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THESIS

LIFE IN THE SHADOW: AN EXAMINATION OF THE MINOR FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE DPRK

by

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March 2014

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This thesis explores the diplomatic relations of North Korea, officially known as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), with an emphasis on its minor diplomatic relations. Minor, for purposes of this thesis, refers to those states other than the Big Four Plus One (i.e., China, Japan, South Korea, Russia, and the United States). This thesis covers the evolution of these relations, assesses trends, and predicts the direction in which these relations may be headed.

While many refer to North Korea as a hermit kingdom, its diplomatic relations challenge this label. The DPRK has been and remains active diplomatically. The DPRK enjoys close relations with many states that continue to be marked by the rhetoric of a previous era. There is more continuity than change in its minor foreign relations; however, signs of new life cannot be ignored. While most of its bilateral-minor relations were established to help bolster its claim as the sole legitimate government of the Korean Peninsula, these relationships have become more important as the DPRK has become increasingly isolated. Furthermore, by keeping these relations warm, they assist Pyongyang in its possible efforts to engage in diplomatic hedging if needed. Over the years, as Pyongyang's relationship with its primary benefactors has waxed and waned, it has engaged in expanded diplomatic efforts. In mid-2013, as China supported efforts for a more universal application of further restrictive sanctions on the DPRK, the beginning of a cooling period in DPRK-PRC relations can be seen. Given this potential waning of relations with its sole primary benefactor, the DPRK can be expected to enter into a new period of more energetic diplomacy.

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LIFE IN THE SHADOW: AN EXAMINATION OF THE MINOR FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE DPRK

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the diplomatic relations of North Korea, officially known as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), with an emphasis on its minor diplomatic relations. Minor, for purposes of this thesis, refers to those states other than the Big Four Plus One (i.e., China, Japan, South Korea, Russia, and the United States). This thesis covers the evolution of these relations, assesses trends, and predicts the direction in which these relations may be headed.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
COW	Correlates of War
DMZ	demilitarized zone
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EBA	European Business Association
EU	European Union
FIR	foreign direct investment
IR	international relations
KCNA	Korean Central News Agency of DPRK
MOC	Ministry of Commerce
MOU	memorandum of understanding
NGO	non-governmental organization
NPT	The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
PRC	People's Republic of China
ROK	Republic of Korea
U.S.	United States
UN	United Nations
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WMD	weapons of mass destruction

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

At some point, every child is warned to remain mindful of the company kept. The idea behind this age-old admonishment is that people, in the absence of other information, often judge others by those with whom they are associated. Of course, individuals have a range of company they keep. If this range is viewed in a linear manner, it likely spans from bitter enemy to close friend. Where a given relationship falls on this linear scale may indicate a number of things to outsiders. Contained within this admonishment, like most venerable nuggets of wisdom, some element of truth likely exists. If this old adage is accepted, then perhaps it has utility in providing additional information about a state. This type of inquiry may have particular value and is the type of analysis that must be employed when examining an opaque state like the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). With a state as closed and as secretive as the DPRK every bit of information that can be gathered is useful to the international community's understanding of this outlier state.

Using this idea as a launching point, this thesis explores the diplomatic relations of the DPRK with an emphasis on the minor diplomatic relations of the state. Minor, for purposes of this thesis, does not speak to durability of the bond between two states. Instead, it simply means those countries with which the DPRK has relations that are not part of what is referred to as the Big Four Plus One (i.e., China, Japan, South Korea, Russia, and the United States). This thesis's core research questions are the following.

- What common characteristics may be identified in diplomatic relations of the DPRK, with a particular emphasis on its minor relations, and what insights can they offer into the internal and external workings of the state?
- Based on these insights what can be surmised regarding the strategic direction of the DPRK?
- Does current DPRK diplomatic outreach predict a more belligerent, defiant North Korea? Or, perhaps, a state becoming a more enmeshed-responsible player in the international system?
- Are emerging or new allies and partners appearing while other stalwarts of the DPRK state begin to wane?

B. IMPORTANCE

An inquiry into the DPRK's foreign relations in the aggregate is an important inquiry in that it may provide additional details and insights into the inner workings and strategic intentions of this impenetrable state. That said; an examination of the minor relations of the DPRK is of particular importance because contemporary academic authorship offers little on this subject. Most writing on North Korean diplomatic relations focuses on participants in the Six Party Talks (i.e., China, Russia, Japan, United States, and South Korea), or on what some refer to as the Big Four (China, Russia, Japan, and the United States), or the Big Four Plus One (i.e., previously listed players plus South Korea). While this author contends that good reason exists for the broader foreign policy community's focus on these significant players, an inquiry on what can be learned on the periphery of DPRK foreign relations is just as important, and perhaps more important, because it largely remains unexplored in contemporary literature.

To substantiate the importance of DPRK minor relations, it is only necessary to look at current news items. In mid-July 2013, the world learned that Cuban-North Korean relations remained active when Panama seized a DPRK state owned freighter. Panama seized the freighter because it contained Cuban weapons being transported back to North Korea for refurbishment, which had been illegally concealed among other cargo.[1] Alternatively, emerging reports of possible DPRK connections to the Syrian chemical weapons program can be reviewed.[2] These two recent stories indicate a DPRK that remains involved, in some measure, in military engagement abroad despite substantial United Nations (UN) sanctions. Any insight that can be gained by exploring these relations is important to United States (U.S.) national defense and understanding of the DPRK state.

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[1] Rick Gladstone, "North Korea Says Freighter Carried Legal Load of Arms," *New York Times,* July 18, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/18/world/americas/north-korean-ship-cuba.html?_r=0.

[2] Stephan Haggard and Marcus Noland, "Chemical Weapons: The North Korean Angle," *North Korea: Witness to Transformation Blog*, Peterson Institute for International Economics, September 3, 2013, http://www.piie.com/blogs/nk/?p=11560; Claudia Rosett, "North Korean-Syrian Chemistry: The Weapons Connections," *Forbes*, August 19, 2013, http://www.forbes.com/sites/claudiarosett/2013/08/19/north-korean-syrian-chemistry-the-weapons-connections/.

Additionally, North Korea continues engagement outside the military sphere. While it is not uncommon for the Korean Central News Agency, the state run news agency of the DPRK, to report on the various travels of its civilian leaders abroad, recent reports have surfaced of high-ranking DPRK civilian leaders visiting African states.[3] While North Korea has historic ties with Africa that date back to the 1960s, an examination of the current state and nature of DPRK-African relations is worthy of analysis. Such recent press items lead to pondering: why the cash-strapped DPRK still sends personnel abroad to engage in diplomatic activities? What motivates these activities in the present age? Is it primarily economic? Is it resource based? What drives these relations in this period?

C. PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESES

While many refer to North Korea as a hermit kingdom, its diplomatic relations challenge this label. The DPRK has been and remains active diplomatically. This thesis demonstrates the relations with many of the states with which the DPRK may consider close friends continue to be marked by the rhetoric of a previous era. Thus, more continuity than change in its minor foreign relations can be seen; however, signs of new life cannot be ignored. While most of its bilateral-minor relations were established to help bolster its claim as the sole legitimate government of the Korean Peninsula, these relationships have become more important as the DPRK has become increasingly isolated. Furthermore, by keeping these relations warm, they assist Pyongyang in its possible efforts to engage in diplomatic hedging if needed. Over the years, as Pyongyang's relationship with its primary benefactors has waxed and waned, it has engaged in expanded diplomatic efforts. In mid-2013, as China supported efforts for more universal application of further restrictive sanctions on the DPRK, the beginning of a cooling period in DPRK-PRC relations can be seen. Given this potential waning of relations with its sole primary benefactor, the DPRK can be expected to enter into a new period of more energetic diplomacy.

[3] Jeong Hunny, "North Korea Looks to Africa to Ease Isolation," *Asian News Network*, August 18, 2013, http://www.asianewsnet.net/North-Korea-looks-to-Africa-to-ease-isolation-50441.html; Korean Central News Agency of DPRK, "DPRK Government Delegation Arrives in DR Congo," August 19, 2013 http://www.kcna.co.jp/index-e.html.

D. LITERATURE REVIEW

In both academic and the broader foreign relations literature, a panoramic survey of the DPRK foreign relations does not exists nor does an analysis of the government's motivations focusing on the post-Cold War period. While a handful of surveys have been written on the foreign relations of North Korea, they were either written during the Cold War or examine only the Cold War period. Additionally, most literature on the DPRK foreign relations focuses on modern-day concerns, such as nuclear weapons development and illicit arms proliferation issues, and then discusses the relations of the DPRK with a small number of states in this context and only addresses its aggregate foreign relations tangentially. Typically discussed in this respect is the relationship the DPRK has with the Republic of Korea (ROK), the People's Republic of China (PRC), Japan, Russia, and the United States. This is not to say that the focus of such writings is inappropriate, but more attention is needed to some of the more obscure relations that the DPRK maintains. From those relations it may be possible to glean knowledge at the margin that may aid in understanding the DPRK's broader foreign policy goals.

The most closely relevant scholarly work to this thesis is that by Charles Armstrong in a paper for the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars titled "Juche and North Korea's Global Aspirations," and his book, *Tyranny of the Weak: North Korea and the World, 1959–1992.* In these works, Armstrong surveys DPRK diplomatic relations through the years. He contends that the DPRK began an aggressive diplomatic outreach in the late 1960s that endured into the 1980s. Armstrong posits that this remarkable outreach was partly rooted in a DPRK desire to become a leader in the third world. He goes as far to say that it was pursuing a "peculiar and limited kind of globalization,"[4] which foreshadowed the globalization South Korea would undertake in the early 1990s. Ultimately, he contends, this diplomatic outreach was doomed to fail from the beginning. Employing an argument much in line with logic advanced in George

[4] Charles Armstrong, "Juche and North Korea's Global Aspirations," working paper, Washington, DC: Wilson Center, 2009, http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/NKIDP_Working_Paper_1_Juche_and_North_Koreas_Global_Aspirations_web.pdf, 1.

Kennan's version of containment,[5] the DPRK's diplomacy was doomed to fail because the state itself was and remains riddled with internal contradictions. Specifically, Kim Il Sung and the DPRK attempted to market its model of self-reliance, or *juche,* to other states, but the effort was destined to fail because it was only made possible by DPRK benefactors and access to the markets that the "socialist universe" provided."[6] Also, the effort contradicted the fact that inherent in *juche* is the idea that the Korean people are a unique people. How can *juche*, something unique to the Korean people, also be applied to other people around the world? Ultimately, these factors, combined with the end of the Cold War and a rising South Korea, ended any notion of enhanced DPRK diplomatic prominence on the international stage by the 1980s.[7]

While Dr. Armstrong's work stands as the most contemporary scholarly work on this subject, a handful of other scholars have gone before him.[8] Works on this subject all in some way offer the same characterization of DPRK foreign relations in the aggregate. They assert that DPRK relations were largely compelled by three loose strategic goals: legitimacy, security, and development. While all three works have slightly different paths, they traverse to arrive at these conclusions; they all conclude that DPRK sovereignty is the chief goal of the state. All three works stand as great contributions to an underserved area of academia but still do not address DPRK relations in the present.[9]

Perhaps the most relevant work found among think tank literature on the subject of DPRK diplomatic relations is that of the National Committee on North Korea, a U.S. based non-governmental organization. Listing a membership of many notable Korea and Northeast Asia scholars, its mission is to promote and facilitate engagement between the

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[5] George Kennan, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," *Foreign Affairs*, July 1947, http://www.foreign affairs.com/articles/23331/x/the-sources-of-soviet-conduct.

[6] Armstrong, "Juche and North Korea's Global Aspirations," 15.

[7] Ibid.; Charles Armstrong, *Tyranny of the Weak: North Korea and the World, 1950–1992* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), 90.

[8] Works pre-dating Dr. Armstrong's latest book include: Wayne S. Kiyosaki, *North Korea's Foreign Relations: The Politics of Accommodation, 1945–75* (Washington, DC: Praeger, 1976); Byung Chul Koh, *The Foreign Policy Systems of North and South Korea* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Byung Chul Koh and Tae-Hwan Kwak, ed., *The Foreign Relations of North Korea: New Perspectives* vol. 1 (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987).

[9] Ibid.

DPRK and the United States.[10] In 2012, Daniel Wertz, JJ Oh, and Kim Insung, of the National Committee, wrote a survey of DPRK diplomatic relations through the years. They break DPRK relations in six distinct periods that begin in 1948: "1948 to 1950s: limited diplomatic relationships; late-1950s through 1960s: declaring autonomous diplomacy; 1970s: expanded diplomatic outreach; 1980s: terrorism and the collapse of the Eastern bloc; 1990s: former Soviet bloc—and outreach to Japan and the U.S.; and 2000s: the European Union and Six-Party Talks."[11] While the authors do not offer much characterization of the individual relations, nor do they make broader assessments based on the relationships that the DPRK maintains, they do provide a useful pool of data and a historical framework for DPRK relations.[12]

While not directly focused on the diplomatic relations of the DPRK, several academic works are notable in their contribution to understanding North Korea. Victor Cha's *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future* advances the thesis that North Korea is entering a period of *neojuche*.[13] He claims that the new leadership of the DPRK under Kim Jong Un is trying to find a new legitimacy narrative, given that the old ideology under Kim Jong Il was an absolute failure in that the country never became the promised "powerful and prosperous nation."[14] As a result, Cha claims that the average North Korean views the past with a certain romanticism, and thus, needs a return back to what made its country great. He describes *neojuche*[15] as "a return to a harder-line, more orthodox *juche* ideology (defined as self-reliance) of the 1950s and 1960s, when North

[10] The National Committee on North Korea, "Mission," accessed March 12, 2014, http://www.ncnk.org/who-we-are/mission.

[11] Daniel Wertz, JJ Oh, and Kim Insung, "DPRK Diplomatic Relations," The National Committee on North Korea, last modified June 11, 2012, http://www.ncnk.org/resources/briefing-papers/all-briefing-papers/dprk-diplomatic-relations.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Victor Cha, *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012), 13.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

Korea saw its best days."[16] If Cha's thesis is correct, then the period of the 1950s and 1960s may be reviewed, a period of expanded diplomatic outreach, for explanations regarding contemporary DPRK actions.

As discussed, Cha's book does not directly address the DPRK diplomatic relations in the aggregate. As others have argued, Cha claims that China and the DPRK have a unique relationship. In his chapter that addresses DPRK foreign relations, Cha advances the idea that China remains "the sole source of external support for the regime today."[17] This support is potentially growing less certain, given recent, more unified enforcement of UN sanctions, particularly in finance, raising some interesting questions regarding the durability of China-DPRK relations.

Another notable recent work is that of Patrick McEachern's *Inside the Red Box: North Korea's Post-Totalitarian Politics*. Published before the 2011 death of Kim Jong Il and his son Kim Jong Un's ascendance to head of the North Korean state, this book advances the thesis that the field of international relations (IR) has mislabeled the North Korean regime as a totalitarian state under Kim Jong Il. He says that "while Kim Il Sung's rule can be described as totalitarian, Kim Jong Il rules through a more decentralized, post-totalitarian, institutionally plural state."[18] This statement, of course, is contested by academics like Cheong Seong-chang.[19] While McEachern's work does not address the DPRK under Kim Jong Un, nor does it directly contribute to the inquiry of this paper, his work does serve as important reminder that whatever decisions the DPRK has pursued diplomatically, they are not necessarily the logical or capricious actions of a single actor. Instead, they very well may be the result of internal workings and machinations of the DPRK elites and leadership, and as such, must be considered when crafting assessments.

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[16] Ibid.

[17] Cha, *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future*, 13.

[18] Patrick McEachern, *Inside the Red Box: North Korea's Post-totalitarian Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 11.

[19] Frank Ruediger, "North Korea after Kim Jong Il: The Kim Jong Un Era and Its Challenges," *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 10, no. 2 (2012): 5.

E. THESIS OVERVIEW

This thesis begins with a broad historical overview of DPRK relations from its establishment in 1948 to the present. This historical overview outlines major themes and trends from the past, where those have brought the DPRK state, and also, addresses underlying motivations in these relations through the years.

