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METHOD TO THE MADNESS – WHY NORTH KOREA WANTS THE BOMB

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INTRODUCTION

The question of why developing nations seek to acquire nuclear weapons is a major issue within the field of international relations. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) is an interesting primary case study, as at first sight it does not appear to be a country in a position to rationally seek nuclear weapons.ⁱ In particular this paper will examine how the interrelationship between the political elite (Kim Jong-Il and his secretariat) and the military elite are the core reason behind the DPRK's development of nuclear weapons. This is in contrast to conventional reasoning that holds that external pressures are motivating the drive towards an entrenched nuclear program.

Developing countries have limited resources and most, like the DPRK, have severe development challenges and needs which make their decision to pursue nuclear weapons appear potentially irrational on the surface. One of the prevalent theories behind the DPRK's push to become a nuclear power is that the regime and its leader, Kim Jong-Il, are irrational. This idea does not bear out when looking at the situation in detail. The feedback from high-ranking individuals who have met with Kim Jong-Il, such as former US Secretary of State, Madeline Albright and former US President Bill Clinton, does not support these ideas painting the Dear Leader as an irrational man. Secretary Albright commented after meeting with him in 2000 that she "found him to be somebody that I could talk to, that was rational and pragmatic."ⁱⁱ This paper is based on the idea that the relevant international actors and decision makers are rational and that their decisions and actions can be explained using a rationally based theory.ⁱⁱⁱ In addition as the DPRK is not the only developing country to pursue nuclear weapons capabilities (e.g. Pakistan, India, South Africa) there must be a reasonable and rational explanation for why, developing countries generally and the DPRK specifically, do pursue them.^{iv} In the case of the DPRK the answer lies in the complex relationship between Kim Jong-Il and the military leadership of the Korean People's Army (KPA).^v The relationship between the executive political structures and the military elite is one of the most challenging dimensions to explore within the context of the DPRK and is an area that has largely been ignored in favour of the analysis of more conventional international relations theory. These in the main cite external causes for the decisions and actions of the DPRK.^{vi} However when this is looked at in the context of the international environment it does not provide a satisfactory explanation for the push towards nuclear armament or indeed for the survival of the Kim regime.

Of course external factors and instability on the Korean peninsula do play their part in the push towards nuclear weapons proliferation but it is not plausible as the primary cause for the nuclear program. Internal information and analysis of the DPRK is extremely limited when compared to the wealth of information which is available and being developed on other so called 'rogue nations' such as Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan. For Australia the issue of instability and conflict on the Korean peninsula is of particular importance. It is one of the only remaining conflict points of the Cold War and any conflict, collapse or transformation of the area will have a direct effect on the regional stability within Asia and also on some of our most important trading partners. In particular China, Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK).^{vii} Domestic issues are a key factor for any state and few subjects are more crucial to understanding the decision-making processes and driving forces within

a state. The military first policy is the primary motivation for the development of the nuclear weapons program in the DPRK and as such the internal political/military situation deserves detailed examination and analysis.^{viii}

THE NUCLEAR WEAPONS QUESTION – EXISTING THEORIES

Existing literature that focuses on why states, including DPRK, seek nuclear weapons generally offer four theories: these are the national prestige hypothesis, the diplomatic purpose hypothesis, and the security hypothesis.^{ix} None of these four hypotheses are entirely convincing or satisfactory when looking at the case of the DPRK as they fail to take any account of the internal domestic situation and internal power structures. Although the external factors are persuasive as part of a comprehensive reasoning they are not the full story. When looked at in depth these theories fail to explain why the DPRK would reactivate its nuclear weapons program in the face of so many countervailing factors such as economic instability, food shortages and international threats.^x

In looking at the current state of literature it is important to assess the level of examination that has been directed at analysing why DPRK is pursuing nuclear weapons capabilities and also looking into the military and power structures within the DPRK. Unlike the study of other authoritarian regimes such as the Soviet Union and more recently China, which have given rise to a wealth of examination and analysis on all aspects of the military forces, the same cannot be said of the military and its high command within the DPRK.

