Shifting Power in the DPRK-U.S. Asymmetrical ‘Crisis’:

David, Goliath and the Cyber Sling

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Part I: Introduction

On May 15, 2017, in the rose garden of the White House during a joint appearance with South Korean President Moon Jae-In, President Trump declared, “[t]he era of strategic patience with the North Korean regime has failed; frankly that patience is over.” This comment marked a significant shift in tone for the U.S. regarding North Korea. This comment also came weeks before the first successful North Korean intercontinental ballistic missile test, marking a significant achievement for the regime of Kim Jong Un. Conventional wisdom would argue that the situation between the countries is reaching a new level of urgency for this sole reason. Michael Hayden, the director of the CIA from 2006 to 2009, believes that should Pyongyang continue at its current pace, the country could develop an indigenous missile that can reach Seattle and carry a North Korean-built nuclear warhead before the end of Trump's first term. (Berlinger, 2009).

While undoubtedly the pace of North Korean missile and nuclear testing has hastened under the regime of Kim Jong Un, the growth and sophistication of this program displayed in exercises of military strength have been far from rare. During nearly every U.S. administration since the end of the Cold War, a U.S. president has found himself in the middle of a ‘nuclear crisis’ involving North Korea. It occurred twice during Clinton administration, once in the Bush administration and then became the norm under the Obama administration as the new regime of Kim Jong un doubled his number of his father’s nuclear tests within only six years. Additionally, U.S. troops and citizens living in Japan and South Korea have been under the nuclear umbrella of North Korea for nearly the same period of time.
While the rhetoric between both countries has escalated dramatically in the recent months, at a quick glance, not much else has changed in tempestuous relationship between the U.S.-DPRK to warrant such a change in tone. A longtime constant in the U.S.-DPRK relationship has been economic and resource disparity between the two countries. From perhaps every measurable perspective the United States has had an overwhelming advantage in traditional power resources over North Korea.

In a study conducted by Byung-Yoen Kim (2017) in his book, *Unveiling the North Korean Economy: Collapse and Transition*, him and his researchers found that the North Korean economy has remained generally stagnant between 1998 and 2013, with an annual average growth rate of 1.74 percent. (p. 80). They found the North Korean DP per capita in 2012 amounted to US$735 in current nominal U.S. dollars which ranked North Korea as 168th out of 189 countries in the world in terms of GDP per capita. (p. 180). According to the World Bank database, those countries whose GDP per capita in 2013 was similar to that of North Korea included Haiti (US$775), Nepal (US$699) and Afghanistan (US$687). (p. 180). When comparing their study with other major estimates, such as The Bank of Korea, Kim asserts, “[b]oth estimations suggest that the North Korean economy has been stagnant since 2005” (p. 83).

This economic reality reflects the reality of military capabilities for North Korea. Despite the sheer size of the North Korean military, it has been estimated that due to the lack of sustained energy in North Korea, in the event of an invasion on the Korean Peninsula, North Korea would not be able to resupply the fuel needed to maintain prolonged conflict. (Hippel, 2003, p. 32).

David Von Hippel’s (2003) study found:

That it would take about three months of DPRK refinery output,
at current levels, to resupply the gasoline and diesel fuel that the military would use in the first month of an active conflict. By the end of the first month of conflict, it would take about two months of total refinery production plus imports of gasoline and diesel to operate the DPRK’s remaining military vehicles and armaments for one month. (p. 32)

North Korea has stifled economic development by putting all of their chips in the basket of military and weapons development for the sake of the Kim regime’s survival and their isolationist philosophy of Juche. Juche, or ‘self-reliance’, can be can be boiled down to a combination of a rigid class society emphasizing Confucian hierarchal values, a fanatical cult society extolling Kim Il Sung as a demigod, an Orwellian thought-controlled society, a thoroughly militarized society, an impoverished socialist economy with a limited education system and woefully poor healthcare system complemented by no free religious institutions or spiritual teaching, and few, if any basic human rights. (Worden, 2008, p. 71).

These trends and policies all have been constants in North Korea. Therefore, it is reasonable to consider that North Korean leadership believes this asymmetry to be true as well. North Korean leadership, presumably, understand an attack on U.S. soil is a way of ensuring the collapse of the regime and it is counterintuitive to almost every domestic policy inside North Korea historically under the Kims. The extent to which the Kim’s have tried to cover every contingency that could lead to dismantling the regime is unprecedented. Quite simply, the strategies of North Korean domestic policies do not provide reason that North Korea has the direct intention to strike the U.S.. Understanding these policies may provide reason of an ulterior motive for the completion of their nuclear development. Following this logic, it then may be true that there is a different end-game for North Korean leadership than a nuclear strike on the United
States, and similarly the heightened tensions from the U.S. perspective may provide reason they understand this as well.

The United States faces devastating consequences of their own if instead they preemptively launched a strike on North Korea. Mark Bowden, a national correspondent for *The Atlantic*, recently articulated the costs of a pre-emptive strike on North Korea. He highlights that North Korea has an, “8,000 big guns—just north of the demilitarized zone (DMZ), which is less than 40 miles from Seoul, South Korea’s capital, a metropolitan area of more than 25 million people” (Bowden, 2017). These missiles, as one high-ranking U.S. military officer who commanded forces in the Korean theater, now retired, told Bowden could ‘pepper’ Seoul, South Korea’s largest population center, its government, and its economic anchor within hours. The conventional weapons shells could also carry chemical weapons, which are in abundance in North Korea. Bowden (2017) explains, “[t]he Kim regime is believed to have biological weapons including anthrax, botulism, hemorrhagic fever, plague, smallpox, typhoid, and yellow fever.” These weapons could also reach Tokyo which as a result could potentially lead to one of the greatest catastrophes in human history making this predicament one of mutually assured destruction to some degree.

In the following sections of this paper I aim to answer the question of what has changed in the DPRK-U.S. asymmetric relationship that has made the once ancillary foreign policy priority of North Korea, now currently one of the most urgent and problematic issues for U.S. leadership? Before proceeding to the literature review and research design portions of this paper my hypotheses as to why this may be true are as following.
**Hypothesis 1**

I first hypothesize that political changes here in the United States have played the biggest role. The past three administrations have taken different approaches in confronting North Korea which may have inadvertently undermined the bargaining positions of each new administration. Each administration dealt with different world politics and varied in how to handle the rogue regime of North Korea which I argue may have negatively impacted the chances of success as North Korea was a lesser priority in some administrations. In contrast, North Korea, as I will address shortly, has always had one priority and therefore more urgency which has enabled them to diligently prepare for the U.S. policies trying to hinder their progress.

**Hypothesis 2**

Second, I hypothesize that domestic changes inside North Korea have been the primary reason that the U.S. has become more concerned with the DPRK than in previous years. This addresses the difference in rhetoric and domestic policies under Kim Jong Un in comparison to Kim Jong Il. While the general trends of isolation and oppression have been constants inside of the DPRK since it was established under Kim Il Sung in 1948, there has been a hardening of both rhetoric and policies under Kim Jong Un. This could do with the effects of U.N. sanctions within North Korea making Kim Jong Un fear for the survival for his regime now more than ever. Alternatively, this could also mean that Kim Jong Un is actually in a strong bargaining position and is close to his end game. The doubling down on fear-instilling rhetoric and oppressive policies could be ‘tying up losing ends’
**Hypothesis 3**

Third, I hypothesize that the calculated and timely development of North Korean technology has closed the asymmetrical gap between the two countries and his put the U.S. in an inopportune position for the first time. I argue the development of cyber capabilities and information communications technology (ICT), has nullified the intended effects of U.S. foreign policy decisions strategies. Essentially, I contend that North Korea has accounted for nearly every contingency of how the U.S. would try to sabotage the Kim regime and the completion of a nuclear weapon capable of targeting to U.S. mainland, with cyber defense being the last hurdle to cross. From this perspective, with the nuclear weapon being the ultimate bargaining chip, the United States for the first time will be forced to at least consider some of the demands of the North Korean rogue regime.

**Hypothesis 4**

My Fourth hypothesis combines elements of the first three but with the role of technology being the leveling mechanism that has led to the asymmetrical change. I will postulate that the advancement of technology has been the driving force of foreign policy failure of the United States as well as the stabilizing mechanism of the Kim regime maintaining ideological control on North Korean society. I propose that the calculated use of technology has enabled the regime to survive where all historical precedent would point to the internal collapse of such an isolationist regime. This has bided time for both Kim Jong Il and Kim Jong Un and has carried them towards the end goal of being the leader in negotiations about the future of the Korean Peninsula.
Part II: Theory (Literature Review)

To understand the crisis and asymmetry between North Korea and the United States from an abstract perspective, the foundations of asymmetric conflict theory must first be understood. To explain, I first elaborate on the works that established the underlying principles of the asymmetric conflict theory. Second, I highlight the literature pertaining to international crises and how the idea of a crisis rather than a conflict is better suited for the DPRK-U.S. paradigm. This theoretical perspective examines how bargaining and sequenced interactions are the forms of ‘armed confrontations’ seen in earlier literature asymmetric conflict theory. Third, I look at how soft power in the aftermath of the bipolarity of the Cold War has taken on a much more significant role within international relations and how it plays into how private information is used and within the strategies and bargaining behavior. Finally, I review the literature on cyber warfare and how the core theories in current literature postulate the way countries understand and use technology today.

A. Foundations of Asymmetrical Conflict Theory

In a highly visionary paper published in 1975, Andrew Mack established the pre-theory for asymmetric conflicts and explaining their outcomes. (Arrequin-Toft, 2003, p. 6). In his essay, titled, Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars: The Politics of Asymmetric Conflict, Mack addresses what ‘asymmetry’ actually means in the context of war between two states.

Mack (1975) asserts:

The insurgents can pose no direct threat to the survival of the external power because, as already noted, they lack an invasion capability. On the other hand, the metropolitan power poses not simply the threat of invasion, but the reality of
occupation. This fact is so obvious that its implications have been ignored. It means, crudely speaking, that for the insurgents the war is "total," while for the external power it is necessarily "limited". (p. 181)

Within this asymmetry not only is it not necessary for the stronger state to fully mobilize against the weak opponent, it does not make sense politically in most cases. Mack argues that this is largely due to the resource asymmetry between the two states. Within these conflicts that fact that one power possesses an invasion capability and the other doesn’t is due to an asymmetry in technological and industrial capabilities for the two sides. “The asymmetric relationship is thus a function of the asymmetry in resource power” (p. 182).

Mack’s essay was so essential for future progress for the theory because unlike earlier scholars in the field who focused particular aspects of asymmetric conflicts, Mack was the first to propose that the asymmetries which characterize the conflicts are critical in understanding their outcomes. Writers such as Rosen (1972) considered the asymmetry in power and "willingness to suffer costs"; Katzenbach (1962) examined the asymmetry in "tangible" and "intangible resources"; Kissinger mentioned asymmetry in overall strategy (physical versus psycho- logical attrition); and Kraemer (1971) distinguished "colonial" versus "non- colonial" guerrilla wars. (p. 188). In Mack’s paper, the asymmetries such as the interests to be at stake in things like mobilization, intervention capability and resource power are meant to be pulled away from their contextual situations and analyzed to derive explanations for particular outcomes.

Through his analysis of several case studies, Mack found two main reasons why the weak have won in historical asymmetric conflicts. First, they achieved not losing by refusing to confront the industrial powers on their own terms and by resorting instead to "unconventional" forms of warfare-guerrilla war, urban terrorism, or even nonviolent action. (p.195). Second,
because the stronger power could not be defeated militarily resulting from the asymmetry in technological and economic development, victory for the weaker state could only result from them destroying the stronger powers “political” capability to wage war. (p. 195). This plays into his limited and total war views of the two sides mentioned above and if these conflicts lasted long enough, democratic regimes would almost always face public opposition and hostility due to the cost, both literally and figuratively, of the conflict.

Mack’s pre-theory to asymmetric conflict outcomes being correlated with interest asymmetry was regarded as the standard for providing explanation for how the weak win wars with the exception of a few other theories. These theoretical approaches included Aliot Cohen’s (1984) argument of arms diffusion, Michael Desch’s nature of the actor argument (2002), and the argument of democratic social squeamishness proposed by Gil Merom (2003). Ivan Arreguin-Toft (2005) proposed that while each of these arguments all play some role within asymmetric conflicts the strategic interaction of these strategies and others are better predictors of outcomes of asymmetric conflicts rather than competing explanations. (p.18).

