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Gendered rhetoric in North Korea's international relations (1946–2011)

Amanda Kelly Anderson
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**UNIVERSITY OF
WOLLONGONG**



Gendered Rhetoric in North Korea's International Relations (1946–2011)

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

from the University of Wollongong by

Amanda Kelly Anderson

School of Humanities and Social Inquiry
Faculty of Law, Humanities and the Arts

July 2015

Certification

I, Amanda K. Anderson, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the School of Humanities and Social Inquiry Faculty of Law, Humanities and the Arts, University of Wollongong, is my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Amanda K. Anderson

July 2015

Abstract

In this thesis, I focus on North Korea's communications with the outside world through the medium of the English-language, with a particular focus on the workings of gender in North Korea's international relations. First, I focus on the North Korean government's communications in the official English-language magazine, *Women of Korea* between 1964 and 1992. The magazine was modelled after the Korean-language equivalent *Chosŏn Yŏsŏng* (Korean Women). The visual images and text in the English version of the magazine portray a positive image of gender equality in North Korea to the world. However, close reading of *Women of Korea* reveals that the North Korea government operates according to gendered assumptions about the roles of men and women in society. North Korean women are seen to be the primary carers of children and responsible for the majority of domestic chores while men's role is to work outside the home to earn money. Additionally, visual images and text in the magazine reveal that women are mobilised to work outside the home in occupations seen to be "suitable" to their characteristics. While publications like *Women of Korea* cannot be taken at face value as a literal and empirical portrait of the situation of women in North Korea, they can be analysed for insight into the government's official views of the roles performed by men and women. I then focus on communications between the North Korea and the United Nations between 2000 and 2011. Since the admission of the country into the United Nations in 1991, the North Korean government has communicated formally with the international community about the human rights of women and other vulnerable groups. The United Nations has advocated for the North Korean government to accede to and ratify various conventions and to make changes to its legal system to improve the human rights of all North Korean people. In this thesis, I analyse reports exchanged between the North Korea and the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women ("CEDAW Committee") between 2001 and 2005. Although the relationship between North Korea and the CEDAW Committee is limited, the exchange of reports gives those outside North Korea an insight into the government's thinking about the roles men and women perform in society and the home. While North Korea has taken the initial step in signing and ratifying United Nations conventions it does not mean that the government has always followed, implemented, or made legal changes to existing state laws to ensure requirements within the conventions are met. Consequently, non-governmental organisations charge that the North Korean government has not adequately addressed issues such as gender equality and discrimination against women in all forms. Instead, presenting a positive picture

of gender relations and gender equality is one of the North Korean government's strategies in international relations. I argue in this thesis that the communication between North Korea and the United Nations and in its official English-language magazine, *Women of Korea*, reveals the North Korean government's gendered ideologies to the international community.

Acknowledgments

In submitting this thesis, I would like to acknowledge the help that I have received over a number of years from various people since I first began this study. First, I would like to acknowledge the support of my supervisor Professor Vera Mackie, who has offered me great encouragement and guidance throughout my research project. She has expertly guided me through my PhD and has been extremely generous in sharing her knowledge and experiences with me when practical advice was needed. I was fortunate to have received a scholarship from the University of Wollongong in support of Professor Mackie's Australian Research Council Future Fellowship project, "From Human Rights to Human Security: Changing Paradigms for Dealing with Inequality in Asia-Pacific Region". Therefore, thank you to Professor Mackie for believing in me and the worth of my research project.

Since 2010, I have attended the Korean Studies Association of Australasia (KSAA) conference or research student workshops each year. Each time I have attended the conferences or workshops I have been encouraged to question what I already know and build upon my established knowledge. These experiences have prepared me to be able to defend my research project in front of Korean specialists and to believe in the true worth of my research. I would like to thank the KSAA members who have offered their time, kind words and encouragement over the years during the KSAA meetings. Finally, I would like to thank KSAA and the Korea Foundation who have generously supported my attendance at the conferences or workshops each year. Without the support of the Korea Foundation for Korean studies in Australia, North Korean studies would not have grown as it has over the last few years.

Next, I would like to acknowledge the funding received from the Faculty of Law, Humanities and the Arts at the University of Wollongong. This allowed me to visit South Korea in 2011 and 2012 to conduct archival research and attend an international law conference to present my research. Both experiences were invaluable.

Many other people have been of great assistance and support during the course of this research project. First, I would like to acknowledge the support of my good friend Josip Matesic and his parents, who have been very generous to me over the last few years and allowed me to stay in their family home. Without their support it would not have been possible to commute between Brisbane and Wollongong to complete this research project.

Lastly, but perhaps most importantly, thank you to my parents who are wonderful, kind and caring people and my inspiration for all I do in life. They have supported me

absolutely throughout this thesis including the arduous task of proof-reading carried out with complete dedication and love by my Dad. Also, a special thanks to my grandmother, brothers and sisters, who have offered their encouragement and support over the course of this thesis. I dedicate this thesis to three special little ladies in my life, my nieces: Mila, Isabella and Amayah, and say to them dream big and work hard and you will be rewarded for your efforts. You will always have my support in your future studies and adventures in life.

Finally, I hope that by making a contribution to the fields of gender studies and North Korean history, I will be able to repay all these influential and helpful people over the years in some small way.

List of Publications

The following publication contains aspects of this research project that were published when the thesis was undertaken.

“North Korea’s representation of gender relations in the magazine *Women of Korea*”,
Korean Studies Association of Australia 7th Biennial Conference, Korean Studies
Association of Australia (KSAA), Sydney, 2011, pp. 14-35.

Preface

In this thesis, the Revised Romanisation system adopted by the Republic of Korea's (South Korea's) Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism in 2000, has been employed. Some exceptions have been made and warrant a mention. Exceptions are made for the names of authors who have published in English and where well-known names of people, places or publications used other forms of romanisation, for example Kim Il Sung or newspaper titles such as the *Chosun Ilbo*. Korean names are written according to the standard usage in Korean with family names preceding given names, except where authors have published in English and family names have been placed last.

On the subject of Chinese romanisation, the Pinyin system is adopted, for example, “Mao Zedong” rather than “Mao Tse-tung”.

This thesis is written using British English. Date order reflects British English usage (day, month, year).

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Acronyms

ARF	Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland
AUD	Australian Dollar
BPA	Beijing Platform for Action
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CEDAW Committee	Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CPPCG	Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide
CRC Committee	Committee on the Rights of the Child
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DMZ	Demilitarised Zone
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IR	International Relations
KINU	Korea Institution of National Unification
KDWU	Korean Democratic Women's Union (Women's Union)
KNA	Korean National Association
KPA	Korean People's Army
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender
NDC	National Defence Commission
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NKHR	Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights
NKwon	North Korean Won
NPT	Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
PDS	Public Distribution System
PoA	Programme of Action

Presidium of SPA	Presidium of Supreme People's Assembly
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
ROK	Republic of Korea, South Korea
SPA	Supreme People's Assembly
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNCOK	United Nations Commission on Korea
UNCURK	United Nations Commission for the Unification and Rehabilitation of Korea
UNDAC	United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNICPD	United Nations International Conference on Population and Development
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNTCOK	United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea
UPR Committee	Committee on the Universal Periodical Review
UPR	Universal Periodical Review
USA	United States of America
USD	United States Dollar
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (Soviet Union)
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation
WPK	Workers' Party of Korea
WPNK	Workers' Party of North Korea

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1. Introduction

Just as a vehicle cannot run smoothly when only one of its wheels is turning, so society cannot make rapid progress based on the role played by the men alone.

Kim Jong Il, 30 April 1975.¹

Introduction

Before the official formation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, North Korea) in 1948, the Provisional People's Committee of North Korea (the so-called interim government) addressed gender equality in Korean society. The leader of the newly-formed North Korean region, Kim Il Sung (1912–1994) is said to have personally promulgated the Law on Equality of the Sexes on 30 July 1946 in response to the oppression of women during the Japanese occupation of the Korean peninsula (1910–1945).² The government expressed the need to address gender equality by embracing women as former victims of human rights violations experienced under colonial rule (Article 7 and Article 9).³ By addressing gender equality in this way the newly-formed government was said to have liberated women from their past experiences, ensuring they were able to leave their homes to participate in the social labour force to build the new North Korean regime.⁴ In the decades after the promulgation of the Law on Equality of the Sexes, the North Korean government established and promoted gender equality in state laws in the name of liberating women from their homes. As we shall see, however, North Korean government policies reveal the government's patriarchal view towards the roles of North Korean men and women, and assumptions that women's primary role is to care for children in the home.

For much of the time from the 1940s to the 1990s, it was difficult to gain a reliable picture of achieving gender equality and gender relations in North Korea, and this is still true

¹ Kim Jong Il (30 April 1975), in "The First Women's Technical School", *Women of Korea*, 4 (124) (1989), p. 28.

² United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), "Consideration of reports submitted by States Parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women", *Initial Report of States Parties: Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, CEDAW/C/PRK/1 (Beijing: thirty-third session, 5 to 22 July 2005), (distributed 11 September 2002), para. 70 and para. 71, p. 11 and para. 52, p. 8.

³ Charles K. Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution, 1945–1950* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 93.

⁴ Jiyoung Song, *Human Rights Discourse in North Korea: Post-colonial, Marxist and Confucian Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 78.

to some extent today. In this thesis, I focus on the North Korean government's communications with the outside world through the medium of the English-language, with a particular focus on the workings of gender in North Korea's international relations. I focus on the communications of the North Korean government in two sets of texts. First, the North Korean government presented one picture through its official English-language magazines, *Women of Korea* and *Korea Today*. *Women of Korea* was largely designed to promote the results of the Communist revolution and the achievement of gender equality in North Korea, similar to the Chinese publication *Women of China* and the Vietnamese publication *Women of Vietnam*.⁵

From 1964 to 1992, the North Korean government disseminated information about North Korean women's lives and experiences through the English-language magazine *Women of Korea*. The magazine was modelled after the Korean-language equivalent *Chosŏn Yŏsŏng* (Korean Women), which was specifically addressed to Korean women.⁶ The visual images and text in the English version of the magazine were intended to portray a positive image of gender equality within the DPRK to the world. Close reading of *Women of Korea*, as we shall see below, reveals that the North Korean government operated according to gendered assumptions about the roles of men and women in society. While women were mobilised into work outside the home, this was in occupations which were seen to be "suitable" to their characteristics.⁷ Further, women were seen to be the primary carers of children and responsible for the majority of domestic chores while men's role was to work outside the home to earn money. Other aspects of North Korean society such as the political and economic goals of the government were portrayed in the magazine *Korea Today*, from 1959 to the present. While publications like *Women of Korea* cannot be taken at face value as a literal and empirical portrait of the situation of women in the DPRK, as an official publication it can be analysed for insight into the North Korean government's views of the roles of men and women in society and the home.

⁵ The Chinese publication *Women of China* is published monthly by the Foreign Language Press in Beijing from 1953 to the present day. The Vietnamese publication *Women of Vietnam* was originally published by the Vietnam Women's Union in Hanoi on a bi-monthly basis from 1958 and in 1963 the magazine was published quarterly. The Chinese and Vietnamese magazines aimed to introduce the lives, experiences and perspectives of Chinese and Vietnamese women to the outside world.

⁶ For further information on the early years of *Chosŏn Yŏsŏng* see Suzy Kim, "Revolutionary Mothers: Women in the North Korean Revolution, 1945–1950", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 52 (4) (2010), pp. 742–767; Suzy Kim, *Everyday Life in the North Korean Revolution, 1945–1950* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2013), pp. 174–203.

⁷ Kim, "Revolutionary Mothers", pp. 742–767.

The second set of texts I analyse are the reports exchanged between the North Korean government and the United Nations (UN) Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (hereafter “CEDAW Committee”) between 2001 and 2005. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) admitted the DPRK to the UN under Resolution 702 on 8 August 1991.⁸ Since the admission of the DPRK into the UN, tension has grown, as the UN has urged the DPRK to take responsibility for human rights violations and the DPRK has often displayed blatant disregard for the human rights institute. The UN has advocated for the DPRK to accede to and ratify various UN conventions and to make changes to its legal system to improve the human rights of the North Korean people.⁹ Pressure has also grown from the international community for the North Korean government to implement the provisions of the UN human rights instruments which it has signed, as well as those it has not yet acceded to. As of mid-2015, the DPRK had acceded to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) in 1984, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) in 1984, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1990, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 2001, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2013.¹⁰ After its admission to the UN, the North Korean government began to communicate formally with the international community about the human rights of women and other vulnerable groups such as children and persons with disabilities.¹¹

⁸ On 17 September 1991, the United Nations General Assembly welcomed the DPRK and Republic of Korea (South Korea) under UNSC Resolution 46/. United Nations Security Council (UNSC), *Admission of New Members to the United Nations*, Resolution 702, S/RES/702 (3001st meeting, 8 August 1991), p. 46; United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), *Admission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea to membership in the United Nations*, Resolution 46/1 (1st plenary meeting, forty-sixth session, 17 September 1991, Agenda Item 20).

⁹ UNGA, *Admission of the DPRK and the ROK*.

¹⁰ The DPRK submitted its initial report to the ICESCR on 14 December 1984, to the ICCPR on 2 April 1984, to the CRC Committee on 13 February 1996, and to the CEDAW Committee 11 September 2002. Although the DPRK signed the CRPD on 3 July 2013 it has not submitted an initial report.

¹¹ United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR), “Report on the mission to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, the Republic of Korea and Japan on the issue of military sexual slavery in wartime”, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, in accordance with Commission on Human Rights resolution 1994/45*, E/CN.4/1996/53/Add.1 (4 January 1996); United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), *Concluding Comments: Democratic People’s Republic of Korea*, CEDAW/C/PRK/CO/1 (Thirty-third session, 5 to 22 July 2005), (distributed 22 July 2005); United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), “List of issues and questions with regard to the consideration of periodic reports: Democratic People’s Republic of Korea”, *Democratic People’s Republic of Korea*, CEDAW/PSWG/2005/II/CRP.1/Add.3 (Beijing: Thirty-third session, 5 to 22 July 2005), (distributed 9 February 2005); United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), “Responses to the list of issues and questions for consideration of the initial report,” *Democratic People’s Republic of Korea*, CEDAW/PSWG/2005/II/CRP.2/Add.3 (Beijing: Thirty-third session, 5 to 22 July

In this thesis, I am interested in the communication between the North Korean government and the CEDAW Committee about women's rights and achieving gender equality in the DPRK. Although the communication between the North Korean government and the CEDAW Committee just spans the years from 2001 to 2005, the exchange of reports gives those outside the DPRK an insight into the government's thinking about the roles of North Korean women and men.¹² Even though the North Korean government has taken the initial step in agreeing to the guidelines set out in CEDAW, it does not mean that the DPRK has always followed, implemented, or made legal changes to existing state laws to ensure requirements in the UN convention are met, as we shall see. Non-governmental organisations charge that the North Korean government has not adequately addressed issues such as gender equality and discrimination against women in all forms (see chapters 3, 7 and 8 below). Instead, presenting a positive picture of gender relations in the DPRK is one of the government's strategies in international relations. I will argue that these texts reveal the North Korean government's gendered ideologies.

As gender issues within a country are shaped by the policies of both the state and its subsidiary organs, as well as the policies of international human rights institutions such as the UN, I frame this thesis within the field of gender and International Relations. Below I outline the use of a gender-sensitive lens in International Relations (IR) and what this means when examining how the North Korean government communicates its views on gender equality to the world.

2005), (distributed 15 April 2005); United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), "Summary Record of the 699th meeting", *Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, CEDAW/C/SR.699 (Thirty-third session, 5 to 22 July 2005), (New York: 18 July 2005 at 10 am), (distributed 9 September 2005); United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), "Summary Record of the 700th meeting", *Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, CEDAW/C/SR.700 (Thirty-third session, 5 to 22 July 2005), (New York: 18 July 2005 at 3pm), (distributed 9 September 2005); United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), "Consideration of Reports submitted by states parties under Article 44 of the Convention", *Concluding Observations: Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, CRC/C/PRK/CO/4 (Fiftieth session, 12-13 January 2009), (distributed 27 March 2009); United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), "Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties under Article 44 of the Convention", *The combined third and fourth reports of States parties due in 2007, Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, CRC/C/PRK/4 (submitted 10 December 2007), (distributed 15 January 2008); United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), "List of issues to be taken up in connection with the consideration of the third and fourth periodic report of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea", *Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child*, CRC/C/PRK/Q/4 (Fiftieth session, 12-13 January 2009), (distributed 20 October 2008); United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), *Written replies by the government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the List of Issues (CRC/C/PRK/Q/4) prepared by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in connection with the consideration of the third and fourth periodic reports of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, CRC/C/PRK/Q/4/Add.1 (Fiftieth session, 12-13 January 2009), (distributed 22 December 2008).

¹² CEDAW, *Initial Report*; CEDAW, "List of issues and questions"; CEDAW, "Responses"; CEDAW, "699th meeting"; CEDAW, "700th meeting"; CEDAW, *Concluding Comments*.

Employing a Gender-Sensitive Lens

While gender studies and feminist theories have long been accommodated in other branches of the social sciences, IR was late to realise the relevance of gender to the discipline.¹³ Together with a range of new perspectives on world politics, including postmodernism, constructivism, critical theory and green politics, gender and IR scholars have contested the power and knowledge of mainstream realists and liberal international relations scholars.¹⁴ This has meant that previous research in the IR discipline has only presented a partial picture and from a masculine perspective.¹⁵ Feminists in IR argue that realism, dominated by elite, white, male practitioners, is a patriarchal discourse that renders women invisible from the high politics of IR.¹⁶ Sandra Whitworth explains that to examine gender within the context of IR is to explore the ways in which knowledge about gender difference is sustained, reproduced and manipulated by institutions such as state policies and laws.¹⁷ It can be said, therefore, that gender is an important dimension of IR as it challenges the conceptual framework which has excluded women from the discipline in the first place.

One of the key contributions of feminist thought to IR has been to draw attention to the necessity for a “deconstruction of gender-biased knowledge claims” and the “reconstruction of gender-sensitive theory”.¹⁸ This has allowed IR scholars, who focus on the inclusion of both men and women, to unsettle the gendered foundation of mainstream thought and to introduce gender into the analysis of key constructions in IR such as the state and sovereignty.¹⁹ Feminist scholars have also encouraged IR to consider perspectives of previously excluded groups, such as women, children, and ethnic and religious minorities.²⁰ These scholars have a common commitment to highlighting and addressing the disadvantages of women and other vulnerable groups within the social and political context and from

¹³ Jill Stean, *Gender and International Relations: Theory, Practice, Policy*, (3rd ed.) (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), p. 1.

¹⁴ Jacqui True, “Feminism”, in Scott Burchill, Andrew Linklater, Richard Devetak, Jack Donnelly, Matthew Paterson, Christian Reus-Smit, Jacqui True, *Theories of International Relations* (Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), p. 213.

¹⁵ Fred Halliday, “Hidden from International Relations: women in the international Arena”, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 17 (3) (1998), p. 420.

¹⁶ Eric M. Blanchard, “Gender, International Relations, and the Development of Feminist Security Theory”, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 28 (4) (2003), p. 1292.

¹⁷ Sandra Whitworth, *Feminism and International Relations* (Hampshire: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1997), p. 4.

¹⁸ V. Spike Peterson, “Feminism and International Relations”, *Gender & History*, 10 (3) (1998), p. 581.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 582.

²⁰ Christine Sylvester, *Feminist Theory and International Relations in Postmodern Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 210.

different cultural and economic backgrounds.²¹ Feminist IR scholars are also concerned with studying the ways in which the practices of state policies and international politics discriminate against women.²² They note, for example, the exclusion of women from foreign policy decision making. In this case feminist scholars point to the “extent to which international politics is such a thoroughly masculinised sphere of activity that women’s voices are considered inauthentic”.²³ For many feminist scholars, the role of gender in IR is not a subset of the discipline but rather something that is intrinsic to every aspect.²⁴ A gender-sensitive lens offers IR scholars a broader series of issues which should be studied as part of the discipline, and this provides a guide to how to address areas of gender-based discrimination.

During the 1980s and 1990s, feminist scholars contributed to IR by highlighting what they saw as the masculine bias of core assumptions and concepts of the discipline.²⁵ Three important contributions were Cynthia Enloe’s *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (1989), J. Ann Tickner’s *Gender in International Relations* (1992) and Jan Jindy Pettman’s *Worlding Women: A Feminist International Politics* (1996).²⁶ These authors demonstrated how the theories and practices of IR reflected and respected the experiences of men and masculine qualities over the experiences of both genders. IR could then shift away from a singular focus on interstate relations toward a comprehensive analysis of transnational actors and structures and their transformations in global politics.²⁷ Until these interventions, IR used abstract categories such as “the state” and “the system”, which effectively removed people as agents embedded in social and historical contexts from theories in IR. In contrast, when feminist scholars examine such themes as war, peace, democracy, governance, economics, development, justice, and security they always keep in mind the concept of gender.²⁸ Consequently, one of the first engagements by feminist scholars in IR was to question realism’s “rational man” as a basis of international life, a

²¹ Katrina Lee-Koo, “Feminism”, in Richard Devetak, Anthony Burke and Jim George (eds), *An Introduction to International Relations: Australian Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 77.

²² Ibid., p. 75.

²³ J. Ann Tickner, *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), p. 4.

²⁴ Lee-Koo, “Feminism”, p. 85.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 77.

²⁶ Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (California: University of California Press, 1989); Jan Jindy Pettman, *Worlding Women: A Feminist International Politics* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1996); Tickner, *Gender in International Relations*.

²⁷ Blanchard, “Gender, International Relations”, p. 1292.

²⁸ Lee-Koo, “Feminism”, p. 76.

theory which modelled human nature based upon aggression, competitive and warlike mannerisms and did not speak for many women or indeed most men.²⁹

Gender and IR is a broad and diverse field of study and is often interdisciplinary. Studying gender includes examining stories, locations, and rules of behaviour in connection with other social categories such as class, ethnic background, age, religion, region and so on.³⁰ Feminist scholars in IR often take a bottom-up approach, which brings the lives of ordinary women into focus and works towards understanding IR not as abstract practices but as something that affects and is affected by the lives of people.³¹ By exploring the ideas about gender difference which inform both domestic and international activities, one discovers the impact these ideas have on cultural practices and the roles of men and women.³² This point is significant in the North Korean context, as the government's ideas about gender roles have shaped state policies and the DPRK's attitude towards men and women in the home as well as the state's relationships with neighbouring countries. By framing this research project within the field of Gender and International Relations, I consider how the roles of men and women are represented in official North Korean communication with the world, particularly when it comes to the portrayal of gender equality in North Korean society.

Gender and Sexuality

At this point, it is important to discuss the meaning of gender and sexuality as standalone terms and then within the context of IR. First, we need to note the term gender and the differences between biological sex and socially constructed gender,³³ found in most societies including the DPRK. In the mid-twentieth century feminist scholars conceived the term gender in order to capture the difference between biological sex and socially and culturally constructed differences.³⁴ While the term sex refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women, gender refers to the socially-constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a society considers appropriate to men and women.³⁵ Feminist scholars use the terminology of gender to argue against the "biology is destiny"

²⁹ Ibid., p. 82.

³⁰ Sylvester, *Feminist Theory*, p. 9.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 53.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ World Health Organisation (WHO), "What do we mean by 'sex' and 'gender'?", <http://www.who.int/gender/whatisgender/en/> (accessed 29 September 2014).

line.³⁶ As many people think of sexuality as private, individual and biological, it is also a highly political and policy-related issue, as shown by the current mobilising around sexuality worldwide.³⁷ In 2002, the World Health Organisation (WHO) provided a working definition of sexuality as:

a central aspect of being human throughout life [which] encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relationships.³⁸

While sexuality can include all of these dimensions, not all of them are always experienced or expressed. Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical, religious and spiritual factors.³⁹ Unsurprisingly, discussion of sexual rights in the women's rights movement internationally and in the field of gender and development has given significant attention to such issues as sexual violence against women and the trafficking of women. Breaking the silence and mobilising to prevent sexual violence was a major achievement of the women's rights movement.

Gender identities develop in gendered societies, where the pressure to adopt the "correct" and "corresponding" gender according to one's biological sex is strong.⁴⁰ While men are socialised to identify with masculine traits which emphasise autonomy, male superiority, fraternity, strength, public protector roles and ultimately the bearing of arms, women are taught to defer, as wives and daughters, to the protection and stronger will of men, while providing the private emotional, economic and social support systems for men's activities.⁴¹ Gender identity is similar to other social identities in that it relates to physical embodiment, and is mediated by people's relative location within their social environment

³⁶ Emily Esplen and Susie Jolly, *Gender and Sex* (Brighton: Bridge (gender and development) Institute of Development Studies University of Sussex, 2006), p. 2.

³⁷ Pinar Ikkaracan and Susie Jolly, *Gender and Sexuality: Overview Report* (Brighton: Bridge: Development and Gender, 2007), p. 8.

³⁸ World Health Organisation (WHO), *Defining sexual health: Report of a technical consultation on sexual health* (Geneva: 28–31 January 2002, released 2006), p. 5.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Joy L. Johnson and Robin Repta, "Sex and Gender: Beyond the Binaries" in John L. Oliffe and Lorraine Greaves (eds), *Designing and Conducting Gender, Sex and Health Research* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Inc., 2012), p. 25.

⁴¹ Ibid.

and how they are judged by others, but ultimately is concerned with how people view themselves with respect to gender.⁴² While individuals' inner feelings influence how they present themselves as a man, a woman, or another gender, feminist scholars argue that the state manipulates gender identities for its own internal unity and external legitimacy.⁴³ In the context of the DPRK, despite the promulgation of the Law on Equality of the Sexes in 1946, the government has directed men and women into stereotypical roles based on the assumption that the home is a space for women and men are to work outside. This point is made clearer in later chapters of the thesis.

Gender Roles

Assumptions by governments (including the North Korean state), about appropriate gender roles in society, the labour force, and what is considered masculine or feminine, all inform the practices of men and women. Practices do not take place independently but exist within particular historical and material conditions and across different cultures.⁴⁴ Socially-constructed gender roles are considered to be hierarchical and characterised as a male-advantaged gender hierarchy by social constructionists.⁴⁵ Feminist scholars argue that it is not simply the case that there are differences between the social construction of masculinity and femininity. There is an unequal relationship between masculinity and its associated characteristics of being strong, aggressive, and dominant and feminine characteristics of being weak, conciliatory, irrational, and peaceable. Further, femininity is politically, economically, and socially devalued compared to masculinity.⁴⁶

The concept of gender is also located in an analysis of social relations, and refers to the real conditions and particular understandings about relationships between men and women in society.⁴⁷ Gender roles can be described as social norms, or rules and standards that dictate different interests, responsibilities, opportunities, limitations, and behaviours for men and women.⁴⁸ Gender roles are social and behavioural norms that are considered appropriate for a man or a woman in a social or interpersonal relationship. They impact

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ True, "Feminism", p. 224.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 67.

⁴⁵ W. Wood and A. H. Eagly, "A cross-cultural analysis of the behavior of women and men: Implications for the origins of sex difference", *Psychological Bulletin*, 128 (2002), pp. 699–727.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ WHO, "What do we mean".

⁴⁸ Joy L. Johnson, Lorraine Greaves and Robin Repta, *Better science with sex and gender: A primer for health research* (Vancouver: Women's Health Research Network, 2007), pp. 5, 6; James R. Mahalik, Benjamin D. Locke, Larry H. Ludlow, Matthew A. Diemer, Ryan P. J. Scott, Michael Gottfried, Gary Freitas, "Development of the conformity to masculine norms inventory", *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 4 (1) (2003), pp. 3–25.

aspects of daily life from choice of clothing to occupation. While gender roles differ according to the specific cultural-historical context,⁴⁹ in every culture the socialised difference between girls and boys begins during early childhood.⁵⁰ From middle childhood and adolescence, children are taught to behave according to customary gender roles. The roles of women and girls encompass a range of responsibilities associated with taking care of the home, nurturing and caring for the family, performing biological reproductive functions and involvement in society and productive labour. In many societies, men and boys contribute to household security through involvement in productive labour and public participation and, for men, in ensuring the education of male children.⁵¹ Through education systems and the modelling of female relatives, female children are taught to perform caring and nurturing roles.⁵² Gender roles shape and constrain individuals' experiences because men and women are treated differently and have diverse life trajectories because of their ascribed roles and the degree to which they conform to these expectations.⁵³

Gender is both produced and shaped by institutions such as the media, religion, and educational, medical, and other political and social systems, creating a societal gender structure that is deeply entrenched and rarely questioned but hugely influential.⁵⁴ Institutionalised gender refers to the ways that gender is rooted in and expressed through these large social systems, through the different responses, values, expectations, roles, and responsibilities given to individuals and groups according to gender.⁵⁵ Individuals develop their sense of gender in the face of strong messages about the correct gender role for their perceived body.⁵⁶ While individuals can accept or resist the stereotyping of men and women to certain roles in their own presentation of self, gender roles are a powerful means of social organisation.⁵⁷

From as early as the eighteenth century in Europe, the concept of women's rights developed in response to claims to the rights to bodily integrity and autonomy, to the vote (suffrage), to hold public office, to work, to fair wages or equal pay, to own property, to access education and healthcare, and to have marital or parental rights. Next, I discuss the

⁴⁹ Eleanor Emmons Maccoby, *The Development of Sex Differences* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966), pp. 25–55.

⁵⁰ United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), *Analysis of the Situation of Children and Women in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea* (Thailand: Keen Publishing Co Ltd, 2006), p. 39.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Johnson and Repta, "Sex and Gender", p. 23.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 21.

⁵⁵ Johnson, Greaves and Repta, *Better science*, p. 7.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

contemporary understanding of women's rights and its development alongside the United Nations' espousal of human rights in the period immediately after the Second World War (1939–1945).

The Women's Rights Movement

Over the course of the evolution of the human rights system, feminists argued for an explicit inclusion of women in UN human rights instruments.⁵⁸ The rights of women differ from broader notions of human rights through claims of an inherent historical and traditional bias against the exercise of rights by women and girls in favour of men and boys.⁵⁹ Women's rights were explicitly mentioned in the founding Charter of the UN in 1945. In 1947, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women was established. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in December 1948. The UN designated the year 1975 as International Women's Year, extending it to International Women's Decade from 1976 to 1985.

In 1979, the UN first applied international rights frameworks to gender with the establishment of CEDAW. The Convention was one of the major achievements of the United Nations Women's Decade (1976–1985).⁶⁰ While often criticised for its weak language, at the very least the Convention articulates an international standard for what is meant by "equality" between men and women, grants formal rights to women, and also promotes equality of access and opportunity (see Appendix 1).⁶¹ CEDAW also recognises that rights can be meaningless unless attention is paid to the economic, social and cultural context in which they are claimed.⁶² The Convention calls for changes to stereotypical gender roles where these are deemed to perpetuate inequality and discrimination. CEDAW was slow to obtain signatories and is notable for the large number of reservations made by state members. Many

⁵⁸ Stean, *Gender and International Relations*, p. 1.

⁵⁹ J. Richard Udry, "The Nature of Gender", *Demography*, 31(4) (1994), pp. 561–573; David Haig, "The Inexorable Rise of Gender and the Decline of Sex: Social Change in Academic Titles, 1945–2001", *Archives of Sexual Behaviour*, 33 (2) (2004), pp. 87–96; Ann-Maree Nobelius and Jo Wainer, "Gender and Medicine: a conceptual guide for medical educators" (Clayton: School of Rural Health, Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, Monash University, 2004); WHO, "What do we mean".

⁶⁰ As the international feminist movement began to gain momentum during the 1970s, the UNGA declared 1975 as International Women's Year and organised the First World Conference on Women in Mexico City during the same year. Five years after the Mexico City Conference, a Second World Conference on Women was held in Copenhagen in 1980. Then in 1985, the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, was held convened in Nairobi. The Fourth World Conference on Women was held in Beijing in 1995. United Nations (UN), *Global Issues: Women*, <http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/women/> (accessed 22 November 2014).

⁶¹ Stean, *Gender and International Relations*, p. 74.

⁶² Ibid.

governments worldwide, however, including the DPRK in 2001, have now signed, ratified or acceded to CEDAW.⁶³

In the 1980s and 1990s, there was concerted lobbying for the inclusion of sexuality in UN human rights instruments.⁶⁴ The first international instrument of human rights to make an explicit reference to sexuality was the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights was created by this Vienna Declaration and endorsed by the UNGA under Resolution 48/121.⁶⁵ Due to the intensive lobbying efforts of a global group of feminist activists, the Vienna Declaration called on states “to eliminate gender based violence and all forms of sexual harassment and exploitation” (paragraph 18), including trafficking in women, rape as a weapon of war, sexual slavery, and forced pregnancy (paragraph 38).⁶⁶ In 1994, a year after the World Conference on Human Rights was held in Vienna, the notion of “sexual rights” first appeared on the international agenda, during preparations for the 1994 United Nations International Conference on Population and Development (UNICPD) in Cairo. Although advocates of the international women’s health movement put forward the idea of sexual rights in the end this concept was not incorporated into the final document of the conference, the Programme of Action (PoA).⁶⁷ The UNICPD and the PoA understood the interconnections between gender and sexuality as follows.

Human sexuality and gender relations are closely interrelated and together affect the ability of women and men to achieve and maintain sexual health and manage their reproductive lives.⁶⁸

They also recognised that gender-based sexual violence, and efforts to control women’s sexuality, affected women’s health and their status in society.⁶⁹ Following the UNICPD,

⁶³ As of 2014, there were 99 signatories to CEDAW and 188 state parties to the Convention, meaning that they have either ratified or have acceded to the Convention.

⁶⁴ Ikkaracan and Jolly, *Gender and Sexuality*, p. 23.

⁶⁵ United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action*, 12 July 1993, A/CONF.157/23, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b39ec.html> (accessed 22 November 2014).

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), *Implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development*, A/RES/51/176 (86th plenary meeting, 16 December 1995); United Nations General Assembly (GA), *Implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development*, A/RES/50/124 (96th plenary meeting, 20 December 1995); United Nations (UN), *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development*, A/COF.171/13/Rev.1 (Cairo, 5–13 September 1994).

⁶⁸ UNGA, *Implementation of the Programme*, A/RES/50/124, para. 7.34, p. 48.

⁶⁹ Ibid., para. 7.35, p. 48.

autonomy and choice in relation to sexuality were linked to reproduction and began to be articulated as women's rights.⁷⁰

A year later, in 1995, the Beijing Platform for Action (BPA), adopted at the Fourth UN Conference on Women, imposed on states an obligation to promote and protect all human rights, regardless of political, economic and cultural systems.⁷¹ Sexual rights were also a major topic of debate at the Conference where an alliance of conservative Muslim and Catholic delegations strongly objected to the term, as they believed it represented what they called a "homosexual agenda".⁷² After prolonged negotiation, the BPA was saved from being completely watered down in the area of sexuality and reproductive rights when agreement was reached on retaining the language employed at the 1994 Cairo Conference whenever possible.⁷³ Retaining the "Cairo language" was a crucial political achievement for women's groups since it re-asserted the right of women to control their own sexuality.⁷⁴ It also had implications for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) rights in that autonomy and choice extended to issues of sexual partners.

The BPA also called for efforts to "mainstream" gender issues into all substantive areas of international and national policy, an emphasis which had begun at the Third UN Conference on Women, in Nairobi, Kenya (1985). Nevertheless, the BPA allowed a degree of discretion in how these broad principles would be implemented, in deference to cultural sensibilities. In practice, those charged with the implementation of women's human rights and gender mainstreaming often worked with a notion of gender roles as complementary.⁷⁵ At the Beijing conference, liberal states and activists resisted concessions to "difference", fearing this would result in the watering-down of state obligations to protect and promote women's rights. Feminists sympathetic to cultural pluralist arguments, on the other hand, supported equity, either in deference to cultural differences or on pragmatic grounds as the only viable way to mainstream gender in policy-making within specific societies outside of

⁷⁰ Stean, *Gender and International Relations*, p. 44.

⁷¹ United Nations (UN), *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* (Beijing: 4–15 September, 1995) (adopted at the 16th plenary meeting, 15 September 1995), para. 9, p. 8.

⁷² Robert Keohane, "Beyond Dichotomy: Conversations between International Relations and Feminist Theory", *International Studies Quarterly*, 42 (1) (1998), p. 197.

⁷³ Stean, *Gender and International Relations*, p. 44.

⁷⁴ For further information see Ole Holsti and James N. Rosenau, "The Foreign Policy Beliefs of Women in Leadership Positions", *Journal of Politics*, 43 (1981), pp. 326–348; Elizabeth A. Cook and Clyde Wilcox "Feminism and the Gender Gap: A Second Look", *Journal of Politics*, 53 (1991), pp. 1111–1122; David Fite, Marc Genest and Clyde Wilcox, "Gender Differences in Foreign Policy Attitudes", *American Politics Quarterly*, 18 (1990), pp. 492–513.

⁷⁵ Stean, *Gender and International Relations*, p. 14.

the West.⁷⁶ Since 1995, gender mainstreaming has given rise to landmark developments in international law in the areas of human rights, asylum and humanitarian intervention.⁷⁷

In 2000, the Optional Protocol to CEDAW entered into force, allowing women within the jurisdiction of parties to CEDAW to make complaints about breaches of the Convention (see Appendix 2).⁷⁸ Potentially, this complaints procedure allows the implementation of CEDAW to be monitored more effectively. Countries such as the DPRK, who have not signed on to the Optional Protocol to CEDAW, though, are not scrutinised to the same extent as those countries that have signed on to the Protocol (see chapter 7).

The existence of strong national women's movements and their effective lobbying of official delegations played a critical role in changing the attitudes of particular countries.⁷⁹ In 2000, at the Beijing+5 Conference, Turkey, a predominantly Muslim country, became a proponent of sexual rights for the first time and played a key role in the inclusion of marital rape, so-called "honour crimes" and forced marriages in the outcome document due to the pressure of women's groups.⁸⁰ Many of the issues raised at the Fourth UN Conference on Women and the Beijing+5 Conference re-emerged in 2005 in New York at the Beijing+5 Review, a meeting designed to generate renewed momentum for the implementation of the BPA.⁸¹ Some Islamic women's groups, conservative Catholic women's groups and delegates of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) affiliated to the Vatican (which enjoys permanent observer status at the UN) objected to the emphasis given to what they characterised as "homosexual rights". These countries and organisations made appeals to protect the traditional family model against homosexuals' demand for equal rights in marriage. An Outcome Document was agreed but only after a period of protracted negotiation and after the terms "sexual rights" and "sexual orientation" were removed from the document.⁸² The difficult and protracted process of negotiation at Beijing, which has been a feature of more

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), "Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women," *Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly, A/RES/54/4* (Fifty-fourth session, 6 October 1999, agenda item 109), (distributed 15 October 1999).

⁷⁹ Ikkaracan and Jolly, *Gender and Sexuality*, p. 14.

⁸⁰ United Nations Economic and Social Council (UNESCO), *Regional Preparatory Meeting on the 2000 Review of the Implementation of Beijing Platform for Action*, E/ECE/RW.2/2000/7 (Economic Commission For Europe, 19-21 January 2000), (distributed 4 February 2000), Annex I, p. 17, Annex II, p. 43.

⁸¹ Mary Caprioli and Mark A. Boyer, "Gender, Violence, and International Crisis", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 45 (4) (2001), p. 503.

⁸² UNESCO, *Regional Preparatory Meeting*, Annex I, pp. 5, 6.

recent international forums on human rights, evidences that women's rights continue to be a contested terrain.⁸³

Gender, Sexuality and the Rights of North Korean Women

Next, I examine scholarship regarding gender, sexuality and North Korean women. Since the 1990s, academic scholarship has attempted to shine a brighter light on the subject of gender and sexuality and achieving gender equality in the DPRK.⁸⁴ One element of this interest has been the large number of North Koreans leaving their homeland and telling their stories to the international community. The North Korean government also increased communication with the world at various institutions such as the UN for a time.⁸⁵ It can be said, though, that unlike the extensive scholarly literature that examines gender and sexuality in other states in Asia, such as South Korea, Japan and China, gender roles in North Korea have not been fully scrutinised. Recent research on gender, sexuality and North Korean women has focused on several aspects: the role and status of North Korean women,⁸⁶ the experiences of North Korean women as refugees,⁸⁷ the representation of North Korean women in media,⁸⁸ changes

⁸³ Stean, *Gender and International Relations*, p. 44.

⁸⁴ Kyungja Jung and Bronwen Dalton, "Rhetoric Versus Reality for the Women of North Korea: Mothers of the Revolution", *Asian Studies*, 46 (5) (2006), pp. 743, 744. For an early attempt to describe the situation of women in North Korea, see: Jon Halliday, "Women in North Korea: An Interview with the Korean Democratic Women's Union", *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, 17 (3) (1985), pp. 46–56.

⁸⁵ According to estimates prepared in late 2004, some 300,000 North Koreans were living in northeastern China, while other reports put figures between 100,000 and 200,000. Jung and Dalton, "Mothers of the Revolution", p. 742.

⁸⁶ Sonia Ryang, "Gender in Oblivion: Women in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)", *Journal of African and Asian Studies*, 35 (3) (2000), pp. 323–349; Sanghee Bang, *The Battered Wheel of the Revolution: Briefing Report on the Situation of Violence against North Korean Women*, NKHR Briefing Report No. 6 (Seoul: Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights, 2011); Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights (NKHR), *Class and Gender Discrimination in North Korea, Alternative Report* (Seoul: Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights, 2005); Good Friends: Centre for Peace, Human Rights and Refugees, *Alternative NGO Report on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. First Periodic Report of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea* (Seoul: Good Friends: Centre for Peace, Human Rights and Refugees, 2005); Joanna Hosaniak, *Flowers, Guns and Women on Bikes: Briefing Report on the Situation of Women's Rights in the DPRK*, NKHR Briefing Report No. 4 (Seoul: Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights, 2009); Jung and Dalton, "Mothers of the Revolution" pp. 741–760; Jin Woong Kang, "The 'Domestic Revolution' Policy and Traditional Confucianism in North Korean State Formation: A Socio-cultural Perspective", *Harvard Asia Quarterly*, 10 (2) (2006), pp. 34–45; Jin Woong Kang, "The Patriarchal State and Women's Status in Socialist North Korea", *Graduate Journal of Asia-Pacific Studies*, 6 (2) (2008), pp. 50–70; Kyung Ae Park, "Women and Revolution in North Korea", *Pacific Affairs*, 65 (4) (1992–1993), pp. 527–545; Eun-young Shin, "Ideology and Gender Equality: Women's Policies of North Korea and China", *East Asian Review*, 13 (3) (2001), pp. 81–104.

⁸⁷ Yoonok Chang, Stephan Haggard, and Marcus Noland, "Migration Experiences of North Korean Refugees: Survey Evidence from China", in Rüdiger Frank, James E. Hoare, Patrick Köllner, and Susan Pares (eds), *Korea Yearbook 2009* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 301–328; Norma Kang Muico, *An Absence of Choice: The sexual exploitation of North Korean women in China* (London: Anti-Slavery International, 2005); Shinui Kim, "Why are the majority of North Korean defectors female?", *NKnews.org*, 31 July 2013, <http://www.nknews.org/2013/07/why-are-the-majority-of-north-korean-defectors-women/> (accessed 17 May 2014); Hae Young Lee,

in North Korean women's roles since the famine in the mid-1990s,⁸⁹ and studies of family life in the DPRK.⁹⁰ This means a large gap still exists in academic research about North Korea and gender studies. This thesis attempts to fill a small part of the gap, with a particular focus on how gender roles are presented to the world by the North Korean government. In the following section, I highlight the scholarly discourse currently available concerning aspects of North Korean women's lives, relevant North Korean laws and the representation of women in North Korean media.

First, it is important to outline the contribution made to scholarship regarding the roles of Korean women during the Chosŏn Dynasty (1392–1897) and the occupation of Korea by Japan from 1910 to 1945. Scholarship on these two periods is extensive and is known as a shared history between North and South Korea.⁹¹ Even though the principles of Confucianism were not law in Korea during the Chosŏn Dynasty the elite ruling class enacted laws to bring society gradually into line with these principles, ultimately to strengthen their own power. The integration of Confucianism into Korean society went along with an ongoing

Lives for Sale: Personal Accounts of Women Fleeing North Korea to China (Washington, DC: Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2009).

⁸⁸ Suk-Young Kim, "Dressed to Kill: Women's Fashion and Body Politics in North Korean Visual Media (1960s–1970s)", *positions: asia critique*, 19 (1) (2011), pp. 159–191; Suk-Young Kim, *Illusive Utopia: Theatre, Film and Everyday Performance in North Korea* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2010), pp. 205–259; Kim, "Revolutionary Mothers", pp. 742–767; Kim, *Everyday Life*, pp. 174–203; Jane Portal, *Art Under Control in North Korea* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2005); Suzy Kim, "Marriage, Family and Sexuality in North Korea", in Mark McLelland and Vera Mackie (eds), *Routledge Handbook of Sexuality Studies in East Asia* (Oxford: Routledge, 2015), pp. 112–123.

⁸⁹ Amnesty International, *Starved of Rights: Human Rights and the Food Crisis in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)*, Index: ASA24/003 /2004, (New York: Amnesty International, 2004); Stephen Haggard and Marcus Nolan, *Gender in Transition: The Case of North Korea*, Working Papers Series No.124 (Washington: Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2011); Joanna Hosaniak, *Status of Women's Rights in the Context of Socio-Economic Changes in the DPRK*, NKHR Briefing Report No.7, (Seoul: Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights, 2013); Kyung Ae Park, "Economic crisis, women's changing economic roles, and their implications for women's status in North Korea", *The Pacific Review*, 24 (2) (2011), pp. 159–177; Kyung Ae Park, *Food Crisis, Women's Changing Economic Roles, and their Implications for Women's Status in North Korea*, (New York: 50th Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, 15–18 February 2009).

⁹⁰ Daniel Goodkind, "Do Parents Prefer Sons in North Korea?", *Studies in Family Planning*, 30 (3) (1999), pp. 212–218; Hyun-sun Park, *Contemporary North Korean Society and Family* (Seoul: Hanwool Academy, 2003).

⁹¹ Hyaeweol Choi, "Constructions of marriage and sexuality in modern Korea", in Mark McLelland and Vera Mackie (eds), *Routledge Handbook of Sexuality Studies in East Asia* (Oxford: Routledge, 2015), pp. 87–100; Hyaeweol Choi, *New Women in Colonial Korea: A Sourcebook* (Oxford: Routledge, 2013); Hyaeweol Choi, "Debating the Korean New Women: Imagining Henrik Ibsen's "Nora" in Colonial Era Korea", *Asian Studies Review*, 36 (1) (2012), pp. 59–77; Hyaeweol Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea: New Women, Old Ways* (California: University of California Press, 2009); Ruth Barraclough, Heather Bowen-Stuyk and Paula Rabinowitz (eds), *Red Love Across the Pacific: Political and Sexual Revolutions of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Palgrave, 2015); Ruth Barraclough, *Factory Girl Literature: Sexuality, Violence and Representation in Industrializing Korea* (California: University of California Press, 2012); Ruth Barraclough, "The Courtesan's Journal: Kisaeng and the Sex Labour Market in Colonial Korea", *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific*, 29 (December 2012), pp. 1–9; Ruth Barraclough, "Red love: an intimate history of the making of North Korea", *Asian Currents*, (July 2011), pp. 15–17; Ruth Barraclough and Elyssa Faison (eds), *Gender and Labour in Korea and Japan: Sexing class* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2009).

influence of Chinese culture and language.⁹² Confucianism and the patriarchal system were supposedly followed by all classes and saw heaven, husband, king, parents, and men as holding superior positions, while earth, wife, subject, child, and women were inferior.⁹³ While persons in inferior positions were to obey their superiors, persons in superior positions were supposed to employ their power to take care of their inferiors. Each position had a role to fulfil for the good of the whole society, but when Confucianism merged with the ruling political hierarchy and family unit, it rather served to legitimise the power of those in superior positions.⁹⁴

In accordance with Confucian teachings, women learned their role in the family unit. Although they played an important role in the management of the home and the rearing of children, often these duties were not evenly distributed amongst family members, particularly men.⁹⁵ Fathers were expected to be somewhat emotionally distant from their children in order to maintain their position of authority.⁹⁶ However, at the same time they were to guide their children, in particular sons, and demand discipline and obedience from them. In contrast, the role of mothers was taken extremely seriously as the preservation, rise and fall of the family were thought to depend on the education of the children, and mothers were regarded as their primary educators.⁹⁷ Elite women were restricted to the inner rooms of their homes and separated from their male counterparts from the age of seven.⁹⁸ Unmarried daughters were to remain confined to the domestic sphere as they prepared for their future roles as wives and mothers. These customs, though, were unrealistic for common women, who were expected to participate in work activities in the fields and marketplace. Thus, their ability to move outside of the family home facilitated the transition for some Korean women to new economic roles during Japanese colonial rule.⁹⁹

In the 1920s, during the occupation of Korea, a small group of educated so-called “New Women” (*sinyŏsŏng*) emerged from the missionary education system with modern ideas about Korean womanhood. These women seized the opportunity to enhance all

⁹² Hee An Choi, *Korean Women and God: Experiencing God in a Multi-religious Colonial Context* (New York: Orbis Books, 2005), p. 35.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 36.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Kyu Kwang Lee, “Women’s Status in the East Asian Patriarchal Family”, in *Hanguk Kajok-ui Kujo Bunsok (The Structural Analysis of the Korean Family)* (Seoul: Ilji-sa, 1975), chapter 10.