Security Hypothesis

The first major hypothesis for the DPRK's pursuit of nuclear weapons is the security hypothesis. Essentially this theory holds that nuclear weapons provide a deterrence against a US/ ROK attack and make up for the imbalance in military power between the DPRK and the ROK. The military on ROK is not in itself a threat but the long-standing relationship between the ROK and the USA military alliance is of concern.^{xi} The security hypothesis is the DPRK's official stance and it is reasoning that is supported by many analysts such as Dr Robert Rachaus and Avery Goldstein.^{xii} Former South Korean president Roh Moo-Hyun said, "It is reasonable for the North to claim that the objective of the DPRK's nuclear development is to deter external attacks."^{xiii} The theory does not explain why DPRK would withdraw from the 6 party talks or expel the International Atomic Energy Commission Inspectors. Those are not actions that increase the security of DPRK. In addition there is no change in the nature of the external security situation in the DPRK during times when the nuclear program was gaining ascendancy which demonstrates that the nuclear program is not only the result of external security factors. It certainly could be argued that security is one facet of the reasoning behind the decisions to develop nuclear weapons in the DPRK but it cannot be held that it is the primary motivating factor. Dr Peter Liberman documents the inadequacies of this hypothesis in the case of South Africa, while noting that it is nonetheless the consensus view.^{xiv}

National Prestige Hypothesis

The second major theory that analysts subscribe to in explaining the DPRK nuclear program is the national prestige hypothesis.^{xv} Another analyst George Perkovich holds that many states, particularly developing states like the DPRK, seek nuclear weapons as a short cut to national power and prestige. He maintains that countries like France, India, and the United Kingdom were driven by factors such as the quest for national grandeur, prestige, independence and national prowess.^{xvi} This rationalisation focuses on Kim Jong-II's desire to enhance both the national prestige of the DPRK and his own personal political prestige. This theory links the DPRK's ambition of becoming a nuclear state to its leader Kim Jong-II's survival in a hostile international environment. Kim Jong-II inherited political power from his father Kim Il-Sung. However, under his leadership, the DPRK

economy has teetered on the verge of total economic collapse.^{xvii} Under this hypothesis, Kim Jong-II has stuck to the development of nuclear weapons and other controversial defence programs such as the long range missile program in order to bolster the national prestige and to have the DPRK recognised as a nuclear power in order to engage international attention.^{xviii}

In looking at the realities of life in DPRK this theory has some plausibility in that the North Korean people view nuclear weapons as a necessary development to bring the DPRK onto a level playing field internationally. However again the timing of the weapons program does not fit in with this theory. The weapons were not developed in the immediate post ceasefire period. The timing also indicates that the program is not a response to South Korean umbrella nuclearisation through the USA/ROK alliance as that had occurred many decades prior.^{xix} National prestige in light of the realities of the situation within the DPRK and the timing of the weapons development simply does not provide a comprehensive explanation. It is an incomplete and unsatisfactory analysis when looked at in combination with other factors.

Diplomatic Purpose Hypothesis

The diplomatic purpose hypothesis, refers to the use of nuclear weapons as a bargaining chip to attain normalized USA-DPRK relations and economic rewards. This hypothesis is often linked in with the national prestige hypothesis in order to attempt a more expansive and detailed explanation but it still does not tell the full story. This hypothesis has DPRK embarking on its nuclear weapons program in order to even the playing field in international relations with countries such as the USA.^{xx} The theory holds that the DPRK would abandon its nuclear aspirations in exchange for normalized relations and generous economic assistance. Former South Korean president Kim Dae-Jung stated, "What DPRK wants is a guarantee for its security and economic recovery. If these things are guaranteed...DPRK would dismantle its nuclear weapons."^{xxi} Historically, however, no country has ever developed nuclear weapons to use them solely as a bargaining chip, making this hypothesis less plausible. Although DPRK's quid pro quo strategy is clearly persuasive as a fragment of the explanation, it is difficult to see it as the primary motive for developing its nuclear arsenal. The cost of developing the program in contrast to the dire state of the DPRK economy does not rationally allow for this as the complete explanation.