Arreguin-Toft proposes:

If we think of strategies as complex but discrete plans of action which include assumptions about the values of objectives, as well as tactical and leadership principles and rules of engagement, different interactions should yield systematically different outcomes independent of the relative power of the actors involved. (p. 15)

This interaction between the strategies used by both sides sometimes favors the strong actor however certain scenarios favor weak actors’ chances to win which has been taking place more and more frequently and particularly in the twentieth century. (p.4).
Arreguin-Toft’s theory, building upon previous approaches mentioned above, suggests that state actor strategies can be reduced into two categories of ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ approaches. His thesis, “[i]s that when actors employ similar strategic approaches (direct-direct or indirect-indirect) relative power explains the outcome: strong actors will win quickly and decisively” (p.18). Conversely, he argues that when state actors use opposite state approaches, weak actors are much more likely to win despite conventional wisdom on state power and capabilities. These direct and indirect strategies are used in a conflict of interests. At the beginning of this conflict of interests the two opposing sides begin with three pre-conceived notions. Each side has an estimate of the resources immediately available to fight with, relative to a potential adversary, a plan for the use of those resources in pursuit of a specified objective (strategy); and an estimate of resources potentially available once the battle has been joined. (p. 23). His strategic interaction thesis allows for more room of explanation of why weak states win such conflicts that he believes conventional wisdom in the literature until this point does not adequately articulate.

Arreguin-Toft furthers Mack’s pre-theory in three significant ways. First, relative interests determine relative political vulnerabilities, but relative interests are not explained by relative power because these interests are too complex to be reduced to Mack’s simplistic formula. (p. 24). Arreguin-Toft claims that political vulnerability and actor interest vary inversely, meaning the higher an actor’s interests are in the issues at stake the less vulnerable it will be to being forced to quitting a fight before a military decision while the lower an actor’s interests, the more vulnerable it will be (p. 25). For example, an authoritarian regime, like the Kim regime in North Korea, historically has placed few limits on the use, mobilization or extraction of the nation’s resources.
Second, regime type in the strategic interaction thesis matters because it effects the costs and vulnerabilities of adopting certain strategies. (p. 24) This differs from Mack’s pre-theory of asymmetric drastically. Mack asserts, “[p]olitics under any political system involves conflict over the allocation of re-sources. In closed or centrist polities, these conflicts will by and large be confined to the ruling elite--but not necessarily so” (Mack, 1975, p. 189). Diverging from the view of all regimes being effected the same way regarding resource trade-offs, Arrequin-Toft claims that certain regime types do in fact effect the outcomes of these conflicts.

He also proposes that authoritarian regimes have an advantage in particular types of war for two reasons. First, authoritarian regimes have much more control over what information reaches their domestic audiences so wars can seem both necessary and fairly fought (Arreguin-Toft, 2005, p. 28). This means when evidence of cruelty and barbarism does reach the regime’s public it can be justified as a limited reprisal for atrocities committed by the adversary. Second, authoritarian regimes typically provide no way for domestic audience to alter state policy or strategy (p. 28).

Third, Arreguin-Toft’s strategic interaction thesis explains why some asymmetric conflicts last for extensive periods of time while some are quick in duration (p. 25). He contests that conventional wisdom encourages a strong expectation that any asymmetric conflict will be over quickly despite some of these conflicts lasting long beyond the initial expectations of each side initially. He proposes the question, “if power implies victory, and a lot of power implies quick and decisive victory, what then explains why power causes quick and decisive victory sometimes and not others” (p. 27)? His answer is the interaction of strategies that can either make power determine the outcome quickly (direct-direct or indirect-indirect) or through the
interaction of different strategies that can prolong wars and diminish the effects of traditional power.

Arreguin-Toft differentiates between strategy, grand strategy and tactics in his interaction thesis. Strategy as defined in his work is defined as an actor’s plan for using armed forces to achieve military or political goals; whereas grand strategy refers to the totality of an actor’s resources directed toward military, political, economic, or other objectives. (p. 29) Tactics in the interaction thesis refer to what one would assume regarding the art of fighting within military engagements. All three are employed by a state actor in strategic interaction to attain the end of compelling their asymmetric foe to do its will. (p. 30) He highlights several types of strategies that are both direct and indirect in his work, and as mentioned above it is the counterstrategies of the weaker state that will allow them a chance to succeed, typically taking place over a long period of time.

B. What’s a Crisis to a Conflict?

Traditional asymmetric conflict theory has for the most part has always looked at the conflict being examined from a perspective of actual ‘war’. However, using armed conflict as the sole unit of analysis may not always be reasonable when looking at the totality of the situation being labeled a conflict. Glenn Snyder and Paul Diesing (1977) first explored this in their highly renowned book titled, Conflict Among Nations: Bargaining, Decision Making, and System Structure in International Crises. In evaluating the overall process of these ‘conflicts’ falling within international politics, they argue that their formulation of a ‘crisis’ is distinctly different from a conflict and is essentially a pre-text to the conflict or all-out war.
They argue:

Lying as they do at the nexus between peace and war, crises reveal most clearly and intensely the distinguishing characteristic of international politics and the logical starting point for theorizing about it: the pervasive expectation of potential war, which follows from the “anarchic” structure of the system. Since war is always possible, the implicit or explicit threat of war is the ultimate form of political pressure and the ultimate means to security and other values. What most urgently needs theoretical description and explanation is how the perpetual shadow of war affects the behavior of states, and how they manipulate that shadow to advance and protect their interests. (p. 4)

This game of leverage can be considered a bargaining process, and it is similar to the strategic interaction set forth by Arrequin-Toft, with specific ‘instances’ rather than the strategies of armed interaction being the sequences that lead the crisis in one direction or the other.

The trajectory of the ‘crisis’ is driven by each instance being affected by the previous instances and by the contemplation of possible following instances (p. 6). What makes this approach different than traditional asymmetric conflict theory, is that war in and of itself is outside the scope of what they refer to as crises. However, the probability of war is within the sequencing of interactions which effect bargaining positions between opposing nations. It is that unpredictability, or the essence of the crisis rather, that can then potentially lead these crises into becoming a total ‘war’ (p. 7). This unpredictability creates the tension that arises in these crises and it is subjectively felt within states, resulting from the objective anxiety between the interests of the opposing states. This tension can be described as a choice between mutually incompatible but highly valued objectives (Tanter, 1973, p. 127).
What drives this tension is the behavior during the interaction sequencing and it is the behavior that fits into the strategic interaction paradigm set forth by Arrequin-Toft. The differing modes of behavior tend to converge by merging in a combination of coercion and accommodation which then drives diplomacy into becoming more actively coercive, and the emotional climate shifts toward greater hostility and fear (Snyder, 1977, p. 10). According to Snyder and Dieser (1977) the central problem of diplomacy in these crises is “[h]ow to achieve an optimum blend of coercion and accommodation in one's strategy, a blend that will both avoid war and maximize one's gains or minimize one’s losses” (p. 10).

In describing why these crises occur, Snyder and Dieser illustrate a framework that has several distinct phases. The first phase is called the challenge, and it is a severe act of coercion that technically starts the crisis and is motivated by a precipitant which can be either external, internal or in some situations both (p. 11). An external precipitant can be described as when a state perceives an intolerable situation developing in its environment as a result of actions from the state(s) involved in the oncoming crisis. It may be intolerable for many reasons which are referred to as general precipitants. There are also specific precipitants, which is a particularly provocative act seen as overtly dangerous (p. 11). An internal precipitant, which I argue is the root of the crisis between North Korea and the United States, is derivative of changes internal to the challenger. In internal situations, the state's leaders come to perceive opportunities for change by coercion and regard such a change in high value (p. 12).

The second phase involves the resistance to the onset of the challenge. This ‘resistance’ can be either immediate and overt or hidden and ambiguous. With this resistance additionally comes deterrence because “[b]esides saying no to the challenger's demands, he is also explicitly
or implicitly threatening to fight if the challenger carries out his threat” (p. 13) From this phase comes the confrontation, which is the predominant phase of the crisis.

Snyder and Dieser (1977) explain:

There may be several peaks of tension of varying intensity during the confrontation phase, each centering perhaps on a particular issue, or perhaps following an especially severe and provocative coercive act. At these peaks, the likelihood of war appears to rise, and the feelings of anxiety associated with tension become more intense. (p. 14)

Within this confrontation phase there are usually three outcomes including escalation into war which ends the crisis and creates a different paradigm, capitulation by one side or compromise that is either negotiated or tacit. (p. 14). If war does not occur then the final resolution phase begins. Within this period “[d]etails of settlement are arranged, and accommodative tactics, bids, concessions, and settlement proposals become preponderant over coercive behavior, although the latter may not entirely disappear” (p. 14). This accommodation may settle the crisis and the challenge which embodied the underlying conflict which was the catalyst for the crisis, or it may only settle the crisis, leaving the conflict embodied in the challenge unresolved which conceptually can lead to the onset of this entire process repeating..

C. Soft Power and Private Information as Bargaining Power

Both Dan Reiter and David Lindsey have written extensively on this new adaption of ‘conflict’, that I argue can be interpreted as asymmetrical crisis. In line with Snyder and Dieser’s concept of the sequencing of interactions effecting behavior, Lindsey formulates a quantitative analysis through game theory of the role private information within asymmetric predicaments in
his essay, *Military Strategy, Private Information, and War*. Along the line of Arreguin-Toft’s theory of strategic interaction and how certain strategy pairings correlate more to victories for either weak or strong states as well as the role coercion under the tenants of Snyder and Dieser’s formulation; Lindsey updates the model with how information is gathered and revealed for opposing sides.

Lindsey (2015) claims:

In general, when a state reveals information about its capabilities, this information will change an opponent’s willingness to grant concessions. If revealing this information does not affect the probability of victory, then strong players will always be willing to demonstrate their strength, after which they will receive a favorable bargain. When military strategy matters, however, the probability of victory will depend on the strategies chosen by each side. Thus, revealing information may change the probability of victory. (p. 630)

Rieter’s, *Exploring the Bargaining Model of War*, adapts a modern approach to the bargaining model of war by providing new ways of thinking about war in its entirety as a bargaining process. He highlights the main hypotheses of the bargaining model then compares it to other theories concluding by describing how the model can be used to cross the divides of political science rifts between academic research and policy practice, between formal and non-formal theoretical approaches, and between quantitative and qualitative empirical methods (Reiter, 2003, p. 28). What both Reiter’s and Lindsey’s essays agree upon is that bargaining covers all phases of war. They do not see war as the breakdown of diplomacy but rather as a continuation in the spectrum of the bargaining process.
The essay illustrates the latest wave bargaining model research and its application to war. Reiter simplifies this by breaking down the phases of the bargaining process.

Reiter (2015) explains:

Each phase is part of the bargaining process. Fighting breaks out when two sides cannot reach a bargain that both prefer to war. Each side fights to improve its chances of getting a desirable settlement of the disputed issue. The war ends when the two sides strike a bargain that both prefer to continuing the war, and the outcome is literally the bargain struck. Finally, the duration of peace following the war reflects the willingness of both sides not to break the war-ending bargain. (p. 29).

He alludes to the perspective of Carl von Clausewitz, a late eighteenth century Prussian general and military theorist, who stressed that war is a means of accomplishing political goals and not an end in itself. Clausewitz (1976) stated over two centuries ago, “‘[t]he political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose” (p. 87). With this in mind, Reiter extracts useful connections from other theoretical approaches such as: deterrence; the spiral model; cognitive psychological biases; domestic politics and the formation of preferences; organization theory; and constructivism.

However, much of the current relevance of private information and bargaining stem from a conceptual shift of how power had always been assessed and asserted prior to the end of the Cold War. Joseph Nye predicted this shifting of power, referring to it as ‘soft power’. He argued in his 1990 essay that the world was beginning to shift where the definition of power as most politicians and diplomats defined it, the possession of population, territory, natural resources, economic size, military forces and political stability, was going to lose its meaning. Nye asserts,
“The factors of technology, education, and economic growth are becoming more significant in international power, while geography, population, and raw materials are becoming somewhat less important” (Nye, 1990, p. 154).

Due to this shift, Nye argues that in the twenty-first century international powers like the U.S. should shift their focus away from curtailing the rise of the next global superpower and instead concern themselves with being able to shape the political environment. In other words, the problem facing the United States is not the rising challenge of another major power but instead a “general diffusion” of power (p.155). Nye identifies five trends that explains this diffusion of power and how traditional powers are less able to use their traditional power resources to achieve their foreign policy goals than in the past while simultaneously strengthening smaller state actors and private actors.