⁹⁶ Choi, *Korean Women and God*, p. 86.

⁹⁷ Bae-Yong Lee, “Family Ethics and Women’s Status within Confucian Tradition and Its Transformation”, in Hwa Oh Jung (ed), *Feminist Cultural Politics in Korea* (Seoul: PrunSasang Co., 2005), pp. 11–38.

⁹⁸ Park, “Women and Revolution”, p. 528.

⁹⁹ Theodore Jun Yoo, *The Politics of Gender in Colonial Korea: Education, Labour, and Health, 1910–1945* (California: University of California Press, 2008), p. 23.

women's access to education, to determine their own physical appearance, and to contribute to the public debate about changing female identity and roles.¹⁰⁰ They also challenged the legacy of Confucian principles and the patriarchal system in Korean society and the family unit which were reinforced during the Chosŏn Dynasty. The "New Women" produced a desired space for public debates but also had to defend themselves from male intellectuals and nationalist reformers, who were also fighting to be heard in an occupied Korea.¹⁰¹

During the occupation of Korea by Japan, the Japanese military kidnapped, falsely recruited, and forced between 100,000 and 200,000 women in the Asian region into sexual slavery as part of the so-called "comfort women" (Japanese "*ianfu*" / Korean "*wianbu*") system.¹⁰² It is estimated that 80 per cent of these women were Korean.¹⁰³ The women were forced into so-called "comfort stations" (*ianjo*) to serve up to 50 men a day with little food, water or sanitation.¹⁰⁴ Although factors such as the lack of documentary evidence and the reluctance of survivors to reveal their past may be offered to explain the long silence about these war atrocities, a major factor is the cultural legacy of Confucianism.¹⁰⁵ During the occupation of Korea the sexual culture of men was often overlooked by society, while women's sexuality was rigidly controlled by standards of virginity and chastity.¹⁰⁶ Unmarried women were supposed to maintain their virginity until married and widows were expected to be chaste. Regardless of their individual circumstances, women who lost their chastity were considered dishonoured, made to feel ashamed and were likely to be ostracised by their own families and society.¹⁰⁷ It was not until the early 1990s that several survivors, predominantly from South Korea, came forward to testify about their experiences. This encouraged the DPRK to start reporting on North Korean women who had similar experiences, although their

¹⁰⁰ Theodore Jun Yoo, "The 'New Women' and the Politics of Love, Marriage and Divorce in Colonial Korea", *Gender and History*, 17 (2), (2005), p. 297.

¹⁰¹ Yoo, *The Politics of Gender*, p. 59.

¹⁰² Hyunah Yang, "Remembering the Korean Military Comfort Women: Nationalism, Sexuality, and Silencing", in Elaine H. Kim and Chungmoo Choi (eds), *Dangerous Women: Gender and Korean Nationalism* (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 126; Ruth Barraclough, "A history of sex work in modern Korea", in Mark McLelland and Vera Mackie (eds), *Routledge Handbook of Sexuality Studies in East Asia* (Oxford: Routledge, 2015), pp. 294–304. Many prefer to avoid the terms "comfort women" / "*ianfu*" / "*wianbu*", referring instead to "military sexual slavery" or "enforced military prostitution". On the various terminologies used in discussion of this issue, see: Vera Mackie, "In Search of Innocence: Feminist Historians Debate the Legacy of Wartime Japan", *Australian Feminist Studies*, 20 (47) (July 2005), p. 216.

¹⁰³ Ryang, "Gender in Oblivion", p. 329.

¹⁰⁴ Pyong Gap Min, "Korean 'Comfort Women': The Intersection of Colonial Power, Gender, and Class", *Gender and Society*, 17(6) (2003), p. 943.

¹⁰⁵ Chunghee Sarah Soh, "The Korean 'Comfort Women' Movement for Redress", *Asian Survey*, 36 (12) (1996), p. 1229.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1230.

¹⁰⁷ Min, "Korean 'Comfort Women'", p. 945.

testimonies are limited in number.¹⁰⁸ Below, I will consider how the DPRK has deployed the discussion of this issue in its interactions with the international community (see chapters 7 and 8).

Studies of women's social status in the DPRK have been concerned with the power relations that socially and culturally structure the reproduction of gender inequality in North Korean society.¹⁰⁹ In this regard, "gender politics is based upon an existing social patriarchal order and system and the state is gendered by enforcing gendered policies and ideologies".¹¹⁰ In this context, in modern communist states, such as the DPRK, gender inequality is reproduced in the family and social patriarchal systems.¹¹¹ It has also been argued, though, that the reform process in the DPRK, the collectivisation of agriculture and industry and the elimination of private property "led to the demolition of inheritance, which destroyed the material basis of traditional patriarchy" and enabled North Korean women to "acquire economic independence through paid labour".¹¹² Others argue that neither the socialist revolution in the DPRK nor the rapid modernisation in South Korea has liberated women, but state interference in the North in favour of women, especially, in the economic arena, has greatly contributed to enhancing women's position in that society.¹¹³ Reform of the North Korean agricultural and industrial sectors, though, did not necessarily mean that the patriarchal structure in society was challenged to the extent that all women achieved economic independence by participating in the labour force. North Korean women were often assigned to occupations that were seen as lower skilled and therefore lower paid.¹¹⁴

Others acknowledge that gender politics in North Korea is based upon an existing social patriarchal system and that the state enforces gendered policies and ideologies based upon this system.¹¹⁵ Kyung Ae Park refers to the household registration system in the DPRK under the male household head and states that due to the abolition of the system "patriarchy"

¹⁰⁸ For further information from the North Korean point of view, see: Jong Hyong Ri, *Japan's War Crimes, Past and Present* (Pyongyang: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1999).

¹⁰⁹ Kang, "The Patriarchal State", p. 55; Raewyn Connell, "The State, Gender and Sexual Politics: Theory and Appraisal", in H. Lorraine Radtke and Henderikus J. Stam (eds), *Gender/Power: Social Relations in Theory and Practice* (London: Sage, 1994), pp. 136–173.

¹¹⁰ Kang, "The Patriarchal State", p. 55.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Kyung Ae Park, *Women and Social Change in South and North Korea: Marxist and Liberal Perspectives*, Working Paper #231 (Michigan State University: Women and International Development, 1992), p. 1; Park, "Women and Revolution", p. 538.

¹¹³ Park, "Women and Revolution", p. 538.

¹¹⁴ Shin, "Ideology and Gender", p. 94; Jung and Dalton, "Mothers of the Revolution", p. 751.

¹¹⁵ Kang, "The Patriarchal State", p. 55; Jung and Dalton, "Mothers of the Revolution", p. 759; Ryang, "Gender in Oblivion", p. 324–326; Kang, "The 'Domestic Revolution' Policy", pp. 34–45.

has also been undermined.¹¹⁶ However, the use of the word “patriarchy” is ambiguous as it is unclear whether Park is referring to the father’s rule within the family, male domination in society in general, or a form of political power or kinship system.¹¹⁷ We shall see below that the abolition of the patrilineal household registration system has not necessarily led to women’s emancipation in the DPRK. While more North Korean women have left the home to participate in the economy, they have effectively been forced to bear the double burden of external employment and being responsible for the majority of household chores.¹¹⁸

After the Korean War (1950–1953), North Korea worked to forge a socialist order and stated its commitment to abolishing the Confucianist patriarchal social structure.¹¹⁹ To accomplish this task, the DPRK adopted laws that would bring women out of the home and into society to participate in the labour force.¹²⁰ Eun-young Shin argued in the early 2000s that, “[t]oday, we no longer see such practices as early marriage, polygamy and concubinage ... and now women are an important segment of the labour force”.¹²¹ However, Shin has not considered the gendered rhetoric found in North Korea’s state laws and instead takes the words of the government at face value. Alternatively, Jin Woong Kang acknowledges that the North Korean regime has been characterised by contradictory goals in its policies toward women.¹²² For example, in the name of gender equality and women’s emancipation, the DPRK has:

[e]nforced gendered policies and ideologies, structured the patriarchal family and social systems through the reproduction of the mechanism of sexual discrimination, and tamed women as passive, gendered socialist fighters.¹²³

¹¹⁶ Park, “Women and Revolution”, p. 528.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., For further information on “patriarchy” see Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), pp. 19–38; Abeda Sultana, “Patriarchy and Women’s Subordination: A Theoretical Analysis”, *The Arts Faculty Journal*, (July 2010–June 2011), pp. 1–18; Raewyn Connell, *Gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), pp.106, 107.

¹¹⁸ Ibid; Jung and Dalton, “Mothers of the Revolution”, p. 753.

¹¹⁹ Shin, “Ideology and Gender”, p. 81.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid., pp. 81, 82.

¹²² Kang, “The Patriarchal State”, pp. 55, 57, 60; Jung and Dalton, “Mothers of the Revolution”, pp. 749, 759; Ryang, “Gender in Oblivion”, pp. 330, 332.

¹²³ Kang, “The Patriarchal State”, p. 55.

Thus, the government's gendered view has created developments contrary to its original socialist ideals of solving the "woman question".¹²⁴ The DPRK moved away from its initial socialist reforms, which aimed to mobilise women to contribute to nation building. Superficially, women's economic participation was egalitarian but this meant that women suffered the double burden of domestic and social work. In this way the patriarchal state mobilised society through gender construction and in this process, women's status in the family and society was subordinated to gender stereotyping.¹²⁵

Jiyoung Song, in *Human Rights Discourse in North Korea* (2011), closely examines the evolution of the North Korean legal system and human rights discourse in the DPRK.¹²⁶ Song offers three alternative perspectives to understand North Korean thought on human rights: postcolonial, Marxist, and Confucian. These perspectives situate North Korea's discourse within Korea's historical context, and within the international evolution of human rights discourses. Song details North Korea's human rights thought from the pre-modern Korean ideas of Confucianism, *Sirhak* and *Tonghak*,¹²⁷ to postcolonial and Marxist ideas on human rights, to the development of the *Juche* ideology and its relationship to human rights, and finally "Our Style" human rights under Kim Jong Il. She has not, however, examined closely the institution of gender equality. For example, in chapter 4, Song provides an overview of the so-called interim government period of North Korea from August 1945 to September 1946 and the wide range of rights institutionalised.¹²⁸ She only briefly, however, examines the rights of women and children, outlining the Law on Equality of the Sexes. The main purpose of the law, she notes, was to embrace women as former victims of human rights violations under Japanese colonial rule in order to mobilise them into the labour force,¹²⁹ but does not question the gendered logic of North Korean laws and policies. In this thesis, in chapter 3, I analyse in detail provisions in North Korean laws from 1945 to 2010 and consider gendered assumptions made by the government that are included in the state legal system.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Song, *Human Rights Discourse*.

¹²⁷ *Sirhak* was the more pragmatic Korean Confucianism of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries and *Tonghak* the nineteenth century's revolutionary Korean philosophy, which led to rebellious peasant movements against upper class. Song, *Human Rights Discourse*, pp. 54–74.

¹²⁸ Song, *Human Rights Discourse*, pp. 75–121.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

Representations of North Korean Women

Recently, academic scholarship in North Korean studies has made a major contribution to the new areas of North Korean art, theatre, cinema, and fashion.¹³⁰ Two major books are Suk-Young Kim's *The Illusive Utopia* (2010) and Suzy Kim's *Everyday Life in the Korean Revolution 1945–1950* (2013).¹³¹ Both works examine the representation of revolutionary women in the personality cult of Kim Il Sung. Suk-Young Kim explores state-produced propaganda, stage performances, film productions, parades, mass games, and visual arts.¹³² She investigates how the DPRK's national imagination is formed, functions, and is represented for the sake of maintaining and solidifying the regime. Since the foundation of North Korean cinema and theatre, the main aim of these arts was to glorify the leader and instil an intense sense of nationalism in the audience. North Korean cinema has relied on a "process of blurring the boundary between performed illusion and social reality by transforming spectators into performers".¹³³ This occurred on two fronts, with actors striving to emulate the virtues of revolutionary citizens and spectators aiming to become like the film characters who were role models.¹³⁴

Suk-Young Kim also discusses North Korean paintings and illustrations and considers the relationship of the cult of the Kim family to traditional patriarchal authority. She notes how Kim Il Sung, the father of the nation, overshadows the authority of traditional parents, especially the father figure, in the many paintings depicting him.¹³⁵ In North Korean paintings family life is transformed, "depriving traditional patriarchs of masculinity" and substituting "omnipresent state patriarchs".¹³⁶ They are "shaped by the need to promote a military spirit", and feature women as protagonists. Kim outlines the representation of female protagonists or heroines and the "ideal female body" in North Korean fashion in a variety of visual media.¹³⁷ The North Korean state politicised the female body through the production and consumption of women's fashion from the 1960s to the 1970s.

¹³⁰ David Heather and Koen D. Ceuster, *North Korean Posters: The David Heather Collection* (Munich, Berlin, London, New York: Prestel, 2008); Portal, *Art Under Control*; Rüdiger Frank (ed), *Exploring North Korean Arts* (Vienna: Verlag für moderne Kunst, 2012).

¹³¹ Kim, *Illusive Utopia*; Kim, *Everyday Life*.

¹³² Kim, *Illusive Utopia*, p. 4.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 41.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid., pp. 205–259.

While some other socialist and authoritarian states glorified masculine clothing as a preferred means to represent revolutionised women, North Korean fashion has continuously explored and expressed degrees of femininity, seemingly contradicting the astringent revolutionary spirit often identified with masculinity.¹³⁸

She looks at two pieces of clothing in particular: the *hanbok* (or *joseonot*), the ethnic Korean clothing for women composed of the *jeogori* (jacket) and *chima* (skirt) and the feminised military uniform. The *hanbok* represents timeless national tradition and domesticity and the military uniform represents the ideals of socialist revolution and public life.¹³⁹ In North Korea, visual images of women are not only objects of visual consumption but concrete models to emulate, instilling in viewers the desire to produce specific bodily presentations.¹⁴⁰

Suzy Kim mobilises a range of materials, including statistics, photos, interviews, and official reports to provide a history of ordinary life in North Korea in the second half of the 1940s.¹⁴¹ During this time, there were three main focuses of governmental activity – land reform, literacy and elections. Kim examines how villagers experienced, understood, and later remembered such events as the first land reform and modern elections in Korea’s history, as well as practices in the schools, communal halls, mass organisations, and study sessions. North Korea from the outset attempted to meld the old and the new through the figure of the revolutionary mother as a uniquely feminine revolutionary subject. This is reflected in the representations of motherhood in *Chosŏn Yŏsŏng* (Korean Women) magazine.¹⁴² The figure of the revolutionary mother sets North Korea apart from other historical examples of social revolutions and their handling of the “woman question”. Although North Korean women during the early period of the country began to participate in the public arena, women’s agency was cast in the framework of the home, reinforcing stereotypical roles of women as wives and mothers.¹⁴³

Although initial reform in North Korea attempted to liberate women from the home, no legislation or political campaign ever denounced tradition or Confucianism per se, as occurred during the Communist Revolution in China when the family was configured as the source of women’s oppression, a position that aligned nationalism, feminism, and Marxism

¹³⁸ Ibid., pp. 10–13.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 228–230.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Kim, *Everyday Life*, pp. 10–13.

¹⁴² Ibid., pp. 174–203.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 175.

against a common enemy.¹⁴⁴ In North Korea, rather than the family being faulted for women's oppression, the family and the home came to symbolise the Korean nation in the revolution.¹⁴⁵ In this context, motherhood became the primary trope by which to construct not only women's revolutionary subjectivity but also all North Koreans, as everyone was extolled to emulate mothers as the sacrificial model citizen. Thus, the distinctiveness of the process through which North Korean women's subjectivity was crafted is in the contradictory deployment of tradition, shifting the meaning of "motherhood" and thereby the overall gender scheme.¹⁴⁶ This is different from the masculine representations of revolutionary brotherhood in images of the worker or peasant in the Bolshevik and Chinese revolutions. In North Korea, the figure of the revolutionary mother became the quintessential icon of female subjectivity, melding the old and the new, and incorporating both Japanese and Soviet legacies along the way. This remaking of motherhood as a public persona would not have been possible without the Korean colonial experience, argues Kim, which served to privilege women and the domestic sphere in unprecedented ways.¹⁴⁷

Although these works have offered a good sense of different aspects of North Korean society such as its legal system, the representation of women in visual media within North Korea, the question of how the government has represented itself to the world, in regards to achieving gender equality, has been left largely unanswered. Therefore, this thesis attempts to offer some understanding of how the North Korean government has communicated with the international community through its reporting to the UN, the CEDAW Committee and in English-language magazines about gender, sexuality and achieving gender equality. Next, I outline the research focus and objectives of this thesis and the questions I explore.

Research Focus and Objectives

In this thesis, I focus on the gender ideology of the North Korean government in its communication with the international community. The objective of the thesis is to answer the following questions:

What gendered views are revealed in the North Korean legal system?

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 176, 177.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 177.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

How has the North Korean government represented gender in the English-language magazine *Women of Korea*?

How has the North Korean government reported on gender and sexuality to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women?

These questions are shaped by the themes of gender, sexuality and international relations that recur at various points throughout this study. Below I outline my research methodology and then provide a chapter outline.

Methodology

In this thesis, I have adopted a qualitative methodology, drawing on critical discourse analysis. As discussed above, the isolation of the DPRK from the international community led to difficulties in accessing reliable information regarding broader aspects of North Korean society, especially gender roles in the home and workplace. This meant that those outside the country had to rely on available testimonies of North Koreans who had fled the country, the writings of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il published by Pyongyang's Foreign Languages Publishing House, and the English-language propaganda magazines, *Women of Korea* and *Korea Today*. Since the 1990s, there has been an increase in the number of North Koreans leaving the country, thus providing a wider range of testimonies. There has also been an increase in governmental communication with the world.¹⁴⁸

Despite the fact the North Korean government has increased attempts at communication with the rest of the world since the 1990s, news reports in the Euro-American and Japanese media assign little credibility to reports released from the DPRK.¹⁴⁹ The

¹⁴⁸ CEDAW, *Initial Report*; CEDAW, "List of issues and questions"; CEDAW, "Responses"; CEDAW, "699th meeting"; CEDAW, "700th meeting"; CEDAW, *Concluding Comments*; Amnesty International, *Starved of Rights*; Amnesty International, *Democratic People's Republic of Korea: Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review* (Seoul: Amnesty International, 2009); NKHR, *Class and Gender*; Young-Hwan Lee, *Child is King of the Country: Briefing Report on the Situation of the Rights of the Child in the DPRK*, Briefing Report No. 3 (Seoul: Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights, 2009); Young-Hwan Lee, *Situation Report on the Rights of the Child: NGO Alternative Report the Combined Third and Fourth Periodic Report of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, CRC/C/PRK/4 (Seoul: Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights and The Asia Center for Human Rights, 2008); Hosaniak, *Flowers, Guns and Women*; Hosaniak, *Status of Women's Rights*; Good Friends, *Alternative NGO Report*; Good Friends: Centre for Peace, Human Rights and Refugees, *Human Rights in North Korea and the Food Crisis: A Comprehensive Report on North Korean Human Rights Issues* (Seoul: Good Friends: Center for Peace, Human Rights and Refugees, 2004).

¹⁴⁹ "North Korea's Tightly Controlled Media", *BBC News*, 19 December 2011, (accessed 9 February 2016), <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-16255126>; "North Korea's Digital Underground", *The Atlantic*,

popular perception of the DPRK by the international community is one of untrustworthiness, unpredictability, and a threat to regional security.¹⁵⁰ This thesis attempts to address the often over-simplified representation of the DPRK in the international community by critically analysing sources released by the North Korean government specifically for the world. By doing this I hope to add another dimension to the representation of DPRK in world politics, with a focus on the North Korea's contradictory stance on gender relations and equality between men and women.

When examining English-language sources from the DPRK, though, I have considered that the information released by the North Korean government is strictly controlled by the state and is information deemed suitable for the international community, as the government wants to project a positive image to the world. In the DPRK, it is illegal to own a radio or television set which is not adjusted to receive only state-run channels and the printed word is largely limited to several state-owned newspapers and books that are published by a small number of state-owned publishing houses.¹⁵¹ Sonia Ryang reminds us that:

Kim's words are *words*, that is, rhetoric, and they have to be treated as such. His works should be placed on the level of official political discourse, constituting the social reality only reflexively, rather than the facts as such.¹⁵²

In the DPRK, Kim Il Sung's words carry an immense policy implication for all areas, including the state's gender equality policy, as they are normally regarded as the most correct and safest reference point.¹⁵³ Therefore, the works of Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong Il and currently Kim Jong Un provide a body of official discourse that needs to be further analysed in connection to wider aspects of the society, and its effects on specific areas such as gender and

April 2011, (accessed 9 February 2016), "<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2011/04/north-korea-digital-underground/308414/>"; Scott Thomas Bruce, "Information Technology and Social Controls in North Korea," *Korea Economic Institute of America*, On Korea: Academic Paper Series (28 January 2014).

¹⁵⁰ "DPRK 'appears to be fueling missile'", *The Japan News*, 9 February 2016, (accessed 9 February 2016) <http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0002730995>; Yong Kwon, "Understanding North Korea's Behavior", *The Diplomat*, 7 August 2014, (accessed 9 February 2016), <http://thediplomat.com/2014/08/understanding-north-korea-behavior/>; "North Korea's Good Behavior May Not Ease Sanctions", *Voice of America*, 21 October 2015, (accessed 9 February 2016) <http://www.voanews.com/content/north-korea-good-behavior-not-likely-to-ease-sanctions/3016472.html>.

¹⁵¹ Ryang, "Gender in Oblivion", p. 323.

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 324.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

sexuality in the DPRK.¹⁵⁴ I approach North Korean sources by critically analysing the state-sanctioned discourse presented in English. I have taken care to view the Kim family words as rhetorical data that should be cross-referenced with other information as much as possible.¹⁵⁵ As I discuss in detail below, the rhetoric deployed by the government provides insights into constructions of gender in the DPRK.

As suggested by Ryang, previous scholarship on the roles of North Korean women and men tended not to support the “empirical” data found in the official words of Kim Il Sung with analytical back-up.¹⁵⁶ Instead, the words of Kim Il Sung were seen as fact or reality and not challenged by evidence that suggested otherwise. For example, although official North Korean texts claim that Kim Il Sung was responsible for the promulgation of the Law on Equality of the Sexes in 1946 this does not mean that he himself drafted the law or that he was committed to achieving gender equality.¹⁵⁷ Further, when the North Korean government proclaims that all women are liberated from their homes, these words should not be taken as reality as evidence collected by other sources such as NGOs offers information to the contrary.¹⁵⁸ Therefore, I draw on reporting by the UN and NGOs and position their views alongside the information presented by the North Korean government to juxtapose the competing perspectives regarding gender and sexuality in the DPRK.

Here, I elaborate on the utilisation of critical discourse analysis and the numerous primary and secondary sources employed and scrutinised throughout this work. Critical discourse analysis is deployed as a method of analysis in the humanities and social sciences with the aim of mapping three separate forms of analysis.¹⁵⁹ These include the analysis of written or spoken language, the analysis of discursive practice (processes of text production, distribution and consumption) and the analysis of discursive events as instances of socio-cultural practice.¹⁶⁰ Fairclough combines the analysis of discourse at the micro, meso and macro-level to interpret written and spoken text.¹⁶¹ At the micro-level, discourse analysis considers the text’s syntax, metaphoric structure and certain metrical devices. At the meso-level, the analyst studies the text’s production and consumption, focusing on how power

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.; Jung and Dalton, “Mothers of the Revolution”, p. 747.

¹⁵⁶ Ryang, “Gender in Oblivion”, p. 324.

¹⁵⁷ CEDAW, *Initial Report*, para. 70 and para. 71, p. 11.

¹⁵⁸ Amnesty International, *Starved of Rights*; NKHR, *Class and Gender*; Lee, *Child is King of the Country*; Lee, *Situation Report on the Rights of the Child*; Hosaniak, *Flowers, Guns and Women on Bikes*; Hosaniak, *Status of Women’s Rights*; Good Friends, *Alternative NGO Report*; Good Friends, *Human Rights in North Korea*.

¹⁵⁹ Norman Fairclough and Clive Holes, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (London: Longman, 1995), p. 209.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid; Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power* (London: Longman, 2001).

¹⁶¹ Fairclough and Holes, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, p. 210.

relations are enacted; and finally, at the macro-level of inter-textual understanding, the analyst tries to understand the broad, societal currents that are affecting the text being studied.¹⁶²

Besides linguistic theory, discourse analysis draws from social theory. Contributions to this discipline have been made by Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, Louis Althusser, Jürgen Habermas, Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu.¹⁶³ This approach examines ideologies and power relations involved in discourse. Fairclough and Holes argue that language connects with the social through being the primary domain of ideology, and through being a site of, and a stake in, struggles for power.¹⁶⁴

Just as text can be analysed using the methods of critical discourse analysis, visual culture can be subjected to similar kinds of analysis. Analysis of visual culture is a field of study that includes a combination of cultural studies, art history, critical theory, philosophy, and anthropology, by focusing on aspects of culture that rely on visual images. Paintings, photographs, posters, fashion and sculptures, to name a few, give insight into the non-literate aspects of human culture and can be employed to challenge or validate conclusions drawn from written discourse.¹⁶⁵ Visual culture is presented in the form of visual artefacts, “natural forms and ways of thinking” that form perceptions in everyday life.¹⁶⁶ Visual culture is learned and cultivated, and is deeply involved with societies, with the ethics and politics, aesthetics and epistemology of seeing and being seen.¹⁶⁷ In my analysis of the North Korea’s English-language magazines, I analyse visual materials as well as more conventional written texts.

Specific text types analysed in this thesis include: official North Korean statements, reports exchanged between the North Korean government and UN bodies such as the

¹⁶² Mats Alvesson and Dan Karreman, “Varieties of discourse: On the study of organizations through discourse analyses”, *Human Relations*, 53 (9) (2000), p. 89.

¹⁶³ Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy* (Paris and Brussels, 1847); Antonio Gramsci, *The Russian Maximalists* (Grido del Popolo) (28 July 1917); Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971); Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a category of Bourgeois Society* (1962), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la folie à l’âge classique - Folie et déraison (Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason)* (1961), Jean Khalifa (ed), Jonathan Murphy (translator) (New York: Routledge, 2006); Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Les héritiers: les étudiants et la culture (The Inheritors: French Students and Their Relations to Culture)* (1964), Richard Nice (translator) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

¹⁶⁴ Fairclough and Holes, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, p. 211.

¹⁶⁵ Allen Kellehear, *The Unobtrusive Researcher: A Guide to Methods* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1993), pp. 73, 74.

¹⁶⁶ Kathryn Grushka, “Exploring Visual Culture through Discursive Performative Visual Art practices in the Secondary School Context”, *Taking a hard look: Gender and visual culture* (Pretoria, 2007), p. 2.

¹⁶⁷ W. J. T. Mitchell, “Showing seeing: a critique of visual culture”, *Journal of Visual Culture*, 1 (2) (2002), p. 166.

CEDAW Committee and North Korean periodicals designed and printed for the international English community. These sources outline the North Korean government's approved discourse on gender, sexuality, and achieving gender equality as presented to the world in various forms of communication. These sources are especially designed for international consumption and represent the country as a place of equal opportunity for North Korean men and women. In contrast, information collected by NGOs and the UN, which tends to be based on the testimonies of North Koreans who have left the country, provide unique first-hand insights into life in the DPRK. In this thesis, I juxtapose the official view presented by the North Korean government with information from NGOs and the UN. Below, I expand on the North Korean sources and NGO reporting employed in this thesis.

North Korean Sources

After outlining the official views of gender relations in the North Korean legal system (see chapter 3), I then turn to the English-language magazine *Women of Korea*, which was a major means of communicating to the international community about gender relations in the DPRK (see chapter 4 and 5). The magazine was modelled after the first Korean-language magazine designed specifically for women, *Chosŏn Yŏsŏng* (Korean Women).¹⁶⁸ The Korean-language magazine was issued under the guidance of the newly-formed government and the Korean Democratic Women's Union (KDWU, Women's Union) in 1946 and was designed to circulate information regarding state policy and gender equality.¹⁶⁹ Between 1964 and 1992, the Working People's Organisation Publishing House (Pyongyang, DPRK) published the English-language version, *Women of Korea*. This version of the magazine was designed specifically to inform the international community of the position of women in North Korean society, and the political and economic goals of the government. I focus on the English version of the magazine because I am interested in how the North Korean government communicates to the world about gender, sexuality and achieving gender equality (see chapters 4 and 5). The visual images in *Women of Korea* are instrumental in portraying a positive image of gender relations in the DPRK, adapted from their original purpose of portraying positive role models for North Korean women.

I also refer to paintings and poster art published in *Women of Korea*, which represent North Korean women in the home and the workplace in different historical contexts. In revolutionary societies such as the DPRK, art and culture have a social function and do not

¹⁶⁸ Kim, "Revolutionary Mothers", pp. 754, 755.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

function as an isolated entity.¹⁷⁰ In a society where the government shapes reality, North Korean visual culture is far from spontaneous, as it educates, entertains, and mobilises people into the workforce.¹⁷¹ The North Korean government has strategically placed paintings, posters and other forms of visual media about current issues in spaces where the population have easy access.¹⁷² Therefore, in the DPRK, magazines entertain people, inform people and are employed to mobilise people to certain government causes, such as women joining the social labour force. Internationally, North Korean magazines work to inform the world of events happening within the DPRK and to propagate the government's policies towards achieving gender equality, economics, and the reunification of the Korean peninsula.

The employment of visual images by the North Korean government was based on principles initially employed by the Soviet Union as part of its Socialist Realism movement.¹⁷³ In 1932, the Soviet Union abolished all independent art groups and by 1934 announced Socialist Realism as the only approved form of art. This approach was based on the four principles of accessibility of art to the masses, class-consciousness, relevance to current political issues and faithfulness to the Party. Although these principles were drawn from Marxist-Leninist ideas, Socialist Realism was a creation of Joseph Stalin (1878–1953) and was later adopted by China and the DPRK, with national and cultural variations.¹⁷⁴ Stylistically North Korean art is more than a mere copy of Soviet Russian Socialist Realism, as North Korean art had to accord with Korea's specific historical conditions and cultural traditions.¹⁷⁵ Kim Il Sung pronounced that Korean painting, the indigenous post-revolutionary development of traditional ink painting, was the best representative of Korean styles and emotions.¹⁷⁶ Kim Jong Il described Korean painting as characterised by clarity, compactness and delicacy, which became the standard characteristics applied to all approved art in the DPRK.¹⁷⁷ This approach to North Korean art became the basis for all art forms including paintings and posters, which are distributed among the North Korean people and to the international community.

I then analyse communication between the North Korean government and CEDAW Committee from 2001 to 2005 (see chapter 7). During this period, the DPRK communicated

¹⁷⁰ Frank, *Exploring North Korean Arts*, p. 10.

¹⁷¹ Kim, "Dressed to Kill", p. 162.

¹⁷² Portal, *Art Under Control*, p. 21.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Frank, *Exploring North Korean Arts*, p. 11.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

most openly with the UN.¹⁷⁸ The relationship stalled shortly after 2005 though, due to the somewhat hostile relationship of the DPRK with the international community. Although the period of communication is short – just a few years – the reports exchanged between the DPRK and the UN are important as they demonstrate how the North Korean government presents itself to the world, and how it negotiates the gap between the views of gender equality presented in CEDAW and the actual conditions in the DPRK. On 11 September 2002, the DPRK submitted an initial report for consideration to the CEDAW Committee.¹⁷⁹ The DPRK's report is one of the only official sources available for gaining some indication of the stance of the North Korean government on women's rights and reveals the few-recorded cases where the government acknowledges gender discrimination and stereotyping within the country. In February 2005, the CEDAW committee provided a list of issues and questions to the DPRK and the North Korean representatives responded.¹⁸⁰ In July 2005, the CEDAW Committee prepared concluding comments and recommendations for the DPRK to improve the rights and status of women.¹⁸¹ Then, in September 2005, meetings were held between the DPRK representatives and the CEDAW Committee where concerns about the rights of North Korean women were raised and requests were made for the North Korean government to make realistic and attainable changes.¹⁸² Although communication between the DPRK and the UN has not continued since 2005, these documents are a valuable source of information as they display the state's position on the status and rights of North Korean women.

In comparison to North Korean reporting to the UN, I survey NGO reports and compare their findings to the official information offered by the DPRK (see chapters 7 and 8). NGO reports are based on the personal accounts from North Koreans who have left the country and reside in China, South Korea or a third country. In 2004, Amnesty International presented the report *Starved of Rights: Human Rights and the Food Crisis in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)*,¹⁸³ outlining human rights violations by the North Korean government against its people. These violations included no access to food, education and healthcare. The report also discusses the role and responsibility of the North Korean government and the international community to provide food aid to North Koreans. In the

¹⁷⁸ Geir Helgesen and Hatla Thelle, *Dialogue with North Korea? Preconditions for Talking Human Rights With a Hermit Kingdom* (Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies Press, 2013), p. 45.

¹⁷⁹ CEDAW, *Initial Report*.

¹⁸⁰ CEDAW, "List of issues and questions"; CEDAW, "Responses".

¹⁸¹ CEDAW, *Concluding Comment*.

¹⁸² CEDAW, "699th meeting"; CEDAW, "700th meeting".

¹⁸³ Amnesty International, *Starved of Rights*.

same year, the Good Friends: Centre for Peace, Human Rights and Refugees (Good Friends) compiled the report *Human Rights in North Korea and the Food Crisis: A Comprehensive Report on North Korean Human Rights Issues*.¹⁸⁴ The report reflects the voices of North Koreans and their experiences in the DPRK and in China.¹⁸⁵ Through the testimonies of the North Koreans, Good Friends has attempted to trace changes in North Korean society, and the current human rights situation of North Koreans in China.

In 2005, Anti-Slavery International commissioned the author Norma Kang Muico to write the report *An Absence of Choice: The sexual exploitation of North Korean women in China*.¹⁸⁶ The report exposes the vulnerability of North Korean women who have fled to China by their own accord or by trafficking. Included in the report is a wide range of case studies and testimonies documenting the sexual exploitation of North Korean women, including arranged marriages. The report also makes a case for North Korean people who reside in China to be considered refugees and not “economic migrants” as the Chinese government refers to them. The report concludes with recommendations and actions that need to be engaged by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Chinese and North Korean governments.

In response to the DPRK’s initial report submitted in 2002 to the CEDAW Committee, two South Korean NGOs submitted shadow reports to the Committee. The two NGO reports submitted outlined concerns about the status of North Korean women inside and outside the DPRK. In June 2005, Good Friends submitted a shadow report with concerns regarding the food shortage in the DPRK since the mid-1990s and the impact on women.¹⁸⁷ In particular, it focused on the trafficking and prostitution of women, their right to access healthcare, and the situation of North Korean women in China. In July of the same year, Citizens’ Alliance for North Korean Human Rights (NKHR) submitted a shadow report to the CEDAW Committee.¹⁸⁸ Concerns raised by NKHR include: gender-based discrimination against women in society and the home, violence against women in North Korean society and the sexual exploitation and trafficking of women. In chapter 7, I compare these findings to the DPRK’s reporting to the CEDAW Committee.

I also refer to three other reports by NKHR. *Flowers, Guns and Women on Bikes: Briefing Report on the Situation of Women’s Rights in the DPRK* (2009) focuses on the rights

¹⁸⁴ Good Friends, *Human Rights in North Korea*, p. 1.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Muico, *An Absence of Choice*.

¹⁸⁷ Good Friends, *Alternative NGO Report*.

¹⁸⁸ NKHR, *Class and Gender*.

of North Korean women and addresses the cultural determinants which negatively affect women.¹⁸⁹ The report then introduces the major areas in which North Korean women's rights are violated including: sexual harassment, domestic violence against women, and violence against in women detention facilities. There are sections on women's access to the education system, women's economic rights, and issues related to family planning, and maternal care. The report concludes with practical recommendations addressed directly to the DPRK, as well as to other governments and UN bodies. *The Battered Wheel of the Revolution: Briefing Report on the Situation of Violence against North Korean Women* (2011), analyses cultural and structural practices which are associated with violence against women in various contexts including the family, educational institutions, the military, local communities, detention centres, and in China and other countries.¹⁹⁰ The report also asserts the responsibility of the North Korean government to eradicate practices that are harmful to women, such as trafficking, especially as these practices have thus far avoided national scrutiny and intervention. The report then makes recommendations to the North Korean government and relevant international organisations on the eradication of practices that are violent against women. *Status of Women's Rights in the Context of Socio-Economic Changes in the DPRK* (2013) outlines the promulgation of the Women's Rights Act in 2010. The NGO suggests that the timing of the new Act was an outcome of North Korea's involvement at the UN and a response to the world's pressure for change in this area. The objective of the research was to document the condition of women's rights in the DPRK after the adoption of the new Women's Rights Act. The first part of the report analyses provisions of the Act, while the second part looks closely at the development in women's status and rights amid the on-going socio-economic changes in the DPRK. The report focuses on trends in North Korean society between 2010 and 2012 and outlines valuable information on the status and rights of women in recent years, which I refer to in chapter 8.

In chapter 8, I also refer to communication between the DPRK and the UN between 2006 and 2010. Specifically, I refer to two press releases issued by the permanent mission of the DPRK to the UN in 2008 and 2010, in response to items discussed during the meetings of the UNGA. In 2008, the DPRK participated in the 63rd session of the General Assembly and issued a press release in response to Item 56 "Advancement of Women".¹⁹¹ The press release

¹⁸⁹ Hosaniak, *Flowers, Guns and Women*, p. 11.

¹⁹⁰ Bang, *The Battered Wheel*.

¹⁹¹ "Statement by the Delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on Item 56 'Advancement of Women'", *Permanent Mission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the United Nations* (New York: Third Committee of the 63rd session of the United Nations General Assembly, 14 October 2008).

addressed the issue of achieving gender equality and the elimination of customary discrimination in the DPRK. Then, in 2010, a North Korean delegation participated at the 65th Session of the UNGA. In response to Agenda item 28 “Advancement of Women” discussed during the session, the North Korean Ambassador issued a press statement outlining the DPRK’s concerns about achieving gender equality in the country.¹⁹² Both press releases referred to the historical issue of so-called “comfort women” when addressing gender equality in the DPRK.

Chapter Outline

Chapter 2 outlines the historical background of North Korea from 1945 to 1990, paying particular attention to the differences between histories retold by North Korean historians as compared to academic historical accounts. By highlighting differences in historical accounts, it will give those outside the country a better understanding of why the DPRK makes its international policy decisions, as well as domestic policy decisions in regard to gender relations and achieving gender equality. More broadly, I outline events such as the occupation of the Korean peninsula by Japan, the formation of the two Koreas (officially in 1948), the Korean War (1950–1953), the consolidation of political power in the North by the Kim family, and the *Juche* ideology. This chapter ensures the reader is aware of several major historical events between 1945 and 1990 that have shaped the North Korean government’s perspectives on gender relations and achieving gender equality.

Chapter 3 focuses on the North Korean legal system between 1946 and 2010. From as early as 1946, North Korea included provisions in laws that addressed the rights of women in the labour force and politics, as well as access to education and healthcare. Key to the government’s promotion of gender equality was to bring women out of the home and into the workforce. The policy direction of the North Korean government therefore developed alongside the economic development of the country. Laws addressed the perceived domestic needs of women by legalising the establishment of childcare and pre-packaged food facilities. We shall see that issues such as gender discrimination and violence against women in all forms have not been addressed fully in the North Korean legal system to date.

Chapter 4 looks closely at the representation of exemplary North Korean women in the magazine *Women of Korea* between 1960 and 1970. The visual images published in

¹⁹² “Statement by Mr. Pak Tok Hun on Agenda item 28 ‘Advancement of Women’”, *Permanent Mission of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to the United Nations* (New York: Third Committee of the 65th session of the United Nations General Assembly, 14 September 2010).

Women of Korea represent North Korean women in the role of the revolutionary heroine. Two prominent exemplary heroines are Kang Ban Sok (1892–1932), mother of Kim Il Sung, and Kim Jong Suk (1919–1949), first wife of Kim Il Sung and mother of Kim Jong Il. The representations of these women were to promote qualities of loyalty to the Kim family and North Korean state, as well as caring and nurturing roles within the home. The domain of the battlefield as a space dominated by men was challenged to some extent by the representation of the revolutionary heroines. However, this was often undermined when heroines were represented performing domestic chores, such as cooking and sewing, as part of their revolutionary roles. In contrast, the visual representation of North Korean men as soldiers and defenders of the country, as fathers and carers within the home are largely absent in *Women of Korea*. Instead, the ubiquitous image of Kim Il Sung as the “Fatherly General”, who cares for all Korean children appears on most pages of the magazines. These representations reveal gendered assumptions about the roles of North Korean men and women in the home. I also consider the clothing worn by the heroines and their male equivalents. While women are dressed predominantly in ethnic Korean clothing (*joseonot* or *hanbok*) or feminised military uniforms, their male counterparts are clothed in military uniforms or western clothing.

Towards the end of the 1970s, the visual imagery of the revolutionary heroines was replaced by the representation of ordinary women who performed the roles of loyal and supportive wives to husband and family, as well as working outside in the so-called “light industries”.¹⁹³ In Chapter 5, I examine the visual and textual representation of North Korean women in the family unit and labour force in *Women of Korea* from the late 1970s on. During this period, the assumptions underlying the North Korean government’s gender equality policy are revealed in the pages of the magazine, as the visual images expose the acceptance of institutional gender inequality for the purpose of mobilising women into employment outside the home.¹⁹⁴ From this time, visual imagery and state laws emphasised the socialisation of childcare and the pre-packaged food industry as a way to lessen the burdens of women within the home. This illustrates, however, the government’s assumptions about men and women’s roles and responsibilities in the home. Women were seen to be the primary carers of children and responsible for domestic chores, while men worked outside the home. Close examination of the images in *Women of Korea* reveals a pattern of gender-segregation in the North Korean labour force, as women are represented in the “light industries” and not in the so-called “heavy industries”, which were reserved for men. Similarly, there are clear

¹⁹³ Kang, “The Patriarchal State”, p. 64.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

distinctions in the clothing worn by women and men in families and in the workplace, highlighting the government's gendered assumptions. Just as revolutionary heroines were represented wearing the *hanbok* or feminised military uniforms, ordinary North Korean women have continued to be represented in ethnic Korean clothing or in simple and modern clothing which retains distinctive feminine traits. In contrast, men are not dressed in ethnic Korean clothing but Western-style dress, suggesting they have moved forward into modern society while women are held in the past.

In Chapter 6, historical events in the DPRK during the 1990s are examined in order to provide vital background for an understanding of North Korea's communications with the CEDAW Committee in the early 2000s (discussed in chapter 7). Events surveyed in Chapter 6 include: the collapse of the Soviet Union 1991 and the termination of Soviet aid to the DPRK, resulting in a food crisis as the North Korean government was unable to provide food to all people. Coinciding with these events, the DPRK experienced widespread famine, drought, and floods during the mid-1990s.¹⁹⁵ Without adjusting the economic policy to the rapidly changing circumstances, the North Korean government instead reduced the daily food rations distributed through the Public Distribution System (PDS).¹⁹⁶ Then, on 8 July 1994, Kim Il Sung died, leaving the country in uncertainty until his son Kim Jong Il officially took power three years later. Initially, the North Korean government did not share openly with the world the full extent of the food crisis and instead isolated the country further. Although NGOs were allowed to work in the country, they were heavily monitored and were only allowed into selected areas of the country to distribute aid. From this time, an increased sense of responsibility was placed on women by both the government and society. In most cases, women shouldered the double burden of household chores and earning a living in the unofficial economy to support their families.

In chapter 7, I consider how the DPRK constructs a particular history of the country, which is depicted as having demonstrated a continuous and unbroken commitment to gender equality. In this chapter, I focus on the relationship between the North Korean government and the CEDAW Committee between 2001 and 2005. In North Korea's reporting, the state maintains that discrimination against women in all forms, verbal and physical, was abolished after the end of Japan's occupation of Korea and with the promulgation of state laws under the new regime. In other words, gender discrimination in the DPRK is generally relegated to

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 65.

¹⁹⁶ Stephan Haggard and Marcus Noland, *Hunger and Human Rights: The Politics of Famine in North Korea* (Washington: U.S. Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2005), p. 14; Amnesty International, *Starved of Rights*, p. 9.

the colonial period. However, a close examination of North Korea's reporting also reveals the extent to which gendered stereotypes underpin the government's views of the roles of women and men, even while it promotes a commitment to gender equality to the international community. I argue that despite the assertion of legal gender equality, the North Korean government still operates according to a binary model of gender, which shapes the opportunities for both men and women's participation in society and the home, although expectations have been challenged in practice through long years of economic recession and famine.

Chapter 8 analyses the communication between the DPRK and the UNGA, as well as other UN bodies, in regards to the state's policies on achieving gender equality within the country. I examine communication between the DPRK and the UN between 2006 and 2011, referring to two press releases issued by the permanent mission of the DPRK to the UN in 2008 and 2010, in response to items discussed during the UNGA. Both press releases confirm the DPRK's commitment to gender equality, but also raise concern about the attitude of Japan on the issue of so-called "comfort women". In the press releases, the DPRK asserts that until all pending issues of the past are recognised and clearly settled it is impossible to achieve the advancement of North Korean women for the present and the future. The government has taken the position that achieving gender equality in the DPRK is fundamentally tied to the occupation of the peninsula by Japan and therefore is seen as a historical rather than contemporary issue. In this chapter, I also examine how pressure from the international community has forced the North Korean government to amend existing state laws to include provisions for the greater protection of women's rights. In 2010, sixty-four years after the promulgation of the Law on the Equality of the Sexes, the DPRK adopted the Women's Rights Act. For the first time, the DPRK addressed contemporary issues faced by North Korean women and included provisions in the Act to protect their rights with respect to domestic violence, female infanticide and the protection of pregnant women who face execution. This final chapter takes us to the end of the regime of Kim Il Sung's son, Kim Jong Il.

Finally, in chapter 9, I conclude the thesis with my findings and conclusions.

2. Historical and Political Background (1945–1990)

*A man who is ignorant of the history and culture of his
nation can have no pride in his nation nor can he [sic]
become a true patriot.*

Kim Il Sung, 16 September 1964.¹

Introduction

In this chapter, I outline the historical and political background of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, North Korea) from 1945 to 1990. Events in the DPRK after 1990 will be outlined in chapter 6. The current gender ideology of the North Korean government is explicated with reference to the historical experiences of the Korean people so I recount events such as Japan's occupation of Korea (1910–1945), the division and formation of the two Koreas, the Korean War (1950–1953), and the consolidation of political power in the North by the Kim family. This chapter provides details of the major historical and political events that have helped to shape the North Korean government's perspective on gender relations and achieving gender equality within the country.

According to historian Yŏng-ho Ch'oe, after Japanese colonial rule ended on the Korean peninsula in 1945, there was a "far more militant" nationalist tone in North Korean historical scholarship compared to South Korean historiography.² Before the 1950s, North Korean scholarship concerned itself with fitting Marxist historiography to Korean history.³ After this time, though, class analysis was abandoned in favour of nationalistic categories, in accordance with the *Juche* idea.⁴ While Marxism-Leninism is still important in the DPRK, *Juche* has superseded this doctrine as the official state ideology, as will be discussed further

¹ Kim Il Sung, *On Improving Party Guidance Relating to the Preservation of Historical Sites and Relics* (speech to the Propaganda and Agitation Department, 16 September 1964).

² Yŏng-ho Ch'oe, "An Outline History of Korean Historiography", *Korean Studies*, 4 (1980), pp. 23–25.

³ Marxist historiography is influenced by Marxism and has contributed to the history of the working class, oppressed nationalities, and the methodology of history from below (people's history). Edward Palmer Thompson, "History from Below", *Times Literary Supplement*, 7 April 1966, issue 3345, pp. 279, 280.

