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Factors Driving North Korean Military Provocations

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Factors Driving North Korean Military Provocations

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An Honors Program Project Presented to

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my father, my mother, my friends at Kyung Hee University, my professors at James Madison University, and the 4th Korea-America Student Conference. Without your invaluable support, I would have never come to love and appreciate Korea.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Keller, Dr. Seth, Dr. Guerrier, and Dr. Yang for their support with this project, their feedback, and for providing me with countless sources of relevant, useful information on my topic. This project could not have been completed without their time and help.

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Abstract

This paper examines the causal factors underlying North Korea's decision to use military actions against South Korean and U.S. personnel, both military and civilian, from the post-Korean War until the present day. It tests hypotheses at the systemic, domestic, and individual levels of analysis and draws conclusions as to what forces and theories appear to explain North Korean behavior across three different leaders. It concludes that North Korea is largely leadership-driven and that there has been a shift away from military provocations since the time of Kim Il-Sung in favor of nuclear weapons development.

Introduction

North Korea is a state that has seemingly exists as a living anachronism in both its regional and the global environment at large. It appears to be the last true totalitarian state standing in the age of increasing global connectedness that shifted its focus inward and closed itself to the outside world. It has resisted pressures from its neighbors to join the world community wholeheartedly and seems to be content with remaining a recipient of aid, while also using fiery rhetoric and taking hostile action against its southern neighbor who is one of its largest suppliers of aid and investment in the last twenty years. The portrayal of North Korea in the media, especially in the last two years, has generally portrayed in terms being incomprehensible, childish, or buffoonish in nature in their actions towards the US, South Korea, and other actors in the region. At first glance, this behavior of receiving aid and then backpedalling on guarantees or acting in a hostile manner towards its patrons appears to be self-defeating or shortsighted. Certainly, it is not difficult to label the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) as an unpredictable actor with undefined or rapidly changing goals that it haphazardly pursues over the course of a few months to a year.

However, within the context of history and not that of the 24-hour news cycle, these assumptions on the inherent nature of North Korea do not necessarily hold up to scrutiny. North Korea is the last Stalinist standing. It has survived the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union who heavily provided it with aid, a prolonged natural disaster in the 1990s, and the advent of advances mass communication and the Internet. In spite of sanctions, numerous reports of some of the worst human rights violations, and humanitarian disasters, the DPRK has not collapsed or fallen victim to civil war and political unrest. Instead, it has seemingly managed to survive the challenges that toppled other states of its kind. Considering this record, it stands to

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reason that North Korea does operate on some form of a calculus or must do something correctly otherwise it would not have lasted as long as it has. Should these assumptions be true, it would also follow that if the underlying conditions driving this behavior could be understood, then an effective way of managing or engaging North Korea can be developed on the part of regional stakeholders, such as the US, the Republic of Korea (ROK), China, Japan, and Russia.

It is from this line of thinking that the interest in this thesis, which seeks to understand the trends of North Korean military provocations and the causal factors behind them, comes forth. There should be drivers of this behavior, which is at odds with international norms and the actions of its neighbors that should shed light on the underlying assumptions or goals of the DPRK, especially with the passage of time and leadership. Designed around answering the question of "why does North Korea use its military in a provocative manner against South Korea and the US," this thesis aims to understand historical trends in North Korean behavior after the Korean War in to the present day across multiple leaders.

Given North Korea's close proximity to several major economic powers within the region, its decision to engage in provocative military behavior may have a destabilizing effect on the vital trade, ranging from automobiles to high-tech computing parts, which flows outward for consumption worldwide. Even with recent tensions between China and Japan in the East China Sea, North Korea's willingness to attack military and civilian targets in South Korea poses the greatest risk to maintaining the peace within the region that has allowed it to flourish since the end of the Korean War. It is assured that a second sustained conflict in the Korean peninsula would be disastrous for both countries, regardless of which side emerged victorious. Similarly, a sudden, complete collapse of North Korea would also result in a humanitarian crisis that would significantly drain South Korean resources for decades to come. If the use of military

provocations holds predictive power for either scenario or injecting volatility into East Asian markets, it is highly important for policymakers to understand what drives these actions in the first place in order to formulate approaches that reduce the risk of further occurrence.

No action occurs in a vacuum however and it is important to consider multiple factors that drive North Korean military provocations that are internal, either in reference to the conditions in country or the beliefs of the leader, or external in nature from a historical perspective. This thesis is structured in such a way to encapsulate these factors by defining variables at three levels of analysis, systemic, domestic, and individual, in the literature review and then providing two historical overviews of North Korean history with each level represented in those overview chapters. The analysis and conclusion sections will determine which variables hold with evidence provided in the overview justification sections. From there, this thesis seeks to gain an understanding of what causes North Korea to use provocations in order to better inform policymakers in their decision-making process.

Literature Review

Answering the question "Why does North Korea decide to engage in military provocations against South Korea and United States?" begins at discussing what influences state behavior. Within the international relations community, there are three conventional levels of analysis that attempt to explain state behavior, the systemic, domestic, and individual levels, ordered from the most general to the most specific (Hudson 2005; Ransom 1968; Romanova 2011; Singer 1961; and Waltz 1959). The intellectual basis for these levels derives from the works of Singer (1961) and Waltz (1959), who sought to create analytical models of analysis as they related to international relations and who examined the nature of war by defining three images conceptually equivalent to the aforementioned levels to explain the phenomenon.

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The systemic level concerns where a given state or states fit within the broader context of an international system or systems and their interactions between each other. It is effectively the most "comprehensive" level because it attempts to "encompass the totality of interactions which take place within the system and its environment" (Waltz 1959). Essentially, the system itself and its characteristics determines how states act. However, since systems are inherently structural in nature, this level of analysis imposes a form of "uniformity" or "homogeneity" upon the actors, or nation-states. It tends to overstate the "impact of the system upon natural actors," while also "discount[ing] the impact of the actors on the system" (Singer 1961). As a result of its built-in broadness, there is very little interest in the internal differences between each actor.

At the systemic level, the realist school of international relations argues that the existence of system wide anarchy creates international security crises because it forces states to provide for their own security independent of one another. However, the act of increasing one's defensive capabilities only serves to be a destabilizing force as surrounding nations regard the buildup of arms with suspicion, prodding those neighbors to build up their arsenals as well and pursue alliances to counterbalance their neighbor, increasing the likelihood of war. Thus, the dynamic created by this "security dilemma" provides a justification for the systemic level Hypothesis 1 if a state is surrounded by neighbors it finds threatening to its security, it is more likely to engage in military provocations in an attempt to secure itself (Glaser 1997; Jervis 1978; Waltz 1988).

A second variable for systemic level causes of provocations comes in the form of regional bipolarity or multi-polarity, in which there are two great powers or more present in the region respectively. Pre-World War Two Europe is cited as a case of multi-polarity being a destabilizing force: prior to 1945, Europe experienced multiple small-scale wars and two world

wars. In contrast, the post-1945 Cold War brought about several crises, but only two wars, the 1974 Greco-Turkish War and the 1956 Soviet intervention in Hungary, neither of which threatened to expand beyond the two countries' borders (Mearsheimer 1990; Waltz 1998). Waltz (1998) explains the reason for the relative peacefulness of bipolar systems is rooted in the zero-sum nature of threats in such systems: one side's loss is the other side's gain. As a result, the two major powers are more inclined to respond quickly to "unsettling events" to prevent losses than they are in a multipolar system where powers have less clearly defined interests. Thus, we derive Hypothesis 2, again at the systemic level: if a state is a junior or client actor in a bipolar system, it is more likely to not engage in military provocations as a result of pressure from its superpower patron than when it is an actor in a multipolar environment.

The domestic level attempts to fill in this gap: it concerns itself with explaining how the internal features, such as organizations within the state and its national features, shape the behavior of a state. It assumes that each state is unique, beholden to a set of characteristics, which may be similar to or different from the characteristics of other states. These characteristics are inherently vast in nature, run the gamut of a state's regime type, whether it is democratic or authoritarian, to its cultural characteristics and self-conception. The organizations act as well, independent, in conflict, or in concert with other parts. As is with the systemic level, the domestic level is not without its own weaknesses. It potentially overstates the role of sub-national actors and their characteristics. It also allows an observer to insert his or her own national bias into their analysis and highlight the "vices" of other nations, especially those that are in conflict the observer's beliefs. Finally, it ignores the influence of individuals, particularly elites, in determining state behavior (Hudson 2005; Ransom 1968; Romanova 2011; Singer 1961; and Waltz 1959).

Huntington (1993) puts forth a domestic-level theory that a country's cultural and civilizational differences and similarities to its neighbors shaped how it would behave towards it neighboring countries. He neatly defines civilizations as regions that share common historical, cultural, and ideological ties, of which he defines three primary types, Western, Islamic, and Confucian, based on major civilizations in world history. From these civilizational cleavages, he argues that there is currently a global conflict between the West and other civilizations due to the unparalleled power of the West in the present day. In his view, the military and economic dominance of the West forced Islamic and Confucian sides closer together to balance the West based on arms transfer from East Asian states to Middle Eastern ones. Using Huntington's theory as a base, we derive Hypothesis 3: we expect a state to engage in military provocations towards other states which do not share a common cultural or civilization heritage with it and cooperative behavior towards countries in which those links were historically strong.

Ajami (1993) disputes Huntington's assertion, remarking that most states make more rational, economic calculations to improve their state's market share in the world economy and thus do not have an interest in reviving historical glory. In his view, economics drives state behavior rather than conscious civilizational clashes. Furthermore, he argues that subdivisions exist even within civilizations, citing Iranian support of "Christian Armenia" over Azerbaijan, a fellow Islamic state and Farsi-speaking state as an example. Thus, from the perspective of Ajami, the contrary Hypothesis 4 emerges: we expect a state not to engage in military provocations towards another state with whom it shares economic ties.

Thus, the individual level examines the role of decision-making elites in affecting the behavior of their state. Kelan (1965) notes that decision-makers, who are predominantly

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elites within their given society, are shaped by their "social backgrounds, previous experience, and personal values," that affect their thinking and process of decision-making. Their values, ideologies, and philosophies are viewed as a "relatively enduring orientation" and thus play a consistent role in the decisions they make and, by extension, those their organization or country makes. Moreover, these elites' characteristics need not be biographical or historical; other factors such as being risk-acceptant or risk-averse in a given situation also influence an individual's decision-making process. In short, the individual level of analysis examines the psychology of the leaders and their behavioral outcomes. Like the previous two levels, this level is also subject to weaknesses. It is difficult to differentiate between an enduring value and a shifting attitude at a given moment in time. Decisions are not made in a temporal vacuum either: past experiences affect future choices and perceptions. Leaders themselves are also subject to the limitations imposed by the organizational structure in which they reside. The context and the timing of a situation may force a leader to make choices that may not be predictable based on their chosen ideology. Likewise, a leader's perception of relative weakness or strength with regard to their own state or another state also guides decision-making. Leaders may work collectively and thus may be influenced by their colleagues and peers (Burke 1966; Keller 2005; Kelman 1965; Jervis 1992; and Price 1975).

At this level, Keller (2005) discusses the role of individual leadership style in using force to mitigate a perceived crisis as a way of testing democratic peace theory, which asserts that democracies are more "pacific" in their relations with countries than autocracies. He divided leadership style into two categories, "constraint respecters" and "constraint challengers," based on their sensitivity to domestic constraints. The primary philosophical difference between the two is that the first group "internalize[s] constraints in their environments," while the second

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group "view constraints as obstacles to be overcome." His statistical findings of 154 cases found that constraint challengers and constraint respecters in autocracies, regardless of regime type, exhibited more "aggressive" or violent behavior than a democratic constraint respecter, the most pacific group, as a conflict resolution tool. The defining characteristics of a constraint challenger lie in the four categories of task emphasis need for power, distrust, and nationalism. Based on Keller's definition, individuals with a task-emphasis mindset, as opposed to those with an interpersonal mindset, direct their attention to accomplishing a given task or achieving a mission instead of examining and contemplating other perspectives, making their leadership style one that emphasizes authority and obedience over compromise and accommodation. The need for power is defined by the perceived desire of the individual actor to heavily "influence, control, or dominate other people" in negotiating circumstances through a predominant focus on achieving maximal personal gains rather than joint positive outcomes. Leaders with a need for power often show a desire for centralized, hierarchical structures of governance and a willingness to use violence against domestic and systemic level opposition to their power (Keller 2005: 7). Distrust refers to a given leader's predisposition to perceive outside forces with an air of suspicion and fear of being taken advantage of in negotiations, leading to a belief system in which force is necessary to protect the interests of the state against these outside threats. Nationalism is a measure in which the leader perceives his or her state as exception or superior to those of other states and a heightened sense of vigilance against foreign threats and accepting the use of conflictual behavior as a means to protect the superiority of that state. Based on Keller's work, at the individual level of analysis, it is relatively simple to determine Hypothesis 5 if a country's leader fits the mold of a constraint challenger, he or she will be more willing to use military

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provocations in their foreign policy decisions than a constraint respecter, regardless of regime type, in managing crises.

A second individual level hypothesis comes from prospect theory, an alternative model to rational choice model of individual level decision-making, which asserts that individuals are risk averse when they perceive to be in the realm of gains and, conversely, risk acceptant when they perceive themselves within realm of losses. The theory continues to assert that aversion to continued losses creates an "endowment effect" in which the individual is unwilling to lose a current possession, even for a trade of comparable value (Betts 193-4; Levy 1996; Kahneman and Tversky 1979). Levy (1996) took this economic model and then examined its applicability of prospect theory into international negotiating behavior. In particular, he found that states who perceive themselves in a losing situation, such as a "external decline" or "internal instability," may engage in increasingly risky actions, "short of war," to maintain the status quo even if a basic cost-benefit analysis encourages "restraint." For leaders, he found that since domestic publics punish leaders more for losses than they reward for gains, "decision-making elites" become risk acceptant and undertake "considerable efforts" to avoid losses. From prospect theory, Hypotheses 6, at the individual level, emerges: if a leader of a country perceives himself or herself to be within the domain of losses, then that leader will be more like to engage in risk-acceptant military provocations in order to maintain the status quo. As a corollary, Hypothesis 7 states that if a state faces internal insecurity, then they are more likely to engage in military provocations.

It is important to note that these levels of analysis are by no means comprehensive in nature or mutually exclusive. Rather their purpose is to structure observations of state behavior

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and each individual level sheds light onto areas in which the others are deficient. They are, in a sense, a lens by which to view and organize observable phenomena. Moreover, it is possible to define and observe at a level between these three (Hudson 2005; Ransom 1968; Romanova 2011; Singer 1961; and Waltz 1959).