First, the revolution of economic interdependence through modern technology including telecommunications, fiber optic cables, satellites as well as the declining costs of communication and transportation have transformed global markets (p.160). According to Nye, the growth in foreign exchange markets has made it more consequential for governments to try to intervene as they will incur great costs in their own economic growth and risk unintended effects (p. 160). Nye’s second trend argues that there will be a diffusion of power for traditional power states that will force them to deal with the transnational actors who will play a much bigger role than in the previous century. International organizations that operate across state borders have changed the way states have both defined and pursued their interests. Nye asserts, “transnational investment creates new interests and complicates coalitions in world politics” (p. 161). Nye’s third trend addresses the growth of nationalism worldwide. Nationalism in poor and weak states due to
increased social mobilization has made it more difficult for stronger states to apply military intervention and external rule costlier both literally and figuratively (p.162).

Nye’s fourth trend addresses the spread of modern technology, which has enhanced the capabilities of backward states while diffused traditional power resources. He highlights how this has been especially important in countries weapons capabilities.

He claims:

In addition, at least a dozen Third World states have developed significant arms export industries. Meanwhile, many arms recipients have sought to diversify their purchases in order to gain leverage over the major or sole supplier. When arms are supplied from outside, the supplier often has leverage through technical assistance, spare parts, and replacements. The growth of indigenous arms industries removes that leverage. (p. 163)

This rapid growth in technology also addresses Nye’s fifth trend and that is the changing of political issues in the twenty-first century. Traditional instruments, “of power are rarely sufficient to deal with the new dilemmas of world politics” (p. 164). All of these trends provide reason that states that want to remain powerful in the twenty-first century need to exercise their power in more subversive and creative ways. Along that same vein, weaker countries are utilizing technology, specifically cyber capabilities and information communications technology (ICT), to serve as the medium in which bargaining power and private information are utilized to effectively close the cap on traditional powers such as the United States.
D. The Cyber Equalizer

It would be useful for me to define some common terms used in the cyber domain before proceeding to the theoretical portion of this section. Cyber is a prefix standing for the computer and electromagnetic realm and the related activities within it. (Nye, 2011, p. 18) The cyber domain includes the Internet of networked computers but also intranets, mobile technologies, fiber-optic cables, and satellite telecommunications. (p. 18). Cyberspace has a physical infrastructure layer that follows the economic norms of rival resources and the political norms of jurisdictions and control policies. (p. 18). This is particularly important as there is an inherent risk to a nation’s infrastructure given due to these systems relying on internet networks. (Craig & Valeriano, 2016, p. 144). Cyber conflict can be defined as the use of computational technologies in cyberspace for malicious and harmful purposes in order to effect political and military interactions between the opposing units. (p. 141). Lastly, cyber capabilities include the malicious code used and created as well as the components mobilized, and the hardware and software developed, to defend against the code created. (p. 144).

The build-up of cyber capabilities has become a critical component to state military strategy in the twenty-first century. However, the daily changing dynamics of cyber capabilities and technological interconnectivity with the civilian sectors of countries has made it exceedingly difficult to develop any sort of enforceable rules of conduct pertaining to state actors. Many academics (Craig & Valeriano 2016, Valeriano & Masess 2015, Nye 2011, Liff 2012, O’Connell 2012) analogize the current situation to the nuclear proliferation era in the twentieth century. Both Adam Liff and Joseph Nye draw upon the 1946 highly visionary book, The Absolute Weapon, written by Bernard Brodie, regarding the significance of the development of the atomic bomb and the future effects in international relations. Bernard asserted, “[w]e know that it is not
the mere existence of the weapon but rather its effects on the traditional pattern of war which will govern the adjustments which states will make in their relations with each other.”¹ Whether or not this idea of deterrence will be applied in cyberspace is a contentious topic in current cybersecurity debate. Liff (2012) argues that, “[n]o comparable comprehensive assessment of the impact of cyberwarfare capabilities exists” (p. 402).

Part of the reason for the lack of a comprehensive assessment of cyberwarfare is because the constantly changing technology. As a result, the rules of engagement and international conduct in the cyber domain are vague at best. Nye differs from Liff in that he contends that there are important lessons to be learned from the Cold War era. Technological changes in the current beginning stage of cyber proliferation he argues, are analogous the development of the hydrogen bomb challenging the strategy of deterrence prior to. Nye claims, “[i]n comparison to the nuclear revolution in military affairs, strategic studies of the cyber domain are chronologically equivalent to 1960 but conceptually more equivalent to 1950” (Nye, 2011, p. 19). The daily evolution of technology in the cyber domain is creating new vulnerabilities such as the development of the hydrogen bomb did in the early 1950’s, which Nye argues, is going to complicate efforts of developing codes of conduct for a significant period of time.

Mary O’Connell (2012), argues that this constant technological development that Nye addresses is reflective of the current dilemma on how cyberspace is even perceived by policy makers. O’Connell believes, similarly as Valeriano & Maness (2015), that the reality of cyberwarfare presently is not on par with the rapid-militarization of cyber capabilities we see currently on the international stage. This cyber-industrial paradigm has created a situation where

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the technology is developing much faster than policies for controlling the effects that I argue seem clear are not fully understood by those whose duties it is to develop said policies.

O’Connell (2012) claims:

The concern with this development is that the Pentagon will conceive of cyber space as it does conventional space, with war fighting in mind. Yet, the international legal rules on the use of force, especially the rules on self-defense, raise important barriers to military solutions to cyber space problems. (p. 190)

This dilemma correlates with how countries and private companies perceive cyberspace. While academics disagree as to the extent of the threat cyber capabilities will pose in the future, it is generally agreed upon that the cyber domain is an inherently insecure environment. (Craig & Valeriano, 2016, p. 144).

This insecure cyber domain is unique in the sense that it favors offensive over defensive strategy, which is different from the era of nuclear proliferation. There are several reasons for this as Craig & Valeriano (2016) point out. These reasons can be boiled down to cost-efficiency and lack of attribution creating uncertainty for retaliation. (p. 144). Liff (2012) goes as far as saying that for those same reasons, asymmetric conflicts will become more frequent because cyber-attacks are a cheap and effective tool that enable the weak to attack the strong when they would not do so with conventional force (p. 408). Scholars (Heejlin Lee & Seungkwon Jang 2009, Sheena Greitens 2013, Seva Gunitsky 2015) have also noted that this cyber-aggression is been growing particularly in authoritarian regimes as well.

I believe it is important to note, that while most of cyber-theory addresses state-to-state interaction, how cyber capabilities are being implemented within oppressive domestic contexts is
of equal concern. Before I proceed, some terms that are used within the context of domestic cyber realm should be defined. Information and communications technology (ICT) refers to the flow of online information within a country. States controlled by authoritarian regimes vary across the three areas of surveillance, activism and control. (Greitans, 2013, p. 263). Control refers to the degree to which a government seeks to inhibit citizen access to ICT, through censorship and filtering. (p. 263). Surveillance refers to the regime’s use of ICT and data in its effort to keep tabs on the population through the ICT medium. (p. 263). Activism refers to the degree which a regime seeks to structure and create online and, more recently, social media content in a favorable light towards the regime. (p. 263). Social media for this paper refers to networking domains, bulletin systems, chat rooms, blogging and IM services, as well as video and photo sharing sites. (Gunitsky, 2015, p. 44).

While there is often a fear for regimes, like the Kim’s in North Korea, of opening up an autocratic society to free use of the internet, recent strategies of non-democracies provide evidence that ICT policy is becoming more of a tool rather than an obstacle. Seva Gunitsky (2015) highlights the persistence of the ‘dictators dilemma’ in the give and take dynamic when dealing with social media and online communication. (p. 43). While this has been traditionally the case involving oppressive regimes, there have been plenty of recent examples of these regimes using ICT policy for economic gains while maintaining social control. Many regimes have been following the lead of China’s ICT strategy, most commonly referred to as ‘The Great Firewall’. This refers to China’s blocking of objectionable websites and search results; as the metaphor suggests a blocking information from the highest levels of authority (Greitans, 2013, p. 265).
Gunisky (2015) and Greitans (2013) have both highlighted how China has evolved in their ICT strategy to promote economic development while heavily censoring content and controlling information flow. Similar tactics have been deployed in Russia and other non-democratic regimes in the middle east. Academics, such as Gunisky and Greitans are what are referred to as technological instrumentalists. From this perspective, “[i]nstrumentalism maintains that the Internet can be employed as a tool for centralized control over economic planning and politics of the regimes” (Lee & Jang, 2009, p. 281). Contrarily, and more optimistically may I add, technological determinism holds a view that the Internet will bring about the democratization of an authoritarian regime when it becomes widely used. (p. 281).

Technological-determinists, such as Larry Diamond (2010) often take a ‘glass half full’ position when it comes to the democratizing effects of internet freedom. What he refers to as ‘liberation technology’ is any form of ICT that can expand political, social, and economic freedom. He provides examples of liberation technology promoting flows of information and widening the scope of dialogue dissent in areas of the world such as Southeast Asia, the Middle East and North Africa. I disagree strongly with the technological-determinist take on the application of liberation technology. For example, Diamond (2010) does not mention one of any of the thirteen countries in the world who ban internet use all together. This includes North Korea, which reportedly has the world’s most restrictive policy on internet access. (Lee & Jang, 2009, p. 284).
Part III: Methodology

A. Asymmetric Crisis Theory

For this paper, I implement the concept of asymmetry and how it pertains to the strategic interaction of weaker and strong states established under Mack and Arrequin-Toft. However, I substitute armed conflict with the interaction and behavior sequencing of Snyder and Diesing as my units of analysis. Under this model which I dub ‘asymmetric crisis theory’, I build upon the framework of Synder’s and Diesing’s crisis formulation. Their formulation process of a precipitant leading to a conflict of interest then progressing into a challenge and ultimately a confrontation that ends in war or resolution is how I interpret the DPRK-US asymmetric crisis. Within each interaction during this process the bargaining potential shifts as the behavior of one another effects the perceived unpredictability that leads to no longer firmly believing the other intends to maintain peace or the possibility of the other pursuing war. However, along Mack’s and Arrequin-Toft’s foundational theory, I concur in their assessment that these ‘conflicts’ can occur over many years and not mere months. This is where the idea of asymmetry comes into effect that is not present within Snyder and Diesing’s formulation.

Asymmetry, by definition, addresses an imbalance. Therefore, the process to where this balance can begin to shift towards favoring the odds of the weaker of the two states would presumably take time. Accordingly, this is where private information, technology, and bargaining come into play serving as strategic tools used to curtail the asymmetry with their stronger foe in the interaction process. As Nye describes, the ability to adapt to softer power strategies in the twenty-first century is critical in countries like North Korea shrinking the gaps with traditional powers such as the U.S. As this asymmetry shifts you begin to see the tension
alluded to by both traditional asymmetric conflict theory and the crisis process formulation, as the concern that was once limited for the stronger of the two states, for obvious reasons, is suddenly an imminent concern.

**B. Research Design**

For my research design, I will first establish why the DPRK-U.S. crisis is in fact asymmetrical. I will evaluate this conflict from when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1992, and the disparity between North Korea and the United States was at its peak, until present day. To assess strategies, I will process-trace the foreign policies of the United States (external precipitant) and the domestic policies of North Korea (internal precipitant) from 1992 until present day. For the U.S., my units of analysis will be key foreign policy interactions with the Kim regime during each of the past three administrations of Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama. My dependent variables are the North Korean domestic strategies used in reaction to these policies under the regimes of Kim Jong Il and Kim Jong Un. Another dependent variable is the development of ICT and cyber capabilities which I analyze in a separate section.

Within my content analysis of all three administrations and analysis of North Korean technology development, I highlight pivotal interactions utilizing the methodology above. What I will be assessing is the relative position of bargaining strength between the two countries for every action-reaction and the sequencing of interactions set forth in my methodology. The role of behavior effecting accommodation or coercion within these sequences I argue will be derivative of the application of soft power tactics as well as withholding private information for bargaining leverage, particularly ICT and cyber development. Lastly, I conclude with theoretical implications for the future of the crisis.
C. Limitations

This paper in no way can conclude definitively on the reasoning for any of the strategies discussed. I can only propose a rationale based upon the theoretical perspective used in examining these strategies. In this sense, I cannot predict any future outcomes or situations that can arise because there are too many unknowns. I will attempt to provide insight into recommendations for useful strategies in the context of my theoretical approach but as I mentioned, they are in no way predictive of the future.

This research however, can be useful in advancing how asymmetrical conflict theory is no longer applicable in the twenty-first century, for reasons explained in the literature review, and how utilizing the concept of ‘asymmetric crises’ more accurately describes situations like the situation with North Korea and the U.S.. There is significance in understanding how a country like North Korea can even pose a threat to the United States. The value is in understanding and dissecting how North Korea has gotten to this point and how the U.S. hasn’t been able to stifle their progress along the way. The DPRK-U.S crisis will be a prototype of how strengths and strategies intertwine with one another in the twenty-first century and as you will see in my argument, the advantages the U.S. has historically had over weaker foes such as North Korea, are rapidly diminishing.

