

**Title: Socialist Fraternalism or Socialist Realism?: State survival versus ideological goals as motivating factors behind North Korean diplomacy toward other socialist states**

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**Structured abstract:**

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*Purpose:* Even when dealing with fellow socialist powers, North Korean diplomacy has never fit neatly into typical socialist bloc categories. The ideological and material underpinnings of this have taken on a complex and distinctly North Korean character. This study offers a theoretical deconstruction of the intersecting structural and normative influences on North Korean diplomacy in developing a typology of ‘socialist realism’, situated within a realist-constructivist International Relations (IR) theory framework.

*Design/Methodology/Approach:* This study relies on primary source material from various diplomatic archives, alongside theoretical works from leading North Korean figures and press coverage from within the DPRK. It does so to both contextualise the subject within the wider historical, ideological, and theoretical context and to draw upon an oft-neglected North Korean perspective in analysing influences on North Korean diplomacy across various levels.

*Findings:* North Korean diplomacy towards socialist states is found to be more adaptive than might be expected, shaped not by one definitive influence but instead positioned at the confluence of distinctive ideological goals and more conventional realist objectives of state survival.

*Practical Implications:* The realist-constructivist framework explored within this paper serves as both a defining constraint on North Korean foreign policy and a conceptual tool for scholars analysing North Korean diplomacy in both a historical and contemporary context, offering a broad utility to scholars and students alike across fields of history, International Relations, and political science.

*Originality/Value:* This paper offers an original interpretation of influences on North Korean diplomacy by developing a new realist-constructivist perspective rooted in theoretical, historical, and ideological analysis. It is positioned at the intersection between history and IR theory whilst critically interpreting North Korean ideological, media, and institutional sources alike in seeking to understand the broad cultural and structural influences on North Korean diplomacy in greater depth.

**Key words:** International Relations theory, diplomacy, Juche, realism, constructivism, ideology, North Korea.

## **Socialist Fraternalism or Socialist Realism?: State survival versus ideological goals as motivating factors behind North Korean diplomacy towards other socialist states**

There is an old joke, occasionally told in left-wing anti-revisionist circles, concerning Cold War-era peaceful co-existence. It involves a meeting between a Soviet cadre and his counterpart from the DPRK. The Soviet waxes lyrical about the need for peaceful co-existence between socialism and imperialism, much to the chagrin of the Korean cadre who warns his comrade that this will not end well for the same reason that a lamb cannot peacefully co-exist with a tiger. ‘Ah’ replies the Soviet cadre ‘but the lamb and the tiger can co-exist, and I can prove it’. He takes the Korean to Moscow Zoo, where he proudly displays a lamb and a tiger occupying the same cage, in apparent harmony. The following day, they return and the lamb is still in one piece, sharing the cage with the tiger. The Korean cadre cannot believe his eyes and, astonished, asks ‘how do you do it?’. ‘It’s simple’ replies the Soviet, ‘we just put a new lamb in the cage every morning’.<sup>1</sup>

Though it may sound facetious, this sentiment largely captures the essence of the North Korean view of its fellow socialist powers in the latter half of the twentieth century and, by extension, its view of itself on the international stage in the present. To those within the decision-making apparatus of the DPRK, its supporters, and indeed to the North Korean people more generally, the DPRK is the sole survivor of a once more steadfast and stronger socialist camp.<sup>2</sup> It is a lone voice of firm and sensible anti-revisionism, alone in being untouched by the madness of straying from the staunchest of socialist paths towards reform and ‘opening up’ to the capitalist West. The Soviet Union in the post-Stalin era made such compromises (the metaphorical ‘new lambs’) with a United States that would not be satisfied until the very existence of global socialism was fatally threatened: which is not forgotten in the North Korean collective understanding of history. The People’s Republic of China, though still nominally on the socialist path and still the DPRK’s most prominent ally, has experienced strained relations with its smaller neighbour since both the Cultural Revolution and the death of Chairman Mao. This has been intensified especially since the ‘opening up’ under Deng Xiaoping through to Xi Jinping and China now looks southward with a cautious suspicion, which Pyongyang duly returns.

It is for this reason that the DPRK has viewed major self-defined socialist powers with as much, or in some cases even more, scepticism throughout its history than it has viewed the Western imperialist powers. However, in the early Cold War period, the DPRK nonetheless

turned almost exclusively to socialist states when constructing diplomatic relationships, at least until the Sino-Soviet split shifted the international context in the 1960s. Though in the post-Cold War era it has been forced to broaden its relations further beyond the socialist sphere by economic and political necessity in adapting to a changing international system, its relationships with socialist countries such as Cuba, China, and Venezuela and its mistrust of those it deems ‘imperialist’ continue to play a large part in shaping its diplomacy. It can broadly be considered a member of the socialist sphere on the international stage, but one that has at times cut a lonely figure even within this sphere. However, as its current and former allies adapt to their new places within the international system, the DPRK finds itself in a seemingly difficult position. Does it start sacrificing the proverbial lambs to coexist with the tiger – acceding to UN resolutions, meeting requests to admit weapons inspectors, and engaging in wider multilateral diplomacy – or does it stand its ground and turn instead to its relationships with its socialist allies, evolving to meet the diplomatic challenges of the new decade?

This paper will seek to use the prism of these diplomatic relationships to identify both elements of *Juche* philosophy and the realist/neo-realist paradigms of International Relations (IR) theory in North Korean approaches to diplomacy whilst reconciling the two in highlighting a distinctly Korean approach to diplomacy: rooted both in *Juche* and the self-interest of the North Korean state. It will argue that North Korean diplomacy is more flexible and adaptive than is often suggested by outside observers and that it can – and does – respond to changes in global, regional, and local conditions. Ultimately, it will conclude that ideology and state survival are so fundamentally interlinked in the North Korean context that they are inseparable. *Juche* is rooted in state survival and has emerged from what might be described as a historical (albeit somewhat justified) ‘siege mentality’. It has evolved with the surrounding circumstances where required, such as with the incorporation of *Songun* as a corollary to *Juche* philosophy after the death of Kim Il Sung. In this period, with the post-Cold War collapse of almost all of the DPRK’s key socialist allies, it is perhaps no surprise that a shift towards the prioritisation of the military was the step taken to address the newfound security imbalance, ultimately in the interests of securing state survival.

The state and *Juche* are so central to the very existence of the DPRK that the survival of the state seems irrevocably tied to the survival of its governing philosophy, and this is reflected in its approach to diplomacy. The DPRK draws elements of a more traditional realist

perspective on international relations but ties these to a very distinctive overarching state philosophy. Its diplomatic engagement with other socialist states displays elements of this ideological motivation but can also not be detached from a broader context of a state fighting to ensure its very survival in an international system it remains deliberately isolated from and hostile to. In this regard, the DPRK pursues a socialist realism: justifying its pursuit of security not only in realist and structural realist terms of power and state interest, but also through a rich ideological tradition of *Juche* philosophy.