After a look at the evolution in relations, this thesis addresses the minor diplomatic relations of the DPRK state. This portion of the study takes a comprehensive look at the main actors out of the minor diplomatic stratum of DPRK relations. It addresses what drives these relations in the present and possibly projects the direction in which they are headed. Next, it examines DPRK international institution participation. Within this section, the thesis explores DPRK levels of activity and what motivates its interactions with these various institutions. Lastly, it concludes with a section addressing some of the broad themes discovered in this inquiry and may be expected to be seen in DPRK diplomatic relations in coming years.

II. THE EVOLUTION OF DPRK FOREIGN RELATIONS

A. ORIGINS OF THE DPRK STATE

Before exploring the minor diplomatic relations of North Korea, it is first necessary to understand how the DPRK came into existence in 1948. North Korea was birthed out of conflict, but conflict was nothing new to the Korean Peninsula. Some historians have compared its plight to that of Poland–the geographical misfortune of serving as ill-fated middle ground for surrounding warring powers.[20] Others have described it as the epicenter of shifting tectonic plates at which the interests of Great Powers converge.[21] Regardless of which analogy is more fitting, the peninsula, particularly in the last century, has seen much transition and conflict. It hosted a good measure of conflict throughout the 1894–95 Sino-Japanese war, and later, became a protectorate of Japan in 1905 as a result of the Russo-Japanese War. In 1910, Japan annexed and declared it a colony of Japan, and it remained so throughout World War II until being partially occupied by Soviet troops in 1945 shortly after the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) entered the war against Japan. U.S. troops would soon also occupy part of the peninsula and remain separated from Soviet troops by the thirty-eighth parallel. The Soviets maintaining troops in the north found the former leader of the anti-Japanese guerilla forces turned statesman Kim Il Sung to be an enthusiastic client after he was installed in October 1945.[22]

The peninsula remained divided, and in many ways, reflected the polarization underway in the early days of Cold War Europe. Both U.S. and Soviet troops withdrew from the peninsula by mid-1949, which left the peninsula led by two nationalistic leaders, Kim Il Sung in the north, and Syngman Rhee in the south. Neither leader was pleased with the divided state of Korea, and both harbored dreams of reunification by any means necessary, including force. Dating as far back as 1949, Kim Il Sung petitioned support for

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[20] Alice Lyman Miller and Richard Wich, *Becoming Asia: Change and Continuity in Asian International relations Since World War II* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 65.

[21] Armstrong, *Tyranny of the Weak: North Korea and the World, 1950–1992*, 10.

[22] Miller and Wich, *Becoming Asia*, 66.

an invasion of the south to the leader of his state's primary benefactor, Joseph Stalin. Stalin, after much persistence on the part of Kim Il Sung, and in no small part due to confusing strategic signaling from Washington, finally acquiesced to Kim's invasion ambitions of the south.[23] This invasion led to the Korean War, which in the end, dragged the newly formed People's Republic of China (PRC) into direct action with U.S. and UN forces. The war ended short of any grand ambition of a reconciled peninsula and largely returned Korea to the status quo antebellum. An armistice was signed between the United Nations and the DPRK on July 27, 1953. It called for the establishment of the Korean demilitarized zone (DMZ), which continues to serve as the de facto border between the DPRK and the ROK to this day. With no mutually agreed upon mechanism established for political collaboration between the North and the South, the border remains one of the most hotly contested regions on the globe.[24]

North Korea and Kim Il Sung's relationship with the USSR and the PRC ebbed and flowed through the years. The North under Kim's direction became very adept at playing off the rivalries between to two communist powers depending on what the DPRK needed and the state of relations between the USSR and the PRC.[25]

B. DPRK RELATIONS: 1948–PRESENT

1. 1948–1957: Only Fraternal Bonds Will Do[26]

At its inception, given that North Korea's two largest benefactors were communist states, its official diplomatic relations was limited to Soviet satellite states. Table 1 shows the official diplomatic relations of North Korea from 1948–1957.

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[23] Miller and Wich, *Becoming Asia*, 66; As Miller and Wich argue, the historic record has revealed in recent years that neither Washington nor Moscow were anxious to enter into conflict on the peninsula through direct action or proxy. Instead, a clear case can be made the great powers were pulled into the Korean War by their respective beneficiary states. This theme remains in play to this day; a relatively weak state, North Korea, drawing an inordinate amount of attention and resources from the great powers.

[24] Armstrong, *Tyranny of the Weak*, 10; Bruce Cumings, *The Korean War* (New York: Random House, 2010), 143–146; Miller and Wich, *Becoming Asia*, 66.

[25] Cha, *The Impossible State*, 315.

[26] The periodization blocks used in this paper are drawn from the work of Wertz, Oh, and Insung, "DPRK Diplomatic Relations."

Table 1. Official Diplomatic Relations of the DPRK: 1948–1957[27]

Country	***Relations Established***	***Country***	***Relations Established***
USSR	10/12/1948	Hungary	11/11/1948
Mongolia	10/15/1948	Albania	11/29/1948
Poland	10/16/1948	Bulgaria	11/29/1948
Czechoslovakia	10/16/1948	PRC	10/6/1949
Yugoslavia	10/30/1948	East Germany	1949
Romania	11/3/1948	North Vietnam	1/31/1950

The USSR was the first to recognize the DPRK and establish official diplomatic ties in 1948. This recognition paved the way for an instant wave of Soviet satellite states also to recognize the DPRK. Immediately apparent upon viewing the table is the limited nature of the DPRKs official relations. By comparison, the PRC, whose recognition as the legitimate government of China was also limited, maintained official diplomatic relations with 28 states to the DPRK's 12. See Table 2.

Table 2. Official Diplomatic Relations of the PRC: 1948–1957[28]

Country	***Relations Established***	***Country***	***Relations Established***
USSR	10/3/1949	Sweden	5/9/1950
Bulgaria	10/4/1949	Denmark	5/11/1950
Romania	10/5/1949	Burma	6/8/1950
Hungary	10/6/1949	Swiss Confederation	9/14/1950
DPRK	10/6/1949	Liechtenstein	9/14/1950
Czechoslovakia	10/6/1949	Finland	10/28/1950
Poland	10/7/1949	Pakistan	5/21/1951
Mongolia	10/16/1949	Norway	10/5/1954
East Germany	10/27/1949	Yugoslavia	1/2/1955

[27] Wertz, Oh, and Insung, "DPRK Diplomatic Relations."

[28] John W. Garver, *Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993), 82.

Country	***Relations Established***	***Country***	***Relations Established***
Albania	11/23/1949	Afghanistan	1/20/1955
India	1/1/1950	Nepal	8/1/1955
United Kingdom	1/6/1950	Egypt	5/30/1956
North Vietnam	1/18/1950	Syria	8/1/1956
Indonesia	4/13/1950	Yemen	9/24/1956

While North Korea's diplomatic relations would grow in terms of numbers in the years to come, this period provides a foreshadowing of the isolated nature of the North Korean state and the markedly different path it would take from its strong communist neighbor and its democratic rival to the south.

While DPRK relations in aggregate may have been lower than the PRC's, it nevertheless maintained more than its neighbor to the south (see Table 3) in this period, a significant comparison given the undecided state of the battle for supremacy on the peninsula under way at this time. In the contest for legitimacy on the international stage between the DPRK and ROK governments, at least in terms of the numbers of states that officially recognized Pyongyang diplomatically, the DPRK had a quantitative edge over the South. While the balance shifted in coming years, this quantitative edge was meaningful in the time immediately preceding both states' entry into the international system.

Table 3. Official Diplomatic Relations of the ROK: 1948–1957[29]

Country	***Relations Established***	***Country***	***Relations Established***
USA	10/12/1948	West Germany	12/1/1955
ROC	1/4/1949	South Vietnam	1956
UK	1/18/1949	Italy	11/24/1956
France	2/15/1949	Turkey	3/8/1957
Philippines	3/3/1949		

[29] Koh, *The Foreign Policy Systems of North and South Korea*, 12.

2. Late 1950s–1960s: Diplomatic Hedging

In the late 1950s, North Korea entered into a period of diplomacy no longer dictated by its benefactors, but instead, marked by a level of autonomy. Throughout the late 1950s and into the 1960s, profound changes were occurring globally, especially in the communist world. Despite the fact that the DPRK had joined the PRC in denouncing Soviet "revisionism" after Nikita Khrushchev's pursuit of "peaceful coexistence" with the West, the DPRK moved away from China and closer again to the USSR, which was largely because the Cultural Revolution was under way (1966–1976) in China. Also, during this time, increasing solidarity emerged amongst the developing world as a result of the nonaligned movement that had its foundation laid at the 1955 Bandung conference.[30] While the DPRK was not invited to the Bandung conference, its official press covered the event positively and it would later seem to adopt the idea of third-world solidarity and greatly expand its diplomatic relations in this period.[31] The Algerian National Liberation Front was the first non-Marxist regime with which the DPRK established diplomatic relations, as seen in Table 4.[32] Additionally, throughout this period, de-colonization was occurring globally that left new countries with which North Korea could establish relations.

Table 4. Newly Established Diplomatic Relations of the DPRK: Late 1950s–1960s[33]

Country	***Relations Established***	***Country***	***Relations Established***
Algeria	9/25/1958	Tanzania	1/13/1965
Guinea	10/8/1958	Syria	7/25/1966
Cuba	8/29/1960	Burundi	3/12/1967
Mali	8/29/1961	Somalia	4/13/1967

[30] U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, "Milestones: 1953–1960 Bandung Conference (Asian-African Conference), 1955," accessed June 30, 2013, http://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/BandungConf.

[31] Armstrong, "Juche and North Korea's Global Aspirations," 4.

[32] Wertz, Oh, and Insung, "DPRK Diplomatic Relations."

[33] Ibid.

Country	*Relations Established*	*Country*	*Relations Established*
Yemen	3/9/1963	Iraq	1968
Egypt	8/24/1963	South Yemen	1968
Indonesia	4/16/1964	Equatorial Guinea	1/30/1969
Mauritania	11/12/1964	Zambia	4/12/1969
Congo Rep.	12/24/1964	Chad	5/8/1969
Cambodia	12/28/1964	Sudan	6/21/1969
Ghana	12/28/1964	Central African Republic	9/5/1969

North Korea during this period first launched an all-out effort to establish diplomatic ties with these countries in particular, which would come to fruition in the 1970s because these new countries were gaining membership in the United Nations and could assist North Korea in matters left to the UN general assembly. Thus, a desire to win voting support in the United Nations partially drove this broadened diplomatic outreach.[34]

3. 1970s: DPRK's Diplomatic Coming Out

Much of the outreach the DPRK had conducted through the 1960s would be realized in the 1970s with further expansion of diplomatic relations (see Table 5). In this period, Kim Il Sung marketed the DPRK state as the model for third world development. This narrative had real resonance with those countries that had only gained independence several short years ago. Many of these states viewed the DPRK as a nation that had broken free of imperialism, built an industrialized economy, defeated a superpower, and was now gaining prominence on the world stage. Charles Armstrong provides his perspective, and a notable Kim Il Sung quote, in a working paper authored for the North Korea International Documentation Project titled, "Juche and North Korea's Global Aspirations:"

[34] Jide Owoeye, "The Metamorphosis of North Korea's African Policy," *Asian Survey* 31, no. 7 (1991): 632; Kiyosaki, *North Korea's Foreign Relations*, 44–86; Wertz, Oh, and Insung, "DPRK Diplomatic Relations."

The DPRK portrayed the North Koreans' struggle against the US and South Korea as identical with the struggle of Third-World peoples for independence, and completely compatible with 'proletarian internationalism': 'We should unite closely with the peoples of all the socialist countries; we should actively support the Asian, African and Latin American peoples struggling to throw off the imperialist yoke, and strengthen solidarity with them.' This revolutionary spirit was very much in sync with a good many movements for Third World solidarity in the age of decolonization.[35]

Table 5. Newly Established Diplomatic Relations of the DPRK: 1970s[36]

Country	***Relations Established***	***Country***	***Relations Established***	***Country***	***Relations Established***
Maldives	6/14/1970	Malaysia	6/30/1973	Botswana	12/27/1974
Sri Lanka	7/15/1970	Denmark	7/17/1973	Australia	12/31/1974
Sierra Leone	10/14/1971	Iceland	7/27/1973	Portugal	4/15/1975
Malta	12/20/1971	Bangladesh	12/9/1973	Thailand	5/8/1975
Cameroon	3/3/1972	India	12/10/1973	Kenya	5/12/1975
Rwanda	4/22/1972	Liberia	12/20/1973	Ethiopia	6/5/1975
Chile	6/1/1972	Afghanistan	12/26/1973	Mozambique	6/25/1975
Uganda	8/2/1972	Argentina	1973	Tunisia	8/3/1975
Senegal	9/8/1972	Libya	1/23/1974	São Tomé	8/9/1975
Burkina Faso	10/11/1972	Gabon	1/29/1974	Cape Verde	8/18/1975
Pakistan	11/9/1972	Costa Rica	2/10/1974	Singapore	11/8/1975
Madagascar	11/16/1972	Guinea-Bissau	3/16/1974	Comoros	11/13/1975
Zaire	12/15/1972	Nepal	5/15/1974	Angola	11/16/1975
Togo	1/31/1973	Guyana	5/18/1974	Myanmar	1975
Benin	2/5/1973	Laos	6/24/1974	Nigeria	5/25/1976
Gambia	3/2/1973	Jordan	7/5/1974	Papua New Guinea	6/1/1976

[35] Armstrong, "Juche and North Korea's Global Aspirations," 5–6.

[36] Wertz, Oh, and Insung, "DPRK Diplomatic Relations."

Country	*Relations Established*	*Country*	*Relations Established*	*Country*	*Relations Established*
Mauritius	3/16/1973	Niger	9/6/1974	Seychelles	6/28/1976
Sweden	4/7/1973	Jamaica	10/9/1974	Barbados	12/5/1977
Iran	4/15/1973	Venezuela	10/28/1974	Grenada	5/9/1979
Finland	6/1/1973	Austria	12/17/1974	Nicaragua	8/21/1979
Norway	6/22/1973	Switzerland	12/20/1974	Saint Lucia	9/13/1979

During this period, the DPRK established relations with 63 countries. It also joined the World Health Organization later in 1975, gained entry into the Non-Aligned Movement, and established an observer mission at the Union Nations. Much of the 1970s would be the highpoint of DPRK diplomatic outreach, but by the end of the decade, due to several scandals involving DPRK diplomats engaged in drug smuggling and its continued support of revolutionary groups in numerous countries, its overall momentum in world affairs and relations with other nations started to wane.[37]

4. 1980s: Diplomatic Bleakness

Throughout the 1980s, the establishment of new diplomatic relations nearly halted. Both world affairs and North Korea's actions were responsible for this slowing. North Korea engaged in two significant acts of terrorism in this decade. First, in 1983, DPRK agents attempted to assassinate ROK President Chun Doo-hwan in Rangoon, Burma. While the attack proved unsuccessful in eliminating its primary target, it did kill the majority of Chun's cabinet and led to both Burma and South Korea breaking all forms of diplomatic relations with North Korea. Additionally, the North Korean bombing of commercial airliner Korean Air Flight 858 in 1987 further drove the DPRK into international isolation and led to it being labeled a terrorist state, which also occurred during a period of increasing South Korean economic affluence that directly impact its relations with other states.

[37] Armstrong, *Tyranny of the Weak*, 168; Wertz, Oh, and Insung, "DPRK Diplomatic Relations."