Part IV: Argument

A. Establishing an Asymmetric Crisis

While North Korea and the United States are not officially in a state of war, the tension between the two countries is derivative of North Korea’s perception of being in a war with the U.S. dating back to June 25, 1950, when North Korea invaded South Korea. The Korean War lasted three years and on July 27, 1953, after approximately 2.5 million lives were lost, an
armistice agreement was signed between the North Korean military, Chinese Command and the U.N. Command. This armistice agreement called for a complete ceasefire “until a peaceful settlement [is] achieved.” This agreement was not a political agreement between the two Koreas, and since a peaceful agreement has not been achieved, the Republic of Korea and Democratic People’s Republic of Korea are still technically at war today.

The people of North Korea live in a society where the narrative of war is reiterated daily through political imagery, lectures and news as if the war ended yesterday. While the rest of the world knows that the Korean War began when North Korea invaded the South, North Koreans are taught from their first days in school that “[t]he United States attacked the North and raped and pillaged North Koreans, and that it is because of hostile U.S. policies that the Korean Peninsula remains divided” (Baek, 2017, p. 3). The United States has been the Kim regime’s scapegoat for the oppression placed on the North Korean people dating back to the regime of Kim Il Sung.

This anti-Americanism, I argue, stems from tensions dating back to a deeply rooted defensiveness on the Korean Peninsula. Dating back to the Paleolithic era, the Korean people have been consistently invaded and divided by foreigners. The Han dynasty of China divided the Gojoseon dynasty of Korea into several smaller and separate dynasties after the Gojoseon-Han War of 108 BCE, leading to several wars until the last Korean dynasty, the Joseon dynasty, emerged victorious. In the nineteenth century, Japan positioned themselves to occupy the Korean empire, which ultimately led to the annexation of Korea by Japan in 1910. After thirty-five years of brutal colonization by the Japanese, Korea gained its independence once again, after the allied forces defeated the Japanese in World War II, only to be divided once again shortly thereafter.
This time, divided at the 38th parallel, the United States took charge of the southern half, while the Soviet Union controlled the northern half.

Kim Il Sung, who was born under Imperial Japanese rule, established the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea in 1948, and both literally and figuratively, built a country in his likeness. North Korea was in shambles after the Korean War and focusing on reconstruction and development of major industries, the North Korean economy growth rates were some of the world’s largest in the 1950’s and 60’s (Worden, 2008, p. 45). During this time, Kim Il Sung’s rhetoric emphasized self-reliance for the North Korean people and it was his charisma that became associated with the economic growth of 50’s and 60’s. This perpetuated the cult-like mentality of his infallibility and it is what allowed the regime to stay in power when the country’s internal situation began to plummet in the 70’s and 80’s.

With the backing of the Soviet Union, Kim Il Sung did not engage in the provocation of the United States in the ways his successors have, but anti-Americanism has been a narrative instilled in every aspect of society. Throughout the 50’s and 60’s Kim Il Sung began conditioning the minds of the North Korean people in his vision of ‘Juche’. Translated as ‘self-reliance’, Juche has been the official ideology of North Korea since 1972.

According to Yuk-Sa li (1972) Kim Il-Sung explained Juche as:

[b]eing the master of revolution and reconstruction of ones own country. This means holding fast to an independent position, rejecting dependence on others, using one’s own brains, believing in one’s own strength, displaying the revolutionary spirit of self-reliance, and thus solving one’s own problems for oneself on one’s own responsibility under all circumstances (p. 157).
This vision of a ‘true Korea’ is systemically reinforced through ‘songbun’. Songbun is generally a ranking system of your loyalty to the North Korean leadership. Songbun can either be a positive or negative ranking and it can be downgraded for lack of ideological fervor, laziness, incompetence, or for more serious reasons, such as marrying someone with bad songbun, committing a crime, or simply being related to someone who commits an offense (Worden, 2008, p. 78).

Songbun is a core tenant of Juche and it provided a way for Kim Il Sung to separate the loyalists from opposition by completely reorganizing society as it was known before he came to power. Most importantly however, is the system’s ties to anti-Americanism. Three broad classes were created with fifty-one subgroups with the most loyal and trusted being allowed to work in the government and in the military as officials. The core of the core live in Pyongyang and while the exact number is uncertain, South Korean and American scholars believe that they are a tiny fraction of the country’s population, numbering between 100,000 and 200,000 out of 23 million. (Harden, 2012, p. 37).

The top class also consists of those who suffered direct or indirect trauma from the Korean War. These people subsequently hold the top tier political positions inside the government. The status of their descendants, who grow up hearing of the atrocities committed by the Americans, allows them to attend the most prestigious schools in Pyongyang and achieve higher ranks in the Korean Workers Party (KWP). Intense anti-Americanism is kept alive in today’s songbun system and is meant to continue with each new generation (Baek, 2017, p. 8).

The bottom class consists of people who were suspected of opposing the government who originally included relatives of Koreans who have fled to South Korea, Christians, and those who worked for the Japanese colonial government that controlled the Korean Peninsula before
World War II. (p 35). This class is referred to as the ‘irredeemables’ and consists of the population inside North Korean labor camps. (Chol-hwan, 2001, p. 79). In 1972, Kim Il Sung established the ‘three generation rule’ which states, “[E]nemies of class, whoever they are, their see must be eliminated through three generations” (Harden, 2012, p. 6).

The Ideology of Juche is essentially a cult-like society extolling the Kims as demigods, and particularly under Kim Il Sung, was meant to encapsulate his vision of a ‘true Korea’. With the backing of the USSR, Kim Il Sung did not need resort to the strategies of his successors because it was conceivable that the political objective of a unified Korea under North Korean control remained possible until the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Under the pre-theory set forth by Mack in the literature review portion of this paper, the end of the Cold War truly marked the beginning of DPRK-U.S. asymmetrical conflict. North Korean leadership was now positioned to fend for themselves in the multipolar international context without the backing of a global hegemon. However, it is important to note that it was before the end of the Cold War, under Kim Il Sung, that the United States was being primed to take this insignificant nation more seriously.

The nuclear program of North Korea began after leaning heavily on China for a joint effort after the division of North and South Korea in the aftermath of the Korean War. China having dealt with Japan previously in nuclear assistance denied Kim Il Sung’s request which directly resulted in the solo effort of developing North Korea’s nuclear program in 1976. It was not until 1984, when Moscow and Pyongyang reached an agreement for the Soviets to supply North Korea with light-water nuclear power reactors that the United States really begin to take the Kim regime seriously. This marked the time when North Korean leadership began to see the bargaining potential of their nuclear program.
Satellite images showed that the reactor in Yongbun was at a level that far exceeded U.S. estimates. The United States for the first time was faced with a decision regarding North Korea. The United States quickly realized that in order to form an international coalition to help dissuade Kim Il Sung from advancing their nuclear program, they would most likely have to remove their nuclear weapons within the region as well. Even though the stockpile in the Korean Peninsula had been drastically reduced throughout the 70’s, American leadership felt that North Korea would not be open to negotiations until they were gone.

Based upon the state of the North Korean nuclear program at the time it was decided that the nukes that were still in the peninsula did not serve enough of a purpose to be a deal breaker for the U.S. Ultimately it was decided that slowing the progress of a nuclear North Korea outweighed leaving the nukes in place.

This was the precursor to the nuclear crisis of 1992, and made North Korea a legitimate concern to the United States. This tug-of-war over the nuclear capabilities within North Korea is the end game for both countries in this asymmetrical crisis. I argue, this is the conflict of interest that Snyder and Deising (1973) describe as the catalyst for the challenge that ignites the crisis. Achieving a nuclear weapon capable of reaching the continental United States is the goal for North Korea because it provides the bargaining chip necessary to place the U.S. in a position where they have to, at the very least, consider removing their military presence on the peninsula.

Why North Korea is challenging the U.S. in this situation is derivative of the North Korea’s motives. This can be described as the Kim regime’s precipitant. This precipitant is both general and internal to the Kim regime in that, at this moment in time, without the backing of the Soviet Union, the regime is fearful of the rapidly decreasing probability of the regime’s goal of a unified Korea under ‘juche’. Additionally, countries within the region, particularly Japan and
South Korea, are rapidly becoming more westernized and closely aligned with the United States and prospering while the dignity and prestige of the Kim regime is dwindling as the isolationist policies of ‘self-reliance’ are domestically destructive within North Korea. Therefore, the only way to for this trajectory to stop is for the Kim regime to develop a nuclear weapon in an effort to coerce the U.S. from removing their footprint off the Korean Peninsula while simultaneously prioritizing regime survival by any means necessary until that objective is reached.

For the United States, the geopolitical ramifications of that possibility could have significant consequences on the trajectory of the region which in the twenty-first century is primed to be the economic and political equivalent of Europe in the previous century. This can be described as the resistance to the challenge placed by North Korea. This resistance, as I will describe, has grown more vigorous as the asymmetry in the crisis has shifted and the uncertainty of escalation and the intentions of North Korea has increased. However, the United States has almost entirely had the upper hand in negotiations due to having significantly more resources to induce North Korea to abide by their demands. North Korea has fully understood this and also what a direct confrontation with the United States would entail. Therefore, North Korean leadership has consistently manipulated and nullified the effects of U.S. and international policies in ways that have placed them in the current situation we see today; as they are in the last stretch of meeting their objective without ever directly confronting the United States.

B. Strategic interaction between Kim Jong Il and Bill Clinton

In the final years before his passing in 1994, Kim Il Sung consolidated all future executive power to his son Kim Jong Il. In 1993, Kim Il Sung promoted Kim Jong Il to the position of president and chairman of the National Defense Commission, with command and control of the
armed forces which until this point was filled by Kim Il Sung himself. (Worden, 2008, p. 212) This marked the beginning of his succession plan to keep the Kim regime in power. The North Korean constitution never specifically mentioned succession, however Kim Jong Il, now essentially the head of the military, assumed presidential responsibilities but not the title when Kim Il Sung died. Kim Jong Un underwent a similar process in the years before Kim Jong Il’s death. The succession strategies used for both Kim Jong Il and Kim Jong Un I argue provide evidence of the streamlining of a shared objective as there are numerous examples of Kim Jong Il and Kim Jong Un crediting their predecessors many times during their tenures as leaders.

One month after Bill Clinton’s inauguration, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) had reason to suspect that North Korea’s largest nuclear facility in Yongbun was far more advanced and sophisticated than any intelligence gathered on it previously. Through further investigation in the months to come it was discovered that North Korea was clearly camouflaging facilities that were being used to test their experiments. Satellite images showed that there were two nuclear waste disposal sites that were never informed to the inspectors visiting. This set the stage for the June crisis of 1994, when North Korea threatened to pull out of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and the first strategic interaction between Kim Jong Il and Bill Clinton. This initial inconsistency of the U.S.’s conception of North Korean intentions versus the reality inside North Korea fits into the role of withholding private information and started the DPRK-U.S. asymmetric crisis as the U.S. was now forced to resist these new developments through efforts of diffusion.

North Korea under the helm of Kim Jong Il at this moment in time was at the lowest bargaining position since the end of the Cold War. Kim Jong Il became leader during the time North Koreans refer to as the ‘Arduous March’. After the Soviet Union collapsed and North
Korea’s foreign aid was almost completely cut off; the economy inside North Korea went into chaos and decimated North Korea’s agriculture industry. Without imports of cheap fuel, the country’s industrial base fractured, and production of fertilizer dwindled resulting in food shortages that quickly transformed into nationwide famine.

Kim Jong Il clung to power by doubling down on his father’s ‘songun’, military-first, approach. Kim Jong-II ensured that the military and government elites were the least affected while a still unknown number of North Koreans, estimated from several hundred thousand to 3.5 million, died of starvation between 1994 and 1998, the most acute phase of the crisis. (Human Rights Watch, 2015). However, the grim material and economic realities provided reason enough for Kim Jong Il to at least superficially agree to the Agreed Framework in 1994. Kim Jong Il could not afford the political transition period to decay even further after the death of his father, as the effects the famine were having profound effects domestically. Essentially, Kim Jong Il knew he could not add to the current tension as he was stretched too thin to make any sort of demands. Therefore, as he did numerous times after, by hiding his intentions he then coerced the United States into believing falsely, that curing grim realities inside North Korea would outweigh his nuclear ambitions.

