Coercion versus Engagement and North Korea's Brinkmanship Foreign Policy

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Abstract

Over the last half century, North Korea has made over 2,660 military provocations against South Korea. Even during peaceful dialogue or institutional negotiations, North Korea has often engaged in “unreasonable” actions such as provocations, violence, and terrorism when situations do not proceed according to plan, the goal being to force its counterparts to change their stance or make concessions. Various explanations have been proposed as to when and why North Korea employs brinkmanship. The key feature underlying these explanations is the precedence of factors internal to the North Korean regime such as diversion and human needs over other factors. This study attaches importance to South Korea’s foreign policy as a cause of Pyongyang’s constant provocations. The study starts with the question of under what conditions South Korean policies of coercion and engagement affect North Korea’s brinkmanship foreign policy. In order to answer the question, it examines two periods related to North Korea’s response to South Korea’s coercion and engagement policies from 1993 to 2008 by process tracing, employing tit-for-tat game theory, and tests alternative explanations. Its findings include: (1) North Korea is more cooperative and less belligerent when South Korea pursues coercion and conditional engagement; (2) North Korea is less cooperative and more conflictual when South Korea implements unconditional engagement. The findings of the study have important theoretical and policy implications. In terms of theoretical debate, the study lends support to coercion and conditional engagement as more sound strategies in dealing with renegade regimes. In terms of policy, the study recommends policy makers to (1) implement a strict reciprocity towards North Korea, (2) maintain a strong US-South Korea alliance, and (3) respond sternly against armed provocations.

Keywords: North Korea, South Korea, brinkmanship, provocation, engagement, coercion

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Chapter One

Introduction

Background

The international relations scholarship has long focused on coercive strategies, primarily on either deterrence or compellence (Nincic, 2006, 2010). Nevertheless, engagement is a subject of growing interest in the international relations literature (Kahler & Kastner, 2006). There is no academic consensus on the efficacy of coercion over engagement and vice versa. Some scholars cast doubt on the effectiveness of engagement to induce change in the behavior of recalcitrant regimes (Drezner, 1999; Jentleson & Whytock, 2005; Kahler & Kastner, 2006; Wagner, 1988). Drezner (1999) argues that "carrots are not feasible because of the high transaction costs involved in making political exchanges in an anarchic world" (p. 190). He notes that positive sanctions are most likely to be effective among democracies and in the context of international regimes. Wagner (1988) argues that a state is more likely to be swayed by sanctions because it values more highly the marginal unit of a good taken away than the benefit of the same amount added. Furthermore, bribing a state into compromising its security is difficult if possible at all. Finally, by offering incentives a state can make itself vulnerable to future extortion attempts.

According to Kahler and Kastner (2006) conditional engagement is less likely to succeed if the initiating state is a democracy. Regarding unconditional engagement, it is less likely to succeed if the target state is a democracy, and if the target state depends heavily on bilateral economic ties and initiating state does not. Yet, unconditional engagement is more likely to succeed if the target state is a democracy, and if a broad consensus backing the strategy exists in the initiating country. Another view suggests that coercion should contain three key elements to succeed: proportionality, the relationship between the coercer's objectives and instruments; reciprocity, the linkage between the coercer's carrots and the

target's concessions; and coercive credibility, the conveyance of consequences of non-cooperation (Jentleson & Whytock, 2005).

Other scholars contend that engagement is a viable alternative to coercion (Baldwin, 1971; Cortright, 1997; Long, 1996; Mastanduno, 1999; Nincic, 2006, 2010). Incentives are reasonable and effective tools for encouraging cooperation over the long term (Dorussen, 2001). Incentives foster cooperation and goodwill, while sanctions create hostility and separation (Cortright, 1997). Threats tend to generate reactions of fear and anxiety, inspire resistance and resentment while the normal responses to a promise or reward are hope, reassurance, attraction and expectation (Mastanduno, 1999). Incentives tend to enhance the recipient's willingness to cooperate with the sender, while negative measures tend to impede such cooperation. Threats send a message of indifference or active hostility, while promises convey an impression of sympathy and concern (Baldwin, 1971). Incentives do not produce the rally-round-the-flag effect and are less likely to engender or aggravate misperception (Long, 1996). Furthermore, positive inducements can modify the regime's motivations in a process of political transformation, increasing the likelihood of improved behavior (Nincic, 2006).

With its Juche-led oppressive totalitarian system, weapons of mass destruction, military provocations and bellicose rhetoric, North Korea is probably the world's foremost rogue state. Since the end of the Korean War in 1953, North Korea (Democratic People's Republic of Korea, DPRK) has made over 2,660 military provocations against South Korea (Republic of Korea, ROK) (Ministry of Unification, 2012). Even taking into account the fundamental instability of the divided peninsula, North Korea's military attacks, infiltrations and other provocations against the South must be seen as the most fundamental symptom of the dysfunction in inter-Korean bilateral relations.

In 1993, Kim Young-sam became the seventh President of South Korea (Y. Kim, 1999). He pursued a blend of coercion and conditional engagement policies towards the North. The new administration, soon after its inauguration, proclaimed a completely new and "dovish" North Korea policy. The South Korean government announced that it would show flexibility when dealing with Pyongyang in areas such as nuclear program and economic exchanges. However, North Korea declared its withdrawal from the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1993. The Kim Young-sam administration adopted a more "hawkish" stance from 1993 to 1994 but reversed it into a friendlier approach in 1995. Again, North Korea "slapped Seoul for doing good". The ROK government halted food aid to the DPRK and requested Washington and Tokyo to do the same. The hard line policy was replaced by a softer approach in 1996 and lasted until 1998.

From 1998 to 2008 South Korea implemented a policy of unconditional engagement towards North Korea in an attempt to ease tensions, foster cooperation and achieve lasting peace (Levkowitz, 2008). The election of Kim Dae-jung to South Korea's Presidency marked the beginning of the engagement policy also known as the "Sunshine Policy" (Levkowitz, 2008). Kim Dae-jung's successor Roh Moo-hyun carried out a similar version of the Sunshine Policy until the end of his term as President (C. Kim, 2005).

The Sunshine Policy was based on the liberal notion of peace through economic interdependence. It rested upon the following principles: no absorption of North Korea in the process of unification, intolerance of any armed provocation destructive to peace, the principle of reciprocity, and separation of the economy from politics (Chae, 2002). Despite the adoption of these principles, South Korea overlooked armed provocations and "incidents" by North Korea and abandoned reciprocity to please the DPRK. Moreover, South Korea ignored the horrendous human rights record of the North and did not support sanctions against the communist regime (Levkowitz, 2008). Both the Kim and Roh administrations

hoped that generosity would positively affect North Korea's worldview and encourage it to change its belligerent posture. During the Bush administration years, there was a major divergence between US and South Korean policies towards North Korea.

The DPRK's response to Kim Young-sam's hard-line policy and the Sunshine Policy was consistent in terms of provocations. North Korea employed brinkmanship strategy both in times of coercion and engagement. For example, in 1994 for the first time in more than two decades, North Korea issued a threat of war in an inter-Korean meeting in Panmunjom (Fischer, 2007). During the Sunshine Policy period, while economic cooperation between the two Koreas as well as South Korea's economic assistance to the North was in progress, the North carried out a series of provocations against the South, including an infiltration of the South with its midget submarine, a nuclear test in 2006, and two test firings of long-range missiles in 1998 and in 2006. Hence, the change in Seoul's policy did not encourage Pyongyang to abandon its "good old" strategy of brinkmanship.

This study is divided into four chapters. It starts with an introduction which presents background information, the research question and a brief overview of the argument. The theoretical chapter lays out the study's hypothesis and alternative hypotheses to it, and discusses the research design. The study then proceeds with the empirical analysis chapter which tests its hypothesis and rival hypotheses. The concluding chapter summarizes the study's findings, discusses generalizability, limitations, theoretical and policy implications.

Research Question

Taking into consideration Pyongyang's numerous provocations during the periods of coercion (under Kim Young-sam) and engagement (under Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun), this study asks the following research question: *under what conditions do South Korean policies of coercion and engagement affect North Korea's brinkmanship foreign policy*?

Argument

Several explanations have been proposed as to why states provoke and escalate crises. Some of these explanations place an emphasis on internal (diverting the public's attention from domestic hardships, proving the credentials of a leader during the transition, perpetuating the regime, competition between different elite factions etc.) factors.

Other explanations attach weight to external (blackmailing to receive food aid, securing negotiations over nuclear program, silencing the regime's critics in South Korea, feeling desperate and insecure etc.) factors. Existing explanations, their strengths and weakness are discussed in greater detail in the theoretical chapter.

This study argues that South Korea's policy towards the North is an important cause of Pyongyang's aggressive and provocative behavior. In particular, conciliatory approach towards North Korea aggravates the latter's brinkmanship foreign policy, increasing the rate and seriousness of provocations.

Chapter Two

Theories, Hypotheses and Research Design

Introduction

This chapter lays out the theoretical and methodological frameworks of the study and hypotheses. The first section discusses theories and the hypothesis proposed by this study. The second section presents an overview of alternative theories and the hypotheses they generate. As mentioned earlier, theories as to when North Korea and states in general provoke and escalate crises range from internal to external motivations. Therefore, the second section contains two subsections: the first subsection presents the theories and hypotheses based on domestic factors of brinkmanship while the second subsection deals with the theories and hypotheses related to external factors. The need for research section summarizes the gaps in the literature and makes the case for this project. The final section discusses research methods, data and case selection, and concepts and their measurement.

A tit-for-tat approach

To frame this study theoretically, scholarly discussions on coercion, conditional and unconditional engagement, and tit-for-tat strategy provide a valuable framework. In coercive strategies, deterrence functions to persuade an adversary not to take a certain action by demonstrating resolve and capabilities, whereas compellence uses threats and other punitive actions to persuade an adversary to undo an action that the adversary has taken or to change course (Nincic, 2006). According to proponents of coercive strategies, deterrence and compellence, whether in the form of military moves or economic sanctions, raise the costs of the offending action and, in turn, modify a state's behavior.

On the contrary, engagement is a strategy whose function is to defuse a potentially dangerous situation not through threats but through incentives (Kahler & Kastner, 2006). The distinguishing feature of engagement is the idea that positive inducements and the extension

of benefits, rather than the promise of harm or the imposition of current costs, can either produce a change in the adversary's actions or transform the target state by creating new interests in the long run. There are two types of economic engagement: conditional policies that require an explicit quid pro quo on the part of the target country and policies that are unconditional.

Conditional policies, also known as linkage or economic "carrots", are the opposite of economic sanctions (Kahler & Kastner, 2006). Instead of threatening a target country with economic loss (sanction) in the absence of policy change, conditional engagement policies promise increased economic benefits in return for desired policy change. Unconditional engagement strategies are more passive than conditional variants in that they do not include a specific quid pro quo. Rather, countries deploy economic links with an adversary in the hopes that economic interdependence itself will, over time, change the target's foreign policy behavior and yield a reduced threat of military conflict.