Now that a structure is given to a state's behavior or behaviors, what are the characteristics behind the actual decision-making process? Kelman (1965) acknowledges the debate between whether foreign policy decision-making in the international community is inherently international in nature, implying states are actors interacting amongst one another or if it is intra-national in nature, that decisions are made within the state itself. In short, it is a debate between whether the state reacts to its external environment or that the state chooses act based the internal voices and actors within itself. He offers the following three factors to explain a decisional outcome and reconcile the two schools of thought: the occasion for the decision, personal characteristics of the decision-maker, and the organizational framework in which the decision-maker decides. Decisions are made at the intersection of external forces, labeled the occasion, internal forces, the values and experiences of the decision maker, and with an intermediate constraint between these forces, the organizational context. These factors are roughly equivalent to the systemic, domestic, and individual levels of analysis.

Allison and Zelikow (1999) take a different approach and define three distinct models of the decision-making process named the Rational Actor Model (RAM), the Organizational Process Model (OPM), and the Bureaucratic Politics Model (BPM). Just as the levels of analysis are not mutually exclusive, their three models are meant to elucidate facets of the decision-making process rather than provide three independent, all-encompassing perspectives.

RAM is the dominant model within the academic, policy, and press circles for describing state behavior. It "attempt[s] to explain international events by recounting the aims and calculations of nations or governments" (Allison and Zelikow, 1999, p.13-5). Effectively, RAM forces "rational order" on state actions which would otherwise be "a mass of phenomena" that are otherwise "disconnected and unintelligible" without such a framework imposed upon them. This derives from the work of Morgenthau (1954), who explained the value of imposing a rational model on the foreign policy of nation-states precisely because doing so made the foreign policy of America, Britain, and Russia "appear as an intelligible, rational continuum" and "consistent…regardless of the different motives, preferences, and intellectual and moral qualities of successive statesmen." Allison and Zelikow (1999) agree with Morgenthau's proposition and demonstrate that adding rationality to individual state action gives it the same quality of consistency regardless of the state's relative power.

RAM defines its unit of analysis and principal actor as the government or nation-state and makes several assumptions. First, it assumes that the "nation or government" is "a rational, unitary decision-maker" and possesses only "one set of preferences, one set of choices, and a single estimate of the consequences that follow from each alternative." The state acts much in the same manner that an individual person does when RAM is applied in its original economic context: it responds to a problem, or rather a "strategic situation the actor faces." It chooses the option that provides maximum benefit to its strategic goals, given the positive and negative consequences of that option compared to the alternatives. Thus, the analyst assumes that when a nation does an action, "that action must have been selected as the value-maximizing means for achieving the actor's objectives." The analyst then attempts to find the rationale, based on the value maximizing property, for a given decision and arranges evidence in such a way to confirm

the rationale. It is the analyst who assigns rules "for making assertions about governmental objectives, options, and consequences" (Allison and Zelikow 1999; and Monroe and Maher 1995).

RAM is not without its criticism. Governments are not individual people and are a "conglomerate of loosely allied organizations, each with a life of its own" and leaders perceive problems through "organizational censors." As a result, unlike RAM that assumes a monolithic quality of the nation state, more closely aligned with the systemic level of analysis, OPM and its theoretical cousin, GPM, explain behavior based on the actions of the internal organizations within the state, aligning it conceptually closer with the domestic level of analysis.

Allison and Zelikow (1999) assert in OPM that state, or government action, is not the result of a monolithic entity but rather as a sum of the routines that organizations within the government make. The organizations themselves are built around handling a certain set of tasks, are specially equipped to handle these tasks, and maintain a level of independence from the elite decision-makers. Thus, executives are able to disrupt organizations, but are unable to actually control an organization's behavior. Instead, the organization creates standard operating procedures (SOPs) to coordinate its human and technical capital and follows these procedures with predictable regularity. These procedures assume that there are "standard" situations that the organization will consistently face and creates routines based on handling these specific situations.   However, this comes at the cost of being able to adapt to a unique circumstance or set of circumstances where a given SOP is inappropriate. Thus, the organization performs at a high level in circumstances that match assumptions of the SOPs and underperforms in critical junctions where circumstances do not fit the mold.

What truly differentiates it from OPM is the logic behind decision-making. OPM adheres to the "logic of appropriateness" whereas RAM adheres to the "logic of consequences." That is, organizations in OPM behave according to established, familiar routines, regardless of the consequences instead of basing their actions on a cost-benefit analysis of potential options and choosing the one that maximizes benefits with the least amount of cost.

The final model, BPM, differentiates itself from OPM by assuming that organizations within a nation-state are "players" in competition with one another and that government action is a result of "compromise, conflict, and confusion of officials with diverse interests and unequal influence." No individual player is dominant and thus each player must bargain their way into an outcome that favors their motivations and goals. Thus the government is neither unitary nor an amalgamation of different organizations but a collection of players and a framework, or game, in which these players interact   These players need not be limited to individuals within executive positions of power or their subordinates: so-called *ad hoc* players are also permitted. Examples of these ad hoc players include "foreign diplomats" and members of interest groups. Action occurs along so called "action-channels," or regular "means of taking a governmental action on a specific kind of issue." The action-channel determines the relative strengths and weaknesses of the players before the "game" itself begins, how the players enter the game, and which lower-level players actually carry out the agreed-upon action. What determines a player's impact is their power, derived from their formal authorities, control of resources, and ability to shape the bargaining process (Allison and Zelikow 1999; and Rosati 1981).

Rosati (1981) points out that there is a strong debate on how applicable this model is despite its popularity and concluded in his own work that it does not apply to policymaking as much as it is conceived to have done. The leadership style of the president or highest executive

plays a role in determining how effective the model is and its results. As opposed to criticisms

that RAM is too simple, BPM is also viewed as overly complex (Christensen and Redd 2004;

Krasner 1972; and Rosati 1981). Krasner (1972) and Bendor and Hammond (1992) argue

against the model by pointing out that it overstates the power of individual players versus the

president to whom they owe their position and share values with. As they note, the president

does not want to bargain with his subordinates. Additionally, there is little discussion on the

impact of hierarchy in BPM. The model also suffers from the weakness that it is inherently

American in design and the examples within the literature reviewed here provide no example of

using this model to describe another liberal democracy or describe an autocratic state.

With this theoretical background in mind, what then influences North Korean behavior?

Within the systemic level of analysis, North Korea is a nation surrounded by large economic

powers, namely China, South Korea, Japan, Russia, and, by virtue of alliances rather than

geography, the United States. With the exception of Japan, all of the aforementioned nation-

states have occupied or placed troops on North Korean soil. To further compound the relative

weakness of North Korea, three fifths of the nations are both nuclear with permanent seats on the

United Nations Security Council. North Korea's only defensive deterrent is the sheer size of its

forces, position of its artillery that make an invasion too costly, and potential possession of a

nuclear weapon. Based on its external environment, ignoring the five's internal characteristics,

North Korea possesses good reason to fear its neighbors (Akaha 2002: 1-3; Buszynski 2009;

Jager 2013; Kim 2011; and Lankov 2013).

At the domestic level, Meyers (2010) hypothesizes that North Korea is not actually a

Communist or Confucian state, instead it conceives of itself in the cloak of Korean ethnic

nationalism. Therefore, the purpose of North Korea's leader is to be the quintessential Korean

rather than a true intellectual counterweight to Marx, Lenin, or Mao. Lankov (2013) supports this proposition of the Korean national character and mentions the historical "de-Stalinization" that Kim Il-Sung underwent during his forty-six year reign. He, as well as Meyers (2010) and Hassig and Oh (2009) paint a rather dire internal economic climate. North Korea itself possesses few natural resources and an obsolete manufacturing base. It acknowledges its loss in the cold war for economic dominance in the Korean peninsula within its own internal propaganda, yet tenaciously justifies being legitimate by virtue of being the more purely Korean of the two Koreas.

At the individual level, the North Korean leadership fears that the breakdown of the information corridor will lead to a popular uprising. This gives them both a suspicion and innate fear of "opening up" based both the perception that it would have an analogous effect of regime change that it did in the final days of the Soviet Union and the fact that they would find few places to flee to given South Korea's history of prosecuting its former dictators (Scalapino 2002: 20-21; Lankov 2013; Kim 2011; and Meyers 2010).

Within Allison's three types Lankov (2013) and Meyers (2010) make the case that North Korea is inherently rational in nature, if not the most rational when compared to the five neighboring powers. They define North Korea's motivations as simple: Pyongyang wishes only to survive and obtain aid with the fewest concessions possible. The use of its military and incendiary rhetoric to antagonize the South and the US is actually part of a tried-and-true tactic of escalation and then de-escalation to extract aid from both countries at the negotiating table. For the reasons mentioned above, its decision to maintain a closed to society also fits within a rational mindset. Since there is an established historical precedent for such provocations, an application of the Organizational Process Model is also plausible. More research is needed to see

if Allison's third model applies given the fact that Kim family is not subject to electoral concerns and the elites in the country are connected to the Kims through shared history and blood ties and thus share the same concerns and motivations as them.

Methods

This thesis will utilize a case-study format to analyze trends present from the period of 1953 to present divided by the reign of Kim Il-Sung (1953-1994) and the reigns of Kim Jong-il and Kim Jong-un (1994-present), each of which will be covered by a historical overview section describing relevant events at the . Due to the relative brevity of Kim Jong-il and Kim Jong-un's reigns when compared to Kim Il-Sung's, the former are combined into one for the sake of creating a period of comparison that is closer in length to latter. Moreover, combining the rule of the two most recent leaders provides an opportunity to overcome the information or analytical gaps that would come about as a result of looking at each period holistically. In the case of Kim Jong-il, his period in power, there is a gap between explaining policy events that happened toward to the end of death that may be tied toward setting up his son, Kim Jong-un, as the heir apparent. In the case of Kim Jong-un, the absolute brevity of his time as leader of North Korea, from 2011 to present, is incredibly short and there is insufficient information at present to provide a robust analysis that is sufficiently removed from the present day. Moreover, certain foreign policy considerations and domestic conditions present in Kim Jong-il's period are likely to carry over into Kim Jong-un's calculus, especially in the rushed manner in which he became the successor, which is explained, in greater depth in the corresponding historical analysis chapter.

The term "provocation" is defined to include armed invasion; border violations; infiltration of armed saboteurs and spies; hijacking; kidnaping; terrorism (including assassination and bombing); threats/intimidation against political leaders, media personnel, and institutions; and incitement aimed at the overthrow of the South Korean government. This definition is based upon the work of Fischer (2007) and Nanto (2003) in their compilation of North Korean military provocations although it intentionally does not include rhetoric or missile tests.

Angry rhetoric and nuclear weapons development are intentionally not considered provocative actions despite the validity of an argument that these actions are, in fact, provocative in their real-world effects. However, including North Korean nuclearization and fiery anti-South Korean and anti-US rhetoric is a field of rich, well-developed scholarly and foreign policy debate unto itself at the present day. Thus, by including these actions, which do not directly threaten lives in the immediate manner that bombings and bullets do, within thesis' operational definition of military provocations would expand the scope into a size that is not suitable for an undergraduate thesis. Limiting the scope maintains the thesis' structural integrity; however, these topics may be later revisited as points of further research and study.

Finally, the primary source of information regarding North Korean military provocations lies in the Library of Congress reports written by Nanto (2003) and Fischer (2007) with the ROK *Cheonnan* sinking (*BBC* 2010b) and the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island (*BBC* 2010a) also included due to their profile in recent years. While these reports do not contain every military incident in the history of DPRK-ROK relations, is useful in determining which actions were considered of high importance to the United States such that they were included in a document originally intended for members of Congress. The operational definition of incident will be

applied to the contents contained therein in order to determine the number of incidents per year to identify periods of variation.

For historical analysis, this thesis primarily draws on the work of Andrei Lankov, Dr. Michael Seth, Dr. Victor Cha, Sheila Jager, and Dr. Meyers. These sources are considered to be leading experts in the field of North Korea studies or have served on the National Security Council to formulate policy on North Korea and negotiated with North Korean officials. In a field where there is little firsthand information available, these scholars and officials have performed the highest quality of research. They have been recommended to me by the thesis committee, who testify to these individuals' eminence within the field. Sources that were not recommended by my committee I have used, albeit more cautiously and generally in areas where they corroborate information that provided by the primary sources.

Hypotheses List

Systemic:

Hypothesis 1: *if a state is surrounded by neighbors it finds threatening to its security, it is more likely to engage in military provocations in an attempt to secure itself.*

Hypothesis 2: *if a state is a junior or client actor in a bipolar system, it is more likely to not engage in military provocations as a result of pressure from its superpower patron than when it is when it is an actor in a multipolar environment.*

Domestic:

Hypothesis 3: *we expect a state to engage in military provocations towards other states that do not share a common cultural or civilization heritage with it and cooperative behavior towards countries in which those links were historically strong.*

Hypothesis 4: *we expect a state to not engage in military provocations towards another state with whom it shares economic ties.*

Hypothesis 7: *if a state faces internal insecurity, then they are more likely to engage in military provocations.*

Individual*:*

Hypothesis 5: *if a country's leader fits the mold of a constraint challenger, he or she will be more willing to use military provocations in their foreign policy decisions than a constraint respecter, regardless of regime type, in managing crises.*

Hypotheses 6: *if a leader of a country perceives himself or herself to be within the domain of losses, then that leader will be more like to engage in risk-acceptant military provocations in order to maintain the status quo.*

Analysis of Kim Il-Sung's Reign

Overview

The greatest period of variation in military provocations in North Korea's history in the early 1960s and the period from the late 1970s to late 1980s takes place under the leadership of Kim Il-Sung, whose forty-year reign spans from the beginning to the ending of the Cold War. His impact on North Korea is both absolute and far-reaching. Both his son and grandson, his successors in dynastic leadership, invoke the policies and images of the revolutionary founder during their own tenure. To adequately understand the world that Kim Il-Sung operated in, it is imperative to consider the systemic, domestic, and internal factors that drove his decisions.

However, there are two corollary notes to consider when evaluating the levels of analysis driving North Korean behavior during this period. First, there is significant overlap between the domestic and individual levels given the structure and absolute control that Kim Il-Sung held during his tenure. That to say that it is reasonable to view North Korean domestic policy as Kim Il-Sung's policy or, at the very least, approved by the Dear Leader himself. Second, due to the intense rivalry between the ROK and the DPRK combined with Kim's desire for reunification, it is useful to consider South Korean conditions within the domestic level as they undoubtedly played a role in determining North Korea's domestic policies.

