

The historical development of the political relationship  
between North Korea and China  
and its future



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## **I - Abstract**

North Korea is an historical anachronism in the global society of today. This paper presents a different approach in analyzing why. North Korea's current status can be said to be the result of a long line of foreign influence on the Korean peninsula, as well as a strong cultural heritage from the Korean and the Confucian tradition. The most influential actor on the Korean peninsula has been its immediate neighbour China, which has spread its influence over the peninsula from ancient times, up until today, and will also keep exerting its influence in the future, politically, economically and militarily. To better understand the North Korean state, its society, politics and ideology that continue to confuse and amaze observers and analysts, it is crucial to understand the long history of Chinese influence. By analyzing and understanding this very special relationship and its development, the North Korean state may be better understood and its politics and actions may be better predicted. The development of the political relationship between North Korea and China is in this paper analyzed from a historical comparative analysis perspective, a political realist perspective and from a transitologist perspective. The answers that are being presented are that North Korea is becoming more and more dependent on China, at the same time as China tries to distance itself from North Korea and solve an internal debate over which direction to take in the future. However, the two countries are tangled up in an intricate and delicate web of economic aid and assistance, trade and profit, military confrontations and negotiations, and a very special form of interdependency. The political choices that one part takes influence the other directly, as it has done throughout history and will continue to do in future. This paper explains why, how and when these decisions and historical events have done so, what have been their results, and what impact they will have on the future.

## **II - Foreword**

I have always been interested in and fascinated by places and things different from us, and North Korea is probably one of the most different places in the whole world – from anything. The Korean peninsula has been the center of conflict for over 60 years and it is the last remains of the Cold War. As a stark contrast to North Korea, China, whose communist state was founded at the same time, is the world's emerging economic powerhouse. The question regarding the future of North Korea is not just a question that is limited to the East Asian region; it concerns everyone. North Korea has become a nuclear state and severe instability could have unspeakable consequences both militarily, economically and politically. China is North Korea's closest, if not only ally, and the future of the North Korean state and the Korean peninsula depends heavily on this relationship. China is becoming the world's leading economic powerhouse and any incidents causing a bump to the Chinese economy will be felt in the global economy. There is a concern of nuclear proliferation from North Korea which would certainly be more acute if something drastic were to change. There is also a very delicate power balance in the region which involves almost all of the world's greatest military powers. This means that the future of North Korea does not just affect China, South Korea, Japan and the United States. It could have influence on the whole world, economically, militarily and politically. To understand the very special relationship between North Korea and China thus becomes important for the whole world.



### **III - Thanks to**

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## 1.0 Introduction

The East Asian region contains arguably some of the biggest differences between countries in the whole world. Ideology, economy, history and military are all completely different from country to country. In just about any statistics or any sort of comparable area China, Japan, North and South Korea are completely different. Japan is losing its economic hegemony to China, North Korea has the world's third largest army while Japan only have some forces for self-defence, at the same time as another "Korean Wave" of South Korean pop culture becomes more and more influential.<sup>1 2</sup> North Korea is in the middle between market-based Communist Party rule in China, a comparatively politically liberal Japan, and a former authoritarian regime that has turned into a modern and prosperous market economy in South Korea. China has lifted 400 million people out of absolute poverty since the 1980s, while some estimates show that as many as 10 percent, or even more of the population in North Korea starved to death in the late 1990s.<sup>3</sup> The examples are endless, but the most striking feature in all of them is that North Korea stands out as the most different part, and creating underlining the huge contrasts within the region. In any comparison, whether it is military, ideology, history or economy, North Korea is vastly different from its regional neighbours.

In this dynamic and diverse region the situation is changing. Japan finds itself in relative economic decline, as well does South Korea compared to their neighbour China, which seems to be rising to become not just the region's but the world's new superpower. As China's powers and responsibilities grow it can no longer concentrate solely on internal politics, consumption and harmonious development of the society. Although North Korea's collapse has been predicted since the early nineties, it seems more and more plausible that the country will soon undergo new crises in management, economy and food distribution. China is still formally allied to North Korea although they trade and profit tenfold more from South Korea. As China seems to further grow and North Korea to further decline, what role will the two countries play in relations to each other?

This paper aims to explore the political relationship between the two countries, and how it has developed and changed from the formation of the People's Democratic Republic of Korea in 1949 up and until the rather turbulent year of 2010 that among other things saw the crisis after the sinking of the South Korean navy corvette Cheonan (to which North Korea has denied any

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<sup>1</sup> CNN. 'Korean Wave' of pop culture sweeps across Asia

<sup>2</sup> Yu Sang-u 2010

<sup>3</sup> Noland, Robinson, Wang 2001

relation), military drills with South Korea and the U.S, Wikileaks revealing rather unflattering descriptions of North Korea by a couple of Chinese diplomats<sup>4</sup> and the North Korean shelling of the South Korean Yeonpyeong island. In addition to this, this paper will also aim to explore some other historical incidents that precedes the modern history of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's state, mainly the Korean contribution to the Chinese anti-Japanese guerrilla warfare in Manchuria and the problems it brought along with it in the 1930s, and to which extent this has had any effect on policymaking in modern North Korea.

China is today the only ally and the only significant "friend" North Korea has left in the world and China is often described as having, or being, the "key" to "unlock" North Korea. Beijing undoubtedly holds some leverage over Pyongyang, but to what extent is unclear to outsiders, and one might even suspect that it is somewhat unclear for Beijing and maybe even for Pyongyang too! To try to understand North Korean politics it is therefore necessary to try to understand its relationship to China and if it really is as it may seem. It is also important to try to understand the relationship from China's point of view, and finally it is important to have a historical perspective on the political relationship between the two. As repetitive as it may sound, it is important to know history to understand the present. This thesis is not going to go overboard in its historical approach, but rather include it as an important element in a larger approach – a method that sadly seems to be lacking in most approaches to North Korean politics, economy and society today.

In short, the main question that this paper raises is: How does North Korea see China and how does China see North Korea and what governs their opinions? What has changed and what remains the same and what can be expected to happen in the foreseeable future?

### **1.1 Research question - The political relationship between China and North Korea**

Most of the research on North Korea that is being done outside East Asia today is in English and is naturally concerned with topics regarding North Korea's relations with the United States and how North Korea influences American foreign policy. The other big contributor to research on North Korea is of course South Korea, and it is concerned with the relationship between the North and South. China is, despite its booming economy and rapid rise still a one-party state with a lot of restrictions on what can be said and written and especially on what can be published. Therefore it is hard to obtain most of the Chinese thinking about North Korea that no doubt exists. North Korea is of course one of the world's, if not *the* world's,

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<sup>4</sup> This does not necessarily represent the main or the official Chinese view

most despotic country and any official information released is not to be trusted blindly. This may very well be the same for the official information given from any other state. However, the factor that makes the North Korean official information especially unreliable is that it is the only source of information, hence there are no opportunities to compare it to see if it is actually plausible or not. As a result of these factors there is not much published research on the relationship between North Korea and China.

Because of this, I believe that the best approach to explaining the relationship between China and North Korea today, is to look at their historical relationship and attempt to use it as an explanatory tool. Of course, history is not a blueprint for the future, but I hope that my contribution to the research on the political relationship between China and North Korea will contribute in some form to increased understanding of the situation, as my contribution will hopefully help to expand the scope of the more traditional approach. One can not explain North Korea and China just through political analysis, talking about buffer states, human rights violations and nuclearization. Including a historical perspective in this analysis will hopefully increase the understanding of key aspects of in the relationship and help give some answers to questions that today seem hard to answer. These are questions like: Why does not North Korea simply just reform like China did? Why is North Korea so reluctant to take Chinese advice, especially on military issues and why does North Korea openly defy China in several of these cases? I believe that questions like these may be answered just as well by using history as a guide, as well as by any other more traditional theoretical approach.

The research question consists of two main questions and the first one is:

**How can the development of the political relationship between North Korea and China be explained?**

This question has several other, smaller questions that are meant to contribute answer the two main questions more precisely and in depth. These questions are:

- Which parts of the development can be explained by which different theoretical approaches?
- How has the relationship developed in the different historical circumstances?
- Why has it developed? / Or has it really developed at all?

This paper aims to answer all of these questions although maybe not to answer each one of them equally thorough. Finally, taking the answers from these questions, I can ask and answer the second main question that this paper raises:

**Based on the historical relationship, how can the relationship be expected to develop in the near future?**

Writing about the political relationship between North Korea and China is problematic in many ways, but one problem that is maybe not as clear as the others is actually the most prominent of them all: What is actually a political relationship? Finding a definition for a political relationship is hard. A political relationship is obviously a relationship of a political nature or a relationship in politics, etc., but finding a definition for the word relationship is also hard. A “relationship” is a very vague and imprecise term. Nonetheless it is a common conception that the political relationship between two countries is a very precise and concrete thing. This was my very thought, but after having spent a long time pondering what a “political relationship” really is and most important of all – how to do research on it, I found no answer or exact definition. Therefore I had to make my own definition of what a “political relationship” between two countries is:

“The political relationship between two countries is the sum of all political actions taken by both actors that will influence the other actor.”

In this paper I will look at the most prominent and influential of these political actions and use them as the base to answer the research questions.

## **1.2 Why is this important?**

The question is interesting from an academic point of view because, as mentioned above, the relationship between North Korea and China seems to be neglected, or if not neglected at least under-represented in favour of research on the relationships between North Korea and the United States, or North Korea and South Korea. The relationship between China and North Korea is probably just as important for peace and development on the Korean peninsula as that of North Korea and the United States. (As long as it does not come to a second Korean War.)

The question is also interesting from a social point of view because extended research on this question could have impact on the actual political and social situation. This is not to say that I

neither believe, nor aim for this thesis to create peace on the Korean peninsula, but extended research on this topic may lead to a more complex view and ultimately in a different approach by media and researchers from a Western perspective. Another reason why the question is interesting from a social point of view is that the relationship between North Korea and China is changing, and when something is changing, new questions arise and need to be addressed. An increased emphasis on the historical relationship will make it easier to predict the key aspects of the relationship in the future.

It is also important because, as mentioned earlier, the explanations being presented today are lacking in explanatory power. Focus on brinkmanship, nuclear proliferation and human rights alone does not explain the intricate relationship between the two countries or North Korea itself. An attempt to explain especially North Korea, but also China from Western modes of social science theories, based on Western history, is bound to miss certain aspects. I will discuss this more thoroughly in the chapter about my theoretical approach.

This paper will explore the changes in the political relationships between North Korea and China, based not just from the North Korean perspective, but on both countries' approaches. How has China's approach to North Korea changed and how has North Korea's approach to China changed?

### **1.3 The existing research on Sino-North Korean relations**

This paper aims to present a different approach in analyzing North Korea by looking at the historical development of the political relationship between North Korea and China. Most of the existing research on this relationship today is mainly concerned with either of two approaches: The first one is the current development of the economic relationship, as for example portrayed by for example Haggard and Noland's research on the North Korean black markets,<sup>5</sup> Nicholas Eberstadt's book on the North Korean economy,<sup>6</sup> and Christopher D. Hale's assessment of the North Korean "market" reforms.<sup>7</sup>

The other main approach to analyzing the relationship is applying the theories of political science and analyzing the two countries' foreign relations strategies, security, military capabilities and nuclear proliferation, like for example Selig S. Harrison's book from 2002:

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<sup>5</sup> Haggard, Noland 2007, 2009

<sup>6</sup> Eberstadt 2007

<sup>7</sup> Hale 2005

“Korean Endgame” that focuses on different scenarios for the possible future or fall of the North Korean state.<sup>8</sup>

Another article like this is David Shambaugh’s “China and the Korean peninsula: Playing for the long term”, from 2003 that was published in *The Washington Quarterly*.<sup>9</sup> In it, he presents “China’s endgame” and China’s supposedly six main goals for the future of the Sino-North Korean relationship.

A similar approach is presented by Anne Wu, also in the *Washington Quarterly* in her paper: “What China Whispers to North Korea”, from 2005 where she presents “the five main messages” that China is trying give North Korea regarding how China believes North Korea should manage its foreign policy.<sup>10</sup>

In a monograph published by the Strategic Studies Institute in 2004, Dr. Andrew Scobell analyzes the relationship and includes a brief background explanation based on the historical, military and geopolitical relationship between the two countries.<sup>11</sup> This explanation is however only brief and does not provide any answers for the further analysis of the relationship. Hongkoo Han presents a historical explanation for some of the North Korean political structure in his PhD thesis from the University of Washington entitled: “Wounded Nationalism: The Minsaengdan Incident and Kim Il Sung in Eastern Manchuria”.<sup>12</sup> However, he does not describe any later historical incidents than the Minsaengdan incident.

Thus, I hope and believe that this paper will contribute to a widening of the traditional scope, by adding detailed background information of the development of the historical development of the political relationship between China and North Korea and thus presenting a different approach to the analysis of this very special relationship.

This paper consists of three main parts – the first part describing the historical relationship between Korea and China before 1949, with special emphasis on the Minsaengdan (Minshengdan in Chinese) incident and on the Korean contribution to the anti-Japanese struggle in Manchuria in the 1930s. The second part will emphasise the first part of the modern relationship between North Korea and China after North Korea was founded in 1949 and up until 2000. The third part will focus on the recent historical development from 2000 to

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<sup>8</sup> Harrison 2002

<sup>9</sup> Shambaugh 2003

<sup>10</sup> Wu 2005

<sup>11</sup> Scobell 2004

<sup>12</sup> Hongkoo Han 1999



2010 and will thus be a natural entrance to the following analysis. Only selected parts will be emphasised as the scope of this paper is not to be a historical account, but I still hope that as little as possible if anything of vital historical information is omitted. The analysis will be of the historical and the modern relationship, comparing them up against each other, but also viewing them in their own light in order to determine how the relationship has progressed and in the end how it is plausible that it will continue to develop.

To recap, the two main questions that this thesis seeks to answer are:

**How can the development of the political relationship between North Korea and China be explained?**

And

**Based on the historical development, how can the relationship be expected to develop in the near future?**

## **2.0 Approach**

### **2.1 Theoretical approach and theoretical problems**

This thesis will consist mainly of a comparative historical analysis approach, but will also apply some elements of the International Relations school of theories, as well as the study of transitology. I hope that that the combination of these three theoretical approaches, although contrasting, may complement each other and together form a solid foundation that this thesis may be written upon. The comparative historical analysis is in many ways the exact opposite of the International Relations approach, or any other approach in the social sciences. This is because that where International Relations theories strives to apply theories to describe the real world (or in some instances apply the real world to describe their theories), comparative historical analysis is more centered on causal analysis. However, both theories seek to explain and predict the same events in the same world. Therefore, I will not argue that one theoretical approach is better than the other, but rather attempt to see what can be explained by the different approaches and to which degree they may complement each other. Another theoretical approach that could be applied, as a supplement, is the theory of transitology.<sup>13 14</sup> Transitology is the comparative research on former Soviet states and the political and

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<sup>13</sup> Tökés 2000

<sup>14</sup> Gans-Morse 2007

economical changes that contributed to their change. The theory could be applied in the way of looking at what political and economic changes have taken place in China and what changes, if any, have taken place in North Korea. Then the focus could be shifted onto the pre-requisites for these changes in the two countries and what in the end separated them. The point of comparison could be the gradual decline, or death of Maoism in China and the degree of the same phenomena (as described by historian Andrei Lankov in his paper from 2006 entitled “The Natural Death of North Korean Stalinism)<sup>15</sup> in North Korea.