Importantly, this study will emphasise the use of primary sources in its methodology in order to assess the DPRK's diplomacy and foreign policy in its own terms, and explore some of the more prominent influences and characteristics of its approach to diplomacy from the DPRK perspective. These include the works of leading figures like Kim Il Sung, records from the online archive of the DPRK Ministry of Foreign Affairs, press coverage from the Korean Central News Agency, and Cold War-era primary source material from the extensive Wilson Centre Digital Collection. The paper will focus both on the historical dimension of North Korean diplomacy in the Cold War era whilst also drawing upon more contemporary examples from the post-1991 period.

### **From Dependence to Self-Reliance**

‘Kim indicates that... exports from Korea will not cover the imports, therefore they need credit from the Soviet government.

Comrade Stalin says “Fine” and asks in what amount they need credit.

Kim answers from 40 to 50 million American dollars.

Cde. Stalin— “fine, what else?”<sup>3</sup>

The above exchange, from a bilateral meeting less than a year after the foundation of the DPRK, summarises the relationship dynamic with the Soviet Union. Stalin's refrain of ‘fine, what else’ succinctly captures the attitude of the Soviet Union to its dependent ally and Stalin in particular was far from miserly in meeting Kim Il Sung's many demands, promising ‘whatever you want, so it will be’.<sup>4</sup> The DPRK was never short of requests for assistance, from weapons and industrial technology to scientific advisors and teachers and the extent of North Korean reliance on the USSR is illustrated by the estimates that in the mid-1950s, 24.6% of the overall state budget and 77.6% of imports were dependent on aid

from the Soviet bloc.<sup>5</sup> Around this time, close to a third of North Korean imports from the USSR were military goods, highlighting that the DPRK was dependent on its larger ally not only in an economic sense but also for security, a fact made further apparent with the onset of the Korean War in 1950.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, there was both a pragmatic and ideological basis for the unusually close relationship it shared with the Soviet Union which shaped the fundamental basis of the DPRK's very existence. The DPRK saw Stalin's USSR as its most crucial ally and it is perhaps partly for this reason that the leadership of the DPRK, unlike other socialist-aligned states, remained unwaveringly loyal to Stalin after his death.<sup>7</sup> For the Koreans, the ascent of Khrushchev and his successors marked the beginning not only of an ideological revisionism but an accompanying diplomatic realignment towards 'peaceful coexistence'. It was, in the eyes of a DPRK which had suffered greatly at the hands of the Imperial Japanese and subsequently at those of the United States in the Korean War, a grave betrayal. It was also, for a state which had heavily modelled its leadership structure on that of Stalin's USSR, a potentially existential threat. This spurred the DPRK into diverging from any remaining vestiges of its initial semi-utopian socialist fraternalism. To achieve its ideological goals, the DPRK would have to forge its own diplomatic path, and from this historical juncture emerges the image of independence in foreign affairs that the DPRK pursues today and which is validated by the principles of *Juche*.

Beyond serving merely as a contextual backdrop, it is possible to identify the historical roots of modern-day DPRK diplomacy in this early relationship with the USSR. Kathryn Weathersby argues that the very creation of *Juche* as a worldview is rooted in the Cold War dependence of the DPRK on Soviet support and almost paradoxically attributes the development of the Korean emphasis on self-reliance in domestic and foreign policy alike to the relative material security that this dependence provided.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, Korea, emerging not only from decades of brutal Japanese Imperial occupation, but also from a catastrophic civil war, was far from the ideal foundation upon which to build a new society without significant material assistance. The DPRK emerged from the Korean War with the entirety of its land, industry, and agriculture essentially levelled by American bombs. Figures from the DPRK indicate that 8700 factories, 370,000 hectares of arable land, and 600,000 houses had been entirely destroyed, which coupled with the enormous human cost and the brutal agricultural difficulties left as a legacy of the conflict, necessitated a turn towards diplomatic

socialist fraternalism to make survival, let alone recovery, viable.<sup>9</sup> The result was a decade-long era of especially close fraternal co-operation, with significant aid from several socialist allies but predominantly the USSR and China.

Weathersby draws on feedback loops to visualise the influence of this history on contemporary North Korean diplomacy and presents an understanding of diplomatic engagement that is shaped by and adapts to the broader contours of its historical context.<sup>10</sup> Feedback loops, a tool drawn from complexity to illustrate self-reinforcing tendencies within systems, can also be used to conceptualise the emergence of the more outwardly self-reliant emphasis in DPRK diplomacy, which evolved from the reaction to the post-1953 ideological ‘revisionism’ in the Soviet Union. Influenced by this ideological juncture with the USSR, Juche called for an independent foreign policy which was accompanied by a growing distrust of foreign powers, especially those socialist allies that had begun to drift from the path envisaged by Marxist-Leninists. As Balázs Szalontai notes in his landmark study on post-Stalin DPRK-USSR diplomacy, this distrust fostered an ‘overdeveloped security complex’ in the DPRK, which in turn drew significant external interest and reservation, as much from the USSR and China as the US, and also made the DPRK reluctant to submit itself to the ‘protection’ of a great power ally.<sup>11</sup> This reinforced the Korean desire for an independent foreign policy, and thus the relationship between history, ideology, and diplomacy is a cyclical one.

The argument can be made that the extent of the Korean dependence on the USSR and China was a major factor in encouraging it to turn towards self-reliance in this sense, but this was not necessarily a linear progression, and nor is the distinction between ideology and self-interest a mutually exclusive one.<sup>12</sup> Above all, the DPRK is able to find a synthesis between acting in ideological interest and acting in the interest of ensuring its own survival by adapting to changes in the international circumstances. For example, according to a likely retrospectively modified speech supposedly given by a young Kim Jong Il, the leadership recognised by 1965 that the DPRK had ‘not advanced much so far beyond the range of socialist countries in its foreign relations’ and encouraged Korean diplomats to seek diplomatic ties further afield, which would have come in the context of the DPRK finding itself increasingly alienated from some of its major socialist allies in the mid to late 1960s.<sup>13</sup> In that period, the DPRK was forced to look further beyond its ideological bedfellows towards non-socialist powers, such as through the Non-Aligned Movement, which the

DPRK joined formally in 1975. This embrace of multilateral diplomacy with states that were not necessarily socialist came not because Korean foreign policy priorities had changed or shifted away from socialism, but because the international circumstances had.<sup>14</sup>