By falsely taking Kim Jong II at his word, the U.S. believed the agreement played into the bargaining advantage and long-term goals from the U.S. perspective for two reasons. First, the Agreed Framework, conceptually, was a way to induce Kim Jong Il to scale back nuclear reduction by offering them incentives to open up relations with the U.S. and countries in the region. North Korea “[a]greed to freeze and eventually dismantle its nuclear program in return for inducements that included two light-water reactors (LWRs), the interim supply of heavy fuel oil, some relaxation of sanctions, and, above all, progress normalizing political relations with the
United States” (Cho, 2016, p.17). Second, the Agreed Framework promoted regionalism in Northeast Asia. Multilateral venues were created to address the growing threat in North Korea, including “[K]EDO, a multilateral mechanism for the implementation for the Agreed Framework, and the Four Party Talks to establish a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula” (p. 79). However, President Clinton soon fell victim to the key strategy used by Kim Jong Il for years to come again shifting the unpredictability and tension in the crisis.

A recurring theme in Kim Jong Il’s negotiation tactics was finding ways in negotiations to overload inducements of aid deals on the front end of long term agreements, while strategically bargaining the permanent aspects, such as dismantlement of nuclear capacities on the backend. Much of this plays to the role of withholding private information. Kim Jong Il never had any intentions of dismantling nuclear facilities during these years, despite starvation leading to crude death rates in North Korea increasing from 28.9 per 1,000 persons in 1995 to 45.6 per 1000 in 1996, and 56.0 per 1,000 in 1997 (Kim, 2017, p. 47). The United States made good on their end of the bargain while North Korea delayed and stalled.

From February 1996, through September 1998, U.S aid initiatives supplied North Korea with approximately $65 million U.S. dollars of food as both encouragement and quid pro quos for North Korea to abide by the Agreed Framework negotiations (Haggard, 2017, p. 125). On the other end of the bargain, North Korea stalled on negotiations. Additionally, leading up the 1998 nuclear crisis, North Korea engaged in a number of military actions that were provocative despite simultaneously engaging in talks with the United States. In evaluating why this was occurring during negotiations, it is important to look at the domestic situations in both North Korea and the United States.
As the famine years of the Arduous March were coming to an end, Kim Jong Il was forced to implement dramatic economic measures, by North Korean standards, as anger against the regime intensified resulting from the failure of the North Korean Public Distribution System (PDS). During the famine years illicit black markets developed as “[t]he famine forced people to trade food, consumer goods, and other essential materials for simple survival” (Kim, 2017, p. 49). As a result, North Korean authorities had to roll out several important economic policy changes.

These economic changes focused on two main areas. First, North Korean authorities drastically reduced their restrictions on market activities inside North Korea. Prior to the loosening of restrictions, this sort of activity was strictly forbidden. This decentralization and bottom up marketization allowed for individual firms to find inputs for themselves whereas prior to this change the government would supply inputs through a top down format. For a socialist nation, this was potentially a major breakthrough as the government took the step of recognizing income through legal economic activities as private property (Haggard, 2017, p. 43).

Second, North Korea partially opened up their economy to the outside world by appealing for aid during the famine years and also established Special Economic Zones (SEZs) with neighboring countries. One of these SEZ’s was established in 1998, in the Rajin-Seobong region along the Northeast border of China and North Korea, was between the South Korean company Hyundai Asan and the North Korean government (Cho, 2016, p. 50). Since decentralization and foreign trade could have weakened Kim Jong Il’s control of the economy he utilized two mechanisms for control and power. One mechanism, a waku, is a license a North Korean company must have to conduct foreign trade which limits the amount of business companies can engage in with foreign companies. The entities that are given waku “[a]re
ultimately selected by the leader of the state, who can decide which state institution will be
strengthened or empowered, and how the powers of these state institutions will be balanced” (p.
130). Waku provided control for Kim Jong Il, but not financial resources such as foreign
currency. For this he utilized the ‘Revolutionary Fund’.

The Revolutionary Fund was introduced in the 1970’s under Kim Il Sung when North
Korea faced a foreign currency crisis, but utilized much more in the 90’s under Kim Jong Il. Kim
Jong Il utilized this fund through collecting foreign currency by attaining it from various
institutions and companies. Because waku were given out for specific trades of goods, the
Revolutionary Fund was essential for maintaining the loyalty of Kim Jong Il’s elites through the
importing of luxury goods as offerings (p. 131).

Kim Jong Il and Kim Jong Un have been able to circumvent sanctions and specific
negotiations through specific bureaus of the government and military that manage the family’s
funds and profits in foreign business dealings. Offices 38 and 39 have been implicated in a wide
range of illegal activities and are involved in not only weapons sales but commercial activities
that ensures all foreign exchange earnings be remitted to the direct control of the regime’s
leadership. (Haggard, 2016, p. 46). Weapons technology and arms sales have been a soft power
tactic of Kim Jong Il and Kim Jong Un as it helps them secure some form of income that
directly mitigates the economic burden of the ‘military-first’ policy of North Korea to a limited
degree.

In evaluating the domestic changes implemented by Kim Jong Il at this time, it would
appear that the 1998 crisis stemmed from a lack of coercion from the United States dating back
to the Agreed Framework. This provided Kim Jong Il enough time to secure stability inside
North Korea after the famine years by using foreign aid and gains in economic ventures within
newly established regional frameworks to fund his nuclear program which was precisely what the aid and regional ventures were meant to discourage. He was also able to secure foreign currency through illicit trade transferred into the Revolutionary Fund. This behavior I argue, is indicative of a time in the crisis where it was still unclear to the United States of North Korea’s intentions whereas North Korea has always known what the U.S.’s true intentions have been and have used this knowledge to their advantage in negotiations.

As Kim Jong Il was using bait and switch tactics to provide regime stability during the famine years, Bill Clinton’s foreign policy on North Korea was facing heavy scrutiny in the United States. As a result of the stalling by Kim Jong II, the republican congress was expressing concerns about the motives behind the North Korean regime. This concern of expressing uncertainty of Kim Jong II’s intentions was a crucial moment in the rising of tension on behalf of the United States. As the next section details, it foreshadows a future shift in U.S. resistance tactics. In July 1998, Donald Rumsfeld issued a bipartisan report from the congressionally mandated commission he ran for ballistic missile threats that included the growing threat in North Korea’s program. A month later The New York Times published a front page story by David Sanger (1998) about a potential secret nuclear facility that was underground near the city of Kumchangri, North Korea. Shortly thereafter North Korea launched an intermediate-range ballistic missile over the main island of Japan.

The nuclear crisis marked an adjustment period in the North Korean foreign policy strategy of the United States. As a result Congress mandated a North Korean Policy Coordinator under a new provision in the ‘Omnibus Consolidated Emergency Supplemental Act’. William Perry, former defense secretary, was appointed by Bill Clinton, and soon began negotiations which ultimately led to an agreement to allow on-site inspections conducted by the United States
of the suspected site reported upon by *The New York Times*. Perry’s strategy on policy for North Korea reflected “[r]egional security affairs without undermining hegemonic strategy” (Mastanduno, 2003, p. 151). Perry’s objective was to initiate alliance relations and cooperation among Northeast Asian countries through a variety of regional frameworks such as ASEAN Plus Three (APT), paving the way for trilateral engagement from South Korea, Japan and China. (Cho, 2016, p. 78). This became known as the ‘Perry Process’.

In the ‘Perry Report’, a two-page report issued in September 1999, William Perry offered a two-path strategy that would be structured as a step by step approach to normalize relations with North Korea, under the condition that Kim Jong Il was willing to denuclearize and end their ballistic missile program (p. 84). However, if they did not, the report although not specifically stating how, abstractly indicated the U.S. would have to contain the North Korean threat. The idea of limited coercion would indicate once again that the U.S. was still undecided on Kim Jong Il’s intentions which I argue provided leverage for North Korea to continue to bide their time and manipulate the inducements of the ‘Perry Process’.

The ‘Perry Report’ was a departure from the Agreed Framework strategy of 1994. Perry stressed, in a congressional hearing in October 1999, that the U.S. “[m]ust deal with the DPRK regime as it is, not as [the United States] would wish it to be” (Testimony before Senate Foreign Relations Committee). Countries in the region followed Perry’s lead and began to rebuild relations with North Korea, especially the Kim Dae Jung government of South Korea. As a result, North Korea would walk out of the famine years, marking the apex of asymmetry between the United States, significantly more secure than when Bill Clinton came into office.

The ‘Sunshine Policy’, the North Korean foreign policy of South Korea from 1998 until 2008, that emphasized peaceful cooperation and sought short-term reconciliation as a prelude to
eventual Korean reunification. South Korean president Kim Dae Jung believed he could win North Korea’s trust with patience and generosity while ignoring the fundamental political dynamics on the Korean peninsula. Kim Dae Jung’s ambitions ultimately proved as failures due to Kim Jong Il directing much of the policy to favor his regime’s interests without returning any of the agreed reciprocations of the negotiation. This led to South Korea and Kim Dae Jung providing the Kim regime with a $500 million gift and several other economic concessions to North Korean demands under the allure that it would change the North Korean regime (Lee, 2010, p. 5).

Kim Jong Il was able to fuel propaganda of self-reliance to North Koreans and ensure the loyalty of the elite classes who benefited from the South Korean aid. In addition, he modernized the nuclear threat of North Korea while increasing oppressive domestic social policies. A number of business dealings between the North and South at this time, including, those associated with Hyundai, were channeled through South Korean government entities and desposited directly to accounts under the control of Offices 38 & 39, therefore essentially to Kim Jong Il himself. (Haggard, 2016, p. 183). The encouraging of economic relationships within Northeast Asia ultimately led to Kim Jong Il profiting both politically and economically inside North Korea. This tactic of launching military provocations to lure other leaders to offer aid in the return for Kim Jong Il coming to the negotiation table exemplified Kim Jong Il’s asymmetric strategy at his best.

From the North Korean perspective, there had been no real repercussions for the provocative behavior of North Korea. Kim Jong Il witnessing this cycle of North Korean provocations being rewarded with inducements repeat itself, resulted in this process becoming a strategy of his for years to come as the next section addresses. However, a new administration
was about to enter office in the United States and it marked an intensified period of confrontation within the crisis as the new administration was not as oblivious to the true intentions and behavior of the regime in North Korea. However, this would inadvertently spark the revitalization in DPRK-Sino relations providing Kim Jong II the lifeline needed to match the confrontational tone of the U.S. with a hardened stance of his own.

C. Strategic interaction between Kim Jong II and George W. Bush

Leading up to George W. Bush’s infamous ‘axis of evil’ remark in his 2002 State of the Union Address, much was changing in Northeast Asian relations. Prior to Bush stepping into office in 2000, superficially it seemed that President Clinton’s regional foreign policy strategy, headed by William Perry, was beginning to pay off. Culminating with the highest U.S. official visit to North Korea in October 2000, U.S. Secretary of State Madeline Albright met with Kim Jong II. The discovery of North Korea’s highly enriched uranium (HEU) program two years later however showed that the meeting was in fact nothing more than a self-congratulatory farce.

Despite this, the biggest political achievement of the ‘Perry Process’ was the issuing of the U.S.-DPRK Joint Communique from both the United States and North Korea. This document not only addressed concerns of nuclear weapon production but also focused on inter-Korean and regional diplomacy. This shift in focus, from traditionally dividing lines of U.S. hegemonic interests to focus more on long-term goals of long lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula by empowering countries within the region, marked the high point in diplomacy for the two countries on paper. However, the chaotic election in the United States and the arrival of a new republican administration in 2001, marked the beginning of a new style and feel to U.S.-DPRK negotiations.
As with most new administrations, the incoming Bush administration opposed the majority of his predecessor’s foreign policy choices. This included the policy on North Korea, but it soon became clear that some members of the new administration did not receive this memo. What can be viewed as a stumble out of the gate, Secretary of State Colin Powell had to repudiate a statement made to reporters on the eve of South Korean President Kim Dae Jung’s visit to Washington, when he told them that the new administration would build upon the momentum of the Clinton foreign policy for North Korea. More importantly, he was quoted as supporting the ‘Sunshine Policy’ of South Korea. The administration immediately took issue with Powell’s remarks which led to a statement shortly thereafter from Powell himself (Cho, 2016, p. 101). Powell’s new statement nominally supported Kim Dae Jung’s Sunshine Policy and also offered contrasting remarks to the conditions under the Agreed Framework negotiations. Essentially, the U.S. was poising themselves to no longer offer inducements unconditionally.

There is ample evidence to suggest that the United States was concerned about the moral hazard problems for extending aid and being played for fools, as the tactics of Kim Jong Il had not changed. In the aftermath of the attacks of 9/11, the Bush administration wanted to take a harder stance on proliferators and see aid in narrower terms.