Regarding the theoretical approach, I begin with a description of comparative historical analysis: In their book “Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences”, Jones Mahoney and Dietrich Reuschmeyer give a good introduction to the features of comparative historical analysis: Comparative historical analysis is concerned with causal analysis and an emphasis on historical processes over time that combined leads to “systematic and contextualized comparison.”<sup>16</sup>

The main critics of this approach is according to Mahoney and Reuschmeyer “among those who seek universalizing knowledge” because historically theorizing methods has too many limitations. This is acknowledged by Mahoney and Reuschmeyer to a degree, but it is also pointed out that they don’t have the same ambitions of their counterparts in constructing flawless theories that can be applied any given place at any given time. They argue that comparative historical analysis is necessary because of the limitations of universalizing theoretical approaches and because the causal approach is much more thorough and have much more explanatory power, even though it can not be applied to other cases other places.<sup>17</sup> Studies that aim for universal truths cannot grasp historical details and are vulnerable to them. However, the main advantage of the historical comparative approach is that:

“Historical researchers can comfortably move back and forth between theory and history in many iterations of analysis as they formulate new concepts, discover novel explanations, and refine pre-existing theoretical expectations in light of detailed case evidence.”<sup>18</sup>

To summarize, the comparative historical analysis has the strengths that is the social sciences’ weakness and its weak points are social sciences’ strength.

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<sup>15</sup> Lankov 2006

<sup>16</sup> Mahoney, Reuschmeyer 2003:6

<sup>17</sup> Mahoney, Reuschmeyer 2003:9

<sup>18</sup> Mahoney, Reuschmeyer 2003:13

The opposite of the approach of comparative historical analysis approach is the approach of International Relations theory: According to Øyvind Østerud in his introductory book on political analysis “Innføring i politisk analyse”, these are the most common schools of thought in International Relations theories:

- Realism, neo-realism, neo-liberalism
- Global Society, globalization, internationalism
- Marxism
- Overlapping perspectives – (As for example the study of International political Economy can be both liberal, Marxist and neo-realist.)<sup>19</sup>

Which school of thought has the biggest explanatory power to the questions that are being asked? Are there other schools of thought that can explain, or at least be complementary to the explanation? In this dissertation I will use the classical realist school of thought as my theoretical approach and I will explain why:

The ideas that govern the classical realism school of thought can be traced a long way back in history to the likes of Sun Zi in China and Machiavelli in Europe. Thomas Hobbes wrote about the “state of nature” in his book *Leviathan* in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, which can be read as being synonymous with anarchy. The German Hans Morgenthau is reckoned as one of the founding fathers of classical realism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The classical realist school is according to Østerud defined by the fact that every state is in a constant state of nature to acquire more power over other states. This can be explained by the fact that the international community of states is anarchic from nature, like the state of nature that is described by Hobbes. It can also be explained by the fact that the will to gain more power is derived from human instinct and that it governs the states as it governs every individual. These two traits can be used as an explanation one by one, or combined together.<sup>20</sup> They are the two main traits that defines the realist school and other schools of International Relations theories disregards these traits, to different degrees.

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<sup>19</sup> Østerud 2007: 241-245

<sup>20</sup> Østerud 2007: 241-245

A more thorough introduction to realism is given by James E. Dougherty and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff Jr.,<sup>21</sup> as they in their book “Contending Theories of International Relations: A Comprehensive Survey”, present the six traits that make up the theoretical foundation that political realism is based upon:

- The states are the main actors in the international community.
- Their relations are conflictual by nature as they struggle for power. This means that every state’s main goal is survival and that every state is responsible for its own survival. (This is a very important point when talking about North Korea as it can be argued that North Korea has found itself in a position of constant threats to regime survival more or less since it’s founding in 1949. This will be thoroughly discussed in the analysis.)
- Every state’s existence is founded upon their own sovereignty.
- States are unitary actors and foreign policy and domestic policy are not necessarily the same.
- “States are rational actors.”
- The idea of power and a power struggle is used to explain and predict the actions taken by each state.<sup>22</sup> (However, as I have argued above, this point is contested by the historical comparative analysis approach, and it can only explain certain aspects of North Korean politics – not all of them.)

The realist school of thought seems consistent with many of the characteristics of the political relationship between North Korea and China as well as the one between North Korea and the members of the Six-Party Talks, mainly the United States. This will be discussed in more depth in the analysis. From the outside, it looks like it is the best theoretical approach when it comes to having explanatory power related to this dissertation. As a temporary hypothesis I propose that the comparative historical analysis is more suitable to explain the development of North Korea’s political relationship with China, while the classical realist approach is more suited to explain China’s development of its political relationship with North Korea. This is to say that I propose that North Korea has been more affected by historical events regarding their policymaking in its relationship to China, than China has been affected by *its* historical relationship with North Korea. However, the situation today may very well be that both North

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<sup>21</sup> Also introduced in Arnhold Arntsen’s MA thesis from 2010 in political science on the French military involvement in Chad

<sup>22</sup> Dougherty, Pfaltzgraff Jr. 2001:63-64

Korea and China are doing politics that can be explained by a political realist approach. A hypothesis of today's situation may be that China and North Korea are locked in a struggle for power and influence over the other part. North Korea wants to profit as much as they can from China through political and economical aid without having to follow Chinese advice or recommendations, while China wants to exert its influence and control an unpredictable neighbour without alienating it.

## **2.2 Methodological problems and research methods**

The Chinese approach will have to come primarily from second-hand sources because: There is a certain language barrier which makes papers and articles on the subject somewhat difficult to find, but mainly because of the fact that China is still a communist state when it comes to access and availability of certain information. Also, attempting to “speculate” on North Korea's future has in the past proven to be difficult. The dissertation will have to be strongly objective and unbiased. The data and material used must be accurate, up to date and reliable – at least compared to the standards existing when talking about North Korea. (Most of which does not possess these standards) However there is information that is more unreliable than other.

Another methodological problem is that it has earlier been shown that it does not necessarily make any sense at all to try to explain North Korea from Western theories. Therefore, the International Relations theories and transitology will be employed pragmatically and loosely rather than tightly and rigidly. North Korean policies seem to continue to baffle observers, and many of the political choices are branded as irrational, paranoid or even crazy. These have become the characteristics of the North Korean regime in the Western media and even in some of the more academic research on North Korea as well. This may well be because of the lacking scope of the theoretical approach that is being used, but on the other hand there aren't any specific universalizing theoretical school of thought that can be seemingly applied to North Korean studies. In my dissertation, the realist and transitology approach will presumably be the closest, but it probably won't be able to explain everything. Therefore, this theoretical approach will be applied rather loosely. This is exactly why I want to apply comparative historical analysis: Because it is the only theoretical approach that (seemingly) seems to be able to explain the core of North Korean politics, because North Korean politics are not governed by the same rules as Western politics or even most of the rest of the world. Indeed it is safe to say that it does not follow any other political

models in modern history, and although it resembles aspects of the Stalinist Soviet Union and the Maoist China, it can not be compared with these two because it exceeds them both in authoritarianism, the simplicity of the economic policies and in the extremely centralized and concentrated political structure. Therefore Western, or any other universal theories, can not be applied to North Korea as the sole theoretical approach. History and causal analysis will hopefully fill the holes in the theoretical approach when writing about North Korea.

### **3.0 The historical relationship until 1949**

#### **3.1 From the Neolithic Period to the end of the Sino-Korean tributary relations**

The Korean peninsula has a long history of Chinese influence and according to the book "Korea Old and New", published by the Korea Institute at Harvard University,<sup>23</sup> the first archeological sign of this influence is the spread of a new pottery culture with painted designs that spread from China to Korea around 2,000 years B.C. It marked the advent of the late Neolithic period.<sup>24</sup> The next major influence to come from China was the appearance of rice cultivation. This is evidenced by archeological uncovering of tools in Korea used to harvest rice – the same tools as the ones that have been found to be used in China. This was during the Bronze Age in Korea, which lasted from the ninth or eighth century B.C. until around the fourth century B.C.<sup>25</sup> There is a long history of examples like these where several aspects of Chinese culture were adapted, including Buddhism, Confucianism and Chinese characters, and it is no space in this paper for mentioning all of them. However it can be said that some of the earliest Korean states: Koguryo (37 B.C. – 668 A.D.), Paekche (18 B.C. – 660 A.D) and Silla (57 B.C. – 995 A.D.) were all tributaries in some form to different Chinese dynasties. The first really significant political relationship mentioned by Eckert is however, the one that evolved with the creation of the Chinese Mongol Yuan Dynasty (1271 – 1368) rising to power in China and capturing the Korean Koryo Dynasty as a tribute state.

“Yuan demanded Koryo gold, silver, cloth, grain, ginseng and falcons, and at times even young women and eunuchs.”<sup>26</sup>

A later example of the historical relationship can be taken from 1592, when Japanese forces landed at Pusan in vast numbers in the spring. The Ming Chinese army came to the Choson

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<sup>23</sup> This book is actually an extended and translated version of a popular Korean textbook on Korean history by Prof. Yi Kibaek, used on university level in South Korea.

<sup>24</sup> Eckert 1990:4

<sup>25</sup> Eckert 1990:9-10

<sup>26</sup> Eckert 1990:97

Dynasty's defence with 50.000 men and won a victory at Haengju early in 1593. In 1597 the Japanese launched another attack, but this time the Koreans and the Ming army were prepared and the Japanese were unable to conquer the land.<sup>27 28</sup> After the Ming Dynasty in China was overtaken by the Manchu Qing Dynasty, the Manchus launched their first invasion on Korea in 1627 and the Choson Dynasty eventually assumed the position of tributary state to the Qing Dynasty.<sup>29</sup> In 1894, on July 23 the Sino-Japanese war broke out with Japanese forces seizing the Korean royal palace, and the war ended with total victory for Japan on April 17<sup>th</sup> 1895. The Qing Dynasty was forced to acknowledge Korea's full independence from China (and in effect a new dependence for Korea on Japan), and the long tradition of Sino-Korean tributary relations was finally broken.<sup>30</sup>

### 3.2 Kim Il Sung

Much of the history of North Korea is the history of Kim Il Sung. In his book: "North Korea Another Country" Professor at the University of Chicago Bruce Cumings presents what he calls "The legend of Kim Il Sung." To summarize the ascent to power of North Korea's "Great Leader", The Juche calendar (which is the official North Korean calendar) started on April 15<sup>th</sup> 1912 with the birth of Kim Song Ju, later known as Kim Il Sung.<sup>31</sup> He was born in a village close to Pyongyang, joined a Marxist underground group as a youth and was arrested by the Japanese. After he got out of prison he joined a guerrilla group, and later joined up with Chinese guerrilla groups in Manchuria to fight the Japanese. After the war was over he became leader of the Korean People's Army (KPA) at its founding on February 8<sup>th</sup> 1948 and one year later he was hailed "supreme leader" at its first anniversary, meaning he was officially in charge of the whole country.<sup>32</sup> This however, was the short story, and much more emphasis can be put on Kim Il Sung's activities during his participation in guerrilla activities against the Japanese in Manchuria in the 1930s. Among one of the most significant incidents in the political relationship between China and Korea of this particular time is the

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<sup>27</sup> Eckert 1990:146-148

<sup>28</sup> This may be seen as a parallel to the chain of events during the Korean War, but without any further comparison whatsoever

<sup>29</sup> Eckert 1990:150

<sup>30</sup> Eckert 1990:222-223

<sup>31</sup> The real name of Kim Il Sung is not a big secret in North Korea and is mentioned in his official biography: "Up to this time he had been called Comrade Kim Song Ju. Now, his comrades and the revolutionary people began to call him comrade Il Sung or Han Byol, meaning "one star", to express their hope that he would be as bright as the morning star leading the Korean people out of darkness to the dawn of liberation. But they were not satisfied with comparing such a great leader of the nation simply to the morning star. To them he was the bright sun of Korea. So, they renamed him Il Sung, meaning "future sun.'" (Kim Il Sung biography 1973:68)

<sup>32</sup> Cumings 2004:104-127

Minsaengdan incident, an incident that is seldom mentioned, but one that was researched by Hongkoo Han in his PhD thesis from the University of Washington entitled: "Wounded Nationalism: The Minsaengdan Incident and Kim Il Sung in Eastern Manchuria." To conclude, Hongkoo Han argues that it has undoubtedly been pivotal in shaping the North Korean state, government and the Juche ideology that has since played a big role in the later political relationship between North Korea and China. This is, according to Han, because Kim Il Sung and most of the North Korean government were active in the anti-Japanese guerrilla struggle in Manchuria and most likely had strong memories from the incident.

