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# North Korea's construction of power: The Six Party Talks, Morgenthau's elements of national power, 'Realist-Constructivism' and the Eternal Revolution – the domination of a narrative

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# Abstract

The Six Party Talks is a multilateral forum created to facilitate the DPRK's (the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or North Korea) denuclearisation, between 2003 and 2007. This paper will look at how the character of the relationship that North Korea had with other states allowed the North to manipulate the Talks in such a way that it managed to continue with its nuclear weapons programme. The content of these Talks makes them unique and shows how power perception (heightened in negotiations that involve a focus on deterrence, state survival and regional stability) dictates outcomes. The intent of the study is to explore how 'power' can be manipulated because it has to be mediated by perception. In essence, 'perception' creates a space for North Korea to manipulate the 'reality' within which all the states involved function. This study aims to show that it can build on currently existing assumptions that relate to negotiation and power, specifically Zartman's explanation of power as a perceived relation. The paper argues that within the context of denuclearisation, the understanding of power perception needs to be qualified. It explores whether, in the context of the Six Party Talks in particular, 'power' can be analysed with a purely realist paradigm. Constructed meanings for resources that seem to exist purely within an objective reality (for realists) can alter the value of these resources. The argument therefore builds onto the realist foundation of Zartman's approach to the analysis of negotiations, by showing how a state like North Korea can change the value of an objective reality by creating certain meanings for the elements that comprise this reality. It is interested in building on certain assumptions made by realists (including Hans Morgenthau (1993)), as well as certain assumptions concerning a structural approach to the analysis of negotiations (Zartman 2008: 100); in order to provide a more nuanced perspective regarding North Korea's behaviour during the Six Party Talks, in relation to its interactions towards the other parties in the Talks (specifically the US, China and South Korea), as well as their reactions to the North's provocations. To create this nuance, it uses constructivist elements to show how North Korea, during the time in which the Six Party Talks took place, manipulated reality to such an extent that it dictated the options that the other states had in relation to the DPRK's nuclear weapons programme.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1. Introduction

The Six Party Talks and the DPRK's (Democratic People's Republic of Korea, North Korea or 'the North') resistance to denuclearisation proves, firstly, how complex and sometimes illusive the practice of negotiation can be; and, secondly, how postponing decisive action – a widely accepted form of foreign policy behaviour (Hudson 2012: 14) – can lead to unintended (and arguably disastrous in this context) consequences. Setting aside the theory that possession of a nuclear weapon is more likely to create peace than lead to war (Waltz 1995: 11), popular consensus in the international community is that North Korea needs to denuclearise in order for the Korean Peninsula to become stable, and so that the tension created by the possession of a nuclear weapon does not perpetuate the tenuous balancing act created by deterrence – with this balance threatening to tip in the wrong direction at a moment's notice.

What makes this case unique is the fact that states involved in the effort to make the DPRK denuclearise are some of the strongest in the world, while the DPRK is one of the weakest. The DPRK, despite this weakness, has been able to transgress in terms of its development and testing of nuclear weapons. This should have been, or at least could have been, prevented by the other states involved – especially in the case of the United States (US) or China. Both these states have the physical ability to force North Korea to comply with international rules, and yet both could not manage to do so. The fact that a multilateral negotiation (the Six Party Talks) had to be facilitated in order for this issue to be resolved (instead of a military operation that merely exerts physical force onto the weaker state in order for it to comply with stronger states' wishes) implies the existence of specific conditions that make the DPRK's denuclearisation different from other situations where weak states get punished for not adhering to international regulations. Firstly, the acquisition of a nuclear weapon (and later the possession of this weapon) influenced the nature of the relationship that the weak state (North Korea) had with other parties that had an interest for it to stop with its nuclear programme. Secondly, the nature of the relationship that the DPRK had with the states involved in the negotiation process was unique and historically contingent. The DPRK actively constructed a certain reality, domestically and internationally, in order for it to manipulate its weakness to make it a source of strength.

Another characteristic of nuclear security negotiations is the importance of power (in the 'realist' sense) when it comes to the amount of influence that parties can exert on each other. In the context of denuclearization (and non-proliferation) negotiations, the understanding of relative power among parties is arguably the most important driving element and causal explanation for the outcome of the process. It is another reason why the Six Party Talks are of interest – this understanding of power should mean that the weak state cannot get what it wants from the negotiation, because it physically is not capable of resisting other parties' pressure (the application of their 'power'). This was not the case with North Korea during the Talks. This paper will therefore use the process of the Six Party Talks as a context for the exploration of the perception of relative power among parties to a negotiation (Zartman 2008: 106), looking specifically at how perceptions of symmetry and asymmetry between parties affect negotiation behaviour (Zartman 2008: 107; Habeeb 1988: 1-9). This approach has been applied in many cases where the content of the issue is at least of a less volatile nature than the content dictated by possession of (or ambition to acquire) a nuclear weapon. The research here aims to apply the approach to this specific context – and to see whether the underlying assumptions about the theory hold true when the stakes are heavily influenced by the threat of a weak state acquiring nuclear weapons. This unique situation also has to be understood within the context of a unique state – North Korea is a peculiar state that functions, domestically and internationally, differently from other states in the world. The reason for the North's ability to resist pressure from stronger states is not only related to the state's ambitions concerning the possession of nuclear weapons – it also has to do with the state's unusual national identity, and how this influences the state's need for a nuclear weapon in the first place.

Despite the fact that the Six Party Talks is a multilateral forum, the paper argues that negotiations – in theory and in practice – are still easier to analyse (and manage) within a bilateral context. All the parties serve a purpose in the direction and outcome of the Talks, but one could break up the interactions and look at bilateral negotiations between North Korea (the one state in this multilateral forum that wants different concessions than the others) and each of the other parties. This does not mean that these interactions happen in isolation; each relationship is complicated by interactions of other parties in the Talks, which influence the (perceived) relative power positions of the two parties being analysed. This study will integrate this understanding into its framework of analysis, while focusing on the bilateral relationship between the United States and North Korea in these negotiations on the one hand, and North Korea's relationship with China and South Korea (respectively) on the other. This paper will in essence analyse three bilateral negotiations within

the context of a multilateral negotiation forum – aware of the fact that interactions have a multilateral foundation that influences each respective bilateral relationship.

The next section of this chapter will create context for the negotiation process that will be analysed in the rest of the paper. A distinction has to be made between North Korea's first and second nuclear crises and the different negotiation processes that governed the responses to these crises. A brief overview of the negotiations conducted in response to the second nuclear crisis will also be provided to create context for the application of the theoretical framework that will be conducted in later chapters.

## 2. Historical Overview

This study will look at the relationship that the DPRK had with the US, China and South Korea within the context of the Six Party Talks. To understand the origin of the Six Party Talks, however, one must understand the Agreed Framework signed by the US and the DPRK in 1994. The Agreed Framework influenced these countries' policies at the start of what is now called the second nuclear crisis which happened in 2003 (and was the catalyst for the Talks). The following section will therefore briefly look at the Agreed Framework before it provides an overview of the Six Party Talks. It includes a brief discussion of the global context within which these negotiations came into existence, as well as a brief summary of the main concerns of each country's policies regarding this issue.

*The First Nuclear Crisis and the Geneva Agreed Framework (1994)*

In 1994 the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the United States (US) signed an agreement in Geneva that created a framework for the DPRK to 'halt the operations and infrastructure development of its nuclear program' (Niksch 2002: 7). At the heart of the agreement was the need for North Korea to freeze and dismantle its graphite-moderated reactors and related facilities (US Department of State 1994). In return, the US promised to provide Light Water Nuclear Reactors (LWRs) by 2003 to 'facilitate the provision to North Korea of "alternative energy" to compensate for the freeze of nuclear facilities [in the form of] "heavy oil"', to normalize the relationship between the US and the DPRK, and to lift the US economic embargo' (Niksch 2002: 7-10). The agreement was in response to a nuclear standoff in 1992, where it became apparent that the DPRK was not complying with the terms of their nuclear power development set by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and to actions in 1994 when North Korea pulled fuel rods from a reactor 'containing sufficient plutonium for five or six weapons' (International Crisis

Group (ICG) 2006a: 5). The framework was signed in October that year, halting North Korea's plans to withdraw from the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and deescalating an extremely volatile situation (Kim 2004: 5).

What is now called the first nuclear crisis occurred within the context of the end of the Cold War and the DPRK's decline in importance for the Soviet Union and China (ICG 2006a: 2). The world also saw a bipolar world system change to a unipolar system with the rise of the US as the sole superpower (Kim 2004: 4). Prior to this, the DPRK had the ability to gain economic and security support from both China and the Soviet Union because of its status as a communist country and its tendency to exploit the Sino-Soviet rivalry (ICG 2006a: 2). The collapse of the Soviet Union, China's normalized relations with South Korea in 1992, and the emergence of the US as the new and only superpower, limited the DPRK's sources of military and economic support. But the North needed more than 'support' – it was experiencing devastating economic and social problems that ended up causing a famine that killed 'hundreds of thousands' (Cha and Anderson 2012: 7). It could be argued that the crisis was not only an attempt to consolidate domestic support for the Kim regime (Ahn 2011: 179), coupled with the means to ensure deterrence and therefore the territorial integrity of the state (Habib 2011: 43). The crisis also (and possibly most importantly) opened up options for the DPRK in terms of the economic assistance that it was desperate to obtain. Antagonizing the IAEA, the US and South Korea might have been seen as one of the country's very few options for regime survival.

Within this context it is easy to see that the North's options in terms of a nuclear programme were limited – especially after the provocation led to bilateral talks with the US, as well as the promise of the lifting of a US economic embargo, 'oil at no cost' and LWRs. It could no longer exploit the Sino-Soviet rivalry for economic and military assistance, but it could get the attention of the world's only superpower with its nuclear programme. For the DPRK to give up its only bargaining chip would mean that the assistance that it was getting from the US would be a one-time deal. Therefore, the DPRK very shrewdly signed an agreement that 'did not resolve North Korea's existing achievements regarding the production and acquisition of plutonium and the production of nuclear weapons' (Niksch 2002: 8). In other words, North Korea still had the ability to produce a few nuclear weapons, especially if it had 'hidden facilities such as a pilot plutonium reprocessing laboratory, about which IAEA Director Blix and others [had] speculated' (8). In the words of Kim Do-tae (2004: 6), 'North Korea partially retained the capability of possessing nuclear weapons, while giving up future nuclear development, so as to maximize its negotiation interests'.

The Agreed Framework itself contained elements which later led to its self-destruction. The framework was 'widely judged an incomplete and flawed policy document', with problems which included the fact that the agreement itself was interpreted differently by both parties (Pollack 2003: 16, 19) and the framework was 'a set of political commitments, not a legally binding document or a treaty' (ICG 2003: 8). It therefore both under-reached when it came to obtaining concrete commitments from both sides concerning the sequencing of the DPRK's commitments and the US's rewards for compliance, and overreached in terms of the document's power to 'remake [the two countries'] entire relationship' (8). For example, despite President Clinton's letter to Kim Jong Il stating that his office would do all in its power to 'facilitate…the light-water nuclear power project…and the funding and implementation of interim energy alternatives' (Clinton, Congress 1994: 13), domestic opposition from the Republican party in the US as well as criticism from the Republic of Korea (ROK) (Pollack 2003: 19) led to slow progress from the US regarding the construction of the LWRs. The Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), responsible for the implementation of this part of the agreement, also encountered problems because it relied mostly on funding from the ROK and Japan (20). Operations lagged, among other reasons, because of the ROK's dissatisfaction with the framework and therefore KEDO's difficulty in obtaining sufficient funds to complete the project in time. Problems, that were non-political in nature, also led to the project being delayed. These included the infrastructural challenge of constructing something of such a magnitude in the DPRK (ICG 2003: 10). The deadline was therefore moved from 2003 to 2008 (for the first reactor) and 2009 (for the second). This angered the DPRK, who saw it as the US (and KEDO's) attempt to circumvent compliance with the framework.

The US's promise of the delivery of heavy fuel oil also encountered challenges – the deliveries were chronically behind schedule because of reasons which include KEDO's struggle with funding and structural difficulties that made it difficult for the DPRK to absorb the oil (Sigal 2014). The US also moved very slowly regarding its commitment to normalize economic relations with North Korea. According to ICG Report *North Korea: A Phased Negotiation Strategy* (2003: 10), 'the steps taken fell short of implementing normal economic relations', mostly due to the change in political will after the 1994 elections – Congress was openly hostile to President Clinton's agenda, and there 'was also a belief at this time that North Korea's economic problems were so serious that it might collapse'. The US promised to 'provide formal assurances to the DPRK, against the threat or use of nuclear weapons by the US' (US Department of State 1994: III (1)), but did not deliver – probably due to domestic opposition as well as the ROK's need to be protected by the US. The US and the DPRK also

promised to 'move toward full normalization of political…relations', including '[opening] a liaison office in the other's capital following resolution of consular and other technical issues through expert level discussions' (US Department of State 1994: II (2)). Here the DPRK blocked a US presence in Pyongyang. According to Pollack, 'North Korean officials may well have believed that the delay in the opening of liaison offices might induce the United States to implement the Agreed Framework more rapidly' (2003: 20). It had the opposite effect: the US blamed the DPRK for not living up to its obligations and used it as an excuse to continue stalling implementation of the rest of the agreement (ICG 2003: 10).

Compliance to the Agreed Framework was dependent on both the US's and the DPRK's own interpretation of the vague document, especially in terms of the sequencing of its implementation (Pollack 2003: 19). Common elements driving the breakthrough in negotiations and the subsequent creation of the Agreed Framework were characterized by ambiguity and superficiality. For example, in order for the DPRK to accept the terms proposed by the US regarding compliance, the document in places did not specify when the DPRK's obligations were to be fulfilled. The DPRK's reactor construction projects at Yongbbyon and Taechon were an example of this – they 'were to be disabled prior to completion of the second LWR, but no date was specified for when the dismantlement would begin' (Pollack 2003: 19). And of course, because the LWR project was not on schedule, this created the opportunity for the DPRK to blame the US for not adhering to the agreement (and for the North to put off disabling the reactors). The agreement also allowed the DPRK to uphold its obligations according to the Agreed Framework, while continuing with a covert missile programme not covered by it, essentially 'enabling Pyongyang to circumvent its declared non-proliferation commitments' (Pollack 2003: 14). An agreement that dealt with a more comprehensive look at the DPRK's weapons projects would not have been accepted by the DPRK. The agreement therefore had within it a convenient loophole for North Korea – one that the US had no control over.

This ambiguity caused concern that the DPRK was not intending to ever fully comply with the agreement. The Perry Report (written by William Perry, US North Korea Policy Coordinator and Special Advisor to the President and the Secretary of State (US)) stated that the US, among other demands, 'would seek complete and verifiable assurances that the DPRK does not have a nuclear weapons program', and recommended 'a step-by-step reciprocal' relationship between the DPRK and the US (1999). In its attempt to create a platform for this reciprocal relationship, the US revealed its position vis-à-vis North Korea. Both states were accusing each other of stalling

implementation and not adhering to the spirit of the agreement – the DPRK very possibly because of its need to continue its relationship with the US without losing its capacity to create nuclear weapons, and the US because of domestic constraints and regional geopolitical concerns (as well as the hope that the DPRK would collapse economically before all of the obligations had to be fulfilled – a hope that up to now has not become a reality). The call for a 'reciprocal relationship' revealed the US's inability to guide the negotiations in a direction favourable to the state. Despite the fact that the agreement was considered valid for an extended period of time (whether this meant full compliance or not), it started to look like the US had no power to make the DPRK change its behaviour – agreement or no.

*The Second Nuclear Crisis and the Six Party Talks (2002/3)*

In 2002, the Bush administration sent James Kelly (Assistant Secretary of State for Asia) to Pyongyang to explain its position toward the DPRK. In the meeting, Kelly 'stated that the United States had obtained information that, starting in the late 1990s, the DPRK covertly acquired uranium enrichment technology for nuclear weapons' (ICG 2003: 12). The DPRK Ministry of Foreign Affairs retaliated by saying that it 'was entitled not only to nuclear weapons…but any type of weapon more powerful than that so as to defend its sovereignty and right to existence from the ever-growing nuclear threat by the US' (DPRK Ministry of Foreign Affairs in ICG 2004: 3). According to the US this statement was an acknowledgement of the DPRK's possession of the technology, and it subsequently pressured KEDO to halt the supply of heavy fuel to the North (Moon and Bae 2003: 12). Tensions rose, and between the exchange in 2002 and January 2003 the DPRK retaliated by declaring the Agreed Framework null and void, declaring its intention to expel IAEA inspectors, and announcing its withdrawal from the NPT (ICG 2003: 13). This ushered in the second nuclear crisis. Issues dominating this crisis included the North's past possession of nuclear warheads (before the signing of the Agreed Framework), the North's present projects relating to spent fuel rods and its 'manufacture and export of plutonium', as well as its production of nuclear warheads and the (tacitly acknowledged, according to the US) highly enriched uranium (HEU) programme (Moon and Bae 2003: 11).

The Bush Doctrine directly influenced the evolution of North Korea's relationship with the US as well as the international community as a whole. The administration's foreign policy stance was shaped by the September 11, 2001 attacks and its subsequent focus on global terror. Its hard-line approach towards the DPRK reflected this paradigmatic shift (Moon and Bae 2003: 14). As part of the focus on the 'War on Terror', Bush branded the DPRK a rogue state contributing to global

instability and referred to it as part of an 'Axis of Evil' during the 2002 State of the Nation address (Washington Post 2002). In the same year, during a speech made at West Point military academy, he reiterated his belief in the US's role as an enforcer of good in a world full of evil when he said, '[we] are in a conflict between good and evil…[and] America will call evil by its name. By confronting evil and lawless regimes we do not create a problem, we reveal a problem' (Bush 2002). In an interview with Bob Woodward in November 2002, Bush equated this 'evil' with North Korea when he said, 'I loathe Kim Jong Il. I've got a visceral reaction to this guy because he is starving his people' (Washington Post 2002). This attitude, as well as global developments (including the September 11 attacks, the invasion of Iraq, the 'War on Terror' and the Republican Party's 'Anything But Clinton' policy (Moon and Bae 2003: 14)) led to the markedly different approach to North Korea's denuclearization – an almost complete 180 degree turn from the policy that led to the formulation and signing of the Agreed Framework in 1994. For example, for the first time the possibility of 'pre-emptive nuclear strikes against terrorists and rogue states' became a reality (Bleiker 2003: 727) – especially since the US was not afraid of invading Iraq (and since the invasion led to a perceived victory) (Park 2004: 140).

In May 2003, Bush demanded a 'complete, verifiable, irreversible dismantlement' of the DPRK's nuclear programme (ICG 2004: 6). Both states seemed not to want to give in to each other's 'maximal, non-negotiable policy positions' (Pollack 2003: 14), which raised tensions in the region – North Korea was arguably taking an aggressive (defensive) stance toward the US because of the US's new foreign policy position toward the DPRK, as well as its desperate need for economic aid and a direct line with the US to guarantee its regime's security. The US, on the other hand, thought that the issue could be solved with a more hard-line position toward the DPRK, as it felt that the Clinton administration had not really produced any concrete results. The new administration believed that this should include, for example, not giving in to the DPRK's demands for direct bilateral talks. Colin Powell flatly rejected direct talks with the DPRK by saying, 'we are not going to simply fall into what I believe is bad practice of saying the only way you can talk to us is directly, when it affects other nations in the region' (Powell in Moon and Bae 2003: 16). The North reacted with provocations including the resumption of the five-megawatt nuclear reactor in Yongbyon, the launch of two missile tests and the interception of a US reconnaissance plane (Park 2004: 140). Bush made clear in an interview, in which he said that North Korea was 'back to the old blackmail game' after the North used brinkmanship tactics to try to bring the US back to the negotiating table, that the US was not going to be manipulated into giving North Korea concessions. In the same interview, he continued by saying that the US wanted 'an opportunity to say to the North Koreans

and the world that we're not going to be threatened' (Spencer and Rennie 2003). He also stated that the North's brinkmanship was 'another reason' for the US to build missile defence shields (2003).

Instead of getting the US to come back to the negotiating table after the DPRK dismissed the validity of the Agreed Framework, the brinkmanship practiced by the North had an adverse effect on the new administration. The US now felt that appeasing the DPRK was going to get them nowhere, and that it just rewarded 'bad behaviour' (Reynolds 2003). Instead of appeasement, the US preferred to try 'isolating, containing and transforming the North rather than attempting [substantial] dialogue and diplomacy' (Moon and Bae 2003: 15). Neoconservative elements within the US even considered 'a malign neglect strategy that would let North Korea become a nuclear country', and therefore give the US cause to apply a more aggressive strategy towards the North (15).

It is within this context that China facilitated a meeting with the US and the DPRK in Beijing on the 20th of March, 2003. Washington up to this point had insisted on a multilateral forum for the talks, while the DPRK had insisted that it communicate directly with the US. China managed with this meeting to get Washington to meet North Korea in a multilateral setting, and within this context to allow bilateral exchanges (Park 2004: 141). The North Korean Foreign Ministry announced that 'it would not stick to any particular dialogue format if the US were ready to make a "bold switchover" in North Korean policy in order to resolve the nuclear issue' (141), which gave the US a chance to conduct these talks in a multilateral forum even though talks mostly focused on the relationship between the US and China.

China can be credited with ending the stalemate with the facilitation of this meeting, acting as a mediator between the DPRK and the US (Zhongying 2009: 9). The meeting did not yield any concrete results, although all three sides agreed to meet again. In July, Pyongyang practiced brinkmanship diplomacy by revealing that it had reprocessed 8000 spent nuclear fuel rods and had restarted the five-megawatt reactor; the US retaliated by including more parties in the talks (South Korea and Japan) in order to put pressure on North Korea (Park 2004: 142). It also created the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) which was meant to stop the illicit trade of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) by 'intercepting shipments of missiles or WMD or WMD-related systems components and technologies', ostensibly aimed at the DPRK (ICG 2009a: 19). In an attempt for the DPRK to counterbalance the strategic goals of the US within the context of the talks, it added Russia to the list of countries that it wanted to get involved in the negotiations (ICG 2007: 8).

China again facilitated the new multilateral forum now called the Six Party Talks. Through this forum, it initially helped both the US and the DPRK to save face. The US needed to prove that it still would not communicate with the DPRK directly, and China promised the DPRK that it would facilitate a bilateral meeting with the US during the multilateral talks (Park 2004: 142). Finally all six parties had a forum with which to discuss North Korea's denuclearization. Technically these parties (China, Russia, the US, the DPRK, Japan and South Korea) had already been involved indirectly, so one argument is that it was only logical to also officially have them at the table. As previously noted, the US thought that it could pressure North Korea into changing its behaviour if it could show that it had the backing of all the countries in North Korea's backyard. The DPRK very likely thought that the more parties there were at the table, the more concessions it could obtain – if it played its cards well enough and made sure that the countries involved never fully united against it.

The Six Party Talks were marred with endemic problems relating to the historic relationship between the US and the DPRK. The two countries were suspicious of each other for a number of reasons, including Bush's Doctrine that placed North Korea on the 'Axis of Evil' as well as the administration's hard-line approach to the North (which implicitly included regime change and sanctions), as well as both countries' poor track record when it came to implementing agreements. Within the context of these talks, the other parties and their objectives concerning the issue also came into play – this added element exponentially complicated the process and led to the eventual stalling of the talks.

Another element that compounded the problem was that democratic governments involved in these talks had a fickle constituency to bear in mind. As the talks dragged along, the Obama administration changed its policy toward the DPRK (Snyder 2013), South Korean elections saw the end of the 'Sunshine Policy' and the beginning of a harder stance toward the DPRK (ICG 2009a: 11), and the Japanese public's disgust over the North's abduction of Japanese citizens became an issue that essentially prevented Japan from playing an effective role in the negotiations (ICG 2006b: 9). Sanctions were not effective as China and Russia opposed them (at least initially) (ICG 2004: 19, 23), and even though China's relationship with the DPRK had waned during the talks, the country could not take a hard stance towards the North as it was still constrained by its own security concerns (ICG 2003: 18).

Within this context the power balance also shifted. Bush's policy towards the DPRK at the end of his tenure, as well as Obama's policy toward the DPRK, highlighted the US's increasing need for

multilateral cooperation (Shaplen and Laney 2007: 1). It could be argued that North Korea's actions, at the start of Obama's first term, were indicative of the North's lack of confidence in the US's ability to deliver credible threats. Right after Obama said that he would hold out an 'outstretched hand' to countries 'who will unclench their fists', the North 'responded with a multi-stage rocket launch and nuclear test' in 2009 (Snyder 2013). If the US ever had the ability to unilaterally control the situation, it had lost it by the end of the talks. It could be argued that this means that the North 'won' these negotiations. The Talks stalled, which gave the North time to continue its developments. All in all, the talks slowly went nowhere while the DPRK continued to develop the nuclear capacity the international community seemed powerless to stop.

## 3. Research Problem

The Six Party Talks stalled in 2009 as no real progress was being made concerning the way in which the respective parties wanted the denuclearisation process to be implemented. In 2005 the Talks had a minor breakthrough when a Joint Statement was released that promised the North's compliance concerning its nuclear programmess (US Department of State 2005). The hope for real progress was short-lived, however. By 2009 the Joint Statement had been rejected by the North. So what led to the deadlock? This paper will explore one aspect of these negotiations by applying Zartman's assumption concerning 'power perception' within the context of the Structuralists' Paradox. The Structuralists' Paradox asks, 'How come weaker parties negotiate with stronger parties and still get something?' (Zartman 2008: 100). Traditionally, negotiations are thought to be more effective (and produce more satisfaction) if both parties are equal in power. Zartman proves that this assumption is generally incorrect by showing that asymmetry provides better results for both parties (2008: 109).

The Structuralists' Paradox does not mean that in asymmetrical negotiations weak states can 'win', but that in these situations both the weaker side and the stronger side are generally satisfied with the results. However, in the Six Party Talks a weak state negotiated with the strongest states in the world and arguably gained what it wanted (and 'won') at the expense of what the other much stronger states wanted from the process. This goes against Zartman's assumption that negotiations for the most part are more satisfactory if parties have asymmetrical power positions.

If one analyses these negotiations according to Zartman's argument, the Six Party Talks should still be producing more positive results for stronger states. Looking at the relationship that the North has with each party individually, it seems to have an asymmetrical power dynamic in each case.

Regardless, the Talks stall every time and none of the stronger parties have seemed satisfied after the outcome of most rounds in the Talks. What makes this case unique? There could be many factors – including the fact that despite the bilateral nature of the interactions between North Korea and the other parties in the Talks, the talks are still multilateral, which complicates how decisions have to be made and outcomes have to be managed. This paper will argue that finding the reason for North Korea's ability to manipulate other much stronger states is the key to understanding why these negotiations did not produce the results that Zartman's hypothesis claims they should have. So Zartman's assumption could still hold true – the perception of power symmetry creates deadlock (2008: 109), although the definition of a 'weak' state and a 'strong' state might have to be qualified within the context of nuclear security negotiations. This paper will therefore look at bilateral relationships between the DPRK and the US, and the DPRK and China and South Korea, in order to test Zartman's assumption that power symmetry creates deadlock in negotiations (or conversely, that power asymmetry facilitates more effective negotiations).

Essentially, the main question that should guide this study is: 'What gives North Korea its power?', or more specifically, 'What makes North Korea an atypical small state?'. In *Uncertain allies or uncomfortable neighbours? Making sense of China-North Korea Relations, 1949-2010*, Chung and Choi argue that North Korea is an atypical small state because it has the ability to manipulate China (for example), and to resist any pressure from its stronger neighbour (2013). This paper wants to explore the 'atypical' nature of North Korea's power in relation to the states that it interacts with. In the context of the Six Party Talks, and Zartman's assumption about symmetry and asymmetry, the North does have a unique ability to resist pressure and gain concessions. If Zartman's hypothesis is still valid, this means that North Korea cannot be as 'weak' as it seems. The paper will explore which factors could make this state able – despite its physical weakness and the fact that nuclear security negotiations are normally dominated by the use, or threat, of physical power – to act as though it is not the weak state that it is, and to get away with it.

## 4. Rationale

The Six Party Talks is a multilateral forum created to facilitate the DPRK's denuclearisation, but because of reasons mentioned earlier, a focus on bilateral interactions that took place during the negotiations (both as part of the negotiations, and interactions that influenced the negotiations externally) will guide this paper's analysis. The content of these Talks makes them unique and shows how power perception (heightened in negotiations that involve a focus on deterrence, state survival and regional stability) dictates outcomes. The intent of the study is to explore how 'power'

can be manipulated because it has to be mediated by perception. In essence, 'perception' creates a space for North Korea to manipulate the 'reality' within which all the states involved function. This focus could be applicable for other states with similar situations. Iran, for example, has little in common with the DPRK, but there are – apart from the negotiations to denuclearise and the very recent nuclear deal signed with the US and other states – still similarities. For example, Iran uses an external threat to create cohesion (Okruhlik 2003: 113), and it uses its nuclear program as one of the tools to achieve this. It is telling that not long after the deal that had been signed, Iran still proclaimed publically that it is still an enemy of the United States (The Wall Street Journal 2015). It is also surrounded by hostile states, which strengthens its resolve to have a deterrent. North Korea uses its desperation for regime survival as a tool to strengthen its position against other parties when it comes to negotiation tactics, as it has an internal commitment (a strong internal drive or even passion) to succeed (Habeeb 1988: 22). Iran also has the habit of exploiting a fundamentalist world view that leaves no room for grey areas (Spindle and Coker 2011). For both countries, it is an 'all-or-nothing' game, and they use this to their advantage. Generalisations are difficult to make, but there might be enough similarities between these two cases to use this approach (broadly speaking) in the analysis of both negotiations.

This study aims to show that it can build on currently existing assumptions that relate to negotiation and power, specifically Zartman's assumption that asymmetrical power structures generally lead to more positive outcomes in negotiations. Zartman has mostly applied this theory using states that have asymmetrical power relations and where the topic is environmental or economic. Seven cases where states had asymmetrical relations were tested in *Power and Negotiation* (2000: 225), and three cases had states with symmetrical power positions – in neither the symmetric or asymmetric relationships was there a case study that dealt with denuclearisation or non-proliferation (although one case does look at the Korean negotiations regarding the Armistice Agreement, where there was symmetry among the parties involved).

In the context of the negotiations analysed by Zartman, for the most part asymmetry led to more satisfactory results. This paper tests this by applying this assumption to the Six Party Talks. In relation to this, the paper argues that the premise can still hold, but that perhaps within the context of denuclearisation, the understanding of power perception needs to be qualified. The study explores whether, in the context of the Six Party Talks in particular, 'power' can be analysed with a purely realist paradigm. Constructed meanings for resources that seem to exist purely within an objective reality (for realists) can alter the value of these resources. The paper therefore builds onto

the realist foundation of Zartman's approach to the analysis of negotiations, by showing how a state like North Korea can change the value of an objective reality by creating certain meanings for the elements that comprise this reality. Not only does the way in which these elements need to be analysed need revision (as discussed above), the distinction between 'aggregate structural power' and 'issue-specific structural power' (Habeeb 1988: 19) needs to be qualified. The 'aggregate structural power' (or overall national power) that the states start with and which they can use as a resource, and 'issue-specific structural power' (or specific negotiation strength) that alters for each player depending on decisions being made within the context of the different rounds of the negotiations (Habeeb 1988: 19), may very well interact a lot more with each other in a two-way street in the context of these types of negotiation than assumed in the past. This paper is therefore interested in building on certain assumptions made by realists (including Hans Morgenthau (1993)), as well as certain assumptions concerning a structural approach to the analysis of negotiations (Zartman 2008: 100), in order to provide a more nuanced perspective regarding North Korea's behaviour during the Six Party Talks in relation to its interactions towards the other parties in the Talks (specifically the US, China and South Korea), and their reactions to the North's provocations.

## 5. Objectives

The objectives of this study are extracted from the intersection of the structural approach to the study of negotiation (which includes the analysis of the division of 'aggregate structural power' and 'issue-specific structural power' (Habeeb 1988: 17, 19)), characteristics of nuclear security negotiations (most specifically the 'perversity of power' within this context (Avenhaus, Kremenyuk and Sjöstedt 2002: 25)), an understanding of power as a 'perceived relation' (Zartman 2008: 107), and the need for more nuance concerning 'value' and 'reality' (and their construction) in relation to elements that together dictate national power, as well as North Korea's behaviour. The study wants to explore what facilitates the interplay of aggregate structural power and issue-specific structural power, and how perception of relative power positions influences the outcome of nuclear security negotiations (and in particular, the Six Party Talks).

To answer this, the study's objective will be to answer the following:

How does North Korea manage to act as if it is not a 'weak' state (i.e. what makes it an atypical small state)?

In order to answer this, the paper will ask the following questions:

1. How does North Korea construct a 'reality' that supports a certain self-perception vis-à-vis the other states in the Six Party Talks?
2. How does this construction affect elements of national power ('aggregate structural power')?
3. How does this construction affect negotiating strength (or 'issue-specific structural power')?
4. How does this influence the North's level of 'perversity of power'?
5. How do all of these elements (above) contribute to the limitation of powerful states' actions towards the DPRK?

The framework of the study serves as a basis from which to explore these questions.

## 6. Delimitation

This study will explore the character of the relationship between the DPRK and the US, as well as the relationship between the DPRK and China and South Korea (respectively), which developed during the Six Party Talks. Bilateral interactions will be examined instead of looking at the negotiations as a purely multilateral forum. The Talks themselves therefore do not adhere in the strict sense to the definition of a multilateral negotiation, although its multilateral complexity cannot (and will not) be taken for granted. It could be argued that one can look at the North's bilateral relationship with each member in order to understand the nature of this multilateral platform. This paper will – for the sake of brevity and depth of analysis – only focus on the abovementioned relationships, but this is not because it wants to make a value judgment concerning which party is the most influential when it comes to North Korea's denuclearisation. In fact, it will be looking at how these different relationships influenced each other. For example, the US desperately needed China to side with it when it came to punitive action against the North for its provocations. Because of China's specific (historic) relationship with the DPRK, however, this was not possible for China. The affect that the relationship between China and the DPRK had on the US's relationship with the DPRK was profound, and is thought by many to be the reason why the Six Party Talks failed. This will not be overlooked during analysis.

The actual negotiating positions of the parties in relation to each round of the Six Party Talks will not be analysed in this paper. Instead, the paper will look broadly at how certain important events influenced the character of the relationship that the DPRK had with the US on the one hand, and that it had with China and South Korea on the other. Important events that took place during the Six

Party Talks include the North's missile and nuclear tests, as well as the agreements that were signed. These will be analysed in the context of the questions (objectives asked) above.

## 7. Methodology (summary)

The research asks whether one can apply the assumption that Zartman makes that power asymmetry in negotiations between two states leads to more satisfactory outcomes for both parties (or that power symmetry leads to deadlock). William Habeeb, in *Power and Tactics in International Negotiation*, agrees with this assumption and applies it to three different cases, all of which were about a disagreement between two states concerning their reach of sovereignty, and none of which were about non-proliferation or denuclearization (1988). In the Six Party Talks, each round ended in deadlock, except for the Joint Statement and the September Agreement that were agreed to in 2005 and 2007 (Zhongying 2009: 6). However, upon closer inspection all the agreements were nothing more than lip service – all of the promises made were retracted not long after the 'commitments' had been signed. This means that for the most part, a structurally weaker state went head-to-head with states that were arguably individually all stronger than itself – and definitely collectively stronger than itself – and despite this, created deadlock.

Despite the North's possession of nuclear weapons, the US, for example, is in terms of national strength much stronger than the DPRK. North Korea does have nuclear weapons (or at least at the beginning of the talks it officially had the potential to have them), but so does the US – a lot more than North Korea has, and a lot more advanced than North Korea's nuclear weapons. The national economy of the North cannot in any way compare to the economy of the US (Dong 2013: 63), and its global influence is negligible (aside from the threat of its nuclear weapons programme, of course). Zartman's assumption also defines 'power' as 'a perceived relation' (2008: 100). Again, it is obvious that the US is physically much stronger than the DPRK, but if 'power' is a perceived relation, this study aims to find out how a perceived power relation can be manipulated during negotiations.

According to Zartman's assumption, even if North Korea manages to gain more concessions from the US than initially predicted, the US should still be getting what it wants – North Korea's denuclearisation. In essence, North Korea is getting what it wants if it wants to keep its nuclear weapons while still being able to extract concessions from other states, and the US has lost if it could not stop the DPRK from continuing with its nuclear weapons programme. This study therefore wants to look at how this is possible – and whether Zartman's assumption is still relevant.

Zartman's argument claims that two 'levels' of power influence power perception in these negotiations. These two levels are 'aggregate structural power' and 'issue-specific structural power' (Habeeb 1988: 17, 19). Aggregate structural power can be understood as the sum of a party's 'resources, capabilities and position vis-à-vis the external world as a whole' (Habeeb 1988: 17). This type of power can be 'measured' with the formula: Pp = (C+E+M) x (S+W), where Pp is perceived power, C is critical mass (population and territory), E is economic capability, M is military capability, S is strategic purpose, and W is the will to pursue national strategy (Cline in Habeeb 1988: 17). Cline's formula (shown above) seems infallible, but is still quite arbitrary. This paper will rather look at Morgenthau's 'elements of national power' for this purpose and analyse the DPRK's elements of national power using Morgenthau's framework. However, because North Korea is obviously weaker than the US (and the other countries that took part in the Six Party Talks), the paper will analyse the 'value' of these elements within the context of their constructed meanings.

Issue-specific structural power 'is concerned with an actor's capabilities and position vis-à-vis another actor in terms of a specific mutual issue' (Habeeb 1988: 19). This power is concerned with the 'power structure of a relationship'. Morgenthau also, in his framework for the analysis of elements of national power, separates 'diplomacy' from other elements that contribute to a nation's overall national power (1993: 155). Issue-specific structural power and Morgenthau's 'diplomacy' have a lot in common. Morgenthau claims that 'diplomacy' is where all the elements that contribute to national power actually get converted into 'power' – therefore this is where resources are used in the application of a state's foreign policy. In the same way, 'aggregate structural power' (mostly static in nature) is only a starting point for an actor, as it then has to use its 'capabilities' in order to create a certain position in relation to another actor (and in the case of negotiations, this would be related to a specific issue). This paper therefore also separates Morgenthau's 'diplomacy' from the other elements of national power for analytical clarity, much like Habeeb (1988: 19) separates 'aggregate structural power' from 'issue-specific structural power'.

In the analysis of both North Korea's 'aggregate structural power' and Morgenthau's 'diplomacy' (or Habeeb's 'issue-specific structural power' (1988: 19)), this study wants to focus on how North Korea manages to transcend the 'objective' reality of its weakness. It will use elements of constructivism in order to look at the social construction of meanings attached to each of these elements and how this construction influences their value. This is because of Zartman's claim that power is a perceived relation. Therefore, if perception mediates reality, can an argument be made that North Korea is manipulating perception in order to 'construct' more power for itself (in

relation to its nuclear weapons programme)? Within the context of an analytical separation of 'aggregate structural power' and 'issue-specific structural power', this paper will explore the North's construction of power (and by implication its ability to manipulate perception and 'reality').

This argument will, because of the nature of the negotiations and the threat of instability that the acquisition of nuclear weapons invites, also look at how the North's construction of power influences the 'perversity of power'. The 'perversity of power' is the phenomenon 'where coercion, instead of achieving its intended effect, actually increases the efforts of the target party to achieve the capability to exercise the same type of counter-coercion' (Avenhaus *et al* 2002: 25). This research paper will explore this understanding of the 'perversity of power' by first looking at North Korea's ability to manipulate perception in order to distort relative power positions between the DPRK and the other states that will be analysed. It will then focus on how this manipulation heightens the North's 'perversity of power', and by so doing, influences international norms that limit the actions of other states when it comes to options for punishing the DPRK.

## 8. Literature Review

This section will look at authors that have written about multilateral nuclear security negotiations in general and the Six Party Talks specifically. The most prominent contributors to this topic include Avenhaus and Kremenyuk, who edited a book that focuses on defining the unique nature of nuclear negotiations; Joo and Kwak, who edited a book that analyses North Korea's second nuclear crisis; Rozman, who gave an in-depth and detailed account of the 'Other Four' (South Korea, China, Japan and Russia) and their policies towards the DPRK during the Six Party Talks; and, most importantly Buszynski, who analysed the Six Party Talks according to how the structure of the multilateral negotiations (the roles that each party played) influenced the outcome of the process.

*Avenhaus, Kremenyuk and Sjöstedt*

In *Containing the Atom: International Negotiations on Nuclear Security and Safety* (2002), Avenhaus, Kremenyuk and Sjöstedt (eds) analyse well-known nuclear negotiations (including those with North Korea) in order to, firstly, identify what may be typical or special characteristics of nuclear talks; secondly, assess what typical or special features of nuclear talks represent impediments on the negotiation process; and finally, discuss how an understanding of the typical or special features of nuclear talks may be used for their facilitation (2002: 2). The book draws several conclusions about nuclear security and nuclear safety negotiations, including that in nuclear security negotiations there is a characteristically unique 'recognition of the perversity of power' (2002: 25).

An example of this 'perversity of power' is the phenomenon 'where coercion, instead of achieving its intended effect, actually increases the efforts of the target party to achieve the capability to exercise the same type of counter-coercion' (25). This perversion has an influence on the character of the Six Party Talks, and North Korea's perceived relative position of power, which will be discussed in the current paper's analysis.

Among other characteristics, multilateral nuclear security negotiations also tend to be 'distributive and confrontational', and have a core of states that dominate the negotiations (2002: 26). In one of the chapters from *Containing the Atom: International Negotiations on Nuclear Security and Safety* (2002), Sigal writes that in the case of the nuclear talks with North Korea, the issues were so politicized that they could not be held in relative isolation (as would normally be the case in nuclear security negotiations) and, more importantly, that in these negotiations 'the parties were more concerned with relative than absolute gains from international negotiation' (369). This arguably serves to confirm the assumption that North Korea's self-perception was never one of a non-nuclear state, but rather one of equal standing with its rivals (because of the 'perversity of power' – where coercion by the seemingly stronger nuclear power only results in belligerence from the other state). According to Sigal, the main issue of the talks (where arguably directly or indirectly the DPRK controlled the flow and content of the sessions) ended up being about North Korea's nuclear capacity compared to South Korea's and the United States'. This negotiation was one where there was not a common need for 'genuine problem solving and a win/win outcome' (369).

What is notable about *Containing the Atom: International Negotiations on Nuclear Security and Safety* and relevant to the current study, is how the nuclear weapon (whether the talks are about non-proliferation or the reduction of already existing ones) can be used as a tool to alter (in, for example, the case of North Korea and the US) or strengthen (in the case of SALT and START (Strategic Arms Limitations Talks and Strategic Arms Reduction Talks)) the perception of the relative power (in terms of symmetry or asymmetry) that each state has in relation to the other. Because of such perversion, this perception dictated the content and outcome of the negotiations: the possession of nuclear weapons, or the move towards their acquisition, made the negotiations about relative gains and not absolute games (2002: 369).

*Joo and Kwak (ed)*

The book, *North Korea's Second Nuclear Crisis and Northeast Asian Security* (Joo and Kwak 2007), focuses on finding the reason for the second North Korean nuclear crisis, the policies of major

players that are involved in the crisis (the six-party negotiating table), implications of North Korea's nuclear blast, and recommendations for the players involved for how peace and security can be attained in the Korean peninsula (1). It critically analyses personalities that were involved in the time of the crisis (specifically that of President Bush) (Chapter 4), while taking a look at the positions of the other countries involved, and examines common tactics that North Korea used in the negotiations (Snyder in Joo and Kwak 2007: 60). Although it does not provide an analysis of the negotiations using structure (or the construction of meaning), the analysis of North Korean tactics is very useful for this study. According to Snyder, 'the North's approach to negotiations have included the use of brinkmanship tactics and threats, crisis escalation tactics, and creating situations where other parties feel obliged to take actions to "save face"' (60). These tactics will be analysed in the context of the argument that this paper puts forward: it will look at these threats and 'crisis escalation tactics' (60), for example, in order to understand the reason behind the North's behaviour (in relation to its constructed 'reality').

*Rozman*

Gilbert Rozman's book, *Strategic Thinking about the Korean Nuclear Crisis* (2007a), provides an in-depth look at the policy choices of the 'Other Four' in the Six Party Talks. It is useful in the context of this study because it provides a detailed analysis of the DPRK's relationship with both China and South Korea. As Chapter Six of this paper focuses on these relationships in relation to the argument at hand, the book provides essential information concerning the interactions that these states had with one another during the Six Party Talks and how this formed the character of the relationship that the DRPK had with China and South Korea respectively. It does not go as far as to look at how North Korea's constructed reality (and by implication its constructed identity) influences this relationship (which is what this paper aims to do), but because of how thorough the account of these relationships is, it provides this paper with a good foundation for an analysis focused on the North's construction of 'reality'.

*Buszynski*

A study that also uses structure to analyse the Six Party Talks can be found in *Negotiating with North Korea: The Six Party Talks and the Nuclear Issue* (2013). In this book, Leszek Buszynski agrees that 'the process of negotiation shapes the outcome' (1). His analysis shows how the structure of the negotiation influenced the bargaining tactics used by the parties involved, which in turn led to the dissolving of the talks. The structure, that he proposes had a direct impact on the negotiation

process, provided each party with a specific role. For example, the United States became the 'dominant player', North Korea became the 'target state', and China became the 'pivotal player' (46, 185). Buszynski believes that the interaction between these players (within the context of the structure – their roles) '[shaped] the negotiations as positions [were] expressed and then reformulated according to feedback received in an on-going process of mutual adjustment' (1). The most important consequence of the structure is explained as the complexity of the multilateral context of the negotiations – the fact that this complexity (too many players with too many different and often opposing interests) inhibited the United States from pursuing its goals, and that it gave North Korea the opportunity to manipulate the disunity among other parties to its own advantage (2013:103).

Buszynski correctly claims that the multilateral context of the Six Party Talks essentially blocked other states from making North Korea do what they wanted it to do (the basic definition of power). This paper does not contest this, but would like to add some depth to the analysis. It was not only multilateral complexity (in a structural sense) that led to the dissolution of the Six Party Talks – it was also North Korea's ability to construct a certain narrative that influenced each state's behaviour within the context of this multilateral complexity. While Buszynski's analysis is insightful, it does not pay attention to the dynamic link between aggregate power and issue-specific power during nuclear security negotiations – that North Korea, in this context, was proactive in relation to its internal and external environment, and that it dictated not only its own 'role' in its constructed 'reality', but the other parties' roles as well.

## 9. Chapter Outline

### Chapter 1: Introduction

The introduction creates the landscape for the study. It provides a historical overview of the negotiations, focusing on the two nuclear crises that heightened the need for the Six Party Talks. It also provides the aim and rationale of the study, as well as the literature review and a summary of the analytical framework.

### Chapter 2: Theoretical Foundation and Analytical Framework

This chapter provides an in-depth look at the analytical framework being used for the study. It looks at Zartman and Habeeb's theory regarding power as a perceived relation, within the context of an overview of both approaches to the analysis of negotiation as well as the concept of 'power'. It provides an analysis of methods being applied to test Zartman's assumption, including

Morgenthau's elements of national power (1993: 126). It will then justify the use of constructivist methodology to strengthen this classical realist approach to the analysis of Morgenthau's elements of national power (which includes a discussion about Alexander Wendt's assumptions concerning the social construction of identity and collective knowledge systems (1992)). It will also provide an overview of the analytical framework that will be used in the rest of the paper.

**Chapter 3: The construction of identity: the Kim myth and the eternal revolution**

Chapter Three will provide a foundation for the analysis of Morgenthau's elements of national power, which will be conducted in the paper's subsequent chapters. Because the DPRK manages to construct certain meanings for each of these elements by constructing a specific national identity, this construction needs to be discussed and analysed before the elements of national power (domestically as well as 'diplomacy' (internationally)) can be critically analysed in the chapters that follow Chapter Three.

**Chapter 4: 'Elements of National power', North Korean identity and the construction of power**

Chapter Four analyses Morgenthau's elements of national power and provides nuance by adding a constructivist approach to this analysis. It builds on the discussion started in Chapter Three, and shows how North Korea's constructed identity influences each of these elements and creates certain meanings (and 'values') for these elements that provide the North Korean regime with a certain level of 'negative power' vis-à-vis other states that are, for example, trying to make it denuclearise. Morgenthau identifies nine elements of national power: geography (1993: 124), natural resources (127), industrial capacity (133), military preparedness (135), population (139), national character (143), national morale (149), the quality of diplomacy (155), and the quality of government (158). These elements will be analysed according to the framework provided in Chapters Two and Three. The element regarding foreign policy implementation – the 'quality of diplomacy' – will be discussed in Chapters Five and Six.

**Chapter 5: The 'revolution', the nuclear weapon, and the nuclear taboo: how the DPRK used coercive deficiency to promote the 'perversity of power'**

Chapter Five analyses the character of the relationship between the DPRK and the US during the Six Party Talks. It shows how the North managed to construct and dominate a certain 'reality' that essentially controlled the actions of the US. This is not to say that the US did not have a hand in

actively constructing this narrative, but the argument will show how – in the context between the US's 'version' of the narrative, and the DPRK's version of the narrative – the DPRK managed to promote its perception (its self-perception and its perception of the US in relation to the region and the DPRK) with more success. This chapter argues that the US was, despite its physical superiority (and, according to itself, its moral superiority), 'directed', and that North Korea was in control of the 'reality' that guided their actions towards each other. The argument concludes with a discussion about how the domination of this narrative (by the DPRK) influenced the North's level of 'perversity of power', as well as the strength of international norms like the nuclear taboo.

**Chapter 6: Multilateral Complexity: North Korea, China and South Korea in the Six Party Talks, coercive deficiency, 'altercasting', and the nuclear taboo**

Chapter Six focuses on the impact of multilateral complexity and, specifically, the impact of the interests of China and South Korea on the success of the Six Party Talks. It shows how the 'negative' power constructed by North Korea, referred to in Chapter Four (and called 'coercive deficiency' by Thomas Schelling (1960: 37)), affected the positions of these two states. It also analyses how the North's construction of identity intensifies this 'coercive deficiency' in such a way that states, like China and South Korea, to a large extent end up entrapped by the North. This, as well as the domination of the North's narrative vis-à-vis the US (and the resulting 'perversity of power' and non-punishment of the DPRK), allows the DPRK to influence international norms like the nuclear taboo in such a way that it actually strengthens the norm while undermining it. In other words, while the North undermines the nuclear taboo norm by crossing lines related to nuclear non-proliferation, the inaction (or non-punishment) of the other states (especially the US, China and South Korea) also – whether intentionally or unintentionally – strengthens it by highlighting the symbolic significance of the nuclear weapon itself, as well as creating a precedent by not allowing themselves to use their own nuclear weapons to punish the North for creating nuclear weapons for themselves.

**Chapter 7: Conclusion**

The conclusion provides an overview of the argument presented in the paper, as well as recommendations for further study.

# Chapter 2: Theoretical Foundation and Analytical Framework

## 1. Introduction

The analytical framework used for this study focuses on understanding the power of the (conscious) construction of a narrative. It is founded in negotiation analysis and is being used parallel to a structural analysis of negotiation (where 'aggregate structural power' and 'issue-related structural power' can be separated, or in the case of Buszynski, where 'national power' and 'negotiation strength' can be separated). As such, the framework needs to incorporate the intersection between realism and constructivism, as well as the relationship that exists between different forms of power and how they need to be applied in relation to a study that looks at the *construction of pow*er. In relation to realism and constructivism, points of convergence and difference need to be identified in order to apply a unique method that relates to this particular case – these include the epistemological and ontological differences between the two approaches, and the difference between the endogenous and exogenous nature of 'interests'. The debate related to these elements, however, becomes relevant only when understood as part of a broader argument about the use of 'power' as a causal factor in the analysis of negotiation.

The challenge is to analyse a negotiation and focus on the impact of a specific distribution of power on the outcome of the negotiation, while being cognisant of the fact that North Korea is an atypical small state and there are elements in this 'equation' that are manipulating this distribution. Multilateral complexity can, to some degree, explain the lack of a proper outcome in the Six Party Talks. What is more interesting is not that there was not a satisfactory outcome (in the sense that the parties did not manage to achieve their objectives – possibly with the exception of the DPRK), but that the outcome was – whether 'satisfactory' or not – not determined. The Talks were merely stalled, which means that there is very little in terms of an 'outcome' to be analysed. What is interesting to analyse is why all the parties (with, possibly, the exception of the DPRK) were entrapped by their own choices at some point in the process. It is one thing to say that the negotiation ended with a certain outcome – one which some states preferred more than others. It is another to try to analyse a negotiation that for all intents and purposes seems to be over, but has not come to a definite conclusion.

The focus of this chapter is to find the correct 'type' of power that can be analysed in this context. In other words, to find a 'power', as a causal factor, that can make sense of North Korea's ability to essentially entrap five of the most powerful states of the world, so much so that the negotiations were not concluded with a 'poor' result, but that they had to be abandoned

altogether. Before this chapter explores the different types of power (as well as the different theories) that can be used in order to find the right framework for this analysis, a brief exposition of negotiation analysis is necessary in order to place the discussion within the correct milieu.