In the present day, the DPRK's diplomacy towards socialist states takes on a very different form and it is possible to identify three levels of engagement on this front, roughly embodied by the relations of the DPRK towards the three example countries of China, Cuba, and Venezuela. The first level of engagement is the last remnant of the uneven (and often strained) relationships with the larger socialist powers in the Cold War era, today limited largely to the DPRK's relationship with China. Beyond the East Asian region, some of its most enduring diplomatic ties are those with Cuba, one of the longest standing bilateral alliances the DPRK has. This relationship has a profoundly ideological basis, even more so than an economic one, with Raúl Castro declaring as early as the 1960s that 'if someone is interested in what the Cubans' opinion is on certain questions, he should ask the Koreans... Our views are completely identical in everything'.<sup>15</sup> This relationship, underpinned by the shared ideological foundations alluded to by Castro, has remained a relatively constant feature of North Korean diplomacy through to the present.<sup>16</sup> It continues to be framed in explicitly socialist terms, with the two respective ruling parties of Cuba and the DPRK expressing in 2021 that 'mutual solidarity' has 'steered bilateral relations' and bolstered 'the fraternal and cooperative bonds between the two countries'.<sup>17</sup> The strength of these ideological ties means that Cuba is more inclined to engage in the more traditional diplomatic niceties in a post-Cold War world. It was, for instance, the only socialist state this year to send its formal greetings to Kim Jong Un commemorating the lunar new year.<sup>18</sup> However trivial, such small details are indicative of an important characteristic of the DPRK-Cuba relationship. It is one of few states, in an age of sanctions and diplomatic isolation, that has remained consistently willing to accommodate the DPRK on its own terms, an important diplomatic trait when dealing with a state that places such an emphasis on symbolism. The ties with Cuba and the associated symbolism reinforce the image of the DPRK, particularly in the West, as a Cold War holdout where ancient Tupolev airliners ferry passengers back to a state firmly stuck in the past. However, whilst the *Juche* philosophy is rooted in the historical context of the revolutionary struggle for independence and the subsequent decades of Cold War tension, North Korean diplomacy has adapted to changing circumstances to a greater extent than many observers might have predicted. As



the former USSR, China, and many other formerly socialist states have turned increasingly towards economic liberalisation (with now even steadfast Cuba perhaps beginning to follow), diplomacy in the DPRK has taken a turn away from traditional twentieth century allies and towards emerging socialist countries, not all of which necessarily follow the Marxist-Leninist model. Particularly from 2019 onwards, the DPRK has made a conscious effort to forge stronger bilateral ties with Venezuela, as the latter faces a new onslaught of US pressure.<sup>19</sup> With various such dynamics shaping Korean diplomacy, it is clear that any policy of fraternal socialist internationalism is more complex than one model of bilateral relations exported across the globe.

### **Contextualising State Survival**

It is important within any discussion such as this to contextualise state survival. Given the idiosyncrasies peculiar to the North Korean leadership, and to the DPRK's international position more generally, state survival in the Korean context plays a more pronounced role in diplomatic and ideological considerations alike. Specifically, regime survival and state survival are bound more closely than may be the case in other states, not least in a state that has known only a Kim-led regime throughout its entire history. It is, however, important to recognise that framing goals of state survival and regime survival as almost one and the same is the result of a concerted effort on the part of the North Korean leadership, in which *Juche* plays a significant role. Nonetheless, it is important to recognise that there are core elements which transcend any regime and which must be considered when contextualising the central objectives and historical contours of North Korean foreign policy. In particular, the ultimate goal of Korean reunification has never truly left the DPRK foreign policy agenda. According to Kim Jong Un, it remains a key aspiration of the DPRK to 'usher in a heyday of peace, prosperity and reunification of the Korean peninsula' tied both to ideological goals and to questions of security.<sup>20</sup> It would be difficult for any other foreign policy matter to serve as sufficient justification for bilateral engagement with the two old enemies: the United States and South Korea, and yet by framing the 2018 Singapore Summit as a step towards eventual reunification, Kim Jong Un was able to situate co-operation within a firm ideological background whilst also strengthening the DPRK's precarious international position by winning security guarantees from the United States.

It would not be unreasonable to argue that state survival is to some extent a means to this end of reunification. Matthias Maass does so in arguing that the central North Korean

foreign policy objective is not survival for the sake of survival, but that the DPRK's 'endgame' is ultimately Korean reunification, with the important caveat that it be under a socialist banner.<sup>21</sup> Though the prospect of a reunified peninsula waxes and wanes in the post-Cold War era and it is not the political inevitability it perhaps once appeared to the North Korean leadership, with serious attempts to force reunification by military means a thing of the past, it remains at least a nominal goal of both the DPRK and the Republic of Korea. This puts it in the unique position of being not only a foreign policy objective, but also a threat to the DPRK's existence. The inverse of the North Korean desire for a unified Korea under the socialist banner is that if a South Korean-led reunification initiative were to succeed, there would be little place for *Juche* or any of the core ideological precepts of the DPRK within the emergent unified state. In this sense, it is clear that there is a state survival dimension to the strained rivalry between the DPRK and its peninsular neighbour. Here the overlap between ideological goals and survival concerns is also especially apparent. Although there is undoubtedly scope here to further analyse the role reunification plays as an objective and as a legitimating tool within the wider context of North Korean diplomacy, the issue of reunification is outside of the scope of this article. It instead focusses on the DPRK's diplomatic interactions with self-defined socialist states and the balance it strikes between international fraternalism and more conventional realist objectives, analysed through the key concept of state survival.

There are, of course, significant limitations with this concept of state survival as a framework for analysing state goals, as Darel Paul points out in his anti-statist critique. Yet whilst for Paul, the assumption of state survival as a foreign policy objective considers solely the continued physical and ontological existence the state, the case of the DPRK highlights that it is impossible to separate an interest in state survival from an interest in the terms of survival (namely sovereignty and independence).<sup>22</sup> State survival as discussed throughout this article refers not necessarily to survival at all costs but survival on the right terms. It is for this reason that the notion of independence is so central to *Juche* and to North Korean foreign policy. Doctrines and priorities may evolve over time, but at the core of the North Korean outlook remains the understanding that independence and survival are virtually interchangeable terms in the context of its diplomatic objectives.

The origins of this can be traced to the historical background of the DPRK. The historic Korean state had lost its independence to the Japanese, and this had a significant impact in

shaping the collective memory and ideological consciousness of the Korean people. The 'spirit of independence' has been a feature of nationalist cultural discourse since even before formal annexation by the Empire of Japan and is a historic notion that has since been adapted to serve as the central core of *Juche*.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, Kim Il Sung rooted his entire ideological programme in this 'revolutionary spirit of independence'.<sup>24</sup> A significant element of the emphasis on independence is seeking to present the DPRK as the sole legitimate heir of the historic Korean state, a core aim of the *Juche* idea. A part of this legitimisation, allusions to Korean history and mythology pervade North Korean ideology and this extends to foreign policy. For instance, the symbolic role of Mount Paektu within North Korean political culture cannot be overstated. It represents North Korea's lineage from the historic Korean state through the Tangun foundation myth, the modern DPRK's origins in the anti-Japanese guerrilla struggle and serves above all as a legitimisation of the DPRK and of the Kim family's leadership, as recognised by the designation of Paektu as the supposed site of Kim Jong Il's birth, marked by Jong Il Peak. Paektu has also played a role in the DPRK's diplomacy in recent years. On the final day of the September 2018 Inter-Korean summit, Kim Jong Un and South Korean President Moon Jae In made a deeply symbolic journey to the summit of Mount Paektu, and the North Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs subsequently pictured the two leaders with hands clasped and held aloft atop 'the holy mountain symbolic of the soul and spirit of the Korean nation'.<sup>25</sup> This was a significant diplomatic coup for the DPRK, with Jean H. Lee suggesting that by participating in such a visit, Moon was 'sanctioning' the ideological symbolism surrounding Paektu and the North Korean leadership.<sup>26</sup> To have a foreign leader visit Paektu, often a site of pilgrimage for Kim Jong Un himself, and recognise its symbolic significance provided a degree of implicit external validation. Such symbolic gestures allow the North Korean leadership to emphasise the DPRK's central claim to be the successor of the historic Korean state, tracing its symbolic lineage as far back as the ancient kingdom of Choson. For the leadership, the validation this symbolism offers also provides an important legitimising basis for the DPRK's survival.

