THE GEOGRAPHICAL CONSTRUCTION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY AND STATE INTERESTS BY A WEAK NATION-STATE: THE DYNAMIC GEOPOLITICAL CODES AND STABLE GEOPOLITICAL VISIONS OF NORTH KOREA, 1948-2010

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DISSERTATION
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This study is a textual analysis of North Korea’s geopolitical discourses. Through the analysis of North Korea’s geopolitical visions and codes, this study provides a theoretical framework to explicate weak nation-states’ foreign and security policies beyond overly power-centered perspectives. In addition, this study suggests an alternative policy toward North Korea for neighboring states beyond the dichotomy of containment and engagement policy. Using textual data from North Korea regarding the geographical construction of its national identity and state interests, this study proposes a theoretical framework which focuses on a weak nation-state’s geopolitical agency, the relationship between geopolitical visions and codes, and the construction of territory for geopolitical discourses in a particular geopolitical context. The main findings of this study suggest that this theoretical framework provides a valuable perspective through which to understand how weak nation-states use geography to construct their national identity and state interests, and how the relationship between their geopolitical visions and codes changes over time. In particular, this study emphasizes the role of territorial construction in the way a weak nation-state naturalizes the concept of the state as an autonomous subject through nationalism and security discourse.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Motivation and Purpose

Just after North Korea completed its first nuclear test in 2006 its state-run news agency (KCNA: Korean Central News Agency) made the following comment: “Our nuclear test is a historic event to give encouragement and delight to our military and people. It will contribute to keeping the peace and stability of the Korean peninsula and Northeast Asia” [October 9, 2006]. This commentary presupposes that North Korea’s territory is threatened by other states and that the people and military yearn for the peace and stability of the peninsula and the region. This presupposition is contrary to the image of North Korea as a ‘revisionist state’ in the international community. What is evident in these claims to truth is that geopolitical discourse has much to do with North Korea’s foreign and security policy.

In the field of political geography, however, it is not easy to find an appropriate theoretical framework to explicate the geopolitical discourses of weak nation-states such as North Korea. Indeed, political geographers have largely concentrated on major powers in the study of international politics. In spite of their critical perspective, the critical geopolitics literature has also focused on major powers in the deconstruction of geopolitical discourses.

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1 Revisionist states are defined as “states that seek to change the distribution of goods such as territory, status, markets, expansion of ideology, and the creation or change of international law and institutions” (Davidson 2006: 14).
According to O'Tuathail and Agnew (1992), because the study of geopolitics is the study of the spatialization of international politics by major powers, geopolitics should be critically re-conceptualized as a “discursive practice.” Of course, it is very significant to unravel the geopolitical discourses of major powers and disclose the hidden power relations behind their geopolitical discourses.

However, international politics is influenced by not only major powers but also weak states. The worldviews taken by the foreign policy elites of major powers are not sufficient in identifying and interpreting the driving forces behind the changes in international politics, particularly after the end of the Cold War. The geopolitical discourses of major powers are not only constitutive of those of weaker states, but are also in part constituted by these “other” discourses (Kuus 2010). In order to understand the dynamics of international politics more precisely, political geographers need to examine the discursive practices of not only major powers, but also weaker states. As Kuus (2004) pointed out, there is a need to overcome a one-way conception of geopolitical discourse from major powers to weaker states.

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2 In accordance with the degree of influence on the international system, states are usually divided into superpowers, great powers, middle powers, weak states and mini-states (Handel 1990). In absolute terms, it is not easy to clearly classify each state in the real world because of the variety in objective criteria such as military capability, GNP, and population. In relative terms, however, it is easier to classify each state. In this study, weak states are identified within a particular geopolitical context relative to other regional actors. Although the term “major powers” largely indicates superpowers and great powers and the term “weak states” largely indicates all other states, whether a state is a weak state or not is determined by its relative weakness in comparison with neighboring states in a specific geopolitical context.
by focusing on weak nation-states’ geopolitical discourses. In particular, a weak revisionist

nation-state such as North Korea can serve as a case study to illustrate the relational

conception of geopolitical discourse between major powers and weaker nation-states.

Above all, this study is an effort to provide a theoretical framework for addressing the

foreign and security policies of weak nation-states from the viewpoint of geopolitical culture

through a specific case study concerning North Korea’s geopolitical visions and codes. The

additional purpose is to provide neighboring states with policy implications for resolving the

“North Korea problem” based on the analysis conducted with the framework. The framework

offered in this study suggests an alternative perspective for the explication of weak nation-

states’ foreign and security policies by unraveling the geopolitical discourses of weaker states.

In order to evaluate this framework, this study uses a combination of textual analysis and a

historical approach. This framework is an attempt to generally explicate weak nation-states’

geopolitical discourses beyond the distinct geopolitical cultures of individual weak states. My

hope is that this case study about a weak nation-state will become a part of the broader

theorization of geopolitics by focusing on the following research problems rather than being

seen as a unique empirical case.
1.2 Research Problem

Since O’Tuathail and Agnew (1992) re-conceptualized the conventional meaning of geopolitics, scholars of critical geopolitics have focused on geopolitical discourses that justify foreign and security policies. The studies regarding geopolitical discourses emphasize geopolitical agency rather than geopolitical structure. By the geopolitical agency of a state I mean the ability to interpret and make choices among not only foreign and security policies, but also the identities and interests of a state (Friedman and Starr 1997). However, the geopolitical agency of weak states has largely been ignored, because much of critical geopolitics focuses on major powers’ geopolitical agency. Although there are several studies on the geopolitical cultures of weaker states (Dijkink 1996; Dodds and Atkinson 2000; Sidaway and Power 2005; Megoran 2006; Moisio 2006), most of them do not focus on the relationships between weaker states and major powers.

This study attempts to illuminate how a weak nation-state expands the parameters of its geopolitical agency in a geopolitical context where major powers compete with each other over the control of that nation-state. In fact, in studying major powers’ geopolitical discourses the problem of the structure/agency dualism is not critical, since geopolitical structures are defined mainly by major powers. In contrast, in researching weak states’ geopolitical discourses it is crucial to transcend the dualism because geopolitical structures impose significant constraints, rather than opportunities, on weak states’ foreign and security policies.
Because weak states have to consider neighboring major powers’ geopolitical discourses within geopolitical structures, weak states’ geopolitical practices need to be necessarily examined in conjunction with their geopolitical representations. This study examines the interaction between North Korea’s geopolitical practices and its geopolitical discourses by historically examining how North Korea produced and consumed geopolitical discourses and what foreign and security policies it chose.\(^3\)

In order to expand the parameters of its geopolitical agency a weak nation-state formulates its geopolitical discourses through the construction of identity and interest. In this study geopolitical discourses are divided into two types: geopolitical codes as the elites’ geopolitical discourses for the construction of interests, and geopolitical visions as the populace’s geopolitical discourses for the construction of identities. On one hand, since Gaddis (1982) first coined the term “geopolitical code,” political geographers have explored the geopolitical codes of states (Taylor 1990; O’Loughlin and Grant 1990; Adams 2004; Huliaras and Tsardanidis 2006; Flint 2009). On the other hand, since Dijkink (1996) introduced the term “geopolitical vision,” political geographers have explored the lasting geopolitical visions of states (Sharp 2000; Van der Wusten and Dijkink 2002; Kearns 2003; Dittmer 2005; Sidaway and Power 2005; Moisio 2006). However, it is not easy to find

\(^3\) In spite of its nuclear capability and possession of the fifth largest military (1.1 million personnel) in the world, North Korea is a weak nation-state relative to other states in the geopolitical context of Northeast Asia.
studies focusing on the relationships between major powers and weak states in the existing
literature that address the geopolitical visions or codes of weak states. Moreover, although
Dijkink (1998) noted the possibility of divergences between geopolitical visions and codes, it
is even harder to find empirical studies focusing on the relationship between geopolitical
visions and codes. This study attempts to empirically examine the geopolitical visions and
codes of a weak state in its relation with major powers, focusing on the dissonances between
North Korea’s geopolitical visions and codes.

In formulating geopolitical visions and codes, the construction of territory plays an
important role. Although some political geographers have provided insights into the
construction of territory by nation-states (Agnew and Corbridge 1995; Murphy 2002), the
importance of territorial construction in the formulation of geopolitical discourses has been
largely neglected. In particular, because weaker nation-states can attempt to become an
autonomous subject in international politics by emphasizing the threats to their territories
from stronger nation-states, there is a need to focus on the construction of their national
homelands and sovereign territories in the study of weak states’ geopolitical discourses.
Specifically, weak nation-states often use nationalism and security discourses as discursive
mechanisms to naturalize the conception of the state as an autonomous territorial subject.
Although political geographers have viewed nationalism as a territorial ideology (White
2000; Anderson 1988; Williams and Smith 1983) and regarded security discourses as spatial
exclusions of “Otherness” (Dalby 1990), the discursive mechanisms were not considered in relation to geopolitical discourses. According to Kuus and Agnew (2008: 99), nationalism inscribes the “inside” of the state as a subject, and security discourses designate the “outside” against which the state is defined. I attempt to unravel a weak nation-state’s nationalism and security discourse as territorial subject-making.

In sum, I identify three research problems:

1) Can a weak nation-state have geopolitical agency within geopolitical structures? If so, how does a weak nation-state expand the parameters of its geopolitical agency in a particular geopolitical context?

2) How does a weak nation-state formulate its geopolitical discourses for the geographical construction of its national identity and state interests? And what is the relationship between the geopolitical visions and codes of a weak nation-state?

3) What is the role of the construction of territory in formulating a weak nation-state’s geopolitical discourses? And how does a weak nation-state construct its national homeland and sovereign territory?

1.3 Case: North Korea

In order to resolve the three research problems this study explores the changes and continuities of North Korea’s geopolitical codes and visions since the creation of the political
regime in 1948. Some political geographers recommend comparative studies to understand
the illustrative argumentations common in the study of geopolitical culture and discourse
(Murphy 2002; Dijkink 1998). In particular, Murphy (2002; 2006) argues that there is a need
to avoid the conceptual vacuum of individual case studies through comparative studies.
However, individual case studies can avoid a conceptual vacuum by uncovering causal
mechanisms or analyzing observable implications for competing theories (George and
Bennett 2005). Moreover, a single case often involves multiple observations and larger
within-case variations across time through a historical approach (Van Evera 1997: 61). The
important thing in a case study is whether the case is appropriate for the evaluation of the
theoretical framework.

Considering the three research problems of this study, North Korea is one of the most
appropriate cases for the study of weak nation-states’ geopolitical discourses. First, North
Korea is a good case to clarify the geopolitical agency of weak nation-states. North Korea is a
weaker state in Northeast Asia in comparison with the neighboring states, including the US.\(^4\)
Nevertheless, this weak state has been regarded as a revisionist state that attempts to change
the geopolitical regional order. In particular, North Korea’s consistent confrontations with the

\(^4\) Although North Korea has the fifth largest military personnel (1.1 million) in the world next to the US,
Russia, China and India, North Korea’s economic capability is much weaker than those of neighboring
countries, including South Korea. According to South Korean government’s estimation in 2012, South Korea’s
GNI per capita in 2010 (US$ 20,759) was 19.3 times higher than that of North Korea (US$ 1,074), and South
Korea’s GNI in 2010 (US$ 1,015 billion) was 39 times larger than that of North Korea (US$ 26 billion).
US during and after the Cold War are viewed as an irrational foreign and security policy by many Western commentators. North Korea’s initiation of the Korean War and its nuclear development were important foreign policy actions to illustrate a weak revisionist nation-state’s influence on global and regional geopolitical structures. In the initial stage of the Cold War, the Korean War had much influence on the formulation of both the geopolitical world order and regional order of Northeast Asia. In recent years, the North Korean nuclear crisis has been regarded as a critical security problem that is influential to the post-Cold War global and regional geopolitical structures. For example, the identity of the US, its Cold War identity as a protector of the free world against communist expansion, and its post-Cold War identity as a “good cop” defending international norms against “rogue states,” including North Korea, were geopolitical constructions. Moreover, given that critical geopolitics should be sensitive to geopolitical contexts (Kuus 2010) this study will be able to contribute to the study of critical geopolitics by offering an empirical case in a non-Western geopolitical context.

Second, North Korea is an appropriate case in illuminating the formulation of geopolitical discourses and the relationships between geopolitical visions and codes. North Korea has formulated its geopolitical discourses through its political ideologies and experienced serious dissonances between its geopolitical visions and codes, especially since the end of the Cold War. In other words, despite the shifts of geopolitical structures, North
Korea’s geopolitical visions seem to have been unusually stable since the creation of the state. Given that the geopolitical visions and codes of a state have much to do with its own assumed or preferred status and its recognized status by other states in the inter-state system respectively, North Korea’s foreign and security policy could be explicated by the relationships between its geopolitical visions and codes. For example, North Korea’s nuclear test challenging the global NPT (Non-Proliferation Treaty) regime illustrates a large gap between its assumed or preferred status and its recognized status by other states in the inter-state system.

Third, North Korea is a good case to elucidate the role of territorial construction in formulating geopolitical discourses. In international law the statehood of a sovereign nation-state is acquired through the recognition of sovereignty by other states and control over one’s own people and territory (Akehurst 1992). In the competition with South Korea over political legitimacy on the peninsula North Korea has increasing difficulties not only in acquiring the recognition of other states but also in controlling its people, especially since the end of the Cold War. For instance, there are only a few states that have recognized North Korea at the expense of their relations with South Korea, and an increasing number of North Korean defectors are escaping from the regime’s control. Therefore, the only way that the North Korean regime can maintain its statehood is to strengthen the control of its territory. In this respect, North Korea’s construction of territory is imperative for its statehood.
The assumption by which the state has been taken for granted as an autonomous subject is the idea of a state as a territorially demarcated section of geographical space (Dalby 1991: 274). North Korea, a divided nation-state competing to become the sole legitimate regime in the Korean peninsula, is one of the best cases in rejecting this assumption because the North has shared its national homeland with the South. In short, it can be argued that North Korea is one of the most appropriate cases for the evaluation of the theoretical framework, and this study, thereby, can avoid the conceptual vacuum of individual case studies.

1.4 North Korea's Geopolitical Context

Context connects texts to discourses. Discourses, as discursive practices, do not occur in a vacuum but arise in a context in which the discourses are embedded (Phillips and Hardy 2002). Similarly, geopolitical context, by which I mean the particular actors, relationships, and practices that characterize a geopolitical situation, connects geopolitical texts to geopolitical discourses. Considering the fact that case studies have the benefit of providing a deeper understanding of the geopolitical context of a state, an overview regarding the geopolitical context of North Korea is necessary for this study. In order to present North Korea’s geopolitical context, this section investigates the geopolitical location and history of
North Korea and its relations with neighboring states. In conclusion, I will characterize North Korea’s geopolitical context as the *conflation of global, regional, and local scales*.

### 1.4.1 The geopolitical location and history of North Korea

North Korea is located in the region of Northeast Asia (see Figure 1.1). North Korea is neighbored by China, South Korea, Russia, Japan and the US in the geopolitical, not strictly geographical, sense. It shares a 640 mile border with China, a 155 mile border with South Korea, and a 9 mile border with Russia. Because the US participated in the Korean War as a main actor and continues to station its troops in South Korea and Japan, the US is also regarded as a neighboring state. The region of Northeast Asia as a geopolitical domain is

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5 North Korea’s formal name is the DPRK (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea). This study uses “DPRK” to indicate the state rather than the country.

6 China’s formal name is the PRC (People’s Republic of China). This study uses “PRC” to indicate the state.

7 South Korea’s formal name is the ROK (Republic of Korea). This study uses “ROK” to indicate the state.

8 Russia succeeded the Soviet Union after the end of the Cold War. This study uses the Soviet Union before the end of the Cold War instead of Russia.

9 The formal name of the borderline is the MDL (Military Demarcation Line). Because the two Koreas have not recognized each other as a foreign country since 1948 the line has been a provisional border for the armistice since the Korean War (1950-1953).
a relational network through which a state’s foreign and security policy significantly affects those of the other states due to geographical proximity and geopolitical linkages.\textsuperscript{10}

Figure 1.1 The geopolitical location of North Korea

(Source: http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/northkorea/map.html)

The origin of the geopolitical context of North Korea dates back to before the creation of the North Korean state. For its two thousand-year recorded history (the national history of

\textsuperscript{10} Although Buzan (1991: 188) astutely defined “region” as “a set of states whose fate has been locked into geographical proximity,” his definition needs to be complemented by a more constructivist view for the study of geopolitical discourse.
Korea has suffered about nine hundred invasions from its neighbors, and experienced five major periods of foreign occupation by five different nations: China, the Mongolian empire, Japan, and, after the World War II, the US and the Soviet Union (Hwang 2009: 32). Many Western and South Korean scholars attribute the foreign invasions to the strategic geopolitical location of the Korean peninsula (Oberdorfer 1997; Kim 2006). Nevertheless, Korea has, remarkably, been able to retain homogeneity of language, culture and customs despite these foreign intrusions through the continuous succession of its kingdoms. The first Korean kingdom was Old-Joseon ( ? - 108 B.C.); believed by North and South Koreans to have been founded by Dangun (the mythical progenitor of the Korean nation) in 2333 B.C. In the two-thousand year recorded history of Korea, however, the first unified Korean kingdom was Silla (57 A.D. – 935 A.D.) which in the seventh century had merged the two kingdoms Goguryeo (37 B.C. – 668 A.D.) and Baekje (18 B.C. – 660 A.D.). Many South Korean and Western historians believe that the Unified-Silla formed the mainstream of subsequent Korean culture (Lee 1984; Eckert et al. 1990). In the tenth century, the Unified-Silla was replaced by Goryeo (918-1392), which saw itself as the legitimate successor to Goguryeo.

11 In spite of Silla's unification, "broad territories of Goguryeo were not conquered, and a section of the Goguryeo elite established a successor state known as Parhae" (Cumings 1997: 35). The North Korean media regarded Parhae rather than the unified-Silla as the successor state of Goguryeo, especially in the 2000s.

12 Considering that Silla made use of foreign powers to conquer the other two kingdoms, North Korean historians have argued that the first unified Korean kingdom was Goryeo, which succeeded to the legitimacy of Goguryeo.
The last Korean kingdom was *Joseon* (1392-1910), which controlled the present territory of the two Koreas (the entire Korean peninsula). From the mid-nineteenth century, however, *Joseon* suffered from imperial competition between its neighboring countries, and finally lost its sovereignty to Japan in 1910. Moreover, after the end of the Second World War, Korea was divided by the Soviet Union and the US after the liberation of the Korean peninsula from Japanese colonial rule in 1945. The northern half was ruled by Soviet troops and the southern half was governed by US troops until political regimes for each of the two Koreas were created in 1948. Therefore, the DPRK (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea: the North Korean state) and the ROK (Republic of Korea: the South Korean state) were much influenced by the USSR and the US, respectively.

### 1.4.2 North Korea’s Relations with Neighboring States

Because the North Korean state was created in the northern half of the Korean peninsula in September 1948 under the de facto rule of the Soviet military, the DPRK established its first full diplomatic relations with the USSR in October 1948. Just after the communization of the Chinese mainland in 1949, the DPRK also established full diplomatic relations with the PRC (People’s Republic of China). North Korea had a very aggressive
desire to reunify the entire Korean peninsula by force\textsuperscript{13} and invaded South Korea, with the support of the USSR and the PRC, in 1950 (Ahn 1987). Although North Korea succeeded in occupying most of South Korea (except for the Southeastern part) in the early stages of the Korean War, the intervention by the US under the auspices of the UN (United Nations) frustrated North Korea’s ambition for reunification.

The Korean War (1950-1953) led to the influence of China and Japan as well as the two Cold War superpowers on the Korean peninsula. Chinese troops intervened in the war by forcing the retreat of UN-ROK allied troops beyond the original borderline (the 38\textsuperscript{th} parallel\textsuperscript{14}) between the two Koreas (Jian 1994). Japan raised its economic and political

\textsuperscript{13} According to some scholars, such as Cumings (1990), South Korea also had a very aggressive desire to reunify the entire Korean Peninsula by force. This argument is linked to the debate about the origins of the Korean War. The “civil war” theory on the origins of the Korean War emphasizes the conflicts between the two Koreas. According to the theory, the question of how the contrasting countries emerged is more significant than the inquiry into who triggered the all-out massive attack. For example, through the analysis of declassified US documents, Cumings (1990) argues that the war was sparked by the South's provocative actions in the Ongjin peninsula, and quickly spread to the thirty-eighth parallel with the mobilization of North Korean troops. In contrast, the “international war” theory highlights the global strategy of the Communist camp to compete with the US. According to this theory, Soviet and Chinese assistance to North Korea’s initiation of the war is more significant. For instance, through analysis of declassified USSR documents, Kim (1996) argues that the war was sparked by North Korea under the strict control of the USSR. O'Tuathail (2006) seems to admit the “civil war” theory by arguing that “the US became involved in civil wars in Korea and Vietnam, locations thousands of miles from the US and of questionable strategic value in themselves…” (p.64). In order to understand the character of the war more precisely, however, there is a need to take a look from the more balanced perspective that the two theories are complementary.

\textsuperscript{14} The 38\textsuperscript{th} parallel was drawn as a provisional borderline through the agreement between the US and the Soviet Union in order to liberate the Korean peninsula from Japanese colonial rule at the end of the Second World War.
position in the region to a considerable degree because the US restored Japan to the status of friend from that of foe during the war (Henriksen 1997). The participation of the Chinese troops and the support of Japan for the US troops in the Korean War prevented one camp from acquiring a complete victory over the other in the Korean peninsula.

Hence, the end to the Korean War in 1953 was not a peace treaty but only an “armistice” between the two hostile camps. The armistice system of the Korean peninsula has continuously imposed security dilemmas on the two Koreas until the present day. North Korea has displayed relentless aggressive foreign policies toward the US and its allies (Michishita 2010); such as capturing the US Navy intelligence-gathering ship Pueblo in the East Sea (1968), murdering American soldiers at the DMZ (Demilitarized Zone) (1976), bombing the South Korean cabinet during a visit to Burma (1985), destroying a Korean Airlines flight (1987), and shelling a South Korean island near the NLL (Northern Limit Line) (2010). It was not until the early 1990s that North Korea began talks with the US and Japan.

The collapse of the Soviet Union had much influence on North Korea's foreign relations. In particular, the establishment of full diplomatic relations between the USSR, the PRC and the ROK was a major shift for North Korea. In response to this shift North Korea even tried to talk with the US by putting withdrawal from the NPT into practice. Despite the Geneva Agreed Framework (1994) to end the first North Korean nuclear crisis, the DPRK
could not normalize political and economic relations with the US. In the 2000s, even though
the DPRK had an opportunity to normalize relations with the US through the exchange of
Presidential envoys, relations with the US were not improved due to North Korean missile
and nuclear tests.

Although the armistice system of the Korean peninsula has not changed fundamentally,
the geopolitical regional order of Northeast Asia has become different from that in the 1950s.
Above all, hostile relations between the neighboring states in the region no longer exist,
including the normalization of diplomatic relations between the PRC and Japan (1972) and
the US (1979), the collapse of the Soviet Union as a rival superpower of the US (1991), and
the normalization of diplomatic relations between the ROK and the USSR (1990) and PRC
(1992). As hostile relations are being replaced by fast-growing economic interdependence
between the regional countries, including the US, Northeast Asia is now regarded as one of
the most dynamic economic regions of the world (Kim, S. S. and Lee, T. H. 2002). In
particular, China’s economic growth has exerted significant influence on political and
security relations in the region, including the Korean peninsula, through the intensification of
economic interdependence between the regional countries (Kim, S. S. 2006).\footnote{China was
the largest trading partner of North Korea, South Korea, Japan and Russia in 2010. China was also
the second largest trading partner of the US in 2010.} However, North Korea has been isolated from the growing regional economic interdependence. On the
contrary, through the development of nuclear weapons and long-range missiles North Korea has moved in a direction that opposed the processes of regional integration.

1.4.3 Conflation of scales in the geopolitical context of North Korea

The geopolitical context of North Korea can be characterized in terms of geographical scale, because most of the neighboring states are not only regional powers but also global powers. From before the creation of North Korea the neighboring major powers competed with each other to dominate the Korean peninsula. The Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) are prime examples. Moreover, after the creation of the two Koreas, the competition between the two Korean states over the one Korean identity within the context of several competing major powers in the region has led to the conflation of local, regional, and global scales in the geopolitical context. By conflating scale, I mean that a scalar hierarchy of geopolitical structures does not portray the geopolitical context of North Korea. In the geopolitical context of North Korea, the three scales are specified as the Korean peninsula being the local scale, Northeast Asia the regional scale, and the superpower rivalry in the world the global scale. The three scales are not separate but interconnected in such a way that, for example, the story of the division of the Korean peninsula cannot be separated from the story of the Cold War.
The Korean War was undertaken in a complex geopolitical context in which the global, regional and local scales were conflated. At the global scale the US and USSR confronted each other in terms of ideological identity. At the regional scale China and Japan were looking for new national identities at the beginning of the Cold War. At the local scale the two Koreas tried to conquer each other to achieve a unified Korean identity and political system. In this geopolitical context, in which the identity politics of Northeast Asian states collided with each other, North Korea’s intra-Korean geopolitical discourses were directly connected with the regional and global geopolitical discourses of the external powers. Therefore, North Korea had to get permission from the USSR and China in order to initiate the Korean War. North Korea’s leadership seems to have tried to maintain the state’s maneuverability by minimizing the intervention of the USSR and China in the Korean War. However, the initiation of the war by North Korea at the local scale resulted in “a substitute for the Third World War” (Stueck 2002: 1).

Even though the Cold War geopolitical world order was dismantled in the early 1990s, the experience of the Korean War has continued to be one of the most important bases of North Korea’s geopolitical discourses. For example, North Korea has used a geopolitical discourse of global antagonisms to legitimize the development of its nuclear weapons as an articulated foreign policy practice. In conclusion, it can be argued that understanding the
conflation of scales in North Korea’s geopolitical context enables us to address the research problems of this study with more validity.

1.5 Methods and Data

1.5.1 Methods

Dalby and O’Tuathail (1996) define critical geopolitics as problematizing fusions of geographical knowledge and power. In order to problematize fusions of geographical knowledge and power in North Korea’s geopolitical discourses I use textual analysis in conjunction with a historical approach.

First, through textual analysis, I attempt to unravel North Korea’s geopolitical discourses. I employ a qualitative textual analysis in order to uncover the meanings of North Korea’s geopolitical texts in a particular geopolitical context. I additionally conduct a count of the articles in a North Korean magazine as part of the analysis of North Korea’s geopolitical visions. Specifically, in the textual analysis of North Korea’s geopolitical visions, I analyze its construction of self-identities, the identities of neighboring states, and the territorial strategies for the construction of identity. In order to analyze North Korea’s construction of neighboring states’ identities I categorize and count the number of articles in the magazine that concern neighboring states. Regarding the construction of the identities of the US and Japan, the categories for the analysis consist of three threats: a threat to the entire
Korean nation, a threat to the North Korean state, and a threat to the Korean culture. The behaviors of the two states before the division of Korea are categorized as a threat to the entire Korean nation. Their behaviors after the division of Korea are categorized as a threat to the North Korean state. Their differences in culture from North Korea are categorized as a threat to the Korean culture. For the analysis of construction of self-identities, I analyze geopolitical texts to reveal the conflation of the nation and the state. In order to shine light on North Korea’s territorial strategies for the construction of its national identity I analyze the geopolitical texts commonly available to the North Korean populace concerning the construction of the national homeland. In the analysis of North Korea’s geopolitical codes I attempt to unpack North Korea’s definition of state interests, North Korea’s mapping of enemies and allies, and North Korea’s territorial strategies for the achievement of its interests.

In order to elucidate North Korea’s definition of state interests I analyze the historical transition of the meaning of Juche (Self-reliance) as an identity discourse. I interpret the North Korean elites’ geopolitical texts regarding neighboring states, mainly in the political leaders’ speeches and the newspapers, to investigate North Korea’s mapping of enemies and allies. Lastly, in order to illuminate North Korea’s territorial strategies for the achievement of its state interests, I analyze the North Korean elites’ texts concerning the construction of sovereign territory.
Second, I use a historical approach to examine the changes and continuities of North Korea’s geopolitical discourses over time. This study analyzes North Korea’s geopolitical texts in relation to North Korea’s foreign and security policy practices, such as nuclear tests, from the creation of North Korea in 1948 to 2010. In order to identify the changes and continuities of geopolitical discourses over time I divide North Korea’s geopolitical history into four periods in accordance with the shifts of the global geopolitical structure. In this study, the détente in the 1970s, the end of the Cold War in the 1990s, and the advent of the “War on Terror” in the 2000s are regarded as important moments that changed the geopolitical contexts of North Korea.

However, the time scope of about 60 years does not mean that this study ignores Korea’s history before the creation of North Korea. For example, in many North Korean geopolitical texts, the US is represented as a “long standing enemy for over a hundred years.”16 North Korea’s geopolitical discourses are rooted in Korea’s national history prior to the creation of the state. Moreover, in order to construct itself as the sole legitimate state in the national homeland, the North Korean political regime has made use of a constructed national geography and history - such as the oldest or strongest kingdom in Korea’s national history and the highest mountain in the Korean peninsula. Hence, the geography and history

of the Korean nation, both before and after the creation of the North Korean state, are also important for the analysis of North Korea’s geopolitical discourses.

1.5.2 Data

I use various North Korean textual sources to unravel North Korea’s geopolitical discourses. This study analyzes the speeches and writings of North Korea’s political leaders, statements made by the government, the articles of the state-run newspapers and news agency, articles in a popular North Korean magazine, and several North Korean novels. The result is a comprehensive analysis of North Korea’s geopolitical visions and codes.

The first set of data sources is the speeches and writings of North Korea's political leaders. The speeches and writings of Kim Il-sung were published in three forms. Of the three forms, “Kim Il-sung Jeojakjip (The Works of Kim Il-sung)”\(^\text{17}\) and “Kim Il-sung Jeojakseonjip (The Selected Works of Kim Il-sung)”\(^\text{18}\) are used for the analysis in this study.\(^\text{19}\) The

\(^{17}\) This collection consists of 47 volumes covering Kim Il-sung’s speeches and writings from 1930 to 1994. It was published for nearly twenty years from 1979 to 1997.

\(^{18}\) This collection consists of 10 volumes covering Kim Il-sung’s speeches and writings from 1945 to 1994. It was published for nearly thirty years from 1967 to 1994.

\(^{19}\) I do not use Kim Il-sung Jeonjip (“The whole works of Kim Il-sung”), because this form is too big (85 volumes) to deal with and the other two forms cover most of his important speeches and writings about North Korea’s foreign and security policy.
speeches and writings of Kim Jong-il were published in the form of "*Kim Jong-il Seonjip (The Selected Works of Kim Jong-il)*". These collections are the main sources for North Korea’s ideological education called “Korean Revolution History” throughout all levels of education. Hence, every North Korean citizen is well acquainted with them. It can be said that the collections have played a critical role in formulating North Korea’s geopolitical codes and visions. Thus, investigating the speeches and writings of North Korean political leaders about their own country and neighboring countries is an essential element in studying North Korea’s geopolitical discourses.

The second set of data sources consists of the government statements and newspapers of North Korea. The government statements related to foreign and inter-Korean affairs are announced through the KCNA (Korean Central News Agency). The rhetoric used in the statements is important in understanding North Korea’s geopolitical discourses. Of the North Korean newspapers, *Rodong Sinmun* (the organ of the Korean Workers’ Party) is one of the most influential daily publications in North Korea. The newspaper is the primary written source for both domestic and international news in North Korea. The North Korean people, 20

20 This collection consists of 15 volumes covering Kim Jong-il’s speeches and writings from 1964 to 2004. It was published for nearly twenty years from 1992 to 2010.

21 Although it is hard to estimate its circulation, it is fair to suggest that practically all citizens have easy access to the newspaper (Park 2006). It began to issue Internet editions from 2011 at http://www.rodong.rep.kp/InterEn/.
including elites, have to read and even memorize important editorials or commentaries in this newspaper. *Minju Joseon* (the organ of the North Korean Government; *Pyongyang Times* is the name of the English edition) and *Joseon Sinbo* (the pro-DPRK Korean-Japanese Newspaper)\(^{22}\) are also important data sources.

The third set of data sources is made up of the most popular and widespread magazine in North Korea and several propaganda novels. They are expected to provide insights into North Korea’s geopolitical visions. I analyze the articles of the magazine *Cheollima* regarding foreign countries and Korean geography and history from 1961 to 2010.\(^{23}\) The magazine is a good data source for investigating North Korea’s popular representations about its own country and neighboring countries in that the magazine aims to provide ordinary people with a variety of “common knowledge.”\(^{24}\)

I illuminate the changes and continuities in the popular representations of the North Korean people’s geopolitical perceptions about its own country and neighboring countries by

\(^{22}\) This newspaper is published in Japan, but the articles regarding North Korea in the newspaper are censored by the North Korean government. It is often used for indirect presentations of the intention of the North Korean government in that direct presentations of the North Korean government can give rise to diplomatic troubles.

\(^{23}\) Although *Cheollima* was first published in 1959, it is impossible to acquire publications before 1961 in South Korea.

\(^{24}\) Kim Jong-il stated, “*Cheollima* is a really good magazine. It is the most interesting popular magazine created by Kim Il-sung during the period of the *Cheollima* movement...If one read the magazine regularly, anyone can get a lot of knowledge and common sense in a variety of fields such as politics, economy, history, geography, and science”(*Cheollima*, volume 400, September 1992, p. 61).
analyzing the articles of the magazine regarding both foreign countries and the national
geography and history of North Korea. Through the examination of novels and magazines, in
conjunction with other sources, we can presume that there is a gap in the understanding and
framing of neighboring states between the elites and the populace. I also analyze North
Korean novels which deal with the relations between North Korea and neighboring states. For
example, “Eternal Life (Yeongsaeng)” (Baek and Song 1997) depicts the last days of Kim Il-
sung during the first North Korean nuclear crisis in 1994 from the perspective of the North
Korean political regime. “Snowstorm in Pyongyang (Pyongyang ui nunbora)” (Jeon 2000)
contrasts the depravity of US prisoners with the purity of the North Korean people in relation
to the capture of the US Navy ship Pueblo in 1968.

1.6 Contributions

This study is an attempt to address the foreign and security policies of weak nation-
states from the viewpoint of geopolitical culture. This section outlines the theoretical and
policy contributions made by this study. This study focuses on three theoretical points. First,
through the concept of geopolitical agency I attempt to advance the overly power-centered
perspectives of classical (material power) and critical geopolitics (ideational power). This
study attempts to demonstrate a weak nation-state’s geopolitical agency through its
geopolitical discourses by illuminating how a weak nation-state can influence its geopolitical
situation in a particular geopolitical context. Second, by examining the relationship between
the geopolitical visions and codes of a weak state I attempt to expand on how a weak state
manages the dissonances between visions and codes in an attempt to maintain consistency in
the construction of its identities and interests. Third, by examining a weak nation-state’s
territorial strategies for its identities and interests I attempt to illuminate the role of the
construction of its homeland and sovereign territory in formulating its geopolitical discourses.

In addition, this study attempts to present several implications for the neighboring
states’ policies toward North Korea, especially in relation to North Korea’s nuclear
development. First, this study suggests that neighboring states should note the relationship
between North Korea’s geopolitical visions and codes in order to precisely interpret North
Korea’s intentions behind the development of nuclear weapons. This study points out that
North Korea has faced a dilemma; whether to use its nuclear program as a negotiation tool to
improve relations with neighboring states or as a means to be a nuclear power. Second, in
order to resolve the North Korean nuclear problem, this study recommends a cultural
approach in conjunction with tangible measures: An engagement or containment policy
toward North Korea tends to exaggerate either its dynamic geopolitical codes or stable
geopolitical visions, respectively. This study suggests that neighboring states need to
cooperate with each other to change North Korea’s geopolitical codes, designing a longer-
term cultural approach to change its geopolitical visions. Third, this study defines the North
Korean nuclear problem as a part of the “North Korea problem.” In this sense, this study suggests that neighboring states should provide North Korea with a favorable geopolitical context in which North Korea can change its geopolitical visions and codes. This study stresses the necessity of a future-oriented plan for the desirable governance of the Korean peninsula and the new geopolitical regional order of Northeast Asia for the resolution of the “North Korea problem.”

1.7 Organization

The first two chapters present the theoretical background and framework of this study. In Chapter 2 I review the related literature in the discipline of political geography and international relations. In particular, the literature of critical geopolitics and strategic culture studies is critically reviewed in order to address a weak nation-state’s foreign and security policy from the viewpoint of geopolitical culture. This chapter explores the existing frameworks and concepts associated with the construction of identity and interest by weak nation-states through their geopolitical discourses. In Chapter 3 I present my theoretical framework which combines three components: 1) geopolitical agency of a weak nation-state in a geopolitical context, 2) the relationship between the geopolitical visions and codes of a weak nation-state, and 3) a weak nation-state’s construction of territory to enable its
geopolitical discourses. In addition, I will discuss several methodological issues in analyzing North Korea’s geopolitical visions and codes.

The next three chapters present the empirical analyses and interpretations of this study. In Chapter 4 I analyze North Korea’s geopolitical visions. In order to show the stability of North Korea’s geopolitical visions I examine North Korea’s construction of its neighboring states’ identities, its construction of self-identities, and its territorial strategies for the construction of identity. In Chapter 5 I analyze North Korea’s geopolitical codes. In order to show the dynamism of North Korea’s geopolitical codes I investigate North Korea’s definition of interest through ideologies, its mapping of enemies and allies, and its territorial strategies for the construction of interest. At the end of the chapter, by comparing the dynamic geopolitical codes with the stable geopolitical visions, I present the changes in the relationships between geopolitical visions and codes. Chapter 6 emphasizes the role of the discursive construction of territory in formulating North Korea’s geopolitical discourses. In the chapter I show that although North Korea has expanded the parameters of its geopolitical agency through its nationalism and security discourses, it is difficult for North Korea to continuously reproduce its statehood due to the incongruence between the discursive construction of its national homeland and the discursive and material scope of its sovereign territory.
The concluding chapter presents the summary and contributions of this study. After summarizing the major findings of this study and the evaluation of my theoretical framework, I summarize the theoretical contributions and limitations, and the policy implications of this study.
CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In order to address the foreign and security policies of weak nation-states from the viewpoint of geopolitical culture I will review the related literature in the disciplines of political geography (hereafter “PG”) and international relations (hereafter “IR”). Particularly, critical geopolitics in PG and strategic culture studies in IR allow us to approach the cultural construction of nation-states’ identities and interests through the concept of geopolitical discourse. In this chapter I will attempt to establish a basis for my theoretical framework by examining the existing concepts informing the discursive construction of identities and interests of nation-states. My review focuses on four themes: 1) cultural approaches in IR and PG; 2) geopolitical discourse, sovereignty and territory as social constructs; 3) nation-states’ construction of their identities and interests; and 4) rethinking nationalism and security discourse.