Stephen Haggard (2017) asserts:

When coupled with Bush administrations unwillingness to reiterate the Clinton administration’s statement of peaceful intent, however, along with public speeches members of the administration outlining North Korean derogations on its obligations under the Agreed Framework, it was plausible for Pyongang and the North Korean military, required a strengthened deterrent. (p. 176)
This hardened stance intensified even further in July of 2002, when intelligence discovered North Korea’s highly enriched uranium (HEU) program, which had ties to Pakistan (p. 176). This was a clear violation of the NPT and as a result the U.S., in November of that year, suspended all heavy oil shipments to North Korea which effectively ended the Agreed Framework (Cho, 2016, p. 102). This was a turning point in the asymmetrical crisis. The conflict of interests now became significantly more severe as this was the first material proof of North Korea’s intentions of militarizing nuclear weapons. As a result, the probability of this crisis escalating into something greater was now felt in the tension between the countries in negotiations and strategies of coercion and accommodation.

It is important to detail what was occurring inside North Korea in terms of domestic policy leading up the nuclear crisis of 02-03 and the subsequent ‘Six Party Talks’. While North Korea was still receiving aid under the Agreed Framework and from South Korea under the Sunshine Policy, what could be interpreted as the unintended negative consequence of the Clinton administration was increased DPRK-Chinese diplomacy. The modern era for the renewed economic relationship between China and North Korea began in 2000. This is when Kim Jong Il met with Chinese President Jiang Zemin to discuss the special significance to the consolidation and development of China-DPRK relations oriented to the new century. This relationship, now more thought of in broader political dynamics, was actually more market-driven focusing on trade and investment that both countries benefited from. North Korea came to play an important role in Beijing’s goal of revitalizing China’s north-eastern regional economy, and China had become central to North Korea’s efforts to overcome its international isolation. (Lee, 2016, p. 296).
This renewed relationship coincided with major economic reforms inside North Korea. ‘The July 1st Economic Management Measures’, known as the July 1st Measures was a reform based on the principles of de-centralizing the structure of decision-making which gave North Korean businesses more flexibility in free trade (Kim, 2017, p. 51). During the early 2000’s there was a fundamental shift in the type of investments China became involved in. What were first simple business ventures such as restaurants and fisheries soon turned into large-scale investment in natural resources, distribution and manufacturing.

In the years before Kim Jong Il’s death, investment for infrastructure was significant along the northeast border of the two countries to facilitate cross-border economic exchange (Lee, 2016, p. 295). The soft power trend of economic interdependence helped curtail the intended effects of the forthcoming hardline U.S. approach and allowed North Korea to increase the tension of uncertainty as they could be more provocative with this new financial security. Similarly, it became clear it was China’s intention to diminish U.S. hegemonic interests in the region while benefit financially from the increased U.S.-DPRK tension which consequently emboldened Kim Jong Il.

While the emerging North Korean-Chinese relationship continued to grow, South Korea, under the Sunshine Policy of Kim Dae Jung proved incredibly difficult to sustain. The reciprocity agreed to in return for the ROK government’s investment in joint ventures such as the Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC) continued to be delayed on behalf of North Korea. The ROK government provided an estimated $223 million of the $374 million cost for the first stage alone (Haggard, 2017, p. 186). Once again, the bait and switch tactics of Kim Jong Il were in full effect. Jang Jing Sung (2014), wrote in a memoir detailing his work in the United Front Department under Kim Jong Il, that around the time of the crisis in 2002, Kim Jong Il spoke of a
strategy referred to as the ‘Northern Limit Line’ (NLL), where instead of promising anything tangible, North Korea would launch provocations and then promise to stop them in exchange for talks and aid (p. 256). Just as it worked during the Clinton years, Kim Jong Il was able to place himself in a good bargaining position in 2002, at the outset of the ‘Six Party Talks’. This position stemmed from the U.S. hardline approach being circumvented through North Korea’s business with China and manipulation of South Korea.

The first round of the ‘Six Party Talks’ took place in August 2003, as the tensions on the Korean Peninsula were reaching dangerous levels. In response to the U.S. suspending heavy oil shipments after learning of North Korea’s HEU program, North Korea expelled UN inspectors from their nuclear sites and resumed the processing of spent fuel rods. North Korea escalated the situation even further by becoming the first country ever to withdraw from the NPT, which then led to the Bush administration, right as the Iraq War was beginning, additionally sending military reinforcements to the Korean Peninsula (Cho, 2016, p. 103). What could be seen as an extreme high-stakes game of chicken, the U.S. was trying to overtly coerce North Korea to cave into their demands while Kim Jong Il continued to raise the tension in an effort to have President Bush sacrifice important interests in order to maintain a state of peace that hopefully would result in more front-end inducements for North Korea. Kim Jong Il hoped, following his NLL strategy that merely coming to the negotiation table would result in more aid. Again, this was possible due to the financial security China and South Korea provided Kim Jong Il.

In an effort to diffuse the rising escalation situation on the peninsula, the ‘Six Party Talks’ were designed to serve as a regional call for countries in the region to have more flexibility with determining how to deal with North Korea. The United States ignored this call. Instead, the U.S. had a list of demands under the acronym CVID (a complete verifiable
irreversible dismantlement) for the nuclear facilities at Yongbon (Haggard, 2017, p. 187). What was different about these demands from the negotiations that took place under the previous administration was that the U.S. would not offer any inducements until actions on North Korea’s end had been completed with no exceptions. While North Korea countered with an offer that frontloaded inducements and placed the irreversible aspects of the deal years down the line, the talks stalled in 2004, as it seems Kim Jong Il was biding his time to see the results of the elections in the United States that year. At this point it seemed clear the U.S. was growing wise to Kim Jong Il’s intentions and would no longer be complicit in willfully aiding his nuclear ambitions. However, as previously mentioned this was having a negative effect on alliance politics in the region and would ultimately prove unsuccessful due to the ideological differences with countries on the peninsula in how to engage North Korea.

Condoleezza Rice (2011) detailed in her memoir covering her time serving under the Bush administration how the hardline approach of his first term was having unintended consequences of strengthening North Korea’s relationships with neighboring countries. She explained, “[U].S. policy of complete isolation of North Korea in the service of regime change was not, in the long term, one that others in the region, particularly China and South Korea, would likely abide” (Rice, 2011, p. 159). This was displayed in blossoming trade relationships between North Korea, China and South Korea during the Bush presidency. The amount of North Korean exports to China from 2002 to 2013 increased by ten times, beginning with US$0.27 billion in 2002, growing to US$2.9 billion in 2013 (Kim, 2017, p. 170). Additionally, prior to sanctions imposed by the South Korean government, South Korea and not China, was North Korea’s biggest exporter of North Korean goods from 2006 to 2009 (p. 170).
It seemed that President Bush was more open to offering inducements during his second term which resulted in the signing of the Joint Statement in 2005. It struck a similar vein as the U.S.-DPRK Joint Communique signed in 2000 under the Clinton administration. The shift from ‘ICVD’ to offering some inducements before North Korean actions marked a turning point in policy. However, in what looked like the U.S. softening up was, in reality, purposely illusive as they wanted to hit the Kim regime so it would actually effect Kim Jong Il’s behavior.

This was clear in Kim Jong Il’s reaction to the U.S. Department of Treasury naming Banco Delta Asia as a money laundering operation during the fourth round of Six Party Talks in September 2005. A series of North Korean military provocations occurred shortly thereafter and could be interpreted as acts of frustration for having his conning practices revealed. This ‘bad bank strategy’ of the Bush administration was different than traditional sanctions in that it leveraged the need for banking relations within American financial institutions to assert pressure on Pyongyang, which then created rippling effects on banking DPRK-European and DPRK-Asian banking relationships (Haggard, 2017, p.191). I will address why this is more effective than traditional sanctions in the next section.

In response, Kim Jong Il had to engage in domestic damage control to secure economic and regime stability. This included a reversal of the ‘July 1st Measures’, which loosened restrictions on domestic market activities to new anti-market policies in 2005, intensifying in 2007, and ultimately leading to currency reform in 2009 (Kim, 2017, p. 65). To be blunt, the Bush administration landed a punch on rogue regime. Evaluating the evolution of North Korea’s penal code around this time provides evidence that the Banco Delta Asia (BDA) action was a real concern to Kim Jong Il and was motivation for adopting new strategies to counteract such coercion by the U.S. moving forward.
In 2004, Kim Jong Il revised the penal code explicitly adding labor training sentences as a new form of punishment and institutionalizing *rodong tarnyondae*. Translated as labor training centers, they are a part of North Korea’s prison structure that have been used since the 1990’s in response to illicit economic activity such as border crossing, unauthorized movement and black-market activity (Haggard, 2015, p. 42). These are not to be confused with *Kwan li So*; the five political prison camps inside North Korea, currently holding an estimated 80,000-120,000 North Koreans inside their walls (Baek, 2016, p. 27). It is important and disheartening to note that North Korea’s labor camps have now existed twice as long as the Soviet Gulags and about twelve times longer than the Nazi concentration camps. (Harden, 2012, p. 4). Additionally, in 2007 a series of clauses added to the penal code named a number of economic crimes involving trade and foreign exchange to be punishable by death (Haggard, 2015, p. 43).

The increasing intensification for punishment of economic crimes, I argue can be correlated to U.S. foreign policy becoming more adapt in how to exert pressure on the Kim regime. In response to the North Korean exchange rate plummeting after the BDA action, a North Korean delegate admitted openly during the Six Party Talks that the U.S. “[f]inally found a way to hurt us” (Cha, 2012, p. 268). In what would soon become a pattern in the back and forth of imposing sanctions and military provocations, North Korea conducted their first nuclear test in October of 2006. This was followed by the passing of the first set of multilateral sanctions (UNSC 1718) and essentially marked the beginning of the end for the ‘Six Party Talks’ and the beginning of the escalated tension seen in presently between the two countries.

In the following years issues arose with verification. In 2007, after both countries agreed on a roadmap of a process for the implementation for the Joint Statement of 2005, it became clear that once again North Korea was engaged in strategic deception. South Korean intelligence
leaks provided evidence that North Korea was restoring an underground nuclear site at the village Punggye (Haggard, 2015, p. 195). Additionally, alarming evidence suggesting North Korea was subsidizing their nuclear technology abroad, just as their HEU program had links to Pakistan, became evident following an Israeli Airforce operation called ‘Operation Orchard’ on September 6, 2007. After an Israeli cyber espionage campaign uncovered pictures of Chon Chibu, leader of the North Korean nuclear program, with Ibrahim Othman, director of the Syrian Atomic Energy Commission together in the Syrian desert, seven Israeli F-151 jets destroyed the Syrian nuclear testing complex of Kibar being used for nuclear weapons production (Singer, 2014, p. 126). Heading into the new U.S. administration there was no longer any hopeful optimism in believing Kim Jong Il ever had any desire to denuclearize and therefore became time to try and suffocate the regime through making it as hard as possible to advance their agenda any further.

**D. Strategic interaction between Kim Jong Il/ Kim Jong Un and Barack Obama**

2009 was one of the more significant years in the asymmetric crisis of the two countries due to the election of a new president in the U.S. and changing political dynamics in North Korea creating much uncertainty. In North Korea, the inevitability in regime change was becoming clear as Kim Jong Il’s health was rapidly deteriorating. After suffering a stroke in 2008, Kim Jong Il began his succession plan fearing imminent death. He promoted his third oldest son, Kim Jong Un, to general of the Korean People’s Army in 2010, a year before his death.

CountryWatch’s Country Review (2013) of North Korea argued:

Ultimately, Kim Jong-un would have to consolidate his power both symbolically and practically, or he could be relegated to a figurehead role at the helm of a
ruling military cadre. But speculation on that score came to a close at the end of the year when Kim Jong-un was officially named supreme commander of the country's armed forces. That particular appointment was made in accordance with provisions set forth in Kim Jong-il's will. (p. 91)

Interestingly, Kim Jong Un was not his father’s first choice. In fact, it was assumed that Kim Jong Nam, Kim Jong Un’s half-brother who was recently assassinated in February of 2017, would succeed Kim Jong Il. However, his embarrassing international travel fiascos such as visiting Disneyland in Tokyo in 2001, with a fake Dominican passport angered his father (Baek, 2017, p. 4). Kim Jong Il, even had a second son that would was thought to be more qualified than Kim Jong Un, named Kim Jong Chul. However, it was reported that his father thought his demeanor was too feminine and didn’t have the authoritative presence needed to maintain the family regime (p. 4).