⁴ Class analysis is research in sociology, politics, and economics from the point of view of the stratification of society. Kenneth M. Wells, "The Nation, the World, and the Dissolution of the Shin'ganhoe: Nationalist Historiography in South Korea", *Korean Studies*, 25 (2) (2001), p. 187.

below.⁵ Many important historical facts were omitted from the North Korean version of national history, while many “facts” were (re)invented or exaggerated to push audiences toward the politically-prescribed nationalistic conclusion.⁶ For example, the North Korean leader Kim Il Sung (1912–1994) commissioned historians as propagandists to glorify his own involvement in the anti-Japanese struggle in Manchuria (now the northeast of China).⁷ All Koreans were to imagine Kim Il Sung’s role in liberating the Korean peninsula from Japanese imperialism. The reinterpretation of North Korean history not only strengthened Kim Il Sung’s political control over the country but also created a narrative around the entire Kim family, including his mother Kang Ban Sok (1892–1932) and first wife Kim Jong Suk (1919–1949). The representations of these women as revolutionary heroines in English-language publications will be discussed in chapter 4.

Andrei Lankov provides three reasons why the North Korean government has manipulated national history. First, the government wants the North Korean people to believe that Korean history is more “ancient” than the history of other societies.⁸ This will ensure that it appears that there have been no influences from other countries, thus reinforcing Korean cultural practices and history. This leads to the second point that the DPRK wants to play down or deny foreign influences on Korean history. Finally, by establishing a long history which is not influenced from other countries this ensures the North Korean government is able to demonstrate that it has always played the decisive role in shaping Korean history and society.⁹ Therefore, when reading North Korean documents that recount historical events it is necessary to be attentive to this historical shaping by the state. While this has helped to shape the loyalty of the North Korean people, it has also driven a wedge between the DPRK and the international community, in particular with Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK, South Korea) and the United States of America (USA). It is thus important to highlight the differences between what is written by the international community and what has been constructed by North Korean historians. This gives a better understanding of why the DPRK makes its political and policy decisions in regards to different aspects of society, including gender relations and achieving gender equality.

⁵ Robert Weatherly and Jiyoung Song, “The Evolution of Human Rights thinking in North Korea”, *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 24 (2) (2008), p. 275.

⁶ Andrei Lankov, “Pyongyang paints history in its own image”, *Asian Times*, 11 May 2012, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Korea/NE11Dg01.html> (accessed 15 April 2014).

⁷ Yŏng-ho Ch’oe, “Reinterpreting Traditional History in North Korea”, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 40 (3) (1981), pp. 503–505, 522; Charles K. Armstrong, “Centering the Periphery: Manchurian Exile(s) and the North Korean State”, *Korean Studies*, 19 (1995), pp. 11, 12.

⁸ Lankov, “Pyongyang paints history”.

⁹ Ibid.

In this chapter, I begin by focusing on Japan's occupation of the Korean peninsula between 1910 and 1945. It is important to highlight the significance of this event in Korea's history as the North Korean government continues to draw on this period when discussing the current status of Korean women. I then move on to two events that have continued to shape relations between North and South Korea as well as the way in which the North Korean government communicates with the world, that is the division of Korea into two states (1948) and the Korean War (1950–1953). Finally, I examine the consolidation of power by the Kim family, the establishment of the *Juche* philosophy under the guidance of Kim Il Sung and the further development of this philosophy into "Socialism of Our Style". As the safest reference point when developing state policies is to reference the words of the Kims and the *Juche* philosophy, this section ensures a deeper understanding of the power held by the Kim leaders in North Korean society. When recalling North Korean history and more generally Korean history, I highlight differences between the state rhetoric of North Korean historians with other more accepted historical works.

Japan's Occupation of Korea (1910–1945)

There had always been encounters between Korea and the outside world, through invasions or relationships with other countries including the Chinese, Japanese, Mongols, Manchus, and French. Each of these powers contested for political control in Korea, as they sought to expand their influence in Asia.¹⁰ From the late nineteenth century, the Japanese government notified the Korean state of its intention to establish a stronger diplomatic and economic relationship between the two countries.¹¹ Initially, the Korean Empire did not respond favourably to this request so Japan threatened to dispatch warships to the peninsula. Faced by an imminent war the unprepared Korean government signed the Japan-Korea Treaty of Amity on 26 February 1876 under intense political pressure. Korean historians refer to the treaty as the Treaty of Kanghwa.¹² The treaty forced Korea to accept the new economic and political ties with Japan, which was the main beneficiary of the agreement.¹³ Under the Treaty three

¹⁰ United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), *Report of the detailed findings of the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, A/HRC/25/CRP.1 (Twenty-fifth session, Agenda item 4, distributed 7 February 2014), para. 90, p. 20.

¹¹ Andrew C. Nahm, *Introduction to Korean History and Culture* (Seoul: Hollym Corporation Publishers, 1993), p. 146.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 147.

¹³ United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), "Consideration of reports submitted by States Parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women", *Initial Report of States Parties: Democratic People's Republic of*

Korean ports were opened to Japanese use, tariffs paid by Japan in Korea lowered, extraterritorial rights were granted to Japanese citizens living in Korea, and the Korean government was forced to proclaim its independence from China.¹⁴ The Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895) resulted in Japan ending Korea’s tributary relationship with China by formally declaring Korea to be independent, a status that allowed Japan to increase its influence on the peninsula.¹⁵

From 1905, under intense political pressure from Japan, the Korean government was forced to sign additional treaties. The DPRK states that Japan illegally fabricated several treaties to assume total diplomatic rights over the Korean peninsula.¹⁶ On 17 November 1905, the Eulsa Treaty or Japan–Korea Protectorate Treaty was signed between Japan and Korea and then the Japan-Korea Treaty of 1907 (24 July 1907) was formally recognised by both states. North Korean historians refer to the treaties as the Ulsa 5-Point Treaty and the Jongmi 7-Point Treaty respectively.¹⁷ Each agreement led to greater control of the Korean peninsula, until Japan finally held all political and economic power over Korea on 22 August 1910, with the signing of the Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty, referred to as the Korea-Japan Amalgamation Treaty by North Korean historians.¹⁸ On 29 August 1910, the treaty was proclaimed to the public, thus officially starting the period of Japanese colonial rule in Korea.

From 1910, Japan formally declared Korea to be a colony, ending its monarchy and insisting on the allegiance of the Korean people to the Emperor of Japan.¹⁹ Japan imposed various modernising reforms in matters of social, administrative and economic organisation.²⁰ The results of Japan’s modernisation process on the peninsula were characterised by patterns of development and underdevelopment. The question of whether Japan ultimately assisted Korea in its development remains highly contested.²¹ During the colonial period, Koreans were prohibited from speaking the Korean-language and were made to adopt Japanese

Korea, CEDAW/C/PRK/1 (Beijing: thirty-third session, 5 to 22 July 2005), (distributed 11 September 2002), (distributed 11 September 2002), para. 11, p. 4.

¹⁴ Up until this time, Korea had been influenced politically by the Qing dynasty (1644–1911).

¹⁵ UNHRC, *Report of the detailed findings*, para. 90, p. 20.

¹⁶ CEDAW, *Initial Report*, para. 11, p. 4.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., para. 12, p. 4.

¹⁹ UNHRC, *Report of the detailed findings*, para. 90, p. 20.

²⁰ Ibid., para. 91, p. 20.

²¹ For further information see Daqing Yang, “Japanese Colonial Infrastructure in Northeast Asia”, in Charles K. Armstrong, Gilbert Rozman, Samuel S. Kim, and Stephen Kotkin (eds), *Korea at the Center: Dynamics of Regionalism in Northeast Asia* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2005), pp. 92–109.

names.²² Currently all Koreans regardless of which region they live in have overwhelmingly viewed the colonial experience as negative and brutal.²³

Secret societies and patriotic cultural movements within Korea and independence movements outside of Korea all played important roles in Korea's struggles for independence from Japan. Most notable is the March First Independence Movement of 1919.²⁴ Students and other Koreans against Japanese colonial rule were prompted to protest in several Korean cities, including Seoul (now the capital of ROK) and Pyongyang (now the capital of DPRK).²⁵ Approximately 2,000,000 Koreans participated in the protest and more than 1,500 demonstrations took place across numerous cities and towns in Korea.²⁶ The uprising was one of the earliest public displays of resistance by the Koreans. It was also in response to the former US President Woodrow Wilson's (1856–1924) speech, "Fourteen Points", presented at the Paris Peace Conference on 8 January 1919.²⁷ The speech outlined the right of national self-determination, free trade, open agreements and democracy; declared that World War I (1914–1918) had been fought for a moral cause; and called for post-war peace in Europe. Although not directly referring to the situation of Korea, after hearing Wilson's speech, Korean students studying in Tokyo published a statement demanding freedom from Japanese colonial rule in Korea. Coinciding with these events the former Korean Emperor Gojong (1852–1919) died on 21 January 1919 amid widespread suspicion that he had been poisoned.

In the early morning of 1 March 1919, the movement's core activists met at a restaurant in Seoul and read the Korean Declaration of Independence which had been drawn up by the historian Choe Nam-seon (1890–1957).²⁸ The Declaration outlined Three Open Pledges as:

Our action today represents the demand of our people for justice, humanity, survival, and dignity. It manifests our spirit of freedom and should not engender anti-foreign feelings.

²² UNHRC, *Report of the detailed findings*, para. 91, p. 20.

²³ *Ibid.*, para. 90, p. 20.

²⁴ The name "March First Independence Movement" is also referred to as the Samil Movement (*Samil Undong*) or Manse Demonstrations (*Manse Undong*).

²⁵ UNHRC, *Report of the detailed findings*, para. 92, pp. 20, 21.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ The Paris Peace Conference was held between Allied countries – the Russian Empire, the French Republic, the British Empire, the Empire of Japan (plus colonies), the Kingdom of Italy (plus colonies), the United States (plus overseas dependencies). At the conference, the peace terms were set out for the defeated Central Powers – the German Empire (plus colonies), the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Ottoman Empire and the Kingdom of Bulgaria).

²⁸ Yŏng-ho Ch'oe, Peter H. Lee and Wm. Theodore de Bary (eds), *Sources of Korean Tradition*, (vol. 2), (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), pp. 337–339.

To the last one of us and to the last moment possible, we shall unhesitatingly publicise the views of our people, as is our right.

All our actions should scrupulously uphold public order, and our demands and our attitudes must be honourable and upright.²⁹

The leaders of the movement signed the document and sent a copy to the Japanese Governor General, Count Hasegawa Yoshimichi (1850–1924).³⁰ The leaders of the movement then telephoned the central police station in Seoul to inform them of their actions. The organisers were arrested soon after. Massive crowds assembled in Pagoda Park (now known as Tapgol Park, Seoul) to hear the student, Chung Jae-yong (dates unknown), read the Korean Declaration of Independence publicly. The gathering then formed into a peaceful procession but the Japanese military police attempted to suppress the movement. The size and intensity of the movement stunned the Japanese who had assumed that their brutal policies would eventually break the Korean national spirit, not strengthen it.³¹ As the number of protesters grew, suppression by the Japanese police force and army turned to violence, which resulted in the killing of Koreans.³²

The ensuing suppression of the Korean people and the pursuit of activists by the Japanese police resulted in the expatriation of many Korean leaders into Manchuria, Shanghai and other parts of China where they continued their activism. As a result, the movement was a catalyst for the establishment of the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea in Shanghai on 13 April 1919.³³ Despite renewed Japanese efforts to end political resistance, Korean nationalists and communists continued to agitate against Japan in scattered movements throughout the country.³⁴

According to the DPRK, the March First Independence Movement failed due to the lack of leadership by an outstanding leader.³⁵ It is said that the anti-Japanese liberation movement was not victorious until the leadership of Kim Il Sung's father Kim Hyong Jik (1884–1926), who personally founded the largest underground anti-Japanese revolutionary

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Hasegawa was the Japanese Governor General of Korea from 1916 to 1919.

³¹ Young Ick Lew, *Brief History of Korea. A Bird's Eye View* (New York: The Korean Society, 2000), p. 23.

³² Seung-Young Kim, *American Diplomacy and Strategy Toward Korea and Northeast Asia, 1882–1950 and After* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 64, 65.

³³ Frank Baldwin, *The March First Movement: Korean Challenge and Japanese Response* (New York: Columbia University, 1972), p. 23.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Korean Friendship Association (KFA), *Modern Korea*, (Official Website of DPRK, 2011), <http://www.korea-dpr.com/modern.html> (accessed 3 January 2014).

organisation at home and abroad, the Korean National Association (KNA) in Pyongyang on 23 March 1917.³⁶ While working to advance the anti-Japanese struggle, the Japanese police arrested Kim Hyong Jik and imprisoned him. While in jail Kim Hyong Jik is said to have heard the news of the October Revolution in Russia in 1917, and the seizure of state power by urban workers and revolutionaries.³⁷ In light of this information, Kim Hyong Jik is said to have reviewed the anti-Japanese movement in Korea, and determined that the only valid way to achieve national independence and win freedom and liberation for the Korean people was to rely on a proletarian revolution.³⁸ In October 1918, upon his release from prison, Kim Hyong Jik shifted the KNA to the northern part of Korea near the border. It was from this time that the guiding principles of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic and the future Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (Soviet Union, USSR) shaped the thinking of Kim Hyong Jik and his son Kim Il Sung. The influence of the Soviet Union weighed heavily on Kim Il Sung in particular, so much so that it led to the formal establishment of a socialist DPRK in 1948.

From 1926, on the death of his father, it is said that Kim Il Sung took over the responsibility to liberate the Korean peninsula from Japan.³⁹ On 5 May 1936, in opposition to the Japanese occupation of Korea, the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland (ARF) was said to be personally established by Kim Il Sung to unite anti-Japanese forces within Korea and abroad. While leading the preparation for the foundation of the Association, Kim Il Sung is said to have personally drafted the Ten-Point Programme of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland (see Appendix 3) and the Declaration of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland (see Appendix 4).⁴⁰ Based on this preparation, Kim Il

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ October Revolution in Russia was instrumental to larger Russian Revolution (8 March – 8 November 1917), which dismantled the Tsarist autocracy and led to the creation of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic.

³⁸ KFA, *Modern Korea*.

³⁹ Ibid. For further information on Kim Il Sung's involvement in guerrilla warfare during the occupation of Korea see Dae-Sook Suh, *Kim Il Sung: The North Korean Leader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), pp. 15-55; Adrian Buzo, *The Guerilla Dynasty: Politics and Leadership in North Korea* (London: IB Tauris, 1999), pp.1-27. On the construction of the myth of Kim Il Sung's role in the founding of North Korea, see Fyodor Tertitskiy, "The Ascension of the Ordinary Man: How the Personality Cult of Kim Il-Sung was Constructed", *Acta Koreana*, 18 (1) (June 2015): 209–231.

⁴⁰ Ibid; Kim Il Sung, *Ten-Point Programme of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland*, (5 May 1936), (United Kingdom: the Association or the Study of Songun Politics, 2009), http://www.uk-songun.com/index.php?p=1_303_THE-TEN-POINT-PROGRAMME-OF-THE-ASSOCIATION-FOR-THE-RESTORATION-OF-THE-FATHERLAND (accessed 10 November 2014); Kim Il Sung, *Declaration of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland*, (5 May 1936), (United Kingdom: the Association or the Study of Songun Politics, 2009), http://www.uk-songun.com/index.php?p=1_412_THE-INAUGURAL-DECLARATION-OF-THE-ASSOCIATION-FOR-THE-RESTORATION-OF-THE-FATHERLAND (accessed 10 November 2014).

Sung called a meeting of military and political cadres of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army to Donggang (Fusong County, Jilin, China) from 1 to 15 May 1936. At the meeting, both the Programme and the Declaration of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland were made public. These documents embodied North Korea's thoughts on the social and political rights of all people, with particular focus on the rights of Korean women. The provisions included in these documents would become key principles in the first DPRK Constitution in 1948. Laws, policy reform, and the first Constitution promulgated during the revolutionary period will be discussed in detail in chapter 3. Under the guidance of Kim Il Sung the ARF is said to have continued to fight back against the Japanese colonisers until Korea was liberated in 1945.

In November 1943, in anticipation of Japan's defeat, the Allied Powers at the Cairo Conference set out an agreement for the independence of Korea.⁴¹ Then US President Franklin Roosevelt (1882–1945), British Prime Minister Winston Churchill (1874–1965) and China's Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek (1887–1975) met at the Conference in part to discuss what should happen to Japan's colonies once the Second World War ended. They agreed that Japan should lose all territories it had conquered by force, including Korea. After the conference, a joint statement affirmed that, "[t]he aforesaid three great powers, mindful of the enslavement of the people of Korea, are determined that in due course Korea shall become free and independent".⁴² For some Korean nationalists who wanted immediate independence, the phrase "in due course" caused great dismay. Any further discussion about Korea among the Allies waited until victory over Japan.⁴³

The Establishment of Two Koreas

Two days after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima on 6 August 1945, the Soviets invaded Manchuria.⁴⁴ The American leaders, though, worried that the whole Korean peninsula might be occupied by the Soviet Union, and feared this could lead to a Soviet occupied Japan. On

⁴¹ Ian C. B. Dear and Michael R. D. Foot (eds), *The Oxford Companion to World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 29.

⁴² *Cairo communiqué*, (released 1 December 1943), (National Diet Library, 2003–2004), http://www.ndl.go.jp/constitution/e/shiryo/01/002_46/002_46tx.html (accessed 8 April 2014).

⁴³ The Allies were the countries that opposed the Axis powers during the World War II (1939–1945) and included: the USA, Britain, France, USSR, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Denmark, Greece, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, South Africa, Yugoslavia. The Allies wanted to stop German, Italian, and Japanese aggression.

⁴⁴ J. Samuel Walker, *Prompt and Utter Destruction: Truman and the Use of Atomic Bombs against Japan* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), pp. 15, 16. The Yalta Conference was held in Crimea, between the USA, UK, and the Soviet Union, for the purpose of discussing Europe's post-war reorganisation.

10 August 1945, two American colonels, Dean Rusk (1909–1994) and Charles Bonesteel (1909–1977), proposed the 38th parallel as the administrative line for the two opposing armies of the US and Soviet Union.⁴⁵ The officers' plans for Korea were incorporated into General Order No. 1 on the administration of post-war Japan.⁴⁶ More interested in obtaining the territories north of Hokkaido, the then Soviet leader Joseph Stalin (1922–1952) agreed to the dividing line. This action resulted in the division of the Korean peninsula, which would be governed by two rival provisional administrations. In the north, the country was under the administration of the Soviet Union and in the south by the US. Soon after the division of the country mistrust grew rapidly between competing administrations and no agreement could be reached on how to reconcile competing provisional governments. The US continued to be concerned that the Soviet Union would not stop at the 38th parallel, and would try to occupy the entire Korean peninsula.⁴⁷ Japan surrendered on 15 August 1945, and was occupied by the Allies until 1952.

With the abrupt departure of Japan from the Korean peninsula, many Koreans were displaced. It is estimated that by 1945, 20 per cent of all Koreans were moved, with 11 per cent outside of Korea.⁴⁸ There were approximately 2.4 million Koreans in Japan, 2 million in China and about 200,000 in the Soviet Union.⁴⁹ During the colonial period, Japan had instigated major industrialisation on the peninsula as part of its war effort and much of the Korean population were uprooted from its agrarian base. Koreans were sent to labour in factories in the northern part of the peninsula and in Manchuria and to mines and other enterprises in Japan. Many of the labourers worked under terrible conditions, and a large number of Korean men and women were conscripted as forced labour. Consequently, with the defeat of Japan in 1945, millions of displaced Koreans sought to return home while others stayed behind in Japan, China and the Soviet Union.⁵⁰ The legacy of this forced displacement includes substantial minority populations of Koreans in Japan and northern China.⁵¹

⁴⁵ They used a small National Geographic map of Asia to decide on the 38th parallel, dividing the country in half while leaving the capital Seoul under American control. James F. Schnabel, *United States Army in the Korean War. Policy and Direction: The First Year* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, United States Army, 1972), pp. 8–11.

⁴⁶ On 17 August 1945, General Order No.1 was prepared by the US military Joint Chiefs of Staff and approved by the then US President Harry S. Truman (1884–1972).

⁴⁷ Charles K. Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution, 1945–1950* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 41.

⁴⁸ Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Volume 1: Liberation and Emergence of Separate Regimes 1945–1947* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 25.

⁴⁹ Charles K. Armstrong, *The Koreans* (New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 95–101.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 108–111.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

On 13 October 1945, the North Korean Bureau of the Communist Party of Korea (North Korean Bureau) was established.⁵² Historians debate the initial meeting of the Communist Party and claim it was held on 10 October and not 13 October as the early date is regarded as the “Party Foundation Day” in the DPRK.⁵³ Nevertheless, although technically under the control of the Seoul-based Communist Party, the North Korean Bureau had little contact with Seoul and instead worked closely with the Soviet Union.⁵⁴ The first chairperson of the Party was Kim Yong-bom (dates unknown), who had been sent to Korea by the Communist International (also known as the Third International or Comintern, 1919–1943) in the 1930s to conduct underground activities.⁵⁵

In December 1945, the foreign ministers of the Soviet Union, the US and United Kingdom (UK) met in Moscow where they agreed to a joint trusteeship of Korea for five years. Nationalists across Korea staged rallies against the decision. At the same time, Kim Il Sung, who had been a member of the North Korean Bureau, replaced Kim Yong-bom as chairperson. North Korean historians seek to downplay the roles of the early communist leaders other than Kim Il Sung and his family members and dispute Kim Yong-bom’s involvement in the Party. Instead, it is claimed, Kim Il Sung was promoted to the position of the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Korea at the same time it was established in October 1945.⁵⁶

In spring 1946, the Communist Party of Korea was renamed the Communist Party of North Korea.⁵⁷ By July 1946, the Party merged with the New People’s Party, a party composed mostly of Korean Communists who had been exiled to China during the occupation of Korea.⁵⁸ On 28 July 1946, a special commission between the two parties ratified the merger, and on 29 July 1946, the merger became official.⁵⁹ One month later, from 28 to 30 August 1946, the new party held a founding conference and established the

⁵² Andrei Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung: The Formation of North Korea, 1945–1960* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2002), p. 20; Adrian Buzo, *The Guerilla Dynasty: Politics and Leadership in North Korea* (London: IB Tauris, 1999), pp. 28–56.

⁵³ KFA, *Modern Korea*.

⁵⁴ The Communist Party of Korea was established in Seoul in 1925 during a secret meeting.

⁵⁵ The Comintern was an international communist organisation established in Moscow, during March 1919 on the initiative of the Bolshevik Party of Russia. John Riddell, *Comintern, Revolutionary Internationalism in Lenin’s Time* (UK: Socialist Worker, 2007), <http://www.socialistworker.co.uk/> (accessed 19 April 2014) p. 4.

⁵⁶ Nahm, *Korean History*, p. 219.

⁵⁷ Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung*, p. 29.

⁵⁸ The Party’s political position was moderate in some issues compared to the Communist Party of North Korea so it was popular with a wide range of Korean people. Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung*, p. 29; Kim Il Sung, *Kim Il Sung, Selected Works 1* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1971), pp. 102–120.

⁵⁹ Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung*, p. 31.

Workers' Party of North Korea (WPNK).⁶⁰ At the conference, Kim Tu-bong (1889–1958) (the leader of the New People's Party) was elected the first Chairperson of the WPNK, while Kim Il Sung was appointed Deputy Chairperson.⁶¹ Despite his formal downgrading in the party hierarchy, Kim Il Sung remained the party's unofficial leader.⁶² Official North Korean documents deny the position held by Kim Tu-bong and instead insist that Kim Il Sung was the first Chairperson of the WPNK.⁶³ It is said that under the guidance of Kim Il Sung, the Party carried out reform in all aspects of Korean society in the aim of building a socialist state. This included developing laws on agrarian reform, on nationalisation of industries, transport, communications, and banks, reform on labour, and on gender equality. At the same time, various steps were taken to reform the judicial and educational systems and cultural affairs. These democratic reforms and the involvement of Kim Il Sung in the process of state reform as presented by historians other than North Koreans will be discussed in chapter 3.

On 17 September 1947, the USA brought the issue of governance on the Korean peninsula before the United Nations General Assembly. The Soviet Union opposed the United Nations' (UN) involvement in any issue on the peninsula because Koreans had not been asked to participate. On 14 November 1947, the UN passed Resolution 112 (II), officially establishing the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK) to supervise government elections in both North and South Korea, with a view to developing a single national government.⁶⁴ The resolution also aimed to assist in the withdrawal of the occupying forces, and guide the new political entity of Korea to full independence. The commission soon found that the communist administration in the north would not allow it to operate to its full potential in the northern region. The Soviet Union argued that UNTCOK should be boycotted and any election non-binding. As UNTCOK could not carry out its mandate in the north, it subsequently recommended that elections be held in the south and that the winner be recognised as the sole legitimate Korean government.

On 10 May 1948, a general election was held in South Korea and Syngman Rhee (1875–1965) was elected President of the ROK.⁶⁵ Both the UN and the US supported his presidential candidacy. The report of UNTCOK, approved by a United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 195 (III) on 12 December 1948, stated that a lawful election

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., pp. 31, 32.

⁶³ KFA, *Modern Korea*.

⁶⁴ United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), *The Problem of the Independence of Korea*, 112 (II), (General Assembly, second session, 14 November 1947), pp. 16–18.

⁶⁵ Nahm, *Korean History*, pp. 230–232.

had been held only in the south of the country.⁶⁶ The same resolution also created the United Nations Commission on Korea (UNCOK) to replace UNTCOK. UNCOK was established to help Korea move towards unification, as well as to observe the activities of military forces on the peninsula. UNCOK was able to assist in the departure of the occupying forces, but had little success when it came to furthering Korean unification and, indeed, on 25 August 1948 elections were held in the north electing deputies to the Supreme People's Assembly (SPA). North Korean historians state that in the north 99.97 per cent of voters took part in the election and that in the south 77.52 per cent of the electorate participated.⁶⁷ As a result, 572 candidates were said to be elected to the SPA. The first session of the SPA was then held in Pyongyang on 9 September 1948, which announced to the world the foundation of the DPRK and the election of Kim Il Sung as the Premier of the Cabinet and the head of the new state in what was described as an uncontested election.⁶⁸ Since the election of Kim Il Sung to his position of political power, political opposition to the government has not been permitted, and anyone expressing opinions contrary to the state risks punishment and imprisonment.⁶⁹

Nine months after the first election was held in the DPRK, the ruling party, the Worker's Party of Korea (WPK) was established on 30 June 1949. At the time, the Workers' Parties of North and South Korea merged to create one Party and Kim Il Sung was promoted to the position of General Secretary (Party Chair). Knowing that he had the support of the WPK and the Soviet Union, Kim Il Sung removed people who did not support his political position.⁷⁰ From this time, the Soviet Union withdrew its administration and military forces from the DPRK.

The Korean War (1950–1953)

Between 1945 and 1948, the 38th parallel turned into a heavily guarded border, while both sides of the divided peninsula contemplated the use of military force to achieve reunification.⁷¹ During 1949, the war of words between the two Koreas escalated, and

⁶⁶ United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), *The Problem of the Independence of Korea*, 195 (III), (General Assembly, third session, 12 December 1948), pp. 25–27.

⁶⁷ KFA, *Modern Korea*.

⁶⁸ United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), *Analysis of the Situation of Children and Women in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea* (Thailand: Keen Publishing Co Ltd, 2006), p. 6; For further information on the consolidation of power by Kim Il Sung see Suh, *Kim Il Sung*, pp.55-95.

⁶⁹ Amnesty International, *Starved of Rights: Human Rights and the Food Crisis in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)*, Index: ASA24/003 /2004 (New York: Amnesty International, 2004), p. 2.

⁷⁰ Andrei Lankov, "Kim Takes Control: The "Great Purge" in North Korea, 1956–1960", *Korean Studies*, 26 (1) (2002), p. 89.

⁷¹ UNHRC, *Report of the detailed findings*, para. 102, p. 23; Wada Haruki, *The Korean War: An International History* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013).

infiltration and clashes along the border increased. As a result the UN changed UNCOK's mandate via Resolution 293 (IV) of 21 October 1949, adding the task of observing and reporting on any developments "which might lead to or otherwise involve military conflict in Korea".⁷² In March 1950, UNCOK requested additional military observers to monitor the situation on the peninsula. In mid-1950, tensions along the Korean border reached breaking point. In the early hours of 25 June 1950, the North Korean army crossed the 38th parallel and invaded South Korea. North Korean historians assert, though, that it was the USA's armed invasion of the DPRK that initiated the war.⁷³ On the same day that the north invaded the south, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) met to discuss the situation and adopted Resolution 82.⁷⁴ The resolution noted the DPRK's attack on South Korea and called upon the immediate withdrawal of North Korean troops.

The Soviet delegation to the UNSC did not attend the meeting as they were boycotting the UN for recognising Chiang Kai-shek's (1887–1975) government in Taiwan as the official government for China whilst ignoring Mao Zedong's (1893–1976) communist regime in Beijing. Therefore, the expected use of the veto by the USSR did not occur. At the meeting, the USA claimed that the DPRK had broken world peace by attacking South Korea. America called on the DPRK to withdraw to the 38th parallel and nine out of the eleven countries in the UNSC supported this view.⁷⁵ Two days later on 27 June 1950, the USA called on the UN to use force to get the DPRK out of South Korea as the North Korean government had ignored the Security Council's resolution of 25 June. The resolution was voted on, but again the Soviet Union did not use its veto as it was still boycotting the UN, and Yugoslavia abstained. From this meeting Resolution 83 was adopted, recommending that member states of the UN assist the ROK to "repel the armed attack and restore international peace and security in the area".⁷⁶

Once member states voted for the UN to intervene in Korea, the UN had to formulate its plan. Sixteen UN member states provided troops under a UN Joint Command, which would fight alongside the South Korean Army.⁷⁷ The Joint Command was dominated by the

⁷² United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), *The Problem of the Independence of Korea*, 293 (IV), (General Assembly, fourth session, 21 October 1949), pp. 15, 16.

⁷³ KFA, *Modern Korea*.

⁷⁴ United Nations Security Council (UNSC), *Complaint of aggression upon the Republic of Korea*, S/RES/82 (473rd meeting of the Security Council, 25 June 1950), p. 4.

⁷⁵ The Soviet Union did not vote and Yugoslavia abstained from voting.

⁷⁶ United Nations Security Council (UNSC), *Complaint of aggression upon the Republic of Korea*, S/RES/83 (474th meeting of the Security Council, 25 June 1950), p. 5.

⁷⁷ The UN Joint Command is the command structure for the multinational military forces supporting South Korea during the Korean War. The US, Great Britain, Australia, Canada, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Colombia, Ethiopia, South Africa, New Zealand, Turkey, Greece, Thailand, Philippines and Luxembourg sent

USA under the command of General Douglas MacArthur (1880–1964).⁷⁸ On 15 September 1950, UN troops landed at Inchon, South Korea. The UN effectively cut the North Korean army in half and pushed them out of South Korea. Under the leadership of General MacArthur, Allied troops then advanced into the DPRK, despite warnings from the DPRK's ally, China. This resulted in a Chinese attack on UN troops and between November 1950 and January 1951, the Chinese managed to push back the UN force. After a clash with the then US President Harry S. Truman (1884–1972), General MacArthur was sacked and the war degenerated into a stalemate with neither the UN nor the Chinese managing to gain the upper hand. While not directly committing forces to the conflict, the Soviet Union provided material aid to both the North Korean and Chinese armies.

Despite the outbreak of fighting, UNCOK remained in existence and its task continued to be to submit reports to the UN, observe the mandate of North Korea's withdrawal from the south, and to keep the UNSC informed of the progress of its resolution. UNCOK was officially terminated on 7 October 1950 when the UNGA created the United Nations Commission for the Unification and Rehabilitation of Korea (UNCURK) under Resolution 376(V).⁷⁹ UNCURK consisted of representatives from Australia, Chile, Netherlands, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand and Turkey and assumed the functions of UNCOK.

On 27 July 1953, the fighting finally ended on the Korean peninsula, when a ceasefire was agreed upon between the USA, North Korea and China at Panmunjom (Gyeonggi Province, ROK), which has continued to this day. The Korean Armistice Agreement was signed by the then US Army Lieutenant General William Harrison Junior (1895–1987), representing the UN Command, North Korean General Nam Il (1915–1976), representing the North Korean People's Army, and the Chinese People's Volunteer Army. The document was designed to “insure a complete cessation of hostilities and of all acts of armed force in Korea until a final peaceful settlement is achieved”.⁸⁰ The Armistice agreed on the permanent establishment of a three-mile wide buffer zone, known as the Demilitarised Zone (or DMZ),

fighting units. While Norway, Sweden, Denmark, India, and Italy contributed military hospitals and field ambulances.

⁷⁸ The choice of MacArthur was hardly contentious as his ultimate success in the Pacific War (1941–1945) made him one of the most famous generals of his era.

⁷⁹ United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), *The Problem of the Independence of Korea*, 376 (V), (General Assembly, fifth session, 7 October 1950), pp. 9, 10.

⁸⁰ *Text of the Korean War Armistice Agreement* (27 July 1953), <http://news.findlaw.com/cnn/docs/korea/kwarmagr072753.html> (accessed 8 April 2014).

between the two countries;⁸¹ put into force a cease-fire, and finalised the repatriation of prisoners of war. No final peaceful settlement has ever been achieved to this day on the Korean peninsula.⁸²

In the DPRK, the Korean War is far from forgotten and stories of war sacrifices were used to bolster the narrative of Kim Il Sung's "forging of the nation".⁸³ The authorised history of North Korea remains that the Fatherland Liberation War was started by the USA, and that Kim Il Sung not only defended the nation but wrought devastation on the American military.⁸⁴ This rhetoric has continued to date. For example, food aid from the USA provided during the famine of the 1990s was reportedly explained to the population as war reparations. In both North and South Korea, there remains fear of invasion and infiltration. In the DPRK, this fear has been instrumental in maintaining a state of emergency invoked to justify harsh governmental rule and its accompanying human rights violations.⁸⁵ In this context, perceived political dissidents have been branded as spies in the service of foreign powers and shortages in food and other essential means of survival have been blamed on a hostile outside world. Nevertheless, with the end of the Korean War in 1953, both the North and South Korean governments were left to rebuild. In South Korea the state was supported by the USA, while the rebuilding of the DPRK was possible due to the extensive financial and agricultural assistance of the Chinese and Soviet governments over several years.⁸⁶

Consolidation of Power by Kim Il Sung

While Confucian principles have remained enmeshed in Korean culture, in the North they were in many ways instrumental to Kim Il Sung's effort to consolidate his authority and that of the WPK under his control.⁸⁷ The relationship between sovereign and subject that is expressed as a mutually binding one under Confucian principles has been stretched to one of absolute obedience to the North Korean leader. Within the North Korean context, this principle is articulated in the *Suryong* (Supreme Leader) system established by Kim Il Sung

⁸¹ Edward R. Miller-Jones (ed), *North Korea: Leadership of the Hermit Kingdom* (Mauritius: Fastbook Publishing, 2010), p. 4.

⁸² For further information on the unfinished Korean War see Charles Armstrong, *Tyranny of the Weak: North Korea and the World, 1950-1992* (New York, Cornell University Press, 2016), pp. 10-51.

⁸³ UNHRC, *Report of the detailed findings*, para. 105, p. 26.

⁸⁴ The Day of Victory in the Great Fatherland Liberation War is a national holiday in the DPRK and is celebrated on 27 July to mark the end of the Korean War in 1953.

⁸⁵ UNHRC, *Report of the detailed findings*, para. 106, p. 26.

⁸⁶ Charles K. Armstrong, "The Destruction and Reconstruction of North Korea, 1950-1960", *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, 8 (51) (2010); Zhihua Shen and Yafeng Xia, "China and the Post-War Reconstruction of North Korea, 1953-1961", *North Korea International Documentation Project*, e-Dossier 4 (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2012).

⁸⁷ UNHRC, *Report of the detailed findings*, para. 110, p. 27.

and carried on by his son Kim Jong Il (1941–2011) and grandson Kim Jong Un (1983–).⁸⁸ The *Suryong* system positioned Kim Il Sung and his heir apparent as unchallenged rulers due to their proclaimed wisdom and benevolence under which the general population would live in a prosperous and righteous society.

In 1953, whilst rebuilding the DPRK after the Korean War, Kim Il Sung sought to consolidate further his political power by eliminating anyone perceived to be a threat to his position.⁸⁹ Those perceived as threats were imprisoned or exiled to remote agricultural and mining villages. Up until this point, North Korean politics had been represented by four factions: the *Yan'an* faction made up of returnees from China, the Soviet Koreans, native Korean communists, and Kim Il Sung's own loyal followers who had fought against Japan in the 1930s and 1940s. Kim Il Sung and his followers had the advantage of appearing as national heroes due to their resistance against the Japanese and there was no question about their patriotism. By contrast, the *Yan'an* and Soviet Korean groups tended to appear as the representatives of other nations.⁹⁰ South Korean communist sympathisers who had defected to the North were also accused of espionage and other crimes, and subsequently killed.

During a visit to Moscow in 1955, Kim Il Sung was criticised by the Soviet Union for practising a Stalinist style cult of personality. On 29 May 1956, at meetings held between Soviet officials and the North Korean ambassador to the Soviet Union, Li Sangjo (dates unknown), the outspoken North Korean representative, encouraged the Soviet Leader Nikita Khrushchev (1894–1971) to criticise Kim Il Sung during their upcoming visit to Moscow.⁹¹ Previously, on 25 February 1956 Khrushchev had denounced Joseph Stalin and the “Stalin cult” in a speech to the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.⁹² The speech sent shock waves through communist countries, such as the DPRK, Albania, and China. In the North Korean context, Li Sangjo criticised Kim Il Sung's cult of personality, the post-war reliance on heavy industry, and the party's ideological work.⁹³ He also charged Kim Il Sung with rewriting history to appear as if his guerrilla faction had single-handedly liberated the Korean peninsula from the Japanese, completely ignoring the assistance of the

⁸⁷ The *Suryong* system embeds all powers of the state, party and military under one singular leader.

⁸⁹ Suh, *Kim Il Sung*, pp. 107–137.

⁹⁰ Ibid., pp. 133–136.

⁹¹ James F. Person, “New Evidence on North Korea in 1956”, *Cold War International History Project*, Bulletin 16 (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2007/2008), p. 450.

⁹² “1956: Khrushchev lashes out at Stalin”, *BBC News*, 25 February 2014, http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/february/25/newsid_2703000/2703581.stm (accessed 21 April 2014); “Khrushchev denounces Stalin in speech to Soviet communists”, *Oxford University Press*, 25 February 2012, <https://blog.oup.com/2012/02/khrushchev-denounces-stalin-speech-soviet-communists/> (accessed 21 April 2014).

⁹³ Person, “North Korea in 1956”, p. 450.

Chinese Communist Party.⁹⁴ While Kim Il Sung was visiting Moscow to personally meet with Khrushchev in June 1956, the Soviets recommended that Kim Il Sung discard the personality cult, adhere to the ideas of collective leadership, remove falsified history accounts from textbooks, and work towards improving the living standards of the Korean people, which remained poor and below pre-war standards.

During Kim Il Sung's visit to Moscow a group of his opponents tried to seize control of government in the DPRK.⁹⁵ They denounced Kim Il Sung as a tyrant who practised arbitrary, one-man rule and criticised his Stalinist rule. When Kim Il Sung hastily returned home, the brief attempt at political liberalisation of the DPRK ended when General O Chin-u (1917–1995) dispatched troops to the streets of Pyongyang to prevent any further protests in favour of reform.⁹⁶ A series of purges followed from 1956 to 1958, and by 1961 the last remaining opposition to Kim Il Sung had disappeared.⁹⁷ In order to sustain the large-scale purges of the late 1950s, a system of secret political prison camps was set up and later expanded.⁹⁸

With the aftermath of the failed 1956 coup and the continued presence of the Chinese People's Liberation Army in the DPRK, there was a growing nationalistic mood in Pyongyang. Relations with China were strained because of the continued presence of the Chinese military following the 1953 Korean Armistice Agreement.⁹⁹ The army increasingly came to be seen as occupation forces but by 1958 the last of the Chinese forces had withdrawn from the country. Aside from the presence of Chinese troops in the DPRK, the leadership in Beijing was nearly as unenthusiastic about Kim Il Sung as the Soviets. The former Chinese leader Mao Zedong criticised Kim Il Sung for having started the whole "idiotic war", referring to the Korean War, and for being an incompetent military commander who should have been removed from power.¹⁰⁰ In the end, however, Kim Il Sung remained in power partly because the Soviets turned their attention to the Hungarian Uprising (23

⁹⁴ Li Sangjo reported that over 30,000 people were in prison for unjust and arbitrary reasons such as having made a book cover from a piece of newspaper containing Kim Il Sung's portrait. Person, "North Korea in 1956", pp. 458, 459, 594.

⁹⁵ James F. Person, "'We Need Help from Outside': The North Korean Opposition Movement of 1956", *Cold War International History Project*, Working Paper 52 (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2006); Person, "North Korea in 1956", p. 447.

⁹⁶ Person, "North Korea in 1956", p. 460.

⁹⁷ Ibid, pp. 460, 461.

⁹⁸ UNHRC, *Report of the detailed findings*, para. 743, p. 227.

⁹⁹ The Chinese People's Liberation Army was established on 1 August 1927 as the Chinese Workers and Peasants Red Army.

¹⁰⁰ V. Kovyzenko, a Central Committee official, close to Kim Il Sung from 1945 to 1948, reported in an interview with historian Andrei Lankov in 1991 that Mao had asserted during discussions in Beijing that Kim Il Sung had launched the "idiotic war and himself had been mediocre," and should be dismissed. Person, "North Korea in 1956", p. 460.

October–10 November 1956) and because both the Soviet Union and Chinese governments were unable to stop the inevitable purge of Kim Il Sung's opponents.¹⁰¹ From this time, relations with both the Soviet Union and China deteriorated. In the case of the Soviet Union this was because of the elimination of the pro-Soviet Koreans and in China's case because of the regime's refusal to acknowledge Chinese assistance in either the liberation of Korea from Japan or the Korean War.¹⁰²

The gradual rift between China and the USSR that developed in the early 1960s caused the DPRK to pursue a delicate balancing act between the two countries but by 1963 this balance clearly tipped towards Beijing.¹⁰³ The North Korean government joined the Chinese in criticising Nikita Khrushchev's denunciation of Joseph Stalin and for being too soft on the USA.¹⁰⁴ It was said that a "complete agreement of positions" was reached between the DPRK and China on all major issues.¹⁰⁵ Perceived racial, cultural, and historical ties also pulled the DPRK closer to China. However, Kim Il Sung eventually decided that he was moving too far towards the Chinese government. China was comparatively unindustrialised, and could not provide the technical and military assistance Pyongyang sought. Kim Il Sung was also eager to promote his own leadership in the Third World independent of the Chinese and the Soviets.¹⁰⁶

The fall of Khrushchev from power in 1964 proved advantageous for the DPRK as it allowed the North Korean government to pull away from Chinese dominance.¹⁰⁷ While Khrushchev had maintained personal control over Soviet foreign policy the new Soviet leadership of Leonid Brezhnev (1906–1982) and Alexei Kosygin (1904–1980) had little experience and knowledge of international affairs. It was in this situation that Kim Il Sung easily convinced them to supply greater financial assistance in several economic ventures, all

¹⁰¹ The Hungarian Uprising or Revolution was a spontaneous nationwide revolt against the government of the Hungarian People's Republic and its Soviet imposed policies. Despite the failure of the uprising, it was highly influential, and ultimately came to play a role in the downfall of the Soviet Union decades later. For further information see Christopher Adam, Tibor Egervari, Leslie Laczko and Judy Young (eds), *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2010).

¹⁰² Person, "North Korea in 1956", pp. 448, 471, 494, 505, 515.

¹⁰³ In November 1963, Beijing and Pyongyang signed an agreement to settle their boundary dispute. The agreement seems no longer valid today. Daniel Goma, "The Chinese–Korean Border Issue: An Analysis of a Contested Frontier", *Asian Survey*, 46 (6) (2006), p. 873.

¹⁰⁴ Goma, "The Chinese–Korean Border Issue", p. 877.

¹⁰⁵ Ria Chae, "East German Documents on Kim Il Sung's Trip to Beijing in April 1975", *North Korea International Documentation Project*, e-Dossier 17 (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2012), p. 4.

¹⁰⁶ Charles K. Armstrong, "Juche and North Korea's Global Aspirations", *North Korea International Documentation Project, Working Paper 1* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2009), pp. 1–4.

¹⁰⁷ "1964: Khrushchev 'retires' as head of USSR", *BBC News*, 15 October 2013, http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthistday/hi/dates/stories/october/15/newsid_3797000/3797887.stm (accessed 21 April 2014).

of which the new leadership in Moscow readily agreed to despite their scepticism over Kim Il Sung's domestic and foreign policies.¹⁰⁸ The Soviet Union believed it to be their duty as a fraternal socialist state to keep the DPRK out of the reach of China. In this sense, the Soviet Union could feel quite satisfied at the DPRK's divorce from China after 1964 as well as Kim Il Sung's condemnation of the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966–1969).¹⁰⁹ Kim Il Sung, though, did not want to become a Soviet puppet any more than he wanted to become a Chinese puppet and so he hurried to restore ties with Beijing as soon as the chaos of the Cultural Revolution subsided.¹¹⁰ By 1970, most of the instability created by the Cultural Revolution had passed and relations with China returned to normal. At the same time, the Soviets were again criticised by both Chinese and North Korean officials for being too soft on the USA.

Meanwhile, the Korean peninsula remained divided and relations with South Korea and the USA bitterly hostile. When the US government became engaged in the Vietnam War (1956–1975), Kim Il Sung saw an opportunity.¹¹¹ Inspired by the actions of the Communist Vietnamese, he began employing his own guerrilla squads to infiltrate the ROK, spread propaganda, and commit sabotage. North Korean agents went south between 1966 and 1969, creating disruption, but ultimately failing to win over the South Korean population.¹¹²

In July 1972, the first formal summit meeting between Pyongyang and Seoul was held but cautious talks did not lead to better relations between the two Koreas.¹¹³ With the fall of South Vietnam to the North Vietnamese on 30 April 1975, Kim Il Sung began to feel that the USA had shown its weakness and that reunification of Korea under his regime was finally possible. He visited Beijing in May 1975 in the hope of gaining political and military support

¹⁰⁸ *Memorandum of Conversation between Soviet Ambassador to North Korea Vasily Moskovsky and Kim Il Sung*, 14 November 1962 (Washington, DC: Wilson Center), <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110490> (accessed 21 April 2014).

¹⁰⁹ Mao Zedong officially declared the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1969, but its active phase lasted until the death of the military leader Lin Biao (1907–1971) in 1971. *The DPRK Attitude Toward the So-Called 'Cultural Revolution' in China* (14 November 1962), (Washington, DC: Wilson Center), <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114570> (accessed 21 April 2014).

¹¹⁰ Sergey S. Radchenko, "The Soviet Union and the North Korean Seizure of the USS Pueblo: Evidence from Russian Archives", *Cold War International History Project*, Working Paper 47 (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars), http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/CWIHP_WP_47.pdf (accessed 21 April 2014).

¹¹¹ The Vietnam War occurred in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia from December 1956 to the fall of Saigon on 30 April 1975.

¹¹² Narushige Michishita, *North Korea's Military-Diplomatic Campaigns, 1966–2008* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 193, 194; Daniel P. Bolger, *Scenes from an Unfinished War: Low Intensity Conflict in Korea, 1966–1969* (Darby: Diane Publishing Company, 2001).

¹¹³ Jong-Dae Shin, "DPRK Perspectives on Korean Reunification after the July 4th Joint Communiqué", *North Korea International Documentation Project*, e-Dossier no. 10 (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2012), p. 43.

for his plan to invade South Korea again, but China refused.¹¹⁴ Despite public proclamations of support, Chinese leaders privately told Kim Il Sung that China would be unable to assist the DPRK this time because of the lingering after-effects of the Cultural Revolution throughout China, and also because China had recently decided to restore diplomatic relations with the USA.¹¹⁵ Relations between the DPRK and China remained on an even course after the death of Mao Zedong on 9 September 1976, and the North Korean government continued its usual balancing act between the Soviet Union and China.

Over the coming years Kim Il Sung reduced contact with the Soviet Union and East European socialist states and economic assistance from these countries, which had been substantial, began to dwindle.¹¹⁶ At the same time, Kim Il Sung expanded his cult of personality and set out a policy of self-reliance and extreme nationalism known as *Juche*.

The *Juche* Ideology

Initially, North Korea adopted Marxist-Leninist principles in the name of socialism and liberating the oppressed Korean people from Japanese colonial rule. Between the 1950s and 1970s, though, Kim Il Sung and party theorist Hwang Jang-yop (1923–2010) elaborated the *Juche* idea into a set of principles.¹¹⁷ The first known reference to *Juche* was in a speech by Kim Il Sung on 28 December 1955, entitled “On Eliminating Dogmatism and Formalism and Establishing *Juche* in Ideological Work” (see Appendix 5).¹¹⁸ In the speech, Kim Il Sung sought to develop his own version of Marxism-Leninism into a North Korean creed.¹¹⁹ The speech focused on the importance of education and learning Korean history.