2.1 Cultural Approaches in International Relations and Political Geography

In the field of IR strategic culture studies has provided a cultural approach to investigating the foreign and security policies of individual states (Johnston 1995; Johnson et al. 2009). In the field of PG critical geopolitics has offered geographical understandings about foreign and security policies by deconstructing geopolitical discourses (Dalby 1991; Kuus 2010). Although both frameworks address foreign and security policies from a cultural
perspective they have some limitations in explaining the foreign and security policies of weak states. This section provides critiques of the two existing frameworks in order to examine weak nation-states’ foreign and security policies from the viewpoint of geopolitical culture, by which I mean “the culture of knowledge and interpretation of the state as a foreign policy actor in world affairs” (O’Tuathail 2004: 98).

2.1.1 Critique of Strategic Culture Studies

One of the important merits of the strategic culture framework is the emphasis upon understanding the cultural contexts of an individual state. Examining cultural contexts allows us to view non-western states’ foreign policies as rational and understandable by considering both material and ideational influences. This emphasis gives the framework more relevance than critical geopolitics in policy debates related to non-western states.

It was not until Snyder (1977) interpreted the Soviet nuclear strategy that a political scientist brought the strategic culture framework into the realm of modern security studies. He applied his strategic culture framework to interpret the development of Soviet and American nuclear policies as products of different organizational, historical, and political contexts. The result was a cultural explanation of why the Soviet military exhibited a preference for the preemptive, offensive use of force (Snyder 1977). Gray (1981: 35), another pioneering scholar of the strategic culture framework, defined strategic culture as “modes of
thought and action with respect to force, which derives from perception of the national
historical experience, from aspirations for responsible behavior in national terms and even
from civic culture and way of life.” Gray (1988: 42) believed that studying the “cultural
thoughtways” of a state was important in understanding a state’s behavior and its role in
world politics.

In the 1990s, the utility of cultural interpretations were asserted by a new generation
of scholarly work. In order to turn to cultural variables some IR scholars stressed the
influences of ‘ideas’ on foreign policy making (Goldstein and Keohane 1993). In particular
Wendt (1992: 392) argued that state identities and interests can be viewed as “socially
constructed by knowledgeable practice.” Constructivists such as Wendt argue that national
identities are social-structural phenomena which provide a “logic of appropriateness”
regarding policy choices (Hymans 2006: 17). However, constructivists largely focus on
international social structures at the systemic level, with special attention paid to the role of
‘norms’ (Katzenstein 1996) in international security. In his book, cited as the third generation
of work on strategic culture (Lantis 2009), Johnston (1995: 39) characterized strategic culture
as an “ideational milieu which limits behavior choices of a state.” He investigated China’s
strategic culture and the linkages to the use of military force against external threats.
Although most strategic culture studies concern the continuity of state behavior, the latest
generation of strategic culture scholars recognizes the possibility of changes in state behavior
over time, especially challenging the distinction between behavior and culture by considering “culture as practice” (Rassmussen 2005: 71).

Nevertheless, by ignoring how strategic culture is based on geopolitical culture the framework of strategic culture has neglected how the construction of geographical knowledge connects strategic choice and the justification of foreign policy to the public. First, the framework does not consider the possibility that geographical factors become an ideational source of strategic culture. For example, Lantis (2009) views geographic factors as only a physical source as opposed to a political and social/cultural element of strategic culture. Second, the strategic culture framework places too much importance on the role of political leaders and elites in formulating strategic culture. For example, Bermudez (2009) argues that the strategic culture of North Korea is the product of the personal dreams and ambitions of a single individual, Kim Il-sung. It can be argued that political leaders define what is possible in key foreign and security policy discourses. However, even though Kim Il-sung had much influence on North Korea’s strategic culture for nearly 50 years, it is problematic to claim that he created North Korea’s strategic culture without reference to material and ideational sources. Strategic culture needs to be seen as a part of geopolitical culture in order to develop a deeper understanding of foreign and security policies. From the viewpoint of geopolitical

25 According to O’Tuathail (2004: 85), geopolitical culture is “a product of prevalent geographical imaginations, the particular institutional organization and political culture (including strategic culture) of a state, and longstanding geopolitical traditions.”
culture, political leaders are strategic users of geopolitical culture rather than creators of geopolitical culture.

2.1.2 Critique of Critical Geopolitics

Although critical geopolitics is depicted as “a gathering place for various critiques of the multiple geopolitical discourses and practices that characterize modernity” (O’Tuathail 2010a: 316), the framework of critical geopolitics largely focuses on geopolitical culture. Unlike classical geopolitics which focuses on the deterministic impact of geography on international politics, the framework of critical geopolitics addresses the relations between geography and international politics from a cultural viewpoint. It pays attention to how geographical claims and arguments are used to direct and justify various foreign and security policies, especially deconstructing the geopolitical discourses of major powers (Dalby 2010). In the framework of critical geopolitics, therefore, geopolitics becomes ‘geopolitical culture’ (O’Tuathail and Agnew 2003: 457); that is, the notion of geopolitics as a fixed and given fact

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26 Mamadouh (2010: 321) argues that the diversification of research objects in critical geopolitics can be perceived as a problem of “loss of focus.” However, I think that it is important to diversify the research objects from major powers to weak states, from formal and practical geopolitics to popular geopolitics, and from state-centric approaches to studies of non-state actors. Yet, I think that it is more important to research the relationship between major powers and weaker states, between practical geopolitics and popular geopolitics, and between states and non-state actors.
of geographical politics is challenged by an understanding of geopolitics as discourses about the identities and interests of territorial nation-states.

For scholars of critical geopolitics, geopolitical culture includes not only strategic culture but also popular geopolitical representations. For heuristic research purposes, critical geopolitics divides geopolitics into three kinds of geopolitical reasoning: formal, practical, and popular geopolitics (O’Tuathail 2006). Of the three kinds of geopolitical reasoning, popular geopolitics, which refers to the geographical politics created and debated by the various media-shaping popular cultures (O’Tuathail 1999), illustrates that geopolitical culture is a broader concept than strategic culture. In this respect, critical geopolitics has the merit of exploring a state’s geopolitical discourses from a broader perspective than the framework of strategic culture. By focusing on an understanding of geopolitics as a broad social and cultural phenomenon critical geopolitics allows us to note that the justification for geopolitical actions taken by the foreign policy elites of a country must be grounded in a geopolitical ideology that resonates with the public. In the framework of critical geopolitics, geopolitics is not simply the practice of statecraft, but rather an interpretative cultural practice.

27 According to O’Tuathail (1999), formal geopolitics refers to what is usually considered geopolitical thought or geopolitical tradition, and practical geopolitics is concerned with the geographical politics involved in the everyday practice of foreign policy. Kuus (2007) argues that the distinction between formal, practical and popular geopolitical reasoning is problematic since all three rely on popular beliefs about the characteristics of places.
However, the significance of the critical geopolitics scholarship has been largely restricted to the disclosure of the hidden power relations behind the geopolitical discourses of major powers. Particularly, the deconstruction of geopolitical discourses of the US prevented the framework of critical geopolitics from being more than “an academic niche chasing American-centric outrages” (O’Tuathail 2010a: 317). In order to more intently reveal the power relations between major powers and weak states critical geopolitics scholars need to pay more attention to the geopolitical discourses of weak states. As Kuus (2010) argues, there is a need to examine the power relationships between major powers and weaker states because geopolitics is not simply written by major powers and then handed down to the weaker states. In the framework of critical geopolitics, in fact, the foreign and security policies of weaker states were often regarded as defined by preconceived categories dominant among major powers and their geopolitical cultures.

Even if one agrees that the nature of the inter-state system is primarily determined by major powers, however, it is not accurate to ignore the capabilities of weak states (Handel 1990). Occasionally, weak states take a limited offensive posture against major powers, taking advantage of the opportunities arising from the nature of any given international system. Indeed, some weak states have actively pursued foreign policies aimed at changing the status quo in their favor. Slogans such as the “power of the weak” (Wolfers 1962), “weak
but not meek” (Fox 1968), and “the big influence of small allies” (Keohane 1971) indicate the greater than marginal influence of weak states on the international system and major powers.

Therefore, for more accurate explication of international politics, there is a need to examine weak states’ foreign and security policies and the representations of their policies. Indeed, weaker states also formulate geopolitical discourses on the basis of their own geopolitical culture – just like major powers. In addition, the foreign policy elites of weaker states also naturalize geographical knowledge for the construction of their national identities and state interests. As O’Tuathail (2010b) pointed out, critical geopolitics began as a critique of Cold War geopolitical discourses that imposed homogenizing categories upon diverse regional conflicts and marginalized place-specific structural causes of instability and violence. Therefore, the scholarship of critical geopolitics needs to deconstruct the geopolitical discourses of weak states as well as major powers.

In short, the framework of critical geopolitics has largely neglected the influence of weak states on geopolitical structures. Instead, I argue that weak states can be producers of geopolitical discourses in a particular geopolitical context. By focusing on the abilities of weak states in formulating geopolitical discourses the foreign and security policies of weak states can be explained more deeply and precisely. For example, although O’Tuathail (2010b: 257) argued that North Korea’s initiation of the Korean War was constructed as a “probing arm of the Communist monolith testing the Free world resolve” by the Cold War geopolitical
discourse of the US at a global scale, North Korea’s naming of the war as the “Fatherland Liberation War” illustrates another geopolitical discourse of a weak state at the local scale of the Korean peninsula.

2.2 Geopolitical Discourse, Sovereignty and Territory as Social Constructs

In order to address the foreign and security policies of weak states from the viewpoint of geopolitical culture it is necessary to rethink the concept of geopolitical discourse and to link sovereignty and territory as social constructs within a complex geopolitical discourse. In this study, geopolitical discourse is re-conceptualized as a combination of geopolitical vision and code, and the social construction of sovereignty and territory is regarded as a source of geopolitical discourse.

2.2.1 Re-conceptualization of geopolitical discourse

According to O’Tuathail (2004), the concept of “geopolitical discourse” is the concept most associated with critical geopolitics. Dalby (1988) sees geopolitical discourse as a discursive formation of security in the spatialized terms of identity and difference. Agnew and Corbridge (1995) define geopolitical discourse as the mode of representation that characterizes a geopolitical order at the macro-level. They identify three regimes of geopolitical discourse which correspond to three geopolitical orders: civilization, naturalized,
and ideological geopolitics. In his later work, Agnew (1998: 5) describes geopolitical discourse as a “modern geopolitical imagination that has provided meaning, and rationalization to practice by political elites."

O’Tuathail (2004: 82) criticizes such definitions as “too sweeping to capture the particularities of geopolitical discourses in concrete foreign policies.” Instead, he argues for more meso- and micro-level concepts, and suggested six concepts for the study of “Geopolitics as Culture”: geographical imaginations, geopolitical culture, geopolitical traditions, geopolitical vision, geopolitical discourse, and geostrategic discourse. O’Tuathail’s conceptualization helps us to grasp the diversity of geopolitical representations (Mamadouh and Dijkink 2006). However, it is better to use the two already established concepts of geopolitical code and vision for the analysis of geopolitical discourses of weak states. While major powers have developed abundant and sophisticated geopolitical discourses that allow for a nuanced conceptualization, it is not so easy to make a distinction between the array of O’Tuathail’s (2004) concepts when studying weak states. Hence, I will re-conceptualize geopolitical code and vision as two types of geopolitical discourse.

In his book Strategies of Containment, Gaddis (1982: ix) defines the American geopolitical code as “assumptions about American interests in the world, potential threats to them, and feasible responses”. Applying this notion to the analysis of Britain’s role in forming the Cold War geopolitical order, Taylor (1990) argues that geopolitical codes are
inevitably geographical because they must encompass variations in the valuation of foreign places. Taylor’s argument is significant in elucidating the fundamental relationship between geography and foreign policy. Indeed, the differentiated valuation of places means that practical geopolitical reasoning in the form of geopolitical codes provides, and is a product of, the political geography assumptions that inform foreign policy.

However, O’Tuathail (2004: 96) argues that Gaddis’s notion of geopolitical code should be abandoned for a more constructivist conception of strategic thinking: Gaddis’s definition is seen as a particular strategy of power because “his account is too much a history of ideas and not sufficiently a history of geopolitical culture, traditions and clashing visions within a context of a struggle for power between American interest coalitions and bureaucracies” (O’Tuathail 2004: 96). Instead, O’Tuathail argues for using the term “geostrategic discourse” because it makes explicit strategic claims about the material national security interests of a state across a world map characterized by state competition. I agree with the argument that Gaddis’s notion of geopolitical codes needs to be a more constructivist conception in that strategic thinking of foreign policy elites must be justified within the realm of public discourse.

Nevertheless, the notion of geostrategic discourse as a form of geopolitical discourse can lead to a false binary between the material interest and the ideational identity of a state. In contrast, Flint and Taylor’s (2007) notion of geopolitical code avoids the false binary by
adding the element of justification. That is, a geopolitical code includes “a definition of a state’s interests, an identification of external threats to those interests, a planned response to such threats and a justification for that response” (Flint and Taylor 2007: 45). More specifically, by focusing on the interaction between domestic politics and the changing global context, Flint and Taylor (2007) emphasize the aspect of justification and the process of creating common sense understandings to justify and interpret foreign policy practices.

Indeed, the dynamism of geopolitical codes is a result of the interaction between domestic politics and the changing global context because states do not have complete freedom in defining their codes, and geopolitical codes are contested even within states as different intra-state political interests seek different policies.

In his book National identity and geopolitical visions, Dijkink (1996: 11) defines geopolitical vision as “any idea concerning the relation between one’s own and other places, involving feelings of (in)security or (dis)advantage (and/or) invoking ideas about a collective mission or foreign policy strategy.” However, O’Tuathail (2004) criticizes Dijkink’s notion of geopolitical vision as somewhat confusing because Dijkink tries to explain too much with one concept. For O’Tuathail, Dijkink explored geographical imagination, national identity, geopolitical culture and geopolitical traditions under the rubric of geopolitical vision. Instead, O’Tuathail (2004) argues that Kearns (2003) uses a more theoretically precise concept of
geopolitical vision in that he defines a geopolitical vision as a normative picture of the world’s political map organized around a geopolitical subject.

However, other scholars (Mamadouh and Dijkink 2006; Huliaras and Tsardanidis 2006; Kolossov 2003) regard not only elites but also the public as a subject of geopolitical vision. For instance, Kolossov (2003: 125) delineates geopolitical vision as “a synthesis of the views professed by various strata of the political elite, academic experts, the creative intelligentsia and public opinion as a whole.” Although it is evident that Kearns’ (2003) conceptualization of geopolitical vision is clear, his concept cannot encompass the important role of geopolitical discourses in embedding national myth into national identity.

Even though Djkink’s notion is a little confusing, it has the merit of linking national identity to geopolitical culture. According to Dijkink (1996: 14), geopolitical visions are “translations of national-identity concepts in geographical terms and symbols.” In the process of formulating geopolitical visions, national identity is constructed in geographical terms through nationalism and security discourse. That is, nationalism mobilizes people to strengthen national identity from within a territory, and security discourse display a strong tendency to transform differences into threats from outside of a territory. In particular, the notion of geopolitical vision enables us to elucidate the process through which constructed nation and constructed external threats become a precondition for national identity. By viewing geopolitical vision as a mechanism through which nation and security is culturally
produced in geopolitical contexts we can denaturalize a national identity that has been regarded as pre-given or taken-for-granted.

What should be noted here is that geopolitical visions are linked with geopolitical codes. In order to elucidate the meaning of geopolitical discourses toward foreign and security policies it is necessary to focus on the relationship between geopolitical visions and codes in geopolitical contexts. Because both types of geopolitical discourses rely on popular beliefs about geographical knowledge, the relationship between geopolitical visions and codes can have much influence on the popular support for foreign and security policies. Particularly for the study of foreign and security policies of weak states, it is crucial to examine the dissonances between geopolitical visions and codes. That is, due to the necessity to consider major powers’ geopolitical codes in formulating their own geopolitical codes, weak states more often confront the situation of serious dissonances between their geopolitical visions and codes than major powers do.

2.2.2 Critical Reflection of Sovereignty and Territory

State sovereignty has been regarded as a constitutive element of statehood in the modern inter-state system, and states’ control of space through territory has been regarded as a foundation of state sovereignty (Murphy 1996). However, both sovereignty and territory need to be viewed as social constructs. States’ geopolitical discourses are based on the social
construction of sovereignty and territory, allowing us to unravel geopolitical discourses formulated by states as an autonomous subject.

According to Biersteker and Weber (1996), state sovereignty is not a naturally given situation but an inherent social construct. A state’s claim to sovereignty constructs a social environment in which they can interact as a member of an international society of states. In other words, state sovereignty is historically contingent within the modern inter-state system, and it has to be recognized by other system members (Flint and Taylor 2007: 322). Therefore, the sovereign state is not the source, but the effect of discourses of sovereignty.

From the viewpoint of geopolitical culture, sovereignty should be treated as a discourse of the state trying to maintain its statehood and subjectivity. According to Kuus and Agnew (2008: 98), sovereignty does not express an already existing subjectivity and agency of the state. There is a need to ask not just how state interests are expressed through state practices, but also how these practices construct the very interests in whose name they are undertaken. The materiality of state power is not prior to the discourse of sovereignty, as our understanding of material reality is formed within this discourse. In this sense, a state is not an autonomous subject pursuing its interests and expressing its identities through foreign policy actions, but a subject defined through foreign and security policies operating under its name. In sum, state sovereignty is a major source of states’ geopolitical discourses in that the
state as an autonomous subject in international politics is exploited both in the state’s foreign relations and the internal control of its people under the principle of sovereignty.

According to Murphy (1996: 119), the success of state sovereignty as an organizing principle of international politics has much to do with its territorial underpinnings. Territoriality is the dominant political practice for states as a consequence of the territorial link between sovereign territory and national homeland (Taylor 1994: 151). The view that the state is an autonomous subject of international politics is linked to the assumption that political authority is necessarily exercised territorially. However, state territoriality is a social construct because it is a “strategy” (Sack 1986) that has developed more in some historical contexts and places than in others. Therefore, political authority is not necessarily predicated on, and defined as, strict and fixed territorial boundaries.

Agnew’s (2005) ‘sovereignty regimes’ help us to understand the extent of state autonomy and the degree to which it is territorial in practice. Nevertheless, territory has provided a tangible basis for the exercise of state power by limiting the human and physical resources in the real world (Murphy 1990: 531). If a state cannot exploit its territoriality not only in constructing national security and interests, but also in penetrating the daily life of the public through ‘infrastructural power’ (Mann 1984), the state would be apt to fail to produce persuasive geopolitical discourses. The power of territoriality is mainly based on the “spatial exclusion of Otherness” (Dalby 1990: 416) by constructing material and discursive
boundaries around the state’s territory; boundaries are lines of inclusion and exclusion between us and them. Through the spatial exclusion of Otherness, state territoriality allows the state to formulate geopolitical discourses. In the sense that states can formulate geopolitical discourses on the basis of the social construction of territory, the social construction of territory is another major source of states’ geopolitical discourses.

In short, as major sources of geopolitical discourses the social construction of state sovereignty and territory strengthen the conception of the state as an autonomous subject in international politics. Therefore, unraveling the social construction of state sovereignty and territory enables us to see the state as “processes of subject-making” in international politics (Kuus and Agnew 2008: 104). Through the processes of subject-making, the modern state system has been maintained by nation-states, which construct their identities and interests.

2.3 Nation-states’ Construction of Identity and Interest

Mainstream IR and PG have regarded nation-states as the primary actors in international politics. In contrast, the framework of critical geopolitics has decentered nation-states (Hyndman 2010). In the modern inter-state system, states formulate their geopolitical discourses through the construction of identity and interest in territorial terms, pretending to be nation-states. In fact, however, most states are not ideal nation-states which consist of one
nation or people (Gilmartin 2009: 20). This section provides critical reflections regarding
country-states and the construction of their national identity and state interests.

2.3.1 Critical Reflections on Nation-states

As Sparke (2005: xii) pointed out the hyphen that ties the nation to the state in the
conventional couplet of “the nation-state” points toward a powerful “world-making process.”
Although the term nation-state is an “amalgam of nation and state” (Gilmartin 2009: 19), the
two different concepts are traditionally linked with each other through territory to symbolize
the reciprocal consolidation of national homelands and state sovereign territories (Sparke
2005: xii). Nation is usually described as “a community of people with a common identity,
which is typically based on shared cultural values and attachment to a particular territory”
(Paasi 1996: 39). State is usually defined as “a legal and political organization covering a
particular territory” (Paasi 1996: 39). Therefore, state and nation are both peculiar in having a
special relationship with a specific territory. As Taylor (1994: 151) pointed out, the power of
a sovereign nation-state has been made possible by a fundamental “territorial link” that exists
between state and nation. In this sense, it can be argued that a nation-state as a sovereign
autonomous subject is the result of the conflation between state and nation through its
territory.
In order to formulate geopolitical discourses, nation-states construct their national identity and state interests. Although the identity and interests of nation-states are not neatly distinguished in the real world, nation-states’ identities are mainly constructed centering on the nation as a cultural community of people with common identities. In contrast, nation-states’ interests are constructed by focusing on the state as a rational political organization.

For analytical purposes, therefore, there is a need to separate the nation and the state in studying the construction of the identity and interests of nation-states. In this sense, a nation-state’s interests need to be examined mainly as state interests, and a nation-state’s identity needs to be investigated mainly as national identity. In fact, the term ‘national interest’ has been widely used for the construction of the common interest among all the citizens of a state beyond sectional interests, and the term ‘national identity’ has been largely used for the construction of the essential and pre-given identity of a state (Burchill 2005). In this sense, the explicit usage of the term ‘state interests’ and ‘national identity’ enable us to more precisely observe the inconsistency between the geographical construction of the identity and interest of weak nation-states, and the consideration of the logical inconsistency of nation-state building.
2.3.2 National Identity and State Interests as Social Constructs

In mainstream IR identity research tended strongly toward essentialism (e.g. Prizel 1998; Brown 2001); pre-given national identities are seen to have a one-way influence on foreign and security policies. However, essentialist claims have been challenged by substantial works (e.g. Rae 2002; Jurado 2003) focusing on the social construction of national identity (Kuus 2007). In order to address the foreign and security policies of nation-states from the viewpoint of geopolitical culture there is a need to unpack how national identities and state interests are constructed by nation-states. National identities are constructed in geopolitical contexts in which nation-states are embedded. In other words, national identities can only be constructed in relation to a series of differences that have become socially recognized among sovereign nation-states in international politics (Wendt 1987). Therefore, national identities are always relational and contingent (Campbell 1992). Although these discourses of national identity have internal consistency, such consistency is not the source but the effect of identity discourses (Katzenstein 1996). Because identity discourses are associated with the construction of state interests, the construction of national identity has powerful effects on the construction of state interests.28

28 Wendt (1999: 231) argues that “interests presuppose identities because an actor cannot know what it wants until it knows who it is.”
In this sense, it is necessary to make a material-centered concept of state interests problematic. Mainstream explanations of national security often have usually assumed that state interests are “discovered” by self-interested nation-states (Katzenstein 1996). Indeed, realist IR scholars have seen measured state interests in material assets, such as military and economic capabilities. Realism can define state interests as an objective and independent reality with fixed terms because of its confidence in the immutable qualities of the inter-state system (Burchill 2005: 202). In the discourse of politics, however, the concept of interests is a contested and problematic idea (Connolly 1974). In the constructivist view of IR, state interests are ideational rather than material.

State interests are important to international politics in two ways: first, it is through this concept that policy-makers understand the goals to be pursued by foreign policy; second, it functions as a rhetorical device that generates the legitimacy of state action (Weldes 1999: 4). State interests are constructed within the representations in which the national identities of the relevant states are established (Weldes 1999: 14). The key challenge is not that states’ foreign policies are shaped by material interests, but that interests exist prior to foreign policy. Indeed, political elites seek to link their conceptions of state interests to the national identity. If state interests are constructed through a process of social interaction, it can be argued that they are “defined” through the axioms of national identity.
In short, national identity and state interests are socially constructed and linked with each other (Wendt 1999). The argument allows us to reject the notion that the material effects of states are derived from pre-given identities and interests (Kuus and Agnew 2008: 99). Given that national identity is constantly constructed and have influence on the construction of state interests (Wendt 1992), it will be important to examine how national identity is constructed, and thereby how state interests are formed. Nationalism and security discourses are important components of geopolitical discourses through which nation-states construct their national identity and state interests.

2.4 Rethinking Nationalism and Security Discourse

The accepted ideology of nationalism has viewed the nation as a natural entity which should have its own territorial state, or nation-state (Agnew 2004; Penrose and Mole 2008; Mountz 2009). The security discourse of states has viewed national insecurity as stemming from external threats. After a critical turn in IR and PG, however, nationalism and security discourses came to be regarded as political discourses that construct the national identity and state interests of the nation-state as an autonomous subject in international politics. This section provides critical reflections regarding nationalism and security discourses.
2.4.1 Critical Reflections on Nationalism

Before the critical turn, nationalism was interpreted as a natural force operating throughout history (Flint and Taylor 2007: 160). In political geography, the nation and nationalism were also part of the assumptions of analysis that were not investigated (Flint and Taylor 2007: 158). In contemporary social science, however, nationalism is no longer considered unproblematic. Smith (1982) proposes that nations should be seen as a particular form of an ethnic community that merges cultural identity with political demands. Anderson (1983) argues that nationalism was the operation of an “imagined community” in which people cannot possibly all know one another, but believe themselves to hold certain histories, narratives and dreams in common. From the modernist position in relation to the definition of the nation, nationalism is regarded as a “political strategy” (Breuilly 1993); that is, nationalism is a political strategy of nation-states to construct their identities and interests through the conflation of state and nation. Thus, it can be argued that nationalism promotes the process of building a nation-state through the conflation of state and nation.

Nation-state building involves not only political processes, such as a centralized government and a monopoly of legitimate force, but also social-cultural elements such as a national education system, standard language, and national symbols (Penrose and Mole 2008: 275). Indeed, in order to induce popular support for their foreign and security policies, the elites of nation-states often conflate the state with the nation in the everyday life of the
public. With his concept of “banal nationalism” Billig (1995) shows that nationalism is part of everyday life in all societies. The continuous processes of building a nation-state in everyday life through banal nationalism not only emphasize national unity but also construct national identity and state interests. In this sense, national identity and state interests provide individuals with objective and subjective dimensions to their sense of self-identity. Thus, national identity and state interests, constructed through nationalism, have a significant influence on the foreign and security policy of a state.

2.4.2 Critical Reflections on Security Discourse

Before the critical turn, national security meant securing the state as a fixed entity against objective and outside threats. In contemporary social science, however, defining state insecurity as objective external threats is no longer regarded as unproblematic. Campbell (1992) proposes that security discourses as “representations of danger” should be a subject for analysis in security studies, arguing that the foreign policy of the US was an endeavor to construct its identity. According to Krause and Williams (1997), the state is not the guarantor of security, but is rather one of the greatest threats to its citizens in many places. Through the concept of “imaginary security,” Weldes (1999) argues that the insecurities faced by states are constructed, and state interests are social constructs which emerge out of representations of relations among states. From these critical perspectives, insecurity does not lie outside of
nation-states, but is an integral part of the process of constructing their national identity and state interests.

Security discourses are based on the assumption that nation-states and their insecurities are natural and unproblematic in the anarchic international system. In this sense, it can be argued that nation-states are produced as autonomous subjects through security discourses. These discursively constituted subjects are endowed with particular identities and interests, and are thus vulnerable to the insecurities that might threaten these identities and interests (Weldes et al. 1999). As Campbell (1992) pointed out, therefore, security is not a threat to, but a precondition for, nation-states. Through this process, security discourses become the principal mechanism for legitimizing nation-states (Wæver 1995; Krause and Williams 1997). Although some political geographers suggested that Communism and the threat of Soviet power provided a hegemonic American culture with an ideal “Other” (Dalby 1990; Campbell 1992; Sharp 2000), security discourses have been largely neglected despite their importance in discussions of international politics. As Kuus and Agnew (2008) pointed out, political geography needs to pay closer attention to the constitutive role of security in constructing the national identity and state interests of a state.
2.5 Chapter Summary

I have reviewed the related literature in the disciplines of PG and IR. Through a critical review of the frameworks of strategic culture and critical geopolitics I have stressed the necessity to address foreign and security policies of weak nation-states from the viewpoint of geopolitical culture. In order to do so, I have re-conceptualized the idea of geopolitical discourse and pointed out that the social constructions of sovereignty and territory are major sources for the formulation of geopolitical discourses. In addition, I have examined the nation-state as a social construct and its construction of national identity and state interests. Lastly, I have conceptualized nationalism and security discourses as discursive mechanisms for the construction of the national identity and state interests of a state. On the basis of this review, in next chapter I present my theoretical framework for analyzing a weak nation-state's construction of its national identity and state interests through the concept of geopolitical discourse.
CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is an attempt to provide a theoretical framework for explaining a weak nation-state’s foreign and security policies using the concepts of geopolitical culture. The framework focuses on three theoretical points: 1) geopolitical agency of a weak nation-state in geopolitical contexts, 2) the relationship between the geopolitical visions and codes of a weak nation-state, and 3) a weak nation-state’s construction of territory for its geopolitical discourses. After identifying the three theoretical points and discussing three methodological issues I will present my theoretical framework.

3.1 Geopolitical Agency of a Weak Nation-State

First of all, this study focuses on the geopolitical agency of a weak nation-state within geopolitical structures. In this study, a weak nation-state is identified in a specific geopolitical context relative to other states. Flint and Taylor (2007: 142-151) suggest the concept of the “maneuverability of states,” classifying states into core, semi-peripheral, and peripheral states. Peripheral states are weak in the world-economy in spite of their overdeveloped state apparatus. Following Flint and Taylor (2007), this study defines a weak nation-state as a nation-state which has low maneuverability in a particular geopolitical context. Although geopolitical structures provide a weak nation-state with constraints rather than opportunities, a weak nation-state has some geopolitical agency through the formulation of its geopolitical
discourses. I illuminate the relationship between geopolitical structure and agency and the
nature of geopolitical agency in geopolitical contexts: These two relationships comprise a
component of my theoretical framework that specifies how a weak nation-state expands the
parameters of its geopolitical agency.

3.1.1 Geopolitical Agency within Geopolitical Structures

In their pioneering article O’Tuathail and Agnew (1992) re-conceptualized geopolitics
by arguing that it is the study of discourse rather than practice. According to them, although
foreign-policy actions are geopolitical, it is only through discourse that the foreign-policy
actions are made meaningful and justified. Through this re-conceptualization geopolitics is
defined as a “discursive practice” (O’Tuathail and Agnew 1992: 190) by which “intellectuals
of statecraft” (O’Tuathail and Agnew 1992: 193) spatialize international politics.

Hence, discourse studies in political geography have put emphasis on ‘geopolitical
agency’ rather than on ‘geopolitical structure’ as determinant of discourses. For weak nation-
states, however, geopolitical structures play a more constraining role in the construction of

29 The agency-structure dialectic is a complex problem ontologically, epistemologically, and methodologically.
An inter-subjectivist ontology which draws heavily from structuration theory (Giddens 1984) and scientific
realism (Bhaskar 1979) has been regarded as the general solution to the problem of capturing the agency-
structure dialectic (Friedman and Starr 1997: 10).

30 “Intellectuals of statecraft” refers to “a whole community of state bureaucrats, leaders, foreign-policy experts
and advisors who comment upon, influence and conduct the activities of statecraft” (O’Tuathail and Agnew
their identity and interests than for major powers because geopolitical structures are largely
constructed by major powers. Therefore, in order to demonstrate the geopolitical agency of
weak nation-states, there is a need consider carefully the constraints of geopolitical structure
imposed on weak nation-states.

Müller (2008: 334) has criticized the weakness of discursive studies, pointing out that
“discourse is always more than text.” He argues for the extension of the concept of discourse
as “language and practice,” citing other scholars’ critiques (Megoran 2006; Thrift 2000; Passi
2000; Dodds 2001). As Müller (2008) points out, the agency implied by considering
discourse as a narrative does not adequately reflect the poststructuralist decentering of the
subject and the contingency of discourses. This is because ‘narratives’ are associated with the
autonomy of the subject or agent but ‘discourse’ reflects contextual structures that are not
exclusively expressed by textual means. In fact, at a given moment, most speeches made by
foreign policy elites or government statements are not only representations but also practices.

By extending the concept of discourse as ‘representation and practice’, we can move
away from textualism to an inclusion of practice in the concept of discourse. Given that
geopolitical discourses of weak nation-states have to be formulated within geopolitical
structures, it is more necessary to see discourse as ‘representation and practice’ in the study of
geopolitical discourses of weak nation-states than of major powers. In order to study the
geopolitical discourses of weak nation-states there is a need to transcend the structure/agency
dualism by noting that identities and interests are often contested in places where a purely
linguistic concept of discourse (narrative) is conceptually inadequate.

Within geopolitical structures weak nation-states have to take neighboring major
powers’ calculations and identifications into account. Given that geopolitical discourses
consist of representations and practices, the geopolitical structures within which weak nation-
states are situated can be divided into two kinds of structures for analytical purposes: material
and ideational. Geopolitical structures are characterized as power relations among nation-
states - as the key geopolitical agents in the modern inter-state system - and other geopolitical
agents. The power relations within material geopolitical structures are formulated in terms of
the material capability of each nation-state in forcing other nation-states to admit their
interests. The power relations of ideational geopolitical structures are formulated in terms of
the cultural capability of each nation-state to induce another nation-state to emulate its
modernity.

Whereas major powers often produce ‘spaces’ by imposing spatial controls on other
states within material geopolitical structures, weak nation-states often make ‘places’ by
constructing their territories within ideational geopolitical structures (Taylor 1999a).\textsuperscript{31}

Within material geopolitical structures weak nation-states define their state interests and act

\textsuperscript{31} Taylor (1999a) argues that the ambiguous political roles of nation-states should be explained through the
concept of “place-space tension.” That is, although states produce space by imposing spatial control on localities
nations turn spaces into places through the construction of the national homeland.
out their foreign and security policies through their geopolitical codes. Due to the inequity of material capabilities among states, the constraints and opportunities for defining the content of geopolitical codes varies across a hierarchy of power. In many cases, the geopolitical codes of weak nation-states reflect the choice to be compliant with those of major powers.

In comparison with material geopolitical structures, ideational geopolitical structures are less coercive and more consensual. Within ideational geopolitical structures weak nation-states construct their national identities through their geopolitical visions. Geopolitical visions can be said to be a framing that connects the individual’s sense of identity to global geopolitics. National identities are translated into foreign and security policies through geopolitical visions.

Although only superpowers can directly link their geopolitical visions with foreign policy practices aimed at changing the material and ideational geopolitical structures (Mamadouh and Dijkink 2006: 356), it is also possible for weak nation-states to have some influence on international politics by making use of a particular geopolitical context. For example, the challenges of weak revisionist states toward ideational geopolitical structures in a particular geopolitical context are often represented as the denial of ‘prime modernity’ (Taylor 1999b), or the dominant ideology of a major power.

32 Taylor (1999b) views “prime modernity” as the attributes of a hegemonic power that other countries want to emulate. In this sense, prime modernity is the “combination of the cultural and economic innovations and vitality that enables a country to reach hegemonic status” (Flint 2004: 365).
Nevertheless, it is important to note that material and ideational geopolitical structures are intertwined. Material geopolitical structures are necessarily justified by geopolitical ideational structures. For example, the world order as a material geopolitical structure is justified by the prime modernity as an ideational geopolitical structure (Taylor 1999b). Within these material and ideational geopolitical structures weak nation-states as geopolitical agents work toward their goals by defining their geopolitical options for state interests through their geopolitical codes and embedding national myths into national identity through their geopolitical visions.

Moreover, national identity and state interests are not neatly distinguished in specific geopolitical contexts. According to Campbell (1992) state interests are assumed to be formed on the basis of national identity, and national identity is inextricably bound to the interests of the ruling elites. That is, separating state interests from national identity would ignore questions about the constitution of either. Within such intertwined geopolitical structures, weak nation-states have geopolitical agency by formulating their geopolitical discourses in geopolitical contexts. In other words, although weak nation-states as geopolitical agents are not autonomous actors within geopolitical structures largely defined by major powers, they have agency or the ability to make choices in constructing their national identity and state interests. To say that the geopolitical agency of weak nation-states is a product of geopolitical discourses is not to deny the materiality of the nation-states. Rather, disrupting the link
between national identity and weak states demolishes the notion that geopolitical agency is derived from autonomous subjects.

3.1.2 The Geopolitical Agency of Weak Nation-states in Geopolitical Contexts

The global geopolitical structure is largely constructed by the aggregation of the geopolitical codes of major powers. In the era of the Cold War the global world order was generally assumed to have been predominantly created by two superpowers, the US and the USSR. Most states across the globe had to define their stance in relation to the Cold War world order. For the pro-US states, the USSR’s use of communism was regarded as simply a rationalization for their own expansionary urges. For the pro-USSR states, the US’s use of liberal democracy was also regarded as simply a rationalization for its imperialist urges. In this binary division of the global world order any indigenous interests of weak nation-states were given minor consideration within the context of superpower rivalry (Gray 1988; Nijman 1993).