Levels of Analysis

Systemic

Kim Il-Sung began his reign during the Cold War at time when the war-era cooperation between the Soviet Union and the United States slid down into a full competition for global

hegemony. Understanding the systemic conditions of the Kim Il-Sung necessitates an understanding of the United States' and the Soviet Union's respective strategic goals and actions during the Cold War. South Korea and North Korea, as the respective client states of these powers, are components of these superpowers' larger objectives, played out on a global scale.

In the immediate postwar period, the Soviet Union was forced to recalculate its imperialist assumptions about the pre-World War II powers, who shifted from colonial ambitions to desiring security guarantees under an American umbrella. This shift, in the eyes of the Soviet planners, amounted to the creation a unipolar capitalist world with the United States at its helm. Such an environment would be more dangerous to the USSR than the multi-polarity of the prewar period, which conferred a security benefit to the Soviet Union by allowing it to balance Western industrial powers through playing powers off one another. The united front in the aftermath of World War II completely eliminated this dynamic, creating an easily identifiable us versus them mentality on the part of the Soviets, who sought to export the Communist revolution (Westad 2007: 56-59).

To counter this threat, the USSR created buffers in Eastern Europe by providing military assistance to local Communists in "Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria" and made it clear to those local leaders that successfully creating a Communist state required the support of the Soviet Union and its military (Westad 2007: 59). At the same time, the Soviet Union used its military occupation of East Germany to install a sympathetic Communist regime in therein. The Soviet-backed locals cemented power through terror and elimination of political opposition in those countries and the Soviet Union later borrowed these tactics in its later territorial expansions into the Third World, including unsuccessful forays into North Africa and Iran (Westad 2007: 60-61).

Unlike the Eastern European states, Chinese Communists established decisive control over the mainland without following Stalin's instructions, which included establishing peace with the Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist forces. This increased Stalin's suspicion of Mao and his commitment to Communism, especially based on China's level of development and its aberrational path toward socialism. As a result, Stalin remained skeptical of the Chinese Communists' authenticity, negotiating in such a way that placated the USSR's security concerns without forming an actual alliance between the two states and laid the groundwork of North Korea's policy of playing the two off one another for aid. The military and political victories of Communist states, including China, and initial struggles of the capitalist West in their postwar protectorates created an optimism in Stalin towards the prospects of Communist military action, leading to the approval of the North Korean invasion of South Korea in the 1950s (Jager 2013: 54-63; Lankov 2013: 6-10; Westad 2007: 64-68).

Stalin's successor, Krushchev, took a more accepting attitude towards China in order to create an international socialist community in the late 1950s and went as far as to create a Marshall Plan-like aid program for China. Like Stalin, Krushchev was rebuffed by Mao after the acceptance of due to the plan effectively forcing China to emulate the Soviet model. Mao, countered with a plan of his own that sought to achieve faster progress along the Communist stages of development, The Great Leap Forward. By the early 1960s, the split became readily apparent as confrontation between the two states increased despite personal visits by Krushchev to rectify the situation. In 1965, the cooling came to a near freeze as both sides attacked the other's policies. As a result of this internecine diplomatic struggle between superpowers within the international Communist sphere, the USSR's grip on North Korea weakened while it competed for legitimacy against China (Lankov 2013: 27-29; Westad 2007: 69-72).

Given North Korea's timeline of using its military to attack the South, it is safe to assume that at least of the military provocations during Kim Il-Sung's reign is positively correlated with periods in which it is relatively independent from the dominance of superpowers or when those powers are in conflict with one another. Soviet and Chinese dominance of the DPRK in terms of its domestic affairs reached their zenith prior to the beginning of the Korean War and declined over time as is as described in the following sections. The circumstances leading up to the Korean War underscore how hamstrung North Korea was at the time: it took stupendous efforts and manipulation by North Korea to persuade both Stalin's Russia and Mao's China that war was viable and could be successful. As a client state of the USSR, the DPRK largely acted in its patron's interests. As an independent ally, North Korea proved able and willing to take part in self-interested actions that without the consideration of its militarily superior partner (Jager 2013: 60-62).

The Sino-Soviet Split strengthened North Korea because it forced both powers to compete against each other rather than united on collective security issues. North Korea's position as a buffer for both the Chinese and Russian borders against the American forces in South Korea makes it an ideal location for shared security interests. Thus, when both powers had a close relationship, their mutual security interest in border security doubled the pressure that they placed on North Korea. However, in times of conflict between each other, both powers needed to vie for the loyalty of North Korea in order to prevent North Korea from increasing territorial reach of their enemy.

This new paradigm places North Korea in a position of strength in negotiating since it can play the competing interests of both sides off of one another for both aid and increased autonomy with little risk. North Korea, as well as China and Russia, effectively understands that

any attempt to seize control of it on the part of either side is riskier than engaging in a bidding war for North Korean loyalty. To provide a concrete example, a Russian intervention at that time in North Korea would have heightened Chinese anxiety and escalated the already high tensions and the same phenomenon would be observed if the roles were reversed. Thus, both powers are forced to knowingly enter into a dynamic of paying off the DPRK rather than potentially subject themselves to a more costly scenario by not securing neutrality. North Korea understood its position and used it effectively to achieve the independence from both powers needed to achieve its localized objective of reunification with the flexibility to use its military in this endeavor (Lankov 2013: 11-21).

The Soviet Union did not allow its conflict with China to prevent the establishment of more peaceable relations with its chief rival, the United States. From 1968 to 1975, the two countries pursued a policy of *détente* by acknowledging the vested interests of other superpower in order to counteract the global disorder present at the time. Both countries were vested in the process: the backlash against military intervention in Vietnam led the United States to improve its image through diplomatic engagement with the Soviet Union, while the Soviet Union sought to secure itself against China after a series of border incidents nearly led to war. The de-escalatory value of *détente* manifested itself several times in times of conflict between Soviet and American backed states, most notably the Yom Kippur War of 1973 in which neither side put boots on the ground to influence the course of the conflict (Westad 2007: 195-202). *Détente* effectively came to a close in the late 1970s and early 1980s as the Soviets intervened in the Third World, particularly in Ethiopia and Afghanistan. The United States interpreted these actions as unvarnished attempts to expand the Soviet sphere and responded strongly in turn by

shutting off aid to Soviet states and aiding anti-Soviet forces within the country (Westad 2007: 280-81, 323).

Soviet focus away from East Asia and rapprochement with the United States reinforced the North Korean security dynamic because it created further constraints on Soviet action and strengthened North Korea's position. With the front of the Cold War shifting to the developed world that did not include the DPRK for reasons described in subsequent sections, the USSR no longer possessed the either the political leverage or the resources to expend on North Korean relations without reallocating resources necessary for its more immediate and pressing concerns in the Third World to a more provincial concern in the East. However, it given its high tensions with China, the USSR still needed to prevent the Chinese threat from gaining an advantage by becoming closer with the North. Thus, North Korea maintained its bargaining position even though it disapproved of Russian engagement with the United States and continued the dynamic through this period. The North Korea vacillation between its alliances to both countries over this twenty year period is further proof of it saw the competition between the USSR and China as beneficial to maintaining its own independence to pursue localized goals in the way it saw fit (Kim 2002: 112-114; Lankov 2013: 19-21; Seth 2011: 347-49).

Moreover, the fact that rapprochement saw Cold War action moving away from East Asia may also play a factor in preventing North Korean provocations. The assassination attempt on President Park Chung Hee occurred in 1968, as did the other most brazen provocations of that period which occurs during the beginning of the détente period. Alternatively, North Korea began a period of engagement with Non-Aligned countries in the 1970s and eventually joined the movement as part of its efforts to expand its global legitimacy against South Korea and isolate its rival. North Korea may have shifted away from military provocations in this period as part of a

larger strategy to maintain an advantage with its growing rival whose development was

beginning to catch up and had a stronger diplomatic presence globally. From a systemic

perspective in the North Korean calculus, high provocations during this time could have

undermined its efforts for recognition at the world stage (Lankov 2013: 31; Kim 2011: 103;

Nanto 2003; Seth 2011: 349-50).

The third potential reason for North Korea's reason for abandoning provocations may

also be explained by the foreign policy actions of the United States towards China, with whom

North Korea had closer ideological ties. President Richard Nixon visited Beijing in 1972, leading

to a thaw in the historically antagonistic Sino-American relationship of the Cold War era. Seeing

Beijing negotiate with its foe whom it had been strongly against in its propaganda may have

caused North Korean leadership to rethink their strategic calculus, at least temporarily, and

engage diplomatically with South Korea to achieve their reunification goal. The historical record

indicates that this may have been the case at one point: there was a 1972 communique between

the two Koreas, similar to its Shanghai cousin, calling for increased cooperation. The calculus

shift did not last very long however: the 1976 axe incident where North Korean soldiers killed

two American servicemen reignited local tensions (Lankov 2013: 31; Kim 2011: 103; Nanto

2003; Seth 2011: 349-50; Westad 2007: 280-81, 323).

The Cold War winded down under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev who wound

down Soviet commitments in Afghanistan while increasing progressively increasing engagement

with the United States from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s. The cost of Soviet

interventionism, coupled with its internal inefficiencies proved to be its undoing. With the

internal collapse of the Soviet Union, the Cold War milieu which Kim Il-Sung's matured in came

to a close (Lankov 2013: 213; Westad 2007: 380-83).

As North Korea reached its developmental zenith and decline, South Korea began its rise at the expense of its democracy. In 1961, junior military officers who graduated in the Korean Military Academy in 1949 and served together in the Korean War, overthrew the Republic of Korea's democratic government and installed General Park Chung Hee as a leader of the state. The impetus for the *coup d'état* came from both a desire to purge corrupt senior military officials and concerns over a burgeoning leftist movement among "labor, students, and teachers" (Seth, 2011: 378-79). Park saw the South's lack of development compared the high levels of development in its North Korean and Japanese neighbors as a form of weakness. He also viewed the ROK's heavy reliance on the United States for aid as enhancing that weakness. In a similar style to Kim Il-Sung and the Meiji rulers at the turn of the twentieth-century, he embarked on a plan of state-directed growth. The results were stunning: the first Five Year Plan of 1961 averaged 8.9%. Although the US forced Park to scale back his political control in the mid-1960s, he expanded trade with the United States and established trade relations with despite strong public opposition. His leadership continued to spur economic growth in the following decade with double-digit growth (Seth 2011: 383-89).

Despite Park's assassination in 1979 and the increasing leadership challenges from student movements that lead to Chun Doo Hwan's ousting in 1987 and a return to democratic rule, South Korea continued to prosper in the 1980s (Seth 2011: 410-18). After a brief inflationary shock in in 1980, the ROK economy continued to grow rapidly reaching a peak growth rate of 12% from 1986-1988 (Seth 2011: 394-95). Outside of its growth numbers, the crowning moment of South Korea's ascendance into First World status was hosting the 1988, which not only sealed its prestige, but also cemented its place ahead of North Korea (Cha 2012: 118-19).

Domestic

In 1946, it was immediately clear that the division between the Soviet-occupied North and the American-occupied South was rapidly reaching a state of permanence due to the conflict between the two powers over how to merge the two territories together politically. Much of the intransigence, especially on the Soviet side, which prevented reunification is understandable given the ground conditions at the time: the American-backed administration enjoyed far less political support from the local population than did the Soviet occupiers. In part, this is due to the American utilization of individuals and groups that were highly connected to the Japanese colonial regime as administrators in the day-to-day operations of government. The North, in comparison, heavily utilized the indigenous population to fulfill functionary needs. The American regime itself was also weakened by political instability caused by leftist factions in South Korea. The Soviets, seeing themselves in a position of strength, elected to stall negotiations by setting unacceptable preconditions in order to achieve a better bargaining position in the future (Jager 2013: 35-40; Lankov 2013: 9; McEachern 2010: 55).

In 1950, amidst the backdrop of a Soviet drawdown, Kim Il-Sung shared his patron state's optimism on the prospects of an eventual victory against the American-backed South and the reunification of the Korean peninsula under the leadership of a single political entity (Lankov 2013: 10-26). At the time, it was immediately obvious to observers that the North Korean People's Army (NKPA) had better training and equipment that their South Korean counterparts. NKPA further benefited from Soviet military assistance in the form of advisors, the vast majority of whom were lieutenant colonels and veterans of the Eastern front in World War II. China further bolstered the ranks of the NKPA by allowing the transfer of "tens of thousands of ethnic Koreans" who were veterans of Mao's forces in the "Chinese civil war" (Jager 2013: 60-61). In

addition to assuming a swift victory against an inferior opponent, Kim was convinced that the Americans would not intervene despite contrary opinions and warnings from Mao and Stalin (Jager 2013: 61-62).

The North Korea initiated-push to engage in military conflict with South Korea based on assumptions of eminent victory is reflected in later periods of high provocations. This suggests that there is a strong correlation between the two and a probable causal link. North Korea will use its military in times when it can be assured of actual success or a lack of consequences. There is a distinct link between its Korean War assumptions toward the prospects of American retaliation and its willingness to engage in minor border incidents in the 1970s that directly ended the lives of the American military such as the 1976 Hatchet Incident. In the first case, North Korea assumed that the United States would not retaliate if South Korea was attacked and would negotiate instead. If those assumptions were true, it would have largely assured a North Korean victory against the poorly equipped and ill-prepared South Korean army. Over thirty years later, it continued to escalate tensions against US and ROK forces when it felt confident that those forces would not retaliate. Thus, it is a reasonable assumption that North Korean provocations during the Kim Il-Sung era are influenced by its perceptions of a victory or minimal consequences and that its goals during this period were consistent with the objective of the complete reunification of peninsula that drove the Korean War. In addition to achieving geopolitical goals, this victory would have further legitimized Kim Il-Sung's personality cult, which relied upon him being the ultimate embodiment of Korean-ness and the protector of the Korean people. There may also be element of prospect theory at work: North Korea is inclined to engage in conflictual behavior at times when it perceives its enemies, the United States and South Korea, to be risk-averse (Jager 2013: 60-62; Meyers 2010: 74-80; Seth 2011: 349-50).