To make revolution in Korea we must know Korean history and geography as well as the customs of the Korean people. Only then is it possible to educate our people in a way that suits them and to

¹¹⁴ Chae, “East German Documents”, pp. 7–11.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ From World War II until 1984, it is estimated that the DPRK received \$4.75 billion in aid from the Soviet Union (roughly 50 per cent), China (20 per cent) and the Soviet-aligned countries of Eastern Europe (30 per cent). Victor Cha, *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future* (New York: Ecco, 2012), p. 28.

¹¹⁷ Hwang Jang-yop defected to South Korea in 1997 and is best known, to date, for being the highest-ranking North Korean official to defect to the South.

¹¹⁸ Kim Il Sung, “On Eliminating Dogmatism and Formalism and Establishing *Juche* in Ideological Work” (Speech Party Propagandists and Agitators, 28 December 1955) in Kim Il Sung, *Selected Works 9* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1982), pp. 582–606.

¹¹⁹ Jasper Becker, *Rouge Regime: Kim Jong Il and the Looming Threat of North Korea* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Paul French, *North Korea: The Paranoid Peninsula – A Modern History* (New York: Zed Books, 2007), p. 30.

inspire in them an ardent love for their native place and their motherland.¹²⁰

It was believed that educating the working people in the North Korean version of the history of Korea would “stimulate their national pride and rouse the broad masses to revolutionary struggle”. Kim stressed significant past events and how certain outcomes could have been prevented in Korean history such as the occupation of the country by Japan.

The speech also attempted to justify Kim Il Sung’s purge of political opponents, similar to the earlier *Yan’an* Rectification Movement in China (1942–1944).¹²¹ The *Yan’an* Rectification Movement was the first ideological mass movement initiated by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and took place at the communist base of *Yan’an*, a remote area in northern Shaanxi Province. More than 10,000 Chinese were killed during the restructuring process, as the CCP made efforts to attack intellectuals and replace the culture of the May Fourth Movement (4 May 1919) with that of Communist culture.¹²² In the DPRK, from the mid-1950s, as Kim Il Sung steered the country away from the influence of the Soviet Union, his decision was hastened by news of de-Stalinisation in Moscow, as discussed above.¹²³ Kim Il Sung saw the new Soviet policies as potentially threatening to his own personal power. It is also quite likely that he and the people around him felt a genuine ideological contempt for Khrushchev-style socialism, which emphasised individual well-being and material prosperity.¹²⁴ In this situation, from 1956 to 1959, Kim Il Sung purged the local pro-Soviet officials. Many of these officials had taken part in the unsuccessful 1956 coup.¹²⁵

Well into the early 1960s, the political speeches and writings of Kim Il Sung were filled with the terminology of Marxism-Leninism but as his own interpretation of socialism (the *Juche* idea) evolved, references to the past ideological system declined. The principles of

¹²⁰ Kim Il Sung, “On Eliminating Dogmatism”, pp. 582–606.

¹²¹ Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank (eds), *The Cambridge history of China. Volume 12: Republican China, 1912–1949, Part 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

¹²² The May Fourth Movement was an anti-imperialist, cultural, and political movement growing out of student demonstrations in Beijing on 4 May 1919. The activists protested against the Chinese government’s weak response to the Treaty of Versailles, especially allowing Japan to receive territories in Shandong Province, which had been surrendered by Germany. Mark Borthwick, *Pacific Century: The Emergence of Modern Pacific Asia* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1998); David Ernest Apter, *Revolutionary Discourse in Mao’s Republic* (New York: Harvard University Press, 1994).

¹²³ Andrei Lankov, “Soviet-DPRK Relations: Purges, Power, and Dissent in North Korea’s Formative Years”, *SinoNK*, 29 March 2013, <http://sinonk.com/2013/03/29/lankov-on-ussr-dprk-50s-60s/> (accessed 9 April 2014).

¹²⁴ The Khrushchev Thaw refers to the period from 1950s to 1960s when repression and censorship in the Soviet Union were reversed, and millions of Soviet political prisoners were released from Gulag labour camps due to Khrushchev’s policies of de-Stalinisation and peaceful coexistence with other nations. The Thaw was only possible after the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953. Lankov, “Soviet-DPRK Relations”.

¹²⁵ Lankov, “Soviet-DPRK Relations”.

Juche are quite different to Marx's socialist ideas. Marx argued for urban workers to unite in a global struggle against capitalist exploitation, overthrow landowners, and launch the socialist phase of history.¹²⁶ Marx envisioned the eventual weakening of the state and the dissolution of all social and economic classes and predicted that humanity would achieve an egalitarian utopia without government or social and economic distinctions.¹²⁷ In contrast, Kim Il Sung saw the state as an all-encompassing and benevolent defender of nationalism, and positioned himself as the national leader of the masses. These principles turn Kim Il Sung into an absolutist, supreme leader, while the working class are not to think for themselves, but instead to think through him.¹²⁸ Kim Il Sung is positioned at the top of the working class, meaning that he is their only legitimate representative and the safest reference.¹²⁹ Class struggle in the DPRK context can only be realised therefore through Kim Il Sung and difficult tasks and revolutionary changes can only be introduced through and by Kim Il Sung himself.¹³⁰ Consequently, Kim Il Sung is the leading force of the working class and is represented as a flawless human being, who never commits mistakes, is always benevolent, and always rules for the masses.¹³¹

On 14 April 1965, Kim Il Sung outlined the three fundamental principles of the *Juche* idea in his speech "On Socialist Construction and the South Korean Revolution" at the Academy of Social Sciences of Indonesia.¹³² The three principles included: "political independence", "economic self-sustenance" and "self-reliance in defence". "Political independence" refers to the society's sacred right to assert its sovereignty to protect itself from alleged imperialist exploitation and ideological suppression.¹³³ There is no room for individual independence or freedom, as individuals are required to assimilate fully into society's collective whole and to submit to the common good. "Economic self-sustenance" was proclaimed by Kim Il Sung when the nation's grain production was still yielding surpluses, exports of minerals were flowing steadily to the Communist bloc and heavy

¹²⁶ For further information see Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (originally published in 21 February 1848 in German).

¹²⁷ Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution*, p. 6.

¹²⁸ Kyo Duk Lee, *The Successor theory of North Korea* (Seoul: Korean Institution for National Reunification, 2004), p. 7.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 8.

¹³² Kim Il Sung, *On Socialist Construction and the South Korean Revolution in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea* (lecture at the "Ali Archam" Academy of Social Sciences of Indonesia, 14 April 1965), (Pyongyang : Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1968).

¹³³ Eun Kwan Choi, E. Han Kim and Yesook Merrill (eds), *North Korea in the World Economy* (London: Routledge Advances in Korean Studies, 2003), p. 159.

industry was turning the North Korean military into a highly mechanised and mobile force.¹³⁴ An independent North Korean economy was to distinguish itself from a capitalist economy by aiming to meet the demands of the country and by generating personal profit.¹³⁵ Heavy industry was to be the cornerstone of the economy while light industry and agriculture were less important because they did not contribute directly to the production of arms and ammunitions.¹³⁶ “Self-reliance in defence”, is a fundamental principle of an independent state, while imperialism is its key villain.¹³⁷ The best defence against the imperialist war of aggression is the perpetual preparedness to counter its violence with violence. In this context, the entire North Korean population was mobilised to support the nation’s defence. From this time, the *Songun* or “military first” era began when a young Kim Jong Il, together with his father Kim Il Sung, visited the 105th Guards Armoured Division Headquarters in Pyongyang.¹³⁸

For the *Juche* principles to function uncontested, a unitary ideological system had to be in place.¹³⁹ In 1970, Kim Jong Il organised the Fifth Party Congress of the KWP, which proclaimed *Juche* as the monolithic ideology of the DPRK and further enhanced his father’s cult of personality, thereby setting in motion the process for his own succession. The “Ten Principles for a Monolithic Ideological System” (see Appendix 6) set out ten principles and 65 clauses which establish standards for governance and guidance for the population’s behaviour.¹⁴⁰ The Monolithic Ideological System emerged in the context of internal policy debates within the WPK and the external challenges posed by the Sino-Soviet split (1960–1989).¹⁴¹ Kim Il Sung implemented the system in order to suppress internal dissent and cement his family’s dominance over the North Korean political system.¹⁴² The Ten Principles have come to supersede the state Constitution as announcements by the WPK and in practice

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 160.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 159.

¹³⁸ The 105th Guards Armoured Division is a military formation of the Korean People’s Army, which has been active since 1948.

¹³⁹ Lee, *The Successor theory of North Korea*, p. 7.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. The system was originally proposed in 1967 by Kim Yong Ju (1920–), the younger brother of Kim Il Sung, and made official by Kim Jong Il in 1974.

¹⁴¹ The Sino-Soviet split occurred when political and ideological relations between China and the Soviet Union worsened during the Cold War (1947–1991).

¹⁴² James F. Person, “The 1967 Purge of the Gapsan Faction and Establishment of the Monolithic Ideological System”, *North Korea International Documentation Project*, e-Dossier no.15 (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center, 2014), <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/the-1967-purge-the-gapsan-faction-and-establishment-the-monolithic-ideological-system> (accessed 10 April 2014).

serve as the supreme law of the country.¹⁴³ The principles must be memorised by every citizen and they call for absolute loyalty and obedience to the Kim dynasty.¹⁴⁴ The principles are integral to the political and daily lives of the people and are to be exercised through daily self-criticism sessions, in work and schools, forming the foundation of the country's pervasive personality cult.¹⁴⁵

From the 1970s, *Juche* was transformed into a highly elaborate and structured belief system based on the semi-deification of Kim Il Sung and his family.¹⁴⁶ As the North Korean government exercised total control over all aspects of society, this was used to perpetuate a cult of personality surrounding the Kims.¹⁴⁷ It was also during this time that Kim Jong Il mentioned the term “Kimilsungism” and not long after the “Kimilsungismisation of the Whole Society” campaign was launched.¹⁴⁸ This campaign strengthened and legitimised the position of Kim Jong Il within the WPK.¹⁴⁹ According to political analyst Jae-cheon Lim, “Kimilsungism” refers to the thoughts of Kim Il Sung and is interchangeable with the *Juche* idea.¹⁵⁰ In 1976, in a speech “On Correctly Understanding the Originality of Kimilsungism”, Kim Jong Il said that Kimilsungism comprises the “*Juche* idea and a far-reaching revolutionary theory and leadership method evolved from this idea”.¹⁵¹ In the past, Kim Il Sung's thoughts had been described by the official media as “contemporary Marxism-Leninism”, but by calling it “Kimilsungism”, Kim Jong Il was trying to elevate it to the same level as Maoism, Hoxhaism, and Stalinism.¹⁵²

¹⁴³ “N. Korea revises leadership ideology to legitimize rule of Kim Jong-un”, *Yonhap News Agency*, 12 August 2013, <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/yonhap-news-agency/130812/n-korea-revises-leadership-ideology-legitimize-rule-kim-jong> (accessed 10 April 2014); Jae-Cheon Lim, *Kim Jong-il's Leadership of North Korea* (London: Routledge, 2008).

¹⁴⁴ John Cha, *Exit Emperor Kim Jong-il* (Indiana: Abbott Press, 2008); Audrey Yoo, “North Korea rewrites rules to legitimise Kim family succession”, *South China Morning Post*, 13 August 2013, <http://www.scmp.com/news/asia/article/1296394/democratic-peoples-monarchy-korea-north-korea-changes-ruling-principles> (accessed 10 April 2014).

¹⁴⁵ “What Are the “Ten Principles”?”, *Daily NK*, 9 September 2013, <http://www.dailynk.com/english/read.php?cataId=nk02900&num=10829> (accessed 10 April 2014); Sung Hui Moon, “North Korea Steps Up Ideological Campaign Amid Tensions”, *Radio Free Asia*, 17 December 2013, <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/korea/ideology-12162013183830.html> (accessed 10 April 2014).

¹⁴⁶ Etienne Havet and Lucas Gaudreau (eds), *Without Freedom of Religion or Belief in North Korea* (New York: Nova Science Publishers Inc., 2010), p. 14.

¹⁴⁷ Miller-Jones, *Hermit Kingdom*, p. 21.

¹⁴⁸ Jae-Cheon Lim, “North Korea's Hereditary Succession Comparing Two Key Transitions in the DPRK”, *Asian Survey*, 52 (3) (2012), p. 561.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Gi-wook Shin, *Ethnic Nationalism in Korea: Genealogy, Politics, and Legacy* (California: Stanford University Press, 2006), p. 89; Kim Jong Il, *On Correctly Understanding the Originality of Kimilsungism* (Pyongyang: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1984), p. 5.

¹⁵² Shin, *Ethnic Nationalism*, pp. 89, 90. Stalinism is a policy on how to construct socialism and develop a communist society, conceived and implemented by Joseph Stalin. The term Stalinism came into prominence during the mid-1930s, when Lazar Kaganovich (1893–1991), a Soviet politician and associate of Stalin stated:

Kim Jong Il argued that Kim Il Sung's thoughts had evolved, and therefore deserved their own distinct name.¹⁵³

Kimilsungism is an original idea that cannot be explained within the frameworks of Marxism–Leninism. The idea of *Juche* which constitutes the quintessence of Kimilsungism is an idea newly discovered in the history of mankind.¹⁵⁴

Kim Jong Il further stated that Marxism–Leninism had become obsolete and needed to be replaced by Kimilsungism.¹⁵⁵

The revolutionary theory of Kimilsungism is a revolutionary theory, which has provided solutions to problems arising in the revolutionary practice in a new age different from the era that gave rise to Marxism–Leninism. On the basis of *Juche* (idea), the leader gave a profound explanation of the theories, strategies and tactics of national liberation, class emancipation and human liberation in our era. Thus, it can be said that the revolutionary theory of Kimilsungism is a perfect revolutionary theory of Communism in the era of *Juche*.¹⁵⁶

The ideas of *Juche* and Kimilsungism were, in essence, the “expressions of North Korean particularism over supposedly more universalistic Marxism–Leninism”.¹⁵⁷ In many ways, it signalled a move from socialism to nationalism.¹⁵⁸ This was made clear in the speech of 1982, when the DPRK celebrated Kim Il Sung's 70th birthday, where love for the nation

“Let's replace Long Live Leninism with Long Live Stalinism!”. Maoism is a political theory derived from the teachings of the Chinese political leader Mao Zedong and was developed during the 1950s and 1960s. Maoism sees the agrarian peasantry, rather than the working class, as the key revolutionary force, which can transform capitalist society towards socialism. Hoxhaism is an informal term, which refers to a variant of anti-revisionist Marxism–Leninism, which developed in the late 1970s due to a split in the Maoist movement. Hoxhaism appeared after the ideological row between the Communist Party of China and the Party of Labour of Albania in 1978. Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar* (New York: Vintage Books, 2005), p. 164.

¹⁵³ Shin, *Ethnic Nationalism*, pp. 89, 90.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 90.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

came before love for socialism.¹⁵⁹ This particularism gave birth to such concepts as “A theory of the Korean nation as number one” and “Socialism of Our Style”, discussed below.¹⁶⁰

Kim Il Sung’s cult of personality became an important instrument of Kim Jong Il’s consolidation of his own succession, as his father was the main source of his legitimacy to rule the nation.¹⁶¹ Kim Jong Il spent twenty years preparing for his succession and was able to sideline his uncle and win the confidence of his father, particularly through his efforts to expand the cult of personality of the Kim family.¹⁶² In 1980, Kim Jong Il was appointed to the Presidium of the Politburo and the Central Military Commission.¹⁶³ At this stage, he was officially ranked fifth in the North Korean leadership system. At this time, only Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il held positions in all three of the Party’s leadership bodies (the Politburo, Secretariat and Central Military Commission). While Kim Il Sung’s highly personalised approach to running the country had involved the Party in decision-making and governance processes, Kim Jong Il adopted a highly centralised, top-down leadership style that often relied on informal channels. Kim Jong Il subsequently shifted decision-making on all policies and personnel appointments from the Politburo to the Party Secretariat Office, his base of power.¹⁶⁴ This move helped to strengthen his support base and his legitimacy to succeed his father.

The “Socialism of Our Style” Ideology

On 27 December 1990, Kim Jong Il introduced the ideological concept of “Socialism of Our Style” in his speech “Socialism of Our Country is a Socialism of Our Style as Embodied by the Juche idea”.¹⁶⁵ The speech was delivered to the Senior Officials of the Central Committee of the KWP. In the speech, Kim Jong Il stated that:

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 90, 91.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 91.

¹⁶¹ UNHRC, *Report of the detailed findings*, para. 129, p. 34.

¹⁶² According to reports, it had actually been his uncle, Kim Yong-chu, his father’s younger brother, who had been the original presumptive heir to Kim Il Sung. Kong Dan Oh, *Leadership Change in North Korean Politics: The Succession to Kim Il Sung* (California: Rand Corporation, 1988), pp. 7–16.

¹⁶³ *Kim Jong Il: Brief History* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1998), p. 80.

¹⁶⁴ UNHRC, *Report of the detailed*, para. 132, pp. 35, 36.

¹⁶⁵ Kim Jong Il, *Socialism of Our Country is a Socialism of Our Style as Embodied by the Juche idea* (speech to the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea, 27 December 1990).

the experiences of the Soviet Union in socialist construction is, in every point, the reflection of the then historical conditions and the concrete situation of the Soviet Union.¹⁶⁶

The experiences of the Soviet Union however, can “hardly accord fully with the specific situation of other countries”.¹⁶⁷ Speaking about communist regimes in the Eastern Bloc (but not the Soviet Union), Kim Jong Il claimed that it was because these countries “transplanted Soviet-style socialism on their lands” that socialism did not “display its advantages to the full” and thus led to the failure of the system within their countries.¹⁶⁸ These countries had failed to understand that the Soviet experience was based on specific historical and social circumstances, which could not be used by other countries aside from the Soviet Union itself.¹⁶⁹ It was within this context that Kim Jong Il explicitly stated that the DPRK survived because of its own style of socialism.¹⁷⁰

Kim Jong Il is said to have stated that North Korea was “once a backward, colonial semi-feudal society” but when the communists came to power in 1945, the interim government “could not literally accept the Marxist theory which had been advanced on the premises of the socio-historical conditions of the developed European capitalist countries or the Leninist theory”.¹⁷¹ The government, therefore, had to find an ideological solution to the country’s own socio-historical conditions. Kim Jong Il states that it was immediately after the liberation of Korea that the interim government started to build a country guided by its own ideological thought of *Juche*.¹⁷² The situation in the DPRK was seen to be more complex than that of the Soviet Union as Korea was divided into North and South and the North was in “direct confrontation with the US imperialists”.¹⁷³ Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il are said to have addressed these concerns by putting “forward original lines and policies suited to our people’s aspirations and the specific situation of our country”.¹⁷⁴ By reflecting on the “people’s desire and demand for independence”, Kim Il Sung is said to have personally

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Shin, *Ethnic Nationalism*, p. 91.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Kim, *Socialism of Our Country*, p. 3.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

created the *Juche* idea, thus providing a new guiding ideology for the DPRK.¹⁷⁵ This was to become the foundation for “Socialism of Our Style”.

In stating that “Socialism of Our Style” was “a man-centered [sic] Socialism”, Kim Jong Il breaks away from basic Marxist–Leninist thought which argues that material forces are the driving force of historical progress, not people.¹⁷⁶ The DPRK considers human beings in general as the driving force in history, which is summarised as the “popular masses are placed in the center of everything, and the leader is the center of the masses”.¹⁷⁷ Therefore, “Socialism of Our Style” was presented as an organic socio-political theory, using the language of Marxism–Leninism, although no reference is made to Marxist–Leninist thought, instead containing populist and organic nationalist concepts. Kim Jong Il describes this in his speech “Socialism of Our Country is a Socialism of Our Style as Embodied by the *Juche* idea”.

The political and ideological might of the motive force of revolution is nothing but the power of single-hearted unity between the leader, the Party, and the masses. In our socialist society, the leader, the Party, and the masses throw in their lot with one another, forming a single socio-political organism. The consolidation of blood relations between the leader, the Party and the masses is guaranteed by the single ideology and united leadership.¹⁷⁸

Within the socio-political organism, the “monolithic ideology” of *Juche* is realised based on the leader’s ideas and the DPRK’s unified leadership, which is ensured by the leader’s guidance.¹⁷⁹ The DPRK has “established the monolithic ideological system firmly through the Party and society and consolidated and developed it from generation to generation”.¹⁸⁰ Kim Jong Il states that the leadership and WPK have been able to achieve unbreakable unity and cohesion of the Party based on the *Juche* ideology.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Shin, *Ethnic Nationalism*, p. 23; Akan Malici, *When Leaders Learn and When They Don’t: Mikhail Gorbachev and Kim Il Sung at the End of the Cold War* (New York: SUNY Press, 2009), p. 113.

¹⁷⁷ Malici, *When Leaders Learn and When They Don’t*, p. 113.

¹⁷⁸ Shin, *Ethnic Nationalism*, pp. 92, 93.

¹⁷⁹ Kim, *Socialism of Our Country*, p. 7.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

Conclusion

Kim Il Sung held the position of General Secretary of the WPK until his death in July 1994, simultaneously holding the office of Prime Minister from 1948 to 1972 and the office of President from 1972 to 1994. With the death of Kim Il Sung the presidential post was written out of the 1998 DPRK Constitution, and Kim Il Sung was designated the country's "Eternal President" (Preamble). Three years after the death of Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong Il assumed official power in 1998. It is unclear why Kim Jong Il waited to take power after his father's death but if he had assumed power hastily, it could have exhibited greed, insecurity in his legitimacy, and a lack of respect for his (and the nation's) father.¹⁸¹ To this day, the sanctification of Kim Il Sung and his family remains a legacy in North Korean society as the written and spoken words of the Kims are the safest reference point for the people.¹⁸² As a result, the political discourse of the Kims, in particular Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il and in more recent years Kim Jong Un, affect the construction of a wide range of social issues from the judicial system to the rights of Korean women and gender relations.¹⁸³

Events in the DPRK during the 1990s, such as the influence of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1992, the death of Kim Il Sung in 1994 and the economic and food crisis in the mid-1990s will be discussed in detail in chapter 6. These events not only influenced the political dynamics of the country as power was handed from Kim Il Sung to his son Kim Jong Il, they also influenced the roles of North Korean men and women. In particular, the economic and food crisis challenged, to some extent, the roles of men and women in the home and North Korean society.

In the following chapter, I trace the promulgation of North Korean laws between 1945 and 2010 with a specific focus on women's rights and gender relations. I focus on three broad periods: the revolutionary period (1945–1950), the *Juche* period (1951–1990), and the period 1991–2010, known as "Our Style". Initially, the key to the government's promotion of gender equality was to bring women out of the home and into the labour force. It can be seen in the North Korean legal system that the government's policies on women's rights progressed as the construction efforts and economic development of the country advanced.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Sonia Ryang, "Gender in Oblivion: Women in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)", *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 35 (2000), p. 326.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

Although state laws socialised childcare and housework, these laws also assumed that women's roles in the home were made up of these activities, as we shall see below.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁴ United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), *Analysis of the Situation of Children and Women in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea* (Pyongyang: United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund DPRK, 2003), p. 21.

3. North Korea's Legal System and Gender Equality (1946–2010)

By the enactment of the Law on Sex Equality, Korean women came to have equal rights in all areas of political, economy, culture and social life... Of course, the enactment of this law does not guarantee women's emancipation completely. We have still many things to do for women's substantive equal rights.
Kim Il Sung, (date unknown).¹

Introduction

In 1946, the Provisional People's Committee of North Korea (the interim government in the northern region of Korea) reformed the legal system in the north of Korea under the guidance of the Soviet Union.² For the first time in Korean history, the North Korean government included provisions in state laws that addressed and promoted gender equality. The Committee institutionalised a series of interconnected laws on labour, the family and marriage, health care, education, nursing and childrearing.³ It was through these laws that the government promoted the importance of women exercising equal rights and fundamental freedoms.⁴ The North Korean government maintains that Korean men and women are guaranteed equal rights before the law and that both genders are entitled to equal protection by the state.⁵ The role of the government, therefore, is to ensure that women have the conditions to advance, through legislative, administrative, and other appropriate measures to

¹ Korean Workers' Party, *40 Years of Creation and Construction in the Red Sunlight* (Pyongyang: Korean Workers' Party Press, 1981), p. 154.

² The Provisional People's Committee of North Korea was established on 8 February 1946 and was based on the local power organs in all areas of northern Korea.

³ United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF), *Analysis of the Situation of Children and Women in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea* (Pyongyang: United Nations International Children's Fund DPRK, 2003), pp. 20, 21.

⁴ United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), "Consideration of reports submitted by States Parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women", *Initial Report of States Parties: Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, CEDAW/C/PRK/1 (Beijing: thirty-third session, 5 to 22 July 2005), (distributed 11 September 2002), para. 87, p. 11.

⁵ *Ibid.*, para. 223 and para. 224, p. 11.

provide basic freedoms and rights of citizens in political, economic, social, and cultural life. The government maintains that it has taken practical legal measures so that all North Koreans can realise their rights and that as a result “all female citizens find themselves in the position of masters of the State and society”.⁶ The government also states that due to state legislation, gender equality policies and preferential treatment of North Korean women, they now have “a strong position in society and are contributing vigorously to the social and economic development of the country”.⁷

In this chapter, I focus on gender equality provisions in the North Korean legal system. The chapter is divided broadly into three sections. First, I examine the revolutionary period (1945–1950), when gender equality was emphasised. It is said that during this time Kim Il Sung (1912–1994) focused on the “women’s question” by promoting their right to participate in all aspects of society. Next, I examine the *Juche* period (1951–1990), and the government’s focus on women’s roles in the home. I then examine the period from 1991 to 2010 or the “Our Style” period, which includes when the DPRK communicated with the United Nations (UN). This is also the period of famine and extreme economic problems in the DPRK. The analysis of North Korean laws and policy statements between 1945 and 2010 reveals the assumptions of the North Korean government concerning the role that men perform in the home as primary financial providers and women as primary carers. State laws and policies also ensure that women are able to return to the workforce to fill a labour shortage. However, this is achieved by the socialisation of household chores, which the North Korean government assumes are tasks that women perform.

The Revolutionary Period and North Korean Laws (1945–1950)

Shortly after the liberation of Korea in 1945, the Provisional People’s Committee of North Korea, under the guidance of the Soviet Union officials and military, revoked all existing laws from the Japanese colonial period.⁸ Some laws had to be reinstated, though, to maintain public order until new laws could be promulgated.⁹ Internationally, during June 1945 the Charter of the United Nations (UN) was signed at the conclusion of the UN Conference on

⁶ Ibid., para. 88, p. 9.

⁷ United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), “Summary Record of the 699th meeting”, *Democratic People’s Republic of Korea*, CEDAW/C/SR.699 (Thirty-third session, 5 to 22 July 2005), (New York: 18 July 2005 at 10 am), (distributed 9 September 2005), para. 3, p. 2.

⁸ The Soviet military was also stationed in North Korea from March 1947 to December 1948 and provided detailed economic and political guidance to Kim Il Sung.

⁹ CEDAW, “699th meeting”, para. 3, p. 2.

International Organisation. The Charter entered into force on 24 October 1945, after being ratified by the original five permanent members of the Security Council—the Republic of China (later replaced by the People’s Republic of China), France, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, the US and a majority of the other signatories. Article 1 of the Charter protects the rights of men and women by stating: “To achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.” Also in 1945, during the Allied Occupation of Japan, the Japanese electoral law was revised allowing women over the age of twenty the right to vote. French women were able to vote from 1946.

Within North Korea, the new legal code introduced in 1946 included revised provisions from the colonial period and a Soviet-based judicial structure. North Korea followed the Soviet pattern in terms of court structure and the offices of public procurators.¹⁰ Soviet advisors to the Provisional People’s Committee also had a role in drafting the 1948 DPRK Constitution.¹¹ Despite the influence of the Soviet Union on the early development of the North Korean state, the North Korean government did not adhere to the early Soviet idea of limiting the enjoyment of rights to the proletariat at the expense of the bourgeoisie.¹² Only those categorised as opponents to North Korea, primarily those who had earlier collaborated with the Japanese occupying forces, were deprived of rights.¹³ The North Korean government imprisoned or purged those deemed “hostile” to the state. By gathering the support of underprivileged groups, Kim Il Sung consolidated his power.¹⁴ Previously, the Korean communists who had spent years in China attempting to mobilise resistance groups had also employed this method as a way to consolidate political power.¹⁵

From 1946, the North Korean interim government aimed to improve the lives of underprivileged groups and mobilise these people into large social organisations in support of new policies for nation building. Land reform helped to establish support among the poor

¹⁰ Patricia Goedde, “Law ‘Of Our Own Style’: The Evolution and Challenges of the North Korean Legal System”, *Fordham International Law Journal*, 27 (4) (2003), pp. 1270, 1271.

¹¹ Jiyoung Song, *Human Rights Discourse in North Korea: Post-colonial, Marxist and Confucian Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 79.

¹² Robert Weatherly and Jiyoung Song, “The Evolution of Human Rights thinking in North Korea”, *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 24 (2) (2008), p. 285.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 274. For further information on the influence of nationalism and communism during the early formation of North Korean human rights thinking, see Song, *Human Rights Discourse*, pp. 85–87.

¹⁴ Charles K. Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution, 1945–1950* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 71.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*; Kyung-Ock Chun, “Women’s Policies in South and North Korea and a Proposal for Unified Korea”, in Kyungsook Lee (ed), *Korea’s Challenges and Opportunities, Future Security Issues and Options* (Seoul: Seoul Selection, 2004), p. 225.

peasant majority of society,¹⁶ while gender equality reforms established support among women. The support of these groups, particularly in the early years of the country, was essential in ensuring the new government's survival. The Kim Il Sung regime deemed it necessary to embrace as many people as possible in an effort to make North Korea strong and resist the threat of foreign intervention. This meant that rights were said to be applicable to the vast majority of the populace irrespective of factors such as gender and social class. By gathering many of the underprivileged groups in support of the regime rather than focusing on the small elite group that held power and composed the party, Kim Il Sung consolidated his power.¹⁷

Welfare rights such as equal access to healthcare, education and land to work were an important part of the early development of the North Korean legal system. This can be seen in the promulgation of the Law on Agrarian Reform in North Korea (1946), the Labour Law for Factory and Office Workers in North Korea (1946), and the Law on the Equality of the Sexes (1946).¹⁸ The importance placed on these rights stems primarily from the practical realities confronting new socialist regimes such as North Korea.¹⁹ Marx had envisaged the gradual reduction of any need for rights in his materially abundant post-revolutionary society, which was to be based on the egalitarian principle of “from each according to his ability, to each according to his need”, but the reality of post-liberated North Korea was quite different.²⁰ On coming to power, socialist regimes, including North Korea, are often faced with conditions of social and economic deprivation, usually in a post-colonial or a war-torn context and sometimes both.²¹ Within this context the North Korean government stressed welfare rights to ensure people were able to work, to foster rapid social and economic development and to raise the living standards of the people.

Although welfare provisions in state laws are a common feature of socialist states, North Korean rights thinking also refers to the Confucian idea that the provision of welfare is the principal obligation of the government.²² The Confucian element in North Korea's development and the emphasis on welfare rights is in accordance with the teachings of the Confucian disciple Mencius (most accepted dates: 372–289BCE), and the notion of

¹⁶ Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution*, p. 71.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ North Korean laws have been translated by the DPRK in its initial report to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 2002. CEDAW, *Initial Report*, para. 52, p. 8.

¹⁹ Weatherly and Song, “The Evolution of Human Rights”, p. 288.

²⁰ Karl Marx, “Critique of the Gotha Programme” (1875), in David McLellan (ed), *Karl Marx: Selected Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 564–570.

²¹ Weatherly and Song, “The Evolution of Human Rights”, p. 288.

²² Ibid.

“benevolent government”, which imposed a sacred obligation on the ruler to govern exclusively in the interests of the populace.²³ The legitimacy of the ruler was deemed to be contingent upon the ability to guarantee the sustenance and livelihood of the people. In the case of North Korea, the “benevolent leader” (Kim Il Sung) provides rights to those who are loyal to the state and the Kim family.

The principles of socialism and Confucianism can be seen in the laws promulgated from 1946, which aimed to protect vulnerable groups such as Korean women, whilst also encouraging loyalty to the state.

The Twenty-Point Platform (1946)

In March 1946, the interim government drafted the Twenty-Point Platform as a short-term measure to protect the rights and interests of the North Korean people (see Appendix 7).²⁴ The North Korean historian Baik Bong describes the Platform as a nationalistic document that was a “brilliant political program of the anti-imperialist, anti-feudal democratic revolution, a thoroughly *Juche* creative programme”.²⁵ The Platform made a clear delineation between people who were entitled to rights and the “enemy”, who were not.²⁶ The latter group were described as “reactionaries”, “fascists” and “anti-democratic forces”, who had been involved with pro-Japanese elements and had collaborated with the Japanese authorities during the colonial period.²⁷ The Twenty-Point Platform encompassed a broad range of human rights, including equal legal rights for all (Article 5), the guarantee of an eight-hour working day for workers and the guarantee of a standard minimum wage (Article 14), a compulsory education system (Article 16) and free medical treatment for the poor (Article 20).²⁸ However, the Platform did not directly address the rights of Korean women.

Below I outline three key laws promulgated by the North Korean government in 1946 that addressed the situation of North Koreans, particularly women.

The Law on Agrarian Reform in North Korea (1946)

²³ Ibid. In his frequent consultations with Chinese feudal kings, Mencius underlined the necessity to provide food, shelter and employment to the people, otherwise known as the doctrine of “the people as the basis of the state”. James Legge, *The Works of Mencius* (New York: Dover Publications, 1970), pp. 135, 173, 300.

²⁴ CEDAW, *Initial Report*, para. 40, p. 7.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 109. Kim Il Sung is said to have progressively developed *Juche* into a nationalist ideology, resting on the three pillars of political sovereignty, an independent economy and military self-defence.

²⁶ Weatherly and Song, “The Evolution of Human Rights”, p. 277.

²⁷ Song, *Human Rights Discourse*, p. 79.

²⁸ Baik Bong, *Kim Il Sung: Biography Volume II: From Building Democratic Korea to Chullima Flight* (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1970), pp. 107–109.

On 5 March 1946, as part of the reform process to dismantle the Japanese colonial social structure, the Law on Agrarian Reform in North Korea was promulgated. Article 1 stated that all “land previously belonging to Japanese and Korean property owners will be confiscated” (Article 1) and then redistributed amongst households based upon labour ability and the number of family members, regardless of gender (Article 15).²⁹ The Law was important for Korean women who were heads of households, as they would never have previously enjoyed land ownership under the old patriarchal system. The Law was also a critical part of the nation-building process as it gave peasants the rights to land.³⁰ With the land reform, the traditional class structure in Korean society was challenged as the ruling class, made up of property owners, capitalists and religious institutions, lost all ownership of their land, livestock and houses without any monetary compensation.³¹ Disadvantaged peasants were given their own land to cultivate according to the number of family members and labour capacity.

Those who had previously owned a large amount of land did not agree with the government’s decision to confiscate their property and redistribute it based on equality and not wealth. Therefore, during the land reform there were random acts of violence in opposition to the government’s decision but nothing like the bloodshed that accompanied the land reforms in the Soviet Union, China, or the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (Vietnam).³² In each of these countries, thousands of people were wrongly accused of being landowners and were killed by each respective government. In the case of North Korea, the land reform process was rapid and implemented successfully with little violence.³³ Close to 673,000 households of landless peasants, smallholding peasants, agricultural labourers, and relocated ex-landlords received the newly distributed lands.³⁴ By the end of 1949, the newly-established agricultural class represented 74.1 per cent of the entire North Korean population.³⁵ The Law on Agrarian Reform successfully dismantled the old feudal society in North Korea and created a new society under the control of the new socialist regime.

²⁹ Jin Woong Kang, “The ‘Domestic Revolution’ Policy and Traditional Confucianism in North Korean State Formation”, *Harvard Asia Quarterly*, 10 (2) (2006), p. 58.

³⁰ Song, *Human Rights Discourse*, p. 79.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution*, p. 76.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War. Volume 1: Liberation and Emergence of Separate Regimes 1945–1947* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 416.

³⁵ Jae-jean Suh, “The Transformation of Class Structure and Class Conflict in North Korea”, *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies*, 14 (2) (2005), p. 56.

The Labour Law for Factory and Office Workers in North Korea (1946)

Three months after the implementation of the land reform, the Provisional People's Committee promulgated the Labour Law for Factory and Office Workers in North Korea (Labour Law) on 24 June 1946. The Law was adapted from the Soviet Union's Labour Codes of 1912 and 1922, as well as the Twenty-Point Platform which had been established just four months earlier.³⁶ While the Platform listed the tasks needed to end workforce practices from the colonial period and listed the ways to establish democratic rule for workers,³⁷ the Labour Law validated the working rights of all North Korean people. Beneficiaries of the law included labourers and office workers of national organisations, corporations, individual entrepreneurs, and business institutions.³⁸ The government focused primarily on factory workers, as there was a sizable urban working class already within the country.³⁹ The Japanese colonial government, from the late 1920s and into the 1930s, had concentrated efforts to develop and expand the industrial base in Korea. This was especially true in the areas of heavy industry, such as chemical plants, steel mills and arms production.⁴⁰ The Japanese military felt it would be beneficial to have production closer to the source of raw materials and closer to potential front lines for a future war with China.⁴¹ Therefore, the working class in North Korea had already increased significantly during the industrialisation of the country in the colonial period.

The Labour Law stipulates that all workers should have an eight-hour working day (Article 1), but those aged between 14 and 16 years would have a six or seven hour working day (Articles 2 and 3). No one under the age of 14 years was to work (Article 4). All workers should receive equal pay for equal work (Article 7). The Law also included for the first time provisions for pregnant women and working mothers. Article 15 prohibits assigning pregnant or nursing women overtime or night work, and stipulates transferring a pregnant woman to easier work with equal pay. Nursing women are also allowed to take baby-feeding breaks with pay (Article 16). There is also provision for seventy-seven days of maternity leave with full pay (Article 18). Although these provisions were an advance, the North Korean government defined the primary role of women as mothers, with no recognition that male workers may also be fathers. No provisions have been included in the Law to suggest that men are a part of the childrearing process or need assistance to fulfil their roles in society.

³⁶ Song, *Human Rights Discourse*, p. 79.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution*, p. 87.

⁴⁰ Keith Pratt, *Everlasting Flower: A History of Korea* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007), pp. 197, 224.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 197, 224.

Further, the Labour Law does not include provisions to protect working women who may not be mothers. For instance, there is no mention of unfair dismissal on grounds other than being a mother.

The Law on Equality of the Sexes (1946)

One month after the promulgation of the Labour Law, Kim Il Sung is said to have personally promulgated the Law on the Equality of the Sexes on 30 July 1946.⁴² At the time, some members of the *Yan 'an* group expressed their apprehension towards the institution of gender equality, as they believed that addressing gender equality was an attack on the deep-seated patriarchal values in Korean society.⁴³ North Korea claims to be the first country in Asia to address discrimination against women in its legal system.⁴⁴ However, provisions were included in the 1930 Chinese Civil Code by the Nationalist government (1927–1948) during the Republic of China (1912–1949). The Chinese Civil Code regarded men and women as individual persons, equal in status, rights and obligations. In particular, daughters obtained equal rights to inherit their fathers' property, wives gained mostly equal rights to marry and divorce and men and women shared nearly equal rights over their children.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the Chinese Civil Code was hardly adopted or implemented due to the chaotic political situation and the brief rule of the Nationalist government.⁴⁶ In the DPRK, similarities in provisions to ensure gender equality can be seen between the North Korean Law on the Equality of the Sexes and the earlier 1936 Soviet Constitution, which are discussed below.

The Law on the Equality of the Sexes included provisions on the protection of women's welfare rights and rights during marital relationships. Article 1 of the Law was closely modelled after Article 122 of the 1936 Soviet Constitution which stipulates equal rights for women in all spheres of economic, social, cultural and political life. The North Korean Law includes provisions for women to vote and be elected to local and supreme organs (Article 2), have equal access to labour, pay, social insurance and education (Article 3), and to own or inherit land (Article 8). The law provides equal rights for women to marry and divorce freely (Article 4 and Article 5); and the legal age for females to marry is set at 17 years and for males 18 years (Article 6). Although the North Korean government officially

⁴² CEDAW, *Initial Report*, para. 70 and para. 71, p. 11.

⁴³ The *yan 'an* group were ethnic Koreans who had fled from Korea to China during the occupation of the Korean peninsula.

⁴⁴ Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution*, p. 93.

⁴⁵ Margaret Kuo, *Intolerable Cruelty: Marriage, Law and Society in Early Twentieth-Century China* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012), p. 4

⁴⁶ Yin-Ching Chen, "Civil Law Development: China and Taiwan", *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs*, 2 (2002), p. 9.

recognises divorce in this provision, the state took measures from the mid-1950s to discourage divorce.⁴⁷ The government states in its report to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, however, that the comparatively small number of divorces in the DPRK is not due to any legislation that makes divorce difficult but because since “olden times, it has been a traditional national custom peculiar to the Korean people for a married couple to live together until they die”.⁴⁸ Divorce from spouses branded “bad elements” is granted comparatively easily to either gender and, in fact, is often strongly encouraged by the government.⁴⁹

According to Jiyoung Song, the main purpose of the Law on the Equality of the Sexes was to embrace women as former victims of human rights violations experienced under Japanese colonial rule, in order to mobilise them as a solid labour force for the process of nation building.⁵⁰ This can be seen in Article 9 of the Law, which stipulates, “[a]long with the promulgation of this law the Japanese imperialist laws and regulations relating to the rights of Korean women shall be nullified”. This can also be seen in Article 7 of the Law, which protects women against violations such as polygamy, trafficking, concubinage, licensed or unlicensed prostitution and the *Kisaeng* system.⁵¹ This was a repudiation of the recent memory of the exploitation of Korean women by the Japanese colonists in the licensed prostitution system and in the enforced prostitution/military sexual slavery system of the Second World War (1939–1945).⁵² As we shall see below, the North Korean government stated in 2002 that the “traffic in women and prostitution [of women] are regarded as the most shameful crime” and claimed that there has been no reported case for many years.⁵³ Instead, the government points to the colonial period, stating, “[t]here used to be the systems of licensed or unlicensed prostitution, *Kisaeng*, and traffic in women in the days of the

⁴⁷ Song, *Human Rights Discourse*, p. 126; Balázs Szalontai, *Kim Il Sung in the Khrushchev Era: Soviet–DPRK Relations and the Roots of North Korean Despotism, 1953–1964* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), pp. 215, 216.

⁴⁸ CEDAW, *Initial Report*, para. 240, p. 35.

⁴⁹ Kyungja Jung and Bronwen Dalton, “Rhetoric Versus Reality for the Women of North Korea: Mothers of the Revolution”, *Asian Survey*, 46 (5) (2006), p. 754.

⁵⁰ Song, *Human Rights Discourse*, p. 78.

⁵¹ A *kisaeng* is a female entertainer, trained in music, dancing, and poetry composition. Ruth Barraclough, “A history of sex work in modern Korea”, in Mark McLelland and Vera Mackie (eds), *Routledge Handbook of Sexuality Studies in East Asia* (Oxford: Routledge, 2015), pp. 294–304.

⁵² On the wartime military sexual slavery/enforced military prostitution system see Yuki Tanaka, *Japan’s Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery and Prostitution During World War II and the US Occupation* (Oxon: Routledge, 2002); Chunghee Sarah Soh, *The Comfort Women: Sexual Violence and Postcolonial Memory in Korea and Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Chunghee Sarah Soh, “The Korean ‘comfort women’: Movement for Redress”, *Asian Survey*, 36 (12) (1996), pp. 1226–1240.

⁵³ CEDAW, *Initial Report*, para. 105, p. 16.

Japanese colonial rule”.⁵⁴ The government insists that immediately after the liberation of Korea in 1945, the strict legal prohibition against the prostitution and trafficking of women was recognised in Article 7 of the Law on the Equality of the Sexes.⁵⁵

Even though the Law on Equality of the Sexes was the first legal document in Korea to outline the rights of women to participate in society, to vote, and receive equal pay, social insurance, and education, the North Korean government did not address many issues faced by Korean women. Issues not addressed include discrimination against Korean women in society and the continual description of their roles as mothers without the equal responsibility of men within the home to care for children. It can be said, therefore, that this law was intended to be an initial foundation for future laws. However, it would be another sixty-four years before the North Korean legal system once again addressed the rights of women in the Women’s Rights Act (2010), discussed below.

The DPRK Constitution (1948)

In April 1947, the first Constitution of North Korea was drafted at the Second Party Congress of the Democratic Party.⁵⁶ The structure of the proposed Constitution was based on the Twenty-Point Party Platform (see Appendix 7).⁵⁷ The draft Constitution was then presented at a Provisional People’s meeting on 6 February 1947. It was not immediately instituted as the draft needed to be approved by the Soviet Union, which was overseeing the initial nation building stage. Several recommendations were made before the final approval of the Constitution at the first Supreme People’s Assembly on 8 September 1948.⁵⁸ Internationally, on 10 December 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly. For the first time, fundamental human rights were universally affirmed. Under Article 2 of the Declaration everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth, without distinction of any kind according to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Under the Declaration the right of women to marry freely (Article 16), to own property (Article 17), and the right to participate in government was also protected. Some of these provisions had been included in the Law on the Equality of the Sexes, as noted above.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ The Korean Democratic Party was established by a nationalist, Cho Man-sik (1883–1950) on 3 November 1945.

⁵⁷ Song, *Human Rights Discourse*, p. 82.

⁵⁸ Andrei Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung: the Formation of North Korea 1945–1960* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2002), p. 42.

Within the DPRK, the procedure employed to establish the 1948 Constitution closely followed the Soviet model.⁵⁹ For example, Article 31 of the 1948 North Korean Constitution was closely modelled after Article 123 of the 1936 USSR Constitution, which stipulates “[e]quality of rights of citizens of the USSR irrespective of their nationality or race in all spheres of economic state, cultural, social and political life is an indefensible law”. Article 31 of the 1948 DPRK Constitution stipulates, “The national minorities who have the citizenship of the DPRK are guaranteed equal rights with Korean citizens”. The protection of ethnic minority rights though, was less of a social issue in the relatively homogeneous North Korea. As a result, the North Korean government deleted Article 31 from its 1972 Constitution.⁶⁰ North Korea’s first Constitution was not replaced until 1972.⁶¹

In the first Constitution, the list of rights was extremely broad-ranging and many were lifted directly from the Ten-Point Programme of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland (see Appendix 3) and the Twenty-Point Platform.⁶² Both the Programme and Platform ensured the social and political rights of all people with particular focus on women and vulnerable groups. The 1948 DPRK Constitution also reaffirmed provisions in existing laws, which guaranteed the welfare rights of people regardless of gender. For example, Article 22 stipulates that women “in the DPRK are accorded equal rights with men in all spheres of government, political, economic, social, and cultural activity” (Article 22). There are also provisions on the advancement of women’s access to education, training, and employment (Article 15 and Article 18), which would also be elaborated upon in laws and regulations in the following years.⁶³ The Constitution also provided what it calls special protection to mothers and children (Article 22), and marriage and the family (Article 23).⁶⁴ This “protection” of the family also features in the 1972 DPRK Constitution and each of the 1992 and 1998 amended Constitutions stipulating, “[m]arriage and the family shall be protected by the State”. Although the 1948 DPRK Constitution confirmed provisions for women included in previous laws such as equal rights with men in all spheres of political, economic, social and cultural activity, the North Korean government also awarded “special protection” to mothers and children. The government reinforced gender stereotypes of the division of labour in the home with provisions for women based on their roles as mothers.

⁵⁹ Song, *Human Rights Discourse*, p. 81.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 84.

⁶¹ Marion P. Spina Jr., “Brushes with the Law: North Korea and the Rule of Law”, *Korea Economic Institute, Academic Paper Series*, 2 (6) (2007), p. 3.

⁶² It is said that the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland under the guidance of Kim Il Sung adopted the Ten-Point Programme on 5 May 1936. CEDAW, *Initial Report*, para. 69, p. 10.

⁶³ CEDAW, *Initial Report*, para. 89, p. 14.

⁶⁴ Ibid., para. 88, p. 14.

Internationally, two years after the DPRK promulgated the state's first Constitution, the new Communist government of the People's Republic of China promulgated the New Marriage Law on 1 May 1950. The Chinese leader Mao Zedong is said to have personally established this law.⁶⁵ The New Marriage Law challenged the patriarchal marriage traditions of arranged or forced marriage and concubine. Before the promulgation of this Law Chinese women could not seek a divorce.⁶⁶ The New Marriage Law became an essential part of the Chinese land reform as women in rural communities stopped being sold to land owners. By this time the DPRK had already addressed the rights of women in marriage in the 1946 Law of Equality of the Sexes. It would be several years later in 1990 though, that the North Korean government would return to address in detail women's rights within marriage in the Family Law, which is discussed below.