However, every state has its own set of geopolitical codes and visions, and global geopolitical structures are products of power relations between all states of the world. Hence, in a particular geopolitical context, weak nation-states, as geopolitical agents, face not only constraints but also take advantage of the opportunities of geopolitical structures. Even though superpowers are much stronger than any other states in terms of material capability
and prime modernity, and play a critical role in creating the geopolitical world order, they cannot ignore geopolitical contexts at various geographical scales.

The geopolitical discourses of weak revisionist states provide clear evidence of geopolitical agency, or the ability to make choices in a particular geopolitical context. Indeed, even during the Cold War era it was not impossible for weak revisionist states to have influence on geopolitical structures by making use of the relations between the major powers. Moreover, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, most weak nation-states came to be relatively free from having their identities defined in terms of their ideological stance. Because the global geopolitical structure is the agglomeration of all states and the influence of weak revisionist states on geopolitical structures increased after the end of the Cold War, there is a need to note the geopolitical agency of weak nation-states in a particular geopolitical context. This entails not simply tracing the distinct geopolitical traditions of different states but examining the power relationship between the centers and peripheries of geopolitical structures.

In conclusion, this study attempts to shine light on how a weak nation-state expands the parameters of its geopolitical agency by formulating its geopolitical discourses in a particular geopolitical context. Geopolitical discourses are dynamic as a result of a weak nation-state’s geopolitical agency, but they also display a level of stability as the goals of the state are situated within the relatively stable geopolitical structures. The dynamism and
stability of geopolitical discourses depend on the specific geopolitical context at various geographical scales. Through the case of North Korea, I attempt to demonstrate that weak nation-states can also influence geopolitical structures through the formulation of geopolitical discourses in a particular geopolitical context.

3.2 The Relationship between Geopolitical Visions and Codes

In this study, geopolitical discourses are conceptualized as a combination of geopolitical codes and geopolitical visions; whereas geopolitical codes are regarded as “high” geopolitical discourses mainly formulated by the elites, geopolitical visions are regarded as “low” geopolitical discourses mainly formulated by the populace (Kolossov 2003). However, although some studies have dealt with either geopolitical visions or codes little research has focused on the relationship between the geopolitical visions and codes of weak states. By focusing on sixty years of the interconnection between the geopolitical visions and codes of North Korea, this study attempts to elucidate the importance of the relationship in explicating the foreign and security policies of weak nation-states.

3.2.1 Geopolitical codes: a nation-state’s geographical construction of state interests

Geopolitical code is a useful concept for taking into account geopolitical actions in that it is an operational code consisting of a set of political geography assumptions that
underlie a state's foreign policy (Flint and Taylor 2007). In formulating geopolitical codes, foreign policy elites take into account the geopolitical codes of other states, because the construction of geopolitical codes is the product of relations between states with different power capabilities. Particularly for weak states the geopolitical codes of major powers became geopolitical structures which often constrain weak states’ formulation of geopolitical codes. According to Flint and Taylor (2007) a geopolitical code operates at three scales: local, regional and global. Generally, the more power a state has in the international hierarchy the greater a state’s ability to construct its geopolitical codes that project power at regional and global scales.

In the case of North Korea as a weak state in Northeast Asia, it is difficult to say that North Korea has a geopolitical code targeting regional and global scales. However, North Korea’s local codes are directly connected with the regional and global codes of the neighboring states for two reasons: First, the strategic importance of North Korea to the geopolitical codes of the neighboring states; second, the importance of a unified Korean peninsula in North Korea’s geopolitical vision. Therefore, the changes in the global and regional geopolitical codes of the neighboring states have led to changes in North Korea’s local geopolitical codes.

Nevertheless, because there has been no fundamental change in North Korea’s geopolitical visions its geopolitical codes have come to show ambiguity or fluidity. For
example, in recent years North Korea seems to regard even China as a potential enemy as well as a current friend with regard to the process of developing nuclear weapons. In addition, the fact that the “Juche (Self-reliance) Idea” and “Seongun (Military-first) Idea” became North Korea’s official ideology instead of “Marxism-Leninism” after the end of the Cold War illustrates the ambiguity of North Korea’s geopolitical codes.

In this study, geopolitical codes are defined as the geographical construction of state interests in the domain of the high geopolitical culture constructed by state elites. In order to illuminate North Korea’s geopolitical codes, I examine three aspects of the construction of state interests: 1) its definition of state interests, 2) its mapping of enemies and allies in relation to state interests, and 3) its territorial strategies for the construction of state interests.

First, North Korean leaders have defined their state interests through their identity discourses. The construction of their national identity has had a powerful effect on the construction of their state interests. Because North Korea’s identity discourses have been developed through the Juche idea, the examination of this ideology allows us to follow the historical changes of the definition of state interests. Second, North Korean leaders have mapped its enemies and allies in relation to their state interests. That is, the neighboring states that threaten North Korea’s interests were identified as enemies, and the neighboring states that do not threaten such interests were treated as allies. In order to understand the ambiguity of geopolitical codes, however, the enemies or allies need to be divided into two categories:
current and potential. Current enemies are immediate threats to state interests and potential enemies are perceived emerging threats. I examine the historical changes in mapping enemies and allies over the four periods of my study. Third, North Korean leaders have made use of territorial strategies to justify their state interests through the construction of sovereign territory. I examine how North Korean leaders have constructed their sovereign territory as part of the discursive manufacture of state interests over the four periods of my study. In Chapter 5 I attempt to illuminate the dynamism of North Korea’s geopolitical codes.

3.2.2 Geopolitical visions: a nation-state’s geographical construction of national identity

Geopolitical codes employed by foreign policy elites should be examined in association with popular geopolitical visions which are more general but less articulate than geopolitical codes (Dijkink 1998). In order to ensure that geopolitical codes resonate with the populace the elites of weak nation-states must frame their actions within the established political geographic sentiment embedded in the histories and myths of the nation. That is, the justification for geopolitical actions taken by the elites must be grounded in popular geographical knowledge. A geopolitical code, or high geopolitical discourse, is not enough to show the popular sentiments in geopolitical culture. Thus, geopolitical vision is a useful concept for examining popular geopolitical representations. Geopolitical visions form the
basis for geopolitical codes and the means to represent and interpret geopolitical agents’ goals
so that they obtain popular support for their actions.

Following Kolossov (2003) and Dijkink (1996), I define geopolitical vision as the
geographical construction of national identity in the domain of the populace, or low
geopolitical culture. North Korea’s geographical construction of national identity is
understood as the combination of the construction of the regional states’ identities and the
construction of the North Korean national homeland. The construction of the neighboring
states’ identities and the construction of North Korea’s self-identities are intertwined as a
Self/Other nexus. In the geopolitical context of North Korea the neighboring states are
defined as outside ‘Others’ to threaten the identity and security of North Korea as the only
legitimate nation-state in its national homeland.

This study examines how North Korea has constructed the neighboring states’
identities as outside ‘Others’. In the process of constructing outside ‘Others’ the North Korean
state has made use of security discourses. How the neighboring states were specifically
portrayed as threats to North Korea’s identity and security by the North Korean media is the
key element of this discourse. On the basis of the construction of the neighboring states’
identities North Korea constructed its self-identity. In the process of constructing ‘Self’ the
North Korean media made use of nationalism through the conflation of nation and state.
Importantly, North Korea portrayed itself as the only legitimate nation-state in its national
homeland. This study examines North Korea’s territorial strategies for the construction of its national identity, focusing on the continuity and change of the construction of national homeland over the four periods of the study. In Chapter 4, I illuminate the construction of external ‘Others’ and self-identity and the construction of national homeland as the key components of North Korea’s geopolitical visions.

3.2.3 Dissonances between geopolitical visions and codes

According to Dijkink (1998) there is a strong degree of consonance between the geopolitical visions and geopolitical codes of a state because a state’s geography offers shared recognition between foreign policy elites and the populace about the state’s geopolitical context. Moreover, both the elites and the populace are subjected to a mechanism that distorts the information about the world as a consequence of the construction of national myths (Dijkink 1998). Nevertheless, if foreign policy elites fail to make their geopolitical codes consonant with the geopolitical visions of their populace it will be difficult for them to justify their foreign policies to the public. The elites of weak nation-states are more apt to fail to create such consonance because weak states face contexts that promote the dissonances between their geopolitical visions and codes. The relative power of stronger states in setting the rules and norms of a geopolitical context make a situation in which the long-term identity of a weak state may not be matched by the immediate needs that are attempted to be achieved...
through geopolitical codes. In particular, states which use geopolitical visions as an identity strategy are apt to experience difficulties in formulating consonant geopolitical codes. Thus, it is important to examine the relationship between the relative change of geopolitical codes and the relative continuity of geopolitical visions, understanding that both geopolitical codes and visions are products of interaction between foreign policy elites and the populace.

Since its creation North Korea has used its geopolitical visions as one of its main national identity strategies, neglecting the dynamic global geopolitical context. In contrast, the US as a hegemonic power has linked its geopolitical visions with its international power practices, but has ignored the local and regional geopolitical contexts in Northeast Asia. Nevertheless, as one can see from the Korean War or the North Korean nuclear crisis, North Korea’s foreign policy has influenced the foreign policies of the neighboring states in spite of its relatively small material capabilities. The conflation of scales has intertwined the local, regional and global geopolitical codes of the regional states within the geopolitical context of the Korean peninsula.

The conflation stemmed from the asymmetry of the internal relationship within the two blocs in Northeast Asia. While the US and Japan, in the capitalist bloc, were never at odds with each other, the Soviet Union and China, in the communist bloc, were often competing, even during the Cold War. Moreover, the normalization of diplomatic relationships between South Korea and Russia and China in the 1990s made North Korea’s
binary distinctions between allies and enemies even more ambiguous. Such fluidity of North Korea’s geopolitical codes has led to the dissonances between its geopolitical codes and visions.

In this study, the relations between the geopolitical visions and codes of North Korea are examined in two aspects. First, this study compares the construction of outside “Others” with the mapping of enemies and allies. In this comparison, I attempt to demonstrate how the construction of outside “Others” is incongruent with the mapping of enemies and allies over the four periods of the study. Second, this study compares North Korea’s construction of its national homeland with the construction of its sovereign territory. In this comparison I attempt to illustrate how North Korea’s territorial strategies are used differently in the construction of its national identity and state interests. In the last part of Chapter 5, I present the dissonances between the two types of geopolitical discourses of North Korea.
3.3 Construction of Territory for Geopolitical Discourses

The existing research concerning geopolitical discourses has largely neglected the importance of territorial construction. Through the concept of the “territorial trap” Agnew and Corbridge (1995) identify the implicit assumption that a state is a fixed territorial entity within the global geopolitical order. Through the concept of “regimes of territorial legitimation,” Murphy (2002; 2006) provides insights into territorial construction of identity and interest from a meso-scale perspective. However, the connection between the territorial constructions and geopolitical discourses of a weak nation-state are not adequately addressed in the literature. This study attempts to elucidate the connection by viewing the construction of national homeland and sovereign territory as the territorial basis of a weak nation-state’s geopolitical agency.

On the one hand, a weak nation-state’s national homeland is constructed within the ideational geopolitical structures for its geopolitical visions in relation to the process of making a “place” (Taylor 1999a). On the other hand, its sovereign territory is constructed within material geopolitical structures for its geopolitical codes in relation to the process of producing “space” (Taylor 1999a). Indeed, in spite of the constraints of geopolitical structures defined mainly by major powers, the construction of territory plays a crucial role in making weak nation-states autonomous subjects in international politics. That is, by emphasizing the threats to their territories from stronger nation-states weak nation-states can construct their
identity and interests in territorial terms. Although major powers also make use of territorial construction for their identities and interests, their construction of territory has been expressed mainly in the form of “extraterritoriality” rather than territorial sovereignty (Flint 2004: 369). In particular, the US has consistently expanded its grip territorially and economically beyond its own sovereign territory through “hegemony” rather than “empire,” especially since the end of the Cold War (Agnew 2005: 17).

Thus, it can be argued that weak nation-states make use of nationalism and security discourse more often than major powers as discursive mechanisms to naturalize the concept of the state as an autonomous territorial subject. Whereas the conflation of the state and the nation through nationalism inscribes the “inside” of the state as a subject, evoking security threats through security discourse designates the anarchical “outside” against which the state is defined (Kuus and Agnew 2008: 99). With this component of my framework, in Chapter 6 I attempt to demystify North Korea’s nationalism and security discourse by treating a weak nation-state as a territorial process of subject-making.

### 3.3.1 Nationalism and the Territorial Construction of Identity and Interest

In this study, nationalism is regarded as “inherently a territorial ideology” (Anderson 1988: 18). Williams and Smith (1983: 502) argues that nationalism is always a “struggle for control of land,” criticizing the academic neglect of the national construction of territory.
Although nationalism has been usually defined as “the pursuit of national self-determination,” it can be better defined in territorial terms as a “collective action designed to render the boundaries of the nation congruent with those of its governance unit” (Hechter 2000: 7). This study uses these definitions to analyze nationalism as a nation-state’s discursive practices to make sovereign territory and national homeland congruent. The term ‘national homeland’ illustrates that national identities are partially derived from territories, revealing strong emotional bonds that nations have for particular territories (White 2000: 28). Because national identities are derived, expressed, and even invested in national homelands, nation-states become very protective of the territories that define their national identity and state interests.

However, the spatial delimitation of a national homeland is not a simple matter, even though nations may express a deep emotional attachment to their homelands. In the modern inter-state system the territories of nation-states are practically delimited in accordance with the sovereign territories of states. Therefore, it is important to understand how the construction of the national homeland is related to that of sovereign territory in the process of the territorial construction of national identity and state interests. This study views that relationship as the fundamental element in the relationship between geopolitical visions and codes in that geopolitical discourses are formulated on the basis of the construction of territory.
Nationalism is viewed as a discursive mechanism for the construction of the national identity and state interest of a nation-state in territorial terms. A nation-state’s sovereignty cannot be claimed with the production of statehood alone (Kuus and Agnew 2008). Indeed, the contingent nature of the state reveals that nation-states’ construction of their national identity and state interests are trapped in the spatial logic of the modern inter-state system (Murphy 2002: 194). The idea that sovereign states are autonomous subjects of international politics depends on the assumption that the legitimacy of the state is derived from the nation or people. “Popular sovereignty” posits that states are the masters of territory and the people are the masters of a state (Yack 2001). Hence, the doctrine of “popular sovereignty” compels us to regard the nation-state as a territorial, political and cultural community. As Murphy (2002) points out, therefore, the historical construction of nationhood and statehood should be complemented by studies focusing on the construction of territory. In this respect, this study examines how nationalism became a basis of North Korea’s geopolitical discourses through the construction of territory.

3.3.2 Security Discourse and the Territorial Construction of Identity and Interest

Security discourse is another discursive mechanism for the construction of the national identity and state interests of a nation-state in territorial terms. According to Dalby (1991: 274), the division of space into “our place” and “their place” for the exclusion of the
“Others” and the inclusion of the “Same” is the “essential moment of geopolitical discourse.”

In the Self/Other nexus of security discourses, security is defined in negative terms as the exclusion of “Otherness” (Neumann 1999). In particular, the construction of “Self” and “Other” in moral terms, like the dichotomy of good and evil, is coupled with the discursive practices of foreign policy making (Doty 1993).

What should be noted is that the exclusion of “Otherness” is expressed in territorial terms through the construction of boundaries between “inside” and “outside” (Walker 1990). On the basis of the territorial delimitation of sovereignty, security is defined in spatial terms of exclusion; enemies are created as “Others,” inhabiting some other territory (Dalby 1988: 420). The object of geopolitical discourses is the enhancement of security through the spatial limitation of the domain in which the adversary can project power. In security discourses, geopolitics is about the formulation of security in spatial terms of identity and difference, and enemies are specified in a series of territorial constructions of insecurity.

North Korea’s construction of national identity specifies its neighboring states as outside “Others” through the use of interconnected security discourses. In particular, the totalitarian conceptualization of security denies politics and history by creating “Others” as perpetual adversaries (Walker 1987). In most cases, however, weak nation-states’ security discourses do not lead to security but to a replication of security problems. In other words, the
geopolitical and military formulations of security provision are apt to undermine the security of the people of the weak nation-states (Dalby 1990: 184).

In addition, the key concept of state interests is important in geopolitical discourses because it has been equated with the military domination of territory. State interests are intimately related to security, understood in the sense of preventing a potential adversary from invading one’s sovereign territory. The anarchy of international politics assumes the inevitable clash of competing state interests, and also the historical perpetuation of the state as the only significant actor in political affairs (Dalby 1988: 422). Thus, outside threats justify and mobilize the state as an autonomous subject.

Security discourses reproduce the sovereign state in the sense that framing an issue in terms of security casts that issue in territorial terms. Security discourses reproduce the state as an inherently territorial subject by demarcating the inside and the outside as territorial categories (Kuus and Agnew 2007: 100). State legitimacy requires moral boundaries of identity just as much as it requires political boundaries, which are produced and maintained through invoking threats from the outside. Framing a state as being under threat casts it as natural and unproblematic, and legitimates emergency measures deemed necessary to deal with the alleged threats. I attempt to investigate the discursive structures of security and reveal the ideological formulations of geopolitical discourses of North Korea, and the intersection of nationalism, political ideology and the construction of external threats.
3.4 Methodological Issues

Some methodological issues in a case study analysis of North Korea to study a weak nation-states’ geopolitical discourse must be considered. This section attempts to justify three methodological issues: the social effects of texts, the identification of historical periods, and the unit of analysis.

3.4.1 The Social Effects of Texts

This study uses textual analysis to analyze North Korea’s geopolitical discourses. Although discourses exist beyond the individual texts that compose them, they are embodied and enacted in texts (Phillips and Hardy 2002). In other words, the premise on which this study can claim to use textual analysis for the study of North Korea’s foreign and security policy is that North Korea’s geopolitical texts have social effects on its geopolitical culture as a social system of geographical knowledge. Once geopolitical texts have been established and become part of geopolitical discourses, in turn, the interrelated set of texts can play a role in framing North Korea’s geopolitical thoughts and actions in a particular geopolitical context. Fairclough (2003) argues that texts can bring about changes in our knowledge and have
longer-term social effects on social practices, stressing “ideological effects”\textsuperscript{33} as the most significant social effects of texts. What should be noted here is that social effects are not the result of a normal cause-and-effect relationship because contextual factors influence whether representations of texts have social effects or not through context-specific power relations. Hence, it is important to see how the geopolitical texts of a state have social effects on its foreign and security policy as a social practice in a particular geopolitical context.

For the analysis of geopolitical discourses through textual analysis, therefore, it is necessary to consider “discursive practice,” which contribute to the creation and reproduction of unequal power relations in a social context (Phillips and Jorgensen 2002: 63). Textual analysis tends to concentrate on the formal features from which discourses are realized linguistically (Phillips and Jorgensen 2002: 69).\textsuperscript{34} As the relationship between texts and social practice is mediated by discursive practice, it is only through discursive practice that texts shape (and are shaped by) social practice (Phillips and Jorgensen 2002: 69). The geopolitical texts produced by powerful geopolitical agents can exert social effects through the role of discursive practices in the maintenance of geopolitical orders or power relations

\textsuperscript{33} Fairclough (2003: 9) defines ideological effects as “the effects of texts inculcating and sustaining or changing ideologies,” viewing ideologies as “representations of aspects of the world which can be shown to contribute to establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power, domination and exploitation.”

\textsuperscript{34} Analysis of discursive practice focuses on “how authors of texts draw on already existing discourses to create a text, and how receivers of texts also apply available discourses in the consumption of the texts” (Phillips and Jorgensen 2002: 69).
(Foucault 1980; Phillips and Jorgensen 2002). Following Foucauldian scholarship, critical geopolitics admits the social effects of texts by approaching geographical knowledge as an essential part of the modern discourse of power (Kuus 2010). However, textual analysis has limits in that it cannot account for the non-discursive aspects of the phenomenon in question (Fairclough 2003). Thus, analysts need to “link the ‘micro’ analysis of texts to the ‘macro’ analysis” of how power relations work across social practices and social structures (Fairclough 2003: 15-16). In order to link the micro analysis of North Korea’s geopolitical texts to the macro analysis of North Korea’s geopolitical context this study uses a historical approach to its geopolitical practices and representations, concentrating on the relationship between the changes and continuities of North Korea’s geopolitical discourses and the shifts of geopolitical structures.

3.4.2 The Identification of Historical Periods

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, a single case study can also avoid a conceptual vacuum by the provision of multiple observations and within-case variations. A historical approach can increase the number of observations because it yields many observations within each sequence of events (King, Keohane and Verba 1994: 224-232). In order to show the variations in North Korea’s formulation of geopolitical discourses, this study defines four
separate periods and observes how the varying situations have produced changes and continuities in geopolitical discourses.

This study divides the history of North Korea’s formulation of geopolitical discourses into four separate periods: 1) the 1950s-1960s as a period of the Cold War confrontation between the capitalist camp and the communist camp; 2) the 1970s-1980s as a period of détente and post-détente between the capitalist camp and the communist camp; 3) the 1990s as a period of the collapse of the communist bloc and the end of the Cold War; and 4) the 2000s as a period of the “War on Terror.”

Additionally, North Korean domestic politics experienced important changes just before and after these shifts of geopolitical structures. Particularly, the changes in guiding ideology have been the most important trait in characterizing the four periods. Therefore, it is possible to characterize the four periods in terms of domestic change: 1) the 1950s-1960s as the period of Marxism-Leninism as the official ideology; 2) the 1970s-1980s as the period of Juche (Self-reliance: Kim Il-sung’s motto) as the official ideology; 3) the 1990s as the period of transition in North Korea’s leadership from Kim Il-sung to Kim Jong-il; and 4) the 2000s as the period of Seongun (Military-first: Kim Jong-il’s motto) as the official ideology.

Of course, this division of periods may be questioned. It is possible to divide North Korea’s geopolitical history into two (the Cold War era and the post-Cold War era), three periods (the 1950s-1960s, the détente of the 1970s, and the post-Cold War era; or the Cold
War era, the end of the Cold War, and the “War on Terror”) or five periods (the First Cold War of the 1950s-1960s, the detente of the 1970s, the Second Cold War of the 1980s, the end of the Cold War of the 1990s, and the “War on Terror” of the 2000s). However, considering the importance of the regional geopolitical structure (particularly China) and the official ideology for North Korea as a weak, divided nation-state, it can be argued that this division of periods is the most appropriate in observing the changes and continuities in North Korea’s geopolitical discourses over the course of about sixty years.

### 3.4.3 The Unit of Analysis

This study treats a state as a unit of analysis, or geopolitical agent, within geopolitical structures under the assumption that nation-states have a national identity and state interests. Friedman and Starr (1997: 89) argue that to treat states as subjects or a unit of analysis is problematic because states cannot perceive and act intentionally, and suggest a “methodological individualist approach,” which treats foreign policy elites as the unit of analysis. However, if a state is treated as a “subject-in-process” (Kuus 2007: 92) a state could be a unit of analysis.

Particularly, in order to overcome the perspective that national identity is a fixed attribute of the state as an autonomous subject, a “performative approach” (Kuus 2007: 92) needs to be introduced. The approach explicitly conceives subjectivity in processual terms,
not as a source but as an effect of identity claims. In this sense, to study a state as a geopolitical agent is not to study the subjective roots of its foreign and security policy, but to analyze the practices by which it is produced as an autonomous subject (Bevir 1999: 65). Consequently, the approach allows us to ameliorate the structure- agency problem in the study of geopolitical agency of weak states within geopolitical structures. In this study, national identity is not viewed as a fixed attribute of the state, and state interests are not regarded as pre-given. Therefore, the question of this study is not how national identity and state interests affect the foreign and security policies of nation-states. Rather, the question is how nation-states construct their national identity and state interests through their foreign and security policies that name threats to the putative identity and interests.

3.5 Conclusion: Theoretical Framework

I have presented three components of my theoretical framework and three methodological issues. My theoretical framework consists of three components: vertical, horizontal, and circular (Figure 3.1). The framework combines the three components to understand how a weak nation-state constructs its identity, interests and territory by formulating its geopolitical visions and codes in order to expand the parameters of its geopolitical agency.
Regarding the vertical component of the framework, this study will examine the geopolitical agency of a weak nation-state within geopolitical structures. For analytical purposes, geopolitical structures are divided into material and ideational. Material geopolitical structures are formulated in terms of material power relations among nation-states. Ideational geopolitical structures are formulated in terms of ideational power relations, such as “prime modernity” (Taylor 1999b), among nation-states. Within material geopolitical structures, major powers create “spaces” by imposing spatial controls on other states. Within
ideational geopolitical structures, weak nation-states make “places” by constructing their territories (Taylor 1999a). Although geopolitical structures mainly create constraints (and, simultaneously, slight opportunities) to a weak nation-state as a geopolitical agent, such a state can expand the parameters of its geopolitical agency by formulating geopolitical discourses.

Regarding the horizontal component of the framework, I will investigate not only the formulation of geopolitical visions and codes, but also the relationship between them. Although national geography and history provide the elites and populace of nation-states with shared geopolitical cultures, weak nation-states more often tend to confront the dissonances between their geopolitical visions and codes than major powers in the process of constructing national identity and state interests.

Regarding the circular component of the framework, this study will examine the role of territorial construction in formulating geopolitical discourses. For analytical purposes, the territory of a nation-state is divided into national homeland and sovereign territory. Through the construction of national homeland and sovereign territory a weak nation-state establishes crucial territorial bases for the formulation of its geopolitical visions and codes in the process of making a “place” and producing “space,” respectively. Through this framework, I attempt to contribute to overcoming the limitations of the existing frameworks (such as critical
geopolitics and strategic culture) to understand the foreign and security policies of weak nation-states.
CHAPTER 4: THE STABILITY OF NORTH KOREA’S GEOPOLITICAL VISIONS

In this study North Korea’s geopolitical visions are understood as the combination of the construction of its self-identity, the construction of its neighbors’ identities, and the territorial strategies for the construction of its own identity. This approach follows the idea that geopolitical visions are “translations of national identity concepts in geographical terms” (Dijkink 1996: 14). North Korea’s construction of state identities consists of two interrelated parts constructed on the basis of the self/other nexus (Dalby 1990; Neumann 1999; Sharp 2000): the construction of the identities of neighboring states as outside “Others” and the construction of its self-identity. Territorial strategies are the translations of North Korea’s national identity in geographical terms through the construction of its national homeland, which is to be defended from the outside “Others.” In the sense that North Korea’s self-identity has been defiantly constructed in response to the influences of neighboring states, I will initially examine North Korea’s construction of the identities of neighboring states.

4.1 North Korea’s Construction of the Identities of Neighboring States

4.1.1 Overview

North Korea’s geopolitical visions have been formulated mainly through the construction of the identities of neighboring states as outside “Others” which threaten its
national homeland in the geopolitical context of Northeast Asia. In order to examine how North Korea constructed its neighboring states’ identities I will analyze articles from the 1960s to the 2000s in a North Korean magazine. The magazine Cheollima, the most widely-distributed magazine for the North Korean masses, is expected to show the popular representations of neighboring states’ identities. Although the magazine included many articles about Third World countries such as Vietnam and Cuba, my analysis will focus on the articles regarding neighboring states, including the US. For about fifty years, articles about the US occupied the largest portion of all the articles in the magazine that were about neighboring states (54.8%, or 392 articles, out of 715). Articles about Japan (23.3% or 166 articles) and South Korea (15.9% or 114 articles) made up the second and third highest proportions (see Table 4.1).

In contrast, articles about allies, such as China and Russia, were not so numerous. Excluding articles on Russia as an “Other” during the 1990s and 2000s, articles describing China and Russia as allies occupied only roughly two percent (2.4% or 17 articles) of the magazine’s content. This implies that since the creation of the political regime the North Korean media has mainly constructed neighboring states’ identities as that of outside “Others” that threaten its territory. Particularly, considering the overwhelming proportion of

35 The articles about other countries largely occupy 5-10% of all the articles in each volume of the magazine Cheollima.
the articles that mention the US and its allies, it can be argued that the North Korean media
has consistently contributed to the sense of insecurity of North Korea as a result of perceived
(or constructed) threats from the US and its allies against the North Korean identity.

Nevertheless, there were some variations over the four time periods (see Table 4.1). First of all, although the articles about the US comprised the largest portion of the articles
during most of the fifty years, they decreased to below fifty percent during the 1990s. This
seems to be the effect of the end of the Cold War and the appearance of articles about Russia
as being one of the “Others” during this period. Articles about Japan largely maintained their
second rank after those about the US, but during the 1990s they made up the largest portion
of the articles regarding neighboring states. This means that the construction of Japan’s
identity was not weakened by the end of the Cold War. Articles about South Korea largely
decreased over the five decades. Particularly in the 2000s, the portion of articles that dealt
with South Korea dropped sharply to below four percent (3.6%). This implies that the
construction of South Korea as an “Other” was considerably weakened after the inter-Korean
summit of 2000. Articles about Russia increased very sharply during the 1990s, but they
portrayed Russia as an “Other” due to Russia’s transition to a capitalist society. In the 2000s,
Russia was depicted as both an enemy and a friend. Articles about China showed no
significant change throughout the four time periods.
However, the overall tone in constructing the identities of neighboring states has shown unusual stability despite the changing geopolitical context. What is most conspicuous is that there has been no positive tone in the construction of the identities of the US and its allies. The US, Japan, and South Korea have, without exception, been consistently constructed as outside “Others” that threaten North Korea’s territory. Therefore, it can be argued that the variations in the proportions of the articles regarding neighboring states are only adjustments to the changes in the geopolitical context. These adjustments are intended to maintain the stability of North Korea’s geopolitical visions despite the changing context.

Table 4.1 Proportions of articles regarding neighboring states in the magazine Cheollima

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1960s</th>
<th>1970s~80s</th>
<th>1990s</th>
<th>2000s</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The US</td>
<td>71 (60.1%)</td>
<td>164 (57.7%)</td>
<td>38 (31.4%)</td>
<td>119 (61.7%)</td>
<td>392 (54.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>16 (13.7%)</td>
<td>51 (18.0%)</td>
<td>42 (34.7%)</td>
<td>57 (29.5%)</td>
<td>166 (23.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>27 (23.1%)</td>
<td>64 (22.5%)</td>
<td>16 (13.2%)</td>
<td>7 (3.6%)</td>
<td>114 (15.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>1 (0.9%)</td>
<td>4 (1.4%)</td>
<td>23 (19.0%)</td>
<td>7 (3.6%)</td>
<td>35 (4.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>2 (1.7%)</td>
<td>1 (0.4%)</td>
<td>2 (1.7%)</td>
<td>3 (1.6%)</td>
<td>8 (1.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>117(100%)</td>
<td>284 (100%)</td>
<td>121 (100%)</td>
<td>193 (100%)</td>
<td>715 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1.2 The US: an Imperialist “Other”

The North Korean media has consistently constructed a negative identity of the US. Without exception the US has been continuously constructed as an imperialist and a capitalist
state that threatens North Korea’s territory. For my analysis, such constructions are divided into three categories: the imperialistic behaviors of the US before the division of Korea in 1945; the imperialistic behaviors of the US after the division of Korea; and the problems of American capitalist society. The first category consists of articles about US foreign policy towards the Korean peninsula before the division of Korea. This category relates to the entire Korean peninsula rather than solely North Korea. The second category consists of articles about the US-North Korean conflicts and the US-South Korean cooperation after the division of Korea. This category is directly related to the insecurity of the North Korean state. For example, the North Korean political regime nearly lost its territory to the US-led UN forces during the Korean War. The third category consists of articles about the various problems of American capitalist society. This category is used for showing the cultural differences between North Korean society and American society rather than showing a direct threat to the security of the North Korean state. I will investigate the three categories, and then examine the changes within the categories over the four periods, through an analysis of the articles about the US in Cheollima.

First, concerning the behavior of the US before the division of Korea (Joseon dynasty, 1392-1910), the North Korean media has reproached the US as an imperialist state for invading Korea and helping Japan colonize it. According to the magazine, invasions by the imperialist US date back to the mid-19th century. Although the USS General Sherman sailed
up the Daedong River toward Pyongyang in 1866 in order to open Korea to international trade, the American merchant ship was sunk by the enraged Korean people because of taking up arms in Korean territory. This incident was portrayed as the historical debut of the revolutionary family of Kim Il-sung, whose great-grandfather Kim Eung-u was alleged to have led the attack on the ship. The magazine has continuously mentioned the incident in the articles about the US throughout the four periods.\textsuperscript{36}

Many articles in the magazine about the incident include the following statement by Kim Il-sung:

\textbf{US imperialism is the Korean people's sworn enemy and has engaged in aggression against our country for over 100 years since the intrusion by the USS General Sherman} [emphasis added]. After the ignominious defeat in the first attempted aggression, it has constantly carried out aggression and barbarous plunder in our country, committing countless, unpardonable crimes against the Korean people. [Kim Il-sung, September 7, 1968]\textsuperscript{37}

According to the North Korean media, the invasion by the imperialist US of the Korean territory did not cease after the General Sherman incident. The North Korean media has associated the imperialist behaviors of the US in the 1870s and 1880s with the foreign

\textsuperscript{36} e.g. Cheollima, February 1968, p. 162; September 1973, p. 113; October 1982, p. 102; August 1993, p. 92; January 2004, p. 72.

policies of the US after the creation of the North Korean political regime; particularly the raid on the Gangwha Island to open Korea in 1871, the unequal diplomatic and trade treaty with Korea in 1882, and the trial to move the Korean King to the US embassy in 1895.

In particular, the North Korean media have given a lot of attention to the role of Christianity in the process of the imperialist US’s invasions. According to the magazine, the US imperialists invaded the Korean territory “with guns in one hand and Bibles in the other.” Whenever the US invaded Korea, American missionaries were said to have always participated in the invasion as guides.

According to the North Korean media, the US also helped Japan colonize Korea in the 1890s and 1900s. In order to emphasize the importance of the argument the magazine continuously quoted Kim Il-sung’s statement: “Before the liberation, the US imperialists supported the occupation and colonial rule of Korea by Japanese imperialists.” The magazine has said that the US mediated the imperialistic conflicts over the colonizatio

38 e.g. Cheollima, July 1970, p. 126; August 2002, p. 64.


40 e.g. Cheollima, April 1974, p. 117; July 2004, p. 88.

41 Cheollima, January 1974, p. 110.

42 e.g. Cheollima, June 1968, p. 115; February 1971, p. 104; October 1984, p. 106; September 2004, p. 87.

Korea between Japan and other neighboring states. For example, at the end of the Sino-Japanese War (1894) and Russo-Japanese War (1904), the US helped the involved states to create the Treaty of Simonoseki and the Treaty of Portsmouth in Japan's favor.\footnote{Cheollima, November 1999, p. 72; July 2004, p. 88. As a result of accomplishing the Treaty of Portsmouth (named after a city in New Hampshire), US President Theodore Roosevelt won the Nobel Peace Prize.} Moreover, the Taft-Katsura\footnote{Through the secret agreement, the US and Japan agreed that Japan would have a prior right in opening Korea and the US would have a prior right in opening the Philippines. At that time, William Taft was the Army Secretary of the US, and Katsura Daro was the Prime Minister of Japan.} secret agreement (1905) was used as critical evidence of America's responsibility in Japan's colonization of Korea.\footnote{Cheollima, October 1984, p. 106; January 1999, p. 65; September 2005, p. 87.} The magazine insisted that with this agreement the US exchanged with Japan a monopoly to colonize Korea for a monopoly for itself to colonize the Philippines just after the Russo-Japanese War (1905).

Second, regarding the imperialistic behaviors of the US after the division of Korea, the North Korean media has constructed the US as a modern imperialist state that uses various means, such as military threats, economic domination, and cultural permeation to invade North Korea's territory. The magazine has portrayed the US as an aggressive military state that aggravated international tensions, stepped up the arms drive, and unleashed a new
war of aggression, particularly against Third World countries. The magazine also defined the US as an economic bully that uses international organizations and multinational corporations. In particular, it was alleged that American multinational corporations supported the US invasions of Third World countries with technology and capital. The US has also been depicted as a culturally imperialist state that exports consumerism and Christianity.

For example, the magazine inserted a series of ten articles under the title “The Performance Record of the Missionary Family of Underwood in 120 years.” In this series (from February 2008 to June 2009), the behavior of the Underwood family was described as a typical example of the Bible and Cross guiding the invasion of Korea by US imperialists:

The Underwood family arrived in Korea in the middle of the 19th century when US imperialists began invading Korea. They played the role of a shock brigade in the execution of the US invasion policy over five generations by

47 e.g. Cheollima, April 1967, p. 139; November 1972, p. 120; June 1987, p. 70; June 1993, p. 71; October 2007, p. 86.


49 e.g. Cheollima, November 1982, p. 97; August 2008, p. 75.

50 e.g. Cheollima, July 1966, p.104; November 2003, p. 57.

disguising as missionaries. Indeed, the record of the family’s performance for 120 years can be said to be a miniature version of the US invasion of Korea....The Underwoods were scouts for the US imperialists who tried to paralyze the combative spirit of the Korean people against the external powers by planting Christianity into Korea.52

In many articles53 about the religious permeation by the US, the magazine quoted the following Kim Il-sung statement: “The US imperialists are making use of religion as a tool for their invasion policy. With the religious propaganda, the US imperialists promoted servitude and worship toward the US and Americans.” 54 The North Korean media also portrayed the US as the most greedy and barbarous imperialist state. In many articles55 about the US the magazine quoted the following statement by Kim Il-sung:

US imperialism is the most barbarous and most shameless aggressor of modern times and the chieftain of world imperialism....No place on earth is safe from its tentacles of aggression and no country is free from the menace of its aggression. US imperialism is extending its aggressive claws to all parts and all the countries of the world. [Kim Il-sung, September 7, 1968] 56

52 Cheollima, February 2008, pp.77-79.


Third, the North Korean media portrayed the US as a declining and depraved state. The magazine insisted that the US was isolated and rejected by many people in the world and had lost its leadership role, even in the capitalist camp.\textsuperscript{57} According to the magazine, the political and economic contradictions in capitalist societies were getting worse every day and that the competition between the imperialist powers over markets and spheres of influence was intensifying.\textsuperscript{58} Moreover, the US was described as a depraved territory filled with exploitation, discrimination and perversion.\textsuperscript{59} The magazine also spoke of mammonism, a wide gap between the wealth of the rich and the poor, racial discrimination, and drug problems as failures of American capitalist society.\textsuperscript{60} In one article the magazine defined the American way of life as a “beastly way of life”:

\begin{quote}
The American way of life is the way of thinking and doing by US imperialists. It is the most reactionary among the bourgeoisie ways of life. Nowadays the American way of life, which pervades capitalist countries, is destroying
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{57} e.g. Cheollima, July & August 1967, p. 166; May 1971, p. 114; November 1983, p. 104; March 1993, p. 78; June 2009, p. 75.