### **3.3 The Minsaengdan incident**

Leading up to the Minsaengdan incident, the North Korean official biography on Kim Il Sung published in 1973 describes the situation for Koreans in Manchuria like this:

“(...) the enemy took advantage (...) to aggravate relations between Koreans and Chinese people by the means of a cunning policy of national estrangement.”<sup>33</sup>

And:

“The reactionary Chinese warlords and even some Chinese people who did not have a clear understanding took a hostile attitude toward the Koreans, branding them as “Japanese agents”. So, many Koreans found it impossible to settle down and carry on their activities anywhere.”<sup>34</sup>

According to Cumings, around 80-90 percent of the Chinese Communist Party in Manchuria was actually Korean at the time of Japan's establishment of Manchukuo. The Minsaengdan, Minshengdan (People's Livelihood Corps) appeared in late 1931 and was made up of pro-Japanese Koreans, who were mostly wealthy merchants or businessmen who sympathized with the Japanese for different reasons. The Minsaengdan downplayed its connection to Japan and called for Korean independence, without taking any hostile stance against Japan. It was not very well received by the Chinese Communist Party. Chinese communists and guerillas became convinced that the Minsaengdan members had aided Japan in the takeover of Manchuria and spied for and collaborated with the Japanese. As a result, any Korean suspected of being a member of the Minsaengdan was purged and sometimes even executed. Over 1,000 Koreans were expelled from the Party as suspects and between 500 and 2,000

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<sup>33</sup> Kim Il Sung biography 1973:65

<sup>34</sup> Kim Il Sung biography 1973:65



Koreans were executed from 1933 to 1936.<sup>35</sup> Even Kim Il Sung himself was arrested as a possible Minsaengdan collaborator, but because of his close ties with the Chinese he was freed and faced no charges, as Cumings writes:

“Kim Il Sung took a leading role in trying to reconstitute Chinese-Korean cooperation in the Manchurian guerrilla struggle, in spite of the terrible losses suffered at the hands of Chinese racism; his fluency in Chinese and long association with Chinese guerrilla leaders certainly helped.”<sup>36</sup>

About the struggle against the Minsaengdan the North Korean official biography contains a lengthy description of how Kim Il Sung allegedly single-handedly managed to overcome the situation. Among other things he is quoted to have said:

“The sectarian-flunkeys, with the backing of the national chauvinists, used the anti-‘Minsaengdan’ struggle for their own evil sectarian purpose and committed grave criminal acts-sacrificing many fine Communists and revolutionaries and creating alienation, enmity and distrust within the revolutionary ranks, thereby weakening their unity and solidarity.”<sup>37</sup>

“Long before he started his march into north Manchuria, Comrade Kim Il Sung had waged a principled struggle against the chauvinists and sectarian-flunkeys who schemed to use the struggle against the Minsaengdan for their own selfish ends, and who were carrying out this struggle in a leftist way, because they were unable to see through the cunning Japanese imperialist policy of estranging Koreans from Chinese and their attempts to subvert the revolutionary ranks from within.”<sup>38</sup>

As can be seen, the Chinese are not portrayed in a flattering light, but ultimately it was the Japanese that was to blame, as they were the ones responsible for attempting to damage the relationship between Koreans and Chinese. This biography was published in 1973 and it is obvious that the Minsaengdan incident was very well alive in the collective national memory even at that point, around 40 years after it had happened.

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<sup>35</sup> Cumings 2004:107-112

<sup>36</sup> Cumings 2004:114

<sup>37</sup> Kim Il Sung biography 1973:146

<sup>38</sup> Kim Il Sung biography 1973:148

### 3.4 Guerilla war and the founding of The Democratic People's Republic of Korea

According to two Japanese Kwantung Army colonels who chased Kim Il Sung in Manchuria debriefed during the Korean War:

“They did not care about the relations of their command organ with the Soviet Army or the Chinese Communist (Army).” They ran back and forth across the Russian border to escape counterinsurgency units, but the Soviets provided no weaponry or material aid; instead the guerrillas took weapons, ammunition and other supplies from the Japanese armies.”<sup>39</sup>

Kim may have escaped being purged during the Minsaengdan incident, and although he was no longer seen as a threat to the Chinese Communist Party, the Koreans were not any safer in the eyes of Stalin:

“As Soviet dissident Roy Medvedev was among the first to point out, during the purges of the late 1930s Stalin executed every Korean agent of the Communist International he could get his hands on – after all they might be Japanese spies.”<sup>40</sup>

On these grounds Kim Il Sung was again arrested, being accused of collaborating with the Japanese, but this time he was arrested by Soviet Russians upon encountering them in 1940, after moving into the Soviet territory in search of a safe heaven as the result of intensified Japanese suppression. He was released on the conditions that the Korean guerillas stop their struggle against Japan so Japan would not turn north and attack the Soviet Union.<sup>41</sup> This must clearly have affected Kim Il Sung and his Korean comrades as Bruce Cumings points out:

“Is it any wonder that for a Communist arrested by both Chinese and Soviet” comrades,” independence and self-reliance would later become Kim Il Sung’s leitmotiv?”<sup>42</sup>

From 1940 to the end of the war, although Kim Il Sung was a major in active duty in the Soviet Red Army, he was stationed in the Soviet Union and played no direct role in the liberation of Korea, contrary to the claims of North Korean propaganda. At the end of the war

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<sup>39</sup> Cumings 2004:116

<sup>40</sup> Cumings 2004:118

<sup>41</sup> Cumings 2004:118

<sup>42</sup> Cumings 2004:118-199

he travelled to North Korea and by the help of Soviet authorities he was gradually instated as chief of the armed forces and thus became head of the party and the state.

Bruce Cumings says in his finishing remarks that Kim Il Sung apparently liked to call himself *changgun*, which means general and is written with the same characters as those used in the Japanese word *shogun* which means warlord. Bruce Cumings also draws parallels from this image of Kim Il Sung and his guerrilla companions to the founders of the Choson dynasty and the first emperor of the Choson dynasty, Yi Song-gye. He also created a ruling elite by giving out land grants and other privileges to the soldiers that helped him ascend to the throne, just like Kim Il Sung filled the inner circle of the government with his guerilla comrades. Bruce Cumings summarizes the Minsaengdan incident and the Manchurian experience like this:

All in all, the Manchurian experience is the crucible of North Korean truth, storytelling, drama, myth, and hagiography ever since – “an epic tale of national loss, struggle, and ultimate redemption, a metaphor for Korea’s colonization and restoration.”<sup>43</sup>

Hongkoo Han writes in his conclusion that:

“(…) the wounds that the North Korean leaders suffered in their innermost selves were not left by Japanese imperialism alone. Many of the returned guerillas, including Kim Il Sung, were deeply wounded by the Minsaengdan Incident. Considering the simple mention of pursuing a Korean revolution (independently of a Chinese revolution) provided the excuse for execution, it is understandable why Kim and his followers adhered so much to the *Juche* ideology and the independence of the nation when they seized power. While North Korean leaders paraded a version of extremely strong nationalism, it was a wounded nationalism.”<sup>44</sup>

Archival researcher, professor and historian Balázs Szalontai presents a more contrasting and sober view of the historic links between the Choson Dynasty and Kim Il Sung’s DPRK in his book “Kim Il Sung in the Khrushchev Era – Soviet-DPRK Relations and the Roots of North Korean Despotism”:

“It is all too tempting to draw a parallel between the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) and pre-colonial Korea. Western journalists routinely call North Korea

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<sup>43</sup> Cumings 2004:127

<sup>44</sup> Hongkoo Han 1999:366

a new “Hermit Kingdom”, and some scholars, most notably Cumings, strongly emphasize that both the Yi dynasty (1392-1910) and Kim Il Sung’s regime pursued an isolationist foreign policy and laid great stress in ideological orthodoxy. (...) Still the heritage of the “Hermit Kingdom” did not necessarily influence the birth of North Korean despotism as directly as one might assume. While a post-1945 Korean ruler was indeed able to draw inspiration from the pre-colonial past of his country (and Kim probably did), he was by no means bound by it.”<sup>45</sup>

Both these views present strong points. However I believe that the historical traditions from the Choson dynasty and Korean Confucianism could only have played a limited role in the collective memory of the DPRK leaders. It is only natural to assume that these people were more affected by the more recent historical events than those events that lay further in the past. But still, neither of these two views presents any universal explanation or background to the later development of the political relationship with China. For that to be explained, several different factors need to be taken into account, and although there are definite parallels between the North Korean state and the Choson Dynasty, and although an isolationist ideology towards China can partly be attributed to the Minsaengdan incident, that alone is not explanation enough. The events that followed, like for example the Cold War and the Sino-Soviet split are also vital in understanding the development of the political relationship between North Korea and China.

## **4.0 The historical relationship: 1949 - 2000**

### **4.1 The Korean War**

Today it is clear that it was North Korea that started the Korean War by attacking South Korea, after direct approval from Stalin to Kim Il Sung (as well as a promise from Mao that China would support North Korea militarily if necessary). North Korea quickly conquered almost the entire Korean peninsula until the U.S. and the United Nations intervened as a result of the absence of the Soviet representative in the United Nations security council. The North Koreans were pushed back almost to the Yalu river on the Chinese border until the Chinese intervened and the Chinese Peoples Volunteer’s Army pushed the U.S. back to the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel from which the war had broken out. It then became a trench war that lasted until 1953 when an armistice was signed. A peace treaty was never signed and the war is thus not

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<sup>45</sup> Szalontai 2005:1-2

technically over. There have also been several small clashes since then between ROK and DPRK forces along the border, the latest two in 2010.

#### **4.2 The Sino-Soviet split and the birth of “Juche”**

According to historian and North Korea expert Andrei Lankov in his book “From Stalin to Kim Il Sung”, several factors contributed to why North Korea shifted their emphasis and reliance from the Soviet Union to China in the 1950s and onwards. The two countries were similar in culture and history, at least more so than North Korea and the Soviet Union and Kim Il Sung did not like the Soviet de-Stalinization that Khrushchev brought along with him – for obvious reasons: Stalin was a dictator just like Kim Il Sung. Additionally North Korea and China had close ties through their history of anti-Japanese struggle and guerilla warfare. From the late 1950s the DPRK economic managements in many ways followed Chinese methods rather than Soviet ones and the Chollima movement can be compared to the Chinese Great Leap Forward, although the Chollima movement actually ended up being much more successful than its Chinese inspiration. The Chinese slogan of “relying on own strength” is also easily comparable to the North Korean “Juche” idea which originated at the same time. However, it can be argued that this was only a natural development since both North Korea and China were in the early stages of industrialization, unlike the Soviet Union. The concept of Juche will be more thoroughly discussed later. In July 1961 Kim Il Sung and Zhou Enlai signed a treaty of friendship between the two countries and a week later a similar treaty were signed with the Soviet Union. However, after 1962 the DPRK shifted more and more towards relying on, and siding with China. Examples of this are that the official North Korean newspaper Rodong Sinmun in October 1963 heavily criticized the Soviet position towards China. On 27 January the same newspaper denounced Khrushchev for arguing for “peaceful co-existence”, and the North Korean leadership denounced the Soviet “capitulation” in the Cuban missile crisis.<sup>46</sup> The “peaceful co-existence” was especially difficult for North Korea as it was (and theoretically still is) a state founded upon the ambition to dismantle the “puppet” South Korean regime, remove the U.S. presence and become the legitimate power for the whole Korean peninsula. (Although this policy today is unlikely and no longer actively pursued by the North Korean regime that has its main focus on survival of the current North Korean state as it exists today). When Khrushchev talked about “peaceful co-existence”, it was thus seen as a threat to the very legitimacy of the North Korean state itself. The Soviet

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<sup>46</sup> Lankov 2002:64-66

Union responded by cutting off their direct aid to North Korea. North Korea may have hoped that China would fill the Soviet Union's shoes and provide aid and assistance. China did so to a degree, but the same amounts of aid and assistance as those from the Soviet Union could not be provided by China.

In Han S. Park's "North Korea: Ideology, Politics, Economy", Karoly Fendler makes a comparative analysis of the Soviet Union and China's economic assistance to North Korea in the postwar years (1953-1963). During this period there was a "hostile international environment", as it was the early days of the Cold War and North Korea, who had to be rebuilt from the absolute beginning after the Korean War, was utterly dependent on economic aid from the other socialist countries.<sup>47</sup> Although the Soviet Union was responsible for the major part of non-repayable aid, cancellation of debt and technical assistance, China also played a pivotal part in economically assisting North Korea. However, there are no reliable data concerning the exact size and amount of the Chinese aid and there are no reliable statistics that shows whether China actually cancelled any of the DPRK's debts or made any other arrangements. However, several Western studies estimates, according to Fendler, that China's contributions to the economic recovery in North Korea was around half of the Soviet assistance and loans during the postwar period.<sup>48</sup> Chinese economic aid contributed a significant part of the overall economic aid and assistance provided by the Soviet and the communist block.

"In other words, Chinese assistance and loans were generally absorbed in the Korean economy despite the temporary and often spectacular impact they made."<sup>49</sup>

When Mao started the Great Leap Forward that culminated in the Cultural Revolution in China in 1966, it brought with itself chaos and many Red Guard publications that were negative to North Korea and its rather un-revolutionary government. The chaos in China was very unfavourable to the ruling North Koreans as they strived for stability in their government. North Korea answered China's new revolutionary line and critique by turning away from their pro-China orientation and assume a neutral stance in the Sino-Soviet conflict. Another reason for the shift in policies was that Khrushchev lost power to Brezhnev in 1964 and that North Korea wanted to build a new relationship with the new political leadership in the Kremlin. This was marked among other incidents by the Soviet Prime Minister A. N.

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<sup>47</sup> Park 1996:163

<sup>48</sup> Park 1996:168-169

<sup>49</sup> Park 1996:169

Kosygin's visit to Pyongyang in 1965. Yet another factor for this change in policies could be that the Soviet Union was, as described by Fendler, still much more important as an aid donor for North Korea than China. Thus North Korea managed to keep its political relationships and their economical benefits with both China and the Soviet Union until the collapse of the Soviet Union.<sup>50</sup>

Even though North Korea received huge amounts of aid, and managed to have a balanced relationship with both China and the Soviet Union, the idea of Juche has been prominent in North Korea ever since the mid 1950s. The Juche idea or ideology is a very important aspect and maybe even (at least in part) a result of the Sino-Soviet split and a very important aspect to include in the study of the political relationship, not just between China and North Korea, but between North Korea and every other country.

In the introductory chapter of "North Korea in the new world order", Callum Macdonald says that:

"Juche became the guiding aspect of the state in the 1960s when the Soviet-Sino split gave the DPRK the reason and opportunity to pursue its own destiny."<sup>51</sup>

Juche was according to official propaganda created by Kim Il Sung. The word is generally translated as self-reliance and he first emphasized its meaning in a speech in 1955:

"It is important in our work to grasp revolutionary truth, Marxist-Leninist truth, and apply it correctly to our actual conditions. There should be no set rule that we must follow the Soviet pattern. Some advocate the Soviet way and others the Chinese, but is it not high time to work out our own?"<sup>52</sup>

In this speech Kim Il Sung stressed the importance of finding an independent way of development apart from both the Soviet and the Chinese; he preached patriotism and nationalism based on "the truth of Marxism-Leninism" as tools for developing an independent national ideology. This speech is today being regarded as the "birth of Juche", but back then it simply meant focusing on self-reliance in the stormy political waters of the time. Juche has later been hailed by North Korean propaganda as a "brilliant and revolutionary idea", "unique" and "the greatest invention of our time". The "Dear Leader" Kim Jong Il, son of the

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<sup>50</sup> Lankov 2002:64-66

<sup>51</sup> Smith 1996:10

<sup>52</sup> Kim Il Sung 1955

“Great Leader” Kim Il Sung II has written many articles on what the Juche idea consist of and has become the chief interpreter of the state ideology. His interpretations of Juche will be presented later in this paper.