In his seminal work "The Evolution of Cooperation", Robert Axelrod (1984) discusses the tit-for-tat strategy. This strategy is simply one of cooperating on the first move and then doing whatever the other player did on the preceding move. Thus, tit-for-tat is a strategy of cooperation based on reciprocity. Axelrod found that a tit-for-tat strategy of cooperative and noncooperative moves links the "shadow of the future" to current behavior and consequently best promotes stable cooperation between adversaries This strategy is determined by four conditions: the agent always cooperates, until it is provoked; if provoked, the agent always retaliates; the agent is quick to forgive; the agent must have a good chance of competing against the opponent more than once.

South Korea's North Korea policy is critical in understanding the DPRK's provocations for several reasons. First is the nature of the bilateral relationship of the two Koreas. South Korea's policy towards North Korea is not a "foreign policy" in a normal

sense but a unique relationship towards the the other half of a divided nation (Armstrong, 2009). Both governments have maintained the official position that Korea is a single country, and the DPRK did not even make Pyongyang its official capital until 1972. Both states dispute the legitimacy of one another and proclaim themselves as the sole legitimate representative of Korea. Ever since the Korean War (1950-1953), when North Korea unsuccessfully attempted to bring the entire peninsula under the Communist banner, there has been an ongoing legitimation war between the two Koreas.

Second, relationship with the South is crucial for the North and vice versa. South Korea is the second largest (behind China) trading partner of the North (CIA, 2011). The dissolution of the Soviet Union and collapse of the East European socialist bloc further isolated North Korea from the rest of the international community, plunging it in the mid-1990s into a severe economic crisis now remembered as the "Arduous March" (MOU, 2012). Under such difficult circumstances, the regime had no choice but to try to diversify foreign relations and improve ties with Western countries, these efforts being focused on regime stability and survival. Such efforts would be in vain without the South's help as was witnessed during the Sunshine period when the DPRK established diplomatic relations with Western countries. Moreover, by engaging in direct dialogue with the South, the North has sought to receive food, fuel and other resources vital for regime sustenance as well as improve its ties with the US and Japan.

Finally, South Korea is the principal victim of North Korea's provocations. Although North Korea has also made provocations against the US and Japan such as hijacking, abduction and test-firing of missiles, South Korea has been the target of the vast majority of DPRK's armed invasions, border violations, infiltrations of armed saboteurs and spies, terrorism, threats and intimidations against political leaders, media personnel, and institutions. In addition, North Korean incitements aimed at the overthrow of the government

have been unique to South Korea. The DPRK has unsuccessfully attempted to "pressurize" South Koreans during elections in order to achieve the desired outcome, mainly in the form of a left-wing president or parliament holding an accommodating stance towards the North. On the eve of the April 2012 parliamentary elections, North Korean media explicitly expressed fervent support for the South Korean progressives, even confidently predicting that "the South Korean people will not give another chance to the [conservative] New Frontier Party" (Lankov, 2012, p. 8).

The Kim Young-sam administration pursued policies of coercion and conditional engagement and employed the tit-for-tat strategy towards North Korea. On the contrary, the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun administrations implemented unconditional engagement and diffuse reciprocity. The Kim Young-sam government more or less coordinated its DPRK policy with the US whereas during the Sunshine period a clear disagreement emerged between ROK and US policies. As North Korea made provocations during the periods of all the three ROK governments, South Korea's different policies and responses must have affected the North's brinkmanship.

Based on the above discussion, the study aims at finding out if the adoption of conciliatory approach and the abandonment of the tit-for-tat strategy (equivalent retaliation) caused North Korea to be less cooperative and more belligerent. Accordingly, the study proposes the following hypothesis: Unconditional engagement directed towards North Korea from South Korea is responded to with increased brinkmanship (*Hypothesis 1*).

Alternative Explanations

Internal Factors

1) Diversionary theory. One of the most important explanations of why states provoke or escalate conflicts is that they do so in order to divert the public's attention from domestic concerns and stoke nationalism. The diversionary theory argues that leaders threatened by domestic turmoil manipulate the "rally-round-the-flag" effect by initiating conflict abroad (Sobek, 2007). According to Sobek, diversionary uses of force can have a positive effect for the leader in four main ways. First, successful actions abroad may win support at home. This increased backing gives the leader a reprieve in which to revitalize their regime. Second, the conflict abroad and the tension it creates at home could justify a crackdown. If targeted correctly, the offensive may quickly eliminate any vociferous opposition to the regime and its leaders. Third, international conflict may divert the public's attention away from the issues that caused the dissatisfaction. Last, conflict with another state in the international system may rally support to the regime through an in-group/out-group effect.

The diversionary theory, while applicable to authoritarian regimes (Miller, 1999), is a contentious explanation for North Korea's brinkmanship. On the one hand, in countries like North Korea the influence of public opinion on foreign policy is slim at best if existent as the Worldwide Governance Indicators' (WGI) Voice and accountability indicator claims (World Bank, 2011). Pyongyang has developed formidable tools of social control and is stable contrary to the assumptions of its doomsayers (Lind & Byman, 2010). On the other hand, the unparalleled level of propaganda (Lankov, 2005) and the elaborate cult of personality around the Kim family[1] (Suh, 2004) point to the contrary.

[1] Suh (2004) notes that even many North Korean defectors who fled from the oppressive regime and food shortage, and are in South Korea, would confide that Kim Il-sung and Kim

Hypothesis 2: Political instability is responsible for North Korea's provocations.

2) "Conflict" in decision-making process. A second explanation centers on the decision-making process and particularly on its "conflict" model. According to this model, there are policy conflicts among organizations and policymakers. Mansourov (1997) argues that the DPRK has a "highly compartmentalized institutional structure" and "its bureaucracy has a clear chain of command and a concentrated leadership structure," but "decisions do not come quickly and easily or in the most efficient form because of lack of consultations across the bureaucratic lines" (p. 223). Proponents of this theory cite the Rodong Sinmun's, the North Korean regime's mouthpiece, opposition to seeking foreign aid in 1995, even though North Korean delegations requested help from the United Nations and its related agencies.

The "conflict" model in a way portrays Kim Jong-il as having little control over the decision-making process in the country. This is problematic because it implies that the "Dear Leader" allowed constant perilous adventures abroad rather than tightening his grip on the bureaucracy. Furthermore, the Rodong Sinmun's opposition was more likely to be a propaganda for domestic consumption than genuine opposition.

Hypothesis 3: North Korea's provocations are caused by conflicts in decision-making.

3) "Loyalty competition". The "competition model" is another explanation for the North Korean decision-making process. It claims that differences among North Korean policy-making groups are nothing but a loyalty competition for winning recognition from its top leader (Kim & Choy, 2012). Loyalty competition is pursued by the elites at the top of the system's pyramid (J. Kim, 2013). This model is based on the argument that even Kim Jong-il, the North Korea's supreme leader, could not control all details in the decision-making process. For example, the military authorities waged a combat against the South Korean Navy in June 1999 that resulted in dozens of deaths, while officials from the United Front

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Jong-il were great leaders and that they could hardly erase Kim Il-sung, in particular, from their memory.

Department of (North) Korean Workers' Party and even Kim Jong-il sought for reconciliation with its Southern counterpart.

This theory, like the "conflict" model, assumes that Kim Jong-il could afford endangering his regime's very existence for a "loyalty competition". Considering Kim Jong-il's military-first policy ("politics that regards the military as crucially important and places priority emphasis on its reinforcement" Jeung, 2007, p. 13) the Korean People's Army would hardly take actions without his approval, let alone a naval battle against the South. Furthermore, the successive nature of armed provocations cannot be a result of Kim Jong-il's constant unawareness of the decision-making process.

Hypothesis 4: North Korea's provocations are caused by loyalty competition.

4) Bad, mad and sad. Another explanation suggests that North Korea is an illogical, inconsistent, uncivilized, animal-like, unrealistic, inscrutable, wild, erratic, evil, insane, logic-defying regime that cannot be negotiated with (Florig, 2002; Roy, 1994; Smith, 2000). Pyongyang's provocations are seen as a result of being bad, mad and sad. The bad thesis assumes that Pyongyang pursues alien objectives which are normative anathema to the rest of the "civilized" international system (Smith, 2000). The DPRK is motivated by malevolence and belligerence and its leadership's domestic and foreign politics are of evil intent.

The mad thesis is similar to the bad one, albeit the former assumes an irrational actor while the latter a rational one. North Korean actions are viewed as mad because of their non-compliance with international norms and apparent refusal to follow optimal preference-maximizing behavior (Roy, 1994). With regard to the sad thesis, Cha (1998) argues that North Korea has found itself in a desperate situation because of economic collapse and declining military might. Pyongyang's priorities have changed form hegemonic unification to basic survival, to avoiding being devoured by the South.

This argument is in some regards persuasive. North Korea is indeed a bizarre state on the international stage. Sung-Yoon Lee (2013) called it “uniquely unique”. “North Korea is the world’s sole communist hereditary dynasty, the world’s only literate-industrialized-urbanized peacetime economy to have suffered a famine, the world’s most cultish totalitarian system, and the world’s most secretive, isolated country - albeit one with the world’s largest military in terms of manpower and defense spending proportional to its population and national income” (Lee, 2013).

More intriguingly, North Korea, unlike other communist states, has survived without reforming itself. Even the devastating famine in the mid-1990s did not cause its collapse contrary to the expectations of many. In other words, the Juche regime is bad and sad but not mad. “The result is a most abnormal state, one that is able to exercise disproportionate influence in regional politics despite its relatively small territorial and population size and its exceedingly meager economic, political, and soft power, principally through a strategy of external provocations and internal repression” (Lee, 2013).

Hypothesis 5: North Korea’s provocations result from being bad, mad and sad.

External Factors

1) Demands for unilateral concessions. One of the most widely-accepted explanations for North Korea’s crisis-provoking behavior is its intention to gain unilateral concessions in return for the opportunity to sit down at the negotiating table (K. Kim, 2004; Hong, 2003; J. Park, 2004, 2013; Liou, 2001; Snyder, 2001). Such unilateral concessions, if made in response to North Korean demands, have rarely been reciprocated. Attempts to extract benefits in advance of negotiations may indicate that North Korea has no real interest in negotiating with the counterpart as failure to reciprocate to a unilateral concession may result in a loss of trust. On the other hand, the demand for a unilateral concession may signal a maximalist position, that is making exaggerated demands in an attempt to psychologically

influence the opponent in a pre-negotiation phase (Snyder, 2001). Every time that a conflict occurred, North Korea tends to intentionally push the conflict to the brink of war (Liou, 2001). The maneuver is designed to force its counterpart to back down (to sit down and negotiate with Pyongyang), as the high cost of war is strategically favorable to North Korea. Once negotiations resume, North Korea will press its counterpart to make economic concessions in exchange for political reconciliation. In this regard, North Korea has two "nightmares": becoming "the agenda-receiving party" rather than "the agenda-setting party" and not forcing its adversaries to give in to its threats (Park, 2013, p. 1-2).

This explanation has some merit considering North Korea's reluctance to give something in return when negotiating and relinquish its nuclear program. The main shortcoming of this argument is that it neglects changes in policies of countries that negotiate with the DPRK such as South Korea and the US. The two countries reversed their North Korea policies twice during the past two decades leaning towards hard-line policies from softer approaches and vice versa. Therefore, both the agenda and their tactics of negotiations must have experienced changes as well.