Table 6. Newly Established Diplomatic Relations of the DPRK: 1980s[38]

Country	***Relations Established***	***Country***	***Relations Established***
Zimbabwe	4/18/1980	Suriname	10/11/1982
Lesotho	7/19/1980	Côte d'Ivoire	1/9/1985
Mexico	9/9/1980	Trinidad and Tobago	1/22/1986
Lebanon	2/12/1981	Columbia	10/24/1988
Vanuatu	10/1/1981	Peru	12/15/1988
Nauru	2/25/1982	Morocco	2/13/1989
Malawi	6/25/1982		

Using its increasing economic wealth, the ROK scored a major diplomatic victory through its Nordpolitik engagement with Eastern European bloc countries. These states diplomatically recognized the ROK and put an end to their policies of exclusive recognition of Pyongyang. This recognition, in some measure, served as the preamble for the USSR and the PRC to recognize the ROK formally in the 1990s.[39]

5. 1990s: A New World

The 1990s got off to bad start for the DPRK in that its two historical benefactors would both officially recognize the ROK by 1992. This period was largely marked by shifting global power dynamics with the end of the Cold War. No longer would ideology trump economic considerations, as evidenced with the almost instant recognition of the ROK government by Russia in 1990. In a rather pragmatic step, the DPRK joined the United Nations concurrently with the ROK in 1991. As the eastern bloc fell, the DPRK worked quickly to establish relations with the newly formed states. DPRK diplomacy abroad soon confronted very real limitations in funding with the reduction of backing from the former USSR. This decrease in aid led to economic hardship on a number of

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid., 238–270; Wertz, Oh, and Insung, "DPRK Diplomatic Relations."

fronts in North Korea, and directly hurt its presence abroad, as it was forced to shutter thirty percent of its embassies.[40]

Table 7. Newly Established Official Diplomatic Relations of the DPRK: 1990s[41]

Country	***Relations Established***	***Country***	***Relations Established***
Namibia	3/22/1990	Tajikistan	2/5/92
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	8/16/1990	Uzbekistan	2/7/92
Antigua & Barbuda	11/27/1990	Armenia	2/13/92
Dominica	1/21/1991	Oman	5/20/92
Bahamas	5/16/1991	Slovenia	9/8/92
Belize	6/20/1991	Croatia	11/30/92
Lithuania	9/25/1991	Czech Republic	1/1/93
Latvia	9/26/1991	Slovakia	1/1/93
St. Kitts and Nevis	12/13/1991	Qatar	1/11/93
Cyprus	12/23/1991	Eritrea	5/25/93
Ukraine	1/9/1992	Djibouti	6/13/93
Turkmenistan	1/10/1992	Macedonia	11/2/93
Kyrgyzstan	1/21/1992	Georgia	11/3/94
Kazakhstan	1/28/1992	Bosnia and Herzegovina	1/19/96
Azerbaijan	1/30/1992	South Africa	8/10/98
Moldova	1/30/1992	Brunei	1/7/99
Belarus	2/3/1992		

The power dynamics of the post-Cold War world forced the DPRK to be more pragmatic than ever. Given the changing security environment, North Korea first entered into nuclear talks with the United States in the 1990s, largely seeking security guarantees from the United States if it agreed to halt its nuclear program and disassemble existing nuclear facilities. The DPRK also entered into talks with Japan to normalize relations and

[40] Wertz, Oh, and Insung, "DPRK Diplomatic Relations."

[41] Ibid.

discussed compensations for Japanese actions during the colonial period. Lastly, also notable in this period, was the death of Kim Il Sung on July 8, 1994. For the first time, someone other than its founder would rule North Korea; however, as the world would soon learn, any predictions of immediate collapse after Kim Il Sung's death would prove to be unfounded. Enduring economic catastrophe, natural disasters, and famine through the latter half of the decade, Kim Jong Il and his elites remained in power.[42]

6. 2000–Present: Rapprochement to Modern Pariah State

While diplomatically the 1990s were a bleak period, the early 2000s opened with promise. A number of promising signs arose that the DPRK was ready to become a normalized member of the international community. Kim Jong Il had publicly expressed a desire to open dialogue with capitalist countries, its nuclear program appeared to be halted, and the Koreas had successfully concluded their first inter-Korean summit in 2000.

Concurrently, as seen in Table 8, North Korea had successfully established diplomatic ties with a number of European countries.

Table 8. Newly Established Official Diplomatic Relations of the DPRK: 2000s[43]

Country	***Relations Established***	***Country***	***Relations Established***
Italy	1/4/00	Liechtenstein	5/2/01
Philippines	7/12/00	EU	5/14/01
United Kingdom	12/12/00	Bahrain	5/23/01
Netherlands	1/15/01	Turkey	6/27/01
Belgium	1/23/01	East Timor	11/5/02
Canada	2/6/01	Ireland	12/10/03
Spain	2/7/01	San Marino	5/13/04
Germany	3/1/01	Montenegro	7/16/07

[42] Armstrong, *Tyranny of the Weak*, 282–288; Wertz, Oh, and Insung, "DPRK Diplomatic Relations."

[43] Wertz, Oh, and Insung, "DPRK Diplomatic Relations."

Luxembourg	3/5/01	UAE	9/17/07
Greece	3/8/01	Swaziland	9/20/07
Brazil	3/9/01	Dominica Rep.	9/24/07
New Zealand	3/26/01	Guatemala	9/26/07
Kuwait	4/4/01	South Sudan	11/18/11

Additionally, adding to its newly reacquired international prestige, North Korea hosted Russian President Vladimir Putin, and then also hosted Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi. Both these visits were a badge of honor for the DPRK as no Soviet, Russian Federation, or Japanese leaders had visited Pyongyang previously. These visits were capped by the fall 2000 visit of Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. The air of promise, however, did not last long. In late 2002—largely due to the Bush's administration's rejection of Clinton administration's approach to the DPRK[44]—the Agreed Framework between the United States and DPRK faltered. Thereafter, the six-party talks proved to be increasingly volatile and endure periods of fragile success to hopelessness; all the while, relations continued to degrade.[45] Even while six-party talks were at a standstill, North Korea did reestablish ties with Myanmar, which had previously been severed by then-Burma due to the DPRK assassination attempt on the visiting ROK president in 1983.[46]

In addition to the stalling of the six-party talks in this period, North Korea engaged in military acts that threatened to destabilize the peninsula even further. In 2010, the North sunk the ROK Corvette *Cheonan*, and then later, rained artillery shells on the ROK island of Yeonpyoeng. Remarkably, these two incidents did not lead to war or the severing of diplomatic relations. France, after this incident, still one of the only European

[44] The Bush administration took a very different approach to the DPRK particularly after the events of September 11, 2001. In the age of the U.S.' war on terror, a much harsher tone in foreign policy towards "rogue states" was adopted, which was articulated in President Bush's State of the Union speech in 2002, which labeled North Korea as part of the "Axis of Evil." The post-9/11 polices of the Bush administration amounted to a radical departure from the Clinton administration's approach to the DPRK, which largely complemented ROK President Kim Dae-chung's sunshine policy.

[45] Wertz, Oh, and Insung, "DPRK Diplomatic Relations."

[46] Armstrong, *Tyranny of the Weak*, 282–290; Wertz, Oh, and Insung, "DPRK Diplomatic Relations."

countries not to have official diplomatic ties with North Korea, in 2011, announced plans to open a cultural bureau in the North Korean capital to better support French non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating in the DPRK.[47]

In 2011, Kim Jong Il passed due to exhaustion for being about the people's work for so many years—at least this was the DPRK's official interpretation.[48] His death ushered in a new leader, Kim Jong Un. The world does not know much about the son of Kim Jong Il; however, thus far, Kim does seems to be deviating very little from what the world has come to expect from a DPRK head of state. Presently, no indication has been seen of a change in focus in DPRK diplomatic relations. The official webpage of the DPRK still reads very much as if it were following the external diplomatic push of Kim Il Sung in the 1960–70s:

> On the principle of independence the Government of the Republic promotes friendship and cooperation with the various countries of the world and makes positive efforts to destroy the old international order of domination and subjugation, establish a new one, based on equality, justice and fairness and develop the South-South[[49]] cooperation on the principle of collective self-reliance.[50]

Additionally, little variation appears to be happening in the uniquely branded DPRK provocation negotiation style: commit provocative act, endure new sanctions, and wait for concessions. Beginning signs have surfaced that this type of negotiating ploy may no longer work in the latest round of sanctions placed on North Korea this past spring, but what kind of impact they will have long-term is hard to tell at this juncture.

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[47] Wertz, Oh, and Insung, "DPRK Diplomatic Relations."

[48] British Broadcast Company, "North Korea: Kim Jong-il's Death Is Announced on State TV," December 18, 2011, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-16240002.

[49] Some may be confused by the "South-South" reference. This author assumes that this passage refers to DPRK relations with the Global South given the DPRK's history of relations with countries of the Non-Aligned Movement.

[50] Democratic People's Republic of Korea, "Foreign Relations," accessed July 1, 2013, http://www.korea-dpr.com/relations.html.

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III. MINOR RELATIONS OF THE DPRK IN THE PRESENT

A. OVERVIEW OF CURRENT MINOR RELATIONS

Returning to the main theme of this thesis, this chapter explores in greater detail the minor relations of the DPRK. Many of the DPRK's relations continue to be defined by its past. Throughout its relations, a common thread can be seen, a singular uncompromising desire to be recognized as the sole rightful government on the Korean Peninsula and preservation of its sovereignty. While the DPRK remains a jealous guardian of its sovereignty, another theme evident in the evolution of DPRK's relations is an acknowledgment that other states and international bodies will, in some measure, decide its contest for international recognition as the only legitimate government on the peninsula. Thus, can be seen a state that is not all together impervious to outside pressures from other states and institutions, but rather, one influenced by these pressures.

Given the DPRK's desire for broad recognition, all relations are important at the macro level; however, at the micro level, not all relationships are equal. This thesis now attempts to narrow down those minor relations and provide granularity to those assessed as most important to the DPRK.

In an attempt to help determine which minor relations are most important to the DPRK, this author chose to focus on press reports from the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA). The KCNA is the official state-run news agency of the Worker's Party of Korea. Established in 1946, it continues to serve as one of the DPRK's primary methods of transmitting information to the outside world that is in contrast to the DPRK's other major media conduit, the *Rodong Sinmun*, which is more oriented towards a domestic audience primarily consisting of the party and general populace. Like many things in North Korea, its media exists in great contrast with much of the rest of the world. Where much of the world possesses a free or semi-free press, North Korea continues to maintain direct control over its media. For this reason, it is possible to review the various press releases of the DPRK and expect they have undergone significant official vetting before

being released for publication or broadcast. In this regard, nothing unofficial is released in the DPRK press. All press can in some measure be interpreted as the official position of Kim Jong Un, the DPRK, and its ruling elites.[51]

Given that the KCNA is the official externally orientated news organ of the DPRK, valuable information can be extracted regarding DPRK minor foreign relations. The KCNA has almost daily stories about various diplomatic exchanges. These exchanges range from gifts that Kim Jong Un receives to official bilateral agreements. Valuable insight into the nature and substance of these bilateral relations is gained through these press accounts.

Even though valuable insight may be gained by examining these press accounts, it is necessary to remain cognizant of the inherent biases present in this type of inquiry. Perhaps the strongest bias in this type of inquiry rests in that the stories that the KCNA decides to run must be used. Given the control the regime and its apparatus enjoy over the press, it must be assumed that the stories released are designed to portray the regime in a positive manner or are intended to shape either domestic or international opinion. Given this press control, any KCNA story cannot be considered as the whole truth. While these stories must be used with caution, this type of bias can be controlled for by examining other press accounts. For example, if the KCNA runs a story on a diplomatic exchange, it is useful to examine the other country's press or official foreign affairs office materials to corroborate the KCNA story. By no means is this method of inquiry and the data it produces free from biases, but by remaining cognizant of potential biases and attempts to control for them, they should have a negligible impact on any conclusions.

The aggregation of these official press reports can also result in some conclusions. By looking at the number of times a country's name appears in the press, assumptions can be drawn as to the importance of that state to the DPRK. For example, from January 1997 to January 2014, the United States is mentioned 3,590 times, Russia 5,700, Japan 6,660, China 8,300, and not surprisingly, most frequently, is South Korea, which is

[51] Korean Central News Agency of DPRK, "Introduction to KCNA," accessed July 1, 2013, http://www.kcna.co.jp/index-e.htm.

referenced 11,800 in this period.[52] These numbers are in great contrast to those states on the lower end of the spectrum, like Liberia, which is mentioned nine times, and Liechtenstein, which is featured only six times in the previously defined 17-year period. When viewed across the regions, few states stand out due to the number of times they are mentioned in the KCNA. See Figure 1. While this author is quick to acknowledge that these numbers must be viewed and employed with caution, it is possible to have a sense of which countries are most important to the DPRK within the minor foreign relations stratum.

[52] These numbers are derived from queries of the Japan-based KCNA server that can be found at http://www.kcna.co.jp/index-e.htm. This site hosts KCNA news items translated in English dating back from January 1997 to the present. The search ranges from January 1997 to January 2014. While the site has no built in search function, this author searched the site via Google. For example, to search for how many times China appeared in the KCNA press, he placed "China site: www.kcna.co.jp/index-e.htm" into Google's search engine. This author acknowledges that this method of inquiry and the numbers derived must be used with an abundance of caution given the search method used is inherently problematic. For example, when attempting to approximate the number of times the KCNA ran PRC-related news items, this author performed a number of queries. "PRC" was seen in the KCNA 227 times, "People's Republic of China" appeared 513 times, "Sino" appeared 1730 times, and "China" appeared 8,180 times. In an attempt to control for this variable, only the variant of a given state's name returning the highest number of results was used.

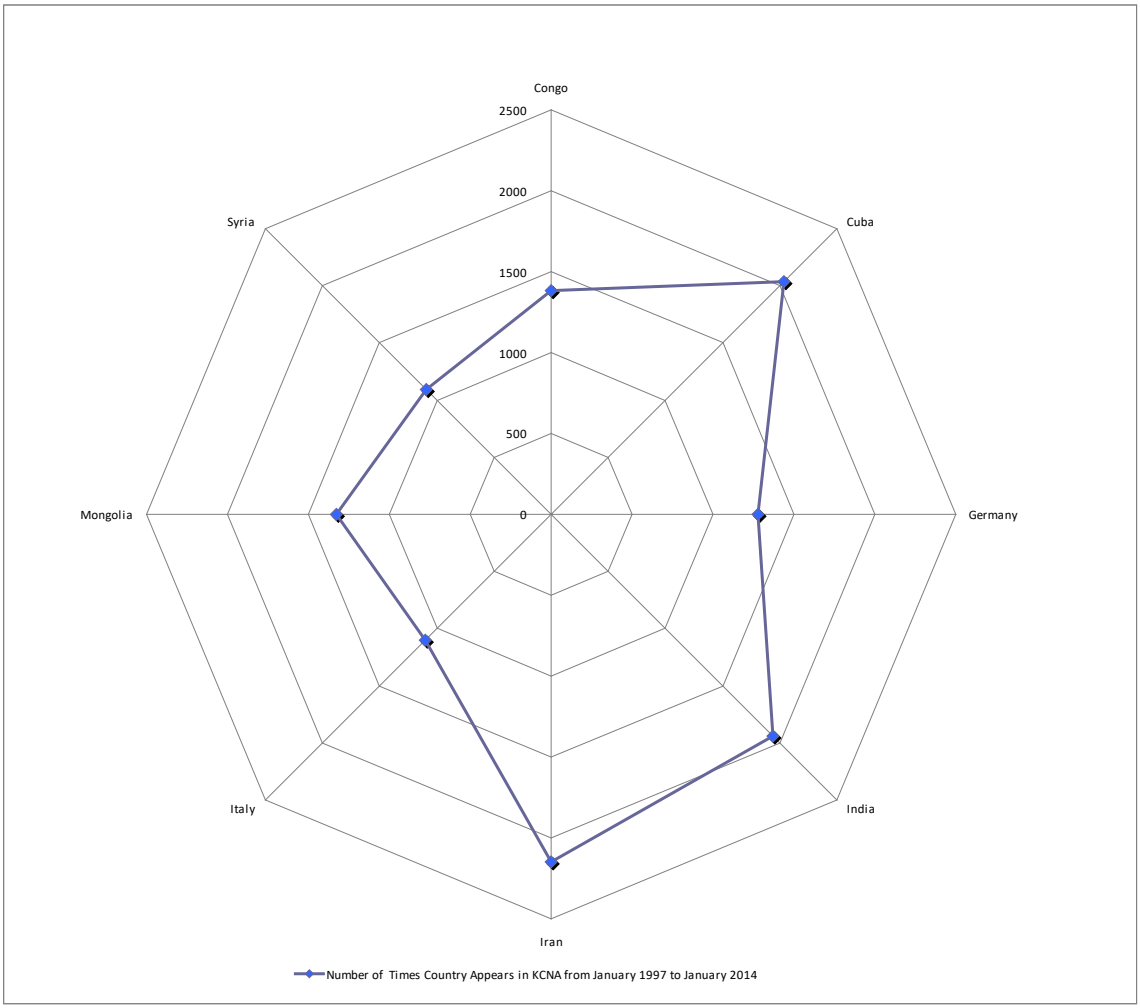

Figure 1. Global: Countries Maintaining Ambassador Level Relations with the DPRK and Receiving Most Mentions in KCNA[53]

This section limits its inquiry to those countries that have ambassador-level relations with the DPRK. As might be expected, where a country decides to place diplomatic assets is a good indicator of which bilateral relations it finds most important. In the DPRK case, funding from diplomatic ventures must be assumed to be a premium, and it is a reasonable assessment that placement of ambassadors is a strategic calculated decision that speaks to the importance and commitment of the DPRK to that country.