After assessing each of these explanations individually it is clear that none of the conventional theories explains the nuclear push in the DPRK with sufficient depth. In fact most of these theories behind why states seek nuclear weapons simply do not fit into the case study of the DPRK. Of course these theories regarding national prestige, diplomatic purpose and security do have contributions to make towards the understanding of why the DPRK is seeking nuclear weapons but they do not provide the full story or even the most significant factor. In particular this paper will look at the effect of executive and military power relationships in encouraging and developing nuclear weapons programs. This is an area that the current literature touches on but does not fully address or focus on the pivotal power structures causing the DPRK's march towards becoming a nuclear power. The theory presented in this paper seeks to explain how the change in Kim Jong-II's perception of internal power relationships have affected the regimes choice of action, and to demonstrate that understanding risks and situations as changing in terms of internal stability and security provides a better picture of DPRK's nuclear policy than the static externally focused explanations prevalent in the current literature.^{xxii}

UNDERSTANDING SONGUN – THE MILITARY FIRST POLICY

The 'military first' policy (Songun) which has been in place since 1998, has enhanced the need for a comprehensive understanding of the political/military relationship within the DPRK.^{xxiii} This policy has diminished the pre-eminence of the Korean Workers Party (KWP) and has facilitated the

rise of the Korean Peoples Army (KPA) as the most important political structure barring Kim Jong-II himself. This is a significant change in power structures from the time of Kim Il-Sung, Kim Jong-II's father who ruled the DPRK from 1948 until his death in 1994.^{xxiv} During Kim Il-Sung's lifetime the KWP was the organisation that was the central controlling force within the DPRK. When Kim Jong-II took the reigns however he was keen to prioritise and reward his allies within the KPA and hence the control and authority of the KWP has been steadily diminishing since 1994, culminating with the declaration of the Songun policy in 1998.^{xxv} This announcement was in effect a reflection of the success of the military leadership being entrenched in policy as the leading authority within the DPRK. In particular the declaration of the position of the Chairman of the National Defence Commission (NDC) as the highest position in the state solidified Kim Jong-II's position as the legitimate and accepted Head of State in 1997.^{xxvi} From this a situation has arisen when nothing within the DPRK can be successful without the support of the military structures and leaders. It also allowed the military to gain the ear of Kim Jong-II, and with that access comes power and influence.

The KPA has steadily increased its influence in the political sphere to the point where it now has the primary relationship with Kim Jong-II.^{xxvii} This development has meant that the lack of knowledge regarding the military elite in the DPRK and the extent of their influence and impact over Kim Jong-II has become an area of extreme importance. Who are the military power brokers? What kind of power and influence do these leaders wield, and how do they exert it? How do KPA leaders interact with Kim Jong-II? And, perhaps more significantly what dynamic in the relationship is causing the push towards the development of nuclear weapons. Interestingly most analysis of why states seek nuclear weapons and indeed initiate military incidents are grounded in the assumption that internal pressures and motivations are generally never the primary reason for military actions or nuclear weapons development.^{xxviii} In light of both the survival of the regime and the continuing push towards nuclear armament the time is ripe for a challenge to that assumption within the context of DPRK. This relates to the idea that internal unrest and pressures can cause states to adopt a more aggressive foreign policy.^{xxix} The DPRK's case is different as it is not in a position to pursue an actual all out war so the drive into nuclear weapons and small scale conflicts such as the permeable water border with the ROK could be an alternative version of this potentially logical response to internal domestic pressures and the need to support and placate the military structures.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE KOREAN PEOPLES ARMY