In the following section, I will examine the influence of the *Juche* ideology and the legal protection of gender equality in the DPRK between 1951 and 1990.

The *Juche* Ideology and North Korean Laws (1951–1990)

While Marxism-Leninism is still important in the DPRK, *Juche* has superseded this ideology as the official state ideology, as we have seen above.⁶⁷ Kim Il Sung is said to have progressively developed *Juche* into a nationalist ideology, resting on three pillars of political sovereignty, an independent economy and military self-defence.⁶⁸ *Juche* is not limited to the spheres of politics, economics or defence, though, as the ideology permeates all aspects of North Korean society, including the state's development of gender equality laws. As part of the North Korean government's aim to develop an independent economy, it emphasised the need for women to join the labour force. It became clear that the government was less interested in women's rights than ensuring that there was a large enough labour force to build the country. The government insisted that by promulgating laws to protect women's rights and encouraging them to join the labour force as paid workers the groundwork for women's liberation was achieved. It was within this context that the government socialised childrearing and the pre-packaging of food to encourage more women to leave the home to participate in the official economy. Laws such as the Law on Nursing and Upbringing of Children (1976) and the Family Law (1990) ensured working mothers better working conditions. However,

⁶⁵ Xinxin Chen, "Marriage Law Revisions Reflect Social Progress in China", *China Today*, March 2001, (accessed 9 February 2016), www.chinatoday.com.cn/English/e2001/e200103/hunyin.htm. As noted above, however, there had been many progressive provisions in the policies of the Nationalists.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Weatherly and Song, "The Evolution of Human Rights", p. 275.

⁶⁸ Goedde, "Law 'Of Our Own Style'", p. 1273.

there was an assumption that all North Korean women were mothers or would be in the future. North Korean laws during this time focused on the role of women as the primary carers and never considered that men could share household chores.⁶⁹ As a result, women continued to suffer from the double burden of being responsible for the majority of household chores while being directed to relatively low status and low paying occupations in the workforce, which will be discussed further in chapter 5.⁷⁰

The DPRK Constitution (1972)

The North Korean government adopted the amended Constitution at the Fifth Session of the Supreme People's Assembly (SPA) on 27 December 1972. This action brought the old Constitution of 1948 into line with the political system and state ideology of *Juche*. Although Marxist-Leninism had been the primary doctrine for the early formation of the North Korean state and legal system, in 1972 the *Juche* philosophy officially replaced this ideology in the Constitution.⁷¹ The later Constitution confirmed provisions in the 1948 Constitution, such as eight-hour work days (Article 30), free education and training for all North Koreans (Article 45 to Article 47), and free medical services (Article 56). The amended Constitution also emphasised the mobilisation of female workers by protecting the rights of working mothers.⁷² Article 77 stipulates special protection of mothers and children by providing maternity leave, reduced working hours for mothers with many children, providing a wide network of maternity hospitals, crèches and kindergartens, and other measures. Article 49 of the 1972 DPRK Constitution stipulates that the state "shall maintain all children of preschool age in crèches and kindergartens at State and public expense". This provides women with facilities to care for their children while they are working in the official economy. The North Korean government has continued to define the role of women as mothers and then by their contribution to society. These provisions are not equally provided to men, who may also be working parents. Instead, the government's gendered lens has tied women to gendered stereotypes.

The Law on the Nursing and Upbringing of Children (1976)

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Stephen Haggard and Marcus Nolan, *Gender in Transition: The Case of North Korea*, Working Papers Series No.124 (Washington: Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2011), p. 3.

⁷¹ Goedde, "Law 'Of Our Own Style'", p. 1270.

⁷² Eun-young Shin, "Ideology and Gender Equality: Women's Policies of North Korea and China", *East Asian Review*, 13 (3) (2001), p. 99.

On 29 April 1976, the North Korean government promulgated the Law on the Nursing and Upbringing of Children.⁷³ The Law provides for all North Korean children to be cared for in nurseries and kindergartens at state and public expense (Article 2); or parents are free to raise their children in their homes, instead of sending them to nurseries (Article 3). Childcare is provided for children from the ages of 3 months to 4 years in nurseries and from 5 years to 7 years in kindergartens. The Law includes provisions to maintain a high standard of feeding and encourage the physical development of children, as well as assuring hygiene and epidemic prevention in childcare facilities (Article 6, Article 7 and Article 28). Operationally, social cooperative organisations are obliged to maintain the material conditions of nurseries and kindergartens at levels determined by the government (Article 12 and Article 15). The Law also makes a commitment to the care of women during pregnancy and after childbirth by providing maternity benefits (Article 20). The nurseries and kindergartens are under the direct control of the central education and public health organs and the local power organs (Article 47). Each city (or district) or county also has a food-processing factory or workshop to help lift the burden of housework (Articles 54 to Article 56). The Law on Rearing and Education of Children includes new provisions such as the right for working mothers to access nurseries and kindergartens at state expense, once again defining women as mothers. The Law confirms the government's gendered view that the home is a woman's primary workplace and thus provides provisions to ensure they are able to join the labour force. The law does not address the responsibility of men in the home but instead reinforces the sexual division of labour.

The Family Law (1990)

The North Korean government promulgated the Family Law on 24 October 1990. This addresses several areas of men and women's lives from marriage and divorce to childrearing and parental responsibility. The Law stipulates that the "State shall provide material conditions for mothers to bring up and educate children soundly" (Article 6). This Article shows that childrearing responsibilities rest firmly on the shoulders of women and that the government does not recognise the equal responsibility of men to care for their children. Articles 27 and Article 28 stipulate that both parents "have the same obligation to educate and the daily care of health and growth of their children", but the Law does not elaborate or provide material conditions for fathers "to bring up and educate children soundly" as seen in

⁷³ Andrew C. Nahm, *Introduction to Korean History and Culture* (Seoul: Hollym Corporation Publishers, 1993), p. 271.

Article 6 which refers only to women. Due to this lack of explanation on the role of fathers, it could be said that the government views the role of men in the home as less important than that of women. By enforcing this gendered view in state laws it only perpetuates the problem of gender stereotyping in the DPRK, as the gendered division of labour in the home is left untouched.

Article 18 of the Family Law stipulates that a husband and wife “shall have equal rights within the family”.⁷⁴ Further, “marriage is recognised legally and protected by the State only after it is properly registered at a registry office and married life is forbidden in cases where the marriage is not registered” (Article 11). The government awards special protection to couples who marry, as the family unit is considered central in North Korean society, reflecting the continued influence of Confucianism.⁷⁵ From as early as 1948 the DPRK Constitution stipulated that “marriage and the family are under the protection of the state” (Article 23). The Article does not provide details on what is meant by equal rights within the family. It could be assumed though, that the government prefers couples to be married and care for each other, as this would help eliminate state responsibility for providing food and facilities to its people. If a married couple wants to divorce in the DPRK, it “may be granted if a marriage cannot be continued because one party has been guilty of gross infidelity to conjugal love and trust” (Article 21). Article 22 of the Family Law stipulates that the custody of children in the case of divorce is “decided according to mutual agreement and in consideration of the interests of the children”. When no agreement can be reached between the couple, the matter is settled by the court (Article 22). No reference is made in the Article to who has preferential custodial rights when a couple divorces, suggesting that North Korean men and women have equal rights.

In the following section, I examine the influence of “Our Style” philosophy on the development of legal protection of gender equality in the DPRK.

The “Our Style” Ideology and North Korean Laws (1991–2010)

From the 1990s, there were significant social changes in the DPRK due to the collapse of both the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc. To add to this instability there were also natural disasters, which decreased agricultural production and adversely affected the economy and society. The North Korean government maintains, however, that social benefits such as the free education system and universal free medical care remained at normal levels during this

⁷⁴ The DPRK is yet to address same-sex marriage or civil unions in state law.

⁷⁵ Weatherly and Song, “The Evolution of Human Rights”, p. 285.

time.⁷⁶ In reality, as the industrial economy began to implode from the withdrawal of subsidies from the Soviet Union, Russia and then China, and the misguided effort of the government to pursue a strategy of self-sufficiency,⁷⁷ a number of North Korean women stopped going to their official workplaces as they searched for food and money in alternative places.⁷⁸ In this context, the government still sees women as primarily responsible for carrying the burden of family chores and childrearing. Although social changes have encouraged women to become financially independent, it has also increased their burdens, as they are now in many cases financially responsible for their families.

In 1995, Kim Jong Il used the phrase “our style of human rights”.⁷⁹ “Our Style” focused more on conservative values such as those of the family and the military.⁸⁰ The Marxist notion of class rights was de-emphasised and entitlement to rights was now much more dependent upon an individual’s loyalty to the nation and its leaders.⁸¹ While collective interests remained highly pertinent to North Korean thinking, they were now expressed in more *Juche*-specific terms, such as the right to national sovereignty and the right to national self-determination. A distinct feature of “Our Style” is the emphasis on the protection of the human rights of people in need, in correlation with the image of a caring, fatherly leader able to protect and take care of them.⁸² This idea refers to a particular governing style of Kim Jong Il as the sole benevolent ruler of the DPRK, acting exclusively to safeguard and protect the interests of the nation.⁸³ In this situation, only those people who are loyal to the virtuous leader enjoyed rights. At the same time, rights can be withheld or withdrawn by the North Korean government from those who are not seen to be loyal to the state and Kim family.⁸⁴ This reinforces a patriarchal relationship between the Kim dynasty and the North Korean people.

In the following section, I examine revisions made to the DPRK Constitution in 1992 and 1998.

The DPRK Constitution (1992)

⁷⁶ CEDAW, “699th meeting”, para. 4, p. 2.

⁷⁷ Stephan Haggard and Marcus Noland, *Hunger and Human Rights: The Politics of Famine in North Korea* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2005), pp. 14, 15.

⁷⁸ Jung and Dalton, “Mothers of the Revolution”, p. 758.

⁷⁹ Weatherly and Song, “The Evolution of Human Rights”, p. 275.

⁸⁰ Song, *Human Rights Discourse*, p. 145.

⁸¹ Weatherly and Song, “The Evolution of Human Rights”, p. 275.

⁸² Song, *Human Rights Discourse*, p. 172.

⁸³ Weatherly and Song, “The Evolution of Human Rights”, p. 281.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

After the 1972 DPRK Constitution, the SPA adopted an amended Constitution in April 1992. The revisions aimed to legitimate the achievements and experiences of the country since the previous Constitution.⁸⁵ The revisions were also a result of a build-up of external events in the 1980s, which culminated at the beginning of the 1990s with changes to the geopolitical world order and the end of the Cold War.⁸⁶ The Soviet Union and Eastern European states, which formed the Communist bloc, fell into decline and later collapsed. China also continued on its path of transformation, incrementally enacting measures in order to adopt a market system. This new post-Cold War period that began in the 1990s drove the DPRK into desperation as the country was forced to try to find its own way to survive in a new, radically altered international environment.⁸⁷ All of these external events had a huge impact on the North Korean economy and political survival and the amendments made to the 1992 Constitution. Perhaps the most notable change to the DPRK Constitution was the elimination of the expression of Marxism-Leninism and its replacement with the terminology of the *Juche* ideology. Article 3 of the revised Constitution stipulates that the “DPRK is guided in its activities by the *Juche* idea, a world outlook centred on people, a revolutionary ideology for achieving the independence of the masses of the people”. Provisions to protect the rights of women who were mothers and worked in the labour force (Article 49 and Article 77) continued in this revised version of the Constitution.

The DPRK Constitution (1998)

On 5 September 1998, the SPA again amended the DPRK Constitution. Just as the previous Constitutions included provisions to protect the rights of the North Korean people, the 1998 Constitution also guaranteed these rights. For example, those who work “are provided with stable jobs and working conditions” (Article 70) and it stipulates “fixed working hours, the provision of holidays [and] paid leave” (Article 71). The Constitution states that the government is to provide “accommodation at health resorts and holiday homes at the State expense and by a growing number of cultural facilities” (Article 71). All North Koreans are also guaranteed free medical care under Article 72, which stipulates, “an expanding network of hospitals, sanatoria and other medical institutions, State social insurance and other social security systems” (Article 72). Finally, all North Koreans are guaranteed an “advanced educational system” (Article 73).

⁸⁵ CEDAW, *Initial Report*, para. 48, p. 8.

⁸⁶ Dae-Kyu Yoon, “The Constitution of North Korea: Its Changes and Implications”, *Fordham International Law Journal*, 27 (4) (2003), p. 1297.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1298.

The amended 1998 DPRK Constitution continued to state the principle of special protection for women. Paragraph 2 of Article 77 stipulates:

The State shall afford special protection to mothers and children by providing maternity leave, reduced working hours for mothers with many children, a wide network of maternity hospitals, crèches and kindergartens, and other measures. The State shall provide all conditions for women to play a full role in society (1998 DPRK Constitution).

This provision reinforces the state's gendered view of women, which has not altered since the early gender equality laws of the post-revolutionary period. Women have continued to be defined by the North Korean government as mothers and thus subject to provisions that are seen to lessen their burdens within the home. Until this time, the North Korean government has not addressed gender stereotyping in state laws.

Next, I briefly outline the DPRK's relationship with the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (hereafter "CEDAW Committee"), as this relationship has influenced the amendment and promulgation of laws since 2005. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (see Appendix 1) will be discussed in detail in chapter 7.

The DPRK and the CEDAW Committee

In February 2001, the DPRK agreed to the guidelines and procedures outlined in CEDAW.⁸⁸ The timing of the DPRK's action suggests that it was an outcome of its involvement with the UN over previous issues such as the famine in the mid-1990s and in response to international pressure for improvement of the state's human rights record. An initial report for consideration to the CEDAW Committee was submitted by the DPRK on 11 September 2002 and the DPRK continued communication with the Committee until 2005.⁸⁹ The North

⁸⁸ The United Nations General Assembly adopted the CEDAW Convention in 1979 and one year later on the 3 September 1981 the Convention was entered into force. The Convention provides for gender equality in political, economic, social, and cultural rights and stipulates that discrimination against women be eliminated through legal, policy, and programmatic measures. United Nations (UN), *Progress Achieved in the Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, A/CONF.177/7, (Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China, 4-15 September 1995), (distributed 21 June 1995), paragraph 12; UNICEF, *Children and Women*, (2003), p. 21.

⁸⁹ United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), "Responses to the list of issues and questions for consideration of the initial report," *Democratic People's*

Korean government has offered no reason as to why communication stalled with the CEDAW Committee. To date the CEDAW Committee continues to request further information from the DPRK concerning gender equality within the country. The Committee has also requested that the North Korean government sign the Optional Protocol to CEDAW but to date the country has neither signed nor ratified the Optional Protocol.⁹⁰

In the DPRK's initial report, the government states that "the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or the stereotyped roles for men and women have nearly been eliminated" so "discrimination based on the outmoded customs is no longer a big issue of social concern".⁹¹ Then again, the North Korean government states that customary discrimination exists within society and households, as in the following example:

Calling a man the outer householder and a woman the inner householder in a family, a man becoming the head of a family, the community employing mostly females in the jobs like restaurant reception, switchboard operation, typing and the like, regarding a hard or big work as a man's job and an easy or sundry task as a woman's job.⁹²

Within this context, the North Korean government has tried to "enhance the consciousness of respecting women among the new generations and to thoroughly prevent the discriminatory conception and happening occasionally witnessed among the old generation".⁹³ The DPRK is said to encourage active education in the idea of respecting and caring for girls and women from school age and through mass media and the promulgation of the state Constitution, laws, regulations, and rules.⁹⁴ However, guaranteeing equal rights in law did not liberate women from the patriarchal system embedded in North Korean culture, as North Korean

Republic of Korea, CEDAW/PSWG/2005/II/CRP.2/Add.3 (Beijing: Thirty-third session, 5 to 22 July 2005), (distributed 15 April 2005).

⁹⁰ United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), "List of issues and questions with regard to the consideration of periodic reports: Democratic People's Republic of Korea", *Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, CEDAW/PSWG/2005/II/CRP.1/Add. 3, (Beijing: Thirty-third session, 5 to 22 July 2005), (distributed 9 February 2005), para. 33, p. 5; United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), "Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women," *Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly*, A/RES/54/4 (Fifty-fourth session, 6 October 1999, agenda item 109), (distributed 15 October 1999).

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, para. 100, pp.15, 16.

⁹² *Ibid.*, para. 101, p. 16.

⁹³ CEDAW, *Initial Report*, para. 104, p. 16.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, para. 67, p. 10.

women continued to be assigned to stereotypical roles in the home and to gendered work in the labour force.

The CEDAW Committee noted with concern the persistence of customary assumptions and attitudes in respect to the roles and responsibilities of women and men, which are primarily discriminatory against women and influence all areas of their lives.⁹⁵ In particular, the Committee is concerned about the perception of women as caregivers and homemakers and their assignment to areas such as education and employment based on spheres suitable to their perceived ability. The Committee states that these expectations of women have serious consequences, preventing North Korean women from accessing rights and entitlements on an equal basis with North Korean men and creating a dependency on men, husbands, and family for housing, food entitlements, and other services.⁹⁶ Communication between the DPRK and CEDAW will be detailed further in chapter 7.

The North Korean government addressed some of the concerns of the CEDAW Committee in new and amended laws after communication stalled. This is particularly evident in the Women's Rights Act promulgated on 22 December 2010 (see Appendix 8). This was the first law since the Law on Equality of the Sexes in 1946 to address discrimination against women in all forms. In the following section, I examine amendments to the 2009 DPRK Constitution and provisions included in the Women's Rights Act.

The DPRK Constitution (2009)

The SPA adopted the revised DPRK Constitution on 9 April 2009. To date the content of the revisions has not been made public by the North Korean government but in late September 2009, Radio Free Asia reported that revisions were made to the 1998 version of the Constitution.⁹⁷ The revised Constitution strengthened the legitimacy of Kim Il Sung's legacy in the preamble, stating that he was the "great leader and founder of the DPRK and the father of socialist Korea". Further, it states that the immortalisation of the "Great Leader" is held in high esteem by the KWP and the Korean people, as Kim Il Sung will always be known as the "Eternal President". The term communism was removed from the revised 2009 Constitution and replaced with "military-first politics". During the North Korean food crisis in the mid-1990s, "military-first politics" was born from the idea that the human rights of the North

⁹⁵ United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), *Concluding Comments: Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, CEDAW/C/PRK/CO/1 (Thirty-third session, 5 to 22 July 2005), (distributed 22 July 2005), para. 35, p. 5.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, para. 36, p. 5.

⁹⁷ "N. Korean Parliament Boosts Kim Jong-il's Powers", *Chosun Media, The Chosunilbo*, 25 September 2009, http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2009/09/25/2009092500395.html (accessed 20 January 2014).

Korean people were fully protected by the “Great Leader” and party. In return, the people defend the North Korean leader and country by endless loyalty and filial piety. The role of the North Korean armed forces under the guidance of “military first politics” is to protect both the state and the working people. Article 59 of the 2009 amended Constitution states that the “mission of the armed forces is to carry out the military-first revolutionary line in order to protect the nerve centre, safeguard the interests of the working people, defend the socialist system and the country from foreign aggression”.

The 2009 North Korean Constitution also included for the first time the terminology of human rights. Article 8, paragraph 1 stipulates, “The social system of the DPRK is a man-centred [sic] social system whereby the working popular masses are the masters of everything, and everything in society serves the working popular masses”. The government “safeguards” the human rights of the North Korean people under Article 8, paragraph 2 of the Constitution.

The state shall safeguard the interests of, and respect and protect the human rights of the working people, including workers, farmers, soldiers, and working intellectuals, who have been freed from exploitation and oppression and have become the masters of the state and society.

The previous version of the Constitution, adopted in 1998, had vowed to “defend and protect the interests” of the same groups. Under Article 63 of the 2009 Constitution, though, the rights and responsibilities of citizens are based on the collectivist principle of “One for All, All for One”. Further, the state guarantees all citizens democratic rights and freedom, and happy material and cultural lives (Article 64). Article 64 continues that, in the DPRK, “the rights and freedom of citizens shall be further expanded with the consolidation and development of the socialist system”. Previously, the protection of human rights in the DPRK was only mentioned in lower-level laws, such as the Criminal Procedure Law (2006). It could be assumed that changes made to the state Constitution were a result of the DPRK’s engagement with the UN and from international pressure. It is unclear, though, to what extent the UN and international community has influenced amendments to existing laws or the promulgation of new laws, as the DPRK does not share this information when reporting to UN bodies.

As in previous Constitutions, the rights of all North Koreans are provided for in the revised 2009 version regardless of gender. For example, Article 70 stipulates, “Citizens shall have the right to labour”, free medical care (Article 72) and an education (Article 73). The rights of North Korean women were also offered “special protection” by provisions in Article 77 of the 2009 Constitution.

Women shall be entitled to the same social status and rights as men.
The state shall provide special protection to mothers and children by guaranteeing maternity leave before and after childbirth, reducing working hours for mothers with many children, and expanding the network of maternity hospitals, nurseries, and kindergartens, and by implementing other measures. The state shall provide every possible condition for women to participate in society.

In this provision though, the North Korean government has addressed gender equality as the ability of women to leave the home and participate in the labour force. To achieve this aim the state stipulates the provision of maternity hospitals, nurseries, and kindergartens (Article 77). Again these provisions reinforce the gender stereotype that women are carers in the home.

The Women’s Rights Act (2010)

In recent years, one of the most important laws to be promulgated was the Women’s Rights Act on 22 December 2010. The announcement of the Act suggests that the DPRK has responded to the international attention by organisations like the UN and the CEDAW Committee, who have focused on its poor human rights record.⁹⁸ This was the first law since the Law on Equality of the Sexes in 1946 to address discrimination against women in all forms. While the Act reiterates women’s equal right to own property (Article 36), equal rights to marriage (Article 44 and Article 45) and divorce (Article 47), and the rights of working mothers (Article 28 to Article 29) it also addresses discrimination against women in other forms such as domestic violence (Article 46), rape and trafficking (Article 39). However, the language employed by the North Korean government on the role of women has not changed significantly, as the government continues to stress the importance of their roles in the home.

⁹⁸ Korea Institute of National Unification (KINU), *White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea, 2012* (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, 2012), p. 429.

This can be seen in Article 3 of the Women's Rights Act, which states that women "play an important role in the welfare of the family and the development of the society". The wording of this Article implies that the role of women is first within the family and then in society, as noted by the non-governmental organisation Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights (NKHR).⁹⁹ The language employed by the North Korean government on gender equality has changed little since its accession to CEDAW in 2001. The fact that it is the "Women's Rights Act" rather than, say, the "Gender Equality Act" reveals that the North Korean government still does not question men's roles in society or the home.

Although the rights of women in marriage (Article 44) and divorce (Article 42) have continued to be protected under the Women's Rights Act what has changed (to some extent) since the DPRK's accession to CEDAW is the actual role of men and women within the home. Since the famine of the 1990s, North Korean women are often absent from their families, as they are away searching for food, trading in distant places, or peddling goods across the country.¹⁰⁰ This has led to disharmony within marriages and family breakdowns. The growing financial independence of women has also created conflict between married couples and women have started to demand more rights within the home.¹⁰¹ In this situation, some North Korean men have responded with violence. The DPRK has addressed violence within families for the first time in Article 46 of the Women's Rights Act, which stipulates that there must not be any form of domestic violence against women in the family. Although the Article attempts to act as a preventive measure against domestic violence, it does not provide any legal protection for victims of spousal violence.¹⁰² This is a step forward in the DPRK's legal system as previous laws did not address domestic violence at all. Instead, violence within the home was seen as a private matter and incidents often went unreported.¹⁰³ The Korean Institute of National Unification reports that many defectors have testified in recent years that incidents of domestic violence are widespread in the DPRK.¹⁰⁴ It is difficult to clarify the number of cases of domestic violence, as the North Korean government has not provided statistical data to the UN in its reporting.

⁹⁹ Joanna Hosaniak, *Status of Women's Rights in the Context of Socio-Economic Changes in the DPRK*, NKHR Briefing Report No.7 (Seoul: Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights, 2013), p. 50.

¹⁰⁰ Jung and Dalton, "Mothers of the Revolution", p. 755; Kang, "The Patriarchal State", p. 38; Kyung Ae Park, "Economic crisis, women's changing economic roles, and their implications for women's status in North Korea", *The Pacific Review*, 24 (2) (2011), p. 170.

¹⁰¹ Hosaniak, *Status of Women's Rights*, p. 35.

¹⁰² Ibid., pp. 64, 65.

¹⁰³ KINU, *White Paper*, 2012, p. 418.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 417.

In the DPRK, labour in the official economy is the responsibility of all people, because it is not seen as an individual benefit but is based on the collectivist principle to benefit everyone.¹⁰⁵ Therefore, the right to work is not a right but a duty to respond to the mobilisation of labour, and thus the North Korean government has long promoted the participation of women in work.¹⁰⁶ The Women's Rights Act states that women have equal rights with men in labour and that Municipal People's Committees and relevant organs are to guarantee the equal rights of women to take part in labour (Article 26). Article 37 states that to ensure women are able to leave the home relevant institutions, corporate associations, and organisations should establish day-care centres, kindergartens and other facilities. This idea, however, rests on the belief that women are primarily responsible for the care of their children. For women who do not have access to these facilities because they work in the unofficial economy childcare is an added responsibility. Further, it is evident that the government's thinking on women's roles has hardly changed since the promulgation of the Law on Equality of the Sexes in 1946 or the state's accession to CEDAW in 2001.

It has been a long-held practice for the North Korean government to assign women between the ages of 16 and 55 years to specific positions in the labour force. Therefore, discrimination against women in the workplace has emerged in the forms of differentiated pay scales and the type of work women are assigned to. Article 28 of the Women's Rights Act highlights this view.

Institutions, corporate associations and organisations, except for those professions or departments that are not appropriate for women, are not allowed to not take in women or restrict them for reasons such as gender, marriage, pregnancy, and childbirth.

The exception made in the Article to "professions or departments that are not appropriate for women" shows that the DPRK deems some occupations unsuitable for women. The Act does not elaborate on what occupations are considered "not appropriate" but Article 30 states that the "supervising organ for labour administration determines which fields and professions are prohibited for women". Consequently, men are assigned to important and higher paying jobs, while women are assigned to relatively less important and lower paying jobs,¹⁰⁷ in the so-

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 379.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 400.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

called “light industries”, such as agriculture, communications, health and education.¹⁰⁸ This does not give North Korean women the right to choose their own profession or employment but confirms their assignment to certain roles in the North Korean gendered labour force. The Women’s Rights Act will be discussed further in chapter 8.

Conclusion

The North Korean government has repeatedly stated its support for the principle of women’s rights but many aspects of gender equality are not adequately addressed in the DPRK’s legal system. Since the promulgation of the Law on Equality of the Sexes in 1946, North Korean rhetoric has emphasised that the role of women was to turn to productive work in society to help build an independent socialist country. To achieve this goal North Korean laws have stated the principal of protecting the economic, social, and political rights of women. However, these legal documents did not include provisions for preventing gender discrimination, altering the division of labour in the home, or consider the needs of women without children. Instead, the rights of women have often been secondary to the government’s economic goals and promotion of family unity. At times women’s rights have been held back to assure a harmonious society, a stable family unit,¹⁰⁹ and work units. As the North Korean government has focused on bringing more economic resources into society through the efforts of women, childrearing and food preparation have been socialised. Then, once women have left the home to work in the economy, the government has claimed that women have achieved liberation since the groundwork for gender equality had been instituted by the state.¹¹⁰ Discriminatory practices still exist in North Korean society and are even promoted by the government to ensure stability. For example, the government still assumes that women are primarily responsible for the care of their children. Any changes that have occurred to the roles of men and women since the mid-1990s and the DPRK’s accession to CEDAW in 2001 have taken place independently of the state and the North Korean legal system. Rather, changes to gender roles are an effect of the ongoing socioeconomic transformation of the DPRK.

In the next chapter, I examine how the DPRK presented women’s rights and gender relations to the world in the medium of its English-language propaganda magazines. From the

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 401.

¹⁰⁹ Maxine Molyneux, “Mobilization Without Emancipation? Women’s Interest, State, and Revolution”, in Fagen, Richard, C.D. Deere and J.L. Coraggio (eds), *Transition and Development: Problems with Third World Socialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1986), p. 299.

¹¹⁰ Kang, “The Patriarchal State”, p. 59.

1960s, the government promoted the images of revolutionary heroines and expected ordinary Korean women to emulate their qualities in their daily lives, while promoting an image of gender equality to the world. Within the country, the heroic portraits of the Kim family matriarchs, Kang Ban Sok (1892–1932) and Kim Jong Suk (1919–1949) were held up as exemplary women for all Korean women to emulate. These women were represented as being able to excel in all forms of housework, such as childcare, tailoring, and cooking, even on the battlefield. They performed these chores while armed with the revolutionary idea to defend the country and help their husbands who also worked for the revolution as soldiers.¹¹¹ When these images were disseminated internationally, this was presented as proof of the success of the Korean revolution and the achievement of gender equality within the country. At the same time, Kim Il Sung (1912–1994) was represented as the father of all Korean people, who are expected to praise and show filial piety towards him just as they would their own fathers. The depiction of gender roles in these propaganda magazines is revealing of the gendered assumptions of the North Korean regime, in ways that are not so evident in the regime's official statements about gender equality.

¹¹¹ Chun, "Women's Policies", p. 228.

4. The Revolutionary Kim Family in *Women of Korea*

During the anti-Japanese armed struggle, ... the fine working women of Korea fought as bravely as men for the country's liberation and the people's honour, and for their social emancipation and freedom.

Kim Il Sung, (date unknown).¹

Introduction

Following the liberation of the Korean peninsula from Japanese colonial rule in 1945, the peninsula was divided into North and South, temporarily entrusted to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR, Soviet Union) and the United States of America (USA) respectively. Before the permanency of the separate states in 1948, socialist reforms were implemented in northern Korea by the North Korean interim government under the policy influence of the Soviet Union.² As we have seen, from 1946 the North Korean government implemented state laws to encourage gender equality in social and family institutions. Initially, the reform process as well as the creation of large-scale social organisations were directed towards underprivileged groups in Korean society, particularly peasants, workers, women, and youth.³ During the Chosŏn Dynasty (1392–1897) and then the colonial occupation of Korea (1910–1945) these groups had lived in oppressive situations. Society adhered to a rigid social hierarchical order based on age, sex, and class, which encouraged women to follow Confucian ideals and attain Confucian virtues. A virtuous woman obeyed men throughout her life: in youth, she obeyed her father; when married, she obeyed her husband; and if her husband died she was subject to her son. However, legally there was great potential for the rights of North Korean women to improve significantly during the initial stages of state formation.

¹ Exact date unknown but speech attributed to Kim Il Sung during anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle. “Eternal ‘Women Warrior’”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (110) (1986), p. 16.

² Sonia Ryang, “Gender in Oblivion: Women in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea)”, *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 35 (2000), p. 330.

³ Charles K. Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution, 1945– 1950* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 71.

From 1946, the visual image of the revolutionary heroine appeared frequently in the Korean-language magazine, *Chosŏn Yŏsŏng* (Korean Women). This magazine was designed specifically for North Korean women. Then, from 1964, the English-language version of the magazine, *Women of Korea*, disseminated to the international community topics concerning Korean women's roles in society. In both magazines, government rhetoric and art promoted gender equality through the visual image of revolutionary heroines fighting equally alongside fellow male revolutionary soldiers on the battlefield. These images challenged, to some extent, the battlefield as a masculine domain, but other roles performed by women alongside their fellow comrades were not so different to their domestic roles in the home. Ultimately, this exposed the view of the North Korean government that women were to leave the home and defend the country but this was to be done by performing the roles of mother and wife, cook and tailor.

In this chapter, I focus specifically on the representation of the Kim family and state rhetoric in *Women of Korea*.⁴ Official North Korean historiography, assisted by paintings and photographs, cultivated the idea that the Kim family epitomised national purity through their resistance to Japanese aggressors.⁵ I focus on the English-language version of the magazine because I am interested in how the North Korean government communicates with the international community about gender relations and the rights of women. In the visual images and text, two exemplary women are prominent, Kang Ban Sok (1892–1932), the mother of Kim Il Sung (1912–1994), and Kim Jong Suk (1919–1949), the first wife of Kim Il Sung and the mother of Kim Jong Il (1941–2011). Both Kim women are depicted as uniquely feminine revolutionary subjects who were capable of caring for their families and the nation.⁶ They are represented performing the roles of mother and wife and educator, and demonstrating skills in domestic chores on the battlefield. Both women set the standard of skills that the government deemed necessary for ordinary Korean women to emulate in the building and defending of the country. Internationally, these women presented a picture of achieving gender equality in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, North Korea). Both women also

⁴ Myung Hwa Kim, "Talks with Women Partisans, *Women of Korea*, 5 (18) (1965), pp. 1, 2; "A Road to Happiness", *Women of Korea*, 5 (18) (1965), pp. 2–4; "The Emergence of the Women's Movement in Our Country and its Correct Road", *Women of Korea*, 1 (20) (1966), pp. 2–4; "Brilliant Solution of Women's Question in Our Country at the Period of Anti-Imperialist, Anti-Feudal Democratic Revolution", *Women of Korea*, 3 (67) (1975), pp. 11, 12; "In the Early Days of the Nursing and Upbringing of Children", *Women of Korea*, 2 (90) (1981), p. 16; "In First Days of Enforcement of Law on Sex Equality", *Women of Korea*, 3 (91) (1981), pp. 18, 19; "On First Democratic Election Day", *Women of Korea*, 3 (91) (1981), pp.19, 20.

⁵ Suk-Young Kim, "Dressed to Kill: Women's Fashion and Body Politics in North Korean Visual Media (1960s–1970s)", *positions: asia critique*, 19 (1) (2011), p. 164.

⁶ Suzy Kim, "Revolutionary Mothers: Women in the North Korean Revolution, 1945–1950", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 52 (4) (2010), p. 743.

represented exemplary mothers who supported their families but stood in supportive roles to their male counterparts. This suggests a contradiction in the government's aim to emancipate women from outdated customary practices. In contrast, the representations of ordinary men as soldiers and defenders of the country, as fathers and carers in the home are largely absent in *Women of Korea*. Instead, Kim Il Sung is ubiquitously represented as the "Fatherly General", who cares for all Korean children and thus the entire nation.⁷ These gendered representations of the Kim family members reinforce assumptions about the roles of ordinary men and women in North Korean society.

When examining the visual representations of the Kim family in this chapter, I have also considered the difference in clothing worn between revolutionary heroines and their male counterparts. The clothing worn by these heroic men and women reveals the gendered lens of the North Korean government. Therefore, when examining the visual images of the Kim family in *Women of Korea*, the analysis of fashion is an important indicator of official attitudes towards gendered roles in society and the change from the colonial modernity of the Korean nation to a nationalistic North Korea.

First, I begin by discussing briefly the Korean-language magazine *Chosŏn Yŏsŏng* and then the English-language version, *Women of Korea*.

The *Chosŏn Yŏsŏng* Magazine

Just weeks after the promulgation of the Law on Equality of the Sexes in September 1946, the first Korean-language magazine designed specifically for women, *Chosŏn Yŏsŏng*, was published.⁸ The magazine was issued under the guidance of the Korean Democratic Women's Union (KDWU, Women's Union) and was designed to circulate information approved by the newly-formed North Korean government.⁹ Although the magazine was intended for North Korean women it is unclear on what basis the magazine was distributed and to what extent women were exposed to the magazine. They were likely distributed during meetings and study sessions conducted by the Women's Union and through the local government offices and cultural institutions rather than women buying individual copies.¹⁰

⁷ "Premier and Children", *Women of Korea*, 3 (22) (1966), p. 2; "Our Father Marshal KIM IL SUNG", *Women of Korea*, 3 (66) (1975), p. 39; "Fatherly Love", *Women of Korea*, 4 (72) (1976), pp. 8, 9; "He Makes a Halt Though He Is Busy", *Women of Korea*, 2 (78) (1978); "Bosom of Parental Affection", *Women of Korea*, 2(90) (1981).

⁸ For further information on *Chosŏn Yŏsŏng* refer to Kim, "Revolutionary Mothers", pp. 742–767; Suzy Kim, *Everyday Life in the North Korean Revolution, 1945–1950* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2013), pp. 174–203.

⁹ Kim, "Revolutionary Mothers", pp. 754, 755.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 754.

Chosŏn Yŏsŏng covers a wide range of topics from reports on economic development to the social and domestic responsibilities of North Korean women. The magazine also includes an editorial section, a column on homemaking, educational material, and an arts and literature section. As we shall see below, the English-language version of the magazine follows this format. The earliest versions of *Chosŏn Yŏsŏng* were influenced by the Soviet Union and included a small section on news about Soviet women and the Soviet state. Anticipating the end of the Soviet occupation in the northern region of Korea, the North Korean government attempted to form a more independent view of North Korean society and the role of an independent North Korean government within the magazine.¹¹ By April 1948, the formal section on the Soviet Union in the magazine was excluded, with only the occasional article on Soviet women and culture.¹² The focus shifted to aspects of Korean life and the rights of Korean women. The theme that emerged in *Chosŏn Yŏsŏng* was the ability of women to combine their duties as wives and mothers with their new positions as workers outside the home.¹³ This theme has continued in the magazine to date and has also influenced content published in the English-language version. Throughout the history of both magazines, articles also promoted the government's role in promulgating gender equality laws.

The Women of Korea Magazine

The Working People's Organisation Publishing House in Pyongyang published the English-language magazine *Women of Korea* between 1964 and 1992. The magazine was designed specifically to inform the international community of the position of Korean women in society, and the political and economic goals of the North Korean government. Each edition of *Women of Korea* follows the same format as *Chosŏn Yŏsŏng*. During the 1960s and 1970s, the magazine emphasised stories and visual images of revolutionary heroines,¹⁴ the history and politics of the DPRK,¹⁵ homemaking articles,¹⁶ and North Korean arts and literature.¹⁷

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., p. 755.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Kim, "Talks with Women, pp. 1, 2; "A Road to Happiness", pp. 2–4; "The Emergence", pp. 2–4; "Brilliant Solution", pp. 11, 12; "In the Early Days", p. 16; "In First Days", pp. 18, 19; "On First Democratic", pp. 19, 20; "Historic Days of Realizing Sex Equality", *Women of Korea*, 2 (106) (1985), pp. 4–6; "In the Sacred War for National Liberation", *Women of Korea*, 3 (107) (1985), p. 5; "For the Sake of Fatherland More Valuable Than One's Life", *Women of Korea*, 3 (107) (1985), pp. 30, 31; "Eternal 'Women Warrior'", p. 16.

¹⁵ "Story Associated with Tower of Juche Idea", *Women of Korea*, 1 (97) (1983), pp. 2, 3; "We Saw Great Vitality of Juche Idea, Inexhaustible Might and Creative Ingenuity Of Masses of People in Reality of Korea", *Women of Korea*, 1 (97) (1983), p. 6; "Mt. Wangjae, Historical Land", *Women of Korea*, 1 (97) (1983), pp. 12, 13; "Complete History of Korea", *Women of Korea*, 1 (97) (1983), p. 34; "An Aspect of Divided Korea", *Women of Korea*, 1 (97) (1983), pp. 36, 37; "It Is Impossible to make a Silk Purse Out of a Sow's Ear", *Women*

From the early days of its formation, the North Korean government promoted women as revolutionary fighters ready to sacrifice their own life for the nation, as well as fulfilling their duties in the home through the imagery of the revolutionary heroine. Stories and visual imagery of these heroines emphasised the domestic virtues of women as mothers and wives who participated in the revolutionary cause on the battlefield.¹⁸ The representation of these revolutionary women to the international community promoted a positive image of women's equal rights in the DPRK.

Below I discuss the role of the "Revolutionary Heroine" Campaign in North Korean society as a background to the visual images and text published in *Women of Korea* from the 1960s to the 1970s.

The "Revolutionary Heroine" Campaign

The second wife of Kim Il Sung, Kim Song Ae (1928–2011?), initiated the "Revolutionary Heroine" Campaign and it was built upon by Kim Il Sung's son Kim Jong Il in later years.¹⁹ Once Kim Jong Il took a prominent role within the Propaganda and Guidance Department of the government, Kim Song Ae's involvement in the campaign decreased. Instead, Kim Jong Il promoted his own family members, such as his mother and grandmother, to important positions with the campaign as revolutionary heroines. North Korean historiography surrounding the family cultivated the idea that each Kim member epitomised national purity through their resistance to Japanese colonisation of the Korean peninsula.²⁰ While Kang Ban Sok and Kim Jong Suk have long been celebrated as the foremost examples of heroines,

of Korea, 1 (97) (1983), pp. 37, 38; "South Korea Is a Complete Colony of US Imperialism", *Women of Korea*, 1 (97) (1983), pp. 38, 39; "Immortal Encyclopaedia On Juche Idea", *Women of Korea*, 2 (98) (1983), pp. 8, 9.

¹⁶ "A Blessed Village", *Women of Korea*, 2 (98) (1983), pp. 10, 11; Ryu Yon Sik, "Kitchen Utensils Massproduced", *Women of Korea*, 4 (100) (1983), p. 31; "With a Mind to Free Women from Household Chores", *Women of Korea*, 2 (102) (1984), p. 2; "A Sight of Woman Carrying Water Jar on Head", *Women of Korea*, 2 (102) (1984), p. 5; "Party's Lofty Intention Bears Good Result in This Village", *Women of Korea*, 3 (103) (1984), pp. 8, 9; "Bringing Up Women into Socialist Builders", *Women of Korea*, 4 (104) (1984), pp. 2, 3.

¹⁷ "Our Acrobatics Is In Full Bloom Under the Benevolent Solicitude of the Party Centre", *Women of Korea*, 1 (97) (1983), pp. 18, 19; "Grand People's Study House Build under the Sagacious Guidance of the Party Centre", *Women of Korea*, 1 (97) (1983), pp. 20, 21; "Women Group Dance. Winnow Dance", *Women of Korea*, 2 (98) (1983), p. 11; "Ancient Painting on Kitchen Work", *Women of Korea*, 3 (99) (1983), p. 35; "At a breeding pond", *Women of Korea*, 2 (102) (1984), p. 24; "Group Dance 'Bumper Harvest of Apples'", *Women of Korea*, 2 (102) (1984), p. 39; "Koryo Celadon", *Women of Korea*, 2 (102) (1984), p. 40.

¹⁸ Mi-ryang Youn, *North Korea's Policy on Women* (Seoul: Han'ul Publishing Co, 1991), p. 135.

¹⁹ Kim Il Sung and Kim Song Ae married in 1952. The exact date of Kim Song Ae's death is unknown but Radio Free Asia reported that she died in a car accident in Beijing in 2001, while more recent reports suggested she was still alive as of July 2011. James E. Hoare, *Historical Dictionary of Democratic People's Republic of Korea* (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2012), p. 223; "Kim Jong-il's Brother 'Under House Arrest in Pyongyang'", *The Chosun Ilbo*, (3 July 2011), http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2011/07/01/2011070100412.html (accessed 7 February 2014).

²⁰ Kim, "Dressed to Kill", p. 165.

purity and anti-imperialist spirit, they obtained their status through their relationship to Kim Il Sung.²¹ Neither woman ever held any real power within North Korean decision-making bodies but they were given a special place in the state's official historiography.²²

In the 1960s, Kim Song Ae became vice-chairperson of the Women's Union and was the chairperson from the mid-1970s until 1998.²³ During her appointment, she expelled several Women's Union officials who had close ties to Kim Il Sung's first wife, Kim Jong Suk. It was also during this time that the visual images and accounts of Kim Jong Suk as a revolutionary heroine were gradually removed from exhibitions and printed materials. Kim Song Ae did not want to favour her predecessor. Instead, Kim Il Sung's mother, Kang Ban Sok was promoted as the primary revolutionary heroine for others to emulate.²⁴ The emphasis by Kim Song Ae on the mother of Kim Il Sung as the dominant revolutionary heroine is prominent in *Women of Korea* during the 1960s. In the following decade, though, this would change as Kim Jong Il took up his position within government.

From October 1970, North Korean art underwent a major revolution under the guidance of Kim Jong Il, who was promoted to the position of deputy director in charge of culture and arts in the Propaganda and Guidance Department of the government.²⁵ In September 1973, at the seventh plenary session of the fifth Central Committee of the Worker's Party of Korea (WPK), Kim Jong Il was promoted to party secretary in charge of propaganda. As part of the artistic reform process, Kim Jong Il systematically promoted the representation of his own mother, Kim Jong Suk, as the primary revolutionary heroine for ordinary women to follow. Kim Jong Il's campaign to promote the visual imagery of Kim Jong Suk also ensured a legitimate connection was made between himself and his revolutionary parents as he was to succeed his father as leader of the DPRK.

The North Korean government intended ordinary women to feel a strong degree of empathy when viewing or reading about the roles of revolutionary heroines. Initially, it was difficult for the North Korean government to encourage ordinary women to become like these heroines, as they had to master a new and unfamiliar role and take up arms to defend the country. In the early editions of both *Chosŏn Yŏsŏng* and *Women of Korea* visual images and stories of unknown revolutionary women who had worked as revolutionary fighters and as

²¹ Gianluca Spezza, "The Women of North Korea: Icons, Heroines & Power Players", *North Korean News*, (30 January 2013), <http://www.nknews.org/2013/01/the-women-of-north-korea-icons-heroines-power-players/> (accessed 2 February 2014).

²² Ibid.

²³ Hoare, *Historical Dictionary*, p. 223.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Masayuki Suzuki, *North Korea: Between Socialism and Tradition* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1992).

members of the revolutionary sewing group were published (see figure 4.1, Hun Yong Kang's painting "*Members of the Sewing Group*").²⁶ However, no matter how intensively these visual images were promoted in North Korean society, they presented a difficult challenge for ordinary women because of the gap between themselves and these heroines.²⁷ For this reason, the North Korean government needed an intermediary procedure that would enable everyday women to identify with the persona of the revolutionary heroine. By employing exemplary women from real life, such as Kang Ban Sok and Kim Jong Suk, they attempted to convince viewers that such women and their courageous stories existed.²⁸ The government promoted the ideal woman through the careful invention of the legendary tales of the two Kim women, blurring reality and illusion.²⁹

²⁶ Hun Yong Kang, "*Members of the Sewing Group*". Date unknown. Oil Painting. *Women of Korea*, 5 (24) (1966).

²⁷ Kim, "Dressed to Kill", p. 172.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 172, 173.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 173.



Figure 4.1 Hun Yong Kang, “*Members of the Sewing Group*”. Date unknown. Oil Painting. *Women of Korea*, 5 (24) (1966).

Below, I discuss the visual and textual representation in *Women of Korea* of Kang Ban Sok and Kim Jong Suk as part of the revolutionary Kim family. In the DPRK, these heroines were presented as models for ordinary women to follow. In the international context, these exemplary women were presented as proof of the success of the North Korean transformation.

Kang Ban Sok, “Mother of Korea”

In the 1960s, numerous articles in *Women of Korea* describe the life achievements of Kang Ban Sok.³⁰ These stories recount her life from birth to death through the different stages of a woman’s life, from a child to mother to wife. Her most famous role was that of mother of Kim Il Sung, which eventually extended to metaphorically include the entire North Korean population.³¹ Thus, she became known as the “Mother of Korea”.³² The article “Glorious life of Kang Ban Sok, Mother of Korea”, explains that Kang Ban Sok was born on 21 April 1892 into a patriotic Korean family who fought against the occupation of Korea by Japan.³³ Her revolutionary spirit was said to be awakened under the guidance of her father, Kang Don Uk (dates unknown) and younger brother Kang Jin Sok (dates unknown), an educator and revolutionary fighter respectively.³⁴ Kang Ban Sok married Kim Il Sung’s father, Kim Hyong Jik (1894–1926), a supposed founding leader in the anti-Japanese liberation movement. Kang Ban Sok is said to have helped her husband in his revolutionary work. Kang Ban Sok’s revolutionary work, though, involved caring for her family, as she was conscious of her husband’s commitment to his work. In this context, Kang Ban Sok is said to have “managed [the] domestic affairs of her family of twelve [members] by her own efforts”.³⁵ This implies that Kang Ban Sok’s role was in the home performing the role of mother and wife, who cared for her family dutifully and not with her husband fighting actively against the Japanese. Therefore, it could be said that Kang Ban Sok was not equal to her husband on the battlefield

³⁰ “Glorious Land Pervaded with Noble Will of Great Mother”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (1973), pp. 18, 19; “Brilliant Life”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (86) (1980), pp. 18, 19; “Revolutionary Exploits Performed by Kang Ban Sok Will Shine Forever”, *Women of Korea*, 3 (71) (1976), pp. 14, 15; “The Mother of Korea”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (70) (1976), pp. 9–11; “Love of Great Mother”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (78) (1978), pp. 11, 12; “If You ... Worry about Your Home... You Cannot Make Revolution”, *Women of Korea*, 3 (87) (1980), pp. 10, 11; “The Great Leader and His Mother”, *Women of Korea*, 1 (89) (1981), pp. 14–16; “Great Women”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (94) (1982), pp. 42–44; “Kang Ban Sok”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (70) (1976), pp. 9–11; “A Path of Glory Followed by the Juche-based Korean Women’s Emancipation Movement”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (72) (1976), pp. 20–22; “Kang Ban Sok”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (72) (1976), p. 25; “Kang Ban Sok was an Outstanding Leader of the Korean Women’s Movement who Initiated the Juche-based Women’s Movement”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (72) (1976), pp. 33, 34; “Formation of Anti-Japanese Women’s Association, the First Women’s Revolutionary Mass Organisation”, *Women of Korea*, 1 (89) (1981), pp. 5, 6; “With a Mind to Enlighten Women”, *Women of Korea*, 3 (91) (1981), p. 10; “Women’s Unity Would Become a Great Force”, *Women of Korea*, 3 (91) (1981), pp. 17, 18.