In relation to China, Juche meant that North Korea distanced itself from Chinese policies and events, like for example the Cultural Revolution, and Juche would also mean that when China under Deng Xiaoping embarked on economic reforms, North Korea had no intention to follow suit. Although it may seem very simple at first, Juche is actually a very complex idea, however not in its content but in its origin, It is the historical events that lie behind the creation of Juche that is the key to understanding it, both from a political realist point of view as well as from that of comparative historical analysis. Juche is an integral part of North Korean politics, economy and military, and has arguably been a defining factor in the development of the political relationship between North Korea and China. This will be further discussed in the analysis.

#### **4.3 The collapse of the communist bloc, the death of Kim Il Sung and the “Arduous March”**

The 1990s started in the worst possible manner for North Korea as it witnessed the Tiananmen incident in China in 1989, and two years later the final fall of the Soviet Union. China opened up diplomatic ties with South Korea in August 1992, in 1994 Kim Il Sung suddenly died of a heart attack and plunged the whole nation out into sorrow, mourning and a shock-like state. His son, Kim Jong Il, “the Dear Leader” who had been groomed for the job since the 1970s, replaced his father and a country in grave economic stagnation and decline. Then the public food distribution system (PDS) more or less broke down in the mid-nineties as a result of the “Great Famine”. The Great Famine or “The Arduous March” or “March of Tribulation” as it was sometimes called by official propaganda, was a series of natural disasters including floods and droughts, that combined with poor economic and agricultural management led to about 10 percent of the North Korean population starving to death. There are no exact numbers as there are no official data on this incident. At a Unicef Conference in Beijing in 2001, the estimate was claimed to be 220.000 by one of Pyongyang’s deputy foreign ministers. However, other estimates said that it could be anywhere from 270.000 up to 3.000.000 people.<sup>53</sup> In an open report from 1998 to the chairman of the International Relations Committee in the House of Representatives in the U.S. it was said that every year, between

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<sup>53</sup> Asia Times Online. North Korea’s Kim-made famine



300,000-800,000 people have died. (Peaking in 1997.)<sup>54</sup> The breakdown of the PDS proceeded more or less as the following: As harvests failed, the rations became smaller and smaller and people had to look elsewhere for food. Thus, the illegal trading of food and commodities accelerated and soon became the main instrument for average North Koreans to provide for themselves. The PDS never got back to what it used to be even after the worst parts of the famine were over, even though North Korea had received massive amounts of aid, not just from China, but from several NGO's as well. Buying and selling food and commodities was done on the black market and it had become the main source of distribution in the once centrally planned economy of North Korea. This is what is described as "the movement from below" in the paper "Reform from Below" by Marcus Noland and Stephan Haggard from 2009.<sup>55</sup> The famine and the breakdown of the PDS, along with the fall of the Soviet Union, meant that North Korea became increasingly dependent on foreign aid, and the only reliable (and acceptable) source for the amounts of aid that was needed was China. Although North Korea managed to muddle through the great famine and the fact that some estimate that an incredible 10 percent of the population starved to death, the country has never been able to even come near its Juche ideals of complete self-reliance. Economically speaking, North Korea has become more and more dependent on Chinese aid and trade, and this dependency intensified especially after the 2002 United Nations sanctions after suspicions of the development of nuclear weapons by North Korea, and it intensified even further when the conservative Lee Myung-bak ended the South Korean Sunshine Policy<sup>56</sup> towards North Korea. The problem for the Chinese is that they have become trapped in a situation where they cannot stop their aid flow to North Korea. This is pointed out among other places, in the book "North Korea: Politics of regime survival", edited by Young Whan Kihl and Hong Nack Kim:

"As one senior Chinese leader said to a visiting U.S. scholar in the context of expressing China's opposition to any economic sanctions on North Korea, "We can either send food to North Korea or they will send refugees to us – either way we feed them. It is easier to feed them in North Korea than in China.""<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> International Relations Committee. Final Report 1998

<sup>55</sup> Noland, Haggard 2009

<sup>56</sup> The Sunshine Policy was a focus on a less confrontational stance against North Korea including economic aid and co-operation and promises of the South not seeking to absorb the North. Initiated by Kim Dae-jung in 1998 and carried on by Roh Moo-hyeon until 2008.

<sup>57</sup> Kihl, Kim 1996:197

Although North Korea and China has become closer tied in regards of aid, and economic assistance (North Korea has become closer to China that is, not the other way around) China has distanced itself from North Korea in the political and military part of the relationship. Samuel S. Kim is a senior research scholar at the East Asian Institute of Columbia University. He was formerly a professor at Princeton University and he writes in Kihl and Kim's book:

“Since 1992, the main overall challenge has remained the same: how to translate China's preference for peninsular status-quo-cum-stability by maintaining a “special relationship” with Pyongyang while at the same time promoting and expanding “normal state relations” with Seoul.”<sup>58</sup>

According to Kim, China did not have much leverage over Pyongyang in the early nineties due to several factors, but mainly due to China's switch to a two Koreas policy, rather than just being pro-DPRK. However, around the turn of the millennia, the relationship began to normalize, signified by several visits by high ranking officials, including President Jiang Zemin's visit to North Korea in 2001 – a very rare gesture – Mao Zedong never visited, Deng Xiaoping visited only three times and Jiang Zemin himself had only been on one visit to North Korea before in 1990.<sup>59</sup> This can however also be seen as a Chinese reaction to their souring relationship with the United States on background of the 1999 U.S. bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade<sup>60 61</sup> and the “apology controversy” following the spy-plane incident over Hainan in 2001.<sup>62</sup>

A vital remnant of the Korean War is the 1961 PRC-DPRK Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance,<sup>63</sup> and it was during the Cold War that the expression that China and North Korea were “as close as lips and teeth” were used by among others Premier Zhou Enlai.<sup>64</sup> Following the declaration of this treaty, visits from high ranking officials continued if not accelerated, but in 1995, shortly after Kim Il Sung's death in 1994, during Jiang Zemin's visit to South Korea, it was strongly hinted that the treaty was more or less dead. As is described by Kihl and Kim:

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<sup>58</sup> Kihl, Kim 2006:184

<sup>59</sup> Kihl, Kim 2006 186-187

<sup>60</sup> Chinese ministry of Foreign Affairs - Strong Protest by the Chinese Government Against The Bombing by the US-led NATO of the Chinese Embassy in the Federal Yugoslavia

<sup>61</sup> This incident is described as an accident by the U.S., but the explanations for the accident were never generally believed or accepted in Chinese public opinion.

<sup>62</sup> Hang 2001

<sup>63</sup> See appendix for a copy of the original treaty

<sup>64</sup> Kihl, Kim 2006:188

(...) a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson stated that the alliance did not commit Chinese troops to defending North Korea; Beijing wanted it known that it would not support Pyongyang if North Korea attacked South Korea.”<sup>65</sup>

In principle however, this treaty is still in effect. Just the fact that it has not been changed can tell us something about the relationship between the two countries because of what Russia did in 2001. In the year 2001, Russia signed the "Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighbourlines and Cooperation" which replaced the formal alliance from 1961. This was, according to a paper in *Comparative Strategy Journal* from 2010, done because Russia wanted an equally distanced relationship with South Korea as with North Korea.<sup>66</sup> The fact that China has changed its original treaty in similar fashion reveals that China is not willing to officially change its position towards North Korea or upset its ally.

To summarize the development of the political relationship between North Korea and China since the creation of DPRK in 1949, it can be said that it started out very close with the Chinese involvement in the Korean War, and since then it has gradually become less and less close. However, North Korea has become more dependent on China at the same time as China has distanced itself from North Korea. There is a big paradox that the more North Korea becomes dependent on China and Chinese aid and backing in political questions, the more China becomes bound to support North Korea to ensure its continued existence as a state. This paradox will be discussed thoroughly in the analysis.

## **5.0 The modern relationship: 2000 to 2010**

A big part of the political relationship between North Korea and China during the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century revolved around the Six-Party Talks that lasted from 2003 to 2007 and counted six rounds in total. Another big factor was the continued stagnation in the North Korean economy. North Korea implemented some market-economic reforms in 2002, and world opinion believed that the country was on its way to follow in China's footsteps and gradually open up its economy. Despite this perception and two trips made by Kim Jong Il to China in the early 2000s to inspect the Chinese style of socialism and special economic zones, the North Korean economy remained as broken as ever. In 2005 the reforms were reversed, and in late 2009 a currency devaluation sought to deprive North Korean private market traders, smugglers and entrepreneurs of their capital. By the end of the decade it was clearer

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<sup>65</sup> Kihl, Kim 2006:188

<sup>66</sup> Joo 2001

than ever that North Korea had no intention in following China's style of market economy socialism, at least not from an official initiative. However, the private markets and illegal black market trading and smuggling across the Chinese – North Korean border being driven on by the movement from below could still play a big part in the future of the relationship.

### **5.1 The Six Party Talks, nuclear tests, missile tests, UN sanctions and visits to China**

“By virtue of agreeing to hold the Six-Party Talks in Beijing, China has become more than an equal partner. It has assumed a greater role as intermediary or third party attempting to fulfill a diplomatic settlement between the DPRK and other participants of the United States, South Korea, Japan and Russia.”<sup>67</sup>

In short, the Six-Party Talks was centered on the five other parties, China, USA, Russia, Japan and South Korea wanting North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons program and achieve a denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. The situation arose when North Korea withdrew from the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 2003. North Korea on the other hand claimed to have pursued nuclear ambitions for self defense and deterrence from the U.S. North Korea wanted recognition from the U.S. and assurance that the U.S. would not attack North Korea. Thus it was a more or less of a stalemate from the start, as the U.S. was not interested in giving such a guarantee or backing down from its demands for a dismantling of the North Korean nuclear weapons program. At the same time, North Korea was not interested in doing so, unless it received more in return than the U.S. was willing to give up. The Six-Party Talks was centered on the conflict between North Korea and the U.S., but it was China that served as the host, took the initiative and acted as chairman of the talks.

On October 9<sup>th</sup> 2006 North Korea conducted an underground nuclear test, according to KCNA (Korean Central News Agency), the official North Korean mouthpiece.<sup>68</sup> The test itself was relatively small, less than one kiloton and was confirmed by radioactivity in the air,<sup>69</sup> although it was suspected that the test was a misfire and was initially planned to be bigger. The Chinese Foreign Ministry released a press statement that condemned the action, and condemned North Korea for ignoring international laws, at the same time as they urged all

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<sup>67</sup> Kihl, Kim 2006: 248

<sup>68</sup> Korean Central News Agency

<sup>69</sup> Bloomberg. North Korea Nuclear Test Confirmed by U.S. Intelligence Agency

parties for a “calm response”<sup>70</sup> and “peaceful talks”,<sup>71</sup> in other words to continue with the Six-Party Talks.

On May 25<sup>th</sup> 2009 North Korea conducted a second nuclear test. According to Xinhua, the official press agency of the government in China released a statement referring to the government’s reaction to North Korea’s second nuclear test:

“”The DPRK ignored universal opposition of the international community and once more conducted the nuclear test. The Chinese government is resolutely opposed to it," the statement said.”<sup>72</sup>

It can also be speculated in that China agreed to host the Six Party Talks not just because of its interest in North Korea, but also because China wanted to achieve closer ties with the U.S. and make an effort in the global political landscape. At the same time it can be said that China’s main goal was most likely to ensure the stability of the Korean peninsula. It is however no doubt that China contributed heavily to the Six-Party Talks and was actively searching for a solution. As Samuel S. Kim writes in an open report to the Strategic Studies institute:

“The Chinese are reported to have made an exceptional effort in the fourth round of talks—the most important and extended round to date—mobilizing a professional work team of about 200 experts from nine departments or bureaus in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These diplomats all spent day and night working on successive drafts of a joint statement of principles, pulling together the lowest common denominator among views laid out by the six parties in the behind-the-scenes negotiations, which included an unprecedented half-dozen bilateral meetings between U.S. and North Korean diplomats.”<sup>73</sup>

Samuel S. Kim continues and suggests that China used its influence to persuade Pyongyang to moderate its rhetoric and actions during the talks, as well as convincing them to downsize their demands for a non-aggression treaty from the United States. This was the core of North Korea’s demands from the start, as well as the demand of being removed from the United States’ list of states sponsoring terrorism. However, China could not convince North Korea

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<sup>70</sup>Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China. 中华人民共和国外交部声明 (Announcement from the Chinese People’s Republic Foreign Ministry )

<sup>71</sup> Xinhua. China resolutely opposes DPRK’s nuclear test,

<sup>72</sup> Xinhua. Chinese gov’t "resolutely opposes" DPRK's nuclear test

<sup>73</sup> Kim 2007:12

not to go through with its nuclear test firing on October 9<sup>th</sup> 2006 or the test launch of several long-reaching ballistic missiles on July the 5<sup>th</sup> the same year.<sup>74</sup> North Korea, on the other hand, defended their nuclear test and claimed it was purely for self-defence. North Korea's summarized statement on the nuclear test stated among other things that:

“The DPRK has already declared that it would take all necessary countermeasures to defend the sovereignty of the country and the dignity of the nation from the Bush administration's vicious hostile actions.”<sup>75</sup>

In 2009 North Korea officially said it would withdraw and not enter another round of the Six-Party Talks after heavy criticism from the UN Security Council following its satellite launch, which was accused of being a test-launch for long range missiles by North Korea's neighbours.<sup>76</sup>

## **5.2 Cheonan and Yeonpyeong**

On March 26<sup>th</sup> the South Korean Navy Corvette Cheonan broke in two and sank in the Yellow Sea, killing 46 South Korean seamen. The general opinion in the West and in South Korea was that this was due to a torpedo attack by a North Korean submarine, and an international independent committee (however working in close contact with South Korean authorities) also concluded that this was the most likely cause, although there were no absolute clues.<sup>77</sup>

On November 23<sup>rd</sup> there was an exchange of artillery fire between the North and South. On the Yeonpyeong island belonging to South Korea four people were killed by the North Korean artillery.<sup>78</sup> The South claimed that North Korea had attacked first because of a South Korean military drill where South Korean artillery grenades had been fired into the water, but North Korea officially stated that they had been directly attacked by the South and had merely returned the fire.<sup>79</sup> China did not take any clear stand in any of these incidents and Russia also joined in with the Chinese opinion and questioned the findings of the investigation of the Cheonan sinking.<sup>80</sup> China said that the death of the South Korean sailors was a tragedy, and warned against escalation and confrontation after the shelling of the Yeonpyeong islands. China wanted to remain on the side and did not want to get drawn into this conflict, because

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<sup>74</sup> Kim 2007:14

<sup>75</sup> BBC. N Korea statement on nuclear test

<sup>76</sup> BBC. BBC Timeline North Korea

<sup>77</sup> Wooksik Cheong 2010

<sup>78</sup> Yonhap News. Two civilians found dead on S. Korean island shelled by N. Korea

<sup>79</sup> Korean Central News Agency. KPA Supreme Command Issues Communiqué,

<sup>80</sup> Wooksik Cheong 2010

then it would have to choose a side between the two, and for the time being, China would like to maintain a good relationship to both parties, both North and South.

