mere survival.

China is a critical element in the North Korean state, and even though North Korea does not play nearly as critical of a role in Chinese affairs, its presence does present China with a certain luxury. “China’s support for Pyongyang ensures a friendly nation on its northeastern border, and provides a buffer zone between China and democratic South Korea, which is home to around 29,000 U.S. troops and marines.”¹²⁵ Characterizing North Korea as being a “friendly nation” to China might be an overstatement, but the fact remains that having a land buffer between the United States and its capital, Beijing, can only be a benefit to China and its strategic interests.

The benefits North Korea presents to China are fairly minimal. The primary hopes China has for the North lie in the potential it possesses. This is one reason why China has been willing to endure the many hardships the relationship has produced. As tensions rise and North Korea continues to present Beijing with tough questions on how to engage with its seemingly irrational neighbor, China has taken what “essentially amounts to a ‘wait-and-see’ attitude, centered on continued negotiations and behind-the-scenes efforts to encourage Pyongyang to comply with the international community.”¹²⁶ They hope that over time, the situation will work itself out, much like what has happened to China itself over the last half-century.

¹²³Bajoria, Jayshree, and Beina Xu. "The China-North Korea Relationship." *Council on Foreign Relations* 7 (2010).

¹²⁴Reilly, James. "China’s Market Influence in North Korea." *Asian Survey* 54.5 (2014): pp.894

¹²⁵Bajoria, Jayshree, and Beina Xu. "The China-North Korea Relationship." *Council on Foreign Relations* 7 (2010).

¹²⁶Swaine, Michael D. "China’s North Korea Dilemma." *China Leadership Monitor* 30 (2009): 1-27.

China must deal with the reality of its circumstances. It has a neighbor that is highly unpopular with the international community. The neighbor is volatile, and they are linked to China in many ways. When China thinks about the possibilities, they see that “the specter of hundreds of thousands of North Korean refugees flooding into China is a huge worry. [They] are most concerned about the collapse of North Korea leading to chaos on the border.”¹²⁷ As if this was not reason enough for them to take an active role in maintaining stability in North Korea, they also see that “if North Korea does provoke a war with the United States, China and South Korea would bear the brunt of any military confrontation on the Korean peninsula.”¹²⁸ There are “some in Beijing [who] also suspect that North Korea had determined to ‘fight to win or die.’ Starved and desperate as it is, Pyongyang has little to lose and can thus risk a confrontation with the world’s lone superpower.”¹²⁹ This means that North Korea is willing to risk far more than the rest of the players in East Asia. As such, China believes that coercion is largely ineffective and a nonstarter.¹³⁰ The United States, as this paper has made clear, is in a position where it will not risk the bulk of its assets should war break out. It is thousands of miles away and does not concern itself with the situation in the same regard as China and South Korea, “yet both those countries have been hesitant about pushing Pyongyang too hard, for fear of making Kim Jong-un’s regime collapse.”¹³¹ There is a line that separates mere punishment and total regime collapse, and it is this line that neither country wishes to cross. In other words, the status quo is preferred over the regime’s collapse, and any action that Beijing feels may begin to cross the line and push the limits of the Kim Regime’s ability to maintain control of the country is ill-advised in their view. Stabilizing the region takes priority for China, but stability is what will keep China’s economy healthy and some of their largest trading partners friendly.

¹²⁷Bajoria, Jayshree, and Beina Xu. "The China-North Korea Relationship." *Council on Foreign Relations* 7 (2010).

¹²⁸Bajoria, Jayshree, and Beina Xu. "The China-North Korea Relationship." *Council on Foreign Relations* 7 (2010).

¹²⁹Wu, Anne. "What China Whispers to North Korea." *Washington Quarterly* 28.2 (2005): pp.43.

¹³⁰Wu, Anne. "What China Whispers to North Korea." *Washington Quarterly* 28.2 (2005): pp.43.

¹³¹Bajoria, Jayshree, and Beina Xu. "The China-North Korea Relationship." *Council on Foreign Relations* 7 (2010).