Hypothesis 6: Demands for unilateral concessions cause North Korea's provocations.

2) Deterrence against the US. Others believe that Pyongyang's brinkmanship is not a distractible tactic in a larger war-fighting strategy (Olsen, 2004). Instead, it is an essential element of a strategy designed to create two results. The first result is a form of interim deterrence against what they perceive as US brinkmanship - the world's sole superpower applying a preemptive doctrine toward a cluster of rogue states and terrorists. North Korea's aggressive policy is designed to compensate for their manifest weaknesses and to keep US military capabilities off balance.

The second goal is to set the stage for external diplomatic and economic intervention that will pull the confrontational US-North Korea parties away from the brink and act as a

catalyst to negotiated reunification of North and South Korea (Olsen, 2004). Increasingly the most likely candidate to fill that international role is China because of its ties to both Koreas, its ability to play such a role in Asian regional affairs, and - as long as PRC-US interests vis-à-vis North Korea appear to overlap - its means to persuade Americans that this would be in the US' best interests. This argument, like the preceding one, overlooks changes in US policy towards North Korea. Deterrence against the US could be North Korea's goal in the Bush era as the US maintained a hard-line approach. However, it is less relevant for the Clinton administration when the US was pursuing engagement towards the DPRK.

Hypothesis 7: Deterrence against the US motivates North Korea's brinkmanship.

3) Human needs. The human needs theory proposes another explanation for North Korea's provocations. According to this theory, the motivation behind North Korea's brinkmanship is blackmailing South Korea, the US and the international community to receive humanitarian aid (Cheon & Suzuki, 2003; Choi, 2006; Maragliano, 2002; Smith, 2000). Abraham Maslow (1943) considers physiological human needs (food, water, shelter etc.) to be the most important ones in the hierarchy of needs. Since the 1990s, North Korea has been facing chronic food shortages. However, Pyongyang is reluctant to implement fundamental political and economic reforms to alleviate its miserable situation fearing such reforms would pose a threat to its regime stability. As a consequence, North Korea does not shy away from blackmailing others to receive what it needs for sustaining the regime and the populace.

This argument is at odds with available empirical evidence. While the DPRK's disastrous economic situation could force it to employ brinkmanship to extort food aid, there are some issues here. Firstly, South Korea was generously providing the North with food and fertilizer aid even without reciprocity while the latter stuck to its provocative behavior. Secondly, North Korea rejected foreign food aid when the South adopted a tough stance

against it in 2008 and demanded the dismantlement of the nuclear program in return for economic aid. Finally, the sudden regime collapse and ensuing chaos in the Northeast Asia region is a more likely reason for providing the Hermit Kingdom with means to sustain itself.

Hypothesis 8: North Korea employs brinkmanship out of human needs.

Need for Further Research

The above-discussed arguments offer useful explanations for causes of North Korea's provocative behavior in general. The majority of them, however, focus on the domestic conditions and characteristics of the North Korean regime. Furthermore, these explanations tend to overlook the role of South Korea's foreign policy, the country against which North Korea makes provocations. This creates obstacles in understanding the continuity of DPRK's provocations under different domestic circumstances and South Korean policies. Therefore, examining different South Korean policies towards North Korea and how they affect the latter's brinkmanship is a necessary step in filling this gap. Apart from contributing to the literature, the findings of this study will have important theoretical and policy implications since there has been a long-standing debate as to whether coercion or engagement is the most effective strategy for changing the North's conflictual behavior.

Research Methods

The study employs the case study of qualitative research method. Gerring (2004) defines the case study "as an intensive study of a single unit with an aim to generalize across a larger set of units" (p. 341). The case study method is distinguished from all other methods by its reliance on covariation. As the purpose of the study is to find out how and why South Korea's different policies towards North Korea caused change in the latter's brinkmanship, explanatory case study is appropriate. Explanatory case studies seek to link an event with its effects and are suitable for investigating causality. In this study the unit of analysis is North Korea's brinkmanship. The independent and dependent variables are as follows:

Independent variables

- South Korea' s policy towards North Korea
- the necessity of diversion
- human needs
- "conflict" and "competition" in decision-making
- demands for unilateral concessions
- deterrence against the US
- bad, mad and sad

Dependent variable

- North Korea's brinkmanship foreign policy

To establish variation in the independent and dependent variables, the study examines South Korea's DPRK policy in two different time-periods: during Kim Young-sam's Presidency (1993-1998) and during the Kim Dae-jung (1998-2003) and Roh Moo-hyun (2003-2008) administrations. The first period was marked by coercion/conditional engagement policy towards North Korea whereas the Sunshine Policy's unconditional engagement dominated the second period. A change is expected to be seen in the dependent variable when the independent variable varies. This change and factors leading to it are observed through the method of process tracing.

George and Bennett (2005) defined process tracing as the "method that attempts to identify the intervening causal process - the causal chain and causal mechanism - between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable" (p. 206). Process tracing, to reiterate, is an analytic tool for drawing descriptive and causal inferences from diagnostic pieces of evidence - often understood as part of a temporal sequence of events or phenomena (Collier, 2011). Process tracing identifies causal mechanisms that connect causes and effects. Process tracing is especially useful when judging competing

explanations and making inferences about which alternative explanations are more convincing, in what ways, and to what degree (Bennett, 2010).

Data and Case Selection

Case study uses multiple sources of data. For this study, there is a wide variety of sources available for analysis. This includes books from university presses, scholarly articles in peer-reviewed journals as well as resource archives, white papers, reports, documents, statistics, analyses by Ministry of Unification of the Republic of Korea, Korea Institute of National Unification, Korea Institute for International Economic Policy, Korea Economic Institute of America, Korea Institute for Defense Analyses, the National Committee on North Korea, US Korea Institute at SAIS.

Dubbed the "Hermit Kingdom", North Korea is widely considered to be one of the most secretive societies in the world (BBC, 2013). This has created significant difficulties in understanding the DPRK's foreign policy motives. Moreover, the intentions of South Korea, the US and other powers when dealing with North Korea is not clear either. This problem of secrecy and non-transparency can be partly resolved by the Wikileaks' release of the US State Department diplomatic cables and Congressional Research Service's confidential reports.

There are several reasons for choosing to analyze the North Korean brinkmanship during the periods of Kim Young-sam administration on the one hand and the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun administrations on the other hand. First, during Kim Young-sam's term of office, North Korea was undergoing a leadership transition. Kim Il-sung died in 1994, shortly before the planned commencement of inter-Korean summit (Park, 1994). Kim Jong-il succeeded his father as the supreme leader of the DPRK. The power transition and subsequent consolidation coincided with the breakout of the devastating famine in 1994 which lasted until 1998 killing somewhere between 2.8 - 3.5 million people (Noland,

Robinson & Wang, 2001). Some of the explanations for North Korea's brinkmanship, such as diversion and human needs, suggest an increase in the DPRK's provocations during this period.

Second, during the Kim Dae-jung administration a very timely reversal occurred in South Korea's DPRK policy. The former opposition leader announced his intention to end the decades-old hostility and distrust between the two Koreas. The left-wing government began to actively promote North-South economic cooperation and exchanges on the principle of the separation of economics and politics, thus delivering badly-needed food aid to North Korea. A groundbreaking North-South summit finally took place in 2000. The Roh Moo-hyun administration continued the conciliatory policy of its predecessor. The humanitarian aid toward the North nearly tripled between 2003 and 2008 (MOU, 2008). In 2007, the two Koreas held their second summit. The unprecedented inter-Korean exchanges and huge amounts of aid pumped into the North must have convinced Pyongyang to be friendlier, question the necessity of provocations, as the logic of some of the explanations for brinkmanship assumes.

Third, during the two periods there were significant fluctuations in North Korea policies of South Korea and the US. The Clinton administration pursued engagement towards the DPRK in contrast to Kim Young-sam's relatively hard-line policy. The US maintained its soft stance during the first two years of the Sunshine Policy (Cho, 2010). Between 1998 and 2000, during the Clinton administration, there was significant progress in both inter-Korean relations and the US–North Korean relations in parallel. On the other hand, the US adopted a tough stance on North Korea during the Bush administration. US–North Korean relations returned to the pattern of the Cold War structure. The divergence between South Korea's Sunshine Policy and US hawkish approach remained until Roh Moo-hyun's end of term as ROK President.

The selection of these two periods will not only allow to test the argument and hypothesis proposed by this study but also the different existing explanations for North Korea's brinkmanship.

Concepts and Measurement

This study has three main concepts: coercion, engagement, and brinkmanship. Alexander George described *coercion* as a political-diplomatic strategy that aims to influence an adversary's will or incentive structure (Levy, 2008). It is a strategy that combines threats of force, and, if necessary, the limited and selective use of force in discrete and controlled increments, in a bargaining strategy that includes positive inducements. The aim is to induce an adversary to comply with one's demands, or to negotiate the most favorable compromise possible, while simultaneously managing the crisis to prevent unwanted military escalation.

Coercive diplomacy differs from deterrence (Levy, 2008). Deterrence invokes threats to dissuade an adversary from initiating an undesired action, while coercive diplomacy is a response to an action that has already been taken. George also distinguished coercion from compellence in two ways. First, coercive diplomacy can include positive inducements and accommodation as well as coercive threats. Second, George considered coercion a "defensive strategy that is employed to deal with the efforts of an adversary to change a status quo situation in his own favor," by persuading the adversary to stop what it is doing or to undo what it has done.

In contrast to the coercive strategies of deterrence and compellence, *engagement* is a strategy whose function is to defuse a potentially dangerous situation not through threats but through incentives (Kahler & Kastner, 2006). The distinguishing feature of engagement is the idea that positive inducements and the extension of benefits, rather than the promise of harm or the imposition of current costs, can either produce a change in the adversary's actions or transform the target state by creating new interests in the long run. The logic of engagement

with a certain target state, addressing that state's outward-looking grand strategy, lies in facilitating the structure of the positive inducement of improved international relations and in strengthening the target state's domestic forces who hold internationalizing identities and values. Within this broad approach to engagement are two variants: conditional engagement and unconditional engagement.

Unconditional engagement uses available incentives whose cumulative effects ultimately transform the target state's policy preferences as well as its behavior. According to Haass and O'Sullivan (2000), unconditional engagement proceeds "without explicit agreement" that a reciprocal act will follow. Because it is necessarily a long-term strategy, unconditional engagement is politically vulnerable in the sense that it may not be accompanied in the short run by concessions.

Conditional engagement is accompanied by specific conditions and corresponding incentives that may affect the target state's calculations about cost and benefit (Kahler & Kastner, 2009). Conditional engagement uses give and take practices, and thus it necessarily involves negotiation. It is a model of engagement with negotiation (Kim & Kang, 2009). Conditional engagement involves a sequence wherein the engaging state would offer incentives in phases in response to the target state's cooperative acts.