The decision to go to war based on Pollyanna assumptions of victory from North Korean leadership proved to be a costly error. North Korea suffered the brunt of intensive bombing campaigns by General MacArthur's forces, which obliterated its pre-Korean War infrastructure and industrial advantages the North held over the South. In the aftermath, North Korea focused heavily on rebuilding its industry and re-industrializing until the early 1960s. These efforts highly successful in part because Imperial Japan concentrated industrial development of the Korean colony in mineral-rich regions that later came to be occupied by the Soviets. Thus, the recovery focused primarily on reusing and building off of Japanese plans instead of building entire industries from scratch. In the later stages of its recovery, North Korea focused on the development of heavy industrial needed for military readiness in case of a future war of reunification. This sharply contrasted with the Soviet Union who took a more balanced approach toward development in the post-Stalin era (Seth 2011: 340-43).

Domestically, the recovery efforts increased North Korean independence from the Soviet Union, especially when compared to the ROK who used American aid for half of its national budget during the same time period. By 1960, North Korea achieved a tangible form of independence from the two Communist superpowers economically and militarily: Soviet aid consisted of a measly 2.6% of North Korean revenues and the People's Liberation Army ended its occupation two years prior (Seth 2011: 342-43).

The actions of North Korea in the immediate post-war period suggest that when the state focuses itself on rebuilding, it naturally is disinclined to engage in conflictual behavior compared to times when its economy is expanding or contracting. This is a rational calculation: North Korea did not have the capacity to fight a second Korean War in the 1950s due to the devastating effects of the war. Continuing hostilities would have only prolonged the recovery process at best

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and potentially be regime changing at worst. This reinforces the hypothesis that North Korea engages in conflictual behavior when it believes that its chances for success are high since it also does not engage in such behavior when it perceives the prospects for failure to be low.

In addition to perceiving a low likelihood of success, the lack of strong conflictual behavior also coincides at time when North Korea heavily leaned on the Soviet Union and China for aid and development, which suggests a moderating influence by the superpowers. Given the presence of Chinese troops in North Korea until late 1950s, a resumption of the hostilities would not have only led to a reversal of the industrialization progress North Korea made, but it also risked either alienating Chinese and Soviet donors while also increasing the likelihood that Mao's armies would remain on North Korean soil and directly threatened North Korean sovereignty in the long run. Kim Il-Sung alluded to the difficulties of having Mao's troops in and near North Korea in a conversation with Eastern bloc diplomats thirty years after the fact, underscoring the friction that the presence of these troops caused during their sojourn in the DPRK (Cha 2012: 23; Lankov 2013:18-19; Seth 2011: 340-43).

The success of the 1950s continued briefly into the 1960s and then began a prolonged period of decline. In 1962, the perception that the Soviets capitulates to the Americans during the Cuban Missile Crisis shook North Korean confidence in its ally's security umbrella. This feeling of insecurity was magnified by the South Korean military government's hardline stance against communism, leading the North to focus up to 30% of domestic production toward military support. Bureaucratic opposition, which supported the development of consumer products, was systematically removed. The economic decline speaks for itself. Both the Seven Year Plan of 1961 and the Six Year Plan of 1971 were extended by three years and one year respectively, indicating a failure to reach developmental targets. Despite slowing down in the 1970s, North

Korea kept itself at a level of development superior to that of the South in the eyes of outside observers. However, from 1986 onward in the twilight of Kim Il-Sung's reign, the reached its hard limits of its "command economy" (McEachern 2010: 58; Seth 2011: 364-67).

North Korea's rise and decline, which coincide with periods of heightened hostilities that it initiated, discredit the notion that economic development leads to peace or declining tensions. In the 1960s, the North far exceeded the South in its economic development, yet it made serious attempts on the life of the South Korean president and captured the *USS Pueblo*. However, in the 1980s, when the South outstripped North Korea in the economic development race, North Korea engaged in terrorism abroad against South Korean targets, including President Chun Doo Hwan. Given the presence of the same action occurring into different economic states, it is unlikely for economic development to possess an explanatory capacity with regard to North Korean military provocations.

However, these actions may be influenced by factors in South Korea itself. Both periods of military provocations and terrorism occurred in times of social unrest in South Korea against the government. Park Chung Hee came into power when there was strong Leftist protest movement and a similar type of movement toppled Chun Doo Hwan. Therefore, the presence of popular anti-government movements in South Korea likely influenced Kim Il-Sung to consider military options as a viable solution to reunify the peninsula. North Korea may have perceived such movements as indicators on an oncoming socialist movement, even if the aims of the leftist movement were far less ambitious than the DPRK perceived them to be.

Individual

Kim Il-Sung's political legitimacy derived from his World War II reputation as a guerrilla fighter and his Soviet patronage of him because of its failure to install a sympathetic leader from the indigenous Communist Party. Neither he, nor any of his comrades, were educated in actual governance and took a suspicious view of intellectuals. This distrust of the intelligentsia manifested itself in the form of multiple purges "before, during, and after" the Korean War" (McEachern 2010: 53-57). He did not tolerate opposition in any form and effectively divided and conquered his opponents, many of whom had helped build the Korean Communist Party. Lankov (2013) notes that only one elderly member of the ten member 1949 Politburo, with the exception of Kim Il-Sung, died of old age: the rest fell to purges in the 1950s (12-15). In addition to intellectual elites, the ranks of the purges of the 1950s and 1960s included Koreans with Soviet and Chinese connections, no matter how strong or real those connections were. By the end of the 1960s, leadership in the Korean Workers Party largely consisted of Kim's comrades from his guerrilla days and those with familial ties to those comrades and the Kim family (Lankov 2013: 14-15; McEachern 2010: 53-57; Seth 2011: 344-48).

The greatest periods of hostile actions against the South come at times when Kim's power is absolute. This indicates that his level of control is positively correlated with his willingness to engage in terror. When Kim felt constrained by opposition, he focused his energies on removing perceived threats rather redirecting his opponents and the people towards the patriotic goal of reunification. In contrast, he used military provocations when he perceived his position as secure from usurpation. Thus, it is safe to postulate that he used terror as a tool when he knew that he would not face major consequences if these efforts resulted in failure due to the supportive makeup of the Korean Communist Party.

The second major characteristic of Kim Il-Sung's personality was his determination to reunify the peninsula. Despite the Korean War being both a complete military rout and an utter annihilation of North's industrial base, Kim never gave up hope for reunification. Ironically, he managed to use the Korean War, a failed military adventure of his own design and initiative, to strengthen his power and become the unquestionable leader of North Korea. His perception that the war for reunification was, in fact, a winnable one led to equally optimistic calculations of a popular Leftist revolution beginning in South Korea. In fact, the two greatest moments of military provocations directly coincide with flashes of anti-government protest movements in South Korea. This suggests that his desire create a Communist Korean peninsula shaped belligerent policy: he used terrorism at times when he thought that prospects of a revolution were at their best with the hope of sparking one (Seth 2011: 352-53).

Moreover, it shows his propensity to interpret pleasant noise as signal: each of his military ventures into the South, including Korean War, ended in failure with none of the initial objectives achieved despite a wholehearted belief in the chances of success. It is plausible that these two factors worked in tandem to promote military provocations during his regime. The rosy and flawed assumptions that lead to provocative policy actions are accentuated from the lack of a moderating force. Without the presence of individuals in positions of power who could dissuade Kim from taking disruptive actions as a result of his unwillingness to tolerate dissent, state policy mimics his whims no matter how flawed they are.

Analysis of Kim Jong-il and Kim Jong-un's Rule

Overview

The brief reigns of Kim Jong-il and his son, Kim Jong-un, mark the beginning of a permanent shift into decline within the North Korean state because of both internal and external factors, which undermined the governance model that Kim Il-sung built. This period also marks a shift in DPRK policy away from using the military to guarantee state security and the pursuit of nuclear weapons and missiles to deter an attack from the outside world. North Korea has benefited from certain South Korean presidents who shifted policy away from suspicion and a desire to counter the North Korean military with aid based engagement. As leaders, both of Kim Il-sung's successors face similar constraints and a need to build support bases to maintain their control over the DPRK. Given the relative brevity of Kim Jong-il and Kim Jong-un's respective reigns when compared to the near half century of Kim Il-Sung, the analysis for their regimes will be combined.

Levels of Analysis

Systemic

Kim Jong-il came into power in 1994, a highly transitional period in global order precipitated by the collapse of the Soviet Union to the current dynamic of the present day. In the United States, William Clinton defeated then-President George H.W. Bush in 1992, effectively ending the career of the last Cold War-era president. President Clinton maintained an international outlook to pursue American economic development through the "enlargement of liberal, free enterprise regimes" (Young & Kent 2005; 609-614). The coherency of Clinton's policies during tenure came into question as the United States intervened in several conflicts in

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Rwanda, Bosnia, and Somalia, which strained US resources. As a result, he developed policies

for future humanitarian interventions that clarified American objectives and made a clear path

for exiting the conflicts. Unlike the Cold War, in which the United States focused on defeating

an external enemy, American foreign policy in the 1990s started out focusing on the creation of a

"New World Order" that strengthened international institutions under the first Bush

Administration and then thereby shifted to containing localized conflicts under the Clinton

Administration (Young & Kent 2005; 610-612).

The initial trend in American foreign policy came as part of a global trend toward

globalization in which the importance of individual states decreased in comparison to regional

and growing interregional connectedness in the form of trade, immigration, and idea exchange

(Young & Kent 2005; 610-612). Cronin (2014) notes that while the initial goal of the new

system was to create a "rules-based system that was supposed to function more or less

automatically," the emphasis on markets, democracy, and human rights had the capacity to be

"very intrusive" because of increased international scrutiny in a state's domestic politics (244).

As a result, there was an unexpected shift toward force-based intervention under various policies

such as the "the responsibility to protect," "nation-building," and "antiterrorism," which later

came to hurt North Korea when it was labeled a state sponsor of terror during the George W.

Bush Administration. Unlike previous administrations, the Bush Administration took steps

beyond sanctions that were aimed at North Korean elites and the cash that was used to acquire

perks and luxury goods through overseas banking. In one particular incident, the US pressured

Banco Delta Asia, a Macau-based bank, into freezing over $25 million in North Korean assets.

While further worsening US-DPRK relations, these efforts also forced the regime to use hard

currency to obtain these luxury items (Cha 2013: 265-66; Cronin 2014: 244-45; Lankov 2014: 154).

Although the Bush Administration focused heavily on the human rights violations taking place in North Korea and its links to terrorism, it also took part in the Six-Party talks, which also included China, South Korea, and Japan in addition to the US and North Korea, as part of an ongoing effort to limit the North Korean shift towards nuclear weapons development. These talks that began in 2003 and continued until 2011 were largely unsuccessful in achieving their purpose since North Korea tested missiles during this period in 2006 and in 2009 despite receiving increased aid from China and the resumption of US foreign aid (Cha 2013: 272-76; Lankov 2014: 154-56).

Of the external shifts that began in the early 1990s that significantly damaged North Korea and its economy, none was as catastrophic as the loss of Soviet aid. In 1990, Soviet leadership decided to cut off aid to North Korea as it established economic ties and diplomatic recognition to South Korea, which included a three billion dollar loan from the ROK to the USSR. Seeing North Korea as a liability to the new partnership, the USSR ended subsidized trade with North Korea that fueled the latter's economy and military cooperation that the DPRK used to export Soviet-made weaponry. In 1993, DPRK trade with Russia dropped six-fold from the amount in 1985, which stood at 49.5% of the North Korean economy. In particular, the loss of Soviet fuel aid crippled North Korean manufacturing output. Although China made moves to replace the Soviet Union as North's principal patron, it still sputtered during this early period from $230 million in 1991 to $100 million in 1994 (Cha 2013: 122-24; Seth 2011: 420).

By the mid-1990s, South Korea had successfully transitioned into a democracy through the presidency of Roh Tae-woo as the result of the 1987 elections. Roh, despite being a highly influential part of the dictatorial Chun Doo-Hwan's administration, intentionally relaxed or reformed laws that restricted freedoms or political independence among branches of government. During the early years of his administration, the South Korean economy boomed with annual growth rates over 10%, that later slowed in 1990 into a recession because of a real estate crash. Since the timing of the South Korean bubble also coincided with a period of opening in the Soviet bloc, Roh leveraged the power of the ROK's economy into developing economic ties with Eastern European states, especially the Soviet Union as mentioned above. These moves were intended to isolate North Korea from its Cold War allies and it accomplished this goal handily as Eastern bloc countries moved away from North Korea in favor of economic ties to their southern neighbor. By 1990, South Korean electoral patterns shifted leftward, resulting in a legislative majority of Roh's major opposition party, the Democratic Liberal Party, headed by Kim Young Sam. Although Kim's party lost legislative positions to the similarly leftist party of Kim Dae Jung, the critic of President Park Chung Hee and President Chun Doo-hwan, Kim Young Sam, managed to win the presidency (Seth 2011: 420-23).

Kim Young Sam increased the speed of Korea's transition, began by Roh Tae Woo, in part by removing high-ranking military officials with connections to the Presidents Park and Chun, while also curbing the domestic scope of the Korea's national security apparatus. However, he was unable to maintain his momentum. His plans to reduce the influence of government-supported conglomerates, or *chaebol*, were unsuccessful and his unwillingness to repeal the Cold War-era National Security Law further diminished his popularity as a reformer. This in turn caused him to successfully prosecute Roh Tae Woo and Chun Do-hwan for offenses

committed prior to the democratic transition to restore his sagging popularity. The political climate did not deter the South's economic fortunes with a GNP growth of 7% in 1996 and official South Korean entry into the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). However, the Asian Economic Crisis of 1997, which was exacerbated by uncontrolled corporate debt, led to a pullout of investments in East and Southeast Asia. This led to a collapse of the won, forcing South Korea to lobby the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a $57 billion dollar bailout package. Despite their success, the package was largest of any created at that point in history (Seth 2011: 467-68).

Amidst this backdrop, Kim Dae Jung, another opponent of Park and Chun, won election in a narrow vote. Kim Dae Jung managed to use the crisis to enact a number of reforms, including a restructured opening of the South Korean economy that reduced the influence of *chaebols*, allowed for foreign investment in the Korean stock market, and permitted foreign firms to own Korean ones. He also negotiated labor settlements that permitted companies to lay off workers. The effect of these neoliberal reforms were bitterly felt: unemployment increased from 2 to 8 percent in a country that predominantly featured a single breadwinner per household. However, these reforms allowed for a weakening of the won, which increased exports enough to allow South Korea to pay off the IMF loans more quickly than had been anticipated. Although South Korea suffered a brief downturn after the IMF removed some of its emergency funding, South Korea achieved several important economic milestones by 2006, including the $20,000 per capita income mark, which solidified its membership into the OECD. By 2008, South Korea became one of the largest holders of US debt (Seth 2011: 469-71).