Prior to Kim Jong Il’s death in late 2011, tensions were rising on the Korean Peninsula once again. President Obama in his inauguration address in January 2009, expressed openness to the Kim regime, while not citing them specifically when stating, “[t]hose who cling to power through corruption and deceit and the silencing of dissent, know that you are on the wrong side of history; but that we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist.” The lack coordination that plagued the first few months of the Bush administration in coordinating North Korean policy seemed to be repeat itself when President Obama came into office. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton shortly after President Obama’s inauguration gave reason for North Korean authorities to believe, contrary to the open of the inaugural address, that the U.S. would not be open to the normalization of relations until North Korea completely disarmed their nuclear facilities (Haggard, 2017, p. 204). In addition to imposing more sanctions, this policy became
known as ‘Strategic Patience’ and despite a new democratic administration, in application it was not all that different from the policies of the Bush administration.

Similarly, Kim Jong Il in his 2009 Pyongyang New Year remarks, was far less critical of the U.S. as well (Klinger, 2014, p. 177). Most likely stemming from a strategy of feeling out the Obama administration in the early months, any hope for optimism quickly faded after Hillary Clinton’s remarks as Kim Jong Il quickly reverted back to the status quo of escalatory rhetoric. In April, North Korea launched a satellite into orbit, viewed by the U.S. as a stepping stone for the regime’s intercontinental ballistic missile program. This triggered President Obama’s main strategy, mentioned previously, of inducing sanctions on the Kim regime in an effort to economically strangle Kim Jong Il into submission. UNSC 1718, mentioned earlier in this paper, was the first set of multilateral sanctions imposed on North Korea in the wake of their first nuclear test of 2006. After their satellite launch in April 2009, a United Nations Security Council Presidential Statement was compromised between China, Russia, Japan, South Korea and the United States condemning the satellite launch as a violation of UNSC 1718, and enhanced sanctions on North Korea (Haggard, 2017, p. 205)

This led to a series of provocations, including threatening war against Washington and South Korea, abandoning the Korean War armistice, and additional missile and nuclear tests. Statements made by officials in the Korean People’s Army shortly after the UNSC Presidential statement, reiterated the regime’s position.

The DPRK’s April 14, 2009, Foreign Ministry statement declared that:
There is no need any more to have the Six-Party Talks. The Six-Party Talks have lost the meaning of their existence never to recover now that the parties totally denied this spirit in the name of the UN Security Council. The DPRK will never participate in such Six-Party Talks nor will it be bound any longer to any agreement of the talks. (Joo, 2016, p. 85).

Additionally, after UNSC issued adjustments to UNSC 1718 on April 24, 2009, North Korea quickly announced that nuclear reprocessing had started once again, leading to another nuclear test on May 25, 2009 (Haggard, 2017, p. 205). This cycle then continued as UNSC 1874 was passed in June, which then followed by another nuclear test in July of 2009. UNSC 1874 was stricter than USNC 1718 largely because China and Russia agreed to a mixture of financial and trade restrictions designed to diminish North Korea’s military development. However, what became understood within Kim Jong Un’s inner circle, I argue, was the ineffectiveness of most of these sanctions in hurting the regime.

What made the BDA ‘bad bank strategy’ of the Bush presidency effective was that it did not require coordination among different countries with different geo-political and economic interests. Additionally, going after the crooked banks associated with North Korean money laundering was a blow since that was the foreign currency they needed to conduct their illicit trading in things such as arms, weapons technology, luxury goods, counterfeit goods, drugs and much more. Constraints on trade for resources are going to have limited effects on a regime like North Korea because the Kims have always controlled all production and distribution and have proven they will literally let their own people starve to keep the regime afloat. Even more importantly is that the desired effects of multi-national sanctions on North Korea will be severely diminished while China
continues to not fully implement them which has become clear during the tenure of Kim Jong Un.

After the implementation of USNC1874 it became clear that the conditions were being interpreted more as recommendations rather than requirements as evidence suggested China was not willing to abide. (Joo, 2016, p. 12). Similar, to when China capitalized on economic ties with North Korea in the crisis of 2002, China once again sought an opportunity capitalize on being the primary trade partner with North Korea. The northeastern province of Dongbei is one of the poorest areas of China and hiring low-cost North Korean labor helped bolster the economy in the region due to lessened salaries in the 2000’s. This rise in employment also aided China’s labor shortages in Dongbei and allowed businesses to grow as North Koreans were able to work there for much lower wages. This represented a significant cost advantage for Chinese firms since the cost of employing a North Korean skilled worker in Dandong and Hunchun amounted to around 1,500–1,600 Yuan per month, compared to 2,700–3,000 Yuan for Chinese workers. (Lee, 2016, p. 306).

2010 was another important year for the DPRK-Chinese alliance as the DPRK-ROK relationship abruptly plummeted after a series of North Korean aggressions in response to South Korean President Lee Myung-bak’s hardline approach of demanding action on North Korea’s end without offering unconditional aid (Haggard, 2017, p. 210). After a series of short range artillery tests in the early months of 2010 in response to Lee’s hardline approach, the ROK-DPRK relationship hit a low point on March 26. That day the ROK Navy ship, the ‘Cheonan’ was sunk by a North Korean torpedo attack while conducting a normal mission near Baengnyeong Island killing forty-six sailors (Lendon, 2010). What soon followed was sweeping
unilateral sanctions from South Korea known as the ‘May 24 Measures’. These sanctions forbade any ROK trade and foreign investment in North Korea as well as humanitarian aid with the exception trade dealing with Kaesong Industrial Complex as part of the Hyundai deal agreement (Haggard, 2017, p. 210). The effects of these sanctions resulted in DPRK exports to South Korea making up for only 16% of total DPRK exports in 2013, the lowest they had been since 1999, solidifying China as North Korea’s primary trade partner (Kim 2017, p.170).

Additionally, Executive Order 13551 was signed on August 30, 2010, under President Obama giving the U.S. authority to target any business entity that has “[d]irectly or indirectly, imported, exported, or re-exported luxury goods to or into North Korea; [and] directly or indirectly, engaged in money laundering, the counterfeiting of goods or currency, bulk cash smuggling, narcotics trafficking, or other illicit economic activity that involves or supports the Government of North Korea” (Exec. Order No. 13551, pg. 53837). As economic ties, between the U.S. and ROK were spiraling out of control, China solidified their ties with North Korea making sure the transition period for Kim Jong Un went smoothly.

Kim Jong Un’s regime can be summed up as stricter and less strategic than his fathers. I argue that his strategy is based around ensuring that there is no domestic threat to regime stability through the purging of any political threats, securing ways to circumvent increasing sanctions and racing to complete North Korea’s nuclear development. As I address in the next section, increasing cyber capabilities has played a major role in this approach. As a result, it cannot be ignored that, under Kim Jong Un, the gap in the asymmetric relationship between North Korea and the United States has shrunk.

This strategy has been aided and abetted by China’s reluctance to abide by UNSC sanctions. It cannot be stressed enough how important DPRK-Chinese economic relationship has
become under Kim Jong Un, who has proven to be much more isolated and reactionary than his father. He has never met with any foreign leader, unlike his father who travelled multiple times to China and once to Russia (Klinger, 2014, p. 177). It appears Kim Jong Il was aware of how important this relationship was going to be to his son, and actively sought Chinese counsel while simultaneously negotiating with the Obama administration on terms for a deal that became to be known as the ‘leap day’ agreement which passed roughly two months after Kim Jong Il’s death. Again, this occurred during the brief period in time where there was some U.S. optimism for Kim Jong Un being more open to change than his father. This private information was not known to the U.S. at the time and was utilized by Kim Jong Un.

In the last few months before his death, Kim Jong Il took significant steps to secure economic ties with China to ensure a successful succession for Kim Jong Un. Adam Cathart and Michael Madden (2012) released a series of Chinese documents they obtained, detailing China’s active role in supporting the succession process for Kim Jong Un. Madden (2012) in his assessment of the Chinese documents stated, “[C]hina seems to be both criticizing North Korea in public and private, often doing in so in new ways, while acting fiercely protectively over any foreign group that sees North Korea as the next Libya and Syria” (p. 10). This could explain the failure of the ‘leap day agreement’.

The ‘strategic patience’ strategy of waiting until sanctions effected the regime to the point where North Korea would be willing to make a deal on U.S. terms was contrary to the leap day deal. The leap day deal offered direct inducements in the form of 240,000 tons of food aid in return for merely negotiating of a major agreement on nuclear issues (Kim, 2017, p.128). The agreement fell apart within weeks, after Kim Jong Un conducted North Korea’s third nuclear test. Also, as a precursor to the rolling out of his ‘byungyin’ policy, the official newspaper of the
Central Committee of the Worker’s Party of Korea (WPK), Rodong Sinmun, published a story of the regime’s intentions of, “reinforcing military power” (Haggard, 2017, p. 51).

Kim Jong Un, has proven to be much more erratic than his father. I argue that this is more from him being emboldened rather than him feeling restricted or fearful. Kim Jong Un has notoriously and publicly murdered many of the top officials in his regime since he came to power. Seoul’s National Intelligence Service reported 68 senior officials were killed from 2012 to 2014. (Chang, 2016, p. 7). Most notably during this time was the murder of his uncle, Jang Song Thaek who was beloved by North Koreans and wielded significant economic influence, as he was responsible for relations with China. However, the share occupied by China in North Korea’s external trade was 39 per cent in 2006, but by 2010 it had grown to 57 per cent, and by 2013, North Korea’s total external trade was estimated to be US$ 8.48 billion, with China’s share amounting to around 77 per cent of total trade. (Lee, 2016, p. 297).

This trade relationship alligned with the implementing of the economic strategy known as ‘byungyin’ which openly committed the country to pursuing both its nuclear and ballistic missile programs while restructuring the economy. This announcement coming after North Korea’s third nuclear test and new round of sanctions, would argue directly against the idea of President Obama’s hopes transformative engagement through sanctions would have on Kim Jong Un. It appears by looking at the timeline of these events that Kim Jong Un has secured himself as they primary facilitator in foreign exchanges which I argue has emboldened him to double down on oppression inside North Korea and provoke the U.S. militarily. Similarly, it has become clear that Kim Jong Un feels no need to even interact with the U.S.. This physiological strength is relative to Kim Jong Un’s willingness to stand risk in the midst of more nuclear and ballistic missile testing along with accompanying escalatory rhetoric. I also believe that this correlates
with fear from the side of the U.S. as policies within recent years have not changed this behavior whatsoever.

Despite Secretary of State John Kerry stating on July 20, 2014, that North Korea was quieter than previous years and that the U.S. was moving forward with efforts to denuclearize the country, evidence suggests otherwise (hearing before the Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, 2014, p. 2). Kim Jong Un has more than tripled the number of nuclear tests Kim Jong Il conducted and increased oppression inside North Korea. Amnesty International (2011) noticed new construction inside North Korean Labor camps, and became concerned that the inmate population was increasing. Additionally, Human Rights Watch have noted increasing surveillance in the regime of Kim Jong Un regime for illicit border crossings through the use of tracking technology (Haggard, 2017, p. 44). Additionally, he has essentially, purged any political threat murdering Hyun Yong-Chul, the Minister of People’s Armed Forces in 2015 (Kim, 2017 p. 198). In April 2015, South Korean lawmakers released a NIS assessment indicating Kim Jong Un had ordered the execution of 15 senior officials so far that year, not including reported ‘disappearances’ of high ranking military officials. (Ilbo, 2015). I address his strategy on ideological control and foreign influence in the technology section.

Statements such as John Kerry’s seem to be naïve to the fact that Kim Jong Un has circumvented arguably the toughest sanctions on North Korea to date. Sanction 2270 imposed by the UN security council in March 2016, contains unprecedented inspection and financial provisions that include a requirement to terminate banking relationships with North Korean financial institutions as well mandatory inspections of cargo to and from North Korea which included luxury goods for the first time. Additionally, Sanction 2321 imposed in November
2016, was enacted to restrict North Korea’s coal exports and additional constraints imposed on the exports of nickel, zinc and copper.

Despite this a NK News report published in August 2016 claimed “[t]henumber of trucks coming out of the North to Dandong has also climbed, energizing trade and overall activity in the border area—so much so, in fact, that some residents have asked whether sanctions on the North have been lifted.” (p. 16). This provides context to studies that indicate Chinese luxury goods exports have increased, and not decreased, at a rate that proves, ‘[S]ecurity Council Solutions have had no discernible effect on China’s luxury good exports” (Haggard, 2017, p. 67).

Additionally, while the exporting of arms and military technology is not a new phenomenon under Kim Jong Un, it has increased in scope with links to arms trades with countries such as Mongolia, Cuba, China, Egypt and Syria (p.65). These occurrences align with the technology strategy of Kim Jong Un which I argue provides reason to believe that he is supremely confident in where his regime stands in bargaining with the United States.