³¹ “Revolutionary Exploits”, pp. 14, 15; “The Mother of Korea”, pp. 9–11; “Love of Great Mother”, pp. 11, 12; “Brilliant Life”, pp. 18, 19; “If You ...”, pp. 10, 11; “The Great Leader”, pp. 14–16; “Great Women”, pp. 42–44.

³² “Glorious Land”, pp. 18, 19; “Glorious life of KANG BAN SOK, Mother of Korea”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (66) (1975), pp. 19, 20; “The Mother of Korea”, *Women in Korea*, 2 (70) (1976), p. 13; “Brilliant Life”, pp. 18, 19.

³³ “Glorious life”, p. 19.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

but confined to the role of mother.³⁶ This is reinforced in visual images and articles published in *Women of Korea*.

In the painting captioned, “The Respected and Beloved Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung Receiving a Patriotic Education from His Mother” (see figure 4.2), a young Kim Il Sung sits at a desk and his mother Kang Ban Sok sits alongside him, guiding and teaching him in his work.³⁷ In addition to helping her son, Kang Ban Sok is sewing or mending clothing. Here I draw attention to the space in which the figures are sitting, the home, and the role performed by Kang Ban Sok, as educator. In the DPRK, the education of children has predominantly been considered women’s work, either within the home or in the school setting. From the initial stages of state formation, North Korea relied on women to hold together the very fabric of society, as sacrificing mothers, who would reproduce and educate future generations as model communist citizens, while contributing to the developing economy as dedicated workers and citizens of the new revolutionary regime.³⁸ The North Korean government believed that children were the reserve in the revolutionary struggle, the future of the revolution and the destiny of the country, which depended on the upbringing of the children by their mothers.³⁹ The representation of Kang Ban Suk in this image reinforces the gender stereotype that women belong in the home caring for both children and housework.

In the painting, both figures are dressed in ethnic Korean clothing for women (*jeogonot/hanbok*) and are positioned in the domestic sphere, a space usually reserved as a woman’s place of work. As Rosemary Roberts states, “[d]espite its seemingly superficial nature, dress is an important site for cultural enquiry”,⁴⁰ for clothing conveys culturally determined meanings about the bodies of men and women. Suk-Young Kim argues that, from a socio-political point of view, the way people dress is a worthy subject of scrutiny as fashion is a domain in which self-perception and taste manifest, where the desires for beauty and consumption materialise, and a site that contests the ground where social hierarchy is articulated through individual spontaneity and state control.⁴¹ In the North Korean context, it is interesting to look closely at how revolutionary heroines are dressed compared to their male counterparts as this reveals the gendered lens of the government. Suk-Young Kim states that, during the revolution, state regulation dominated everyday life, including fashion

³⁶ “Revolutionary Exploits”, pp. 14, 15; “The Mother of Korea”, pp. 9–11; “Love of Great Mother”, pp. 11, 12; “Brilliant Life”, pp. 18, 19; “If You ...”, pp. 10, 11; “The Great Leader”, pp. 14–16; “Great Women”, pp. 42–44.

³⁷ “Great Women”, pp. 42–44.

³⁸ Kim, “Revolutionary Mothers”, p. 764.

³⁹ Kim Il Sung, *Selected Works* 27 (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1986), p. 328.

⁴⁰ Rosemary Roberts, “Gendering the Revolutionary Body: Theatrical Costume in Cultural Revolution China”, *Asian Studies*, 30 (2006), p. 142.

⁴¹ Kim, “Dressed to Kill”, p. 159.

choices.⁴² North Korea is a highly fashion-conscious nation where political leaders are preoccupied with how people dress. They impose rigid regulations, including uniforms for various social sectors, and systematically recommend certain designs to civilians.⁴³ Therefore, when reading *Women of Korea*, clothing styles are an important indicator of official attitudes to male and female positions in North Korean society. The ideal clothing style for North Korean women is found in the officially sanctified domestic history of the Kim household and Kang Ban Sok was the ideal standard for women's behaviour and appearance.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, as these magazines were produced from the 1960s on, they represent an idealised version of revolutionary dress, rather than a literal image of behaviour and dress during the anti-Japanese struggle and the establishment of the North Korean state.

In visual images of Kim Il Sung as a child he is almost always dressed in the ethnic Korean clothing for males, consisting of a jacket (*jeogori*), a vest (*jokki*) and trousers (*baji*). Children's clothing is the same as that of adults but with appropriate adaptations.⁴⁵ In contrast, Kang Ban Sok is seen only in the ethnic Korean clothing for women, consisting of the skirt (*chima*) and jacket (*jeogori*). This configuration of women's clothing often resulted in a triangular silhouette, which deemphasises the upper torso of the wearer,⁴⁶ but draws attention to the wearer's exposed legs if the length of the skirt is modified. The clothing worn by Kang Ban Sok is not usually modified, unlike the clothing worn by her successor Kim Jong Suk who is depicted mostly on the battlefield, as we shall see below.

The North Korean book, *Korean Folk Customs* (1990), by Hwan Ju Pang, outlines clothing worn by Korean men, women and children.

Korean costume is the product of a long historical process which had close bearing on the constitution of Koreans, the mild climate of Korea, their principal occupation in agriculture, their living in the room with heated floor and national predilection for smartness and gracefulness [sic].⁴⁷

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 159, 160.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 166.

⁴⁵ Hwan Ju Pang, *Korean Folk Customs* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1990), p. 13.

⁴⁶ Hyung Gu Lynn, "Fashioning Modernity: Changing Meanings of Clothing in Colonial Korea", *Journal of International and Area Studies*, 11 (3) (2004), p. 77.

⁴⁷ Pang, *Korean Folk Customs*, p. 5.

In the Three Kingdoms period (37BCE–935CE) upper, lower, and outer garments already existed.⁴⁸ In the Koryo (or Goryeo) period (918–1392) and the Chosŏn Dynasty (1392–1897), improvements were made to clothing worn by both genders.⁴⁹ There were slight alterations in length and width of skirts and jackets and the outer garments varied depending on gender, age, occupation, and social status.⁵⁰

As noted above, Kim Il Sung is clothed in the traditional jacket, vest and trousers. On long journeys men often wore leggings under the trousers to ensure brisk movement.⁵¹ The colour of men's clothing was mostly white but sometimes grey, jade-green or other muted colours. Alternatively, Korean women wore the ethnic clothing, the female *hanbok*, and sometimes an overcoat (*turumagi*).⁵² Pang states that there are two kinds of skirts in North Korea, a long wrap skirt and a cylindrical skirt (see figure 4.3).⁵³ The long wrap skirt had wide pleats to encircle the body from the waist down, while the seamless cylindrical skirt is a rounder shape and resembles the skirt style worn today in the DPRK. The long wrap skirt is made wide and is so long that its hem trails along the ground. When walking, it is held up by the wearer. The seamless cylindrical skirt has been designed for ceremonial or gala occasions, is longer than that for ordinary use, and its length differs according to the wearer's age.⁵⁴ Material used in the making of skirts is colourful and changes according to the season.⁵⁵ In contrast to the men's jacket, the jacket worn by women is characterised by curves and the edge of the neckband and outer collar is rounded (see figure 4.4).⁵⁶ Rich colours and patterns are also features of the female jacket. Today North Korean women wear the ethnic Korean clothing for holidays and on special occasions. Various transformations of Korean dress can be seen in the pages of *Women of Korea*.

⁴⁸ Three Kingdoms of Korea are composed of the Goguryeo (37BC–668AD) period, Baekje (18BC–660AD) period, and Silla (57BC–935AD). Pang, *Korean Folk Customs*, p. 5.

⁴⁹ Pang, *Korean Folk Customs*, p. 5.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 6.

⁵² Ibid., p. 7.

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 8, 10.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 7.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 8.

⁵⁶ Ibid.



Figure 4.2 “The Respected and Beloved Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung Receiving a Patriotic Education from His Mother”. Date unknown. Oil Painting. “Great Women”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (94) (1982), pp. 42–44.



Long Wrap Skirt and Cylindrical Skirt (Left to Right)

Figure 4.3 “Long Wrap Skirt and Cylindrical Skirt”. Hwan Ju Pang, *Korean Folk Customs* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1990), p. 10.

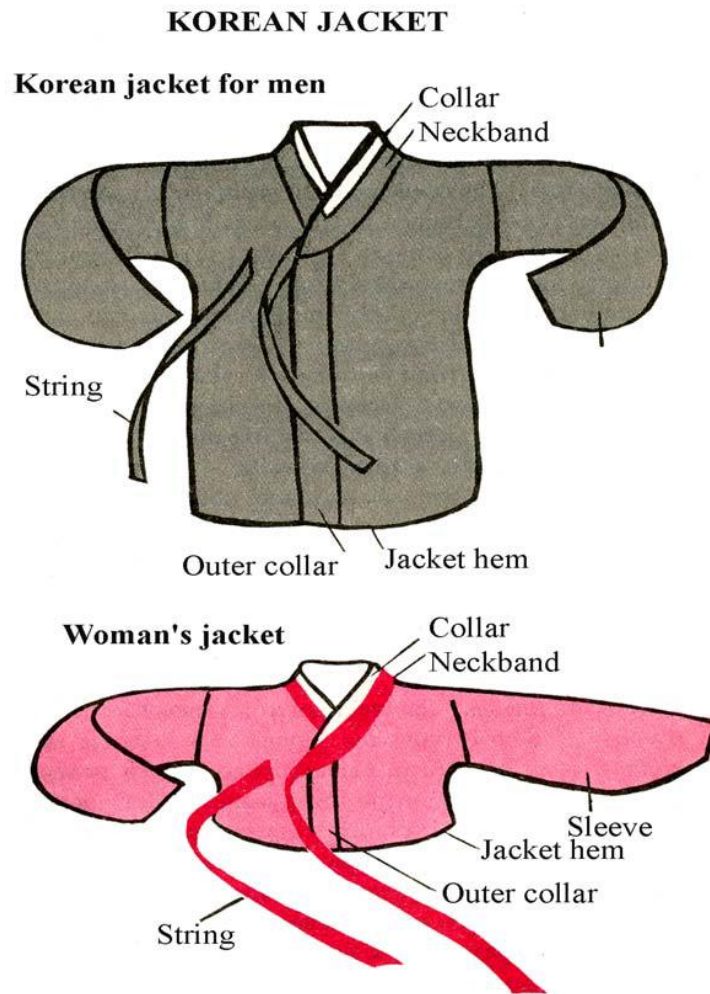


Figure 4.4 “Korean Jacket”. Hwan Ju Pang, *Korean Folk Customs* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1990), p. 8.

With the arrest and imprisonment of Kang Ban Sok’s husband, Kim Hyong Jik, by the Japanese police in 1917, Kang Ban Sok is depicted as moving from just caring for her son and family to caring for the entire Korean nation. Kang Ban Sok’s new role will be discussed further below. First, it is said that Kim Hyong Jik was arrested because of his role in the establishment of the Korean National Association (KNA) on 23 March 1917. In the prison, he is said to have mapped out a new plan for the higher phase of the revolutionary struggle. His

plan was to develop the anti-Japanese national liberation movement from a nationalist one to a proletarian one. After one year of imprisonment, he was released in October 1918. Kim Hyong Jik left Mangyongdae for the northern border area on Amnok River, where he regrouped and reinforced the KNA organisation. Kang Ban Sok is shown taking care of the household and continuing the revolutionary activities of her husband during his imprisonment. With the death of her husband in 1926, Kang Ban Sok is shown working alongside her son in battle against the Japanese.⁵⁷ While *Women of Korea* includes representations of women joining their male counterparts on the battlefield, Kang Ban Sok's role is limited to the representation of a caring mother. This is seen in the painting captioned "Kang Ban Sok Encouraging the Men of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army Founded by the Great Revolutionary Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung" (see figure 4.5).⁵⁸ Kang Ban Sok is represented as a mother figure to Kim Il Sung and the fellow soldiers whom she comforts before they enter battle.⁵⁹ Kang Ban Sok has placed her hand on one soldier's chest, encouraging him in his revolutionary work, symbolising her role as a nurturing mother figure to the soldiers and thus the Korean nation. While she inspects and consoles the soldiers in the Korean People's Revolutionary Army, a young Kim Il Sung stands to the left of his mother and looks in the direction of the figures, surveying the scene.

The clothing style worn by Kang Ban Sok, the only female figure in the painting, is an important indicator of the view of women's position in North Korean society. While the male figures are dressed in military uniforms consisting of jackets, trousers, knee-high socks, and hats, Kang Ban Sok is dressed in a pale coloured ethnic Korean dress. Suk-Young Kim suggests that the ideal clothing for women found its prototype in the representation of Kang Ban Sok dressed in the female *hanbok*.⁶⁰ However, as Suzy Kim points out, many Korean women had always worn ethnic Korean dress and never fully accepted Western clothing, so that state reform was not needed by the North Korean government to promote this dress code.⁶¹ During the occupation of Korea by Japan, the ethnic national dress for women had a nationalist meaning, when modernity for females meant wearing Westernised clothing.⁶² Within the masculine domain of the battlefield, the female *hanbok* signifies that Kang Ban Sok stands equal to her son and fellow revolutionary fighters but retains feminine qualities.

⁵⁷ "Kang Ban Sok", pp. 9–11; "If You ...", pp. 10, 11; "The Great Leader", pp. 14–16; "Kang Ban Sok helps indomitable revolutionary fighter Kim Hyong Jik in his revolutionary activity", *Women of Korea*, 1 (93) (1982), p. 20.

⁵⁸ "The Mother of Korea", pp. 9–11.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Kim, "Dressed to Killed", p. 166.

⁶¹ Kim, "Revolutionary Mothers", p. 755.

⁶² Ibid.

The pale colour of the dress makes Kang Ban Sok's figure stand out from the dark background and from the men that surround her. As the ethnic Korean clothing has not been modified in length in this painting, it reflects the ideal of modesty, achieved by concealing the female form.⁶³ In other paintings, particularly of Kim Jong Suk, to be discussed below, the length of the skirt and jacket are shorter, revealing the wearer's legs and the shape of the waist. Modifications made to the female *hanbok* ensured the wearer was able to move more easily but also sexualised the female figure, drawing the male gaze to the revolutionary heroines. In comparison, the revolutionary men are never depicted wearing ethnic Korean clothing in *Women of Korea*.⁶⁴ Instead, revolutionary men are always depicted wearing unaltered military uniforms and carrying guns ready to defend the country by force. It could be said that even the revolutionary female is confined by the assumptions of the North Korean government and what it deems to be appropriate fashion and behaviour for women.

⁶³ Kyung Ja Lee and Lee Mi Ryang, *Traditional Korean Costume* (Kent: Global Oriental, 2003), p. 181.

⁶⁴ Kim, "Dressed to Kill", p. 172.



Figure 4.5 “Kang Ban Sok Encouraging the Men of the Korean People’s Revolutionary Army Founded by the Great Revolutionary Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung”. Date unknown. Oil Painting. “The Mother of Korea”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (70) (1976), pp. 9–11.

Kang Ban Sok is said to have put the revolutionary cause before herself even when severely ill. Towards the end of 1932, when a young Kim Il Sung was leaving for south Manchuria to expand the guerrilla unit to which he was a member, he learned that his mother was critically ill. Due to the news of his mother’s health, Kim Il Sung decided to return home to visit her. Kang Ban Sok however, reprimanded him for leaving his revolutionary work so Kim Il Sung left his mother’s house and walked through dense forests and across rough mountains to reach his destination.⁶⁵ After covering some distance, Kim Il Sung is said to have stopped to rest and take off his shoes. There in the bottom of his boots was Kang Ban Sok’s hair spread out to cushion his steps and stop his feet from freezing.⁶⁶ Stories such as this exemplify Kang Ban Sok’s sacrifice for her son and the revolutionary cause. Qualities such as a loving, caring, and thoughtful mother, who puts the needs of her children and the

⁶⁵ “Glorious life”, p. 20.

⁶⁶ “Glorious Land”, p. 19.

revolutionary cause before herself, were all characteristics ordinary North Korean women were encouraged to emulate. In 1932, at the age of forty, Kang Ban Sok passed away. She is described as an ardent communist and a prominent member of the early women's movement in Korea.⁶⁷ This self-sacrificing image of revolutionary heroines, who exemplify qualities of loyalty, caring and nurturing continued to be illustrated in visual images of Kim Il Sung's first wife Kim Jong Suk.

From the late 1970s, the North Korean government attempted to meld the old and new images of women in *Women of Korea* through the figures of women participating in the revolutionary struggle as tailors, cooks, and fighters as well as mothers. This change in the representation of heroic women suggests that the old way was represented through the images of Kang Ban Sok and her ethnic Korean clothing, while the new role of women was represented in Kim Jong Suk in her modified military uniform. In the following section, I discuss the representations of these two women and the promotion of revolutionary heroines to the world.

Comrade Kim Jong Suk

In *Women of Korea*, numerous articles and visual images represent the life and achievements of Comrade Kim Jong Suk.⁶⁸ The representation of Kim Jong Suk was developed far beyond that of her mother-in-law Kang Ban Sok. Kim Jong Suk is shown as defending the "Fatherly General" and performing domestic duties on the battlefield. While Kang Ban Sok is shown in a supportive motherly role to her son and other revolutionary soldiers, the visual imagery of Kim Jong Suk was extended to include her role as a revolutionary fighter, a domain usually dominated by males. Kang Ban Sok's revolutionary work also extended to gathering and

⁶⁷ It is claimed that Kang Ban Sok established the Korean Women's Anti-Japanese Society in December 1926. "Glorious life", p. 19.

⁶⁸ "Comrade KIM JONG SUK, Indomitable Revolutionary Fighter Boundless and Faithful to the Leader", *Women of Korea*, 3 (67) (1975), pp. 16, 17; "Only for the Sake of the Leader", *Women of Korea*, 1 (69) (1976), pp. 14–16; "Only for the Sake of the Leader", *Women of Korea*, 2 (70) (1976), pp. 13, 14; "Paragon of the Bodyguards", *Women of Korea*, 1 (89) (1981), pp. 7–9; Gwang Yon Chang, "A Foot Of Historic Osan Hill", *Women of Korea*, 4 (92) (1981), pp. 31–33; "A Permanent Bodyguard", *Women of Korea*, 2 (94) (1982), pp. 45, 46; "Kim Jong Suk, an indomitable revolutionary fighter, giving sincere care to her sick revolutionary comrade in a secret camp", *Women of Korea*, 2 (70) (1976), p. 36; "For the Future of Revolution", *Women of Korea*, 3 (103) (1984), pp. 10, 11; "A Real Star Embroidered on Military Cap", *Women of Korea*, 4 (80) (1978), pp. 29, 30; "Standard-bearer of Devotion", *Women of Korea*, 3 (87) (1980), pp. 18, 19; "Comrade Kim Jong Suk, indomitable revolutionary fighter, take maternal care of the pupils of the Mangyongdae Revolutionary School", *Women of Korea*, 2 (90) (1981), pp. 17, 18; "Our Mother Kim Jong Suk", *Women of Korea*, 1 (93) (1982), p. 1; "Everlasting Revolutionary Historical Fighter", *Women of Korea*, 1 (93) (1982), pp. 21, 22; "Mothers Answer", *Women of Korea*, 1 (97) (1983), pp. 45, 46; Hun Yong Kang, "Members of the Sewing Group", *Women of Korea*, 5 (24) (1966); "Anti-Japanese Women's Association and Its Assistance to Guerrillas", *Women of Korea*, 3 (91) (1981), pp. 40, 41; "In the Sacred War", p. 5; "On First Democratic", pp. 19, 20; "Helping Women Take Their Share in Nation-Building", *Women of Korea*, 3 (91) (1981), pp. 20, 21.

educating Korean women, and performing domestic duties in the middle of battle. Kim Jong Suk is described as a revolutionary fighter faithful to Kim Il Sung and an outstanding female revolutionary activist, nurse, cook and tailor.⁶⁹ Kim Jong Suk is shown negotiating the worlds of the domestic and nationalist femininity,⁷⁰ as seen in the different roles she performs and in her clothing. In visual images, a young Kim Jong Suk continues to wear clothing similar to Kang Ban Sok, the ethnic Korean clothing for women (*hanbok*), but in later artworks she is seen in a feminised military uniform.

The article “Only for the Sake of the Leader” states that Kim Jong Suk was born on 24 December 1917 to a poor peasant family in Hoeryong County in North Hamgyong Province (present day northeast DPRK).⁷¹ With her family, Kim Jong Suk fled Korea to Yanji (Jilin Province, China) around 1922. By 1935, when she was 18 years old, all members of her family had died. The Chinese village in which her mother and sister had lived is said to have been attacked by the Japanese military and the two women were killed. Kim Jong Suk’s elder brother, Kim Ki Jun (dates unknown) was arrested by the Japanese authorities, jailed and died whilst imprisoned. Her younger brother, Kim Ki Song (dates unknown) died for unreported reasons in December 1933. The article continues that with “bitter grief in her heart”, Kim Jong Suk set out on the road in search of Kim Il Sung, the leader of the Korean revolution.⁷² In early 1935, Kim Jong Suk met Kim Il Sung for the first time, at Xiongzhuiyong in Sandaowan (Jilin Province, China). It was at this location that a secret guerrilla camp had been established by Koreans who were fighting against the occupation of the country.⁷³ After the meeting, Kim Jong Suk is quoted as saying, “He [Kim Il Sung] is really a great man... I will fight only for General Kim Il Sung at any time and at any place”.⁷⁴ Since this initial meeting, Kim Jong Suk was a loyal follower of Kim Il Sung and the revolutionary cause, and she did not waver until her death in September 1949.

In visual images, Kim Jong Suk is represented as a revolutionary soldier, ready to sacrifice herself for both Kim Il Sung and the Korean nation.⁷⁵ This is evident in the image captioned, “Dauntless Revolutionary Fighter Comrade Kim Jong Suk Guards the Great

⁶⁹ “Comrade Kim Jong Suk, Indomitable Revolutionary Fighter Boundless Faithful to the Leader”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (100) (1983), pp. 16–18.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ “Only for the Sake”, p. 14.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 14–16; “Comrade KIM JONG SUK”, pp. 16, 17; “Only for the Sake”, pp. 13, 14; “Paragon”, pp. 7–9; Chang, “A Foot”, pp. 31–33; “A Permanent Bodyguard”, pp. 45, 46.

Leader at the Risk of Her Life” (see figure 4.6).⁷⁶ Suk-Young Kim suggests that North Korean artworks and their captions work in tandem to contain and redirect the dual roles of women, as housewives and revolutionary fighters, towards each other.⁷⁷ She notes that the military space dominates paintings such as this one while the caption draws attention to the domestic role of Kim Jong Suk.⁷⁸ This is demonstrated in the following paintings that represent Kim Jong Suk performing domestic chores whilst on the battlefield. Accompanying this painting (see figure 4.6) the article “Anti-Japanese Heroine” states:

Sometimes, shielding the great leader with her [Kim Jong Suk’s] own body, she shot down enemies one by one at a stroke at the critical moment for the great leader owing to the secretly approaching enemy soldiers and sometimes she saved the Headquarters of revolution and her unit from crisis by luring the enemies toward herself and annihilating them.⁷⁹

Kim Jong Suk stands in front of Kim Il Sung, lovingly protecting her husband from enemy fire and apparently ready to give her own life to the anti-Japanese cause and husband, therefore illuminating the role of loyal and self-sacrificing wife. The two main figures, Kim Jong Suk and Kim Il Sung, stand in the centre of the painting, while other revolutionary soldiers surround them in less prominent positions. No eye contact is made between the revolutionaries as they look out of the painting. The artist has highlighted the importance of the two main figures by centring them in the artwork and creating a halo effect around them, a painting technique also employed in Christian religious art. A white cloud also floats around the Kims to ensure their dark military clothing stands out from the dark background. In the painting, Kim Il Sung is elevated in this painting, so the viewer’s eye is drawn first to his face. He stands confidently with one hand placed on the rock and the other holding a pistol.

The dark brown military uniform of Kim Il Sung is similar to that worn by Chinese revolutionaries. Initially, the suit was named the Sun Yat-Sen suit after the Chinese Leader

⁷⁶ “Only for the Sake”, pp. 14–16.

⁷⁷ Kim, “Dressed to Kill”, p. 179.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ “Anti-Japanese Heroine”, *Women of Korea*, 3 (103) (1984), pp. 18, 19.

Sun Yat-Sen (1866–1925) and later the Mao suit after Mao Zedong (1893–1976).⁸⁰ Shortly after the founding of the Republic of China (1 January 1912–10 March 1912), Sun Yat-Sen introduced the style as a form of national dress. The suit though, had a distinctly political and later governmental implication. After the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, the suit became widely worn by males and government leaders as a symbol of proletarian unity. From this time, the suit was known by the name Mao suit after Mao Zedong’s affinity for wearing them in public. Thus, the garment became the symbol of the Chinese leader and the Chinese communist movement. In the North Korean context, Kim Il Sung is always shown wearing this suit when fighting the revolutionary cause.

In the painting, “Dauntless Revolutionary Fighter Comrade Kim Jong Suk Guards the Great Leader at the Risk of Her Life” (see figure 4.6), the other male revolutionary soldiers are dressed in uniforms similar to that worn by Kim Il Sung.⁸¹ The colour of the soldiers’ uniforms, though, is a dull green and the jackets have collars, unlike the style worn by Kim Il Sung. These men hide behind rocks and the long grass, indicating to the viewer that they are less important than the two central figures and perhaps less brave than the two Kims. Each of the soldiers holds a gun ready to defend the country against the enemy. These men are vigilant and dedicated to the struggle against Japan but appear in this painting in a supportive role to the Kims. In *Women of Korea*, it is not common for male revolutionary soldiers to appear in such revolutionary paintings, as this magazine tends to emphasise the importance of revolutionary female soldiers and the role of the Kim men in defending the country.⁸²

Kim Jong Suk stands confident in the battlefield and depicts characteristics of devotion, strength and courage. Her military uniform is a vibrant green colour, a symbol of the revolutionary heroine, and is a feminised version of the male uniform. This styling difference ensures viewers know that while equal on the battlefield there are expectations as to how a North Korean woman should dress and behave. To exemplify further the differences between genders, Kim Jong Suk wears a knee-length skirt rather than trousers, while full-length white socks cover her legs. By dressing the female revolutionary soldier in a military skirt, it suggests that this clothing was adopted to mark women’s supportive role to their male comrades. Kim Jong Suk’s jacket is drawn in tightly at the waist by a belt, showing the shape

⁸⁰ Antonia Finnane, “What Should Chinese Women Wear? A National Problem”, *Modern China*, 22 (2) (1996), p. 107.

⁸¹ “Only for the Sake of the Leader”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (70) (1976), pp. 13, 14.

⁸² “The great leader Comrade Kim Il Sung organising and guiding the shooting practice of the youth and students for the formation of the armed ranks”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (72) (1976), pp. 4, 5; “A Permanent Bodyguard”, pp. 45, 46; “On the Road of Advancing Into Homeland”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (98) (1983), pp. 15, 16.

of her body and thus sexualising the figure. Suk-Young Kim argues that feminised military uniforms signified women's participation in social and economic structures, but at the same time, their feminine shape was a constant reminder of the different positions held by men and women in the public sphere.⁸³

Retaining patriarchal ideals of a male-centred society, North Korea's leaders have perceived women's and men's dress as separate national projects, forging different corporeal practices for the two genders.⁸⁴ In the visual images of female revolutionary soldiers, North Korean official artists have selected clothing for women which they consider to be appropriately feminine. Suk-Young Kim argues that North Korean leaders have regulated gendered bodily practices through the production and consumption of women's fashion from the 1960s to the 1970s.⁸⁵ It was during this formative period in North Korea's history that *Juche* (self-reliance) and national purity governed everyday life under the leadership of Kim Il Sung.⁸⁶ While the military uniform in paintings signified women's participation in social and economic structures, at the same time it highlighted gender differences on the battlefield and in the public sphere. The techniques employed by the artists to both gender and sexualise the female figure remind us that the progress of gender equality in the DPRK is limited because of the patriarchal practices and structure of the North Korean government. As a result, paintings such as "Only for the Sake of the Leader" are a reminder of the different positions held by North Korean men and women in the public sphere.

⁸³ Kim, "Dressed to Kill", p. 177.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 160.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 161.

⁸⁶ Ibid.



Figure 4.6 “Dauntless Revolutionary Fighter Comrade Kim Jong Suk Guards the Great Leader at the Risk of Her Life”. Date unknown. Oil Painting. “Only for the Sake of the Leader”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (70) (1976), pp. 13, 14.

Below I discuss the representation of Kim Jong Suk negotiating domestic responsibilities and public responsibilities on the battlefield. Close examination of the visual images reveals that these two domains are not separate but are in fact intrinsically linked as Kim Jong Suk is depicted performing domestic chores on the battlefield. In the following three paintings, the representation of Kim Jong Suk as a mother figure, a cook and a tailor is taken from the domestic sphere to the front line, suggesting a new realm for domestic labour.⁸⁷ The visual imagery of Kim Jong Suk marks the transition from the ideal traditional woman who performs her duty to her family above all else (as seen in the representation of Kang Ban Sok) to the new role of woman as defender of the country. For Kim Jong Suk the two spheres are not mutually exclusive but coexist harmoniously and form a feminine virtue that is much more complicated than the depictions of Kang Ban Sok.⁸⁸ This complication arises from trying to meld together the roles of women in and outside of the home. While the

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 181.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

government attempts to encourage ordinary women to join the labour force, it also restricts them to stereotypical gender roles in the home.

The role of North Korean women as primary food preparers and cooks is seen in the visual images and articles about revolutionary heroines in *Women of Korea*.⁸⁹ The article “Iron Pot” depicts Kim Jong Suk preparing food for the soldiers of the revolutionary cause. According to the article, one autumn day in 1934, Kim Jong Suk was preparing lunch in an iron pot for the revolutionary fighters when suddenly the Japanese enemy attacked.⁹⁰ The food was boiling hot but she did not want to leave it behind, as the soldiers would have gone hungry. She is said to have placed a handful of dry grass on her head and then the boiling pot upon it. Kim Jong Suk then climbed up a hill following the revolutionary soldiers, with bullets flying past her ears, while carrying the boiling pot on her head, and successfully delivered the food to her fellow comrades. Stories of Kim Jong Suk’s determination and courage in defending the nation and performing domestic duties on the battlefield are common in the magazine.⁹¹

In the accompanying painting captioned, “Comrade Kim Jong Suk, an Indomitable Revolutionary Fighter, Climbs Up a Height Carrying a Boiling Gruel Pot on Her Head for the Sake of Her Comrades-In-Arms” (see figure 4.7), the main figure looks into the distance.⁹² A cloud floats behind her and accentuates her importance. This technique also highlights the body shape of the revolutionary heroine and the feminine characteristics of the figure. In the distance, an unidentified woman follows Kim Jong Suk. The hairstyle of the main figure is new and modern, cut short, unlike Kang Ban Sok, who wears her hair long and tied behind her head. During the colonial period, cutting one’s hair represented a gesture of revolt from Confucianism as it had previously been banned in any public place as a social offence, regardless of gender.⁹³ During the twentieth century, short hair for women in many East Asian countries strongly signalled feminism.

Unlike the earlier painting of Kim Jong Suk (see figure 4.6) as a revolutionary fighter, here she wears the *hanbok*, with the skirt (*chima*) shortened to below the knee and the waist

⁸⁹ “In the Sacred War”, p. 5; “Standard-bearer”, pp. 18, 19; “Paragon”, pp. 7–9.

⁹⁰ “Iron Pot”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (112) (1986), p. 15.

⁹¹ “Comrade KIM JONG SUK”, pp. 16,17; “Only for the Sake”, pp. 14–16; “Only for the Sake of the Leader”, pp. 13, 14; “Paragon”, pp. 7–9; Chang, “A Foot”, pp. 31–33; “A Permanent Bodyguard”, pp. 45, 46; Kang, “Members”; “A Real Star”, pp. 29, 30; “Anti-Japanese Women’s Association”, pp. 40, 41 “In the Sacred War”, p. 5; “Standard-bearer”, pp. 18, 19.

⁹² “In the Sacred War”, p. 5.

⁹³ Aida Yuen Wong (ed), *Visualizing Beauty: Gender and Ideology in Modern East Asia* (Aberdeen: Hong Kong University Press, 2012), p. 79.

drawn in with a belt.⁹⁴ These modifications would have made it easier to move and work, but in the visual representation this also highlights the figure's gendered body.⁹⁵ The transition from the modified longer length *hanbok* to shorter skirts and longer length jackets (*jeogori*) occurred at a slow pace across Korea.⁹⁶ A number of Korean women viewed the modified *hanbok* as a wonderful change and adopted it to wear whilst working but continued to wear the longer length in the home.⁹⁷ Korean women living in rural areas continued to wear the unmodified version of the dress.



Figure 4.7 “Comrade Kim Jong Suk, an Indomitable Revolutionary Fighter, Climbs Up a Height Carrying a Boiling Gruel Pot on Her Head for the Sake of Her Comrades-In-Arms”. Date unknown. Oil Painting. “In the Sacred War for National Liberation”, *Women of Korea*, 3 (107) (1985), p. 5.

⁹⁴ “Only for the Sake of the Leader”, pp. 13, 14.

⁹⁵ Sunny Yang, *Hanbok: The Art of Korean Clothing* (Seoul: Hollym, 1998), p. 179.

⁹⁶ Lynn, “Fashioning Modernity”, p. 77.

⁹⁷ Yang, *Hanbok*, p. 179.

Visual images and stories representing Kim Jong Suk in the role of mother taking care of young children appear frequently in *Women of Korea*.⁹⁸ In the article, “For the Future of Revolution”, Kim Jong Suk is described as a member of the Committee of the Bagou Young Communist League and an instructor of the Children’s Corps, who worked in a guerrilla base camp along the Tuman River and helped to establish a school for children whose parents were revolutionary fighters.⁹⁹ At the school, young Korean children were educated in the words of Kim Il Sung. Kim Jong Suk is also said to have fed, clothed, and nursed these children, taking on the responsibility of nurturing the children in the absence of their own mothers. Here, the representation of the young Kim Jong Suk fulfils a similar role to Kang Ban Sok as “Mother of Korea”. While Kang Ban Sok was mother to Kim Il Sung and fellow revolutionary fighters and thus the entire Korean population, Kim Jong Suk took on the role of mother figure to the future of the revolution and country. It was as though all hope of succeeding in the revolution was the responsibility of these women. This responsibility was then to be transferred to the lives of ordinary women who were expected to care for and raise their children according to the teachings of Kim Il Sung. Thus, along with their childrearing responsibilities, the burden of North Korea’s future was now on women, who were to raise their children according to the revolutionary thought of the Kim family.

The article, “For the Future of the Revolution”, depicts events in November 1935, when the Korean guerrilla base in Chechangzi (Jilin, China) was dissolved because of fighting in the area. In this context, the question arose as to how to deal with the Children’s Corps members and how to move them to a new location.¹⁰⁰ Revolutionary heroine Kim Jong Suk is said to have taken responsibility for the children’s safety and led them to a safer place. The story of moving the Children’s Corps members to a new location is captured in the painting “Indomitable Revolutionary Fighter Comrade Kim Jong Suk Carrying Bullets to Height Together With the Children’s Corps Members” (see figure 4.8).¹⁰¹ Kim Jong Suk is represented as the carer and protector of several children, as well as a revolutionary soldier as she carries bullets for her comrades.¹⁰² In the accompanying article, Kim Il Sung is quoted.

⁹⁸ “Kim Jong Suk”, p. 36; “For the Future”, pp. 10, 11; “A Real Star”, pp. 29, 30; “Standard-bearer”, pp. 18, 19; “Comrade Kim Jong Suk”, pp. 17, 18; “Our Mother Kim Jong Suk”, p. 1; “Everlasting Revolutionary”, pp. 21, 22; “Mothers Answer”, pp. 45, 46.

⁹⁹ “For the Future of Revolution”, p. 10.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., pp. 10, 11.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 10.

Comrade Jong Suk gave much loving care to children in her lifetime.
Whether she fought in the mountain or she came back to the liberated
country, she lived always for the sake of children.¹⁰³

This statement confirms the gendered view of the government that the role of women is to care for children combined with their duty to fight for the revolutionary cause.

In the painting, Kim Jong Suk leads a small group of children through the snow to safety. She looks back in the direction of the children to make certain all are following her. The two boys in the lead look forward and out of the picture, while the other children look in the direction of Kim Jong Suk. In particular, one young girl looks up towards the revolutionary heroine waiting for further instructions and seemingly pleading with her not to stop. Kim Jong Suk has placed a hand on the girl's shoulder to comfort her. It is said that, on the journey, Kim Jong Suk comforted the children with the warmth of her body while they slept under a fallen tree, and she picked up dried nuts in the snow to prepare for their meals.¹⁰⁴

The viewer is drawn first to the most important figure in the painting, Kim Jong Suk, because of her height compared to the children. The clear background draws the viewer's attention to her face and body shape. The figures of the children, by contrast, tend to blend in with their surroundings as they all stand at the height of the forest. Kim Jong Suk does not wear the ethnic Korean dress or military uniform. Instead, her clothing style appears to be a mixture of both and consists of a modified jacket and skirt. The jacket does not fit closely to her body but is large and tends to hide her figure.

During the colonial period, the movement to reform the old-style ethnic clothing into a more functional dress code was motivated not only by the practical suggestion that Western-style dress offered better mobility but also by a symbolic order in which wearing Western clothing was a gesture toward civilising the self in a globalising world.¹⁰⁵ Western-influenced fashion codes gradually became popular during the period of Japanese occupation amongst younger Korean women and educated upper-class women, while older women still preferred to wear the ethnic dress.¹⁰⁶ Underwear, slips, socks, and shoes were not replaced

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁰⁵ Kim, "Dressed to Kill", p. 164.

¹⁰⁶ Yang, *Hanbok*, p. 180.

but remained the same ethnic Korean style.¹⁰⁷ However, with the introduction of Western clothing during the Japanese colonial period many Koreans saw it as compromising national purity.¹⁰⁸ The North Korean government later labelled Western clothing as oppressive and bourgeois because the so-called “New Women” of the colonial period took part in the new material culture often through their wealthy families.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, in the new North Korean state, Western-influenced fashion was eradicated from women’s wardrobes as representing remnants of the colonial past and the cultural traits of the enemy class, the bourgeoisie.

New socialist clothing norms arose as alternatives to the Western-style garments that had been brought to Korea through what was seen as a corrupting Japanese influence.¹¹⁰ Unlike China, which designed a national dress code for both men and women based on the clothing worn by their revolutionary leader Mao Zedong,¹¹¹ the DPRK did not promote androgynous clothing. In China from the 1950s to the 1970s women dressed in sympathy with the proletariat and wore loose-fitting trouser suits, lacking in ornamentation.¹¹² The difference in clothing between genders was in the styling of the collar and pockets. In the Korean context, there was a strong return to Korea’s past before colonisation as the traditional *hanbok* was approved by the state for women to wear. Korean men, however, wore modified Western-style suits (similar to the suits worn in Communist China, as noted above). The longer one examines North Korean artwork representing men and women it becomes unquestionable that North Korea’s leaders and official artists have perceived women’s and men’s dress as separate national projects. As in many other colonial and post-colonial contexts, it is women who are the carriers of national identity through their dress.¹¹³

In, “Indomitable Revolutionary Fighter Comrade Kim Jong Suk Carrying Bullets to Height Together With the Children’s Corps Members”, the female Korean children wear a light coloured jacket closely resembling the traditional Korean jacket (*jeogori*) over a shortened version of the traditional Korean skirt (*chima*). The two young girls also wear scarves as protection from the cold. In comparison, the two young boys are dressed in long

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Kim, “Dressed to Kill”, p. 161.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 163.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 164.

¹¹¹ Wong, *Visualizing Beauty*, p. 63.

¹¹² Kim, “Dressed to Kill”, p. 164.

¹¹³ Sharon Sievers, *Flowers in Salt: The Beginnings of Feminist Consciousness in Meiji Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), pp. 14,15; Partha Chatterjee, “The Nationalist Resolution of the Women’s Question” in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (eds), *Recasting Women: Essays in Indian Colonial History* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), pp. 233–253; Andrea Germer, Vera Mackie and Ulrike Wöhr, “Introduction: Gender, Nation and State in Modern Japan”, in Andrea Germer, Vera Mackie and Ulrike Wöhr (eds), *Gender, Nation and State in Modern Japan* (Oxford: Routledge, 2014), pp. 1–24.

trousers, jackets, and hats. The boys also wear scarves. The triangular red scarf is said to represent a corner of the Communist flag, dyed red from the blood of martyrs.¹¹⁴ The clothing worn by the children resembles uniforms worn by Chinese Young Pioneers. In both North Korea and China, children were regarded as the hope and future in each respective country. The clothing styles of these children are clearly gendered, suggesting that gendered expectations start from an early age in official discourse in the DPRK.



Figure 4.8 “Indomitable Revolutionary Fighter Comrade Kim Jong Suk Carrying Bullets to Height Together With the Children’s Corps Members”. Date unknown. Oil Painting. “For the Future of Revolution”, *Women of Korea*, 3 (103) (1984), pp. 10, 11.

¹¹⁴ Powerhouse Museum, *Chinese Dress 1700s–1990s. Evolution and Revolution* (Sydney: Powerhouse Publishing, 2002).

Alongside her role as revolutionary fighter, Kim Jong Suk is also represented in *Women of Korea* as performing domestic duties such as sewing on the battlefield.¹¹⁵ The article, “It Is Honourable Either to Live or to Die for the sake of Comrade Commander”, relates that in autumn 1939, Kim Il Sung assigned the task of making military uniforms for the male revolutionary soldiers to Kim Jong Suk.¹¹⁶

Upholding the orders of the great leader, she [Kim Jong Suk] together with some women guerrillas made 600 suits of military uniform with a single sewing machine within 20 days and brilliantly carried out the underground political work in the area covered with the forest of enemy bayonets and secret agents.¹¹⁷

In this story, due to her loyalty to both Kim Il Sung and the struggle against the Japanese aggressors, Kim Jong Suk went to a secret camp where the tailor corps was located. She appealed to the women to complete the task of making all 600 military uniforms in less than a month.¹¹⁸ All women are said to have worked hard to fulfil this request. Only women compose the tailor corps, and there is no representation in any story or visual image of men sewing alongside the women on the battlefield. This reinforces the ideology that women should perform duties that are customarily deemed to be household chores and that North Korean men do not. Kim Il Sung is quoted as recognising how difficult it was going to be to make 600 military uniforms in such a short time.¹¹⁹

Needless to say, it is not an easy job for the few tailor corps members, to make 600 uniforms in a short time. But, in order to bring the operations to a success, the task should be carried out with fail.¹²⁰

The success of the fight against the Japanese fell on the shoulders of Kim Jong Suk and other revolutionary heroines and not just on the men fighting on the frontline. Further, it is implied that without these uniforms the male revolutionary soldiers would have been unable to

¹¹⁵ Kang “Members”; “A Real Star”, pp. 29, 30; “Paragon”, pp. 7–9; “Anti-Japanese Women’s Association”, pp. 40, 41.

¹¹⁶ “It Is Honourable Either to Live or to Die for the sake of Comrade Commander”, *Women of Korea*, 1 (101) (1984), p. 16.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ “Sewing Machine”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (112) (1986), p. 15.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

perform their military duties. Under so much pressure to produce 600 military uniforms, the women worked day and night but in the final stages, the sewing machine needle broke.¹²¹ Faced with this situation, Kim Jong Suk was forced to sew the remaining military uniforms by hand. It is said that all 600 military uniforms were successfully completed in just 20 days.¹²²

Visual images such as “She Produced Military Uniforms During the March” (see figure 4.9) ensure women can identify with exemplary women capable of achieving all state goals.¹²³ The painting captures the story of the tailor corps making the military uniforms on the battlefield in the middle of a forest. In the centre of the painting, Kim Jong Suk sits at a sewing machine, with one hand on the fabric and the other on the machine. The viewer’s gaze is first drawn towards Kim Jong Suk as she dominates the painting by her large scale. In the background, two female revolutionary soldiers support the work of Kim Jong Suk by preparing the material for the military uniforms. One woman carries cloth, while the other is sewing by hand. Each woman wears a feminised version of the military uniform, comprised of a hat, a jacket, a skirt and long socks or stockings. The uniforms are modest and do not reveal the female form, conforming to the virtues of modesty and purity. As noted above, whilst including women in the revolutionary struggle the modified uniforms ensured that women could participate and be recognised in a male dominated domain. The uniform, though, also clearly highlights differences in roles based on gender. It can be said that while men participated in combat, women were defined by duties that were perceived to be acceptable for women – sewing and cooking. In other words, women were portrayed as contributing to the revolution by carrying out duties that were typically associated with women’s work within the home. In the painting, Kim Jong Suk and her female comrades also have short haircuts, representing modernity. While intended to show to the international community the success of integrating women in the revolutionary struggle, these images rather demonstrate the contradictory elements of the North Korean government’s plan to liberate women from the home while promoting the idea that men and women are equal. Although women are represented outside the house working alongside their male counterparts, they are stereotyped to certain gendered roles usually associated with the domestic sphere.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ “Sewing Machine”, p. 16.



Figure 4.9 “She Produced Military Uniforms During the March”. Date unknown. Oil Painting. “Sewing Machine”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (112) (1986), p. 16.

Kim Il Sung and his male family members are represented in visual images and stories which capture ideal masculine qualities of strength and loyalty, ready to defend the country. Below I discuss the symbolism of Kim Il Sung as a father figure in visual images published in *Women of Korea*. The representation of Kim Il Sung went far beyond the representation of an individual father. Rather, he is depicted as the father of the entire Korean nation.¹²⁴

¹²⁴ “Premier and Children”, p. 2; “Our Father”, p. 39; “Fatherly Love”, pp. 8, 9; “He Makes a Halt”; “Bosom of Parental Affection”; “Women Work Rather Harder”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (104) (1984), p. 5; “Bosom of Mother Party”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (104) (1984), pp. 8, 9; Chong Mi Hong, “Motherland Gave Me Light”, *Women of Korea*, 3 (107) (1985), p. 25; “Try to Become Skilled Worker Quickly”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (110) (1986), pp. 2, 3.

The “Fatherly General” Kim Il Sung

Since the 1970s, the stereotypical gender roles of men and women have been reflected in the patriarchal political culture of the DPRK.¹²⁵ This can be seen in the approved North Korean visual media such as the magazine *Women of Korea*, and the representation of Kim Il Sung as the “Fatherly General” or “The Father Leader” and the WPK as the “Mother Party”.¹²⁶ The political power within the DPRK personified the “Fatherly General” and the “Mother Party” under the justification of a stable patriarchal political system governed by a paternalistic leader.¹²⁷ These representations of Kim Il Sung and the WPK impacted on all aspects of North Korean society including the roles of ordinary men and women.¹²⁸

In *Women of Korea*, it is said that North Korean children grow up happily with no worries under the warm fatherly care of Kim Il Sung and that he never forgot the children of the revolutionary soldiers in the busy days when he led the anti-Japanese armed struggle to victory.¹²⁹ The painting “The Fatherly Leader General Kim Il Sung Embracing the Members of the Children’s Corps in Mt. Maan-sha’n” (see figure 4.10), represents Kim Il Sung with young children, similar to Christian paintings and suggests that Kim Il Sung himself is a God-like figure and saviour or liberator of the Korean people.¹³⁰ Religious language and painting techniques are regularly employed when referring to Kim Il Sung and his family members and many comparisons could be made with depictions of religious figures such as Christ.¹³¹ Paintings of Kim Il Sung often represent him surrounded by children, like traditional religious paintings of Jesus (see figure 4.10) or they show him standing on top of a mountain or hill bathed in light (see figure 4.6). In “The Fatherly Leader General Kim Il Sung Embracing the Members of the Children’s Corps in Mt. Maan-sha’n” (see figure 4.10), both the caption and the painting represent Kim Il Sung as the father figure, rescuer of and provider for the young children, who symbolise the North Korean people as well as the future of the revolutionary cause in the DPRK. It is said that the paternal role of Kim Il Sung was

¹²⁵ Jin Woong Kang, “The Patriarchal State and Women’s Status in Socialist North Korea”, *Graduate Journal of Asia-Pacific Studies*, 6 (2) (2008), p. 64.