## 2. Negotiation analysis

In *Multilateral Negotiations: Lessons from Arms Control, Trade and the Environment* (1995), Fen Osler Hampson analyses, among other case studies, the Limited Test Ban Treaty and the Stockholm Conference on Confidence and Security Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe. He uses an approach that focuses on the dynamic quality of the process of negotiation, framing his analysis on the phases of negotiation (1995: 25). Because the analytical framework of this study focuses on how process in negotiations can alter outcomes, Hampson's exploration of different approaches to the study of negotiation (1995: 6-19) has been used as a guide to the most important approaches that have relevance to the way that this study will approach its analysis. This section will therefore – broadly using Hampson's three groupings – summarize different approaches to the analysis of negotiation according to *decisional analysis, structural analysis* and *process analysis.* Different subfields will be discussed within this structure, and their relevance to this study will be analysed.

This section relates to the difference between analysing negotiation processes by focusing on behaviour, versus analysing negotiation processes by focusing on the endogenous character of interests. It serves as an introduction to the problem at hand: how to analyse the Six Party Talks as a process, influenced by the relative distribution of power among the parties that are involved, without over-simplifying the problem and only looking at tactics (behaviour) that lead to certain results.

*Decisional analysis*

Spector, in *Decision Theory: Diagnosing Strategic Alternatives and Outcome Trade-Offs* (1994: 73), states that 'decision analysis is a methodology that facilitates the evaluation of…preference adjustments and trade-offs based on systematic and quantitative techniques'. This means that negotiators are rational (Siebe in Kremenyuk 1991: 201) and seek to always maximize utility (Habeeb 1988: 11). Added to this is the assumption, in many of the approaches that fall in this category, that negotiators possess common knowledge (Siebe in Kremenyuk 1991: 201). It is easy to see in international negotiations, especially multilateral negotiations, that this can be problematic – if not impossible. Parties to the table can hide their true intensions, and often do; with regard to the Six Party Talks specifically it has been noted that the DPRK was consistently

unwilling to reveal its position (Buszynski 2013: 12). Rational choice produces its own problems when used as an analytical tool – Herbert Simon (1959: 256) rightly states that '[in] actual fact the perceived world is fantastically different from the "real" world…[and that] the decision-maker's model of the world encompasses only a minute fraction of all the relevant characteristics of the real environment, and his inferences extract only a minute fraction of all the information that is present even in this model'. If the real world is only what we perceive it to be, then an analysis that claims to objectively assess choice becomes problematic. Despite the problems mentioned, the different approaches within 'decisional analysis'are still applicable as they each provide some insight into our understanding of negotiation; no single approach (in this sub-field and others) can provide a holistic explanation of behaviour and outcomes. Among the different approaches that can be found in this sub-field are game theory, linkage analysis and concession analysis.

In game theory, mathematical formulas are designed to 'deal with the problem of rational decision making in interpersonal conflict situations' (Siebe in Kremenyuk 1991: 180). Simulations (or games), such as the Prisoner's Dilemma and Chicken, are used to help actors 'pursue a minimax strategy (minimize you losses, maximize your gains)' in situations where both parties have a 'matrix of values' that they need to manipulate (Habeeb 1988: 11). The outcome of the game is then, according to Habeeb, the 'intersection of the two sides' strategy choices' (11). Three problems apply here – rational choice is a tricky concept, even if one takes into account that one person's 'rationality' can have a different frame of reference to another's; 'common knowledge' is also difficult to achieve, especially outside of the so-called sterile conditions found in simulation games played between two individuals; and utility maximization, although not a bad tool (with qualifications) when analysing economic negotiations, is problematic in the context of international negotiations. Essentially, game theory sacrifices the complexity of the psychological characteristics of negotiators for the elegance of the 'logic of the game' (Rapaport in Swingle 1970: 2).

Linkage analysis is related to game theory in that it uses strategy to alter values in a negotiation. The difference lies in the focus of the strategy – 'issues and parties themselves are often important choice variables in negotiation', and this approach looks at how one can use strategy that focuses on altering parties and issues during a negotiation in order to influence outcomes (Sebenius in Kremenyuk 1991: 281). In essence these strategies attempt to vary the values that the opposing party attaches to certain issues (for example) in order to augment their own position (and secure their own items of high value) (286). The above-listed problems that prevent game theory approaches from providing a full understanding of negotiation are also applicable here. For example, parties to a negotiation often purposefully obfuscate the value of

items that they are there to negotiate with and/or for. Strategies designed to alter values could prove to be meaningless or at the very least superficial, when there is a good chance that one party is trying to deceive another specifically by not revealing exactly what they want, or what they are willing to give in return for what they want.

Concession analysis unfortunately also falls into some of the same traps from which the other approaches cannot escape. The rationale is that the best way for parties in a negotiation to attain a balanced and fair resolution is to '[exchange] small concessions that modify opposing positions until they come into coincidence' (Zartman 2008: 62). Concession strategies include Osgood's 'graduated reciprocation in tension reduction' model – where parties are more willing to concede to relieve tension (a 'soft' strategy) (Osgood in Hamner 1974: 458), and Siegel and Fouraker's 'level of aspiration' model which is essentially the opposite – where 'a negotiator should make a concession only if his opponent makes no concessions' (a 'tough' strategy) (in Hamner 1974: 459). The problem with this is that here the analyst ignores the relative values that each party attaches to specific items. According to Zartman, the difficulty with this type of analysis is that 'concession/convergence implies that the variable value in question is the concession rate rather than the items at stake, that the item itself has no intrinsic value, and that a little more or a little less does not affect the nature of the item' (2008: 62).

The approach discussed above leaves out the dynamism of the *process* of the negotiation – the understanding that items' values differ among parties to the negotiation as well as change throughout the process of negotiation. It also assumes that each party can formulate a strategy based on 'common knowledge' of the values at stake. Importantly, even Zartman does not go far enough in his criticism. Values of items change during the process of negotiation, according to Zartman, but he looks at the values as exogenous and separated from the dynamic quality of the parties' identities and interests. Values of items do change, and they change within the process of negotiation, but they are themselves influenced by the contingency of the circumstances that surround the negotiations themselves. Values of interests are products of the identities and interests of the parties involved in the negotiation, as well as the dynamic process that is the result of the interaction between the parties during the negotiation itself.

*Structural analysis*

Structural analysis looks at the power dynamics that influence the course and outcomes of negotiations. It is based on realism, 'which emphasizes the impact of the international distribution of power on the behaviour of states and the role of power in deciding potential outcomes' (Hampson 1995: 8). Zartman says conventional wisdom dictates that 'power symmetry is the condition most propitious for mutually satisfying negotiations and efficient

attainment of optimal results', and that 'if asymmetry favours the more powerful, it indisposes the less powerful and delays joint agreement' (2008: 100). Most analysts who look at negotiations using this analytical tool explore a version of this statement, within the context of what Zartman calls the Structuralist's Paradox: the fact that weak states can negotiate with stronger states and 'still get something' (100). While Hampson criticises this approach for being deterministic (the assumption being that the strong will always 'win' and get more out of a negotiation than the weak) (1995: 8), analysts like Habeeb and Zartman counter the assumption that power predetermines outcomes. Zartman calls power 'a label for a *causal relation*, an area for inquiry rather than a concept of inquiry', an 'ability' (2008: 41 [own emphasis]); and Habeeb writes that '[if] explaining outcomes *involves a searching for causation, explaining causation involves seeking a notion of power*,…[therefore power] should…be the principle focus of negotiation analysis' (1988: 10 [own emphasis]). Most problems with this approach involve, in some form, a criticism of the way power is defined – if it is only defined as 'resources, skill, knowledge, and so forth' (Hampson 1995: 10), then power does become deterministic and superficial as a framework with which to analyse complex negotiations. But Zartman himself says that power is a purposeful action, an action 'by one party, intended to produce movement by another' (2008: 104). It is therefore not a resource or an outcome, but something in between, which allows for 'sub-categorisation, analysis and causal distinctions'.

Power, however, is a contested concept and needs to be defined in a specific way in order to apply to unique circumstances. This approach to the analysis of negotiation opens up the possibility of 'movement' when focusing on the analysis of power as the main variable that determines outcomes in negotiations, but takes 'power' for granted. It does not look at how power can be the result of endogenous processes that dictate the 'reality' of a specific situation. It is certainly a starting point for this paper, however, as the current analysis is interested in explaining North Korea's atypical power and its influence on the Six Party Talks. 'Movement' is the key element that creates a space for new possibilities in this analysis. The intersection of power and movement (process and interaction) is the reason why this type of analysis is still applicable to the case at hand, although this argument will qualify its approach with an in-depth look at 'power', 'identity and interests' and 'interaction' (related to social construction). Process analysis also comes close to an appropriate framework within which this analysis can take place, but it lacks elements that will be necessary in order to understand North Korea's atypical nature.

*Process Analysis*

Process analysis acknowledges the problematic nature of rational choice when used as a point of departure when analysing negotiations. Herbert Simon (1959: 272) understands the need for 'a description of the *choice process* that recognizes that alternatives are not given but must be sought [own emphasis]' and reminds us that 'the perceived world is fantastically different from the "real" world'. Process analysis does not completely do away with the idea of rationality; it looks at the 'procedural notion of rationality', the 'broader environmental context of negotiation and the cognitive and social milieu of decision making' (Hampson 1995: 15). It therefore agrees that negotiations are dynamic and outcomes are not predetermined, that the process of the negotiation itself can influence the outcome.

One example of this approach is sequencing and staging analysis. It analyses negotiations according to different phases, such as the formula phase and the details phase (Berridge 2010; Zartman 2008; Habeeb 1988). According to Zartman, 'formula/detail behaviour is associated with an active search for a solution'; it 'pays greater attention to substance and content and seeks an outcome which respects the concerns of both sides as much as possible' (2008: 64). Process analysis has the benefit of not being deterministic, as it allows for an analysis of a dynamic process. The process is therefore one that has an indeterminate outcome because interaction among parties itself directs the negotiation. If interaction determines the outcome of a negotiation (Buszynski 2013: 7) then one needs to analyse the different phases of a negotiation and how behaviour during these phases determines its outcome. In other words, this approach does not take 'rationality' as a given, it does not allow for a superficial analysis as it looks at the broader environmental context, and it provides an opportunity for the exploration of elements that influence behaviour (and therefore the process, and ultimately the outcome, of negotiations). As this approach allows for an exploration of external and internal factors that can influence process, it creates room for the analysis of power in the form previously described – power as a purposeful action. In fact, both Zartman and Habeeb use the 'formula-detail' approach in their analyses of negotiations, as it 'has room for the analysis of power as an added value' (Zartman 2008: 66).

This approach provides a framework that understands, as one of the governing principles, that 'rationality' can be influenced by processes and the 'cognitive and social milieu of decision-making' (Hampson 1995: 15). It does not, however, look at how *interaction can create and shape that social milieu* as well as being its result. Again, Zartman calls for the analysis of power 'as an added value' (2008: 66), while this specific study wants to analyse the construction of power during the process of the negotiation. In other words, it wants to analyse the interaction – the

constructive process – that creates perception of relative power positions among the states in question. The study will focus on North Korea specifically because of its atypical nature.

*Negotiation as a process*

For the context of this study, the previous section justified ruling out approaches such as game theory and 'concession/convergence' analysis. It instead suggested that one use an approach to analysis that incorporates an understanding of negotiation as a process, as the outcome of a negotiation cannot be predicted through a formula or a static framework of analysis (Buszynski 2013: 7). Within this approach, both (but not exclusively) Zartman (2008) and Habeeb (1988) advocate for an analysis that looks at negotiation as a process with phases – specifically, a phase that focuses on the search for a formula (Zartman 2008: 62), followed by the hashing out of the details (64). Habeeb (1988: 31) acknowledges that 'formula-detail is meant merely as a framework for better understanding what is in reality a complex and fluid process'. This is especially true in the case of the Six Party Talks, where it is very difficult to define which rounds (or phases in the rounds) fall into the first category, and which the second. Common wisdom suggests that once the formula has been agreed upon, the details follow – and while the details might be difficult to agree on, that the formula will stay intact.

In the Six Party Talks, however, this movement is not a linear progression but rather a circular motion where details and formulas keep being redrafted. This element has relevance to the analysis at hand because the framework that will be applied will not look at the linear progression of the negotiation. Instead, it will focus on a circular construction of the 'reality' within which the negotiations are taking place. It will specifically look at North Korea's role in the construction of this reality, and how this process provides the DPRK with a specific type of power in relation to the positions of the other parties. Because the focus is on the intersection between interaction (process and construction), power, and perception, the rest of this chapter will discuss theoretical (and analytical) elements that are related to these specific features, in order to piece together an analytical framework that can be applied to answer the research question of this study.

## 3. Types of power and the analysis of International Relations (IR)

Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, in *Power in International Relations* (2005) grapple with the challenge of a universal understanding of power in the context of twenty-first century IR (International Relations). Their solution to the problem is to point out that 'scholars of international relations must work with multiple conceptions of power' because of power's 'polymorphous character' (40). It is applicable here because of the nature of North Korea's

inexplicable ability to resist pressure to denuclearise, as well as its ability to resist pressure to change its character. This section will briefly look at Barnett and Duvall's classification(s) of power in order to create context for the 'power' that will be applied and analysed in later chapters. With the understanding that 'power works in various forms and has various expressions that cannot be captured by a single formulation' (41), Barnett and Duvall create a typology of power in order to help IR analysts choose the correct 'power' with which to analyse a specific phenomenon. They encourage theorists to use the typology not as a rigid set of mutually exclusive definitions, but as a foundation from which one can find different definitions of power as sometimes intersecting, and other times even mutually constitutive. With that in mind, this section will briefly differentiate between the different types, in order to place this study in the appropriate context.

Barnett and Duvall distinguish between *compulsory* and *structural* power, and *institutional* and *productive* power (2005: 48). The first two are types of power in the context of what they call 'social relations of interaction' (44). This implies a direct interaction between actors and is related to the concept of power as the 'power over' someone. The first type also relates more directly to the realist school of power that emphasises an interaction between two actors that produces movement in one through the intentional action of another (Dahl 1957: 204). The second two types relate to 'social relations of…constitution' (Barnett and Duvall 2005: 44) – which is linked more to the 'power to', than the 'power over'. The second two types relate to a power relation that is more diffuse, related more to indirect impact and (more specifically, especially with 'institutional power') institutional limitations that dictate a range of possibilities, than the direct impact of power over someone (which relates to compulsory and structural power) (48).

Note that structural power in Barnett and Duvall's typology is not related to the structural analysis of negotiation (as described in the previous section). Structural power here relates to a direct form of domination, whereas the structural analysis of negotiations merely uses the distribution of power as a tool with which to analyse negotiation outcomes. In the framework for the analysis in this paper, 'power' on the surface relates most to 'compulsory power: direct control over another' (49). Despite this, because of Zartman's own qualification that power is a *perceived relation* (2008: 107), this definition fails to completely encapsulate the essence of the power relations that exist between North Korea and the other parties in the Talks. What will follow is, first, an exploration of how Zartman's conception of power (within the context of negotiation) creates nuance within the context of 'compulsory power', and second, an argument for a more holistic approach to the analysis of the case at hand, which will require a related, but different, approach to the understanding of power.

## 4. Power as a causal factor (Compulsory Power)

> Political power is a *psychological relation* between those who exercise it and those over whom it is exercised. It gives the former control over certain actions of the latter *through the impact which the former [exerts] on the latter's minds*.
>
> Morgenthau (1993: 30 [own emphasis])

In *Politics Among Nations*, Morgenthau's definition of political power adds psychology to an understanding of the impact of resources. As much as the possession of important sources dominates the foreign policy of a country and influences its political power (according to this understanding), this same foreign policy will always entail a strategy that tries to produce 'control of the actions of others through influence over their minds' (1993: 33). This has relevance to the understanding of power that will be used in the current analysis, as it brings the tangible (material resources) in contact with the intangible (psychology). While this definition is essentially one that Morgenthau believes to be universal in international relations, it can also have a very specific meaning when applied to international negotiations.

Both Zartman and Habeeb use these two elements (the external reality and psychology) to separate what Habeeb calls 'aggregate power' (resources, national power) from 'issue-related power' (the behaviour of parties within the context of negotiations in order to ensure a favourable outcome) (1988: 14). This distinction and how it can be used as a framework (for the analysis of negotiation) is not clear if one only uses Morgenthau's definition of political power. How does one translate the material into influence? Is influence itself the power that Morgenthau is talking about? Is power measured only by looking at outcomes (who won)? Should the action that produces the outcome be defined as 'power', or the product of power? There is a crevice between 'resources' and 'behaviour' and, more specifically, a link in the analysis of negotiations between 'resources', 'behaviour' and 'outcomes', that needs to be explored before the concept of 'power' can be applied in an appropriate manner.

What will be discussed first is how one can situate an analysis of a particular negotiation in a context where resources can be translated into behaviour – and, ultimately, specifically directed outcomes. What will follow after this is an exploration of what guides this motion – how movement is produced primarily through perception, and how this perception is the 'meaning' that translates resources into behaviour (and results in outcomes with specific values). The definitions of power discussed below, that fall under Barnett and Duvall's 'compulsory power', will provide us with more insight.

*Power as force*

Power defined as force serves as the basis of realism. 'Power politics' means that the application of coercion to achieve one's aims (in the international sphere) is what drives international politics. Zartman and Rubin (2002: 9 - 10) list a number of reasons why this approach is problematic. According to these analysts, power as force is ideological because it 'becomes a justification for violence'. It is reductionist because it equates the cause of power (what makes something powerful) with the ultimate expression of power (the application of force). This means that the source from which one attains power and the 'act' of power are the same thing, which cannot be the case. It is inaccurate 'since it denies the power of other causes'. Finally, power as force is narrowing because it limits what can be analysed within the context of political science; if it is what drives international politics (and only states are the 'actors' that have the capacity to acquire and apply this power), then 'force as power is of no help in analysing intrastate as opposed to interstate politics' (2002: 9). A closer analysis of force proves that it is one of the many elements that influence power, but that it cannot be equated to it.

In the analysis of interaction among parties in the Six Party Talks, power as 'force' can also not provide the full picture. Even Morgenthau states: 'the actual exercise of physical violence *substitutes* for the *psychological relation between two minds*' (1993: 31 [own emphasis]). One cannot analyse the dynamic quality of the concept of power (or use power as a causal factor in the analysis of an active and changing process) by only looking at the physical act of force. If this is done, then it will be useless to analyse a negotiation process where the object is to find a way to make a state like North Korea denuclearise without the mere application of direct (military) coercion. If power is not force, then in between intension and movement there needs to be something (other than force) that can be defined as compulsory power. The next logical step is to work backwards to see where an actor finds the capability to exert force (as an element or a possible consequence of compulsory power) in the first place.

*Power as resources*

This definition of power claims that actors that have the most resources have the most power. To prove this, it adds that 'actors with an overwhelming imbalance of resources *frequently do well*' (Zartman 2008: 83 [own emphasis]). As the subject of this study has proven, however, this is not always the case and there are many times when actors with an overwhelming advantage in power actually leave the negotiating table less satisfied than they had anticipated they would be. The possession of resources, therefore, does not guarantee the ability – as Morgenthau puts it – to control others through the influence of their minds. There has to be an additional element, placed between resources and outcomes, that 'activates' (compulsory) power.

Morgenthau, in the context of international relations, says, 'the quality of a nation's diplomacy combines those different [material] factors into an integrated whole, gives them direction and weight, and awakens their slumbering potentialities by giving them the breath of actual power' (1993: 155). He identifies this additional element as 'the quality diplomacy' – the quality of the action that converts resources into (compulsory) power. There is an element that Morgenthau ignores (or possibly takes for granted) when he talks about how diplomacy should use resources in such a way that it gives them 'direction and weight'. The element that will dictate how this will be done is linked to the *meaning* that is ascribed to the resources and how they should be used. But before perception and meaning can provide context for this study's analytical framework, the standard definition of power needs to be addressed.

*Power as ability*

The standard behavioural definition of power is the well-known adage that power is, according to Von Clausewitz, 'the ability of one party to move another in an intended direction' (Von Clausewitz in Zartman and Rubin 2002: 7), or 'A's ability to cause B to change his behaviour' (Habeeb 1988: 14). Famously, Robert Dahl wrote that power involves 'a successful attempt by *A* to get *a* [or B] to do something that he [B] would not otherwise do' (1957: 204). The first trap that this definition falls into is the fact that it is using the object that it is trying to define in the definition. In other words, 'if A caused a change in B's behaviour, A obviously *had* the *ability* to do so [own emphasis]' (Habeeb 1988: 14). So *power* is therefore A's *power* to cause B to change his behaviour. Habeeb correctly points out that 'this is an observation, not an explanation'. The other problem, according to Zartman (2008: 83), is that this definition is 'conclusionary or outcome-directed'. In this view, power can be found in the outcome of an interaction – therefore 'the winner is always the most powerful, the most able to move the other party' (83). But does the party that 'wins' have all the power and the party that 'loses' have none, purely based on the outcome of the interaction? For example, if in a match one team loses with one point, it does not mean that they had no power, only that they had less power than the victors. This definition should therefore be qualified: 'the concept as stated is unable to distinguish between an agent that prevails against no *resistance* (power) and one that prevails by a hair with tremendous effort' (Zartman and Rubin 2002: 7 [own emphasis]). Zartman and Rubin conclude that 'it tells who wins but not the score!' (7). These two problems make it necessary to qualify the understanding that we have of (compulsory) power; it is not only the ability to move another in an intended direction, nor is it only identifiable according to the 'final score' (outcome) – it is the element(s) that 'enables one party to move another in an intended direction' (8).

*Power, ability and perception*

The different definitions of compulsory power that have been discussed so far reveal the following: firstly, that force is an expression (or even an element) of power, but not power itself; and secondly, that resources can influence power, but also cannot by themselves predict or *be* power. Not only can resources be applied incorrectly (which will indicate a lack of power because of a lack of skill in converting resources into power), but they cannot have any meaning in isolation. The resources of one actor, for example, have to mean something in relation to another actor. So, thirdly, an action is needed to 'activate' resources – which brings us to the definition that Zartman and Rubin propose: 'power…is defined as an action by one party intending to produce movement by another' (2002: 8). This correlates to the way that Deutsch defines power in a social context – 'many theorists who have been concerned with power have focused on it as an attribute solely of the actor. This neglects its relational aspects and implicitly assumes that it remains constant across situations, an assumption that is clearly false' (1973: 85). Power needs to be directed at someone (Deutsch 1973: 85), with intention (Zartmand and Rubin 2002: 8) – and this intention is the movement of the other actor in a specific direction. But in between A's intention (its need for B to move in a specific direction), and B's movement, there is the action that A produces in order to incite a specific reaction from B, *mediated* by both A and B's perception of their mutual relative power positions. In other words, the production of the intended movement of B is dependent on A's ability to make B move. A's ability to make B move is dependent on how B perceives A: B has to perceive that it is not able to resist A's ability to make it do something that it would otherwise not have done. Power is therefore not only perception, but is highly dependent on perception. Without the *mediation of perception* (the translation between A's action and B's reaction), there is no link between A's motivations and intentions (and even resources and skill) and B's reaction to these stimuli.

The inverse of this makes negotiation as a process so unpredictable. If A's ability to make B do what A wants it to do (and what B would not otherwise have done) is dependent on the level to which B perceives that it can resist A's actions (and therefore intentions), then can this perception be manipulated? In a physical sense, no. For argument's sake, if B is the 'weaker' state and A is the 'stronger' state, then B cannot make A perceive that B is physically 'stronger' – 'it is obvious that the resources of the actor play an important role in determining his power in a given situation…ingredients such as wealth, physical strength, weapons, health, intelligence, [and] knowledge' (Deutsch 1973: 85). But because power is only really given value within the context of interaction, it is possible, given the right circumstances and actions by B, that *B can change A's perception of its own ability to make B do what it wants B to do*, despite B's obvious physical disadvantage.

This is where the traditional understanding of compulsory power needs to be qualified. In the process of negotiation (and the Six Party Talks specifically), this 'translation' can lead to outcomes that could not have been predicted. It is here where weaker states sometimes end up being able to get a lot more out of a negotiation than the stronger state would have wanted it to. One can identify elements with which to analyse this movement: in a process of interaction between two (or more) actors, between the one actor's action (in order to produce movement in the other), and the other actor's reaction, there is the target state's *perception* of relative power position – the perception of its ability to resist the other's attempt to move it.

Related to this is the structural (according to Zartman) approach to analysing negotiation – the assumption in this approach is that power symmetry or asymmetry influences the outcome of a negotiation (and behaviour of parties to a negotiation). Zartman qualifies this by saying that 'in reality it is not the fact of structural symmetry or asymmetry that can be related to behaviours but its perception, or power as a *perceived relation*' (2008: 107 [own emphasis]). A link needs to be made between the understanding that perception mediates reality, and that perception of power symmetry or power asymmetry in a relationship can be manipulated and distorted. The combination of Zartman's qualification to the influence of power as a causal factor (*perception* of relative power position), with the understanding that a nuclear weapon (in the hands of a weak state) leads to the 'perversity of power' (Avenhaus, Kremenyuk and Sjöstedt 2002: 25), creates the need for the application of another type of power – what Barnett and Duvall call 'productive power' (2005: 55). This is power in a diffuse sense – in essence (at the risk of oversimplifying it), it is the power of socially constructed meaning. In order to justify the use of productive power in the context of this study, the next section will discuss and analyse the link between realism, constructivism, and how this link can be used as a tool in the analysis of International Relations.

## 5. Morgenthau's Realism, Wendt's Constructivism and 'Realist-Constructivism'

When one looks at what separates realism from its theoretical antithesis, post-structuralism, their incompatibility as theoretical approaches seems evident. On an epistemological level, realism – as scientific realism – sees an objective reality that can be measured and categorised (Wendt in Barkin 2003: 326). Critical theories, on the other hand, 'question positivist approaches to knowledge, criticising attempts to formulate objective, empirically verifiable truth statements about the natural and social world' (Price and Reus-Smit 1998: 261). However, realism as *political* realism is, according to Wendt, incompatible with *scientific* realism (in Barkin 2003: 326). But this has to be qualified. While Wendt criticises realism's eschewing of

the unobservable, on an ontological level he does believe that 'scientific realism [should be] the philosophical foundation of structuration theory' (in Zehfuss 2002: 12). The ontological difference between Wendt's constructivism and other post-structural theories is that he believes in the study of causal mechanisms as elements that exist independently of the mind (in Zehfuss 2002: 13). He therefore creates, in his method (or approach), an ontological and epistemological middle ground between realism and post-structuralism.

I would like to provide another argument here. Wendt believes that in order to create this middle ground, scientific realism should be used as a philosophical foundation of 'structuration theory'. However, would it not be more logical to assume that the middle ground between the two approaches will be easier to find if one shows the overlap between *political* realism and constructivism? Wendt believes that the validity of his argument will be called into question through a critique that would point out that structuration theory without scientific realist principles will be too abstract and (for realists at least) would become meaningless. But by using scientific realism as the philosophical foundation of his approach, he contradicts his own theory by trying to make the 'unobservable' empirical in the 'scientific' sense. I believe that this is not necessary – if Wendt feels the need to create a middle ground in order to gain the respect of realists, why not make the argument that there are more parallels between the construction of social reality and *political* realism? For this, I turn to Hans Morgenthau, the 'father' of realism.

Morgenthau says that 'political science [is a] social science concerned with power' (Morgenthau in Barkin 2003: 327). In fact, in *Politics Among Nations,* Morgenthau claims that '[whatever] the material objectives of a foreign policy, such as the acquisition of sources of raw materials, the control of sea lanes, or territorial changes, *they always entail control of the actions of others through influence over their minds'* (1993: 33 [own emphasis]). Even Morgenthau, then, as the father of realism, understands that 'reality' has limits when it comes to intersubjective interpretation. If one looks at political realism, the *epistemological* incompatibility between it and post-structural theories becomes less acute, as the social nature of political realism is in fact not necessarily equal to the material objective 'truth' nature of scientific realism. This opens up a discussion about the possible compatibility (within certain parameters) of realism and post-structural approaches to the study of IR, although it does not yet make the debate a clear-cut argument in favour of complete compatibility. The *ontological* nature of these two approaches is also seen as incompatible.

*Realism and power*

For Barkin (2003: 327), realism is hard to define 'because so many definitions abound that seem, on their face, to be mutually incompatible'. But at its essence, and in the way that it is relevant to this particular study, it is about power. Barkin admits that this sounds obvious and not like something that has to be stated. If one looks at how definitions of realism have 'evolved' (so to speak), however, one will realise that power – the central feature of realism – has, perhaps because of the fact that it is taken for granted, not always been explicitly stated as a core principle that guides the application of realism in IR. Barkin claims that 'this basic definition of realism has been built upon to the point that power, the original kernel of the definition, has occasionally gotten lost' (2003: 327). More often one will be told that in IR, realism is the study of states in the context of international anarchy (Barkin 2003: 327) – which is not incorrect, but only applicable when used with the foundational understanding that power is what political science (according to realism), as a social science, is all about. Of course, just because critical theories also focus on power (George in Price and Reus-Smit 1998: 262), does not mean that one can now easily argue that these approaches are compatible.

*Critical theories, power and Wendt*

Realism makes power the most critical element when it comes to the analysis of politics. Ironically, this is something that critical theories will not disagree with. The criticism lies in the assumption in realism that power is not constructed – that it *is*, and that it should therefore be a tool used in analysis with the intention of discovering generalised (falsifiable) rules about the world (Kirk in Morgenthau 1993: 17). When looking at Zartman's understanding of power, it is the causal factor that needs to be studied in order to understand the outcome of negotiations. Zartman's understanding is not concerned with intersubjective systems of knowledge that create inherent uneven distributions of power and therefore unknowingly dictate behaviour (and analysis). His understanding is merely concerned with the analysis of the translation of ('real') power into a certain outcome (whether successful or unsuccessful).

The difference between the way that realism 'uses' power, and the way that critical theories understand the concept and its applicability in terms of analysis, lies in purpose – what critical theories believe analysis should be *for*, and what realists believe analysis should be *about*. Critical theories want to discover and uncover the existence of inherent unequal power distribution – the mode of its creation and perpetuation – in an attempt to emancipate knowledge from oppressive structures perpetuated by its existence. Jim George (in Price and Reus-Smit 1998: 262) states that '[power]…is integral to all discursive practices, to the way we think and act, to the way we are *defined* as thinkers and actors' [original emphasis]. As such,

critical theories tend to be more meta-theoretical and to focus on 'the epistemological, methodological and normative assumptions and implications of dominant rationalist theories' (262). This is undertaken in order to uncover taken-for-granted assumptions that perpetuate certain power structures. So where realism is concerned with uncovering generalizable rules that can predict how the world works, looking at the world as it is – with power as the fundamental principle that guides action within it, critical theories criticise the logic behind the way that the world is analysed by realists (for example). The perennial argument is that critical theories exist because of the 'problem' of realism's (or, more generally, traditional Western philosophy's) taken-for-granted assumptions, and not as an approach that can be used in conjunction with it – despite having power as a common denominator.

Wendt provides an appropriate middle ground (in Zehfuss 2002: 13). In terms of power, Wendt leans towards a positivist ontological approach, but not in its purest (neorealist) form. Wendt argues that within the context of IR, power can be studied as a causal mechanism, but not without an understanding of its historical contingency. He calls for the study of 'social practices' and a focus on 'the transformation of identities and interests…of entities which are, because of their shared commitment to rationalism, taken as exogenously given by both realists and liberals' (13). In other words, Wendt proposes – in the traditional realist (and neorealist) sense – a state-centric structural theory (where the distribution of power is what causes states to act in a certain way in the context of anarchy), but qualifies this by saying that 'structure does not exist apart from process, that is, the practice of actors' (14). Social practice creates structures, therefore, and structures change (or can change) depending on the circumstance and the actors' constructed identities and interests. Power *is*, but what power *means* to actors, within the context of certain shared understandings, can change depending on identity and interests (which are not exogenously 'rational'). The understanding of power's significance in any given situation can therefore be mediated through perception – each actor's self-perception (identity) and its perception of self in relation to other actors (shared understandings of meaning, and the perception of relative power positions).

*Epistemology, ontology, negotiation analysis and North Korea*

Epistemologically, there is – in essence – space for a political realism that does not take 'reality' for granted, despite the tendency for realists to analyse the world with the assumption that there is an objective reality (and that generalizable laws can be derived from an analysis of this reality). One can therefore argue that the first problem of incompatibility between realism and post-structural approaches can be circumscribed depending on the phenomenon in question, and the method of analysis chosen to make sense of it.

The second incompatibility lies in the way that the world should be studied, if power is the fundamental force that guides action and influences the behaviour of actors in IR. This means that there is an incompatibility, when looking at realism and post-structural approaches to the study of IR, in the way in which power should be studied or used as a tool for analysis. The argument for ontological compatibility is linked to an epistemological one – in other words, ontological compatibility is more obvious when looking at the nature of 'reality' when it comes to analysing North Korea, in this case. Morgenthau provides a list of 'elements of national power' which he believes, when used as an analytical tool, can provide insight into how much 'power' a state has in the international sphere (1993: 124). To relate this to the study's argument, when analysing North Korea's elements of national power it is difficult, because of North Korea's 'atypical' nature, not to lean towards an approach that can do more than look at the raw facts. The 'reality' here is still that the North is weak. It has been week for decades and this is evident – if this had not been the case then it would not need the amount of humanitarian aid that it requests and even factors into its yearly national financial budget, for example (Habib 2011: 52). On the surface it does not seem necessary to analyse these elements in order to gauge North Korea's 'aggregate structural power'.

It is clear, however, that there are symbolic and intangible forces at work that at the very least, change the DPRK's own *perception* of its strength as well as the way that its self-perception (and the actions and interactions that stem from that) *influences* its relationship with other states. One can therefore say that there is a case for an *epistemological* middle ground between these theories within the context of the issue at stake in this study – 'reality' is definitely being manipulated by the DPRK. This manipulation of the DPRK's perception of its relative power position is aided by the acquisition (and possession) of a nuclear weapon (or nuclear weapons), as well as its own self-perception (through the construction of its identity). An analysis of the DPRK's relative 'strength' in the negotiations (ontologically speaking) cannot only look at (epistemologically speaking) a material context. It has to look at how non-material elements influence this context.

This study's aim is to find a way to *ontologically* look at 'power', without focusing on an emancipatory agenda as in the spirit of many Third Debate theories. This does not discount the relevance or weight of such an analysis. It is, however, not the focus here. The focus is on using a structural approach to the study of negotiation (in the spirit of Zartman and Buszynski), but with the understanding that the DPRK cannot be analysed alone with only the tools that this approach provides. What is needed is a 'middle ground' theory – a theory that can acknowledge that there are forces that mediate reality, without becoming too relativistic within the context of the framework that will be used.

*Constructivism, Realism and North Korea's power*

One approach that can be used as a 'middle ground' theory is constructivism, which '[sees] the *facts* of international politics as not reflective of an objective, material reality but an *intersubjective, or social, reality*' (Barkin 2003: 326 [own emphasis]). Deciding to use constructivism in this context is certainly a starting point, although there are still some issues that need to be ironed out before its application. One argument is that one might wonder why this study even needs to use realism as a foundation for what seems to be a fundamentally constructivist argument. For example, North Korea constructs its own identity in order for its regime to survive, and therefore every action by North Korea is merely for the purpose of the maintenance of this 'construction'. Because of the construction of North Korea's particular identity, certain domestic and international 'realities' develop (and are therefore merely the result of this act of construction). In other words, this whole argument could merely be an exploration of the interactions that actualise the structures (internal and external shared knowledge structures) that now exist in this context. In fact, constructivists believe that '[it] is precisely because we are a social species that…we are not actualised as human beings unless we interact with one another, and that human social practices and structures are historically contingent' (Sterling-Folker 2004: 342). Without this intersubjective understanding (because we *interact* with one another), material facts will remain material facts; we as analysts will still not be able to understand why North Korea seems to eschew these 'facts' in order to 'create' a reality that is conducive to its survival. So why not leave out realism altogether?

The reason lies in the nature of constructive analysis (and the space it provides for a realist interpretation of events, however contingent it may be). Realists believe that 'it is precisely because we are a *social* species that…we form groups – implying division, competition and structural concerns with relative power' (Sterling-Folker 2004: 342). It is true that constructivists do not believe that there is an exogenous relationship between group formation and 'division, competition and structural concerns of relative power' (i.e. that group division will *always* lead to this type of behaviour). However, this does not mean that they think that this is never possible. According to Wendt, there is a difference between a 'permissive causal claim' and an 'active causal claim' (1992: 395). Wendt does not say that group formation *never* leads to competition and concerns with relative power (an active causal claim). Instead, he says that *anarchy* (that which is the outcome of 'group formation' in international relations) and, for example *war*, could have a causal relationship (a permissive causal claim) – but there might be structures (supported by 'collective identities') that, despite being anarchic, might lead to cooperation instead (395).

In this study, the relationship that North Korea has with the other parties in the negotiation – and the relationships that they have with one another – places this argument in the 'competition and structural concerns of relative power' category. It would be very easy to analyse this situation according to parsimonious realist principles – the essence of the issue is, after all, the nuclear weapon, a symbol of ultimate power and international prestige. But then why is North Korea still getting what it wants despite its disadvantage? Even if North Korea owns a dozen nuclear weapons it will not be able to match the power of the other parties in the negotiation. This is where it becomes imperative that one look beyond the material. And it is here where one finds the nexus between realism, constructivism and a 'structural' (Zartman 2008) analysis of the Six Party Talks.

The opposite could be argued as well – why use a constructivist argument when a more parsimonious realist one will do? Even if a constructivist argument provides more depth, it does not mean that it will provide more insight. Stefano Guzzini warns against redundancy and says constructivists should be careful not to merely 'add some face lift to already existing approaches' (2000: 148). After all, the negotiations are about the acquisition of a nuclear weapon, and involve major powers that are more concerned with their relative power within the region than North Korea's actual denuclearisation. In this argument the essential question is: why complicate things when they can be simplified? The argument for the use of both these theories (or approaches) lies with what was said at the beginning of this section. To analyse North Korea's aggregate structural power using Morgenthau's elements of national power is not going to provide the holistic understanding needed to properly analyse the situation.

There are limitations to an understanding about the world that believes that 'generalised rules' can be created and made universal – the case study at hand proves this. There has to be a way to understand this in more detail – not just as an analysis of the interactions among these parties (as in game theory), or the analysis of universal principles on power and anarchy (similar to what would be done in a neorealist sense). This situation is unique, historically contingent, value-laden and incalculably complex. So how can this study pay homage to a realist approach, while still ensuring that the analysis is not overly simplistic?

*Exogenous versus Endogenous*

The obstacle here is to create an appropriate space for this analysis which falls between an approach that focuses on the analysis of behaviour (where interests are exogenous to an actor's behaviour), and an approach that questions a pure understanding of 'rationality' and highlights the endogenous nature of the creation of identity and interests. In other words, if all we are looking at is behaviour, and 'national interest' is more a consequence of the nature of anarchy

(and rationalism), then a realist analysis of power structure would suffice. But because of the nature of North Korea's identity construction, one might want to consider the endogenous nature of its interests, and how interactions during the negotiations affect this as well as its relationship with other states in general.

As discussed above, realists believe the world to be transhistorical (Sterling-Folker 2004: 342). To constructivists, history is dynamic and ever-changing (Reus-Smit 2008 400). For the most part, realists believe that '[material] contexts may change, but everything to do with cultural particularity and variation vanishes [as elements to be analysed], as does all contingency born of individual creativity and imagination' (395). Morgenthau's understanding of politics, Zartman's approach to the analysis of negotiations (where power, as the *perception* of relative positions among parties, becomes *dynamic* because it can be manipulated), and Buszynski's claim that the outcome of the Talks was a result of North Korea's manipulation of its relative position during the *process* of the negotiations (2013: 6); creates room for an approach that does not only focus on the rationality that realism expects from its actors. If one believes that the *process of interaction* among parties can change outcomes, then there is at least *room* for the argument (related to realism and a structural approach to the analysis of the Six Party Talks) that this is not only about manipulating *behaviour* (Wendt 1994: 384); it is also about actively constructing the character of the relationship between the parties involved in the talks (through the construction of *identity* (individual and intersubjective) and the meanings, values and interests attached to that identity). And if one can use the assumption that scientific realism and political realism are distinct (and that political realism is the middle ground between realism and post-structuralism), then there is room for the argument that 'state interests [are] *endogenous* to interaction', and that one should not assume (as game-theoretic models do, for example) that 'identities and interests [are] *exogenous* to interaction' (Wendt 1994: 390).

Before applying this understanding (that social reality is created and does not merely exist) to the current analysis, a more detailed look at Wendt's constructivist argument is necessary. Wendt argues that reality is constructed, but 'brackets' the impact of individual states' identities in the international realm. The next section will argue why this is problematic, even in the context of a 'realist-constructivist' middle-ground approach to the analysis of international relations.

*Wendt and Zehfuss: intersubjectivity and the* a priori *existence of the state*

In *Anarchy is what States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics* (1992), Wendt explains that the way that states perceive themselves in relation to other states dictates the way that anarchy is perceived. In other words, if states think of each other as enemies, then anarchy

is what realism claims it to be: a self-help system (396, 400). If states share collective knowledge structures and norms, however, anarchy could mean a context within which states can cooperate – not only for joint benefits, but because of a shared collective identity (Wendt 1994: 386). According to Maja Zehfuss, 'Wendt argues that the way international politics is conducted is made, not given, because identities and interests are constructed, and supported by intersubjective practice' (2002: 12).

The understanding of the construction of identity and interests brings us back to elements in Wendt's argument that have already been discussed. For example, collective identity is formed through interaction (Wendt 1994: 386), but in contrast to rational understandings of interaction that can change external behaviour through 'learning' (as in the case of game-theoretical models of analysis) (390), this behaviour is not exogenous or merely a symptom of rationality. The identities and interests of states that lead to certain types of behaviour are historically contingent, which makes interaction (and general behaviour) not exogenous but endogenous, and therefore changeable. Interactions create collective identity, but the behaviour that forms this collective identity is founded on the historically contingent self-perceptions of the individual actors that are part of this process (1994: 387). Wendt's approach 'revolves around identity, which is construed as more basic than interests' (Zehfuss 2002: 12). Wendt finds a middle ground between realism and structuration theory (which calls for a focus on the study of social practices (Zehfuss 2002: 13)) because he keeps his focus on a state-centric system, while claiming that 'social reality is created…[and therefore] the existing competitive international system could be reshaped' (12).

The focus of Wendt's approach, however, 'brackets' the domestic and only looks at international (collective) intersubjectivity (Zehfuss 2002: 220). In other words, interactions among states, within the context of an anarchic system, are what become a 'process of creating new definitions of self' (Wendt 1994: 387). Intersubjectivity in this context is related to the collective identity that is created apart from (or outside) the domestic spheres of these states. The states' own individual identities are 'bracketed', they are – in this approach – 'independent of the international system', and are part of each state's '"corporate identity" which refers to the intrinsic qualities that constitute actor individuality"' (Zehfuss 2002: 44). This corporate identity is taken for granted and is considered *a priori* – the focus of the approach is to look at how intersubjectivity is created, from this starting point, among states in the international (anarchic) system.

Since Wendt himself does not agree that identities and interests are transhistorical, the 'bracketing' of the domestic in the search for a framework that can look at intersubjective

meaning on an international level misses an important point. International (or supranational) intersubjective meaning, created through the formation of collective identity, cannot be malleable if the individual identities of states that take part in this collective process cannot themselves change. Wendt wants change in the actions that create the supranational structure (the endogenous process of the creation of identities and interests) to create 'new definitions of self' (1994: 387). This understanding of intersubjectivity – the effect that norms have on the way that actors interact with one another internationally (creating an appropriate framework for states within which to act) – takes for granted the fact that individual identity influences the agency that affects collective identity. Zehfuss adds to this criticism when she points out that for Wendt, 'state agents exist *a priori*…[and] their identities are merely refined in interaction' (2002: 220). Essentially Wendt is criticised for 'exogenising the domestic realm…[and] for ignoring the genesis of the subject' (220).

In Wendt's defence, he does not say that the domestic is not important, but believes that in order to provide an approach that can be used as a method to analyse certain aspects of international relations, one has to 'bracket' others. Unfortunately, however, to 'bracket' domestic politics in a study of North Korea, which will include 'linguistic processes and normative considerations' (Zehfuss 2002: 220), will not lead to a proper understanding of how the country manipulates its relative power position in the Six Party Talks. Looking only at how norms constrain the actions of other actors in the negotiations will definitely provide a certain level of insight, but will not provide the whole picture. An exploration of domestic factors in this context is crucial as part of an analysis that wants to explain North Korea's source of 'power' (aside from mere tactics, exogenously dictated) in the negotiations. And when it comes to how North Korean domestic factors lead to the country's 'power' (or lack thereof), once again a material account of the state's weakness will provide very little insight. What is necessary is a look at how the state creates a unique domestic reality that influences its external relations.

*'Productive power' and the production (and construction) of power*

Barnett and Duvall's (2005: 55) final type of power is 'productive power'. It is closely related to Wendt's understanding of the construction of reality, as the authors describe it as 'the constitution of all social subjects with various social powers through systems of knowledge and discursive practices of broad and general scope' (55). What separates it from structural power is that structural power is a direct structural relationship that promotes dominance of one party over another (as in dependence theory, for example) (55). This does not mean that productive power does not perpetuate a 'reality' that benefits some at the expense of others – it is by nature doing exactly that. It just means that the power that it projects is diffuse and this type of power

(the potential to influence) lies in its subtlety. 'Productive power concerns discourse, the social processes and the systems of knowledge through which meaning is produced, fixed, lived, experienced and transformed' (55). This 'power' concerns the discourses that 'define the (im)possible, the (im)probable, the natural, the normal, what counts as a problem' (55). This study will analyse how domestic and international discourses are manipulated by the construction of North Korean identity, as well as how constructed (shared) international meanings that govern the 'reality' of nuclear negotiations (like, for example, that which Nina Tannenwald calls the 'nuclear taboo' (2005)) create meaning for both North Korea and the international community that is 'fixed, lived,…experienced', as well as ultimately distorted by the North's identity. It will also look at how this in turn provides North Korea with a certain type of 'power': the power to resist external pressure, and the power to increase uncertainty and therefore the risk of coercive action for the other parties to the negotiation.

For Barnett and Duvall, productive power focusses on how 'diffuse and contingent social processes produce particular kinds of subjects, fix meanings and categories, and create what is taken for granted [as] the ordinary of world politics' (2005: 57). North Korea's internal as well as external actions perpetuate this – the construction and maintenance of North Korean identity perpetuates particular kinds of subjects, meanings and categories within the context of its existence and its relationship with the other parties to the Six Party Talks. North Korea uses social processes (in the form of a type of productive power) to create a certain self-perception that influences meaning – specifically, in the context of this study, this self-perception influences the meaning of its 'power' vis-à-vis the other parties. It dominates a narrative that is pervasive within and without its borders – a narrative that promotes its self-perception domestically and internationally – and the domination of this narrative is where North Korea gets its 'power'.

In essence, North Korea's use of productive power is a form of *power construction*. This study is interested in analysing how the creation and maintenance of a narrative (through the construction of identity) can be a form of power construction for North Korea in the Six Party Talks. North Korea is an atypical small state because it distorts different meanings, categories and subjects domestically and internationally – it manages to manipulate its weaknesses in such a way that it severely constrains the most powerful states in the world from taking action against its unpredictable (and certainly potentially dangerous) behaviour. Intangible forces are at work that give the North Korean elite the ability to negotiate in this way – and this study believes that it goes far beyond the mere application of shrewd manoeuvring in bargaining. Another element that should not be ignored in this analysis, is how the possession of a nuclear weapon factors into this equation – especially as the study looks at how the DPRK constructs this power in the Six Party Talks.

## 6. The 'perversity of power' and 'forms and expressions of power entailed in social construction'

This section will discuss how the 'perversity of power' (Avenhaus, Kremenyuk and Sjöstedt 2002: 25) affects this construction of North Korea's identity – and by implication, how that alters North Korea's (self) perception of power. The questions asked as the starting point of this investigation are: 'What makes North Korea an 'atypical' state?'; 'How does North Korea manage to manipulate stronger states in the way that it does?'; and 'How does the "perversity of power" affect the DPRK's "atypical" nature?' The corollary of this is that an understanding of North Korea's ability to manipulate 'power' is an essential ingredient to this recipe. The perversity of power provides a space for this contrivance to take place, and the intersubjective symbolic nature of the nuclear weapon (and the nuclear taboo) is used as part of this deliberate distortion.

This phenomenon, 'where coercion, instead of achieving its intended effect, actually increases the efforts of the target party to achieve the capability to exercise the same type of counter-coercion' (25), makes it possible for North Korea to use its weaknesses as strengths. For example, when the US threatens the DPRK in order for it to stop its nuclear programme, then the DPRK retaliates by claiming that it has a right to produce nuclear weapons and 'any type of weapon more powerful than that so as to defend its sovereignty and right to existence from the ever growing nuclear threat by the US' (DPRK Ministry of Foreign Affairs statement, in ICG 2003: 13). The propaganda value of what is said here is notable as it is part of the manipulation – North Korea's understanding of 'sovereignty', its 'right to existence' and the 'ever growing nuclear threat by the US' has a lot more nuance than that which might be understood at a superficial level.

All three of these elements ('sovereignty', 'right to existence' and 'the nuclear threat from the US') serve to maintain a self-perception of a specific identity vis-à-vis the outside world. Here one can see that North Korea does not only play the 'martyr' card (in order to have a reason to carry on with its programme), but it strengthens its identity as a country at permanent war with an evil external enemy. It does not only blame the US for 'forcing it' to continue with the programme (because it is fearful for its existence), it strengthens its own construction of its existence (its identity, or its raison d'être) in the act of blaming the US for its own actions.

To provide context, the next section will briefly discuss the link between the nuclear taboo and the 'perversity of power'. This analysis will not only look at how the nuclear taboo constrains the actions of the other states in the Six Party Talks (although it is evident that it does), it will

use the explanation below as a foundation from which to show how North Korea's identity construction plays into this understanding of the nuclear taboo, as well as how the nuclear taboo (and the 'perversity of power') influences the construction of the country's identity (and therefore the narrative that provides it with productive power).

*The 'perversity of power' and the nuclear taboo: North Korea's construction of (negative) power*

> [A] weapon once introduced inevitably comes to be widely accepted as legitimate. In reality, however, nuclear weapons have come to be defined as abhorrent and unacceptable weapons of mass destruction, with a taboo on their use. Tannenwald (2005: 5)

Whether a state's possession or use of a nuclear weapon is purely tactical and 'rational' in the context of strategic interest, there is no denying that the weapon itself has value-laden meaning that goes beyond the physical. In the context of the 'perversity of power', three elements concerning this taboo are important to highlight: firstly, there is a discourse that promotes a belief that it is a '"bright line" norm: once the threshold between the use and non-use is crossed, one is immediately in a new world with all the unimaginable consequences that could follow' (2005: 8); secondly, that the 'bright line' norm is a product of (or was at least maintained by) a strategic stalemate between the two superpowers during the Cold War (11); and thirdly, that there is a moral component attached to this norm – a line has been formed, throughout history, that has distinguished nuclear weapons from conventional ones (12).

All three of the elements discussed above are related to the understanding of the 'perversity of power', and how North Korea manipulates it. Firstly, the fact that the nuclear taboo is a 'bright line' norm places stronger states in a precarious position in relation to weaker states that want to procure a nuclear weapon. Because there is a threshold between use and non-use that opens up the possibility of uncontrollable risk, strong states can try to coerce weaker states into giving up on the development of their own weapons – but only to a point. The US's options are limited when it comes to threatening North Korea – for example, it can place economic sanctions on the country to punish it for its nuclear weapons programme, but it cannot use its own nuclear weapon in order to stop it. This is because this specific norm constrains the US from entering the unknown – from crossing the line that could lead to unimaginable consequences. This means that the 'perversity of power' gives weaker states an ability to manipulate these self-imposed limits that strong states place on themselves. Weaker states are not only incentivised to continue with their nuclear weapons programme because they now need protection from the coercion of stronger states, they also know that there is a limit in terms of what the stronger states can do to them if they continue. This is not only strategic – of course using a nuclear

weapon could invite possible chaos – it is also a principle that a state like the US has to refer to before entertaining the idea of the use of one of its weapons. When the Six Party Talks began, the US was considered a global hegemon – and even then, although there were elements within government structures considering the use of the weapon against North Korea, the constraint was the 'identity mechanism' operating in the taboo: '"we" do not use nuclear weapons – because of who we are and what our values are, because civilized states do not do this, and so on' (Tannenwald 2005: 45).

The second element of the norm intersects with the 'perversity of power' because of the idea of deterrence (and mutually assured destruction) which was formulated during the Cold War (Schelling 1960: 6). The (superficial) understanding of the connection between deterrence and threat dictated that if there are two parties (for argument's sake) and they both have nuclear weapons, the threat of mutual destruction will constrain both actors from using the weapon against the other. Preventing a weak state from attaining a nuclear weapon through coercion provides that state with the opportunity to claim that this (Cold War) doctrine applies to the situation at hand – and that the acquisition of a nuclear weapon has become even more urgent. The example where the DPRK stated that North Korea had the right to defend themselves proves this (DPRK Ministry of Foreign Affairs statement, in ICG 2003: 13). Although the doctrine technically does not apply to a situation where the two states have an unequal distribution of nuclear weapons' capability, the doctrine, in conjunction with the first element discussed above (which limits stronger states from using their own nuclear force against others), constrains the stronger state as well as once again providing the weaker state with a justification for its actions.