Purges and Promotions

The KPA is not a static structure. Over the past 20 years there has been a dramatic shift in both the command structures and the position of the military within the regime. The vast majority of these changes were undertaken to secure the power and position of Kim Jong-II. At the 18th session of the sixth Central People's Committee, held on May 23, 1990, the National Defense Commission became established as its own independent commission, rising to the same status as the Central People's Committee and not subordinated to it, as before.^{xxx} Concurrent with this, Kim Jong-II was appointed first vice-chairman of the National Defense Commission. Following this on 24 December 1991, Kim Jong-II was appointed Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army. Four months later, on 20 April 1992, Kim Jong-II was awarded the rank of Marshal and in 1993 he became the Chairman of the National Defense Commission.^{xxxi}

Following Kim Jong-II's appointment in 1990 to the KPA he embarked on a range of promotions to secure his position. Between December 1991 and December 1995, nearly 800 officers (out of approximately 1200) received promotions and preferential assignments. Three days after Kim Jong-II became Marshal, eight generals were appointed to the rank of Vice-Marshal.^{xxxii} Perhaps most

significantly is that along with these changes many KPA officers were appointed to influential positions within the KWP, further strengthening the military high command's hold over the political structures within the DPRK.

In the past two decades, in order to ensure the personal loyalty of the third-generation military and state security leaders, Kim Jong-II in his capacity of Supreme Commander of the KPA completely revamped the national security establishment through twelve rounds of general officers' promotions which usually took place on significant and symbolic occasions such as the anniversary of Kim Il-Sung's birthday on April 15, the KPA founding anniversary on April 25, the anniversary of the Armistice Agreement on July 26, or the KWP's founding anniversary on October 10. For instance on April 15, 1992, in one of his first moves to consolidate his leadership in preparation for his succession and in the midst of an extreme famine, Kim Jong-II as Supreme Commander of the KPA issued an order to promote 664 general officers.^{xxxiii}

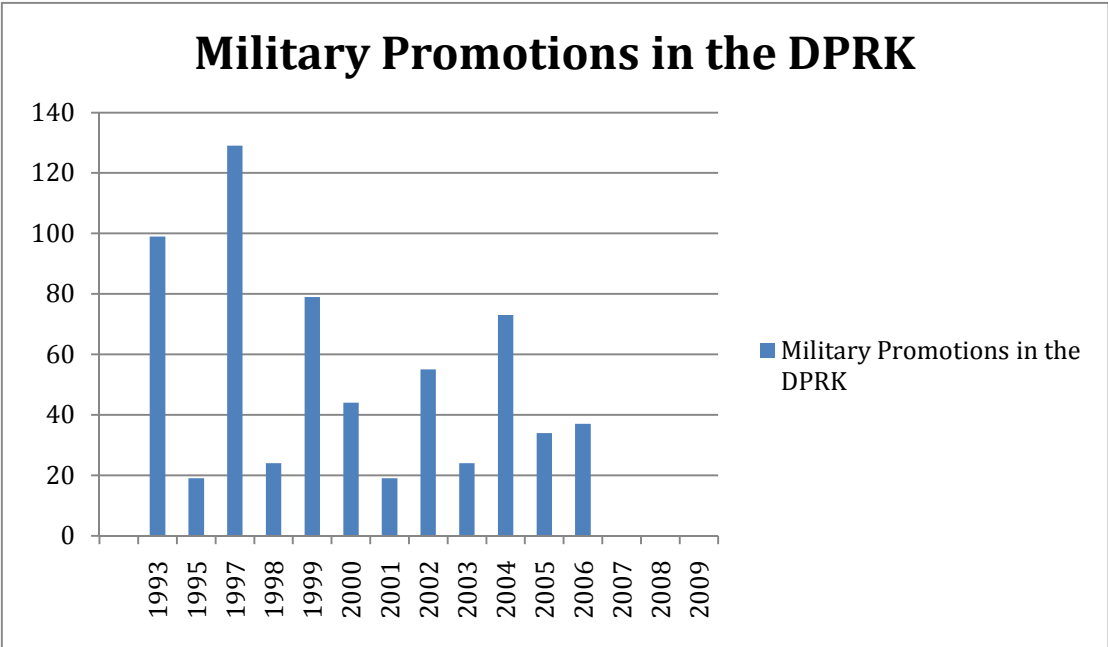
Below in Table I is a list of all the promotions granted by Kim Jong-II since the initial 1992 round.^{xxxiv}