¹²⁶ “The Embrace of the Mother Party”, *Women of Korea*, 1 (109) (1986), p. 1; “I Know it Now”, *Women of Korea*, 3 (107) (1985), p. 1; “The Party, the Motherly Image”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (108) (1985), p. 1; “The Bosom of the Homeland”, *Women of Korea*, 3 (103) (1984), p. 1; “Bosom of Mother Party”, pp. 8, 9; “Where My Life Blossomed Out”, *Women of Korea*, 1 (101) (1984), p. 1.

¹²⁷ Kang, “The Patriarchal State”, p. 64.

¹²⁸ Ryang, “Gender in Oblivion”, p. 340; Guktae An, “North Korea in the Globalizing Era: Why it is critical to understand North Korea through history, culture, norms, and the Kim family”, *Exchange Panel for Interdisciplinary Knowledge Journal*, 3 (6) (2012), p. 10.

¹²⁹ An, “North Korea in the Globalizing Era”, p. 8.

¹³⁰ “Fatherly Love”, pp. 8, 9.

¹³¹ Jane Portal, *Art Under Control in North Korea* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2005), p. 100.

not merely because the children were lovable but because they were the future of the country.¹³²

The clothing worn by Kim Il Sung and the Children's Corps members is clearly gendered even though they all wear modified ethnic Korean-style clothing, except for Kim Il Sung who is dressed in a military uniform. The younger male and female children wear *hanbok*. The boys wear a jacket or a vest, which has been worn by Korean men since the late Chosŏn Dynasty (1392–1897). The jacket has changed little since this time, but the vest was a new addition based on the Western-style vest.¹³³ The young boys also wear trousers similar to the traditional ones worn since the Chosŏn Dynasty. In the painting, all male figures including Kim Il Sung and the young boys wear short hairstyles. In 1895, King Gojong (1852–1919) (Chosŏn Dynasty) ordered all Korean men to cut their hair short and wear Western-style clothing.¹³⁴ By cutting their hair and wearing Western-style clothing, it was believed that men were taking the first step towards a modern nation.¹³⁵ In comparison, the young girls in the painting wear the modified female *hanbok*. The length of the dress has been shortened to allow for easier mobility but the sleeves remain long and cover their arms. Each of the young girls also wears a modern short hairstyle.

Kim Il Sung is seen to be comforting two of the children in the painting. He holds the hands of the young girl who stands in front of him and embraces another who stands beside him. Both girls appear happy and safe in the arms of the leader. The other children from the Children's Corps stand around him, looking up to the fatherly leader with admiration in their eyes. These children were groomed to carry on the political goals of Kim Il Sung in makeshift schools established on guerrilla bases. Concerned about the life of these children, it is said that Kim Il Sung provided them with gifts of new warm clothes and quilts. In return for protection and gifts, the children were said to be so deeply moved and grateful for the great love of Kim Il Sung that they made a winter suit and padded boots, which they presented to him.¹³⁶ In the article, "Fatherly Love", it states that because of the parental care of the "Fatherly General" (Kim Il Sung) towards the North Korean people, the children (symbolic of the nation) showed enduring love and devotion towards their leader.¹³⁷

According to Sonia Ryang, in this "state-engineered process of the production of love and loyalty discourse" towards Kim Il Sung, the "North Korean people on the whole play a

¹³² Ibid., p. 8.

¹³³ Yang, *Hanbok*, p. 172.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ "Fatherly Love", pp. 8, 9.

stereotypical ‘female’ part [just like] in old-fashioned romantic tales”.¹³⁸ Ryang adds that North Korean men and women are represented as being “in love” with Kim Il Sung, adoring his image, cherishing his figure, admiring his manly beauty and wisdom, and totally submitting to his command”.¹³⁹ Kim Il Sung held absolute power over the North Korean population, not necessarily by way of violence and oppression, but through the representation of benevolence and fatherly love and the responsibility for each household.¹⁴⁰ Ryang suggests that because of the feminisation of the population gender inequality in North Korean society has effectively been cancelled because “men and women, young and old” play a feminised role.¹⁴¹

Alternatively, Immanuel J. Kim states that the North Korean government inevitably excludes the presence of women, whose sole responsibility is to support the nation through their motherhood.¹⁴² Kim continues that while new gender equality laws, and women’s participation in the workforce, military, and other social institutions suggest a paradigmatic shift towards a progressive North Korean state, women’s essential function in society is to reproduce the next generation of socialist revolutionaries.¹⁴³ Kim asserts that for women to be integrated into a state like the DPRK, they have to become masculinised, where women, too, need to acquire the patriarchal language.¹⁴⁴ In other words, gender equality in the DPRK does not eliminate gender difference but homogenises gender into a single masculine gender. Therefore, masculine discourse in the DPRK has conveniently eliminated gender difference and equality, instating the hegemony of males.¹⁴⁵ I would argue however, that the North Korean population has neither been feminised nor masculinised but infantilised. North Korean men and women have equally been infantilised as they all are represented equally loving and cherishing the leader Kim Il Sung as their father. There is still, however, a gendering of societal roles. Women have continued to be represented in stereotypical feminine roles within the home, while the representation of men in the home is largely absent due to the masculine role being replaced by Kim Il Sung himself. Therefore, the role of men has fundamentally been left undefined by the North Korean government and in the pages of

¹³⁸ Ryang, “Gender in Oblivion”, p. 341.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 341, 342.

¹⁴² Immanuel J. Kim, “North Korean Literature: Margins of Writing Memory, Gender, and Sexuality” (University of California, Riverside: Doctor of Philosophy Thesis, 2012), p. 107.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 108.

Women of Korea. Instead, Kim Il Sung has replaced the role of ordinary men as the head of the household, as the provider and protector of all North Korean families.

The visual representations and the stories of the Kim family in the magazine *Women of Korea* fostered and encouraged the idea that this heroic family epitomised national purity through their resistance to Japanese aggressors.¹⁴⁶ This can be seen in the representations of Kang Ban Sok and Kim Jong Suk, promoted as feminine revolutionary subjects who were capable of caring for their families and the nation. These women, though, held no significant decision making power in the government to truly influence the patriarchal structure of the state or society and instead reinforced the gendered view of the government that women's primary roles were in the home. The visual images and stories of Kim Il Sung as the "Fatherly General" of all North Korean people replaced the nurturing role of ordinary North Korean men within their family. These gendered representations of the Kim family members reinforced the gendered assumptions made by the government. These expectations however, undermined the government's stated goal of liberating women from their homes and the provisions included in North Korean laws to ensure women shared equal rights with men. Further, these representations in *Women of Korea* of men and women undermined the government's goal of promoting a positive and equal society for all North Koreans to the international community.

¹⁴⁶ Kim, "Dressed to Kill", p. 164.



Figure 4.10 “The Fatherly Leader General Kim Il Sung Embracing the Members of the Children’s Corps in Mt. Maan-shan”. Date unknown. Oil Painting. “Fatherly Love”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (72) (1976), pp. 8, 9.

Conclusion

From the 1960s, the magazine *Women of Korea* featured a series of visual images and stories about the Kim family – Kim Il Sung, his mother Kang Ban Sok and his first wife, Kim Jong Suk. The depictions of the revolutionary Kim family present an idealised story of the liberation of the nation from Japanese colonial rule. While the Kim women are presented as heroic figures, who nevertheless support the revolution in gendered ways, through cooking, sewing and looking after children, Kim Il Sung is presented not only as a father figure in the Kim family, but as the patriarch of the nation. Within the DPRK, these representations of the Kim women provided heroic models for ordinary North Korean women to emulate, while also reinforcing the primacy and legitimacy of the Kim dynasty. In an international context, these representations promote the legitimacy of the North Korean regime. Although the North Korean government aimed to promote the idea that North Korean women shared equal rights with men the visual images and accompanying articles reveal the gendered assumptions made

by the government towards the roles of men and women. North Korean women were to leave the home and work alongside their male counterparts to rebuild the socialist state. However, men and women's roles were gendered and men were to be soldiers and women mothers and wives, cooks and tailors.

In the next chapter, I discuss the representations of North Korean women in the labour force as seen in the magazine *Women of Korea*. From the 1980s, the North Korean economy began a downward turn as the Soviet Union and its satellites began to collapse. In this context, the emphasis on revolutionary heroines was slowly replaced with visual representations and articles on “ordinary” North Korean women. These women performed the roles of mothers and wives as well as contributing to the North Korean labour force as active and diligent workers. These exemplary women displayed skills the North Korean government wanted all women to display – loyalty to the state and hard work in society and the home. The emancipation of women in North Korea's policy and laws revealed a backward aspect from this time, as the state's patriarchal system was strengthened and women's status was significantly undermined by affirmation of customary gender roles in the home and labour force.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ Kang, “The Patriarchal State”, p. 62.

5. Work and Family in *Women of Korea*

We must step up the struggle to wipe out the feudal conventions of binding women to the home and other remnants of the old habits so that all of them will not only help their husbands who are participating in nation-building endeavours, bring up their children well and run their homes thriftily, but also directly contribute to the nation-building work by their own labour efforts.

Kim Il Sung, 9 May 1946.¹

Introduction

From the 1970s, changes to the patriarchal system and the status of women in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, North Korea) were influenced by both international and domestic political economic shifts. By this time Kim Il Sung had established a stable government and was preparing for the transfer of political power to his successor, Kim Jong Il.² From this time, the emphasis on revolutionary heroines was slowly replaced in *Women of Korea* with an emphasis on the roles of ordinary North Korean women as wives and mothers who supported their husbands, sons, and families by working both inside and outside the home.³ In this chapter I examine the representation of ordinary women who performed their duties inside and outside the home as presented to the international community in the magazine. From this time the North Korean government promoted a positive image of women who were said to have shared equal rights with men. While women were encouraged

¹ Kim Il Sung, "On the Future Tasks of the Women's Union, Speech Addressed to the Communist Workers of the Women's Union Scheduled to Attend the First Conference of the Democratic Women's Union of North Korea, 9 May 1946", in Kim Il Sung, *Selected Works 2* (Pyongyang: Korean Workers' Party Press, 1979), p. 218.

² "The First Women's Technical School", *Women of Korea*, 4 (124) (1989), p. 28.

³ "Mother", *Women of Korea*, 3 (22) (1966), pp. 6–7; "Mother", *Women of Korea*, 3 (22) (1966), p. 39; "New Aspects of Pyongyang", *Women of Korea*, 1 (97) (1983), pp. 22, 23; "For Hitting the Goal of 100 Million Metres of Fabrics", *Women of Korea*, 3 (99) (1983), pp. 20, 21; "Mangyongdae in Blooming April", *Women of Korea*, 2 (102) (1984), pp. 18–21; "Daily Work of Shop Manageress", *Women of Korea*, 2 (102) (1984), pp. 22, 23; "Bringing Up Women into Socialist Builders", *Women of Korea*, 4 (104) (1984), pp. 2, 3; "Merry Laughing Voice Floats Out of Each and Every Home", *Women of Korea*, 4 (105) (1985), p. 32; "Historic Days of Realizing Sex Equality", *Women of Korea*, 2 (106) (1985), pp. 4–6; "April Holiday in Flowery Spring", *Women of Korea*, 2 (106) (1985), pp. 18, 19.

to work outside the home, this was in a clearly gendered North Korean labour force.⁴ As Sonia Ryang notes, the status of North Korean women was overwhelmed by traditional patriarchal values along with the logic of economic exploitation and gender differentiation in post-war gender politics, which eventually replaced the “woman question” with the “mother-worker question”.⁵

Although the North Korean government promised women the same work privileges, wages, and social security as men, in practice they were not paid comparable wages for essentially comparable work, and they were not equally promoted (see chapter 3 for further details on the North Korean legal system).⁶ Although the emancipation of women from the patriarchal family structure was strongly emphasised, their domestic labour was an important aspect of the national economy.⁷ Women’s roles in the home were subservient to male labour in the public sphere.⁸ In *Women of Korea*, the representation of protective male providers in the family unit was largely absent; rather the focus was on women who were expected to combine duties inside and outside the home. Therefore, any cultural and patriarchal restrictions that were placed on women were not eliminated simply by their joining the labour force. Instead, women’s responsibilities increased as they were expected to continue to perform their work in the home alongside their work in society. Under the surface of claims made by the North Korean government that women reached equality within society, the visual images and text rather reveal that discrimination against women continued to persist socially and culturally.

In this chapter, I analyse the visual and textual representations in *Women of Korea* of ordinary North Korean women as mothers and workers in the labour force as promoted by the state.⁹ I begin with an outline of depictions of the contribution of ordinary North Koreans to

⁴ Jin Woong Kang, “The Patriarchal State and Women’s Status in Socialist North Korea”, *Graduate Journal of Asia-Pacific Studies*, 6 (2) (2008), p. 62.

⁵ Sonia Ryang, “Gender in Oblivion: Women in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea),” *Journal of African and Asian Studies* 35 (3) (2000), p. 337.

⁶ Suk-Young Kim, *Illusive Utopia: Theatre, Film and Everyday Performance in North Korea* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2010), p. 209.

⁷ Suk-Young Kim, “Dressed to Kill: Women’s Fashion and Body Politics in North Korean Visual Media (1960s–1970s)”, *positions: asia critique*, 19 (1) (2011), p. 174.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Yun, Son Nye, “Fishery Base for People”, *Women of Korea*, 2(98) (1983), pp. 12, 13; “Faithful Servants”, pp. 21–23; “Manageress”, pp. 13, 14; “The Child Is King”, pp. 22, 23; “Mistress Responsible”, pp. 26, 27; “Women Run Factory”, *Women of Korea*, 1 (113) (1987), p. 27; “Changsan-ri Today”, pp. 17–19; “Great Solicitude: At the Women’s Clothing Factory in Pyongyang”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (57) (1972); “Women Come out Valiantly in the ‘Movement for Winning the Red Flag of the Three Revolution’”, *Women of Korea*, 1 (69) (1976); “Under the Great Love”, *Women of Korea*, 3(71) (1976), pp. 16, 17; “Worthwhile Working Place of Women”, *Women of Korea*, 3 (71) (1976), pp. 36, 37.

nation building in the 1970s national “Hidden Hero” campaign.¹⁰ I then go on to analyse the official rhetoric in the magazine of exemplary North Korean women who were mothers and wives, as well as workers in the so-called “light industries”. The roles of women in industries such as the childcare and education sectors,¹¹ and the food industries¹² were promoted in the articles and visual representations in the magazine.¹³ *Women of Korea* describes North Korean women as a major resource in the labour force, who were targeted to fill gaps in the light industries.¹⁴ The magazine reveals, therefore, the assignment of North Korean women to specific jobs deemed suitable and approved by the state.

The “Hidden Hero” Campaign

From the 1970s, articles and visual images in *Women of Korea* addressed women’s participation in the labour force and the socialisation of childcare facilities and the food industry. The “Hidden Hero” campaign is the background to the visual images and text published in *Women of Korea* from the 1970s to 1992.¹⁵ The selfless achievements of the heroes and heroines in the “Hidden Hero” campaign are said to resemble the devotion of Kim Il Sung to the building of the nation from the time of Japanese colonial rule (1910–1945).¹⁶ The campaign was designed to increase the sentiments of nationalism amongst all North

¹⁰ Immanuel J. Kim, “North Korean Literature: Margins of Writing Memory, Gender, and Sexuality” (University of California Riverside: Doctor of Philosophy Thesis, 2012), p. 15.

¹¹ “In the Early Days of the Nursing and Upbringing of Children”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (90) (1981), p. 16; “The Sun of Hope for Women”, *Women of Korea*, 1 (97) (1983), p. 30; “A Blessed Village”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (98) (1983), pp. 10, 11; Son Hi Ryu, “Changgwang Kindergarten Built the Guidance of the Party Centre”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (98) (1983), pp. 22, 23; Dong Chun Kim, “Far-reaching Benefit, Fruitful Life”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (98) (1983), pp. 38, 39; “Mangyongdae”, pp. 18–21; “Children Are brought Up at State Expense”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (102) (1984), pp. 26, 27; “Upbringing of Children at State and Public Expense”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (106) (1985), pp. 12–15; “The Child Is King of Our Country”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (106) (1985), pp. 22, 23; “Changsan-ri Today”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (124) (1989), pp. 17–19.

¹² “Faithful Servants of People (A visit to the store of the Sinuiju Textile Mill)”, *Women of Korea*, 1 (101) (1984), pp. 21–23; “Personal Visit to Rice-cooking House”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (102) (1984), p. 3; “Manageress”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (105) (1985), pp. 13, 14; “At Chongryu Restaurant”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (105) (1985), pp. 31, 32; “Upbringing of Children”, pp. 12–15; “The Child Is King”, pp. 22, 23; “Mistress Responsible for a County”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (106) (1985), pp. 26, 27; “Great Forty Years”, *Women of Korea*, 3 (7) (1985), pp. 2, 3; “Korean Women’s Burden of Household Work Is Becoming Lighter”, *Women of Korea*, 3 (107) (1985), pp. 11, 12; “State Benefits to Women and Children Provided by DPRK Laws”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (108) (1985), pp. 11, 12; “More Affluent Life to the People”, *Women of Korea*, 1 (109) (1986), p. 16; “Happy Women in DPRK”, *Women of Korea*, 1 (109) (1986), pp. 29, 30.

¹³ “Worthwhile Workplace Overflowing with Joy”, *Women of Korea*, 1 (97) (1983), pp. 28, 29; “The Sun”, p. 30; Kim, “Far-reaching Benefit”, pp. 38, 39; “For Hitting the Goal”, pp. 20, 21; “Faithful Servants”, pp. 21–23; “Daily Work”, pp. 22, 23; “Historic Days”, pp. 4–6; “Upbringing of Children”, pp. 12–15; “Mistress Responsible”, pp. 26, 27; “Great Forty Years”, pp. 2, 3; “Korean Women’s Burden”, pp. 11, 12; “Impressions of Korean Women”, *Women of Korea*, 3 (107) (1985), p. 13; “Valuing Women’s Talent and Ardor”, *Women of Korea*, 3 (107) (1985), p. 16; “Changsan-ri Today”, pp. 17–19.

¹⁴ Light industries in the DPRK included: factory work, office work, restaurant work and work in healthcare and educational institutions.

¹⁵ Kim, “North Korean Literature”, p. 15.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Koreans. According to Immanuel J. Kim, “[i]n as much as collective memory of the Great Leader is state orchestrated, the Hidden Hero [or Heroine] is another campaign that sustained the continuity of the past and present”.¹⁷ The campaign singled out model citizens of both genders. The campaign not only encouraged North Korean men and women to participate actively in society, it also allowed the state to closely monitor their every move. It was imperative for the North Korean government to find those lacking in nationalism and loyalty to the Kim family and educate them with correct thought. Surveillance of North Koreans took place with the justification of finding heroic people amongst the population.¹⁸

With the need to advance North Korean society under the Three Revolutions, the “Hidden Hero” campaign provided a motive for individuals to become involved in society.¹⁹ These campaigns, though, never fully addressed or resolved the “woman question” in the DPRK, as the government understood that to achieve gender equality was to lessen women’s household duties and allow them to participate alongside their male counterparts in the labour force. Under North Korea’s economic campaigns, such as the Three Revolutions, women were targeted to join the labour force. Due to the state’s strong policies and institutional reform of socialisation of housework, women’s proportion of economic activities continued to increase until the late 1970s. Kim Il Sung is quoted as saying that it is “of tremendous significance to mobilise actively the women for the work of nation-building as they make up half the population”.²⁰ To extol the value of the female workforce, visual media promoted images of ordinary North Korean women working in various places of employment but most notably in the food and textile industries and the education sector.

Before moving to representations of North Korean women in the labour force, I analyse the representations of ordinary men and women in the family unit. The images of women exemplified skills such as actively contributing to the revolutionary cause by helping to build a stronger economy, as well as the devotion of women as mothers and wives within their families. Consequently, women faced inevitable challenges from this time as they had to juggle both the domestic and public spheres. While the representation of ordinary North Korean men is largely absent in the magazine *Women of Korea* there are a few images that I will refer to.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁹ Kim, “Dressed to Kill”, p. 159. The Three Revolutions included: the Revolution of Technology (*gisului hyeogmyeong*), the Revolution of Ideology (*sasangui hyeogmyeong*) and the Revolution of Culture (*munhwa hyeogmyeong*) and will be discussed further below.

²⁰ “The Women Were Guided to Fulfil the Economic Plan”, *Women of Korea*, 1 (121) (1989), p. 13.

Gender Roles in North Korean Families

For at least two decades after the end of the Korean War (1950–1953), women were under intense pressure to produce more children.²¹ By the 1980s, however, the fertility rate in the DPRK was in decline with the average number of children born to women decreasing from 6.5 in 1966 to 2.5 in 1988.²² The tendency to marry relatively late may be one factor affecting the fertility rates.²³ The legal age to marry in the DPRK is 18 for males and 17 for females. However, since the 1980s, it has become increasingly common to marry in one's late twenties or early thirties because of work and military service obligations.²⁴ Maternity and childbirth have been given "protection" in North Korea's legal system, as seen in Article 77 of the 1972 DPRK Constitution.

Women are accorded equal social status and rights with men. The State shall afford special protection to mothers and children by providing maternity leave, reduced working hours for mothers with many children, a wide network of maternity hospitals, crèches and kindergartens, and other measures. The State shall provide all conditions for a woman to play a full role in society.

The granting of equal rights in law was not enough, though, to liberate women from patriarchy within the family structure.²⁵ The concept of equality was strongly resisted by some in North Korean society such as in family relationships,²⁶ which only superficially changed. For example, domestic work and the nurturing of children continued to be seen as "women's work" by both the state and the majority of North Korean people.

Although women's work outside the home was promoted, the DPRK had a larger number of women who stayed in the home compared to other socialist countries. There are many possible reasons, including: tradition still dictates that once married, a woman should stay at home to serve her husband and care for her children; marriage to high-income earners; reluctance of employers to retain married women; decline in North Korea's economy and economic opportunity outside the official economy; and the government's lack of concern for

²¹ Ryang, "Gender in Oblivion", p. 332.

²² Kyungja Jung and Bronwen Dalton, "Rhetoric Versus Reality for the Women of North Korea: Mothers of the Revolution", *Asian Studies*, 46 (5) (2006), p. 754.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Kyung Ae Park, "Women and Revolution in North Korea", *Pacific Affairs*, 65 (4) (1992–1993), p. 534.

²⁶ Jung and Dalton, "Mothers of the Revolution", p. 754

the number of married women staying in the home.²⁷ Once married some women voluntarily left their jobs but sought ways to generate income while also having the opportunity to stay at home. This practice was supposed to reduce the “double burden” of housework and economic employment, while increasing their economic independence.²⁸ Whatever the reason, the number of homemakers increased to around 60 to 70 per cent by the mid-1980s.²⁹ It should be noted that work in sideline production teams or neighbourhood work units was not officially counted as employment.³⁰ The fact that a large number of women remain in the home suggests that views of gendered roles are strongly rooted despite legal provisions mandating equality. Confucianism defines women’s roles in the family in relation to male family members. Women, therefore, are always seen as mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters.³¹

Women as mothers appear in *Women of Korea* from the initial publication in 1966.³² Kim Il Sung is quoted as emphasising that it is women’s natural duty to give birth and to raise and educate children at home.³³

The mother has to bear the major responsibility for home education.
Her responsibility is greater than the father’s because it is she who
gives birth to children and brings them up.³⁴

This statement reinforces gender stereotypes within families and does not alter the model whereby men work outside the home and women look after children.³⁵ This attitude is reflected in the painting “*Dandelion*” (see figure 5.1).³⁶ The representation of Korean women as mothers was not new and can be seen from the mid-1920s, as the “wise mother, good

²⁷ Ibid., p. 752.

²⁸ Park, “Women and Revolution”, p. 540.

²⁹ Eun-young Shin, “Ideology and Gender Equality: Women’s Policies of North Korea and China”, *East Asian Review*, 13 (3) (2001), pp. 89, 90.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Kim, *Illusive Utopia*, p. 205.

³² “Mother”, pp. 6, 7; “Mother”, p. 39.

³³ “New Aspects”, pp. 22, 23; “For Hitting the Goal”, pp. 20, 21; “Mangyongdae”, pp. 18–21; “Merry Laughing”, p. 32; “Korean Women’s Burden”, pp. 11, 12; “Valuing Women’s Talent”, p. 16; “Women Enjoy a Rest to the Full”, *Women of Korea*, 3 (107) (1985), pp. 22, 23; “Mother of 12 Children”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (108) (1985), p. 30; “State Benefits to Women and Children”, *Women of Korea*, 1 (109) (1986), pp. 27, 28; “Mother of 16 Bereaved Children”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (110) (1986), p. 28.

³⁴ Kim Il Sung, “The Duty of Mothers in the Education of Children: Speech at the National Meeting of Mothers” (16 November 1961), in *Selected Works 3* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1971), p. 216.

³⁵ Ryang, “Gender in Oblivion”, p. 335

³⁶ *Women of Korea*, 4 (132) (1991), p. 34.

wife” ideal was promoted.³⁷ As colonial oppression grew stronger in the 1930s in Korea, the doctrine of dedicated mothering gained even greater traction and many Koreans believed that their people’s future, including freedom from colonialism, depended on women’s willingness to sacrifice themselves to stay home and raise good sons and daughters.³⁸ Becoming a mother was promoted as the most sacred duty and females who turned away from this role were accused of being over-sexed and vain.³⁹

In the painting “*Dandelion*” the mother supports the young child by wrapping her arms around the child’s waist. The figures stand outside amongst plant life and both gaze at a flower held by the mother. Both child and mother blow lightly on the flower petals which float gently through the air. The child appears to be safe and happy with no care in the world. In this painting, it is difficult to tell the gender of the child as the child is dressed in yellow clothing, a gender-neutral colour. Further, the child is wearing a hat, so the viewer cannot see the length of the youngster’s hair, which could have indicated the gender. The mother is dressed in distinctly Korean clothing designed for women (*joseonot/hanbok*), which emphasises modesty, virtue, and feminine beauty. The sleeves of her *hanbok* though, are transparent allowing the viewer to see her skin. Suk-Young Kim states that in other North Korean cultural forms almost all female protagonists are projected in familial relationships, as mothers, sisters and daughters, to ensure that female characters do not incite erotic thoughts.⁴⁰ This is confirmed by the visual images published in *Women of Korea*, which predominantly represent women as mothers or wives and surrounded by their children.

³⁷ Aida Yuen Wong (ed), *Visualizing Beauty: Gender and Ideology in Modern East Asia* (Aberdeen: Hong Kong University Press, 2012), p. 96. For comparable ideas of the “good wife, wise mother” (*ryōsai kenbo*) in Japan, see Koyama Shizuko, “Domestic Roles and the Incorporation of Women into the Nation State: The Emergence and Development of the ‘Good Wife, Wise Mother’ Ideology”, in Andrea Germer, Vera Mackie and Ulrike Wöhr (eds) *Gender, Nation and State in Modern Japan* (Oxford: Routledge, 2014), pp. 85–100.

³⁸ Wong, *Visualizing Beauty*, p. 96.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Kim, *Illusive Utopia*, p. 222.



Figure 5.1 “*Dandelion*”. Date unknown. Oil Painting. *Women of Korea*, 4 (132) (1991), p. 34.

In the painting “*Toddler*” (see figure 5.2) the roles of North Korean men and women within the family are clearly defined and are exemplified in the gendered roles performed and by the clothing worn.⁴¹ Four family members enjoy a day at a park and sit under a tree. The father and mother figures sit on a park bench watching their small child attempt to walk towards them, assisted by his older sister. The representation of the family dynamics appears to show gender-specific roles based on masculine and feminine expectations. Unlike other socialist states, such as the Soviet Union and China, the North Korean government kept the nuclear family together to ensure stability in society and the economy.⁴² This meant, however, that gender inequality and the gendered division of domestic labour in the home were maintained. It was thought that if the North Korean government had challenged the stereotypical gendered roles within families, it may have led to instability in society, the

⁴¹ *Women of Korea*, 4 (136) (1992), p. 22.

⁴² Ryang, “Gender in Oblivion”, p. 333.

labour force, and the basic unit of reproduction of future generations. Instead, the nuclear family as the basic social unit has remained intact with a gendered division of domestic labour.⁴³

While the government recognised women's work in the home as a burden, there is no discussion of men's responsibility to participate in domestic chores. On the rare occasion that the role of men in the home is mentioned in *Women of Korea*, they are represented in masculine stereotypical roles. The role of men is said to be centred on the responsibilities of providing financial support and moral guidance to their family. Men are typically depicted as responsible for the management of the household.⁴⁴ Before the 1990s, North Korean households relied upon the state's Public Distribution System (PDS) to ensure they had adequate food supplies and so they had little disposable income.⁴⁵ Since the famine in the 1990s, however, when people were forced to look for alternative ways to survive, trade along the North Korean and Chinese borders and marketplaces grew, thus incomes of some North Korean families also increased.⁴⁶ In this situation the roles of North Korean men and women were challenged as women were more likely to work in trade and markets, becoming financially independent (see chapter 6 for further details on North Korean food crisis and gender roles).

In *Women of Korea*, the painting "*Toddler*" is one of the few artworks to represent a man in the role of father and protector of his family, as this role is usually reserved for the national patriarch Kim Il Sung, as discussed above. In this painting, though, the father has taken on the role of protector of his family as he sits beside his wife on the park bench with his arm around offering support and comfort. He looks down, observing the young child as he attempts to take his first steps. Although he looks towards the child, the man does not appear too concerned with the events taking place before him as compared to his wife. The mother figure sits on the edge of the park bench and leans towards the child with concern in her eyes. She holds a child's rattle, encouraging the youngest child to walk towards her. Even the elder sister has taken on the stereotypical feminine role as nurturer as she shows concern for the small child and assists him to walk. This suggests that the caring role of the man is not as

⁴³ Ibid., p. 334.

⁴⁴ Shin, "Ideology and Gender Equality", p. 97.

⁴⁵ Stephan Haggard and Marcus Noland, *Hunger and Human Rights: The Politics of Famine in North Korea* (Washington: U.S. Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2005), p. 14; Amnesty International, *Starved of Rights*, p. 9.

⁴⁶ Norma Kang Muico, *An Absence of Choice: The sexual exploitation of North Korean women in China* (London: Anti-Slavery International, 2005), p. 2.

important in the family structure as the mother who is the primary nurturer of children. This is confirmed by the fact that the viewer can only see part of the father's face, which is obstructed by the female figure.

In this visual image and others in *Women of Korea*, men are not represented wearing ethnic Korean clothing. As a way of practising the *Juche* ideology, which promotes extreme ethnocentrism, women did not abandon the Korean dress for Western clothing.⁴⁷ While this explains the persistence of ethnic dress, it does not explain why only women had to express "Koreanness" through their bodies.⁴⁸ In this painting, the clothing style and colours worn by the male and female figures are clearly gender-differentiated. While the father figure is dressed in Western style clothing, the mother is dressed in a light coloured pink and white *hanbok*, which modestly covers her body except for her face and hands. In the 1960s, the colour scheme of the female *hanbok* symbolised female modesty and chastity.⁴⁹ The colour of women's clothing continued to be an important indicator of the government's assumptions about both genders well into the 1980s, as women are shown dressed in soft pastels rather than vibrant or dark colours. As can be seen in the paintings discussed so far, the female figures are represented in pale pastel colours symbolising femininity, modesty, and chastity.⁵⁰ In contrast, the male figure in this painting wears a modern Western-style suit in a dark blue colour, representing strength and masculinity.

The mother's modesty in the painting is confirmed by her unmodified *hanbok*. Unlike the visual images discussed in the previous chapter, which depicted women clothed in modified dresses, this version of the *hanbok* does not reveal the body shape or legs of the wearer. In later editions of the magazine, the style of *hanbok* has returned to the traditionally longer version seen in the earlier representations of the revolutionary heroine Kang Ban Sok. This could suggest that the government wanted women to return a more modest and traditional life as personified by Kim Il Sung's mother. While this clothing style ties women to Korea's past, it also places them in a patriotic position compared to men, who are usually represented wearing Western-style clothing. It was thought that when North Korea men dressed and groomed in Western ways it was a symbol of progressiveness and modernity,⁵¹ suggesting that the status and roles of North Korean women are confined in the past and have not progressed towards modern life.

⁴⁷ Kim, "Dressed to Kill", p. 172.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 169.

⁵⁰ Kim, *Illusive Utopia*, p. 234.

⁵¹ Sunny Yang, *Hanbok: The Art of Korean Clothing* (Seoul: Hollym, 1998), p. 171.

A young girl is kneeling and looking towards the child with her arms stretched out encouraging him to walk towards her. The girl is dressed in a blue school uniform, her hair pulled back with a flower clip on top of her head. She wears a red handkerchief typically worn by the Young Pioneers Corps.⁵² The youngest child in the painting looks towards the older sister. By the hairstyle of the youngest child, it could be assumed that the figure is male. The young boy is dressed in a red sleeveless shirt, white pants, and red shoes. The viewer's gaze is drawn to the child because of the colour of his clothing and because the other figures look in the direction of the youngster. This painting not only reinforces gendered assumptions about the role of men and women in the family, it also highlights the importance of children in North Korean society by drawing the viewer's gaze to the most important figure in this painting, the child, a symbol of the DPRK's future.



Figure 5.2 “Toddler”. Date unknown. Oil Painting. *Women of Korea*, 4 (136) (1992), p. 22.

⁵² The Young Pioneers Corps is open to North Korean children between the ages of nine and fifteen years and is operated by the government.

The Socialisation of Household Chores

Since the end of the Korean War in 1953, the North Korean government has promoted women's participation in the labour force.⁵³ Women also, however, remained the subject of gendered expectations whereby they were predominantly responsible for domestic chores and the care of children. Kim Il Sung is said to have acknowledged the hard work of women in building an economically independent nation combined with their roles in the home. In the article "At Sight of Women Carrying Water Jar on Head" published in *Women of Korea*, Kim Il Sung is quoted.

Men eat meals cooked by women, and so, they do not know well about how painstaking women are. But women, even after they worked as hard as men did have to fetch water, cook rice and do washing.⁵⁴

To ensure women were able to leave the home the government developed policies designed to lighten their domestic workloads.⁵⁵ In 1972, at the Fifth Congress of the Worker's Party of Korea (WPK), the congress made freeing women from the heavy burden of household work a major goal of the party. The government committed to providing childcare facilities, the pre-packaged food industry, and laundromats to address the burdens of women in the home. Such a suggestion, however, rests on the belief that the home is not a workplace run by both genders.⁵⁶ Although Kim Il Sung had promised timesaving equipment, it did not materialise for a majority of ordinary women, as items such as washing machines remained the property of a privileged few.⁵⁷

The North Korean government strongly encouraged mothers to put their children into state-run childcare facilities and viewed it as a state responsibility to provide childcare, teaching and nursing necessities under the principle of the "best thing for the children".⁵⁸ Although attendance at nurseries was optional it was available for three months to four year olds, while attendance at kindergarten was for children aged five to seven years and was compulsory. Between 1956 and 1960, the number of childcare facilities is said to have

⁵³ Jung and Dalton, "Mothers of the Revolution", p.751; Kang, "The Patriarchal State", p. 61.

⁵⁴ "A Sight of Women Carrying Water Jar on Head", *Women of Korea*, 2 (102) (1984), p. 5; "Korean Women's Burden", p. 11.

⁵⁵ Jung and Dalton, "Mothers of the Revolution", p.749.

⁵⁶ Ryang, "Gender in Oblivion", p.335.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ "The Raising of Children at State and Public Expense", *Women of Korea*, 2 (130) (1991), p. 25.

increased 31 times, accommodating about 700,000 children.⁵⁹ As of 1966, around 60 to 70 per cent of all the children in the country were said to be at pre-school, cared for by a total of 130,000 nursery and kindergarten teachers.⁶⁰ It was reported that by 1985, more than 60,000 nurseries and kindergartens had been built accommodating more than 3.5 million children.⁶¹ All nurseries and kindergartens are said to be staffed by competent teachers, with food and adequate furniture.⁶² State-owned supply offices were established near each nursery and kindergarten and they were responsible for providing foodstuffs such as milk, meat, eggs, fruit, vegetables, and sweets as well as nursing and educational equipment, musical instruments, printed matters, teaching aids.⁶³ No payment was required for the use of the childcare facilities and they were divided into three types, daily, weekly, and monthly so that mothers could meet their work commitments.

From the 1970s, the focus of the North Korean government was on developing the food industry to lessen the time women spent preparing meals in the kitchen. Kim Il Sung is said to have stated that the “most important thing we can do to lighten the women’s kitchen chores is to introduce innovations into the food industry”.⁶⁴ This included the production of boiled rice, noodles, bread, and other foodstuff. At the same time, factories were established in towns and workers’ districts to process vegetables, meat, fish, and other food products by industrial methods so that women could prepare meals quickly and easily in the home.⁶⁵ There was a network of food take-out services for busy working women to collect premade food after work and before returning home. However, the variety of food that could be purchased from stores was extremely limited.⁶⁶ It is said, though, that people’s dietary needs improved with the changes in the food industry.⁶⁷

⁵⁹ Kim Il Sung, “Report on the Work of the Central Committee to the Fourth Congress of the Workers’ Party of Korea” (11 September 1961) in *Selected Works 2* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1965), p. 160.

⁶⁰ Kim Il Sung, “The Communist Education and Upbringing of Children Is an Honourable Revolutionary Duty of Nursery School and Kindergarten Teachers: Address to the National Congress of Nursery School and Kindergarten Teachers” (20 October 1966), in *Selected Works 4* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1965), pp. 467–469.

⁶¹ “Anti-Japanese Women’s Association and Its Immortal Achievement”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (100) (1983), p. 11, 12.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Jae Suk Kim, “Upbringing of Children at State and Public Expense”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (106) (1985), p. 15.

⁶⁴ “Personal Visit”, p. 3.

⁶⁵ “Korean Women’s Burden”, p. 12; “With a Mind to Free Women from Household Chores”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (102) (1984), p. 2.

⁶⁶ Park, “Women and Revolution”, p. 536.

⁶⁷ “With a Mind”, p. 2.

The North Korean government emphasised the mass production of consumer goods centring on light industries as part of the Revolution of Technology.⁶⁸ In 1972, at the Fifth Congress of the WPK, Kim Il Sung is quoted as saying that one of the “vital tasks in the technical revolution is that of freeing women from the burden of kitchen and household work”.⁶⁹ Kim Il Sung promised that refrigerators, cookers and other household appliances would be manufactured and the pre-packaged food industries would be established to make women’s lives easier within the home.⁷⁰ Such a suggestion that women need to be freed from the burden of kitchen and household work rests on the assumption that they are responsible for the home, and men are not. Nowhere did Kim Il Sung mention men’s duties to undertake housework or caring for children.⁷¹

North Korea’s Gendered Labour Force

From the mid-1970s, the visual images in *Women of Korea* depicted ordinary women working outside the home, which coincided with the North Korean government’s emphasis on women leaving the home to build sustainable light industry. In order to provide suitable work for women the government transferred men from the light industries to heavy industries.⁷² This has resulted in significant occupational segregation between genders with women being assigned to low-skilled labour and unpopular work⁷³ with lower pay. Men dominated the higher-paid jobs in mining and heavy industries, and took those with the highest status, as managers, university professors, and doctors.⁷⁴ While wages in the DPRK do not have the same impact on the quality of people’s lives as in capitalist societies, such job segregation results in not just unequal pay, but also unequal status.⁷⁵

By 1970, women accounted for 70 per cent of the labour force in light industries and 60 per cent of those employed in the agricultural sector.⁷⁶ The 1980 data shows that women composed 70 per cent of the labour force in the light industry and just 15 per cent in heavy

⁶⁸ Kang, “The Patriarchal State”, p. 63.

⁶⁹ “With a Mind”, p. 2.

⁷⁰ Kim Il Sung, *Report to the Fifth Congress of the Workers’ Party of Korea on the Works of the Central Committee* (November 1970), in *Selected Works 5* (Pyongyang: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1972), p. 451.

⁷¹ Ryang, “Gender in Oblivion”, p. 335.

⁷² Shin, “Ideology and Gender Equality”, p. 93.

⁷³ Jung and Dalton, “Mothers of the Revolution”, p. 751.

⁷⁴ Mi-ryang Youn, *North Korea’s Policy on Women* (Seoul: Han’ul Publishing Co., 1991), p. 203.

⁷⁵ In the DPRK housing, education, healthcare, and food are free or heavily subsidised by the government. Kim, “Revolutionary Mothers”, pp. 765, 766.

⁷⁶ Jung and Dalton, “Mothers of the Revolution”, pp. 750, 751.

industry.⁷⁷ Specifically, women occupied 56 per cent of the labour force in the agricultural sector, 45 per cent in the industrial sector, while just 20 per cent in mining, and 30 per cent in forestry. In education, women accounted for 80 per cent of the elementary school teachers, while the figures for middle and high school, technical school and college were 35 per cent, 30 per cent, and 15 per cent, respectively.⁷⁸ Among professionals and technicians, women accounted for more than 37 per cent in 1989.⁷⁹ In this respect, women's proportion of economic activities was almost equal to men's, seemingly showing gender equality. However, North Korean women worked prominently in feminised sectors such as agriculture, the education and light industries, which are typically paid lower wages, while men dominated the higher-paid occupations in mining and heavy industries, and managerial positions.⁸⁰

The government promised women the same work privileges, wages, and social security as men but in practice women were not paid comparable wages for essentially comparable work, and they were not equally promoted.⁸¹ By 1980, women earned just 70 per cent of the average income of males, but continued to contribute significantly to household earnings.⁸² Although there was state legislation on equal employment and equal pay for men and women there remained significant occupational segregation between the genders.⁸³ More importantly, even though some women worked as managers or supervisors in female preferred jobs, the proportion of women in high-level positions was very low.⁸⁴ The job segregation by gender reveals that the external equality of women's economic participation did not necessarily guarantee actual equality in social activities.⁸⁵

As the North Korean government deemed factory work suitable for women they are described as playing a major role in the Revolution of Technology to increase consumer goods. This assumption is represented in visual images in *Women of Korea*, for example, the poster captioned, "Let Us Produce Mass Consumer Goods More and Better!" (see figure

⁷⁷ Ryang, "Gender in Oblivion", p. 332; Kang, "The Patriarchal State", p. 61.

⁷⁸ Tae Young Lee, *Pukhan Yosong* (North Korean women) (Seoul: Silch'on Munhaksa, 1988), p. 194.

⁷⁹ Ae Sil Kim, "Yosong-ui Kyongje Hwaldong" (Women's economic activities), in *Bukhan Yosong-ui Suktae* (The status of North Korean women) (Seoul: The Second Ministry of Political Affairs, 1990), p. 189.

⁸⁰ Kang, "The Patriarchal State", p. 61; Suzy Kim, *Everyday Life in the North Korean Revolution, 1945–1950* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2013), p. 201.

⁸¹ Kim, *Illusive Utopia*, p. 209.

⁸² Shin, "Ideology and Gender Equality", p. 93.

⁸³ Laws that proclaimed equal employment and equal pay for men and women include: the Labour Law for the Factory and Office Workers in North Korea (1946) and the Law on the Equality of the Sexes (1946).

⁸⁴ Youn, *North Korean Policy*, p. 203.

⁸⁵ Kang, "The Patriarchal State", p. 61.

5.3).⁸⁶ A woman stands among consumer products such as food, medical and stationery products. In her hands, she holds two rolls of fabric and behind her are items of clothing. This image is to encourage North Korean women to work harder to produce more consumer goods for society. The woman is dressed in a collared shirt and white apron and her hair falls to her shoulders. Her hair is covered with a scarf. The factory worker is clothed simply but retains distinctive feminine traits, such as long hair, and an apron to protect her clothing. The fact that she is dressed this way suggests that although women are said to participate in the labour force equally with men they do so in gendered ways.



Figure 5.3 “Let Us Produce Mass Consumer Goods More and Better!” Poster. *Women of Korea*, 2 (98) (1983), p. 41.

⁸⁶ *Women of Korea*, 2 (98) (1983), p. 41.

In *Women of Korea*, women are often represented working in the textile industry and in clothing production but are also referred to by their domestic roles.⁸⁷ In the article “From Zero”, the workers in the textile factory are referred to as homemakers and mothers.⁸⁸ This textile factory is said to have been the first established factory in Sakje County (DPRK) with humble tools such as handlooms and spinning wheels.⁸⁹ In the factory, ten “homemakers” were employed. This labelling of women as “homemakers” suggests that women were not seen as equal workers but instead as mothers first and then as contributors to North Korean society.

In the poster captioned, “Let’s Hit the Target of Textiles of New Long-Term Objectives Ahead of Schedule!” (see figure 5.4), a woman stands behind a table in a textile factory.⁹⁰ Her hands are placed on machinery and she looks out towards the viewer. The woman wears a short-sleeved, collared blouse with a white apron covering and protecting her clothing. A soft flower motif decorates the blouse, symbolising femininity within the work environment. The clothing worn by the woman is simple and modern but retains distinctive feminine traits, such as the pattern printed on the clothing and the apron covering her clothes. The apron, an item of clothing usually associated with the domestic sphere, has been taken from the home and introduced into the workplace. The woman’s face is framed by a short bob ending below the ears and she does not wear any jewellery. Images such as this poster promote to the international community that North Korean women have left their homes to participate in the national economy. However, on closer examination of *Women of Korea* socially accepted gender inequalities are revealed.

⁸⁷ “The Pyongyang Changgwang Garment Factory”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (136) (1992), pp. 19, 20; “The Women Were Guided”, pp. 13, 14; “Great Solicitude”; “Women Come out Valiantly”; “Under the Great Love”, pp. 16, 17; “Worthwhile Working”, pp. 36, 37; “For Hitting the Goal”, pp. 20, 21; “Thirty Years’ Service of Trade Worker”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (100) (1983), pp. 28, 33; “Silk Fabrics Massproduced”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (100) (1983), pp. 29, 30; “Let’s hit the target of textiles of new long-term objectives ahead of schedule!”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (100) (1983), p. 41; “Clothing Problem”, *Women of Korea*, 1 (101) (1984), pp. 26, 27; “Vinalon – Pride of Korea”, *Women of Korea*, 1 (101) (1984), p. 28; “Bringing Up Women”, pp. 2, 3.

⁸⁸ “From zero”, *Women of Korea*, 3 (131) (1991), p. 17.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ *Women of Korea*, 4 (100) (1983), p. 41.



Figure 5.4 “Let’s Hit the Target of Textiles of New Long-Term Objectives Ahead of Schedule!” Date unknown. Poster. *Women of Korea*, 4 (100) (1983), p. 41.

The visual images and personal stories in *Women of Korea* reflect the importance placed on women to educate the younger generation according to Kim Il Sung’s *Juche* idea. In the DPRK, education is considered crucial to the destiny of the country.⁹¹ All children, even those who live on remote islands or in mountainous areas are said to be educated at state expense and are regarded as the “Kings of the Country” [sic].⁹² There is said to be a free universal education system in the DPRK, which consists of a eleven-year program, compulsory for children to attend (1972 DPRK Constitution, Article 45). By 1980, women

⁹¹ “Primary importance to education”, *Women of Korea*, 3 (135) (1992), p. 11.

⁹² Ibid.

composed 80 per cent of the labour force of primary school teachers and nursery school teachers.⁹³ This dominance in the sector can be seen in the visual images and articles published in *Women of Korea*. For example, the article “Woman Principal in Mountain Village”, tells the story of a female teacher, Kim Yong Suk, who worked for more than twenty years at Sodu Senior Middle School, located in the remote area of Paegam County (Ryanggang Province, DPRK).⁹⁴ The article states that she went to teach the students because no other teachers would live in a remote location. From the first day, Kim Yong Suk is said to have pledged to the students that she would stay in the area and not return to the city to marry as other female teachers had done previously.⁹⁵ This claim places great importance on women’s contribution to educating the future generation rather than fulfilling one’s own plans, thus sacrificing one’s own happiness for the betterment of the country.

Kim Yong Suk was said to have been so dedicated to her work that even after teaching the students during the daytime, she would visit the students’ homes at night to guide them with their homework. However, the students’ work did not improve greatly so she started walking with them to and from school and taught them along the way. She is said to have made small plaques with mathematical formulas and foreign languages painted on them and placed the plaques on the trees along the path where the students walked. Kim Yong Suk was dedicated to improving the marks of students as they were the future of the revolution.⁹⁶ All students at the Sodu Senior Middle School were said to have become honour students because of Kim Yong Suk’s hard work.

The importance of women in the education sector is represented in the visual image “*Children Enter School*” (see figure 5.5), which depicts three teachers welcoming their students into the classroom.⁹⁷ The large figure of the female teacher in the foreground is dominant as she towers over the students and wears bright coloured clothing. She looks down at her students happily. In comparison, the other teachers fade into the background and appear only in a supportive role to the main figure, the teacher in the foreground. The main teacher holds in one hand a book and with the other she is greeting a male student as he enters the classroom. All three teachers wear ethnic Korean clothing. The main teacher is dressed in a green *hanbok* with some alterations. While the sleeves of the dress cover her arms, her legs are exposed below the knees, a more modern form of tradition dress. The

⁹³ Youn, *North Korean Policy*, p. 203.