Essentially, the understanding that the nuclear weapon is a special kind of weapon influences both the first and second elements above. In the context of the 'perversity of power', the nuclear weapon has a (negative) character that sets it apart from other kinds of weapons and is associated with the risk of uncertainty as well as the memory of its use in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, events that some have labelled 'apocalyptic' (van Wyk, Kinghorn, Hepburn, Payne and Sham 2007: 25). – This (negative) character strengthens the limit placed on strong (nuclear power) states when using coercion (actual or threatened) against a weaker state that is facilitating a nuclear weapons programme. The moral backlash that will ensue if there is merely an open threat by a strong state to use a nuclear weapon – especially against a weak state – will be considerable. The only recourse that strong states have when it comes to coercion (in this context) is to, at the very worst, use conventional weapons (or the threat thereof) in order to prevent the weaker state from further developing a nuclear weapon. But because of the uncertainty surrounding the 'rationality' of a weaker state (as well as its own moral compass

when it comes to the use of nuclear weapons), even this type of coercion is risky for the stronger state; an attack with conventional weapons might be reciprocated with a counter-attack by the weaker state, where the non-use of its nuclear weapon is not guaranteed.

North Korea's power lies in the negative consequences related to any attempt by stronger states to stop it from acquiring a nuclear weapon. The limits related to coercive action by other states provide North Korea with the ability to act without restraint. These limits only have power within an understanding of the nuclear taboo and North Korea's construction of its identity (internally and externally). If North Korea's identity is known as one that is 'rational' (within the same understanding of rationality ascribed to by the other parties in the Talks), then other states will be able to place more restraint on its actions by using threats that have predictable outcomes. But because threats made by stronger states in the case of North Korea do not have predictable outcomes, these threats are not made (or severely limited in their credibility).

The principle of the 'perversity of power' is therefore strengthened by the norm of the nuclear taboo. This is one of the examples of how North Korea uses norms in order to entrap its counterparts in the Talks, and one of the reasons why using a theoretical argument that combines both realism and constructivism will prove useful when North Korea's actions are analysed later in the paper. The next section will look at how a specific use of 'productive power' can be the focus of an analysis of power and its different forms. This will aid in providing context for the analytical framework that will be used in order to understand North Korea's 'atypical' nature.

*The construction of power: thinking like a realist, analysing like a constructivist*

Janice Bially Mattern (2004: 343) argues that 'constructivism and realism do have more to say to each other than IR literature might lead one to think'. What differentiates her advocacy for the application of a 'bridge' between constructivism and realism in the study of IR is *what* she suggests should be analysed. Generally, constructivism leans towards the advocating of 'idealist' norms. In other words, constructivists look at – for example – how the changing identity of Western states can influence international humanitarian laws to the extent that 'human rights' becomes part of an accepted norm of conduct, and justification for conduct, in international relations (Sterling-Folker 2004: 342). This is because constructivism 'subscribes to a notion of social causality that takes *reasons as causes*' (Adler 1997: 329 [original emphasis]). In other words, norms and rules are formed through historical and cultural circumstances, which create, or '*socially constitute* – "cause" – the things people do; that is, they provide actors with direction and goals for action' (329 [original emphasis]). In this sense, constructivism has an intrinsic 'idealist' tendency.

What makes Janice Bially Mattern's argument so compelling, especially in the context of this study, is that rather than asking how norms are constructed (within the above context), she asks that analysts use a 'realist-constructivist approach that emphasises the forms and expressions of *power* entailed in social construction' (2004: 343 [original emphasis]). She urges the researcher to consider:

> …how specific actors wield different *forms* of power (authority, force, care, and so on) through different *expressions* (linguistic, symbolic, material and so on) to *produce* different social realities. It guides the researcher to ***think like a classical realist about the variety of power*** while guiding him or her to ***analyse the role of that power in international political life like a constructivist***. (Mattern 2004: 343 [own emphasis])

The question is 'What makes North Korea an atypical state?' – a question which involves an exploration of its ability to manipulate a traditional classical realist understanding of power, in order for it to be able to resist pressure and exert (negative) influence on the other parties in the negotiation. The reason why it is important to look at how it is manipulating a *traditional classical realist* understanding of power is because of the nature of the nuclear weapon. The 'perversity of power' does not only allow North Korea to distort the situation so that it can resist demands from powerful states as well as strengthen its own identity (and the regime's legitimacy) – it creates this space because the nature of the nuclear weapon itself promotes traditional Cold War norms. These norms entrap stronger states in their own 'norms and rules' that 'provide actors with direction and goals for action'.

However, before North Korea can be in a position to bargain with its 'negative' strength, it needs to 'create' the self-perception through the construction of its identity (which is strengthened by the 'perversity of power') in order for it to be the 'atypical' small state that it is.

## 7. Summary of chapters (analytical framework)

This briefly brings us back to negotiation analysis. The paper starts off by asking what makes North Korea an atypical state, and proposes that an analysis of the Six Party Talks and its (non)outcome might provide insight. The first assumption that it has to make, in order to make sense of the uneven power distribution between the parties (and North Korea's obvious structural (power) disadvantage), is that there must be a disconnection between 'actual' national power and the process of negotiations. Zartman's (and Buszynski's) approach – that separates national power from negotiating strength – has the potential to explain why North Korea is getting what it wants, instead of conceding to the more powerful states in the Talks. But here Buszynski (and Zartman) analyses behaviour only; Buszynski first provides each state with

a starting role that it has to play (according to the distribution of power among the parties), and then shows how the tactics of North Korea helped the smaller 'target' state to play the other states off of each other, and to exploit the multilateral complexity of the situation (2013).

This analysis shows how North Korea managed to bargain away the need for denuclearisation. It does not, however, show how all of North Korea's actions – internal or external to the negotiations – constrain the actions (towards North Korea) of the other states (as well as empower North Korea to make threats and gain concessions without any fear of punishment). This chapter has pointed out that the process of the Six Party Talks is not linear. For example, the Talks first work towards a broad formula (like the Joint Statement in 2005), and then digress and go back to a type of pre-negotiation phase – and this happens in a circular fashion. There is no real linear progression in the process. There is salience here – North Korea's actions purposefully make sure that the process does not move forward, and this is why a basic structural analysis (like the one Buszynski provides) explains some of the reasons why the other states did not manage to get what they want from North Korea. However, it does not explain why North Korea is an 'atypical small state' in general (and not just during the Six Party Talks). This is why the production of power will be used as a framework which can provide more insight concerning the DPRK's ability to 'pause' its existence – in order to make sure that nothing comes to a real conclusion, which will mean that it can take its time, not only in the production of the nuclear weapon itself, but in the maintenance of its oppressive regime. North Korea dominates a narrative that figuratively 'pauses' everything in time so that nothing can ever change. This is primarily for the maintenance of the Kim regime, but it also entraps the states that want to make the regime change – not only its ambitions concerning nuclear weapons, but its very existence – its identity.

Chapter Three will focus on the production (construction) of North Korean identity and how the 'perversity of power' reinforces this. It will focus on how the construction of the Kim myth has entrapped both the people and the regime itself. North Korea has to be in a permanent state of war and revolution for the regime to survive – this is not only what the propaganda machine of the country force-feeds its people, but it is ironically the truth, because if the population does not believe that there is an external enemy (for example), their discontent will turn towards the elite. If that happens, it might mean the end of the Kim cult and its oppressive regime.

The rest of the framework is structured parallel to the framework that Zartman and Habeeb use when analysing negotiations. Chapter Four and Five (and Six) respectively will represent 'aggregate structural power' (Chapter Four) and 'issue-related structural power' (Chapter Five and Chapter Six), but will apply the essential argument of the paper in a different way within

this framework. To analyse 'aggregate structural power', Chapter Four will use Morgenthau's elements of national power (all but 'diplomacy', which will be analysed in Chapter Five and Six) to show how the construction of North Korean identity (and the importance of the nuclear weapon in the maintenance of this identity) gives each element specific (contingent) meaning which changes its 'real' value.

Chapter Five and Six will use Wendt's hypothesis, which states that interaction between 'ego' and 'alter' – through 'altercasting' – can change narratives and states' identities (and ultimately their actions) (Wendt 1992: 421). Wendt claims that one has to change the identities and interests of others so 'that [they will] help sustain…[certain] systems of interaction' (421). To do this, one needs to facilitate a process of 'altercasting – a technique of *interactor control* in which ego uses tactics of self-representation and stage management in an attempt to frame alter's definitions of social situations in ways that create the role which ego desires alter to play' (421). He goes on to say that 'in altercasting ego tries to induce alter to take on a new identity (and therefore enlist alter in ego's effort to change itself) by treating alter *as if* it already had that identity' (421 [original emphasis]). Instead of analysing the negotiation process as a linear process of interaction where behaviour is exogenous, rational and a result of repetition (as in game theory, for example), this paper will apply 'altercasting' to specific interactions that North Korea had with, firstly, the US (Chapter Five), and then both South Korea (its 'brother') and China (Chapter Six). In both cases (Chapter Five and Chapter Six), an analysis of 'interactor control' (421) is important, as it shows which party (for example the US and the DPRK) dominated this form of control. The analysis will focus on the 'process' of the negotiations as social construction – and in the case North Korea, social construction of its power (vis-à-vis the other parties in the Talks) through the domination of a narrative that perpetuates its identity.

## 8. Conclusion

The theories and analytical frameworks that are being merged in order to apply the 'production of power' in the context of North Korea are diverse and seemingly incompatible. This chapter has attempted to show how these elements can be used to strengthen an analysis of a specific type of negotiation, within a specific (historically contingent) time and space. My hope is that this 'borrowing' from different approaches will serve to strengthen the analytical strength of both realism and constructivism, as well as the structural and procedural approaches to the analysis of negotiation. Essentially, the paper works towards 'process' – Chapter Five and Chapter Six will use Wendt's altercasting to analyse whether North Korea's actions are strengthening its identity, and whether this is contributing to its 'strength'.

By using altercasting as a framework with which to analyse individual interactions within the process of the negotiations, this study reflects the belief that individual actions by North Korea are merely for the maintenance of a specific power position (a 'pause' in history). The purpose of this argument is to analyse which narrative (identity) dominates in the action and reaction of each specific situation (in relation to the relationship that the DPRK has with the US, as well as the relationship that it has with China and South Korea). If the actions and reactions of the states being analysed perpetuate one narrative as opposed to another, then whoever is in control of that narrative, according to Wendt, is the party that is exercising 'interactor control' (1992: 421). What this paper wants to focus on is whether the domination of the narrative (if North Korea is the party dominating it) can prove that North Korea is an atypical small state, and – more importantly – whether 'atypical' merely means that it is a small state with shrewd negotiation ability, or whether it means that North Korea has constructed a reality that has forced other (stronger) states to play along, whether they like it or not.

# Chapter 3:

# The construction of identity: the Kim myth and the eternal revolution

## 1. Introduction

The Principles of Newspeak:

> The purpose of Newspeak was not only to provide a medium of expression for the world-view and mental habits proper to the devotees of Ingsoc, but to make all other modes of thought impossible….Its Vocabulary was so constructed as to give exact and often very subtle expression to every meaning that a Party member could properly wish to express, while excluding all other meanings and also the possibility of arriving at them by indirect methods.
>
> George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949 (Appendix))

Chapter Two argued that one of the faults in Wendt's approach is that he 'brackets' the domestic in favour of a study of interaction between (exogenously given) states, as the basis from which to study the creation of norms. The problem in the argument is that each state has its own identity, and the creation of this identity has to be taken into account if one wants to understand, and possibly manipulate, social construction as the basis for the creation of norms. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* George Orwell alludes to this internal construction of reality (and identity). The section above, quoted from the book's appendix, shows how 'Newspeak' (in contrast to 'Oldspeak') was constructed (in the authoritarian world created in the book) in order to give meaning to all expression that was *allowed* to be expressed (by a member of the 'Party' (the governing regime)), while simultaneously excluding meanings of anything that was *not permitted* to be expressed by a member of the Party.

In the world created by Orwell, rigid boundaries are set between what is possible and what is impossible, and these boundaries form the basis of the creation of the *reality* within which the people of Oceana (the state in which the story takes place) are allowed to function.; A brief examination of how the domestic realm, and its creation of the boundaries of 'reality', is integral to the understanding of a nation's (and in this case North Korea's) identity, and will be undertaken in view of Orwell's philosophy of the creation of reality, this paper's understanding of productive power, and Derrida's argument for a focus on the creation of 'origin' as an integral part of the construction of a nation's identity.

*'Reality', identity, history and Derrida's 'origin'*

In *Constructivism in International Relations* (2002), Maja Zehfuss examines three prominent 'constructivist' theorists: Alexander Wendt, Friedrich Kratochwil and Nicholas Onuf. These theorists are 'constructivist' in a broad sense; 'constructivism' is not a unified theory, but more often thought of as an approach to analysis (a type of methodology) where the focus of analysis could have a variety of forms. This is relevant because one has to remember that there is no overarching definition of the 'theory' of constructivism, and that it can be used in a variety of ways to explain social construction in specific cases. Zehfuss (2002) uses the abovementioned analysts' approaches to analyse German military involvement abroad and finds weakness in all of them concerning an element that has particular bearing on this study: 'reality'. She claims that the 'conceptual problems with identity [Wendt], norms [Kratochwil] and materiality [Onuf] respectively are different expressions of representing 'reality' as a limit to the possible' (197). This study's focus is concerned with North Korea's *construction of power*, and this construction has a direct relationship with the construction of reality. Chapter Two notes that for North Korea, its (productive) 'power' lies in its ability to dominate a certain narrative. The North Korean regime has to consciously construct a 'reality' that only permits a certain 'possible' or a certain 'probable', in which the regime is all-powerful.

Similar to the 'Newspeak' created by Oceana in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the North Korean regime consciously and domestically constructs a reality (directly related to North Korean identity) in order to stay in power. This narrative, which creates a certain reality, also dictates a certain intersubjectivity within which North Korea and states that interact with it can function. This 'reality' creates a specific internal and external milieu that not only dominates North Korea's actions (and provides meaning to elements of its 'national power'), but also regulates action for other states that interact with it (especially those involved in the Six Party Talks). The creation of this internal 'reality' is what allows the regime to dominate the narrative that dictates its relationship with other states. It is also what allows this regime to create a certain self-perception (and perception of relative power), which limits other states' options in terms of their strategies in relation to any interaction that they have with the DPRK.

To better understand the construction of 'reality', this study turns to Jacques Derrida. For the sake of brevity, this section will only briefly pay attention to Derrida's argument concerning origin and identity. Derrida believes that any claim to a singular understanding of one's identity has to invoke a myth: 'Monogenealogy would always be a mystification in the history of culture' (in Zehfuss 2002: 211). Derrida also believes that there cannot exist an identity that is not in relation to something that it is not ('there is never such a thing as a unified, self-present identity'

(Zehfuss 2002: 211)) -- and therefore in order to create a 'singular story', one has to create a myth that has an origin. This is what Zehfuss calls the 'mystification of the origin', for according to Derrida there are only 'nonoriginary origins' (in Zehfuss 2002: 211). Linked to this is the authority of 'history' in the making of the myth of identity. Zehfuss states that '[references] to history endow actions with meaning…*History is often used as a source of truth*' (211 [own emphasis]).

Therefore, the creation of identity consists of the creation of an 'origin', which has contained within itself an understanding (or reference) of what it *is not* (in order to provide understanding for what it *is*), which is contained in the appeal to history as a source of truth. These elements are prominent in the North Korean regime's conscious construction of its 'Kim myth' in order to stay in power. The 'Kim myth' sustains North Korean identity; it provides it with an origin (the revolution and Kim Il Sung's leadership in the liberation of the Korean people), an understanding of what North Korean identity is not (the outside world, including its 'brother', South Korea), and a narrative cemented in this origin (historical beginning) through the construction of a history that appeals to legitimacy and truth.

Although this section borrows from Derrida, the argument here is not for complete deconstruction. It is merely to provide a link between the construction of North Korean identity and its construction of power (while remaining cognisant of Zartman's perception of relative power) within the Six Party Talks. The dominance of the narrative that controls North Korean people's behaviour is what keeps the regime (the elite) in power. It also makes it less dependent on other states when it comes to its interaction with the international community. This is aided and sustained by the nuclear weapons programme, which (as has been shown in Chapter Two) provides the regime with considerable leverage vis-à-vis the other parties in the Six Party Talks. The maintenance of this supposed 'domestic' identity also changes intersubjective meaning, whether internal or external. In Chapter Four, Morgenthau's elements of national power will be analysed using the understanding that the North Korean 'identity narrative' distorts the meaning and value of each of those elements. The analysis will not only focus on how the meaning and value for each element is distorted in terms of internal (supposed 'domestic') purposes, but how each element is distorted in terms of international intersubjectivity. To start with, the next section will provide background for this application; it will look at elements that together construct North Korean identity, and then look at how the narrative is maintained through social processes within the country (for example, daily activities that perpetuate the population's own oppression).

Before looking at 'origin' and the construction of identity, however, one needs to understand the regime's role in this construction. The North Korean regime not only actively constructs this narrative to stay in power – it needs to construct this narrative in order to exist in its current form. Ironically, this desperate need to hold onto power is part of what gives the regime its power internationally; the uncertainty of its demise puts fear into other countries' assessment of its regional impact. Additionally, the North Korean regime's need to construct this narrative binds it to the narrative itself: as the study will show in Chapter Four, aspects of society that need urgent attention (such as economic reform) are ignored (or, arguably, consciously worsened) because of this narrative. The regime's aim is *to exist* and in order to do so it needs power – power not necessarily for the mere sake of gaining resources, but power for the sake of itself.

## 2. Regime survival and the construction of North Korea's identity

> 'The Party seeks power entirely for its own sake. We are not interested in the good of others; we are interested solely in power…The German Nazis and the Russian Communists came very close to us in their methods, but they never had the courage to recognize their own motives. They pretended, perhaps they even believed, that they had seized power unwillingly and for a limited time, and that ***just round the corner there lay a paradise where human beings would be free and equal***. We are not like that. We know that no one ever seizes power with the intention of relinquishing it. Power is not a means, it is an end***. One does not establish a dictatorship in order to safeguard a revolution; one makes the revolution in order to establish the dictatorship…The object of power is power***.'
>
> George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949: 583 [own emphasis])

North Korea's behaviour (the elite's behaviour specifically) is dictated by the need for the regime's survival (Ahn 2011: 183). Elements concerning state development that need to improve in order to consolidate overall state (or national) power are used in this context in order to bribe certain parts of society, and oppress and blackmail others. In Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* Oceana's regime exists solely for the acquisition and maintenance of power over the population. In North Korea the situation is similar, although because of the dynamic character of 'reality', it is more complex. There is evidence that proves that the regime's actions are solely for the purpose of oppression (in order to maintain power), in the same way that in Oceana '[the] object of persecution is persecution' (1949: 583). But there is also evidence that the regime is curtailed by its own narrative when it comes to unsuccessful attempts to reform (especially economically) in order to improve the lives of its people. Nevertheless, parallels can

be drawn between the imaginary authoritarian world that Orwell created in 1949 and the world within which ordinary North Koreans have to live every day.

The elite in North Korea and 'the Party' in Oceana have a lot in common – although in the case of North Korea one could possibly argue that the need for power comes second to the need for resources, the fact remains that the regime needs to cement a certain type of power relation (in relation to the elite and the general population) in order for it to exist. One can therefore not make a clear distinction, in the case of the DPRK, between the 'domestic' (internal) and the 'international'. This is not to say that there is not a 'domestic' – it just means that the only 'internal' that the regime understands is its *own* 'internal'. French notes that '[all] the current members of the extended Kim family are members of North Korea's "Core Class", which includes Party, military and government officials as well as descendants of independence fighters and relatives of the military and civilian dead from the Korean War' (2007: 65). The regime's own 'internal' is this 'Core Class' – the class that benefits from any action taken by the regime to perpetuate its existence. It is as if the Kim family and its cronies – the elite – act on the periphery of both the domestic and the international, in order to manipulate perception in both spheres and subsequently maintain the elite's power position in relation to both the domestic and the international spheres.

Theoretically, the North Korean regime's conscious construction of the nation's identity relates to both 'productive power' and Zehfuss's belief that identity is tenuous and needs to be continuously constructed and reconstructed (2002: 219). To briefly come back to Barnett and Duvall's typology, productive power refers to how '"microfields" or the quotidian "define the (im)possible, the (im)probable, the natural, the normal, what counts as a problem"' (Hayward in Barnett and Duvall 2005: 55). This typology is created in order to be used in the study of International Relations, but with the permission of the authors themselves (43), this section will borrow from 'productive power' and apply it in a 'domestic' realm (if one looks at this in a traditional realist way), in order to show how it has relevance to North Korea's international relations. Barnett and Duvall also claim that one can see, for example, ways in which 'compulsory power shapes productive power, and vice-versa' (67) -- and the current study is based on the assumption that this is possible. This chapter looks at how 'internal' productive power (the 'domestic' creation of intersubjective meaning) has the potential to influence and shape intersubjective meaning internationally (and therefore the potential to 'internationally' shape compulsory power).

Derrida and Zehfuss's discussion concerning identity is also of utmost importance here. Derrida states that there are only constructed origins (which are always the basis of identity), and that

these 'origins' are tied to the authoritative nature of 'history'. Zehfuss believes that these constructed origins (and identities), supported by the legitimacy of history as the source of truth, have to be constructed and reconstructed through action (2002: 219-220). This chapter will firstly focus on what North Korean 'identity' is (and what it claims to be based on (its 'origin')), and – secondly – how it is constructed and reconstructed. The process of construction will also be analysed in depth in Chapter Four (in relation to the elements that provide North Korea with its 'national power'). The chapter will therefore analyse the symbolic maintenance of this identity.

Certain elements concerning the construction of 'reality' will be prominent throughout the discussion and explanation of North Korea's constructed identity. They bear close relation to elements in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and so the book has been integrated into this chapter to highlight aspects of the creation of Oceana's reality and its relevance to North Korea's construction of its identity. Orwell's imaginary regime is based on three fundamental principles: 'war is peace', 'freedom is slavery', and 'ignorance is strength' (1949: 433). These principles can also be seen in North Korea's active construction of its reality and identity. Two more principles are evident both in Orwell's book and the North Korean regime's character: the ideology of revolution is one of the foundations of both these 'realities', and the control of the concept of time (and history) is another. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the protagonist (Winston) is forced to obediently repeat the phrase 'who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past' (Orwell 1949: 574).

This chapter will show how, in the construction of North Korean identity, war is peace (in the Orwellian conception) – 'revolution' is part of society's identity and the state controls history in order to maintain this reality, freedom is slavery, and ignorance is strength. To explain the complexity of this construction, one has to begin with Kim Il Sung's rise to power and how this shaped the 'origin' of North Korean identity.

## 3. The genesis of the Kim cult and the myth of 'origin'

Derrida's philosophy claims that there are only 'nonoriginary origins' (in Zehfuss 2002: 211). Zehfuss adds, '[who] we are depends, in this thinking, on who our predecessors were, on where we come from' (2002: 211). What both Derrida and Zehfuss explain is that origins, as a foundation from which we build our understanding of ourselves, are *created*. This could not be truer than in the case of North Korea. The section that follows looks briefly at how Kim Il Sung consolidated power in order to become the 'Great Leader' that North Koreans believe him to be – the facts behind the origin of his leadership show that he was brutal, ambitious and ruthless. The constructed myth, however, of how he became the liberator and the father of the nation,

creates a completely different origin. And it is in this origin that one will find the core of North Korea's identity – a family, bound by blood, whose politics is infused with deep emotion and will gladly eschew 'facts' in order to hold onto the power of the symbolic.

*Kim Il Sung's consolidation of power*

Before becoming the resistance fighter who ended up being instrumental in the creation of what is now known as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Kim Il Sung was a 'nationalist-minded young man' who was educated in China and a member of the Chinese Communist Party (Lone and McCormack 1994: 176). While fighting as an anti-Japanese guerrilla fighter in Manchuria, the Japanese military forced the resistance fighters, which included Kim Il Sung, to retreat to the Soviet Union 'where he became a member of a Soviet force until the end of the war in 1945' (Lone and McCormack 1994: 176). After the Second World War, the area now known as North Korea was occupied by Soviet forces, and Kim Il Sung was chosen 'by Stalin himself, to play a leading role in his liberated country' (176). At this point, complete control by Kim Il Sung and his allies was far from guaranteed.

Kim Il Sung was the leader of what was known as the 'Manchurian Faction', but this faction (or force) was not the only one vying for power and influence. Kim Il Sung wanted his faction to have absolute power, but it was also important for him that the peninsula be united under a communist system. He therefore managed to 'gain the support of Stalin and Mao for launching the Korean War in June 1950' (French 2007: 53). However, the war proved that Kim needed more than just ideological support (and that his survival depended on others), which became evident when his side needed the intervention of 300,000 Chinese Volunteer Forces to reclaim Pyongyang (53). These forces, as well as powerful Korean military leaders who were not necessarily directly linked to Kim's faction, were a direct threat to his domestic power -- and when Chinese forces recaptured Pyongyang, Kim began purging Korean military leaders , while also initiating the process of loosening Pyongyang's ties with China (Chung and Choi 2013: 246). Show trials were favoured when it came to the purging of the opposition. The trials found former communist leaders from the South guilty, as well as officials accused of 'aiding the Japanese and plotting to replace [Kim] as leader' (French 2007: 53). The revolution and Kim's role in the Korean War made him a prominent figure and, despite the dependence on China and the Soviet Union, an ambitious and ruthless leader.

Kim understood that he needed the Soviet Union and China (especially in the beginning) to survive, but the plan was always to cut off ties that could hinder independence. According to French, what set Kim apart from other leaders in the socialist bloc countries was 'his fiercely independent streak' (2007: 56). For example, in the post-Second World War period, 'Stalin put

China in charge of "supervising" the communist parties in Asia' – this culminated with the rise of the Yan'an Faction (Chung and Choi 2013: 246). Kim Il Sung was concerned about their influence, especially since to him it seemed as though China was using this faction as a way to interfere in North Korea's domestic politics (247). Not only did this threaten his hold on power domestically, it was also perceived as an attempt by China (and by implication the Soviet Union) to make Kim a puppet of these two far more powerful nations. Kim succeeded in gaining the upper hand by 'purging the Yan'an Faction thoroughly' in what is now called the 'Factional Incident of 1956', which closed off communication channels with the Chinese and consolidated power in the hands of the Manchurian Faction (Chung and Choi 2013: 247). Purging continued throughout the century, but it did not take long for Kim and his faction to cement their power domestically. Kim became the 'supreme leader,[…]defeating domestic, Soviet and Yan'an factions' (Kang 2014: 215).

Essentially, Kim Il Sung forcefully paved his way to full control of the country that was now starting to look like it would never – especially in the time of the Cold War – reunite with its brother, South Korea. He became known as the leader of the revolution, and his 'fiercely independent streak' (French 2007: 56) created the opportunity for him and his faction to attain ultimate control – domestically and in relation to this new state's international supporters.

*Construction of the myth: the origin of the Kim cult*

More can be said about Kim's physical consolidation of power throughout his reign, but what is directly relevant to this study is how Kim became the 'Great Leader' (Kwon 2010: 3). According to French (2007: 52-53), when Kim was presented to the Korean crowds in liberated Pyongyang, 'the crowd was shocked and surprised':

> Here was a leader, short in stature, slightly chubby and not much over 30. He looked young and fresh beside the Soviet command on the rostrum and many Koreans did not at first believe that this was their great leader, ***who was already being mythologized in Soviet and Korean communist propaganda***.
>
> French (2007: 52-53 [own emphasis])

Despite the misgivings of the people, the *Pyongyang Times* called him 'the incomparable patriot, national hero, the ever victorious, brilliant field commander with a will of iron…the greatest leader that our people have known for the last several thousand years…a man equipped with exceptional powers' (in French 2007: 53). The creation of the Kim personality cult had begun. Kim Il Sung became not only the nation's liberator, but its 'father', and the nation became a close-knit family.

According to Myers (2011: 116), the DPRK's ruling ideology is one where 'Koreans are a uniquely virtuous race that needs a parental leader's protection to survive in an evil world'. Kim Il Sung was (and still is) at the centre of this myth. North Korea is often described as a 'partisan state' or a 'family state', and Kim Il Sung is the 'supreme hero…who was, according to the countless cultural productions of the national saga, the nation's single hope for liberation from colonial misery' (Kwon 2010: 9-10). The *Arirang* festivals (which re-enact the history and, by implication, the genesis of the nation), for example, are 'biblical' in the sense that the stories that they tell 'empower the prophesy of truth emerging from life in exile' – where 'seeing the truth is equal to nurturing an absolute belief in the infallible ability and pure spirituality of the leader they [the North Korean population] are following' (11). Kim Il Sung is the 'Single Star' that helps the 'displaced child' (the people of North Korea) to '[awaken] to Truth along the revolutionary path paved by [him]' (10-11). Kwong makes the observation that these stories, festivals and songs that exalt Kim Il Sung (and his successors) are 'anchored in the revelatory power of *adoptive kinship'* (2010: 12 [own emphasis]).

The power of this particular focus on family in the construction of North Korean identity lies in the way that it erodes the boundaries between the public and the private. The state has complete control of the media (which gives it the power to ceaselessly indoctrinate the citizens of North Korea with these narratives). Furthermore, 'universal lapel badges, worn next to the heart, and the portraits of the Kims…hang in every household to show [how] the Great Leader and the Dear Leader [Kim Jong Il] effectively watch over every family in the land' (French 2007: 67). This provides North Koreans with both a sense of belonging and protection (as 'individual life [is linked] to stories about [their] collective destiny' (Kang 2014: 215)), as well as an understanding that there is no room for individualism – and that non-conformity, however slight, will be exposed and severely punished (216). This paradoxical nature of the 'family state' – where love and fear seem to coexist – is at the heart of this construction, and allows the Kim regime to impose its will on the people, mostly with little resistance.

A core element in the construction of North Korean identity is the idea of 'politics'. This understanding of politics is more complex than a Western conception of the idea, or even the politics of acquiescence to state propaganda and oppression. Kim Il Sung's death in 1994 led to an 'incredible nationwide outpouring of grief' (French 2007: 59). One might think that this was forced, as the country by that time was an established dictatorship. But accounts of this grief all seem to agree that the 'mourning for the dead Great Leader appeared genuine and intense' (59). According to Kwon, '[the] death of Kim Il Sung meant the death of a father for many North Koreans, and the drama of collective bereavement and the ensuing funerary proceedings…were

in fact, in an important sense, a *family* affair' (2010: 15). This shows how the belief that the North Korean nation is a 'family' has an emotional impact that intensely influences identity.

Defectors have described North Korean politics as the 'politics of deep emotion', and have explained this by saying, for example, 'my nation's pain is like mine. If my nation spills blood, it is like I spill blood' (Kang 2014: 219). Others describe their politics as '"*sovereign love*" – the "boundless love of the nation" for the nation's supreme hero, Kim Il Sung, who was, according to the countless cultural productions of the national saga, the nation's single hope for liberation from colonial misery' (Ryang in Kwon 2010: 10 [own emphasis]). It is important to note this, as it shows that symbolic meaning (which is the politics of North Koreans' love for their leader and their ties to the leader as their 'father' and liberator) is more important than 'reality'. Medlicott (in Kwon 2010: 10-11) explains that 'symbol and symbolic performance collectively constitute a single grand mediating layer between the "real" North Korean state and the world external to it'. One could go a step further and say that 'symbol' and 'symbolic performance' constitute a single grand mediating layer between the 'real' North Korea and the North Korean people's *perception of their own country and their role within it*.

Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* once again provides insight here. The politics of the symbolic, the politics of the peoples' love for the Great Leader, provides an acceptable 'reality' for the ordinary citizen in North Korea that transcends the reality (the fact, the experience by the population) of hardship that has to be endured. In Oceana, people had to consciously practice 'doublethink':

> 'To know and not to know, to be conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully constructed lies, to hold simultaneously two opinions which cancelled out, knowing them to be contradictory and believing in both of them; to use logic against logic, to repudiate morality while laying claim to it…; to forget whatever it was necessary to forget, then to draw it back into memory again at the moment when it was needed, and then promptly to forget it again: above all, to apply the same process to the process itself'
>
> George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949: 451)

North Koreans have to practice a version of 'doublethink' in a similar way. The Arduous March (a time of great suffering and crisis) did not affect many people's love for their leader, despite a famine that reportedly killed more than half a million people (Kwon 2010: 4). To North Koreans, according to one guide, '[the] thing that matters is politics. The economy is nothing compared to politics…We are ready to endure hunger and sacrifice our lives for politics if necessary' (4). It is the politics of symbolism, the politics of 'family', the politics of love for a leader and a liberator.

It is the politics that worships the Kim clan despite, and sometimes because of, the hardship that the people have to endure in the country. It is the ability to forget what needs to be forgotten in order to remember the constructed reality that overwhelms one with emotion; it is the ability to understand two realities, to believe in them both and to live within that contradiction as if it is reality – as if it is the natural, 'normal' thing to do.

The Kim cult constructs a foundation for the ideology that drives North Korean identity. While *Juche* (North Korea's governing ideology and Kim Il Sung's alleged creation) drives everyday life in the country, as well as governs most decisions made by the regime, it has its roots in other ideologies which include Marxist-Leninism. The next section will look at what constitutes *Juche* and how this ideology was adapted during Kim Jong Il's rule. The succession from Kim Il Sung to Kim Jong Il became problematic because of the foundations upon which the Kim Il Sung myth was based. Following an explanation of *Juche,* the philosophy of *Songun* (military first) will be discussed –there will be an exploration of how the original ideology (and myth) had to be developed in order to accommodate the new leader, without losing the authority of the origin of the country's identity.

*North Korean identity:* Juche

*Juche* permeates everything about North Korean life – and everyday activities in North Korea construct and perpetuate this ideology, which is, along with the Kim clan myth, an integral part of North Korean identity. Kim ll Sung – the 'father' of the North Korean nation, the Great Leader, the 'brain' of the body that is the North Korean nation (Lone and McCormack 1994: 179) – explained that:

> Establishing *Juche* means, in a nutshell, being the ***master of revolution*** and reconstruction in one's own country. This means holding fast to an ***independent position***, ***rejecting dependence on others***, using one's own brains, believing in one's own strength, displaying the ***revolutionary spirit of self-reliance***, and thus solving one's own problems for oneself on one's own responsibility under all circumstances.
>
> Kim Il Sung in Lee (2003: 105 [own emphasis])

On the surface, *Juche* seems to be a philosophy that glorifies the independent and creative capability of man to be the master of his own destiny (Lee 2003: 109). The 'revolution' is therefore not predetermined (as Marx claimed), and 'man has ultimate control over the world and of his own destiny because he alone has…creativity and consciousness' (109). The other aspect of this definition is that 'revolution' is linked to 'self-reliance' and 'solving one's own

problems for oneself on one's own responsibility *under all circumstances*' (Kim Il Sung in Lee 2003: 105). Not only is the 'revolution' in the hands of the people who induce it (and not a symptom of a particular development in a particular time in history), it is always necessary – there will always be problems that have to be solved, and therefore one will always need a 'spirit of self-reliance', as well as a *revolutionary* spirit of self-reliance.

At the same time, however, Kim Il Sung explains that '[the] Great Leader is the brain that makes decisions and issues orders, the Party is the nervous system that channels information, and the people are the bone and muscle that physically execute the orders' (Kim Il Sung in Lee 2003: 111). Yes, 'man' has power over his own destiny, but he is also part of a holistic organism (part of a single 'body' comprised of many men) – and this organism is controlled by the brain (the Great Leader) and the Party (the Korean Workers' Party). Individual parts of this 'body' – or this united 'family' – can only have real purpose if the independent and creative capability of the head of this family guides them and dictates what they should do and who they should be.

Within *Juche* ideology one can locate a collection of influences. The first goes back to the idea of 'family' (as the Great Leader is the brain of the 'body' of North Korean citizens), which has roots in traditional Korean and Confucian philosophy. The second has roots in revolutionary ideology (linked to memory as well as a Marxist-Leninist understanding of anti-imperialism). The third is a nod to Mao Zedong's rejection of the 'universal truth' (an understanding that the Soviet model of communism is the only true mode) – the claim that solving one's own problems should be done in one's own way goes directly against this, and highlights the theory that there are 'different means to the penultimate goal of communism' (Lee 2003: 110).

i. *Confucianism and traditional Korean societal practices*

Confucianism is a strong component in North Korean philosophy (or politics), as it is this (as well as traditional Korean social systems) that connects the ideology to the private lives of the individuals of the nation. Armstrong (in Kwon 2010: 12) notes that 'North Korea's early revolutionary politics "combined images of Confucian familialism with Stalinism", of which the virtue of collective filial piety (toward Kim Il Sung) was the most distinctive element'. The fact that some analysts have called North Korea's political order a 'family state' shows how strong this element is within the understanding of *Juche*. It ties in with the Kim myth, strengthens the Kim family's ideological hold on the people of North Korea and links the Kim cult to traditional philosophy. The last point is important as the link between the Kim cult, *Juche* and Confucianism creates the impression that the Kim cult – although it has only been 'alive' for less than a century – has some historical legitimacy. Zehfuss states that the 'authority of history is particularly significant in relation to questions of identity' (2002: 211). Here Confucianism aids the

legitimacy of *Juche* because of the legitimacy provided by the 'timelessness' of history. It is as if, by creating the Kim myth and linking it to traditional identity, the Kim cult has made their legitimacy transhistorical. Therefore the Kim cult and *Juche* form an entity which now becomes 'universal' in the sense that it is part of Korean identity, and not just a construction that is contingent upon the survival of one person (or one family – the Kim family).

Not only does the influence of Confucianism strengthen the legitimacy of the Kim cult, it also strengthens the legitimacy of the regime's absolute control over the people. According to French, 'Confucianism in North Korea is used as a binding force for society, to provide a sense of belonging and a way to achieve a broad consensus that social order (under the Party) is in everyone's best interest' (2007: 38). Related to *Juche*, this reinforces the idea that, while man is the author of his own destiny, one should still 'put the group first and individual needs second' (39). Confucianism strengthens the spirit of group loyalty among the people in society, which also intensifies loyalty to the system – making non-conformity difficult and informants easy to find. This is cemented by the influence of Korean tradition – it 'reinforces the idea that although humankind is the master of its destiny, it is guided by a collective consciousness embodied in a great leader' (French 2007: 41). Here, again, the Great Leader is the 'brain', and the people are the bone and muscle that execute orders.

The influence that Confucianism has on *Juche* is also linked to historical events (and more specifically, eras). It is said that the philosophy is linked to independence 'espoused by [former] Korean rulers', and a strong historical 'nationalistic strain of Korean political culture' (Lee 2003: 110). Confucianism in this sense adds to *Juche* an element of 'antipathy towards foreign influence' and 'an intensification of Korean nationalism' (110). The influence of Confucianism in *Juche* therefore links the Kim myth to the history of the Korean people, conformity to North Korea's modern society (through the focus on family as well as traditional Korean values), and the idea of family to 'group loyalty', which in turn is linked to a heightened sense of nationalism.

ii. *Marxism and Leninism*

In keeping with the need to find a way to blend both 'traditional ideas of power and legitimacy' and 'modern state and industrial ideologies', an important piece of the *Juche* puzzle is the incorporation of Marxist and Leninist ideas (Lone and McCormack 1994: 178). Although *Juche* is now described by the Kim cult as 'superior to all other systems of human thought, including Marxism' (French 2007: 32) – and in 1992 'the *Juche* concept's remaining connections to Marxism were completely removed from the North Korean Constitution' (Park 2014: 6) – it is essentially based on Marxist-Leninism and the works of Mao (Lee 2003: 108). What the philosophy took from these political ideologies (and kept in its canon) is an adoption of these

ideologies peculiarly suited to the Korean situation, according to Kim Jong Il. The adoption had to accommodate:

> …a difficult and complex revolution which had to deal with the tasks of the ***anti-imperialist, national-liberation revolution***, with formidable Japanese imperialism as the target, and those of the ***anti-feudal, democratic revolution simultaneously***
>
> Kim Jong Il in Lee (2003: 108 [own emphasis)

Note in this statement the use of the word 'revolution'. Kim Jong Il took over from his father long after the Korean War was over, and he himself did not have any combat experience. Nevertheless, the idea of *Juche* consistently invoked an understanding of revolution, as if the country were still at war. This construction, referred to by some as the 'making of the continuous revolution' (Kong 2014: 77), creates a present that is embedded in the past. It creates a 'reality' where every citizen is constantly aware of the country's permanent state of war. It introduces a 'self-reliant defence system [that involves]…the mobilization of the whole country and the complete inculcation of ideology in the armed forces' (Lee 2003: 107). Every single person in the country is always helping towards the 'maintenance of the domestic defence industry and [remains] ideologically prepared so that the home front would be united in a sense of socio-political superiority' (107). In other words, whether one was working in a factory, sitting in school, or actually in the military itself, one is consistently reminded that every daily activity it part of this 'war'. This is what Lenin called 'War Communism', which seems suited to the *Juche* ideology – all industry and economic distribution goes to the state, everything is nationalised and everything is rationed (distribution is controlled by the state) (French 2007: 33). The 'continuous revolution' and the permanent state of war, along with traditional understandings of hierarchy in society (bolstered by selected elements of Confucianism), contribute to the state's complete control.

iii. *Mao Zedong*

On a pragmatic level, the works of Mao Zedong inspired Kim Il Sung and had an influence on *Juche*, even though Kim never overtly admitted it (French 2007: 35). The influence of Mao's politics came at the end of the Korean War, when 'Chinese influence in North Korea had overtaken that of the Soviet Union' (Lee 2003: 109). One of the reasons why Kim did not acknowledge Mao's influence is because of the Yan'an faction that was 'more closely aligned to Maoism than to Stalinism' (French 2007: 37). As previously noted, Kim – afraid of losing his absolute hold on power domestically – purged the Yan'an faction, and therefore would not have admitted that their philosophy influenced his thinking. The most important element of this, and

the element that links with other already analysed aspects of *Juche*, is Mao's belief that the leader of the country had to guide 'policy at all levels' (35). In 1958-1960, Mao Zedong led a movement he called 'The Great Leap Forward' (Park 2001: 505). These economic plans were geared towards mobilising the masses for intense spurts of growth. North Korea replicated what were essentially Chinese programmes (505). The programmes were ideologically based on economic self-sufficiency, and inspired what was called the *Chollima Undong* economic plans, which were founded on the logic that:

> …if one lacks the revolutionary spirit of self-reliance, one will lose faith in one's own strength, fail to try to tap the inner resources of one's country, ***grow indolent and loose, and fall into passivism…and conservatism.***
>
> (Kim Il Sung in Lee 2003: 110 [own emphasis])

Importantly, here Kim says that these mass campaigns are planned in order for the people to make sure that they do not 'grow indolent and loose' – in other words, in order for the people to stay on the right moral path, one where hard work, self-reliance and 'faith in one's own strength' guide one's decisions and therefore one's life. These plans, inspired by Mao's practices, merged citizens' economic and moral (private) spheres. Again, one can see here that this element of *Juche* encourages full control by the 'Great Leader'.

A symbol of the control exercised by the leadership over its population in North Korea can be found in the way that both Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il (and later Kim Jong Un) provided 'on-the-spot' guidance at factories and other places where ordinary people were working (French 2007: 62). This action implies two messages: the one is that the 'Great Leader' (and later his successors) cares and is truly directly involved in all aspects of North Korean life; the other is that the 'Great Leader' (and his successors) is all knowing, all powerful and not to be questioned. This aspect of Mao's political practices, borrowed and adjusted for the purposes of *Juche*, makes the leader all powerful, and makes the individual citizen responsible for the success of any of the plans implemented by the leader. If the leader – for example – is all-knowing and all-powerful, and if he says that these mass economic mobilisation campaigns will make the country strong and prosperous (and are essential to the self-reliance that North Korean identity is based on), then it is impossible for them to fail. However, if they do fail, it is not the fault of the leader, but the fault of the citizens who clearly ventured off the moral *Juche* path – and have become 'indolent and loose'. This reinforces the 'continuous revolution' (Lee 2003: 107), actively constructs the legitimacy of the leadership, and keeps the individual morally responsible for the success or failure of the leader's choices.

iv. Juche*: the paradox of 'freedom'*

The *Juche* ideology takes elements from Confucianism (for example), but leaves out the most important part: '[both] Confucius and Mencius argued that, though one should never disobey parents, the state is changeable and can be overthrown if it abuses its power' (French 2007: 40). This is an example of the 'doublethink' that citizens have to perform every day as they try to live out the principles of *Juche.* The selectivity of the ideology is very likely one of the reasons why it has been said that the study of Confucian thought is not encouraged, and why Kim Il Sung has claimed that *Juche* is his own 'ingenious and original contribution to the body of political philosophy' (Lee 2003: 110). In other words, when living according to the principles of *Juche*, one should have both a traditional understanding of Confucianism (albeit indirectly), and an acute awareness that questioning authority is forbidden. One should also, for example, believe intensely that one has the ability to control one's destiny, while simultaneously giving up all one's individual freedom to an all-powerful leader.

The three elements together make *Juche* an incredibly powerful tool, used to provide the people in North Korea with an identity and a purpose, and – more importantly – used by the elite to establish and maintain their legitimacy and power position. This philosophy taps into the private life of the individual, making that individual part of a family and providing him or her with a 'moral compass'. This moral compass helps to guide the individual while he or she is busy 'fighting the revolution' by working alongside other members of this 'family' to make their great nation strong – and their Great Leader happy. Their Great Leader, legitimised through state propaganda, is not only their leader, but their father, liberator and spiritual guide. Kim Il Sung is the centre of this identity, the revolution that led to the creation of the North Korean 'family' is the origin and cornerstone of this ideology and identity; together Kim Il Sung and the revolution that put him in power are the centre of the call to community and collective consciousness. Kim Il Sung is all-knowing, all-powerful and the nation's one and only true protector. Without the Kim myth, most of what North Koreans believe to be the elements that comprise their identity and purpose have no meaning.

*Juche* – despite its claim that it champions a man's independence – did (and does) the exact opposite. One can argue that the focus on 'man's creation of his own destiny' actually only applies – literally – to Kim Il Sung himself (and later Kim Jong Il and Kim Jong Un). The reason why its legitimacy is maintained is because of the belief in a specific ideology, and because of the complexity of the ideology itself and its ability to transcend not only the public realm (and successfully invade the private realm), but its ability to be a 'religion' – a system of moral guidance, 'which ultimately [defines] the purpose of people's lives' (Park 2014: 6). This is

essentially the difference between 'ideology' and a cult whose identity is embodied in a personality – and this is what gives the Kim family and the elite their power. The Great Leader (and later his successors) is the master of the destiny of the North Korean nation (thought of as a single body by the elite and the population alike) and what he decides is law. Any level of non-conformity is seen not only as a slight on the Great Leader himself, but as an attack on the essence of North Korean identity and the nation's raison d'être.

The succession from Kim Il Sung to Kim Jong Il did not deviate much from the practice and maintenance of this ideology, but intensified the significance of one of its core elements. Lenin's 'War Communism' brought with it an understanding both of a permanent war as well as a specific understanding of its character – that it is a revolution. Practical problems in the 1990s led Kim Jong Il to the creation of *Songun,* a military-first policy that intensified the construction and maintenance of a 'permanent war' as part of North Korean identity.

*North Korean identity:* Songun

In the early 1990s important events that took place in North Korea made it necessary to build on the ideology that was constructed by Kim Il Sung. The *Juche* 'religion' was not abandoned, but because of a succession, a famine and the death of the 'Great Leader', the narrative that kept the North Korean identity inextricably linked to that of the Kim myth had to be adapted. Kim Jong Il himself did not have any military experience when he took over after his father's death. The strength of the idea of the continuous war (or permanent revolution) was so instrumental in the maintenance of unity in the country, that a myth that connects Kim Jong Il to the revolution had to be created.

When it comes to the myth of the Kim clan, the way in which the succession from father (Kim Il Sung) to son (Kim Jong Il) was managed – akin to the way that a director manages a play or a performance – is pivotal. The official story is that Kim Jong Il was born on Mount Paekdu (a sacred mountain), where 'legend has it that Korea came into existence 5000 years ago':

> As he came into the world a new star appeared in the sky, a double rainbow appeared, an iceberg on a nearby lake cracked, strange lights filled the sky and a swallow passed by overhead to pass on to the world the news of his birth. Kim, as a baby, remained by his father's side until the Japanese were defeated, expelled from Korea and Pyongyang was liberated.
>
> French (2007: 57)

The truth is that he was born in Siberia, but that the myth is not true is not essentially the point. If the story were not mythical, it would not fit into the narrative that had already been

constructed through the leadership of Kim Jong Il's father. French explains that '[the] story is allegory, and is probably understood as such by most ordinary North Koreans' (2007: 58). This does not mean, however, that the allegory has no real value. In fact, the story has immense importance for the perpetuation of not only the Kim regime, but North Korean identity itself. The belief in the spiritual supremacy of Kim Il Sung was (and is) not only a tool used by the regime to maintain power, it is also that which keeps a tenuous identity of a nation, plagued by suffering, alive. As much as the leadership needs the people to believe in the myth, the people need to believe in it – it is what gives their lives meaning, and what makes them choose 'politics' over 'reality' on a daily basis. Therefore, the mythology that surrounded the 'Single Star' – which created a culture of filial piety – needed to somehow be perpetuated. The Kim cult was successful in transforming Kim Il Sung into a 'quasi-divine emperor known as the "Great Leader"' (Carlson 2003: 34).

Succession was tricky, because if Kim Il Sung was 'god', then a myth that is equally fantastic needed to support the passing of leadership from him to someone else. This was orchestrated with the use of the state propaganda machine. According to witnesses, a result of the success of the propaganda machine is that the Kim cult has become 'a cult of personality like nothing in history…In North Korea, he [Kim Jong Il] and his father [Kim Il Sung] are like God and Jesus Christ' (Carlson 2003: 35). In keeping with the understanding that the North Korean nation is a family, and that Kim Il Sung was the 'lost Father' and the 'Great Leader', the succession from father to son was appropriate. Poems and stories that emanated from the death of Kim Il Sung centred around a new leader and his 'heroic efforts to keep the family (of the nation) together after the founding leader passed away' (Kwon 2010: 16).

A new narrative had to be created, however, because Kim Jong Il did not have the military background that his father had – and yet, in order to maintain the revolutionary spirit that permeated his father's legacy, he had to become –at least in the minds of the people – a 'general'. In North Korean school textbooks, for example, 'in order to boost Kim Jong Il's image, the authors of the textbooks portray him in mythological terms' as a born leader (Lee 2010: 357). In a story called *The Child General of Mt Baekdu,* Kim Jong Il is 'a child with an innate sense of opposition to the Japanese' (in Lee 2010: 357). In the story, a guerrilla fighter makes a toy for him and he says:

> Sir, please make my pistol as big as my father's (line 17)…
>
> Mum, I will defeat the Japanese like my father (line 18)…

> The guerrilla fighters were deeply moved, One guerrilla said "A great general of Korea who will succeed Kim Il Sung has been born", "a child general was born in Mt Baekdu" (line 19)
>
> *Guegeo 2* in Lee (2010: 358)

Therefore, three elements had to be constructed in order for the Kim Jong Il succession to be legitimised. Firstly, the succession from *father to son* had to be legitimised – this was supported by the identity already constructed by the Kim Il Sung myth, that the North Korean nation was a family. But, secondly, because Kim Il Sung was also worshipped as the ultimate spiritual leader (and father), the myth could only be maintained if Kim Jong Il's entrance into the world was allegorical and fantastical in nature (in the sense that it perpetuated a myth of a spiritual succession and not only a (physical) familial one). Lastly, a vital part in the myth of Kim Il Sung was that he was the liberator – the revolutionary fighter who saved North Korea from Japanese imperialism. Since Kim Il Sung at least did have fighting experience, this myth (in relation to him) was easy to create and perpetuate. Kim Jong Il, however, had no fighting experience – and therefore his narrative needed to include some 'evidence' that he too was a fearless leader. The story taught to children (above) shows how this myth was constructed. Another example is the poem entitled 'The Single Way to Victory along the General's Footsteps' (North Korean Worker's Party in Kwon and Chung 2012: 37). The poem laments the death of Kim Il Sung, and refers to how his 'children wailed and cried' – but essentially hails Kim Jong Il as the new 'general' that will lead them to victory.

The construction of this myth was also important for practical reasons. Kim Jong Il had to be made a 'general', and *Juche* had to be adapted to incorporate what became known as the 'military first policy' (or *Songun*), because of Kim Jong Il's need to win over the military. The death of Kim Il Sung could not have come at a worse time. The Agreed Framework (United States Department of State 1994) was being finalised, and the country was finding itself incapable of preventing a famine (Kwon 2010: 4). What is referred to as the 'Arduous March' was the 'culmination of various forms of decay' (Habib 2011: 49). Economic stagnation, 'costly military contest that diverted resources from productive applications', as well as 'agricultural inefficiency related to collectivism and intensive industrial farming practices' (among a myriad problems) (Habib 2011: 49), induced a famine that killed hundreds of thousands of North Korean citizens (Cha and Anderson 2012: 7). Some believe that the figure is closer to two million – out of a population of 22 million (Miller 2003: 47). Kim Jong Il had inherited the problems that his father had not been able to fix, and he himself did not have the legitimacy that his father seemed to command. Kim Jong Il had no choice but to find a way to consolidate his power by making sure the military was loyal to him. Park notes that *Songun* was introduced in

1995 'as part of [Kim Jong Il's] strategic move to consolidate his grip on power after his father's death and to overcome a series of crises that befell North Korea [in that time]' (2014: 8).