### **5.3 Wikileaks**

In the end of 2010 Wikileaks revealed several documents that were taken by some as proof that China is indeed distancing itself from North Korea politically. According to South Korea's vice-foreign minister, two senior Chinese officials allegedly said that they wanted Korea to be unified under Seoul's control, and that this view was increasing with the leadership in Beijing as well. Another senior Chinese official said in private that the Chinese had less political influence over North Korea than what was presumed by the rest of the world, and that the Chinese public opinion was increasingly critical to its neighbour. This official also supposedly said that this was a view that was present not just in public opinion, but in the political leadership as well.<sup>81</sup> This does not however necessarily have to mean that there is a wide acceptance of this thought as the Chinese Communist Party is very large and diverse and inhabited by many different political factions with different views.

### **5.4 Economic relationship**

The economic relationship between China and North Korea can serve as an important point of reference when it comes to assessing the recent development of the political relationship between the two countries. In the last ten years, North Korea has become more and more economically dependent on China while North Korea has at the same time become less important for the Chinese.

According to statistics from the World Trade Atlas,<sup>82</sup> presented in a paper by the Congressional Research Service, China's exports and imports from North Korea has been rising steadily since around the turn of the millennia from 37.214 million dollars of imported goods in 2000 to 754.045 million dollars in 2010 and from 570.660 million dollars of exports in 2000 to 2,033.233 million dollars in 2010.<sup>83</sup> However, China's total amount of trade with North Korea has become smaller and smaller at the same time, compared to trade with other countries. In 2008, China provided around half of the total amount of North Korean imports

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<sup>81</sup> The Guardian. Wikileaks cables reveal China ready to abandon North Korea

<sup>82</sup> It is important to notice that these are estimates made by the World Trade Atlas and not accurate or 100% percent reliable data, as China does not release these data themselves. Still, the numbers are considered reliable enough by this author to be included in this paper.

<sup>83</sup> Nanto. Manyin. Dumbaugh. 2010:14

and bought a quarter of the North Korean exports.<sup>84</sup> This does not account for the smuggling across the border that is responsible for the black market trade of Chinese goods and commodities. Thus, there are good reasons to believe that the North Korean dependency on China is even bigger than these numbers suggest.<sup>85</sup> China is also the largest foreign direct investor in North Korea, excluding the on again, off again South Korean investment project in the Kaesong Industrial Complex.<sup>86</sup> For China on the other hand, the DPRK ranked 64<sup>th</sup> among China's export markets which is smaller than Egypt, Hungary or Peru. On the import side North Korea ranked just 70<sup>th</sup> which is well below countries such as Gabon or Yemen.<sup>87</sup>

## **5.5 Summary**

During the first decade of the new century, North Korea grew increasingly dependent on Chinese assistance, both politically and economically, without giving away any significant political concessions towards China. The Six Party Talks were hosted by China and held in Beijing, but even though China attempted to play the role of third part and mediator between North Korea and the United States, the situation remained more or less the same.

China's mediation diplomacy in and around the Six-Party Talks can still be said to have been decisive in creating dialogue and negotiations between the Northeast Asian States, Russia and the U.S. Unlike the nuclear standoff between North Korea and the U.S. in 1994, where China wanted the two parties to pursue bilateral talks and took a more neutral stance, this time China was active in promoting multilateral talks, even though North Korea had opted for bilateral talks with the U.S. (which the U.S. refused). This can be seen as a sign that China did not just want the conflict to be resolved; they wanted to be an active part in it. The Six-Party Talks was a historical change in the political relationship between North Korea and China and showed that China was no longer as close an ally to North Korea as they once were. China would no longer sit idly by and let North Korea do as it saw fit.

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<sup>84</sup> Nanto, Manyin, Dumbaugh 2010:13

<sup>85</sup> For complete table, see appendix

<sup>86</sup> Nanto, Manyin, Dumbaugh 2010:16

<sup>87</sup> Nanto, Manyin, Dumbaugh 2010:13



## **6.0 Analysis - How can the development of the political relationship between North Korea and China be explained? Based on the development, what can it tell about the future development of the relationship?**

### **6.1 A short summary of the historical development of the relationship**

The Korean peninsula has been under the cultural and political influence of China since ancient times, but after its division at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, only North Korea has continued the long tradition of tight political and cultural ties with China.

To summarize, North Korea was utterly dependent on China during the Korean War, but after it ceased, North Korea distanced itself politically even though it was still economically dependent on China, as well as other Soviet bloc countries, mainly the Soviet Union. North Korea assumed more or less a neutral stance in the Sino-Soviet conflict and received aid from both parties. However, after the fall of the Soviet Union and the disastrous decade of the 1990s in North Korea, China was all that was left to rely on.

### **6.2 The scope of the historical contemporary analysis**

Where is the limit of the historical comparative analysis approach? The Minsaengdan incident and the Kim Il Sung guerrilla faction can explain many of the qualities of the North Korean leadership and their political actions, but can this approach explain everything? It is possible to apply the history of Sino-Korean ties all the way back to ancient history, like Korea's place as a Chinese tributary state, and find similarities to today's relationship. It is however not assured that these similarities will be significant in any way. History can explain many of the qualities of the North Korean leadership, and links and historical similarities can be found, but it is not certain that such a comparison will be fruitful. Many of these comparisons could just as much be coincidences, as for example calling North Korea "The Hermit Kingdom", a label that was put on the Korean Choson Dynasty after it sealed itself off from European contact, or Bruce Cumings' comparison of Kim Il Sung to the famous Choson emperor Yi Song-gye.

As Hongkoo Han writes in his PhD, it is obvious that Kim Il Sung and his inner circle of guerrilla fighters that later became the core of the North Korean government, were definitely affected by the Minsaengdan incident. However, it is impossible to measure the magnitude of this impact, and as an example one can easily wonder if not any other head of state would,

just like Kim Il Sung, attempt to play China and Soviet against each other during the Cold War.

### **6.3 The scope of classical realism**

In classical realism as defined by Hobbes and Morgenthau, the world is anarchic by nature and all actors continuously struggle to gain more power. This idea can be seen in the political relationship between North Korea and China in the way that they are continuously struggling for power and to influence the other actor. China tries to persuade and use its leverage over North Korea to lower the tensions whenever conflicts with South Korea, the U.S. and Japan arise. North Korea tries to comply with Chinese advice as little as possible while at the same time not crossing the line to alienate the Chinese regime. This struggle for power and leverage can be explained by the Chinese desire for peace and stability on the Korean peninsula and the North Korean desire to follow its own set of politics and its own mode of development while receiving Chinese aid at the same time. Because these two approaches are contrasting, the two actors are locked in a struggle where they continuously try to influence each other and gain leverage. The notion of state survival and sovereignty as explained by Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff Jr. can also explain many of today's traits in North Korean politics, as for example their justification for developing nuclear weapons as well as their aggressive stance towards the U.S. and South Korea, and the goals being pursued during the Six-Party Talks.

### **6.4 The scope of the transitologist perspective**

Transitology, as presented by Rudolf L Tóké and Jordan Gans-Morse, is the comparative study of how former Soviet states in Eastern Europe underwent many of the same changes in the last years leading up to the dissolution of the Soviet Union. These were changes like for example an emerging black market that featured market economy characteristics, or a softening of the political structure. Andrei Lankov writes in his paper "The natural death of North Korean Stalinism" about how these black markets have supposedly affected North Korean authoritarianism and central planning as well. There are also many other papers on this phenomena, like the ones already mentioned by Haggard and Noland,<sup>88</sup> or Christopher D Hale's paper from 2005 entitled: "Real Reform in North Korea? The Aftermath of the July 2002 Economic Measures."<sup>89</sup> As can be seen, North Korea does share this very vital characteristic with these former Soviet states, but this is also where the similarities end. Yes,

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<sup>88</sup> Noland, Haggard 2007, 2009

<sup>89</sup> Hale 2005

there are black market upsurges just like in the former Soviet states, but North Korea does not want to incorporate it into their economy like China and these states did. Actually it did look like North Korea made an attempt to do just this with the July 1<sup>st</sup> 2002 Economic Reforms, dubbed “market reforms” by several western analysts. These reforms were seen as an opening up of the North Korean regime and the North Korean economy, but in the end everything points to the fact that North Korea did in fact not want to adjust its economy to reap the benefits of the emerging market economy from below. This is usually explained by the North Korean government’s fear of a free market leading to a flow of information about the outside world, especially South Korea and South Korean products. Such an opening up is probably rightfully feared by the government as it would show the huge differences between the two countries, and could lead to break down the picture that the North Korean propaganda tries to create. Instead North Korean officials aimed to channel all of the transactions from the black market economy into the state and centrally planned economy to get it under control. There were also some individual freedom that came along with these reforms, but in 2005 all of these reforms were reversed, and with the currency devaluation in 2009, it was clear that North Korea did not intend to follow in the footsteps of the former Soviet States or its neighbour China.

Thus the only answer that the transitologist perspective gives to the study of the development of North Korean economy and politics, is that North Korea once again followed its own route of politics – a move that has become more and more obvious for each year passing.

## **6.5 Analysis of the historical relationship up to 1949**

### ***6.5.1 The importance of the guerrilla movement and the Minsaengdan incident***

Hongkoo Han writes in his conclusion among other things that:

“In the early 1930s, the Minsaengdan incident delivered a blow to the Kando base area as fatal as the effects of an atomic bomb. (...) the survivors of the Minsaengdan incident – like the survivors of the A-bomb explosion – suffered severely and had to endure the pain of indelible wounds for generations.”<sup>90</sup>

It is clear that the collective memory of the Minsaengdan incident has contributed in some capacity to the politics of North Korea, but it is not easy to say to which degree. The only thing that is certain is that it was not the only factor that played in, no matter the magnitude

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<sup>90</sup> Hongkoo Han 1999:367

that it may have had. Looking at the Minsaengdan incident is mainly a historical comparative analysis approach to explain the later effects it has had on the North Korean policymaking. Applying realism does not make any sense because North Korea was not yet even born as a state during this time.

## **6.6 Analysis of the historical relationship from 1949 to 2000**

### ***6.6.1 The importance of Juche***

The idea of Juche was first mentioned in 1955 in a speech by Kim Il Sung, stressing the importance of neither following the Chinese, nor the Soviet way of economic and political development and government. The roots of Juche can clearly be seen to have been planted a long time ago, and the question of independence can be traced back to dynastic times. However, it is likely that the persons behind this ideology were more influenced by their own personal experiences than by the collective national memory. Still the possibility of the latter to be the defining point cannot be fully excluded, but it can be agreed upon that it is not very plausible. Another factor to take into account is that the political landscape at the time made the conditions for Juche ideal and that it was natural for North Korea to pursue its own developmental policy instead of relying on one of the greater powers. This is a political realist way of looking at it.

There are several studies on Juche and the origins of Juche and there is no room to mention them all. However there are a few worth mentioning: Brian Reynolds Myers, associate professor of international studies at Dongseo University in Busan, has written a book about North Korean ideology based on reading and watching internal propaganda in the DPRK. It is called “The Cleanest Race” and focuses solely upon how the North Koreans supposedly view themselves.<sup>91</sup> B. R. Myers suggests that Juche is nothing but a “smokescreen”, branding North Korean society as purely racist. The ethnocentrism and racism he describes is meant to be able to explain every aspect of North Korean economy, military and other political choices. Presenting Juche as a cover-up for nationalism is not necessarily right and may be overly simplistic. Although self-sustainment and isolation can be seen as an extreme form of nationalism, and the North Korean population probably is the most ethnically homogeneous in the whole world, it is easy to argue that these aspects are just as much formed by other factors as it is blind ethnocentrism. As can be easily pointed out, racial ideology is for example certainly not unique to North Korea. It is not to be said that the North Korean propaganda that

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<sup>91</sup> Myers 2010

Myers have studied isn't nationalistic, racist and xenophobic.<sup>92</sup> However, to claim that paranoia and nationalism has not just influenced, but been the sole driving force behind every aspect of political decision-making for over 60 years is in danger of being overly simplistic, especially when this nationalism is not explained very well in depth. If Myers is rather one-dimensional in his characteristics, then Han S. Park, Ph.D. at department of International Affairs at the University of Georgia presents a more multi-faceted explanation. In his book "The politics of unconventional wisdom", he claims that Juche is not just a political ideology. It is presented as a genuine religion with a god and an afterlife. Transcendentalism may be achieved when an individual is remembered by the people for its sacrifices for national or social courses; in other words: martyrdom is a way to achieve eternal life – to be forever remembered by the people of North Korea.<sup>93</sup> This is how Kim Il Sung lives forever with the Korean people and forever will rule as the eternal president.

However, the most important factor in the belief system of Juche is, according to Park, not its transcendentalism and theological qualities; it is indeed nationalism. The North Korean nationalism is hostile against the "imperialist" United States and promotes the sovereignty of the Korean people. This goes so far that Korea is viewed as a chosen land, that North Koreans are told that world civilization evolved from Korea and that they are the leaders of the third world, the last stance of socialism and independence. North Korean nationalism is thus described by Park as "ultra-ethnocentric."<sup>94</sup> This is what Juche looks like today. However, Park points out the historical factors that he means has formed Juche.