[53] These numbers are derived from queries of the Japan-based KCNA server (http://www.kcna.co.jp/index-e.htm) using this author's previously outlined methods.

Given this assessment, this section has a particular focus on those countries with designated DPRK ambassadors and an even greater focus on those countries with a DPRK ambassador in residence.

1. Americas

In 1987, Manwoo Lee, in the anthology *The Foreign Relations of North Korea: New Perspectives*, offered the following characterization of DPRK relations with Latin America.

> Prior to the 1960s, Latin America was of no interest to North Korea. After the success of the Cuban revolution, North Korea became interested in the growing nationalistic and political ferment that might weaken the United States' influence in Latin America. North Korea sees in the region much potential for the successful anti-imperialist and national liberation struggles . . . . [S]he sees a certain American parallel between South Korea and many of the Central and Latin American nations dominated by conservative armed forces and U.S. interests. Finally, North Korea views Cuba and Nicaragua as heroic nations that have successfully assaulted the U.S. presence and interests in the Caribbean and Central America.[54]

Arguably, much of what is contained in this passage holds true to this day. Even in the present, the KCNA is filled with words of solidarity for the revolutionary causes in the Americas. Until recently, this support largely appeared to be the DPRK propaganda machine on auto-pilot; however, real evidence suggests that in some way, strong connections remain in the region that have endured despite the markedly different international environments.

Despite the dire economic state of the DPRK, it maintains a diplomatic presence throughout the Americas. North Korea has ambassadorial level representation with the countries of Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Guatemala, Guyana, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, Trinidad, Venezuela, and the United Nations in New York. At first glance, it may appear impressive that the DPRK maintains relations with 13 states and one intergovernmental organization, but its ambassadors, while resident in

[54] Manwoo Lee, "North Korea and Latin America," in *The Foreign Relations of North Korea: New Perspectives*, ed. Jae Kyu Park, Byung Chul Koh, and Tae-Hwan Kwak (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), 411–421.

one country, must oversee the affairs of multiple countries. While having a designated ambassador—even though not necessarily in residence in the country—is better than no ambassador at all. Not having an ambassador in permanent residence undoubtedly decreases the amount of interaction between the ambassador and a given state in which the ambassador does not reside.[55] See Figure 2.

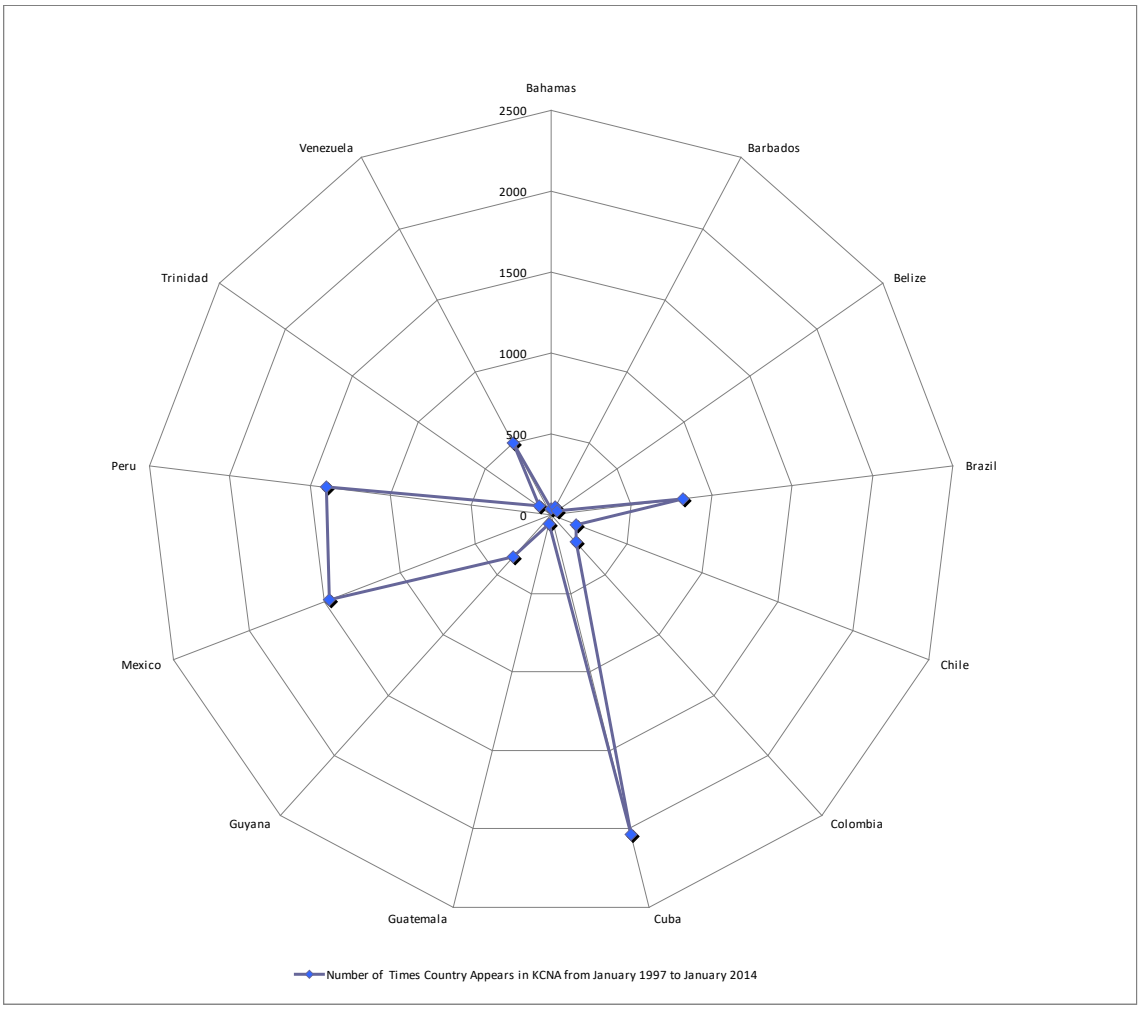

Figure 2. Americas: Countries Maintaining Ambassador Level Relations with the DPRK[56]

[55] Wertz, Oh, and Insung, "DPRK Diplomatic Relations."

[56] These numbers are derived from queries of the Japan-based KCNA server (http://www.kcna.co.jp/index-e.htm) using this author's previously outlined methods.

a. Cuba

Cuba continues to stand as the DPRK's most important bilateral relationship in the Americas. Partial evidence shows that Cuba is one of only four countries in the region to have a DPRK ambassador in residence. Additional evidence of the uniqueness of this bond may be found in the 2,000 times Cuba has been mentioned in the KCNA from January 1997 to 2014. DPRK-Cuban relations date back to 1960 when the DPRK made its first real push to expand diplomatic relations in a period that this author has previously referred to as a time of diplomatic hedging. In many ways, the events of the Cuban missile crisis and Khrushchev's decision to back away from an all-out conflict with the United States pushed the DPRK more firmly in Beijing's orbit and formed a bond between the DPRK and Cuba. This dyadic bond was strengthened by the idea that both were smaller powers fighting a larger imperial power (i.e., the United States) and neither could trust on the promise of Moscow's assistance in a potential fight with the United States.[57] Over the years, they have cooperated in nearly every major area of relations ranging from cultural to military exchanges. That said, the bond has largely been ceremonial and one marked by rhetoric over substance, but since Raul Castro took over in 2008, some increase in both commercial and military ties has occurred.[58] Evidence of this relationship could be seen in the summer of 2013 when a North Korean ship with illegal military cargo mixed in with a sugar shipment was interdicted by Panamanian authorities.

While the outside world understood that some measure of military relations existed between the DPRK and Cuba, few details were available that delve into the extent of these relations. Until however, on July 22, 2013, when Panamanian authorities investigated the *Chong Chon Gang* and discovered fighter jets, jet engines, and dissembled rockets. After the seizure, the Cuban government was quick to claim that all

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[57] Kiyosaki, *North Korea's Foreign Relations*, 81.

[58] Korean Central News Agency of DPRK, "Economic Cooperation Between DPRK and Cuba," November 12, 2000, http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2000/200011/news11/12.htm; Korean Central News Agency of DPRK, "Talks Between DPRK, Cuban Military Delegations Held," July 1, 2013, http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2013/201307/news02/20130702-21ee.html; Economist Blog, "The Cuban Connection," December 15, 2013, http://www.economist.com/blogs/americasview/2013/12/cuban-relations-north-korea.

the military hardware onboard the ship was outdated and being sent to North Korea for refurbishment; however, reports have stated that the jets had fresh fuel still present in their tanks and their logs revealed they had recently flown before shipment.[59]

This shipment reveals a few significant details about the DPRK and its minor relations. First, it is yet another data point demonstrating that that the DPRK continues to contravene UN Security Council Resolution 1874. Additionally, it reveals what may likely be a mature weapons exchange program between Cuba and the DPRK. It is a reasonable assumption that other exchanges of military hardware have occurred, likely in both directions. It also reveals that on some level, the current sanctions against North Korea are working and those choosing to disregard Resolution 1874 likely share some sort of international pariah status with the DPRK. Furthermore, this shipment reveals that potentially this relationship is more than a mere relic of an era in which the DPRK wished to foment troubles for the "imperialist aggressor," the United States, in its backyard. It reveals that the bond that Cuba and the DPRK share on the fringe of the international systems is one of substantive exchange. It is easy to view the bombastic rhetoric contained within the press of both Cuba and the DPRK and become lulled into era gone by, but just because the rhetoric may be dated does not mean that new life is not present.

The Cuba-DPRK bond that has stood the test of time must continue to be monitored for these new signs of life. While this most recent case of weapons transfer appears rather benign given the age and type of weapons included in the attempted transfer, it demonstrates that military technology is shared between the two states. The DPRK, despite its vast coffers of dated military technology, does possess an impressive array of missile technology. From surface to air missiles to ballistic missiles, the DPRK could transfer materials to Cuba that could decidedly place the U.S. homeland at greater

[59] Economist Blog, "The Cuban Connection;" Carl Meacham, "Smuggling Cuban Weapons through the Panama to North Korea," Center for Strategic and International Studies, July 23, 2013, http://csis.org/publication/smuggling-cuban-weapons-through-panama-canal-north-korea.

risk. Understanding the true nature of military relations and the full extent of weapons transfers between these two countries must remain a critical task for the U.S. intelligence community.

2. Europe and Central Asia

Eastern Europe and Central Asia have ties with the DPRK that date back to the early days of the Cold War. The DPRK was quickly recognized by a number of states in Eastern Europe and Central Asia regions due to affiliations with the former Soviet Union. Western Europe and the European Union's (EU) relations with the DPRK did not begin until the year 2001. Almost universal recognition from the states of Western Europe occurred largely at the prompting of ROK President Kim Dae-jung in line with the sunshine policies of the ROK from 1998–2008. While little in terms of substance is seen in DPRK relations between Eastern Europe and Central Asia in the present age, significant exchanges between the DPRK and Western Europe remain.

Western Europe and the European Union continue to maintain a number of important connections to the DPRK. First, since 1995, the European Union and its member states have provided nearly $500m dollars in direct aid.[60] Additionally, it continues to hold annual political talks with North Korea in areas of what it refers to as "critical engagement."[61] It defines those areas as "peace and security in the Korean Peninsula," "non-proliferation of nuclear weapons," and "human rights."[62] Lastly, trade between the European Union states and the DPRK remains critical to North Korea. According to the CIA *The World Fact Book*, using 2011 data, the European Union imports to the DPRK rank third after China and South Korea at 4 percent.[63] According to

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[60] European Union, "EU Relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)," accessed March 8, 2014, http://eeas.europa.eu/korea_north/index_en.htm.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Central Intelligence Agency, "The World Fact Book: North Korea," March 4, 2014, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kn.html.

a July 2013 EU report in terms of total trade volume (i.e., both exports and imports), the European Union is the DPRK's eighth top-trading partner.[64]

Similar to DPRK diplomatic-corps management of the Americas, most ambassadors manage diplomatic relations with several countries. Despite having ambassadorial level relations with 52 countries in the region, the DPRK only maintains 15 ambassadors in the region (for a detailed list of states please see footnote[65]).[66] See Figure 3.

[64] European Commission, Directorate-General for Trade, *European Union, Trade in Goods with North Korea*, July 11, 2013, http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc_113428.pdf.

[65] The DPRK has ambassador level relations with Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, and the United Nations in France (United Nations Education, Science, and Cultural Organization, UNESCO), Geneva, and Vienna. Similar to DPRK diplomatic-corps management of the Americas, most ambassadors manage diplomatic relations with several countries. Despite having ambassadorial level relations with 52 countries in the region, the DPRK only maintains 15 ambassadors in the region. Wertz, JJ Oh, and Kim Insung," DPRK Diplomatic Relations."

[66] Wertz, Oh, and Insung," DPRK Diplomatic Relations."