To be fair to the leadership of Kim Il Sung (as well as, to some extent, Kim Jong Il), not everything that took place in the early 1990s could have been predicted or controlled. The collapse of the Soviet Union left the DPRK with a gap in its aid revenue, North Korea's 'precarious international position' and the Soviet Union's move towards rapprochement with the West left the North without one of its most important allies, and several natural disasters induced and intensified a famine and the subsequent economic hardship experienced by the country (Park 2014: 8). Kim Jong Il's move to promote the military to a higher status was pragmatically sensible in this context.

When Kim Jong Il took over from his father, he needed the support of the military as rumours were circulating that the military hierarchy was not necessarily pleased with the succession (French 2007: 60). His alliance with the military helped him to maintain his position, and created and maintained a parallel military economy (Habib 2011: 51). This cemented an obstacle to economic reform – because the DPRK had developed 'an autonomous military industrial base, the reduction of the military burden was economically difficult' when economic reforms were eventually considered (Kong 2014: 83). The military effectively possessed this autonomous character, and it also commanded most of the nation's resources (Dong 2011: 129). Staying in power became an expensive enterprise for the Kim clan.

Nevertheless, the military-first policy 'accentuated revolutionary commitment and military values' (French 2007: 60). As much as this was the 'theoretical realisation of the compromise between Kim Jong Il and the military leadership' (French 2007: 60); it was also a continuation of some of the fundamental components of *Juche*. Since 1995, *Songun* has become the 'primary ideology that guides the political and economic life of the country' (Park 2014: 8). According to Suh (2002: 146), military-first politics gave 'priority to the military to preserve and protect the sovereignty of the state'. Park understands it as a political ideology that implies that 'North Korea's economy, diplomacy, and politics must be guided by its strong military power' (2014: 8). It permeates all aspects of society, and is reminiscent of *Juche* philosophy in that it promotes continuous revolution and commands direct involvement of all citizens through their daily commitment to the revolutionary cause. Certain *Arirang* stories, for example, 'culminate in the shining example of another military genius [other than Kim Il Sung] of the nation, Kim Jong Il, the only one who can lead the nation in the global crisis of socialist revolution' (Kwon 2010: 19). Kwon continues to explain:

> The scenario is that the time of the Arduous March is a national crisis as grave as the era of colonial domination, and that the ***power of the armed forces is vital for overcoming the current crisis, just as the power of the partisan forces was for ending colonial domination and displacement***…[The] manifest destiny of Kim Jong Il, as the head of the country's armed forces, ***overlaps with the historical destiny of his predecessor*** as the shining leader of the revolutionary partisan forces.
>
> Kwon (2010: 19 [own emphasis])

These festivals reinforce Kim Jong Il's ties with the late Great Leader, and guarantee his legitimacy – not only in the traditional sense (as he is the descendent of the 'father' of the nation), but also as the leader who will continue fighting for the revolutionary cause. Symbolically this strengthens not only his legitimacy vis-à-vis the identity of the North Korean nation, but also strengthens the identity of the North Korean nation itself. His lack of legitimacy will call into question his father's legitimacy – the infallibility of the father (the all-knowing, all-powerful supreme spiritual leader of the North Korean people) might be called into question. And as the *suryeong* (leader) himself is 'at the apex or core of the system' (Park 2014: 5), this could undermine the essence of the nation's constructed identity.

*The control of history, 'doublethink' and North Korea's permanent war*

Orwell's Oceana has a government that aims for the complete control of its population. As previously mentioned, 'the Party' wants power for power's sake (1949: 583). In order to achieve this, the 'Party' creates a philosophy that distorts time (488), controls and creates (and recreates) history (455) and forces people into thinking in a certain way, regardless of their personal experience (451). All three of these characteristics are prominent in the construction of North Korean identity (and the maintenance of the Kim clan's power). The philosophy of a permanent revolution – created in order to control the population's actions on a daily basis, to legitimise a leader that was once a military revolutionary but became a tyrant, and to legitimise the succession of his son who had not fought in any revolution in his life – distorts time, distorts history, and forces people to exercise a form of 'doublethink'.

The people in North Korea need to believe in a revolution that does not exist. They need to live within the contradiction that this ideology and its daily incantation have created – not only in order to survive, but in order to make sense of their existence. The constructed origin, to which North Korean identity continuously returns in order to legitimise its existence, keeps the elite in power and sustains the purpose of both the elite and the general population.

The next section will look at how this identity is constructed and reconstructed through the daily actions of both the state and the people. The control, once again, of the future (a time when things will be better) as well as the past (where the county comes from – the origin of North Korea's identity) works to maintain an identity that is very heavily dependent on the myth of a past that never really existed to begin with, and that will never lead to the future that promises liberation from North Korea's current struggle.

## 4. North Korea's eternal war: the population's struggle for meaning

WAR IS PEACE

FREEDOM IS SLAVERY

IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH

George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949: 433)

Orwell's world in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is founded upon the three slogans above. 'War is peace', 'freedom is slavery' and 'ignorance is strength' are three elements that together keep a population in check, and the elite (the 'Party') in control. On the surface these look like 'doublethink' – in the entire book, labels for things are the opposite of what they are. For example, the Ministry of Plenty consistently announced that national production (of anything) was always going up, when in fact it was declining (1949: 465), and the Records Department (ostensibly created to document history) was designed to destroy the past and constantly make a new one (454). But these three elements have deeper meaning, especially when applied to North Korea. For example, 'war is peace' is a double standard that does have a sense of truth in Oceana:

> To understand the nature of the present war…one must realise in the first place that it is impossible for it to be decisive.
>
> (1949: 542)
>
> …
>
> The war, therefore, if we judge it by the standards of previous wars, is merely imposture…But though it is unreal it is not meaningless. It eats up the surplus of consumable goods, and it helps to preserve the special mental atmosphere that a hierarchical society needs…

> A peace that was truly permanent would be the same as a permanent war. This…is the inner meaning of the Party slogan: *War is Peace.*
>
> (1949: 547 [original emphasis])

In the case of North Korea, aside from small sporadic skirmishes, the nation has not been in an actual war for decades. The acquisition and possession of nuclear weapons maintain the illusion that the country is at war, and thus provide justification for the construction of a permanent 'revolution'. War is peace because the deterrent effect of the threat of war (in the case of North Korea) keeps an actual war from taking place – while a reality is created that makes all North Koreans believe that they are at war. This not only affects the behaviour of citizens domestically, but dictates action by other states in relation to North Korea. Externally, North Korea's construction of 'war' actually does create a type of peace. Internally, the construction of this eternal war keeps the population from revolting – fighting against something external (whether real or constructed) keeps the general population from turning against their own government.

One of the reasons for this obedience from the population has to do with the construction of North Korean identity on a daily basis. *Juche*, the Kim cult and the military first policy all culminate to produce a self-awareness that keeps the citizens of the country subdued – or more accurately, fighting a 'revolution' long since forgotten by everyone except the North Koreans themselves, as they shift their frustration to the external, where evil awaits. More importantly, the external is not only spatial, but the void that exists outside of the constructed world within which North Koreans live. North Koreans are not docile – instead they are actively fighting (expressing their frustrations about their real situation) – but their energy goes towards resisting the oppression of the past (the Japanese occupation before the revolution), the external oppression of the present (the evil international community led by the United States), and the uncertainty, confusion and emptiness that will result if a critical examination of what comprises North Korean identity is allowed.

This is not a criticism of the people who live under this system – punishment for non-conformity in any way is severe (Miller 2003: 47), and the fact that punishment is necessary points to the tendency for many in the community to want to criticise and question authority. Nationalism (the construction of the North's identity) is tenuous – and needs to be reinforced through intensive propaganda campaigns and excessive punitive measures for disobedience. In this sense, war against the population (or its perceived dissidents) is also 'peace' – the peace found, for the elite, in the knowledge that 'order' (which in this case will mean the literal oppression of the population) will keep them in power.

In terms of 'freedom is slavery', one can definitely argue that perhaps for North Koreans 'freedom' from this constructed reality is not slavery per se, but that it could very possibly lead to mass disillusionment. If 'freedom' in this case means the freedom to question authority, then by implication it will be the 'freedom' to question the Kim myth, the origin of the North Korean 'nation', and essentially North Korean identity. Maybe the opposite is truer for North Koreans in this context: maybe for North Koreans, slavery is freedom. For example, by allowing propaganda to dictate their beliefs, *Arirang* festivals serve to intensify the emotional connection that citizens have to the leadership. It is said that, while for the most part one gets swept up in the moment during these festivals, there is an element of compulsion involved:

> …he admits he applauded with gusto to avoid angering the Dear Leader.
> "Are you clapping because you really enjoyed the performance?"
> "It doesn't matter," he replied. "Just clap like mad. It's an order."
>
> Carlson (2003: 33)

While there is certainly evidence of a level of compulsion, it could be said that this is also a self-imposed compulsion. What makes the myth a reality is not only the state and its oppression – it is also the 'daily activities of citizens…[that construct and reconstruct] their identities and [maintain] subject positions from the bottom up' (Kang 2014: 213). One could arguably find an element of acquiescence from North Korean citizens when it comes to the maintenance of the country's identity – which unfortunately creates a reality in which most of the population are treated as slaves.

The focus on how daily activities perpetuate this 'slavery' is directly linked to an application of 'ignorance is strength' in the case of North Korea. Examples of indoctrination abound, as the state has tight control of the propaganda apparatus, and 'Pyongyang does not allow undesirable information and materials [from the outside] to be smuggled in' (Park 2001: 509). There is a clear need for the regime to reinforce ideas through this psychologically violent top down approach. The pervasive nature of these types of propaganda (coupled with tight controls on the flow of information) proves how the state has to consciously construct the nation's identity in order for it to survive.

Simultaneously, however, individuals internalise structures as – the notion of *habitus* (Bourdieu in Kang 2014: 215) emphasises 'the practices of individuals that are shaped, evolved and understood within particular sociocultural contexts'. In *The Two Faces of North Korean State Power* (2014: 215), Kang states that 'North Koreans have systematically developed internalised dispositions that mediate anti-American sentiments into everyday activities that in turn reproduce the social structure within which people act'. The militant nature of the propaganda (as discussed above) becomes internalised through the activities of ordinary North Koreans.

Kang provides an example given by a defector where he describes that children played games that involved the 'beating [of] American scarecrows' (215). The defector explains that they 'enjoyed the game because it aroused their nationalist sentiment against a national enemy…beating Americans was a political behaviour in itself. [They had] been disciplined that way since…boyhood' (219).

Another example of the maintenance of the status quo by individuals within the community is the irrational love that many have for Kim Il Sung. Many observers who do research in North Korea note that individuals – even defectors – have a deep and earnest love for the Great Leader. Myers notes, '[small] wonder why even today North Koreans blink back tears – as my driver did on my last trip to the DPRK… – when speaking of their "Eternal President"' (2011: 118). The myth is internalised through this love that breaches the private lives of individual North Koreans. Ignorance of the true nature of their nation's father – mediated by propaganda, it has to be noted – gives them strength because it gives their lives meaning and an emotional connection to the state. It is very difficult to logically override an emotional truth – Kim Il Sung was not the man that ordinary North Koreans believe him to have been, but it does not matter because even if North Koreans are confronted with the truth (as defectors are), their emotional truth is stronger than any 'fact' that has the potential to challenge it.

Other more overt practices where individuals perpetuate the structure that oppresses them in the system include the surveillance and punishment systems that are focused on the family (Kang 2014: 216). This is also perpetuated by the state, but it is more indirect. The 'punishment' is linked more to an individual's position in society than it is linked to the direct punishment of the state. The idea is that it is not an individual who is an 'anti-revolutionary', but that it is the quality of the family that makes the individual so. For example, one defector speaks about how she was 'the daughter of a 'reactionary' and political prisoner, and no amount of studying would enable her to attend a good university, marry a man with a good background or obtain success' (216). These societal structures are not overtly created by the state, but rather by the society, as it tries to govern itself within the confines of the state's structures. According to Moon and Hwang, 'cultural factors such as "dignity" and "face" are often weighed more heavily than material ones' (2014: 4). To be shamed in society is a fate no one wants to endure, and people conform to structures that will prevent this from happening.

Ignorance, therefore, and the conscious focus on not disobeying the state, becomes the strength of the people and the strength of the regime. In this sense, ignorance helps the population to focus on 'politics', on the emotions that they experience when they think of their Great Leader, and the solidarity that they experience as a 'family'. Essentially, ignorance for the population

gives them a 'home' within the construction of North Korea's identity – they are no longer 'orphans' because they have been 'saved'. *Not* to question this gives the population purpose. For them, in this circumstance, ignorance is strength. For the regime, the ignorance of the population clearly provides the elite with internal power. What must not be forgotten, however, is that the population's ignorance provides the regime (and those who control it) with great bargaining strength during the Six Party Talks, for example. Resolve and dedication – from the North Korean negotiators as well as the population that backs them – cannot be underestimated. For those who benefit most from the North Korean regime internally and externally, therefore, ignorance is strength as well.

To briefly return to Derrida's discussion of 'reality' and its connection with identity – Zehfuss explains that there is 'never such a thing as a unified, self-present identity' (2002: 211). In the case of North Korea, its identity is clearly constructed and has to be maintained through consistent action – internally and externally. 'War is peace', 'freedom is slavery' and 'ignorance is strength' are all present in North Korean society and are all tools with which this society constructs this identity. But identity – especially such a carefully constructed one – is tenuous. It creates a certain reality at a certain time, for a certain purpose – but needs to be dynamic in order to adapt to external change (with regard to, for example, its dynamic relationship with the international community) while simultaneously 'pausing' history in order to sustain the belief system that is the cornerstone of its identity. 'Reality' in this context is directly dependent on the construction of North Korean identity. The 'reality' of the elements of national power that will be discussed in the next chapter will show how North Korean identity distorts the meaning of these elements, while at the same time the intersubjective meaning of these elements -- which arises from the construction of this reality – feeds back into North Korean identity.

## 5. Conclusion

The regime's legitimacy is based almost exclusively on what happened when the North Korean nation was 'created' in the 20th century. Drives, festivals, schooling and societal pressures and activities all culminate in creating and perpetuating a moment in time. For example, Park states, 'the legacy of Kim Il Sung was not to be erased, and still looms enormously in every facet of political and social life. *There is no post-Kim Il Sung era in North Korea* and there never will be one as long as the regime itself survives' (2001: 508 [own emphasis]). The state has created a 'landscape of collective longing' which requires 'devotion from every member of the family state, and the devotion [is] both spiritual and material dedication' (Kwon 2010: 21).

The North Korean regime (and the Kim cult) is constructing and reconstructing a moment in time to sustain its own survival. It merges past and present with its one face to perpetuate

subordination, and – with its other face – colours the future with the same revolutionary shade; 'transformation' and 'revolution' are vague destinations that perpetuate an identity and a sense of purpose, but do not in reality have an end, as their end is found in the past. Kwon (2010: 220) notes that 'the power of the state in the DPRK has moulded and remoulded its subjects into active cells of the nation'. Both power structures and individuals are perpetuating this construction – this need for a destination that only truly ever existed in the past, if at all. The drive towards 'transformation' and 'revolution' is therefore a destination in itself; for the elite, it is the tool that perpetuates subordination through a specific construction of North Korean identity. For the people, it is the comfort of an identity with a specific purpose, founded upon a benevolent and everlasting 'father' that watches over and protects all his children.

The acquisition of a nuclear weapon serves as a tool to perpetuate this permanent state of war. The revolution can continue because the international community reacts to North Korea's nuclear programme in a manner that serves the North Korean elite perfectly. Being called the 'Axis of Evil' by the president of the United States provides the elite with proof that the revolution is not over, and that the battle for the existence of the North Korean nation will never end. This is where a domestic programme – because it is a tool used by the elite to maintain the loyalty of the military, as well as a symbol that intensifies nationalism and creates the domestic perception that North Korea is a great nation – is used to affect the perception of national power externally. It leads us to how North Korean identity, along with the perversity of power, influences Morgenthau's elements of national power and – subsequently – North Korea's power position vis-à-vis the other parties involved in the Six Party Talks.

# Chapter 4:

# 'Elements of national power', North Korean identity and the construction of power

## 1. Introduction

Chapter Three provided an analysis of the construction of North Korea's identity. Before applying the relevance of this construction to Morgenthau's elements of national power (1993: 124), a clear link needs to be made between the construction of meaning for each of these elements (which will be discussed in this chapter) and the construction of power – which is the theoretical link between this study's constructivist approach, realism and negotiation analysis.

Firstly, this study has used a structural approach to the analysis of negotiation as a starting point for its analysis – Chapter Four, and Chapter Five and Six, loosely resemble the difference between 'national power' and 'negotiation strength' in the manner in which Buszynski (2013) applies this approach. The circular character of constructivism adapts the linear manner in which 'process' is analysed, however. The main difference, and the justification for the adaptation to the approach to the analysis of 'process', is the difference (discussed in Chapter Two) between the exogenous and endogenous nature of 'identity' and 'interests'.

The behaviour of North Korea is therefore not analysed according to an exogenous understanding of its interests and tactics during the negotiation. It is instead analysed in relation to the manner in which the construction of its identity (self-perception) influences not only its interests, but creates a certain 'reality' that simultaneously enables and constrains action – depending on the intersubjective understanding provided as a context for a specific action. Power in this sense is the power to dominate a narrative – to construct a certain 'reality' – which, in a realist sense (in terms of the analysis of negotiations) enables North Korea to control the other parties involved in the negotiation. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five and Chapter Six where it will be related to the acquisition of nuclear weapons, the 'perversity of power' and the 'nuclear taboo'.

This chapter will focus on the other elements in Morgenthau's list of elements of national power -- to show how the construction of a certain 'reality' creates a form of 'negative' power that forces other states to adhere to the country's demands. This relates to the second point that needs to be highlighted. The analysis of Morgenthau's elements of national power entails a focus on how the construction of certain meanings (as a symptom of, as well as the cause of, the

construction of identity) not only perpetuates North Korea's identity and keeps the regime in power, but also creates a different 'reality' concerning each of the elements, which leads to a type of 'negative' power closely related to the concept of 'coercive deficiency'. Coercive deficiency is a situation when a country 'has lost the power to help [itself], or the power to avert mutual damage, [and] the other interested party has no choice but to assume the cost or responsibility' (Schelling 1960: 37). This chapter will analyse these elements and the effect that North Korea's construction of its identity has on them in order to highlight this negative power – the power to force a stronger party to 'help out' purely because one is powerless. Again, power is the power to dominate a certain 'reality' in order to manipulate others.

Essentially, these two points (a structural approach to the analysis of negotiations and the construction of meaning) highlight the connection between a realist interpretation of a negotiation ('coercive deficiency') and the construction of North Korea's 'power', as discussed in Chapter Two. Let us now turn to Morgenthau's elements of national power, and the 'reality' created by North Korea concerning each of these elements in relation to the country's construction of its identity.

## 2. Morgenthau's elements of national power

Morgenthau himself notes that elements of national power 'are all in constant flux, influencing each other and influenced in turn by the unforeseeable intervention of nature and man' (1993: 168). The intervention of man therefore has an impact on the value of these elements, and he warns analysts that this should not be overlooked. However, there are limitations to his measurement of national power – he claims, for example, that geography is not in flux and is not influenced by the 'unforeseeable intervention of nature and man' (168). This should be questioned. What should be asked is not only how North Korea's geographic location physically influences its national strength, but how intersubjective understandings of geographic components influence North Korea's perception of its position in the region and the quality of its relationship with its neighbours. In this sense, geography could become more than just borders. If North Korea's self-perception, heightened by the acquisition of a nuclear weapon, is founded on the idea of war and revolution (and an 'us/them' dichotomy), then geography and borders – especially in the case of the Koreas – becomes more than a physical element. All Morgenthau's elements of national power have to be looked at as if they are in flux – as if the meanings that are attached to them are in a continuous process of construction. The meaning ascribed to these elements contributes to the construction of the nation's identity and therefore its reality. This in turn affects the country's self-perception and its perception of its relative

power position vis-à-vis the other parties to the Six Party Talks. It also provides it with a certain type of power – a 'negative' power, a 'coercive deficiency' (Schelling 1960: 37).

Morgenthau identifies nine elements of national power: geography (1993: 124), natural resources (127), industrial capacity (133), military preparedness (135), population (139), national character (143), national morale (149), the quality of diplomacy (155), and the quality of government (158). Many of these elements, because of the nature of the North Korean regime, overlap and influence each other. For example, 'natural resources', 'industrial capacity' and 'population' seem like objective and distinct parts that comprise the sum total of the nation's power – but the way natural resources are used, the type of industrial capacity that the government's economic plans creates, and the way that the population is used in order to implement these policies (as well as the way that the population is impacted by these policies) can be holistically analysed when looking at the government's economic plans (especially their reform plans). The economic plans, in turn, are heavily influenced by the country's identity (discussed in Chapter Three) and this is the main element that drives national character and national morale. One can find a link between all of these elements and trace it back to the country's construction of its identity, its perception of its own power, and the intersubjective reality that is created as a result of this process.

The next sections (geography, national character and morale, population, resources and industrial capacity (economy), quality of government and military strength) will look broadly at Morgenthau's elements. Chapters Five and Six will look at the last of Morgenthau's elements of national power: diplomacy. The parallel between Buszynski and Zartman and their distinction between national power and negotiation strength (2013, 2008), and Morgenthau's own belief that diplomacy is the most important element as it 'combines those different factors…and awakens their slumbering potentialities by giving them the breath of actual power' (1993: 155) makes the differentiation justifiable. The next sections will therefore focus on what Morgenthau calls 'the raw material out of which the power of a nation is fashioned' (155) and set out to explore the possibility that these 'raw materials' – this physical 'reality' from which Morgenthau believes we cannot escape – can nevertheless create a certain reality that dictates behaviour (sometimes in unexpected ways).

## 3. Geography

From a (realist) strategic point of view, the regional placing of North Korea is important. It acts as a buffer state between China and South Korea, which is not only an ally of the United States, but also has military troops from the United States on its territory. An example of this complexity is the way that China sees the situation in the region. Rozman (2007a: 129) says that

'China fears the collapse of North Korea and unification of the peninsula under leadership elected in the South, even as it sees benefit in a communist regime turning to China'. Added to this is the regional strategic landscape, framed in the language of security and regional dominance. 'Many Chinese analysts see the North Korean-US standoff less as a struggle over WMD [Weapons of Mass Destruction] and more as a contest over control of NEA [Northeast Asia]' (124). This is not the only regional consideration that needs to be taken into account if one wants to understand the complexity of the tension between the countries. According to Rozman, China's relationship with Japan (a US ally) is also serious (China believes that Japan wants to use the nuclear crisis to justify altering its military position (Rozman 2007a: 131)), and the fact that the US does not agree with China's policy towards Taiwan has not made things easier. What is therefore keeping the US from being right on the doorstep of China's backyard is North Korea – and the Chinese, at the very least, are intent on keeping it that way.

There is a common misunderstanding that China and the North Koreans are very close. The previous discussions have proven that Kim Il Sung, in an attempt to stay 'self-reliant', made sure that the North never owed an allegiance to either the Soviet Union or the Chinese during the Cold War (and in fact liked to play the two off of each other in order to gain more concessions from both). Ideologically they are not that close – it is simply a case of North Korea's geographical location. Chung and Choi note that 'Korea and China have shared the "curse" of geopolitics. Situated at the crossroads of maritime and continental powers, Korea is often compared to the "dagger" pointed at the neck of China…Abundant historical accounts testify to Korea's strategic importance to China' (2013: 245). This includes the Korean War: China lost more than it won by focusing on supporting North Korea instead of liberating Taiwan, and still chose – against all odds – 'to fight against the US and the United Nations' (246). The issue is not closeness in terms of 'brotherhood', or closeness because of ideology, it is about regional power – a united Korea will increase the US's influence in the region, and create more instability (among other problems – such as refugees – that the Chinese will have to deal with if North Korea collapses (ICG 2003: 18)).

Russia also acts, in relation to this issue, as though it is trying to balance both the US and China's power in the region (Rozman 2007a: 136). Power politics is the name of the game, but one cannot ignore the fact that it is heavily influenced by the historical relationship that all of these countries have with each other. The way that they perceive their relationships with one another is one of the most important motivators for the focus on a regional balance of power. The question to ask is whether North Korea is merely a victim of this situation, whether North Korea simply passively benefits from it, or whether North Korea actively plays its part in constructing and reconstructing this reality through the construction of its identity.

*Identity and its influence on 'geography'*

Carl Dahlman (in Gallaher, Dahlman, Gilmartin, Mountz and Shirlow 2009: 90) starts off a discussion about the link between geography and international relations by saying:

> …international politics does not play out on a featureless, frictionless surface. The location, resources, population and borders of a state *do* matter but how they matter is as much a function of political interpretation and will than of any determinant fact of nature.

Morgenthau claims that geography is the only element of national power that is *not* in constant flux (168), and yet the statement above claims almost the exact opposite. This study's argument agrees with the former viewpoint, and gives cognisance to the fact that the question being asked is specifically concerned with how the geographical features of a country are *interpreted*, and more importantly how their value is related to the construction of a certain reality (through the construction of identity). The above discussion gives an overview of the regional political climate, but does not analyse how the construction of North Korean identity has an effect on the meaning of features related to geography – like the meaning of a territorial boundary.

*i. Borders: The DMZ (The Demilitarised Zone)*

A border is itself, literally, a constructed thing. What exists now as a border that separates the North and the South of Korea was created by a war that led to the 'birth' of North Korea. The border between North and South Korea, and its physical embodiment – the DMZ – is probably one of the best examples of the construction (and reconstruction) of a 'reality' that seems impermeable and yet is still something that is supported by, and maintained through, the behaviour of the people that live within the limits of their own construction. Mountz (in Gallaher *et al* 2009: 198) explains that a 'border certainly *is* a line that delineates here and there, separating an 'us' from a 'them', one place from another. It is physical, tangible, material'. It is the physical reality that is created in order to perpetuate an identity that can only be supported by a dichotomous relationship.

Of course in the context of North and South Korea, this is ironic as the border has created two states out of one 'nation'. North Korean identity – as something that has to be defined in contrast to a negative identity (the evil world, and the imperialist Americans, for example) – also has to be understood within the context of this 'virtuous race', of which South Koreans are a part. Before looking into this paradox, a better understanding of the DMZ itself is necessary – as the construction of identity in the North helped to create, and helps to maintain, the DMZ.

Behaviour associated with the DMZ serves not only to perpetuate its existence, but also to strengthen this 'us/them' divide that supports North Korean identity.

When former US President Bill Clinton went to the DMZ, he called it the 'world's scariest place' (in Cha and Kang 2003: 24). Tom O'Neill concurs: '[in] a world full of scary places – Kashmir, Chechnya, the West Bank – the DMZ is perhaps the scariest of all, considering the massive fire power deployed on both sides and the brinkmanship practiced by rival camps' (2003: 13). This no-man's land, 'drawn across the Korean peninsula at the 38th parallel in 1953 remains in force with the world's most heavily militarised border' (French 2007: 2). The fear that this area instils is partly based on the physical manifestation of antipathy between North and South Korea (and by implication, between North Korea and the US), but this reality is supported by risk and uncertainty – the border is the physical representation of a 50 year-old armistice (not a peace treaty), that exists upon shaky foundations (Cha and Kang 2003: 24).

Few believe that North Korea would risk going to war with the South (and by implication, the US) (Worthington 2003: 125), but the mere existence of 'deployment and operational battle plans on both sides' means that the slightest provocation can escalate tension to the point where neither side has control over the inevitable (Cha and Kang 2003: 24). According to O'Neill (2003: 13-14[own emphasis]), along the 148-mile truce line, 'hundreds of thousands of well-trained troops from two of the world's largest armies (plus more than half of the 37, 000 United States troops stationed in South Korea) stand ready to fight, *trained by their commanders to hate their ideological opposites* and never to let their defences down'. As the GI saying goes, 'there ain't no "D" in the DMZ' (French 2007: 3). But the fear lies not only in the reality of the raw military power that these states have – it lies in the power of the ideological justification for the maintenance of the DMZ itself.

Ideology, and by implication identity, in this situation – this physical border that divides a people – is the raison d'être of the DMZ, and makes the situation on the ground very unstable as it is ideological rhetoric that would promote escalation of the tension that maintains the DMZ. This is a physical 'line' – drawn by parties that were part of a war that physically took place more than 50 years ago – whose justification for existence can only be found in rhetoric that invokes the ideological divides that led to the war in the first place. Despite the lack of a 'hot' war in this context and an emphasis, by both sides, for eventual unification, real peace between the two sides seems a distant dream. According to French (2007: 233), along the road to what is often termed the last border of the Cold War one passes a single hoarding: a picture of a giant index finger with the words "One Korea" painted below it, although '"One Korea" has become a somewhat hollow and trite slogan'. This slogan – a recognition of the bond that ties the two

sides of the divide – has become 'hollow and trite' because at the heart of unification lies the quagmire that serves to prop up the division itself – unification will involve the 'cancelling out of one or the other side's ideology' (2007: 235). Both sides adhere to diametrically opposed ideologies – and the respective ideologies, especially in the case of North Korea (if not more so), have permeated the identities of these two sides to such an extent that what once was one nation and two ideologies now seems to have become two distinct identities, leading to insurmountable incompatibility.

Actions on the DMZ both maintain the tension in the zone itself and perpetuate the dichotomy that divides the North and the South. For example, on the 18th of August 1976, two US Army officers were beaten to death by North Korean guards at the Joint Security Area (JSA) with an axe (Yoon 2000: 639). Yoon states, '[the] Panmunjom axe murder incident was the gravest of the physical clashes and the first deaths on the JSA since the Korean Armistice Agreement in July 1953' (2000: 639). This was a culmination of many factors that included a debate about the possible unification between the North and the South. But what made the situation more volatile than it had to be was that in 1971, North Korea strengthened what it called its 'international revolutionary forces' in order to 'drive out the US troops from South Korea and reunify [the] Korean peninsula under the North Korean formula' (640). The North regularly launched propaganda campaigns against the US, but in 1976 the combination of the propaganda by the North 'against the alleged preparation for war by the US and South Korea', and an ROK-US combined military exercise called Team-Spirit (being allegedly facilitated only for the purposes of strengthening the defence capabilities of the combined ROK-US force), led to increased and excessively volatile tension on the JSA in the DMZ (641).

Within this context, a poplar tree that blocked the view of one of the US checkpoints became the focus of all this pent-up aggression. When some US officers went to trim the tree, a North Korean Lieutenant demanded that the US Captain stop what he was doing. The US Captain refused, 'believing that the North Korean threat was typical of the kind of behaviour which had occurred many times in the past without leading to serious incident' (642). Instead, the North Korean Lieutenant ordered his officers to 'kill' and according to accounts, the US officers were 'beaten to death with clubs and metal pipes taken from the back of a North Korean truck and the axes that had been used by Korean workers' (642).

The incident is instructive in two ways. Firstly, it proved that the violence that was (arguably) not intended by either side was escalated by both the North's propaganda as well as the message that the South and the US sent with the joint military exercises. As the focus of this study is primarily on how the North constructs its identity and how this construction prescribes

meaning to the different elements that are being analysed, it will not go into a discussion about how the South and the US played its own part in perpetuating the tension and instability with propaganda campaigns of their own. Needless to say, they were also to blame for the existence of, and the meaning attached to, the DMZ. But what is important in the context of North Korea's self-perception here, is the evidence that the propaganda aimed at strengthening the nation's identity (and its belief in an ideology diametrically opposed to the South and the US) induced the North Korean Lieutenant to give the order to 'kill', despite the fact that the action of the US in this context was not supposedly intended to cause a violent reaction.

Secondly, the reactions to the incident (which included 'Operation Paul Bunyan', the operation focused on cutting down the tree (Miller 2001: 479)) also perpetuated the construct that had been created – the shared knowledge system that is the foundation of the value of the DMZ. For example, it gave the North Koreans an opportunity to reinforce the idea that the US and South Korea were planning an attack on the country, as well as to call US officers (who in the minds of the North represent the entire nation) 'hooligans' and 'gangsters' (Kirkbride in Miller 2001: 479-480). This sends two messages. The first is that North Koreans should be in a permanent state of emergency – and by implication – war (as one never knows when the enemy will attack, and there is evidence of their intention to do so). The second message is that the North Korean nation is pure, while the US comprises 'hooligans' and 'gangsters' and – more importantly – that the South Korean government is not made of the same 'stuff' as the US, but that it is instead a 'puppet' – a helpless and powerless government (or nation) that has gone astray. It is certainly an insult to South Koreans, and strengthens the 'us/them' dichotomy, but it has a nuance that allows it to leave room for the inclusion of the South as part of the Korean nation – albeit a part that has lost its way.

Another example of how behaviour that is conducted at the DMZ reinforces an understanding of identity is the attempt to reunite families on the border. In 1972 the two Koreas signed their first diplomatic agreement: the 1972 July 4th Joint Communiqué (French 2007: 237). This agreement was the result of 'contact that began in 1971 between the two Korean Red Cross societies on the issue of divided families' (Foley 2003: 182). More recently, uniting families has become a political game: in 2000 the two governments facilitated the process of uniting families. One reporter noted that '[the] meetings [were] part of a strategy, mapped out by Kim Jong Il and the South Korean president, Kim Dae Jung, in their historic meeting in June, to being the process of reunifying the two countries by breaking down the barriers that divide their people' (Strom 2000: 57). However, the justification for both governments to facilitate these encounters is not always about the uniting of families. Foley states that '[the] implicit competition between the two Koreas is still apparent in the zero-sum logic of the format for the reunions' (2003: 182).

This competition strengthens disunity, while also – from the North Korean point of view – reinforcing the idea that the North wants reunification as much as the South.

This dichotomy serves both the need to strengthen the idea of the 'virtuous race' (as completely eschewing the South would mean that Koreans are not all virtuous, which would make North Koreans question their own identity), as well as the need to strengthen the two sides' differences. The South is at once part of this race, as well as part of the evil 'outside' that North Koreans have to guard themselves against (as the South Korean government is a puppet government, leading its own people astray). The unique nature of this split – one nation, but two states – has given the North Korean regime the incentive to blur the line between the domestic and the foreign. Here the understanding that the regime in North Korea is sitting on the periphery of what is 'inside' and what is 'outside' the state is evident. The border between the North and the South is not only a physical line – it is the point of departure for North Korean and South Korean relations and, by implication, one of the most important symbolic representations of the North's identity.

*ii. Borders: North Korea's construction of its 'space' in the world*

Lastly, the implication of North Korean identity on geography (and vice versa) lies in its self-perception of its 'space' in the world. 'Radio Pyongyang', in 2003, proclaimed that '[the] earth without North Korea is meaningless, and it should be destroyed' (in Moon and Hwang 2014: 10). North Korea perceives itself 'as the centre of the universe, an extreme form of solipsism' (Moon and Hwang 2014: 10). If it is the centre of the universe, then anything that wants to threaten its position 'should be destroyed' – and of course, as the construction of North Korean identity is supported by an 'us/them' reality, this means that everyone outside North Korea (anyone that is not North Korean) is a threat to the existence of the nation. This perception is strengthened by the state's actions on the border (of which examples have been provided in this section) which both strengthen the idea that Koreans are a family (and a 'virtuous race'), and the idea that everything that is external to this is a threat.

*The construction of power: dominating the narrative (geography)*

The combination of North Korea's constructed identity, and the meaning that is attached to geographical features that separate the North and the South serve the regime in its need to dominate and subjugate domestically. Myers states that '[far-right] states derive mass support from the perception of their success in dealing with internal or external enemies' (2011: 117). Domestic matters, such as the strength of the economy, are not as important as the perception that the state is actively defending its citizens against perceived threats – and in the case of

North Korea, these come from the 'outside'. It has to be said, briefly, that this construction is supported by the acquisition of nuclear weapons; the possession of nuclear weapons perpetuates the eternal war that subjugates the population of the North.

To briefly come back to the strategic geographic milieu that was discussed in relation to 'geography' – the language concerning the relationship between parties to the Six Party Talks (and the character of the region in general) is overwhelmingly 'realist' regarding its references to security and regional dominance. When one looks at the actions (discussed above) that support the construction of North Korean identity, the prevailing aspects linking the North's actions with its identity and the meaning attached to the DMZ, for example, are related to an ideology that historically dominated the relationship of all the states in the Six Party Talks. The remnants of the Cold War and the way that this still – to some extent – defines the relationship between Russia and the US plays an important role in the constructed meaning of the DMZ and North Korea's existence. More importantly, the reason for the division between the North and the South is still dominated by the 'communism versus capitalism' narrative (notwithstanding North Korea's construction of its own version of this ideology). Reunification means to both the North and the South that their specific ideology will prevail. North Korea's status as a buffer state, in relation to China's interests, is also affected by this ideological divide. The US and China are acting in this region according to pragmatic (power) concerns, but the reason why the US is still stationed in South Korea is directly linked to the ideological differences between the North and the South, and the tendency for China – because of its own ideological history – to support the North, even at the cost of its own interests.

North Korea perpetuates this reality through its actions (which include the acquisition of nuclear weapons), as every action in the context of the DMZ (whether positive (uniting families) or negative (killing US soldiers)) constructs and reconstructs a reality where the North is still at war with the US, and by implication the South. Its need for an eternal war (to maintain its identity 'domestically') 'creates' the war that it is constructing. The antipathy that North Korea projects onto South Korea not only sustains this 'eternal war', but influences the nature of the interactions of all the other parties to the Six Party Talks, whether these actions are directed at North Korea itself or at each other.

### 4. National morale/character

It is important to note that this element is closely related to the construction of identity in Chapter Three, and to guard against repetition will not delve deeply into this construction. What should be noted here, however, is that national morale (and character) is not exogenously given, and that the construction of national morale and national character contributes to a certain

power that the North Korean regime possesses vis-à-vis the other parties to the negotiation. To begin with, Morgenthau's argument concerning national morale and national character needs to be qualified. According to Morgenthau (1993: 143 [own emphasis]):

> Of the three human factors of a qualitative nature which have bearing on national power, national character and national morale stand out both for their elusiveness from the point of view of rational prognosis and for their permanent and often decisive influence upon the weight a nation is able to put into the scales of international politics. ***We are not concerned here with the question of what factors are responsible for the development of a national character***. We are only interested in the fact – contested but (it seems to us) incontestable, especially in view of the anthropological concept of ***the "culture pattern" – that certain qualities of intellect and character occur more frequently and are more highly valued in one nation than in another.***

This study contests Morgenthau's understanding – that a nation is exogenously a nation with a specific "culture pattern". The mere comparison between North and South Korea – one nation – and the differences that divide the two states would prove that one should be concerned with the question of 'what factors are responsible for the development of national character'. Alison Mountz (in Gallaher *et al* 2009: 277) states that '[nationalism] is one mode of belonging', and Benedict Anderson (in Mountz (Gallaher *et al*) 2009: 277-278) notes that the development of the idea of nationalism essentially has its roots in the nineteenth century. He states that nationalism is the operation of '"an imagined political community" in which people cannot possibly all know one another, but *believe themselves to hold certain histories, narratives and dreams* in common. Such groups also have shared *symbols, iconography, memories and structures that act as unifying forces*' (in Mountz (Gallaher *et al*) 2009: 277-278 [own emphasis]).

Morgenthau's 'national character' is the product of these forces and the agency that creates the structure within which certain communities can act as a 'nation'. However, he does not agree that agency can change 'character'. That which he might have thought of as a given, a transcendent objective reality that does not change over time, might have been the product of construction through historical narrative – that which creates the illusion that these elements are exogenous, without taking into account that a narrative repeated over time recreates and maintains a particular reality. When Morgenthau looks at national character as an element of power, he looks at these seemingly historically transcendent 'truths' about a nation that influence the nature of foreign policy decision-making. He is correct when he says that '[the]

observer of the international scene who attempts to assess the relative strength of different nations must take national character into account, however difficult it may be to assess correctly so elusive and intangible a factor' (148). In this study, however, it would not bear much fruit if one looked only at 'cultural patterns' – the justifications for the cultural patterns that should be analysed and those that should be left out would alone make the study ambiguous at the very least. North Korea constructs its identity, and therefore its national character is also consciously constructed. This has to be taken into account when an analysis of 'national character' has to be conducted.

The other factor that needs to be taken into account when analysing Morgenthau's national elements of power is 'national morale', which is related to, but not the same as, national character:

> National morale is the ***degree of determination with which a nation supports the foreign policies of its government in peace or war***. It permeates all activities of a nation, its agricultural and industrial production as well as its military establishment and diplomatic service. In the form of public opinion, it provides an intangible factor without whose support no government, democratic or autocratic, is able to pursue its policies with full effectiveness, if it is able to pursue them at all.
>
> (Morgenthau 1993: 149 [own emphasis])

Morgenthau himself concedes that national morale is unstable and that 'the national morale of any people will obviously break at a certain point', although not all nations will 'break' in the same way, or at the same point (1993: 150). Morale is affected by and affects other aspects of national power (the quality of government, production levels in the economy, and the strength of the military, for example), and is supported by national character. Morgenthau claims that the quality of society and government are deciding factors when it comes to the strength of national character and national morale (1993: 152). This study will relate this claim to the construction of national identity. If national character is constructed, and is the foundation for the strength of national morale, then the construction of identity is the foundation for the quality of both. This section will refer to the previous chapter as reference when discussing how the construction of North Korea's identity influences 'national character' and 'national morale'.

*Identity and its influence on 'national character' and 'national morale'*

National character is not exogenous to a nation – it is not something that just *is,* but is rather constructed through narratives that serve a certain purpose. In the case of North Korea, the narrative is steeped in revolutionary rhetoric – the history of a nation always at war, always in

the *process* of being liberated and protected by the Great Leader. National character is constructed through this process of indoctrination – the telling and retelling of the story of the virtuous race, the race at the centre of the universe that is one family, united in its revolutionary purpose. What the outside world sees as 'national character' is an irrational support for a deified leader, and an unwavering resolve in the revolutionary cause. The *Chollima* drives (discussed in Chapter Three) serve to bolster the narrative that the people as a nation are united and hard-working. The revolutionary narrative bolsters the militant nature of the citizens of the country. The North Korean nation's 'national character' is therefore constructed as a resilient one – where famines cannot move their revolutionary resolve, and where obedience to the leader is everything.

North Korea's level of national morale – the degree to which the nation is determined to support the foreign policy of the government – has always been high. It is supported by both physical and psychological violence. Everything that is used to construct North Korean identity – the country's ideology, the festivals, North Korean education, the Great and Dear Leaders' on-site visits, the nuclear weapon – is used to maintain a high level of support for the regime. North Korean 'morale' is constructed aggressively through state propaganda and has become internalised by the citizenry. Of course, a 'reality' that requires the amount of propaganda that this construction does is not a stable one – national morale is not high purely because citizens believe the 'truth' that is being fed to them. It is supported by a system of control and punishment that is pervasive. Fear is not only overtly created (through political prison camps, for example), but is implicitly strengthened by internal censoring and, ironically, disunity among members of communities. National morale, therefore, is high because it is forced to be.

There is another internal aspect to this – the fear of an unknown identity is just as effective as a tool to create a system of self-censoring. Yes, one does not have individual power, but together this nation can become great (according to the state's narrative). And maybe this is still better than being thrust into the ideological unknown – the void where an individual North Korean does not have an anchor – a place to belong. Like the slogan 'ignorance is strength', perhaps for many the fear of that void is worse than the fear of being physically punished for insubordination. One defector speaks about her experiences in one of the political prison camps:

> The worst thing is that the camp officials took my identification card when I was incarcerated in the camp. This meant that I was not legal and a socially legitimate citizen in North Korea for 8 years.
>
> (Kang 2014: 217)

As the ordinary citizen in North Korea does not have individual freedom, he or she has to find this freedom and power in the collective – in the power of the nation. And if the nation is the centre of the universe, and it has in its possession the most powerful weapon the world has ever seen, then the individual has purpose. This purpose lies within the success of the nation, regardless of what that may mean (in terms of sacrifice) for the individual.

Both 'national character' and 'national morale' have been constructed through the continuous construction of the nation's identity. It is consciously done, and it has been done for one purpose: to keep power in the hands of the elite – the Kim family and its cronies.

*The construction of power: dominating the narrative (national character and morale)*

The regime maintains power through this type of physical and psychological violence. The aggressive nature of the way that identity has to be maintained – and consequently the way 'national character' and 'national morale' is maintained – provides the regime with ultimate control, but paradoxically also proves its tenuous hold on this power. That the 'national character' and 'national morale' of the North Korean nation are both resilient to outside interference and are strong in the sense that the people of North Korea do support the regime's foreign policy decisions, is not in dispute. That this resilience is constructed is also evident. Without this constant (re)creation of history and the narrative that provides the regime with all its power, 'national character' and 'national morale' might look significantly different.

The fact that Kim Jong Il and Kim Jong Un have had to resort to using nuclear weapons (or the acquisition of nuclear weapons, in the case of the timeframe of this case study) in order to sustain this narrative is instructive. It shows that the regime's internal power (supported by this created narrative) is not easily sustained, and that the regime will do anything, including provoking the international community with a WMD, to sustain it. From this perspective one might think that this means the regime is weak. But this type of 'negative power' – the regime's own risk of falling apart, coupled with these desperate measures to keep it in power – could prove to provide North Korea (especially in the case of the Six Party Talks) with leverage that it would not otherwise have if the regime's hold on power were internally stronger, and the regime were less inclined to resort to desperate measures to stay in power. If one were to merely look at concerns from South Korea and China, one would see what leverage this type of uncertainty provides to North Korea. South Korea is afraid that unification (if the regime collapses) will undermine the South's economic strength (Myers 2011: 125), or that 'revival of a North Korean threat…would force a return to the cold war relationship with the United States, or [that] the chaotic collapse of North Korea [would elicit] a scramble for power of military forces within the country and outside powers' (Rozman 2007a: 78). For China, aside from the

regional power considerations, it 'fears that without Kim Jong Il's [and by implication Kim Jong Un's] iron rule, North Korea would descend into uncontrollable civil unrest or civil war between heavily armed rival factions from within the elite, and that this instability would spill across the border' (ICG 2006a: 10).

Neither of these countries want internal instability that would spill over into the region, but both know that they cannot force North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons programme from the 'outside' because – among other equally important reasons – the regime has the backing of its people (in terms of foreign policy decisions made related to this programme), and the regime's stability (and the nation's stability) is grounded not only in ideology but in the support of the nuclear programme itself. The nuclear weapons programme is the most aggressive tool that the regime has used in order to keep the nation in its revolutionary past. The level of potential regional destruction that this weapon can cause proves the regime's desperation. It needs the programme to maintain its hold internally, and uses this weakness – in conjunction with an understanding that the more it is threatened from outside to stop the programme, the more this strengthens this construction – to manipulate the other parties involved in the Six Party Talks. North Korea uses the unstable nature of its construction of its own identity (and 'character' and 'morale') as leverage against the other parties in the Talks. Its own weakness, coupled with the perversity of power provided by the acquisition of a nuclear weapon, is its 'coercive deficiency' – its 'negative' power is reinforced by the population's unwavering support for its Foreign Policy decisions.

## 5. Population

When Morgenthau talks about how the population of a state can contribute to its national power, he primarily looks at population size and population growth (1993: 139-143). He makes a distinction, when talking about how the population can contribute to national power, between qualitative and quantitative elements related to population which can have an effect on power (1993: 139). However, the current study focuses on how one cannot truly separate the qualitative from the quantitative – as the quantitative has attached to it qualitative meaning that influences its value (and by implication, its effect on its own 'reality'). When looking at North Korea's population, once again it is easy to see on the surface that other countries – especially those that are participants in the Six Party Talks – all have more power. The smallest country in the Six Party Talks, second to North Korea, is South Korea, with a population of 49, 115, 196 in 2015 (Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) World Factbook 2015). This is more than twice the population of North Korea (CIA World Factbook 2015). While the population growth rate (important to the calculation of how the population can contribute to national power

(Morgenthau 1993: 143)) of both South Korea and Japan are declining, North Korea's population also does not appear to be growing – 'the declining population of youth, due to low birth-rates and recent famines, indicates at best minimal labour growth' (Bradford, Kim and Phillips 2011: 323).

North Korea's population is not only smaller than the other parties'; it is also incapable of the development and growth that a large population is supposed to represent. Morgenthau states that '[it] it obvious that a nation cannot be the first rank without a population sufficiently large to create and apply the material implements of national power' (1993: 141). North Korea's population is small and does not have the physical capability (in terms of individual health and prosperity) to be used in a positive way in order to promote development and economic growth (which, in hard realist terms, would then support military structures and strengthen 'hard' national power).

In North Korea the population is a weakness in every aspect of its existence. Other than being small, the population is literally (physically) weak and the standard of living intensifies this problem. Hospitals are overburdened and under stocked (ICG 2010: 12), food shortages still cause 'starvation deaths' (10) and '[even] the ability to provide potable water has declined significantly, leaving many citizens susceptible to waterborne diseases' (12). According to the World Food Program (WFP), '[in] 2003, many people were still surviving on just nine ounces of rations a day, provided by foods with poor nutritional benefit such as corn stalk cakes – …less than half the recommended minimum daily intake' (in French 2007: 129). Other reports by NGOs that do research on defectors who live in China, show that malnourishment has caused a general drop in IQ and the median height of the population (Demick 2004: 71). For example, the Korean People's Army (KPA) is normally the first recipient of supplies, resources and rations, which means that the army traditionally has also been the strongest and best fed portion of the population. But by 2003, the KPA reduced its minimum height requirement to 4 ft 11 (1.25 meters) – 'the shortest in the world' (French 2007: 221). Another very concerning issue is reports by South Korean anthropologists that malnourishment has lowered the IQs of North Korean children (the ones that could be studied, of course) – according to the reports, children who have been able to escape to South Korea are known to have 'difficulty keeping up in the school system' (Demick 2004: 71).

In the same way that North Korea uses 'negative strength' to bolster its power in terms of 'national character' and 'national morale', it uses its weak population in order to control the citizenry internally and to intensify uncertainty regionally – which in turn limits options for countries that want to influence the state to change its behaviour both internally and externally.

It would be redundant to divide the discussion into three separate sections that look at how the regime uses the population, the economy and the military to bolster its power internally and externally. Instead, it would be more efficient to look at the economy (industrial capacity and resources), as well as the military, as two elements of national power that are driven by the exploitation of the population. Without complete control of the economy and the military, the Kim regime will not be able to survive. The economy and the military cannot be controlled unless the regime has complete control over the minds of the population. This section will show how a physically weakened population favours the survival of the regime as well as the (negative) power that it has over stronger nations. Before moving on to how the regime uses the military in its favour (to bolster its negotiating strength internationally as well as its domestic control over the population), this section will look at the state's economic policies to prove how the economy is being used solely in order to promote ideological control while enriching the elite.

*Raw materials and industrial capacity (economy)*

Morgenthau treats natural resources as 'another relatively stable factor that exerts an important influence upon the power of a nation with respect to other nations' (1993: 127). He breaks up his analysis of this element into food (127), raw materials (128) and industrial capacity (133). This section will first give a brief overview of North Korea's capacity in these areas (the 'reality'), and then look at how North Korea manipulates this reality through the internal construction of power structures (with support from the creation of the national identity narrative) in order to create leverage in the negotiations that should not exist under 'normal' circumstances.

Within this context, one has to pay special attention to how the population is used in the context of the existence of these elements. 'Food' should be, as Morgenthau claims, a 'relatively stable factor' – but in the case of North Korea, food is a political tool used to exert power and extract loyalty. This makes it less 'stable' and its power (or lack of power) less obvious. In fact, one could argue that in the case of North Korea, scarcity of food gives the elite power over the population – therefore, for the *state* of North Korea scarcity of food is a weakness, but for the *Kim regime* scarcity of proper resources for the masses is a source of strength. This is, admittedly, a very cynical view of the practices of the North Korean regime. Whether this is a coincidence, or whether the distribution of resources is purposefully facilitated in a way that would secure the Kim regime's survival is up for debate. According to Park (2014: 5), 'the policies implemented in the past can be regarded as a shackle, setting limits to the range of choices for…present and future decision-makers'. This might be the case for North Korea, as the

reforms that have been implemented to save its failed economy have been limited because of the need to keep them within the limits of an anachronistic ideological framework. Nevertheless, evidence of illegal activity – presumably facilitated in order to sustain the current regime – casts doubt on the idea that the Kim regime is just a victim of its own ideology. The 'coercive deficiency' (vis-à-vis external actors) that is created through this scarcity is arguably just too convenient – it provides the regime with a type of bargaining strength that limits and essentially entraps the other parties to the Talks.