The evolution of Juche went from "Anti-Japanism" from the mid-1920s to the 1950s, then "Anti-hegemonism" in the decade following the Korean War, appearing as a nationalist ideology in the late 1960s and much of the 1970s and then as "Paternalist Socialism" beginning with the sixth party congress in 1980. This phase set the stage for Kim Jong Il's official promotion to the leadership and eventual succession. Finally Juche, according to Park evolved into "a legitimate Weltanschauung with a philosophical structure."<sup>95</sup> Another factor that formed Juche was a sort of an identity crisis after WW2 when Koreans had nothing to identify themselves with as their land had been ruled by the Japanese and were split between Washington on the one side and Moscow on the other. The charisma of Kim Il Sung is yet

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<sup>92</sup> For an extreme example of North Korean racial hygiene the story about the four American defectors in Pyongyang is a striking tale. (Appendix)

<sup>93</sup> Park 2002:36

<sup>94</sup> Park 2002:31-32

<sup>95</sup> Park 2002:20-27

another factor, and the fact that he is the ruler with the longest reign in modern time (46 years). Furthermore, North Korea is according to itself the last genuine social system left and therefore has a sacred mission to save humanity from capitalism and the moral and spiritual decay that follows in its wake.<sup>96</sup>

The idea of a strong sense of collectivism between all Koreans is very apparent in Juche ideology and it is described as analogous to fish in a fishbowl by Park. The fish are the North Koreans and the bowl is the state – the only thing keeping the fish safe.<sup>97</sup> Political self-determination and nationalism go hand in hand for North Korea. Liberating South Korea is in the sake of the nation, unifying the Korean people, making them free and whole is the ultimate goal, much more than socialism and equal distribution.<sup>98</sup>

The philosophical principles of Juche, which also explains the transcendental qualities of it, is according to Park that classical communist class consciousness has been substituted with national consciousness, a consciousness that supersedes all other forms of beliefs and legitimises all forms for political purges within North Korea. The nationalism is founded upon the struggle and the rejection of foreign hegemonic powers; first Japan and then the United States. China is not mentioned in this setting, probably because it is not a “hegemonic power”, but the Korean guerrilla’s relationship with China during the anti-Japanese struggle could very well have been mentioned in this setting. The North Korean nationalism and anti-foreignism is so strong that it has, according to Park, acquired a form of self-affirmation. The result is that every North Korean individual is not worthy of life if they are deprived by their nation because the North Korean state as it exists today is an invisible and sacred entity. Therefore, complete loyalty to the nation supposedly supersedes all other forms of behavioural orientation.<sup>99</sup>

Neither of these two views mentions the Minsaengdan incident and the relationship between the Korean guerrillas and the Chinese. Han S. Park touches indirectly upon the subject when he talks about anti-Japanism. B.R. Myers also touches indirectly upon the subject when he talks about the Korean nationalism but only in the sense that some of it may have been the result of the Minsaengdan incident. However, he attributes these feelings to be anti-Japanese. Although the Japanese are strongly resented in the North Korean national collective memory

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<sup>96</sup> Park 2002:44-49

<sup>97</sup> Park 2002:35

<sup>98</sup> Park 2002:98

<sup>99</sup> Park 2002:32

for their actions during the colonial period and WW2, it seems inadequate to base over 60 years of policymaking in this assumption alone. If one were to explain Juche based on nationalism, it would have made more sense to include the Minsaengdan incident and Kim Il Sung and his guerrillas' relationship with China, both before and after the formation of the DPRK. There are two reasons for this: The first is that almost all of the people constituting the North Korean core government had been victims of both Chinese and Soviet racial discrimination and betrayal – from people that were supposed to be on their side in the fight against the Japanese. The second reason is that the implementation of Juche came at a time when North Korea had minimal economical and political connections with Japan anyway.

### ***6.6.2 Kim Jong Il and the official North Korean view on Juche***

Kim Jong Il inherited the position as “Dear Leader” from his father, the “Great Leader.” He has held several speeches on Juche and in these speeches he presents himself as the highest authority on the subject, correcting other Juche theoreticians. According to Juche as it is presented by Kim Jong Il:

- Every nation in the world is independent – and every of these nations are made up of people of the same ethnicity.
- “Inequality occurs when the independence of nations is trampled upon.”
- In a capitalist society where the individuals of the same ethnicity are split into different classes, national unity can not be achieved.
- Every nation should develop by itself to become strong, prosperous etc. by the means of socialism.<sup>100</sup>

“Man is the master of everything and decides everything.”<sup>101</sup>

This is probably the most frequent cited sentence from Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il's Juche interpretation and it is also meant to explain the Juche ideology as a whole in just one sentence. It fits with Park's reference to the fishbowl analogy. Every individual is a part of the state (bowl) and the state is also the master of everything as it is supposed to be an extension of every individual North Korean. The notion is used to explain that man is the only animal capable of forming social groups, societies and nations. This is the basis upon which the idea of a strong and nationalistic state is built.

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<sup>100</sup> Kim Jong Il 1982, 1990, 1997

<sup>101</sup> Kim Jong Il 1982

Juche insists on being a continuation of and an improvement of Marxism and Leninism. However, the Juche worldview claims to defy the Marxist notion that class struggle and social movement is based on economical differences between the proletariat and the capitalists. Instead it preaches that man is a “social being” and that collectivism, which becomes the natural pre-requisite for socialism, is an innate quality; a priori if you like. Man is born with a sense of collectivism and this collectivism is not triggered by economical inequality or injustice.<sup>102</sup>

The a priori collectivism preached by Juche can be said to fit well in with any description of nationalism, racism or ethnocentrism. Man is a social being and although Juche does not have a blueprint for how to organise all the different ethnic groups in the world who may be fit to stay together in a social movement, it is both implicit and explicit that all Koreans belong to the same social movement, and that they have this innate wish, almost like a biological instinct for belonging together:

“Those who have the blood and soul of the Korean nation must link their own destiny with the destiny of the country and nation and fight devoting body and soul for the independent reunification of the country and the prosperity of the nation, no matter which class and strata they belong to and which social system they live in and whether they live at home or abroad.”<sup>103</sup>

Kim Jong Il and the official North Korean view of Juche bases the Juche idea on nationalism and ethnocentrism, as does B.R. Meyers. Han S. Park presents a more historically founded view that certainly contains elements of classical realism, but ultimately his explanations are also grounded in the North Korean nationalism. Hongkoo Han’s analysis of the Minsaengdan incident is useful as a link to understanding how a portion of this nationalism can be directly linked to the historical relationship with China.

As can be seen from the different approaches to Juche presented in this analysis, the emergence of Juche can be explained by two major different approaches:

- The idea that Juche was born out of the collective memory of the Korean nation and the experiences of the North Korean leaders during the anti-Japanese struggle in the 1930s.

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<sup>102</sup> Kim Jong Il 1982

<sup>103</sup> Kim Jong Il 1997



- The idea that Juche was a natural response to the political climate at the time.

The first idea marks the historical contemporary analysis approach and the second idea is that of a more classical realist approach. The most obvious answer is of course to say that it was not just one or the other, but a combination of the two. However, had there been no historical justifications for Juche, there could not have been a combination of the two. So, it can be argued that the historical incidents, especially those of whom Kim Il Sung participated in, and also to a degree, the collective national memory and Korea's place in the world in earlier times, laid the basis for the birth of Juche, or at least a sort of moral justification for it. Later, the political realist conditions for Juche became more solid as the Cold War evolved and the Sino-Soviet split became obvious, and finally the justification for Juche did not look as far-fetched as it may seem to outsiders today. It can therefore be argued that the birth of Juche was in a great part born out of the development of the political relationship between North Korea and China.

Juche meant that North Korea pursued an extremely isolationistic strategy both politically, economically and militarily, and it ultimately led to North Korea losing the economic development battle with South Korea, which it had actually led in the years after the Korean War. The North Korean economic growth slowed down and stagnated because of the limitations of the Juche economy and North Korea became more and more dependent on aid. When the Soviet Union was dissolved, the defeat of the Juche economy was final, and a big part of the 1990s great famine could be attributed to Juche economy and Juche politics. North Korea has in many ways continued to pursue the Juche ideology by continued economic and political isolation, because Juche has become so deep-rooted in the North Korean nation that it can't be easily cast aside. This is a big part of why North Korea is so hesitant to any reforms that may change the current conditions in the country.

As the second approach points out, Juche does also have a considerable political realist explanation, which can be seen by looking at the political world at the time and events such as the Korean War, the Cold War and the Sino-Soviet split. These are all incidents that made the northern part of the Korean peninsula an ideal prospect for a project on extreme isolationism and attempted self-sufficiency. The North Korean nationalism may also be understood from a realist perspective, as the desire for independence and sovereignty is the backbone of the state, as explained by Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff Jr.

The exact origins of Juche may be disputed, but what can be agreed upon is that a considerable portion of it came from the historical development of the political relationship with China. It came both from the relationship between the Korean guerillas and the Chinese in Manchuria in the 1930s, and from the realist policies pursued by North Korea during the Cold War and the Sino-Soviet split. Still, no matter the exact origins, Juche politics has probably been the most influential factor in shaping North Korean politics and thus the North Korean political relationship with China.

## **6.7 Analysis of the historical relationship from 2000 to 2010**

### ***6.7.1 The results of the Six-Party Talks***

The only result of the Six-Party Talks, if there can be said that there even were any significant results, were that China distanced itself from North Korea and fronted itself as a “responsible great power”, a phrase that these days is heard more and more often in Chinese media and more and more often spoken by Chinese officials. From the North Korean point of view, the Six-Party Talks cannot really be explained by transitology or comparative historical analysis. The historical reasons for North Korea to develop nuclear weapons as a deterrent may be said to be the collective memories of the Korean War, but classical realism explains why North Korea tried to force the U.S. into concession by developing nuclear capabilities. This was a very clear example of a classical realist power struggle.

## **6.8 The development of the relationship from the North Korean side**

The North Korean approach to China is both of a realist and a historical nature. At the same time as there still exists a strong national collective memory of the Minsaengdan incident and the Korean War, there are also some very practical and real challenges that lie before the North Korean government. Some of the political decisions, such as the brinkmanship strategy with the United States and China are not just born out of a collective national memory, but also born out of a desperate need for foreign capital, recognition from the United States and lifting of the United Nations economic sanctions imposed on the country. These are very real problems that any state would find undesirable and attempt to find a solution to, regardless of historical background.

## 6.9 North Korea's "survival strategy" and how China fits into it

China is probably seen as an ally and a kind of "political buffer state" between North Korea and the rest of the world. Had it not been for the existence of the Chinese state, then there would likely have been a much more hostile view on North Korea by its regional neighbours and also in the world as a whole. China functions internationally as a sort of mediator or a shock-absorber between North Korea and the rest of the world. This can be seen among other places in the Six-Party Talks, where it was China that arranged the whole process and convinced the other parties to join. The Six-Party talks were not just an attempt by China, Russia, Japan, South Korea and the United States to disarm North Korea's nuclear capabilities. It was also a North Korean attempt to gain acceptance and economic benefits from the other five parties, mainly the United States. In the end it did not go quite as planned for any of the parties, but the possibilities were created by China's role as mediator for North Korea. Other recent examples of China cooling the international climate around North Korea are the two incidents in 2010, when the South Korean navy ship Cheonan sank and 46 South Koreans died, and the Chinese reaction to the shelling of the Yeonpyeong islands in late 2010 as well as the reaction to the North Korean nuclear tests in 2006 and 2009. Most of the international community, including the Western nations and their allies, joined in the assumption that North Korea was behind the sinking of the Cheonan, and an international independent investigation (made up of five countries, including South Korea)<sup>104</sup> also confirmed that this was the most likely cause. However, there were not any decisive evidence and a recent survey carried out by the conservative South Korean group DailyNK (which advocates "democratization" of North Korea) shows that even as many as 3 in 10 South Koreans believe that North Korea did not sink the Cheonan. The cause that most of these people believe in is that the Cheonan ran aground or was hit by a South Korean mine.<sup>105</sup> North Korea denied any involvement and China also avoided to pass any guilt. The same happened after the shelling of the Yeonpyeong islands when four South Koreans were killed by North Korean artillery. This time the question was who had started the provocations and again China avoided taking any side in the conflict, simply stating that the loss of lives were tragic and that the parties should get together for peaceful negotiations. That China did not take any side, was the same as taking North Korea's side as it was one of the few countries in the world not to condemn North Korea. However, China did not defend North Korea's actions

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<sup>104</sup> BBC. North Korea welcomes UN statement on Cheonan sinking

<sup>105</sup> DailyNK. 3 in 10 Don't Trust Cheonan Result

and this was a further sign of China's function as a mediator and a hot air vent for North Korea, as such an action would clearly have intensified the situation. The North Korean government cannot fully count on Chinese support, but they can always count on that China will try its best to defuse any difficult situations. This is how China fits into North Korea's strategy of aggression and confrontation followed by calls for negotiation and cooperation, followed again by aggression and confrontation and so on. This is an approach that is easily explained by classical realism. Just like in the Six-Party Talks, North Korean politics are governed by a realist approach – their ultimate goal is to gain influence and leverage, mainly over the U.S. and thus achieve their goals of economic and political stabilization. Even though contributing to the conflict, North Korea knows that it can rely on China as long as it does not go too far. In addition to this realist approach, it can be mentioned that there are also examples of North Korea playing on its history with China to draw on Chinese sympathy and emphasize the strategic position of North Korea, like for example the North Korean official memorial service of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Mao's son (who was killed in the Korean War and is buried in Pyongyang), Mao Anying, as reported by Chinese and North Korean media.<sup>106 107</sup> (This ceremony, suspiciously to some, came only two days after the Yeonpyeong islands incident.)<sup>108</sup>

### **6.10 The development of the relationship from the Chinese side**

The political relationship between China and North Korea has gone from being “as close as lips and teeth”, and communist allies in the fight against “U.S. imperialism” in the Korean War, to today's situation where North Korea is seen simply as a burden in the eyes of many Chinese. When you ask a regular Chinese person today of what he or she thinks of North Korea and the state it is in, it is not unusual to hear that “North Korea is just like China was 40 or 50 years ago.” From this it can be understood that many Chinese believes that North Korea is just as capable of economic and political reform as China was. This is of course a very simplistic presentation, and there are several obstacles that stand in the way of North Korean reform that are greater than those faced by China in the 1980s. Nevertheless, there seems to be a common feeling in China that North Korea is somewhat of an anachronism in the international community and more or less a lost cause – they just don't want to reform. This view is grounded in China's own transformation from agrarian centrally planned

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<sup>106</sup> KCNA. Kim Jong Il Sends Wreath to Grave of Mao Anying

<sup>107</sup> People's Daily. Memorial ceremony to Mao Anying held in DPRK

<sup>108</sup> NK News. Remembrance as reminder? Mao's Son in N. Korea

communism under Mao Zedong to reformation, market capitalism and economic success under Deng Xiaoping and onwards. As China's total trade amount started to rise with the rest of the world compared to North Korea, the relationship became less significant. This is one of two major changes in the relationship between China and North Korea, and it is continuing to this day. The other big change is of course the end of the Cold War and the diminished role of North Korea as a buffer zone. Although there are some Chinese projects concerning raw materials and infrastructure in North Korea, there are much more lucrative deals for China to be made for example in Africa. North Korea is just not that economically important to China any longer. As mentioned earlier, China imports more goods from Gabon than they do from North Korea. However, according to a report from Crisis Group entitled "Shades of Red", China does in fact have a long-term development strategy concerning expanding its economic interests and access to North Korean raw materials, especially iron ore and coal as well as some infrastructure deals.<sup>109</sup> But then again, even if China does expand its economic interests in North Korea, it will still only contribute to a fraction of the total Chinese trade.