In the arena of foreign policy, Kim Dae Jung's signature accomplishment was the Sunshine Policy, which led to a historic summit between him and Kim Jong-il in 2000, for which

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he was rewarded with a Nobel Prize. The key philosophy behind the policy, which offered aid to the North, was that instead of maintaining suspicious, acrimonious relations with the DPRK, it would better to engage with its historical enemy in a more open manner. This broke with long-standing ROK policy towards the DPRK. This strained U.S.-ROK relationship in 2001, with the Bush II Administration viewing the Sunshine Policy as incentivizing problematic behavior on North Korea's part. President Roh Moo-hyun, the successor of Kim Dae Jung, continued Kim's policy and rejected arguments from conservative voices that advocated conditional aid to North Korea based on the North improving its human rights record and reducing its military buildup along the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). Despite disagreements over North Korea, the South Korean government at that time remained supportive of the War on Terror and US foreign policy, although a definite generational gap was observed in public opinion polling (Seth 2011: 475-81).

The fallout from North Korea's 2006 nuclear test marked a shift in South Korean policy and picked up steam after the 2007 election of the conservative Lee Myung-bak to the presidency. He immediately announced an end to the Sunshine Policy and made South Korean aid contingent on North Korean movement on halting its nuclear program or increased human rights for North Korean citizens. This heavy-handed approach drew the ire of the North Korean elite, culminating in a series of nuclear and missile tests in 2009 and the sinking of the ROK naval vessel, *Cheonan*, and the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island in 2010. (BBC 2010a; BBC 2010b; Cha 2010: 272-73, 296).

Interestingly enough, this period of the worsening in North Korean fortunes did not correlate to an increase in military provocations, but rather marked a shift towards nuclear weapons development and threat of acquiring missiles to extract aid. Effectively, North Korea's

stance largely shifted from an offensive posture, that of military action in and outside of the peninsula, to a defensive minded posture that is based upon a nuclear deterrent. The provocations that did occur prior to the Six Party Talks in 2003 were more benign in nature and primarily took the form of naval border crossings over the Northern Limit Line (NLL) which the DPRK does not recognize (Cha 2013: 272-76; Fischer 2007).

This shift away from provocations towards nuclear development may be the result of two different factors. The South Korean government, especially during the late 1990s, became more willing to offer aid to North Korea, especially in the form of government-subsidized investment in industrial and tourist projects, such as the Kaesong Industrial Complex and the Kumgang Resort. These efforts generated cash for the North Korean government which it needed to offset the freezing of its overseas assets in order to obtain the goods that it used to maintain the support of its elites. As it had done during Sino-Soviet Split, North Korea was able to leverage policy differences between the US and ROK in the early and mid-2000s over how to engage it. Thus, the expanded use of military provocations would have largely been counterproductive by giving both countries a reason to unify against North Korean aid as they did after the election of Lee Myung-bak and the 2006 missile test.

Second, the foray into nuclear weapons development has resulted in large concessions from the United States, something that military provocations were never able to do. In the 1990s and 2000s, North Korea received increased aid, including the promise of light-water reactor technology and historically large food aid, from the United States as part of its negotiations to suspend its nuclear programs. Furthermore, the Chinese have been willing to maintain and, after 2006, increase their aid commitment to North Korea even in the face of international pressure not to do so. Effectively, not using the military for provocations in favor of nuclear weapons has

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yielded greater benefits and attention from larger powers that correlates to increased aid. Since North Korea is still depends upon aid for its survival, switching tactics to extract the maximum amount of aid makes strategic sense (Cha 2013: 292-93; Lankov 2014: 155-57).

Domestic

For North Korea, the 1990s is best remembered as a period of hastening decline. The fall of the Soviet Union severely damaged North Korea's already weakened economy as its largest patron shut off aid. As a sign of the times, Kim Il-Sung publicly admitted in 1994 that such problems existed to the North Korean public – an act that would have never occurred during his heyday. This precipitous decline marked a shift toward the development of nuclear weapons and the expansion of ballistic missile technology, one of the few sectors in which North Korea had a competitive, exportable product. Accelerating nuclear weapons research at Yongbyon drew increased pressure on the North to end its program, much of which came from the United States. The resulting crisis came to a head in 1994, which led to a negotiated settlement between North Korea and the United States which gave the DPRK "energy assistance, political normalization, and economic benefits" in exchange for halting and dismantling its nuclear program (Cha 2010: 253; Seth 2011: 439-40). In addition to the opening up its nuclear facilities for International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for inspection, the North also received aid in the form of light-water reactor technology needed for domestic nuclear energy production (Cha 2010: 253).

However, shortly after the US and North Korea reached a settlement, Kim Il-Sung died, which shocked the North Korea public. Although the transition between Kim Il-Sung and his son, Kim Jong-il, was smooth and Kim Jong-il had largely shared power prior to 1994, Kim Jong-il did not officially become the leader of North Korea until 1997 in order to follow a

Korean cultural mourning practice. In 1998, North Korea amended its constitution in a way that favored the military, including the decision to make the head of the National Defense Council also serve as the head of state. This shift was accompanied by "Military First" rhetoric, initiated by Kim Jong-il (McEachern 2010: 87; Seth 2011: 440-42).

In the same mourning period after Kim Il-Sung's death, North Korea was hit with a period of intense famine because of both extreme weather patterns and poor agricultural policies that went back to the Kim Il-Sung era. In particular, intense flooding wrecked North Korean crops and North Korean officials fought United Nations' certification requirements for food aid. Although some aid made it through the diplomatic impasse, up to a million North Koreans died from either starvation or infection brought about as the result of malnutrition. The party establishment largely felt that the introduction of market reforms or outside exposure would hasten the decline of the party, citing the dissolution of the Soviet bloc as an example of the dangers of cross-border trade and a market system (McEachern 2010: 72).

Basic necessity on behalf of non-party citizens trumped party ideology: the famine led to the creation of an entrepreneurial class of citizens who sold their wares, either procured from nearby China or manufactured on their own. Farmers sold a portion of their crops in open-air markets. This burgeoning class of risk-taking merchants ultimately were able to achieve wealth that had previously been available only to the Party-faithful. Quite simply, the advent of the growing black market weakened the state's control on social advancement at the time and eroded the public's trust in government. In years past, faith in the revolution provided a means for advancement and salvation in society. The famine broke this norm by allowing those who defied the regime the chance to advance within society. The state, out of practical necessity, permitted

the introduction of open markets to combat the lack of state's ability to provide basic necessities (McEachern 2010: 73-75).

Concurrently with the famine, North Korea amended its constitution in 1998 that permitted an increased prominence of the military and separation between the Korean Peoples' Army (KPA) and the Korean Workers' Party by eliminating the requirement for military officers to report to party elites. The military-first politics, which emphasize the importance of the military over civil concerns, continue to this day. Under this new system, the KPA enjoyed greater influence in state decision making, even in matters outside of the military context (Cha 2013: 91; McEachern 2010: 77-79).

By late 2008, Kim Jong-il's significant health issues forced the North Korean elites to unofficially prepare for his successor, who would naturally be part of the Kim family and one of Kim Jong-il's three sons. This problem was that the first son, who is believed to have been prepared for this very role, fell out of favor several years prior for a failed attempt at entering Japan for tourism in 2001. This forced the regime to quickly speed up the ascension of Kim Jong-un, the youngest son, by giving him key positions in military leadership roles, despite a lack of any known military experience prior to 2010. Following his father's death in 2011, his process of ascension ramped up through photo ops and other propaganda efforts, well after he had become the ruler of North Korea. In addition to the rushed propaganda efforts, the father also prepared for the eventual succession by setting up two regents, consisting of his sister and her four-star general husband, to help his son learn how to manage state affairs in 2009. In 2011, Kim Jong-il died and his son took power in his place, despite not having the prominence or prestigious positions that would make him the official heir apparent. This transitional period was where the power of Kim Jong-un was less than assured and thus the shelling of Yeonpyeong

Island and the sinking of the *Cheonnan* were likely part of a process designed to establish the credentials of the new leader towards the old guard (BBC 2010a; BBC 2010b; Cha 2013: 97-99; Lankov 2013: 132-36). Lankov (2013) postulates that this is more an accident of history than one of North Korean intent: Kim Jong-il believed that he had a three to seven year timeline to entrench his son an official role (136-37).

North Korean military provocations during the Kim Jong-il and Kim Jong-un era have taken place in periods of transitional leadership and less during times of national crisis or economic development. This suggests that, from a domestic standpoint, the provocations are highly correlated to changes in leadership, especially in 2010, and may be a method for North Korean policymakers to increase the profile of the new leader.

However, the severity of these provocations also appears linked to the amount of aid received: Kim Jong-il's provocations in the late 1990s and early 2000s, which occurs during the heyday of the Sunshine Policy, are far less severe than the ones undertaken in 2010 when South Korean development aid began to decline under conservative leadership. The development projects that were undertaken during this period provided a means for North Korea to rebuild from the crippling famine of the 1990s and maintain the support of its elites through the acquisition of hard currency. Severe military provocations could have disrupted the creation of this capital, which is primarily located within North Korea, at a time when it was sorely needed to prop up the regime in the aftermath of its worst internal crisis. During the crisis itself, North Korea moved away from provocations in order to focus its domestic conditions. Effectively, the worst provocations appear to occur when North Korea has little to lose from doing so, e.g. when aid flows are low, and are lessened during times of emergency management and recovery.

Individual

Although it is difficult to fully understand the mindset of Kim Jong-il and his son, Kim Jong-un, due to the closed nature of North Korea, it is important to note that there are several factors that may affect their decision-making processes in comparison to Kim Il-sung. Kim Jong-il took over North Korea during one of its worst crises and his own legitimacy derived from the actions of his father. He lacked the military bonafides that his father possessed and faced several coup attempts from when he was officially designated the successor of Kim Il-Sung in the 70s to two years before he took office. His decision to observe the traditional Korean mourning period may go beyond cultural considerations: he needed to cement his image with the public and with other elites. Likewise, the early crises of his tenure forced him to take a pragmatic path early while balancing the need to shore up a power base. His decision to focus on policies that moved away from socialist policies, but also increased the stature and power of the military, are sensible in this regard: they allowed him to tackle a national catastrophe while building support from the military. Lacking the charisma of his father, Kim Jong-il was forced to rely more on pragmatism to maintain power and control over the state. This put a constraining force on his ability to initiate policies since his authority was not absolute. As a result, his willingness to engage provocations needed to factor in the desires of his base, which likely played a role in both conflictual and cooperative behavior. The provocations in 1997 around the Northern Limit Line may have been undertaken to demonstrate his commitment to military strength in a manner that did not threaten the survival of the regime (Cha 2013: 95-96; Fischer 2007; McEachern 2010: 70-75).

Unlike his father, Kim Jong-un did not come into power when facing a national crisis. Instead, his larger concerns are believed to be his lack of credentials and tenuous stature within

elite circles. In particular, the 2010 provocations against Yeonpyeong Island and the *Cheonan* may be an attempt to further build his credentials since he visited the artillery sites that conducted the shelling. Further propaganda connects him to the 2009 missile tests, despite his lack of an official military position at the time (Cha 2013: 100-106). Cha (2013) notes that the newest Kim may also be facing elites who lack the perspective gained from living overseas: Kim Jong-il's generation of high level officials were able to travel to the Soviet bloc, whereas Kim Jong-un's generation saw the fall of that bloc as well as other friendly dictatorships in the Middle East (106). This lends credence to the view that he is presiding over a group of isolated elites who moderate or curb his ability to initiate reforms that would open the DPRK.

Effectively, Kim Jong-il and his son were forced to negotiate a domestic political scene that required them to curry favor with a bloc in order to maintain control of the country. It appears that both elected to place their trust in the DPRK military, evidenced by the independence granted to the military in the 1990s constitutional revision and the use of military force against civilian targets in the period immediately after Kim Jong-un's succession. Unlike their father, both leaders also face a difficult domestic situation that required them to focus on solving practical problems while balancing ideological constraints from other elites.

Analysis

Provocation Trends

Following the Korean War, North Korean military provocations slowly increased from 1958 to reaching a peak in 1967-70 with multiple high profile incidents that included the first attempt on Park Chung-hee's life, the seizure of the *USS Pueblo*, and 130 man commando operation on South Korea's eastern coast. The two years of 1967-68 also demonstrated a peak in infiltration operations: a total of 739 individuals were sent to South Korea in these two years or 20% of the 3,693 total number of infiltrators from 1954-1992. The following years, 1969-70, followed a similar pattern of high profile incidents including the hijacking of a South Korean airliner, an attack on US soldiers at the DMZ, the provision of asylum for the Japanese Red Army terrorist group, and the creation of an underground revolutionary party (Nanto 2003).

After a brief lull, the number of provocative acts reached a similar uptick from 1974-1979, which included the second attempt on Park Chung-hee's life, the Panmunjom Axe Incident in which North Korean soldiers attacked US and ROK soldiers removing a tree, along with several abductions and attempted abductions of South Korean citizens from locations overseas. Similar with the incidents of the previous period, there were several infiltration attempts although none were as large at the aforementioned operation, but were instead comprised of smaller squads who engaged in armed conflict with ROK authorities (Fischer 2007; Nanto 2003).

Infiltration operations continued well into the early 1980s although assassination attempts were largely unused until 1982-83, when North Korea attempted to assassinate Chun Doo-hwan three times during his official visits overseas in Canada and Myanmar. Of the three, only the Burmese caper came close to being successful and, despite failing to accomplish its primary

objective, killed 17 senior personnel and the ROK ambassador to Myanmar. The 1982 attempt in the Philippines was revealed two years later in a Canadian court case in which the plaintiffs, both Canadian, revealed that they were contracted by the DPRK to kill Chun Doo-hwan during his visit there. Despite the continued use of small infiltrations by the North, this early period established a theme of shifts to operations abroad in the 1980s (Fischer 2007).

Provocative actions resumed from 1986-88, although the tactics employed by the DPRK were largely reminiscent of those used from the 1974-79 and the 1982-83 periods, although there was a greater focus on South Korean civilian targets either for acts of terrorism and kidnapping abroad. The two high profile bombing attempts, one in 1986 and 1987, specifically targeted South Korean commercial air activities, specifically Gimpo Airport and a Boeing 707 operated by Korean Airlines. According to the testimony of a defector who nominally ran a DPRK-affiliated trading company in 1988, there was a worldwide directive to North Korean embassies to prevent the Seoul Olympics from occurring, suggesting that these attacks were part of a larger campaign to damage South Korean credibility overseas rather than to actually topple the state (Fischer 2007; Nanto 2003).