Table I: KPA promotions issued by the Supreme Commander of the KPA

Date	Occasion	Issuing Authority	No. of Promotions
15.4.1992	Kim Il-Sung's 80 th Birthday	Kim Jong-II	664
26.7.1993	40 th Anniversary of the Armistice Agreement	Kim Jong-II	99
4.10.1995	50 th Anniversary of KWP	Kim Jong-II	19
16.2.1997	Kim Jong-II's 55 th Birthday	Kim Jong-II	6
15.4.1997	85 th Birthday of Kim Il-Sung (dec)	Kim Jong-II	123
15.4.1998	86 th Birthday of Kim Il-Sung (dec)	Kim Jong-II	22
9.9.1998	50 th Anniversary of formation of the DPRK	Kim Jong-II	2
15.4.1999	87 th Birthday of Kim Il-Sung (dec)	Kim Jong-II	79
4.10.2000	88 th Birthday of Kim Il-Sung (dec)	Kim Jong-II	44
15.4.2001	89 th Birthday of Kim Il-Sung (dec)	Kim Jong-II	19
15.4.2002	90 th Birthday of Kim Il-Sung (dec)	Kim Jong-II	53
15.4.2002	90 th Birthday of Kim Il-Sung (dec)	KWP and DPRK NDC	2
26.7.2003	50 th Anniversary of the Armistice Agreement	Kim Jong-II	24
15.4.2004	92 th Birthday of Kim Il-Sung (dec)	Kim Jong-II	73
15.4.2005	93 th Birthday of Kim Il-Sung (dec)	Kim Jong-II	34
15.4.2006	94 th Birthday of Kim Il-Sung (dec)	Kim Jong-II	37

TOTAL	1300
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The selection of these dates is deliberate. It is symbolic of placing military promotions at the heart of the DPRK’s power structures. These dates are akin to religious holidays in Western society and are observed with extreme devotion second only to celebrations of the Great Leader, Kim Il-Sung and the Dear Leader, Kim Jong-Il’s personal anniversaries.^{xxxv} It is another example of how the domestic situation in the DPRK is controlled and dominated by the military structures and leaders.



Strategic Adjustments to the Civil/Military Structures

The fact of the matter is that all of the security and military structures in the DPRK are aiming to ensure a consolidation of their own power. As their power is centered in the ruling regime, the self-interest of the military is inextricably linked with the survival and perpetuation of the regime. The Songun policy was a clear-cut victory for the loyal KPA and that has become the primary actor in all policy-making processes, whereas the more conservative State Security Agency was relegated to secondary status in restructuring the North Korean state and building a “great powerful and prosperous nation”.^{xxxvi} In particular the prioritization of the KPA to a level equal and in reality above the KWP is symbolic of the rise of the military’s power within the regime and its continuing importance to regime survival and stability. The question is how does Kim Jong-Il cement the loyalty of these military leaders. One of the ways, other than direct promotion is by giving the military access to the lions-share of the budget. A nuclear program by its nature demands a significant proportion of the budget of any nation. Even though the DPRK does not release an accurate representation of its budget breakdowns it is logical to assume that a significant amount in the context of the budget size goes into weapons development and this allows for the perpetuation of the military regime and potentially a significant percentage of corruption and individual luxury that would be impossible without this program.^{xxxvii} In effect the policy is continuing the total war economy and ensuring the military access to a large proportion of the available funds.