Brinkmanship is the art or practice of pushing a dangerous situation or confrontation to the limit of safety especially to force a desired outcome (Schelling, 1980). Brinkmanship does not have to be war, it seeks any outcome that is mutually harmful. Brinkmanship involves getting onto the slope where one may fall in spite of his own best efforts to save himself, dragging his adversary with him. Brinkmanship is thus the deliberate creation of a recognizable risk of war, a risk that one does not completely control. It is the tactic of deliberately letting the situation get somewhat out of hand just because its being out of hand may be intolerable to the party and force his accommodation. It means harassing and

intimidating an adversary by exposing him to a shared risk or deterring him by showing that if he makes a contrary move he may disturb us so that we slip over the brink whether we want to or not, carrying him with us.

Official government documents, reports and statistics are used to measure South Korea's coercion and engagement policies (economic cooperation, humanitarian aid, socio-cultural exchanges). To measure changes in North Korea's brinkmanship, "North Korean Provocative Actions, 1950 - 2007", a report by the Congressional Research Service is used. In this report, the list of events provides information on instances of North Korean provocative actions between 1950 and 2007. Under the CRS definition, provocation includes armed invasion; border violations; infiltration of armed saboteurs and spies; hijacking; kidnaping; terrorism (including assassination and bombing); threats/intimidation against political leaders, media personnel, and institutions; incitement aimed at the overthrow of the South Korean government; actions undertaken to impede progress in major negotiations; and tests of ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons.

In addition to the three concepts described above, diversion, conflict in decision-making process, loyalty competition, demands for unilateral concessions, deterrence against the US, human needs, and bad, mad and sad are concepts proposed by the alternative hypotheses. With respect to *diversion*, Bodin (1955) notes that "the best way of preserving a state, and guaranteeing it against sedition, rebellion, and civil war is to keep the subjects in amity one with another, and to this end, to find an enemy against whom they can make common cause" (p. 168). Wright (1965) argues that war is a "necessary or convenient means to establish, maintain, or expand the power of a government, party, or class within a state" (p. 727). The core rally-round-the-flag hypothesis is that when the nation is involved in international conflict, the public will rally to support the national leadership (Chapman & Reiter, 2004). Simple patriotism has been identified as driving the rally effect. During crises,

individuals tend to raise their assessments of social institutions, such as the economy, which in turn raises their assessments of leadership performance. Since diversion is motivated by political instability and domestic hardship, it can be measured by the WGI's Political Instability/Absence of Violence indicator and North Korea's economic performance from 1993 to 2008.

Max-Neef (1991) distinguishes *human needs* from satisfiers of those needs. He describes human needs as stemming from the condition of being human, few and finite. Max-Neef argues that human needs must be understood as a system: that is, all human needs are interrelated and interactive. With the sole exception of the need of subsistence, that is, to remain alive, no hierarchies exist within the system. On the other hand, Maslow (1943) and Doyal and Gough (1984) consider physiological needs such as food, water, clothing and shelter as the most basic and urgent human needs. In North Korea, the state fails to meet even the most basic needs of its population, let alone protection, participation, self-actualization and freedom (Cho et al., 2009). Therefore, human needs can be measured by the DPRK's economic performance from 1993 to 2008.

In relation to *"conflict" in decision-making process*, Mansourov (1997) notes that the DPRK has a highly compartmentalized and rigidly hierarchical institutional structure. Dr. Steven Linton (as cited in Mansurov, 1997, p. 223), states that "North Korean society often evokes the image of a bicycle wheel with thin spokes radiating out from a small hub at the center and extending all the way out to a narrow rim." According to Mansurov, there appear to be relatively few formal lateral connections between the "spokes". On the one hand, the DPRK has a clear chain of command and a concentrated leadership structure. On the other hand, decisions do not come quickly and easily or in the most efficient form due to lack of consultations across the bureaucratic lines. Harrison (2002) asserts that there is a conflict between "hawks" and "doves" in the DPRK over how to handle the nuclear crisis. The

"competition" model posits that differences among North Korean policy-making groups are nothing but "a loyalty competition for winning recognition from its top leader" (Kim & Choy, 2012) This model is similar to the monolithic model (one-man dictatorship, lack of a dynamic process of decision-making) in that the two acknowledge the notion that North Korea is a monolithic society and reject the notion of fragmentation between hard-liners and soft-liners. To measure the likelihood of provocations because of "conflict" and "competition" among the bureaucracy, the study utilizes sources on internal dynamics, civil-military-party relations and military-first policy in North Korea from 1993 to 2008.

Snyder (2001) regards *demands for unilateral concessions* in negotiations as an initial component of North Korea's brinkmanship. It involves mixing of tactics such as making unconditional demands, bluster, bluff, threat, stalling, manufacturing deadlines and even withdrawing from the negotiations to produce the effect of crisis or to create perception that penalties may accompany delay in responding to North Korean demands. The North Korean initial position prior to negotiations has been described by one negotiator as "If you don't accept our proposal, we will walk out" or "We accept your proposal but you do X first" , a combination of demand for a unilateral concession and threat to break off a negotiation (Snyder, 2001, p. 118). To measure actions undertaken to impede progress in major negotiations, "North Korean Provocative Actions, 1950 - 2007" CRS Report is used.

Deterrence theory is usually using threats to discourage an adversary from taking an unwanted action (Roehrig, 2006). The defender's threat must be sufficient to raise the cost of the challenger's action to a level that is unacceptable and will convince the challenger to refrain from the action. Deterrence is different from defense inasmuch as it attempts to prevent an attack from occurring. Asymmetrical deterrence works with relatively small states using their limited resources to hold off larger powers. With even a relatively small nuclear arsenal, it is possible for otherwise weak conventional state to hold at bay a much more

powerful adversary. North Korea uses nuclear weapons to deter the US from repelling its aggressive behavior and to overcome the conventional superiority of the US. To measure the credibility of this concept, the study assesses US policies towards the North from 1993 to 2008.

The *bad, mad and sad theory* assumes that the DPRK is a "garrison state" and the most militarized society on Earth ready to make war upon its neighbors, even attack the US itself, and in pursuit of these offensive aims, it is constantly engaged in an arms buildup (Smith, 2000). The DPRK regime is immoral, diverting resources to the military instead of its population which is suffering from severe food shortages. North Korea extorts aid from the US, engages in blackmailing and provocative behavior. It is unpredictable in domestic and foreign policy behavior. Terrible, inexplicable things "beyond the pale of normal human existence" occur inside North Korea such as cannibalism and human rights violations of immense magnitudes. Measuring the bad, mad and sad concept requires an overall assessment of North Korea's internal and external conditions like its economic situation and foreign relations from 1993 to 2008.

Chapter Three

North Korea's Brinkmanship during the Kim Young-sam government and the Sunshine period

Introduction

The chapter examines North Korea's brinkmanship in two different periods of inter-Korean bilateral relationship. The first section analyzes the Kim Young-sam administration's policy towards the North and the latter's response and North Korea's brinkmanship during the Sunshine period. This section tests the study's hypothesis against available empirical evidence. The second section empirically tests the counter-hypotheses to establish which alternative explanations are more convincing, in what ways, and to what extent. The concluding section summarizes the main findings.

Kim Young-sam's DPRK Policy and Pyongyang's Response

During the Presidency of Kim Young-sam (1993-1998) South Korea did not implement a consistent policy towards North Korea (Y. Kim, 1999). The Kim Young-sam government was regularly alternating its North Korea policy between engagement and coercion, "idealistic" and "realistic" approaches (Han, 2011; Shinn & Sutter, 1994). Public opinion in South Korea is cited as a critical factor in these alterations (Y. Kim, 1999; Shinn & Sutter, 1994). The government's inconsistency was particularly pronounced in its reactions to moves the US made towards Pyongyang (Yoon, 1996). When Washington took a tough stand on North Korea with threats of economic sanctions and possible military strikes, Seoul counseled caution. On the other hand, when Washington opted for negotiations, Seoul reproved the US for being too soft and lenient towards the North, confounding the American leadership about the real intentions of the Kim Young-sam government. Nonetheless, Kim Young-sam made reciprocity the cornerstone of his North Korea policy and his prefered form of engagement was conditional (Shinn & Sutter, 1994).

In the first 16 days of his office, Kim Young-sam adopted a dovish approach towards the DPRK (Kim, 1999). On March 12, 1993 North Korea declared that it was withdrawing from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to defend its own interests and sovereignty. South Korea called on North Korea not to leave the NPT, saying that the South is prepared to take stern measures against any provocations (KJDA, 1993). Kim Young-sam announced that no economic incentives would be offered until Pyongyang fulfilled the Non-Proliferation Treaty obligations. The ROK government also called on the US not to make concessions in high-level talks with North Korea (KJDA, 1993). The North Korean response was relatively soft. In 1993, it made only one provocative statement when vice Marshal Choe Kwang, Chief of the General Staff of the North Korean military, declared at a major state function that the military "has the heavy and honorable task of re-unifying the fatherland with guns in the nineties without fail" (Fischer, 2007, p.11).

Between 1994 and 1995, the Kim Young-sam administration reversed its hard-line policy into a soft one (Kim, 1999). A key reason for this reversal were the US-North Korea nuclear negotiations. Although there was no tangible progress in resolving the nuclear issue, the Kim Young-sam government abandoned its issue-linkage policy. The ROK and DPRK agreed to hold a North-South summit from July 25 to 27 which did not take place because of Kim Il-sung's death. In August 1994, Kim Young-sam and US President Bill Clinton reached a full agreement that both countries will provide North Korea with light-water nuclear reactors, provided that Pyongyang guarantees transparency of its nuclear history (KJDA, 1994). From late October of 1994, South Korea began to pursue a massive investment program towards the North (Kim, 1999). This dovish policy culminated in the shipment of 50,000 tons of rice to the North on June 25, 1995. Moreover, on June 7, 1995 North Korea virtually agreed to receive South Korean-made light-water nuclear reactors in its talks with the United States in Kuala Lumpur (KJDA, 1995).

However, Pyongyang "slapped Seoul for doing good" (Kim, 1999). North Korean soldiers threatened the captain of the South Korean vessel with harm in the North Korean port of Chongjin unless he hoisted the North Korean flag while the vessel was there to deliver the South Korean humanitarian rice shipment to the North (Fischer, 2007). North Korea said that it would boycott inter-Korean talks scheduled in Beijing on August 10 (KJDA, 1995). Pyongyang charged the crew of a South Korean ship delivering rice engaged in espionage activities at the port of Chongjin. Kim Young-sam indicated South Korea will provide more rice aid to North Korea and will continue to take other conciliatory moves toward the North despite the latest hitches in inter-Korean relations.

In 1994, North Korea made two provocations (Fischer, 2007): in March, for the first time in more than two decades, North Korea issued a threat of war in an inter-Korean meeting in Panmunjom. In response to Seoul's chief delegate mentioning the possibility of UN sanctions against the North for its refusal to accept full international nuclear inspections, Pyongyang's chief delegate reportedly replied: "Seoul is not far away from here. If a war breaks out, Seoul will turn into a sea of fire." In June of the same year, North Korea attempted to abduct a South Korean professor, Lee Jinsang, from an Ethiopian university in Addis Ababa.