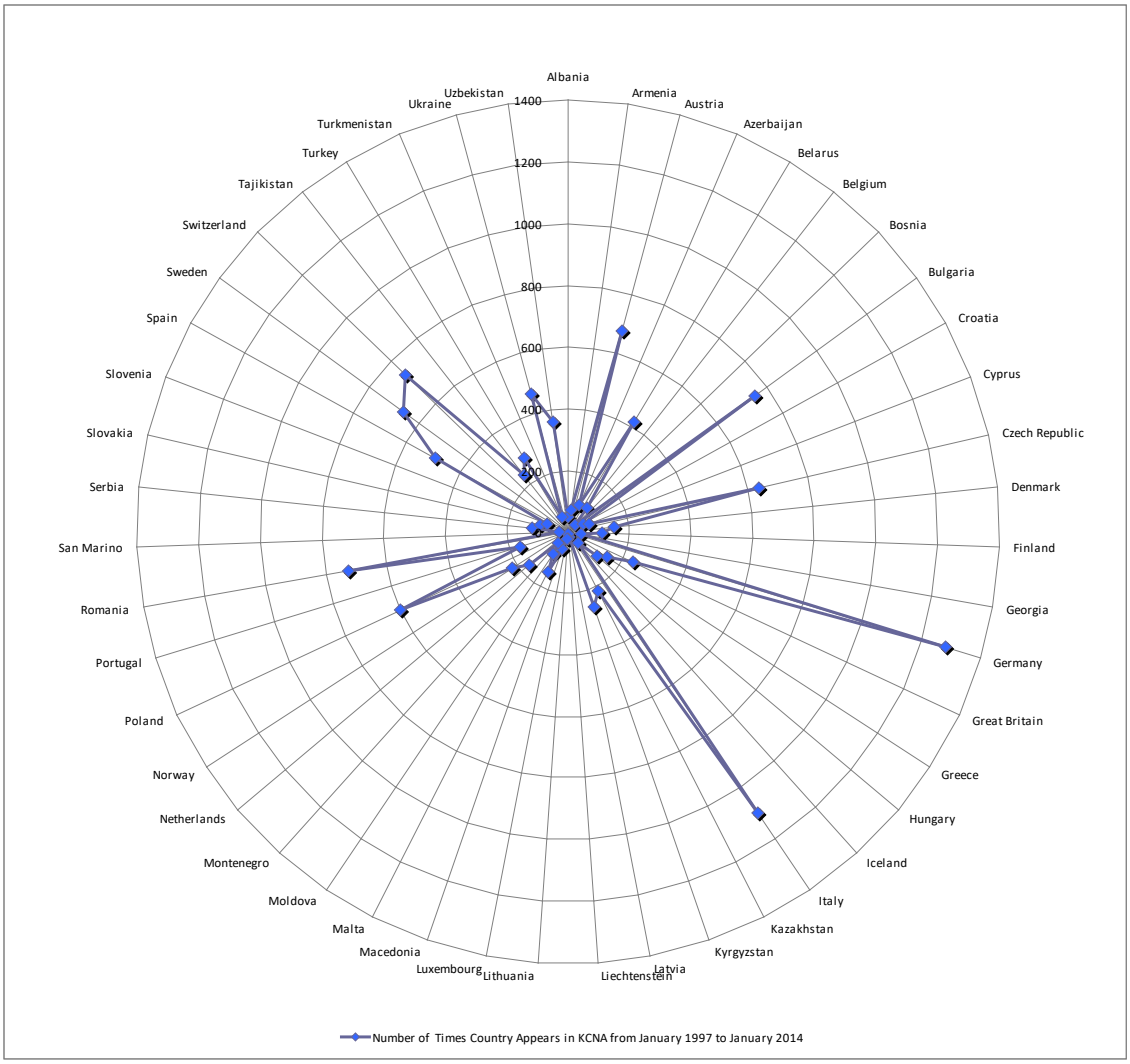

Figure 3. Europe and Central Asia: Countries Maintaining Ambassador Level Relations with the DPRK[67]

a. Italy and Germany

Arguably, the two most important countries to the DPRK in this region are Italy and Germany. Both countries have ambassadors in residence. Additionally, this importance is reflected in the number of times these countries are mentioned in the DPRK press. Since DPRK rapprochement and the diplomatic push with Europe, the thin bond between North Korea and Europe has been economic with both Italy and Germany

[67] These numbers are derived from queries of the Japan-based KCNA server (http://www.kcna.co.jp/index-e.htm) using this author's previously outlined methods.

at its fragile core. Companies based in Germany and Italy have held joint ventures in North Korea. To facilitate these joint ventures, a Europe specific DPRK based chamber of commerce of sort was established in 2005, which is called the European Business Association (EBA).[68] The EBA's mission is stated to, "promote and develop business and trade relations between Europe and North Korea."[69] This author was unable to ascertain the full extent of current joint ventures between European states and the DPRK at this time, but it is expected that the fallout from the capricious closing of the Kaesong Industrial Complex in early 2013 will have some long-term negative impacts on prospects for future joint ventures.[70]

In April 2013, North Korea made an unexpected and unilateral decision to close the ROK-DPRK Kaesong Industrial Complex only to reopen it later in September 2013. Undoubtedly, this move will hamper additional foreign direct investment (FDI) given the greater perception of risk now present in the minds of potential foreign investors. China, of course, maintains a number of joint ventures with the DPRK, but these are not likely subject to the same risks as those held by the ROK or European investors given China does maintain more political influence over the DPRK than the ROK or European governments.[71] It is likely that European investors will focus on joint ROK-DPRK ventures to gauge potential risks before entering into new ventures with the DPRK. How the DPRK continues to manage Kaesong in this coming year will likely have great influence on future investment from European investors.

Both Germany and Italy fall under the European's Common Foreign and Security Policy, which has also greatly dampened economic activities between these states due to more restrictive measures against the DPRK because of its 2013 nuclear tests. In April 2013, the European Union strengthened measures against the DPRK in an effort to

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[68] European Business Association, "About Us: Missions and Values," accessed July 11, 2013, http://www.eba-pyongyang.com/aboutus/index.php.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Bradley Babson, "North Korea's Push for Special Enterprise Zones: Fantasy or Opportunity?" December 12, 2013, *38 North, U.S. Korea Institute at SAIS*. http://38north.org/2013/12/bbabson121213/.

[71] Drew Thompson, "Silent Partners: Chinese Joint Ventures in North Korea," *U.S. Korea Institute at SAIS*, February 2011, http://uskoreainstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/USKI_Report_Silent Partners_DrewThompson_020311.pdf.

implement UN Security Council resolution 2094 fully. EU sanctions specifically restrict "trade, transport and financial sectors."[72] Both the uncertainty previously discussed, and these restrictions imposed on economic activities, will continue to hamper any future efforts in the near term for further economic cooperation.

3. Africa and Middle East

DPRK relations in Africa and the Middle East date back to the period immediately after the collapse of imperialism and colonialism in the 1960s and 1970s. At this time, the DPRK attempted to take full advantage of marketing its *juche* ideology throughout both regions. In the immediate post-colonial period, this DPRK-based ideology of independence and self-reliance had real resonance with those states still attempting to author a new narrative after being freshly freed from the grip of their imperial masters. This freedom served the DPRK in its contest for legitimacy with the ROK on the world stage as it facilitated a wave of diplomatic recognition in a fairly short period.[73]

In the present age, North Korea's relations with Africa are largely holdovers from a previous era. When characterizing DPRK-African relations, Professor Kim Yong-hyun at Dongguk University in Seoul said, "Pyongyang cannot provide the kind of economic assistance to African countries [it once did] in the post-Cold War era, so its relations can only remain perfunctory."[74] Largely "perfunctory" is perhaps the best characterization of African-DPRK relations as a whole. The KCNA runs almost daily stories about various communications or significant DPRK anniversary celebrations held in African countries, but these stories appear to be the same type of story that the DPRK press has run since

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[72] European Union, *The EU and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, April 29, 2013, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/136733.pdf.

[73] Armstrong, "Juche and North Korea's Global Aspirations," 5–6; Jae Kyu Park, "North Korea's Foreign Policy Toward Africa," in *The Foreign Relations of North Korea New Perspectives*, ed. Jae Kyu Park, Byung Chul Koh, and Tae-Hwan Kwak (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), 461; Chung-in Moon, "Between Ideology and Interest: North Korea in the Middle East," in *The Foreign Relations of North Korea: New Perspectives*, ed. Jae Kyu Park, Byung Chul Koh, and Tae-Hwan Kwak (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), 379.

[74] Kim Yong-hyun as quoted in Yonhap News Agency, "N. Korea Strengthens Diplomatic Ties with Africa," August 13, 2013, http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2013/08/13/82/0401000000AEN20130813001400315F.html.

the apex of its African relations in the 1960s and 1970s. These stories likely remain fixtures of the KCNA as part of the DPRK propaganda apparatus to demonstrate how the DPRK and its ideals are celebrated and revered abroad. Such stories fit nicely with the DPRK narrative as the supporter of the subjugated, but other than flowery words, little substance remains. A few notable exceptions are addressed in this section.

While relations in the Middle East have their roots in the same post-colonial period, and are largely perfunctory, significant exchanges have occurred between a few key countries in the Middle East. These exchanges have not only had significant implications for the region, but also, the international system as a whole. Before discussing these specific relationships, this thesis provides an overview of the ambassador level relations of the DPRK in the region.

As in other regions, DPRK ambassadors have responsibility for multiple countries. While the DPRK maintains relations with 60 countries throughout Africa and the Middle East, it has only 11 ambassadors in the region (for a detailed list of states please see footnote[75]).[76] See Figures 4 and 5.

[75] In Africa and the Middle East, the DPRK maintains ambassadorial level relations with Algeria, Angola, Bahrain, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissua, Iran, Jordon, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Qatar, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Syria, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, West Bank, Yemen, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. As in other regions, DPRK ambassadors have responsibility for multiple countries. While the DPRK maintains relations with 60 countries throughout Africa and the Middle East, it has only 11 ambassadors in the region. Wertz, Oh, and Insung, "DPRK Diplomatic Relations."

[76] Wertz, Oh, and Insung, "DPRK Diplomatic Relations."

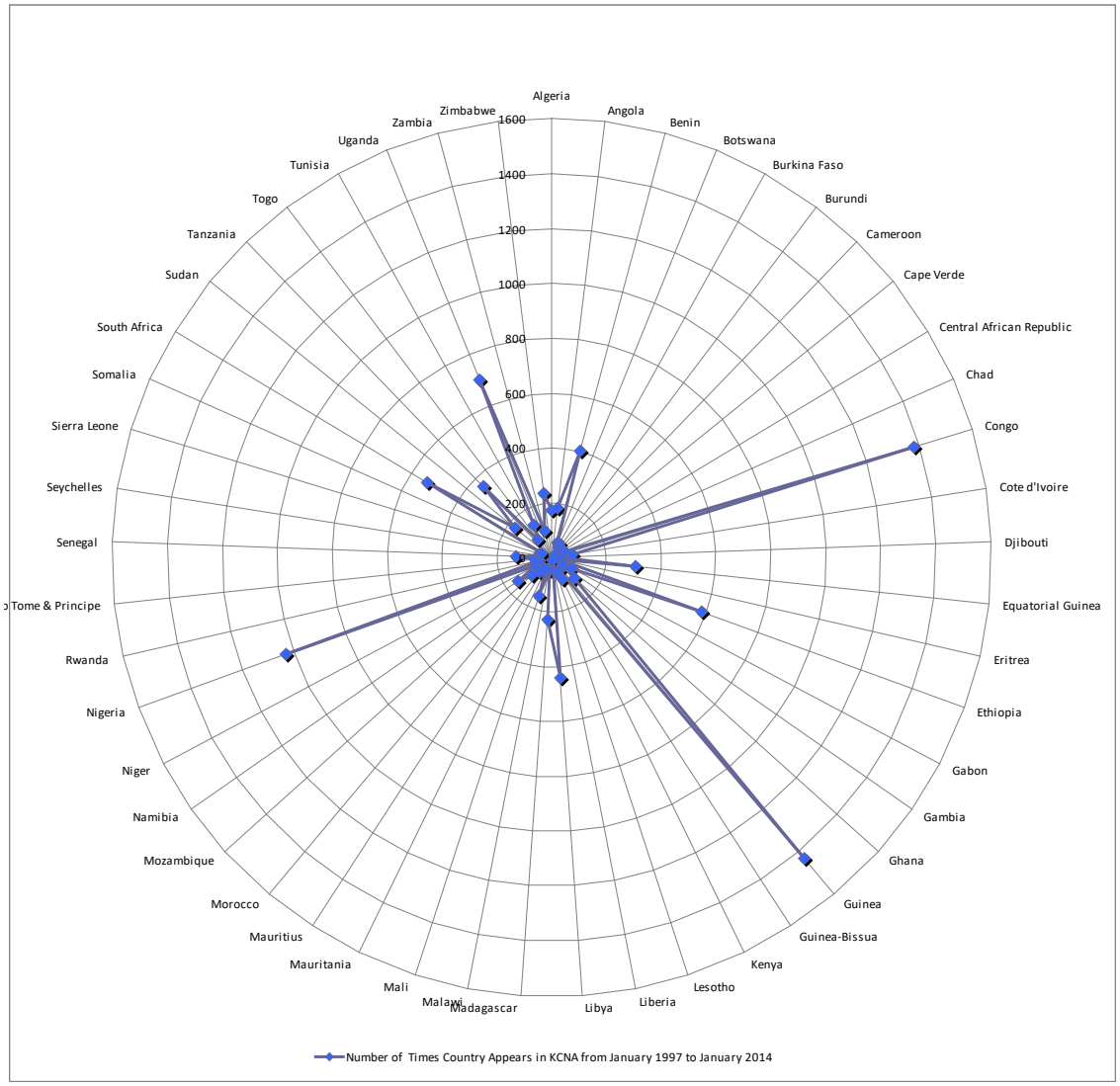

Figure 4. Africa: Countries Maintaining Ambassador Level Relations with the DPRK[77]

[77] These numbers are derived from queries of the Japan-based KCNA server (http://www.kcna.co.jp/index-e.htm) using this author's previously outlined methods.

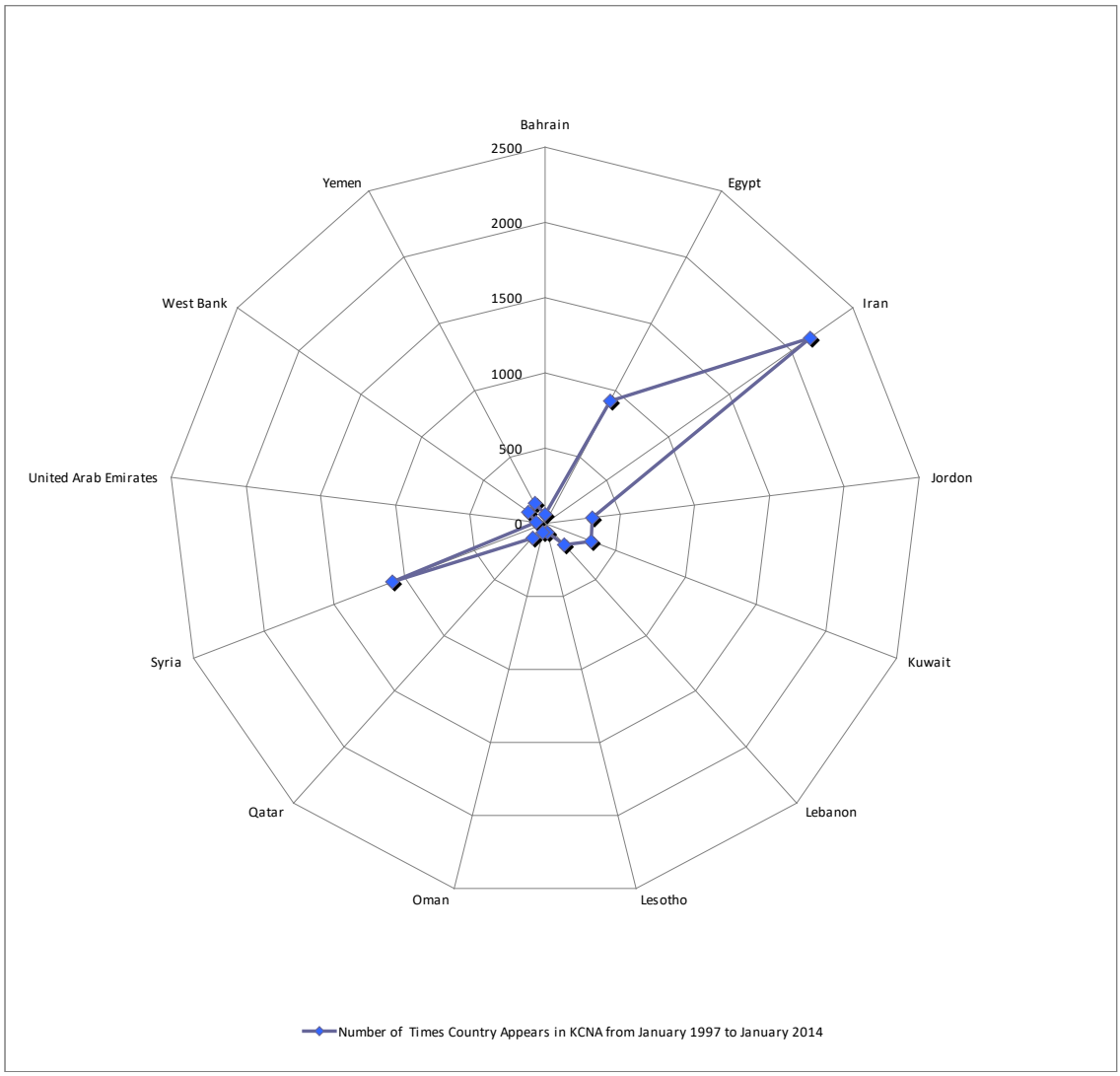

Figure 5. Middle East: Countries Maintaining Ambassador Level Relations with the DPRK[78]

a. Democratic Republic of the Congo

While much of the relationship between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the DPRK is defined by its past, some evidence suggests the two states maintain a substantive relationship. As Figure 4 shows, the Democratic Republic of Congo was

[78] These numbers are derived from queries of the Japan-based KCNA server (http://www.kcna.co.jp/index-e.htm) using this author's previously outlined methods.

mentioned approximately some 1,400 times from 1997–2014 in the DPRK press.[79] According to 2012 European Commission Trade Data, the Congo remains the DPRK's fifth top trading partner with a trade volume of approximately $213m annually.[80] Reports are also available of DPRK weapons transfers to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)—specifically, the transfer of sensitive dual use missile technology, but little evidence of further military ties or technology exchanges exists.[81]

b. Iran

While North Korea maintains relations with multiple countries in the Middle East, Iran received considerable play in the DPRK press, which is not likely a surprise to those familiar with Iran's position in the world and its ongoing confrontation with the West. Iran, like North Korea, has declared its right as a sovereign nation to pursue nuclear energy production, but also, like North Korea, evidence exists to suggest Iran's nuclear ambitions go beyond energy production. While the countries of Iran and North Korea have dissimilar geo-political situations, from the DPRK press, some belief that their fates are intertwined can be discerned. That is to say, how the West and the United Nations decide to deal with the nuclear question with one state is likely to impact how it deals with the other state. Any new actions in the United Nations or from the international community towards Iran afford the DPRK an opportunity to express to the world indirectly how it wishes to be treated. The DPRK view espoused in the press has likely less to do with Iran, and everything to do with how it feels about its own precarious position. This feeling reflected in a KCNA press statement regarding new proposed UN sanctions against Iran, "[a]ll forms of sanctions and pressure on Iran including military

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[79] As the Figure 4 indicates, Guinea had the most mentions in the DPRK press from 1997 to 2014; however, this author chose not to provide any additional details regarding the DPRK's relationship with Guinea, largely due to a lack of available materials in the open source realm that provided any details regarding the nature of relations between the two states in the present. Additionally, its high return is likely based on the fact that it includes hits for Guinea-Bissau and Equatorial Guinea, and thus, is not a valid return.