From 1989 to 1995, the provocations that occurred were limited mostly small-scale infiltrations, spying incidents, and attempted kidnappings and did not share the same scope the operations conducted in previous years. This trend changed in 1996-97 when North Korea carried out three crossings of the DMZ's military boundaries with well over one hundred personnel taking part. In addition to terrestrial border crossings, there were several naval vessel crossings on both the Republic of Korea's coasts, one of which was part of an infiltration attempt. In both years, the DPRK continued its policy of assassinations, one of a ROK diplomat in Russia and another of the nephew of Kim Jong-il's first wife. While the 1989-1995 period is

notable for its relative calm, this period does mark the beginning of North Korea's foray into nuclear weapons development (Nanto 2003).

While there were still border crossing incidents that included submersible vessels and attempted kidnappings in the following years from 1997 to 2000, increased emphasis was shifted towards focusing on missile development and fiery rhetoric. This pattern continued until 2001-2002 when North Korea significantly increased the number of naval incursions into South Korean territory, predominantly along the NLL, which they had unilaterally redrawn several years earlier and had historically disputed. At the same time, the North attempted move firearms and was caught selling SCUD missiles to Yemen in two smuggling incidents. In the following years, from 2003 to present, North Korea largely moved away from military-based provocations and instead focused on the development of nuclear weapons (Fischer 2007: Nanto 2003). The most notable provocations that occurred in the post-2002 period took place in 2010 with the sinking the *Cheonnan*, an ROK naval vessel, and the shelling of the civilian settlement on Yeongpyeong Island (*BBC* 2010a; *BBC* 2010b).

Hypothesis Analysis

Systemic:

Hypothesis 1: *If neighbors that it finds threatening to its security surround a state, it is more likely to engage in military provocations in an attempt to secure itself.*

Throughout its entire history, North Korea has directly bordered a single hostile state, South Korea, while sharing two borders with its largest benefactors, the USSR and China. Although there has been a significant US military presence in the ROK and in nearby Japan since the end of World War II, the Security Dilemma dynamic does not convincingly provide

explanatory power to the oscillating periods of military provocations specifically for three key reasons.

First, the most intense periods in the history of provocations occurred in periods when North Korea possessed a distinct developmental and military advantage against South Korea as described at length in Chapter III. Rather than engage in destabilizing provocations in times of perceived weakness, Kim Il-Sung made his boldest moves during the apex of North Korean strength and periods of historically high aid from both of its primary benefactors, the USSR and China. The calculus for provocative behavior stand in sharp contrast to the perception of self-weakness that exists in a security dilemma: North Korea embarked used these policies as a means to capitalize on its existing strengths by providing the spark for a popular revolution that would overwhelm the South, paving the way for a takeover by DPRK's military. Thus the dynamic, especially during the days of Kim Il-Sung, is the exact opposite: North Korea felt extraordinarily confident in its *own security* and sought to take advantage of its opponent's *insecurity*. Based on this paradigm alone, it safe to conclude that a security dilemma does not provide predictive power during the most intense periods of provocations (Fischer 2007; Nanto 2003; Seth 2011: 352-53).

Even in the 1980s, when the South clearly had surpassed the DPRK, the bombing campaigns and infiltrations were centered on the limited objective of preventing the 1988 Olympics from occurring, which would prove to be a significant loss of North Korean prestige. The emphasis of these attacks was not to demonstrate North Korean strength and capabilities, but rather to make the South appear to be an unstable country in the eyes of international community, incapable of safely hosting an event with the global renown like the Olympics. The event itself did not imminently threaten the North's territorial security, only its pride and desire

to portray itself as the true Korea to citizens on both sides of the DMZ (Fischer 2007; Lankov 2014: 31-33; Meyers 2010: 74-80; Nanto 2003).

During the era of Kim Jong-il and Kim Jong-un, there is a marked decrease in the scope of provocative behavior as defined by the operational definition that is limited to military and terrorist acts despite this being considered the period of increasing North Korean internal weakness from natural disasters and famine. Most of the incidents were limited to border crossings, especially naval ones that were fairly short. Most of the tactics used in this period other than the naval border crossings, such as overseas kidnappings and assassinations, generally correspond with those used a decade earlier and are far more limited in their scope and intensity. Instead, there is an observed shift towards achieving a nuclear deterrent and using the threat posed by nuclear weapons as a means of improving North Korea's bargaining position in Six Party Talks. While these acts rightfully cause alarm within US and ROK military commands, these actions are far more defensive in nature, e.g. do not threaten to topple the South Korean government, and have yet to spark a peninsular arms race. Moreover, the *Cheonnan* and Yeongpyeong Island correlate with a leadership transition period in North Korea to Kim Jong-un just as do the border crossings do with Kim Jong-il's buildup to becoming the official head of state three years after his father's passing (BBC 2010a; BBC 2010b; Cha 2013: 224-229, 253; Fischer 2007; McEachern 2010: 72; Seth 2011: 439-42).

For these three reasons, the security dilemma as a systemic level variable does not indicate explanatory power over North Korea's military provocations in both past and present. Rather, North Korea demonstrates a contrary mechanism for provocations: it attacks in times when it is assured of its own strength and South Korea's weakness. In times of weakness, it typically moves to a defensive position, e.g. nuclear development, for the purposes of deterring

an attack from outside and to increase its ability to demand concessions from the ROK and the US. In the moments in which it has attacked in times of perceived weakness, the objectives do not appear to be for the purposes of building up its own strength, but are far more limited in scope to removing its opponent's prestige on the world stage. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is rejected in its applicability to North Korean actions.

However, this is not to say that a security dilemma could not be used to the DPRK's behavior, especially with its pursuit into nuclear weapons development. If the development of missile technology was included as a form of military provocations, albeit in a defensive form. In such a circumstance, the pursuit of nuclear weapons would be correlated to the decline in North Korea's conventional military power and fear that an economically stronger South Korea could exploit its superiority in that capacity. Thus, the pursuit of nuclear weapons becomes a defensive hedge despite the fact that is considered highly provocative action against the ROK. This in turn could create the tension and buildup cycle as the South Korean military responds to a nuclear-armed DPRK.

Hypothesis 2: *if a state is a junior or client actor in a bipolar system, it is more likely to not engage in military provocations as a result of pressure from its superpower patron than when it is when it is an actor in a multipolar environment.*

For similar reasons to Hypothesis 1, the presence of a bipolar system does not appear to explain the behavior of North Korea and it appears that the opposite dynamic is actually in place. Even though North Korea has actually switched primary patron states with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, it still performs less conflictual behaviors, again using the definition of military provocations, in times of multi-polarity, reducing the validity of the hypothesis.

The peak of North Korean provocations occurs during the Cold War, a time of clear

bipolarity between the USSR and the US, and shows a downward trend as the world shifts into

the multi-polar environment of the present day. North Korea in its heyday as a prime recipient of

Soviet aid made multiple attempts to subvert and otherwise destabilize the region against both

US targets, namely the *USS Pueblo*, and South Korean targets, e.g. The Blue House. These

actions, in comparison with those undertaken from the 1990s to present, are far more egregious

and ambitious despite the fact that it was during that same period that North Korea reached the

apex of its economic and developmental might. Thus, the results indicate the opposite type of

paradigm as described in the hypothesis: North Korea engaged in highly escalatory military

behavior when it received the highest amounts of aid from its patron and engaged in less

provocative behavior in the multipolar environment where it receives aid that is a fraction of

what it originally was (Cha 2013: 122-24; Seth 2011: 340-43).

While Hypothesis 2 can be rejected for the reasons listed above, it is also important to

note that labelling North Korea as a client state of the USSR and China is not necessarily a valid

definition. Indeed the DPRK's economy is wholly dependent upon foreign aid and, of that

foreign aid, the most reliant on the beneficence of China and, prior to its dissolution, the Soviet

Union. Prior to the Korean War, the DPRK was quintessentially subservient to the USSR and, to

a slightly lesser extent, Mao's China to the point where it was occupied by Soviet troops and was

forced to heavily lobby both Stalin and Mao's for permission to conduct a military campaign

against the American-occupied ROK to reunify the peninsula (Jager 2013: 61-63; Seth 2011:

349-50).

However, North Korea also used its geostrategic position as a buffer state to achieve a

state of relative independence from both the USSR and China by playing its patron's interests

against one another in order to maximize both its level of independence from both powers and foreign aid in all forms. Effectively, North Korea pursued and continues to pursue a path that gave it the best of both worlds, the enormous gifts of superpower patronage without the interference and leverage that such assistance usually accompanies said patronage. Its historical success in leading itself down provide reason to reject North Korea as a strictly client state in general and rather as a quasi-independent recipient of foreign aid. Its growing independence from other countries, particularly during the time of Kim Il-Sung, is functionally better in explaining North Korea's actions than the Cold War client-patron state dynamic (Ahn 1987: 30-33; Cha 2013: 144-53; Lankov 2013: 11-21).

This seemingly paradoxical position of North Korean political independence and foreign aid dependence is noted in the literature (Cha 2013: 144-53; Lankov 2013: 11-21; Meyers 2010: 33). Meyers (2010) provides an alternative explanation based on a historical analysis of North Korean propaganda that provides a small window into which North Korea is willing to receive aid, yet is equally able to pursue an independent agenda from that of its patrons. He defines North Korea as being more in line with the traits of an ethno-nationalist state, as opposed to a particularly Communist one that defines itself as inherently being racially pure, yet vulnerable to the whims of the outside world (31-37). As a result, it is able to acknowledge the strength of outside powers, yet considers itself as an inherently exceptional entity in terms of its moral values than that of its benefactors. Essentially, it is willing to receive aid that is necessary for its own survival, even if that aid comes from a stronger yet morally repugnant state, because the act of doing so does not harm its own purity. Furthermore, its innate purity of it being and intent provides a justification for its own actions: they become right due to the goodness of the Korean people who perform them with only the best intentions of reunifying the peninsula. The DPRK is

willing to acknowledge its position vis-à-vis other nations, but also able to justify its provocative actions because those actions are aimed at protecting the Korean people as a whole from the outside world (57, 74-85).

Thus, Hypothesis 2 is rejected for two key reasons. First, North Korea's behavior does not fit the expected behavior of a client-state in that the North engaged in more escalatory behavior when it received the most amount of aid and performed fewer provocations during periods when it was a recipient of substantially less aid. Furthermore, North Korea may not be a truly client state because of its willingness to pursue independence and foreign aid simultaneously. An alternate definition that the DPRK is not as much a client as it is an ethno-nationalist may work better in explaining its historical behavior with its military provocations (Cha 2013: 122-24; Meyers 2010: 37; Seth 2011: 420).

Domestic:

Hypothesis 3: *we expect a state to engage in military provocations towards other states that do not share a common cultural or civilization heritage with it and cooperative behavior towards countries in which those links were historically strong.*

Hypothesis 4: *we expect a state to not engage in military provocations towards another state with whom it shares economic ties.*

The evidence for the related Hypotheses 3 and 4 is decidedly mixed, although there may be room to evaluate this hypothesis as true depending on what type of civilizational type is used, particularly one with less of the long-term historical emphasis employed by Huntington in favor of one with greater a political emphasis. Since North Korea engages in both conflictual and

cooperative behavior towards states in which it shares civilizational ties, allowing for alternative definitions may give more explanatory power for this hypothesis.

First, it is important to note that the overwhelming majority of North Korean military provocations described in the works of Nanto (2003), Fischer (2007), and the BBC (2010a; 2010b) are directed towards South Korea, the state in which it shares the greatest amount of historical and civilizational ties. No other country in the world comes close to having the same linguistic, cultural, and geographic influences that North Korea and South Korea share, especially due to the fact that both were historically a single entity until the end of World War II. In spite of this, the trends and behaviors identified from the sources that document military provocations from North Korea towards the South are clearly in opposition to a Huntingtonian assumption that shared civilization results in greater cooperative behavior. In fact, it provides evidence in support of the opposite position, that North Korea engages in conflictual behavior with the states that it shares the greatest civilizational ties with (Huntington 1993; Jager 2013: 13-14; Seth 2011: 305-313).

When using Huntington's macroscopic definition of civilization that places North Korea under the Confucian cleavage, the results are far less conclusive than if one limits the scope to Korean civilization. The DPRK does not engage in military provocations against China despite vicissitudes in friendly and antagonistic relations in both countries' diplomatic history. It largely views other nations in the Confucian sphere, particularly Southeast Asian nations who were part of the Communist bloc, as a key part of its strategy for establishing legitimacy against South Korea and has established relations with Association of Southeast Asian Nations members outside of the aforementioned bloc. Seemingly, North Korea tends to enjoy peaceful relationships with the majority of Confucian civilization and especially close relationship in

recent years with that civilization's center, China (Chung 1987: 197-99; Huntington 1993; Kim 1987: 363-65; Kim 2011: 150-53).

While South Korea is the prime exception to this hypothesis, Japan is also another example of where North Korea engages in conflictual behavior, albeit to a lesser scale, with a non-Confucian state according to Huntington's (1993) definition. Like South Korea, Japan and North Korea do not recognize each other formally although there was a period of warming relations from the 1970s the late 1980s with the intent of expanding economic ties. However, the admission that North Korea had engaged in abductions of Japanese citizens in 2002 in a meeting between Kim Jong-il and Junichiro Koizumi led to a diplomatic cooling as tensions over the abductee issue from the Japanese public forced Japan to back out of agreements with North Korea and made the issue a key wedge in negotiations designed to reestablish ties. In addition to the abduction issue, North Korea engaged in territorial incursions to Japan using its navy, which fit the definition of military provocations. Since North Korea also has conflictual relations with another Confucian state, South Korea, it does not necessarily hold that sharing a civilizational history specifically that of the Confucian civilization is necessarily true, although there is evidence for it given Sino-North Korean and Japanese-North Korean relations (Cha 2013: 380-85; Kim 2011: 166-70; Nanto 2003; Shin 1987: 284-87).