The DPRK often seeks similar symbolic validation from sections of the international socialist movement, as seen with a 2020 communique citing messages of support from various socialist organisations (ranging from the Communist Youth of Venezuela to the Socialist Party of Romania) each praising Kim Jong Un for 'holding fast to the revolutionary

tradition of Paektu'.<sup>27</sup> However, there have been far fewer such diplomatic interactions of similar significance to the joint Paektu visit. Thus, in this context, whilst socialist diplomacy remains useful to some extent in symbolic terms and for propaganda purposes, it is not enough alone. In order to secure its more fundamental interests in the post-Cold War era, DPRK diplomacy must branch out beyond this, even for the core functions such as ideological legitimisation that socialist diplomacy could once provide. This symbiosis between state interest and ideological factors is one that lies at the heart of North Korean approaches to diplomacy and is one that lends itself to a realist analysis.

### **North Korean diplomacy through the lens of realism/neo-realism**

IR and foreign policy observers, especially in the West, tend to view the North Korean case through a realist frame of analysis and argue that such relationships are forged not out of ideological solidarity or principle, but rather in the self-interest of the state and specifically in the interest of ensuring state survival. Various interpretations have offered explanations for the successful survival strategies of the DPRK ranging from its nuclear capability to the argument that the ethnic homogeneity of the North Korean people provides fewer intrastate tensions for US destabilising efforts to exploit and allows the state leadership to preserve a stable equilibrium (implicitly rooted in defensive neo-realism).<sup>28</sup> However, regardless of the variety of explanatory factors, these understandings of North Korean approaches to diplomacy share a common basis: the assumption that state-survival is the primary motivation behind the actions of the DPRK. In this sense, a convincing, but undoubtedly controversial, case could perhaps be made that the DPRK is the quintessential defensive neo-realist state. It is supremely sceptical of international institutions, unapologetically preoccupied with the pursuit of power as a path to security, and is seemingly (at least at face value, from a Western perspective), concerned foremost with ensuring state survival.

Each of these characteristics has echoes in the neo-realist paradigm of IR theory which essentialises state behaviour as concerned with and motivated by ensuring the survival of the state above all else. This is particularly true of the defensive school; with Kenneth Waltz premising his approach on the assumption that 'states seek to ensure their survival' (though he makes clear that this is a generalisation about theorising state motivations rather than a hard rule about state behaviour).<sup>29</sup> However, even John Mearsheimer, torch-bearer of offensive neo-realism, presents an approach which sees state actors 'as concerned mainly with figuring out how to survive' and explains aggressive behaviour of states as a result of

a realisation that ‘power is the key to their survival’.<sup>30</sup> The DPRK can be framed somewhere in between the defensive and offensive neo-realist approaches. It is acutely aware of its historical position in both the surrounding region and the global socialist camp and openly pursues defensive policies of seeking to ensure security. On similar grounds, David Kang presents the DPRK as not only a fundamentally defensive neo-realist state but as one which is neither unpredictable nor dangerous and further suggests that one of the factors influencing this defensive approach are the historical limitations on the DPRK’s fluctuating diplomatic relations with socialist allies like China.<sup>31</sup> Under this perspective, rooted heavily in defensive neo-realism, if even the DPRK’s alliances with socialist allies can by their fluctuations leave the state vulnerable and ‘truly alone in a dangerous world’, it must act not according to any sense of ideological solidarity, but rather out of state interest in the more traditional sense.<sup>32</sup> Yet it is on precisely this note that Kang falters. He fails to sufficiently account for the role of *Juche* in the context of Korean diplomacy, instead going as far as to suggest that North Korean foreign policy would look the same today even if Kim Il Sung had never assumed the leadership.<sup>33</sup> This is reflective of one of the defining traits of the neo-realist paradigm, which in general places such an emphasis on structural factors that other factors can be cast aside as almost irrelevant. There is a danger here in conflating the Korean model with other Cold War era Marxist-Leninist regimes, and overlooking the historical, material, cultural, and ideological factors that have shaped a distinctly Korean approach to domestic society and foreign policy alike. Whilst Kang is correct that engaging in counterfactual histories can offer no guarantees about the present, it is important not to overlook the centrality of *Juche* to the Korean world view and it is impossible to understand this without recognising the centrality of Kim Il Sung to *Juche*. It would be misguided to take it as merely socialism with Korean characteristics: instead *Juche* emerges from the confluence of various ideological, nationalist, cultural, material, and historical factors.

In this regard, it is perhaps more helpful to conceptualise the Korean model from a Western perspective through the lens of Hobsbawm’s conception of nationalist movements, rather than solely in strictly Marxist-Leninist terms. Hobsbawm presents nationalism as the force which constructs the nation, rather than the other way around, and views it as a concept that adapts and evolves to changes in the contextual circumstances.<sup>34</sup> In the North Korean case, nationalism is equally fundamental to the existence of the Korean ‘nation’ and *Juche* blends together a distinctly Korean nationalism with revolutionary socialist ideology in order to tap

into this. It is for this reason that its diplomatic relationships with other socialist countries, seemingly ideological bedfellows, can be more complex. It behaves largely according to realist principles of self-interest, but this cannot be separated from the ideological core of its entire society. Here, Korean diplomacy can be reconciled more concretely with the neo-realist paradigm. Waltz argues not that states always act exclusively to ensure their survival, but rather that viewing state survival as a prerequisite for any additional goals states might have is a useful tool for considering the motivations behind state behaviour.<sup>35</sup> This mirrors, to some extent, the DPRK's position, where the fundamental goal is building a self-reliant society in the image of *Juche* and Kimilsungism, but state survival is a prerequisite for this, and thus the pursuit of security by means of power cannot be separated from the wider socialist ideological goals. Traditional distinctions between state survival and regime survival are difficult, if at all possible, to apply to the DPRK, not least because it has known only one regime in its seven-decade history.