[80] European Commission, Directorate-General for Trade, *European Union, Trade in Goods with North Korea* (July 2013), http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc_113428.pdf.

[81] Mark Bromley and Paul Holtom, "Arms Transfers to the Democratic Republic of the Congo: Assessing the System of Arms Transfer Notifications, 2008–2010," *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*, October 2010, http://books.sipri.org/files/misc/SIPRIBP1010a.pdf, 1.

option should be renounced with immediate effect. Iran's nuclear issue should be settled through dialogue and negotiations. The DPRK opposes and rejects the U.S. and West attempt to abuse peaceful nuclear issue as a means for overthrowing the system of a sovereign state."[82] The not so subtle message to the international community in this statement from the DPRK is "we will continue to reject any efforts to hinder our pursuit/refinement of nuclear technologies."

While much of the nature of relations between the DPRK and Iran is unclear given the opacity of both states, at least hints of a substantive relationship in the open source realm do emerge. On September 2, 2012, the KCNA reported an "MOU on cooperation in science, technology and education between the governments of the DPRK and Iran was signed in Tehran on Saturday."[83] The fact that two countries, sharing similar nuclear pariah status in the international community, signed an agreement of cooperation is interesting. Perhaps more interesting, however, is those attending the signing. According to the KCNA's account of those present, "DPRK side were Kim Yong Nam, president of the Presidium of the DPRK Supreme People's Assembly, Foreign Minister Pak Ui Chun, DPRK Ambassador to Iran Jo In Chol and other suite members and from the Iranian side President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Fereydoon Abbasi-Davani, vice-president and concurrently head of Atomic Energy Organization, Ahmad Vahidi, minister of Defence and Armed Forces Logistics, Mehdi Ghazanfari, minister of Industrial, Mining and Trade, Kamran Daneshjoo, minister of Science, Research and Technology, the minister of Agriculture and the governor of the Central Bank and officials concerned."[84] Most striking is the attendance of "Abbasi-Davani, vice-president and concurrently head of Atomic Energy Organization"[85] and "Ahmad Vahidi, minister of Defence and Armed Forces Logistics."[86] At least in some manner, the

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[82] Korean Central News Agency of DPRK, "DPRK Opposes All Forms of Sanctions and Pressure," December 12, 2011, http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2011/201112/news12/20111212-08ee.html.

[83] Korean Central News Agency of DPRK, "MOU Signed Between DPRK and Iran," September 2, 2012, http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2012/201209/news02/20120902-09ee.html.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Ibid.

presence of the head of the Atomic Energy Organization and the Minister of Defense at the signing may portend a relationship not confined to civil science and technology, but also implies cooperation in military technology as well. Well-documented missile cooperation exists between the two countries to include Iran's purchasing of Nodong MRBMs in the 1990s. Also, numerous reports states that the DPRK is assisting Iran with the production of longer-range ballistic missiles. These activities are no doubt an important revenue source for Kim Jong Un and DPRK elites.[87] While undoubtedly the transfer of funds for services rendered has proved harder after the more universal application of tougher sanctions in 2013, this important bilateral relationship must be watched for further signs of cooperation.

c. Syria

Syria, second only to Iran in the region for the number of mentions in the KCNA, remains an important bilateral relationship to the DPRK. Syria and North Korea maintain embassies in the other's capital. For further evidence of the importance of this bilateral relation, look at the KCNA reporting from the July 2013 "60th Anniversary of Victory in Fatherland Liberation War"[88] celebration. In the brief description offered of foreign delegations in attendance, Syrian officials are one of only a few mentioned, listed only after China. Additionally, during this visit, Kim Jong Un took time to meet personally with the delegation.[89] Meeting personally is not a privilege afforded to every visiting foreign delegation. These two countries have numerous formal agreements expressed through MOUs. The MOUs formalize cooperation in areas ranging from tourism to science and technology.[90] While the memorandum of understandings (MOUs) make no

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[87] Mark Manyin, *North Korea: Back on the Terrorism List?*, CRS Report RL30613 (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, June 29, 2010).

[88] Korean Central News Agency of DPRK, "National Meeting Marks 60th Anniversary of Victory in Fatherland Liberation War," July 26, 2013, http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2013/201307/news26/20130726-53ee.html.

[89] North Korea Leadership Watch, "Kim Jong Un Meets with Syrian Delegation," July 25, 2013, http://nkleadershipwatch.wordpress.com/category/dprk-syria-relations/.

[90] Korean Central News Agency of DPRK, "Agreements and MOU Signed between DPRK and Syria," October 28, 2009, http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2009/200910/news28/20091028-15ee.html; Korean Central News Agency of DPRK, "DPRK, Syria Sign MOUs and Agreements," November 5, 2012, http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2012/201211/news05/20121105-22ee.html.

direct mention of military ties, and no formal security alliance exists, they do share a mature military relationship as well, which is outlined in a recent CRS report.[91] Included in this reporting are claims that the DPRK has exported nuclear technology for energy production and possible weapons production to Syria in recent years.[92] Some reporting has gone as far as claiming a possible DPRK-Syria chemical weapons link.[93] Such reports led the DPRK through its official press—as it has with past allegations—to refute these charges saying, "some foreign media are floating misinformation that the DPRK supplied war equipment to Syria, its airmen are directly involved in air-raids on insurgent troops in Syria, etc. This is nothing but part of the foolish plots of the hostile forces to tarnish the image of the peace-loving DPRK and cover up their criminal acts of blocking the peaceful settlement of the Syrian situation."[94]

Much like the way the DPRK views its fate as in some way tied to that of Iran, so also does the DPRK likely hold similar views concerning Syria. Some evidence also exists to suggest this perception is a reciprocal view. When the DPRK declared its intentions to pull out of the NPT[95] in 2003, Wolid Hamdoun, a leader in the Syrian Arab Socialist Baath Party said, "Syria and the DPRK are standing in the same trench of the struggle against the U.S. vicious and aggressive offensives and expressed full support to the principled stand and decision of People's Korea."[96] If Syria stood with the DPRK, then it is likely that this solidarity has been further bolstered by recent events. The regime of President Bashar al-Assad enjoys questionable domestic support and has increasingly become viewed unfavorably in the international community. Yet, he still clings to power

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[91] Emma Chanlett-Avery and Ian E. Rinehart, *North Korea: U.S. Relations, Nuclear Diplomacy, and Internal Situation*, CRS Report RL41259 (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, January 15, 2014).

[92] Gregory L. Schulte, "Uncovering Syria's Covert Reactor," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, January 2010, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/schulte_syria.pdf, 4–5.

[93] Alexandre Mansourov, "North Korea: Entering Syria's Civil War," 38 North, U.S. Korea Institute at SAIS, November 25, 2013, http://38north.org/2013/11/amansourov112513/.

[94] Korean Central News Agency of DPRK, "DPRK Refutes False Rumor About Its Involvement in Military Operations in Syria," November 14, 2013, http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2013/201311/news14/20131114-27ee.html.

[95] The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

[96] As quoted in Mansourov, "North Korea: Entering Syria's Civil War."

and has thus far evaded foreign military intervention into Syrian affairs. Given this possible perception in the DPRK, and to some degree Syria, that their fates are tied, further cooperation and the strengthening of ties between these two countries in the near term is likely to occur.

4. South, Southeast, and East Asia

DPRK relations vary greatly depending on which part of Asia being examined. In East Asia, DPRK relations are dominated by security. To the south and east, security concerns are rooted in the constant threat of possible military confrontation with the ROK, Japan, and their mutual ally, the United States. To the north, security concerns are different, but nonetheless, still very real. Friendly relations with the PRC remain critical to DPRK survival, as without its trade and backing in the international system, its security situation would become even more tenuous. Turning to Southeast Asia, the former glory of DPRK relations are largely seen in its Third World outreach of the 1960s and 1970s, fraternal bonds, and non-aligned states membership still at play.[97] In South Asia, the two most important relations remains Pakistan and India. Pakistan and North Korea have had a bidirectional relationship in missile and nuclear weapon development.[98] See Figure 6.

India remains a powerful trading partner and stands as the DPRK's second top trading partner with total trade standing at approximately $300 million to China's approximately $4 billion in total trade.[99] While China's trade volume with the DPRK decidedly dwarfs that of India, the contribution that Indian goods make and the

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[97] Kook-Chin Kim, "An Overview of North Korean-Southeast Asian Relations," *The Foreign Relations of North Korea: New Perspectives*, ed. Jae Kyu Park, Byung Chul Koh, and Tae-Hwan Kwak (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), 353–361.

[98] Sharon Squassoni, *Weapons of Mass Destruction: Trade Between North Korea and Pakistan*, CRS Report 31900 (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, October 11, 2006), 1.

[99] European Commission, Directorate-General for Trade, *European Union, Trade in Goods with North Korea*, July 11, 2013, http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc_113428.pdf, 10.

importance of trade in the DPRK economy cannot be discounted given its paltry state. Overall, relations in this region remain the most important relations to the DPRK state.[100]

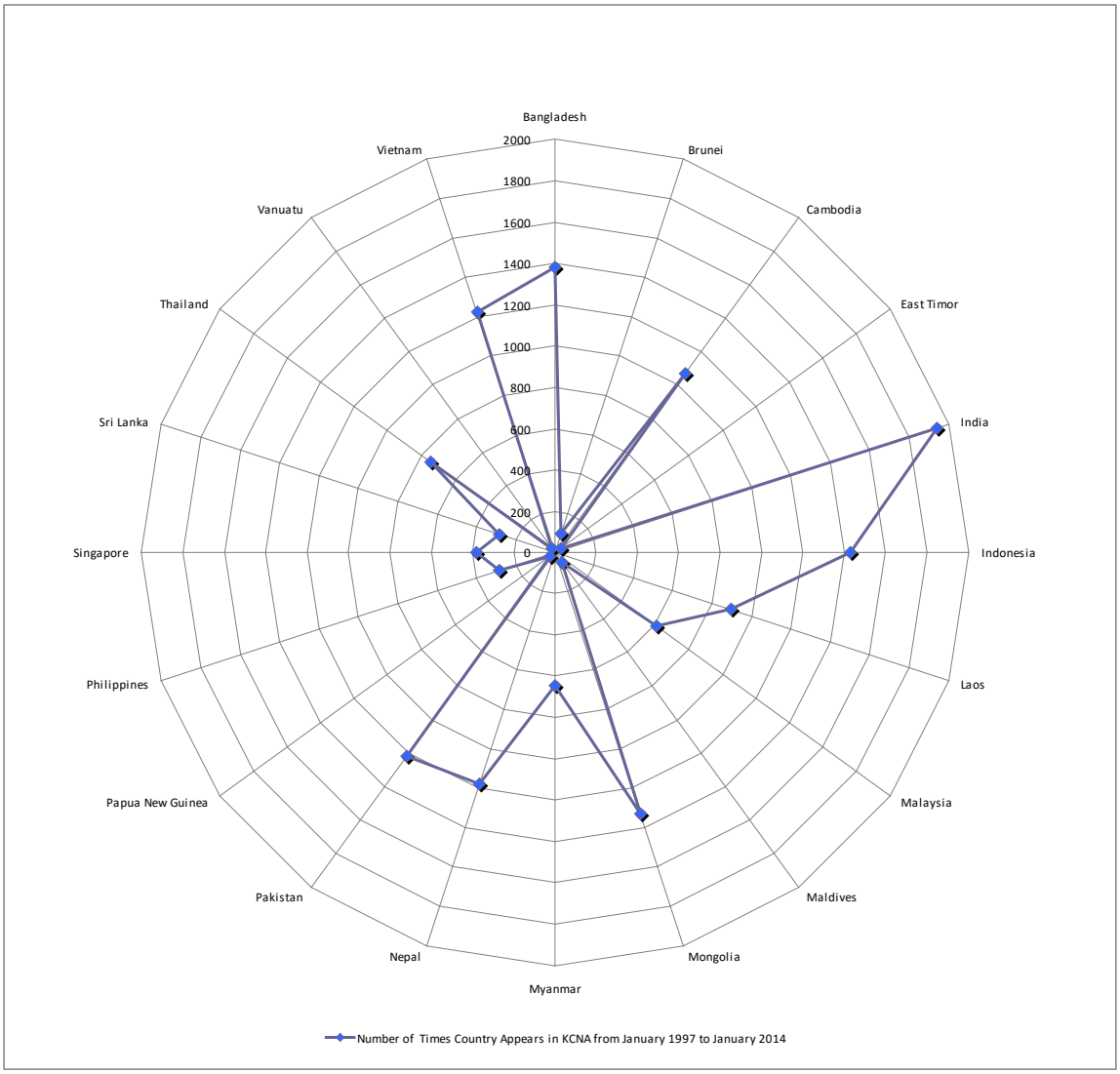

Figure 6. South, Southeast, East Asia: Countries Maintaining Ambassador Level Relations with the DPRK[101]

[100] Throughout Asia, the DPRK has ambassadorial level representation in Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Throughout Southeast and East Asia it maintain relations with Brunei, Cambodia, China, East Timor, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vanuatu, and Vietnam. Wertz, Oh, and Insung, "DPRK Diplomatic Relations."

[101] These numbers are derived from queries of the Japan-based KCNA server (http://www.kcna.co.jp/index-e.htm) using this author's previously outlined methods.

a. India

India and the DPRK first established diplomatic ties December 12, 1973.[102] The DPRK press is filled with frequent accounts of various exchanges of correspondence between the two states and seminars held in India to explore the "Juche Idea."[103] India's Ministry of External Affairs characterizes the relationship between India and DPRK in the following way.

> Relations between India and DPR Korea have been generally characterised [sic] by friendship, cooperation and understanding. As members of the Non-Aligned Movement, there is a commonality of views between the two on many international issues, e.g. Disarmament, South-South Cooperation, etc. Both sides continue to work closely in international fora and support each other on various issues of bilateral and international interests.[104]

While it is true that both states are members of the Non-Aligned Movement and may share some bond because of their mutual membership, it is surprising that the two countries have relations at all. Pakistan—which whom India has a very active territorial dispute over Kashmir—and the DPRK are assessed to have shared military technology and information in both directions over the years. North Korea is reported to have sold Nodong MRBM (Medium Range Ballistic Missile) to Pakistan in the 1980s.[105] Surprisingly, these instances of cooperation and weapons transfers have not seemingly placed a significant damper on India-DPRK relations in the present.

Numerous bilateral agreements exist between the DPRK and India that range from "cooperation in science and technology" to "cooperation in the field of information."[106]

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[102] Wertz, Oh, and Insung, "DPRK Diplomatic Relations."