\textbf{E. The leveling effect of North Korean technology}

For the purposes of this section, I do not explicitly express the methodology used in the previous strategic interaction sections at specific sequences in time. Rather this section can be as an application of how technology as soft power private information effected bargaining leverage throughout different sequences within the DPRK-U.S. asymmetrical crisis. When considering the events in this section aligned with the strategic interactions in the above sections, it is clearly evident that cyber and ICT technology has been a driving force in the Kim regime’s efforts in their strategy for closing the asymmetrical gap with the U.S.
Since the regime of Kim Il Sung, North Korea has tried to mitigate all potential forms of outside information and influence from entering North Korea. Before the digital age, the vessel in which outside information could penetrate North Korea’s ideological fortress was through radio. Dating back to 1960, all radios officially sold in North Korea have had fixed tuning, so that only a small number of official North Korean channels can be listened to (Lankov, 2011, p. 22). As the Cold War ended, and the famine years struck North Korea, North Koreans crossed the border into China, which in return meant new forms of technology began to spread inside North Korea. For example, DVD players have played an important role in shifting North Korean citizens views on the world till this day. However, DVDs and DVD players are legal in North Korea as long as they are used for state approved content.

This is because the penetration rate of foreign DVDs is quite low. An InterMedia study estimated that in 2009 the penetration rate was 21% and 5% for VCD and DVD players (p. 25). North Korean authorities have been able to circumvent foreign DVDs from entering the country through tactics such as random house checks. Additionally, under the regime of Kim Jong Un executions for possessing foreign DVDs have become commonplace. In November 2013, Kim Jong Un, ordered the execution of as many as 80 people for watching foreign television. (“The Secret State of North Korea,” 2014). The inhumane tactics of the North Korean regime are not shocking when looking at the track record of the Kims. Presumably, conventional wisdom would suggest a similar pathway regarding ICT development in North Korea. Contrary to this presumption however, Kim Jong II and Kim Jong Un have strategically and effectively developed ICT technology and cyber-warfare capabilities primarily due to both the defensive and offensive abilities they provide while forgoing most of the traditional tactics used to stop influence and technology from spreading.
Kim Il Sung began investing in cyber capabilities in the late 80s (Haggard, 2015, p. 4). In the 90’s, Kim Jong Il himself, as well as those in the highest brass of the North Korean government emphasized the importance of developing an IT industry especially when it came to modernizing military technology and economic development in the digital age (Chen, 2010, p. 651). Kim Jong Il even said that there are three kinds of fools in the twenty-first century – people who smoke, people who don’t like music, and people who don’t know how to use a computer (p. 650). As a result, North Korea first appeared in cyberspace in 1997, with the opening of Chosun Tongsin (www.kcna.co.jp), a website served as a medium for regime propaganda (Ko, 2009, p. 285).

Shortly thereafter, Kim Jong Il and North Korean authorities began to realize the potential for economic gains under strategic and limited use of ICT. In 1999, the government launched, Chos’on Tongsin, for earning foreign currencies through cooperating with overseas firms and then an international email communications platform called Silibank.com in 2001 (Chen, 2009, p. 651). In 2000, North Korea launched their own version of an ‘intranet’, called Kwangymong, that offers a search engine, technical texts, a chat function, and official news to the select group who can access approved content (Greitans, 2013, p. 266). It is estimated that approximately 50,000 out of 23 million people have access to the ‘intranet’ (Chosun, 2011).

This extremely slow roll out for possibly opening up North Korea’s ICT is not due to a lack of capabilities or technological sophistication, but rather it has been a strategy of Kim Jong Il dating back to 2002, when he ordered that IT institutions inside North Korea develop the related technologies and strategies to ensure regime security before opening the intranet to widespread use. Essentially, Kim Jong Il wanted to use the intranet as a test to resolve any technical problems of controlling and filtering information over the cyberspace and resolve
them before opening up in any way. Kim Hu´ng-kwang, a former North Korean IT scientist and defector, stated, “[t]he regime is determined to hold off allowing wider access to the Internet until it finishes developing its own operating system (OS), since the Windows-based system does not open its kernel source code” (Kim, 2007, p. 121).

What this translates to is North Korean software being developed in North Korea’s own programming languages. Along the lines of ‘Juche’, North Korea has been trying to create a ‘self-reliant’ OS system of their own. This most likely is the direct reason why North Korea still remains the world’s most restricted country for internet access. The regime’s focus on software would indicate that they are trying to break away from widely used IS software of their western counterparts.

Chen (2010) asserts:

As a result, the North Korean IT research and development facilities have been making every effort to develop a Linux-based OS and their own programming languages. The KCC has already developed a Linux-based OS called ‘Pulgˇunbyˇ (RedStar)’. In addition, other Linux-based OS, such as ‘Arirang ’, are being developed and upgraded by Kim Ch’aek University of Technology. (p. 658)

While this strategy is conceptually defensive, from an information penetration perspective, it also has played into their strengths for cyber-warfare and diminishing the financial effects of international sanctions; thus mastering cyberspace has become a top priority under the regime of Kim Jong Un and evidence shows that North Korea has become extremely proficient in this realm.

According to Yong Kwon (2011), writer for the Asia Times, testimonies of defectors who were graduated from Mirim University in Pyongyang in 1986, North Korea hired twenty-five
computer experts from Kyrgyzstan solely to establish a cyber-warfare program during their time as students. These same testimonies reveal that more than one hundred hackers graduate from this same program every year, now at Automation University in Pyongyang. Under Kim Jong Il, this production in cyber capabilities was significantly increased. Jang Se-yul, a former North Korean soldier who went to a military college in Pyongyang to groom hackers and who defected to the South in 2008, estimated that the North Korean military has some 3,000 troops, including 600 professional hackers, within its cyber-unit (Park, 2013).

The evidence of this increased investment is exhibited in the sophistication of North Korea’s alleged cyber-attacks as well as the lack of cyber-attacks against them. There were two instances in 2004 and 2006 where it appeared North Korea had breached a number of South Korean military wireless communication networks (Haggard, 2015, p. 5). Additionally, it would appear that the more sanctions that have been passed against the regime, the more they have doubled down on cyber tactics. In 2009, it was reported that Kim Jong II, was reported to order the cyber command unit of the Reconnaissance General Bureau (RGB) of the Korean People’s Army (KPA) to expand the cyber-unit known as ‘Unit 121’ to have approximately ten times the manpower as their South Korean Counterpart (Kheserti, 2014, p. 189). Under the regime of Kim Jong Un and in sync with the rolling out of increased sanctions, the techniques and magnitude of cyber operations have increased even further and have expanded beyond the borders of the hermit kingdom.

In 2013, Kim Jong Un reportedly said, “[i]f we have strong information technology and brave warriors like the Reconnaissance General Bureau, we will be able to break any sanctions and have no problem building a strong and prosperous country” (p. 188). However, Kim Jong Un has not limited this use of technology strictly to within North Korean borders. South Korea’s
NIS in a meeting with the intelligence committee of South Korea's National Assembly reported that there were seven North Korean hacking organizations and a network of spies operating in China and Japan as of November 2013 (Schearf, 2013). Additionally, South Korean police have estimated that there were close to 10,000 North Korean hackers operating in China alone as of 2014. These hackers are believed to directly send foreign currency to ‘Office 39’, the branch of government within the Kim Regime responsible for providing financial support to Kim Jong Un himself (Kheserti, 2014, p. 189).

North Korean cyber activity spreading across international borders has not been spontaneous in the least. North Korea’s school system is designed to groom exceptionally talented students in science and mathematics through a ‘farm-system’ of sorts that sends them to North Korea’s most prestigious schools as well as abroad to hone their skills. Kim Heung-kwang, the North Korean defector and computer scientist mentioned earlier in this section, described this process after students graduate high school in detail in 2011 to Al Jeezera.

Kim Hueng-kwang explained to Sangwon Yoon (2011):

When they graduate [from Keumseong], they are sent to attend North Korea's top technology institutes and universities, such as the Kim Il Sung University, Kim Chaek University of Technology, and various others in Pyongyang or Hamheung, [a city near the country’s eastern coast]. Following an expedited two-year program at university, students are sent to China or Russia for about one year to solidify their knowledge of hacking and other technical skills. After the overseas training, they are placed in various warfare units to serve as ‘cyberwarriors’. These internationally highly trained ‘cyberwarriors’ have provided North Korea the capabilities to attack South Korean media infrastructure in 2011 and South Korean financial institutions and
the South Korean government’s domain name system in 2013 (Haggard, 2015, p. 5). Additionally, in 2011 North Korea conducted a cyber attack against US and South Korean military entities which jammed the GPS systems of hundreds of civilian aircrafts and ships. (p. 5).

The attacks detailed above list just a few of the many North Korean cyber campaigns that are known to the public. Despite this, it is clear that countries have not been able to retaliate against North Korea because of their choice to remain technologically closed off. Former NSA official Charlie Miller once explained, “[N]orth Korea’s biggest advantage[s] is that it has hardly any internet-connected infrastructure to target; on the other hand, the U.S. has tons of vulnerabilities a country like North Korea could exploit” (Singer, 2014, p. 151). Miller’s statement rings true when looking at the number of known cyber-attacks and the lack of retaliation when looking at North Korea.

Brandon Valeriano and Ryan C. Maness (2015) released a study on the number of cyber disputes amongst rival states, from 2001 through 2011 and accounted for fourteen total offensive attacks conducted by North Korea on the United States, Japan and South Korea, and only one response coming from South Korea during the ten years (p.79). This may be true due to the fact that internet and online penetration rates are extremely low in North Korea. In a country of 23 million people only a few dozen families are believed to have unfiltered internet access in the entire country (Kheserti, 2014, p. 191). North Korea’s ‘intranet’ is estimated to have approximately one million subscribers which is less than 5% of North Korea’s population and additionally the demographic profile of these users remains very unclear (Greitans, 2013, p. 268). Also, North Korea only has 1,024 IP addresses and all of the servers for these addresses are in either Japan, China or Germany (Haggard, 2015, p. 4 & Ko, 2009, p. 285).
In addition, the growth of cell phones and mobile networks have been curtailed by the Kim’s as well. Cell phones that are either made within North Korea, or smuggled in from China, all have restrictions. Restrictions include disabled bluetooth and camera features, and if the phone is made in North Korea, it can only be used within the limits of the city it is registered to. There is also no ability make international calls, even to foreign diplomats or to home countries of NGO workers stationed in North Korea. Additionally, there is no ability for phones inside North Korea to call people using illicit Chinese phones in widespread use along the Chinese-DPRK border (Greitans, 2013, p. 367). The cyber-asymmetry between the DPRK-U.S. may actually be in North Korea’s in favor currently because it is conceivable that if the U.S. went into a cyberwar today, the U.S. would be defeated because it is most vulnerable, the most connected, and have the most to lose (Singer, 2014, p. 151).

**Part V: Conclusion**

When looking at how this crisis will play out there are few indicators from the theoretical framework applied to this paper that offer some insight. Most importantly, it has become evident that the crisis is reaching a tipping point that will theoretically result in one of two scenarios. The first direction would be moving into a resolution phase where the U.S. either acknowledges a nuclear North Korea and accommodates to the desires of the Kim regime, or tacitly acknowledges North Korea as a nuclear state without accommodating to any other desires from Kim Jong Un. In this scenario, a new crisis could develop with a higher probability of war as the asymmetry between the two countries is no longer as outstanding as it was when this crisis started at the end of the Cold War.
The second and more frightening direction this crisis can move towards is a new escalatory level leading to war between the United States and North Korea. As mentioned in the introduction of this paper, this is terrifying on many levels but it cannot be ruled out of the realm of possibility within this crisis construct. More importantly however, is how this crisis has been able to reach this point. As this paper details, North Korea has tactically and strategically bided their time and coordinated specific strategies to shrink the asymmetric gap with the United States over a period spanning almost three decades.

Beginning with the bait and switch tactics used by Kim Jong Il in the famine years after the Cold War and ending with the proficiency in cyberspace illustrated by Kim Jong Un, North Korea has been able to beat the odds of crumbling from within due to the self-reliant ‘Juche’ ideology through manipulating U.S. foreign policy and international aid deals consistently. They have aligned themselves strategically with China and in doing so secured a safety net that allowed them to pursue nuclear development despite becoming even further isolated from the rest of the world. As I claimed in the previous section, while political changes in the U.S. and domestic changes inside North Korea have played a role in this asymmetrical shift, it has been technology that has been the medium to achieve this. It has been the medium that has been present in every stage of this crisis and it has been better understood by the Kim regime than any other country including the United States. It is no longer David versus Goliath as North Korea has emerged as a real adversary to the strongest nation on earth by mastering the continuously evolving realm of cyberspace.
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