The creation of the military first policy is unlikely to have been a response to a negative external environment. The timeframes simply do not add up. When the military first policy emerged it was during a time of cooperation between the DPRK and the West and between the DPRK and ROK under the Sunshine Policy.^{xxxviii} Nor is it likely to have been caused by the protracted economic

crisis and famine, because the DPRK was already entering the period of economic stabilization in the late 1990s and food conditions had improved.^{xxxix} If this change had occurred in the mid 1990's amidst the^{xl} succession and desperate famine caused by the disintegration of the DPRK's Soviet allies then that reasoning may have made sense, but it did not. It was a conscious decision by Kim Jong-Il in a considered and relatively stable setting. The most likely reason for the introduction of the military rule under the Songun policy and the push to prioritise the military structures was the defeat of the leadership challenge brought against Kim Jong-Il's leadership in 1998. It was an internally motivated transition, which had a lasting effect on the foreign policy environment involving the DPRK.

The Leadership Challenge of 1998

There is always some tension between the military and the state security establishment in a totalitarian style state. The DPRK is no different as previous purges in the national security establishment in 1976-1977 and in 1987-1988 indicate.^{xli} That tension was exposed again at the end of 1998, following the purge of the top leadership at the State Security Agency and other organizations within the intelligence and counter-intelligence community, which ultimately gave impetus to the ensuing rise of the Songun policy in the DPRK.

Reportedly, a number of key security officials began to pass negative judgments on Kim Jong-Il's leadership in early 1998. Especially harsh in his criticisms was General Kim Yong Ryong, First Deputy Minister of the State Security Agency, who essentially acted as the Minister of State Security in the absence of the aging and ailing Minister Chon Mun Sop. Kim Yong Ryong is rumoured to have stated in private conversations that "our political system is sick," and that "we also can live well if we open and reform our country."^{xlii} Even Kwon Hui-Gyong, Director of Office 35 at the KWP Central Committee in charge of the South (which used to be called the Foreign Intelligence Analysis Department), who was personally close to Kim Jong-Il, is alleged to have shared these critical views. Moreover, they are alleged to have asserted that they could "restore discipline," "create a new order," and "rectify the mistakes committed by the current leadership" through "internal reforms and external opening," like the former Soviet KGB Chief and the CPSU Secretary-General Andropov hoped to do in the stagnant Soviet Union back in 1983.^{xliii}

Obviously, it was a direct challenge to Kim Jong-Il's leadership from the State Security establishment. The Dear Leader chose to rely on the KPA to suppress the dissent within the ranks of the intelligence and counter-intelligence community and throughout the society generally.^{xliv} The strong support he received from the KPA in large part is indicative of what is in effect a power sharing arrangement between the military and Kim Jong-Il. He can count on their support so long as he continues to fund their requests and programs hence making it in the military's interest to continue supporting the regime. In response to the challenges in 1998 a number of actions were taken by the KPA to protect the regime and Kim Jong-Il's leadership. Kim Yong Ryong and his close associates were accused of treason and bribery from the export-oriented enterprises under the control of the State Security Agency and promptly executed. Kwon Hui Gyong, the DPRK Hero, was accused of failing to "repatriate" Hwang Jang Yop and of embezzling state funds during his ambassadorship in Moscow and was exiled. In addition, Kim Jong-U, former Chairman of the Committee on Promotion of Cooperation with Foreign Countries, and some other officials responsible for economic exchanges with the South, were accused of illicit wealth accumulation and disappeared. Seo Kwan-Hui, the then KWP CC Secretary for Agriculture, was accused of undermining the party agricultural policy and starving the people and was executed. Even General Lee Bong-won, the Army Commander with close ties to the State Security Agency, was accused of espionage and disappeared in late 1998.^{xlv}

Through these purges, Kim Jong-II successfully re-imposed discipline and personal loyalty among the senior leadership by teaching them a painful lesson in obedience. No objectors would be tolerated, especially within the inner sanctum responsible for the North Korean regime's security. More importantly, Kim Jong-II dramatically curbed the unbridled ambitions of the State Security apparatus to change the course of the country in accordance with their own vision. Instead, the ever-loyal KPA was given the green light to start the modernization of the nation on its own terms.^{xlvi}