[103] Korean Central News Agency of DPRK, "National Seminar on Juche Idea Held in India," April 14, 2013, http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2013/201304/news14/20130414-07ee.html.

[104] Ministry of Government Affairs: Government of India, "India-DPR Korea Relations," January 2014, http://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/DPR_Korea_January_2014.pdf, 1.

[105] Jeffery Lewis, "The Axis of Orbit: Iran-DPRK Space Cooperation," *38 North, US Korea Institute at SAIS*, January 13, 2014, http://38north.org/2014/01/jlewis011314/.

[106] Ministry of Government Affairs: Government of India, "India-DPR Korea Relation," 1.

In recent years, India has remained one of the DPRK's premier trading partners, but according to a January 2014 Indian Ministry of Commerce (MOC) report, trade declined drastically in 2013 "due to [a DPRK] financial crunch."[107] The same report also claims that the DPRK seeks to increase the volume of trade on a "deferred payment basis"[108] and "barter trade."[109] While it appears the DPRK is keen to increase trade, Indian firms only appear to have tepid interest, given "limited foreign exchange with DPRK, non-availability of direct shipping and non-guarantee of payments through an established banking and insurance system."[110] The same MOC report also states that the DPRK would "welcome participation of Indian companies in joint ventures and FDI."[111] This desire for participation is no doubt true as Kim Jong Un and the ruling elite's further attempt to secure additional revenue streams, but as discussed earlier in this thesis, foreign firms will watch Kaesong in the near term to determine the current level of risk for entering into these types of ventures in the DPRK. Any significant FDI or joint venture announcements in the near term should not be expected, and thus, relations between the two states will likely persist at status quo.

b. Mongolia

Mongolia has ties with North Korea that date back to the DPRK's emergence as a state in 1948. On October 15, 1948, only three days after the USSR, Mongolia recognized the DPRK as a state.[112] This recognition is not surprising given that among the 12 states to recognize the DPRK in the period 1948–1950, all were closely tied to the USSR. What is interesting is that some semblance of a strong bond between the two states has endured into the present age. In October 2013, some 63 years after recognizing the DPRK, and nearly 19 years after Mongolia adopted a new constitution and transitioned to a market

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[107] Ibid., 3.

[108] Ibid., 4.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Ibid., 3.

[111] Ibid., 4.

[112] Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mongolia, "List of States with Diplomatic Relations," last modified October 27, 2011, http://www.mfa.gov.mn/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=70&Itemid=83&lang=en.

economy and democratic society,[113] evidence of this strong bond is seen in Mongolian President Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj's visit to the DPRK as the first head of state to visit the country after Kim Jong Un's succession. While Elbegdorj did not meet with Kim Jong Un, not meeting was likely less to do with Mongolia-DPRK relations and more to do with a desire to withhold the first summit privilege for China or Russia.[114] On this visit, the two countries entered into "an agreement on cooperation in the fields of industry and agriculture and an agreement on cooperation in the fields of culture, sports and tourism."[115] This agreement was signed after a number of other agreements were signed between the two states earlier in the year.[116]

Economic cooperation between the two states appears to be increasing. Of particular note is the June 2013 acquisition of a 20 percent stake in a DPRK state-run oil refinery by a Mongolian company, which as the ROK-based Institute for Far Eastern Studies think tank points out is, "the first purchase by a Mongolian-listed company of a foreign asset."[117] These steps are significant as it could lead to further economic activities between the two countries. It also could lead to fulfilling a long held ambition of Mongolia of gaining port access in North Korea.[118] While on his October 2013 visit to Pyongyang the Mongolian President said:

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[113] Migeddorj Batchimeg, "Mongolia's DPRK Policy: Engaging North Korea," *Asian Survey* 46, no. 2 (March/April 2006): 275 (doi:10.1525/as.2006.46.2.275).

[114] Jeyup Kwaak, "Why Kim Jong Un Snubbed Mongolia's President," *Wall Street Journal*, November 1, 2013, http://blogs.wsj.com/korearealtime/2013/11/01/why-kim-jong-un-snubbed-mongolias-president/.

[115] Korean Central News Agency of DPRK, "Agreements on Cooperation between Governments of DPRK, Mongolia Signed," October 28, 2013, http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2013/201310/news28/20131028-28ee.html.

[116] The Institute for Far Eastern Studies, "North Korea Expanding Cooperation with Mongolia in IT, Distribution, and Livestock Industries," July 25, 2013, http://ifes.kyungnam.ac.kr/eng/FRM/FRM_0101V.aspx?code=FRM130725_0001.

[117] Ibid.

[118] Office of the President of Mongolia, "President Elbegdorj: We Aim to Further Expand Our Relations Consistently with the Interests and Benefits of the Peoples of Our Two Countries," October 30, 2013, http://www.president.mn/eng/newsCenter/viewEvent.php?cid=31&newsId=997&newsEvent=The%20state%20visit%20of%20the%20President%20of%20Mongolia%20Ts.Elbegdorj%20to%20the%20Democratic%20People%E2%80%99s%20Republic%20of%20Korea.

> Our two countries do indeed have opportunities for mutually complimentary economic cooperation. Mongolia is a land-locked country. Mongolia is interested to boost our economic cooperation with other countries by using the DPRK's infrastructure and sea ports. We do see ample opportunities of cooperation in railways, air and auto-transport and sea-ports. Also, the Korean side proposed establishing a live-stock husbandry complex. This is another area of productive cooperation. Mongolia is a country of rich experience in animal husbandry. Mongolia can train DPRK's livestock husbandry students and specialists in Mongolia, and our veterinarians and specialists can come to DPRK to work on various projects. I understand that the people who will realize these cooperation opportunities into concrete businesses have gathered here today for this meeting. The people of Mongolia, our businessmen, our companies and firms do realize and see these opportunities of cooperation, and therefore, so many of them have arrived to DPRK to engage in, discuss and materialize joint businesses. I call you for active undertakings and cooperation.[119]

While no such agreement exists yet, it can be seen how an agreement of this nature would benefit both countries. In the near term, additional economic engagement between the countries of Mongolia and the DPRK should be expected, and thus, a strengthening of ties.

[119] Office of the President of Mongolia, "President Elbegdorj."

IV. DPRK INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONAL PARTICIPATION

A. DPRK INSTITUTIONAL PARTICIPATION 1991–2011

This thesis now turns to a discussion on the DPRK's participation in international institutions. Much like the treatment of the DPRK's minor foreign relations, it receives little attention. DPRK participation in international institutions is important to understand given that participation is one of the few formal venues the DPRK has to communicate with the outside world and states outside of the Big Four.

In this age of unprecedented global connectedness when examining a state's memberships in international institutions, it is often easier to discuss in which institutions a country does not participate. The DPRK is not one of these states. According to the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency's "The World Fact Book," the DPRK currently maintains membership in 26 international institutions (see Figure 7).[120] The Correlates of War (COW) database holds that the DPRK maintains membership in 28 organizations.[121] Both databases accept slightly different definitions of international organizations, but regardless of which definition found more accurate, DPRK participation is low when compared to its neighbor to the south and other states in the region. The ROK maintains membership in 73 international institutions.[122] The fact that ROK institutional membership is greater than DPRK should be of no surprise given its impressive economic rise and relative good standing in the international community in recent years. While North Korean membership numbers are low compared to South Korea, it does maintain membership levels higher than other states in the region. Taiwan, the other

[120] Central Intelligence Agency, "The World Fact Book: North Korea."

[121] Jon C. Pevehouse, Timothy Nordstrom, and Kevin Warnke, "The COW-2 International Organizations Dataset Version 2.3," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 21, no. 2 (2004): 101–119.

[122] Central Intelligence Agency, "The World Fact Book: South Korea," March 4, 2014, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ks.html.

pariah state of East Asia,[123] only maintains membership with seven international organizations.[124] Perhaps a more fitting comparison may be Burma, which until recently was often classified in a similar category as North Korea; it maintains membership in 41 international institutions.[125] This author does not mean to imply that sheer numbers indicate the quality of a given country's membership in an international institution, but they do provide at least a superficial understanding of its opportunities for participation in the international system and how a country may perceive them.

[123] This author acknowledges Taiwan is, of course, a pariah state for entirely different reasons. It may be referred to as a pariah state not due to reckless actions of the state as in the DPRK case, but due to its relationship with the PRC, which claims Taiwan as part of China. This unsettled claim makes it hard for states to interact with Taiwan as a state entity for fear of some measure of reprisal from the PRC.

[124] Central Intelligence Agency, "The World Fact Book: Taiwan," March 11, 2014, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tw.html.

[125] Ibid.

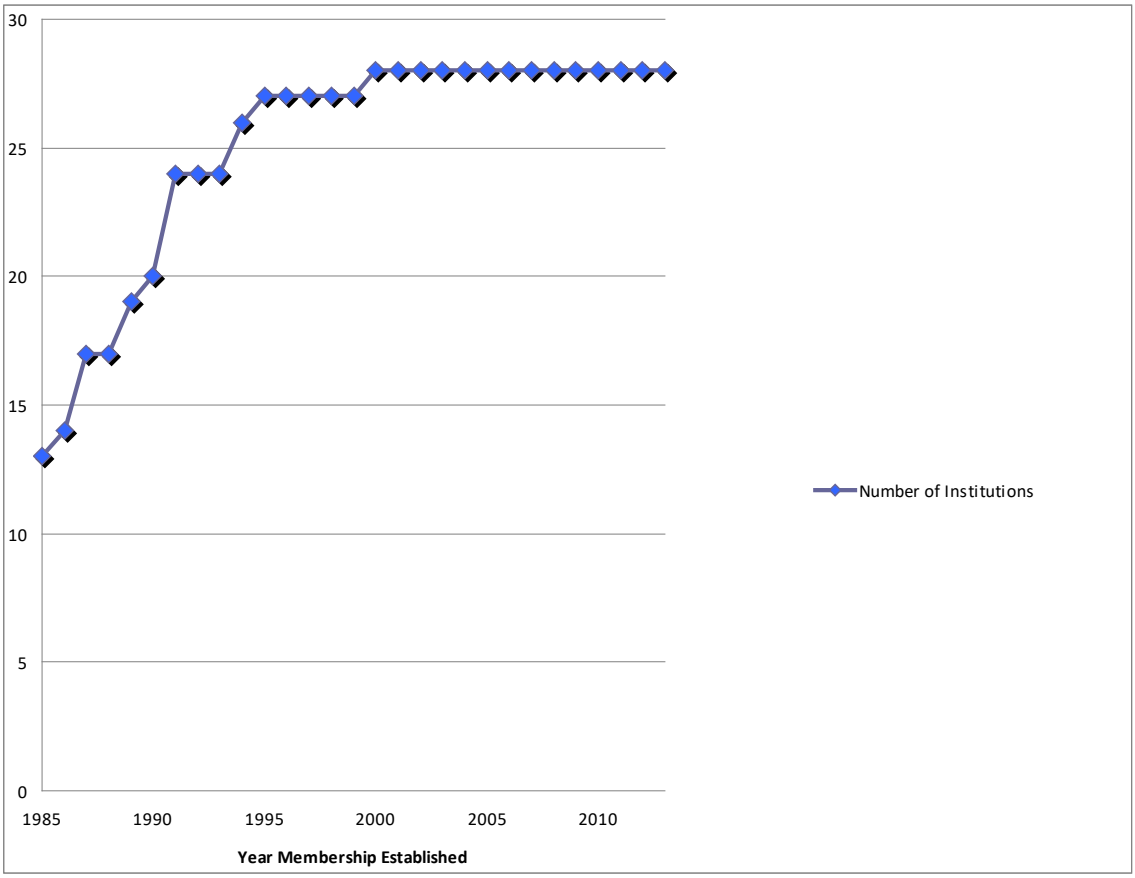

Figure 7. DPRK Membership in International Institutions 1985–2011[126]

To gain a more substantive understanding of DPRK institutional participation, it is necessary to look at a few key international organizations and DPRK participation in those organizations. The two most important institutions that the DPRK maintains membership in are the United Nations and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). This paper now turns to an examination of DPRK participation in the United Nations followed by a discussion on its participation in the ARF.

B. NORTH KOREA IN THE UNITED NATIONS

While North Korea maintained observer status and participated in the United Nations from its mission in New York beginning in 1973, full membership was not

[126] While this author constructed this graph, the data is derived from Pevehouse, Nordstrom, and Warnke, "The COW-2 International Organizations Dataset Version 2.3;" Central Intelligence Agency, "The World Fact Book: North Korea."

gained until 1991. This membership was achieved concurrently with the other half of the Korean Peninsula, the ROK. While a significant step, met with much optimism, it proved substantively to change little in North Korea or its position in the international system.

With the abrupt end of the Cold War, Russia quickly established relations with South Korea, which came as a big jolt to the DPRK. Certainly, the fact that Russia was engaging the archenemy of its previous client state was significant, but perhaps most significant was the promise from Russia that came as a result of the engagement. Russia, maintaining a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, assured South Korea that it would not block its petition for full UN membership. With one word of Russia's intentions, the DPRK quickly had to reverse its enduring objections to South Korea and North Korea gaining UN membership as separate entities. North Korea was essentially forced to reverse its stance for fear that South Korea would enjoy a greater measure of international legitimacy in the contest to be viewed as the sole rightful government of the Korean peninsula. In a telling statement released from the DPRK foreign ministry, some three months before North Korea would gain its full membership, and containing much of the rhetoric seen to this day, it would articulate its reluctance to joining the United Nations.[127]

> Taking advantage of the rapid changes in the international situation, the south Korean authorities are committing the never-to-be condoned treason to divide Korea into two parts ... by trying to force their way into the United Nations .... As the south Korean authorities insist on their unilateral United Nations membership, if we leave this alone, important issues related to the interests of the entire Korean nation would be dealt with in a biased manner on the United Nations rostrum and this would entail grave consequences. We can never let it go that way. The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has no alternative but to enter the United Nations at the present stage as a step to tide over such temporary difficulties created by the south Korean authorities.[128]

While countries do not need to join international institutions out of pure intentions, an implied spirit of pragmatism helps states reach common goals. The aforementioned

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[127] Samuel Kim, "North Korea and the United Nations," *International Journal of Korean Studies* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 77–79.

[128] As quoted in Samuel Kim, "North Korea and the United Nations," 79.

statement serves as powerful foreshadowing demonstrating that the pragmatism that led North Korea into the international body would not endure and continue to define its behavior both in the UN system and the world stage.[129]

Samuel S. Kim, the Korean foreign relations scholar, only six years after North Korea had achieved full UN membership, wrote the following: "[d]espite all the sweeping changes that have occurred in the domestic, regional, and global situations over the last seven years, continuity, not change, has remained the dominant element of North Korean foreign policy."[130] He continues to say, "Pyongyang is still fighting the cold war North Korean style in the post-cold war world organization, putatively in order to eliminate the remnants of the cold war."[131] While the enduring validity of Kim's analysis in the present may be questioned, this author and others agree it remains an unfortunately accurate characterization of DPRK UN membership. Writing for the International Peace Institute in March 2013, Eduardo Albrecht penned something very similar to the characterization offered by Dr. Kim some 16 years earlier.

> [I]t is not uncommon for Security Council resolutions to be utilized by the DPRK to reach some kind of strategic objective of its own. In particular, the DPRK has been successfully provoking the Security Council with weapons proliferation in order to (a) play the great powers against each other, (b) gain the upper hand in negotiating with the US and Japan, (c) portray itself as the legitimate defender of the Korean people, North and South, and (d) test the attitude of the international community, particularly the US, toward itself. [132]

Playing "great powers against each other,"[133] and "portray[ing] itself as the legitimate defender of the Korean people, North and South"[134]—these themes seem all too familiar and point to a state that has not found agreement with the international community

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[129] As quoted in Samuel Kim, "North Korea and the United Nations," 77–105.

[130] Ibid., 101.

[131] Ibid., 105.

[132] Eduardo Albrecht, "North Korea & the UN Security Council: Action, Reaction, Trust, and Mistrust," *International Peace Institute*, March 2013, http://www.ipinst.org/media/pdf/publications/ipi_pub_north_korea__3_.pdf, 1–2.