Nonetheless, it is important to recognise that there is no universally applicable or accepted definition of state survival as a motivating factor in IR theory, even amongst the diverse realist and neo-realist tradition. Buruk Kadercan helpfully poses two questions to contextualise the state survival assumption inherent to neo-realism, noting that this concept is more complex and multi-faceted than much contemporary analysis would suggest, and the factors he emphasises can be used to assess perceptions of the North Korean case. Kadercan interprets state survival as fundamentally rooted in the governing elite's sensitivity towards regime stability and the territorial integrity of the state.<sup>36</sup> The Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) and Kim Jong Un, like his predecessors, are acutely aware of the significance of both regime stability and territorial integrity, to the extent that these two foreign policy priorities are presented as interconnected. It takes only a cursory glance at the pages of DPRK state media to highlight the extent of this overlap in the Korean public consciousness. *Rodong Sinmun*, the mouthpiece of the WPK Central Committee, recognises that Korea has historically found itself at risk of 'being stricken off the world map' but identifies the greater threat as losing its independence and subsequently being 'reduced to a lesser nation'.<sup>37</sup> There is significant overlap between the neo-realist paradigm and classical realism. To Morgenthau, alliance-forming is 'not a matter of principle but of expediency' and ideological factors like political solidarity can strengthen an alliance in some regards and weaken it in others, but are inherently secondary to the real basis of any diplomatic alliance:

the material interests of the states concerned.<sup>38</sup> Thus, in the eyes of realists, the DPRK may use socialist fraternalism to justify and legitimise its diplomatic engagement, but the material basis of this engagement should not be overlooked. This perspective firmly places state interest and state survival at the centre of foreign policy, with ideological goals merely a secondary consideration. However, whilst it is true that material needs and objectives are a vital priority, it is important to stress that they cannot be detached from the broader ideological framework of *Juche*. Material and ideological objectives share a somewhat symbiotic relationship in North Korean diplomacy, and one may shape the other. For instance, according to some IR scholars, prioritising state survival has been so urgent that it has required compromising and redefining the very essence of *Juche* itself to adapt to contextual circumstances and material conditions.<sup>39</sup> This adaptation can be presented in realist terms of state interest as much as it can be presented in ideological terms of refinement through dialectics. For example, the DPRK is the only state to have signed, ratified, and subsequently withdrawn from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty which illustrates its capacity to adapt its diplomacy according to evolving state self-interest. Non-proliferation-seeking multilateralism is a rational choice for a state with no nuclear capacity, but once this capability becomes a possibility and by extension offers a better chance of securing state survival, neo-realist principles of security-maximisation dictate that the key interests of the state shift to account for this.

Adapting hegemonic stability theory, the ‘tolerance-autonomy model’ proposed from a South Korean perspective argues that the Sino-DPRK relationship is a hegemon-periphery relationship defined by a degree of tolerance shown by the Chinese, but ever weakening.<sup>40</sup> This removes a degree of foreign policy autonomy from the DPRK and instead presents its diplomacy as relational: defined as peripheral not in any objective sense but in relation to the balance of power in the international system. In soft diplomacy, the North Koreans were at times wary of taking steps that might provoke China, avoiding retaliating to diplomatic transgressions where this could be avoided, such as the Chinese Communist Party positioning loudspeakers on the Sino-Korean border to blare slogans like ‘smash Korean revisionists and Kim Il Sung’.<sup>41</sup> Despite this direct attempt to undermine *Juche* in the Korean consciousness, such actions were not directly responded to in kind immediately, because Kim Il Sung recognised that, in line with defensive neo-realism, a moderate policy of dealing with minor transgressions can better position a state to deal with genuine threats

to its security. That is not to say that growing tensions with China were ignored or that the DPRK did not make transgressions of its own which were viewed negatively by its neighbour, but in a diplomatic context the DPRK sought to tread a cautious line. This had become increasingly difficult from the onset of the Cultural Revolution in China in the late 1960s, and North Korean foreign policy was forced to adapt to a less tolerant and cautious China.

Consequently, the dynamic of diplomatic relations between North Korea and China has fluctuated significantly, adapting to wider contextual factors, and continues to do so. For example, in the early 1960s, the Chinese government was acutely conscious of the need to avoid alienating the DPRK in an era of Sino-Soviet competition and thus was willing to take a more tolerant diplomatic approach. The mass exodus of ethnic Koreans illegally crossing the border from China into the DPRK in 1961 and 1962 posed a potential diplomatic crisis, with 55,000 fleeing China and being accommodated with financial support on arrival by the DPRK. However, under the direction of Zhou Enlai, Chinese diplomats were instructed not to raise the issue with the DPRK, and instead make any necessary concessions to preserve diplomatic ties.<sup>42</sup> Here, the DPRK could benefit from being accommodated by China and accommodating Chinese interests in return, but as the decade progressed, this was not always the case. Towards the end of the 1960s, thinly veiled implicit criticism of the Cultural Revolution, Mao, and the Chinese leadership escalated in North Korean state media as Chinese propaganda condemning Kim Il Sung also became an increasingly common feature, and this period of deterioration culminated with respective ambassadors being recalled.<sup>43</sup>

It was ultimately this period which pushed the DPRK away from its strong ideological relationship with China and into closer alignment with the Soviet Union. Yet beyond the ideological dimension, Chin-Wee Chung suggests a further reason for this, one more in keeping with a realist analysis. Nikita Khrushchev's decision to end Soviet military aid to the DPRK left the state in a precarious position, ill-equipped to defend itself. A change of leadership in the Soviet Union, coupled with the increasingly apparent realisation that China was far less able to meet North Korean military aid and security requirements, provided an opportunity for the North Korean leadership to turn towards the Soviet Union.<sup>44</sup> This echoes Walt's prediction that, through the realist lens, a state in a particularly weak position is far more likely to seek to turn to 'bandwagoning', that is, seeking out alliances with stronger states more capable of ensuring its security.<sup>45</sup> The DPRK sought to bandwagon with the



Soviet Union when its material security needs demanded this and thus was willing to alter its alliances wherever this served state interest, even if this was a process of shifting from alignment with one socialist state to alignment with another. By contrast, the DPRK's engagement with the Non-Aligned Movement shortly after this period can be considered an example of 'balancing' in alliance-forming, which Walt proposes states will almost always prioritise over bandwagoning, and which entails allying with weaker or smaller allies rather than a more threatening dominant power in the interests of a more stable balance of power.

### **North Korean diplomacy through the lens of *Juche***

Kim Il Sung explicitly stressed that he saw Korean foreign policy as 'the extension of its domestic policy' and it remains difficult to separate the external outlook of the DPRK from its internal governing philosophy.<sup>46</sup> Even the formative theoretical basis of *Juche*, Kim Il Sung's 1955 speech, defines *Juche* in opposition to that which is foreign – it is framed from its genesis as an ideological defence against not just military or territorial invaders but ideological and cultural ones.<sup>47</sup> In this sense, the Korean approach serves almost as a precursor to the present day 'Overall National Security Outlook' pursued by the Chinese Communist Party under Xi Jinping. This similarly takes a more holistic view of national security and situates ideological and cultural threats at the centre of this, framing them as priorities of equal importance to conventional security concerns.<sup>48</sup> To some extent, this lends itself to a constructivist analysis – or more specifically, a realist-constructivist analysis. Realist-constructivism, as outlined by Barkin, positions itself on the intersection between power and morality and potentially offers a means of bridging the gap between political morality and the realist conception of interest defined in terms of power and thus is better positioned to deal with change.<sup>49</sup> The Korean approach overlaps with realist-constructivism to some extent by blending its defensive neo-realist underpinnings with a profound sense of ideological direction instilled in its normative structures, and through political adjustment is able to adapt and evolve when faced with change in the contextual, material, or political circumstances of the international system.