*i. Food*

Food, in the case of North Korea, is not merely a taken-for-granted resource. North Korea (and historically, Korea) has been the victim of famines more than once. Morgenthau starts his discussion about elements of national power with what he calls 'the most elemental of [natural] resources, food':

> …a country that is self-sufficient, or nearly self-sufficient, has a great advantage over a nation that is not and must be able to import the foodstuffs it does not grow, or else starve….[Permanent] scarcity of food is a source of permanent weakness in international politics.
>
> (1993: 127)

The irony in his use of the words 'self-sufficiency' is evident in the case of North Korea. He is, of course – in a conventional sense – correct. Even for a state whose primary (or even only) focus is the readiness for combat and all-out war – as North Korea claims it is – this is elemental. At the very least one's army will need to be fed properly, and then of course the population that is making the weapons and facilitating agricultural production will have to be fed. This is the principle from which Morgenthau analyses this element. He says, for example, that one of the reasons why the US is strong is because it is '[a] country…[that] need not divert its national energies and foreign policies from its primary objectives in order to *make sure that its populations will not starve in war*' (1993: 127 [own emphasis]). Essentially, if the North Korean regime truly cares about its readiness for war and its ability to resist military intervention with its own military strength, then it should have as a foundational priority the ability to feed its people.

Yet despite the state's economic policy being guided by the principle of becoming a 'strong and prosperous nation' (ICG 2010: 8), the country is dependent on aid for its food. The regime itself has blamed its poor performance record in this area on natural disasters and floods (French 2007: 123); it is also true that after the Korean War, South Korea inherited most of Korea's

arable land, including its rice-growing regions (116). However, the regime's economic policies contributed substantially to the problem (Kwon 2010: 15). According to French (2007: 118), despite North Korea's disadvantage, in the 1940s the north of Korea was able to support itself agriculturally. After the Korean War, the state changed agricultural policy to collectivised farms, 'aimed to create a proletarianised agricultural workforce with no land ownership ties, strong ideological commitment and without any peasant traditions' (119).

Agriculture came second to heavy and light manufacturing industries – and light industries came second to heavy industries (Kong 2014: 79). This reflected the 'regime's basic motivation towards political control' (79), as heavy industry provided the (physical) framework for mass mobilisation and mass economic drives – meant to promote accelerated development, but mostly used in order to promote ideological unity. By the start of the 1980s the DPRK's economy started to decline because of its dependence on failing State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) that led to the misdistribution of resources, and state-facilitated economic drives that resulted in 'waste on a massive scale of resources, energy and labour' (French 2007: 96). Arguably, this was the beginning of what was called the Arduous March that led to mass starvation (Kwon 2010: 19).

Along with the collapse of the Soviet Union (North Korea's benefactor), the 'planning system [with its mass *Chollima* drives] continued to erode the industrial and agricultural base of the economy while Pyongyang was forced to reschedule its foreign debts, almost immediately falling behind in promised interest repayments' (French 2007: 97). According to Lone and McCormack (1994: 188), the 'reliance on frenzied, Stakhanovite-style productivity campaigns (the "speed of the eighties") brought ever-diminishing returns…[The] people grew tired; the machines began to wear out; and "top-down" planning methods failed to develop mechanisms of flexibility and (consumer) feedback'. This applied to agriculture as much as it did to the industrial sector. Over-farming eroded the little usable top-soil that was available, and decreasing rations incentivised hording which intensified the problem (French 2007: 120). North Korea 'pursued the "agriculture-first" policy in 1994 to no avail', lost the capacity to deal with natural disasters, and mass famine ensued (Jun 2009: 77). The WFP reported in 1998 that 16% of North Koreans suffered from serious acute malnutrition, and 62% of them from chronic malnutrition (in Jun 2009: 77). Annual food or grain production was significantly less than the minimum consumption amount (Ahn 2011: 179), and the ration amount was cut so drastically that the state was forced to 'give up the state-rationing system altogether in most parts of the country' (Jun 2009: 78).

It is believed that the deficit in the national budget is balanced with aid, especially food aid (Dong 2011: 127). In order to create the monuments that support the narrative of the North Korean identity, provide resources to the military and make sure that the Kim cult can pay its loyalists (as well as procure a significant amount of national finances for themselves), the government needs to find another source for basic resources that need to be distributed to the general public. But countries that normally provide aid (the US being the country that provides the most) have become sceptical about where *essential* (emergency) food aid ends up. Dong asks, '[Is] this latest food campaign [the one that was facilitated during the succession in 2011] a politically motivated attempt to validate its third-generation succession and live up to its propaganda as a "powerful and prosperous nation"?' (2011: 128). The question is asked not only because the drive in 2011 might have been politically motivated (and not necessarily prompted by an emergency, as the North Korean government claimed), but because reports have shown that even this resource is given only to 'a select class of people' (129).

Aid is not only an important element that forms part of the regime's relations with other states (and specifically the other parties in the Six Party Talks) – it is important to note here that aid is used to *pay for* loyalty (within the elite). It is simultaneously *given in return for* loyalty (with the implicit threat of its absence if there is an absence of loyalty) – military officers, for example, are closely monitored, with 'regular checks for political allegiance', while simultaneously being rewarded for their loyalty with 'food, goods and services' (French 2007: 223).

'Food' is manipulated in a way that Morgenthau probably did not anticipate as being able to provide North Korea with leverage – subsequently providing it with an 'atypical' negative source of power. Again, the uncertainty of North Korea's future, in the context of regional tension and power struggles, makes it difficult for other parties to the Six Party Talks to impose sanctions. It is very likely that these sanctions will only negatively affect an innocent population, and will play into North Korean anti-American (and anti-international) rhetoric – strengthening a sense of national resolve against the other parties (in the Talks) from the country's own disenfranchised population, paradoxically strengthening national morale. It will also intensify the risk of instability – how many famines will it take before the regime completely collapses, refugees flow into China and South Korea and strain those countries' economies, and internal struggles ignite a civil (and possibly regional) war?

The power in the country's coercive deficiency is evident. Combined, the food shortage, reliance on aid, militant regime rhetoric against the outside world, and the primacy given (ideologically) to the nuclear weapons programme limits other countries' options when it comes to external pressure. If the population's well-being is considered secondary to the regime's survival (which

seems to be true), then threatening to starve the population (through sanctions, for example, or by linking aid with progress in the nuclear negotiations) if the regime does not give up its nuclear programme is not going to produce any results. It will, at the very least, only serve as another tool to perpetuate the narrative of the North's 'eternal war'.

Many aspects that have influenced food, the famine and the need for aid in North Korea are intertwined with the country's economy. The next section will look at the country's main raw materials and its attitude towards Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), and its attempts at reform – focusing specifically on the 'Economic Management Improvement Measures' North Korea implemented in 2002, as well as North Korea's experiments with Special Economic Zones (SEZs).

*ii. Raw materials*

Morgenthau once again links the availability of raw materials with national power, which makes his analysis instructive in the case of North Korea. North Korea's identity is permeated with a 'Spartan-style permanent war atmosphere' (French 2007: 182). Morgenthau's analysis of the importance of the possession of certain raw materials is principled on the understanding that the ability to wage war is what all these elements are essentially used for. The possession of raw materials on its own does not necessarily add to 'national power' in the sense that Morgenthau understands it; the conversion of raw material into tools that aid 'hard power' is what adds to national power:

> What holds true of food is of course also true of those natural resources which are important for industrial production and, more particularly, for the waging of war. The absolute and relative importance natural resources in the form of raw materials have for the power of a nation depends necessarily upon the technology of the warfare practiced in a particular period of history…With the increasing mechanisation of warfare, which since the industrial revolution has proceeded at a faster pace than in all preceding history, national power has become more and more dependent upon the control of raw materials in peace and in war.
>
> (1993: 128-129)

He goes on to point out that natural resources such as uranium (because of the advent of the nuclear weapon) (129) and oil (because of its importance as a source of energy) (130) hold the potential for more political exploitation than other resources. Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations* was first published in 1948, after the world had experienced its second World War, and at the start of the Cold War. Preoccupation with 'hard power' is understandable in this context, although the value of the direct link between raw material and its use in the waging of war (as a

source of power) would probably be contested in the post-Cold War era. However, North Korea's preoccupation with 'hard power' and war makes this analysis relevant. It shows a disjointed relationship between the regime's obsession with war propaganda and its exploitation of raw materials (and its industrial capacity, which will be discussed in the next subsection). As it is difficult to measure the amount of minerals available in North Korea because of its secrecy, limited information provides only a glimpse of the resource potential that lies within the borders of the DPRK. Nevertheless, available information could still provide insight – so let us have a brief look at the natural resources that the world knows North Korea possesses.

North Korea reportedly possesses large natural uranium deposits. In 2006, it offered Russia exclusive rights to the deposits 'in exchange for support at the stalled talks on Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions' (*New York Times* 2006). Because of poor infrastructure, North Korea cannot exploit these resources in the same way that other states can. It is interesting to note that Russia allegedly wanted rights to these deposits in order to enrich and sell them as 'nuclear fuel to China and Vietnam' – not as uranium that can be used in the production of nuclear weapons, but rather as enriched uranium that can be sold for use in the production of nuclear energy (*New York Times* 2006). The difference in focus – from weapon to energy – in the case of the international community (notwithstanding the fact that Russia has its own nuclear weapons) shows the anachronistic nature of North Korea's obsession with its nuclear weapons programme. Uranium is not exploited primarily in order to provide energy to the country; the DPRK's only attempt to use uranium in this context has been to use it as a bargaining tool in nuclear weapons negotiations.

According to the US Energy Information Administration (USEIA), North Korea is the 'only nation that has nuclear weapons but does not use nuclear power for electricity generation' (2015). In a country where only 26% of the North Korean population receives electricity (USEIA 2015), this is confusing. Other parties to the nuclear negotiations have offered to assist North Korea in using uranium for energy and not the development of nuclear weapons, but the DPRK has repeatedly hampered the process. The Korean Energy Development Organisation (KEDO), part of the Agreed Framework from 1994, was supposed to produce nuclear power generating capacity in the form of two light-water reactors (LWRs) (French 2007: 102). North Korea and the parties involved in the facilitation of the programme (especially Japan and South Korea) accused each other of hampering progress, and the whole process failed. Nevertheless, according to the South Korean Ministry of Unification, North Korea is estimated to have about 4 million tons of uranium in recoverable deposits (in Berger 2014), and this could be used to support the country's antiquated and inefficient electricity production.

As much as the link between uranium and power, even in Morgenthau's assessment, is directly related to the production of a nuclear arsenal, a country that develops a nuclear arsenal at the expense of its electricity infrastructure cannot possibly care about the actual overall strength of the state. A nuclear weapon in the hands of a regime that exists almost purely because it has a nuclear weapon does not have the same power as a nuclear weapon in the hands of a state that has the economy and infrastructure to support the potential power that it brings to the country's national power. Uranium in North Korea is either used, as in the case of a bargaining chip with Russia during the nuclear negotiations, to extract concessions negatively (in other words, extract concessions with the promise of refraining to use uranium for weapons development), or it is used to prove that its nuclear weapons programme cannot be hampered by externally-imposed sanctions (it is 'self-reliant' in this sense) – that it will be used primarily in order to continue with the production of nuclear weapons (Berger 2014).

The question that should be asked is why North Korea, while it has this immense potential to generate its own electricity and be completely self-reliant (as its own philosophy dictates), feels the need to weaken itself in this area. It is – again – using its uranium deposits not as a source of strength but as a source of uncertainty; it is using the leverage that the production of a nuclear weapon provides in order to extract concessions and maintain 'negotiating strength' during nuclear negotiations, instead of looking inward to truly become economically self-sufficient. Uranium is not used in order to make the North Korean state and its population self-reliant; it is used by the regime in order for it to stay in power. Having the capacity to generate enough electricity in order to serve the population will undermine the semi-deified status of the Kim clan. The Kim family needs to control who gets what – including electricity – in order to maintain the construction of their power (the reality that has been created through the construction of North Korean identity). What will happen to the Kim myth once normal North Korean citizens can survive on their own without the patronage of the Kim family? Arguably, the regime is aware that it will not last long if the population of the country does not believe that it is completely dependent on the existence of the regime for its own survival.

The nuclear weapons programme serves the purpose of the regime only; it strengthens national morale, intensifies national hatred towards the outside world (that imposes sanctions because of its existence), extracts concessions that only truly benefit the regime and directs attention of the domestic public away from the fact that it is not empowering the nation the way that it should be (by making the public focus on how it is 'empowering the nation' with a nuclear weapon instead).

The same applies to North Korea's oil, gas and coal. According to the USEIA (2015), North Korea has considerable coal reserves, and it even became 'the global leader in anthracite coal exports, most of which were sent to China'. The sales generated an estimated 10% of the country's GDP in 2013, but could not be used properly to facilitate the generation of sufficient electricity within the country's borders. Many companies have also jumped at the opportunity to explore oil and gas reserves. The challenge concerning both these resources lies in cost and machinery – North Korea has to rely on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and buying equipment on credit to be able to do both. Firstly, North Korea does not have a good credit record, notwithstanding the fact that drilling equipment cannot be sold to North Korea because of certain sanctions that are currently in place (Korea JoongAng Daily 2015). These sanctions are connected to the state's nuclear weapons plan, which means that they are contingent upon North Korea's compliance with the international community's requests for it to halt the programme. Because of this, the DPRK – which could have ample resources to generate its own electricity and therefore be the 'self-reliant' nation that it claims it is – imports oil from China and Russia (Korea JoongAng Daily 2015).

The irony lies in the fact that the DPRK only survived before the famine because of Moscow's subsidised oil sales; part of the reason the economy fell apart in the early 1990s is because Russia began to sell its fuel competitively in order to bolster its own failing economy (French 2007: 90). The DPRK was – and is – reliant on its neighbours not only for food (which it managed to make enough of before the rise of the Kim clan), but for electricity (and specifically oil) which still has to be provided within discounted rates, and recently also has to be given secretly. It has been reported, for example, that China is still providing oil to North Korea, despite having halted oil shipments in January 2014 as a reminder to the Kim regime of its dependence on the state (Ryall 2014).

Lastly, 14% of North Korea's economy rests on mining (Fifield 2015). Most say that the country is almost literally 'sitting on a gold mine', and that it has significant deposits of 'more than 200 different minerals, including the second-largest magnesite reserves in the world after China, and the sixth-largest tungsten deposits' (Fifield 2015). Most of these exports go to China – and in 2009 the country's mineral trade balance showed a surplus (Choi 2015). Among these minerals, North Korea reportedly has huge stocks of 'rare earth' metals – minerals that are used in the production of, for example, smartphones as well as guided missiles (Keck 2014). The potential of these minerals has not been unlocked by the DPRK, however. In 2012, Leonoid Petrov predicted that Pyongyang would be likely to become 'rich and powerful through the exploitation and sale of natural resources' (2012). He added that '[the] export of rare earth metals will replenish the state coffers; stimulate the loyalty of the elite to Kim Jong Un's

autocratic rule; and *secure the growth and consumption among the ordinary people*' (Petrov 2012). Petrov did not realise that the nation's ideology, and by implication the regime's raison d'être, cannot allow for the growth of consumption among ordinary people.

What this source of revenue will mean for the future of the DPRK's economy remains to be seen, but for the moment it is safe to say that not only is 'politics' more important than the economy – the 'economy remains largely a tool of ideology; the millstone of *Juche* weighs down the regime, eroding the industrial base and perpetuating the population's impoverishment' (French 2007: 133). Petrov predicted that the influx of revenue would cease 'purges of the political elites and the mass starving of ordinary people in North Korea', but in 2014 Jang Song Thaek (Kim's uncle by marriage) was executed for alleged treason (it was rumoured that Kim's uncle was trying to enforce reforms on the country that would open up the DPRK more than Kim Jong Un would tolerate) (Mundy 2014), and the state's security apparatus has just become more oppressive with the new leader, despite the potential for economic growth which could uplift the entire nation.

Moreover, FDI is almost impossible because of the nation's suspicion of the outside, and its vehement adherence to *Juche*. For example, 'at times North Korea has encouraged foreign companies to make huge initial human and capital investments in the country, only to kick out the companies after these investments have been made' (Keck 2014). This could be as a result of *Juche* being applied to the regime (and its elite) more than to the nation as a whole; the regime needs FDI but does not want to be tied financially to any outside influence which might lessen its ability to act independently. FDI will improve the economy domestically but will constrain the regime in terms of its internal and external manoeuvrability. Domestically, FDI will improve living conditions and very possibly create a society that the regime will have to answer to – again, this will erode the power of the construction of North Korea's identity and reality; externally these companies belong to states that can use them as leverage against the DPRK if the international community believes that the North's behaviour needs to be contained.

North Korea's *Juche* policy has enslaved the regime. The regime cannot reform without admitting that the philosophy upon which the nation's identity rests is flawed, and – by implication – that the family that created it to begin with is not supernatural and can (and should) be questioned. There can also not be a 'continuous revolution' without suffering and the promise of a better life in the future. This identity is based on a future better life – what happens to the regime when this future arrives? Will the people still need their saviour – their Great or Dear Leader (or even their Marshal (Kim Jong Un))? They will truly be able to live 'self-reliant'

lives. This would mean, at the very least, that the Kim family would only be a figurehead – a representation of the past, and not a justification for the present.

### *iii. Industrial Capacity*

In *North Korea: The Paranoid Peninsula,* French notes that the survival of the state and the survival of the regime, in the case of North Korea, are not one and the same thing:

> A quip that has circulated in Beijing's economic circles for many years is appropriate to the DPRK too: there are two ways for the regime to die – one is to reform itself, the other is not to reform.
>
> (2007: 132)

In fact, as the discussion in the previous section has proven, the one works against the other – if there is reform, and the state survives, there is a very good chance that the regime will not. In 2002, the economic situation in North Korea was so desperate that the regime had to implement some reforms in order to gain hard currency and to counter the 'food shortages…[and lack of] aid donations…due to the political impasse and donor fatigue' (French 2007: 138). These reforms included wage reform, price reform, farming and enterprise autonomy, the licensing of markets, and FDI (Kong 2014: 80). This section will look at three of these – wage reform, price reform and FDI (and the facilitation of Special Economic Zones, in particular).

#### *a. Wage reform*

The reforms of 2002 included an apparent attempt to encourage 'enthusiasm for work', and wage performance was for the first time based on profit – 'local governments, factories and companies [were granted] the authority to determine prices for certain products' (Kim and Choi 2005 16-17). This lessened the state's need to subsidise factories and companies, while at the same time the state claimed 'state revenue from profit of enterprises' (18-19). For the first time, companies 'were responsible for covering their own costs…managers were told to purchase raw materials on the market and choose how to invest profit' (Hale 2005: 833). Wages were no longer the responsibility of the state, while quotas and taxes were not lessened and factory managers were still not given autonomy concerning whom they could hire and fire (834). The need to encourage 'enthusiasm for work' seemed to be a desperate move to put the onus on the population to produce enough revenue – without the aid of the state – for the state to exploit. However, raw materials and investment were not easy to procure, so State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) 'remained technically bankrupt and were unable to pay higher utility bills and wages' (French 2007: 161). Because of the failure of this reform and the state's need to save face (Moon and Hwang 2014: 4), the reform that was supposed to encourage decentralisation of the

planned economy did the exact opposite – SOEs are still being propped up by the government (French 2007: 161). However, the state's ability to loosen itself from the burden of paying subsidies in 2002 did bring hard currency to state coffers that year – and the regime ended up spending most of that money on the military and other loyalists (Hale 2005: 831).

*b. Price reform*

In terms of price reform, in 2002 'state-set prices for daily necessities and services that had been set at an extremely low level were significantly raised to reflect actual costs. The price of rice jumped 550-fold, from 8 jeon (1/100th of one won) to 44 won per kilogram, pork rose 26 fold, while electricity rose 70 fold' (Kim and Choi 2005: 16). According to Hale, the purpose of these reforms was to monetise the economy – more specifically, the purpose was to do two things: end government subsidies on food, while simultaneously helping the government to profit from grain sales(2005: 827). The government also wanted to either absorb the black market economy or at least incentivise people to channel their labour into the official sector instead (830), then use the money in other areas of the national economy. According to Frank the 2003 budget was balanced – 'it actually [carried] an unmentioned large surplus thanks to the elimination of rice subsidies…which [he estimated was] about the percentage by which the 2003 expenditures [were] expanded' (2003). The principle behind it was noble on the surface – the government wanted to increase the budget being used in order to maintain and expand other areas of the economy that were falling apart, for example. Unfortunately, however, the government ended up not channelling surplus money into areas of the economy that most needed improvement, and instead took much-needed subsidies from the general public and used this 'revenue' in order to improve other areas of the economy. In other words, the government was weakening one part of the economy in order to strengthen another.

The government seemed to be implementing policies purely in order to get hold of hard currency – the planned economy was clearly one of the main reasons why the state did not have enough money to sustain the economy. Because of the price reforms, wages were also adjusted, but the adjustments were (at least for the average person) not nearly enough. Once again, there were many who needed some form of central distribution in order to receive basic necessities. Although an increase in the price of grain (for example) was seen as a reform, 'it can be seen as an attempt by Pyongyang actually to bolster and protect the command economy in the countryside' (French 2007: 144). This means that in the short run, the state was relieved of its obligation to subsidise manufacturing and agriculture (and it was also given the opportunity to profit from the reforms that were made at the expense of the general population), but in the long run both these policies led to a re-instatement of the control that the government had

traditionally had on distribution and development. The state not only managed to get its hands on some extra cash in the short term, it managed to strengthen the ideological hold (as well as the physical control) that it had on the general population in the long run. For example, Hale says that 'it appears that the government was able to use the price reforms to build support among favoured groups' (2005: 830).

*c. 'People's Life Bond' and currency conversion*

There are two other examples of the state's drive to obtain hard currency in 2002: the 'People's Life Bond' and changing the preferred currency from the US dollar to the euro. The '"People's Life Bond" [was ostensibly implemented] to finance industrial investments as well as to control inflation' (Kim and Choi 2005: 15). According to Hale, the bulk of this money was spent on energy development (2005: 835). Firstly, it was not enough to jump-start a moribund industrial sector, and secondly it once again sucked money out of the personal savings of the general population in order to finance the government's risk-taking behaviour (Ahn 2003: 50) – risks being taken with the implementation of these reforms, most (some would argue) too drastic for the economy to handle (Sandhu 2003: 113). For example, bond repayments were 'rigged' in Pyongyang's favour, 'with a ten year maturity term and no interest payments' (French 2007: 153). It was also reported that purchasing a bond was mandatory, which meant that the general public was once again forced to sponsor the government's reforms with no guarantee that any of the reforms would pay off (in fact, most people probably knew that the purchasing of those bonds meant that they had lost any savings that they might have had).

Pyongyang also announced that it was going to switch from the US dollar to the euro as the North's preferred currency in 2002 (French 2007: 149). People were not allowed to exchange or deposit any savings (in dollars) above a certain amount, and the rest was confiscated. Many 'with large sums of cash, saw their savings evaporate overnight' (149). Frank claims that North Korea did not want to print money, which meant that the government was serious about the reforms and wanted to make them work (and did not want them to fail because of hyperinflation) (2003).

One could also say, however, that the fact that the government would rather take the savings (in US dollars, most likely) of the general public than print money, was because it wanted to use that money in a different capacity. One could argue that the regime needed US dollars and not the local North Korean won (NKW) because the NKW has no value outside of the country's borders. The country was in desperate need of both FDI and international credit, both of which it could not access because of the regime's pariah status. So it took the savings of its own people instead. One can speculate where that money went, but considering the fact that the economy

did not significantly grow after the reforms (as well as the fact that the state is intensely secretive and to get any accurate information is almost impossible), it could easily be argued that most of it went to the elite instead – to the Kim family and its loyalists, as well as the military.

*d. Sinuiju Province (SEZ – Special Economic Zone)*

In 1998, Kim Jong Il commented in the *Rodong Sinmun* that 'The market economy is one of the fishing rods of temptation. Hanging from the fishhook are two specious baits called "economic co-operation" and "aid"' (Kim Jong Il in French 2007: 157). By 2002, however, the country was clearly desperate for hard currency and was willing to try any form of reform that would save its failing economy, despite statements like these. But North Korea's government never completely moved away from the aversion to a market economy that cannot be completely controlled by the government. With both the need for reform in order to survive, as well as the state's insatiable appetite for control, came the failure of the last example of North Korea's attempts at reform. The state's attempt to develop a version of Chinese SEZs 'in order to attract investment' was located in Sinuiju, 'which lies along the Yalu River bordering China on the west coast of the Korean peninsula' (Sandhu 2003: 113-114). It was meant to be legally autonomous (Ahn 2003: 52), and the legislative assembly could even consist of foreigners (Kim 2004: 1313). The idea behind it was to attract foreign investment (especially Chinese investment, as a Chinese citizen was chosen to head the initiative), and grab the attention of the European market (a Dutch citizen was also chosen to head the initiative) (1308-1309).

North Korea took for granted that the Chinese government would provide support for the programme. Lack of infrastructure (power, water, gas and other utilities) was not accounted for when the project was envisioned. This meant that North Korea once again became reliant on China for raw materials as well as infrastructure (Kim 2004: 1315). Unfortunately for the DPRK, Beijing officials appeared upset at not having been consulted on the Sinuiju project (Ahn 2003: 52), and it is rumoured that this is the reason why China did not warn Kim Jong Il about Yang Bin (the person chosen to head the project) before they arrested him for tax evasion (52-53). Sinuiju also became a contested province because it was threatening China's income from neighbouring Chinese provinces (French 2007: 179). The whole project was poorly planned and not properly negotiated with the party that North Korea needed to have on its side the most: China.

The SEZ is also another example of North Korea relying on money from the outside to make money that will go to the regime, and will not necessarily be used for the well-being of the population – without any strings attached. French says '[several] analysts have seen in Sinuiju

another take on Pyongyang's developed aid economy' (2007: 177). The regime once again found a way to take money from the outside without having to make any promises. As much as Kim Jong-Il did not like the idea of a market economy because it ostensibly makes one dependent on outside help, he strangely seemed to take for granted that the regime could get 'help' without 'co-operation'. In the end the Chinese government sabotaged the plan by arresting Yang Bin. Sinuiju became a cautionary tale instead of the framework within which North Korea could attract foreign investment.

A good indication of whether this project was conceptualised in order to uplift the economy in general, or only to benefit the regime itself, can be garnered by looking at how Kim Jong Il treated the development of this province in relation to the general public in North Korea. French notes that 'North Korea in all its attempted zones sought to corral any investment from occurring outside these designated zones…The wealth and investment, as well as the possible "spiritual pollution", was to be contained and not allowed to spread randomly throughout the country' (2007: 176). The integration of this province into the wider economy would mean that the general population would also benefit from whatever profit made within the province. This is not to say that Sinuiju did not want to use North Korean labourers for this project; provisions governing labouring standards suggested that the region should primarily use North Korean workers (Kim 2004: 1314). But one could argue that this was only because North Korean labour would be significantly cheaper. If the general public was not to benefit from this region, then the provision for North Korean labourers meant that the region was merely supposed to benefit from the labourers instead.

*iv. Exploitation of the population and the narrative: maintaining coercive deficiency*

Whether trapped by it, or using it consciously in order to create a disposable population over which the regime has complete control, the Kim regime uses ideology to benefit from reforms at the expense of the North Korean nation. The need to 'protect' the general public from the 'evils' of marketization is merely a concerted effort to make sure that the public does not benefit from the market, and therefore become autonomous. The money that the DPRK collected through the reforms in 2002 did not benefit the economy or the general public in any way. In fact, most ordinary citizens were worse off after the reforms than they were prior to them. The fact, for example, that the savings of ordinary citizens were taken shows both the regime's desperation for money, as well as its obsession with making sure that ordinary citizens stay completely dependent on the government for survival. It plays into and strengthens North Korea's identity, and is also a way in which the government can ensure that the citizens will fear standing up against the regime because they will be afraid of losing too much.

More evidence of the DPRK's lack of empathy for its own citizens is how North Korea's need for hard currency has not only led it to exploit its own population, but also to conduct illegal activities internationally. What is officially a state secret, but is known as 'Division 39', 'was established in the 1970s…to generate funds for Kim Jong Il' (French 2007: 156). It conducts illegal activities including drug trafficking, money laundering and counterfeiting (156), and funds are reportedly used by the Kim family to keep senior cadres happy. This is significant because illegal activity for the purposes of procuring hard currency does not need an accountability system. With this money, the Kim family can do what it wants, and needs, in order to stay in power. It gives the regime complete autonomy and control – and makes sure that the population does not have any.

Yes, North Korea's economy is weak, and by most standards its growth is almost non-existent. The irony is that this provides the regime with more power internationally than if the regime truly attempted to accept FDI and aid in order to uplift it and make it stronger. The state is weak, but the regime – with its own source of income, as well as its ability to exploit the plight of its own population when it is convenient – is autonomous and cannot easily be forced to change its behaviour. This is especially true in the context of the Six Party Talks and the ability of the regime to survive despite sanctions. The North Korean regime uses its 'negative' power – its 'coercive deficiency' – in order to gain concessions without having to make promises. Humanitarian aid, however begrudgingly, will be provided if North Korea claims that there truly is a food crisis. Money will be given if North Korea just so much as hints that it will open its economy or change its behaviour in the nuclear negotiations. No promises are made because North Korea does not have to make them. Ultimately, a dying economy gives North Korea more leverage than an economy that has been propped up with 'economic co-operation' and 'aid' that come with conditions.

Actions taken by the regime support its existence on a practical level as well as a symbolic one. Any deviance from *Juche* or any of the writings of Kim Il Sung, for instance, will erode the legitimacy of the regime. In this way they both strengthen the power of the regime, weaken the country's overall capacity to stand on its own, and create a level of coercive deficiency that makes it impossible for other countries – that could be directly affected by these actions, perpetuated in order to preserve a certain construction of reality – to threaten the state, or even demand concessions. This is why countries like South Korea continue to give aid, and why they know by now that they should not expect anything in return.

## 6. Military preparedness

When Kim Jong Il succeeded his father, he had to buy the loyalty of the military in order to stay in power. This solidified the 'military-first' policy as part of the nation's ideology, and by implication its identity. The need for a pragmatic solution for a discontent support base became the impetus for the construction of the eternal war within which the whole nation has to exist. On a dogmatic level, 'military-first' has intensified a hatred for the outside world that can make a community resolute to defend itself, at whatever cost. On a pragmatic level, as has been shown in this paper, the military receives most of the food and most of the money that circulates within the country.

The factors already discussed that provide North Korea with intangible strength are linked to their meaning within the context of North Korea's constructed identity. Their 'strength' is in their weakness – the construction of the nation's identity distorts the values of these elements in order to exploit them in a negative sense (in order to use their weakness to manipulate others). However, in terms of military preparedness, there is a certain 'material' character to its power that does not need to be distorted by ideology in this way – rather, it needs to be supported by it (and in turn it will support the construction of the nation's identity). Morgenthau says of military preparedness:

> Military preparedness requires a military establishment capable of supporting the foreign policies pursued. Such ability derives from a number of factors of which the most significant, from the point of view of our discussion, are technological innovations, leadership, and the quantity and quality of the armed forces.
>
> (1993: 135-136)

Morgenthau discusses this purely from the understanding of material power. He analyses how geography (physically), natural resources and industrial capacity – solely from a material perspective – support military preparedness, and in turn believes that without military preparedness the strength of these other factors would not matter. In other words – from this perspective – a strong economy means nothing without a strong military; it is inevitable that at some point a state would want to physically encroach upon another state's territory and take their possessions. Of course, the post-Cold War era has both confirmed and contested this. There are areas in the world where neighbours are still enemies. In these areas the countries believe what Morgenthau believes: that it is of the utmost importance to have a strong and well-prepared military in order to protect the nation against threats to domestic (material) power (domestic power being developed through the growth of industrial capacity), or threats against

the power that the possession of certain raw materials provide (or even threats to the territorial integrity of the state itself).

As has been discussed in Chapter Two the relationship that North Korea has with the other parties to the Six Party Talks falls into this understanding of international relations and the analysis of IR. North Korea's military therefore needs to be physically strong – in a realist sense –in order to 'compete' with the other states in the Six Party Talks when it comes to their perception of relative power. It is also this factor that is being exploited by the regime differently than the other factors. Other factors already discussed are exploited for their weaknesses – in order to entrap other states as well as to maintain the construction of reality that keeps the current regime in power. The military, for practical reasons, has to be (literally) powerful, however. This not only makes the negotiations necessary (why have the Six Party Talks if North Korea is not a military threat?), but also maintains the nation's constructed identity.

However, for North Korea, its greatest strength is also its greatest vulnerability – its military is one of the biggest in the world, and the entire nation is constantly prepared for battle – psychologically, (ideologically) at the very least. The strength is not only physical, it is also found in the intangible quality of the nation's tenacity and its willingness to sacrifice itself for the ideological 'cause' that forms the foundation for its existence. This strength is clearly tenuous, as the need for a nuclear weapon to strengthen this intangible factor, as well as the need for Kim Jong Il (and Kim Jong Un) to buy the military's loyalty, proves both that the military is the cornerstone of the regime's existence and that the regime is its hostage. It is also, because of its parasitic character, the one element that could bring the general population to a breaking point. The fact that it has to be 'obese' means that the regime is aware that its power lies primarily in its ability to control the population, and secondarily in its ability to properly 'protect' the nation. In fact, even its size is more a reflection of its importance in the maintenance of the constructed narrative that keeps the North Korean public docile, than a reflection of its actual capability to resist the true (material) power that could be exerted on it if any of the other parties to the Six Party Talks decide to intervene militarily.

Even materially, the size of the military could be thought of more as a message of resistance at any cost, than a message of perseverance. This is the 'power' that it presents externally. This power, again, is a version of Schelling's coercive deficiency. It is a negative power – the power to resist outside (more powerful) pressure by being weak. In other words, weakness (and possible decline) is more of a threat to the more powerful nation (trying to exert pressure) than the strength of the more powerful nation. The size and aggressive character of the North Korean

military adds to the threat of the country's weakness, which could lead to the untenable escalation of regional tension that North Korea exerts on the international community, and on the other parties in the Six Party Talks in particular. Before briefly summarising the effect that the construction of identity has on the strength of the military and how this supports the regime and the nation's constructed identity, this section will briefly discuss the North Korean military's technology, leadership, and quantity and quality of armed forces.

*Technology – North Korea's nuclear weapons and the 'perversity of power'*

Morgenthau states that 'nations which possess nuclear weapons and the means to deliver them have an enormous technological advantage' (1993: 137), but he also acknowledges that:

> …the availability of nuclear weapons also results in two extraordinary paradoxes…Both paradoxes stem from the enormous destructiveness of nuclear weapons. [Firstly], it is by virtue of that destructiveness that ***a quantitative increase in nuclear weapons, in contrast to conventional ones, does not of necessity signify a corresponding increase in national power***…[Secondly], the other paradox lies in the inverse relationship between the ***degree of destructiveness of nuclear weapons and their rational usability***. High-yield nuclear weapons are instruments of indiscriminate mass destruction and can therefore not be used for rational military purposes. They can be used to deter a war by threatening total destruction; but they cannot be used to fight a war in a rational manner.
>
> (1993: 137 [own emphasis])

The first paradox is actually a corollary of the perversity of power: the 'perversity of power' is the assumption that a weak state that wants a nuclear weapon will be even more encouraged to attain it if there is pressure from a stronger state to halt its progress. This is because the stronger state has little power over the weaker state, even if the weaker state only has one nuclear weapon. It is precisely because of the paradox of the destructiveness of the nuclear weapon, along with the importance of the nuclear taboo, that the 'perversity of power' exists. Even with a handful of nuclear weapons, and the means to deliver them, North Korea is not and cannot be as powerful (in terms of its total destructive capability) as the US, China or Russia, who are all nuclear states and all have a much larger arsenal than North Korea. And even though Japan and South Korea do not have nuclear weapons, they are covered by the nuclear umbrella that the US provides them (and both have US troops stationed in their territories) (Lim 2011: 144). So what does a nuclear weapon (and missiles) give North Korea? It gives it the ability to bring great powers to the table, to manipulate the nuclear taboo, and therefore to practice its own distorted version of deterrence. In other words, one weapon cannot 'destroy' any of the

existing nuclear states, and their retaliation will most certainly overcome the North Korean army – if not crush the nation. But the threat of the use of this weapon, within the context of a region that has been plagued by 'hard power' politics and a high level of tension that does not seem to have a chance of being abated, intensifies the uncertainty of what will follow. Could it cause a war in the region? Would this war involve the most powerful states in the world? For both the answer is yes, but it is only applicable if the second paradox is also true for North Korea and its nuclear weapons programme.

The second paradox claims that the degree of destructiveness of the nuclear weapon makes it rationally unusable. The irony here is that there is a fine line between the rationality of not using the weapon and the 'irrationality' that needs to be believed in order for the weapon to still have deterrent capability. According to Schelling (1960: 40), a nuclear weapon is only as powerful as the credibility of the threat of its use. Deterrence, therefore, is the balance between the understanding (for parties that have nuclear weapons) that a state in possession of a nuclear weapon will not be so irrational as to use it, and the understanding that it has to be irrational enough – under certain circumstances – to be provoked to use it nonetheless. As an example: there are two states that possess nuclear weapons. If both states have the same destructive capability, then they will each be aware that the destruction of the other will mean their own destruction. Rationally, therefore, neither will use its weapon(s) against the other because it will never bring victory to either one of them. Of course, there has to be a time when either one would use it, otherwise the rationality of these states cancels out the deterrent value of the weapons. So, as in the Cold War, the two states prove that there are circumstances in which they may find themselves incapable of being 'rational' – if a mistake in the order of command takes place and the wrong order is followed, for example, then a nuclear weapon could be used unintentionally (Schelling 1960: 17-18). Therefore the weapon has deterrent capability because its possible 'irrational' use provides the uncertainty needed in order for the weapon to have deterrent value.

If two states have unequal nuclear weapons capability, it is obvious – if both are 'rational' – that the weaker state will not use its weapon because it would mean a possible small victory for the weak state, but this will have to come at the expense of the complete destruction of the weak state by the stronger state. The retaliation of the stronger state would render the small victory obsolete. But 'rationality' is a contested concept. It is not an absolute truth, or a universal framework within which all humans in the world operate. 'Rationality' is therefore not exogenous, as Schelling believes it to be, and is rather a product of the construction of shared knowledge systems, strengthened and supported by the construction of identity (Wendt 1995:

71-72). North Korea's strength lies in its 'irrational' construction of its own world, coupled with its ability to manipulate the nuclear taboo.

North Korea lives in the past, where all the states around it supposedly want to wipe it off the face of the earth. It is the centre of the universe – the rest of the world should not be allowed to exist if North Korea cannot exist at its centre. This means that North Korea – according to its own narrative – will be willing to sacrifice itself completely in order to make sure that the rest of the world cannot attain even the smallest of 'victories' over it – whether ideologically or militarily. North Korea's strength, supported by the perversity of power, the manipulation of the nuclear taboo, and its own construction of the narrative that justifies its existence, is in its 'irrationality'. The nuclear weapon on its own, when compared to the arsenals that the other states in the Six Party Talks possess, does not have much power. It has power in relation to its constructed meaning: its value as the cornerstone of the military's existence (once the programme started in the 1990s, it became the symbol for the strength of the military), its value as the final 'bright line' norm, and its value in relation to the military's importance to the nation's identity and raison d'être.

*Military leadership – the Great Leader, the Dear Leader and the Great Successor*

When Morgenthau talks about military leadership, he specifically cites examples from battles where leaders helped the military to prevail because of their capability to employ strategy and tactics in effective ways (1993: 138). Here again North Korea is an anomaly. The last time that North Korea's army was in a real battle was in the Korean War (discounting skirmishes and provocations that can be attributed to North Korea's need to provoke in order to extract concessions from the international community (Park 2008: 358, 360)). And, as has been discussed, even then Kim Il Sung's faction needed the aid of China and the Soviet Union in order to win. It has not, in real terms, proven itself to be efficient in military leadership. Ideologically, however, and in the daily construction of North Korea's identity, Kim Il Sung is a revolutionary hero, a saviour and a leader; Kim Jong Il and Kim Jong Un – despite no real military experience – are the military leaders that will continue the 'revolutionary war'. Kim Il Sung is lovingly referred to as the 'Great Leader', Kim Jong Il as the 'Dear Leader', and Kim Jong Un as the 'Great Successor' (Park 2014: 1). Military leadership in the context of North Korea is an idea, a constructed history – it is the narrative that keeps North Korean identity alive.

It could be said that this is one of the regime's greatest vulnerabilities – the military elite themselves are (and were) well-aware of the lack of experience of both Kim Jong Il and Kim Jong Un. It is precisely because of this lack of confidence that Kim Jong Il had to update *Juche* to include 'military-first' as part of the nation's identity – he needed to buy loyalty and the military

was not willing to let him (or his successor) stay in power without the constant maintenance of this power structure. Of course, the maintenance of this relationship binds both the Kim family and the military – the Kim family needs to buy loyalty and convince the people that 'military-first' should be the cornerstone of the ideology that defines them, and the military in turn needs to prop up the family and legitimatise the Kim cult. The parades, the songs, the propaganda and the military's dominance domestically sustain this relationship. Leadership, in the context of the North Korean military, is directly linked to the country's ideology and the nation's identity. The constant construction of history and its attempt to keep North Korean people psychologically living in the past is essential. The only strength that 'military leadership' can provide to boost North Korea's national power is the strength of the people's belief in the leadership of Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong Il and Kim Jong Un. There is no 'strategy' or 'tactical ability' to assess. There is merely the hold that the Kim myth has on the people and the military, and the level to which the myth has the ability to strengthen the military's resolve (as well as the nation's resolve) if there ever should be a battle.

*Quantity and quality of armed forces (before 'technology')*

Morgenthau does not only look at the overall quantity of the armed forces (how armies match up in holistic terms, in other words), but also at the quality of the distribution of arms and men in the different components that make up the whole, as well as the efficiency of these components when they work together in order to become an efficient and powerful force (as a whole) (1993: 138-139). As much of this detail is not available in the context of North Korea, what can be discussed is the difference between North Korea and South Korea's forces (as an example of North Korea's comparative strength in material terms), as well as what it means – in terms of efficiency and a state's military power (and its overall national power) – if a military uses 33.9% of its GDP (Gross Domestic Product) in order to prop up the military-industrial complex (CIA World Factbook2003: 162). Finally, what needs to be discussed in this section is how the abovementioned is affected by the nation's construction of its identity, and how this construction manipulates the value of these elements in order to use the nation's weakness (in this area) as an advantage.

*i. North Korea, South Korea (armed forces), military efficiency and leverage*

The BBC also reported in 1999 (128) that 'the ROK [Republic of Korea] stands far superior to the DPRK in actual military strength, as the DPRK military generally lags behind the ROK militarily in terms of the shape of its servicemen, combat ability, equipment performance, national strength, and joint defence preparedness'. Additionally, the US still has troops on the border of the ROK and the DPRK – aimed as a means to dissuade the North from attacking the

South because of the threat of US retaliation (Choe 2004: 92). The case is clear: the South not only has military superiority concerning its forces as a whole (even in total numbers manpower in the South exceeds manpower in the North (CIA World Factbook 2004: 153, 162)) – it is better run, has better equipment and conducts joint military defence simulations with a very powerful ally. Essentially, South Korea's military is superior to North Korea's military in Morgenthau's terms, both qualitatively and quantitatively. Quantitatively, despite North Korea's 'one million-man army', the South's army is physically more capable of prevailing in battle. The BBC stated in 1999 that ROK troops measure on average 171cm in height and 66kg in weight, while the DPRK's soldiers had an average height of 162cm and 48kg. As has already been stated, the famine caused long-term problems in terms of the North's population's stunted growth – and this has affected the army, despite the fact that the military still gets the first pick of food and wage distribution.

Qualitatively, the overall functioning of the military in the South has been reported to be more efficient than in the North. This is linked to the very likely assumption that an organisation that is too big, proportionally, to the rest of the country's economy is bound to be wasteful. Compared to 2.8% of the South's GDP spent on the military in 2003, North Korea spends 33.9% (CIA World Factbook 2004: 153, 162). This does not only inevitably lead to wastage within the structures of the military, but is a parasitic drain on the country's entire economy. Morgenthau notes that a state may be politically weak if 'it does not possess a military establishment that in its over-all strength and in the strength of its component parts is neither too large nor too small in view of the tasks it may be called upon to perform' (1993: 139). This statement has implications for the way in which one should analyse North Korea's military strength. Its size is its weakness – it is a bottomless pit into which a very large part of the country's GDP disappears; it is, according to many reports, the reason why the country cannot feed its own people; it is the main element that is currently keeping a parasitic regime in power.

But of course, in terms of leverage, its weakness – combined with the construction of the nation's identity and the part that the perversity of power plays in order to support this construction – is its strength. For years many analysts have wondered when a faction will rise up to topple the current power structure, or how long it will take for the Kim family to run out of the ability to buy loyalty. These scenarios will inevitably lead to chaos within the country and the spilling over of a civil war into a regional one. The fear of a confrontation between the US and China, as an example of what might hypothetically happen, is very likely what keeps China from allowing the regime to fall apart (ICG 2012: 7). A tenuous hold on domestic power seems to be an asset to North Korea when it comes to negotiating for international concessions.

The construction of the nation's identity (and the subsequent ardently constructed hatred that the population has for the outside) also plays a part in the strength of North Korea's 'weak' military. Worthington (2003: 125-126) notes that the question that should be asked when comparing the North's military with the South's is whether the South's military is as 'disciplined and determined' as the North. He describes the North Korean army – as malnourished as its soldiers are – as an army with 'fanatic zeal' and states that, comparatively, the South Korean army's morale is in question. This is an example, once again, of the way that the regime exploits the population in order to find strength in weakness. If there is an actual battle, for example, then the regime will have the capability to use more or less a million soldiers (malnourished as they might be) with 'fanatic zeal' against the South (and by implication the US) as cannon fodder; these soldiers would rather die than give up, which means that the North would definitely suffer immense losses if this were to happen. But they might easily have more resolve to resist for much longer than the South and its ally might be prepared for, and the deaths of millions of malnourished soldiers will poignantly be a propaganda victory for the North in any way that one looks at it. Internationally, the US and South Korea will look like bullies, and domestically the ideology that sustains North Korean identity will be strengthened as there will be proof of the US's evil ambitions to wipe North Korea off the map.

## 7. Quality of government

Morgenthau concludes his discussion about elements of national power by acknowledging that foreign policy objectives cannot properly be implemented without the support of a government that is being governed well. He starts by saying:

> The best conceived and most expertly executed foreign policy, drawing upon an abundance of material and human resources, must come to naught if it cannot draw also upon good government. Good government, viewed as an independent requirement of national power, means three things: balance between, on the one hand, the material and human resources that go into the making of national power and, on the other, the foreign policy to be pursued; balance among those resources; and popular support for the foreign policies to be pursued.
>
> (1993: 158-159)

The assumption taken for granted here is that the government's goal to strengthen its influence internationally includes the strengthening of the governance of the state itself. An efficiently-run state will be able to implement foreign policies with a better chance of success, and a well-strategized balancing between resources and foreign policy goals will not only improve the state's international standing (and allow it to exert the influence that it wants to in the

international arena), but will also feed back into promoting the general standard of living for citizens within the borders of that state. Of course, when one works with an autocratic state then the relationship that the government has with its citizens is one of little accountability – and in the case of North Korea, this could not be more applicable. North Korea is one of the world's most autocratic governments – and, in fact, this study itself has gone as far as to say it is a dictatorial regime. Therefore, the distance between the elite in the regime and the general public is almost impossible to reconcile. This is because of, not despite, the construction of North Korea's 'reality'. The genius of the system is that its 'family' rhetoric pushes the citizens further and further away from the real actions of the elite in the regime every time the narrative is reconstructed. This section will look at the three elements that Morgenthau highlights as relevant when analysing the quality of government, referring back to the framework (that has already been established) which looks at how the construction of the nation's identity influences these elements.

*Balance between resources and policy*

This element in essence is about how a state sees itself in relation to the world. In order to choose a foreign policy that it can successfully implement, a state needs to properly assess its strengths and its limits. Morgenthau highlights two mistakes that could be made if a nation's self-perception is not a correct evaluation of its own strength – a nation could set its sights too low, 'forgoing foreign policies well within the reach of its power', or set its sights too high 'and pursue policies that cannot be successfully executed with the available power' (1993: 159). Morgenthau takes for granted that assessments of the limits of one's own power (whether as an individual or as a nation) are never objective. This is why foreign policy decisions are easier to analyse than to make. In the case of North Korea, one should also not make the mistake in thinking that the regime believes itself to be weak, or that the regime believes that it should function within the context of its own weakness. Rather, the regime uses its weakness as a strength, as has been proven – North Korea uses all the elements that have been discussed above as a means to gain 'negative' power (or create 'coercive deficiency').

North Korea does not believe itself to be weak. It is, after all, the centre of the universe. This narrative might be constructed in order for the regime to have control over the population, but one cannot say that it does not have an impact on how the leaders in the country perceive themselves in relation to the other parties in the negotiations. Not only does North Korea not believe itself to be weaker than the other parties in the Talks, Kim Jong Il himself fixated on the development of missiles and nuclear weapons precisely because he believed that the powerful

nations of the world should be taking notice; when a journalist asked Kim Jong Il why he was spending resources on missiles instead of his population, he replied:

> The missiles cannot reach the US and if I launch them, the US would fire back thousands of missiles and we would not survive. I know that well. But I have to let them know I have missiles. I am making them because only then will the US talk to me.
>
> (Kim Jong Il in French 2007: 207)

According to Moon and Hwang (2014: 4), the regime is obsessed with 'face saving', both domestically and internationally. It is a regime that values 'cultural factors such as "dignity" and "face"…more heavily than material [factors]' when it comes to an understanding of power, authority and legitimacy (4). They further say that 'the unique identity formation of leader and people in North Korean history and culture' creates a situation where 'identity is inseparably tied to self-esteem (how we regard ourselves) and esteem (how we are regarded by others)' (2). If foreign policy objectives are driven by self-perception and a fixation on the perceptions of others, then perhaps – from a foreign policy perspective – the acquisition of a nuclear weapon is a shortcut to recognition. Internally, the nuclear weapons programme, as a tool to strengthen the reality of an eternal war, was driven by a need to shift focus away from the famine and the fact that the new leader was not the 'legend' that his father was. It was, in this respect, also a shortcut to saving the regime domestically. Internationally, it supported North Korea's self-perception of its own importance. Every time the US reacted to provocations, it strengthened this self-perception (French 2007: 207).

If power is the ability to influence as well as the ability to resist pressure from another party to change your behaviour, then the nuclear weapon as a resource to support North Korea's perception of its own power is doing just that. In this sense, if one assesses the power balance between North Korea and the other parties to the Talks (in a traditional way) (Habeeb 1988: 19), then one can merely look at the level of dependence that the North has in relation to the other states. If its level of dependence is what gives it power (in a realist sense), then it has more power than the other states to manoeuvre (not only during the negotiations, but in general). Not only can it resist pressure to give up the programme, it can extract concessions from its opposition without promising anything in return. Not only can the regime resist change, it has the ability to force other parties to help it stay in power. And finally, not only can the acquisition of a nuclear weapon (or the maintenance of a nuclear weapons programme) perpetuate its own perception of its power vis-à-vis the other parties in the Talks – it can use

the reactions of other parties to its provocative behaviour as a means to strengthen its self-perception domestically and internationally.

The policy objectives of North Korea often elude the international community – other states shake their heads when North Korea provokes its neighbour (South Korea), its historic enemy (Japan) and the world's only (current, and with the exception of the rise of China) major power (the United States (US)). But if North Korea's foreign policy objectives are to construct and reconstruct its own self-perception of superiority (through the careful and conscious construction of its identity) – for the purposes of exploiting other nations as well as its own population – then it would not be fair to say that it is being irrational. In fact, it would be fair to say that it is achieving its goals.

*Balance among resources*

This brings us to North Korea's ability to use its weakness within the region (and with the support of the perversity of power) in order to exploit its situation and project an atypical form of power that allows it to resist external pressure and manipulate stronger powers. Morgenthau says, '[A state] attains that maximum [power] when it has at its disposal a sufficient quantity and quality, in the right mixture, of those resources of power which will allow it to pursue a given foreign policy with a maximum chance of success' (1993: 159). North Korea's resources of power lie in its construction of its own identity – the conscious construction of the nation's identity (and the manipulation of its morale, whether through propaganda or fear of punishment) allows the regime to exploit its population and use its poorly performing economy, its oversized and inefficient military and its own population's underdevelopment, and finally the acquisition of a nuclear weapon, against the international community.

The distance that the regime actively creates between itself and its citizens, and the indifference towards the population's well-being, promotes an independent regime – *a regime that does not need to answer to its own citizens or the international community* for its actions. This is in essence where the North Korean regime's construction of power lies. It might be callous to say, and one can also argue that the regime has itself been trapped by the ideology that put it in power in the first place, but the fact remains: if the regime cared more for its people than the maintenance of *Juche* and *Songun* (and by implication the Kim cult), it would not have lasted this long. Its power (domestically and internationally) is in its material weakness, coupled with a distorted self-perception of its rightful place in the international arena, supported by the perversity of power (and its corollary, the manipulation of the nuclear taboo). If North Korea's foreign policy objectives are the ones that have been discussed above, then it is – in a perverted way – strategically balancing its resources and its objectives very well. Morgenthau himself

highlights that a nation's character can dictate this balance: '[one] nation will revolt against hardships that another nation will take patiently in its stride, and sometimes a nation will surprise the world and itself by the sacrifices it willingly makes for the defence of its interests and its existence' (160). North Korea's foreign policy behaviour is an extension of its domestic politics on multiple levels – and its ability to create as well as manipulate its nation's character in order to exploit its resources in the way that it does is not evidence of an irrational actor. Rather, it is – sadly – evidence of an extremely calculating and ruthless one.