Inter-Korean relations deteriorated again between 1995 and 1996 (Kim, 1999). The Kim Young-sam administration changed its course with regard to North Korea policy from dovish to hawkish. The South Korean government decided not to consider any food aid to Pyongyang and requested cooperation from Washington and Tokyo to abstain from further humanitarian aid to North Korea. In October 1995, Kim Young-sam expressed strong displeasure with Japanese moves to improve relations with North Korea ahead of South Korea, warning that they could hamper inter-Korean rapprochement (KJDA, 1995). In 1995,

North Korea made six provocations in the midst of the South's hawkish policy (Fischer, 2007).

In 1996, the ROK government re-adopted its soft-line approach towards the North. By that time the food shortage in flood-stricken North Korea had worsened and, without continued rice aid, would be placed in even more severe condition (KJDA, 1996). In February, the US State Department announced that the US will provide $2 million in indirect aid through the UN World Food Program (WFP) to North Korea (KJDA, 1996). On April 16, Kim Young-sam and Bill Clinton suggested the four-party talks proposal in a joint US-ROK statement after the summit at Jeju Island (Kim, 1999). First, Clinton pledged the steadfast US commitment to the security of the ROK and reaffirmed the strength of the US-Korea security alliance (MOU, 1996). Second, both Presidents agreed that the present Armistice Agreement should be maintained until it is succeeded by a permanent peace arrangement. Third, both Presidents agreed that South and North Korea should take the lead in a renewed search for a permanent peace arrangement, and that separate negotiations between the US and North Korea on peace-related issues cannot be considered.

Fourth, Kim affirmed that the Republic of Korea is willing to meet without any precondition at the governmental level with representatives of the North; Clinton affirmed that the US is prepared to play an active and cooperative role in support of this effort; and both Presidents agreed that China's cooperation on this matter would be extremely helpful (MOU, 1996). Fifth, the two Presidents proposed to convene Four-Party Talks among representatives of South Korea, North Korea, the US, and China as soon as possible. Sixth, the two Presidents agreed that this peace process should also address a wide range of tension-reducing measures. Food aid and the lifting of the US trade embargo were linked to Pyongyang's acceptance of the proposal. North Korea was reluctant to accept the proposal

and made six provocations in 1996, mainly border violations and armed infiltrations (Fischer, 2007).

For the first time, Kim Young-sam did not reverse his North Korea policy (Kim, 1999). On June 26, 1997, Kim Young-sam and Bill Clinton agreed in New York to move fast on North Korea's virtual acceptance of their proposal for four-party Korean peace talks and to continue to participate in international relief agencies' efforts to provide food aid to North Korea (KJDA, 1997). In August 1997, DPRK leader Kim Jong-il said that North Korea wanted a peace treaty and improved relations with the US saying "we do not want to regard the US as an inveterate enemy but hope for normalized relations between the DPRK and the US" (p. 233). North Korea also tried to normalize relations with Japan and received food aid from the US and South Korea. Despite the conciliatory approach, North Korea made ten provocations against the South in 1997 (Fischer, 2007).

Overall, North Korea made 25 provocations against South Korea during the Presidency of Kim Young-sam (Fischer, 2007), while the humanitarian aid from the South to the North totalled $284 million (MOU, 2008). It is evident from the above-presented that North Korea increased its provocations when South Korea adopted a flexible approach. The distinguishing feature of North Korean provocations in this period is incitement aimed at the overthrow of the South Korean government. In June 1997, North Korea's ruling party organ, Nodong Sinmun, incited "pro-democratic" South Koreans to "overthrow" South Korea's Kim Young-sam government as "an urgent requirement" in a patriotic, anti-fascist struggle for "independence, democracy, and reunification" (Fischer, 2007). In November of the same year, North Korea threatened to "demolish" South Korea's state-run Korean Broadcasting System (KBS) alleged to be "a mouthpiece of fascist dictatorship" (p. 15).

North Korea's Brinkmanship during the Sunshine period

The election of Kim Dae-jung to South Korea's Presidency in 1998 marked the beginning of a new era in inter-Korean relations. Under the new "progressive" administration (1998-2003), South Korea launched a policy of unconditional engagement towards North Korea (Kim & Kang, 2009), officially called "Reconciliation and Cooperation Policy", commonly known as the Sunshine Policy[2]. The policy had three basic principles: no tolerance of armed provocation that would destroy peace on the Korean Peninsula; elimination of achieving unification through a unilateral takeover or absorption; active promotion of reconciliation and cooperation between the two Koreas (MOU, 2001).

Apart from the "basic principles," the administration identified two other core policy components (Levin & Han, 2002). One was the separation of politics and economics. Formally, this meant allowing South Korea's private sector greater leeway in making its own decisions concerning trade and investment with the North and easing restrictions that hindered inter-Korean business, while limiting the government's role primarily to matters of humanitarian and other official assistance. In practice, it meant not holding South Korean economic interactions with the North hostage to good North Korean behavior in other areas. In emphasizing the separation of politics and economics, the administration understood North Korea's dire economic situation and greater potential receptivity to economic, rather than political, inducements. Interestingly, however, administration officials explained and rationalized the importance of separating economics and politics more in terms of its effect in fostering change inside North Korea itself.

The other core policy component concerns the requirement for reciprocity (Levin & Han, 2002; Shinn, 2001). In the beginning, the administration took "reciprocity" literally to

[2] The name of Kim Dae-jung's North Korea policy was taken from an Aesop fable which depicted how sunshine was more successful in getting a stranger to take off his coat than a strong wind (Kim, 1998).

mean a mutual process of "give and take." Both Koreas would "promote mutual benefits" in inter-Korean relations by respecting each other's opinion and allowing each to gain something from the interactions. However, this was another area where theory and practice did not meet. When the administration tried to apply the principle two months after its inauguration by requesting the establishment of a reunion center for families separated since the Korean War in exchange for South Korean fertilizer assistance, the North Koreans denounced their southern counterparts as "horse traders" and cut off all interactions.

Although the administration stuck to its strict quid pro quo position for another year, it eventually dropped this demand and introduced a new notion of "flexible reciprocity" (Levin & Han, 2002). By this it meant not a strict quid pro quo or even a simultaneous process of "give and take." Rather, it meant a "flexible, relative, and time-differential" approach in which the ROK, as the stronger "elder brother," would be patient and allow North Korea to reciprocate South Korean measures at an undetermined time, and in some undetermined way, in the future. Administration leaders further differentiated between humanitarian assistance, which the government would provide without any reciprocal requests at all, and government-to-government economic cooperation in areas like building social infrastructure, for which "flexible reciprocity" would apply. In many regards, the Sunshine Policy was in a stark contrast to the containment and reciprocity-oriented policy pursued by the Kim Young-sam administration.

Several assumptions underpinned the Sunshine Policy (Shinn, 2001). First was President Kim's overarching notion that there is an emergent need to help ease beleaguered Pyongyang's concerns about domestic and external uncertainties, which might cause the North to lash out in desperation. Second, peace and stability were essential to Seoul's effort to attract foreign investment and revive its economy. Third, a stable coexistence would enable the North to creatively adjust to the emerging situation without fear of being

unraveled. Lastly, the Cold War-derived culture of confrontation would gradually dissipate to minimize the chances of renewed hostilities in Korea.

The successor government of Roh Moo-hyun (2003-2008) continued and expanded the Sunshine Policy it inherited (C. Kim, 2005; H. Kim, 2006). Officially known as the "Policy of Peace and Prosperity", Roh Moo-hyun's North Korea policy had two goals: the promotion of peace on the Korean Peninsula, and the pursuit of mutual prosperity for North and South Korea and contribution to prosperity in Northeast Asia (MOU, 2005). To accomplish these goals, the Policy of Peace and Prosperity set four principles: resolve disputes through dialogue; seek mutual understanding and reciprocity; promote international cooperation based on the principle of "parties directly concerned"; form policies reflecting the will of the people.

Both Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun reasoned that by changing the rules of the game and adopting a liberal approach based on engagement, they would decrease the possibility of conflict and enhance inter-Korean relations (Levkowitz, 2008). In order to change North Korea's approach to inter-Korean relations, South Korea decided to pursue a different new strategy in the hope that it would lead to an incremental change in the North's attitudes. Kim and Roh pursued their policy, even when confronted repeatedly by North Korean brinkmanship, arguing that it would take time for the new approach to penetrate the North's worldview and lead to alterations in its policies.

The Sunshine Policy led to an unprecedented levels of exchanges between the two Koreas. In June 2000, the historic first North-South summit was held in Pyongyang (Moon, 2000). It was followed by a second inter-Korean summit in October 2007 (Noland, 2007). In November 1998, the Mt. Geumgang tourism project was launched attracting 1,530,090 visitors as of June, 2007 (MOU, 2007). The construction of the Gaeseong Industrial Complex began in 2003 and ended in 2007 (MOU, 2007). The amount of humanitarian aid towards the

North during the Kim and Roh administrations was $690 million and $1,830 million respectively (MOU, 2008).The South-North bilateral trade reached $2 billion during the Kim Dae-jung administration and $4.7 billion during the Roh Moo-hyun administration. A total of 41,750 people made South-North social and cultural exchange visits between 2000 and 2007 (MOU, 2007). More than 5,000 and 13,000 persons participated in family reunions during the Kim and Roh administrations respectively.

The opaque nature of North Korea's intentions led to speculations about Pyongyang's diplomatic opening (Manyin, 2002). Some opined that it was a sign that Kim Jong-il had changed his stripes, deciding to adopt a more cooperative posture and possibly reform the faltering North Korean economy. Others warned that the North's actions were merely tactics to obtain economic concessions from South Korea and its allies, thereby propping up North Korea's economy, rearming its deteriorating conventional military, and preserving the power of its communist elite. Another possibility was that the North Korean ruling elite was divided, with some reformers favoring a greater openness, and other interests - such as the Korean People's Army - opposing it. In any event, North Korea largely succeeded in steering the North-South dialogue toward discussions over economic assistance and away from discussions over military confidence-building measures and internal economic reforms.

Kim Dae-jung's and Roh Moo-hyun's hopes that unconditional engagement would change North Korea's behavior vanished into thin air. North Korea did not give up its brinkmanship strategy. The adoption of conciliatory approach and abandonment of tit-for-tat reciprocity fostered Pyongyang's brinkmanship both quantitatively and qualitatively[3]. During the Kim Dae-jung administration, North Korea made 37 provocations against the South and

[3] During Kim Young-sam's term in office, North Korea's provocations were predominantly border violations, infiltrations, threats/intimidations against political leaders, media personnel, and institutions, and incitement aimed at the overthrow of the South Korean government.

its allies (Fischer, 2007). Among them were the test-firing of a 3-stage Taepodong-1 missile in an arc over Japan in August 1998, the First Naval Battle of Yeonpyeong on June 15, 1999, the unilateral declaration of new navigation "zones and waterways" in the Yellow Sea in disputed waters near the Northern Limit Line (NLL) in March 2000, 8 naval infiltrations in 2001 and the Second Naval Battle of Yeonpyeong on June 29, 2002.