\textsuperscript{58} e.g. Cheollima, April 1969, p. 139; May 1973, p. 120; June 1987, p. 70; March 1992, p. 84; April 2007, p. 80.

\textsuperscript{59} e.g. Cheollima, July 1966, p.106; February 1978, p. 73; November 1989, p. 53; June 1990, p. 70; December 2006, p. 76.

\textsuperscript{60} e.g. Cheollima, November 1967, p. 127; February 1976, p. 94; August 1985, p. 63; June 1992, p. 70; February 2006, p. 74.
morality and extremely depraving people... In the American way of life, money is omnipotent. Therefore, making money is the most important purpose of human activities... The American way of life is a beastly way of life.⁶¹

A culturally significant publication was “Snowstorm in Pyongyang” (“Pyongyang ui nunbora”): This North Korean short story depicts the perversion of American people’s everyday life through a recollection of the time when North Korea captured a US Navy ship (the USS Pueblo) in 1968. In the story one of the Pueblo’s American crew pleads for the right of homosexuality as a private matter despite his captivity. By contrasting the US soldier’s homosexuality with a snowstorm the story attempted to construct the American culture as immoral:

“Captain, sir, homosexuality is how I fulfill myself as a person. Since it does no harm to your esteemed government or esteemed nation, it is unfair for Jonathan and me to be prevented from doing something that is part of our private life.” (the North Korean officer responds) “This is the territory of our republic, where people enjoy lives befitting human beings [emphasis added]. On this soil none of that sort of activity will be tolerated.” ...A snowstorm rages as if intending to sweep the country clean of all the filthy, ugly, revolting traces left behind by the Yankees.⁶²

⁶¹ Cheollima, December 2006, p.76.

In contrast, North Korea is portrayed as a clean territory which filthy Americans should not stain with their perversion. In this short story, the invasion of the USS *Pueblo* was not simply a military invasion but an intrusion into the morality of the North Korean people. By viewing a military incident as a cultural invasion the short story culturally portrayed the US as an “Other” that threatened North Korea’s clean national homeland in the domain of everyday life.

Throughout the four periods of this study the North Korean magazine continuously constructed the negative identity of the US as an imperialist state that intended to invade North Korea’s territory. Of the three categories, Table 4.2 shows that the second category was the most important mechanism in the construction of the US identity. Although the proportion of the second category in all of the articles dealing with the US decreased over the four periods, the proportion always occupied over 50% of the total. This means that the US imperialist threat to the North Korean state was the main theme used in the construction of the US identity.

In contrast, the first and third category occupied 23.4% and 11.0% respectively in the total articles about the US, but the proportions have increased over the four periods. The proportion of the first category increased from 16.9% in the 1960s (the first period) to 22.0% in the 1970s and 1980s (the second period), and to 28.6% in the 2000s (the last period). This implies that the magazine paid more attention over time to the threats to the entire Korean
peninsula in constructing the imperialist identity of the US. The proportion of the third
category also increased from 11.3% in the 1960s to 13.1% in the 1990s and to 15.1% in the
2000s, but had declined to 7.3% in the 1970s and 1980s. This means that the magazine paid
more attention to the construction of the US as a declining and depraved state in the post-
Cold War era (see Table 4.2). In conclusion, in order to strengthen the binary opposition
between the identities of the US and North Korea the North Korean media increased the
dissemination of articles representing the US as a threat to the entire Korean peninsula and
emphasizing the otherness of the American society while decreasing the amount of attention
paid to the US as a threat to the North Korean state itself.

In short, by continuously constructing the US in the popular media as an imperialist
state pursuing the domination of the Korean peninsula, North Korea has attempted to
culturally portray the US as an “Other” that was a threat to North Korea’s identity. Therefore,
this particular construction of the US as an “Other” has been one of the fundamental
components of North Korea’s geopolitical visions.
4.1.3 Japan: a Militarist ‘Other’

The North Korean media has also constructed the negative identity of Japan very consistently. Japan has been constructed as a militarist state that attempted to eliminate the national characteristics of Korea. For my analysis, such constructions are divided into three categories: the militarist behaviors of Japan before the division of Korea, the militarist behaviors of Japan after the division of Korea, and Japan’s cultural invasion to eliminate the Korean national characteristics (particularly during Japanese colonial rule). The first and third categories relate to the entire Korean peninsula rather than the North Korean state itself. The second category has a direct relationship with the security of the North Korean state. I will
investigate the specific contents of the three categories, and then I will examine the changes in the three categories over the four periods through an analysis of the articles in *Cheollima* that focuses upon Japan.

First, concerning the militarist behaviors of Japan before the division of Korea, the magazine *Cheollima* delineated the militarist behaviors of Japan as a product of the Japanese identity. According to the magazine, the Japanese militarists not only plundered several resources of Korea but also committed barbarous acts such as massacres, abductions, and torture toward Koreans in the course of waging its imperialist war during the first half of the 20th century. The magazine often quoted the following statement by Kim Il-sung⁶³:

> Japanese militarism is the sworn enemy of the Asian people. Historically, it has invaded other countries with the backing of the big imperialist powers. In collusion with the US and British imperialists and under their patronage, the Japanese militarists occupied Korea, stretched out their talons of aggression to the Asian continent and brought immeasurable suffering and calamity to the Asian people. In conspiracy and collaboration with fascist Germany and Italy, they also ignited the Pacific War and were crazy to become the “leader” in Asia. [Kim Il-sung, November 2, 1970]⁶⁴

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⁶³ e.g. *Cheollima*, March 1972, p. 113; January 1984, p. 112; December 1993, p. 96; September 1995, p. 71.

Second, regarding the militarist behaviors of Japan after the division of Korea, the magazine portrayed Japan as a militarist state which still has the ambition to dominate the Korean peninsula and East Asia. According to the magazine, Japan revived its militarism during the Second World War with the support of the US,\textsuperscript{65} and tried to invade the East Asian countries to realize a so-called “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.”

With the backing of US imperialism, a revived Japanese militarism is once again overtly stretching out its tentacles of aggression to Korea and other Asian countries and recklessly seeking to realize its old dream of a so-called “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.”\textsuperscript{66}

However, Japan was depicted as subordinate to the US both militarily and economically. In comparison with the US as a leader of imperialist and capitalist projects, Japan was called a “shock brigade” to assist US aggression in Asia, including the Korean peninsula. The alliance between the two countries was regarded as a “master-and-servant

\textsuperscript{65} The North Korean media has insisted that Kim Il-sung liberated Korea by defeating Japan with the Soviet Union. According to the media, the US was not a liberator but another invader because the US ignored the Korean people and even cooperated with Japan for the colonial rule of Korea. Therefore, the antagonistic relations between the US and Japan during the Second World War have been ignored and re-interpreted in North Korea.

\textsuperscript{66} \textit{Cheollima}, December 1995, p. 98.
relationship” in their common interests in the Asian aggression. The magazine often cited this statement by Kim Il-sung.67

Japanese militarism faithfully serves as their [the US’s] “shock brigade” [emphasis added] in Asian aggression. In an implausible attempt to materialize its old dream of conquering Asia with US imperialist backing, Japanese militarism has gone so far as to project a war against Korea and other socialist countries in Asia. At the behest of US imperialism, the Japanese militarists are making active preparations for a new war. Moreover, Japan is serving it as a logistics and staging area for aggression against Asian countries. [Kim Il-sung, September 7, 1968]68

Specifically, the magazine insisted that Japanese participated in the Korean War under the disguise of US uniforms69 and invaded South Korea economically by making use of the trilateral alliance led by the US.70

Third, in relation to Japan’s cultural invasion to eliminate the Korean national characteristics, the North Korean media emphasized that the Japanese colonial authority tried to eliminate the national characteristics of Korea. The magazine quoted Kim Il-sung as


69 e.g. Cheollima, June 2000, p. 61

70 e.g. Cheollima, January 2009, p. 83.
saying, “Villainous Japanese imperialists committed a lot of atrocious and contemptible 
machinations in order to obliterate our national culture for nearly fifty years.” According to 
the North Korean media, the Japanese colonial authority forced the Korean people to change 
their Korean names into Japanese names and forbade the Korean people from using the 
Korean language. In addition, Korean national history was said to have been distorted by 
Japan to justify Japanese militarism. For example, the magazine insisted that Dangun was 
dismissed by Japanese historians as being simply a myth.

Japanese imperialists recognized that they could not dominate Korea without 
eradicating the strong consciousness of national independence of the Korean 
people, and they distorted the longevity and advancement of the Korean 
history as a basis of the consciousness of national independence. In order to do 
so, they tried to erase Dangun from Korea’s ancient history.

One of the most important features in the overall tendency of all the articles about 
Japan is the fact that the second category (the militarist behaviors of Japan after the division 
of Korea) decreased consistently (see Table 4.3). In contrast, the third category (Japan’s 
actions to eliminate Korean national characteristics) sharply increased in the post-Cold War 
era, and the first category (the militarist behaviors of Japan before the division of Korea in 

71 e.g. Cheollima, January 2007, p. 94.

1945) also increased. These tendencies mean that in constructing Japan’s identity North Korea paid more attention to Japan’s threat to the entire Korean peninsula rather than the North Korean state. This coincides with the North Korean media’s emphasis on traditional Korean culture and nationalism, especially after the collapse of the communist bloc. In constructing Japan as an “Other” the negative effects of Japanese colonial rule on the Korean national culture became more prevalent or imperative to the North Korean people than the militaristic behaviors of Japan after the nation’s division.

In short, by continuously constructing Japan through the popular media as a militarist state pursuing the domination of the Korean peninsula North Korea has attempted to culturally include Japan as one of the “Others” that threaten North Korea’s identity. Therefore, it can be argued that the construction of Japan as an “Other” that threatens North Korea’s territory has been one of the fundamental components of North Korea’s geopolitical visions.
Table 4.3 Proportions of the three categories in the magazine articles about Japan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Category 1: Japan as a threat to the entire nation</th>
<th>Category 2: Japan as a threat to the state</th>
<th>Category 3: Japan as a cultural invader</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The 1960s</td>
<td>5 (31.3%)</td>
<td>11 (68.8%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>16 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 1970s</td>
<td>13 (40.6%)</td>
<td>18 (56.3%)</td>
<td>1 (3.1%)</td>
<td>32 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 1980s</td>
<td>12 (63.2%)</td>
<td>7 (36.8%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>19 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 1990s</td>
<td>25 (59.5%)</td>
<td>14 (33.3%)</td>
<td>3 (7.1%)</td>
<td>42 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 2000s</td>
<td>32 (56.1%)</td>
<td>16 (28.1%)</td>
<td>9 (15.8%)</td>
<td>57 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>87 (52.4%)</td>
<td>66 (39.8%)</td>
<td>13 (7.8%)</td>
<td>166 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1.4 South Korea: a Flunkey ‘Other’

The North Korean media has constructed South Korea as a flunkey state and a hellish place for the South Korean people. The most frequent adjectives describing South Korea are “puppet” and “a living hell.” For my analysis such constructions are divided into three categories: the flunkey behaviors of South Korea, the problems of capitalism in South Korea, and the loss of national characteristics in South Korea. Initially, I will investigate the specific contents of the three categories, and then I will examine the changes that occur in the three categories over the four periods through an analysis of the articles about South Korea in the magazine Cheollima.
First, regarding the flunkey behaviors of South Korea, the magazine portrayed the South Korean state as a puppet regime under the control of the US. The magazine stated that the real ruler of South Korea was the imperialist US and that the South Korean people suffered from the racial insults of the US imperialists:

The US imperialists are the real rulers who have seized all the power in South Korea. The occupation of South Korea by US imperialism and its colonial rule is the basic cause of all the misery and pain that the South Korean people are suffering from. Until the US imperialist aggressors are forced out of South Korea and their colonial rule is smashed, the South Korean people cannot escape their present wretched plight. [Kim Il-sung, November 2, 1970]

Second, concerning the problems of capitalism in South Korean society the magazine described South Korea as a “living hell” for the South Korean people. Many articles in the magazine said that the South Korean people were very poor and could not escape from poverty because they were exploited by the comprador capitalists of South Korea as well as the multinational capitalists of the US and Japan.

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75 e.g. Cheollima, November 1969, p. 119; September 1984, p. 112; January 1995, p. 86.

Third, the magazine portrayed South Korea as a cultural colony of the US and Japan that has lost its own national characteristics. According to the magazine, the language spoken in South Korea was contaminated with English and Japanese, and Korea’s traditional culture was treated as inferior to the dominant Western culture:

South Korea is a dark place in which our national characteristics are soundly obliterated and our national elements disappear. In South Korea, our national cultures and traditions are insulted and trampled upon. Nowadays the Western culture including the American and Japanese culture is worshiped, and our national culture is disregarded as a musty and inferior culture.

Although the proportion of articles about South Korea in the total number of the articles on neighboring states decreased in the 2000s, the first category (the flunkey behaviors of South Korea) continued to occupy fifty to sixty percent of the articles about South Korea over the four periods (see Table 4.4). This means that flunkeyism was the main identity discourse when constructing the identity of South Korea. The second category (the problems of capitalism in South Korea) increased until the 1990s but in the 2000s there were no articles related to the category. The third category (loss of national characteristics in South Korea) was particularly emphasized in the 2000s. These changes show that the North Korean media

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77 e.g. Cheollima, April 1989, p. 86; July 2008, p. 78.

78 Cheollima, May 2000, p. 61.
put forth less effort into constructing South Korea as a poor country and more effort in
criticizing the loss of national characteristics. This is related to the tendency of the North
Korean people to no longer regard South Korea as an economically inferior society compared
to North Korea due to the sharp increase in the amount of information about South Korea
from the 1990s, particularly after the great famine of the mid-1990s in North Korea.

In short, by continuously constructing South Korea through popular media as a
flunkey state resulting from the domination of the Korean peninsula by the US and Japan,
North Korea has attempted to construct South Korea as an “Other” that threatened North
Korea’s identity. This construction has been one of the fundamental components of North
Korea’s geopolitical visions.

Table 4.4 Proportion of the three categories in the articles about South Korea

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Category 1: South Korea as a flunkey state</th>
<th>Category 2: South Korea as “a living hell”</th>
<th>Category 3: South Korea as a cultural colony</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The 1960s</td>
<td>15 (55.6%)</td>
<td>6 (22.2%)</td>
<td>6 (22.2%)</td>
<td>27 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 1970s</td>
<td>18 (64.3%)</td>
<td>9 (32.1%)</td>
<td>1 (3.6%)</td>
<td>28 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 1980s</td>
<td>19 (52.8%)</td>
<td>14 (38.9%)</td>
<td>3 (8.3%)</td>
<td>36 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 1990s</td>
<td>8 (50.0%)</td>
<td>8 (50.0%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>16 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 2000s</td>
<td>4 (57.1%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>3 (42.9%)</td>
<td>7 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>64 (56.1%)</td>
<td>37 (32.5%)</td>
<td>13 (11.4%)</td>
<td>114 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1.5 China and Russia (the Soviet Union): Friends or Traitors?

The North Korean media has largely constructed China and Russia as friendly states.

China was represented as a "blood-tied ally" in that China fought against the US-ROK alliance with North Korea during the Korean War. An article of the *Cheollima* magazine quoted Kim Il-sung as saying:

The great friendship between North Korea and China was tied with blood in the midst of hard revolutionary struggles, and so nothing can break the friendship.\(^{79}\)

Compared to China, the construction of Russia’s state identity by the North Korean media has displayed fluctuation through a number of representations. Until the 1980s, the Soviet Union was represented as one of the closest friends of North Korea and one of the most advanced countries. In an article about the Soviet Union, the relations between the two countries were depicted as robust and long: “The friendship between North Korea and the Soviet Union is based on the robust relations of communist comradeship, and has long historical traditions.” \(^{80}\)

And the article also quoted Kim Il-sung’s saying:

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\(^{79}\) *Cheollima*, April 2005, p. 70.

\(^{80}\) *Cheollima*, August 1985, p. 61.
We must defeat the Japanese imperialists and then construct in the homeland a socialist state like that of the Soviet Union with an advanced industry and agriculture. [Kim Il-sung, September 15, 1943]81

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, however, Russia was portrayed as a capitalist state that abandoned communism. In the 1990s the magazine ran a series to depict the problems that were said to have come from the conversion to capitalism under the title, "Owing to Abandoning Communism."82

In Russia, the result of abandoning communism is very serious. In the midst of a vortex of disasters in all fields such as politics, economy, culture, education, and public health, Russia recently turned into a “hell.” Particularly, Moscow, which was the most orderly city as the Soviet capital, turned into a hotbed of crime.83

Nevertheless, the number of articles in the magazine about China and Russia as friends was relatively small. This means that the construction of friends’ identities is almost ignored by the North Korean media in contrast to the construction of enemies’ identities. The sharp


82 e.g. *Cheollima* January 1996, p. 76; May 2000, p. 65.

83 *Cheollima*, January 1997, p. 75.
increase in the amount of negative articles about Russia in the 1990s is a good illustration of this bias.

4.2 North Korea's Construction of Its Self-identity

Through the construction of neighboring states' identities North Korea has defiantly constructed its self-identity. The way in which the North Korean media has constructed its self-identity is to conflate national identity with state identity through the concept of Juche.\textsuperscript{84} However, the Korean national identity constructed in North Korean terms is an extremely biased “imagined community” (Anderson 1983) in that the political division of that nation has continued since 1945. Moreover, given that the Korean nation as a political community is a modern construction (Eckert 1991; Em 1995), the Korean nation as a political community is not as solid as North Korea has asserted.\textsuperscript{85} Nevertheless, by conflating the nation with the state North Korea has tried to “naturalize” its state identity. Before examining the

\textsuperscript{84} Although Juche is often translated as “self-reliance,” “independence” or “subjectivity” by Western scholars, it is very difficult to translate the term into English. The Pyongyang Times (January 6, 1966), the English organ of the North Korean government, has translated Juche as “national identity” (Koh 1969: 90).

\textsuperscript{85} I do not deny the fact that the activities of the unified Korean states (at least Joseon or Goryeo dynasty) created a sense of national identity with a larger collectivity in Korea. However, the formulation of the Korean nation as a political community in the modern nation-state system was not accomplished because Korea was divided just after the end of Japanese colonial rule. Therefore, it is more persuasive to argue that the two Koreas have respectively developed their national identities in conformity with their state identities.
construction of North Korea’s self-identity, I will shed light on the *Juche* idea as an ideological mechanism for the construction of North Korea’s self-identity.

4.2.1 *Juche* as a Mechanism for the Construction of Self-identity

North Korea has constructed its self-identity by converting the identities of neighboring states as outside “Others” and using them as the basis for its self-identity with the concept of *Juche*: An ideological mechanism for the construction of North Korea’s self-identity in opposition to the neighboring states’ identities that was created by integrating anti-Americanism, anti-imperialism, anti-Japanism, anti-militarism, anti-flunkeyism, and anti-hegemonism from a nationalistic perspective. The perspective has made use of not only the geopolitical context of the Korean peninsula in which the neighboring states compete with each other but also the characteristics of the Korean nation, such as its longstanding ethnicultural homogeneity. What is important to the North Korean political regime is that the idea provides an implicit criticism of South Korea because the opposite of *Juche* is flunkeyism or reliance on outside “Others”. However, even greater importance rests on how the idea legitimizes the Kim family’s cult on the basis of the nationalistic ideology.

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86 Kim Jong-il, who worked in the KWP’s Propaganda and Agitation Department early in his career, was unofficially designated as Kim Il-sung’s successor in 1972, and formally introduced to the state as an official successor in 1980. Although the Academy of Social Sciences in its 1970 edition of the ‘Dictionary of Political Terminologies’ denounced hereditary succession, calling it “a reactionary custom of exploitative societies” and “originally a product of slave societies...later adopted by feudal lords as a means to perpetuate dictatorial rule,”
According to *Juche* theoreticians (Kim Chang-ha 1985; Park Seung-deok 1984) the idea was created under objective and subjective conditions. The objective condition is the entire Korean history in which the Korean people endured national humiliation, deprivation of national sovereignty and dignity, and national division by outside “Others” while maintaining a strong sense of ethnic purity. According to the idea, no other nation in the world has experienced the same kind and degree of interferences from external powers. On the other hand, the single subjective condition is the presence of a “sole supreme leader” (*Suryeong*).

*Juche* theoreticians maintain that all of the objective conditions would have been wasted had Kim Il-sung not been born in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, insisting that the South could not develop such an ideology despite similar objective conditions. In relation to this subjective condition, the *Suryeong* system becomes a crucial element of *Juche*. The system has been supported by “organic nationalism,” which views the nation as an organic body. The “sociopolitical organism proposition” emphasizes the blood relations between the supreme leader, the party and the masses,\footnote{Kim, Jong-il. 1992. *Collected Works of the Dear Leader Kim Jong-il*. Pyongyang: The KWP Publishing House.} and argues that without the supreme leader the party

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would fail to guarantee the unity of the nation. In turn, national unity is argued to be necessary to safeguard national self-determination from the interference of external powers.

In short, the concept of *Juche* is an ideological mechanism used to construct a North Korean self-identity that is the opposite of the neighboring states’ identities through the discourse of nationalism. In order to illustrate how the North Korean media constructed North Korea’s self-identity by conflating national identity with state identity I will explore three themes: a recalcitrant nation and autonomous state, a homogeneous nation and “socialist large-family state,” and a morally superior nation and righteous state.

### 4.2.2 A Recalcitrant Nation and Autonomous State

The North Korean media has constructed the Korean people as a recalcitrant nation that is resistant to external interventions. For example, the magazine *Cheollima* has included many articles about the Korean people’s struggles against foreign countries in an attempt to open Korea (at that time, *Joseon*: 1392-1910). As Cumings (1997: 87) observes, Korea was the last country in Northeast Asia to be opened by Western powers “not because it is stronger but because it is more recalcitrant” than China and Japan. Particularly, according to Kim Il-
sung’s statement quoted by the magazine,\textsuperscript{88} the Korean people are those who are peace-loving but fight relentlessly against foreign invaders:

\begin{quote}
Our people are brave and resourceful, industrious and peace-loving. In particular, our people are highly patriotic who fight indefatigably against foreign invaders in defense of the dignity of the nation. [Kim Il-sung, September 15, 1943]\textsuperscript{89}
\end{quote}

Despite the recalcitrance of the Korean nation against external invasions, however, the North Korean media insisted that flunkeyism has had much influence on the external relations of the Korean nation for a long time. For example, according to the magazine, Kim Il-sung stated:\textsuperscript{90}

\begin{quote}
Flunkeyism has a long history in our country. For a long time some of our people held the servile idea of doubting their own strength and blindly worshipping and trailing behind others. [Kim Il-sung, November 2, 1970]\textsuperscript{91}
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{90} e.g. March 1988, p. 69.

Geographically speaking, our country is situated among the Soviet Union, China and Japan. These adjacent countries are all big countries, with larger territories and populations than ours. [Kim Il-sung, 1979]^{92}

In order to prevent the Korean nation from being taken over by flunkeyism, the North Korean media insisted that the North Korean people should follow a great leader to adhere to independence and autonomy in foreign policy. In the geopolitical context of Northeast Asia, Kim Il-sung stressed national recalcitrance against not only the imperialism of the US and Japan but also the hegemonism of the USSR and China:

We are independent in our foreign policy, and we have a diplomatic policy of our own....We must always rely on our own judgment and convictions in struggling against imperialism and ‘Right’ and ‘Left’ opportunism, in conformity with our actual conditions, and let no one violate and affront the rights and dignity of our nation. [Kim Il-sung, August 12, 1967]^{93}

Thus, it can be said that North Korea constructed itself as an autonomous state by linking the identity of a recalcitrant nation with the foreign policy of the state. Through the link between nation and state, the North Korean media could legitimize its foreign policy toward neighboring states more effectively.

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4.2.3 A Homogeneous Nation and “Socialist Large-family State”

The North Korean media has constructed Korea as a homogeneous nation in terms of race, language and culture. One of the most representative illustrations of the construction of ethnic homogeneity is the 1998 speech by Kim Jong-il entitled “Let Us Unify the Country Independently and Peacefully through the Great Unity of the Entire Nation.”

The Korean nation is a homogeneous nation that has inherited the same blood and lived in the same territory speaking the same language for thousands of years. All Koreans in the North, South, and abroad belong to the entire Korean nation due to the shared blood and soul and are linked inseparably with the same national interests and a common historical psychology and sentiment. No force can ever split into two forever the single Korean nation that has been formed and developed through a long history, nor can it obliterate our nation and our national traits...The reunion of our nation that has been divided by foreign forces is an inevitable trend of our nation's history and the law of national development. [Kim Jong-il, 1998]94

In the speech, Kim Jong-il stressed the importance of the Korean blood, soul, and national traits for national reunification. Kim’s speech might be persuasive to the entire Korean nation in that the ethnic homogeneity is also admitted by the South Korean people (Shin 2006). However, this homogeneity discourse was used for the unity of the North

Korean socialist society rather than the national reunification of the two divided political communities. Instead, South Korea was portrayed as a westernized society that has lost the traits of the Korean nation.

The usage of the term "Kim Il-sung Nation" is a good illustration. When the North Korean media talks about the Korean people as a political community, they often use the term “Kim Il-sung Nation” instead of calling it the Korean nation. By excluding the South Korean people from the Korean nation the term places more importance on the unity of the North Korean people than national reunification. Kim Jong-il coined the term “the socialist society as a large family (sahoijuui daegajeong)" to emphasize brotherly love among the North Korean people. The North Korean media put an emphasis on delineating the North Korean society as one family sharing the same bloodline with Kim Il-sung serving as a father figure. On the basis of the remarkable ethnic homogeneity of the Korean nation, the North Korean media called Kim Il-sung a “present-day Dangun” (the mythical founder of the Korean nation). Indeed, Kim Il-sung or Kim Jong-il were not simply considered political leaders but were revered as a “fatherly or parental leader (Eobeoi Suryeong)” among North Koreans.

In conformity with the metaphor the ruling communist party was called the nurturing mother and the people were treated as children. For example, the KWP organ quoted Kim Jong-il’s statement to explain the metaphor:
Building the party into a mother party means that just as a mother deeply loves her children and cares warmly for them, so must the party take responsibility for the fate of the people, looking after them even in the smallest matters, and become a true guide and protector of the masses.\textsuperscript{95}

In particular, after the end of the Cold War the mono-race characteristic was emphasized more as a source of national pride by the North Korean media. A magazine article quoted Kim Jong-il as saying, “Our [Korean] people are the purest and cleanest in the world.”\textsuperscript{96} The KWP organ even condemned the South Korean government for introducing a multi-racial society through the promotion of miscegenation:

A mono-race nation is something that our nation and no other on earth can pride itself on....There is no suppressing the nation's shame and anger at the talk of a multi-ethnic, multi-racial society....which would dilute even the bloodline of our people.\textsuperscript{97}

In the post-Cold War era the pure bloodline was overemphasized compared to the other characteristics of national homogeneity such as race, language, customs, and value system. This strengthened the construction of the idea of a “large family state” within North

\textsuperscript{95} Rodong Sinmun, October 3, 2003.

\textsuperscript{96} Cheollima, November 2006, p. 87.

\textsuperscript{97} Rodong Sinmun, April 27, 2006.
Korean society rather than national reunification with the diversified South Korean society. Thus, it can be said that North Korea has constructed itself as a “large family state” by making use of national homogeneity discourse.

4.2.4 A Morally Superior Nation and Righteous State

The North Korean media has constructed North Korea as a morally superior nation compared to neighboring states. In particular, according to Kim Jong-il’s statement quoted by the magazine *Cheollima*, the Korean nation as one of high moral standing that has never invaded neighboring states throughout its history:

> Our nation is a morally lofty nation. Our nation has a strong sense of justice, loves the truth, and is polite and modest. Our nation has never invaded other countries throughout our history, and never given harm to other nations. [Kim Jong-il, December 28, 1989]

According to the North Korean media, the North Korean state is always righteous because its foreign policy has achieved justice for the North Korean people. Kim Il-sung claimed that the North Korean state was on the side of justice:

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98 e.g. *Cheollima*, January 2009, p. 96.

Today our Republic has entered an era of unprecedented prosperity. Our people are marching forward with increasing vigor, working, learning and living full of joy and pride in the Republic, firmly convinced of the justice [emphasis added] of their cause and of victory. [Kim Il-sung, September 7, 1968]¹⁰⁰

For example, North Korea’s proposal on national reunification is defined as absolutely “just” because it reflected the aspirations of the whole Korean nation. Even a potential future war on the peninsula is regarded as “just” in that it would aim to safeguard national sovereignty and reunification.

But the South Korean rulers have been dead set against the independent peaceful reunification of the country, each time ignoring our just [emphasis added] proposals which reflect the unanimous aspirations of the whole nation. [Kim Il-sung, November 2, 1970]¹⁰¹

In the event a war breaks out in our country, we will be waging a just war [emphasis added] to safeguard the sovereignty of the country and reunify the divided nation....A just war will surely end in victory, for the triumph of truth and justice is the law of history.¹⁰²


¹⁰² Rodong Sinmun, December 7, 1998.
Such an understanding by the North Korean media about the nation and state has led to the application of a binary between good and evil in representing foreign relations. For example, in response to US President Bush’s speech about the “Axis of Evil” the North Korean media portrayed the US as an “Empire of Evil” that always pursued an imperialist foreign policy:

Rodong Sinmun today in a signed commentary titled "The US, Empire of Evil" analyses Bush's remarks about an "axis of evil" made in his "state of the union address." The commentary discloses the injustice, falsehood, aggressive and dangerous nature of the Bush's assertion about an "axis of evil" which he is going to set out as the core of the US aggressive foreign policy despite domestic and foreign protest and denunciation. The commentary cites concrete facts to prove that Bush's assertion is nothing but vituperation as it lacks any theoretical ground or evidence.103

Thus it can be said that the North Korean media made use of the construction of a national identity as a morally superior nation in order to insist that the North Korean state is always righteous.

103 KCNA, February 14, 2002.
4.3 North Korea’s Territorial Strategies for the Construction of Its Identity

The territorial strategies of a nation-state for the construction of its identity are represented in the idea of “national homeland.” In naturalizing state identities through a linkage with national identities, territorial strategies play an important role. Across national contexts, the national homeland has been recognized as a natural basis for state and nation identities by both elites and the masses. Specifically, the North Korean media has consistently constructed the entire Korean peninsula as its national homeland since the creation of the political regime. However, the content of this construction have changed over the four periods of this study.

The continuity and change of North Korea’s territorial strategies for the construction of its identity can be explored in terms of representations by the North Korean media concerning three understandings: Pyongyang as the center of the Korean nation, Mt. Baekdu (or White Head Mountain) as a national landmark, and the geography of South Korea as a part of the national homeland. The North Korean media has portrayed these understandings as being “objective” by reinventing the content of Korean geography and history disseminated to the North Korean people.

As part of the territorial strategy for the construction of its identity, the North Korean media has constructed Pyongyang as the center of the Korean revolution and the national homeland. The North Korean media has argued that Pyongyang was not only “the heart of the
revolution,” but also “the psychological home of the Korean nation.”\textsuperscript{104} It even insisted that “without Pyongyang, Korea would not exist.”\textsuperscript{105} In order to legitimize the argument, the North Korean media emphasized that Pyongyang was the capital of two kingdoms (Old-Joseon and Goguryeo) and the most important city throughout the nation’s history. According to the North Korean media, Old-Joseon was the first kingdom, and Goguryeo was the strongest kingdom in Korea’s history.\textsuperscript{106}

Moreover, the alleged discovery of the Dangun Tomb in the 1990s provided the North Korean political regime with scientific evidence for the centrality of Pyongyang in the national homeland. However, the allegation that Pyongyang was the center of the two kingdoms does not automatically guarantee the legitimacy of the political regime whose current capital is Pyongyang. Nevertheless, the North Korean media has emphasized such findings as “historical facts” in order to maintain the national identity and the legitimacy of the political regime.

The North Korean media has also constructed Mt. Baekdu as a landmark of the

\textsuperscript{104} Rodong Sinmun, February 28, 1999. The article in the newspaper emphasized the importance of defending Pyongyang by saying, “Pyongyang had to be defended at all costs, as Korea could not exist without Pyongyang.”

\textsuperscript{105} Rodong Sinmun, January 29, 1999.

\textsuperscript{106} According to a surviving text from the Goryeo period, Chinese historians wrote that Dangun built his royal palace near modern-day Pyongyang and established a state called Joseon (Cumings 1997: 23).
Korean nation. Mt. *Baekdu* is not only the highest mountain (2,744m)\(^{107}\) in the Korean peninsula, but is also known as the birthplace of *Dangun* (the first king of Old-*Joseon* or mythical progenitor of the Korean race). Therefore, the mountain has been regarded as a landmark of the whole Korean nation in both physical\(^{108}\) and psychological aspects. North Korea utilized this mountain as part of its founding myth from the creation of the political regime, insisting that Kim Il-sung and his partisans conducted their anti-Japanese guerilla activities in the vicinity of this mountain and considered it the holy ground of their revolution (Suh 1988: 198). Hence, North Korea’s narratives about Mt. *Baekdu* help reveal North Korea’s territorial strategies for the construction of its national identity.

It is not surprising that the southern half of the Korean peninsula should be represented as a part of national homeland. However, the North Korean media’s representation of the geography of South Korea has changed over the four periods of this study. The North Korean media’s representations regarding the geography of South Korea are important indicators to show how the national homeland has been constructed in North Korea. In order to explore the territorial strategies of North Korea for its identity discourse, I will

\(^{107}\) North Korea corrected the height of the mountain as 2,750m above sea level, insisting that the correction was very significant to the Korean people.

\(^{108}\) For example, a famous Korean monk named *Doseon* (827-898), who combined Buddhist and Taoist practices of geomancy in the period of the unified-*Silla* (668-935), saw the Korean peninsula as “a branching tree with its roots at Mt. *Baekdu*” (Lee, K. B. 1984: 107).
examine the representations concerning Pyongyang as the center of the Korean nation, Mt. *Baekdu* as a national landmark, and the geography of South Korea as a part of the national homeland over the four periods of the study.

### 4.3.1 1950s-1960s

Until the 1960s, the North Korean media often discussed the geography of South Korea. For example, *Cheollima* ran the series “Unfolding the Map of the Southern Half of Our Homeland” to introduce the geography of South Korea to its readership. In this series, many mountains, rivers, and provinces in South Korea were introduced to the North Korean public. In total, the magazine inserted 10 articles about the geography of South Korea during the 1960s. The important feature of these introductions is that the articles were not objective depictions, but subjective or distorted ones. The magazine insisted that the rivers and mountains in the South were destroyed and the Southern provinces were regrettably devastated by the South Korean political regime.

In contrast, the geography of North Korea was described very positively. For example, articles about Mt. *Baekdu* (January 1961) and River *Amnok* (June 1961) were inserted in a

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series titled “Pride of Our Homeland.” The North Korean media constructed South Korea as a part of its homeland but the tone was very negative in comparison with the representation of the geography of North Korea. In other words, while the North Korean used geography to represent South Korea as part of the national homeland it was portrayed as missing out on the benefits from the communist revolution conducted by the North Korean political regime.

During the first period the North Korean media constructed Pyongyang as the center of the Korean revolution rather than the center of the Korean nation. Pyongyang was represented as Kim Il-sung’s hometown and the center of the communist revolution. In particular, the North Korean media said that although Pyongyang was destroyed by the US Air Force during the Korean War the city was newly built “within ten years”.110 Significantly, Pyongyang, in which the offices of the party and government are located, was not portrayed as the center of the entire Korean nation until the 1960s. According to the first Constitution of the DPRK, the capital city was not Pyongyang, but Seoul.

In addition, North Korean historians have argued that the center of the first Kingdom in Korea’s national history (Old-Joseon) was at the basin of River Liao (a region of Manchuria) located in what is presently China (Kwon 2003: 92). In particular, after investigating ancient artifacts with Chinese historians in the 1960s, this argument became commonly understood amongst North Korean historians. In the North Korean media

110 e.g. Cheollima, November 1978, p. 37; July 1984, p. 75.
Goguryeo was simply a kingdom among the three ancient kingdoms of Korea. Moreover, as was the case with South Korean historians, Silla was stipulated as the first unified kingdom in Korean history.\[^{111}\] During this period the North Korean magazine Cheollima included many articles about Joseon (capital: Seoul) and Silla (capital: Gyeongju in the southeastern region of the Korean peninsula), which were centered on the southern half of the Korean peninsula.\[^{112}\] Therefore, it can be said that Pyongyang was not constructed as the center of the Korean national homeland until the 1960s.

During this period the North Korean media constructed Mt. Baekdu, hitherto known as a holy place of the Korean nation, as a holy place of the Korean revolution led by Kim Il-sung. However, the magazine included only one article about Mt. Baekdu during the 1960s. In contrast, several mountains in South Korea were introduced similarly to Mt. Baekdu.\[^{113}\] This means that the North Korean media had not yet formulated a national identity discourse through Mt. Baekdu until the 1960s.