China's relationship with North Korea has diminished to that of a concern of how China can avoid any burden that might come, should North Korea fail as a state and, or use military force against South Korea, Japan or the United States. To avoid this, China seeks to secure the current regime. This is done through aid, political support in the form of a neutral stance in conflicts that North Korea is involved in and mediating, encouraging negotiations and a resumption of the Six-Party talks. In effect this means a continuation of the status quo. Therefore, all signs point to that China will continue to support the current change of power in North Korea from father to son in a bid to see continued stability in North Korea. Another fact that points in the same direction is that China is still officially allied to North Korea and will probably not do anything to formally change this status.

### **6.11 Why have North Korea not followed in China's footsteps of political and economical development? – Transitology meets political realism, Juche and historical comparative analysis**

This question: "Why have not North Korea followed in China's footsteps of political and economical development", is much more complex than it may seem. First of all, the two countries are not very similar, contrary to popular belief. Although they are both "communist"

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<sup>109</sup> Crisis Group. Shades of Red: China's Debate over North Korea

states, most of the similarities stop there. North Korea was after WW2 much more industrialized than China, as a result of the Japanese building almost all of their factories in Korea in the northern part of the country. China was an agrarian society and had almost infinite amounts of countryside people who could be relocated to industry. Political economist and author of several articles on North and South Korea, Nick Eberstadt explains in more detail in his book “The North Korean Economy”:

China was after the death of Mao a rural and agrarian society with a huge rural workforce ready to move into other sectors of production. North Korea was, and still is, however already urbanized and industrialized and looked more like an East European post-Soviet country than it resembled China. Post-Maoist China also had a measure of macroeconomic stability (long-term stability in the inflation rate, low interest rate and a steady increase in assets), while North Korea is one of the most unstable economies in the world today. Due to the high inflation rate, the North Korean Won is unsuitable for economic exchange, unlike the Chinese Yuan. Furthermore, of Deng Xiaoping’s four modernizations, the military, a big fund-drainer in any planned economy, was the last post on the agenda to be modernised, while North Korea today continues to pursue its military first policy (songun).<sup>110</sup> China was supported by ethnic Chinese from abroad with capital investments, entrepreneurship and technology for an easier entry into the world markets. North Korea is nowhere near having that same opportunity, and it could also be labelled as counter-revolutionary by Pyongyang.<sup>111</sup>

Furthermore, China and Vietnam (who has reformed in many ways like China) never had a southern neighbour more successful.<sup>112</sup> The DPRK leaders fear that economic reforms inevitably will lead to increased openness to the outside which will allow the population to see how dreadfully their country has been managed and that there is a better alternative south of the border. This dilemma is also well explained in the article “Is North Korea moving toward a Market Economy” by professors at Seoul University Lim Hyun-Chin and Chung Young Chul.<sup>113</sup> Another aspect of this dilemma, presented by Dae-Won Koh in his paper “Dynamics of Inter-Korean Conflict and North Korea’s Recent Policy Changes”, is that, should the state collapse, the southern neighbour is ready to annex it:

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<sup>110</sup> This policy was introduced around the turn of the millennia by Kim Jong Il to ensure that the military stays on the side of the regime. In general it means that the military has bigger influence over party politics as well as people in the military are better off than the rest of the population.

<sup>111</sup> Eberstadt 2007:228

<sup>112</sup> Taiwan has never really been seen as a threat to China based on their systemic differences

<sup>113</sup> Lim Hyun-Chin, Chung Young Chul. 2004

“(…) the leadership is in a much tighter stalemate than in the cases of the Soviet Union, China, and Vietnam, which have already adopted a system-reforming option. In those cases, the ruling elites did not strongly fear that admitting system failure and adopting radical reforms would lead to extermination of their regimes or states.”<sup>114</sup>

Still, maybe the biggest difference between China and North Korea is that China managed to normalize their relations with the USA, spur trade and investment and being able to enter the global economic markets, but North Korea can't do this today. These facts do not stop China from promoting its own experiences of economic liberalization and growth to North Korea. According to the “Shades of Red” report from Crisis Group, China has a long-term blueprint for North Korea that is based on its own model. The visit from Kim Jong Il to China's first special economic zone, Shenzhen, in January 2006, and North Korean Premier Kim Young Il's March 2009 tour of the Shandong Province, where he was shown its economic achievements, are examples of how China tries to offer its own model as an example for North Korean economic growth.<sup>115</sup> It has however not yielded any significant results so far.

## **7.0 The future of the relationship**

Predicting the future of anything that has to do with North Korea has forever been an extreme sport of political science. Things just don't seem to go as predicted and there are always surprises in how the North Korean government behaves. Since 1994 when Kim Il Sung suddenly died, everyone has been waiting for North Korea to collapse, and even though North Korea managed to muddle through the great famine and into the 2000s, the idea of a North Korea on the verge of collapse can still be seen present in most researchers' and analyst's papers. Very few people had predicted that North Korea would still be alive as a state in 2010 and very many people were wrong. This time, it is the rumoured failing health of Kim Jong Il that is the weight on the scale when it comes to analyzing North Korean future, and there is a general opinion that there will be a succession crisis when he dies and that his third son Kim Jong Un will not be up to the task of succeeding him.

### **7.1 The Chinese future approach – Chinese strategists vs. traditionalists**

Looking at the historical relationship between China and North Korea seen from the Chinese side, it can be argued that the Chinese will continue to distance themselves from North Korea.

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<sup>114</sup> Koh 2004:429

<sup>115</sup> Crisis Group. Shades of Red: China's Debate over North Korea

After the Korean War where the Chinese Volunteer's Army stepped into the conflict to save North Korea, the relationship has become less and less valuable for the Chinese. Where North Korea once was a buffer state during the Cold War, it is now probably seen more and more as a threat in the form of potential refugee flows, armed conflict and nuclear proliferation.

In a report from Crisis Group in 2009, there is presented an internal debate in China between two groups that have conflicting views on North Korea. The two groups are called traditionalists and strategists. The first group favours the traditional relationship between North Korea and China, based on historical and strategic foundations. The second group favours a more realist approach, cut off from historical traditions. Zhang Liangui, a North Korea specialist at the International Strategic Studies Institute of the Central Party School, is a representative of the strategists' position. His main arguments are that:

- China is the immediate victim of the North Korean nuclear and missile tests because of its geographical position next to North Korea.
- North Korea is both ignoring Chinese advice and interests at the same time as they are continuing to receive Chinese aid. Thus North Korea is both a strategic and economic liability.
- China should use its economic leverage to influence North Korean policy and stop "bribing" the North Korean government with aid.
- China should actively pursue a resumption of the Six-Party talks to increase its leverage over North Korea."<sup>116</sup>

The primary "traditionalist" arguments are:

- China and North Korea fought a war together against the Americans and the relationship is still like "lips and teeth".
- China should not risk damaging the relationship with an important neighbouring country.
- China must pre-empt international pressure to avoid provocative or desperate actions by Pyongyang. For the same reason China must also continue to offer economic aid to North Korea.
- North Korea is still a buffer zone against American soldiers and is still a big military strategic asset.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Zhang Liangui in: Crisis Group. *Shades of Red: China's Debate over North Korea*



Granted that such a conflict really exists internally in the Chinese Communist Party, it is not easy to predict if one of them will triumph or what degree of influence they will have. Up until now there are examples of both directions being followed: China has stood by its ally and has not made any significant moves to attempt to exert pressure or use its economic leverage to significantly change the political choices of the North Korean government. China has also stood (relatively) by North Korea's side in the recent conflicts with South Korea over the Cheonan sinking and the Yeonpyeong island shelling. However, China's strategic dependence of North Korea as a buffer zone has changed, at least in relation to what it was during the Cold War. Furthermore, China was actively attempting to persuade North Korea to exert moderation during the Six-Party Talks and also condemned the North Korean nuclear tests in 2006 and 2009. Still, it can be added that China *did* approve the appointment of Kim Jong Un, Kim Jong Il's third son to high positions and eventual succession, and in doing so, approved to the continuation of the current regime and its politics. This happened during the Korea Worker's Party Conference on September 28<sup>th</sup> 2010, and China's role in accepting the succession plans are evidenced by for example sending Zhou Yongkang, a standing member of the Chinese Politburo to express China's best wishes. He also carried with him an invitation for the new core group of North Korean leaders to visit Beijing. This is described by visiting Professor Han Dong-ho at the Korean Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security in an essay published in the South Korean monthly journal "Korea Focus".<sup>118</sup>

Although it is not easy to predict the future Chinese approach, it can be seen from the development of the relationship that China is probably not going to protect North Korea any more than it has done in the recent years. China may not actively engage in any regime threatening actions, but the question of North Korea as a strategic asset or liability will probably continue to balance the Chinese approach. It can be argued that today North Korea is more of a liability than an asset because of the changed economical and strategically situation. However, discontinuing support of the North Korean regime on the grounds that it is only a liability could lead to it becoming a much bigger liability, in the form of a highly unstable North Korea. North Korea is still seen as an asset by some in the form of its status as a buffer zone against American troops. This asset is however becoming less and less significant as the United States and China have become extremely interdependent economically and because

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<sup>117</sup> Crisis Group. Shades of Red: China's Debate over North Korea

<sup>118</sup> Han Dong-ho 2011

the Cold War ended 20 years ago. It can therefore be said that North Korea is both an asset and a liability, but the only real asset is that it is not a bigger liability than it currently is.

## **7.2 The North Korean future approach**

As has been suggested in this analysis so far, the North Korean approach to China has been governed in a great deal by historical incidents, like the Minsaengdan incident was an important factor in the process of the formation of Juche. However, the politics of today are more pragmatic. According to Northeast Asia expert Daniel Pinkston at the International Crisis Group, as he is quoted in a report written by the Council on Foreign Relations:

“The North Koreans are developing a much more realist approach to their foreign policy,” Pinkston says. “They're saying imbalances of power are dangerous and the United States has too much power--so by increasing their own power they're helping to balance out world stability. It's neorealism straight out of an international relations textbook.”<sup>119</sup>

A similar realist approach to foreign politics can be found in North Korean relations with China in the last decade. North Korea is clearly defying Chinese advice and maintaining an un-cooperative position in an attempt to gain power and to exert influence, not just over China but also over other parties. This was especially on display during the Six-Party Talks of which the essence was that North Korea was willing to trade in its nuclear weapons program only for benefits and recognition from the United States. The recent military clashes with South Korea can also be viewed in this context.

In short it could be argued that history has produced the circumstances and the current conditions. However, the current conditions may be worked at from different angles than the angles that created the historical conditions. Therefore there is a mixed approach: Although the current conditions are being worked at from a realist perspective, the present conditions cannot be escaped. Given its very special place in the globalised world today, it is a strong possibility that North Korea will continue to rely on China at the same time as continuing to balance their relationship with South Korea and the United States, shifting from provocations to peaceful approaches as it has done in the recent years. Neither political realism, historical contemporary analysis nor the transitologist approach provides any hints that North Korea will undergo a sudden political change in its relationship to China in the near future.

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<sup>119</sup> Jayshree 2010

## 8.0 Conclusion

This paper has presented a different approach in analyzing North Korean politics by looking at the historical development of the political relationship between North Korea and China. This relationship has been analyzed by three different theories where the historical comparative analysis has the biggest explanatory power. It shows how political decisions and a big portion of the political structure in North Korea can be linked to Chinese influence, and it also shows how this influence has been active in shaping the historical development of the political relationship between the two countries. The political realist approach shows how North Korea and China are locked in a struggle for influence and power over the other part and how they both have their own visions for a better future for North Korea and how to achieve it. These two views are conflicting. This is in turn showed by the transitologist perspective that shows how there is no political will in North Korea to embark on political or economic reforms similar to the Chinese reforms in the 1980's, or those of any other previously communist state. Therefore, it is hard to predict any radical changes in the future of the political relationship between the two countries. However, based on the historical development, it can be suggested that North Korea will continue to resist Chinese pressure in political decisions, but at the same time North Korea is becoming more and more dependent on Chinese economical and political support. This paradox will not necessarily reach any climax because China is not ready to see the North Korean state collapse at any time in the near future. The only thing that can be predicted, based on the historical development of the political relationship, is that the struggle for influence over the other part will continue. History has laid the foundation for today's politics and this can be easiest seen in the North Korean Juche-inspired seemingly never-changing political structure. Today's and tomorrow's politics are formed by a political realist approach by both parts, inside the framework that has been constructed by the historical development of the very special political relationship between North Korea and China.



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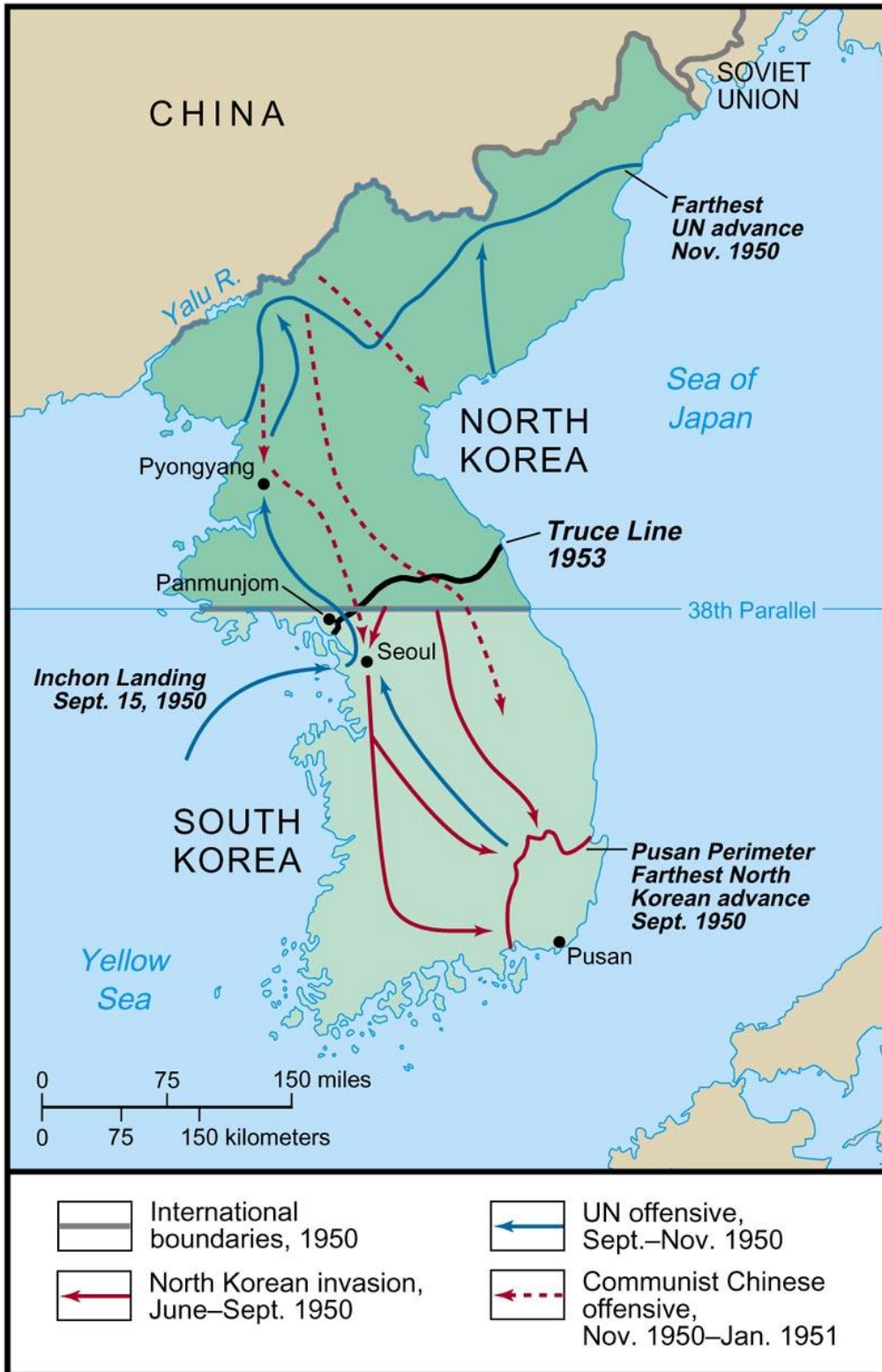
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## Appendix