*Popular support*

Morgenthau cautions foreign policy practitioners against being overwhelmed by domestic sentiment when making foreign policy decisions:

> Thinking required for the successful conduct of foreign policy can be diametrically opposed to the rhetoric and action by which the masses and their representatives are likely to be moved. The peculiar qualities if the statesman's mind are not always likely to find a favourable response in the popular mind…A foreign policy that is presumably and overwhelmingly supported by public opinion cannot be assumed for that reason alone to be good foreign policy. On the contrary, the harmony between foreign policy and public opinion may well have been achieved at the price of surrendering the principles of good foreign policy to the unsound preferences of public opinion.
>
> (1993: 161)

Morgenthau did not trust the general public to make sound foreign policy decisions and therefore, like Plato (1955: 231), advised that the statesman – as a 'philosopher ruler' trained in the art of conducting foreign policy – should have more freedom when it comes to foreign policy decisions (from his or her own local constituency) than the limits that should be imposed on leaders domestically (by their constituencies) when they are voted into office. Of course in the case of North Korea, the population exists to serve the state, and not the other way around. On the surface it might seem as though this means that the regime does not need to take public opinion into account when it makes any decision (foreign or domestic). But this is not strictly true. Again, this proves to show that the regime's most powerful 'weapon' (that it uses to exploit its own people as well as the international community) is the construction of its self-perception, the construction of its identity, and – by implication – its 'reality'.

The narrative that creates North Korean identity – and the tools that are used in order to perpetuate this – is what gives the regime the power to do what it wants in terms of its foreign policy. This means that its power (that which perpetuates its ability to distance itself from, and

in turn exploit, its own people) is tenuous. The mass-development drives that only lead to wastage, the fact that the military drains almost all the state's money, the fact that the Kim clan has had to pay for their loyalty, and the intense daily propaganda (along with its accompaniment, punishment) that sweeps up the nation in an attempt to unify it against the evil 'outside' *needs* to happen. Without these elements, the regime will fall apart. One could argue that this means that popular support is of the utmost importance for the regime. But it is this type of support that is *dictated* to the population, through physical and psychological violence, in order to serve the regime's whims.

## 8. Conclusion: Domestic government and Foreign Policy

In this last section, Morgenthau provides the reader from the late twentieth century with a glimpse into the future. The understanding of how international relations (and International Relations) was changing (and would change) is astute as Morgenthau acknowledges that 'the struggle for power on the international scene is today not only a struggle for military supremacy and political domination, but in a specific sense a *struggle for the minds of men*' (1993: 164-165 [own emphasis]). He was talking, of course, about how the Cold War was about the struggle between opposing ideologies, and essentially the struggle for the dominance of one over the other. The post-Cold War era has not changed in this regard; it is no longer about the struggle for the dominance of one ideology over another, but it is to a large extent a struggle for the minds of men – and in the case of North Korea, the struggle for the dominance of a narrative that dictates 'reality'.

This is where North Korea exploits international norms and, in this specific study, the nuclear taboo. In the next chapter, this paper will explore North Korea's behaviour in the Six Party Talks and how it promoted its own 'reality' by dominating a certain narrative, while simultaneously manipulating the intersubjective meaning of the nuclear taboo. It forced the other parties to act in certain ways that perpetuated this 'reality' despite desperate measures by other states (including, for example, South Korea's very ambitious 'Sunshine Policy') to bring it out of the past (and its 'eternal war'), and into the present.

The strong influence of multilateral complexity, and the way in which it was an obstacle to the success of the Talks, is definitely the reason why there was no consensus. This study does not contest this, but will focus on certain points in the timeline that will highlight Wendt's 'altercasting'. Wendt's altercasting is the practice of '*interactor control* in which ego uses tactics of self-representation and stage management in an attempt to frame alter's definitions of social situations in ways that create the role which ego desires alter to play' (1992: 421 [own emphasis]). He goes on to say that 'in altercasting ego tries to induce alter to take on a new

identity (and therefore enlist alter in ego's effort to change itself) by treating alter *as if* it already had that identity' (421 [original emphasis]). The next two chapters ask: 'who is *ego* and who is *alter* when it comes to the relationship that North Korea has with the other states in the Six Party Talks?'. Technically, whoever is in control of this narrative – this ability to change *alter's* character (or to resist *ego's* attempts to change its own character) – is the party that has interactor control.

North Korea set the scene, so to speak. Through its own construction of an identity that can only have meaning as something that lives in the past (but is active in the present), it perpetuates an antagonistic 'shared knowledge system' that dictates the way that other states acted towards it and towards each other. Because of the regime's own need to perpetuate the nation's identity, which is steeped in the concept of 'eternal war', it has to act in certain ways in order to gain certain reactions that would strengthen the North Korean identity domestically. But because of these actions, it also consciously constructs the 'past' through the way that other states react to its provocations. Power is still the name of the game, despite the other states' attempts to change the 'reality' within which these negotiations (and general interactions) are taking place. North Korea dominated the narrative during the Talks in the way that it still dominates the narrative that creates reality for its domestic population (and the reality created for the international community) – through the conscious construction and reconstruction of the past.

The last two chapters will look at Morgenthau's 'quality of diplomacy' as an element of national power. The paper separates the rest of the elements from 'diplomacy' in the way that Zartman (among others) uses a structural approach to the analysis of negotiations. This argument borrows Zartman's format in order to make a distinction between Morgenthau's elements of national power discussed above, and diplomacy, which he calls 'the art of bringing the different elements of the national power to bear with maximum effect upon those points in the international situation which concern the national interest most directly' (1993: 155). It is, in the context of international relations and the negotiations in particular, where the material is transformed into the dynamic – where 'national power' merely becomes a starting point from which a better negotiating position is reached through bargaining. This argument will take cognisance of the fact that traditionally structural arguments (that use this framework) assume that behaviour is exogenous and that negotiating tactics are rational corollaries to each country's national interests. However, it will provide more depth by showing how interests are not exogenous, and that the manipulation of international constructions of shared knowledge systems can help an 'atypical' small state pervert its own power in relation to other, much stronger, states.

# Chapter 5

# The United States and the DPRK during the Six Party Talks, the nuclear weapon, the nuclear taboo and 'perversity of power': the DPRK's domination of the narrative

## 1. Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with Morgenthau's elements of national power that focused on a state's resources. Diplomacy, the final element on this list, will be analysed in Chapter Five and Chapter Six. Using events that affected and were a consequence of the Six Party Talks as a framework, the two chapters will analyse Morgenthau's 'diplomacy' – the element where a state proves its ability to combine all the other elements of national power 'into an integrated whole, [by giving] them direction and weight, and [awakening] their slumbering potentialities by giving them the breath of actual power' (1993: 155). North Korea's construction of identity creates certain meanings for the other elements, and diplomacy is no different. Diplomacy is where this construction comes to life in the international arena and influences the DPRK's external environment in order to create certain intersubjective meanings related to the North's relationship with its neighbours, as well as its 'enemy' – the United States (US).

The rationale behind isolating this element of national power is that Morgenthau's 'diplomacy' runs parallel to Habeeb's understanding of 'issue-specific structural power' (1988: 14), as well as Buszynski's 'negotiating strength' (2013: 6). In *Negotiating with North Korea: The Six Party Talks and the Nuclear Issue*, Buszynski separates 'national power' and 'negotiating strength' (2013: 6) and argues that initial positions at the start of the negotiation process are influenced by the distribution of national power, which assigns certain 'roles' to each party (13). His argument goes further than that, however, proving that initial positions (or 'roles') do not predict outcomes, as 'negotiating strength' (which can alter positions during the negotiation, through the implementation of certain tactics) can influence outcomes in unpredictable ways (16). In his analysis, 'national power' stays static – it provides the parties with initial starting positions, which will change as the process of the negotiation creates a dynamic atmosphere that influences outcomes. In the case of North Korea, however, the previous chapter shows that the 'value' of certain elements of national power, that would generally be considered neutral and objective, are not necessarily neutral or objective. As the construction of these 'values', directly associated with the construction of their meaning in relation to the North's construction of its identity, have to be actively constructed daily, these elements of national power create a

certain level of 'negative power' for North Korea – a certain type of leverage that sustains the regime's existence internally and externally. This is part of North Korea's construction of power – its ability to create a reality internally. The second part of this construction relates to how the state creates (or constructs) reality externally. Both of these facets of North Korea's construction of power are ongoing processes. Therefore, the roles that are ascribed to parties when they first come to the negotiation table might already have subjective values before the process of negotiation begins.

This chapter shows how the DPRK regime's main objective, internally and externally, is to uphold the reality sustained by the regime's constant construction of North Korean identity. This means that the line between the internal and the external becomes blurred as the active construction of identity is an ongoing process; and that 'internal' and 'external' actions (that construct this identity) reinforce each other. For example, actions that provoke the international community are used by the DPRK to bolster internal propaganda; in the same way that the maintenance of the state's internal weakness, combined with its ideological strength, bolsters North Korea's negotiating position vis-à-vis the other parties in the Six Party Talks.

Before looking at North Korea's relationship with the US during (and just before) the Six Party Talks, this negotiation has to be placed in a specific context. Unlike other multilateral negotiations which mostly deal with economic and trade deals, the Six Party Talks concerned the use and non-use, as well as the dismantlement, of nuclear weapons. As such, this negotiation had already been fundamentally characterised by two principles before the Talks had even begun: the first was the concept of power; the second, the need to uphold certain international norms. This means that the nature of the Talks was always going to be characterised at any point in time either by how the perception of relative power influenced decisions by parties to the Talks, or by how the parties' actions were upholding or eroding the non-proliferation regime (and by implication, the nuclear taboo). With this in mind, this chapter will look first at how perception was manipulated by the North in its relationship with the US – in other words, how the North managed to construct and maintain a certain reality that gave the US a certain 'role' to play, and how the US could not make any decisions that ran counter to the limitations of this 'reality' or 'role'. For this, Wendt's conception of the 'looking-glass self', which asserts that the self is a reflection of an actor's socialisation' (1992: 404), will be used. The first section asks: if a person were functioning within the framework of another narrator's 'reality', and their 'power' is directly related to their perception of their relative power position (and their self-perception in general), how much power can they have outside of the 'power' or the 'role' that has been created for them by another's narrative? The first part of this chapter will focus on answering this question by analysing the relationship between the North and the US. Cognisant

of the fact that no bilateral relationship can be analysed in isolation, Chapter Six will look at this element within the context of the DPRK's relationship with China and South Korea, as this reality can only be sustained in a multilateral context.

The latter part of this chapter will focus on the second principle that guides the Six Party Talks: international norms (and specifically the nuclear taboo, as has been described in Chapter Two). It will analyse how the relationship discussed in the first part of this chapter influenced the non-proliferation regime and the nuclear taboo. The actions of both the DPRK and the US have affected the level of 'perversity of power' that the DPRK manages to exploit, and have simultaneously undermined and strengthened the nuclear taboo. Because the construction (and maintenance) of this norm can only take place in a multilateral context, Chapter Six will also analyse this principle in the context of the North's relationship with China and South Korea (and how these relationships supported the construction of the North's external identity). For the sake of analytical clarity, this chapter will first focus on the relationship between the DPRK and the US. In relation to this, therefore, the DPRK's construction of power is – both internally and externally – an ongoing process that leads to a strengthened 'perversity of power' for the North. Therefore, this chapter will look at how the North's internal construction of identity is for internal as well as external use, and how the domination of a negotiation 'narrative' (in the context of the Six Party Talks, in this case) is used to bolster internal power, as well as strengthen external perversity of power (and by implication also undermine the nuclear taboo).

Before looking at the 'story' of the relationship between the DPRK and the US, it is necessary to briefly explain Wendt's 'altercasting' (1992: 421). 'Altercasting' is concerned with treating 'alter' as though 'alter' is already the 'person' that 'ego' wants 'alter' to be, and essentially changing a 'bad apple' into a good one in the international arena (1992: 420). The US did not apply this strategy to its relationship with the DPRK during the Six Party Talks, but this chapter argues that if 'ego' can make 'alter' the person that 'ego' wants 'alter' to be, then this can be done in both a positive and negative way. The DPRK's relationship with the US shows that they both created perceptions of each other that promoted negative threat perceptions and mutual suspicion. It is important to note that the point of this chapter is not only to show that they both 'created' each other, but that one of these constructions (or narratives) dominated the other. This led to a certain 'reality' within which both these states had to function – and where one state dictated the direction and character of the process, and the other had no choice but to 'play along'. While this chapter will focus on Wendt's explanation of the 'looking-glass self' in relation to the mutual construction of the DPRK's and the US's identities, Chapter Six will look more closely at Wendt's four stages of 'altercasting' and how North Korea actively resisted South Korea's and China's attempts to promote the two countries

## 2. Wendt, 'ego', 'alter', and the 'looking-glass self'

Wendt claims that in constructivism, 'the meanings in terms of which action is organised arise out of interaction' (1992: 403). This forms the foundation for his argument that anarchy does not always have to lead to conflict between states in the international arena (as is claimed by realists). In his argument, he shows how action can change collective understandings of meaning, which in turn can change the meaning of institutions such as anarchy (1992: 391-425). For this to work, he asks the reader to consider two actors, 'ego' and 'alter' (404). 'Ego' makes a gesture, for example 'an advance, a retreat, a brandishing of arms, a laying down of arms, or an attack' (404). This is ego's way of signalling the way in which it is prepared to respond to whatever 'alter' does in return. The foundation of this signal is 'unknown to alter, however, and so it must make an inference or "attribution" about ego's intentions and, in particular, given that this is anarchy, about whether ego is a threat' (404). According to Wendt (1992: 405), 'there is no reason for [alter] to assume a priori – before the gesture – that ego is threatening, since it is only through a process of signalling and interpreting that the costs and probabilities of being wrong can be determined. *Social threats are constructed, not natural*' (405 [own emphasis]). Of course when Wendt makes this argument he purposefully 'brackets' the domestic, as the domestic will provide both ego and alter with an identity that might not have the capacity to be moulded merely through international interaction.

The process that Wendt promotes is one of reinforcement: the repetition of 'signalling, interpreting, and responding' which eventually will make (international) 'intersubjective meanings' (1992: 405). It is strengthened by 'rewards for actors for holding certain ideas about each other and discourages them from holding others' (405). One can see the allure for this type of process in the context of Northeast Asia and the region's security. The hope is that this positive reinforcement – the idea that other states are not a threat to the North – works; the North will change its perception of them, and itself in relation to them. Wendt adds, '[it] is through reciprocal interaction…that we create and instantiate the relatively enduring social structures in terms of which we define our identities and interests' (406). The Six Party Talks provided a perfect framework for the creation of a certain collective identity for Northeast Asian countries and their perception of their regional security. It facilitated an environment conducive to this process where there was by definition an obligation for reciprocal action (negotiation and bargaining). States such as South Korea and China did to a large extent try to use the framework in this sense.

Unfortunately the Talks became a platform for the creation (or the strengthening) of a different (or, in the case of Northeast Asia, a very familiar) collective identity. Wendt claims that '[self-

help] security systems evolve from cycles of interaction in which each party acts in ways that the other feels are threatening to the self, creating expectations that the other is not to be trusted' (406). It could be said that the actions of both North Korea and the United States contributed to the maintenance of this type of system. George W. Bush's 'Axis of Evil' speech would be a good example of how Wendt's argument concerning reciprocal action creates a self-help security system rather than a collective (peaceful) security community (Rozman 2007a: 15).

Wendt challenges the presumption that self-help systems will always stay the same because of this type of reinforcement. He points out that predation (resistance to more cooperative behaviour as described in the context provided above) could stem 'at least in part from prior systemic interaction – perhaps a result of being victimised in the past… - [and] as such, might be transformed by future social interaction in the form of appeasement, reassurances that security needs will be met, systemic efforts on domestic politics, and so on' (1992: 409). He goes on to conclude that '[in] this case, in other words, there is more hope that process can transform a bad apple into a good one' (409). Could North Korea, because of its self-perception as a victim of an antagonistic international community, be changed through appeasement and reassurances that security needs will be met? This is what the South Korea's Sunshine Policy was ostensibly created for (Kim 2002: 99). The Roh administration (South Korea's administration for the duration of most of the Six Party Talks) later focused more on engaging with the North than putting pressure on it to change through coercive tactics (ICG 2006b: 7). China also promoted peaceful engagement, claiming that 'peace and stability are preconditions for denuclearisation' (ICG 2009b: 8). The US, however, because of a perception of its own power and moral superiority, did not try this and essentially helped the DPRK to construct its much needed external enemy.

Wendt describes the 'looking-glass self' in order to bolster his claim that interaction over time can create 'conceptions of self and interest' (1992: 404). The argument is that identity-formation is 'captured by the symbolic interactionist notion' of this looking-glass self, 'which asserts that the self is a reflection of an actor's socialisation' (404). If applied to the relationship between the DPRK and the US, this would mean that these two actors have 'created' each other's identities through mutual interaction – that their interactions with one another have 'socialised' them in such a way that their perception of themselves, in relation to the other, has formed (or created) their conception of self and interest. This is how, instead of interacting in a certain way in order to change mutual threat perception, both the US and the DPRK managed to create an enemy through their behaviour towards one another.

To be sure, the construction (and maintenance) of these identities vis-à-vis these states is also a reflection of their 'history of security or insecurity between the two' (Wendt 1992: 404). Wendt brackets the domestic in this case on purpose for analytical clarity, and therefore one cannot criticise him here for completely ignoring the fact that history or 'biological or domestic [imperatives] for power, glory, or conquest' (404) could be influential in the relationship between two actors. His argument is hypothetical, and proposes that we imagine a world where two states encounter each other for the first time with a clean slate. Within this framework (one where history as well as the domestic is bracketed), he proposes that states – before they perceive certain threats or have a certain perception of what other states are like – have to make decisions based on probabilities, and that 'these are produced by interaction, by what actors *do*' (404 [original emphasis]). Identity, however, has to be maintained through agency – even if a relationship between two states is initially established as non-threatening, this relationship needs to be reinforced in the way that these states continuously behave towards one another. Therefore, even if an initial position of mutual threat perception exists, and through history and domestic factors has become intrinsically linked to each state's identity, they would still have to interact in a certain way to maintain this initial position. In fact it could be said that once an initial position of mutual threat perception exists, it becomes not only part of the state's external identity, but implicitly becomes part of a state's internal identity as well.

The US and the DPRK had a relationship that they constructed and maintained internally and externally. The 'looking-glass self' – the 'reflection of an actor's socialisation' (Wendt 1992: 404) – applied to these states as they were maintaining, through their behaviour towards one another, mutually dependent identities. The US, after the terrorist attacks in 2001, had to find a new 'enemy' or 'evil' that could be identified and dealt with (as the Soviet Union no longer existed) (Bleiker 2003: 721), and the DPRK regime needed an enemy because it needed justification for its internal construction of power through the maintenance of its revolutionary identity (Chapter Three). Both states were actively constructing these identities as well as narratives to make the one look 'good' and the other 'evil' (721). The purpose of this chapter is to see which state's narrative dominated interactions between the two states, and by implication which state had more influence to manipulate the other's behaviour.

Interactions of the four states that will be analysed (North Korea and the US (in Chapter Five), and South Korea and China (in Chapter Six)) will be looked at from two angles. The first (Chapter Five) will show how North Korea, within the above framework, constructed a certain reality by 'socialising' the US (and allowing the US to reciprocate in kind) in order to create its enemy. A comparison of the two narratives will be provided, but the focus will mainly be on

North Korea's actions and the construction of its external narrative (or 'reality'). The second (Chapter Six) will focus on how China and South Korea pursued a certain type of 'altercasting' in order to maintain the status quo (regional stability), which supported North Korea's narrative and strengthened its 'perversity of power'. In relation to both of these viewpoints, the paper will then look at how these actions affected the nuclear taboo (and what that, in turn, meant for the North's 'reality' and construction of power).

This brings us back to the 'story' behind North Korea's nuclear weapons development. It is a very important part of how the North constructs the 'reality' that provides it with the power to resist the change that the external world tries to thrust upon it, and how the North is able to manipulate the external world to do what it otherwise would not have done (in this case, provide very little affective punishment for the acquisition of nuclear weapons). This particular story will now be analysed in relation to events that led to the outcome of the Six Party Talks, and the North's final 'victory' over the external world, with a 'presentation' of its ability to create the weapon that the other parties to the Talks hoped it would never be able to possess.

## 3. The North Korean narrative versus the United States' narrative: 'David meets Goliath' or 'rogue state meets righteous state'?

The 'story' of the Six Party Talks is very often told as a cautionary tale for multilateral negotiations. If a multilateral negotiation includes more than one powerful state, and a target state is added as an equal to the table with de facto veto power, then the complex character of the negotiation itself, as well as conflicting interests among powers that have the capacity to 'stick to their guns', will make the negotiations very difficult from the outset. The Six Party Talks prove this as the Talks failed to limit a weak state from manipulating other states in order to obtain concessions (and ultimately, continue with its nuclear weapons programme). Zartman (2008: 100) talks about how conventional wisdom dictates that symmetrical negotiation structures bring about more stable (and more satisfying) outcomes, but that asymmetrical structures in fact lead to more satisfied customers. In this case the structure was balanced against the weak North Korean state, and – as was hoped by the US – would mean an easy outcome where a coalition of five could form against the target state (Rozman 2007a: 41). But the 'reality' of these negotiations had little to do with how much physical power the US had – not only over the DPRK but over the other states as well – and had a lot more to do with the *narrative* (or 'reality') that dictated the path of the interactions among the parties (process) during the negotiations.

Whether North Korea's posturing (and its rhetoric) was meant only for a national audience, an international audience, or both, is not necessarily the issue. What should be asked is why the rhetoric was necessary in the first place, and whether it influenced decisions made by other members of the Talks in North Korea's favour. The international community is used to North Korea's propaganda (especially countries that deal with it on a more frequent basis). So did the rhetoric mean nothing? Or did the narrative of North Korea's identity – constructed internally and externally – create a 'reality' that influenced the actions of other states, including the US? This section will analyse the US's perception of its position in the Six Party Talks, and contrast it to the DPRK's perception of its position in this context. Again, it is not only important to see whether these states created narratives that influenced their actions (and affected decisions made by others in retaliation). What needs equal, if not more, attention, is a focus on whose narrative (perception and 'reality') was dominating the Talks. In the context of this paper, and North Korea's construction of power, the focus should be on whether North Korea managed to construct a narrative that dominated 'reality' during the negotiations. The next sections will look at the 'story' of North Korea's relationship with the US (in relation to its nuclear weapons development programme and the Six Party Talks) to see whether it managed to construct this specific form of power.

*Setting the scene: The Agreed Framework, unfulfilled commitments, and North Korean 'vulnerability'*

The early 1990s started with a change in the global world order – the Soviet Union collapsed, and its plan to 'promote "socialist economic integration in the Far East"', which was linked to assistance to the DPRK regarding peaceful uses of nuclear energy in North Korea (in the 1950s), collapsed with it (ICG 2003: 4). The change in Moscow's posture was already evident by the late 1980s, when it forced Pyongyang to accede to the Treaty of Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) (5). The corollary of this was that the DPRK 'agreed not to acquire or manufacture nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, and not to seek or receive any assistance in the manufacture of nuclear weapons or other explosive devices' (6). In 1991 the DPRK, together with the Republic of Korea (ROK), signed a Joint Declaration on a Non-Nuclear Korean Peninsula (6). At the same time, however, the country was going through a devastating economic downturn (combined with a drought) that led to the death of hundreds of thousands of people.

The DPRK regime had little choice but to 'expand contact and seek economic and political cooperation with the West – particularly, the United States and Japan, and then South Korea' (Paik 2002: 20). The problem for the regime in relation to this outreach was that it would have

to accept that it was weak, and very possibly not have a choice but to let the forces (economic and otherwise) of the West dictate its future. As this essentially would have meant the end of the nation's ideology (and identity) and therefore the end of the regime's existence, the North decided that the overt (and later clandestine) development of nuclear weapons might give it the leverage that it needed to extract economic assistance without having to give up the system that controlled the state. It served the narrative that underpinned the North's identity well: the death of Kim Il Sung, the Arduous March and the transfer of power from father to son needed a 'revolution', a battle, and by implication an enemy.

The 1994 Agreed Framework was brokered after the DPRK did not comply with IAEA inspections and threatened to withdraw from the NPT in 1993 (ICG 2003: 7). This deal provided the North with much needed assistance, as it was experiencing a drought which was leading to famine in the country (7). This happened within the context of the Clinton administration's shift in policy from its predecessor. The first Bush administration believed in a 'containment-plus strategy', which fed into the North's anti-American propaganda and produced negative results for the US (Harnisch 2001: 612). The Clinton administration decided to focus on a 'strategy of enlargement' when it took over in 1993 (612) and managed to produce some results in 1994 with the Agreed Framework, which at least temporarily froze test firing of missiles (including the Taepodong missile) and the North's nuclear weapons development programme. Clinton believed that the US 'had been one of the creators of today's world order, [which meant] that it shared responsibility to shape its future' (Harnisch 2001: 613). In this respect, the Clinton administration believed that it had a responsibility to change the threat perception that had been created during the Cold War, which included threat perception among states in Northeast Asia (613). Cho (2009: 8) adds that the Clinton administration did not necessarily trust the North Korean regime, but it did believe in a 'soft landing approach' that 'sought not to demolish but reform North Korea through constructive engagement'.

The 'soft landing approach' (Cho 2009: 8) worked in tandem with South Korea's attempts to engage the North and improve relations through its 'Sunshine Policy' – the policy attempted to promote peace on the Korean peninsula 'through economic exchange and cooperation' (Kwon and Lim 2006: 131). Here both the US and South Korea were appealing to the North's need for reform from the inside – neither were focussed on inducing a regime change that would destabilise the region, and both appealed to a new way of thinking (for the DPRK) about the North's perceived threats. This would have been the best time for the North Korean regime to take the US and South Korea up on their offer and reform in order to save not only the state, but – literally – its people. It could therefore be argued that if the survival of the people of North Korea was the primary objective of the regime, the Clinton and Kim Dae Jung administrations

would have been successful. However, the survival of the regime and the ideology that maintains it were more important. The North Korean regime generally only pretended to play along when concessions from their side would not threaten North Korean identity and ideology.

The Sunshine Policy, promoted for the first time in 1998, was the formalisation of then-President Kim Dae Jung's hope for a unification policy that promoted three principles: 'No armed provocation by the North will be tolerated; A takeover or absorption of the North will not be attempted; North-South reconciliation and cooperation will be expanded beginning with those areas which can be most easily agreed upon' (Ministry of Unification (MOU) in Kwon and Lim 2006: 133). This was not only a warning that unification by force would not be tolerated, but that the South was willing to reconnect with the North as if they were brothers – that the South would reconnect as a 'friend' that would not pursue policies that would encroach on the identity of the North, but rather pursue policies that would look for common ground for cooperation. It was South Korea's attempt at promoting a type of 'altercasting', with the hope that the North would respond in kind – that the North would become the friendly neighbour that the South was hoping it could be. The US, and especially the Clinton administration, realised that the only way to get any cooperation from the North (however disappointing the quality may be), was to accept the same attitude. The Agreed Framework document itself is a reflection of the need for the states not only to 'satisfy the nuclear problem, but also [to] remake their entire relationship' (ICG 2003: 8). Both states were attempting to incentivise a change in the behaviour of the North through engagement, negotiations, and agreements like the Agreed Framework.

Despite both these states' approach to (re)frame the North's threat perception, the DPRK responded, for the most part, by provoking them instead. For example, in 1998 during an inter-Korean conference in Beijing, a North Korean official reportedly said that the North would rather have a 'liberation war' than capitulate to the South Korean attempt to 'politicise' the food-and-fertiliser (aid being provided by the South) issue (Song 1998)). In June 1998, in retaliation to the US's 'economic isolation' of the North, North Korea declared its intention to continue to develop, test, and deploy missiles as a means of countering the alleged US military threat (Sullivan 1998)). The North added that it wanted the US to lift its economic embargo 'and compensate for losses that could be caused by termination of missile sales' (Sullivan 1998). In August of the same year the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* revealed that North Korea 'might develop secret nuclear programs at the underground facility in Kumchangri, which was clearly interpreted as the violation of the…Agreed Framework' (in Cho 2009: 8). North Korea also fired a rocket into 'the North Pacific via the East Sea (the Sea of Japan) (Cho 2009: 9). In exchange for engagement, the South mostly received open aggression in return. The North

Korean regime was going through a transition (even though Kim Il Sung had died in 1994, the transition from father to son took a long time to gain legitimacy), and in order for the regime to stay in power the narrative needed to hold: the North was at war with the US imperialists and South Korea (the US's puppet).

The next sections will focus mostly on the US's relationship with the DPRK, but will refer to the South's role in the construction of the North's 'reality'. The South played an important part in the maintenance of the North's identity because of its relationship with both the US and the DPRK. As such, the relationship between the US and the DPRK cannot easily be divorced from the ROK's relationship with its 'brother'. Chapter Six will provide a more in-depth focus on the relationship between the South and the North.

*i. The Agreed Framework: Unfulfilled promises*

Non-compliance from both sides regarding the implementation of the Agreed Framework did not help with the US's attempts (during the Clinton administration) to lower North Korea's threat perception. Both states did not trust each other, which meant that despite the US's promise of a Light Water Reactor (LWR), KEDO (the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organisation) did not manage to fulfil its obligations; KEDO's promise of the delivery of heavy fuel oil was also generally behind schedule, and the US moved very slowly when it came to the lifting of economic sanctions, and 'fell short of implementing normal economic relations' (ICG 2003: 10). Finally, and probably most importantly, the US did not provide 'formal assurances to the DPRK that it would not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against it' (despite having withdrawn its nuclear weapons from South Korea) (10). Because of this lack of trust, the DPRK refused to let the IAEA inspect facilities not subject to the freeze in the Agreement – 'these actions violated the express provisions of the Agreed Framework that commit the DPRK to "allow implementation of its safeguards agreement" and adhere to its NPT commitments' (11).

North Korea's actions reflect an attitude of suspicion, a belief that attempts at engagement were merely part of a ruse – merely attempts to make the regime let its guard down. Threat perception was high as not only did the US, according to the DPRK, not adhere to the Agreed Framework (and not provide it with assurances that it would not use nuclear weapons against it), it was (especially according to the North) actively trying to strangle the regime with economic sanctions. The North also believed that the South's engagement was a trap, as the DPRK believed that the South was, for example, simultaneously providing an outstretched hand while 'slandering the Republic' by claiming that the Korean War was started by a southward invasion of North Korea (Radio Pyongyang in Nanto 2003: 21). This is one example of the DPRK's rhetoric, as it interpreted this sentiment (reflected in a South Korean newspaper at the

time) as 'harmful to national unity and reunification, [and was] 'not a matter of freedom of the press, but high treason' (Radio Pyongyang in Nanto 2003: 21). Another example was when, in 2000, Lee Hoi Chang (the opposition leader in South Korea) spoke about 'the need for reciprocity and inter-Korean cooperation' in the South Korean National Assembly; North Korea responded by calling him 'an anti-reunification element…a traitor, a fool, and in imbecile' (Radio Pyongyang in Nanto 2003: 22).

North Korea received concessions and accepted incentives in order to change its behaviour (and a perception of itself in relation to other states that surround it), and gave very little back. It has to be noted that since the North Korean regime's main bartering currency was rhetoric, public proclamations against the US and the ROK – while both of these states were trying to change the DPRK's threat perception – meant that the US and the ROK were unable to break the 'Cold War' mentality within which the North believed itself to exist. Positive external actions of these states (including, importantly, South Korea as it shares a part of its identity with the North) did not lead to change in the North's behaviour, while perceived small slights (by the ROK especially) were amplified as acts of 'high treason'. The message was clear: the North was not going to give up its 'reality' – its perception of itself vis-à-vis the other states – that easily. Cautious engagement from both the US and the ROK gave the DPRK the opportunity to focus on what was still wrong in its relationship with these states, instead of focussing on what they were trying to do to address these problems.

Accusations concerning who was to blame for the end of the Agreed Framework were a consequence of the ambiguity of the agreement itself. The inability of the US (and other states involved with KEDO) to adhere to specific deadlines made it look like the US had not fulfilled its obligations. The North's inability to be patient regarding the process, as well as its eagerness to use any delay as an excuse to provoke external actors also did not ameliorate threat perception among the parties involved. Consistent positive reinforcement from the North – even if only in terms of rhetoric – would quite possibly have lessened the political obstacles that the US had, for example, when it came to the need for it to gain permission from Congress for the Agreement's implementation. But it was precisely the DPRK's rhetoric that led to the US's suspicion of the DPRK's intentions, as well as prohibited the ROK from implementing policies that would lead to earnest reconciliation with the North. Ambiguity concerning who was to blame for the North's heightened sense of vulnerability – even before the new Bush administration promoted a neoconservative foreign policy – gave the North the ability to manipulate its relationship with its external environment in such a way that it could promote this constructed vulnerability (and 'reality'), regardless of what the new US presidential administration's policy toward it was going to be.

### *ii. North Korea: the 'vulnerable' target*

From both sides, the US and the South had failed to change the North's perception of their intentions towards it. Provocations – and later, the resumption of the nuclear weapons development program – fed into the North Korean construction of a permanent war against an enemy that was trying to facilitate the collapse of the regime. Every time the North provoked either of these two countries, their stance – especially that of the US – became more uncompromising. With the exception of South Korea (which throughout most of the Six Party Talks promoted engagement instead of pressure), the reactions induced by North Korea's actions created an 'enemy' – an enemy that justified its nuclear programme, perpetuated North Korea's constructed identity, and (because of the new Bush administration's hardened stance towards it) created the international image of a vulnerable state that was being unfairly targeted by stronger states. The North, during the process of the Six Party Talks (as well as before it), provoked the international community to the point where even the South became tired of being embarrassed by the North's reactions to their incentives. Towards the end of the negotiations, North Korea could not extract concessions from the South as easily as it had been able to when the South had been promoting peaceful engagement.

Rich (2014: 430) notes that North Korean propaganda externally portrays the country as vulnerable, while internally 'emphasises the strength of the [country's] military'. North Korea had set the scene, domestically and internationally, for the 'confession' reportedly made in 2002 that it was developing Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU) (Nanto 2003: 24). To the DPRK's population, this confession (if it was ever revealed to the general public in the state) fed into the narrative that the military was standing up to the 'evil' international community (and the 'hostile' US) as an underdog, unafraid to fight for its perceived legitimate right to have nuclear weapons, as well as 'any type of weapon more powerful than [a nuclear weapon] so as to defend its sovereignty and right to existence from the ever-growing nuclear threat by the US' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, DPRK in ICG 2003: 13). To the international community, the lack of consensus concerning evidence of this programme and the validity of the confession (Buszynski 2013: 57), made the North look vulnerable – a state that has no choice but to create a deterrent against an overly zealous great power that had called it part of the 'Axis of Evil' (Rozman 2007a: 15).

North Korea actively resisted any type of 'altercasting' that would lead to a change in its externally constructed reality (and by implication, its internally constructed identity). The DPRK made it possible to make its actions (and other states' reactions) feed into, and maintain, the construction of this identity. Its ability to construct this reality was stronger than the US's (during the Clinton administration), as well as the ROK's and the PRC's (the People's Republic of

China) attempts to erode this self-perception through active engagement. This narrative created a vulnerable yet defiant regime (in the eyes of its own population), while constraining action from the international community. Other states still believed that, whether through engagement or force, they could make the North give up its nuclear development programme,; which made the North look (especially in light of the new Bush administration's lack of finesse regarding diplomacy) like it was entitled to a nuclear weapons programme as there was a legitimate reason for it to feel threatened.

*'David and Goliath', the new Bush administration, and Wendt's 'looking-glass self'*

As part of the North Korean regime's conscious construction of its identity, interaction with its external environment reflects and perpetuates Wendt's 'mirror theory of identity formation' and the 'looking-glass self' (1992: 407, 404). This is true especially in the case of its relationship with the US. By the time the US confronted North Korea with information about a secret HEU programme, the scene had already been set for the DPRK's narrative in relation to the US; if Wendt's argument is applied to the relationship between the US and the DPRK respectively, then the 'self' (the US) is a 'reflection of an actor's socialisation' (the US's history and interactions with the DPRK). It can be argued that the DPRK socialised the US to become the self that was necessary for the DPRK in order for it to create its 'reality'. This worked the other way around as well – the US, especially after 9/11, was also constructing a reality concerning its external environment that pitted 'good' against 'evil' (Bleiker 2003: 721), and this construction was enabled and supported by the DPRK's relationship with the US. The interactions of both these states towards one another created a co-dependent identity that reinforced North Korea's 'reality'.

According to Roland Bleiker (2003: 721), '[the] rhetoric of rogue states is indicative of how US foreign policy continues to be driven by dualistic and militaristic Cold War thinking patterns. The "Evil Empire" may be gone; but not so the underlying need to define safety and security with reference to an external threat that must be warded off at any cost'. Despite the Clinton administration's push for a new way of thinking about the US's role as a superpower that can shape the future of the world's character (by promoting norms that lead *away* from Cold War thinking), the advent of the new Bush administration brought back this duality when it came to national (and international) security. The new administration embodied a 'paradigmatic change in American foreign policy and defence policy' with a focus on 'moral absolutism, hegemonic unilateralism, offensive realism, and a focus on mass destruction and global terrorism' (Moon and Bae 2003: 11). Bush's State of the Union address in 2002 characterised North Korea as part of an 'Axis of Evil' (Pollack 2003: 27); North Korea was labelled as a 'rogue state' by the National

Security Strategy of the United States (The White House 2002: 13-16) – a state that 'pursued repression of their citizens, threatened neighbouring states, violated international treaties, sought weapons of mass destruction (WMD) to intimidate others, served as sponsors of terrorism, and *rejected American values*' (own emphasis); and Bush himself said that he loathes Kim Jong Il (Bush in *The Washington Post* 2002). For its part, North Korea used this to define its relationship with the US for its own benefit. There is no doubt that the US's rhetoric was belligerent and gave the North justifiable reason to fear an attack, but whether escalation of the problem – and the need for the Six Party Talks because of the crisis – was only the fault of the US and its new policies is questionable. As previously noted, the DPRK had been using the nuclear weapons programme to bolster regime legitimacy long before the Bush administration (ostensibly unintentionally) fed into the narrative.

The focus should not be on who was to blame (or who reneged on promises first). It is not necessarily important whether it was the North's non-compliance with the Agreed Framework (through the supposed development of a clandestine HEU program), or the US's rhetoric that caused the North to feel compelled to react by declaring the Agreed Framework dead and withdrawing from the NPT. The reason for this is that *both* states needed an 'opposite' in order to bolster the construction of their external 'realities'. These states actively continued constructing each other's identities through the actions that followed the 'confession'. The North could prove that they had reason to be scared – the US had not adhered to the principles in the Agreed Framework while they themselves had upheld their end, by freezing their nuclear programme (ICG 2003: 10-11), and the US's accusation of a secret HEU program (which will be discussed in the next section) was, according to the North, merely a justification for the US to do to the North what it was already doing to Iraq (Rozman 2007a: 18-19). In retaliation, the North threatened, among other things, to 'turn Seoul into a "sea of fire"' (Bleiker 2003: 724). The rationale behind this constructed reality was that it needed to show strength (especially if this specific example of the DPRK's rhetoric was meant for an internal audience as well) so that the US would not consider doing the same to them.

Before looking at the 'confession' that was made in 2002 in more detail, clarity will be provided regarding the narrative that dominated the mutual construction of the DPRK's and the US's identities. Wade Huntley, in *US Policy toward North Korea in Strategic Context: Tempting Goliath's Fate* (2007), compares the two adversaries to the Biblical parable of David and Goliath. In the case of North Korea and the US, the 'confession' recreated this story as one where the weak but defiant state takes on the strong and arrogant state and wins – because David, 'fearless despite his evident inferiority…finds and then exploits weaknesses Goliath didn't realise he himself had' (456). This story became a story of 'good versus evil' (Bleiker 2003: 732).

Who was 'good' and who was 'evil', however, seemed to be less clear-cut than the US would have wanted it to be. According to Rozman (2007a: 15), the 'Other Four' (the other four parties to the Six Party Talks) 'cringed at news of [the 'Axis of Evil'] speech and reenergised [their] own engagement of the North', ostensibly because they themselves were afraid of what the US might plan to do to the region. North Korea's 'reality' as the weak but justifiably defiant state, in the war against the strong and 'evil' Goliath, was not too far-fetched to be dismissed as 'irrational' – not even by the US's ally in the South. Despite the US's sense of physical superiority (and the belief that it could unilaterally make 'evil' states do what it wanted them to do, through the application of its superior power), the DPRK actually had better leverage from the start because of this narrative. The North's interactions with the US had intensified the fear of the other parties to the negotiation in relation to the very probable instability that the US was going to catalyse in the region through its belligerent rhetoric. Uncertainty surrounding the 'confession' did not only made other states (especially the ROK and the PRC) scramble to try to placate the US (which worked in the DPRK's favour), it also made them suspicious of the US's 'actual' intentions regarding this 'confession'.

*The 'confession': 2002*

In 2002 Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, James Kelly, asked Kang Sok Ju (North Korea's first Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs) whether North Korea had an HEU programme. According to Buszynski (2013: 24), Kang 'offered to terminate the program if the US promised not to attack it'. This 'confession' was thought to be authentic by the US, although the North denied that they had made the confession in the first place, claiming that there had been a mistranslation in what had been said (24). Some believed that the North had secretly been developing this programme while technically complying with the Agreed Framework, and had been planning to use it as a bargaining chip for when the Framework would fall apart. Bruce Cumings, for example, says that the Clinton administration had told the Bush administration that there was a chance that the HEU programme existed, but that 'it should [not be an] obstacle to keeping Yongbyon frozen and finishing the missile deal, because HEU is a hard technology to master and would require many years of experimentation before a bomb could be built' (2007: 3). Others were not convinced that the North's declaration was a real confession, and questioned the US's interpretation of the statement made by Kang. China, for example, responded by claiming that it 'had no prior knowledge of this program' and voiced doubts about US intelligence concerning it (ICG 2006a: 5).

What made this confession relevant is how it changed the US administration's attitude toward the North. Before the September 11 attacks and Bush's famous 'Axis of Evil' speech, where he

grouped North Korea with Iraq and Iran as three of the most dangerous states in the world, the Bush administration had been willing to continue with the Agreed Framework, albeit with 'improvements'. It wanted 'verifiable constraints on North Korea's missile programs and a ban on its missile exports; and a less threatening conventional military posture' (ICG 2003: 12). In this same statement Bush stated that 'if the DPRK was receptive to these American objectives, then the United States would "expand [its] efforts to help the North Korean people, ease sanctions and take other political steps"' (12). After the September 11 attacks, the 'Axis of Evil' speech, and a National Security Strategy that did not rule out the possibility of military strikes against states with WMDs (White House 2002: 14), North Korea was in no mood to negotiate. It accused the Bush administration of being 'hostile' towards it, and made the claim that it had the right to develop whichever weapons are necessary in order to protect it from the 'hostile US' (ICG 2003: 13). The programme had very possibly started before the 'confession' had been made (Hecker 2010: 47), but this did not matter: North Korea (still) had its enemy, and its justification for leaving the NPT, as well as for the continued development of its nuclear weapons programme (ICG 2009a: 5). It was the vulnerable small (target) state (Buszynski 2013: 185) going up against a great power bent on promoting its collapse.

Because of the Bush administration's new foreign policy outlook, it had no choice but to 'play along' after the 'confession' – continuing with engagement (or even trying to apologise for Bush's statements) would undercut their neoconservative agenda, 'while burying news of the problem would only have left the administration vulnerable to an embarrassing leak' which would make it look weak and fickle (Rozman 2007a: 16). To be fair to the North in this context, George W. Bush did say that he loathed Kim Jong Il, the 'Axis of Evil' did include North Korea, and the National Security Strategy of 2002 stated:

> '[we] must be prepared to stop rogue states and their terrorist clients before they are able to threaten or use weapons of mass destruction against the United States and our allies…Our response must take full advantage of [among other resources] innovation in the use of military forces, modern technologies, including the development of an effective missile defence system'; and 'The United States has long maintained the option of pre-emptive actions to counter a sufficient threat to our national security'.
>
> (White House 2002: 14, 15)

The US made it easy for North Korea to use the US's aggressive stance to their advantage. This raised the real perception of threat in the region significantly as the US was already invading Iraq (Rozman 2007a: 16), and it would not have been too far-fetched to believe that North Korea would be one of the next states on the US's target list. It did not matter that in January

2003 Bush said that if North Korea would stop the development of nuclear weapons, he would consider restarting a '"bold initiative" involving US energy and food assistance' (ICG 2004: 5). The damage was done – the North was 'at war' with its historic enemy and it had the resolve to rather have a 'liberation war' than to give in to the enemy's demands. The DPRK was 'David' because it was being unfairly targeted by the powerful 'Goliath', and the North was also 'David' because it was defiant, it had the strength of its own convictions, and was not going to go down without a fight.

*The Joint Statement and the first nuclear test (2005, 2006)*

Despite the US's attempts to avoid bilateral negotiations with the DPRK concerning the nuclear weapons programme in the North, other members of the Six Party Talks managed to get it to become more flexible in 2005 with the 19th of September agreement (the Joint Statement of 2005) (Huntley 2005: 1). In the agreement, the North committed to 'ending its efforts to produce nuclear weapons, give up "existing nuclear weapons", rejoin the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT), and resubmit to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards, including readmission of international inspectors to its nuclear facilities' (1). This was in response to North Korea's threat on the 10th of February 2005 that it had nuclear weapons and 'would "increase its nuclear arsenal" in response to the "*hostile* policy of the US"' (ICG 2006b: 2 [own emphasis]). After the threat, the US negotiator was given permission to have 'unrestricted bilateral talks' with North Korean negotiators (2). On the 19th of September the parties signed an 'ambiguous joint statement, drafted by China' (2), despite the reluctance of the US; the US was essentially forced to sign the statement or face being accused of derailing the Talks (Rozman 2007a: 113). The North's demands for an LWR – a demand that the US refused to entertain – was ambiguously added by others in order to preserve momentum. However, the US added a clause that they would consider the production of an LWR 'at an appropriate time', which to them meant that they would only consider it once North Korea had 'dismantled *all* nuclear weapons and [programmes]' (ICG 2006b: 3 [own emphasis]). An important shift nevertheless occurred, as the US confirmed for the first time that they had no intention to attack the DPRK (which was a change from the initial stance of the Bush administration), and they also officially stated for the first time that they had 'no nuclear weapons deployed in [South] Korea' (Huntley 2005: 1).

Right after signing the statement, however, the US – whether intentionally or not – derailed the progress by freezing the DPRK regime's assets in the Macao-based bank, Banco Delta Asia (BDA) (ICG 2006b: 3), as well as reverting back to 'tough talk to the North [in order to reassure] its conservative base' (Rozman 2007a: 113). America's closing statement after the round of talks

that led to the September 2005 Joint Statement essentially blocked the DPRK's request for an LWR (which was promised in the initial 1994 Agreed Framework), sanctioned the North by freezing the DPRK's bank assets in BDA, and justified these actions by bringing up 'human rights and "illicit activities" in addition to weapons proliferation' (ICG 2006b: 3). North Korea's behaviour led to a Joint Statement that the US could not avoid signing, but the US still refused to earnestly make concessions in order to let the Six Party Talks become successful. The DPRK was still believed to be an 'international miscreant that [did] not deserve the prerogatives of sovereignty', and should not 'be "rewarded for bad behaviour"' (Huntley 2007: 463).

Initial flexibility shown by the Americans was in part because of Chinese pressure, but this pressure proved to be insufficient as progress in the negotiations was less important for the US at the time than the promotion of its non-proliferation strategy. The US's non-proliferation strategy was one where the *threat of its own power* (nuclear or otherwise) '[was] actually *part* of the *non-proliferation solution*, and [therefore] a greater commitment to [peaceful] nuclear disarmament [was] irrelevant' (Huntley 2007: 463 [own emphasis]). It did seem, after the US's actions, that it was more concerned with upholding its version of 'moral absolutism' (463) than halting the DPRK's nuclear weapons programme. The US's decision to derail a statement that promoted 'respect [for] each other's sovereignty, [peaceful existence]…and [normalised relations]', as well as a negotiated 'permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula' (September Joint Statement in Huntley 2005: 2), played into North Korea's (and other states') perception of the US's arrogance, and showed a lack of respect for international norms such as the nuclear non-proliferation regime. This counterproductive non-proliferation strategy was a reflection of the US's perception of global power – it thought that it could act 'above' the limitations set by institutionalised norms. It was also the perfect justification for the DPRK to continue with its own nuclear weapons' production, as it perfectly reflected the North's 'vulnerability' narrative.

After the round that produced the Joint Statement, not much progress was made in terms of the North's denuclearisation. The US once again refused bilateral talks with the DPRK until the Yongbyon reactor was shut down, and the DPRK refused to do anything until the assets at BDA were unfrozen (Wit 2007: 55). The North insisted that their policy against the US was justified, especially after being 'punished' by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for test-firing long range missiles in 2006. This came in the form of Resolution 1695 that demanded that the North 'suspend all missile activity', and included sanctions (non-binding on member states) that offended the North Korean regime (ICG 2006b: 5). The North's response to the Resolution was to '[condemn] the attempt of some countries to misuse the Council for despicable political aims and to put pressure on [North Korea]' (Pak Gil Yon in ICG 2006b: 6). This played into North

Korea's image of the unfairly targeted state – the state that was brave enough to defy the international community (and the 'evil' Goliath, the US, in particular) – and justified the continuation of the nuclear weapons programme. Scott Snyder supports the argument that this ploy was about maintaining a certain constructed identity when he states that 'the missile launch may have been *more for internal purposes than external purposes*, designed to *rally public support for the regime*, to placate the military for lack of diplomatic accomplishments or to encourage it to accept one of Kim Jong Il's less-than-impressive sons as his heir apparent' (in ICG 2006: 6 [own emphasis]). This launch was very possibly for internal purposes, but it did not only sustain the North Korean regime's internal clout. The fact that it strengthened North Korea's internal identity meant that it also strengthened North Korea's externally constructed reality – it therefore served to sustain the DPRK regime's 'power' internally as well as externally.

Although the UNSC Resolution was not binding for members (China and Russia made sure that this was the case), it had 'exhortatory language' which offended the DPRK. Both China and Russia believed that the fact that they circumvented the use of mandatory language in the Resolution was a sign that they were on North Korea's side (Buszynski 2013: 118). Nevertheless, the North was angered by the Resolution – not only because of the language that was used, but also because China and Russia signed off on it. In fact, when the North conducted its first nuclear test, it gave China only 20 minutes' notice, which conveyed their mistrust towards their 'ally' (Blank 2007). This sent the message that the North believed that China and Russia had abandoned it – its reaction to the Resolution did not say that it was only the US that was misusing the Security Council to promote its own agenda. The North's statement condemned 'some countries' for apparently abusing the UNSC (Pak Gil Yon in ICG 2006: 6), which could possibly also have been a message to China and Russia. It also strengthened the symbolic significance of the test itself in relation to the maintenance of its identity – the North now had to prove, to an even more antagonistic world, that it had the capability to defend itself. Huntley supports this assessment of the motivation behind the test. He claims that the symbolic was more important than the physical in the DPRK's behaviour: 'The inevitable exposure, combined with Pyongyang's bold announcement of its intention to test, together indicate the likely dominance of symbolic over strategic motivations in going forward with the detonation' (2007: 476). According to Buszynski (2013: 121):

> [Banners] were unveiled in Pyongyang and crowds gathered to celebrate North Korea's arrival as a nuclear state – a matter of great pride for the regime. The nuclear test was proclaimed as a symbol of *Juche*, the regime's ideology of self-

> reliance, which would be used to strengthen regime credibility against domestic discontent.

For a domestic audience the symbolic significance of this test was incredibly influential in maintaining the North Korean regime's power internally. According to the domestically constructed narrative, North Korea was finally a nuclear state – it was as strong as its enemies and it had beaten the odds: the world was against it but its revolutionary ideology had saved the day.

The nuclear weapon was not only a possible bargaining chip for concessions if the North promised denuclearisation – it had become one of the cornerstones of the regime's power (its constructed power externally) as well as the nation's identity, both of which are mutually reinforcing. If the self-reliance and independence of *Juche* exists only in the collective, then the nuclear weapon was the physical embodiment of each individual North Korean's 'power' in relation to its nation and 'family'. The test was not only a message that woke up the international community and brought the US back to the negotiating table – it was the conscious construction of an identity that gave a nation strength while simultaneously exploiting (and promoting) its weakness. The first nuclear test was a symbol of past successes more than it was a symbol of present ones. It was designed to ignite the 'revolutionary spirit' in the people of North Korea during a time of (economic) instability and an uncertain domestic future. It was designed to bring the nation back to the past.