The KPA as Power Brokers – Access and Control

Following the purges in the state security apparatus in 1998, in his day-to-day country management, Kim Jong-II has surrounded himself with his trusted military aides, who accompany him on all his military inspections and civilian on-the-spot guidance tours around the country. The so-called Operation Command Group of the KPA Supreme Command consists of Army General Ri Myong Su (Chief of Operations Bureau at the General Staff), Col.-Gen. Hyong Ch'ol Hae (Logistics Commander of the General Staff and Deputy Chief of the General Political Department), and Col.-Gen. Pak Jae Gyong (Chief of the Propaganda Bureau of the General Political Department).^{xlvii} In essence, these three senior generals, all in their late sixties, who have the executive authority over all the KPA operations, logistics, and information assets, control most of the daily access to Kim Jong-II. They decide what paperwork he reads, what documents he signs, what telephone calls he takes, where he goes on his trips, and what he sees. In a way, they constitute a military screen around the Dear Leader. Although they may have their own differences of opinion and represent slightly divergent corporate interests, they share a common interest in shielding the Kim Jong-II from unvetted information, in promoting their interests, and in striking at their enemies in his name. Occasionally, Vice-Marshal Kim Yong Chun (Chief of the KPA General Staff), Army General Kim Yun Sim, and Col.-Gen. Kim Ki Son also join the Operation Command Group in accompanying Kim Jong-II in his daily activities.^{xlviii}

Arguably, the military and party leaders in Kim Jong-II's daily entourage may have different agendas and divergent perspectives on national developments, and may strive to pull and push the Dear Leader in different directions. The fact that The DPRK is run predominantly by the military under the military-first policy does not mean that the country is in hopeless shape. This is a common misconception. Kim Jong-II has an iron-clad grip on power and until he passes away this is unlikely to change. The question is what does the military first policy mean for external security on the Korean peninsula. In reality it has led to the nuclearisation of the DPRK and continuing small scale military engagements, which perpetuate the idea that the DPRK is under threat from the South and the US.^{xlix}

Why Proliferate?

The nuclear weapons issue in relation to the DPRK is a key security concern for the region and the international community. The DPRK's pursuit of nuclear weapons is interesting as it is a country that cannot feed its population, is economically fragile and is increasingly internationally isolated yet it has been pursuing its nuclear program with increased vigour over the past few years, why? It is the nuclear program in particular that is causing DPRK to be regarded as a pariah state more than anything else so how can this be rationally explained? DPRK is not the only example of a developing state with scarce resources pursuing nuclear weapons capabilities but it is one of the only case studies where current theories are not entirely convincing. India and Pakistan can be explained satisfactorily by the national prestige and security hypotheses respectively but no current theory provides a reasonable and satisfactory explanation for why the DPRK is pursuing nuclear weapons.¹ Nothing in the external environment for DPRK changed so why the sudden push towards the development of nuclear weapons? As outlined above this paper is putting forward the idea that it is the reciprocal power sharing arrangement between the KPA and Kim Jong-II that is responsible

for the pursuit of nuclear weapons – and practically it is the military first policy that is driving this development.

The North Korean nuclear crisis began to rise to the surface after the end of the Cold War. As North Korea's security environment suddenly worsened after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Chinese diplomatic transformation, the DPRK began to challenge U.S. nuclear non-proliferation policy. According to Dale Copeland a state in decline like the DPRK can adopt one of two foreign policy options: 1) to accommodate its enemy at the risk of war in the long term, or 2) to adopt a hard-line stance at the risk of war in the short term.^{li} Although it does not appear that the DPRK intended to go to war against the United States, the most powerful nation in the world, the North has often escalated and de-escalated the nuclear crisis with its unique nuclear policy. Consequently, the DPRK once reached the brink of being attacked militarily by the U.S. due to its reluctance to follow the international demand for nuclear inspections.^{lii} In June 1994, the United States was making every diplomatic effort to have UN sanctions imposed on The DPRK and was also considering a few military options, including preemptive strikes on the North's nuclear facilities. This situation could have led to war but Kim Il-Sung chose instead to pursue a negotiated end to the crisis, which evolved into the Agreed Framework between the USA and the DPRK.^{liii}