### The Japanese occupation of East Asia



Retrieved from: [http://images.wikia.com/war/images/6/65/Japanese\\_Empire2.png](http://images.wikia.com/war/images/6/65/Japanese_Empire2.png) (accessed 21.04.2011)



## THE KOREAN WAR, 1950-1953

Retrieved from: [http://www.unit5.org/hills/korean\\_war\\_historical\\_applicatio.htm](http://www.unit5.org/hills/korean_war_historical_applicatio.htm) (accessed 21.04.2011)

Today



Retrieved from: <http://www.mytravelguide.com/g/maps/Far-East-Asia-map.gif> (accessed 21.04.2011)

**Timeline of incidents regarding the Sino-North Korean relationship mentioned in this paper:**

2,000 B.C	The first archeological sign of this influence is the spread of a new pottery culture with painted designs that spread from China to Korea.
1,000 – 900 B.C	The appearance of rice cultivation during the Bronze Age in Korea
57 B.C.– 995 A.D	Silla. Tributary in some form to different Chinese dynasties.
37 B.C.– 668 A.D	Koguryo. Tributary in some form to different Chinese dynasties.
18 B.C.– 660 A.D	Paekche. Tributary in some form to different Chinese dynasties.
1271 – 1368	The Chinese Mongol Yuan Dynasty rising to power in China and capturing the Korean Koryo Dynasty as a tribute state.
1592	Japanese forces landed at Pusan in vast numbers in the spring.
1593	The Ming Chinese army came with 50.000 men and won a victory at Haengju.
1597	The Japanese launched another attack, but were again repelled by the Koreans and the Ming Army.
1627	The Manchu Qing dynasty launched their first invasion on Korea in and Korea eventually assumed the position of tributary state to the Qing Dynasty.
1894	On July 23 the Sino-Japanese war broke out with Japanese forces seizing the Korean royal palace,
1895	April 17 <sup>th</sup> 1895 the war ended with total victory for Japan. The Qing Dynasty was forced to acknowledge Korea’s full independence and the long tradition of Sino-Korean tributary relations was finally broken.
1912	Kim Song Ju (Kim Il Sung) was born.
1933 – 1936	Over 1,000 Koreans were expelled from the Chinese Communist Party as suspects of being members of, or collaborating with the Minsaengdan and between 500 and 2,000 Koreans were executed. Kim Il Sung himself was also arrested
1940 –	Kim Il Sung was a major in active duty in the Soviet Red Army, but was

1947	stationed in the Soviet Union
1948	Kim Il Sung became the leader of the Korean People's Army (KPA) at its founding on February 8 <sup>th</sup> 1948.
1949	Kim Il Sung was hailed "supreme leader" at the first anniversary of the Korean Workers Communist Party, meaning he was officially in charge of the whole country.
1950-1953	The Korean War
1955	Kim Il Sung mentions the "Juche" idea in a speech for the first time
1961	Kim Il Sung and Zhou Enlai signs a treaty of friendship between the two countries and a week later a similar treaty were signed with the Soviet Union.
1962 – 1963	The DPRK starts shifting more and more towards relying on and siding with China. The official North Korean newspaper Rodong Sinmun in October heavily criticized the Soviet position towards China. On 27 January the same newspaper denounced Khrushchev for arguing for "peaceful coexistence", and the North Korean leadership denounced the Soviet "capitulation" in the Cuban missile crisis.
1964	Khrushchev lost power to Brezhnev in 1964 and North Korea wanted to build a new relationship with the new political leadership in the Kremlin.
1966	The Great Leap Forward that culminates in the Cultural Revolution. It brought with itself chaos and many Red Guard publications that were negative to North Korea and its rather un-revolutionary government.
1991	The Soviet Union falls apart.
1994	Kim Il Sung dies.
1995 – 1999	The Arduous March / The Great Famine / The March of Tribulation – some estimates show that as many or maybe even more than 10% of the population starves to death.
2001	Chinese President Jiang Zemin visits North Korea, and it signifies a better relationship.
2002	North Korea implements "market reforms" in an attempt to control the black market economy.
2003 – 2007	The Six Party Talks. (Six rounds in total)

2006	North Korea conducts its first underground nuclear test and test-fires several long-range ballistic missiles.
2009	North Korea conducts its second underground nuclear test.
2009	North Korea states that it will not enter another round of the Six-Party Talks.
2009	North Korea implements a currency devaluation in an attempt to wipe out all black market trading and private entrepreneurs.
2010	The South Korean navy corvette Cheonan is sunk. North Korea denies any involvement although the Western world is condemning it as a torpedo attack. China assumes takes a neutral stance.
2010	China approves the appointment and eventual succession of Kim Jong Un, Kim Jong Il's son to high positions and eventual succession during the Korea Worker's Party Conference on September 28 <sup>th</sup> 2010.
2010	North Korean artillery kills two soldiers and two civilians on the island of Yeonpyeong. Both North and South Korea blames the other part for being the provocative part, firing the first shots. China assumes a neutral stance.



**Table I. China's Merchandise Trade with the DPRK, 1995-2008**  
(\$ in millions)

<b>Year</b>	<b>China's Imports</b>	<b>China's Exports</b>	<b>Total Trade</b>	<b>China's Balance</b>
1995	63.609	486.037	549.646	422.428
1996	68.638	497.014	565.652	428.376
1997	121.610	534.411	656.021	412.801
1998	51.089	356.661	407.750	305.572
1999	41.722	328.634	370.356	286.912
2000	37.214	450.839	488.053	413.625
2001	166.797	570.660	737.457	403.863
2002	270.863	467.309	738.172	196.446
2003	395.546	627.995	1,023.541	232.449
2004	582.193	794.525	1,376.718	212.332
2005	496.511	1,084.723	1,581.234	588.212
2006	467.718	1,231.886	1,699.604	764.168
2007	581.521	1,392.453	1,973.974	810.932
2008	754.045	2,033.233	2,787.278	1,279.188

**Sources:** Chinese (PRC excluding Hong Kong and Macau) data as supplied by World Trade Atlas.

Table is taken from the paper: "China-North Korea Relations" (included in the sources)

**Table 2. Estimated North Korean Trade by Selected Trading Partner**  
(\$ in millions)

<b>North Korean Exports</b>									
	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
World	1,319	1,171	1,291	1,266	1,561	1,568	1,909	2,535	2,801
China	37	167	271	395	586	499	468	584	754
Japan	257	226	235	174	164	132	78	0	0
S. Korea	152	176	272	289	258	340	520	765	930
Russia	8	15	10	3	5	7	20	34	14
India	20	3	5	1	4	8	9	41	116
Thailand	20	24	44	51	91	133	168	36	29
Germany	25	23	29	24	22	45	17	16	21
<b>North Korean Imports</b>									
	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
World	1,859	3,086	1,973	2,051	2,616	3,388	2,908	3,437	4,127
China	451	573	468	628	799	1,081	1,232	1,393	2,033
Japan	207	1,066	133	92	89	62	44	9	8
S. Korea	273	227	370	435	439	715	830	1,032	888
Russia	38	62	69	111	205	206	190	126	97
India	158	170	145	105	167	38	33	41	40
Thailand	189	106	172	204	239	207	216	184	48
Germany	53	80	139	71	68	63	63	34	31
<b>Balance of Trade</b>	<b>-540</b>	<b>-1,915</b>	<b>-682</b>	<b>-785</b>	<b>-1,055</b>	<b>-1,820</b>	<b>-999</b>	<b>-901</b>	<b>-1,326</b>

**Source:** S. Korean data from S. Korea, Unification Ministry. Other country data from Global Trade Atlas and U.N. COMTRADE Database. World trade data from U.N. COMTRADE Database, accessed via U.S. Department of Commerce, Trade Policy Information System. World trade totals are mirror data derived from U.N. reporter country trade with North Korea plus inter-Korean trade reported by South Korea, adjusted Indian data for 2006 and 2007, plus Taiwan's trade with North Korea.

Table is taken from the paper: "China-North Korea Relations" (included in the sources)

## Chinese Communism Subject Archive

### Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance Between the People's Republic of China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

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**Source:** Peking Review, Vol. 4, No. 28, p.5.

**Transcribed/HTML:** Max, B. and Mike B.

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***July 11, 1961***

THE Chairman of the People's Republic of China and the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, determined, in accordance with Marxism-Leninism and the principle of proletarian internationalism and on the basis of mutual respect for state sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and mutual assistance and support, to make every effort to further strengthen and develop the fraternal relations of friendship, co-operation and mutual assistance between the People's Republic of China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, to jointly guard the security of the two peoples, and to safeguard and consolidate the peace of Asia and the world, and deeply convinced that the development and strengthening of the relations of friendship, co-operation and mutual assistance between the two countries accord not only with the fundamental interests of the two peoples but also with the interests of the peoples all over the world, have decided for this purpose to conclude the present Treaty and appointed as their respective plenipotentiaries:

The Chairman of the People's Republic of China: Chou En-lai, Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China.

The Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea: Kim Il Sung, Premier of the Cabinet of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea,

Who, having examined each other's full powers and found them in good and due form, have agreed upon the the following:

#### **Article I**

The Contracting Parties will continue to make every effort to safeguard the peace of Asia and the world and the security of all peoples.

#### **Article II**

The Contracting Parties undertake jointly to adopt all measures to prevent aggression against either of the Contracting Parties by any state. In the event of one of the Contracting Parties being subjected to the armed attack by any state or several states jointly and thus being involved in a state of war, the other Contracting Party shall immediately render military and other assistance by all means at its disposal.

#### **Article III**

Neither Contracting Party shall conclude any alliance directed against the other Contracting Party or take part in any bloc or in any action or measure directed against the other Contracting Party .

#### **Article IV**

The Contracting Parties will continue to consult with each other on all important international questions of common interest to the two countries.

#### **Article V**

The Contracting Parties, on the principles of mutual respect for sovereignty, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit and in the spirit of friendly co-operation, will continue to render each other every possible

economic and technical aid in the cause of socialist construction of the two countries and will continue to consolidate and develop economic, cultural, and scientific and technical co-operation between the two countries.

#### **Article VI**

The Contracting Parties hold that the unification of Korea must be realized along peaceful and democratic lines and that such a solution accords exactly with the national interests of the Korean people and the aim of preserving peace in the Far East.

#### **Article VII**

The present Treaty is subject to ratification and shall come into force on the day of exchange of instruments of ratification, which will take place in Pyongyang. The present Treaty will remain in force until the Contracting Parties agree on its amendment or termination. Done in duplicate in Peking on the eleventh day of July, nineteen sixty-one, in the Chinese and Korean languages, both texts being equally authentic.

(Signed)

CHOU EN-LAI

Plenipotentiary of the  
People's Republic of China

(Signed)

KIM IL SUNG

Plenipotentiary of the  
Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Retrieved from: [http://www.marxists.org/subject/china/documents/china\\_dprk.htm](http://www.marxists.org/subject/china/documents/china_dprk.htm) (accessed 17.03.2011)

## **The four American defectors – and their sex-life: An anecdote on North Korean racial hygiene**

The North Korean population is perhaps unique in the world today as it is more or less totally homogenous. Everyone else is judged by the fact that they are not Korean and intermarriage or “interbreeding” is unofficially forbidden. This is evident in the propaganda on the South Korean interracial marriages and the damage they are supposedly causing the Korean people. Another example of this is the story of the four American soldiers who defected to North Korea after the Korean War,<sup>120</sup> Larry Allen Abshier, Jerry Wayne Parrish, James Joseph Dresnok and Charles Robert Jenkins were not allowed to find their own North Korean wives. Rather they were “assigned” or “given” foreign women. According to Jenkins’ book Abshier married a Thai prostitute kidnapped from Macau, Dresnok married a Romanian woman kidnapped from Italy, Parrish married a Lebanese woman “lured” to North Korea as described by Jenkins, and Jenkins married the kidnapped Japanese Hitomi Soga who later became his ticket out of North Korea as she was eventually repatriated to Japan. Actually, before their marriages all of the Americans were assigned ethnic Korean “cooks” or “maids” to live with them. These women had no children from before and were considered to be infertile. They were thus also “allowed” and also expected to have sex with them. At one point Jenkins actually points out how one of his supervisors was angry with him for not having sufficient amounts of sex with his “cook”. Interracial sexual relations weren’t a problem as long as it didn’t cause any watering out of the Korean race. However, Abshier’s supposedly infertile wife got pregnant and had to have an abortion. After this, the North Korean cooks were removed and the Americans were eventually “given” their foreign brides. After his Romanian wife died, Dresnok later married a half Togolese, half Korean woman who was the daughter of a Togolese diplomat and a North Korean woman. Although being an “illegal” half-breed she still could serve of some use as the new wife of Dresnok, and most importantly she obviously couldn’t marry any North Korean and further contribute to the thinning out of the Korean blood. Also, the children of Dresnok are considered to be American although they have spent their whole life in Pyongyang, speak fluent Korean and broken English and their official papers are also stating that they are American rather than Korean.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> See Jenkins (included in the sources) or the BBC documentary “Crossing the line” by Daniel Gordon

<sup>121</sup> “Crossing the Line” by Daniel Gordon (Included in the sources)