During the Roh Moo-hyun administration, North Korea made 49 provocative actions (Fischer, 2007). The most important provocations include North Korea's eventual withdrawal from the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the test-firing of a short-range, anti-ship missile into the Sea of Japan, interception of a US Air Force reconnaissance plane in international airspace over the Sea of Japan - all in 2003, two naval incursions in 2004, the test-firing of a short-range missile into the Sea of Japan, the resumption of construction of a 50,000-kilowatt reactor in Yongbyon and a 200,000-kilowatt one in Thaechon in 2005, test-firings of missiles into the Sea of Japan, including a long-range Taepodong-2, the first underground nuclear test in (October 9) 2006.

The causal mechanisms connecting the Sunshine Policy and North Korea's increased brinkmanship are South Korea's reluctance to retaliate, silence on the North's human rights record and the weakening of US-ROK alliance. During earlier presidencies, the ROK reacted severely to any provocation from the North Korean regime, and such provocations were harshly criticised and condemned (Levkowitz, 2008). They were seen as part of a zero-sum game, that is, unless the South responded, any incident would be considered as a victory for the North. Since 1998, this almost automatic reaction had changed. Although one of main principles of the Sunshine Policy was the non-tolerance of provocations, the Kim and Roh administrations chose to overlook North Korea's provocations and "incidents."

After a submarine infiltration into South Korean territorial waters 1998, the ROK government did not retaliate arguing that it was more of an intelligence-gathering activity

than a military provocation and did not lead to civilian deaths or injuries (K. S. Kim, 1998). Kim Dae-jung prevented the Joint Chiefs of Staff from making a statement because he wished to handle the issue quietly and cautiously and to return the submarine and its crew to North Korea as a humanitarian gesture (Levkowitz, 2008). Repeated missile firings in 1998 did not alter South Korea's stance either. Park Sung-hoon, deputy minister for unification policy, said: "The missile incident is expected to have a negative impact on our government's promotion of inter-Korean reconciliation and cooperation … but the government is not considering retaliating by suspending the tourism project or delaying its pace" (Levkowitz, 2008, p. 131-132). Kim Dae-jung even tried to silence domestic criticism of North Korea (Manyin, 2002). For instance, Hwang Jang-yop, the highest-ranking North Korean ever to defect to South Korea, accused the South Korean government of threatening to evict him from a protected "safe house" in order to stop him from criticizing North Korea and Kim Dae-jung's Sunshine Policy.

The Roh administration dealt with DPRK's provocations in the same manner as its predecessor even when South Korean public opinion polls demanded a harsher stance towards the DPRK, and ignored US and Japanese demands for a firmer reaction against North Korean provocations (Levkowitz, 2008). In a few cases, the administration did not accept US intelligence evaluation of the DPRK, considering reports in the US and Japanese press that a North Korean missile launch was imminent as unreliable. When North Korea conducted its first nuclear test in 2006, the South Korean government vowed to support the UNSC resolution and called for Pyongyang to return to the Six-Party Talks, but also said it will not suspend cooperation with North Korea on the Gaeseong Industrial Park and the Mt. Kumgang tourism site (Chanlett-Avery & Squassoni, 2006).

Despite pressure from the Bush administration following the test, South Korea declined to join the US-led Proliferation Security Initiative (Cheon, 2008). Park In-kook,

deputy minister for policy planning and international organizations, expressed the official position of the South Korean government regarding the PSI:

> The South Korean government formally supports the goals and principles of the PSI, but will not officially join the US-led plan due to its 'special situation' vis-à-vis the North.…The punitive measures around the waters of the peninsula will abide by an inter-Korean maritime agreement and the PSI participation in the rest of the areas will be dependent upon our own judgment in accordance with certain cases. This concurs with the operation principles of PSI. (Cheon, 2008, p. 40)

Alongside provocations, South Korea ignored social and human rights issues in North Korea (Lee, 2010). Despite gruesome violations and no tangible improvement of the human rights situation in the North (Choi, Suh, Jhe, Lee, Kim 1999, 2000; Kim, Lee & Lim, 2007; Lee, Choi, Lim & Kim 2005, 2006, 2008; Suh et al., 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004), human Rights issues did not feature in the official declarations following the 2000 and 2007 inter-Korean summits (Levkowitz, 2008). Bad news about the North Korean leadership, refugees, human rights violations, or other illegalities was downplayed or barely covered in the South Korean vernacular press (Snyder, 2004). The ROK did not even raise the issue of its 487 abducted citizens in North Korea (SSRC, 2001). South Korea was also reluctant to support UN resolutions on North Korea's human rights violations. Although the UN Human Rights Commission had adopted a resolution on the communist state every year since 2003, South Korea had either abstained or was absent from the voting sessions (The Korea Herald, 2010).

The Sunshine Policy also lead to a divergence between the ROK and US. Kim Dae-jung favored engagement versus regime change, exclusion of North Korea from the "Axis of Evil" and opposed sanctions (Levkowitz, 2008). President Kim urged the United States and Japan to normalize their relations with North Korea, not minding the absence of parallel progress in inter-Korean relations (Shinn, 2001). In March 2001, Kim told visiting US

officials and the administration that he is ready to sign a peace "declaration" with Kim Jong-il even if the North does not pull its army back from the DMZ, or make progress on the missile deal with Washington (SSRC, 2001). A media research poll in June 2002 indicated that 62% of South Koreans were unfavorable towards the US (SSRC, 2002).

Anti-Americanism significantly rose during the Presidency of Roh Moo-hyun (Manyin, 2003; Chanlett-Avery, Manyin & Fischer, 2006). President Roh criticized the Bush Administration for not negotiating with North Korea. He called for "modernizing" the US-ROK alliance to make South Korea a more equal partner in the relationship. He demanded a renegotiation of the US-South Korea Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). A poll of 800 adults found 39% call US biggest threat to peace in Korea, 33% North Korea (SSRC, 2004). The cooling of US-ROK relations resonated with the Kim Jong-il regime. In 2003, a North Korean diplomat was quoted in a Hong Kong newspaper as saying that, if the North was attacked by the US, it would retaliate against the US but would not attack South Korea (Fischer, 2007).

South Korea's disregard of the North's armed provocations, the human rights record, and tensions in ROK-US relations played into the hands of North Korea giving Pyongyang the green light to be increasingly belligerent and less cooperative. This, in turn, affirms the study's hypothesis (*Hypothesis 1*), that is conciliatory approach fostered DPRK's brinkmanship.

Alternative Explanations

Diversion

According to the diversionary theory, North Korea made its provocations to divert the public's attention from domestic hardship. This explanation seems to be consistent with the empirical evidence. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Socialist bloc, North Korea found itself in a miserable situation. Through the 1980s, North Korea had become

dangerously reliant on imports, subsidies and direct aid from the Soviet Union (Habib, 2011). Subsidised trade involved an exchange in which the Soviet Union would provide manufactured goods, fuel and transportation equipment in exchange for rolled ferrous metals, oil and substandard North Korean value-added products. In total, two-way trade with the Soviet Union accounted for between 50 and 60% of North Korea's total trade volume. After 1991, the economy could no longer operate at its former level of complexity without an enormous output of energy and resources from the Soviet Union.

The first signs of food shortages in the DPRK appeared to the outside world in the late 1980s as the country's Public Distribution System or food rationing system began to falter (Lee, 2005). The agricultural system in North Korea essentially collapsed in the 1990s, with severe economic and social repercussions throughout the country (Kang, 2008). Food shortages culminated in the breakout of a devastating famine in 1994 which lasted until 1998. Different estimates put the death toll between 270.000 and up to 3.5 million (Lee, 2005; Noland, Robinson & Wang, 2001; Noland, 2007).

Coupled with Kim Il-sung's death and leadership transition in the same year, the famine posed an unprecedented challenge to the regime stability. In 1996, a growing number of food refugees travelled domestically without official permission and even fled into China, raising great security concerns for the government (Lee, 2005). In December, for instance, Kim Jong-il warned that such population movement was causing chaos and disorder in the country, which the government was ordered to immediately take all necessary actions to prevent.

The severe economic conditions indicate that North Korea could provoke or escalate crises in order to divert the population's attention from the ongoing disaster. It should be noted, however, that starving people are more likely to be obsessed with food and basic needs rather than seek to topple the dictatorship, which is a goal of a better-off citizenry (Cho, Suh,

Lim, Kim & Park, 2009). Furthermore, in countries like North Korea the regime stability depends more on the loyalty of elites and the military (J. Kim, 2013; Lind & Byman, 2010). The DPRK is a country where the very building blocks of opposition are lacking. North Korea has no merchant or land-owning class, independent unions, or clergy. The authoritarian tools of control have made social unrest virtually impossible. The regime uses perks and rewards to co-opt military and political elites. Members of this class receive more and better food, in addition to the most desirable jobs working for the regime. During the famine, the core class was protected, so that the famine's devastation was concentrated on the people deemed least loyal. This group acquiesced to the succession of Kim Jong-il after his father's death; it kept Kim in power. Hence, diversion is a plausible but not a sufficient explanation for the pre-Sunshine period.

In order for the diversionary theory to be credible, the North Korean regime had to be unstable during the Sunshine decade. Yet, there is no evidence to indicate any sign of political instability and therefore, the necessity of diversion. The catastrophic famine was already over by 1998. Kim Jong-il had consolidated his power in 1998 with military as the most important political base supporting the regime (Park & Lee, 2005). The North Korean regime enhanced its sustainability by creating regime adaptability (Suh, 2008). North Korea was continually laboring its regime in places where the inefficient socialist regime was replaced by a new productive system. One such system was the DPRK's version of market economy through which ordinary North Koreans managed their lives (Choi et al., 2009). Overall, according to the Worldwide Governance Indicators, the North Korean regime was generally stable between 1998 and 2008 (World Bank, 2011). Hence, *Hypothesis 2* is largely disconfirmed.

Human Needs

The aforementioned information about the famine seems to support the human needs theory. From 1995 to 1997, the worst years of the famine, food production barely reached 3.54 million tons on average (Mou, 2012). This decline in yield resulted in a shortfall of an average of 1.64 million tons to the amount needed for the already-reduced ration system. The dire economic situation could trigger North Korean brinkmanship for obtaining food aid. Evidence shows, however, that the DPRK asked for food aid during the years of famine (KJDA, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997). South Korea, the US and Japan, the main providers of economic assistance, linked humanitarian aid to progress over the North's nuclear issue. Unwilling to make reciprocal gestures such as dismantling its nuclear program, North Korea denounced the politicization humanitarian aid. In April 1998, a South Korean news dispatch quoted a member of the North Korean delegation to an inter-Korean conference in Beijing as making a "provocative statement" to the effect that North Korea would rather have a "liberation war" than capitulating to the South Korean attempt to "politicize" the food-and-fertilizer aid issue (Fischer, 2007, p. 15). Its brinkmanship was, therefore, directed against the issue-linkage policy rather than seeking to extort humanitarian aid. Thus, the blackmailing for food explanation is an insufficient one for the Kim Young-sam era.