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\[^{111}\] An article of Cheollima (April 1964) said, “Silla merged most of the Korean peninsula by unifying the three kingdoms” (p.95).


\[^{113}\] Mt. Taebaek (October 1964), Mt. Seolak (May 1965), Mt. Sokni (September 1966), Taebaek Mountain Range (April 1968), and Charyeong Mountain Range (August 1968).
Indeed, before the 1970s North Korean leaders expressed negative perceptions toward nationalism from the viewpoint of Marx-Leninism. For example, in 1957 Kim Il-sung stated that “nationalism not only destroyed the friendship between nations but also did not accord with the interests of working class.” Instead, he used “socialist patriotism” in order to avoid contradictions arising from the simultaneous pursuit of socialism and nationalism (Shin 2006). In a speech Kim Il-sung tried to reconcile any tensions that existed between nationalism and internationalism by using patriotism, after asserting the importance of Juche:

Hearing us say that it is necessary to establish Juche, some comrades might take it in a simple way and get the wrong idea that we need not learn from foreign countries....Internationalism and patriotism are inseparably linked with each other. You must realize that the love Korean Communists bear for their country does not conflict with the internationalism of the working class but conforms with it. [Kim Il-sung, December 28, 1955]

However, there was no difference in the substantive meaning between nationalism and patriotism in the geopolitical context of North Korea; one could not simply claim loyalty to the state against the loyalty to the nation.

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4.3.2 1970s-1980s

During the second period, although the North Korean media still constructed the entire Korean peninsula as the national homeland, they scarcely dealt with the geography of South Korea. The magazine Cheollima inserted only two articles about the topic during the roughly twenty years from 1970 to 1989. In contrast, articles in the magazine related to Pyongyang and Mt. Baekdu became prominent.

Beginning in the 1970s the North Korean media began to construct Pyongyang as the center of not only the Korean revolution but also the Korean nation. Although Pyongyang was called the capital of the Korean revolution in the 1950s and 1960s, the city was not yet the de jure capital of the DPRK. By revising its constitution in 1972 North Korea moved the de jure capital city from Seoul to Pyongyang. In addition, the historical argument that the center of Old-Joseon was the basin of River Liao was abandoned under the influence of the Juche historical viewpoint (Kwon 2003). In a new argument the North Korean media claimed that Goguryeo, which was centered on Pyongyang, was the sole legitimate kingdom to succeed Old-Joseon during the era of the three ancient kingdoms. The North Korean media

116 Mt. Halla (January 1973), The South Sea (August 1973)


From the 1970s, Mt. Baekdu was generally used to reinforce the cult of the national leader Kim Il-sung under the influence of the Juche idea. The magazine ran four articles about Mt. Baekdu. One article said that "Mt. Baekdu always reminds us [North Korean public] to think about the Korean revolution led by Kim Il-sung as a legendary hero of our [Korean] nation."\footnote{Cheollima, September, 1975, p. 19.} A photograph of Kim Il-sung standing on top of the mountain near Lake Cheonji was widely circulated in the 1970s (Suh 1988: 201). For example, the picture was prominently displayed in a number of publications, and a full-page photograph appeared right
after Kim’s portrait in the 1970 Korean Central Yearbook. The construction of Mt. *Baekdu* as a geographical symbol of Kim Il-sung was associated with the change in the concept of “nation.” In the 1970s, North Korean historians added “bloodline” as a common characteristic of a nation along with language, territory, culture, and economic life (Shin 2006). In the 1980s, North Korean scholars eliminated the element of economic life from the concept as evidence of a critique of Stalin’s Eurocentric definition of the nation (Do 2003: 79). In accordance with these changes in the conceptualization of the nation Mt. *Baekdu* became to be used as a geographical symbol of Kim Il-sung as the leader of the Korean nation, and his promotion of a unitary bloodline. Thus, it can be said that Mt. *Baekdu* began to be regarded as the national landmark of racial purity of the Korean nation from the 1970s.

### 4.3.3 The 1990s

In the early 1990s, the alleged discovery of the *Dangun* Tomb had a great influence on the way in which the North Korean media constructed the entire Korean peninsula as the

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120 An English information book published by North Korea in 1974 featured a picture of Kim Il-sung standing on top of the mountain on the first page, even before the state emblem and state flag, and identified the mountain as being in Korea and a sacred mountain associated with the revolutionary struggle of Kim Il-sung (Suh 1988: 202).

121 Before the 1970s, the North Korean media used Stalin’s concept of nation as “a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture.” (Shin 2006: 82).
national homeland. To the North Korean media the discovery of the tomb in Pyongyang provided scientific evidence for the construction of Pyongyang as the center of the national homeland. Regardless of whether the discovery was fabricated or not,\textsuperscript{122} it can be said that it became important for the representation of national identity – notably for the role of Kim Il-sung in the discovery.

*Yeongsaeng* (Eternal Life), a North Korean propaganda novel depicting Kim Il-sung’s activities in his last days of 1994, illustrated his enormous interest in the discovery. The novel claims Kim Il-sung concentrated on three big issues at that time: the negotiation with the US over the nuclear problem, food production, and the rebuilding of the *Dangun* Tomb. Kim Il-sung made use of the tomb as a symbol of national pride particularly in relation to Japanese colonial rule\textsuperscript{123}:

> Comrade Kim Il-sung said that Japanese imperialists tried to eliminate *Dangun* from Korea’s history during the colonial rule in order to make the duration of the Korean history shorter than that of Japanese history. He also directed scholars [in North Korea] to intensify the study on *Dangun* and Old-Joseon. Such directions were made more than sixty times (Baek Bo-heum and

\textsuperscript{122} According to South Korean historians, it was scientifically impossible to prove that the remains in the tomb were that of *Dangun*.

\textsuperscript{123} During the Japanese colonial era (1910-1945), Korean nationalist intellectuals attempted to counter Japanese propaganda to co-opt Korean pride by reviving interest in the legend of *Dangun* as the founder of the Korean nation. The legend gave Koreans their own pure bloodline, a civilization grounded in a unique culture, and over four millennia of history (Myers 2010: 27).
In order to announce the discovery of the Dangun Tomb North Korea even interrupted negotiations pertaining to the ongoing nuclear crisis in 1993 (Cumings 1997: 24). The discovery was used to open a new phase in the interpretation of the debate over the center of Old-Joseon and the pure bloodline of the Korean nation. The construction of a new historical fact, Pyongyang becoming the center of Old-Joseon, emerged as the central element of the representation of the pure bloodline of the Korean nation (Kwon 2003: 94).

After the discovery North Korea began to construct Pyongyang as the center of Korean culture and national reunification. A prominent North Korean historian wrote that “the fact that the capital of Old-Joseon was Pyongyang means that Pyongyang is the birthplace of the Korean culture” (Jang Woo-jin 1999: 170). The Academy of Social Science, a North Korean national academic institute, evaluated the discovery as a very important event for national reunification in an academic journal of history, the Ryeoksa Guaahak (Historical


125 “The founding of Old-Joseon by Dangun 5,000 years ago marked an epochal occasion in the formation of the Korean nation. With the founding of the state of Old-Joseon, and after an integrated political unit was established, the blood ties and cultural commonness of the population were strengthened and their political and economic ties became closer, which gave momentum to the formation of the nation...The Koreans are a homogeneous nation who inherited the same blood and culture consistently down through history” (KCNA, November 26, 1993).
By proving that Dangun was a real figure and that the Korean nation developed a unique culture as a unitary nation since Old-Joseon, the Korean people came to be able to struggle for national reunification more firmly together. The Korean brethren in the North, South and overseas will end the division of the Korean nation created by external powers by prioritizing the homogeneity of the bloodline inherited from Dangun regardless of the differences in opinions, religions, and classes. [The Academy of Social Science 1993]

Cheollima associated the city, as the center of the Korean culture, with reunification. An article argued that reunification in the Korean peninsula was pursued by the kingdoms which selected a Pyongyang-centered policy:

Our ancestors of Old-Joseon sanctified Pyongyang as the birthplace of the Korean nation. Goguryeo moved its capital to Pyongyang in its heyday, regarding itself as a successor of Old-Joseon. Goryeo also placed importance on Pyongyang and tried to move its capital to Pyongyang several times. Our national history shows that unification movements were propelled by the kingdoms, which selected a Pyongyang-centered policy.126

The tomb was made into the symbol of the unified nation because it is the “strategic base of the nation’s territory”127 and a “place that all seventy million Koreans should...
visits. After the discovery, the magazine inserted many articles about the Dangun Tomb and Old-Joseon. In comparison with the number of articles about Old-Joseon (three articles in twenty years) during the second period, the number increased considerably (six articles in ten years). In addition, the magazine emphasized the succession of the national culture by Goguryeo (B.C.37-668) and Goryeo (918-1392). The number of articles about Pyongyang in the magazine increased from six in twenty years to seven in ten years.

Furthermore, after building a magnificent tomb for Dangun North Korea also renovated the tombs of the founders of Goguryeo (King Dongmyeong) and Goryeo (Wang Geon), which became treated as legitimate kingdoms by the North Korean regime. In an academic journal of history, North Korean historians persistently emphasized the continuity of ancestral observance rites performed by the succession of Korean states for Dangun and

128 Rodong Sinmun, November 14, 1993.


130 The magazine Cheollima inserted articles about the Korean kingdoms in the following manner: Gogurye, 4 articles (May 1990, January 1991, April 1992, December 1992); Goryeo, 2 articles (October 1992, November 1992); Silla, 1 article (July 1992); Baekje, 1 article (July 1992).


King Dongmyeong.\textsuperscript{133} The obsession with the antiquity of the nation, its homogeneity and purity, and the legitimate succession of rulers, suggested that North Korea claimed the legitimate succession for itself.

In addition, in the 1990s Mt. Baekdu was constructed as a geographical symbol of not only Kim Il-sung but also Kim Jong-il. The North Korean media emphasized that the mountain was a holy place related to the revolutionary activities of the Kim family (Kim Il-sung, Kim Il-sung’s wife,\textsuperscript{134} and Kim Jong-il). In particular, Cheollima emphasized that Kim Jong-il was born on the slopes of Mt. Baekdu.\textsuperscript{135} In total, the magazine published eleven articles in the 1990s related to Mt. Baekdu.\textsuperscript{136} In comparison with the number of such articles in the magazine during the second period (four articles in twenty years), the number increased sharply (eleven articles in ten years).

Finally, the geographical encyclopedia published in 1990 by the Academy of Science said that Mt. Baekdu was a holy place in which Kim Jong-il inherited Kim Il-sung’s


\textsuperscript{134} Kim Jong-suk (1919-1949), Kim Il-sung’s first wife and Kim Jong-il’s mother, was also a member of Korean partisan group stationing around Mt. Baekdu.

\textsuperscript{135} Kim Jong-il was actually born along the Russo-Chinese border south of Khavarovsk, and accounts conflict as to whether he was in China or in Russia (Cumings 1997: 28).

revolutionary spirit. In the midst of the collapse of the communist bloc, North Korea attempted to avoid an identity crisis through the Dangun Tomb and Mt. Baekdu.

4.3.4 The 2000s

During the last period of this study the North Korean media constructed Pyongyang as the center of a “Strong and Prosperous State,” which was the goal of its “Military-first Politics.” Although the magazine published a few articles dealing with the then-present Pyongyang, it emphasized the importance of Pyongyang indirectly by inserting many articles (twenty eight articles in ten years) concerning the Goguryeo kingdom. In the magazine, Goguryeo was portrayed as a kingdom that had the strongest military force and the largest territory throughout Korea’s history, particularly after the move of the capital to Pyongyang. Most of the articles cited Kim Il-sung’s statement regarding Goguryeo: “Goguryeo was the


strongest and largest country throughout our [Korean] history.” In addition, the magazine portrayed Goguryeo as a kingdom which had pursued national unification and struggled against interventions by external powers. These state images accorded with North Korea’s goal of becoming a “Strong and Prosperous State” and reunifying the Korean nation through “Military-first Politics” in the 2000s. In fact, the slogan was made to appear as if it emanated from Goguryeo in that the North Korean media identified the kingdom as a “Strong and Prosperous State.”

During this period the North Korean media constructed Mt. Baekdu as a geographical symbol of Kim Jong-il. Mt. Baekdu was portrayed as a landmark of Kim Jong-il who was leading the “Military-first Politics” and national reunification. An article in the magazine said that Kim Jong-il was “the great son of Mt. Baekdu,” citing Kim Il-sung’s comment about Kim Jong-il: “it was Mt. Baekdu that fostered Kim Jong-il as the leader of the Korean nation.”

In September 2007 another article in the magazine insisted that the Baekdu mountain

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range proved that the Korean peninsula is one physical entity:

Japanese imperialists got rid of the Baekdu mountain range and divided our mountain system into two basic mountain ranges in order to eliminate our nation.... The Baekdu mountain range is a pride of Korea in that the ranges stretched throughout our homeland from Mt. Baekdu to the South Sea. This shows that Mt. Baekdu is the mother mountain of the Korean peninsula and the symbol of our nation as a unitary race [emphasis added] who lived in our homeland for about five millennia.\textsuperscript{144}

This article insisted that Kim Jong-il as the son of Mt. Baekdu should be the national leader to reunify the divided nation-state in that the mountain is the “mother mountain of the Korean peninsula and the symbol of the Korean nation as a mono-race.”\textsuperscript{145} In contrast, it is very difficult to find articles about the geography of South Korea in the magazine during this period. This shows that the North Korean media geo-graphed the Korean national homeland rather than trying to provide objective information about it.

In sum, although the North Korean media has constructed the Korean peninsula as the national homeland, they did so by reinventing geographical and historical knowledge. Especially, representations of Pyongyang and Mt. Baekdu as the center and landmark of the national homeland were formulated (see table 4.5).

\textsuperscript{144} Cheollima, September 2007, p. 95.

\textsuperscript{145} Cheollima, September 2007, p. 95.
Table 4.5 The number of the articles related to North Korea’s territorial strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Mt. Baekdu</th>
<th>Pyong -yang</th>
<th>Pyongyang-centered Dynasties (Goguryeo or Old-Joseon)</th>
<th>South Korea-centered Dynasties (Silla, Baekje or Joseon)</th>
<th>Geography of South Korea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960s</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
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<td>1990s</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>2000s</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>56</td>
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4.4 Chapter Summary

North Korea’s geopolitical visions were unusually stable in spite of the changing geopolitical context. The stability of North Korea’s geopolitical visions was maintained through three paths: the consistent construction of the neighboring states as outside “Others,” the nationalistic construction of its self-identities, and the construction of the national homeland for naturalizing its self-identity.

First, to enable a consistent construction of neighboring states as outside “Others,” the North Korean media concentrated on the construction of negative and threatening identities of the US and its allies rather than the positive identities of China and Russia. Second, the
nationalistic construction of North Korean self-identity was manufactured by the conflation of nation and state. Third, the North Korean media reinvented geographical and historical knowledge to naturalize its self-identity in territorial terms. What should be noted is that these three paths have been integrated by the representations of the Kim family leading a struggle to defend North Korea’s national identity and national homeland against the threats of neighboring states. Thus, it can be argued that North Korea’s geopolitical visions have been made stable by representations of the supreme leader, resulting in the justification of his monopoly over the interpretation of North Korean geopolitical culture.

Geopolitical visions are linked with geopolitical codes in that both types of geopolitical discourses are formulated by interactions between the elites and the public in a shared geopolitical context. However, geopolitical codes tend to be more malleable than geopolitical visions because they are formulated in relation to the construction of state interests rather than national identity. In the next chapter, I will examine the dynamism of North Korea’s geopolitical codes in comparison with the stability of North Korea’s geopolitical visions.
CHAPTER 5: THE DYNAMISM OF NORTH KOREA’S GEOPOLITICAL CODES

North Korea has been largely regarded as a revisionist state by the international community since its creation in 1948. Hence, there has been a tendency to conclude that North Korea’s geopolitical codes have not changed in spite of the collapse of the communist bloc. As a matter of fact, North Korea’s geopolitical codes were not static. The formulation of North Korea’s geopolitical codes, as a weak state, has been strongly influenced by its stronger neighboring states. In order to present the dynamism of North Korea’s geopolitical codes I will examine three themes: 1) North Korea definition of its state interests through ideologies such as Juche (self-reliance) and Seongun (military-first); 2) North Korea’s mapping enemies and allies in relation to its state interests; and 3) North Korea’s territorial strategies for the construction of its state interests. In addition, and in comparison with the stability of North Korea’s geopolitical visions examined in Chapter 4, I will present the changes in the relationship between the geopolitical visions and codes of North Korea.

5.1 Ideology and the Definition of North Korea’s State Interests

North Korean leaders have defined their state interests through the lens of ideologies such as Juche (Self-reliance) and Seongun (Military-first). These ideologies have played a crucial role in maintaining consistency between the construction of North Korea’s national identity and state interests. According to North Korean texts on these ideas, the ideologies
date back to the period of Kim Il-sung’s armed struggle against the Japanese colonial rule of Korea. By examining the development of the ideas as a worldview for the North Korean foreign policy, from before the creation of the political regime to the advent of the idea of Seongun, I will show how North Korean leaders have defined state interests in conformity with the dominant identity discourses.

5.1.1 Before the Advent of Juche

Kim Il-sung, as the creator of the idea of Juche (self-reliance), used the term extensively from at least the 1930s to channel and develop popular sentiment against Japanese colonial rule. Indeed, the term became widely entrenched in the mass belief system of the entire Korean people (Park 2002). For example, Kim Il-sung emphasized self-reliant “armed struggles” against Japan by saying that Koreans must fight to win back their state “for themselves” during the period of his anti-Japan guerilla activities:

In order to conduct the Korean revolution effectively, we have to commit armed struggles [emphasis added] against Japanese imperialists for ourselves [emphasis added] above all. As the historical experiences of anti-Japanese

146 Based on such a statement by Kim Il-sung, North Korea even claimed in the 2000s that Seongun (Military-first) originated with Kim Il-sung in the 1930s anti-colonial guerilla struggle against Imperial Japan. Therefore, Seongun can be said to be a revised version of Juche in conformity with the changed geopolitical context in the post-Cold War era.

struggle show, other countries cannot give us independence, and we cannot defeat the Japanese imperialists and acquire our national independence with peaceful means. [Kim Il-sung 1930]\(^\text{148}\)

Even before the creation of the North Korean political regime in 1948, North Korean leaders used ideology to establish “anti-Japanism” as a fundamental component of North Korea’s identity discourse. On the basis of anti-Japanism, Kim Il-sung defined the liberation of all of Korea from Japanese colonial rule as a primary goal.

After the creation of the political regime in 1948, North Korean leaders used *Juche* to establish “anti-Americanism” as a fundamental component of North Korea’s identity discourse. For North Korean leaders the US was not a liberation force but an occupation force. The goal of North Korean foreign policy was to restore its territorial integrity by force in spite of the interference by the US. The driving force behind this goal was the *Juche* inspired belief that the division of Korea was an imperfect form of independence.

The initiation of the Korean War was an extreme foreign policy to realize this goal. In the war North Korean leaders reconfirmed that the US was another enemy that helped the South and destroyed much of the North. Moreover, the fact that US forces have been stationed continuously in South Korea made North Korean leaders perceive strong threats towards their state interests. The term *Juche* transformed into another antagonist sentiment,

this time, against the US. For example, Kim Il-sung emphasized the “Korean line and claims” in overcoming the division of Korea against the US by saying that the Korean question must be settled “by the Korean people themselves” just after the Korean War:

> It is quite evident that if the US imperialists had not interfered and if the Korean question had been solved in accordance with our line and claims [emphasis added], our country would have long ago been reunified, and our country and people would have been freed from all the sufferings and disasters resulting from the country's division. Our task is to carry our just line and claims into effect and to do everything for their realization....The Korean question must naturally be settled by the Korean people themselves [emphasis added]. [Kim Il-sung, August 5, 1953]

Therefore, after the Korean War, North Korean leaders established “anti-Americanism” as a fundamental component of North Korea’s identity discourse. On the basis of anti-Americanism, North Korean leaders defined the primary state interest as the liberation of South Korea from the military control of the US.

In the mid-1950s Kim Il-sung used the term of *Juche* in the process of purging the pro-Soviet and pro-China factions within the KWP (Korean Workers’ Party). In a speech to

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party propagandists and agitators in 1955,\textsuperscript{151} Kim Il-sung criticized the pro-Soviet factions that were following the Soviet goal of easing tension with the US:

This, the Korean revolution, constitutes *Juche* in the ideological work of our Party. Therefore, all ideological work must be subordinated to the interests of the Korean revolution. When we study the history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the history of the Chinese revolution, or the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism, it is all for the purpose of correctly carrying our own revolution....Comrade Pak Yong Bin, on returning from the Soviet Union, said that since the Soviet Union was following the line of easing international tension, we should also drop our slogan against US imperialism. Such an assertion has nothing to do with revolutionary initiative....It is utterly ridiculous to think that our people’s struggle against the US imperialists conflicts with the efforts of the Soviet people to ease international tension. [Kim Il-sung, December 28, 1955]\textsuperscript{152}

In the so-called “August Incident” of 1956, Kim Il-sung accused these two factions of following the political line of the Soviet Union and China. As the above speech shows, however, North Korean leaders did not yet have the intention to criticize the foreign policy of the Soviet Union. Therefore, North Korean leaders established “anti-flunkeyism” as an important component of North Korea’s identity discourse through *Juche*. Until at least the

\textsuperscript{151} Although most western scholars believe that the speech is the first public occasion on which Kim Il-sung spoke of the nationalistic concept of *Juche*, Myers (2006) argues that the speech is not nationalist in any meaningful sense of the term but a criticism of the excesses in following the Soviet line.

1950s at least the term *Juche* was an expression of antagonist sentiments against a specific target rather than a systemic ideology.

As the Soviet-China dispute intensified in the mid-1960s North Korean leaders began to formalize *Juche* as a systemic ideology. North Korean leaders began to articulate a state identity as an independent sovereign state. In his speech for the tenth anniversary of the Bandung Conference of 1965, Kim Il-sung used *Juche* to pronounce the principles of independence in foreign policy in front of an international audience.

For the domestic audience, the organ of the KWP issued an editorial in 1966, titled, “Let Us Defend Our Independence.”¹⁵³ It said:

> In recent years, the international communist movement shows that an unendurable phenomenon has not been eradicated. Some parties often force other brother parties to follow their own mistaken lines, and in the case of not following them, they intervene into other countries’ domestic politics….The mutual relationship between the international communist parties and the Korean Workers’ Party is founded on the principle of perfect equality, independence, mutual respect, noninterference in domestic politics and brotherly cooperation. There is no privileged party between the communist party and the Korean Workers’ Party. There may be a bigger party and smaller party, but there cannot be any higher party and lower party nor ruling party or ruled party….These facts ask us to thoroughly establish “*Juche*” [emphasis added]. [Rodong Sinmun, August 12, 1966]

¹⁵³ This editorial, which occupied nearly three pages in the six-page newspaper, was unusually so long.
Indeed, around this time North Korea’s foreign policy began to parallel the concept of *Juche*.

In the 1960s, the dispute between the Soviet Union and China posed a serious dilemma to North Korea as a small communist state. North Korean leaders could not afford to alienate the Soviet Union or China as a political and economic sponsor. In the midst of the increasing Sino-Soviet conflict and the escalating Cold War (particularly the Vietnam War), *Juche* helped North Korean leaders avoid the dilemma posed by the Soviet-China conflict. The result was enhanced maneuverability in North Korean foreign and security policy.

Accordingly, North Korean leaders established “anti-hegemonism” as an important component of North Korea’s identity discourse through *Juche*: North Korean leaders defined independence from the interventions by the Soviet Union and China as an important state interest.

### 5.1.2 After the Advent of *Juche*

At the fifth Congress of the KWP, Kim Il-sung declared the establishment of *Juche* throughout the country. In his report about the Party's work, Kim Il-sung said:

> Our party has endeavored to embody the *Juche* idea thoroughly in all areas of the revolution and construction as it established *Juche* in ideology. All the lines and policies of our party stem from the *Juche* idea, and they are permeated with it. [Kim Il-sung, November 2, 1970]^{154}

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North Korea institutionalized *Juche* as an official ideology of the state through the first amendment of the 1948 Constitution in 1972. The fourth Article stated: “The DPRK is guided in its activity by *Juche* of the KWP (Korean Workers’ Party), a creative application of Marxism-Leninism to the conditions of our country.”155 This indicates that North Korean leaders began to define new state interests in the midst of the détente between the communist and capitalist camps in the 1970s.

In the 1972 Constitution North Korea called for “peaceful reunification on a democratic basis.” Article five said:

> The DPRK strives to achieve the complete victory of socialism in the northern half, drive out foreign forces on a national scale, *reunify the country peacefully on a democratic basis* [emphasis added] and attain complete national independence.

This implies that North Korean leaders changed the primary state interest in the 1970s from elimination of the South Korean regime by force to elimination of the South Korean regime by the actions of the South Korean people, along with the support of the non-aligned Third

155 The 1970 Rules of the KWP also said, “The KWP is guided in its activities by Marxism-Leninism and the idea of *Juche* of Comrade Kim Il-sung, which is the creative application of Marxism-Leninism to the reality of our country.” In contrast, the 1956 Rules of the KWP said, “The KWP is guided in its activities by the theory of Marxism-Leninism.”
World countries. In 1972 Kim Il-sung insisted that the South Korean revolution must be carried out by the South Korean people, and the North Korean people should just support the South Korean people’s struggle.

As we always say, the South Korean revolution must be carried out by its masters—the working class and people of South Korea. As for the people in the northern half of the Republic, who are of the same nation, they are duty bound to give active support to the South Korean people’s revolutionary struggle. They must always be fully prepared to come to the aid of the South Korean people in their revolutionary struggle. [Kim Il-sung, 1972]156

In an attempt to create resonance with the broader international community North Korean leaders emphasized a united front of anti-imperialism with the non-aligned group rather than the communist bloc. In fact, North Korea made consistent efforts to export the idea of *Juche* to non-aligned Third World countries. By extending the existing identity discourses of anti-Americanism, anti-Japanism, and anti-hegemonism to the non-aligned group North Korean leaders tried to acquire the support of Third World countries. The North Korean elites were impressed by the independent posture of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) (Byun 1991: 52). The elites thought that *Juche* needed to be understood in relation to the NAM until the movement began to decline after the end of the Cold War. In his report to the sixth Congress of the KWP in 1980, Kim Il-sung summarized that in the 1970s the NAM

reached a higher stage of development through the achievement of Jajuseong (self-determination), which is the most important element within Juche:

Through a prolonged, arduous struggle many of the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America achieved the historic cause of national liberation....In the course of the rapid advance of the struggle of the people all over the world to oppose imperialism, eradicate all forms of domination and subjugation and achieve Jajuseong, the non-aligned movement reached a higher stage of development. The movement expanded to become a fully comprehensive, worldwide movement and grew into an organized political force with its own accepted principles of action. [Kim Il-sung, October 10, 1980]  

From the viewpoint of Juche conflicts inside the NAM were caused by the US’s imperialist tactics to weaken the movement and to make member states abandon the idea of anti-imperialist sovereignty. Kim Il-sung was portrayed as an outstanding leader for the unity of the non-aligned bloc who would raise the prestige of North Korea within the non-aligned group. In turn it was thought that the legitimacy of the North Korean state in the eyes of the South Korean people would be enhanced.

Furthermore, North Korea glorified Kim Jong-il’s elaboration of Juche as anti-imperialism to facilitate the leadership succession (Suh 1988). North Korean ideologues asserted that Marxism-Leninism did not fit the current North Korean geopolitical context  


158 In the 1992 Constitution, a provision claiming Marxism-Leninism as a guiding ideology was deleted.
or that of any other Third World state. They claimed that *Juche* superseded Marxism-Leninism as an anti-imperialist ideology for the contemporary world through the dint of Kim Jong-il’s endeavors. North Korea proclaimed that an “era of *Juche*” would provide Third World countries with “a new turning point in the history of mankind.”

Therefore, North Korean leaders established “anti-imperialism” as a fundamental component of North Korea’s identity discourse through *Juche*. On the basis of the anti-imperialism of *Juche*, North Korean leaders defined the primary state interest as being the liberation of South Korea from the imperial domination of the US with the support of the non-aligned group.

5.1.3 The Advent of *Seongun*

In the 1990s North Korean leaders needed to respond to the stunning transformation of international politics following the collapse of the communist bloc. As one of just a few countries to challenge the world order promoted by American hegemony the context was seen to be particularly threatening to North Korea’s survival. Therefore, instead of the elimination of the South Korean regime, North Korean leaders defined the survival of its own political regime as its primary state interest in the 1990s. This concern was amplified after the death of Kim Il-sung in 1994.

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However, *Juche* could not provide North Korean leaders with a practical way to cope with the changing geopolitical contexts because the idea was created within the particular imperatives of the Cold War era. In response to the changing geopolitical context Kim Jong-il proclaimed the idea of *Seongun* (Military-first) as a practical means for the realization of *Juche*. North Korea outlets claimed that the idea dated all the way back to the 1930s. However, Kim Jong-il used a speech in 1997 to mention the idea for the first time by saying that “the army equals the party, the state and the people”:

> Various socialist countries have collapsed with no shots fired because they were not furnished with a strong army. There will be no people, no socialist country and no Communist Party if they are not furnished with a strong army at the time of constructing a socialist society under the siege and threat of the imperialists. *The army equals the party, the state and the people* [emphasis added]. [Kim Jong-il, January 1, 1997]

In the 1998 Constitution North Korea changed the state apparatus to support the *Seongun* idea by raising the status of the National Defense Commission (NDC). The revised constitution placed the NDC above the Supreme People’s Assembly (SPA) Presidium and the

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160 For example, a North Korean ideologue (Kang, Hee-bong 2008) asserted that *Juche* was the leading idea that illuminated the prospects of the North Korean people and that the military-first policy was the way to achieve that goal.

Kim Jong-il was reelected as chairman of the NDC, becoming the de facto head of state without the need for the presidential position of the DPRK. SPA Presidium Chairman Kim Yong-nam, the nominal head of state, declared that “the NDC chairmanship is the highest post of the state, and controls all of the political, military, and economic capabilities of the Republic.” In the 2009 Constitution, the military-first idea finally became the guiding ideology in conjunction with Juche, and the chairman of the NDC was stipulated as the highest leader of state.

The new global geopolitical context had a serious impact on North Korea, forcing it to consider how to act within a world in which the US seemed to be growing exceedingly powerful. North Korean leaders raised the perceived degree of threat from the US by insisting that the confrontation with the US was a question of “life or death” for North Korea. Kim Jong-il said:

The confrontation between us and imperialism is a confrontation of power, and the anti-imperialist military frontline is our basic frontline of revolution because it is the most important lifeline of our revolution, which regards the

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162 Before the constitutional amendment, the NDC was placed below the SPA (Supreme People’s Assembly) Presidium and the Central People’s Committee.

163 The presidential position was abolished in the 1998 Constitution because Kim Il-sung was called as “the eternal President of the Republic” in the Constitution.

164 Rodong Sinmun, September 6, 1998.
life or death [emphasis added] of our country and nation, plus socialism. [Kim Jong-il, January 29, 2003]^{165}

North Korean leaders insisted that the necessary response was to safeguard North Korean socialism and national sovereignty, and regarded military force as an essential element of the state. Kim Jong-il emphasized that North Korea presented the military-first theory instead of the working-class first theory (Marxism-Leninism):

Our party, for the first time in the history of the revolutionary movement, presented the theory of army first, working class next [emphasis added], and set up the People’s Army as the core troop and the main driving force of evolution, based on an in-depth examination of the development of the era and the changed relations between social classes. The creative nature and invincible power of military-first politics lies in the fact that it has the People’s Army as its core element. [Kim Jong-il, January 29, 2003]^{166}

Therefore, North Korean leaders established “militant anti-imperialism” as an important component of North Korea’s identity discourse through the idea of military-first. In comparison with the survival of the political regime in a defensive way as a primary state interest of the 1990s, in the 2000s North Korean leaders defined the aggressive survival of the

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political regime as their primary interest: The means was the prioritization of the military in every sphere of the state.

5.2 North Korea's Mapping of Enemies and Allies

North Korean leaders had mapped their enemies and allies in accordance with state interests, which were defined through ideologies. Neighboring states were identified as either enemies or allies. Since the creation of the political regime in 1948, North Korean leaders have consistently identified the US, Japan and South Korea as enemies. Particularly, the US was regarded as a primary enemy by North Korean leaders because the US not only invaded the Korean peninsula but also dominated military alliances with Japan and South Korea. However, surprisingly, the three states were sometimes considered potential allies at some moments.

On the other hand, North Korean leaders consistently identified China and Russia (the former Soviet Union) largely as allies. However, the two states were also sometimes regarded as a potential or even actual enemy. China and Russia were considered hegemonic states in that they threatened North Korea's self-determination in spite of the similarity between their political systems. Through this mapping, North Korean leaders have constructed the state interests of North Korea. I will examine the mapping of enemies and
allies by North Korean leaders in the geopolitical context of Northeast Asia, focusing on the historical changes over the four periods of the study.

5.2.1 A Clear Dichotomy in Mapping Enemies and Allies: the 1950s-1960s

In the 1950s and 1960s the distinction between enemies and allies for the North Korean elites was very clear. The primary state interest of forcefully restoring singular political control over all of the Korean peninsula was supported by the communist camp and opposed by the capitalist camp. In particular, the Korean War (1950-53) influenced the identification of enemies and allies. Capitalist states, such as the US, Japan, and South Korea, were identified consistently as current enemies, and the communist states, such as the Soviet Union and China, were regarded largely as current allies.

First of all, the US was identified as the primary enemy which frustrated the territorial ambitions of North Korean leaders during the Korean War. Kim Il-sung said that the US was an invader who massacred the North Korean people in the Korean War. Kim Il-sung also argued that the US occupied the South after the war, which he classified as part of the North Korean sovereign territory:

167 Although some Western and Chinese scholars believe that the decision by Chinese leaders to enter the Korean War was a reluctant reaction to the imminent threats to the Chinese territory in comparison with the Soviet support to the initiation of the war, Mao Zedong’s statement that China will “force the Americans out of the Korean peninsula” (Jian 1994: 212) shows China’s firm support to North Korea’s primary state interest at that time.
The US imperialists invaded the Northern part of the Korean peninsula to massacre our families in “the Liberation War of the Fatherland” [the Korean War], and occupied the southern part of the Korean peninsula by force to oppress our brothers [in South Korea]. We have to expel the US imperialists out of our territory and revenge their misdeeds toward the Korean people. [Kim Il-sung, 1983]  

After the Korean War, the USS Pueblo incident of 1968 was one of the biggest crises between North Korea and the US. The incident provoked the US-ROK military to jointly proclaim Defense Condition (DEFCON) level three, which is equivalent to a quasi-war situation. By insisting that the US Navy intelligence-gathering ship was captured within the territorial waters of North Korea, DPRK leaders compelled the US to apologize to North Korea and propagandized the incident as a victory over the US. Kim Il-sung used the event to continue to construct the US as the primary enemy pursuing an invasion policy toward North Korea’s territory:

When it comes to the invasion of USS Pueblo into our territorial waters [emphasis added], it was not only a violent infringement on a sovereign state but also a part of US imperialists’ scheme to invoke a new war in the Korean peninsula. [Kim Il-sung, 1968]  


North Korean leaders identified Japan as a current enemy, insisting that Japan made efforts to invade the Korean peninsula again with American support. For example, in 1953 Kim Il-sung warned that “the Japanese reactionary ruling regime acted to revive Japanese militarism and rearm Japan with the help of the American imperialists.” The organ of the North Korean government carried an article warning of the revival of Japanese militarism in 1958 in the following manner:

Japanese militarists, who have been protected and fostered by the US imperialists since the defeat of Japanese militarism through the decisive role of the Soviet army, are more openly embarking upon the road to remilitarization. The policy of remilitarizing Japan has been further intensified by the present reactionary government of Japan. [Minju Joseon, September 3, 1958]

During this period, North Korean leaders treated South Korea as a current enemy under the control of the US. As an epitome of aggressive action, North Korea invaded South Korea in 1950. After the war North Korea initiated many armed infiltrations, including a commando raid on the South Korean presidential palace in 1968. Kim Il-sung stated that the South Korean government is a “puppet regime” established by the US in 1948 in order to invade North Korea:


The US imperialists, who occupy the southern part of our sovereign territory by force, established a *puppet regime* [emphasis added] with a small group of pro-American and pro-Japanese in South Korea, and now they are running madly about preparing for the invasion of our country. [Kim Il-sung, 1948]  

The South Korea-Japan normalization treaty of 1965 led Kim Il-sung to state that the South Korean government was a subordinate regime of Japan and not just the US. Kim Il-sung evaluated the treaty as a conspiracy of a trilateral military alliance between the US, Japan and South Korea to colonize the entire Korean peninsula:

The US imperialists who nowadays occupy the southern part of our fatherland are forming various conspiracies to colonize our country. They are running madly about remilitarizing Japan and tempting Japan into the intrigue of colonizing our country. The South Korean puppet regime, which consists of pro-Japanese, is pursuing the contract of the South Korea-Japan normalization treaty. [Kim Il-sung, 1970]  

On the other hand, North Korea’s relations with China and Russia had depended largely on the development of Sino-Soviet relations. During the Sino-Soviet alliance of the 1950s North Korean leaders had identified the Soviet Union and China as current allies. For example, the organ of the KWP stated that “the firm solidarity between the Soviet Union and


China, our great neighbor countries, constitutes an important guarantee for all victories of our people.\textsuperscript{174} When the Sino-Soviet dispute intensified in the mid-1960s, however, North Korean leaders began to seek a neutral foreign policy within the communist camp. North Korean leaders wanted to receive military and economic aid from both states, which was necessary for the realization of North Korea’s interests.

Khrushchev’s peaceful-coexistence with the US meant that North Korean leaders had to abandon their primary state interest of eliminating the South Korean regime by force. However, when the Soviet Union advocated peaceful-coexistence with the US North Korean leaders indirectly criticized the Soviet Union:

The modern revisionists and certain people are dissuading the Afro-Asian and Latin American peoples from waging struggles for national liberation with their insistent advocacy of a peaceful-coexistence strategy...Marxist-Leninists unjustly expelled from certain parties. [\textit{Rodong Sinmun}, January 27, 1964]

North Korea also indirectly criticized China as a hegemonic state. An editorial of the KWP organ openly expressed its opposition to dogmatism that might impede the unity and solidarity of the communist camp deemed necessary to guarantee North Korea’s primary state interest:

\textsuperscript{174} \textit{Rodong Sinmun}, November 23, 1960.
Unity and solidarity are utterly incompatible with great power chauvinist arbitrariness and with the blindness of dogmatists. For the sake of unity and solidarity, we must put a complete end to the interfering and splitting attitudes in domestic questions of fraternal parties and countries. [Rodong Sinmun, September 30, 1965]

Therefore, from the mid-1960s it can be said that North Korean leaders began to treat the Soviet Union and China as current allies but also potential enemies. This change emerged in the form of an independent foreign policy in the 1970s. Nevertheless, although North Korean leaders sometimes indirectly criticized the two states as being hegemonic, the critique did not challenge the maintenance of military alliances. By the 1960s, North Korean leaders maintained this clear dichotomy in mapping enemies and allies by constructing the two communist states as firm allies.