The US's immediate response was to use the UNSC to '[push] for punitive sanctions, and [it] drafted a resolution that was eventually unanimously adopted' (Chanlett-Avery and Squassoni 2006: 1). North Korea responded by insisting that 'increased pressure on the regime would be regarded as an *act of war*' (1 [own emphasis]). The irony is that what the test ultimately did was prove that the 'red line' of nuclear weapon possession (in terms of non-proliferation) could be shifted (Rozman 2007b: 612), and that belligerence from the North would eventually be met with a softened stance from the US (Hecker 2010: 50). Nevertheless, North Korea's rhetoric fed into its conscious construction of a certain reality in the same way that antagonistic rhetoric from the US bolstered the foundation of the 'David versus Goliath' narrative. The nuclear test did not only undermine an international non-proliferation norm (that not even the strongest state in the world could uphold in this case) – it proved that the North had 'won' because it had brought the US back to the negotiation table (Rozman 2007a: 39), back into the North's constructed 'reality' where the North had the power to make the US continue to play its part.

*The February 2007 Agreement, second nuclear test (2009), and '150-day Battle'*

The US lost traction with regard to the negotiations from 2007 onwards. Despite growing desperation from all parties to get back to the negotiating table – which became increasingly evident in the US's behaviour – the North continued its plans to pursue its nuclear weapons programme. This even frustrated its 'ally', China. The momentum with which the talks deteriorated after the 2007 'deal', as well as the US's lack of a coherent strategy to manage the North's behaviour, helped foster perfect conditions for the North's second nuclear test. The next sections will look at these events and analyse how the North's domination of 'reality' (or, for arguments' sake, the negotiation 'narrative') entrapped the US by using its strategy towards the DPRK against it. The chapter will conclude by looking at how this eroded the strength of international limitations (like the nuclear taboo) that could have forced the international community to react appropriately to reinforce 'red lines', instead of increasingly making them seem as though they had always merely been symbolic.

*i. The 'deal'*

In 2007 the parties of the Six Party Talks 'struck a general denuclearisation deal' (ICG 2007: 1). Most experts believed that the deal did not deviate much from the original Agreed Framework that was signed in 1994, as 'both [demanded] a "freeze" of North Korea's Yongbyon reactor in return for economic aid' (3). The differences were slight but included the fact that the US had realised it needed cooperation of the other actors in order to increase momentum (Rozman 2007a: 23). This more flexible attitude had already started in 2005 with the September agreement (the Joint Statement), but it was much more evident in this phase where, 'in the face of [another possible] nuclear test, the United States showed more flexibility and took more seriously the goal of forging a multilateral coalition' (35). The second difference was that it was a 'step-by-step' plan in which North Korea '[was] to be rewarded with specific aid packages for specific actions, rather than receive large rewards for merely the promise to take action' (ICG 2007: 3). The US was also being more flexible in this sense; up until this point the Americans regarded Complete, Verifiable and Irreversible Dismantlement (CVID) before any concessions as non-negotiable (Moon 2008: 82). Here the US was willing to give concessions in steps ('Actions for Actions') instead of reiterating its uncompromising position. One part of the deal that the Bush administration publicised was an improvement from the Agreed Framework in that it made no provision for a 'peaceful North Korean nuclear program' (ICG 2007: 3). This was different from the Agreed Framework because the framework promised LWRs in exchange for the freezing of North Korea's nuclear weapons development programmes. Nevertheless, despite the fact that the US promoted this difference as if it was a victory for them, the energy package

of fuel oil and electricity as well as an 'immediate shipment of fuel oil for shutting down the Yongbyon reactor' in the new deal (Buszynski 2013: 141) was actually more than the DPRK had received under the Agreed Framework.

The structure of the agreement was divided into two processes in order for all parties concerned to agree to sign it. The agreement itself was vague (once again), and called for 'Actions for Actions' – a sequential process where North Korea would incrementally receive aid for taking certain steps, with the final step (denuclearisation) being accompanied by full normalisation of relations between all the parties in the Six Party Talks (including, specifically, Japan and the US) (ICG 2007: 3). The second process consisted of the parties creating separate 'working groups' where certain issues (that could not be agreed to due to their sensitive nature) would be hashed out in more detail (Rozman 2007a: 50). For example, one of the working groups was created to deal with denuclearisation, which presumably 'under China's lead and the watchful eyes of the US [was designed to] press the North to meet benchmarks for declaring and disabling is nuclear assets' (50). These groups had to work in tandem, as progress on one could derail progress on the other – for example, the third working group, led by South Korea, focused on economic and energy assistance (51); if the South agreed to concede too much in this specific group, the North probably would not have felt the need to make any concessions of their own when it came to denuclearisation.

*ii. Deadlock*

Problems encountered in this agreement included getting the DPRK off the US's list of states that sponsor terrorism (ICG 2007: 6), unfreezing the regime's assets in the Macau-based bank, Banco Delta Asia (BDA) (Wit 2007: 54), and the process of verifying that the North had declared all of its nuclear development activities and were allowing the IAEA to monitor the process. For example, the US 'demanded that the North clarify its role in nuclear proliferation and its assistance to the nuclear programmes of other countries' (Buszynski 2013: 153 before being taken off the 'terrorism list', but the declaration of the nuclear programmes that it had submitted to China on the 26th of June 2008 'did not meet US expectations and [did] not include information about [suspected] nuclear weapons or nuclear weapons facilities' (ICG 2009a: 2). Understanding what 'verification' should mean under the agreement was also vague; the Chinese and South Koreans pressured the US into a resolution that would make sure that 'verification would come in some vague way as a product of tension reduction on the Korean Peninsula [and would be] tied to the promised incentives in an action by action plan' (Buszynski 2013: 153). This type of flexibility was the opposite of what the Bush administration had wanted when it came to the table at the start of the negotiations – 'CVID' had become obsolete,

as verification would have been almost impossible to implement (ICG 2009a: 3). The North also boycotted the Talks when the US took longer than expected to unfreeze the North Korean regime's assets at BDA, 'refusing to participate until the funds were transferred' (ICG 2007: 3). The HEU threat was also not discussed openly by the parties (Wit 2007: 54), but was very likely to become a problem at some point during the working group for denuclearisation..

Because of the issues discussed above, the group responsible for discussing and implementing the denuclearisation of the North eventually reached a deadlock (Buszynski 2013: 154). In September 2008, the North began threatening to restart the Yongbyon reactor, and on the 22nd of September 'it asked IAEA monitors to remove surveillance cameras and seals that had been installed in July 2007 under the first phase of denuclearisation' (ICG 2009a: 2). Despite this, the US tried to accommodate the North by eventually taking the country off its terrorism list, which briefly made the North continue with its disablement (Niksch and Perl 2007: 17). But at the end of the year in 2008, the North became uncooperative during the Talks concerning denuclearisation because of apparent misunderstandings. Kim Sook, the head of the South Korean delegation at the time, said that 'several core elements of verification' had not been resolved (in ICG 2009a: 3).

Misinterpretation concerning 'verification' was inevitable due to the nature of the agreement. North Korea arguably used this ambiguity to undermine the agreement – possibly something that had been planned since its inception. The regime knew that the succession from Kim Jong Il to Kim Jong Un (for example) would need strong ideological support (ICG 2009a: 3). It was likely that he regime was aware that another nuclear weapon test would sustain the status quo domestically, and was willing to take its chances with the international community in order to make sure that this was the case. It seems that there was a need for this; the succession process, as well as certain problematic market economy policy changes had left the general public unhappy (Oh and Hassig 2010: 91), and the regime needed to prove its legitimacy.

The DPRK did not re-emerge internationally (despite repeated offers for engagement in both bilateral and multilateral formats) until May 2009, when the North Korean state media began to describe the US as 'maintaining the "*hostile policy* of the past" and "stepping it up in a more cunning manner"' (ICG 2009a: 3 [own emphasis]). As part of the 2007 deal, the North had claimed that it would get rid of their nuclear weapons in the 'fourth stage' of the sequenced agreement, 'pending the USA stopping its *hostile policies*' (Nakato 2012: 21 [own emphasis]). Despite the US's sudden turnaround and willingness to conduct bilateral talks with the North, the DPRK consistently resorted to recycling the mantra that the US had a 'hostile policy' towards it. This very possibly meant that the North did not ever plan on making it to the 'fourth stage'. It

was in a position to consistently bring the Talks back to where they had started. It is also telling that the North said that the US was maintaining the hostile policy *of the past* – the DPRK masterfully kept the negotiations going in circles (and kept 'reality' firmly stuck in the past) while simultaneously blaming the US for this very tactic.

The 2005 Joint Statement included a type of formal security guarantee which is perplexing but not unusual if analysed in relation to the construction of the 'underdog' versus 'heavyweight' (or 'David versus Goliath') narrative: the North 'brushed [the security guarantee] off as a meaningless commitment, a piece of paper that guaranteed nothing for North Korean security' (Cha 2009: 120). The sudden turnaround from the North was considered a contradiction, which was something that the other parties were used to, but were becoming increasingly frustrated with. However, it is consistent with the 'reality' that needed to be created in order not only for the North to justify testing missiles and conducting a nuclear test in 2009, but to strengthen the narrative that legitimised the succession of power from father to son and the resistance to ideological change.

*iii. The Bush administration's new (flexible) policy*

The new policy followed by the Bush administration (that led to the deal signed in 2007) was in fact more contradictory in nature than North Korea's rhetoric that led to the tests in 2009. Increased regional tension, along with the pressure on the parties to deescalate the crisis, led to 'strategic trade-offs that were easing cooperation' (Rozman 2007a: 43). For example, some believe that the White House thought Iran was the greater threat, and 'if a deal could be struck with North Korea, [it] would put pressure on Tehran to negotiate away its nuclear programme' (Cumings 2007: 4). The Bush administration had run out of options and had changed direction from its previous neoconservative policy towards North Korea, which had focused primarily on a combination of its assumption about the DPRK regime's character (as 'evil'), and its assumption about its own power 'and the rectitude of the administration's overarching global vision' (Huntley 2007: 460). It had produced a worse outcome by the end of the Bush administration's tenure than when the administration had begun the application of its policy in 2002. It saw 'the situation escalate from one where the North's nuclear program was essentially frozen to one where it [had] tested…weapons and may have made significant progress on its missile and warhead development' (ICG 2009a: 7).

The DPRK confirmed the parties to the Six Party Talks' worst fears about the North Korean regime's intentions when it tested nuclear weapons in 2006 and 2009, which forced the US to be more conciliatory (Rozman 2007a: 44). The Bush administration's hope that the Talks would have a 'five versus one' structure, with itself at the helm, fully 'reliant on firmness of will and

military power' (41), was proven to be wishful thinking because of the differences among the parties, as well as the US's disregard for the other parties' relationship with the North. For example, one of the main reasons why the US's 'power' did not provide the results that it wanted was because of the lack of support for its policy not only from China, but from South Korea as well. The US might have thought that it would not need the 'support' of South Korea (or probably thought that the South would passively support the US no matter what its policies were), but its lack of understanding of the importance of the North's identity vis-à-vis the other states (especially the ROK) left it vulnerable.

The new policy shifted from being moralistically unilateral to accepting that a truly multilateral policy would produce better results (Rozman 2007b: 619). It also reflected Bush's desperation to produce a positive result before the end of his tenure, as the situation in Iraq and the Middle East was turning into a disaster, threatening to taint his administration's foreign policy legacy. Concerning the February 2007 deal and the Bush administration's dilemma, David Sanger from *The New York Times* reported that '[it] is hard to imagine that either George W. Bush or Kim Jong Il would have agreed even a year ago [in 2006] to the kind of deal they have now approved….[but] in the past few months, the world has changed for both Mr. Bush and Mr Kim, two men who have made clear how deeply they detest each other' (2007). Despite backlash from neoconservatives, Bush pushed for a deal that would make sure that the North 'would no longer produce nuclear fuel and was on the way to dismantlement', instead of maintaining its CVID stance (Buszynski 2013: 155). The Bush administration was desperate and, in order to fast-track an agreement, 'struck a bargain with North Korea [which included terms that were largely the same as] the Agreed Framework [of 1994]' (*National Review* 2007). The article in *National Review* concludes: 'we've [the US] won a promise from a liar'. The Bush administration had essentially 'lost', having been led by a regime bent on protecting its identity (cemented in constructed victories of the past) back to where both parties had begun. Cumings (2007: 2-3) adds that 'no administration ever took longer to arrive at…a conclusion', which he described as going 'back to the future'.

*iv. The nuclear test: 2009*

The nuclear test in 2009 was once again preceded by what the international community interpreted as a rocket launch test, but what North Korea claimed was an attempt to 'launch a satellite…[by] the Korean Committee of Space Technology' (Nakato 2012: 24). The attempt to place this satellite into orbit failed. Nevertheless, the international community reacted by using the UNSC as a vehicle for its dissatisfaction (ICG 2009a: 4). The presidential statement released

by the Security Council 'condemned the launch as in contravention of its Resolution 1718' (4). The DPRK responded to the statement by saying:

> First, the DPRK resolutely rejects the ***unjust action*** taken by the UNSC wantonly ***infringing upon the sovereignty*** of the DPRK and seriously ***hurting the dignity of the Korean people.***
>
> Second, there would be no need to hold six-party talks which the DPRK has attended.
>
> Now that the six-party talks have ***turned into a platform for infringing upon the sovereignty of the DPRK and seeking to force the DPRK to disarm itself and bring down the system in it the DPRK*** will never participate in the talks any longer nor will it be bound to any agreement of the six party talks.
>
> Third, the DPRK will ***bolster its nuclear deterrent for self-defence in every way***.
>
> The DPRK, Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006 (*National Committee on North Korea* [own emphasis])

The statement reinforces North Korea's narrative. Firstly, the presidential statement could by nature not demand of member states to uphold previous, or implement any new, types of punitive action against the North. It was not a declaration of war, but a warning given within a specific context – the DPRK was in the middle of denuclearisation negotiations, and within this context the launching of a satellite (which looks suspiciously similar to the launching of a rocket) could only be regarded by other parties to the Talks as an action designed to undermine the creation of (tenuous) trust.

The statement was called 'unjust' by North Korea and claimed to have hurt the dignity of the *people* of North Korea. This could be a sign that the statement was not primarily meant for the international community, but was also produced for the North's domestic audience. It claims that not only was the UNSC presidential statement designed to hurt the dignity of the people of North Korea, but also that the Six Party Talks were designed to infringe upon the sovereignty (and by extension the existence) of the state itself. In this context, the rhetoric created a vulnerable North Korea that was merely defending itself against unjust action by the outside world. This provided the perfect foundation for the North's justification of its 'nuclear deterrent'. After this statement, the DPRK demanded an apology for the UNSC presidential statement and said that if it did not get one that it would 'conduct nuclear tests and flight-tests

of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs)' (ICG 2009a: 4). The scene had been set for the North's nuclear test that was conducted on the 25th of May 2009 (5).

Once again the test had domestic propaganda value as it coincided with an attempt to motivate workers during that year, through a 'drive' called the '150-day battle' (Oh and Hassig 2010: 91). During this 'battle', workers were 'assigned to work overtime on special construction and agricultural projects in order to increase productivity' after a failed currency re-evaluation (91). The test bolstered *Juche* and *Songun*, and could be said to have been timed specifically as part of preparation for the legitimisation of Kim Jong Il's successor. The North had 'won' the 'revolution' with the successful test of a nuclear weapon in defiance of the 'hostile' outside world that openly threatened to undermine the very existence of the North Korean nation. The fact that the test coincided with a *Chollima* drive that was called a 'battle' is instructive. The negotiations, the rhetoric (from both the US and the DPRK), and the negative reaction from the international community (which this time included China and South Korea) after the failed satellite launch (92) had served their purpose: the nation was still fighting the 'revolution' and winning the 'battles'. The use of the word 'battle' meant that the 'war' had not yet been won; propaganda created to support the regime once again had 'inspired' the nation to fight on in order to win the 'war'. The fact that sanctions (that had been imposed on the North by the UNSC in Resolutions 1718 and 1874 – although they were not binding on member states) were regarded as acts of 'war' by the North, and not just attempts to make it denuclearise and stop testing missiles (Nakato 2012: 27), is a reflection of this world view. Sanctions will probably be imposed on the North for as long as it has nuclear weapons (and for as long as it tests missiles). This creates the perception of an antagonistic 'outside' for the people of the DPRK, so that the 'war' (or the 'revolution') can continue. The fact that these sanctions focus more on constraining the use or sale of weapons than aid (Chanlett-Avery and Squassoni 2006: 3), for example, does not matter. Sanctions do not undermine the North Korean regime's constructed narrative – they play into it.

Because this cycle of construction – this narrative that supports North Korean identity – feeds into the domestic as well as the international 'reality' for the North, the North had also gained a lot of ground on the negotiations front. The North now wanted to be recognised as a nuclear weapons state by the US in the same way that the US had accepted the status of India and Pakistan as de facto nuclear weapons states (Cha 2009: 123), and they wanted the talks to be about arms control and not the unilateral denuclearisation of the North (Hecker 2010: 50). Giving in to these demands would make the US appear fickle as it would seem as though the emphasis on moralistic principles earlier in the Talks, for example, had been a smokescreen for another agenda. Not giving in to these demands (or not considering negotiations regarding

them) leaves the international community without any influence over the North and its nuclear weapons programme, and severely undermines the non-proliferation regime.

*'David and Goliath': dominating the narrative and the North's construction of power*

North Korea successfully tested a nuclear weapon in 2009 with little backlash. It refused to go back to the Six Party Talks, as the situation had now changed: it was an 'equal' – a nuclear weapons state, allowed to demand talks about arms control and not denuclearisation negotiations as a target state. The US's policies were counterproductive, to be sure. The Bush administration was not flexible (particularly at the beginning), and at the very least did not take the other states (especially China and South Korea) into account when calculating its perception of relative power and influence in relation to this issue. It pursued a strategy based on a perception of itself as the only real great power among lesser states (in physical as well as moralistic terms), and in so doing revealed a blind spot that the North could manipulate: the Bush administration did not realise that North Korea had been actively constructing their own identity for decades, using the actions of others against themselves. They did not realise that rhetoric was the power that the North had constructed for itself. Every action (and reaction) the US took played into the North's narrative, giving it the power to control how the story was being told. If a party 'acts' in another's constructed (and manipulated) 'reality', how much value does the party's perception of its relative power position have? It will not matter how much leverage it *perceives* itself to have vis-à-vis the other parties to the negotiation. If the one that is in control of the collectively constructed reality makes the party the outsider or the 'Goliath', then there is not much it can do to change the fact that it has been given a certain role to play – and that this role is not being dictated by the party's own actions, but is being directed by the narrator of this constructed 'reality'.

The 'power' that the North had in terms of this narrative is intensified by the DPRK's construction of identity on a domestic (or 'internal') level. The North would not have this power without the desperation (to stay in power) that a regime has to have in order for it to use its own people as 'cannon fodder', intensified by the regime's solution for the need to consolidate power domestically via the development of a weapon that increases the risk of instability in the region in order to feed a certain narrative to its people (and provide them with a purpose), as well as extract concessions from the international community and undermine the nuclear taboo. The elements discussed in Chapter Four play an important role – they form a foundation of 'negative' power (or 'coercive deficiency') that makes states in the region cautious, and leaves them with very few options regarding their behaviour towards the DPRK.

The US did not take this specific brand of coercive deficiency into consideration during the Talks, as it believed itself to be powerful enough to act as if this form of entrapment was not being actively constructed. The DPRK used this ignorance – and the US's perception of its overall global power position – against it when it came to the construction of what could be called, in this context, the 'Six Party Talks narrative'. Other states, however, were more cognisant of this power – states like South Korea and China acted in certain ways in order to attempt to change the North's threat perception, or at the very least to maintain the status quo. This was not only because of the risk of the unknown (what the region would be like for the North's neighbours if the North Korean regime were to collapse), but because of the way that the North's construction of its role in the region (through the construction of its own specific identity and 'reality') intensified a certain intersubjective understanding of the character of the region, and the other actors' relationship with the North and their roles in relation to this. The relationship that the North's neighbours have with the North can either support or undermine the North's constructed reality vis-à-vis the US. In the case of the Six Party Talks, this constructed reality gave the DPRK the upper hand because it intensified the need for states in the region to counter US policies in order to maintain the status quo. This coercive deficiency (that will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Six) supported and was intensified by the DPRK's narrative.

## 4. 'Perversity of power' and norms: North Korea's construction of power

This final section will link the North Korean regime's narrative (and 'reality') with the North's ability to control not only other states, but its ability to influence the non-proliferation regime (and its accompanying 'nuclear taboo' norm) through its ability to limit stronger states' actions. It argues that a strengthened justification for the 'perversity of power' (for a weak state) places strong states in a quagmire that reveals their limitations. North Korea's ability to 'pause' time and bring these negotiations (externally) 'back to the beginning', as well as to maintain its constructed internal identity, undermines as well as strengthens the nuclear taboo – and in turn proves that 'Goliath' does have a weak spot that can be exploited.

### *The North's control of the 'possible' and the 'perversity of power'*

The North Korean regime, throughout the negotiations, had the ability to control a narrative that created certain perceptions of itself as well as the US. While some believed that the North's actions were erratic and sometimes contradictory, the bigger picture arguably tells another story. Every action by the North precipitated a certain reaction from the international community (for the most part, a specific one from the US, as well as another from its neighbours) that continued to legitimise its plans to attain nuclear weapons. Every reaction by the international community, therefore, justified the North's 'reactions' which eventually led to

the state legitimising its existence as well as its status as a nuclear state. A Chinese analyst once said about the North's behaviour:

> The North Korean decision making system works best when it is in front of the decision making pattern of the international community, and doesn't work well in a reactionary role. They always ***have to have people reacting to their initiatives***, and this makes it difficult for China to dictate, as ***they have already planned out what to do***.
>
> (in ICG 2006a: 18 [own emphasis])

This echoes a belief that the North Korean regime had been constructing a narrative externally, just as it was constructing one internally, in order to guide the behaviour of states in relation to the North, and to manipulate them into following paths that would serve the regime's interests. It could be safe to say, by the end of the negotiations (and the testing of the second nuclear weapon), that the North was able to construct an internal narrative that led to a reenergised belief in the 'eternal revolution' through its external behaviour. The corollary of this is that it had actually also 'won' externally by consistently forcing the international community to rethink its 'red lines' (Park 2008: 361), and by getting what it wanted out of the negotiations (time, and the ability to manipulate other states within this context) without punishment.

The narrative therefore strengthened the North Korean regime's 'perversity of power', as it managed to stage a narrative that allowed it to continue working on its nuclear weapons programmes. This narrative, that accentuated the North's vulnerability and the legitimacy of its actions in relation to the US's stance towards it, justified their threat perception and made it difficult for the US to use its physical power and belligerent rhetoric against it in order to make it denuclearise. The US's volte force towards the end of the negotiations reflects their inability to implement the foreign policy that they had wanted to in this context.

The North's ability to manipulate its 'perversity of power' was supported by the actions of, for example, China and South Korea, but this support did not come from an ideological camaraderie or the states' need for an uncompromising position towards the US. China was far more pragmatic in its stance towards the DPRK than the US perceived it to be. Its 'friendship' with the North was maintained more because it wanted to preserve the status quo than because of a need to stand by its ideological 'brother'. The North was aware of this, and used its 'reality' to intensify the PRC's fear of regional instability. The more the North provoked the US (and by implication, the US reacted with the threat of force), the more China became desperate for the two 'enemies' to negotiate and find a peaceful solution that would not destabilise the region. The same applies to the South's relationship with the North (although because of their shared

identity, the North's narrative combined with the South's need to engage the North to maintain the status quo created a quagmire for the South) – it had to walk a tightrope between maintaining the status quo (and engaging the North), and sustaining its alliance with the US. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Six, but for now it is safe to say that the North's constructed narrative led the South and China to pursue engagement instead of pressure – and that this gave the North more room to increase the strength of its 'perversity of power'.

The North Korean regime managed to legitimise attaining a nuclear deterrent by constructing a narrative that amplified the US's 'bully' status every time it tried to pressure the North into giving up its nuclear weapons. This strengthened 'perversity of power', characterised by the increasing need for a weak state to develop a nuclear deterrent the more a strong state places pressure on it to give up its ambitions. The North justified continuing with its programme by consistently referring to the US's belligerent rhetoric (its 'hostile policy', for example) and its reactions to the North's provocations. This intensified the US's need to pressure the North to denuclearise, which in turn created the need to maintain the status quo for the other states.

In essence, the DPRK managed to control the other states in the Six Party Talks in terms of which decisions they could make in this context. The North Korean regime's construction of a certain narrative gave it the ability to control the 'possible' – it gave it the ability to place limitations on the actions of other much stronger states through the creation and maintenance of a specific 'reality', wherein the other states could only play their assigned roles. North Korea's construction of power in this context is this construction of 'reality' – the construction of a narrative that limits the actions of stronger states (and sometimes even dictates them). This narrative, which bolsters its internal identity and is simultaneously supported by this same identity construction, put North Korea in charge and allowed it to 'win' this battle in its eternal revolution.

*Action and non-action – the non-proliferation regime and the nuclear taboo*

Eric Yong-Joong Lee (2004: 102) notes that '[the] North Korean nuclear dispute is significant, as it forced the international community to apply a new framework and reform the nuclear control system prevailing at the time'. For a country that is ranked one of the weakest in the world, it is quite a feat to have the ability to disrupt an international norm that has been maintained by the strongest states in the world. It is through its 'perversity of power' (sustained and intensified by its construction of 'reality' and identity) that North Korea has managed to limit powerful states' actions. In the context of 'perversity of power' as well as the limitations placed on states regarding the nuclear taboo norm, powerful states can either react with force or not react at all. Reacting with force (which would probably include the use of their nuclear weapons) would

undermine and severely weaken the nuclear taboo. The US's initial counterproductive non-proliferation strategy (where it would maintain the non-proliferation regime through the use of its own nuclear weapons) is an example of how the nuclear taboo could have been weakened (and the deterrent value of the nuclear weapon itself would have been severely weakened), had the US followed through with the policy.

If, however, a nuclear state does not react by punishing another state for continuing with its production of nuclear weapons, it paradoxically strengthens the nuclear taboo. The US's non-action after each North Korean nuclear test shows how even the US was not necessarily convinced that the use of nuclear weapons was the best policy to pursue in order to protect the value of a norm that places value on the non-use of nuclear weapons.. It could convincingly be argued that the US might have followed through with this if the Iraq war had not turned out to be a failure. However, even if the non-use of the nuclear weapon was not because of the US's need to adhere to an international norm (but rather because it realised that it did not have the capacity to follow through with their threats), the US's non-action strengthened the nuclear taboo, which strengthened the DPRK's resolve to continue with its nuclear weapons programme.

The North's (continuous) internal construction of identity therefore gave it the power to dominate a narrative externally that increased its 'perversity of power'. This 'perversity of power' placed any state that had the ability to punish the DPRK in a quagmire: should one pressure the North (and threaten it with the use of one's own nuclear weapons) in order for it to dismantle its nuclear weapons programme? Doing this would only erode the legitimacy of the nuclear taboo and decrease the deterrent value of the nuclear weapon itself. But if one were to do nothing – which, whether intentional or not, became the case with states' reactions to the North's nuclear tests – then the nuclear taboo would be strengthened, and in turn, the North's 'perversity of power' would be strengthened as well.

What cannot be ignored is the influence that multilateral complexity has on not only the course of international negotiations, but also the maintenance of international norms. The US's inaction – its inability to punish the DPRK for crossing 'red' or 'bright' lines – strengthened the nuclear taboo and in so doing, gave the DPRK the ability to increase its 'perversity of power'. Its inaction, however, cannot be analysed as though other states did not have a role to play in relation to the US's behaviour towards the DPRK. It has already been mentioned that the US did consider punitive action against the DPRK (which included the possible use of its own nuclear weapons) at the beginning of the Talks. The reasons why the US did not go through with this mandate are numerous; but this paper argues that two of the most important reasons include

firstly, what was discussed in this chapter (the North's dominance of a narrative that sustains a certain type of relationship between the DPRK and the US), and secondly, what will be discussed in Chapter Six: how the North's external (and by implication internal) construction of identity influenced other countries' actions towards the DPRK, and how this aided in limiting the US's options when it came punitive actions against the North Korean regime. Chapter Six will analyse the impact of the US's non-action in more depth, within the context of the influence of other states (China and South Korea in particular) on the US's foreign policy towards the DPRK. It will therefore come back to the issue of 'non-action' after a discussion concerning China and South Korea's relationship with the North.

## 5. Conclusion

This chapter analysed the relationship between the US and the DPRK by focusing on how both of them created mutually dependent identities that in turn constructed certain realities. It showed that, in the course of the Six Party Talks, the interactions between these two states supported a 'reality' that helped the North to dominate a certain narrative. This narrative, supported by its internal construction of identity (while simultaneously influencing it), not only directed the actions of the US, but also influenced the nuclear taboo which in turn created a space in which the North could manoeuvre in such a way that in the end it demanded to be treated as an 'equal' at the negotiation table.

The chapter starts by showing how the North 'set the scene' and used the US's non-compliance (in relation to the Agreed Framework) as an excuse to create a certain reality that influenced behaviour throughout the Six Party Talks. It then shows how this reality was strengthened through the 'David and Goliath' narrative that created a certain perception of the DPRK (as vulnerable but defiant) for the other states involved in the Talks (with the possible exception of Japan). It then shows how this constructed narrative strengthened the state's 'perversity of power', which placed the responsibility to maintain the legitimacy of the non-proliferation regime in the hands of its adversaries. Not knowing how to react, the international community did not do very much in return. As much as the US was very vocal at the start of the negotiations about how it would punish the North if it tested nuclear weapons, the fact that the US did not really put as much pressure on the DPRK as it had threatened to do when the North did test nuclear weapons, shows how the DPRK had managed to influence both the behaviour of powerful states, as well as the maintenance of a powerful norm.

The inaction of the US in relation to the North's 'perversity of power' cannot be explained in isolation, however. Chapter Six will focus on how the North's construction of identity, as well as the construction of its external 'reality', intensified the need – especially with the South and

China – to maintain the status quo. The multilateral context therefore cannot be overlooked – it did have a part to play in limiting the US's power. However, the analysis would be superficial if one did not show how the DPRK's manipulation of 'reality' also dictated the way that states like South Korea and China reacted toward the North. In fact, the construction of the North's external reality (supported by its active construction of its internal identity) pressured the South as well as China to adopt a strategy that countered the US's ambitions, and therefore supported the North's control of the negotiations.

# Chapter 6:

# Multilateral Complexity: North Korea, China and South Korea in the Six Party Talks, coercive deficiency, 'altercasting', and the nuclear taboo

## 1. Introduction

Chapter Five focused on the relationship between the US and the DPRK during the negotiations, but captured only a part of the 'story'. Relevant in relation to the North's behaviour towards the outside world is Saadia Touval's argument, which states that '[interactions] between two actors usually do not capture the totality of a negotiation process and the interdependencies between them do not explain the totality of power that impinges upon a negotiation' (in Zartman and Rubin 2002: 173). The multilateral context of any bilateral 'asymmetrical dyad' (like the relationship between the DPRK and the US) will need to be taken into account when trying to understand the relationship between two actors with different levels of relative power (174).

The reason it is not difficult to tell the 'story' of the relationship between the US and the DPRK in order to explain the North's 'power', is because the Six Party Talks were initially meant to be a framework within which the US could exercise unilateral control over the DPRK (by somehow also exercising unilateral control over all the other parties that had been invited to the table). The US was convinced that their overall superior power gave them the right to control the whole process from the start (Park 2005: 79). Touval highlights how a bilateral relationship in international relations is never only bilateral, and that all parties to the negotiation (whether they are the strongest or not) are confined in their actions by 'the totality of power' that defines the process of the negotiation (in Zartman and Rubin 2002: 173). This paper shows that it is not only the 'totality of power' that influences the process of the negotiation, but that it is also the character of that 'power' that adds nuance to the process and ultimately defines it. This is relevant in the case of North Korea because of how it uses its 'elements of national power' (Morgenthau 1993: 124) to create a level of dependency – a weakness – that it uses as a 'strength' against the US and its neighbours. Schelling (1960: 37 [own emphasis]) defines 'coercive deficiency' as:

> When a person – or a country – has lost the power to avert mutual damage, ***the other interested party has no choice but to assume the cost or responsibility***. "Coercive deficiency"…[describes] the tactic of deliberately exhausting one's annual budgetary allowance so early in the year that the need for more funds is

> irresistibly urgent. A related tactic [in international relations] is manoeuvring into a *status quo* from which one can be dislodged only by an overt act, an act that ***precipitates mutual damage because the manoeuvring party has relinquished the power to retreat.***

If the North Korean regime 'falls', then the parties that will have to take most of the responsibility are China and South Korea. The US thought, at least at the beginning of the Talks, that the 'cost' of the North Korean regime collapsing would be easily absorbed (and possibly that they would not have had to bear most of the cost anyway). What the US had not anticipated was the resolve with which other countries, that would physically (geographically and financially) be negatively affected by such a change, would resist US pressure to act in a threatening manner towards the DPRK. The 'negative power' that the North produces through the construction of its identity (and therefore its internal and external reality) maintains the status quo, because it is well aware that mutual damage (especially in the case of South Korea and China) will be substantial if any action is taken against the DPRK – as the North, in Schelling's words above, 'has relinquished the power to retreat' from the inevitable negative consequences that will be hastened by a change from the status quo.

Broadly summarised, Buszynski's argument (2013) shows how multilateral complexity (and parties with competing interests) can hamper a strong state's objectives in a multilateral negotiation, and concludes that the reason the Six Party Talks failed was because China did not side with the US in putting pressure on the North. This section will provide more nuance to Buszynski's claims. It is true that multilateral complexity negatively affected the negotiation process in the context of the Six Party Talks, but to say that the Talks would have been successful if China had 'played along' is contestable. If Schelling is correct, and if one can use this understanding of coercive deficiency (and relate it to the North's construction of its reality), then China could not so easily have sided with the US – even if they had been able to put their (the US and China's) own competitive relationship aside in order to deal with the DPRK.

## 2. China, South Korea, and North Korea: uncomfortable 'allies'

There are certain intersubjective meanings attached to China and South Korea's relationships with the North that intensify the North's coercive deficiency vis-à-vis these states. This 'coercive deficiency' is not only about the financial cost of refugees (in the case of China), a civil war (in the case of both China and South Korea), or even unification and the integration of a moribund economy with one of the fastest growing economies in the world (a great concern for the South). It is the implication of the inevitable destruction of the North's identity if the regime were to fall, and how this would affect the abovementioned practical consequences for both

China and the South. The North's coercive deficiency is maintained through the construction of its identity (and the strength of this construction), and supported by the country's physical weakness, combined with its control over the North Korean population. The next sections will briefly touch on China and South Korea's fears in this regard, although it will refer back to Chapter Four to avoid repeating a discussion about North Korea's elements of national power.

*China and North Korea*

In Chapter Four, the relationship between China and North Korea is defined as a tenuous friendship, governed by China's fear of collapse of the North's regime – which would not only mean more interference  the US and its power in the region, but also economic problems which would be exacerbated by the flow of refugees across the North Korean border into China. The relationship that these states have towards one another is also defined by their historical ties and ideological similarities. As much as China is not the 'communist' state that it used to be, it is still one of the last representatives of an ideology that directly opposes that of the US. North Korea, situated between South Korea (where the US has troops stationed on the border) and China, is the country's only ideological 'ally' in this sense, however different *Juche* might be from the more recent pragmatism that has been guiding the Chinese Communist Party's actions in the new century (ICG 2006a: 6). North Korea's actions on the border (the DMZ) and its anti-American propaganda strengthen the US's resolve to stay in the South (and therefore in the region), which strengthens China's resolve to 'protect' the Kim regime. Its actions during the Six Party Talks (whether literally during the Talks or the actions taken in between rounds, like the testing of missiles and nuclear weapons) did the same, thus strengthening the US's resolve to stay in the region (and at the start of the Talks even to consider invading the DPRK). This in turn strengthened China's resolve to maintain the status quo.

The 'confession' that the North made concerning an HEU programme seemed to the Chinese to be fabricated by the US in order for the US to have a legitimate reason to attack the North. The reason for China's suspicion concerning the US's evidence did not only have to do with the apparent lack of 'evidence' that the confession took place in the first place. It also had to do with China's mistrust of the US's intentions regarding the region in general (Major General Pan Zhenqiang in ICG 2006: 7). The North only had to make an ambiguous claim about an HEU programme and then deny that they ever made it to make China side with the North and not the US. The DPRK's leverage over China in this sense was effective in the context of China's suspicion of the US in general, and in the context of China's relationship with the US in relation to the DPRK in particular. Historically, the Korean War had already proven that China would back the North against any provocations from the US at the expense of its own short-term

interests. The current drive by the US to ameliorate its relationship with China, specifically in the context of these Talks (Park 2005: 79), could never replace China's distrust of US intentions in the region as long as the North continues to construct its identity (and reality) in a way that maintains a 'Cold War' mentality (Bleiker 2003: 730). The North is well aware of this, and manages to masterfully manipulate this to its own advantage. The DPRK regime's active construction of an identity that lives in the past forces all the other parties, including China, to live in it as well.

*South Korea and North Korea*

Chapter Four shows how North Korea abuses its relationship with the South in order to strengthen its identity. For South Korea, the hope that a process exists where (re)unification with the North can take place has both practical and ideological problems. Economically, the South is not fond of the idea of having to incorporate an economy that cannot in any way compete with the South's (or easily be absorbed by the South). Peaceful unification (or reunification) and collapse might both create the same problems; collapse of the regime might lead to unification (albeit not with the North's blessing, and very probably not without interference from outside powers), or it might lead to civil war and regional instability. Peaceful (re)unification would also very likely involve outside powers eager to secure their influence in the region, which could easily lead to regional instability, notwithstanding the economic problems that the South would face in both cases. The South does not want a revival of a threat that would lead all the states in the region back to a Cold War status – and the North's actions threaten to do just that.

The problems listed above are all influenced (and even created and maintained) by the North Korean regime's active construction of the nation's identity. Chapter Four also highlights how this identity is maintained through behaviour by the North towards the South. The dichotomy of 'inside/outside' and 'good/bad' (or even 'us'/'them') is abused by the North in order to maintain its position in relation to the South. For the North Korean regime, the challenge is to justify its antagonism towards the South while pretending to want unification. The North is a 'virtuous race' which implies that the South must be as well, as they share the same blood, but the South has 'gone astray' and has become a puppet of the US. Unification, which has to be supported by a common identity, means the 'cancelling out of one or the other side's ideology' (French 2007: 235). This ideology (on both sides) ironically influences the identities of these states to such an extent that it is hard to imagine either state giving it up in favour of a 'new' identity. Therefore, aside from the practical implications of a collapsed regime (or even a peacefully unified one), the implication for both states' identities is important when it comes to the South's need for the

status quo to be maintained. The battle for ideological dominance, intensified by the very probable interference of the US and China (in both cases, for strategic as well as ideological reasons), will define the region's character if the status quo is undermined.

For both North Korea and South Korea, despite their attempts to engage with one another, unification through seeking a common identity seems like a challenging, if not impossible, task. Without attempting to change this ideological divide, the South tried to alter the North's threat perception towards it (Cho 2009: 3). This did not work, as the DPRK actively constructs and reconstructs this fundamental ideological contradiction between the two states – it dominates this 'reality' so well that attempts to superficially change the North's perception of the South will always fail. Efforts to change the DPRK's threat perception will always end up at the same dead-end: the construction of the North's eternal revolution. The ROK's actions before and during most of the Six Party Talks exposed this fundamental flaw in a South Korean policy based on engagement with the North. The Sunshine Policy (Kim 2002: 99) as well as the Roh administration's policy towards the DPRK (discussed below) tried to change the DPRK's threat perception, but ended up not producing the results that the ROK had hoped they would.

During the Talks, Roh Moo Hyun continued an engagement policy with the North which angered and perplexed some (the Sunshine Policy did not produce the results that the South had hoped it would, and the Roh government's policies were not much different) (ICG 2015: 9), but also kept the status quo. Despite the anti-Americanism and an intensification of nostalgic nationalism that helped Roh to become the president (Park 2005: 80), as well as Roh's constituency that 'favoured engagement with the North' (Rozman 2007b: 608), complete unification was probably never the (short-term) end-goal. Keeping the South Korean economy strong, making sure that the US did not attack the North (or attempt to increase the North's threat perception which would leave the South vulnerable), and ensuring the North Korean regime's survival were probably the reasons why the South did not side with the US for most of the duration of the Six Party Talks. These goals – especially the goal to ensure the North Korean regime's survival – were considered the lesser of two evils in a process favouring some type of 'altercasting' that preferred the 'long view' in terms of changing the regime's threat perception vis-à-vis the outside world (Hecker 2010: 53) in place of a destabilising regime-change policy that would produce, in the ROK's view, unnecessary costs to the region and the country.

South Korea's worries concerning the North therefore went deeper than strategic problems. The threat of a clash of identities and the chaos that would ensue, because of an inevitable (ideologically charged) battle that would not be limited to interactions between North and South Korea, intensified the risk attached to the fall of the DPRK regime and its implications for

the South. This ideological divide, which disconnected Koreans from each other and eroded each side's understanding of their collective identity, intensified the fear of a collapsed economy and an American attack on DPRK soil – which would bring with it this ideological clash, fuelled by outside powers, and tainted by the threat of the use of nuclear weapons. This fundamental incompatibility meant that any type of interaction or engagement with the North would have to be superficial. Therefore economic engagement and aid were the tools most frequently used to entice the North to cooperate with international norms and obligations (Cho 2009: 3). This is where North Korea wins: it can receive concessions without having to compromise on the element that matters the most in terms of an attempt to change its endogenously constructed 'interests' – the construction of its identity, and the inherent need for an enemy in order to maintain it.

## 3. China, South Korea, 'altercasting' and the 'Ukraine Model'

Wendt (1992: 420) believes that 'states might transform a competitive security system into a cooperative one' by changing its own and others' self-perception, and by implication its own and others' perception of mutual threat. In other words, endogenous instead of exogenous change in behaviour can alter collective knowledge systems or intersubjective meanings. Chapter Five shows how North Korea actively behaved in a way that consciously counters Wendt's framework for this transformation to take place: in the case of its relationship with the US, North Korea strengthened rather than weakened its 'identity commitments' (stage one) (420); actively avoided 'critical examinations of old ideas about self and other' (stage two) (420) and in fact went out of its way to reinforce old ideas about itself in relation to the US; and did everything in its power to avoid 'new practice' (stage three) (421). This intensified and maintained the 'rogue state/evil Goliath' dichotomy that kept the mutually dependent identities of the US in relation to the DPRK, as well as their common threat perception, alive.

China and South Korea have more to lose than the US when it comes to the destruction of the North Korean regime. It was easy for the US to promote regime change in the beginning of the negotiations, when it was still basking in the 'victory' over Iraq, and believed itself to be the world's 'uncontested global superpower' (Park 2005: 85). China and South Korea, however, would have been left to pick up the pieces after such an eventuality, and (considering the discussion above) would have been crippled by it. Their opposition to the US's stance towards the DPRK reflected their desperation to keep the status quo. Opposition from both China and South Korea, especially at the beginning of the Talks (that of China being less surprising, but that of South Korea catching the US off-guard), to an aggressive posture regarding the DPRK showed that the US lacked the leverage it thought it could use. China and South Korea were

following Wendt's advice, because *they had no other choice* – they had to balance the threat of a North Korea armed by nuclear weapons with the threat of an over-zealous US whose administration seemed to be unnecessarily trigger-happy. They both practiced a version of Wendt's 'altercasting' (1992: 405), engaging with the North in the hope that it would change (even if mildly) its threat perception vis-à-vis the other parties to the negotiation and therefore its behaviour (and by implication this meant a change, however minor, in its self-perception – its identity). By doing so, China and South Korea hoped to lessen the tension that had been created by the interactions between the DPRK and the US.

These two states (China and South Korea) opted for what was called the 'Ukraine Model' as a framework for the North's denuclearisation. After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, Ukraine 'inherited' Soviet nuclear missiles (Park 2005: 84). The US and Russia 'persuaded Ukraine that dismantling its inherited nuclear arsenal would be more advantageous than retaining it' (85). With Ukraine's denuclearisation came a multilateral security guarantee with economic rewards (85), as both Russia and the US were aware that threat perception at that time was still high – they had to show Ukraine that they were not a threat before the Ukraine felt safe enough to give up its nuclear weapons. In this model, security guarantees and economic assistance preceded any action by Ukraine – this is a type of 'altercasting' where the US and Russia had to act towards Ukraine in such a way that Ukraine perceived itself to be what the US and Russia wanted it to be, in order for it to give up its nuclear weapons.

China, South Korea and Russia all believed that the Ukraine model would make the North give up its nuclear weapons programme. And despite the US's wishes, all three (especially China and South Korea) pursued this model – engagement, economic assistance (and energy assistance) before any action from the DPRK, as well as non-action towards the DPRK after its nuclear tests – in an attempt to change the DPRK's external behaviour. But even Wendt warns that if practices that are conducted by 'ego' in order to change behaviour in 'alter' are not reciprocated by 'alter', 'they will expose ego to a "sucker" payoff and quickly wither on the vine…In order for critical strategic practice to transform competitive identities, it must be "rewarded" by alter, which will encourage more such practice by ego, and so on' (1992: 422). Evidence shows that 'ego' (China and South Korea, for example) ended up being short-changed when the North ('alter') conducted nuclear weapons tests despite their engagement. The North had made them 'suckers' – they realised that they could not punish the North for its provocations (because of the North's coercive deficiency, intensified by the construction of its external reality (Chapter Five)), despite being outraged – or at the very least extremely frustrated – by the hermit state's actions.

There are many examples of how China and South Korea acted in a way towards the North in order for it to change its threat perception during the Six Party Talks. As analysing each example will not be practical in the context of this paper, the next sections will select the most important examples in each case (the relationship with the North and China, and the relationship with the North and South Korea) in order to show how these states attempted to change the North's threat perception by trying to change the way it perceives the outside world. This approach was problematic as the North Korean regime needed to construct, and was actively constructing, this very threat perception (which supported the construction of its identity) that the South and China were trying to change.

The analysis of these examples will also show how 'altercasting' indirectly supported the North's constructed external reality discussed in Chapter Five. For example, China's and South Korea's reaction to the 2002 HEU programme 'confession' was to be sceptical of the US's intentions (ICG 2006a: 5)– possibly because they were truly sceptical about the evidence presented by the US, but also because putting pressure on the DPRK by agreeing with the US that the 'confession' was 'real' would undermine the regional status quo. China and South Korea's reactions played into the 'David versus Goliath' narrative, supporting the belief that the DPRK was vulnerable and had a legitimate right to develop a deterrent capability.

## 4. China and North Korea – 2006 and 2009

In 1994, China's involvement regarding the North's denuclearisation was purposefully limited – the PRC (People's Republic of China) believed that the nuclear crisis could only be solved through bilateral talks between the US and the DPRK (Park 2005: 81). This changed in 2002, when Beijing began to play a more 'proactive role' (81). The reason for the change was the PRC's foreign interests, which became derivatives of the country's domestic concerns (Huntley 2007: 477). It wanted to make sure that its external environment was stable enough as a foundation from which it could focus on its own economic development (Park 2005: 81). This remains a priority for the state, but is not the only concern. As an emerging power (due to its economic rise), it does not want to miss out on the opportunity to increase influence in terms of its interests in the region; at the very least, it does not want predominantly 'outside' (or specifically US) influence in a region where it feels it should play a leading role. To this end, China believes it has to focus on two specific regional concerns: Taiwan and North Korea. According to Rozman (2007a: 99), '[next] to Taiwan, North Korea is the most significant territory for national security and legitimacy not currently under the control of Beijing'. Because of concerns already discussed in Chapter Four and in previous sections in this chapter, the PRC's leaders 'stress the futility of applying pressure [on the North to denuclearise],…[and would rather] accept the logic

of gradual transformation controlled by the communist leadership [in North Korea]', much like the process that led to change in China itself (100). For them, a process where North Korea's threat perception is lowered (through gradual internal transformation, and essentially a revision of North Korean ideology), but where a certain level of authenticity regarding North Korea's identity is preserved (as the transformation should occur within the confines of 'communist leadership'), is the best possible approach to North Korea's denuclearisation.

China was heavily invested in the Six Party Talks not only because it was a framework through which regional tensions could be reduced (ICG 2015: 10), but because '[the] Six Party Talks, guarantee Beijing, as chair, a central role in setting international policy toward the DPRK, consistent with its growing multilateral foreign policy orientation and desire to be seen as a "responsible great power"' (ICG 2009b: 2). By making sure that the Six Party Talks and the UNSC were the institutions with which North Korea's denuclearisation would be handled, it maintained a certain level of influence that very few other states, if any, in the Talks had in relation to the DPRK. Because of this, the only times when there was a 'breakthrough' during the negotiations was when the other states in the Talks (including the US) agreed to a policy that would promote 'peace and stability [as] preconditions for denuclearisation' (ICG 2009b: 8). This policy reflected Chinese interests but directly contradicted the US's CVID policy, which is one of the reasons most analysts believe that the Six Party Talks did not succeed.

Hence, due to domestic, regional and international (global) aspirations, the PRC's goals towards North Korea were '"stability of the North Korean regime", "stable management of North Korea's nuclear issues", and "expansion of economic cooperation between the two countries"' (Lee 2014: 155). China knew that if it did not separate its bilateral relationship with the DPRK from the denuclearisation issue, it would lose influence vis-à-vis North Korea and it would not be able to realise its goals of 'neighbourly engagement' (Delury 2012: 71). Separating its bilateral relationship with the DPRK from the denuclearisation issue shows where China's interests lie: it would rather have a nuclear DPRK, than have a destabilised region accompanied by greater influence for the US in the region. The status quo had to be maintained, which meant that engagement would be preferred rather than pressure, and that the DPRK's narrative ('David versus Goliath') would be maintained. Even when China did briefly show its displeasure with the North, the narrative was maintained because the DPRK blamed the PRC (People's Republic of China) for 'going to the other side'. This meant that the North had an even more legitimate reason to test its nuclear weapons, as it was now even more vulnerable. China never expressed its frustration for long, however. It knew that losing influence in its relationship with the DPRK would be more detrimental to its pragmatic regional concerns than engaging with the North, regardless of whether this engagement led to the end of the nuclear programme or not.

*The first nuclear test: 2006*

In October 2006, the DPRK announced that it had conducted a nuclear test (Chanlett-Avery and Squassoni 2006: 1). This came after missile tests in June and July of the same year that angered the PRC as it had showed its displeasure with the plans to conduct the tests before they had taken place,. The belligerence of the North led to more coordination with the United States as China seemed unable, despite its engagement with the North, to restart the Talks (Rozman 2007a: 117). The North's defiance of its 'lifeline' (China, as well as South Korea) (Chanlett-Avery and Squassoni 2006: 16) proves that the North knows that China's options are limited when it comes to punitive actions against it. The DPRK's disregard for China's leverage became even more evident when the PRC – the state in the Six Party Talks that was supposed to have the most influence over the DPRK – was given only 20 minutes' notice of the test before it was conducted (Fifield 2006). Stephen Blank comments that '[the] UN may pass some sanctions, China and Russia will be angry with Pyongyang and South Korea may change elements of its policy, but clearly the DPRK believes that it can ride out whatever storm [the nuclear test] generates, just as it did with regard to its missile tests of July 4, 2006' (2007). The test had frustrated and embarrassed the PRC because it was pursuing an engagement policy that it believed would have the ability to reduce regional tension and control North Korea's nuclear ambitions (Rozman 2007a: 117), and would also, in the long run, manage to reform the regime in North Korea from the inside. The PRC was trying to prove that engagement would serve all the parties' interests, but could not get the North Korean regime to 'play along'.

After the test, China voiced its frustration with the North by calling the DPRK's actions 'brazen' (Chung and Choi 2013: 259) and reportedly cutting off the PRC's oil supply to North Korea for a few days (Rozman 2007b: 612). It agreed to adopt UN Security Council Resolution 1718, but its allegiance to the North (and its need to keep the status quo) watered down the language in the resolution to the extent that it said that states should 'impose…sanctions at their own discretion' (612). The resolution called for a 'ban on trade in heavy weapons and luxury goods', '[authorised] countries to inspect cargo bound to and from North Korea to look for weapons of mass destruction or related materials', '[requested] that countries freeze funds related to North Korea's non-conventional weapons programs', and '[called] on North Korea to refrain from conducting additional nuclear or ballistic missile tests, rejoin the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), suspend its ballistic missile program and eventually abandon its nuclear weapons in a complete, verifiable, and irreversible manner' (Chanlett-Avery and Squassoni 2006: 3). China and Russia insisted on lessening the obligation on member states to adhere to the sanctions, and they also made sure that the resolution ruled out the use of military force as an option if North Korea were not to comply (3).

The PRC was committed to sending a message to the North – especially as the term 'brazen' is normally reserved by China for characterisation of adversaries (Huntley 2007: 477). However, this did not mean that China was ready to cut ties with the state. The reported oil supply cut-off only lasted a few days, and China went back on the charm offensive with the North when Hu Jintao shifted his anger to Kim Jong Il to 'offering him enticements to return to the Six Party Talks' (Rozman 2007b: 613). Some believed that the adoption of the resolution was a shift in China's policy to a harsher stance towards the DPRK (and a policy that would bring it closer to the US), but for the most part China's reaction was cautious – China wanted to send a strong message to the North, but knew that it could not punish the North in the way that the US wanted it to because of China's need to maintain the status quo. Pyongyang manipulated this by making the most of its coercive deficiency vis-à-vis China: it sent a strong signal to the PRC when it shunned the state whenever there were opportunities for China to rekindle its engagement. Lee (2014: 149) points out that 'China suffered severely in its relations with North Korea for joining the resolution' as, for example, during the inter-Korean summit in October 2007, Kim Jong Il expressed suspicion concerning 'China's attitude toward North Korea, considering China's response toward North Korea's nuclear test' (149). On another occasion, the DPRK claimed, after the passing of the resolution, that 'the Chinese effort was made fundamentally not "from our side but from others' side"' (148), highlighting the fact that it was now suspecting China of siding with the West.