After the end of the famine and the launch of the Sunshine Policy, the DPRK economy began to show signs of stabilization. North Korea received foreign assistance worth billions of dollars with the US, South Korea, China and Japan being the major aid donors (Manyin, 2005). The national economy recorded a positive growth rate of about 2.2% on average from 2000 to 2005 although it turned to negative in 2006 and 2007 and rebounded in 2008 (Bank of Korea, 2008). From 2003 to 2010, North Korea's food production increased to an average of 4.24 million tons a year, thanks to various factors operating in the first half of the 2000s (MOU, 2012). These included favorable weather conditions, a continuous supply

of fertilizer by South Korea, agricultural assistance from the international community, along with domestic policies promoting food production. North Korea introduced some reform measures on July 1, 2002, raising wages and prices to bring the state sector into line with market valuations in the growing private sector (Lee & Yoon, 2004; Kim, 2010).

The inception of the market led to the emergence of a merchant class (Cho, Suh, Lim, Kim & Park, 2009). The class structure underwent considerable changes as well: 5-15% upper class, 30-40% middle class, 50-60% lower class in the big cities, and a small minority upper class, 20-30% middle class, 70-80% lower class in the rural areas. A 2004 nutritional survey conducted by the North Korean government and sponsored by the UN also indicated that although more than a one-third of the population is chronically malnourished and approximately one-third of North Korean mothers are malnourished and anemic, malnutrition rates have fallen significantly since the late 1990s (Manyin, 2005). Overall, while the quality of life was unbearable by Western standards, it was sufficient for the regime's durability and sustenance (Chon, Huh, Kim & Bae, 2007). Consequently, brinkmanship out of human needs is not a good explanation for the Sunshine period either, rejecting *Hypothesis 8.*

"Conflict" and "Competition"

Kim Jong-il succeeded his father as the supreme leader of the DPRK in 1994. It took, however, three years and three months for Kim Jong-il to consolidate his power (Park & Lee, 2005). At the end of 1997, Kim Jong-il was elected General Secretary of the Worker's Party of Korea. In the following September, his post of National Defense Commission Chairman was further reinforced to mark the launch of the Kim Jong-il regime (Chon, Jeung, Choi & Lee, 2009). Kim Jong-il adopted a "military-first" (Songun) policy which significantly expanded the military's role and functions. It is possible that during the process of power consolidation there were policy conflicts among the military and party. For example, on February 9, 1996, North Korean ambassador to the UN Pak Gil-yon told Japan's Kyodo news

agency that his country will not ask for more food aid because of strong opposition from its dominant military (KJDA, 1996). Therefore, the "conflict" model is a credible explanation for the pre-Sunshine period.

Regarding Songun, Kim Jong-il said:

> As long as we maintain our People's Army strong, we can reorganize the Party even if it were to collapse, but if the military were weak, we would be unable to safeguard the bounties of revolution and unable to maintain the Party. In this sense, the military is the Party and the State, as well as the people. (Jeung, 2007, p. 19)

North Korea explained her military-first politics in terms of politics that regards the military as crucially important and places priority emphasis on its reinforcement (Jrung, 2007). The military-first politics was a method of utilizing the military as Kim Jong-il's and the Party's tool for the maintenance of stable political power (Suh, 2002). It was a device designed to buttress Kim Jong-il's legitimacy and military charisma by stressing his military leadership and to inspire the military's loyalty. It also intended to seize complete control of the army.

To achieve his goals, Kim Jong-il applied carrot-and-stick tactics towards the military (Jeon, 1999). On the one hand, huge military expenditures were kept immune from the economic crisis. Kim Jong-il offered material benefits and privileges to military personnel, massively promoted the elite, elevated the relative status of military elite vis-à-vis the civilian elite, upgraded the army to a position equal to the party. On the other hand, Kim Jong-il overlapped command structures to prevent independent actions, institutionalized check-and-balance mechanisms within the army, implemented round-the-clock surveillance with extensive secret police networks, divide-and-control towards top commanders, and ideological indoctrination of the army.

With carrots Kim Jong-il earned "voluntary" loyalty from the army, while sticks served to receive "imposed" loyalty (Jeon, 1999, p. 133). Thus, it's highly unlikely that Kim

would allow loyalty competition at the expense of his regime's foreign policy goals (such as jeopardizing DPRK's efforts to receive humanitarian aid with provocations). Furthermore, the food aid could well have been for the military itself. In June 1996, Kim Young-sam said most of the 150,000 tons of rice South Korea offered North Korea were used to feed its military (KJDA, 1996). In June 1997, Kim Young-sam again said he cannot rule out the possibility that North Korea diverted part of the rice it received from South Korea in 1995 for military use (KJDA, 1997). Hence, the "competition" model is not a convincing explanation for the Kim Young-sam period.

In the Kim Jong-il era, the key figures in the regime's power base were Kim Jong-il's close associates equipped with expertise (MOU, 2012). They included Kim Jong-il's college peers, work colleagues from the Organization and Guidance Department, and those who helped secure his power succession. These associates had been alongside Kim Jong-il since the 1960s, and held key posts in the Political Bureau, Secretariat and National Defense Commission. The indicators that help to assess North Korea's power elites were the order of appearance on the leader's platform, position and title, frequency of having accompanied Kim Jong-il on his on-the-spot guidance tours, relationship to Kim Jong-il and son Kim Jong-un, etc. Among these, the most indicative was the order of appearance on the podium. Ever since North Korea promoted the military-first policy, surveys of the leader's podium at major public events clearly showed that military leaders had made remarkable ascensions in the leadership hierarchy.

"Kim Jong-il's choice of setting military values up front was a strategic decision for the survival of the system as it allowed convergence of interests between Kim Jong-il and the military elites who had interests in maintaining such a symbiotic relationship" (J. Kim, 2013, p. 96). Songun politics reduced the size of the core elites by emphasizing the role of the military and limited the number of candidates who would be the major beneficiaries. It also

increased predictability of policy direction and future rewards in exchange for political loyalty to the regime.

Kim Jong-il had succeeded in bringing the military under his control and won its loyalty. According to former secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea Hwang Jang Yop, who defected to the South in 1997 (now deceased), the DPRK regime was in no danger of collapsing for the time being because Kim Jong-il has consolidated his power by promoting only those who show unconditional loyalty to him" (Kihl, 2011). "The degree of dictatorship has become 10 times stronger than that in the era of his father (Kim Il-sung)" (p. 82). Hwang added that 20% of the country's revenues become ruling party funds that can be used freely by Kim, while 50% is used in the military, and the remaining 30% is offered for the lives of the people. Kim Jong-il also considerably limited the ability of "factionalists" to exert any serious influence on policy decision-making (Zhebin, 1995). Obviously, conflict and competition models are irrelevant for the Sunshine period. Therefore, *Hypothesis 3* and *Hypothesis 4* are largely disconfirmed.

Bad, Mad and Sad

As mentioned earlier, during the period of 1994-1997 North Korea saw economic collapse and underwent a large-scale famine. The floods of 1995 and 1996 wiped out nearly one-third of the harvest (approximately 1.5 million tons of grain), destroyed 359,936 hectares of arable lands out of a total of 650,000 hectares and most of the granaries, and devastated thousands of kilometers of roads, railroads, irrigation networks, river embankments, and hundreds of dams and bridges as well as tens of thousands of houses (Mansourov, 2007). In light of these calamities as well as international isolation and diplomatic setbacks (Oh, 1992), North Korea can be described as being both "sad" and "bad" since it failed to satisfy the most basic needs of its population. As argued above, North Korea employed brinkmanship not for receiving food aid per se but rather to receive it without making reciprocal gestures. In any

respect, North Korea cannot be deemed “mad”. On the contrary, North Korea is a rational actor as it made provocations to achieve concrete goals.

The Sunshine Policy not only provided the North with unconditional aid and economic incentives, but also a unique opportunity to come out of international isolation. With diplomatic support from Seoul, Pyongyang established normalized relations with sixteen countries and the European Union in only three years (from 2000 through 2002) (S. Kim, 2009). Within two years, Pyongyang had established diplomatic relations with all but two of the European Union member states, the EU itself, Canada, Australia, the Philippines, Brazil, New Zealand, Kuwait, Turkey; in July 2000, with Seoul’s encouragement, North Korea joined the ASEAN Regional Forum for intra-Asian security dialogue (Armstrong, 2009). The diplomatic opening enabled North Korea to receive humanitarian aid from the international community as well as from South Korean NGOs. With economic stabilisation, amicable South Korea and diversified diplomatic contacts, North Korea was not “sad” in the Sunshine period. Although North Korea was “bad” in terms of making provocations, this was not related to being “sad”. In sum, the bad, mad and sad thesis does not offer a credible explanation for North Korea’s brinkmanship in the two periods, rejecting *Hypothesis 5*.

Demands for Unilateral Concessions

Provoking or escalating crises to elicit unilateral concessions in negotiations is a widely-accepted explanation. It is also to a large extent supported by evidence. By examining North Korea’s brinkmanship from 1993 until 1998, we see that North Korea was more belligerent when South Korea had a relatively dovish approach. For example, in 1996 South Korea and the US proposed to replace the 1953 armistice treaty with a more permanent and effective peace treaty (Kim, 1999). Food aid, lifting of the US trade embargo and further rapprochement with Washington - all depended on DPRK’s acceptance of proposal. Reluctant to accept the proposal and make reciprocal gestures, North Korea responded with

several armed infiltrations, border violations and a submarine incident (Fischer, 2007). In addition, Captain Lee Chol-soo, an ex-North Korean air force pilot revealed in Seoul that, in a blitzkrieg, North Korea planned to seize Seoul within 24 hours after an initial invasion, and all of South Korea in a week (KJDA, 1996).

During the Sunshine period, North Korea engaged in bilateral and multilateral negotiations with South Korea, the US, China and Japan over its nuclear program. North Korea also made numerous provocations in this period. For instance, in March 2000, North Korea unilaterally declared new navigation "zones and waterways" in the Yellow Sea in disputed waters near the Northern Limit Line (NLL), which the United States-led United Nations Command had maintained as a de facto sea border between the two Koreas since August 30, 1953 (Fischer, 2007). North Korea threatened military action against intruders "without warnings." The provocation occurred before the North-South Korean Summit in which it received a new attention. In October 2002, North Korea warned the US that it would take unspecified "tougher counteraction" if Washington did not accept talks on the nuclear issue. North Korea frequently escalated tensions throughout 2005 when the Six-Party Talks were in progress (Chanlett-Avery et al., 2006). These provocations do not necessarily imply that concessions in negotiations is the best explanation. Some of North Korea's provocations sought to gain concessions or impede progress in negotiations whereas others did not. Nevertheless, the existence of this motivation for DPRK brinkmanship in both periods lends support to this explanation. Hence, *Hypothesis 6* is partially validated.

Deterrence Against the US

Although the deterrence against the US and especially in the form of nuclear arsenal is a reasonable argument, it is not applicable to the period of 1993-1998. During this period, the Clinton administration implemented an engagement policy towards North Korea. The US' conciliatory approach sought to persuade the DPRK to dismantle its nuclear program through

economic incentives. The dovish policy even put South Korea and the US at loggerheads as Kim Young-sam deeply feared US-DPRK "collusion" at the expense of South Korea's national interest (Armstrong, 2009). For example, the Kim Young-sam administration viewed US-North Korean negotiations over the Agreed Framework with suspicion and concern (Armstrong, 2005; Savage, 2002). In July 1993, Kim Young-sam warned the US not to be "led on" by North Korea in upcoming high-level nuclear talks (KJDA, 1993). Since the US did not conduct its own "brinkmanship", North Korean provocations as a form of deterrence become irrelevant.