Given the information, it may be useful to define civilization in a slightly more political context, and then the foreign policy trends that have been identified in North Korea begin to fit better than using the Huntington definition. If there were a defined Communist civilization that included the USSR, the Warsaw Pact, China, and other nations using a variant of the Communist model, then the civilizational model would hold true. The strongest and most long-lasting relations that North Korea has had, with largely an absence of provocations, are countries within

the Communist world, especially its two largest entities, China and the Soviet Union. From its beginning, it has had stable relationship with the Eastern European bloc and later expanded its diplomatic operations to Africa and Southeast Asia as it attempted to show its legitimacy on the world stage over South Korea, which it ultimately lost after the Seoul Olympic Games in 1988. It is worth noting that the DPRK's movement outside of the Soviet sphere coincides with a larger period of Soviet engagement in the outside world, indicating that it followed the path of its patron state in its development of foreign ties outside of the Korean peninsula, albeit with a more localized goal related to the inter-Korean rivalry. Thus, it is safe to assume, regardless of whether one considers North Korea to be a Communist state, that it would be a member of a Communist civilization that largely lasted until the Soviet collapse 1990s and it enjoyed generally good relations with other Communist states with different models despite the lack of historical links with many of those countries (Fischer 2007; Lankov 2013: 31; Kim 1987: 363-65; Kim 2011: 103; Nanto 2003; Seth 2011: 349-50).

The benefit of using this conception of a civilization is that North Korean behavior historically would largely fit the hypothesis with this alternative definition. South Korea, Japan, and the US would of a Capitalist civilization and thus more conflictual behavior towards these states is expected as a result of their political differences in civilization. This mirrors the actual data rather well: the worst North Korean provocations occurred prior to periods of rapprochement between Communist and Capitalist spheres and largely declined in intensity over time using this thesis' operational definition of conflictual behavior. Effectively, the alternative definition of civilization would show support for the hypothesis more cleanly than Huntington's one since two of the states in which North Korea has engaged in such behavior with are outside of the civilizational confines (Fischer 2007; Nanto 2003; Seth 2011: 347-49; Shin 1987: 284-87)

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However, Huntington's position was designed to provide a model for conflict in the post-Cold War period that would demonstrate the fault lines of conflict outside of what he felt were ideological in nature, not civilizational. Thus, there is a strong argument that would put the alternative definition into question by stating that it is placing a civilizational label on an ideological conflict. In fact, regardless of whether or not the Communist versus Capitalist sphere is defined as ideological or civilizational in nature, the results of North Korean would be largely same since the contours of each side would not change in either circumstance (Huntington 1993; Fischer 2007).

Hypothesis 4, which is designed to counter Huntington essentially eliminates this definitional problem, but also runs into the issue of negotiating the South Korea question (Ajami 1993; Deutsch et al. 1957; Russett and Oneal 2001: 130). The data supports this hypothesis in the Kim Il-Sung era, but is clearly mixed during the Kim Jong-il and Kim Jong-un eras where there is greater connectedness between the two Koreas from changes in North Korea's economic and leadership conditions described in the historical overview chapters. Dependency theory, in which a smaller economy resists a larger economy through the use military disputes due to perceived unfair treatment in trade, may explain North Korea's actions in the post-Kim Il-Sung era. Despite the opening of trade relations between North Korea and South Korea, military provocations against the South have continued as the South's economy and level of development continues to increase, while North Korea moves in the opposite direction in both fronts. (dos Santos 1970; Mearsheimer 1992; Rubinson 1976; Russett and ONeal 2001: 132).

The height of North Korean military provocations in the late 1960s and 1970s occur well before the 1997 softening of inter-Korean relations under the Sunshine Policy of Kim Dae Jung, which essentially brought economic assistance to the North from the South. Prior to this period,

the two Koreas regarded each other with hostility, especially towards the end of the Cold War when the South began to overtake the North in terms of its economic development. At the same time, North Korea never used provocative actions against the USSR or China despite ideological differences and conflicts over policy and shared close economic relations with the two Communist powers through foreign aid. This suggests that Hypothesis 6 is largely true during the Kim Il-Sung era since it effectively employed a cooperative strategy with the two states who it had the closest and most significant economic ties while engaging in the absolute worst of its conflictual behavior against the state in which it had no such ties and a significantly worse relationship (Fischer 2007; Lankov 2013: 11-21; Seth 2011: 475-81).

Moreover, in the Kim Jong-il and Kim Jong-un era, in which the Sunshine Policy became a significant cornerstone between the DPRK and the ROK, military provocations still occurred, albeit to a lesser extent and severity as to those undertaken in the days of Kim Il-Sung. The worst of these provocations, the sinking of the *Cheonnan* and the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island, took place well after the cessation of the Sunshine policy and an increasingly monumental impasse over nuclear weapons development in North Korea. When looked considered in isolation, this does lend support for Ajami's idea that economic fault lines would play a larger role in determining conflict rather than a civilizational explanation. Indeed, the periods of the lowest amount of conflict do take place when South Korea made serious investments into North Korea and conflictual behavior resumed after those investments were decreased under a more conservative leadership party in the Blue House (Ajami 1993; Cha 2013: 272-73, 296; Seth 2011: 475-81).

However, the economic ties hypothesis loses its explanatory power when looked at from a long-term context of North Korea's use of military provocations. As mentioned in the previous

section, the use of provocations actually declined after the 1970s as operations became more localized and focused on limited objectives rather than a grand strategy to start a popular revolution against the South Korean government and the most egregious incidents of 2010 are outliers in this overall trend. Thus, the onset of economic ties between North Korea and South Korea as an explanatory factor may in fact be spurious in nature in that it occurs during a general period of decline in the use of provocative behavior as a form of policy. Furthermore, the absence of this behavior does not necessarily indicate that North Korea stopped acting hostile towards South Korea or refused to engage in antagonistic behaviors towards its neighbor. Instead, this period also marks the rise in a shift away from provocations in favor of the threat of nuclear weapons development, which is still highly threatening to South Korea without meeting the definition of provocative actions. Therefore, there is a distinct possibility that North Korea did not really change with the advent of economic ties, but rather behaved in such a way that is consistent with historical trends and policy shifts of that time (Cha 2013: 272-73; Lankov 2013: 145-50; Fischer 2007; Nanto 2003).

In conclusion, there is evidence that Hypothesis 3 and Hypothesis 4 do hold a modicum of explanatory power in that they hold true for certain periods of time, although Hypothesis 5 may require an alternative definition of civilization to hold true, which runs the risk of redefining the conflict into ideological terms. Hypothesis 6 appears true in the short-term analysis of each of the regimes, but comes into question when considering the long-term trends, which move in a downward, and the policy shifts that occurred during the same period. As a result, the efficacy of these hypotheses is called into question and are inconclusive.

Hypothesis 7: *if a state faces internal insecurity, then they are more likely to engage in military provocations.*

Like Hypothesis 4, this hypothesis is not necessarily supported by the data when examined from a short-term perspective, as there is only one known case of severe domestic insecurity in the form of food shortages within North Korea during the 1990s. As such, it is difficult to conclude if this variable is truly explanatory since it coincided with a period of transitional leadership between Kim Il-Sung and Kim Jong-il. However, the inconclusiveness of this variable at the domestic level of analysis does not eliminate the possibility of it becoming an explanatory variable at the individual level of analysis in the following section.

North Korean society for much of its history has remained fairly stable and generally has not experienced serious internal threats to the ability of any given Kim regime to maintain its political control in the post-Korean War era. The only real instance in which it faced such a challenge comes in the famine of 1994 following the death of Kim Il-Sung, which lasted until 1999. By conservative estimates, the deaths that resulted from the famine are roughly 2.5% of North Korea's population at that time, which does not including other effects such as malnourishment, and the state's food distribution apparatus was completely shut down, squeezing lower level bureaucrats and workers. While there was a significant string of provocations in 1997 with border crossings and weapons sales overseas, North Korea largely did not use provocations during this period. Instead, the state relaxed certain rules that allowed for the creation of black markets, informally tolerated noncompliance of state regulations, and bribery of officials became common. Instead of rallying around the flag, North Korean elites essentially looked the other way rather than increase forms of oppression and control. Even with the context of those provocations, they do not appear to be directed at shoring up political support but rather emphasizing their commitment to redrawing the Northern Limit Line and perhaps also the official transition of Kim Jong-il as a successor. As it stands, North Korea does

not appear to use provocations to divert public attention away from domestic problems, but rather engages in a strategy of tolerance that did not threaten the regime's ability to maintain effective political control (Cha 2013: 124-29; Fischer 2007; Lankov 2014: 78-94; McEachern 2010: 72-75).

However, it is important to note that this variable only concerns itself with problems at the domestic level of analysis, meaning that the issue that North Korea is responding to is wide enough in scope to be noticeable for most of the country. The inconclusiveness of this variable at this level of analysis does not mean that it cannot drive decision-making at the individual level. Certainly, all three leaders of the Kim dynasty may make decisions to engage in provocative behavior when they perceive *themselves*, not the country as a whole, to be subject to insecurity with regard to their position.

In conclusion, Hypothesis 7 is rejected because it does not comport with the data since there is only one instance of severe provocations in this period in 1997 that does not appear to be directly related to the famine. Instead, there is ample evidence to suggest that North Korea opted to loosen state controls in certain areas, especially ones conducive to trade, rather than increase patriotic fervor among its citizens.

Individual:

Hypothesis 5*: if a country's leader fits the mold of a constraint challenger, he or she will be more willing to use military provocations in their foreign policy decisions than a constraint respecter, regardless of regime type, in managing crises.*

Within the three regimes, there is only one North Korean leader who fully embodies the characteristics of a constraint-challenger based on Keller's (2005) traits of task emphasis, need

for power, distrust, and nationalism. His son, Kim Jong-il, while sharing certain similarities does not demonstrate the traits in such a way that clearly marks him as a constraint-challenger. Given the lack of data on Kim Jong-un in comparison to his father and grandfather, this hypothesis will not include the current leader of North Korea as an object of analysis. Hypothesis 5 is supported by the historical records of both leaders.

Kim Il-Sung clearly matches the profile of a constraint-challenger. Several policies undertaken within his regime clearly indicate a task-emphasis and a leader who was highly distrustful of those outside of his inner circle, regardless of their ability and willingness to threaten him. Particular evidence of this is derived from the extensive purges his regime carried out in its early years, before and after the Korean War. While certain elements of those purged were seen as having ties to undesirable elements to the North's regime or had directly challenged Kim's authority, the Dear Leader also extensively purged important figures within the Korean Communist circles who had been active in the peninsula well before Kim Il-Sung came into power. Certain victims, who held leadership positions in the Korean Worker's Party, did not directly challenge Kim Il-Sung's power and, in one instance, only filled a ceremonial role. In a telling statistic, only two members of the original Politburo, including Kim Il-Sung, of 1949 died of natural causes, and another two died at the hands of South Korean and American forces. The remaining six of the ten-member politburo were purged at the behest of Kim Il-Sung. Those replaced in the wake of the purges were partisans with whom he fought with and were more willing to carry out his orders without issue. While his regime remained suspicious and hostile of the ROK and the US, his regime showed distrust at reformist elements, manifested in a series of diplomatic barbs, within China and the Soviet Union, even when the North received the greatest amount of foreign aid from both countries. It was only towards the end of his life in 1994 in

which his regime moved to negotiate an agreement with the United States over nuclear weapons development. The nationalism of Kim Il-Sung is also well supported: Kim Il-Sung intentionally moved his regime away from being part of the Communist sphere in favor of ethno-nationalist Korean rhetoric that established himself as the ultimate embodiment of Korean-ness both in internal propaganda and propaganda intended for South Korean consumption. He demonstrates the characteristics of a constraint-challenger in their fullest as leader who intentionally stamped out any form of dissent, solidified his power into a form of total control, distrusted those who did match his background, and promoted nationalist rhetoric aimed at Korean peoples (Cha 2013: 252-253; Lankov 2014: 12-18; Keller 2005; Meyers 2010: 31-37; Nanto 2003; Seth 2011: 344-51, 475).

Unlike his father, Kim Jong-il, showed less in common with the characteristics that designate a leader as a constraint-challenger. Although he was shown in North Korean propaganda in much the same light as his father, a paragon and protector of the inherent purity of the Korean people. He has shown to be more willing to engage with other powers, including those who are considered to be a threat, and negotiate as evidenced by North Korean participation in the Six Party Talks and other high-level bilateral talks in the mid-2000s. Despite raising the status of the military in the new constitution, he opted for a system that divided and ruled the two major factions within North Korean elite spheres, the military and the Korean Workers' Party, which stands in stark opposition to the heavily centralized system that his father ruled over where the party became the superior organ of governance. His style of leadership, which emphasized the sharing of responsibility and governance, is not consistent with the need for power in the way his father's was. In summary, while he does share certain characteristics of

his father, he does not fit the mold of a constraint challenger (Cha 2013: 255-89; Lankov 23-26; Kim 2006: 49, 91-99; Keller 2005; McEachern 2010: 72-75; Meyers 2010: 114-17).

The timeline of provocations shows that the greatest number of provocations in terms of severity and boldness occurred under the leadership of Kim Il-Sung and lessening of provocations under Kim Jong-il, who does not fit within that mold. The most brazen attempts at toppling the South Korean regime or destabilizing it occur under Kim Il-Sung's reign, such as the seizure of the USS Pueblo and the attack on the Blue House. Even in the 1980s, where the focus shifted away from igniting a popular revolution into preventing South Korea from overtaking North Korea in international prestige, the most blatant assassination and bombing attempts occurred, despite an overall decrease in the number of provocations that occurred. Comparatively, under his son's leadership, the number of military provocations decreased in severity and potential for harm to South Korean civilians, with the worst of provocations occurring early in his regime, and instead pursued missile development. Effectively, the constraint-challenger demonstrated a greater likelihood of engaging in military provocations than that of the non-constraint-challenger, thereby meeting the expected results of the hypothesis. As a result of the evidence provided, Hypothesis 5 has been demonstrated to be true within two profiles of North Korean leaders (Fischer 2007; Nanto 2003; Seth 2011: 352-53).

Hypotheses 6: *if a leader of a country perceives himself or herself to be within the domain of losses, then that leader will be more like to engage in risk-acceptant military provocations in order to maintain the status quo.*

There is ample evidence to suggest that Hypothesis 6 holds true at the individual level across all three leaders in each of their regimes. It is important to note that the conditions that

precipitated the military provocations for Kim Jong-il and Kim Jong-un are similar, yet the two are highly different in their historical context than the instance in which Kim Il-Sung followed a prospect theory-based decision-making style. In all three instances of provocations used, the objectives of the action were limited in scope to influence specific events and the tactic was discontinued once the event reached its conclusion.