As much as China was trying to promote the 'Ukraine' model, and as much as it was trying to make sure that it stayed connected to the North in order for it to have influence over the hermit state (Blank 2007), Pyongyang was reminding the PRC where its allegiance should lie. It was not only using coercive deficiency to limit the PRC's actions, it was also 'making the best out of…rhetoric [that] promoted communism, friendship and camaraderie' (Chung and Choi 2013: 259). The 'our'/'other' divide reminded China that it had an obligation to help the North, which the North felt it was not fulfilling. Again North Korea managed to become 'ego' that created the 'alter' that it needed in order for its reality to be maintained. For example (as mentioned earlier), China urged that the resolution be invoked under Article 41 and not Article 42 of Chapter VII of the UN Charter, 'ruling out the use of armed force' (Huntley 2007: 478), and then added that the UNSC resolution 'should "create conditions conducive to the peaceful resolution of this issue through *dialogue and negotiation*"' (Los Angeles Times in Chanlett-Avery and Squassoni 2006: 4 [own emphasis]). China wanted all the parties (especially North Korea and the US) to go back to the Six Party Talks. It also made sure that economic cooperation between it and the DPRK did not fall away, and 'frequently provided economic assistance to North Korea' (Lee 2014: 147). The nuclear test intensified China's need for negotiation as an alternative to

coercive action towards the North; China's 'altercation' was being manipulated by the DPRK, and there was very little that China could do about it.

Through the continuous construction of internal identity, the North created a level of coercive deficiency vis-à-vis China that strengthened the North's level of perversity of power in relation to the US. When China sided with the US, the North's justification for a nuclear deterrent, in relation to its constructed external identity, increased: it now had more enemies than just 'Goliath'. When China attempted to rather engage with the North, in order to make sure that it still had some leverage in relation to the hermit state, this engagement paradoxically also strengthened the North's justification for a nuclear deterrent. As long as China did not agree with the US's policies, the DPRK could use China's interpretation of any given situation (within the context of the nuclear weapons issue) to make it look like the US was being unreasonable (and that the DPRK therefore had justification to continue with its nuclear weapons development). This proves that the strength of North Korea's identity construction could not be eroded either by pressure (as in the case of North Korea's relationship with the US), or engagement (as in the case of its relationship with China). The DPRK's identity internally facilitated the creation of a certain 'reality' externally, which affected all the parties concerned; it constructed a narrative that dominated other parties' perception and interpretation of the situation in such a way that even the North's 'lifeline' could not dictate the limitations of appropriate behaviour for the state.

*The 'satellite' and the second nuclear test: 2009*

According to International Crisis Group (2009b: 1), 'Beijing was aware as early as January 2009 that North Korea intended to test the new US administration'. On the 24th of February 2009, the DPRK announced that it was going to launch 'a satellite…for communications, prospecting natural resources and weather forecasting…[and that it was] essential for the economic development of the country' (Nakato 2012: 24). The DPRK added that 'shooting down their satellite would mean war' (24). The Obama administration reacted by stating that it was a 'clear violation of UNSC Resolution 1718 and a threat to the northeast Asian region and to international peace and security' (Obama in ICG 2009b: 2), while China took what the ICG called a 'wait and see' approach, 'acknowledging that North Korea had launched a satellite and insisting that the DPRK had the right to the peaceful use of nuclear and rocket technologies' (2). China made sure that the UN would not react with a resolution, but agreed to a UNSC presidential statement 'that condemned the launch as in contravention of its Resolution 1718' (ICG 2009a: 4). The DPRK responded by saying that the statement was 'unjust', that it 'was hurting the dignity of the Korean people', and 'infringing upon the sovereignty of the DPRK'

(DPRK Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2009). It withdrew from the Six Party Talks as the Talks had, in their view, 'turned into a platform for infringing upon the sovereignty of the DPRK and seeking to force the DPRK to disarm itself and bring down the system in it the DPRK', and stated that it would 'bolster its nuclear deterrent for self-defence in every way' (DPRK Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2009).

The rhetoric clearly paved the way for the North to justify testing its second nuclear weapon when it came to its relationship with the US. Because China and Russia had accepted the presidential statement, however, both these states – who were, according to the DPRK, supposed to be on the DPRK's side – had betrayed the North (ICG 2009b: 4). The DPRK criticised China and Russia for '[siding] with the USA…although it did not specify them by name' (Nakato 2012: 30). Again China had helped in ensuring that the statement was non-binding, and had thought that this would assuage the North's fears regarding their commitment to the regime (ICG 2009b: 3). However, the DPRK 'disregarded China's role in ensuring a non-binding statement…focusing instead on the strong wording' (4). This apparent betrayal gave the North even more justification to 'bolster its nuclear deterrent for self-defence in every way' (DPRK Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2009). The DPRK had prepared the scene for its second nuclear test by manipulating the US and the DPRK's apparent ally, China. It knew that it could 'get on great powers' nerves [including China's – the DPRK's 'lifeline'] and carry out [adventurist] plots without getting punished' (Chung and Choi 2013: 259). China's inability to dominate the narrative – its inevitable fall into the North's constructed 'reality' – showed its limitations in relation to the North, and made the North confident enough to test its second nuclear weapon without any real punishment from the PRC.

China knew that in order to have any influence vis-à-vis the North, it needed to engage with the North and not isolate it. It had two conflicting policies towards the North – 'stabilising the North Korean regime' and 'forcing North Korea to give up its nuclear development' (Lee 2014: 149). The two could not work alongside one another anymore, as China realised that siding with the US in order to make the DPRK stop its nuclear development would lead to a destabilised North Korean regime (and by implication a destabilised region). This quandary, however, inevitably meant that China gave the North concessions to come to the table – as '[the] process is what [mattered]; a poor outcome could be blamed on the US and the DPRK' (ICG 2015: 10). Meanwhile the North had no intention of stopping its nuclear weapons programme, and it seemed as though the PRC had lost interest in punishing the state for it.

North Korea conducted its second nuclear test on the 25th of May, 2009 (ICG 2009a: 5). The UNSC 'unanimously adopted Resolution 1874 on 12 June, condemning North Korea's nuclear

test in the strongest terms' (10). However, China agreed but did not participate in the implementation of Resolution 1874's sanctions that were imposed on the North (Lee 2014: 150). In fact, while it did not veto the Resolution itself, 'China [did, however] massively [increase] economic cooperation' (150). China had made its choice: it wanted 'peace and stability on the Korean peninsula' and realised that it feared 'US intervention in North Korea more than it does nuclear weapons in its neighbour's hands' (Hecker 2010: 53). Peace and stability as *preconditions* for denuclearisation became the guiding principle of Chinese foreign policy towards the DPRK. This was wishful thinking, however. Denuclearisation was going to be increasingly difficult with the North calling the bluff of both the US and China when it came to its nuclear development. In this context, 'peace and stability' was what was keeping the North Korean regime in power. The more the regime threatened its own downfall or the use of its apparent 'irrationality' (by testing missiles and nuclear weapons, for example) (Park 2008: 358), the less China and other states in the region focused on appropriate punishment for the oppressive regime or its rhetoric (and nuclear weapons programme), rather focusing on their own survival in relation to this weak state. States geographically close to the DPRK (like China) actively helped to keep the Kim regime in power *because* of the nuclear weapon combined with North Korea's (seemingly actively constructed and maintained) weakness as a state.

*China's relationship with North Korea and North Korea's construction of 'reality'*

The status quo, which was more important for the Chinese than denuclearisation, was maintained – whether or not that meant North Korea had crossed a 'red line' and that this could not be undone. Hwee Rhak Park called this process a 'trail of crossed red lines' (2008: 361) – a situation where the continuous inaction of states involved in the Talks (like, for example, China's cautious strategy toward the North and its nuclear weapons programme) started to erode the importance of non-proliferation in exchange for regional stability. North Korea's brinkmanship had taught it a lesson: it could strengthen relations with states (especially China), as well as strengthen its ability to control these states, by threatening to destabilise the region.

When China 'punished' the North for its belligerence, it lost more than the North did. This does not make sense if one merely looks at how China could cripple the North with sanctions and should clearly have more influence over the North's actions. But the DPRK's construction (and maintenance) of its 'reality' gave it the upper hand during the negotiations, as well as with its relationship with China in general, through (for example) the way that it taunted the US with anti-American rhetoric and its missile and nuclear tests, while justifying its actions by pointing at the US's 'hostile policy' towards it and in so doing, intensifying its coercive deficiency in relation to China. Chung and Choi (2013: 259) state that 'Pyongyang knows too well that

Beijing's real options are limited, unless the latter is determined to turn Sino-North Korean relations into completely different dynamics'. But in the face of continuous construction of North Korea's identity, supported by the (seemingly) conscious weakening of the state apparatus by the regime for the purpose of absolute internal control (and by implication the creation of the North's specific brand of external coercive deficiency), what would these 'completely different dynamics' look like? It is hard to see how China could do anything other than focus on denuclearisation *or* focus on regional stability in relation to the DPRK – both of which, on their own, are less than satisfactory to say the least.

## 5. South Korea and North Korea – 2006 and the 2007 'deal'

Engagement pursued by South Korea has to be placed in the context of South Koreans' perception of their own identity in relation to their neighbour. Chapter Four already talks about how the North actively constructs and reconstructs an identity that places the South in an 'us'/'them' dichotomous relationship. The Sunshine Policy was designed to change this in order to change not only North Korea's perception of the South, but also to change South Korea's perception of the North. Kim Dae Jung's policy wanted to break these countries' mutual threat perception in order to break an intersubjective 'Cold War' mentality that governs their relationship (Kim 2002: 102). The Sunshine Policy initiative certainly had an influence on the perception that the South Korean population had towards the North. South Koreans started believing in the merits of engagement: as an example, Roh Moo Hyun was elected because he had promised, along with the implementation of other policies, that he would continue with Kim Dae Jung's policies towards the DPRK (Moon 2008: 74).

Optimism among South Koreans that there is yet a chance for the two Koreas to unite existed despite North Korea's 'brinkmanship diplomacy' in the early 2000s (Moon 2008: 74). This is arguably because in an attempt to change the North's perception of the South's intentions towards it, the South was reminded of their kinship with the North. In fact, because of the continuous aid that is provided by the South, most South Koreans do not regard North Korea 'as a proper competitor in a globalising world….North Korea is gradually coming to be seen as an isolated, weak country' (Cho 2009: 14). Kim Keun Sik (2002: 98) points out that from 'a fraternal point of view, to neglect North Korean citizens in a serious food crisis is not a desirable action'. During Roh Moo Hyun's campaign, identity became important and did not stand apart from the pervasive construction of coercive deficiency from the North. The Sunshine Policy adopted an 'inter-Korean economic cooperation [model based on] "flexible reciprocity", which [was] characterised by non-symmetry, non-synchronism, and non-equivalence' (Kim 2002: 99). Roh's government extended this policy and called for the creation of a regional 'peace regime'

(Rozman 2007a: 64). The bond between the two countries was being strengthened by the South's actions towards the North. However, it seems as though perception of the strength of this bond was decidedly one-sided. South Korea became hopeful for reconciliation and a rekindled sense of brotherhood; North Korea on the other hand, did not seem to be touched by the South's actions as much as the South had hoped. On the contrary, the South's actions were arguably seen as weakness by a state that believed itself to be in a perpetual state of war. The Sunshine Policy's 'flexible reciprocity' was very likely too flexible. But an alternative was difficult to conceive: a 'messy' (re)unification was never going to benefit either the ROK or the North Korean regime.

In the face of the US's policy of 'hostile neglect' – which focused on 'isolation, containment, and transformation' (Moon 2008: 76) – the ROK still continued to provide aid to the North. For example, between the period of 1998-2008 (the period when tensions between the DPRK and the US were at their highest), the ROK 'provided [the DPRK] with an annual aid donation of 400,000 tons of food and 300,000 tons of fertilizer, along with various other gifts, altogether amounting to $7 billion, including almost $3 billion in cash' (Oh and Hassig 2010: 93). The South wanted to secure the North's trust (Moon 2008: 77), did not want it to feel isolated or contained, and certainly did not want the North Korean regime to feel as though its existence was being threatened. As much as the North Korean regime's character was probably unacceptable to the South, the combination of the North's coercive deficiency and its link to the South's identity perpetuated policies that contradicted US ambitions for the region.

In fact, despite the Sunshine Policy (as well as the Roh administration's policy) that aimed to 'socialise North Korea' (Cho 2009: 3) in order for it to become part of the international community, the South's actions changed South Korea's perception of its relationship with the North more than it changed the North's perception of its relationship with the South. This change became very powerful, as it even influenced the South's image of its ally, the US, to the point where the 'United States [became] an impeder of inter-Korean reconciliation' (Cho 2009: 29). Rozman adds that South Korean '"historical amnesia" about the sacrifices the United States had made in fighting the Korean War, [as well as the South's need for] "romantic" ethnic reconciliation, had turned the nation away from sober realism [concerning the US] who had assured its security and prosperity' (2007a: 74-75). Engagement with the North was not merely rekindling hope for reconciliation between the two countries – it was eroding the strength of the relationship that the South had with the US.

In essence, the South's attempts to make North Korea change its perception of itself in relation to external actors (including its 'brother', South Korea) worked in North Korea's favour much

more than it did the South's. The DPRK's construction of its 'reality' was too strong for the South to undermine – instead, their attempts to undermine this construction merely played into the narrative that the North had already been actively constructing for decades.

The next section will provide examples of South Korea's attempts to engage with the North in an effort to assuage the North's fears concerning its external environment. It shows how, despite the South's optimism about the North's compliance with arrangements made during the Six Party Talks, the North only wanted one thing: to enhance its nuclear weapons programme. Victor Cha (2009: 122) writes, 'the simplest explanation for North Korean actions is the desire to improve their nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles'. The reason for this might be a little more complex than the mere need for deterrence, but the North's strategy during the Six Party Talks points to a desire for nuclear weapons – not at the cost of an ameliorated relationship with the South, but rather because it is actively avoiding full reconciliation (maintained because of the construction of its own identity).

*Missile tests and the first nuclear test: 2006*

Rozman notes that '[voices] on the Korean left took for granted that North Korea would abandon all of its nuclear weapons once trust was re-established' (2007: 55). While the US promoted a 'complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantling' (CVID) of the nuclear programme before any assurances of security or economic aid would be established (Moon 2008: 83), South Korea's approach to the Talks that led to the joint statement in September 2005 was very similar to the North's. The ROK proposed a 'parallel approach' that involved simultaneous action by both the US and the DPRK in order to build 'mutual trust between the two adversaries' (83). In the face of the US's insistence that the North was developing a secret HEU programme and that the US would not give in to the DPRK's 'nuclear blackmail' (Zhou 2016), the South's approach to the Talks was a direct contradiction of its (much stronger) ally's policies. In the meantime, North Korean provocations were met with caution 'to the point of denial' (Feffer in ICG 2006b: 5) by Seoul. The missile launches in 2006 were not met with a lot of backlash from the ROK, as South Korea felt as though it was walking a tightrope, 'having to choose between its old friend [the US] and its self-destructive "brother"' (ICG 2006b: 6). It was reluctant to impose sanctions and did not want to participate in the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), an anti-arms trafficking (specifically WMDs) initiative that had been 'designed [by the US] to crack down on North Korean arms transfers' (7). This did not mean that the relationship between the two neighbours remained the same, however. The missile tests in 2006 were the beginning of a deterioration of relations between the two 'brothers' (9). Nevertheless, despite the South's displeasure concerning the North's actions in 2006, erosion of South Korean trust took a long

time to reach full effect. The North still had the capacity to manipulate the South's sentiments after the initial missile tests (and after the first nuclear test).

The missile tests in 2006, as well as the nuclear test in October of the same year, accelerated the South's increasing frustration with the North. After the tests many public figures in the ROK voiced their concerns. For example, a prominent activist in the ROK said: 'The North has abused our humanitarian assistance…has anything in the North changed after ten years of the Sunshine Policy?' (Song Wol Ju in ICG 2006b: 9). Nevertheless, when the North proclaimed that they would test a nuclear weapon, the South understood it as an opportunity to engage the state and not to punish it. This seemingly paradoxical stance from the ROK was very likely a combination of the South's belief (discussed above) of an ameliorated relationship with the North as well as the South's desperation for the region not to become unstable. In fact, evidence suggests that it was more the former than the latter, although coercive deficiency cannot be discounted. According to Park, the ROK government thought that the North's proclamation was just an attempt by the DPRK to get the US's attention, 'citing that Pyongyang would not have made that kind of announcement if it had a real intention of conducting a nuclear test' (2008: 360).

After the test, however, despite the South's failed assessment of North Korea's intentions and even China's condemnation of the act, South Korea asked the US 'not to be too hard on its neighbour' (361). South Korea still did not join the PSI until after the second nuclear test (BBC News 2009), which shows that the South wanted to maintain the status quo in 2006. It also shows that the South was optimistic that the North would give up their programme 'for the right price' (Hecker 2010: 53), which meant that the nuclear test led to more engagement with the North (and a higher incentive to 'pay' for the North's compliance), and not punishment or isolation.

*The 2007 'deal' and South Korea's premature optimism*

In February 2007 the parties to the Six Party Talks reached an agreement on 'Initial Actions for the Implementation of the Joint Statement' (Moon 2008: 96-97). This 'deal' was described by some as a 'tentative deal', in contrast to the Agreed Framework (1994) that was a 'package deal' (Quinones 2007: 25). Bruce Cumings (2007: 1) called it a 'back to the future' deal that had just brought all the parties back to their initial positions before the Bush administration had come into office, but with shortcomings that the Clinton Administration had begun to address before the end of its tenure (2). This included an attempt to buy out, 'indirectly, the North's medium and long-range missiles' (2). Because of the Bush administration's ABC ('Anything But Clinton') policy (Moore 2008: 16), the North was able to retain its missile capability. South Korea was optimistic about the 2007 deal, still believing that Pyongyang would give up its nuclear

programme and its missiles in return for a 'new relationship' (Cumings 2007: 6). The South, especially the Roh administration, was desperate to do anything that would lessen tension in the region so that it would not have to be 'dragged into a war it didn't want' (5). It believed that a 'peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue [would] eventually cultivate new trust among concerned parties, [which could] facilitate the resolution of other outstanding security and non-security concerns' (Moon 2008: 100). The Roh administration immediately pursued the possibility of a summit meeting with Kim Jong Il and facilitated other bilateral breakthroughs (Rozman 2007a: 73). It also volunteered to supply the first instalment of '50,000 metric tons of heavy oil to the North' (Moon 2008: 98). There was additional speculation that the South had already 'pledged additional aid' to the North, although the government denied it (ICG 2007: 9).

Despite the North not adhering to the deadlines that were set out in the 2007 deal, Seoul 'pledged 400,000 tons of rice on 22 April, with transport to begin in late May' (ICG 2007: 9). The South was eager to comply with their side of the deal, despite the North's ambivalence concerning the deadlines that had been set out for its denuclearisation (9). This is not surprising, considering the belief that all the North needed was security reassurances (and by implication, reduced threat perception) in order for it to change its external posture. The Roh administration specifically believed that the nuclear issue was 'deeply embedded in the structure of the Korean conflict' (Moon 2008: 99). The fact that the South's posture was informed by the history that the countries shared with one another shows how the Roh administration's policies were informed by the thought of some type of 'romantic' ethnic reconciliation. The South, despite its fear of possibly having to go to war (as a result of the coercive deficiency that the North cultivated and the Bush administration's policies intensified), had hope in the North. It was the hope that the DPRK also had a need for some type of romantic reconciliation with the South, and that this need for reconciliation would be as strong as the South's need to rekindle the same brotherly spirit with the North. The North, however, abused the South's efforts to engage with it by continuing with its nuclear programme despite the South's concessions. The South no longer wanted to live in the past, but the North had no choice: in order for the regime to survive it had to reconstruct the past and create an identity that could only exist within the framework provided by an 'us'/'them' dichotomy. The ROK's attempts to bring the North out of the 'Cold War' mentality was not strong enough to change 'reality' in the face of the North's conscious construction of a reality that, by implication, could not exist without the mentality from which the South wanted the North to break free.

*South Korea's 'altercasting' and North Korea's construction of 'reality': 2009*

In 2009, the relationship between the South and the North deteriorated significantly. In January, the DPRK still expressed their desire for a nuclear-free Korean peninsula (ICG 2009a: 3), but by May a list of provocations had soured the international community's attitude towards the DPRK's position: the DPRK's rhetoric turned against the US (once again invoking the 'hostile policy' mantra as justification for its planned actions), it declared that it was 'scrapping all political and military agreements with Seoul, and the western sea boundary…was void', it temporarily closed the DMZ, 'stranding South Koreans in the inter-Korean industrial project in Kaesong, North Korea', and tried to place a 'small satellite into orbit with a three-stage space launch vehicle on 5 April' (ICG 2009a: 3-4). The South – especially after the death of former President of the ROK, Roh Moo Hyun (Moon 2009: 57) – had become tired of unrequited concessions. According to ICG, the Roh administration had tried, during its tenure, to deepen inter-Korean engagement, but 'both liberals and conservatives were disappointed when Pyongyang failed to reciprocate on denuclearisation, arms control and military confidence-building measures' (2015: 9). In May 2009 the DPRK conducted its second nuclear test, which prompted a new UNSC Resolution to condemn the North's actions (Oh and Hassig 2010: 92).

The actions of the North in 2009 prompted the ROK to announce that it would impose economic sanctions against the DPRK (ICG 2010: 3). After a naval clash between the two Koreas, which only lasted two minutes but which had great symbolic significance (Moon 2010: 62), South Korea announced its intention to join the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) (Nakato 2012: 26). The South had reached its limit regarding tolerance of North Korean provocations and had sided with its old ally, the US. In August of the same year, North Korea sent a delegation to the South, expressing a desire for improved relations, but the new government was not in a giving mood, adhering to its policy of '"principled engagement" predicated on "no progress in inter-Korean relations without North Korea's concrete moves toward denuclearisation"' (Moon 2010: 62-63). North Korea's need for engagement after provocations was an old tactic that had intensified the South's frustration with the state – it seems as though the South finally decided that its 'altercasting' was only being abused by the DPRK. The strengthening of the ROK's alliance with the US was symbolised specifically, but not exclusively, through the South's participation in the PSI. Pyongyang called this 'the decision of a declaration of war' and 'announced its withdrawal from the 1953 Korean War Armistice' (Oh and Hassig 2010: 92). The new ROK President, Lee Myung Bak, decided to base the ROK's North Korean policy on 'reciprocity rather than unconditional aid, [and] the North Korean media criticised him as a "traitor" to the Korean nation' (93).

As much as the DPRK seemed to want engagement in 2009, the testing of its second nuclear weapon did not point to the North's change of heart or ambitions. It could be argued that concessions from the South that the DPRK had been enjoying up to this point, because of the South's hope for improved relations if it continued with an engagement policy that was based on non-symmetrical reciprocity, were believed to be unconditional. North Korea did not want to improve relations with the South at the expense of their nuclear programme – it wanted concessions despite their nuclear programme. And it would not matter if the South had decided that it was not going to 'play along' any more: if it did not engage with the North, then the North's 'reality' remained intact – the South was the 'brother' that betrayed the North. If the South did provide aid, for example, its actions would still play into the 'brotherhood' narrative: the South 'should' provide aid, as it is the North's brother, and the North should not have to give anything back, as it is merely the South's obligation to help its brother if its brother is suffering. 'Brother' in this sense refers to the population of North Korea, whose weakness can be manipulated in this way in order for the regime to extract concessions from the South.

The ROK's attempts to engage with the DPRK by emphasising economic cooperation, as well as through attempts to rekindle a sense of shared nationalism with the North, only helped the North abuse its independence regarding any obligation to reciprocate the South's positive reinforcement. Coercive deficiency is definitely one of the main reasons, but it is not the only reason for South Korea's actions. The fact that the North called Lee Myung Bak a '"traitor" to the Korean nation' (Oh and Hassig 2010: 93) means that the North was well aware that the South had intended to improve relations with the DPRK for the sake of security, and because of an intensified awareness of its connection (in terms of its identity) to the North. The North therefore did not only manipulate its coercive deficiency vis-à-vis the South during the negotiations – in its implied promises to reciprocate with concessions (including, for example, the promise to reunite families, to strengthen economic cooperation, andto consider denuclearisation) it facilitated this rekindled romantic notion of ethnic unity, and manipulated 'variations in [South Korea's] collective identity with the United States and North Korea' (Cho 2009: 31). Once the South started linking denuclearisation with engagement, it won back the support of its ally, the US, but it lost its support of its long-lost 'brother', the DPRK. South Korea once again became the 'traitors' and the 'puppets' of the US. Despite this, the DPRK seemed not to care that it had briefly lost economic support from the ROK. It now considered itself a nuclear power, and wanted to talk 'arms control with Washington, not denuclearisation on the North' (Hecker 2010: 50). Cutting off support for the DPRK only cut off the link that the ROK had with the regime, and soured the relationship between China and South Korea (Moon 2010: 63). This meant that China and South Korea could not at any point unite against the North. Manipulating

the ROK's behaviour in this way meant that the North managed to make the South dependent on the US, which divided the South Korean/Chinese 'alliance' as well as reinforced the North's constructed reality.

By alternating promised concessions with provocations, the DPRK played on both the South's fear of war (coercive deficiency) as well as its desire for identification with the North. By the time it had tested the nuclear weapon in 2009, the South had once again become, in the eyes of North Koreans, the US's puppets. The South's concession fatigue, together with its lack of independence concerning its policy towards the North, had played into the role that the North had constructed for the South from the start. South Korea had tried to change the North's behaviour by focusing on superficial engagement, which only meant that the North had the opportunity to receive concessions without reciprocating the South's goodwill. The ROK said from the start of the Six Party Talks that it would not pursue a policy that would encroach on the DPRK regime's survival. The problem with this policy was that the South's altercasting ended up changing its own perception of the North, and not the North's perception of the South. Because the North's regime was not to be touched, the North had the power to continue constructing its domestic (internal) narrative – which by implication meant that it had to make the US an enemy and the South the enemy's 'puppet'.

In essence, what made South Korea's policies inadequate during the Six Party Talks was not its promise to the DPRK regime that it would not promote regime change in the North. It was the fact that North Korean identity (which was facilitating the construction of threat perception that the South wanted to counter with engagement) was being actively constructed by the North Korean regime. Allowing the regime to survive meant that it was allowing the threat perception, created by this regime through its identity construction, to be maintained regardless of what the South did on a superficial level to try to change the North's perception. The corollary was that the fear of questioning the North's construction of its internal identity (because of the North's intensification of coercive deficiency through this very construction) allowed the DPRK to influence the South's perception of itself in relation to the North and to the US.. The North's power was in its ability to use the South's altercasting against it – the South's fear of war (and instability) made it afraid of questioning the North's identity construction, which led to superficial engagement that only resulted in the South's 'identity variation' (Cho 2009: 31). The North's 'reality' had once again prevailed; the South had no choice but to play the role to which it had been assigned.

## 6. Engagement and the narrative: the North's control of the 'possible'

For both China and South Korea, the type of pressure that the United States wanted to put on the DPRK was untenable. The coercive deficiency created and maintained by the North Korean regime's consciously constructed identity (in the case of meanings created for domestic elements of national power, for example) limited both China and South Korea's options when it came to their behaviour towards the state. The DPRK's weakness, combined with the strength of its constructed identity (which maintained a level of conviction that could not easily be broken by either pressure from the US or engagement from other states), created a regional status quo that not even South Korea (which is supported by the strongest state in the world both financially and militarily) or China (a rising power in the world) could afford to disrupt.

The level of 'perversity of power' created through the DPRK's interactions with the US (as discussed in Chapter Five) also intensified this coercive deficiency for both China and South Korea. The pressure that the US wanted to put on the DPRK to make it denuclearise amplified the risk associated with a region that could fall apart at any moment. This 'perversity of power' was sustained by the narrative dominated by the DPRK during the Six Party Talks – as discussed in Chapter Five, in the 'competition' between the 'David (North Korea) versus Goliath (US)' narrative and the 'rogue state (North Korea) versus righteous state (US)' narrative, the latter 'lost' to the former. The North engineered the narrative in order to justify (and to some extent even legitimise) the reason for its nuclear weapons development. If the US was the bully that would unfairly attack the North, why would it be wrong for the North to protect itself? This argument was supported – whether indirectly or not – by the non-punishment (and attempted engagement) of both South Korea and China. China (and others), for example, questioned the validity of the evidence that the US used in order to accuse the DPRK of having a clandestine HEU programme, and then tried everything in its power once the 'confession' had been made to make sure that the US did not retaliate with force. South Korea declined to join the PSI until after the second nuclear test when the state was finally tired of the North's provocations.

Both coercive deficiency and the 'perversity of power', therefore, strengthened the need for engagement for China and South Korea. Paradoxically, engagement by these two states – because of the need to maintain the status quo – also strengthened the North's 'perversity of power' vis-à-vis the US because it (whether directly or indirectly) supported the DPRK's justification for its nuclear weapons programme. The DPRK's constructed identity (which produces both a physical weakness as well as an inflexible common conviction internally) is supported by its external actions and its external reality – and vice versa. The strength of both this continuously constructed identity (internally) and 'reality' (externally) was so strong that

neither engagement or pressure could break this pattern of construction. In fact, the pressure put on the North by the US helped to create and maintain the (external) narrative, while engagement by China and the South helped to support this reality. Engagement as a type of altercasting did not change the DPRK's external behaviour because, in practice, both South Korea's and China's attempts to change the North's self-perception (and threat perception) were too superficial. In the same way that Wendt theoretically 'bracketed' the domestic, both South Korea and China – out of fear of changing the status quo regionally – tried to change the North's identity from the outside. The North's masterful manipulation of both its internal and external realities prove that in order to change identity and interests externally, one needs to change identity domestically so that 'interests' truly become endogenous to a state's external behaviour.

The DPRK's strengthened 'perversity of power', supported by the construction of coercive deficiency, gave it the 'power' to undermine norms such as the nuclear taboo. This is important as the argument of this paper is not concerned with the North's actual (physical) power, but with its ability to manipulate an internal and external 'reality' in order to make states do what they otherwise would not have done. A norm like the nuclear taboo, sustained in practice by the maintenance of the non-proliferation regime (controlled by strong nuclear weapon states), is also merely a constructed reality. If a nuclear weapon had not been thought of as the weapon of the apocalypse, the North would not have gained the power that it wanted vis-à-vis the other parties in the Six Party Talks. The fact that there is a taboo attached to the use of the nuclear weapon gave the North – in its ability to manipulate not only the 'reality' that was guiding the direction of the Talks, but also the limits imposed on the other states in relation to how far they could go to punish the state – the power to influence a global reality in the context of nuclear weapons and the norms that dictate their use or non-use. In fact, the US had tried, in its security posture, to alter this taboo by attempting to make the use of nuclear weapons (as punishment for violation of the non-proliferation treaty (NPT)) acceptable.

The irony lies in the fact that the US, the most powerful state in the world, could not alter a reality (such as the taboo related to the use of a nuclear weapon) that the DPRK managed to simultaneously undermine and strengthen. By crossing the 'red lines' (or 'bright lines' (Tannenwald 2005:8)) associated with the use and development of nuclear weapons, the DPRK undermined norms related to the nuclear taboo, but because of other states' non-punishment (which included the US) for its actions, it also strengthened the norm and check-mated all the states involved in the Six Party Talks. This was because every time the DPRK undermined the norm and was met with inaction from the international community (or at least insufficient punishment), the non-punishment from other states – and by implication the non-use of nuclear

weapons in order to stop the DPRK from developing their own – strengthened the idea that the nuclear weapon could (and should) not be used – not even to stop 'rogue states' from developing their own.

## 7. Conclusion: North Korea's construction of power – a tenuous identity

The DPRK's constructed power therefore leads to the ability to manipulate not only its external reality in the context of the Six Party Talks, but also a 'reality' that regulates international conduct in relation to a WMD. However, the domestic construction of identity that supports the creation and maintenance of this external 'reality' is strong inasmuch as it leads to a certain level of coercive deficiency. The regime's need to keep the country weak in order to maintain power internally (as well as to dictate the actions of states externally) is the source of its 'power'. It is the reason that the regime consciously constructs its identity and has to maintain its external reality (with the development of nuclear weapons) in order to support this identity. Its weakness lies in the fact that this reality cannot sustain itself – it is not exogenous, and therefore without conscious construction it will change. This change will very likely be to the detriment of the people in the regime that are currently benefitting from it. This means that the North Korean regime will not be able to stop this conscious construction if it wants to stay in power.

The maintenance of the status quo needs constant construction – to stay in the past, to always exist within the context of an eternal revolution, to make sure that the better life is found in the 'past' and not the 'future'. The North Korean state cannot stop this construction; this is its weakness. One could argue that even if the regime would like to change its behaviour towards the South, or its economic policies (internally) – for example – it cannot, because doing so will induce the future that will lead to the extinction of the regime itself. This is why it has to continue with its 'war', and why it has to continue with its nuclear weapons programme in order to sustain this reality. The regime's power lies in the construction of the 'past', which ironically means that it can never stop acting in ways that seem 'linear', in order to produce reactions from other states that will sustain its eternal war. Its weakness is therefore found in its constructed power: the DPRK has created a reality (internally and externally) that it cannot pull away from. As much as it has manipulated other countries to act in certain ways, its constructed reality has forced it to continue in the same path – it cannot stop provoking, or testing its nuclear weapons, for example, because if it does then it will lose its 'power' and very possibly cease to exist.

# Chapter 7: Conclusion

## 1. Summary

This study starts with an attempt to analyse the Six Party Talks using a framework proposed by Zartman (2008), Habeeb (1988) and Buszynski (2013). This framework entails separating national power (or 'aggregate structural power' (Habeeb 1988: 14)) from negotiating strength (or 'issue related structural power' (Habeeb 1988: 14)) in order to analyse whether Zartman's hypothesis applies to the Six Party Talks. Zartman hypothesis claims that the perception of asymmetry of relative power among parties (or states), in an international (bilateral or multilateral) negotiation, leads to better results – for both the perceived 'strong' and 'weak' states – than perception of symmetry (2008: 109). When applied to the Six Party Talks, however, this hypothesis becomes problematic. The reason for this is that, at best, the Talks just did not produce any results; and at worst, the weakest (target) state managed to get what it wanted, which regrettably was the maintenance of a nuclear weapons programme.

The paper therefore first asks 'Why does the Six Party Talks not conform to Zartman's hypothesis?'. The corollary of this is that the DPRK must be able to manipulate perception of relative power positions within the context of the relationship that it has with the other parties to the negotiation. This leads to the second question, 'What makes North Korea an 'atypical' small state?'. The question is asked in order to understand how the DPRK regime is able to have the power to resist pressure from the international community, while simultaneously existing as one of the weakest states in the world.

Zartman's approach to the analysis of negotiations emphasises the importance of the influence of 'power', but qualifies what 'power' is during the process of the negotiation – 'power', in this context, is a 'perceived relation' (2008: 100). This qualification opens up a debate about how to analyse 'power' – if power has to be mediated through perception, then would a purely structural approach to the analysis of a negotiation be appropriate? In Chapter Two, the paper argues that one can find a common ground between realism and critical theories; and promotes the use of a 'realist-constructivist' paradigm in order to analyse the DPRK's 'power'. It borrows the phrase 'think like a classical realist, analyse the role of…power in international political life like a constructivist', coined by Janice Bially Mattern (2004: 343). It concludes by arguing that understanding North Korea's *construction of power* will provide depth to an analysis of the Six Party Talks, as it will provide insight regarding the North's ability to not only resist international pressure, but also its ability to manipulate strong states into doing what these states (like the US and China) would not otherwise have done.

The importance of the nuclear weapon (or the North's nuclear weapons programme) in relation to the construction of this power is not forgotten. Chapter Two also discusses how the DPRK used the 'perversity of power' to its advantage during the Six Party Talks, as well as how the North managed to undermine as well as indirectly strengthen the nuclear taboo (Tannenwald 2005: 5). What 'power' should be, in the context of the Six Party Talks, as well as how it should be analysed, includes an analysis of the North's ability to manipulate 'reality' as well as its ability to skilfully use its nuclear weapons programme to maintain this 'reality'. Chapter Two therefore discusses certain elements from realist, constructivist and critical theories in order to strengthen an analysis of a specific negotiation, found in a historically contingent time and space. In addition to Chapter Two's search for a middle ground in relation to these theories for the purpose of providing more depth in the analysis of the Six Party Talks; it also points out the importance of the nuclear weapon as a variable that needs to be studied in order to understand North Korea's construction of power.

Because the paper promotes the use of a 'realist-constructivist' paradigm when it comes to the analysis of the Six Party Talks (and North Korea's ability to dominate the negotiation), it makes use of Wendt's understanding of the 'social construction of power politics' (1992). This entails understanding his argument for 'altercasting' (or socialising), within the context of the creation and maintenance of collective knowledge systems within international politics (1992: 421). Chapter Two points out that his argument is based on the construction of identity in the international sphere, but it 'brackets' the domestic when it comes to this construction (Zehfuss 2002: 220). He proposes that 'altercasting' can change the perception that states have towards one another, but does not take the influence that a domestic construction of identity has on any given state's perception of other states. This paper argues that, especially in the context of North Korea, the Six Party Talks, and the international community's attempts to make the DPRK adhere to international norms (related to the nuclear weapon), the construction of North Korea's identity is a continuous process that takes place domestically (internally) as well as internationally (externally). This construction of identity creates a situation where 'altercasting' by other countries simply does not work – the North's internal and external construction of identity makes its self-perception so strong that other (stronger) states cannot manage to socialise it to 'play by the rules'.

Chapter Three introduces the North's construction of identity and shows how the regime constructs and maintains this identity in order to create a certain reality, so that it can stay in power. North Korean identity is based on the careful construction of a reality that eternally exists in the past. The regime uses the 'myth' of the origin of the Kim clan in order to maintain a distance between it and the population, so that it can exert its power on the North Korean

people and secure its own existence. The nation is indoctrinated, like the citizens of Oceana in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Orwell 1949), to stay in the past – to continue to fight the 'revolution', the same revolution that brought the Kim clan into power and essentially ended decades ago. This need to stay in the past domestically influences the regime's foreign policy – North Korea's foreign policy therefore, in order to maintain this reality, also has to stay in the past. This means that it has to create an enemy against which it has to fight this 'revolutionary war', and certainly does not mean a change in the state's self-perception in relation to the states around it. This construction of identity therefore influences both the domestic and the international – on both fronts the regime has to construct this 'revolution' in order to maintain the reality that keeps it in power.

Chapter Four, in keeping with Zartman's (2008), Habeeb's (1988) and Buszynski's (2013) analytical framework (separating 'aggregate structural power' and 'issue-related structural power' (Habeeb 1988: 14)), uses Morgenthau's elements of national power (1993: 124) in order to analyse 'aggregate structural power', or national power. Hans Morgenthau's framework is used because Morgenthau himself allows for the influence of psychology in his definition of 'power'. Because of Zartman's 'perception' and Morgenthau's 'psychology', Chapter Four is given room to show how North Korea constructs certain values (and a certain meaning) for each of these elements, in order for the regime to stay in power. Elements that seem to need only an objective analysis (as though the 'material' is 'reality') are shown to embody completely different values when the North Korean regime's construction of the nation's identity is taken into account.

Chapters Five and Six reflect Morgenthau's final element, 'diplomacy' (1993: 155) as well as Habeeb's 'issue-related structural power' (1988: 14). They both look at the North's behaviour in relation to other states, within the context of the Six Party Talks. Buszynski (2013), for example, argues that the process of the negotiation is more important than the initial structural distribution of power, as the process of the negotiation can alter the outcome in unpredictable ways (2013: 16). The difference between Buszynski's analysis of the Six Party Talks and this paper is that his analysis focuses on exogenous behaviour (the use of tactics in order to improve negotiating strength, for example (2013: 6); while this analysis focuses on the endogenous construction of North Korea's identity and interests, and how this construction not only influences the tactics that North Korea used during the Talks, but also dictated the character of the Talks themselves.

Chapter Five focuses on how the DPRK managed to dominate a certain narrative vis-à-vis the US during the Six Party Talks, which limited the US's options (and policy choices), as well as its

bargaining strength, in relation to the DPRK. It shows how the DPRK and the US created and maintained each other's identity, and – more importantly – how the DPRK managed to use this mutually dependent construction to create a narrative (or 'reality') that allowed it to dictate the character and quality of the Six Party Talks. It also shows how the narrative strengthened the nuclear taboo, because it facilitated a precedent of non-action by the US when it came to the DPRK's crossing of 'red lines'. Both the domination of 'reality' during the Talks, as well as the nuclear taboo (and the US's indirect support of the norm as a result of non-action (punishment) when the DPRK crossed the 'red lines' related to the development of nuclear weapons), strengthened the North's 'perversity of power'.

Strengthening the nuclear taboo meant that nuclear states would be less and less inclined to use their weapons as punishment for non-compliance with non-proliferation principles, which meant that the US's options became increasingly limited as the DPRK continued to develop nuclear weapons. The fact that the DPRK also dominated a narrative that promoted a perception of the US as a bully justified the North's nuclear weapons programme and strengthened the North's 'perversity of power'. Combined with the limitations put on nuclear states concerning punishment for non-nuclear states when it comes to the development of nuclear weapons (because of the nuclear taboo), the DPRK had both the justification (as a result of the 'reality' that it had created) and the freedom (because of the nuclear taboo) to pursue a nuclear weapons development programme.

Chapter Five concludes by pointing out that the relationship that the US had with the DPRK during the Six Party Talks cannot by analysed in isolation. Chapter Six starts by highlighting that multilateral complexity also had a role to play in the outcome of the negotiation. It then looks at North Korea's relationship with China and South Korea within the context of the Six Party Talks, and shows how their attempts at 'altercasting' (when it came to their relations with the DPRK) only served to promote and sustain the narrative that was discussed in Chapter Five. It combines the concept 'coercive deficiency' with the North's construction of identity and uses these two elements to analyse the behaviour of China and South Korea towards the DPRK during the Six Party Talks. The analysis shows that the North's construction of identity intensifies the North's coercive deficiency vis-à-vis China and South Korea, which makes them promote the existence of the regime as this will maintain the status quo (regional stability). The discussion related to the DPRK's relationship with China and South Korea (in the context of the North's coercive deficiency and its construction of identity) concludes that both China and South Korea would rather choose the lesser of two evils – as a result of the North's ability to increase its coercive deficiency, a North Korea with nuclear weapons seems like the better alternative to regime instability.

After an analysis of interactions (during the Six Party Talks) between both the DPRK and China, and the DPRK and the ROK, the chapter returns to a discussion about how this constructed 'reality', sustained by the DPRK's construction of identity, influences the nuclear taboo and the North's perversity of power. The inference is that the DPRK regime, through its construction of identity, strengthened the nuclear taboo by undermining it. Each time the US, China and South Korea (as well as other nuclear states and members of the Six Party Talks) did not properly punish the DPRK for crossing 'red lines', their non-action strengthened the nuclear taboo, which in turn increased the DPRK's freedom to continue with its nuclear weapons development programme.

## 2. What makes North Korea an 'atypical' small state?

The introduction of this paper asks: 'What makes North Korea an 'atypical' small state?'. The question leads to an investigation concerning what gives North Korea the ability to act independently. In order to answer the question, the paper had to provide nuance to the understanding of 'power' within the context of the North's behaviour during the Six Party Talks. The concept 'power' is the reason why realism is used in the analytical framework of this paper; while the contradiction between the DPRK's physical power and its ability to dominate the negotiation process during the Six Party Talks creates the need for the introduction of theories (and assumptions) that are more post-structural in nature. North Korea functions within the space that is created when perception influences 'power' – it is in this space where the DPRK distorts reality, through the construction and maintenance of its identity domestically and internationally, that North Korea constructs its power.

The North Korean regime's ability to continue to consciously construct this identity has made it powerful domestically, and has given it the ability to undermine strong states' perceptions of their own power. The construction of this identity is a holistic process. As much as this paper, for the sake of analytical clarity, separated the domestic and the international; the truth remains that the DPRK regime's conscious construction of the nation's identity internally, as well as the regime's conscious construction of a certain 'reality' externally, are mutually reinforcing processes that work towards the same goal. This goal can only be found in the constructed past – the North Korean regime cannot move forward, as this will bring an end to the eternal revolution. This eternal revolution is what creates the need for a nuclear weapon, as well as justifies its acquisition (as the development of nuclear weapons will create enemies internationally – which is what the regime needs to survive).

The 'eternal revolution', and the need to stay in the past in order for this narrative to exist, resulted in the Six Party Talks being a circular process, continuously bringing all the parties

back to the beginning. This circular process entrapped China and South Korea, for example, as 'altercasting' by implication would need a 'future' that states can strive towards – a future where current threat perceptions have been altered and new identities have been created. The maintenance of this identity meant that the continuous construction of the North's external 'enemy' increased the level of the DPRK's coercive deficiency in relation to states that surround it in the region; and decreased any chance of an external influence changing the North's self-perception in relation to the rest of the world. This 'eternal revolution' narrative also entrapped the US, because by playing into this narrative, the US increased the North Korean regime's power domestically as well as in relation to its level of coercive deficiency vis-à-vis states like China and South Korea. The North Korean regime's conscious construction of its identity defied Wendt's 'altercasting' – every action (or non-action) by other states, for the purpose of promoting momentum and a break from the existing reality, supported the North's constructed identity. This meant that the North created a 'reality' that dictated other states' actions to the extent that they themselves, regardless of their 'power', reinforced the very collective knowledge systems that they were trying to change.

North Korea's narrative not only reinforced the 'cold war' mentality and threat perception that the DPRK had towards, for example, the US and South Korea; it ironically also reinforced international norms that exist to protect the world from the use of the nuclear weapon. Every non-action (or lack of sufficient punishment) from the international community after the DPRK tested nuclear weapons paradoxically strengthened the nuclear taboo instead of weakening it. Each time a strong state decided not to punish North Korea for testing a nuclear weapon, the North's deterrence strengthened. This was not because the tests proved that the North had the capability to completely destroy a strong nuclear state (in the way that any strong nuclear state – like the US – would be able to destroy the North if nuclear weapons were to be used). It was because the meaning behind using a nuclear weapon gave the nuclear tests a certain level of symbolic significance that no other weapon was capable of doing. The corollary of this reinforces the nuclear taboo once again – non-action from other states after the tests implicitly meant that these states supported this symbolic significance, and therefore indirectly supported the 'reality' that the North had created.

North Korea's power comes from its ability to construct a reality that dictates other states' interests and actions. This construction does not have an end – in order for this reality to stay in the past, it has to be maintained through frequent reinforcement. The North Korean regime will very likely not be able to stop provoking other states, or to stop developing its nuclear weapons programme. Its constructed power is its ability to dominate a narrative. This narrative does not only keep North Korean people in the past (and under control), it forces the international

community to maintain the status quo. The North Korean regime has created the ability to resist any pressure to change its behaviour domestically and internationally, and has found a way to make other states do what they otherwise would not have done. North Korea is an atypical small state because it has power – not physical power (supported by resources), but a constructed power that gives it the ability, mediated by perception, to move other states (make them behave in certain ways) in an intended direction.

## 3. Can North Korea be socialised?

The argument in this paper has a dualistic quality because it analyses power. On the one hand, realism is one of its theoretical foundations, and this means the paper should be able to discover or test generalizable rules that could possibly be applied elsewhere. The inclusion of realism as a theoretical foundation also suggests that recommendations should be made concerning the way forward, in terms of the issue at hand (i.e. the need for the international community to find a way to make the DPRK denuclearise). On the other hand, the use of post-structural assumptions about reality make this task difficult – post-structural methodology does not claim to have answers, and in fact shies away from arguments that are linear in nature. For example, the use of Derrida in Chapter Three would be null and void if recommendations, based on certain assumptions about states, foreign policy and the current world order, are made.

Nevertheless, the use of Wendt's assumptions about the social construction of power politics does provide a space for recommendations regarding ways to possibly change DPRK's threat perception. This paper shows how two contrasting approaches to dealing with North Korea (the US versus China and South Korea) have both not produced results. Both approaches did not lead to a change in the North's behaviour, and in fact strengthened the legitimacy of the DPRK regime's policies. What is needed is an approach that can somehow alter the construction of the nation's identity without promoting chaos. As much as the regime is to blame for the situation within which the country finds itself, and the international community cannot seem to break away from, promoting regime change would very likely not promote peace and prosperity. This does not only apply to the DPRK's neighbours, who are worried about their own peace and prosperity; but also to the North Korean nation itself. Regime change can only destabilise not only the functioning of government, but the nation's identity itself.

Promoting engagement – attempting to socialise the DPRK regime into changing its character without any external coercion – seems a better option. However, this argument promotes the idea that 'altercasting' only supported the status quo. This means that the nuclear weapons programme, as well as the regime's oppressive nature, will continue unobstructed. The 'Ukraine model' was probably the best option, and should have been used at the beginning of the Talks

when the window of opportunity was still open. Promoting this model now, however, will erode the legitimacy of the non-proliferation regime even further. States like the US now have to balance a changed perception of relative power (relative not only to North Korea, but to other states in the Six Party Talks and the world), the need to promote international norms that are supposed to be maintaining peace and security in the world, and the pragmatism that comes with the ability to learn from past mistakes.

Socialising the DPRK into changing its behaviour is probably the best option, but the type of engagement needs to change. This engagement will have to have the ability to deal with the core of this problem – the North Korean regime's desperation to stay in power, and the way in which it perpetuates its existence. The construction of North Korean identity will always be an obstacle to peaceful change in the country itself as well as in the region. States that want to promote peaceful change need to find ways to balance the continuation of the regime's existence with a change in the nation's identity (and by implication reform of the regime's policies). The problem with this approach is that any change in the regime's character will erode the legitimacy of the nation's identity, which will very likely lead to internal, and possibly external instability; and any change in the nation's identity will erode the legitimacy of the regime's existence – which will also very likely lead to instability.

## 4. Recommendations for further study

This paper's argument is more an exploration of new ways to use existing theories in order to answer historically contingent questions. It builds onto Morgenthau's classical realism by showing how there are similarities between the principles that guide his theory and principles that believe in the social construction of reality. It also shows how constructivism can be used without the recourse to an 'idealist' stance: constructivism can analyse the intersection between power (in a realist sense) and the construction of reality. Chapter Two aims to show these similarities in order to prove that theories are not mutually exclusive, and that they should not be applied rigidly. Recommendations for further study therefore include using the Six Party Talks, or North Korea's behaviour towards the international community, as a case study with which to apply new combinations of analytical frameworks and theoretical foundations. Wendt (1992) argues that the question should dictate the methodology, and not the other way around. I agree with this, and propose that further study include new ways to ask questions in order to find better tools with which to understand the quagmire of the North Korean regime and its nuclear weapons programme.

Another possibility is the use of this framework to analyse the Iran denuclearisation negotiations, to see whether one can find any similarities between the two cases (North Korea

and Iran). Iran is also a country that relies heavily on the construction of a very specific identity that puts it at odds with not only the West, but most of the Middle East as well. Further research could include an analysis of whether there are enough similarities between the two cases for a comparison regarding the impact of 'altercasting', for example. If similarities exist, recommendations for states dealing with North Korea, by looking at lessons learned from the Iran denuclearisation negotiations, might carry more weight. The North Korean quagmire is the international community's inability to change its threat perception. A study of other states that have similar characteristics (like Iran, for example) might provide analysts with the options that seem to allude not only researchers, but practitioners as well.

## 5. Final remarks

This study makes certain assumptions: it does not question Morgenthau's choice of elements of national power, or the politicised nature of the analysis of these elements in the first place. It also does not question the format of the Six Party Talks, and whether this format has been structured in a certain way in order to benefit some and not others. In other words, according to Derrida, this study has not depoliticised itself completely (Zehfuss**). The use of realism as a foundation from which to define 'power' has itself many assumptions that promote structures that oppress some and not others. For the sake of the argument, most of these assumptions were kept intact. I am aware, however, that to use some elements that are principles that guide critical theories, while using elements that are taken for granted assumptions in realism, could mean that assumptions that should be questioned are implicitly accepted. Not only could this lead to a study that promotes principles that should be questioned on a theoretical level, but it could also lead to the obfuscation of issues that should be discussed within the context of this study. For example, this study looks at how the North Korean regime oppresses its own people in order to maintain power domestically and internationally. It points this out, but only in order to analyse the regime's construction of power within the context of a multilateral negotiation.

What is neglected, for example, is a focus on why policies of other states cannot truly by guided by the promotion of human rights – the US, in fact, used 'human rights' as an excuse to stall the negotiations at some point during the negotiation process. This state, governed at the time by a perception of its own moral superiority, decided to use the promotion of human rights as a bargaining tactic instead of truly caring about the people that have to live every day in a country that denies freedom to all its citizens. Despite this paper's use of some principles that guide critical theories gave nuance to a classical realist analysis of power, it did not do what critical theories aim to do: it did not deconstruct assumptions that promote structures that benefit some and not others.

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