5.2.2 Ambiguous Mapping of Enemies and Allies: the 1970s-1980s

From the early 1970s North Korean leaders began to change the primary state interest from the elimination of the South Korean regime by North Korean forces to the South Korean people eliminating the state along with the support of the international community. Accordingly, this period witnessed the beginning of the identification of capitalist states as potential allies. Although North Korean leaders still regarded the US, Japan, and South Korea in some ways as current enemies, the international détente of the 1970s provided North Korean leaders with the conditions to regard the US and Japan as potential allies.
After the rapprochement between the US and China in the early 1970s North Korean leaders began to treat the US as a potential ally. The intention was to induce the US to withdraw its forces from South Korea. For North Korean leaders the presence of US forces in South Korea was the biggest obstacle for the elimination of the South Korean regime by the South Korean people. For example, in talks with journalists of the *New York Times* in 1972 Kim Il-sung reached for an improvement of relations with the US by proposing the withdrawal of US troops from the South:

If the US government changed its foreign policy toward us, we will change our foreign policy toward the U.S....If the US military got out of South Korea, two Koreas will be reconciled and the anti-American sentiment of the North Korean people will be removed....The US government should improve relations not only with big countries but with small countries as well. [Kim Il-sung, May 26, 1972]°

In order to justify the identification of the US as a potential ally for domestic audiences Kim Il-sung defined the Sino-American rapprochement as a “surrender of the US imperialists” and a “victory of the Chinese people”:

Nixon is going to turn up in Beijing with a white flag just as the US imperialist aggressors who suffered a defeat in the Korean War in the past came out to Panmunjom with a white flag. Nixon’s visit to China is not a march of a victor but a trip of a loser, and it fully reflects the declining fate of

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US imperialism. This is a great *victory of the Chinese people* and a victory for the revolutionary people of the world. [Kim Il-sung, August 6, 1971]

In 1974 North Korean leaders began to push for direct talks with the US. The DPRK Assembly adopted an open letter to the US Congress proposing that direct negotiations should be held between the two countries concerning the question of replacing the existing armistice agreement with a peace treaty. Kim Il-sung stated that North Korea was ready to improve relations with the US in talks with the executive committee of the American-Korean Friendship and Information Center in 1974:

In sum, in order to normalize the relationship between North Korea and the US, the US government has to abandon the invasion policy toward North Korea and should not disturb the reunification of Korea. If such a condition is fulfilled, we are ready to improve relations with the US, although there remain the differences of social institutions and some other problems. [Kim Il-sung, June 16, 1974]

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177 However, the US did not respond positively to North Korea’s request for direct talks since North Korea insisted the exclusion of South Korea in the talks (Koh 1994: 124).

During this period, North Korean leaders still identified Japan as an enemy. For example, referring to the Korea-related article in the Nixon-Sato communiqué, Kim Il-sung stated that Japan was an “American agent” for the invasion of the Korean peninsula:

We do not like the US imperialists’ help for the revival of Japanese militarism. Seeing the communiqué between the US and Japan in 1969, we know that the US is instigating Japan as an American agent [emphasis added] for the invasion of Korea to intervene into our internal affairs. After the announcement of the communiqué, Japan began to overtly pursue the intervention of our internal affairs. [Kim Il-sung, 1972] 179

At the same time, however, North Korean leaders began to treat Japan as a potential ally that could provide North Korea with economic benefits. In 1971 Kim Il-sung made an overture to Japan immediately after Henry Kissinger visited China for the Sino-US rapprochement. In the interview with a Japanese newspaper, Kim Il-sung stated:

Of course I look forward to having diplomatic relations with Japan, but in the initial stage there should be trade, free travel between North Korea and Japan, cultural exchange and the exchange of journalists. [Kim Il-sung, September 25, 1971] 180

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Increased trade and economic exchanges resulted in Japan becoming North Korea’s second largest trading partner by the mid-1970s. In particular, North Korean leaders paid attention to the role of Japanese technology in alleviating their own economic difficulties. However, North Korea could not maintain economic relations with Japan throughout the period due to North Korea defaulting on a US$600 million loan from Japan (Kim, H. N. 1994: 163). Such economic travails were overshadowed by North Korean complaints that the Japanese government did not take conducive steps toward the normalization of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

During this period North Korean leaders still identified South Korea as an enemy, despite dialogue and the pronouncement of the first inter-Korean joint statement in 1972. In order to talk directly with the US over the withdrawal of US forces from the peninsula, North Korea conceded that South Korea could be a partner in dialogue. A letter sent by the North Korean Assembly to the US Congress revealed that North Korean leaders wanted to exercise consistent efforts for the peaceful unification and that they needed to directly talk with the US regarding its military support of South Korea.

The dialogue started between North and South Korea in September 1971 thanks to the consistent efforts of the Government of the DPRK for the independent and peaceful reunification of the country....the publication of the north-south joint statement...was an epochal event that broke the freeze

\[181\] By 1989 North Korea had defaulted on some US$5 billion in foreign debts (Kim, S. S. 1991: 34).
between the North and South Korea that had existed for a long time... The US should discontinue its military aid to South Korea, stop the supply of weapons and war equipment, and the arms expansion and war exercises in South Korea and refrain from instigating the South Korean authorities to make Koreans fight Koreans by supporting them with arms.... the Supreme People’s Assembly of the DPRK expresses the hope that the US Congress will direct serious attention to this letter of ours and take the appropriate positive measure.

[KCNA, April 6, 1973]182

In the 1980s North Korea agreed to the participation of South Korea in trilateral talks, instead of the existing proposal of bilateral talks with the US, over the conversion of the armistice into a peace treaty. However, North Korea’s primary state interest was still the elimination of the South Korean regime, illustrating that North Korean leaders did not regard South Korea as a potential ally.

During this period, while maintaining an independent and neutral foreign policy in the midst of the Sino-Soviet conflict, North Korean leaders continued alliances with China and the Soviet Union. For example, Kim Il-sung said that “North Korea will help resolve the Sino-Soviet dispute, but the dispute is a difference of opinion between fraternal parties and there is no basic contradiction in the Communist international order.”183 After the advent of the Nixon Administration, however, the détente in Soviet-US relations had an important

182 KCNA, April 6, 1973. “The letter to the US Congress adopted at the Second Session of the Fifth Supreme People’s Assembly of the DPRK.”

influence on the mapping of allies by North Korean leaders. The context of détente led to the Soviet Union rejecting North Korea’s request for sales of advanced military arms and a reduction of its economic assistance to North Korea (Ha and Jensen 1987: 150). It was a demonstration of the Soviet Union's desire to mitigate the direct confrontational tension on the Korean peninsula during the period of the US-Soviet détente. Therefore, North Korean leaders regarded the Soviet Union as both a potential enemy and a current ally.

The rapprochement between China and the US and the normalization in Sino-Japanese relations in the 1970s gave North Korean leaders further problems in mapping allies. Kim Il-sung attained China’s continued support for his policy toward South Korea and China’s firm commitment to protecting its security through his visit to Beijing in 1975 (Kim, I. P. 1994: 256). On the other hand, Kim Il-sung’s speech at the sixth Congress of the KWP in 1980 illustrated the broader attitude of North Korean leaders toward China. Kim Il-sung treated China as a potential enemy by stating that China should respect North Korea’s sovereignty, should not negotiate with imperialists, or sell the interests of communist revolution:

A country should firmly maintain its independence in foreign relations and should not flirt with any ruling power...should denounce any external intervention and should not play a role as the other’s proxy...should respect the other’s sovereignty and avoid any behavior which might infringe on other countries’ interests. Socialist countries, non-aligned countries and third-world countries should not negotiate with imperialists without any
principles....should not sell the fundamental interests of revolution and should
not negotiate with imperialists without any principle....should not pursue its
own interests at the expense of others. [Kim Il-sung, October 10, 1980]¹⁸⁴

As détente withered in the early 1980s the Soviet Union attempted to renew closer
cooperation with North Korea. The climax in the growing North Korean-Soviet ties was Kim
Il-sung’s 1984 visit to Moscow, the first official visit since 1961.¹⁸⁵ In Kim Il-sung’s
message to Soviet President Chernenko on the anniversary of Korean liberation, the Soviet
Union was referred to as a “liberator” that had been ignored since the advent of Juche.
Although he did not fail to stress that it was the KWP that led the construction of a socialist
society after the liberation, he expressed deep appreciation for Soviet assistance:

The liberation which our people earned through the joint struggle with the
heroic Soviet troops opened a new era. After the liberation, under the guidance
of our party, we defeated the repeated schemes of American hegemonists for
invasion. Our people remember the Soviet’s role as liberators and maintain
appreciation for the assistance provided for our people’s great achievements of
justice as a class ally and revolutionary comrade-in-arms. [Rodong Sinmun,
August 15, 1984]

In order to counterbalance the improvement of North Korea-Soviet relations China
also improved relations with North Korea from 1981. Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang visited

¹⁸⁴ Rodong Sinmun, February 26, 1981.

¹⁸⁵ The last visit of a Soviet leader to Pyongyang dates back to a trip made by Premier Alexei Kosygin in 1965.
Pyongyang in 1981, and Kim Il-sung visited Beijing in 1982 to restore North Korea’s neutral policy in the Sino-Soviet rivalry. The organ of the KWP declared that the visit of the Chinese Premier was “an important milestone in further consolidating and developing the militant friendship and revolutionary solidarity between the two countries.”

From the late 1980s, however, North Korea’s relations with the Soviet Union and China deteriorated with the improvement of relations between the two states and South Korea. In particular, China’s decision to participate in the Seoul Asian Games of 1986 provoked North Korean leaders. North Korea broke with convention to raise the status of Hong Kong and Taiwan, and even referred to Taiwan as a “country” after the games. In reaction China did not send a greeting message for Kim Jong-il’s birthday in 1987, while the Soviet Union and all other Eastern European countries did (Kim, Y. H. 2011: 76).

The Soviet Union’s participation in the Seoul Olympic Games of 1988 also provoked North Korean leaders. Despite requests for a boycott of the Seoul Olympic Games, President Gorbachev told Kim Il-sung that the Soviet Union would participate in the Seoul Olympic Games with Eastern European countries (Isaacs and Downing 1998: 370). Moreover, in the late 1980s South Korea’s economic development led to a drastic increase in trade between the two communist states and South Korea. This improvement in economic and cultural relations had much influence on North Korea’s mapping of enemies and allies. North Korean leaders

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186 Rodong Sinmun, December 20, 1981.
began to identify the Soviet Union and China from the late 1980s as potential enemies rather than unequivocal historic and future allies.

5.2.3 Apex of the Ambiguous Mapping of Enemies and Allies: the 1990s

In the 1990s, North Korean leaders fundamentally changed the primary state interest from the elimination of the South Korean regime to the survival of their own. As the Soviet Union and China normalized diplomatic relations with South Korea, North Korean leaders experienced unprecedented disorder in their mapping of enemies and allies. Moreover, the reunification of Germany provoked North Korean leaders into focusing upon the prevention of so-called “absorption reunification.” Plans to eliminate the South Korean regime were retracted. In order to cope with these fundamental shifts North Korean leaders felt a pressing need to improve relations with the US, Japan and South Korea. This orientation occurred despite the continuing necessity of maintaining the identity discourses of anti-Americanism, anti-Japanism, and anti-flunkeyism.

Above all, in the midst of the collapse of the communist bloc North Korean leaders attempted to improve relations with the US despite the tensions exposed by the nuclear diplomacy. The first North Korean nuclear crisis in the early 1990s was an expression of North Korea’s pressing need to improve relations with the US. Even though Kim Il-sung criticized the arrogance of the US as the sole superpower he simultaneously revealed his
strong hope of improving relations with the US. In a 1992 interview with the *Washington Times* he said:

> After the end of the Cold War, it is natural that the problem of having an abnormal relationship between North Korea and the US is rising as a contemporary issue....If the US got out of power politics in international relations and think more about international justice and equality, people in the world will support the foreign policy of the US....If the US changes its “policy of strength” toward North Korea in accordance with the contemporary trend [the end of the Cold War], the relationship between the two countries will be smoothly improved. [Kim Il-sung, 1992]^{187}

In the early 1990s North Korean leaders tried to grab the US’s attention and provoke direct talks by withdrawing from the NPT (Non-Proliferation Treaty). The US considered a surgical attack on a North Korean nuclear site (Wit, Poneman and Gallucci 2004), but former US President Carter’s visit led to a diplomatic breakthrough. The subsequent direct talks led to the conclusion of the “Agreed Framework” in 1994.^{188} The agreement included the opening of diplomatic and economic relations between the two states. In order to prevent the talks from undermining the essential identity discourse of anti-Americanism, North Korean

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^{188} The Agreed Framework largely included three main actions: 1) the DPRK will allow implementation of the NPT; 2) the US will cooperate in providing the DPRK with LWR (Light-Water Reactor) power plants; and 3) the US and the DPRK will move toward complete normalization of relations.
leaders justified their actions by heralding a great diplomatic achievement, in the form of US President Clinton’s letter\textsuperscript{189} pledging full support of the agreement (Manning 1998: 155).

In 1997, after the death of Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il used his first thesis on national reunification reconfirmed North Korean leaders’ remapping of current enemies by stating that North Korea would not see the US as an “unswerving enemy” and would normalize relations with the US\textsuperscript{190}.

The US should fundamentally change its anachronistic policy toward us, and should no longer impede the peaceful reunification of Korea. \textit{We will not see the US as an unswerving enemy, and we want to normalize relations with the US} [emphasis added]. If the US gets out from the old way of thinking of the Cold War era and contribute to the peace and reunification of the Korean peninsula, relations between the two countries will develop in conformity with the interests of the two countries’ people. [Kim Jong-il, August 4, 1997]\textsuperscript{191}

This was a big change for North Korea, which had identified the US as a primary enemy for about 40 years. In particular, it was very unusual for Kim Jong-il to not mention the

\textsuperscript{189} The letter pledged that “in the event that this reactor project is not completed for reasons beyond the control of the DPRK, I [Clinton] will use the full powers of my office to provide, to the extent necessary, such a project from the US, subject to the approval of Congress.”

\textsuperscript{190} Kim Jong-il mentioned the national reunification of Korea many times in his “Selected Works.” However, it was for the first time that he integrated his thoughts about the reunification in the form of a thesis. The North Korean media have regarded the thesis as a classic statement about national unification.

withdrawal of US troops from South Korea in its attempt to create positive relations with the US. This reflected the desire of North Korean leaders to regard the US as a potential ally rather than a current enemy in the post-Cold War era.

North Korea also sought the normalization of relations with Japan during the fundamental shift in geopolitics in the early 1990s. Although diplomatic normalization between the Soviet Union and South Korea was the most important factor, Japan’s economic compensation for colonial rule was another important issue because it was necessary for the revival of North Korea’s ruined economy (Kim, H. N. 1998). In 1990, talks with the delegates of Japanese political leaders produced a joint declaration that urged their respective governments to hold diplomatic talks. Due to obstacles, including the nuclear crisis, however, the normalization talks were not resumed until after the conclusion of the Agreed Framework. Japan’s rice aid in 1995 was a positive sign for North Korea, which was in desperate need of food aid. Indeed, in the mid and late 1990s, North Korean leaders talked several times with Japanese leaders, including party delegates, government officials, and delegates from the Red Cross. In 1997, Kim Jong-il stated that if Japan abandoned its hostile policy toward North Korea it would treat Japan in a friendly manner and improve relations:

    Japan, who gave us tragedy and disaster, must regret what they have done to the Korean people and must not impede Korea’s reunification. If it does not
impede, we will treat Japan as a friendly and relations between Japan and us will be improved. [Kim Jong-il, August 4, 1997]

Nevertheless, in order to maintain the identity discourse of anti-Japanism, Kim Jong-il did not fail to mention Japan’s brutal colonial rule of Korea. North Korea’s identity discourses, given manifestation by the missile tests near Japan’s territory, strained relations with Japan throughout the 1990s.

From the 1990s North Korean leaders began to identify South Korea as a potential ally. In the 1991 “Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-aggression and Exchanges and Cooperation between the South and the North” North Korea stipulated South Korea’s authority as the government controlling the southern part of the Korean peninsula. The simultaneous entry of the two Koreas into the UN illustrated the change in North Korean leaders’ recognition of the South Korean regime. Before the 1990s North Korea had rebuked such simultaneous entry in the name of a “one-Korea policy” and described it as a scheme of eternalizing the division of Korea at the UN.

On the other hand, North Korean leaders identified Russia as an enemy during this period. North Korea criticized the Soviet Union very strongly and directly, particularly after


193 Although the agreement consists of 23 articles, the main content states that both parties shall respect each other’s regime, resolve political and military confrontations, and promote economic and social cooperation.
their establishment of diplomatic relations with South Korea. In 1990, an organ of the KWP reproached the Soviet Union in an article entitled “Diplomatic Relations Traded for Dollars.” The article stressed that the Soviet Union was responsible for the division of the Korean peninsula, which was something that was never mentioned during the Cold War era:

When it comes to the USSR, it is the country that was responsible for the division of the Korean peninsula [emphasis added] together with the US after World War II and also conceded the DPRK as the sole legitimate state of the Korean nation... If there exists the power of hegemonism, weak states and nations would be victimized.... According to South Korean newspapers, South Korea is going to give 2.3 billion dollars to the USSR. That means that the USSR sold out its dignity as a socialist superpower and its trust from alliances at the price of 2.3 billion dollars.194

China normalized relations with South Korea two years later, but North Korean leaders did not identify China as a current enemy since China maintained a communist political system and was the sole supporter of North Korea in the international community. And yet, just after the normalization of Sino-South Korean relations in 1992 North Korea indirectly criticized China:

Some socialist countries are abandoning socialism and returning to capitalism.... The need to strengthen the anti-imperialist struggle has become even more important due to escalated anti-socialist schemes led by the US imperialists.... Due to the acts of treachery of various turncoats, some countries

194 Rodong Sinmun, October 5, 1990.
on earth have faced a serious situation in which socialism has been frustrated and capitalism has been restored. [KCBS, September 27, 1992]^{195}

To emphasize the ambiguity, North Korean leaders made it clear that China was regarded as a potential enemy. In 1995 Kim Jong-il expressed displeasure in an implicit but clear fashion by labeling Chinese leaders “opportunists” and “betrayers of socialism”:

*Opportunists and betrayers of socialism* [emphasis added] have discarded the socialist task regarding people’s thought, and instead encouraged individualism and selfishness through the introduction of a capitalist market economy. They claimed multiplicity in ownership and thus, caused the total destruction of the socialist economic system, which is based on socialist ownership. There is no need for discussion that schemes by opportunists and betrayers of socialism are anti-socialist and anti-revolutionary. [Their schemes] distort socialism in favor of imperialists, paralyze the superiority [of socialism], and open a way for the collapse of socialism and a return to capitalism. [*Rodong Sinmun*, June 21, 1995]

The ambiguity was manifest in the mismatch between diplomatic visits and agreements. Sino-North Korean relations improved after the 1999 visit of Kim Yong-nam, the nominal head of the DPRK. However, the military alliance between the two states was not restored after since Kim Il-sung’s last visit to China in 1991. It was not until May 2000, just before the

^{195} The Korean Central Broadcasting Station, September 27, 1992. “Strengthening anti-imperialist struggles is the basic requirement for perfecting the socialist task.”
inter-Korean summit in June 2000, that Kim Jong-il visited China for the first time since his first visit to China in 1983.

5.2.4 Dramatic Change in the Ambiguous Mapping of Enemies and Allies: the 2000s

In the last period of my study North Korea dramatically altered its mapping of allies and enemies in the area of Northeast Asia. In the early 2000s North Korean leaders continuously attempted to remove South Korea, the US and Japan from their list of current enemies in spite of the continuing identity discourses of anti-Americanism, anti-Japanism, and anti-flunkeyism.

First of all, North Korean leaders tried to improve relations with South Korea. In June 2000 Kim Jong-il hosted the first inter-Korean summit in Pyongyang, and admitted that the South Korean government was a legal one by identifying Kim Dae-jung as the President of the ROK. Two weeks later Kim Jong-il used a conversation with a Korean-American journalist to confirm that he would no longer treat South Korea as an enemy:

I think that we could not treat them [the South Korean leaders] toughly by forcing them to apologize about the past, because they came to meet us for national reconciliation today even if they dealt with us very badly until yesterday. [Kim Jong-il, June 30, 2000][196]

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After the inter-Korean summit North Korean leaders used high-level talks to improve relations with the US. Special envoy Jo Myong-nok, a highly ranked soldier in North Korea, visited Washington to talk with President Clinton in October 2000.\footnote{Two weeks later, US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright visited Pyongyang to talk with Kim Jong-il about Clinton’s visit.} Considering the ardent enmity of the North Korean military against the US, Vice Marshall Jo’s visit was inconsistent with the identity discourses of anti-Americanism and anti-imperialism. In the talks the North Korean special envoy revealed the intention of North Korea to normalize relations with the US by reaching an agreement to improve bilateral relations and by planning the first visit by a US President to Pyongyang.

In September 2002 Kim Jong-il hosted the Japanese-North Korean summit for the first time. Unexpectedly, he acknowledged the abduction of Japanese citizens by North Koreans. Furthermore, he apologized and pledged that no future abductions would take place. Considering the deep-rooted enmity of the North Korean people and military against Japan, his apology was inconsistent with the identity discourse of anti-Japanism. In return, Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi apologized for Japan’s past colonial rule over North Korea, and added that Japan's economic cooperation would be offered at the time of normalization.

However, the advent of the Bush Administration frustrated the intent of North Korean leaders to remove the US, Japan and South Korea from their list of enemies. North Korea
responded to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 by announcing an extraordinarily low-key statement that “as a UN member the DPRK is opposed to all forms of terrorism.”

Yet the statement did not protect North Korea from US opprobrium regarding its nuclear program. In particular, after the revelation by the US in October 2002 of North Korea’s involvement in uranium enrichment activities, North Korean leaders began to reconsider their remapping of potential allies. North Korean leaders drove through unprecedented economic reform policies such as the opening of several special economic zones and marketplaces.

Although North Korean leaders were persuaded by Chinese leaders to participate in the Six-Party Talks, it was difficult for them to take an initiative to remapping their geopolitical code. Certainly after the first nuclear test in 2006, North Korean leaders identified all neighboring states as current or potential enemies rather than allies. Most notably, the remapping of China meant there were no current allies for North Korea. In fact, the first nuclear test undermined North Korea’s state interests by depriving it of diplomatic flexibility; prior to the test China had been unsure whether North Korea actually possessed nuclear weapons (Michishita 2010: 186).

As a result of these multiple developments, North Korea’s identity discourse came to have much more influence on its mapping of enemies and allies than the immediacy of geopolitical codes. For example, in the New Year’s special editorial just after the nuclear test,

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an organ of the KWP constructed the national identity by emphasizing “national history” and “national strength”:

The military and people of Korea, under the banner of Seongun, have gained victory after victory in the showdown with the US and in safeguarding socialism….That we have come to possess a nuclear deterrent was an auspicious event in our national history [emphasis added], and a realization of our people’s centuries-long desire to have a national strength [emphasis added] no one could dare challenge. [Rodong Sinmun, January 1, 2007]

Just after the nuclear test North Korean leaders confirmed that the US was still a current prime enemy by insisting that they could not help but develop a nuclear program in order to prevent a nuclear war with the US:

The US imperialists were the first to test nuclear explosions and use nukes against humanity in the world in the last century. They have become all the more overt in their attempt at a nuclear war in the new century….The US has staged DPRK-targeted nuclear war exercises of various codenames one after another by mobilizing its allies including South Korea, thus bringing the situation on the Korean Peninsula to an extreme pitch of tension. [KCNA, November 7, 2006]199

Nevertheless, during the Six-Party Talks from 2003 to 2008 North Korean leaders tried to improve relations with Japan and South Korea. Kim Jong-il hosted further summits

199 KCNA, November 7, 2006.
with Japan and South Korea in 2004 and 2007 respectively. Importantly, North Korean leaders’ endeavors to remap current enemies were not fulfilled. Aggressive policies, such as the second nuclear test, indicated that North Korean leaders failed in remapping current enemies in the 2000s. In light of North Korea’s state interests in the geopolitical context of the “War on Terror,” improvement in relations with the US was the most important factor in promoting its interests. Nevertheless, North Korean leaders chose to continue aggressive foreign policies such as the second nuclear test in 2009, the sinking of the South Korean warship Cheonan in March 2010, and the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island in November 2010. North Korean leaders needed to maintain the existing identity discourses for the legitimacy of the political regime.

During this period North Korean leaders no longer identified China as an ally. Particularly, North Korea’s nuclear tests illustrated this change. China had very strongly opposed North Korea’s nuclear testing. Hence, continued testing implied that North Korean leaders no longer considered its alliance with China as a reliable security guarantor against the US (Kim, Y. H. 2011: 107). North Korea’s nuclear tests reflected the change in the mapping of allies from the inclusion of China as a current ally to the identification of China as a potential enemy.

The reports of two North Korean newspapers regarding the Chinese prime minister’s visit just after the second nuclear test on May 25, 2009 illustrate the ambiguous identification
of China by North Korean leaders. The organ of the KWP regarded China as a potential ally by focusing on the cooperation of the two countries against the US:

In the dialogue with the Chinese prime minister, our prime minister presented the readiness to realize the denuclearization in the Korean peninsula through bilateral and multilateral dialogues, emphasizing that the US is to blame for the nuclear problem in the Korean peninsula. [Rodong Sinmun, October 4, 2009]

In contrast, Joseon Sinbo (a pro-DPRK Korean newspaper in Japan) identified China as a potential enemy by focusing on the fact that North Korea, as a nuclear power, does not need to depend on China’s power for its regime’s survival:

The Chinese prime minister’s visit to North Korea was an opportunity to identify the mutual interests that our two countries should pursue in the changed international environment... the geopolitical environment of Northeast Asia has undergone a great change due to North Korea’s possession of nuclear weapons... the inter-state relations within Northeast Asia is not static but can be turned into a new regional order. [Joseon Sinbo, October 7, 2009]

Thus, in the 2000s, it can be said that North Korean leaders regarded China as a potential enemy rather than a current ally. In this respect, North Korea came to have no current allies in the 2000s.

On the other hand, North Korean leaders no longer identified Russia as a current enemy during this period. In order to restore the support of neighboring states, North Korean
leaders withheld the identity discourse of anti-hegemonism. Kim Jong-il’s twin visits to 
Russia for the summits with Putin in the 2000s illustrated the improvement of relations with 
Russia. In the Vladivostok summit of 2002 Kim Jong-il expressed his satisfaction:

The two leaders informed each other of their countries’ situation and expressed 
satisfaction with the steady development of the bilateral relations on good 
terms. They exchanged views on international matters of mutual concern. 
They also had sincere discussions on the issue of linking the Korean 
Peninsula’s railroad with Russia’s trans-Siberian railroad and other issues 
concerning the further development of the bilateral cooperation. [KCNA, 
August 23, 2002]

A fundamental change in North Korea’s policy toward Russia stemmed from the consensus 
between the two states about the unilateralism of the Bush Administration and the post-9/11 
reorientation of US policy toward North Korea. Russian President Putin’s statement about 
North Korea’s nuclear programs in 2003 shows the consensus:

We think that this matter should be settled through negotiations that take into 
account the legitimate interests and concerns of North Korea. We should not 
back North Korea into a corner and aggravate the situation. If North Korea has 
concerns over its security and is worried that someone might try to attack it, 
then we should provide it with security guarantees. [Vladimir Putin, June 20, 
2003] ²⁰⁰

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Nevertheless, North Korean leaders still identified Russia as a potential enemy rather than a current ally. North Korea did not provide Russia with information about the nuclear tests in advance, and Russia agreed with the two UN sanctions (UN Resolution No. 1718 and No. 1874) against North Korean nuclear tests. Therefore, it can be said that North Korean leaders identified Russia as both a potential ally and a potential enemy.

In sum, the Table 5.1 shows the dynamism of North Korea’s mapping of enemies and allies for the construction of its state interests.

201 The independent report of Russian investigators about the Cheonan incident did not confirm that the torpedo sinking the warship was fired from a North Korean submarine, unlike the multinational investigation team which consisted of representatives from South Korea, the US, the UK, Canada, Australia, and Sweden. However, Russia’s ambassador to South Korea told a South Korea audience that journalists mention “Russia and China, as closest allies of North Korea,” but Russia is not an ally of North Korea (Roehrig 2011: 207).
Table 5.1 North Korea’s mapping of its enemies and allies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>I (‘48 ~‘60s)</th>
<th>II (‘70s ~‘80s)</th>
<th>III (‘90s)</th>
<th>IV (‘00s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>The US Japan South Korea</td>
<td>The US Japan South Korea Russia</td>
<td>The US Japan South Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Potential Enemies</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>The USSR China</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Russia China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Potential Allies</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>The US Japan South Korea Russia</td>
<td>The US Japan South Korea Russia</td>
<td>The US Japan South Korea Russia China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current Allies</strong></td>
<td>The USSR China</td>
<td>The USSR China</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3 North Korea's Territorial Strategies for the Construction of State Interests

State leaders use territorial strategies for the construction of their state interests because territory plays a critical role in maintaining a state. Particularly for North Korea, as a divided nation-state, its territorial strategies were very important in competing for legitimacy in the eyes of the entire Korean people. North Korea's territorial strategies for the construction of its state interests can be explored in terms of four issues: the attitude of North Korean leaders towards the presence of US forces in South Korea; North Korean leaders’
“one-Korea” diplomacy at the UN; North Korea’s capital city; and North Korean leaders’ position on the NLL (Northern Limit Line) in the Yellow Sea. These four issues are significant indicators of North Korea’s territorial strategies.

First, the presence of US forces in South Korea has been regarded by North Korean leaders as a fundamental threat to North Korea’s territorial integrity. South Korea has been constructed as a colony of US imperialists in comparison to independent North Korea. North Korea is represented as having a national mission to maintain its territorial integrity by liberating South Korea from US imperialists. Second, North Korea’s “one-Korea” diplomacy at the UN is linked to the preservation of the Korean peninsula as a unit of sovereign territory. According to North Korean leaders, the dual membership of the two Koreas at the UN eternalizes the division of the Korean peninsula by dint of international law. That is, North Korea has proposed one membership for the two Koreas at the UN as a statement of the territorial integrity of the entire Korean nation. Third, North Korea’s capital city is an important issue. Before the division of the Korean peninsula, Seoul was the capital city of Korea for about five hundred years. The fact that North Korea still regarded Seoul as the capital city, even after the division, has a significant implication for North Korea’s territorial legitimization. Finally, the NLL as a quasi-maritime border reveals the perception of North Korean leaders about its territorial waters. The NLL is related to the territorial dispute with South Korea. Although the NLL was declared by the UN Command (UNC) without the
agreement of North Korean forces, it has played the role of a quasi-maritime border between the two Koreas. Through the examination of the combination of these four issues, I will illustrate how North Korean leaders have used their territorial strategies for the construction of state interests. In particular, I will focus on the changes in North Korea’s discursive practices on the four issues during the four periods of the study.

5.3.1 Aggressive Claims to the Entire Korean Peninsula: the 1950s~1960s

In the 1950s and 1960s North Korea claimed the entire Korean peninsula as its sovereign territory in an aggressive way. The first Constitution of the DPRK provided that the capital city was Seoul, located in South Korea, even though the de facto capital city was Pyongyang. North Korea’s aggressive territorial claim led to the Korean War after the invasion of South Korea in 1950. However, military intervention by the US under the banner of the UN frustrated North Korea’s territorial ambition.

In North Korea’s construction of its state interests, the presence of US forces in South Korea was regarded as a fundamental obstacle for its territorial integrity and the reunification of Korea. Kim Il-sung expressed his regret about failing to restore the entire Korean territory in a radio address during the Korean War:

Had it not been for the direct military intervention of the US imperialists, we could have put an end to the fratricidal war started by their lackeys, reunify
our fatherland [emphasis added], and completely liberate the people in the southern half from the police state tyranny of the US imperialists and the Syngman Rhee regime. [Kim Il-sung, July 8, 1950]

Therefore, it is not surprising that North Korea requested the withdrawal of the US military from South Korea after the Korean War. However, the remaining presence of Chinese forces in North Korea after the war muted the North Korea claims for the withdrawal of US forces until 1958. Immediately after their withdrawal North Korean leaders began to strongly request the withdrawal of US forces from South Korea:

For the peaceful reunification of the fatherland, the most important policy of our party is the withdrawal of foreign forces, especially US forces. Our government suggested the withdrawal of all foreign forces out of the Korean peninsula on February 5th. The PRC [People’s Republic of China] fully agreed with our suggestion, and took actions such as the perfect implementation of the second stage of troop withdrawal by the end of this year. US imperialists stated that the reason why the US military is stationed in South Korea is because the Chinese People’s Volunteer Army is stationed in North Korea. Yet, even today when the Chinese people’s volunteer army is withdrawing, US forces are trying to remain in the Korean peninsula. [Kim Il-sung, 1958]


In the 1960, North Korean leaders added another reason for the withdrawal of US forces. Kim Il-sung insisted that US forces should withdraw from South Korea because North Korea had no intention of invading South Korea:

US imperialists insist that US forces must station in South Korea to prevent “the invasion of communism from North Korea.” However, US imperialists cannot deceive anyone with this lie. Our party and republic always try to peacefully resolve the issue of Korean reunification and have no intention to resolve the issue by force....Our reunification must be realized gradually through intermediary stages on the condition that foreign forces withdraw from South Korea. [Kim Il-sung, 1962]

However, North Korea nearly tripled its military expenditure between 1965 and 1967 (Koh 1984: 59). North Korea signed military alliance treaties with the USSR (July 6) and PRC (July 11) in 1961. However, the submission of the USSR during the Cuban missile crisis and China's attitude as an onlooker during the Vietnam War raised concerns in North Korean leaders about their dependence on the communist allies.

During this period, North Korea applied for UN membership twice, in 1949 and 1952. The former Soviet Union also submitted an application for North Korea’s membership twice, in 1957 and 1958 (Kihl 1998: 259). However, North Korea’s entry into the UN was rejected

\[204\] North Korea entered into military treaties with the Soviet Union and China respectively in 1961, concerned that the new military government of South Korea may be planning a march north (Kim, J. A. 1975: 295).

as a result of the vetoes by the permanent capitalist members of the UN Security Council, including the US. Unable to make the UN recognize the legitimacy of its own political regime, North Korea sought to undermine the legitimacy of the ROK; recognized by the UN as the only legitimate government on the Korean peninsula (IEAS 1977: 3). Particularly, making use of the mass entry of newly born Afro-Asian states into the UN in the 1960s, North Korea tried to dissolve the UNC in South Korea and insisted, at the UN, that the presence of US forces constituted a barrier against Korea’s reunification.

During this period North Korea did not problematize the NLL, except for a few minor transgressions. To North Korean leaders the NLL was an unimportant issue because they continued their pursuit of conquering the entire Korean peninsula until the 1960s. If North Korea occupied the entire Korean peninsula, the NLL, as a quasi-maritime border between the two Koreas, would have become meaningless. In sum, to North Korean leaders the extent of their sovereign territory coincided with the national homeland during this period.

By this strategy North Korean leaders could maintain the support of the populace through the pledge not to abandon the Korean destiny of reunifying the divided national homeland. In particular, in the 1950s Kim Il-sung had strong competitors in both North and South Korea. In order to acquire popular support South Korea’s first president Syngman Rhee (1948-1960) also proposed forcefully reunifying Korea (Shin 2006). In the North, political challengers such as the pro-Chinese and pro-Soviet factions restrained Kim Il-sung’s power.
According to Lankov (2005), the “August incident” in 1956 was a conflict between two trends. One was the more indigenous and nationalist political line personified by Kim Il-sung and the other was the more open-minded and pro-foreign political line personified by the pro-Soviet and pro-Chinese factions. In order to win against the South Korean competitor and North Korean challengers Kim Il-sung used the territorial strategy of aggressively claiming the entire Korean peninsula.

5.3.2 Defensive Claims to the Entire Korean Peninsula: the 1970s~1980s

North Korea continued to construct the entire Korean peninsula as its sovereign territory until the late 1980s. In spite of the revision of the Constitution, North Korea maintained its territorial claim to the entire Korean peninsula by using the expression “drive out foreign forces on a national scale, reunify the country peacefully.” Article five of the 1972 Constitution proclaimed:

The DPRK strives to achieve the complete victory of socialism in the northern half, drive out foreign forces on a national scale, reunify the country peacefully [emphasis added] on a democratic basis and attain complete national independence.

However, the means to achieve this goal were different from that of the first period. In the geopolitical context of the détente in the 1970s North Korean leaders changed their
territorial strategies. North Korea began to claim the entire Korean peninsula in a largely non-aggressive way, such as through diplomacy and dialogue. Moreover, North Korea moved the *de jure* capital city from Seoul to Pyongyang by revising its Constitution in 1972, and thereby weakening its territorial ambition of forceful reunification to a considerable degree.