In the Korean case, the precedence of ideological concerns above all else is a core principle of *Juche*, and that is reflected in both its historical and contemporary diplomacy, including (if not especially) in terms of its relations with other socialist states, but this is able to adapt to shifting power dynamics without profoundly corrupting its political and ideological basis. For instance, during the Cold War era, Manwoo Lee argued that the DPRK prioritised

ideological and political factors over economic ones in its diplomatic relations with Cuba and the entire Latin American region, as the DPRK sought to export its alternative model of non-aligned, anti-imperialist socialism in the context of a struggle for hegemony over the socialist sphere between the USSR and China.<sup>50</sup> In the present, the same prioritisation largely remains, but with a different motivation. Kim Jong Un has followed the lead of his father and grandfather in actively pursuing close diplomatic relations with Cuba yet economic trade between the two countries, despite both being under heavy sanctions, has been less significant than might be expected with Cuba's exports to the DPRK in 2016 equal to just 13% of its exports to South Korea.<sup>51</sup> In this context, the symbolic diplomatic co-operation is at least as important, if not more so, than the material benefits for a DPRK that sees itself as under siege from the US-led international order. Reiterating this, in outlining the foreign policy priorities of the DPRK under his leadership, Kim Jong Un stressed that the DPRK would engage in diplomatic cooperation foremost not with the states that could offer the most significant economic advantage, but those 'which respect our sovereignty'. There is an element of continuity spanning six decades here, and indeed, in the same speech (delivered to the Seventh WPK Congress) Kim continues by reiterating that the DPRK 'will take a beeline along the eternal course of independence, *Songun* and socialism, no matter how the situation and relationship among neighbouring countries may change'.<sup>52</sup> However, despite the seemingly unchanging rhetorical foundations, the means and motivations of North Korean diplomatic engagement have evolved over time, as highlighted by the Cuban case.

Kim Il Sung implicitly dealt with this inherent adaptability from the outset, stressing that *Juche* was an alternative to following the Soviet line in foreign policy and that instead, a distinctly Korean foreign policy as part of a 'struggle to ease tension... the world over' would create 'more favourable conditions' for the revolutionary struggle of the Korean people.<sup>53</sup> This sentiment is telling as it reveals that the DPRK does not see itself as permanently isolated from the international system. Rather, any isolation is temporary and is a result of resisting attempts to impose a US-led international order. In this regard, the DPRK is able to adapt to the international system. There remains an implicit hope of a new socialist world order, but there is also a recognition that the existing conditions of the international system are defined by tension (or contradiction, in the Marxist sense) between the imperialist West and the divergent forces of socialism. By engaging in diplomacy on its

own terms and by resisting attempts to impose an imperialist world order, the DPRK seeks to bring about an order of its own, and it is here that the overlap with realist-constructivism is most noticeable.

Diplomacy with socialist states thus becomes not a question of prioritising state survival over ideological concerns but rather of seeking to ensure state survival precisely by prioritising ideological concerns, with the governing philosophy tied so intrinsically to the very existence of the state, even with its capacity to evolve and adapt. From the Korean perspective, to speak of state survival is to speak of fundamentally ideological matters. Kim Il Sung outlines this clearly in defining in very broad terms the Korean ideology as an all-encompassing revolutionary force. It was shaped, in his words, out of ‘resolutely fighting in defence of the purity of Marxism-Leninism against revisionism’, an allusion to the ideological and diplomatic junctures with socialist allies, and thus implies a fundamentally ideological basis to the North Korean approach to external and internal affairs alike. Significantly, Kim defines his approach as anti-hegemonic and not necessarily obedient to socialist fraternalism at all costs, noting that it is ‘in opposition to dogmatism and flunkeyism towards great powers’. He summarises the core principles of the DPRK as: ‘*Juche* in ideology, independence in politics, self-support in the economy, and self-reliance in national defence’.<sup>54</sup>

The emphasis on self-reliance in defence (or *jawi*) is significant. Recognised as a prerequisite for pursuing socialism, this not only positions the DPRK as a security-maximiser in the defensive neo-realist sense, but also gives its security policy a fundamentally ideological basis. Here, the internal and external are bound so tightly together within the formative basis of *Juche* that it becomes not just a way of viewing the world, but of defining the DPRK’s place within it. Foreign policy is a means to the end of building socialism at home which in turn is a prerequisite for securing the existence of the DPRK against external threats. Thus, whilst North Korean diplomacy lends itself to a realist and neo-realist analysis, it is impossible to develop a convincing appraisal of this without contextualising it through the ideological lens of *Juche*, with the core ideological elements of *Juche* serving as the defining principles on which the Korean understanding of the international system, no matter how deeply rooted this may appear in the realist paradigm.<sup>55</sup> For instance, even the DPRK’s nuclear weapons programme, often analysed through a realist lens, can be framed in relation to ideological considerations. Edward Howell does so

in arguing that the DPRK's survival objective is at least in part reliant on its 'nuclear ideology' which he defines as the embedding of the nuclear weapons programme within the state ideology, and which is used to provide both domestic and international legitimisations of the regime.<sup>56</sup> There is a profoundly ideological dimension to all aspects of North Korean foreign policy, rooted in the core principles of *Juche*.

These defining principles of *Juche*, as outlined by Kim Jong Il, are: Independence (including self-reliance in defence), creativity in developing and implementing policy, and the precedence of ideological consciousness over all other considerations.<sup>57</sup> Each of these principles can be identified not only in North Korean diplomatic propaganda, but in its diplomatic actions and wider approaches to engaging with other nations. Creativity, as an example, can be taken as synonymous with the aforementioned adaptive characteristic of North Korean diplomacy, but can also be identified on other levels, such as the reframing of bilateral relations with socialist countries (as seen with the post-Cold War turn towards Venezuela) but also in its diplomatic methods (such as the current usage of barter trade as a mechanism to avoid depleting hard currency reserves and to circumvent increasingly heavy sanctions).<sup>58</sup>

The ideological basis for the DPRK's approach to foreign policy and diplomacy is perhaps best captured by the 1992 Pyongyang Declaration, yet this same document also highlights the existential challenge inherent to Korean diplomacy in a post-Soviet world.<sup>59</sup> This declaration called on left-wing parties around the world to fulfil their 'international duty' to 'defend and advance socialism on an international scale' through 'mutual support and solidarity'.<sup>60</sup> However, of the signatories, which consisted of communist and anti-imperialist parties from across the globe, only the DPRK and Angola were parties of government. Kim Il Sung dismissed this, noting 'whether or not the socialist parties in power sign the Pyongyang Declaration does not matter. It is necessary to let the world know that many revolutionary parties aspire after socialism', and this is indicative of the DPRK's symbolic diplomacy.<sup>61</sup> This tendency towards political symbolism is highlighted by the mechanisms of diplomacy employed, particularly the use of the foreign visit by socialist leaders throughout the Cold War. Such visits, according to Kim Il Sung (speaking privately in the context of Erich Honecker's visits to the DPRK and China) were to 'demonstrate the unity and comradeship-in-arms of the socialist countries', which implies socialist diplomacy, and that of the DPRK especially, is fundamentally performative, and perhaps