[133] Ibid., 25.

[134] Ibid.

regarding common goals and collective goods, which speaks to a state actor that has been touched by international institutions, but remains immune to their potential behavior moderating forces. This immunity in the North Korean case leaves a state that clings to its *Juche* ideology no matter how contradictory to its standing in the world today.

C. NORTH KOREA AND ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM

After North Korea gained membership in the United Nations and a number of its sub-organizations throughout the 1990s, its institutional participation did not change significantly until the year 2000, when it participated for the first time in the ARF. It is worth nothing that North Korea sought participation in the regional forum, perhaps demonstrating a will to be further connected with the regional and international community.[135] While North Korea would not officially participate in ARF until 2000, the situation on the Peninsula had been discussed since ARF's establishment. Readers of this paper no doubt understand the broad objectives of the United Nations; perhaps less clear are those of the ARF. The ARF came into existence after the 26th ASEAN ministerial meeting in 1993. The objectives of ARF, as advertised, are "1. to foster constructive dialogue and consultation on political and security issues of common interest and concern; and 2. to make significant contributions to efforts towards confidence-building and preventive diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region."[136] In line with this mission, the ARF has continued to voice support for negations aimed at the denuclearization of North Korea and full implementation of the Agreed Framework.[137]

North Korea's entry and participation into the ARF was viewed with promise as reflected in the ARF chairman's statement.

> The Ministers noted with satisfaction the positive developments on the Korean Peninsula, including the increased dialogue and exchanges between the DPRK and several ARF countries. They welcomed in particular the historic Summit between the leaders of the DPRK and the

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[135] Rodolfo Severino, *The ASEAN Regional Forum* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009), 25.

[136] ASEAN Regional Forum, "About The ASEAN Regional Forum," accessed 14 September 2013, http://aseanregionalforum.asean.org/about.html.

[137] Severino, *The ASEAN Regional Forum*, 26.

> ROK and expressed their support for the 'June 15 North - South Joint Declaration.' The Ministers also expressed the hope for further efforts by all parties concerned within the frameworks of inter-Korean dialogue, the US-DPRK and Japan-DPRK talks, the Four-Party Talks, and broader international efforts, as well as for further positive developments regarding the temporary moratorium by the DPRK on missile test launches and for the full implementation of the 1994 Agreed Framework, including the work of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO).[138]

This optimism was not wholly unfounded. After all, ARF is the only other body aside from the United Nations that addresses security issues in which the DPRK sits alongside the United States, Japan, and other regional powers. The DPRK has also been active within ARF. As Rodolfo Severino points out in his book, *The ASEAN Regional Forum*, "[f]rom 2001 to 2007, North Korea contributed to no less than five issues of the ARF's *Annual Security Outlook*. Since its admission into the ARF, the DPRK has taken part in certain 'inter-sessional' activities, that is, ARF events between ministerial meetings, but not in others."[139] Of distinct significance is their participation in the March 2006 seminar on "non-proliferation and weapons of mass destruction [WMD]."[140] DPRK attendance in this seminar has a unique irony given 2006 was a banner year for North Korean WMD delivery and development. In this year, it test-fired a long-range Taepodong-2 missile in July, and tested its first nuclear weapon in October.[141] While no one would make the assertion that mere attendance and membership is enough to restrain certain behaviors of a state, it is worth remembering that talk and attendance mean little; it is in deeds a state must accessed.

North Korea's participation in international institutions can only be characterized as minimal. For North Korea to gain entry into additional international institutions, it would have to greatly modify current behaviors and adopt a level of transparency that it is unlikely to agree to in the near term.

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[138] Pacific Forum Center for Strategic & International Studies, "PacNet Number 31: ARF Chairman's Statement," August 4, 2000, http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/pac0031.pdf.

[139] Severino, *The ASEAN Regional Forum*, 26.

[140] Ibid.

[141] New York Times, "Timeline of North Korea's Nuclear Program," modified August 6, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/02/05/world/asia/northkorea-timeline.html?_r=1&.

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V. CONCLUSION

A. OVERVIEW

In the post-Cold War period, North Korea diplomatically became lost for a time. No longer having benefactors whose rivalry could be manipulated, the DPRK largely had to find its own way diplomatically. As Charles Armstrong puts it, "[a]fter the collapse of North Korea's communist allies at the end of the Cold War, 'self-reliance' had to face the bitter test of reality, and hundreds of thousands of North Koreans died in the process. The world had changed radically, but North Korea refused to change with it, and insisted on following its own path: fiercely nationalist, militant, self-enclosed."[142] This idea is reflected throughout DPRK relations. While the rest of the world sought to take advantage of many of the opportunities that became only available in the post-Cold War period, the DPRK seemed to maintain its Cold War diplomatic tack.

B. TRENDS

1. Continuity

A trend immediately evident throughout DPRK relations is a recent reaffirmation of some of its most troubling minor relations. The continuity of DPRK relations and not change is most remarkable. Many foreign observers predicted that Kim Jong Un would distance the DPRK from regimes like that of Assad's Syria in wake of the Arab Spring, but this prediction proved incorrect.[143] Much the opposite has seemed to play out as evidenced by continued DPRK support for Assad in Syria. Alexandre Mansourov characterizes Pyongyang's efforts as follows.

> Pyongyang's involvement in Syria characterizes Kim Jong Un more as a steady hand and traditional alliance manager than an erratic wanderer and opportunistic risk-taker. Although he is playing with fire in the shifting sands of far-flung lands like Syria, but he is simply staying the course set forth by his grandfather and upheld by his father, demonstrating continuity in North Korea's foreign policy. Moreover, potential material and

[142] Armstrong, *Tyranny of the Weak*, 288–289.

[143] Mansourov, "North Korea: Entering Syria's Civil War."

> reputational rewards far outweigh possible security or diplomatic risks, especially if Kim's bet on Assad's eventual victory proves to be correct.[144]

This same type of continuity can be seen in DPRK relations with Iran and Cuba as well. Aside from the material support and technical support that the DPRK may provide to other nations, perhaps its greatest export is something less tangible.

Traditionally, goods and services on the ledger of a nation's exports are examined to determine its primary export. North Korea's chief export will not be found on any ledger or buried in an economic table because of its intangible nature. This author contends that the DPRK's chief export—either intentionally exported with political advisors or merely standing as a model—is how to stay in power despite overwhelming odds. Exporting this model is a partial fulfillment of Kim Il Sung's desire to stand as a leader of the globe's subjugated states, and thus further, contributes to the legitimacy of Kim Jong Un and serves as a point of pride for the DPRK.[145] The DPRK stands as enduring inspiration to those on the fringe of the international system on how best to flout even the most effective levers of the globe's most powerful states and institutions directly. Syria, with which this thesis has demonstrated the DPRK has a special relationship, offers the perfect example.

In August 2013, tensions between factions in Syria and President Bashar al-Assad were at a decisive point. During this period, calls for Assad to step down were common and growing throughout the international community. Possible military intervention to force Assad out of power was discussed. During this time, Assad chose to employ a very North Korea-like tactic. Assad's regime, containing no mature nuclear weapon program, chose to use chemical weapons on its own population. Why would Assad and his regime do such a thing? The short answer is to make intervention so costly or undesirable that those suggesting military intervention may rethink their previous calls. The DPRK makes a similar move when it decides to detonate a nuclear weapon. By not only demonstrating that a state has a nuclear weapon, but also that it is capable and not afraid to detonate a

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[144] Mansourov, "North Korea: Entering Syria's Civil War."

[145] Armstrong, "Juche and North Korea's Global Aspirations," 3.

device despite pressure from the international community, is one way the DPRK broadcasts to outsiders that intervention will be costly.

It is important to note that this author has no direct evidence that Assad was inspired by the DPRK; however, as this thesis has argued, significant links are apparent between the two states. As Alexandre Mansourov recently outlined in his article "North Korea: Entering Syria's Civil War" that "[s]ince the beginning of this year [2013] alone, Kim Jong Un has exchanged personal letters with Bashar Al-Assad on ten different occasions—more than with any other foreign leader, including Chinese. Many senior DPRK leaders have either visited Syria over the past two decades or worked closely with its government."[146] As mentioned, this author was unable to find direct evidence of inspiration, but extensive ties are present at multiple levels of both governments. It is possible, and perhaps even likely, that Assad's actions are both inspired and informed by DPRK's experience.

Certainly, chemical weapons are not nuclear weapons, and in no way, match the magnitude of potential destruction if employed, but they do grab the attention of the international community. Nuclear weapons are an easy deterrent in that once outsiders understand that a country possesses these weapons, and may even have a potential means of delivery deterrence, in some measure, goes on auto pilot. Perhaps, a state like the DPRK occasionally must detonate a device, in defiance of the international community, just to prove that it will not be constrained. Syria was forced in August 2013 to demonstrate to the outside world that intervention would be costly. Unlike nuclear weapons, the mere testing of chemical weapons is not an effective deterrent. Chemical weapons do not act as a deterrent just by merely being present in a given state's arsenal. To serve as an effective deterrent, chemical weapons must be used. Then and only then, will the message be broadcast to the international community calling for infringement of the state's sovereignty—intervention will be costly. While this author has only indirect evidence that the DPRK may be advising the Assad regime on how to stay in power, it

[146] Mansourov, "North Korea: Entering Syria's Civil War."

cannot be denied that at the very least the DPRK stands as the shining example of what a state and its ruling elite must do to stay in power despite overwhelming odds.

2. Possible Hedging

Since mid-2013, with the more universal application of sanctions against North Korea, its minor relations have become even more important, especially with those states in which it shares similar standing on the fringe of the international system. As the DPRK has been further isolated, it will likely become more desperate in its attempts to guarantee revenue for Kim Jong Un and the DPRK ruling elites. This network of minor relations, and in particular fringe states, will become more important in a number of areas, especially trade. Having warm relations with a number of minor powers could assist the DPRK in weathering a sharp cooling in PRC relations. As the DPRK intimated to India, it desires to increase its barter relations.[147] Given this stated goal, it can be expected that DPRK barter trade will increase, particularly with those countries willing to flout the new more restrictive UN sanctions as evidenced by the attempted transfer of military hardware between Cuba and the DPRK in 2013. Given the further isolation of the DPRK, and a growing desperation as a result, those relations that appeared to be relics of a previous era will need to be watched for new signs of life in the near term.[148]

As relations cool with its primary benefactor, the DPRK may engage in a new more energetic diplomatic campaign. While the foundation of many of the DPRK's bilateral relations may be the DPRK's contest with the ROK for international legitimacy, its possible need to hedge in the event relations with Beijing further cool defines them today. Now that Kim Jong Un has consolidated power and appears to have a firm grip on the DPRK state, the time may be right for a new wave of diplomatic activity. New diplomatic activity could greatly benefit the DPRK as the international community continues to search desperately for evidence that Kim Jong Un wants to responsibly

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[147] Ministry of Government Affairs: Government of India, "India-DPR Korea Relations," 4.

[148] Hugh Griffiths and Lawrence Dermody, "Shadow Trade: How North Korea's Barter Trade Violates United Nations Sanctions," Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, July 17, 2013, http://www.sipri.org/media/expert-comments/shadow-trade-how-north-koreas-barter-trade-violates-united-nations-sanctions.

engage the outside world. By even feigning a desire to become a responsible member of the international community, the DPRK would afford advocates of more Sunshine-like policies the evidence they need to advocate for a return to softer policy approaches to the DPRK. Projections of new diplomatic activity are supported by a few key pieces of evidence. First, some assert that relations between China and the DPRK continue on a downward trajectory.[149] This assessment is evidenced by PRC support towards efforts to curtail activities of North Korean financial institutions in 2013,[150] and most recently, by the public execution of Jang Song Thaek, who was widely regarded as "Beijing's man."[151] Traditionally, as Pyongyang's relations with its benefactors (particularly Beijing) have waned, its relations with other states have increased. This type of change can be seen as a partial explanation of the aggressive outreach from the DPRK that occurred in the later part of the 1960s and early part of the 1970s. This period coincides with China's Cultural Revolution, which was a time of great upheaval in China when much of its leaders' focus was on internal affairs. During this time, the DPRK secured more bilateral relations than in any other period. This period of new bilateral ties is second only to DPRK outreach efforts in 1990s, which further supports this idea given its struggle to find its place in the post-Cold War era. This assessed coming surge of diplomatic activity will not manifest in the number of new relations established, but rather will be seen in the level of engagement.

Preliminary indications of this engagement are arguably seen in the January 25, 2014 DPRK UN ambassador's press conference. While it is a rarity for a DPRK official to host a news conference, it is an even greater rarity for the hosting official to take questions from Western press. It must be noted that Ambassador Sin Son-Ho did not answer Western press corps questions; but merely permitting questions may be initial evidence of a new diplomatic push. Further evidence of this push may also be seen in Kim Jong Un's New Year's speech, whose foreign policy section largely focused on

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[149] Chanlett-Avery and Rinehart, *North Korea: U.S. Relations, Nuclear Diplomacy*, 10–11.

[150] Ibid.

[151] Alexandre Mansourov, "North Korea: What Jang's Execution Means for the Future," *38 North, U.S. Korea Institute at SAIS*, December 13, 2013, http://38north.org/2013/12/amansourov121313/.

improving ROK-DPRK relations, and which North Korea watchers have called "mildly hopeful."[152] Furthermore, the DPRK National Defense Commission's proposal to ROK authorities to resume among other things family reunions is additional possible evidence.[153] This NDC proposal appears to be bearing initial fruit; last month, family reunions occurred for the first time since 2010.[154] While reunions have since been paused, likely due to the recent ROK-US military exercise, if they were to continue in the near term, it would likely portend more extensive diplomatic engagement. While undeniably not concrete evidence of a new diplomatic wave, these pieces of evidence, when viewed together, could point to new efforts from the DPRK.

C. OPPORTUNITIES

Perhaps, the greatest revelation when viewing the minor diplomatic relations of North Korea separate from its major relations, are the opportunities for engagement that become evident. Given the unique relationship that states like India and Mongolia enjoy with the DPRK, the United States should make every opportunity to engage the DPRK through these states. As Mongolia enters into deeper economic ties with the DPRK, more insight should be sought from the Mongolian government regarding North Korean and the true goals and aims of its foreign policy. India should be leveraged in any capacity possible, which potentially serves a dual purpose. Not only could India's relationship with the DPRK offer insight into the opaque state, but by having India take a greater role in security affairs in the region, sets up India potentially to emerge as an influential broker and possible balancer in further shaping of power dynamics in Asia.

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[152] Stephen Haggard, "The North Korea Proposal," *North Korea: Witness to Transformation blog*, Peterson Institute for International Economics, January 22, 2014, http://blogs.piie.com/nk/?p=12804.

[153] Haggard, "The North Korea Proposal," Channel News Asia, "North Korea Takes Diplomatic Offensive to UN," January 25, 2014, http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/north-korea-takes/967226.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed:+Nam Nguyen-GooglePublicPosts+(Google%2B+Posts); Paula Hancocks, K. J. Kwon, and Jethro Mullen, "North and South Korea Agree to Hold family Reunions This Month," *CNN*, February 5, 2014, http://www.cnn.com/2014/02/05/world/asia/north-korea-family-reunions/.

[154] Choe Sang-Hun, "North Korea Rejects Plans for More Family Reunions," *New York Times*, March 6, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/07/world/asia/north-korea-rejects-plans-for-more-family-reunions.html?_r=0.

It also reveals that effective engagement with the DPRK may be more successful if taken along its periphery. If anything, the interdicted shipment of weapons from Cuba to the DPRK hastens the case for U.S.-Cuban rapprochement. While the United States appears to be headed in this direction, it should view acts like the attempted Cuban-DPRK weapons transfers as a case for hastening such steps rather than justification for delay. If the United States is able to exercise influence over Havana, it may facilitate indirect influence of Pyongyang.

D. AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The minor relations of the DPRK largely remain unexplored. While North Korea is undoubtedly an opaque state, many of the countries that it has relations with are not. A deeper inquiry of records from the states that the DPRK has diplomatic ties with may help shed further light on previously unrecognized trends or intentions of the DPRK state.

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