For Kim Il-Sung, the successful completion of the 1988 Seoul Olympics placed the claims that his regime regarding its economic development vis-à-vis the South, a key underpinning of the propaganda claims that it used to establish its legitimacy, and his battle for legitimacy in the eyes of Korean people within the peninsula. Until that period, North Korea had attained a level of development well above South Korea's despite the devastation of its industry following the Korean War. The economic policies than began under Park Chung Hee, which were continued by his successors, began to shift the dynamic in favor of South Korea as the Miracle on the Han quickly propelled its economic growth. Both countries competed for global recognition outside of their traditional allies in order to make themselves appear to be more legitimate in the eyes of their domestic audiences, the audiences of the other country, and international ones. Seoul hosting the Olympics would be a deathblow to North Korea in terms of maintaining its historical prestige and the legacy of Kim Il-Sung. As a result, there was a serious of assassination attempts on President Chun Doo-Hwan overseas in addition to bombings of a Korean airliner and Gimpo Airport in Seoul. Each of these events were designed for the purpose of preventing South Korea from hosting the Olympics by creating a perception that South Korea was unsafe and unstable. After the conclusion of the Olympics, North Korea generally abandoned these tactics for the rest of Kim Il-Sung's regime. Thus, the evidence suggests that Kim Il-Sung was willing to engage in provocative behavior when he perceived himself to be in

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the domain of losses, e.g. losing prestige to South Korea on the world stage, and was willing to use military provocations in order to prevent further losses (Fischer 2007; Heo and Roehrig 2010: 78-84; Lankov 2013: 31; Kim 1987: 363-65; Kim 2011: 103; McEachern 2010: 58; Nanto 2003; Seth 2011: 349-67).

Kim Jong-il and Kim Jong-un both employed military provocations in the transitional period in the buildup and consolidation of official state power. In 1997, Kim Jong-il officially came into power after completing a traditional Korean mourning period of three years after his father's death in 1994 and did not enjoy the same level of institutional control that his father had through the early elimination of political rivals with Soviet backing. Kim Jong-un came into power through a rushed succession process due to his father's death forcing the need to hoist him into an authority position without the same amount of time and preparation that his father had prior to the grandfather's death. Both came in during a time of relative weakness, Kim Jong-un lacked the credentials and training needed to establish dominance while his father was forced to establish a power base and manage a domestic crisis. In both instances of transition in 1997 and 2010, the North Korean navy engaged in military provocations, one that amounted to a series of overt and covert border crossings and another that employed direct military force against ROK targets. Given the similarity in the tactics employed in each instance and the timing despite differences in their overall severity, it does suggest that both leaders are willing to employ military provocations in moments when they perceive themselves to be the weakest and vulnerable to challenges in leadership (Cha 2013: 95-96, 106; Lankov 2013: 10-15; McEachern 2010: 70-75),

Given that this trend had been observed in the actions of all three leaders, it is reasonable to conclude that Hypothesis 6 holds at the individual level despite not being as conclusive at the

domestic level. Although the circumstances shifted between Kim Il-Sung and his successors, there is a clear correlation between military provocations to meet short-term objectives in order to move out of the domain of losses. In each instance, the provocations stopped after the event, either a leadership transition or the Olympics, concluded, lending credence that these acts were carried out for a limited objective.

Conclusions

Findings and Summary

Table of Results							
Level of Analysis	*Systemic*		*Domestic*			*Individual*	
Hypothesis Number	H1	H2	H3	H4	H7	H5	H6
Result	Rejected	Rejected	Mixed	Mixed	Rejected	Accepted	Accepted

As discussed in the Analysis chapter, it has been demonstrated that the systemic level hypotheses, which are based on theories developed with historical conditions in Europe prior to World War I and in the Cold War. Effectively, North Korea did not behave in the manner expected of a client state nor in the trends of a multipolar environment despite its heavy reliance on foreign aid for institutional stability. Instead of acting like junior partner who followed the preferences of its senior partners, North Korea behaved along the lines of a rational actor who attacked in times of perceived strength against South Korea in both the Korean War and in future provocations. It should be understood that strength in this case indicates a higher level of economic development than the ROK as well as a high level of autonomy from its patron states as a result of pitting those states against one another. Even though the DPRK is heavily reliant on others for its survival, in the instances of strength, it had a high degree of confidence in being able to receive future aid due to its geostrategic position. Alternatively, the attacks may be a function of the leadership style at the time that fit the mold of a constraint challenger.

At the domestic level, it is unclear whether or not civilizational or economic demonstrate explanatory power over the North Korean provocative military behavior. Prospect theory, defined at both the individual and domestic levels, resulted in different outcomes at each respective level of analysis: the domestic level hypothesis was rejected and the individual level variable was accepted. Like prospect theory, the constraint-challenger hypothesis at the individual level was also accepted based on historical evidence.

At the systemic level, there are two possible explanations for why North Korea defied trends that well established and respected within International Relations theory. First, North Korea was leverage its position as a necessary hedge within the Sino-Soviet Split in such a way that it was able to continually receive Chinese and Soviet aid without being subject to heavy interference in its internal affairs. Alternatively, the elements of the early North Korean Communist movement that were more aligned towards the Soviet and Sino spheres instead of the personality cult of Kim Il-Sung were removed at such early stage in North Korean development that such interference simply could not occur. As a result of either explanation or a combination thereof, North Korea was able to achieve a level of independence that permitted it to pursue its own goals, which it laid out from the Korean War as the reunification of the peninsula. As a result, it may have been less restrained in its ability to pursue that objective, when compared to other states in Eastern Europe.

Second, North Korea's behavior may not be in line with that of a Communist bloc state due to the fact that over time, it did not necessarily pursue goals in line with expanding the revolution as a whole, but rather on concerns of the Korean peninsula and its peoples, who had been historically united under a single political entity. That is to say, that North Korea's desire to reestablish this type of a unified ethnic state was at the forefront of its concerns: any commitment

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to ideology or the revolution may have been more aimed at aid-giving foreign audiences rather than a reflection of its objectives. Therefore, North Korea's focus may lie in limited goals to the peninsula and its policy actions better fit to these localized objectives rather than the expansion of the revolution outside of the peninsula. If this were the case, it is reasonable to expect that North Korea would not fit neatly into Cold War assumptions.

For the domestic level, the mixed results lie at a definitional level since defining a Communist civilization would largely run into the issue of conflating ideological agreement among nations into a broader definition. The economic hypothesis is also strange in that North Korea has historically not engaged in military provocations against its benefactors prior to the end of the Cold War, it has engaged in such behaviors with the South, who has provided vital economic and humanitarian support to North Korea after the Soviet Union collapsed.

The general trend is that North Korea engages in cooperative behavior with states whom it shares a relatively positive or neutral history and conflictual behavior with states that it has had an antagonistic relationship in the past, namely the United States, South Korea, and Japan. While it is natural for North Korea to not engage in military provocations against its historical benefactors, China and Russia, the fact that its provocative behavior does not extend to other countries in East and Southeast Asia, despite its willingness to use those countries for operations against South Korea, speaks to the efficacy of an explanation based on enduring rivalries. There are few disputes between North Korea and these nations, even if those nations were allied with the United States, as was the case for the Philippines and Canada. Those nations do not heavily contribute to the schism between the two Koreas, which North Korea has sought to rectify for much of its existence and therefore do not merit the attention and effort given their geographic

distance from the peninsula. Along the same lines, North Korea's military may not have the capability to actually engage in such provocations given their state of economic decline.

For the individual level of analysis, North Korean behavior can be explained in part by individual level factors such as a prospect theory and the constraint-challenger model. Despite the worst of the provocations occurring at time of strength, North Korea has used provocations at times when the leader feels a loss of prestige or insecurity within their own position given the provocations that occurred prior to the Seoul Olympics in 1988 and during transitional periods in 1997 and 2010. Likewise, the earlier period of provocations is explained the constraint-challenging nature of Kim Il-Sung, who engaged in provocative actions for much of his tenure while his son took a different approach. This lends credence to the idea that North Korea may be more leadership driven in nature, which would make sense given the purges that resulted in establishment of political leadership with stronger ties to the Kim family than ideological adherence to external political philosophies.

In conclusion, the most explanatory parts of North Korean provocations occur at the individual level of analysis rather than the domestic and systemic levels as demonstrated in the previous chapter. The rejection or inconclusiveness of the hypotheses in those levels of analysis may indicate that North Korea is heavily focused on goals that are limited to itself and South Korea rather than global or civilizational concerns. The results demonstrate that North Korea is a heavily leadership-driven state and its decision-making calculus likely is driven by considerations that are held by its elite.

Areas for Improvement and Future Research

There are several areas in which this thesis can be improved upon and there weaknesses to the approach taken. These are areas of improvement fill into two categories of definitional and data. As a result of these weaknesses, the conclusions made herein are called into question and should be further reexamined in the future with a greater rigor in its experimental design.

The definitional weakness of this thesis is that it does not include nuclearization as a form of provocations, and, as a result, makes no effort to explain the casual factors beyond this policy shift within the last twenty years with the declining use of provocations in favor of nuclear weapons development. For policymakers, North Korean nuclearization and the expansion of its missile technologies is naturally a key area of concern because of the threat that such weapons possess and its ability to shift the balance of power away from South Korea. The decision not to include these actions as part of its military provocations limits the definition to the conventional use of arms that North Korea is shifting away from. Furthermore, it is likely that South Korean and American authorities would consider actions relating to nuclear tests as being inherently provocative in nature, making the thesis' operational definition of provocation more limiting than what it would be considered in a practical sense to outside observers.

However, the pursuit of nuclear weapons would likely be considered a defensive action from the perspective of North Korean planners who need to factor in the degradation of their weaponry and resources when formulating a defensive strategy against South Korea. Nuclear arms may be considered an ideal deterrent since North Korea can develop them internally and, upon completion, will remain a persistent defensive measure against South Korea. For these reasons, nuclearization is not considered a provocative behavior since the perspective of North Korean leadership is the primary focus. That being said, future research that incorporates the perspective of both Koreas in the process would improve the quality of the final product.

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Likewise, the data used in this thesis is largely incomplete due to the secretive nature of North Korea and the subject of study. North Korea is not a country that is open about its internal operations; its leaders and elites do not give unscripted interviews to the press or write biographies that are not a form of propaganda. As a result, most of this analysis is indirect and is based on the work of leading historians in the field of North Korean relations and unclassified information provided by high-ranking defectors. As a result, it is difficult to say with complete certainty what was the thought process of North Korea's leaders, especially since two of them are no longer among the living. Second, this data set makes extensive use of reports that slanted to a US audience and are unclassified or declassified and there is no information on the authors' Korean language abilities. Given the shared language and proximity of South Korea to North Korea, there may also have been historical provocations that were highly important to inter-Korean relations, which may not be accounted for. Also, there may have been events, especially in the near present that are classified, but are highly relevant to the analysis performed in the thesis. Due to the incompleteness of the data, it is likely that additional information would change some of the conclusions.

As a result, future inquiries into North Korea from a historical or international relations perspective should include some form of discussion of the North Korean paradigm shift away from conventional military forces and the difficult that comes with discussing actions undertaken by North Korea due to the dearth of information as a result of the state's closed nature. Enhancing the practical quality and applicability of further studies in the future demands improvement within these areas.

The course of my research also found that North Korea might act according to ideological reasons rather than overtly cultural or civilizational ones. This finding is useful in the future

study of North Korean behavior even outside of the context of overtly hostile military actions. If North Korea acts according to a set of beliefs, possessing a deeper understanding of these convictions is imperative in predicting how they are likely to respond. Since North Korea also appears to be highly driven by its leadership, it may also be useful to disaggregate the profile of a constraint challenger to see which aspects of that profile drive the leader's actions vis-à-vis other parts, e.g. the role of nationalism versus the need for power. From there, it would be highly useful to see how much the predictive aspects apply to non-constraint challenging leaders to determine if these traits are passed across generations of leadership.

Implications

The study identified that North Korea has largely shifted away from the use of military provocations by conventional means, or non-nuclear ones, from the 1970s onward. This trend, which also correlates towards the end of Kim Il-Sung's life and the decline of North Korean power and strength vis-à-vis South Korea, is worth noting because it suggests that the shift towards indigenous missile development is largely permanent for the foreseeable future and that military provocations are a secondary means of action. Therefore, policymakers should be aware that North Korea may see the expansion of its missile technology as a defensive mechanism, since it has used its military in times of strength with the intent to overcome the South Korean government whereas it has pursued the former as the declines in its economic fortunes became permanent.

Furthermore, this thesis also found that North Korea, at least in the cases of Kim Jong-il and Kim Il-Sung, are largely leadership driven from the success of the individual level variables, despite the differences in their styles as noted in the analysis section. While this is logical given

Kim Il-Sung's longevity of reign, his removal real and perceived enemies early in his career, and his support from younger members of the Korean Workers' Party and the military following the Korean War. His son, Kim Jong-il, gained power through success as a bureaucrat in the eyes of his father's partisan comrades that held elite positions and was more willing to delegate authority to others that allowed him to distance himself from the policy failures that came through the famine of the 1990s. The model of maintaining power in North Korea appears to have a strong influence on early successes, military or otherwise, and this may be a motivating factor for Kim Jong-un, especially in the present, which is only a few years removed from his official succession. Unlike his father and grandfather, he did not have the benefit of time to build himself up and may need some form of success against South Korea and the United States to establish a power base. Given the shift toward nuclearization outlined in previous paragraphs and sections, he may pursue these weapons to build success since it is an area, unlike military provocations, where North Korea has had more success in negotiating with larger powers. It is therefore reasonable to expect future provocations to be limited in nature in that they will be tied to specific conditions within North Korea or aligned with a particular policy issue that is important around the time of provocation.

The final implication of this that North Korea abandoned the policy of trying to actively reunify the peninsula and has shifted to more protective measures as it has been overtaken by South Korea in terms of its development and shifted away towards defensive measures, evidenced by the movement away from military provocations. It appears that the belief in the eventuality of reunification under North Korean leadership, a view held by Kim Il-Sung, has largely moved into an ideal rather than a basis on which to formulate policy. Instead, the regime seems focused more on its own survival and has largely been successful in that regard despite the

loss of vital economic aid from the end of the Cold War. Policymakers should realize that making moves that threaten the survival of North Korean elites will be taken with the utmost seriousness. Initiating any form of reunification of the peninsula should take the survival of North Korean leadership, as repugnant as their leadership has been, into consideration to maximize the chances of its success.

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