From 1998 to 2000, the Clinton administration's North Korea policy was in harmony with the Sunshine Policy (Cho, 2010). With respect to Kim Dae-jung's policy, the Clinton administration stated:

> President Clinton expressed strong support for President Kim's vision of engagement and efforts toward reconciliation with the North. The United States is working to create conditions of stability by maintaining solidarity with our South Korean ally, . . . ensuring that an isolated and struggling North Korea does not opt for a military solution to its political and economic problems. (p. 99)

The US dovish policy culminated in Madeleine Albright's October 2000 visit to Pyongyang for talks to curtail North Korea's missile program (Manyin, Chanlett-Avery & Marchart, 2005). Aid to North Korea constituted approximately 6.5% of total US food aid between July 1995 and June 2001 (Manyin, 2005). Over the same period, the US donated over $4.5 billion to the World Food Program, roughly ten percent of which was designated for the WFP's relief efforts in North Korea.

However, with the advent of the Bush administration, the US reviewed its policy towards the DPRK and adopted a hard-line approach such as including North Korea in the "Axis of Evil", imposing sanctions, linking economic assistance to the nuclear and human

rights issues. In the State of the Union address, George W. Bush said: “States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world” (SSRC, 2002). There was a sharp discrepancy between the South Korean and US policies towards North Korea. In October 2002, DPRK’s head of state Kim Young-nam hinted at deterring functions of nuclear arsenal by telling the South’s Unification Minister Jeong Se-hyun that the nuclear issue is a matter between the US and the DPRK (SSRC, 2002). During the first round of Six-Party talks in August 2003, DPRK’s Kim Yong-il said: “We can dismantle our nuclear program if the US makes a switchover in its hostile policy towards us and does not pose any threat to us” (SSRC, 2003, p. 105). In 2004, DPRK Foreign Ministry spokesman remarked that the US compelled the DPRK to build nuclear deterrent (SSRC, 2004). North Korea used US’ hard-line policy as an excuse to develop nuclear weapons. Although deterrence against the US is reasonable, it was a less likely goal of the DPRK’s brinkmanship as it could alleviate the pressure from Washington with Seoul’s help (economic assistance, diplomatic backing). This largely disconfirms *Hypothesis 7*.

Concluding Remarks

During the Presidency of South Korea’s Kim Young-sam, North Korea tended to be more cooperative when Seoul adopted a hard-line approach. In the Sunshine period, North Korea responded to Seoul’s conciliatory policy with more aggressive behavior. The number and severity of the DPRK’s provocations during the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun administrations respectively was higher than during the Kim Young-sam government. The study’s hypothesis was backed by empirical evidence. South Korea’s disregard of armed provocations, indifference to the North’s human rights issues and cooling of ROK-US relations were responsible for the DPRK’s intensified brinkmanship in the Sunshine period. This is in line with the logic of tit-for-tat strategy which posits that equivalent retaliation is essential for ensuring successful cooperation.

Existing explanations for North Korea's brinkmanship offer a valuable framework for understanding various motivations behind Pyongyang's behavior. Although there is some merit in each of these explanations, they apparently show limitations when tested against empirical evidence in two different periods. A key reason for this is their over-reliance on the nature of the communist regime and underestimation of important factors like South Korea's foreign policy. Another shortcoming of the alternative hypotheses, particularly diversion, human needs, conflict and competition, and bad, mad sad, is their failure to explain the intensification of DPRK's brinkmanship in the Sunshine period when North Korea was better off and stable. Out of six contending hypotheses, only the demands for unilateral concessions managed to gain support as a viable explanation for the two periods under consideration. Yet, even this explanation itself is not flawless.

Another problem here is equifinality, that is different cases of provocation might have had different motivations. Determining the motivations of a government as opaque and secretive as North Korea is extremely difficult. Nevertheless, the available empirical evidence validates the study's argument highlighting inter-Korean relations as a cause of brinkmanship in North Korea's foreign policy. Even if the alternative explanations were true, the conciliatory approach was a necessary precondition for DPRK's brinkmanship given the aggravation of provocations in the Sunshine period.

Chapter Four

Conclusion

Findings

The study aimed at investigating how South Korean policies of coercion and engagement affect North Korea's brinkmanship foreign policy. It argued that South Korea's conciliatory approach towards North Korea fosters Pyongyang's brinkmanship. Following the logic of tit-for-tat strategy, the study hypothesized that South Korea's unconditional engagement towards North Korea is responded to with less collaboration and more confrontation. The analysis of North Korea's behavior during the Kim Young-sam government (coercion/conditional engagement) and the Sunshine period (unconditional engagement) by means of process tracing confirmed the hypothesis. Three causal mechanisms were specified to be responsible for such an outcome: South Korea's reluctance to retaliate, silence on the North's human rights violations, and the deterioration of ROK-US relations.

The study also evaluated competing explanations for North Korea's brinkmanship. Examination of temporal sequence of events during the Kim Young-sam administration lent support to the "conflict" in decision-making and demands for unilateral concessions in negotiations. The latter also emerged as the most credible, albeit flawed, alternative explanation for the Sunshine period. Yet, South Korea's North Korea policy as a cause of Pyongyang's provocative behavior is ultimately a more powerful argument as its variance better accounts for change in North Korea's brinkmanship. In terms of scholarly discussion on North Korea's brinkmanship, this provides a new potential direction for future research in addition to the essence of the DPRK regime as the dominant perspective.

Generalizability

Because causal mechanisms are operationalized in specific cases, and process tracing is a within-case method of analysis, generalization can be problematic. As this study is built on deductive reasoning, developing a hypothesis from a theory and confirming it through observation, its inferences should apply to similar cases. However, the peculiarities of the North Korean regime sets it apart from other rogue states. The findings of the study may not be applicable to other renegade regimes. Nonetheless, in terms of the theoretical debate, the findings of this study favor coercion and rigid reciprocity consistent with tit-for-tat strategy as a more viable strategy in dealing with rogue states.

Limitations

Due to temporal and spatial constraints, this study only focuses on the aforementioned three periods of inter-Korean relations. The study could present a richer picture should it include another period of South Korea's coercion or conditional engagement towards North Korea. Furthermore, the study examines changes in North Korea's brinkmanship strategy on the basis of South Korea's different policies and their relationship with US policies. Consequently, the role of regional stakeholders, particularly China and Japan, are not taken into account.

China was a key player in the Six Party talks (Manyin, Chanlett-Avery & Marchart, 2005). China earlier had been reluctant to engage in multilateral efforts to deal with North Korea and did not play a direct role in the 1994 Agreed Framework. Because China is thought to be North Korea's top trading partner and source of aid, Beijing's cooperation was considered crucial to any attempts by the international community to put economic pressure on the Pyongyang regime. Beijing reportedly feared the profoundly destabilizing effects of either a robust nuclear-armed North Korea, which could set off an arms race in the region, or

the collapse of the regime, which could send thousands of refugees over the border into China.

Japan's role was potentially critical in the crisis over North Korea's nuclear program for a number of reasons (Manyin, 2003). Most importantly, Japan promised North Korea a large-scale economic aid package to compensate for the Japanese occupation of the Korean Peninsula from 1910-1945, as much as it gave South Korea economic assistance when Tokyo and Seoul normalized relations in 1965. The assistance was to be provided after the countries agree to normalize relations, a process that Japan linked to a resolution of the nuclear issue. Japan was a significant source of North Korea's foreign exchange, by virtue of the large Japanese market for the North Korean government's suspected drug-running operations, and of remittances from Korean permanent residents in Japan. Japan is North Korea's third-largest trading partner.

The inclusion of China and Japan as key players influencing North Korea's foreign policy could help in understanding Pyongyang's brinkmanship strategy. It should be noted, however, that China and Japan pursued roughly the same policy towards the DPRK as South Korea and the US respectively. Beijing sided with Seoul and emphasized dialogue with North Korea whereas Tokyo supported the Bush administration's coercive measures.

Implications

This study suggests several implications for foreign policy towards North Korea, in particular the effort to pressure Pyongyang to change its belligerent posture and relinquish its nuclear arsenal. The analysis of North Korea has led to considerable debate among academics and policy-makers about what actions can best foster an improvement in North Korea's behavior. Scholars are divided over the most effective approach towards the DPRK. Some advocate for coercive diplomacy (Foster-Carter, 1997; Spector & Smith, 1991) while others prefer engagement in its conditional and unconditional forms (Cha, 2002, 2004; Cha & Kang,

2003, 2004). The findings of this study disconfirm theoretical arguments in favor of dovish engagement such as hope, sympathy, expectation and the recipient's willingness to cooperate. Conciliatory gestures in the form of unconditional engagement were found to exacerbate crisis-provoking behavior. By contrast, the study finds that coercion and conditional engagement work better with recalcitrant regimes. Rigid reciprocity and the will to penalize non-cooperation are essential ingredients in successful coercion.

In South Korea, much of the public debate is a product of differences among South Koreans over the changes Kim Dae-jung made in South Korea's long existing policy after becoming president in 1998, rather than over the need for some kind of engagement with North Korea per se (Levin & Han, 2002). While partisan politics are a component of the debate, at its core are some big questions. What should be the aim of any effort to achieve greater association with North Korea - "reconciliation" on the basis of Korea being "one people" or "unification" by extending South Korea's democratic, free-market system to the North? What role should reciprocity play in this effort? What should be the nature and scale of South Korean assistance to North Korea? How should political efforts to engage North Korea be balanced against South Korea's security and other important interests?

The Sunshine Policy was unsuccessful both in changing the North's warlike behavior and "transforming" the regime in any meaningful way (Choi et al.,1999, 2000; Kim et al., 2007; Lee et al., 2005, 2006, 2008; Suh et al., 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004). The findings of this study recommend the implementation of a strict reciprocity vis-à-vis North Korea. Rather than providing unconditional economic aid, North Korea should be required to produce palpable progress in its human rights record and efforts to undertake fundamental political and economic reforms. This will increase the efficiency of the economic aid, preclude the propping up of the regime and sending of wrong signals to Pyongyang. Furthermore, the coordination with the US is a necessary precondition for keeping Pyongyang's aggressive

behavior in check. A robust ROK-US security alliance is an effective deterrence against North Korea's conventional and unconventional threats as it has been since the Korean War. In addition, proportional retaliation against DPRK's provocations will make Pyongyang reconsider the effectiveness of its brinkmanship. As Axelrod (1984) puts it,

> What accounts for TIT-FOR-TAT's robust success is its combination of being nice, retaliatory, forgiving and clear. Its niceness prevents it from getting into unnecessary trouble. Its retaliation discourages the other side from persisting whenever defection is tried. Its forgiveness helps restore mutual cooperation. And its clarity makes it intelligible to the other player, thereby eliciting long-term cooperation. (p. 54)

Finally, the failure of positive inducements to change the North's behavior leaves regime change policy through non-military means a desirable option. For sanctions to be effective, they need to target the regime's power base. Because China is the main provider of food, energy assistance and investment to North Korea, its cooperation is vital in bringing about the collapse of the regime.

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