Regarding the withdrawal of US forces from South Korea, North Korea stressed the negative effects of the presence of US forces on peaceful reunification. In order to emphasize the negative effects North Korea conceded South Korea as a dialogue partner in the first inter-Korean dialogue in 1972. In the construction of its state interests, North Korea began to place importance on the role of the South Korean people’s anti-imperialist struggle for peaceful reunification:

> As long as South Korea is in the grip of US forces, peaceful reunification of our country will never be free from its miserable plight... Only when all the patriotic forces—the workers, peasants, youth, students, intellectuals, entrepreneurs, traders, etc.—are united as one man and launch a decisive struggle against the aggressive forces of US imperialism, can the South Korean people attain real freedom and liberation and win complete victory of democracy. [Kim Il-sung, 1970]

> Sino-American normalization brought about a change in the attitude of China towards the role of the US military in the Korean peninsula. China did not oppose US forces in South

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Korea since they could block Soviet expansion and maintain regional stability. Because the presence of US forces in the region was in China’s interests, the strategic positions of China and North Korea towards the US military’s role began to reveal a stark incompatibility (Kim, Y. H. 2011: 39). At the UN in 1975 North Korea submitted a draft resolution which recommended the withdrawal of US forces from South Korea, the dissolution of UNC in South Korea, and the conversion of the Korean Armistice into a peace treaty for a peaceful reunification. Thanks to the support of non-aligned states, the pro-DPRK resolution (No. 3390 B) was adopted by the UN General Assembly. North Korea claimed a diplomatic victory over South Korea at the UN.207

Indeed, the UN General Assembly, where non-aligned states occupied the majority in the 1970s, was a good international arena for North Korea’s “one-Korea” diplomacy. Moreover, in 1971 the PRC replaced the ROC (Republic of China: Taiwan) as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and began to act as a leading spokesman for Third World states. After acquiring observer status at the UN, North Korea actively campaigned to win the support of the members of the non-aligned group in order to promote its claims for legitimacy vis-à-vis South Korea. Particularly, North Korea regarded South Korea’s suggestion of a simultaneous entry of the two Koreas into the UN as a US conspiracy to maintain its military base in South Korea:

207 Contradictorily, Pro-ROK resolution (No. 3390 A) was also adopted during the same session.
The draft of the simultaneous entry of the two Koreas into the UN revealed the real intention of US imperialists and Japanese reactionaries who pursue the eternal division of the Korean peninsula. The draft was submitted to prevent the withdrawal of US forces from being discussed in the UN general assembly....We cannot absolutely admit to the idea of “two-Koreas.” US imperialists want the eternal division of the Korean peninsula in order to maintain their military bases in South Korea. [Kim Il-sung, 1973]208

In 1978 North Korea issued a memorandum reiterating North Korea’s opposition to separate UN membership for the two Koreas:

Cross recognition is meant to create two Koreans through the alternated recognition of North and South Korea by socialist and capitalist countries. This was an invention by the Ford Administration to perpetuate the division. The dividers try to invent two Koreas through the UN. This is designed to justify the division of Korea by applying to a divided Korea the general practice of all countries admitting to the US of the two countries’ existence and position as independent states. This is why the dividers persistently tried to realize a simultaneous entry into the UN by North and South Korea and separate admission of South Korea to the UN. [Rodong Sinmun, February 1, 1978]

In 1973, at the Korean Cease-fire Committee, North Korea began to officially negate the validity of the NLL. The overwhelming majority of North Korean actions near the NLL in 1970s were mere indirect uses of force aimed at supporting its diplomatic moves. The

intention was neither to destroy targets nor to occupy territories (Michishita 2010: 66).

Although the purpose behind North Korea’s negation of the NLL could have been to make North Korea’s boundaries clear, it is difficult to say that North Korea conceded the reality that the ROK occupied the southern part of the Korean peninsula because the negation did not lead to military conflicts near the quasi-maritime border.

The pronouncement of a military boundary in the Yellow Sea, to safeguard the economic sea zone, is evidence that North Korean leaders were motivated by economic interests. The North Korean military (Korean People’s Army: KPA) emphasized the defense of North Korea's economic sea zone using the military boundary:

> The Supreme Command of the Korea People’s Army recently established a military boundary within the economic sea zone of our country. The purpose of this action is to defend national interests and sovereignty by safeguarding the economic sea zone of the DPRK. [Rodong Sinmun, August 8, 1977]

In short, North Korean leaders still claimed the entire Korean peninsula as their sovereign territory during this period but the sovereign territory was claimed in a non-aggressive way under the name of peaceful reunification. This change reflected the dynamic geopolitical context of North Korea in the 1970s. Domestically, Kim Il-sung stabilized his dictatorship with the help of the concept of Juche, which legitimized his absolute power. The revision of the Constitution in 1972 meant that Juche became one of North Korea’s guiding
ideologies in conjunction with Marxism-Leninism.\textsuperscript{209} Internationally, the Sino-Soviet dispute and the détente between the US and the communist camp provoked North Korea to use a new territorial strategy. In this changing geopolitical context, Kim Il-sung could not continue an aggressive territorial claim. Rather, North Korean leaders, who were encouraged by the failure of US forces in Vietnam and the rise of the non-aligned Third World states, claimed the South in a non-aggressive way.

5.3.3 Defensive Claims to the Northern Half of the Peninsula: the 1990s

In the geopolitical context of the collapse of the communist bloc North Korea began to construct the northern half of the Korean peninsula as its sovereign territory. Through an amendment of the state’s Constitution in 1992, North Korea eliminated the expression “on a national scale” from Article 5 of the 1972 Constitution. This meant that the North Korean state would no longer regard the entire Korean peninsula as its sovereign territory since the national revolution had proclaimed the goal of establishing Communism throughout the entire Korean peninsula. Although the Rules of the KWP (Korean Workers’ Party) maintained the expression “on a national scale,” the elimination of the expression from the

\textsuperscript{209} The Socialist Constitution of 1972 declared that “the DPRK is guided in its activity by Juche of the Korean Workers’ Party, a creative application of Marxism-Leninism to the conditions of our country” (Article 4).
Constitution is significant in that the KWP was still seen as a party not just for the North Korean people but for the entire Korean people.\textsuperscript{210}

North Korean leaders also presented a flexible attitude toward the presence of US forces in South Korea. In the first high-level dialogue with the US since the Korean War, North Korean leaders stated that it was possible for US forces to be stationed in South Korea under certain conditions. At the dialogue between the Foreign Affairs Secretary of the KWP Kim Yong-soon and the Deputy Secretary of State Arnold Kanter in 1992, Kim stated that “the North would not object to the presence of US forces in Korea if relations were fully normalized” (Harrison 2002: 205). At the dialogue North Korean leaders revealed their readiness to allow the conditional presence of US forces in South Korea. Kim Il-sung confirmed the readiness by telling former US President Carter that he was more interested in the reduction of US troops in South Korea than their complete withdrawal (Solingen 2007: 120). For the territorial strategy of North Korea it was a fundamental change. North Korea began to concede the fact that the southern part of the Korean peninsula was no longer North Korea’s sovereign territory.

\textsuperscript{210} In the preamble, the 1980 Rules of the KWP states: “The immediate purpose of the KWP is the assurance of the complete victory of socialism in the northern half of the republic and the development of the revolutionary task of national liberation and the people’s democracy \textit{on a national scale} [emphasis added]. The ultimate purpose is the establishment of a Communist society.”
In 1991 North Korea suspended its “one-Korea” diplomacy and accepted the simultaneous entry of the two Koreas into the UN. Both the normalization of the relations between Russia and South Korea and China’s plan to normalize with South Korea compelled North Korea to accept the dual membership of the two Koreas into the UN. North Korea was forced to admit that the southern half of the Korean peninsula was the territory of the ROK as a fully-fledged member state of the UN. Of course, for domestic audiences, North Korea emphasized that the simultaneous entry into the UN was a “temporary” action under “unavoidable” circumstances and that North Korea pursued a unitary UN membership for national reunification:

As the South Korean authorities insist on their separate UN membership, if we leave this alone, important issues related to the interests of the entire Korean nation would be dealt with in a biased manner on the UN rostrum and this would entail grave consequences.…This is a temporary [emphasis added] decision we have taken under unavoidable [emphasis added] circumstances created by the partitionist moves of the South Korean authorities. South Korean authorities are committing the never-to-be condoned treason of dividing Korea into two parts through the arena of the UN by trying to force their way into the UN against the desire of the entire Korean nation for reunification. [The statement of North Korean Foreign Ministry, May 27, 1991]

During this period, North Korea began to provoke military conflicts near the NLL in the Yellow Sea. After several minor conflicts North Korean military vessels attacked South
Korean military vessels on the southern side of the NLL in 1999. The state-run news agency (KCNA) denounced the intrusion by the South Korean military into North Korean territorial waters:

South Korean warships ran into warships of the navy of the Korean People's Army and fired bullets and shells at them, sinking one of them in the north side's territorial waters...The armed provocation committed against our warships by the South Korean authorities, who have aggravated the situation in the territorial waters on the north side in the West Sea of Korea almost daily since June 4, is an unbearable insult and military challenge against us. [KCNA, June 15, 1999]

The significance of this incident is that it shows that North Korean leaders conceded the reality that the ROK was occupying the southern half of the Korean peninsula. In fact, just after the military conflict, North Korea declared an MDL (Military Demarcation Line) in the Yellow Sea without negotiating with South Korea to clarify the boundary:

As known to the world, the "NLL" is an illegal line unilaterally drawn by the side of the US forces in our territorial waters in defiance of the Korean Armistice Agreement and international law....Accordingly, the US forces' insistence on keeping the "NLL" constitutes a grave encroachment upon the sovereignty of our republic....Under the situation where the side of the US forces is insisting on keeping the illegal and brigandish "NLL", the Korean People's Army (KPA) general staff solemnly declares in defense of inviolable waters as under our military control. [Special communiqué of KPA general staff, September 2, 1999]211

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211 The KCNA, September 2, 1999.
In short, North Korea’s territorial strategy began to focus on the northern half of the Korean peninsula during this period. In the geopolitical context of the collapse of the communist bloc, North Korean leaders claimed the northern half of the Korean peninsula as their sovereign territory in a non-aggressive way. The collapse of the communist bloc and the death of Kim Il-sung forced North Korean leaders to transform their territorial strategy. In order to construct stronger threats to its interests, North Korean leaders narrowed the construction of the state’s sovereign territory to the northern half of the Korean peninsula. In particular, North Korean leaders wanted to concentrate on blocking the cultural invasion of capitalism into the present sovereign territory rather than extending the territory through the Korean communist revolution. The elimination of Marxism-Leninism as a guiding ideology in the 1992 Constitution of the DPRK illustrated this change. North Korean leaders tried to isolate the northern half of the peninsula from the pervasion of capitalism across the world by emphasizing the possibility of contamination by capitalism rather than emphasizing the Korean communist revolution.
5.3.4. Aggressive Claims to the Northern Half of the Peninsula: the 2000s

During the last period of this study North Korea claimed the northern half of the Korean peninsula in an aggressive way in the geopolitical context of the “War on Terror.” Although North Korean leaders conceded to the “stabilizing role” of US forces in the Korean peninsula, the Bush Administration’s declaration of the “War on Terror” led to North Korea’s aggressive responses. Through the amendment of the Constitution in 2009, North Korea defined Seongun as one of guiding ideologies in conjunction with Juche, and stipulated that the chairman of the National Defense Commission (NDC) was the highest leader of state who controls all affairs of the state.

Although North Korean leaders still requested the withdrawal of US forces from South Korea for its domestic audience, the following article of the KCNA represented North Korean leaders’ readiness to concede the presence of US forces through the improvement of US-DPRK relations:

As already clarified, the DPRK appreciates the progress of DPRK-US relations made so far through negotiations based on mutual respect and understanding, but will decisively counter the forces who are taking an attitude of confrontation, displeased with the progress. If the United States opts for confrontation in relations with the DPRK, it will counter it with confrontation, and if the US shows good faith to the DPRK, it will answer it with good faith. [KCNA, April 16, 2001]

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At a meeting on October 25, 2000 with US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Kim Jong-il reconfirmed the change of his attitude regarding the presence of US forces in South Korea. Kim Jong-il stated that the presence of US forces now played a “stabilizing role in Northeast Asia” in the midst of increasing competition between regional powers like China, Japan, and Russia in the post-Cold War era:

He [Kim Jong-il] said his government’s view had changed since the Cold War: American troops now played a stabilizing role [emphasis added] in Northeast Asia...He [Kim Jong-il] said there are still some here [North Korea] who think US troops should leave, and there are many in South Korea who are opposed to the US presence as well.213

In the geopolitical context of the “War on Terror,” North Korean leaders still conflated the state with the nation by using the statement “fundamental interest of the Korean nation”214 at the UN. However, the emphasis on state sovereignty implies that North Korean leaders gave priority to the present sovereign territory. Responding to the UN Security Council’s resolution on the first nuclear test in 2006 the spokesman for North Korea’s Foreign Ministry commented:

_____________________________________________________________________


214 KCNA, October 17, 2006
The successful nuclear test in the DPRK was an exercise of its independent and legitimate right as a sovereign state as it was a positive defensive countermeasure to protect the sovereignty [emphasis added], life and security of the people from the escalated threat of nuclear war and pressure from the US. The DPRK was compelled to legitimately pull out of the NPT as a result of its relevant provision and manufacturing of nuclear weapons after undergoing the most fair transparent processes, as the US seriously encroached upon the supreme security of the DPRK and the fundamental interests of the Korean nation [emphasis added] under the pretext of the nuclear issue. [KCNA, October 17, 2006]

Later, responding the UN Security Council resolution on the second nuclear test in 2009, the North Korean foreign ministry stated that it was a self-defensive measure to maintain the sovereignty and dignity of the state. These statements were far from the “one-Korea” diplomacy at the UN in that the sovereignty of the DPRK was related to the Northern half of the Korean peninsula rather than the entire Korean peninsula:

The DPRK’s second nuclear test is a self-defensive measure as it was conducted to cope with hostile acts of the US and this does not run counter to any international law. In essence, this confrontation is an issue related to the sovereignty and dignity of the DPRK [emphasis added] rather than an issue related to peace and security-- this is a DPRK-US confrontation. [KCNA, June 13, 2009]

By giving rise to the Cheonan warship and the Yeonpyeong island incidents near the NLL North Korean leaders showed their strong will to defend their sovereign territory.
Particularly, the Yeonpyeong island incident was a serious provocation to South Korea because it was the first shelling attack on South Korea’s territorial lands since the Korean War. This means that North Korean leaders constructed the northern half of the Korean peninsula as their sovereign territory in a very aggressive way. North Korean leaders declared:

The revolutionary armed forces of the DPRK standing guard over the inviolable territorial waters of the country took such a decisive military step as reacting to the military provocation of the puppet group with a prompt powerful physical strike.... Should the South Korean puppet group dare intrude into the territorial waters of the DPRK even 0.001 mm [emphasis added], the revolutionary armed forces of the DPRK will unhesitatingly continue taking merciless military counter-actions against it....There is in the West Sea of Korea only the maritime military demarcation line set by the DPRK. [The communiqué of the Supreme Command of the Korean People's Army: KCNA, November 23, 2010]

In short, North Korea’s territorial strategy focused on the northern half of the Korean peninsula during this period. In the geopolitical context of the “War on Terror” North Korea claimed its sovereign territory in a very aggressive way. North Korean leaders constructed the declaration of the “War on Terror” and its designation as a part of the “Axis of evil” by the US as a direct threat to the present sovereign territory. In particular, seeing the Iraq War and the death of Saddam Hussein, North Korean leaders needed to produce more imminent threats to security interests for the North Korean people to consume. In response to the
changing geopolitical context, North Korean leaders aggressively constructed the northern half of the peninsula as their territory. Through this construction North Korean leaders tried to exaggerate a state of emergency in regards to its security interests to maintain the legitimacy of the political regime. North Korea’s nuclear tests and attacks on the South Korean territory in the Yellow Sea can be interpreted as foreign policy actions that illustrate this construction.

In sum, Table 5.2 shows the dynamism of North Korea’s territorial strategies for the construction of its state interests over the four periods of the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>I (’48 ~’60s)</th>
<th>II (’70s ~’80s)</th>
<th>III (’90s)</th>
<th>IV (’00s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The presence of US forces in South Korea</td>
<td>Requested the withdrawal of US forces</td>
<td>Requested the withdrawal of US forces</td>
<td>Admitted the presence of US forces conditionally</td>
<td>Admitted the stabilizing role of US forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ‘one-Korea’ diplomacy at the UN</td>
<td>Negative campaign against South Korea at the UN</td>
<td>Active one-Korea diplomacy at the UN</td>
<td>Admitted the separate memberships of two Koreas</td>
<td>Stressed North Korea’s sovereignty at the UN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Capital</td>
<td>Seoul</td>
<td>Pyongyang</td>
<td>Pyongyang</td>
<td>Pyongyang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The NLL in the Yellow Sea</td>
<td>Tacitly conceded to the NLL</td>
<td>Officially problematized the NLL</td>
<td>Attacked South Korea’s military vessels around the NLL</td>
<td>Attacked South Korea’s islands around the NLL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.4 Periodical Change in the Relations between the Geopolitical Visions and Codes of North Korea

North Korea’s geopolitical codes have been very dynamic for about sixty years. Although the components of identity discourses have had a strong influence on North Korea’s foreign and security policy, North Korean leaders did not always adhere to them because of the imperatives of the changing geopolitical context. For example, in the geopolitical context of détente, North Korean leaders attempted to improve relations with the US and Japan, putting aside identity discourses of anti-Japanism and anti-Americanism. In the geopolitical context of the end of the Cold War, North Korean leaders tried to normalize relations with the US and its allies, playing down anti-imperialism and anti-flunkeyism. The key implication is that the dynamism of North Korea’s geopolitical codes brought about dissonances with its geopolitical visions.

5.4.1 A Very High Degree of Consonance: the 1950s and 1960s

In the 1950s and 1960s North Korea’s geopolitical codes showed a very high degree of consonance with its geopolitical visions. As a territorial strategy for the construction of its national identity the North Korean media did not try to create new images of the national homeland. Indeed, North Korea’s constructed imageries of the national homeland were not so
much different from those of South Korea. For example, Seoul was still the de jure capital city and Mt. *Baekdu* was a holy place for the entire Korean nation. Using the existing imageries of the national homeland, the North Korean media attempted to formulate its national identity by constructing “Others” such as the US, Japan, and South Korea.

At the beginning of the Cold War neighboring states were also constructing their identities by reference to ideology. The Korean War was a critical event in the construction of identities for the regional states (Milliken 2001; Jian 1994). In a regional geopolitical context of strong identity politics, North Korean leaders defined their primary state interest as the liberation of the southern part of the national homeland by force from the control of the US. As a territorial strategy for the construction of their state interests, North Korean leaders claimed the entire Korean peninsula as their sovereign territory in an aggressive way. The result was the initiation of the Korean War. That is, they actively tried to make their sovereign territory coincide with the national homeland.

In the process of using their territorial strategies North Korean leaders presented a clear dichotomy in mapping enemies and allies. The “Others,” in terms of the state's geopolitical vision, were not regarded as potential allies in North Korea’s geopolitical codes. The US, Japan, and South Korea were not actual or potential diplomatic partners. Therefore, during this period, it can be said that North Korea’s geopolitical codes and visions scarcely showed any dissonance with each other.
5.4.2 A Relatively High Degree of Consonance: the 1970s and 1980s

In the 1970s and 1980s, North Korea’s geopolitical codes showed a relatively high degree of consonance with its geopolitical visions. As a territorial strategy for its identity, North Korea’s media began to construct a new image of the national homeland. Pyongyang was portrayed as the center of the Korean nation and Mt. Baekdu was used by the cult of Kim Il-sung, who was considered as the leader of the entire Korean nation. Using the new image of the national homeland the North Korean media tried to strengthen their national identity under the guidance of Juche as an official ideology. In the changing geopolitical context, North Korea’s media added new “Others,” such as the Soviet Union and China.

The détente of the 1970s weakened the strong identity politics in this region. Particularly, it was a big change for China, as a communist state, to regard the Soviet Union as a more dangerous enemy than the US and Japan. Within this geopolitical context of weakening identity politics, North Korean leaders defined their primary state interest as the elimination of the South Korean political regime from the national homeland by the actions of the South Korean people with the support of non-aligned states. As a territorial strategy for the construction of their state interests, North Korea’s leaders defensively claimed the entire Korean peninsula as a sovereign territory. That is, in a defensive way, they tried to make their sovereign territory coincide with the national homeland.
In the process of using such a territorial strategy, North Korean leaders began to show ambiguous mappings in their identification of enemies and allies. In particular, foreign policies to improve relation with the US and Japan were not congruent with the geopolitical visions of anti-Americanism and anti-Japanism. Therefore, during this period, it can be said that relations between the geopolitical visions and codes began to have some dissonances, though overall a relatively high degree of consonance remained.

5.4.3 A Very High Degree of Dissonance: the 1990s

In the 1990s, North Korea’s geopolitical codes showed a very high degree of dissonance with its geopolitical visions. In particular, North Korea’s construction of national identity was in crisis because the communist bloc had collapsed and Kim Il-sung, the symbolic figure of the national identity, had died. In order to maintain its national identity, North Korea’s media strengthened the construction of the national homeland in North Korea’s terms. Through the discovery of the Dangun’s Tomb, the North Korean media formulated its identity discourse geo-historically by clarifying that Pyongyang had been the center of the Korean nation since the Dangun period. Also, the Mt. Baekdu cult was constructed to refer to both Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il. Using the historically focused image of the national homeland North Korea’s media tried to protect North Korea’s national identity from the
geopolitical context of the end of the Cold War. Particularly, it was a big change for South Korea to normalize relations with the Soviet Union and China.

North Korea tried to maintain the construction of “Others” by emphasizing the nation rather than the state. That is, North Korea’s media increased the identity discourse related to the threats to the entire Korean nation rather than the North Korean state. In a fundamental shift in the geopolitical context, North Korea’s leaders defined their primary state interest as the survival of their own political regime on the national homeland. As a territorial strategy for realizing state interests, North Korea’s leaders defensively claimed the northern half of the Korean peninsula. In other words, they passively tried to separate the sovereign territory from the national homeland.

In the process of using this territorial strategy North Korea’s leaders practiced the most ambiguous mapping in the identification of enemies and allies. “Others,” in terms of North Korea’s geopolitical visions, were regarded as potential allies in terms of the geopolitical codes. In the midst of the collapse of the communist bloc, Russia became a current enemy that had betrayed the causes of socialism, and China was treated as a potential enemy rather than a current ally due to its recognition of the South Korean regime’s legitimacy. The change of the geopolitical context forced North Korea to improve relations with the US, Japan, and South Korea as potential allies. Therefore, during this period, it can
be said that North Korea’s geopolitical codes and visions had considerable dissonances with each other.

5.4.4 A Relatively High Degree of Dissonance: the 2000s

In the 2000s, North Korea’s geopolitical codes showed a relatively high degree of dissonance with its geopolitical visions. Although the state identity crisis after the collapse of the communist bloc was abated to some degree, North Korea still suffered considerable incongruence between the construction of its national identity and state interests. As a territorial strategy for the construction of national identity, the North Korean media tried to construct a new image of the national homeland. Indeed, North Korea’s image of the national homeland was considerably different from that of the previous periods. Pyongyang was portrayed as the center of the Korean nation during its zenith in the Goguryeo period, and Mt. Baekdu became a geographical symbol of Kim Jong-il as a national leader.

Using the new imageries of the national homeland, the North Korean media tried to construct North Korea's national identity by emphasizing the threats from “Others” toward the nation rather than the state. In the geopolitical context of the “War on Terror” North Korean leaders defined the state’s primary interest as the survival of its own political regime through the adoption of military campaigns. As a territorial strategy for the construction of the state interests, North Korean leaders aggressively claimed the northern half of the Korean
peninsula. The significant point is that they actively tried to separate the sovereign territory from the national homeland.

In the geopolitical context of the “War on Terror” North Korean leaders suddenly changed their mapping of enemies and allies. In the process of changing the mapping the articulation of the discourse about state interests became more important. Although North Korea attempted to restore their relations with Russia and China to cope with the hard-line policy of the US, the identity discourse hindered North Korea from remapping allies and enemies. Therefore, during this period, it can be said that the dissonances between North Korea’s geopolitical codes and visions remained considerable.

5.5 Chapter Summary

I have demonstrated that North Korea’s geopolitical codes were dynamic over the course of about sixty years. Consequently, the dissonances between North Korea’s geopolitical visions and codes increased from the 1970s. North Korean leaders defined their state interests through the lens of their ideologies such as Juche (Self-reliance) and Seongun (Military-first). In accordance with the defined state interests North Korean leaders changed the mapping of their enemies and allies. By using territorial strategies North Korean leaders have constructed state interests in territorial terms. In the geopolitical context of the end of the Cold War, North Korean leaders changed the construction of their sovereign territory
from the entire Korean peninsula to only the northern half of the peninsula. As a consequence, the dissonances between North Korea’s geopolitical visions and codes increased, especially after the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the communist bloc.

In order to manage the dissonances North Korean leaders developed ideological mechanisms to maintain the discursive consistency in the construction of their national identity and state interests. In the next chapter I will examine how North Korea reproduced its statehood through its ideological mechanisms, such as nationalism and security discourse. Notably, I will emphasize the importance of the construction of territory in formulating geopolitical visions and codes.
6.1 Introduction

As we have seen, North Korea began to have dissonances between its geopolitical visions and codes in the 1970s. The situation climaxed in the 1990s when the dissonances became serious enough to destabilize the territorial basis of the state. The negative influences of the dissonances on North Korea’s construction of its national identity and state interests caused the country’s leaders to develop ideological mechanisms for legitimacy, such as *Juche* (self-reliance) and *Seongun* (military-first). North Korea, a divided nation-state neighbored by more powerful states, has had to continuously confirm the consistency between the construction of its national identity and state interests.

North Korea has used nationalism and security discourses in territorial terms to consistently construct its national identity and state interests. The *Juche* idea emphasized nationalism and the *Seongun* idea stressed security discourses. The ideological mechanisms contributed to expanding the options for North Korea’s geopolitical agency in the changing international context. North Korea has not only chosen a relatively independent foreign policy but also constructed its national identity and state interests with a degree of consistency. In the process, however, North Korea has created an incongruent discursive construction of its territory. The nationalism of *Juche* depended on constructing the entire
Korean peninsula as its national homeland while the security discourses of Seongun rested on constructing the northern half of the peninsula as its sovereign territory.

Given that nationalism claims a national homeland and security discourses clarify the boundaries of a sovereign territory, the geopolitical discourses of North Korea are based on the antinomic construction of its territory. The more North Korea simultaneously strengthens both nationalism and security discourse, the more serious the incongruence in the North Korean state’s construction of its territory will become. In this sense, I will argue that unless North Korean leaders change the ideological mechanisms for the legitimacy of the political regime they will not be able to resolve a fundamental problem concerning the dissonance between their geopolitical visions and codes.

6.2 North Korea’s Reproduction of Statehood with Juche Nationalism

In the midst of changes in the geopolitical context of the 1970s, Juche was an ideological mechanism to make the North Korean state a consistent subject through the construction of its national identity and state interests. I will discuss the following themes in North Korea’s nationalism and reproduction of its statehood: emphasis on the so-called “Korean conditions” rather than general communism or socialism, and the conflation of the

215 In this sense, it is proper for the term Juche to be translated into “subjectivity” as the original meaning of the word in Korean rather than “self-reliance” or “independence.”
state with the nation. Arguably, there is no country among the communist states that emphasizes local conditions and stresses the conflation of the nation with the state as much as North Korea. The reasons are North Korea’s existence as a divided nation-state, and the competition with South Korea to claim to be the sole legitimate regime in the national homeland.

6.2.1 *Juche* and the *Suryeong* as Ideologies of Nationalism

Many western scholars believe that the *Juche* idea is a form of nationalism disguised by communism. For example, Scalapino (1971) argues that Asian Marxism, including North Korean communism, was not a true Marxist ideology because it emphasizes parochial peasants’ revolution rather than proletarian revolution. Suh (1988) goes on to argue that the idea is irrelevant to the tenets of communism or the intellectual profundities of Marxism-Leninism. Cumings (1997) argues that North Korea substituted nation for class as the unit of historical change. Armstrong (2003: 245) argues that North Korea has been “Stalinist in form” but was clearly “nationalist in content.” Park (2006) also argues that the ideological legitimacy of the North Korean government is founded on *Juche*, which is predicated upon nationalism.

Indeed, North Korean texts about *Juche* explain that the idea includes three principles: independence in politics, self-sufficiency in the economy, and self-reliance in defense.
“Independence in politics” indicates an opposition to imperialism, support for national liberation, and noninterference in domestic affairs. “Self-efficiency in the economy” means building a self-reliant economy which is free from dependence on other countries. “Self-reliance in defense” indicates defending one’s country by one’s own efforts. These explanations show that the idea has more to do with nationalism rather than socialism or communism.

However, the three principles have been counterproductive for the development of the economy and have often been detrimental to the welfare of the society as a whole. Nevertheless the principles have been emphasized ideologically, though not in reality, to promote nationalism among the populace and to demonstrate a position of superiority in the regime’s legitimacy compared to the South. Moreover, nationalist sentiment has pervaded all areas of the North Korean people’s lives through comprehensive political socialization, including ideological education. As Park (2006) pointed out, Juche was not just a political ideology but a political culture or a way of life in North Korea, ingrained in the people’s everyday life through constant education and reeducation. In conjunction with the expansion of Juche from the early 1970s, the eleven-year compulsory public school education was introduced to enable ideological education. In addition, all workplaces were required to set aside at least one full day each week for ideological reeducation in which every worker participates.
Therefore, it is not surprising that the term *Juche* has been inseparable from the everyday life of the North Korean people, and attached to all areas of culture and society: *Juche* art, *Juche* literature, *Juche* architecture, *Juche* medicine, even *Juche* sports. The self-reliance doctrine has led to the alienation of all foreign sources, and whatever is traditionally Korean is considered sacred and something that should be preserved. In comparison with the North, the South was portrayed as a cultural colony as well as a political regime dependent upon external powers.

North Korea's nationalism was articulated by the *Suryeong* (sole supreme leader) system of *Juche*. The system was a crucial instrument to justify foreign policies determined by the supreme leader. In the initial stage of building the state of North Korea, *Suryeong* indicated Joseph Stalin of the Soviet Union as the leader. As the idea was developed, however, *Suryeong* came to mean Kim Il-sung.\(^{216}\) In accordance with the nationalistic discourse of the idea, Kim Il-sung was called the “Sun of the Korean nation” or even the “present-day Dangun (the legendary progenitor of the Korean nation).” Furthermore, the historically sacred Mt. *Baekdu* was portrayed as a geographical symbol of Kim Il-sung.\(^{217}\)

\(^{216}\) For example, between the fourth (1961) and fifth (1970) Party Congress, 39 million copies of *The Selected Works of Kim Il-sung* were published (although there were only 14 million people in North Korea, of whom 6.6 million were under the age of 14). Party members were required to spend a minimum of two hours per day reading the works of Kim Il-sung (Kim, J. A. 1975: 320)

\(^{217}\) Strictly speaking, only Kim Il-sung is the *Suryeong* in North Korea (Suh 2002: 66). However, Kim Jong-il played a similar role to that of the *Suryeong* as the sole interpreter of the idea of *Suryeong*.
According to the *Juche* idea, North Korean elites and the populace do not have a right to change and criticize the leadership.\(^{218}\)

In general, geopolitical visions are formulated and changed mainly by the public, and geopolitical codes are formulated and changed primarily by elites (Dijkink 1996). In the case of North Korea, however, geopolitical visions and codes could be formulated and changed only by the sole supreme leader. That is, the *Suryeong* system provided the leadership with the absolutely privileged role of formulating and changing geopolitical visions and codes. In the name of maximizing the unity of the people and national self-determination, the supreme leader has been regarded as more than a representative of the populace as well as the elites. Although specific foreign policy acts can be recommended by a group of elites, geopolitical codes are formulated and changed not within the circle of elites but within the supreme leader’s mind. The *Suryeong* system was continuously maintained in the security discourses of *Seongun*. Therefore, it can be argued that nationalism and security discourses are articulated by the *Suryeong* system in which the supreme leader monopolizes the interpretation of North Korea’s national identity and state interests.

\(^{218}\) According to *Juche*, the authoritative relations among the three actors are described in the idea as follows: the *Suryeong* is the errorless brain of the living body, the masses compose the living body that is able to maintain life only through loyalty to the supreme leader, and the party is the nervous system that organizationally links the masses to the supreme leader (Kim, Chang-ha. 1985. *The Eternal Juche Idea*. Pyongyang: Social Science Publishing House)
6.2.2 Expanding the Parameters for Geopolitical Agency through Juche

By making use of nationalist language within Juche North Korea was able to expand the parameters of its geopolitical agency and maintain its statehood in spite of the changing regional order. North Korean leaders used two themes in the construction of nationalism: emphasis on particular “Korean conditions” during the communist revolution, and the conflation of “the nation” with “the state.”

First, leaders emphasized the peculiarity of Korea’s conditions. The national emphasis implies that North Korea thought it should distance itself from the Soviet Union and China instead of following the policy line of the communist powers. In fact, despite the security treaties with the Soviet Union and China in 1961, North Korean leaders questioned their allies’ reliability. However, the more important implication of North Korea's nationalism is a criticism of South Korea, which had maintained relations with the capitalist

\[\text{Reference:} 219 \text{ In his “Selected Works,” Kim Il-sung (1975) contended that “it would be meaningless for Korean communists to talk about revolution apart from the Korean nation and the Korean soil.” (Kim Il-sung. 1975. The Selected Works of Kim Il-sung, Volume 3, 2nd English edition. p. 490). In his treatise “On the Juche Idea,” Kim Jong-il (1982) also contended: “Koreans must know Korean history, geography, economics, culture and the custom of the Korean nation well. Only then will they be able to establish Juche and become true Korean patriots, Korean communists.” This treatise was sent to the national symposium on Juche held in celebration of Kim Il-sung’s 70th birthday. The North Korean media stated that it was a classic document which is of undying significance in deepening and developing the idea.}\]
powers such as the US and Japan. The South was portrayed as a flunkey regime in opposition to Juche.\textsuperscript{220}

North Korea declared its foreign policy independence by defining a “creative application of Marxism-Leninism to conditions in Korea” in the 1972 Constitution. Indeed, with the \textit{Juche} idea, North Korea could have some degree of maneuverability in foreign policy beyond the circle of the communist camp. For example, North Korea sharply increased non-aligned diplomacy in the 1970s. Furthermore, the North began to change its geopolitical codes by trying to improve relations with the US and Japan in opposition to its geopolitical visions. However, the radical nationalism of \textit{Juche} had become a liability to North Korea’s efforts to reform its economy in response to the dynamically growing South Korean economy. North Korea failed to reform its economy as China was reforming its own in the 1970s, instead resorting to a highly closed form of nationalism.

In the 1990s, by developing the idea of “Our Style of Socialism” beyond the creative application of \textit{Juche}, North Korea tried to expand the parameters of its geopolitical agency at the moment of the apex of the ambiguity in mapping its allies and enemies. When the communist bloc collapsed Kim Jong-il contrasted the Eastern European communist states that imitated the Soviet experience in a mechanical manner with North Korea, which developed

\textsuperscript{220} In his treatise \textit{“On the Juche Idea,”} Kim Jong-il (1982) contended: “Flunkeyism is an attitude peculiar to slaves serving and worshiping big powers and developed countries....The harmfulness of the servility is most notable in South Korea today.”
the idea of “Our Style of Socialism.” He asserted that Korean-style socialism was based on “organic nationalism” by emphasizing the national blood relations between the leader, the party, and the masses. In order to intensify organic nationalism, North Korea aggressively promoted Korean national traditions and heritage (in North Korean terms) in the 1990s.

Second, North Korea had conflated “the nation” with “the state” for the construction of its identity and interests. In the construction of North Korea’s identity the media linked the state to the nation. As shown in the previous chapter, North Korea’s identity had been constructed in relation to its national identity. For example, the identity of “socialist large family state” came from the remarkable homogeneity of the Korean nation. The identity of “autonomous state” was constructed on the basis of the recalcitrant struggles of the Korean nation against foreign invasions throughout the nation’s history. Lastly, the self-righteousness of the state came from the historical fact that the Korean nation had never invaded its neighboring nations.

For the construction of North Korea’s interests, North Korean leaders intentionally conflated the state with the nation by placing the interests of the North Korean state and the

221 “Socialism of our country is our style of socialism as embodied by Juche” (Kim Jong-il, 1997. The selected works of Kim Jong-il. Pyongyang: The KWP Publishing House, p. 446.)
interests of the Korean nation in the same category. In fact, in many case, “the people” in the statements of North Korean leaders indicated those in the entire Korean nation who lived in not only the North but also the South and abroad. The spokesman for the Foreign Ministry also conflated state interest with national interest by referring to the “fundamental interests of the Korean nation” in his statement about the UN Security Council Resolution against North Korea’s first nuclear test. In short, through the conflation between the state and the nation and the emphasis on Korea’s conditions, the North Korean state tried to become the sole legitimate regime in the national homeland. In this sense, the nationalism of Juche played a critical role in providing the state with a justification for its geopolitical agency and thereby reinforcing sovereign statehood.

6.3 North Korea’s Reproduction of Statehood with the Seongun Security Discourse

In the geopolitical context of the end of the Cold War in the 1990s, North Korea came to have more serious dissonances between its geopolitical visions and codes. In order to reproduce its statehood through the construction of identity and interests, North Korea proclaimed Seongun (Military-first). For North Korean leaders, Juche was not enough to

222 For instance, in his speech at the 20th anniversary of the founding of the DPRK in 1968, Kim Il-sung insisted that the DPRK is a full-fledged independent state and that the Korean nation escaped from the fate of a ruined nation.

223 KCNA, October 17, 2006.
maintain its geopolitical agency because the idea was premised on the existence of the
communist and non-aligned countries. Thus, Kim Jong-il reinterpreted *Juche* by giving
priority to “self-reliance in defense” among the three principles within the ideology. In this
sense, *Seongun* was a revised mechanism for North Korea’s reproduction of statehood in the
post-Cold War era. Nevertheless, the security discourse that was added to the nationalism of
*Juche* exacerbated the dissonances between the geopolitical visions and codes by leading to
incongruence in the discursive construction of the state’s territory.