Of particular importance is the information, which came to light in the early part of the 2000's. That was that the DPRK was pursuing nuclear weapons in the form of enriched uranium from roughly 1998. Mike Chinoy in his book "*Meltdown: The Inside Story of the North Korean Nuclear Crisis*" outlines how the USA discovered the uranium program under the George W Bush administration.^{liv} This is further evidence that the push towards nuclear proliferation is a result of the military involvement in the highest levels of policy through the Songun policy. It is the only explanation that fits in terms of the timelines. In 1998 the DPRK is just emerging from the transfer of power following Kim Il-Sung's death and the famine of the mid 1990's.^{lv} In terms of the international environment this was during the years of the ROK's Sunshine Policy and tentative positive engagement with the USA under both the agreed framework and other areas. It is the internal power struggle and the victory of the KPA that the Songun policy is enacted. It is logical that Kim Jong-Il would reward the loyalty of the KPA. The nuclear program through uranium enrichment is clearly embarked upon primarily as a reward to the KPA. A program such as the uranium enrichment program and the accompanying budget allocation and power of involvement in top-secret activities is one way Kim Jong-Il could reward his loyal military high command and ensure their continued support.

CONCLUSION

Songun first appeared as a policy of the DPRK in the initial throes of the succession from Kim Il-Sung to Kim Jong-Il.^{lvi} The effect of the policy is that the military high command – the NDC was elevated to the position as the primary decision making body in the DPRK. Significantly it became even more important than the KWP and ceased having to report to the KWP as a subordinate. From the moment Kim Jong-Il was installed at a high level within the military structure he embarked on an ambitious round of promotions aimed at ensuring all the top levels of the military owed their promotions to him directly. It was a gradual transition, the first round was the most comprehensive but after the challenges of the mid to late 1990's he effectively promoted those officers who had proved loyal throughout and purged the military of all subversive elements.^{lvii}

This military first doctrine is an important feature as it was elevated to its current primary position during the single biggest domestic transition since the armistice of 1953. The timing of this event and the timing of future military actions links in with various domestic developments and crises at a time when the regime is clearly preparing for a leadership transition. It seems logical that this links the internal stability issues with the promotion of the military first policy. Kim Jong-Un looks to be

the anointed successor to his father Kim Jong-Il and at present there are many rumours suggesting a big announcement at the KWP Party conference scheduled for September of 2010. The conference is held irregularly and could be a forum to pave the way for the transfer of power to Kim Jong-Un.^{lviii}

The military first policy can certainly be seen as in large part the driving force behind the DPRK's nuclear programs. The nuclear program is not the result of external security issues as is often claimed. The time frames simply do not match this idea in a logical fashion. In 1998 towards the end of Clinton's second term as President the US/DPRK environment was relatively stable and even improving to the point that Clinton considered visiting prior to leaving office. The relations at that time between the DPRK and ROK were good and basking in the glow of the friendly Sunshine policy of ROK President Kim Dae-Jung. The drive towards nuclear weapons is better explained by internal power relationships. The military supported Kim Jong-Il during the turbulent years of 1994 – 1998 and the reinvigoration of the nuclear weapons program and the associated budgetary allocations was one way that Kim Jong-Il could reward that loyalty.

Most international relations can be brought back to power and this case of the DPRK is no different. In order for Kim Jong-Il to stabilize his leadership and entrench loyalty he enacted the military first policy and raised the military up as the highest political body within the DPRK. However it is a two way relationship. In the same way that he is supported and endorsed by the military he is required to support and endorse the position and importance of the military leadership. In an environment where he is limited in the type of preferment he can endorse access to a nuclear program provides him with an excuse for allowing the military access to the biggest proportion of budget spending. It is a way of rewarding their ongoing loyalty and support in addition to the accelerated promotion schedule that has been taking shape over the past two decades.

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