even choreographed to cultivate a particular image both domestically and on the international stage.<sup>62</sup> That is not to say, however, that the DPRK did not seek to address the thinning out of its socialist allies beyond symbolism. Instigating revolution elsewhere across the globe has long been a mechanism of a more covert North Korean diplomacy, one that engages not just with the state actors at the centre of the realist paradigm, but equally with socialist non-state actors. For example, by funding Venezuelan communist guerrillas in 1966, the DPRK hoped in part to broaden the community of socialist nations it could draw upon as allies, albeit a move that was not directly successful.<sup>63</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The DPRK does not always behave as an orthodox realist perspective might suggest but it equally does not always reflect its core ideological underpinnings in its diplomatic dealings. In terms of whether its diplomacy towards socialist states is motivated by state survival or ideological principle, it is not a clear-cut 'either-or'. Its diplomacy draws upon both socialist fraternalism and realist self-interest, and in doing so is able to adjust this balance when required to adapt to diplomatic circumstances and challenges. As this study has shown, North Korean diplomacy has historically been adaptive and is regularly reshaped to meet the circumstances the DPRK faced. This has been even more notable in relation to the DPRK's engagement with other socialist powers, where the DPRK would seek to achieve the best of both worlds by reaping the benefits of co-operation with socialist allies whilst simultaneously promoting its own unique and independent ideology, switching positions, lines, and allegiances whenever ideological or economic circumstances necessitated.<sup>64</sup> For instance, a report from an East German diplomat in the 1960s highlights how the DPRK would shift its diplomatic position based on the circumstances before it, alternating between taking influence from China or the USSR depending on the period and the overall aims of particular sequences of diplomatic interaction. The diplomat went as far as to describe the DPRK's diplomatic approach as 'un-Marxist but still centrist', but its behaviour in this context is perhaps better described as diplomatic opportunism.<sup>65</sup> Here, there are also allusions to neo-realist alliance theory, with the DPRK able to straddle the line between formal alliance and more general alignment to meet the given circumstances.<sup>66</sup> It would be misleading to present the DPRK as a state that behaves towards its socialist allies solely motivated by ensuring its survival but neither is it motivated exclusively by ideological principles. The reality is significantly more complex, and North Korean diplomacy is able

to draw upon both in adapting and balancing to the circumstances it faces. It thus lends itself best to an analysis that can combine ideological elements with broader concepts drawn from across the realist and neo-realist paradigm from which emerges something of a socialist realism, well-placed to analyse how the DPRK is able to adapt to its surroundings through reshaping and reframing the interconnected influences of *Juche* ideology and state interest.

It is this adaptability that is the defining feature of North Korean diplomacy towards socialist states, rooted in a long historical and cultural context. As the DPRK moves forward into the coming decades, it is highly likely that this diplomacy will continue to adapt in new ways. The post-1991 era has already seen a shift in Korean diplomatic language, particularly with the emergence of *Songun* as a supplement to *Juche*, and under Kim Jong Un the methods of diplomatic engagement are shifting significantly.<sup>67</sup> There has been, for example, a marked turn towards soft power under Kim Jong Un: cultural diplomacy, music and sport diplomacy, and even TikTok and Twitter diplomacy beyond the realms of inter-state engagement have all either emerged or become more prominent.<sup>68</sup> Such change is not an indication of compromising with the West, as alluded to in the joke at the beginning of this study, but instead of the characteristic adaptability that emerges from the uniquely Korean synthesis of socialist, nationalist, and culturally-rooted *Juche* philosophy with the broader principles of the realist and neo-realist IR tradition. State survival and ideological principle are so intrinsically connected at the heart of this approach, that they essentially become one and the same.

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<sup>1</sup> There are multiple variants of this joke (which itself is an adaptation of a much older theme), one of which was told by Deputy CIA Director Vernon Walters in 1976. The other version replicated here, or one closely resembling it, was recited to the author by a member of the UK-Korean Friendship Association.

Vernon Walters, Address Before US Chamber of Commerce, 18 May 1976, *Central Intelligence Agency Records*. Available at: <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp91-00901r000700040003-7> [Accessed 22 February 2021].

<sup>2</sup> This sentiment is captured well in the North Korean press, where the DPRK's former allies are frequently decried as revisionists, traitors, and 'socialist renegades who danced to the tune of the imperialists, falling into their strategy of "peaceful transition"'.

Korean Central News Agency, 'Rodong Sinmun on crimes of socialist renegades', *Rodong Sinmun*, 24 April 1997. Available at: <http://kcna.co.jp/item/1997/9704/news4/24.htm#7> [Accessed 18 April 2021].

<sup>3</sup> Notes of the Conversation between Comrade I.V. Stalin and a Governmental Delegation from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea headed by Kim Il Sung, 5 March 1949. *Wilson Centre Digital Archive*. Available at: <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112127> [Accessed 26 March 2021].

<sup>4</sup> Record of a Conversation of Comrade Stalin with Kim Il Sung and Pak Heon-yeong, April 1950. In: International Department of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik), Report on Kim Il Sung's visit to the USSR, March 30 - April 25, 1950. *Archive of the President of the Russian Federation*. Translated by Gary Goldberg. Available at: <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114905> [Accessed 28 March 2021].

<sup>5</sup> Kathryn Weathersby, *Dependence and Mistrust: North Korea's Relations with Moscow and the Evolution of Juche* (Washington D.C.: US-Korea Institute at SAIS, 2008), p.11.

Erik van Ree, 'The Limits of Juche: North Korea's Dependence on Soviet Industrial Aid, 1953-76', *Journal of Communist Studies*, 5. 1 (1989), 50-73 (pp.57-58).

<sup>6</sup> Joseph M. Ha, 'Soviet Perceptions of North Korea', *Asian Perspective*, 6.2 (1982), 105-131 (p.108).

<sup>7</sup> Stalin is regularly mentioned in the North Korean press and in public and academic circles alike, often as means of adding legitimacy to *Juche* and the Korean system. For instance, 'the Generalissimo Stalin' is said to have 'deviated from the diplomatic etiquette, in order to show his deepest respect to Kim Il Sung and to give him the highest praise'.

Korea Association of Social Scientists, 'President Kim Il Sung's Internationalist Obligation', 3 May 2016. Available at: <http://www.kass.org.kp/index.php/?lang=eng&article=President%20Kim%20Il%20Sung%E2%80%99s%20Internationalist%20Obligation-2016-05-03> [Accessed 17 April 2021].

<sup>8</sup> Kathryn Weathersby, *Dependence and Mistrust*.

<sup>9</sup> Min Yong Rok, *Outstanding Leadership and Brilliant Victory* (Pyongyang: Korea Pictorial, 1993), p.54

<sup>10</sup> Kathryn Weathersby, *Dependence and Mistrust*, p.3.

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<sup>11</sup> Balázs Szalontai, *Kim Il Sung in the Khrushchev Era: Soviet-DPRK Relations and the Roots of North Korean Despotism, 1953-1964* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), p.261.