Conclusion

The dynamics at play here have major consequences for regional security. The Pacific and more distinctly, East Asia, have enjoyed a considerable period of peace, which has allowed all but one player to prosper. The success of many has meant paranoia in the minds of others. North Korea has essentially been caught in the middle of a balancing act between two very large powers, the United States and China. As evident in their Juche ideology, the North Koreans have an immense amount of national pride and ambition but they are not in a position where their voice is recognized all too well. Their actions, in a sense, reflect this. They try to be noticed, but do not want to deal the consequences of their actions. This means that they are generally not taken too seriously, which is also recognized as dangerous because the capabilities they possess are enough to cause a great deal of damage. It is never really known when they are serious or not, and as such, the safer bet is usually to error on the side of caution and assume what they say has more truth than not.

The way in which each country deals with the North has their own characteristics. China has the ability to sympathize with North Korea on an ideological, militarily, and economic level more so than anyone else. They also allow the North to operate as they wish more than any other country involved while still providing the most money to them as well. South Korea has the connection of family and race. They were once the same people living in the same country. It is fair to say that both sides wish for an eventual re-unification, so there is a distinct emotion that has evolved in South Korea that not any other country can relate to. The United States, however, is in the position where it does not suffer nearly as much if war were to break out, and their actions reflect this. They are more bellicose with their rhetoric and they are quicker to blame/judge North Korea. There seems to be more of the attitude that the Americans are keeping a list of North Korea aggressions to use to build a case against the North, whereas the other countries are more quickly to forgive and forget. This is possibly because they have little choice but to do so. There is a greater need for

the United States to have a reason for action, whatever that action may be, than the rest of East Asia. As an outsider, the reasons for involvement must be clearer. If they cannot provide an account of all that North Korea has done wrong then they are not as easily able to justify their actions.

Governance in North Korea is unique, there is an extremely strong authoritarian hold on the country that is unlike the rest of the world. There are few tools the people have to protest or let their opinions be known. The government acts mostly on their own behalf, and they generally do not worry about the country as a whole. This is in contrast to their neighbors who have a wider base of perspectives they must accommodate. They need to govern a more diverse range of people, and they must also engage in foreign policy on a much more regular basis than North Korea does. This means that they generally act more rationally and have a broader base of experience. Saying that North Korea acts in a rational manner is complicated, they do not operate on the same level as their neighbors and their standard for rationality is based off a different set of influences. An understanding of the differences among neighbors is vital when trying to comprehend the common goals.

When it comes to dealing with their own country, they have not exactly been acting in the best interest of the people. It is also debatable whether or not they are capable of being called a rational actor, on par with their neighbors. It is in this notion of distinction that the rationality North Korea appears to have drawn a dividing line between it and those other East Asian neighbors. Where North Korea may still exhibit a degree of uncertainty in predictability, the rest of those involved in this situation have a more recognizable set of circumstances that dictate how the country will act in a given circumstance. This means that it is harder to know what might be coming up next from the North than the other regional players. The only thing that gives this issue a more comforting outcome is that the Kim regime uses the state for their benefit rather than acting out of the benefit of the state, and because of that, there is a smaller group of decision makers and therefore the actions can be more predictable if the conditions,

decisions, and the real motives are known for integration into the rational choice process.

The perpetual misunderstanding of North Korea is that something is about to happen. It seems as though there is often a line of thought that the North is on the verge of collapse or even some sort of reform. This has guided policy and shifted thinking of this subject. The thinking most states have on this issue is that they would rather maintain the status quo and guide North Korea into a gradual landing from whichever of the two monumental events they feel could likely be happening. It would sooth the country into a peaceful transition instead of exploiting a weakened enemy. The reality is that there has been little change in the country for the time period for which this thesis has assessed. The indication this brings is that the status quo is better for each individual country more than it is for both them and North Korea. Although this may seem harsh, it is, in essence, the core of what each country would consider to be at their best interest. It is better to invest in a climate that is known rather than to risk a situation that could easily go in any direction, good or bad. What North Korea presents to the world is both a threat and an opportunity; it's just too bad for the people of North Korea that the opportunity is too risky for others to seize upon.

The next best option is for the North to transition to a system of governance that would be acceptable in the eyes of the international community, but the Kim dynasty has too many skeletons in their closet for any rapid transition to be made. They know this as well as anyone else. It is also known that the dynasty will do everything in its power to stay in the position of leadership. Therefore, for true reforms to be made and a route towards a more peaceful and open North Korea to be made, it must be understood that this process should be measured in generations rather than years. For all that is known about North Korea, it should come as no surprise that they are not yet ready for the outside world. Should the international community wish to transition North Korea into modern times, it must be done with this timeline in mind.

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