### 6.3.1 Seongun as a Security Discourse

*Seongun* indicates that the centrality of the military should be valued in all activities
of the state in crisis situations (Kim, S. C. 2006: 92). Thus, it needs to be understood as a
security discourse of the North Korean state. *Seongun* was initiated by Kim Jong-il in the
midst of continuous crises; such as the collapse of the communist bloc in the early 1990s, the
death of Kim Il-sung in 1994, and the economic crises including the great famine in the mid-
1990s. During these crises Kim Jong-il discovered that the party machine was becoming
increasingly bureaucratic and losing its dynamism. Above all, he was concerned about the
weakening of the ideology in the continuing economic crisis. For Kim Jong-il the military
was not only better organized to be more responsive to his command for the economic
recovery but also more faithful to ideology than the party. Indeed, from the mid-1990s most military leaders achieved higher rank and status than party leaders, a situation that had never occurred under Kim Il-sung’s leadership.

The North Korean leadership had not simply relied on the armed forces for the purposes of defense but also expanded the role played by armed forces in the enhancement of the North Korean state’s viability and national identity (Suh 2002). In this respect, Seongun was used for the construction of external threats. The security discourse of Seongun was an important mechanism to legitimize the North Korean state in the context of the disappearance of the communist and non-aligned blocs. Military tensions in Northeast Asia decreased sharply in the geopolitical context of the end of the Cold War. All the neighboring states no longer wanted confrontation between the communist and capitalist camps in the region.

However, North Korea experienced an identity crisis as well as a serious economic crisis in the 1990s. As a way to respond to these internal crises, North Korea tried to construct a sense of insecurity from outside. In particular, North Korea made use of the hard-line policy of the George W. Bush Administration toward North Korea as an opportunity to construct more insecurity. Although the US government confirmed several times that it had

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224 The North Korean media has said that the military is not only the central pillar for national defense, but also the ideological vanguard in the North Korean society. In an editorial by an organ of the KWP, it was stressed that the “military-first idea is a cure-all in this era of ideological, military, and economic confrontation with the imperialists.” (Rodong Sinmun, April 3, 2003)
no intention of initiating preemptive attacks, North Korea aggressively responded to US foreign policy by stating that the economic sanctions of the US were regarded as a “declaration of war.” Therefore, it can be said that Seongun was an ideological mechanism for North Korea’s reproduction of statehood in the post-Cold War era by strengthening the security discourse in conjunction with nationalist messages.

6.3.2 Expanding the Parameters for Geopolitical Agency through Seongun

Nuclear weapons development under the banner of Seongun (Military-first) was the main item of foreign policy informed by the production of security interests and the construction of threats to national identity. The North Korean media portrayed nuclear weapons development as a foreign policy to protect security interests and exalt national identity and pride. By constructing imminent insecurity through the nuclear weapons development, North Korea could expand the parameters of its geopolitical agency.

First, in the geopolitical context of the “War on Terror” North Korean leaders constructed security interests in the name of “nuclear deterrence” against preemptive attacks

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225 “The DPRK has already declared that it would regard the US sanctions against it as a declaration of war” (KCNA, October 18, 2005).

226 In the editorial titled "Military-first policy is a precious sword of sure victory for the sovereignty of the nation," an organ of the KWP said that "the nation is over class and stratum, and the fatherland is more important than idea and ideology" (Rodong Sinmun, April 3, 2003).
by the US. North Korea already had an indirect method of “conventional deterrence” against the US through its capability to launch an artillery attack on Seoul. It was more probable that possessing nuclear weapons deteriorated North Korea’s state interests in that they invoked sanctions and interference from neighboring states. Indeed, due to the nuclear tests the UN Security Council imposed severe sanctions upon North Korea.

Furthermore, nuclear weapons were not helpful to the national interests of the entire Korean people. Nuclear proliferation led to a bad environment for Korean reunification by increasing military tension in Northeast Asia. North Korea asserted that the nuclear weapons were for protecting both the North Korean and South Korean people by deterring a nuclear war on the Korean peninsula. However, this construction of the national interest was not at all reflective of the popular belief of the South Korean people. In the early 1990s, even though the US removed its tactical nuclear weapons from South Korea, North Korea gave rise to the first North Korean nuclear crisis. In this respect, it can be argued that North Korean leaders have made use of a security discourse to promote the survival of the political regime.

227 Kim In-ock (2003: 266), a North Korean theoretician, insisted that “the military-first policy is defending the entire Korean nation including the South Korean people from the nuclear threat of the US.”
Second, the media constructed threats to the Korean national identity in the name of national dignity and sovereignty.\textsuperscript{228} For North Korean leaders, possession of nuclear weapons symbolized the triumph of North Korea’s model over that of the South Korean “flunkey” political regime. Just after the death of Kim Jong-il in 2011, in a political essay titled “On Revolutionary Legacy of Kim Jong-il,” the organ of the KWP said that North Korea had been “dignified as a nuclear power” thanks to the deceased supreme leader.\textsuperscript{229} This essay evaluated the nuclear development as one of the most important achievements of Kim Jong-il. Thus, it can be argued that nuclear weapons were represented by the North Korean media as a means to prevent subordination to foreign intervention. In short, through the security discourse of Seongun, North Korean leaders could expand the parameters of geopolitical agency in an unfavorable international context. Nevertheless, the dissonances between their geopolitical visions and codes were not resolved due to the incongruence in the discursive construction of territory.

\textsuperscript{228} For example, the editorial of an organ of the KWP (April 3, 2003) insisted that “the DPRK has defended the dignity and sovereignty of the nation, countering the US imperialists’ high-handed practice and arbitrariness with Seongun politics.” Just after the first nuclear test in 2006, the New Year’s editorial of the KWP organ (January 1, 2007) insisted: “That we have come to possess a nuclear deterrent was an auspicious event in our national history, a realization of our people’s centuries-long desire to have a national strength no one could dare challenge.”

\textsuperscript{229} Rodong Sinmun, December 28, 2011.
6.4 The Incongruence in North Korea’s Construction of Territory

The nationalism and security discourses of North Korea share a need to include the social construction of territory in their rhetoric. Nationalism is a territorial form of ideology in that nations claim particular territory (Anderson 1988: 18), and security discourses reproduce the state as an inherently territorial subject (Kuus and Agnew 2007: 100). A state’s construction of territory constitutes its geopolitical visions and codes. The North Korean regime’s construction of territory is very important not only to its nationalism and security discourse, but also to the relations between the country’s geopolitical visions and codes.

6.4.1 North Korea’s Nationalism as a Territorial Ideology

North Korea’s nationalism is based on representations of its territory. Jajuseong (Self-determination), the foremost value of Juche, stresses national sovereignty and the national homeland. As a territorial strategy, North Korea has claimed the entire Korean peninsula as a national homeland since the creation of the political regime. For North Korea, the Korean peninsula is not simply a historic territory but also a geographical manifestation of its national identity. The peninsula has been constructed as a symbol of national reunification and the unity of the entire Korean nation.\(^{230}\)

\(^{230}\) For example, North Korea agreed to use the “Korean Peninsula Flag” as a flag of the joint Korean team in the Olympic Games or other world sports events from the early 1990s.
What should be noted is that geographical knowledge about the peninsula has been reinvented by the North Korean media in conformity with the changes in the geopolitical context. In other words, the way in which the North Korean media has constructed the peninsula as the national homeland has changed over the four periods of this study. In the 1950s and 1960s the North Korean media’s construction of the national homeland was not so much different from that of the South Korean media. From the 1970s a major difference began to appear. Pyongyang and Mt. Beakdu were used for the naturalization of Kim Il-sung’s dictatorship. In the 1990s, after the discovery of the Dangun tomb, Pyongyang was constructed as the birthplace of Korean culture and bloodline and Mt. Baekdu was used for the justification of the hereditary succession of the leadership. In the 2000s Pyongyang, the capital city of the Goguryeo kingdom, was portrayed as the center of the “Strong and Prosperous State (Gangseong daeguk)” and Mt. Baekdu was used for the construction of Kim Jong-il as a national leader.

On the other hand, in the process of constructing other states’ identities the North Korean media emphasized constructed threats to its national identities. The North Korean media portrayed the US as a morally depraved country in contrast with the morally pure Korean nation. In another example, the North Korean media portrayed South Korea as a cultural colony of the US and Japan in which it was hard to find Korean national characteristics.
In addition, the North Korean regime has utilized taken-for-granted national landscapes to promote nationalism. The North Korean regime has viewed its territory and cultural landscapes as the repository of national identity. Before the 1990s the main themes in constructing the cultural landscape were the anti-Japanese struggle and the political leadership of Kim Il-sung (e.g. the Mt. Baekdu Revolution Historic Site), the representations of the traumatic past of the Korean War (e.g. the Shincheon War History Museum), and the vitality of Juche as nationalism (e.g. the Juche Tower). After the end of the Cold War, the North Korean regime began to focus on the origin of national identity in representations of the cultural landscape. The building of the Dangun tomb and the rebuilding of the King Dongmyong tomb (the founder of Goguryeo) in 1994 are good examples. Through the reshaping of taken-for-granted national landscapes across its territory the North Korean state tried to naturalize the discourse of nationalism.

6.4.2 North Korea’s Security Discourse: the State as a Territorial Subject

North Korea’s security discourse has emphasized threats from the plundering interventions of outside “Others.” The “Others” consisted of the neighboring states, including the US. According to North Korea’s security discourse, the nature of the neighboring states is different from North Korea’s and their identities never change. The possibility that there might be alternative thoughts about the “Others” is dismissed. In particular, North Korea
forged an exclusive link between imperialist capitalism and the US. The nature of US imperialism is characterized as “ferocious and shameless.” \(^{231}\) and ultimately immoral. North Korean leaders have consistently argued that the US has been continuously involved in a campaign for global domination, seeking influence all over the world to gain military bases with which it threatens Third World countries. Given the unchanging nature of US imperialism the only logical course of action for North Korea is to uncompromisingly defend the national homeland by its “own defense power.” \(^{232}\) At least from the early 1970s the Soviet Union and China also began to be perceived as an “Other” by North Korean leaders in the name of Juche. The components of North Korea’s identity discourse, notably anti-imperialism and anti-hegemonism, were established as a guiding rule to distinguish “Self” from the “Others.” From the mid-1990s the ideology of Seongun was used to portray “Others” as a danger that should be expelled from the Korean peninsula by military force.

Through constructing the identities of neighboring states North Korea’s identity was constructed as a defiant state. As presented in Chapter 4, representations made by a North Korean magazine portraying China and Russia as friends were overwhelmingly few in

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\(^{231}\) In the fifth Congress of the KWP adopting Juche as an official ideology of the party, Kim Il-sung excluded the possibility of other ways of thinking toward the US by declaring that “US imperialism is the most ferocious and shameless aggressor and plunder of modern times.” (Kim Il-sung. 1972. *The Selected Works of Kim Il-sung*, Volume 5, 2nd English Edition, p. 489)

comparison with those regarding the US and its allies. What should be noted is that North Korea’s security discourse specified “Others” as threats in spatial terms. North Korea’s identity is related to the geopolitical specifications of “them and us,” or “their territory” and “our territory.” North Korea’s geopolitical discourses constructed the neighboring states not only in terms of self and “Others” but also in terms of threats to North Korean territory. The territory is depicted as so precious and important to the national identity that “Others” must not invade it by even “0.0001 mm.”

Borrowing Kuus and Agnew’s (2007: 100) words, North Korea’s security discourse “reproduced the state as an inherently territorial subject by demarcating the ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’ as territorial categories.” In addition, neighboring states’ threats to North Korea’s territory were constructed as a result of its geographical location. For instance, North Korean leaders have insisted that the Korean peninsula is in a strategic location for the US to materialize its global domination. North Korean leaders have also argued that Japan regarded the Korean peninsula as an important location for realizing its ambition of a


234 “The fact that the confrontation between the USSR and US turned into the confrontation between the DPRK and US is related to the increasing importance of the geographical location of the Korean peninsula in the new century” (The KWP Institute of Party History. 2006. Our Party’s Military-first Politics. Pyongyang: The KWP Publishing House.)
“Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere.”

Because immutable geographical location determines the identities of neighboring states regardless of the change in geopolitical context, the neighboring states have been represented as unchanging or consistent threats to North Korea’s territory.

6.4.3 The Intractable Incongruence in North Korea’s Construction of Territory

North Korea has used its territorial strategies for the construction of national identity and state interest in conformity with the changing geopolitical context. The reason why North Korea used such territorial strategies is that the threat to territorial integrity was one of the most effective sources for the state’s legitimacy. Although the nationalism and security discourses of North Korea contributed to the expansion of its geopolitical agency, the two discourses brought about an incongruence between the construction of the national homeland and the state’s sovereign territory. This incongruence is a serious problem for the North Korean state because the construction of the national homeland as the sovereign territory was a crucial mechanism for the maintenance of its legitimacy.

In fact, the North Korean regime has depended on the stability of the Korean nation’s territory for the construction of its national identity and state interests. Scholars who attempt to address the uniqueness of the Korean experience in the formulation of nationalism refer to

the remarkable stability of its territorial boundaries and the endurance of the bureaucratic state (Shin 2006: 6). Indeed, pre-modern Korea had maintained the Korean peninsula as its territory for at least 500 years (from the Joseon dynasty, 1392-1910) and the central bureaucratic system for at least 1,000 years (from the Goryeo dynasty, 918-1392). Therefore, any political regime on the Korean peninsula is reliant upon the remarkable stability of territory for the construction of its identity and interest. Particularly, for the North Korean regime, which has depended on the construction of national identity for legitimization rather than political efficiency, the stability of territory has been a very important source of its legitimacy.

As I examined in Chapter 5, North Korea also claimed the entire Korean peninsula as its sovereign territory in the 1950s and in the 1960s. From the 1970s the North claimed the entire Korean peninsula as its sovereign territory in a defensive way by issuing a proclamation of peaceful reunification in the geopolitical context of detente. In the post-Cold War era, however, North Korea could not apply the stability of its national homeland to the

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236 There exist several contending views to explain the origins of the Korean nation (Shin 2006: 4-6). The ethnicist and primodialist views regard the idea of Korean ethnic national unity as natural (this view is similar to that of North Korea), since all Koreans are considered descendants of Dangun. The modernist or constructionist view regards the Korean nation as a modern product of nationalist ideology that was espoused at the end of the Joseon dynasty. The third group of scholars attempts to address the uniqueness of the Korea’s experience in the formulation of nationalism.

237 Most North Korean historians view the Goryeo dynasty as the first reunified kingdom. In contrast, many South Korean historians view the Unified Silla (676-918) as the first one.
construction of its sovereign territory because the North needed to produce more insecurity in the geopolitical context of the collapse of the communist bloc. In fact, to the North Korean people during the great famine of the 1990s, security was more likely to mean a regular supply of food rather than defense against the attack of the US and its allies.

Nevertheless, North Korean leaders gave priority to a military build-up through their nuclear weapons development rather than building up a food supply. In order to construct more imminent military insecurity from outside “Others” North Korean leaders began to change the construction of the sovereign territory in the geopolitical context of the collapse of the communist bloc. In the 1990s, North Korean leaders defensively claimed the northern half of the peninsula as their sovereign territory through the acceptance of the presence of US forces in the South. In the 2000s, the northern half of the peninsula was aggressively claimed as its sovereign territory through the sinking of the South Korean warship Cheonan and the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island

However, the more aggressively North Korea claimed the northern half of the peninsula as its sovereign territory, the more incongruence there was between the construction of its national homeland and sovereign territory. In order to manage this incongruence the North Korean media changed the representation of its national homeland,

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238 The deaths caused by the great famine (1995-97) were largely presumed to be between 0.5~2 million people (the total population of North Korea was about 23 million in the 1990s) by Western or South Korean sources.
emphasizing national traditions and the peak-experiences of the nation’s history. The entire Korean peninsula is still constructed as the national homeland for the purposes of the national identity discourse. However, the North Korean media have created imagery of the national homeland emphasizing the centrality of Pyongyang in the peninsula and the symbolic meanings of Mt. Baekdu to the Kim family. Moreover, from the mid-1990s, the North Korean media has used the term “Kim Il-sung Nation” rather than “the Korean nation” when referring to the Korean people as a political community. The term implicitly excludes the South Korean people and the southern half of the Korean peninsula from the Korean nation as a political, cultural and territorial community. The term “Kim Il-sung Nation” is a discursive practice of the North Korean regime which has tried to maintain congruent nationalist and security discourses. Considering the importance of Juche and Seongun in reproducing the statehood of North Korea, I argue that it is very difficult for the state to overcome the dissonances between its geopolitical visions and codes because of the ever-increasing incongruence between the construction of its national homeland and sovereign territory since the end of the Cold War.
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

This study has analyzed the case of North Korea to explicate two things: 1) a weak nation-state’s formulation of its geopolitical visions and codes through the construction of its identity, interests, and territory, and 2) the dissonances between its geopolitical visions and codes. In this chapter, I will summarize the main findings of this study and evaluate my theoretical framework. In addition, I will present the theoretical contributions, the study’s limitations, and policy implications.

7.1 Summary

7.1.1 Main Findings

North Korea has formulated its geopolitical discourses in two ways: geopolitical vision and geopolitical code. It is one of my main findings that North Korea’s geopolitical visions have been relatively stable despite the variations in geopolitical contexts over the four periods of this study. Although geopolitical visions tend to be more resistant to change than codes, they do not remain static. Considering the changing geopolitical context, I argue that North Korea’s geopolitical visions have been forced to be stable by the North Korean state. Indeed, in order to maintain the stability of geopolitical visions, the North Korean state has consistently used the media to construct its self-identity and the negative identities of
neighboring states as “Others.” In addition, North Korea has consistently constructed the entire Korean peninsula as its national homeland. Nevertheless, North Korea’s identity is not an essential attribute of the state as a geopolitical agent or subject, but is socially constructed, historically contingent, and contested.

Another key finding is that North Korea’s geopolitical codes have been formulated through the mapping of enemies and allies and the related territorial strategies. As a weak state in Northeast Asia, North Korea has had to consider the geopolitical codes of neighboring states in formulating its own codes. North Korea’s geopolitical codes have been very dynamic in order to conform to the changing geopolitical context. Although the 1950s witnessed a clear message in the mapping of enemies and allies, the 2000s witnessed a very ambiguous mapping. In addition, North Korea’s construction of its sovereign territory transformed from the entire Korean peninsula to the northern part of the peninsula after the end of the Cold War.

The third key finding of my study is that the dissonances between the geopolitical visions and codes have increased, especially since the end of the Cold War. Geopolitical visions are linked with the codes in that interests have been defined by identity discourses. Confronting the dissonances, the North Korean state has maintained consistency in the construction of identity and interest through the development of ideologies. These ideologies were developed in order to expand the parameters of North Korea’s geopolitical agency. By
making use of the nationalist and security discourses of *Juche* (Self-reliance) and *Seongun* (Military-first) North Korea has succeeded in reproducing its statehood.

However, in the process of reproducing its statehood North Korea has had to confront the intractable incongruence between geopolitical codes and visions in the construction of its territory. Considering the importance of the construction of territory for the maintenance of statehood, if the North Korean state cannot resolve the incongruence between the construction of its national homeland and sovereign territory, the consistency of the discourses will be so damaged as to risk the negation of statehood.

### 7.1.2 Evaluation of the Theoretical Framework

I have attempted to provide a theoretical framework to explicate weak nation-states’ security and foreign policies beyond the overly power-centered perspectives of both classical (material power) and critical geopolitics (ideational power). The framework focuses on the relationship between geopolitical visions and codes and the construction of territory in the process of weak nation-states’ maintenance of their identities and interests. The assumption is that such constructions are intended to expand the parameters for the states’ geopolitical agency.

In Chapter 3, I presented three components of the framework: the geopolitical agency of a weak nation-state within geopolitical structures as the vertical component; the
As a result of this study, it can be argued that this framework demonstrated the need for a combination of the three components for the explication of a weak state’s geopolitical
discourses. This study has illustrated that the geopolitical agency of a weak nation-state was not driven by its strategic geographical location, but from the imperatives defined by its geopolitical discourses. Furthermore, this study has demonstrated the importance of the territorial construction of identity and interest by elucidating that the dissonances between geopolitical visions and codes of a weak nation-state stemmed from the incongruence between the construction of its national homeland and sovereign territory.

It can be argued that this study has provided an alternative framework for the investigation of weak nation-states’ foreign and security policies beyond overly power-centered perspectives. In particular, this framework enables us to understand how the geopolitical agency of a weak nation-state in constructing its identity and interests and the geopolitical agency of a weak nation-state in its foreign and security policy have an influence on each other. For example, Juche (Self-reliance) and Seongun (Military-first) influenced North Korea’s development of its nuclear weapons as a means to prevent military subordination to a foreign yoke, and the development of nuclear weapons constructed North Korea’s national identity and state interests in an anti-hegemonic or anti-imperialistic way.

7.2 Theoretical Contributions and Limitations

I have attempted to contribute to the knowledge of the geopolitics of weak nation-states in three aspects. First, through the application of the concept of geopolitical agency, I
attempted to present how the formulation of geopolitical discourse enabled weak states in the international arena. Second, by focusing on the relationship between geopolitical visions and codes, I attempted to illuminate the situation a weak state confronts in the process of constructing its identity and interests to expand the parameters of its geopolitical agency. Third, I identified the importance of the construction of territory in formulating geopolitical discourses. Nevertheless, for more abundant implications in studying a weak nation-state’s geopolitical discourses, future research needs to recognize the limitations of this study. Particularly, studies of neighboring states’ geopolitical discourses in interaction with the weak state, and comparative studies of weak nation-states, would provide more general results.

7.2.1 Geopolitical Agency of a Weak Nation-state

It is my critique that both classical and critical geopolitics have not provided an adequate geopolitical approach to the foreign and security policies of weak nation-states. In classical and critical geopolitics the prevailing view regarding the characteristic of weak states is their relative inability to conduct independent foreign policies and construct their own identity and interests due to the constraints imposed by geopolitical structures. In order to study weak states’ foreign policies more deeply, and thereby explain international politics more precisely, I argue that it is necessary to examine a weak states’ geopolitical agency.
Geopolitical agency, the ability to interpret and make choices regarding not only foreign policies but also identity and interests, is a useful concept in illuminating how weak states constructed their identities and interests. Of course, geopolitical structures largely defined by major powers often impose coercive hierarchies on a weak state’s geopolitical agency. However, this does not mean a weak state is unable to make choices in the construction of identity and interests and its foreign policy. Rather, in a historically contingent geopolitical context, weak states can have considerable influence on the foreign policies of more powerful neighboring states. In other words, like major powers, it can be argued that weak states are also able to play a role in international politics by constructing their own identity and interests and conducting independent foreign policies.

North Korea’s geopolitical discourses illustrate the geopolitical agency of a weak state in a geopolitical context. For North Korea as a relatively weak nation-state in Northeast Asia, the geopolitical structures were largely unfavorable in expanding the parameters for its geopolitical agency. For example, North Korea had to get permission from the Soviet Union and China to initiate the Korean War under the hierarchy of geopolitical codes in the region (Goncharov et al. 1993). However, North Korea has influenced the geopolitical regional order of Northeast Asia by constructing its identity and interests. In a geographically deterministic manner, many commentators pointed out the fact that North Korea has a strategic geographical location in the region which accounts for its behavior. According to
my examination, however, North Korea’s geopolitical agency is not driven by its strategic geographical location but by the geopolitical discourses based on the construction of its territory. In this sense, I argue that it is necessary to examine the geopolitical discourses of weak nation-states in order to illuminate their geopolitical agency.

7.2.2 The Relationship between Geopolitical Visions and Codes

For IR scholars, it is customary to view geopolitics as a specific form of the realist approach which stresses the geographical characteristics of the state in order to explain its interest in entering certain international relations in a certain way (Mamadouh and Dijkink 2006: 353). In contrast, for scholars of critical geopolitics, the aim of geopolitical research is to problematize the fusion of geographical knowledge and power by deconstructing how geopolitical discourses make use of geographical knowledge to naturalize power. For political geographers, however, geopolitics can include both a realist and constructivist approach.

It is my contention that the examination of the relationship between geopolitical visions and codes can contribute to integrating the realist and constructivist perspectives. To understand a weak nation-state’s foreign and security policy it is important to focus on the relationship between geopolitical visions and codes, especially the dissonances between the construction of national homeland and sovereign territory. Hence, the dissonances between
geopolitical visions and codes need to be a central theme in the study of all weak states’ geopolitical discourses and foreign policies. In order to maintain the legitimacy of their political regimes, weak states have to make more efforts to lessen the dissonances than major powers. Particularly for a weak nation-state depending on identity discourses for its legitimacy the dissonances can significantly impair its statehood.

As I examined in the previous chapters, although the North Korean state had to consider the stronger neighboring states’ geopolitical codes as a given geopolitical structure, the state simultaneously constructed its identity and interests through ideologies to naturalize its power by making use of the very same geopolitical structure. The North Korean state has developed its ideologies in order to manage the dissonances between its geopolitical visions and codes by maintaining consistency in the construction of its identity and interests. Particularly, because its statehood has been very problematic in the geopolitical context, North Korea was more sensitive to consistency in the construction of its identity and interests. That is, the existence of an alternative political regime (South Korea) on the national homeland (the Korean peninsula) continuously eroded the statehood of North Korea.

In the process of constructing its identity and interests, the North Korean state tried to maintain its consistency and legitimacy through the development of ideologies. Through the ideologies of Juche and Seongun, North Korean leaders attempted to expand the parameters of their geopolitical agency. The nationalism and security discourses of the ideologies
provided the North Korean state with justification for its geopolitical agency and thereby reinforced its statehood. In the post-Cold War era, North Korea’s antinomic foreign and security policy, such as nuclear development and the participation in the Six-party Talks, illustrated the dissonances between its stable geopolitical visions and dynamic geopolitical codes.

Although their geopolitical contexts may differ, weak states have to make more effort than major powers to manage the dissonances between their geopolitical visions and codes. In this vein, it can be argued that understanding the relationship between the geopolitical visions and codes of weak states will contribute to the study of weak states’ foreign and security policies.

7.2.3 The Construction of Territory within Geopolitical Discourses

Most theories identify territory as a basic element of the state. More than any other institution, the modern state exploits territoriality in its foreign policy through the principle of sovereignty (Paasi 2003). What should be noted is that territory has been socially constructed through territorial-based narratives of identity and interest. Particularly for weak states, the construction of territory is crucial since their geopolitical discourses are often based on the threats to their territories from stronger states. In order to explicate weak states’ foreign and security policies, I have argued that the construction of territory is a constituent element in
formulating their geopolitical visions and codes. Of course, the construction of territory is also important in formulating major powers’ geopolitical visions and codes, but their construction of territory can be characterized as “extraterritoriality” (Flint 2001; 2004). In the study of geopolitics, however, the importance of the construction of territory in the formulation of geopolitical discourses has been neglected.

In order to address this omission I have attempted to illustrate North Korea’s territorial strategies for the construction of its identity and interests. In the relationship between geopolitical visions and codes, the connection between the construction of the national homeland and sovereign territory is very important. In order to construct its national identity, the North Korean state has tried to keep its geopolitical visions stable through territorial strategies in spite of the changing geopolitical context. In contrast the North Korean state has tried to dynamically change its geopolitical codes for its interests. Therefore, the North Korean state came to confront the dissonances between its geopolitical visions and codes. Even though the state tried to expand the parameters of its geopolitical agency and reproduce its statehood, the dissonances were intractable because the geopolitical visions and codes were based on the construction of territory. In this vein, I have argued that the social construction of territory is crucial in the survival of the North Korean state.

In sum, I have attempted to show that a weak state’s construction of territory through territorial strategies is a constituent element in formulating geopolitical visions and codes. I
believe that this study on the construction of territory contributes to explicating weak states’ foreign and security policies.

7.2.4 Limitations and Future Research

I have attempted to demonstrate how North Korea’s geopolitical discourses have been formulated in the process of constructing its identity and interests in territorial terms, focusing on the relationship between its geopolitical visions and codes. However, this study has some limitations in that North Korea’s geopolitical discourses are influenced by those of the neighboring states in Northeast Asia. Future research needs to shed light on the neighboring states’ geopolitical discourses related to North Korea and other weak states’ geopolitical discourses with a comparative method.

First, a study of neighboring states’ geopolitical discourses on their policies toward North Korea will give a more abundant understanding of North Korea’s geopolitical discourses. Above all, a study of South Korea’s geopolitical discourses is crucial as it shares Korean national identity while it competes with the North over the legitimacy of the state. A study of the geopolitical discourses of the US toward North Korea is necessary in that the US has been regarded as a primary enemy by North Korea. Studies of the geopolitical discourses of China, Japan, and Russia toward North Korea are also important in that the three states had major influences on the Korean territory and history.
Second, comparative studies will provide a more general framework for the study of weak states’ geopolitical discourses. North Korea is one of the best cases in illustrating a weak state’s geopolitical agency and the conflation of the nation and the state in that it is a divided nation-state neighbored by five more powerful states. Yet, in order to establish a more general framework there is a need to research the geopolitical discourses of other weak states that have different geopolitical cultures. In particular, the studies on the geopolitical discourses of so-called “rogue states” will be helpful in designing more comprehensive and longer-term policies for the US toward such states.

Finally, there is a need to adopt more systematic methods with primary data sources without censorship, such as the results of surveys or interviews. Particularly, because the North Korean media is run and strictly censored by their government, it seems difficult to investigate North Korea’s geopolitical culture. Because North Korea is one of the most closed societies, it is very difficult to acquire primary data without censorship. Nevertheless, as the domestic control of the North Korean state has been weakened, especially since the great famine in the mid-1990s, it has become possible to acquire primary data and use systematic methods. For example, as defectors are continuously increasing (now over 23,000 in total) it may become possible to research the geopolitical perceptions of the North Korean elites and populace through interviews with North Korean defectors without the censorship of the North Korean government.
7.3 Policy Implications

After the death of Kim Il-sung and the fall of the communist bloc, most watchers of North Korea in Western countries, including South Korea, predicted the collapse of North Korea within a few years (Park 2002: 2). However, North Korea still survives in spite of its economic difficulties and even after the death of Kim Jong-il in 2011. The policies of the neighboring states toward North Korea need to be based on an in-depth understanding of North Korea’s geopolitical discourses since the state depends on ideology rather than material prosperity for its survival. Thus, policy makers of neighboring states should focus on the dissonances between North Korea’s geopolitical visions and codes. I will present three policy implications of my study.

7.3.1 A Nuclear Power or a Nuclear Card?

Is North Korea’s nuclear program a bargaining chip for negotiation or a means to become a nuclear power? One of the most critical questions is whether North Korea is determined to become a nuclear power at all costs or if the regime simply uses the nuclear program as a card for negotiation. If considering North Korea’s geopolitical visions, the former is the case since the nuclear program is not only the means for nuclear deterrence as a construction of interest, but also the representations of national dignity as a construction of...
identity. In contrast, if considering North Korea’s geopolitical codes, the latter is the case since the possession of nuclear weapons impedes the achievement of the state’s interests by derailing the improvement of relations with neighboring states, including the US.

Thus, there is a need to focus on the relationship between North Korea’s geopolitical visions and codes. The issue of whether the nuclear weapons program is a negotiation card or a step toward becoming a nuclear power is not appropriate in that North Korea’s foreign and security policy is influenced by both its geopolitical visions and codes. The purpose of nuclear weapons development is the survival of the North Korean political regime. Depending on the changing geopolitical context, the nuclear weapons program can be either helpful or harmful to the survival of the political regime. If North Korea interprets the program as helpful to its survival, North Korea will not abandon it. Alternatively, if it is seen as a burden, North Korea will be willing to use it as leverage for negotiation. What are most important at this point are the dissonances between North Korea’s geopolitical visions and codes. Since the end of the Cold War, the dissonances in the relationship have increased. In particular, the necessity to improve relations with the US increased in the post-Cold War era, but North Korea’s anti-imperialism or anti-Americanism has been strengthened. Therefore, North Korea is in a dilemma in relation to whether it will use its nuclear program as a bargaining chip or as a means to become a nuclear power.
Policy-makers in neighboring states need to prevent North Korea from deciding to become a nuclear power. It will be difficult for neighboring states to prevent North Korea from completely abandoning its ambition of becoming a nuclear power. However, by inducing North Korea to weaken the construction of its identity and interests through the nuclear weapons program, neighboring states will be able to at least postpone North Korea’s progress becoming a nuclear power. The nuclear weapons program is a main means of the construction of North Korea’s identity and interests. If North Korean leaders think that negotiations are helpful to the survival of their political regime, they will retain the ambition of becoming a nuclear power and consider the usage of the nuclear card for negotiations.

7.3.2 Engagement Policy or Containment Policy?

Although many scholars have rejected an engagement-containment dichotomy (Litwak 2000; George 1993), it can be said that the approach to North Korea by the Clinton Administration was an engagement policy and that of the George W. Bush Administration was a containment policy. Although both policies toward North Korea gave rise to a substantial amount of political debates (at least in the US and South Korea), it is hard to say that they produced significant results for the resolution of the North Korean nuclear problem.

It can be argued that an engagement policy toward North Korea emphasizes the dynamism of North Korea’s geopolitical codes. In contrast, a containment policy toward
North Korea can be said to put stress on the stability of North Korea’s geopolitical visions.

Given that North Korea’s behaviors are influenced not only by its geopolitical codes but also by its geopolitical visions, neither policy will be effective in changing North Korea’s behaviors. Nevertheless, neighboring states have utilized tangible measures such as economic compensations or sanctions in an attempt to change North Korea’s behaviors.

In order to resolve the North Korean nuclear problem, therefore, neighboring states need to adopt a cultural approach to North Korea in conjunction with tangible measures. However, Kim Jong-un, the new North Korean supreme leader, is likely to follow his father’s geopolitical discourses at least for the time being. Moreover, because of the short succession period it will likely be difficult for him to change the ideological mechanisms for the construction of North Korea’s identity in a short period of time. Yet, the new North Korean supreme leader has a greater imperative to make up for his weaker leadership than his predecessors by improving relations with neighboring states.

Thus, neighboring states need to try to change North Korea’s geopolitical codes, designing a longer-lasting cultural approach with which North Korea can change its geopolitical visions under its new leadership. For instance, neighboring states can adopt a two-track strategy, through which the governments of neighboring countries focus on the change in North Korea’s geopolitical codes, while the politically neutral committees of neighboring countries cooperate in the change of North Korea’s geopolitical visions. The
longer-lasting cultural approach should aim to resolve the “North Korea problem” rather than the nuclear problem itself in that its geopolitical visions have been a basis of the “North Korea problem” as well as the nuclear problem.

7.3.3 The North Korean Nuclear Problem or the “North Korea problem”?

In fact, the North Korean nuclear problem is a part of the “North Korea problem.” The fundamental cause of North Korea’s nuclear development is that the state is isolated from the international community. North Korea has created a radical system that is legitimized nearly exclusively on the grounds of ideology and not material prosperity. This means that North Korea has aimed for legitimacy by placing priority on the construction of its national identity and state interests with an international focus rather than through the provision of tangible economic development and social welfare. By neglecting to understand North Korea’s construction of its identity and interests, however, neighboring states have disregarded the “North Korea problem.” The suspension of Six-party Talks for the last few years shows the limitations of the neighboring states’ narrow approach. To North Korea, the abandonment of its nuclear weapons means that it would have to transform not only its geopolitical codes but also its geopolitical visions.

In order to resolve the “North Korea problem,” including the nuclear problem, neighboring states should provide North Korea with a geopolitical context in which the North
can change its geopolitical visions and codes. For a change in North Korea’s geopolitical visions, it is important to devise a future-oriented plan for the most desirable governance on the Korean peninsula through a longer-lasting cultural and cooperative approach. Because South Korea shares a considerable part of North Korea’s geopolitical visions the South can play a crucial role in changing the North’s national identity. The governance should be based not on the sovereign territory but on the national homeland to induce a consensus between the two Koreas. To enable a change of North Korea’s geopolitical codes, neighboring states need to visualize the future of a Northeast Asian geopolitical order in which a desirable North Korea exists with the neighboring states. Potential and future cooperation between the US and China is especially important in this respect.

Of course, it is not easy for neighboring states to change North Korea’s geopolitical visions and codes. However, the difficulty does not mean that the cultural approach is not viable. The important things for the viability of these policy suggestions are a change in the viewpoint of neighboring states toward the “North Korea problem” and positive cooperation among neighboring states in order to provide North Korea with a favorable geopolitical context within which it may change its geopolitical discourses. If neighboring states share the recognition that North Korea’s geopolitical agency stems from its geopolitical discourses, it would be possible for the neighboring states to change their view of the ”North Korea problem” and cooperate with each other for positive change.
7.4 Concluding Remarks

In the process of expanding the parameters of its geopolitical agency North Korea has confronted the dissonances between its geopolitical visions and codes. In particular, the incongruence between the construction of national homeland and sovereign territory has impeded the territorial legitimation of the North Korean state. However, North Korea’s elites and populace seem to believe that their geopolitical context is too unfavorable to change their geopolitical visions and codes.

Thus, before the collapse of the North Korean political regime gives rise to a serious geopolitical disorder in the region, neighboring states need to provide the North Korean state with a favorable geopolitical context by creating a new geopolitical regional order. In fact, Northeast Asia has been regarded as the only region in which the Cold War geopolitical order still remains (Kim and Jones 2007). Considering the intractable incongruence between North Korea’s construction of its national homeland and sovereign territory it is time for the neighboring states to create a new geopolitical regional order. What is important here is that the new geopolitical order should be oriented toward the concept of “integrative sovereignty” rather than “classic sovereignty” (Agnew 2005). Although it is not easy to develop an integrative regional community, such as the European Union, in Northeast Asia, it does not
seem impossible to establish a multilateral framework to deal with the "North Korea problem."
REFERENCES


APPENDIX: NORTH KOREAN DATA SOURCES

Political Leaders’ Speeches and Writings and Government Statements


- North Korean Government statements: KCNA (Korean Central News Agency: http://www.kcna.co.jp)

Daily Newspapers


- The organ of North Korean Government (*Minju Joseon*); Pyongyang Times (English edition: weekly)

- The pro-DPRK Korean Newspaper in Japan (*Joseon Sinbo*)


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