<sup>12</sup> This argument is put forward in Charles K. Armstrong, 'Fraternal Socialism': The International Reconstruction of Korea, 1953–62, *Cold War History*, 5.2 (2005), 161-187, a work which has since been discredited with accusations of plagiarism, source fabrication, and dishonest scholarship. It is also made by Balázs Szalontai (in *Kim Il Sung in the Khrushchev Era*) whose work Armstrong drew upon extensively.

<sup>13</sup> Kim Jong Il, 'Let Us Strengthen Friendship and Solidarity with the Newly-Emergent Countries' (1965) in: *Selected Works* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1992), 86-95 (pp.87-88).

<sup>14</sup> R.R. Krishnan, 'North Korea and the Non-Aligned Movement', *International Studies*, 20.1-2 (1981), 299-313.

<sup>15</sup> Lőrinc Soós, 'Report, Hungarian Embassy in Cuba to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry', 25 January 1968, translated by Balázs Szalontai, *North Korea International Documentation Project, Wilson Centre Digital Archive*. Available at: <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116665> [Accessed 20 February 2021].

<sup>16</sup> Samuel Ramani, 'The North Korea-Cuba Connection', *The Diplomat*, 7 June 2016. Available at: <https://thediplomat.com/2016/06/the-north-korea-cuba-connection/> [Accessed 12 March 2021].

<sup>17</sup> Korean Central News Agency, 'Kim Jong Un receives reply message from Cuban leaders', *Pyongyang Times*, 12 February 2021. Available at: <http://www.pyongyangtimes.com.kp/?bbs=37240>. [Accessed 18 March 2021].

<sup>18</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs DPRK, 'Respected Comrade Kim Jong Un Receives New Year Cards and Greetings from Different Countries'. 1 February 2021. Available at: <http://www.mfa.gov.kp/en/receives-new-year-cards-and-greetings-from-different-countries/> [Accessed 13 March 2021].

<sup>19</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs DPRK, 'Venezuelan Vice Foreign Minister Expresses Readiness to Strive for Improved Bilateral Relations with DPRK'. 6 February 2021. Available at: <http://www.mfa.gov.kp/en/venezuelan-vice-foreign-minister-expresses-readiness-to-strive-for-improved-bilateral-relations-with-dprk/> [Accessed 13 March 2021].

<sup>20</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs DPRK, 'Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un Makes New Year Address'. 1 January 2019. Available at: <http://www.mfa.gov.kp/en/new-year-address/> [Accessed 2 August 2021].

<sup>21</sup> Matthias Maass, North Korea's "Endgame": Peaceful Two-State Solution or Coercive Unification?', *North Korean Review*, 15.1 (2019), 109-117.

<sup>22</sup> Darel E. Paul, 'Sovereignty, Survival, and the Westphalian Blind Alley in International Relations', *Review of International Studies*, 25 (1999), 217-231 (p.228).

<sup>23</sup> Andre Schmid, *Korea Between Empires 1895-1919* (New York: Columbia University Press), p.199.

<sup>24</sup> Kim Il Sung, *Let Us Embody More Thoroughly the Revolutionary Spirit of Independence, Self-Sustenance and Self Defence in All Fields of State Activity* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1967).



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<sup>25</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs DPRK, 'Distinguished Political Ability of Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un and Spiritual Power of Our People Praised by International Community'. 28 March 2020. Available at: <http://www.mfa.gov.kp/en/distinguished-political-ability-and-spiritual-power-of-our-people-praised-by-international-community/> [Accessed 3 August 2021].

<sup>26</sup> Jean H. Lee, 'Face-Saving, Promises, and Propaganda', *Wilson Center*, 19 September 2018. Available at: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/face-saving-promises-and-propaganda-jean-h-lee-the-inter-korean-summit> [Accessed 3 August 2021].

<sup>27</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs DPRK, 'Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un Climbs Mt Paektu Together with President Moon Jae In'. 21 September 2018. Available at: <http://www.mfa.gov.kp/en/mt-paektu-together-with-president-moon-jae-in/> [Accessed 3 August 2021].

<sup>28</sup> Kentaro Hirose and Shuhei Kurizaki, 'The Logic of the Survival of North Korea', *Asian Economic Policy Review*, 14 (2019), 287-304.

Paul Bracken, 'Nuclear Weapons and State Survival in North Korea', *Survival*, 35.3 (1993), 137-153.

<sup>29</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1979), p.91.

<sup>30</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W, Norton and Company, 2001), p.21.

<sup>31</sup> David C. Kang, 'Rethinking North Korea', *Asian Survey*, 35.3 (1995), 253-267.

<sup>32</sup> Kang, 'Rethinking North Korea', p.262.

<sup>33</sup> Kang, 'Rethinking North Korea, p.264.

<sup>34</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1870: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>35</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, p.91.

<sup>36</sup> Burak Kadercan, 'Making Sense of Survival: Refining the Treatment of State Preferences in Neorealist Theory', *Review of International Studies*, 39.4 (2013), 1015-1037 (p.1016).

<sup>37</sup> Korean Central News Agency, 'A New Era of the Juche Idea Ushered In', *Rodong Sinmun*, 17 April 2021. Available at: [http://rodong.rep.kp/en/index.php?strPageID=SF01\\_02\\_01&newsID=2021-04-17-0013](http://rodong.rep.kp/en/index.php?strPageID=SF01_02_01&newsID=2021-04-17-0013) [Accessed 24 April 2021].

<sup>38</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, 'Alliances in Theory and Practice', in: Arnold Wolfers (ed.), *Alliance Policy in the Cold War* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1959), 184-212 (pp.185-189).

<sup>39</sup> Virginie Grzelczyk, 'Navigating Interdependence', in: *North Korea's New Diplomacy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 145-185.

<sup>40</sup> Changyong Choi and Eul Chul Lim, 'Sino-DPRK Relations: A 'Tolerance-Autonomy' Model', *KDI School of Public Policy and Management Paper* 18-06 (2018).

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- <sup>42</sup> Shen Zhihua and Xia Yafeng, Chinese-North Korean Relations and Chinese Policy Toward Korean Cross-Border Migration, 1950-1962, *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 16.4 (2014), 133-158.
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- <sup>53</sup> *Kim Il Sung Works*, vol.9, p.409.
- <sup>54</sup> Kim Il Sung, 'On Socialist Construction in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the South Korean Revolution' (1965) [speech] in: *Kim Il Sung Works*, vol. 19. (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1984), 236-284 (p.263).

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- <sup>55</sup> The foreign policy priorities under Kim Jong Un continue to be framed explicitly in terms of *Juche*, with a diplomacy rooted in *Juche* presented as a means of securing and consolidating the domestic objectives and national interest of the state. Ministry of Foreign Affairs DPRK, 'Independence, Peace and Friendship – Consistent Ideals of Foreign Policy of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea', 5 September 2018. Available at: <http://www.mfa.gov.kp/en/venezuelan-vice-foreign-minister-expresses-readiness-to-strive-for-improved-bilateral-relations-with-dprk/> [Accessed 13 April 2021].
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