⁹⁴ “Woman Principal in Mountain Village”, *Women of Korea*, 3 (111) (1986), p. 14.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 15.

⁹⁷ *Women of Korea*, 3 (131) (1991), p. 22.

teacher is groomed simply and is not adorned with elaborate make-up or jewellery; she wears a badge of one of the Kim men on her dress. Her hair is pulled back into a ponytail.⁹⁸

The children enter the classroom and walk towards the desks. Some students carry colourful bunches of flowers and one student a hat. There are colourful ribbons on their schoolbags. The female students wear short dresses and short-sleeved collared blouses. Their hairstyles are varied in length but all wear light pink flower ornaments. Hair decoration in the form of ribbons, bows and flowers can be found in most North Korean visual images of young female children. This helps to feminise the figures and accentuates gender differences. The male students are dressed in trousers, short-sleeved collared shirts, and hats, with short hair. There are clear clothing differences between the students suggesting that the gendering of males and females starts from a young age. In no visual images are young girls depicted wearing long pants – they are always seen in dresses or skirts. In *Women of Korea*, working North Korean women are rarely represented wearing trousers or long sleeved shirts. On the rare occasion they are represented wearing trousers and jackets, their clothing is oversized and does not emphasis the feminine body shape (see figure 5.6, “*Going to the Farm Field*”).⁹⁹

⁹⁸ The North Korean author, Pang Hwan Ju, writes that today in the North Korean people, male and female, do not wear trinkets but instead dress simply. Pang Hwan Ju, *Korean Folk Customs* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1990), p. 14.

⁹⁹ *Women of Korea*, 2 (86) (1980), p. 39.



Figure 5.5 “*Children Enter School*”. Date unknown. Oil Painting. *Women of Korea*, 3 (131) (1991), p. 22.



Figure 5.6 “Going to Farm Field”. Date unknown. Oil Painting. *Women of Korea*, 2 (86) (1980), p. 39.

The North Korean government places great importance on self-sufficiency and food production. In the agriculture sector, efforts to increase production included a variety of experiments with land tenure, farm organisation, and managerial techniques.¹⁰⁰ Women were active members of the agricultural workforce during planting and harvesting, and laboured in road construction, land reclamation projects, and similar endeavours requiring mass mobilisation.¹⁰¹ In the images and articles in *Women of Korea*, women are often represented working on cooperative farms and producing food to sustain the country.¹⁰² The North Korean government saw women’s roles in the agricultural sector as an important contribution to self-sufficiency. Visual images of women working on cooperative farms as food producers

¹⁰⁰ Joseph S. Chung, “The Economy”, in Andrea Matles Savada, *North Korea: A Country Study* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1993), <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/kptoc.html> (accessed 6 May 2014).

¹⁰¹ Kim, “Revolutionary Mothers”, p. 765.

¹⁰² “Faithful Servants”, pp. 21–23; “Personal Visit”, p. 3; “Bringing Up Women”, pp. 2, 3; “Manageress”, pp. 13, 14; “At Chongryu Restaurant”, pp. 31, 32; “Upbringing of Children”, pp. 12–15; “The Child Is King”, pp. 22, 23; “Mistress Responsible”, pp. 26, 27; “Li Byong Nam, “Direct Sale store Crowded with Shoppers”, *Women of Korea*, 1 (109) (1986), pp. 30, 31; “Tenth Anniversary of Promulgation of Law on Nursing and Upbringing of Children”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (110) (1986), pp. 25, 26; “Shop”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (122) (1989), p. 40.

appear regularly in the magazine, for example, “A Nesting Place” (see figure 5.7).¹⁰³ It is unusual though, to find depictions of men working alongside women in the agriculture sector in *Women of Korea*. In the painting, three people are working on a farm in an unspecified mountainous region of the DPRK.¹⁰⁴ The small work team or perhaps a family work unit is composed of a man or father figure, a woman or mother figure, and a young woman or child. The man or father figure kneels beside the birdcage, looking down towards the pheasants that he is releasing into the wild. The male figure is dressed in Western-style clothing, consisting of a long sleeved collared shirt, blue trousers and straw hat.

The older woman or mother figure stands beside the man with her hands in the air releasing one of the birds. The position of the woman within the artwork and the colour of her clothing draws the viewer’s eye to her. She stands tall and strong and wears the female *hanbok* with some alterations. Unlike the visual images discussed in the previous chapter that depict Kang Ban Sok in a traditionally long ethnic Korean dress, the length of this woman’s skirt (*chima*) is shortened. The vibrant pink and white skirt and jacket (*jeogori*) worn by the woman is drawn in at the waist, revealing her feminine shape and subtly sexualising the female figure.

In the painting, the younger girl wears a light pink dress, resembling the Lenin dress of the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁵ The Lenin dress symbolised the national revolution in the Soviet Union and was typically worn by female government staff.¹⁰⁶ The clothing style became popular amongst Korean women in the early 1940s at the *Yan’an* revolutionary base (Shannxi, China). The dress later became associated with the Communist revolutionary movement in the Soviet Union and East Asia and was worn in support of the movement.¹⁰⁷ The young female figure stands in the background watching the man release the birds, while carrying a cage of pheasants towards him. In *Women of Korea*, this painting is significant as it represents the roles that men and women perform together in the North Korean agriculture sector. The composition of figures in the painting is unusual as it is usually just women who are depicted in the magazine.

¹⁰³ *Women of Korea*, 3 (103) (1984), p. 24.

¹⁰⁴ “A nesting place”, *Women of Korea*, 3 (103) (1984), p. 24.

¹⁰⁵ Powerhouse Museum, *Chinese Dress 1700s–1990s, Evolution and Revolution* (Sydney: Powerhouse Publishing, 2002), p. 23.

¹⁰⁶ Mei Hua, *Chinese Clothing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 141, 143.

¹⁰⁷ Powerhouse Museum, *Chinese Dress*, p. 23.



Figure 5.7 “A Nesting Place”. Date unknown. Oil Painting. *Women of Korea*, 3 (103) (1984), p. 24.

From 1989 articles and visual images in *Women of Korea*, include women’s fashion in the DPRK,¹⁰⁸ traditional Korean food,¹⁰⁹ and North Korean arts and literature.¹¹⁰ Below I

¹⁰⁸ “Pleated Skirt Vogue Among Women of Koguryo”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (108) (1985), p. 38; “Children’s summer clothes”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (130) (1991), pp. 34, 35; “More Footwear for Women”, *Women of Korea*, 3 (131) (1991), pp. 27, 28; “Sincerity and beauty (at the Changgwang Hairdresser’s)”, *Women of Korea*, 3 (131) (1991), pp. 34, 35; “At the Hwangju Grasswork Factory”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (132) (1991), p. 22; “Various bags”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (132) (1991), pp. 27, 28; “Fine knitwear”, *Women of Korea*, 3 (135) (1992), p. 34; “Kaesong plaited goods”, *Women of Korea*, 3 (135) (1992), p. 35; “Women’s ornaments”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (136) (1992), p. 35.

¹⁰⁹ “Diet Peculiar to Our Nation”, *Women of Korea*, 1 (113) (1987), p. 39; “Taedonggang Mullet Soup”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (130) (1991), p. 33; “Casserole”, *Women of Korea*, 3 (131) (1991), p. 33; “Steamed lobster and scallop cold dish”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (132) (1991), p. 39; “Insam”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (132) (1991), p. 40; “Chicken dishes”, *Women of Korea*, 1 (133) (1992), p. 36; “Korean dishes”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (134) (1992), p. 26; “Grilled mushrooms and chicken livers on skewers”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (134) (1992), p. 36; “Pickled radish”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (136) (1992), p. 36.

¹¹⁰ “Our Acrobatics Is In Full Bloom Under the Benevolent Solitude of the Party Centre”, *Women of Korea*, 1 (97) (1983), pp. 18, 19; “Grand People’s Study House Build under the Sagacious Guidance of the Party Centre”, *Women of Korea*, 1 (97) (1983), pp. 20, 21; “Women Group Dance. Winnow Dance”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (98) (1983), p. 11; “Ancient Painting on Kitchen Work”, *Women of Korea*, 3 (99) (1983), p. 35; “At a breeding pond”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (102) (1984), p. 24; “Group Dance ‘Bumper Harvest of Apples’”, *Women of Korea*,

discuss three key issues covered in the magazine: laws that were promulgated to protect the rights of North Korean women, the rights of South Korean women and the so-called “comfort women” issue.

The Law on Equality of the Sexes in *Women of Korea*

In *Women of Korea*, several articles in the mid-1980s describe the legal measures taken by the North Korean government to ensure gender equality in the DPRK. Laws such as the Law on Equality of the Sexes were included in the magazine to argue to those outside the country that gender equality had been achieved in the DPRK.¹¹¹ Before the liberation of Korea from Japanese colonial rule, it is said that Korean women had been subjected to double and treble exploitations and oppression for a long time.¹¹² There were restraints imposed on Korean women such as no right to free marriage, confinement to their houses, or being sold like goods.¹¹³ However, one year after the liberation of Korea from Japanese colonial rule in 1945, Kim Il Sung made preparations for the promulgation of the law and is said to have personally drafted the law himself.¹¹⁴ On 30 July 1946, Kim Il Sung is described as proclaiming to the world:

With the liberation of Korea from the colonial rule of Japanese imperialism, the social position of women changed. The democratic reforms being carried out in north Korea have provided conditions for liberating women from the former inequalities in the political, economic, cultural and family life.¹¹⁵

2 (102) (1984), p. 39; “Female Group Dance ‘Three Colours Dancing’”, *Women of Korea*, 3 (103) (1984), p. 27; “Haegum – Women’s Favourite national Instrument”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (104) (1984), p. 35; “Workwomen – ‘Actress’”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (105) (1985), pp. 33, 34; “Ceramics of Korea”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (106) (1985), pp. 20, 21.

¹¹¹ “In the Days of Proclaiming Law on Sex Equality”, *Women of Korea*, 3 (123) (1989), pp. 27, 28; “Developing Women to Be Pillars of Society Turning One of Its Two Wheels”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (124) (1989), p. 28; “State Benefits to Women – through the laws proclaimed immediately after liberation”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (110) (1986), p. 11; Tan Sil Choe, “Recollection of the Promulgation on Sex Equality”, *Women of Korea*, 3 (111) (1986), pp. 7, 8; “Fifteen Women Labour Heroes”, *Women of Korea*, 3 (111) (1986), pp. 10, 11; “Democratic Revolution and Women’s Problem”, *Women of Korea*, 1 (105) (1985), pp. 4, 5; “Historic Days of Realising Sex Equality”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (106) (1985), pp. 4–6; “Towards Civilisation”, *Women of Korea*, 3 (107) (1985), pp. 10, 11.

¹¹² Choe, “Recollection”, p. 7.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ “In the Days”, p. 27; Choe, “Recollection”, p. 7.

¹¹⁵ “In the Days”, p. 27.

On the same day the Law on Equality of the Sexes was promulgated Comrade Kim Jong Suk is described as meeting the officials of the Women's Union to share the joy with them about the new law.¹¹⁶ Informed that they were going to hold celebrations in the capital and provinces, Kim Jong Suk is quoted as follows.

The celebrating meetings will be an effective occasion for education to get the women to know well about the significance and importance of the Law on Equality of the Sexes and make firm resolution to repay the favour to General Kim Il Sung who enacted the law.¹¹⁷

Kim Jong Suk is then said to have taught the women how to hold the celebrations which took place across the country. Kim Jong Suk attended the celebration held in the DPRK's capital Pyongyang, where she appealed to the women to take an active part in nation-building to demonstrate the validity and vitality of the Law on Equality of the Sexes.¹¹⁸

On 1 August 1946, Kim Jong Suk is said to have told the Women's Union to issue a declaration supporting the Law on Equality of the Sexes. The declaration was to say:

All the women in our country support the Law on Sex Equality. The Korean women had not been protected by law in state and public lives and even in family life for 5,000 years. They had been forced into slavery and suffered subhuman insult and treatment as a good of the white slave market for 36 years under Japanese imperialist occupation. For the equal work women got much lower wages than men.¹¹⁹

Under the guidance of Kim Il Sung and the promulgation of the Law on Equality of the Sexes, it is said that the position of Korean women changed radically as the Law granted equal rights with men in politics, the economy and society. During the early days after the promulgation of the Law, Kim Jong Suk guided the North Korean women to ensure they got "rid of the outworn idea of predominance of man over women and equip them with the idea

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 28.

of sex equality”.¹²⁰ It is also said that Kim Il Sung personally gave continuous guidance to the North Korean people so that the law was thoroughly materialised in all fields of state and social activities.¹²¹

In *Women of Korea* it is claimed that North Korean women now enjoy a happy life and have no idea of gender inequality.¹²² These articles, looking back on the Law on Equality of the Sexes of 1946, appear around the fortieth anniversary of the Law in 1986. These articles were also published just after the United Nations International Decade for Women (1975–1985), and after the enactment of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1979 (see Appendix 1). This suggests that the North Korean government might have been working with a consciousness of international events.

South Korean Women in *Women of Korea*

From the mid-1980s, several articles are published in *Women of Korea* that criticise the “failure” of women’s rights in South Korea and the lack of protection in the labour force.¹²³ In the article “Hard Work Place to Death”, Kim Il Sung is said to have taught North Korean women, that:

[t]he South Korean [female] workers are exploited and oppressed more cruelly than in the days of Japanese imperialist rule. Far from enjoying freedoms and rights, they find it difficult even to keep body and soul together.¹²⁴

When discussing the rights of South Korean women in contemporary society, articles published in the magazine refer to the “occupation” of Korea by the United States of America (USA). All South Korean women’s misfortunes and hardships in the labour force are said to be entirely due to the USA and its “imperial evil policy of colonial enslavement” in South

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Choe, “Recollection”, p. 8.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ “South Korean Women Groaning under ‘Hell of Labour’”, *Women of Korea*, 1 (97) (1983), p. 40; “The North Is Quite a Revelation to US”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (98) (1983), p. 6; “Our Life Is in the Depths of Despair”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (98) (1983), p. 40; “Hard Work Place to Death”, *Women of Korea*, 3 (99) (1983), p. 38; “Songs Chanted by Women”, *Women of Korea*, 3 (99) (1983), pp. 39, 40; “Women Suffering from Hard Toil”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (100) (1983), pp. 36, 37; “Struggle Is The Only Way to Live”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (105) (1985), pp. 36, 37; “S. Korean Women Workers Are Fighting”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (106) (1985), p. 34; “Fate of Two Actresses”, *Women of Korea*, 3 (107) (1985), pp. 28, 29.

¹²⁴ “Hard Work”, p. 38.

Korea.¹²⁵ From the 1980s, tensions grew between the North Korean government and the USA and South Korea due to the former US President Ronald Reagan's (1911–2004) strong anti-communist stance and more assertive foreign policy.¹²⁶ It was from this time that articles published in *Women of Korea*, began to focus on the situation of South Korean women.

In the article “South Korean Women Groaning under ‘Hell of Labour’”, it is said that female workers in South Korea are suffering from severe exploitation and oppression and are “treated virtually as slaves” and paid low wages.¹²⁷ South Korean women are said to be paid one-half or one third of the wages male workers receive for the same work performed.¹²⁸ According to data presented by the DPRK, the average monthly wage of female workers is about 100, 000 won (146 AUD/ 111 USD) in 1983. Further, 59 per cent of all South Korean women work over 10 hours a day and those women in public welfare services are forced to do 10 to 12 hours or more and have no holidays all year, as well as work overtime without pay.¹²⁹ South Korean women are said to work in drudgery without taking meals and are in constant danger of dismissal at defective work places with no labour protection facilities available to them to access.¹³⁰

Due to the poor working conditions, it is said that female workers are tortured with all kinds of occupational and other diseases. According to the article, every year there are several hundred cases of nervous paralysis in the lower body amongst the female workers. Further, workers in South Korean factories can lose their eyesight and develop tuberculosis symptoms because of the poisonous gas, high heat and a foul labour environment.¹³¹ The intensity of labour that the South Korean women are said to be compelled to is said to be far beyond the limit of their “physical strength”.¹³² The suffering of South Korean women working in the factories is said to not be an isolated case as women who work in the fibre, clothes and leather industries also suffer from injustices.¹³³ In the DPRK, such depictions of the situation of South Korea would be intended to demonstrate the superiority of the North Korean regime.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Charles K. Armstrong, “Juche and North Korea's Global Aspirations”, *North Korea International Documentation Project*, Working Paper 1 (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2009), p. 28; Mark E. Manyin, Emma Chanlett-Avery, Dianne E. Rennack, Ian E. Rinehart and John W. Rollins, *North Korea: Back on the State Sponsors of Terrorism Lists?* (Congressional Research Service Report, R43865, January 21, 2015); Arielle Shorr, “The Failure of U.S. Coercive Diplomacy Towards North Korea”, (Brandeis University, Massachusetts: Doctor of Philosophy Thesis, May 2013), pp. 5, 41–44.

¹²⁷ “South Korean Women Groaning”, p. 40.

¹²⁸ “Hard Work”, p. 38.

¹²⁹ “Women Suffering”, pp. 36, 37.

¹³⁰ “South Korean Women Groaning”, p. 40.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

When addressing an international audience, these English-language articles would be an attempt to claim legitimacy for the North Korean regime and the success of the provisions in state laws that protect the rights of North Korean women.

The “Comfort Women” Issue in *Women of Korea*

From the 1990s, there were articles in *Women of Korea* that explored the issue of the so-called Korean “comfort women”, an issue that was then receiving international attention.¹³⁴ An article in the magazine, “Volunteer corps” states that the greatest crime committed by Japan against the Korean people was the drafting of Korean women as “comfort girls” in the name of the “volunteer corps”.¹³⁵ The North Korean government asserts that the “volunteer corps” originated from Japan’s intention to assimilate the Korean nation to Japan and obliterate the Korean lineage.¹³⁶ The article continues by stating that the “comfort girl” system was established on a secret order from the former Japanese Ministry of the Army, which initiated the system to prevent “the spreading of war weariness” among the troops.¹³⁷ The draft is described as applying to unmarried women aged from 17 to 20 years but girls in their teenage years were said to have been “dragged to comfort houses”.¹³⁸ When they did not submit they were killed, shot, dismembered and hung.¹³⁹ According to the article “Grievances”, in urban areas the comfort houses were managed by civilians under the guidance of the Japanese military and on the battle front by the Japanese themselves.¹⁴⁰

North Korea states that such women were first employed during the Japanese-Chinese War (or the Second Sino-Japanese War, 1937–1945) but numbers are said to have grown

¹³⁴ “Volunteer corps in history of crime”, *Women of Korea*, 3 (135) (1992), pp. 39, 40; “A memorable meeting of women”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (136) (1992), pp. 13, 14; “The comfort girl issue”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (136) (1992), p. 34; “History Indicts”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (136) (1992), pp. 31, 32; “Grievances”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (136) (1992), p. 33; “Bestial Japanese imperialists”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (136) (1992), pp. 32, 33. On the emergence of this issue into international attention, see Vera Mackie, “Sexual Violence, Silence, and Human Rights Discourse: The Emergence of the Military Prostitution Issue”, in Anne-Marie Hilsdon, Martha Macintyre, Vera Mackie and Maila Stivens (eds), *Human Rights and Gender Politics: Asia-Pacific Perspectives* (London: Routledge), pp. 37–59.

¹³⁵ “Volunteer corps”, p. 39. In South Korean discussions of the so-called “comfort women” issue, the comfort women system was often conflated with women’s labour mobilisation under the “volunteer corps” (Japanese “*teishintai*”/ Korean “*chǒngshindae*”). Chunghee Sarah Soh, however, argues for a more nuanced understanding of the different forms of labour mobilisation and recruitment/coercion into the military comfort women/ military sexual slavery system. Chunghee Sarah Soh, *The Comfort Women: Sexual Violence and Postcolonial Memory in Korea and Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), pp. 159–61. The use of the term “volunteer corps” in the North Korean publication also suggests a consciousness of the discourse on the issue in South Korea.

¹³⁶ “Volunteer corps”, p. 39.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ “Grievances”, p. 33.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

after the massacre in Nanjing (1937–1938).¹⁴¹ After the event in Nanjing, the rape of women was prohibited by Japan so the so-called “comfort system” was said to have been established. In the article “Volunteer corps” the number of Korean women draftees in the Pacific War is estimated at about 200,000.¹⁴² In order to prevent the crimes against the Korean people being divulged during and after the occupation of the country, the North Korean government stated that Japan kept the matter of the “Volunteer corps” secret and that many documents that outlined what had happened were burnt.¹⁴³ However, the crimes committed by the Japanese military were revealed by public activists, by the people involved in the crimes and by the victims themselves. The DPRK states that the criminal actions committed by Japan can never be pardoned nor should history be falsified.¹⁴⁴ The North Korean government demands that the government of Japan apologise for the inhuman crimes committed against countless Korean women who were sent to sexual slavery by the Japanese military.¹⁴⁵ The North Korean reporting of this issue suggests a consciousness of international debates. In the DPRK, the government’s statements on this issue would have been a means of promoting nationalist and anti-Japanese sentiment. In the international context, this would have been a means of deflecting certain criticisms of the North Korean regime. In particular, there was increasing attention in the 1990s to incidents where the North Korean government had abducted Japanese citizens, something which Kim Jong Il finally admitted in the year 2002 in a summit meeting with the then Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi Jun’ichirō (1942–).¹⁴⁶

Conclusion

Articles and visual images in *Women of Korea* represent the North Korean government’s constructed view of masculinity and femininity in society, the workplace and the family unit. The goal of the North Korean government to liberate women from the home was based on the assumption that women were primary caregivers and the belief that women had not previously contributed meaningfully to society as active workers in the labour force. It is evident in the articles and visual images in the magazine that North Korean women are

¹⁴¹ “Volunteer corps”, p. 40.

¹⁴² Ibid. This account is somewhat inaccurate as the so-called “comfort women” system was established well before 1937. See Vera Mackie and Miyume Tanji, “Militarised Sexualities in East Asia”, in Mark McLelland and Vera Mackie (eds), *The Routledge Handbook of Sexuality Studies in East Asia* (Oxford: Routledge, 2015), pp. 60–73.

¹⁴³ “Volunteer corps”, p. 39.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 40.

¹⁴⁵ “The comfort girl issue”, p. 34.

¹⁴⁶ See Gavan McCormack and Wada, Haruki, “The Strange Record of 15 Years of Japan-North Korea Negotiations”, *The Asia Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* (2005), <http://www.japanfocus.org/-Wada-Haruki/1894/article.html> (accessed 3 June 2015).

assigned to gender specific jobs in the labour force, which are based on their perceived attributes rather than actual ability. Women are assigned to occupations in the light industries and service industries such as textile manufacturing, nursing and teaching based on the belief that they are better suited to this work. Work in these industries is paid less than other occupations and women have fewer opportunities to progress to managerial roles. This means that any gender equality laws in the North Korean legal system are undermined by the segregation of women to gender-specific roles in the labour force.

The North Korean government also promoted the idea in *Women of Korea* that women could successfully combine their roles in the home with their responsibilities to work in building a strong socialist society. In the family unit North Korean women continued to be represented wearing the ethnic Korean *hanbok*, while women working in the light industries were represented in simple and modern, but feminine, clothing. In contrast, North Korean men in the family and work context are not represented in ethnic Korean clothing but in Western dress, suggesting that men are able to progress into a modern North Korean society. The magazine regularly published articles on the Law on Equality of the Sexes, but at the same time the depictions of women as mothers and as workers reveal the gendered assumptions behind the allocation of domestic tasks and different occupations. As mentioned above, from the 1990s, the issue of the “comfort women” or military sexual slavery system perpetrated by the Japanese Imperial Army and Navy received increased international attention, and this is reflected in *Women of Korea*.¹⁴⁷ The North Korean government attempted to mobilise attention to this issue in its international communications, as we shall see below.

In the next chapter, I focus on the changing economic situation in the DPRK in the 1990s. This provides necessary context for understanding the communications between the North Korean government and the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in the early twenty-first century, to be explored in chapter seven.

¹⁴⁷ “Volunteer corps in history”, pp. 39, 40; “A memorable meeting”, pp. 13, 14; “The comfort girl issue”, p. 34; “History Indicts”, pp. 31, 32; “Grievances”, p. 33; “Bestial Japanese imperialists”, pp. 32, 33. On the emergence of this issue into international attention, see Mackie, “Sexual Violence, Silence, and Human Rights Discourse”, pp. 37–59.

6. The North Korean Food Crisis and Gender Relations (1990s)

The current standard of living of our people cannot be said to be very high, but it is still higher than it was in the past. The young generation, not knowing what hardship is, are enjoying a life in which there is nothing in the world for them to envy.

Kim Jong Il, 31 December 1994.¹

Introduction

In previous chapters, I have considered the representations of North Korean men and women as presented to the world by the North Korean government in its official propaganda publication, *Women of Korea*. This official publication presented the roles of revolutionary heroines and members of the Kim family who were defenders of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, North Korea), as well as more "ordinary women" who were loyal mothers and wives and who worked in feminised occupations. While North Korean men were represented as soldiers and defenders of the nation, Kim Il Sung was represented as the national patriarch. In 1992, *Women of Korea* ceased to be published due to major economic and political upheavals. From 2000, however, the North Korean government communicated with the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (hereafter "CEDAW Committee"), as will be discussed in the next chapter. In this chapter, I provide the reader with background knowledge of the famine in the DPRK during the 1990s. This provides a bridge between the discussion of the official representations of gender roles in English-language publications from the 1960s to the early 1990s and the discussion of the official representation of gender roles in the communications with the CEDAW Committee in the early 2000s.

In this chapter I focus on non-governmental organisations (NGO) sources to discuss the situation in the DPRK in the 1990s, in the absence of official sources. The NGO sources

¹ Kim Jong Il, *Let Us Make Our Country, Our Motherland, Ever More Prosperous, True to the Great leader Comrade Kim Il Sung's Intention* (speech to the Senior Officials of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea, 31 December 1994), pp. 5, 6.

also provide an alternative view of gender relations in the DPRK, providing a corrective to official North Korean rhetoric promoted to the international community. I begin by outlining the collapse of the North Korean economy in the 1990s and the effects on the official Public Distribution System (PDS). It was during this time that the country also experienced natural disasters and a shortage of food as agricultural land was destroyed from flooding. I then discuss the opening up of the DPRK from the 1990s as the North Korean government was forced to allow NGOs to work within the country to provide aid. I then explain the consolidation of Kim Jong Il's power after the death of his father, Kim Il Sung, in 1994. Finally, I discuss the challenge to men and women's roles in society and the home because of the food shortage and economic crisis.

In 1991, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (Soviet Union) collapsed and terminated its aid to the DPRK and China halted trade with its neighbour. Without the heavily subsidised fuel from the Soviet Union and China, the DPRK was unable to use agricultural equipment, and as a result the country's agricultural sector weakened and food production fell sharply.² From 1991 to 1996 the North Korean economy contracted by 30 per cent, coinciding with extreme weather conditions such as droughts and floods across the country.³ In this situation hundreds of thousands of North Korean people suffered from chronic malnutrition and ultimately death.⁴ According to the World Food Programme (WFP), the two main contributors to the substantial food crisis in the DPRK were the stagnant agricultural sector and the country's declining economic situation coupled with the natural disasters. This made an already deteriorating food supply situation much worse.⁵ Without adjusting the economic policy to the rapidly changing circumstances, the North Korean government

² Amnesty International, *Starved of Rights: Human Rights and the Food Crisis in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)*, Index: ASA24/003/2004 (New York: Amnesty International, 2004), p. 7.

³ Kyungja Jung and Bronwen Dalton, "The Humanitarian's Dilemma: The experience of international NGOs in North Korea", *Biennial Korean Studies Association of Australasia (KSAA) 6th Biennial Conference* (Sydney: University of Sydney, July 2009), p. 205.

⁴ Jin Woong Kang, "The Patriarchal State and Women's Status in Socialist North Korea", *Graduate Journal of Asia-Pacific Studies*, 6 (2) (2008), p. 65. Amnesty International outlines the World Food Programme's definitions of famine and food crisis as: Famine is the incidence of serious food shortage across a country that dangerously affects the nutrition levels, health and livelihood of many people, to the extent that there is a large incidence of acute malnutrition and many people have died of hunger. While food crisis is the incidence of serious food shortages across a country, but where hunger deaths are rare, and the incidence of acute malnutrition is less than in a state of famine, but there is a significant incidence of chronic malnutrition and the country is still unable to achieve food self-reliance and is significantly dependent on international aid. Amnesty International, *Starved*, p. 8.

⁵ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and World Food Programme (WFP), *Special Report: FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea* (Rome: FAO Media Relations Officer and Pyongyang: WFP Public Information Officer, 29 July 2002), <http://www.fao.org/WAICENT/faoinfo/economic/gIEWS/english/alertes/2002/SRDPKR70.htm> (accessed 2 July 2014).

instead reduced the daily food rations distributed through the PDS and launched the “Let’s Eat Two Meals a Day” Campaign in 1991.⁶ The PDS distributes subsidised rations on a gram-per-day per person basis, according to a person’s occupation, gender and social class. This system was established by the North Korean government in the 1950s. By 1997, the PDS was only able to supply 6 per cent of the population with food.⁷ Those receiving food rations were located in the capital Pyongyang or had close connections to the government. The rest of the population who did not have access to the food distribution system adopted coping strategies such as foraging for alternative foods like roots, grasses, tree bark, and stalks. It has been argued that the North Korean government could have avoided the food shortage by simply making reasonable policy adjustments, such as maintaining food imports on a commercial basis or aggressively seeking multilateral assistance. Instead, the government blocked food aid to the hardest-hit areas in the DPRK and restricted commercial imports as humanitarian assistance began to arrive.⁸

Amidst the economic collapse and natural disasters, on 8 July 1994, North Korea’s Great Leader Kim Il Sung collapsed from a sudden heart attack leaving the country in a fragile political state. It would take his son three years to consolidate his power. Kim Jong Il (1941–2011) officially took over his father’s post as General Secretary of the Workers’ Party of Korea (WPK) on 8 October 1997. From this time, the government directed state funds towards strengthening the military instead of sourcing food and other state resources. It is understandable, therefore, that the last edition of the magazine *Women of Korea* was published in 1992 as the priority of the WPK shifted to stabilising Kim Jong Il’s political position in North Korean society. Other North Korean magazines such as *Korea Today* continued to be published in various languages such as English, Russian, Chinese, French, Spanish and Arabic and distributed to the world. The English-language version of *Korea Today* was published monthly by the Foreign Languages Publishing House in Pyongyang from 1959 to date. Although the content of the magazine does not focus primarily on gender equality in the DPRK the economic and political achievements of the North Korean government are promoted for the world to see.

⁶ Stephan Haggard and Marcus Noland, *Hunger and Human Rights: The Politics of Famine in North Korea* (Washington: U.S. Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2005), p. 14; Amnesty International, *Starved*, p. 9.

⁷ Norma Kang Muico, *An Absence of Choice: The sexual exploitation of North Korean women in China* (London: Anti-Slavery International, 2005), p. 1; Andrew Natsios, *The Politics of Famine in North Korea*, Special Report 51 (Washington: US Institute of Peace, August 1999), p. 5–11.

⁸ Debra Liang-Fenton, “Failing to Protect: Food Shortages and Prison Camps in North Korea”, *Asian Perspective*, 31 (2) (2007), p. 51.

Faced with a deteriorating economic situation and food shortages, the North Korean government initially did not want to share openly with the world the full extent of the food crisis and imposed tighter controls on the population to hide the extent of the disaster.⁹ This only exacerbated the effects of the famine and the subsequent food crisis.¹⁰ During this time the North Korean government did, however, allow a number of NGOs to work in the country to administer food and medical aid to the North Korean people. While these NGOs were allowed to work in the DPRK they were heavily monitored by the government and were only allowed into selected areas of the country to distribute aid. Although the work of the NGOs is relatively limited because of government control, their activities forced the DPRK to open up to the international community.¹¹

Consolidation of Power by Kim Jong Il

At the time of Kim Il Sung's death in 1994, the most important position held by Kim Jong Il in North Korea's political system was in the military, specifically second in command of the Korean People's Army (KPA).¹² In order to keep control of the government, Kim Jong Il needed to secure his support base in the military so he deliberately chose to sideline other aspects of the government in order to assert the importance of the military.¹³ This included the abolition of the Central People's Committee, the state presidency, and sidelining the North Korean Administration Council, as the KPA became the most powerful organ in the DPRK.¹⁴

On 24 December 1991 at the 19th Plenary Meeting of the Sixth Party Central Committee, Kim Jong Il was appointed as the Supreme Commander of the KPA and moved his organisational base from the WPK to the National Defence Commission (NDC). A year later on 20 April, he received the title Marshal, the DPRK Constitution was revised, and the

⁹ Amnesty International, *Starved of Rights*, p. 1.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Mi Ae Taylor and Mark E. Manyin, *Non-Governmental Organizations' Activities in North Korea*, Congressional Research Service, 7-5700, R41749 (Washington D.C., 25 March 2011), p. 1.

¹² United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC), *Report of the detailed findings of the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, A/HRC/25/CRP.1 (Twenty-fifth session, Agenda item 4, distributed 7 February 2014), para. 140, p. 37 and para. 140, p. 37; *Kim Jong Il: Brief History* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1998), p. 116.

¹³ Alexander V. Vorontsov, "North Korean Military-first policy: A curse or a blessing?", *Brookings Institution*, 26 May 2006, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2006/05/26northkorea-vorontsov> (accessed 21 April 2014).

¹⁴ Byung Chul Koh, "Military-First Politics and Building a 'Powerful and Prosperous Nation' In North Korea", *Nautilus Institute Policy Forum Online*, 14 April 2005, <http://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-policy-forum/military-first-politics-and-building-a-powerful-and-prosperous-nation-in-north-korea/#axzz2zUck3OJyl> (accessed 21 April 2014).

NDC became the leading state body (1992 Constitution, Article 106).¹⁵ In 1993, Kim Jong Il became chairman of the NDC at the Fifth Session of the Ninth Supreme People's Assembly (SPA) and was formally elected leader of the Assembly in 1998. He held this position until his death in 2011. In 1998, the DPRK Constitution was revised as Kim Jong Il took total political control of the DPRK. The amended Constitution designated Kim Il Sung as "Eternal President" (Preamble), the NDC was elevation to the highest organ of the state (Article 108), and Kim Jong Il as its chairperson (Article 107). This meant that Kim Jong Il was elevated to the highest position in the DPRK. Lacking the war hero credentials of his father, though, Kim Jong Il shifted the fundamental orientation of the state in his effort to win the support of the military by bestowing on the NDC policy influence and prestige, as well as a large share of the national budget, through the *Songun* ("Military-First") Policy.

Once Kim Jong Il came to power, the "Military-First" Policy became the major ideology of the DPRK. Under this policy, the KPA was elevated to primary position in the North Korean government and society. The policy also prioritised the defence force in the affairs of the state; defence was allocated the majority of state resources, such as food and money, as well as acting as a guide for international relations.¹⁶ Although, Kim Il Sung's *Juche* ideology continued to function in the DPRK, *Songun* soon replaced the older ideology as Kim Jong Il consolidated his power over the government, military and the North Korean people.¹⁷ One reason why the "Military-First" Policy was promoted by Kim Jong Il after 1994 was the desire to increase the DPRK's military strength within the region.¹⁸ In this context, *Songun* has been perceived as an aggressive, threatening move to increase the strength of the North Korean military at the expense of other parts of society.¹⁹

On 7 April 1997, the "Military-First" Policy was mentioned for the first time in *Rodong Shinmun* (Workers' Daily) under the headline "There Is a Victory for Socialism in the Guns and Bombs of the People's Army".²⁰ The article defined the ideology as "the

¹⁵ Dae-kyu Yoon, "The Constitution of North Korea: Its Changes and Implications", *Fordham International Law Journal*, 27 (4) (2003), p. 1299.

¹⁶ Vorontsov, "North Korean Military-first policy"; Jae Kyu Park, "North Korea since 2000 and prospects for Inter-Korean Relations", *North Korea International Documentation Project* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center, 17 January 2006, <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/north-korea-2000-and-prospects-for-inter-korean-relations> (accessed 21 April 2014).

¹⁷ Soyoung Kwon, "State Building in North Korea: From a 'Self-Reliant' to a 'Military-First' State", *Asian Affairs*, 34 (3) (2003), p. 294.

¹⁸ Bruce Cumings, *North Korea: Another Country* (New York: The New Press, 2004), p. 102.

¹⁹ Vorontsov, "North Korean Military-first policy".

²⁰ Kyo Duk Lee, *The Successor theory of North Korea* (Seoul: Korean Institution for National Reunification, 2004), p. 9.

revolutionary philosophy to safeguard our own style of socialism under any circumstances”.²¹ In 1998, *Songun* began appearing in conjunction with other terms, including “military-first revolutionary idea”, “military-first revolutionary leadership”, and “military-first politics”, expanding the concept of the policy into even more aspects of North Korean governance.²² On 5 September 1998, the DPRK Constitution was amended to state that the NDC, the highest military force in the DPRK, was the supreme body of the state (Article 100 to Article 113). This date is considered the official beginning of the *Songun* era and means that by this time Kim Jong Il had consolidated his power over all aspects of North Korean society.²³

The North Korean Food Crisis

Since 1946, the DPRK has been dependent on financial and agricultural assistance from the Soviet Union and China. One of the causes of the North Korean famine and food crisis in the 1990s was changes to this assistance. After the DPRK’s bilateral trade with the Soviet Union dropped more than ten-fold from \$2.56 million in 1990 to \$1.4 million in 1994, the DPRK became dependent on China for assistance.²⁴ However, the DPRK’s bilateral trade with China also fell from US\$900 million in 1993 to \$550 million in 1995, while food imports fell by half between 1993 and 1994.²⁵ The seasonal arrival of extreme rains in July and August in the DPRK in 1995 compounded by soil erosion led to flooding that destroyed the yearly harvest. These events contributed to a period of food insecurity and ultimately the starvation of the North Korean people. This period has been referred to as the Arduous March by the DPRK.²⁶ Between 1996 and 1999, it is estimated that between 450,000 and 2 million people starved to death.²⁷

Since the North Korean government was forced to make an unprecedented appeal to the international community for food aid and assistance,²⁸ the state opened up to the world to some extent.²⁹ The international community responded to the food shortage in the DPRK

²¹ Young Whan Kihl and Hong Nack Kim, *North Korea: The Politics of Regime Survival* (New York: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 2006), p. 63.

²² UNHRC, “*Report of the detailed*”, para. 1189, p. 357.

²³ Kihl and Kim, *North Korea*, p. 63.

²⁴ Andrei Lankov, *The Real North Korea: Life and Politics in the Failed Utopian State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 73–76.

²⁵ Victor Cha, *The Impossible State: North Korea Past and Future* (New York: ECCO, 2012), p. 327.

²⁶ UNHRC, “*Report of the detailed*”, para. 94, p. 21.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, para. 140, p. 39.

²⁸ Good Friends: Centre for Peace, Human Rights and Refugees, *Human Rights in North Korea and the Food Crisis: A Comprehensive Report on North Korean Human Rights Issues* (Seoul: Good Friends: Center for Peace, Human Rights and Refugees, 2004), p. 5.

²⁹ Jung and Dalton, “The Humanitarian’s Dilemma”, p. 201.

with generosity and committed more than two billion dollars over a decade.³⁰ However, this has resulted in the DPRK becoming increasingly dependent on international assistance instead of the government addressing economic and agricultural issues. The United Nations (UN) responded to the food shortage in 1995 when the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team was sent to the DPRK to try and obtain reliable information.³¹ The UNDAC team consisted of representatives of the World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organisation (WHO), United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO). The functionality of UNDAC in the DPRK was limited, though, as its mission was primarily in the development sector as opposed to humanitarian operations. The one exception was the agricultural sector, where relief and rehabilitation work were conjoined.³² An important consequence of UNDAC's visit to the DPRK was that several organisations became permanently established in the country.³³ The WFP established an office in Pyongyang in November 1995, UNICEF in January 1996 and WHO in late 1997. These organisations have continued their limited roles in the DPRK to date.

NGOs working in the DPRK have faced many challenges when delivering aid as North Korean officials often monitor their operations. There are a limited number of NGOs who are able to monitor the distribution of aid in the DPRK, as they are strictly controlled by the government and often excluded from places that are deemed to represent the country negatively to the world. Initially, NGOs were blocked from visiting the northeast provinces of Chagang, South Hamgyong, North Hamgyong, and Ryanggang, as well as parts of Kangwon, South Hwanghae, and North and South Pyongyang.³⁴ It could be assumed that these areas were the worst hit by natural disasters and famine and the North Korean government did not want to reveal the full extent of the food crisis to the world. Between 1995 and 2000, the international community concentrated mostly on easing the food shortage and on providing medical treatment for the North Korean people.³⁵ The North Korean government, though, insisted that NGOs use the PDS to distribute aid to recipients but NGOs demanded to be able to monitor the distribution of aid themselves. The government, however, did not listen to this request and did not allow NGOs to perform random visits to sites. As

³⁰ Liang-Fenton, "Failing to Protect", p. 49.

³¹ Hazel Smith, *Hungry for Peace. International Security, Humanitarian Assistance, and Social Change in North Korea* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 2001), p. 109.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., pp. 109, 110.

³⁴ Good Friends, *Human Rights in North Korea*, p. 4.

³⁵ Jung and Dalton, "The Humanitarian's Dilemma", p. 205.

these conditions restricted the operation of NGOs, it was difficult to assess how much of each donation actually reached its intended recipients and how much was diverted for resale in private markets or to the military.³⁶ It is precisely for this reason that humanitarian aid to the DPRK poses moral dilemmas.

There were also concerns from NGOs about the reliability of data provided by the government on the number of North Korean people suffering from the food crisis. To address this issue UNICEF provided capacity-building programs to the DPRK Central Bureau of Statistics.³⁷ Reliable statistical information is still difficult to obtain from the North Korean government. For example, figures on the number of North Koreans who died during the food crisis are difficult to obtain and estimates between 1991 and 1998 vary widely ranging from 220,000 to 3.5 million, out of a pre-famine population of approximately 22 million (between 2.7 and 4.5 per cent of the total population).³⁸ Good Friends: Centre for Peace, Human Rights & Refugees (Good Friends) states that during the most acute phase of the famine between August 1995 and late July 1998, an estimated one to two million people died of starvation,³⁹ and hundreds of thousands of people crossed the North Korean border to China to obtain food. Over time though, some smaller NGOs did obtain better access and monitoring than much larger international organisations, giving them some assurance that aid was reaching the right recipients.⁴⁰

NGOs such as *Médecins Sans Frontières*, Oxfam, *Action Contre La Faim*, CARE, the United States Private Voluntary Organisation Consortium and *Médecins Du Monde*, though, have withdrawn from the DPRK, citing inadequate access to people and the consequent inability to account for the use of their aid supplies.⁴¹ As discussed above, the monitoring of aid distribution has often been problematic and visits to certain areas require prior permission from the North Korean government.⁴² *Médecins Sans Frontières* has stated that restrictions on access made it impossible to deliver aid in a “principled and effective” manner.⁴³ Organisations that withdrew from the DPRK requested donor governments to review their aid policies towards the DPRK, to exact greater accountability, to ensure that aid agencies were

³⁶ Taylor and Manyin, *Non-Governmental Organizations*, p. 4; Jung and Dalton, “The Humanitarian’s Dilemma”, p. 209; Liang-Fenton, “Failing to Protect”, p. 58.

³⁷ Jung and Dalton, “The Humanitarian’s Dilemma”, p. 210.

³⁸ Amnesty International, *Starved of Rights*, p. 10.

³⁹ Good Friends, *Human Rights in North Korea*, p. 12.

⁴⁰ Taylor and Manyin, *Non-Governmental Organizations*, p. 4.

⁴¹ Jung and Dalton, “The Humanitarian’s Dilemma”, p. 210.

⁴² Amnesty International, *Starved of Rights*, p. 19.

⁴³ Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders), *MSF Calls on Donors to Review Their Policy in DPRK: Urgent Needs in North Korea But MSF Forced to Pull Out*, <http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/press/release.cfm?id=460#sthash.rY17fnq7.dpuf> (accessed 25 July 2014).

able to assess needs impartially and have direct access to the population. Several sources have even asserted that the North Korean government distributes international aid to those who are loyal to the state, while some of the most vulnerable groups have been neglected.⁴⁴

Other NGOs, such as German Agro Action (*Deutsche Welthungerhilfe*) have continued to provide humanitarian aid in the DPRK, as these organisations believe that slow improvements in access and monitoring justify their continued involvement.⁴⁵ Despite concerns about access, other larger humanitarian organisations such as the WFP, the FAO and UNICEF have all continued working in the DPRK. However, most of the food supplied by the WFP, the biggest humanitarian organisation present in the country, is distributed through the PDS. North Korean officials' insistence that food aid be distributed through this distribution system is to "provide a vehicle for control over distribution of the resources provided by the international community, reinforcing the existing institutional, regional, social biases of the North Korean system".⁴⁶

Challenging Gender Roles in North Korean Society

Before the North Korean food crisis, gender roles and the division of work in the home were strictly fixed. Since the economic instability of the country combined with natural disasters, however, gender roles have been challenged.⁴⁷ Since the 1990s, the North Korean PDS system has failed to operate effectively and the government is unable to provide food and other necessities to its citizens. Faced with a failing economy and food shortages the North Korean government emphasised the importance of the "socialist extended family" in the Family Law (1990, Articles 1 and 3). This provision intended the integration of state and society by focusing on family groups,⁴⁸ meaning that, when faced with difficulties, the state passed the economic burden of supporting individuals (through the PDS) to the family (Family Law, Articles 35 and 36). In this situation, the financial responsibility of the family became the primary responsibility of women, as most North Korean men lost the ability to support their families because food coupons were not distributed through their workplaces on a regular basis.

⁴⁴ Amnesty International, *Starved of Rights*, p. 18.

⁴⁵ Ibid; *Deutsche Welthungerhilfe* (German Agro Aid), <http://www.welthungerhilfe.de/home-en.html> (accessed 4 March 2014).

⁴⁶ L. Gordon Flake and Scott A. Snyder, *Paved with Good Intentions: The NGO Experience in North Korea* (Connecticut: Praeger, 2003), p. 40.

⁴⁷ Jung and Dalton, "The Humanitarian's Dilemma", p. 205.

⁴⁸ Kang, "The Patriarchal State", p. 65.

As state factories and enterprises closed, households decided that it was more important for North Korean men to remain in state employment, meaning far fewer men left their official workplaces compared to women.⁴⁹ With men staying in the official economy, it allowed households to meet security requirements and access residual social services provided through the work unit, however inadequate. In contrast, North Korean women who had worked in state-owned workplaces left their official employment and gravitated towards employment in the marketplace.⁵⁰ Some women in the official economy were dismissed and sent home to help relieve the economic burden.⁵¹ By reducing the number of women employed in the official economy, the government was able to decrease the amount distributed through the PDS. Thus, in economically uncertain times many women were forced to become active players in the unofficial North Korean economy.⁵²

One of the unintended consequences of this avoidable food crisis was the widespread emergence of informal markets. As the PDS was no longer able to provide rations or minimal food amounts the North Korean government was unable to exercise the level of control over the establishment of markets that it had once had.⁵³ Prior to the mid-1990s, the North Korean government maintained a centrally planned economy and markets were suppressed,⁵⁴ but from the mid-1990s, the importance of the market grew. The government's inability to fulfil its economic obligations unleashed an unplanned, bottom-up marketisation of the economy resulting in the alteration of social and political relations among the population. Although the North Korean government initially tolerated markets during the food crisis, the state controlled the items traded, the actual size of the marketplace, and the operation period of the markets.⁵⁵ The present market system in the DPRK was established as agricultural markets in 1950, under the management of the People's Council in each province, city, and county. Agricultural products or commercial and industrial products were traded. In August 1958, the agricultural markets were given the new name "Farmers' Market". Items were restricted to vegetables and subsidiary food and industrial products were prohibited. By 1992, the government intensified its control by closing unauthorised markets and adjusting the

⁴⁹ Jung and Dalton, "The Humanitarian's Dilemma", p. 205.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Good Friends, *Human Rights in North Korea*, p. 47.

⁵² Ibid., p. 66.

⁵³ UNHRC, "Report of the detailed", para. 510 and para. 511, p. 149.

⁵⁴ Stephen Haggard and Marcus Nolan, *Gender in Transition: The Case of North Korea*, Working Papers Series No.124 (Washington: Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2011), p. 4.

⁵⁵ Good Friends, *Human Rights in North Korea*, p. 37.

frequency of activities in the markets from every day to every ten days.⁵⁶ As the food crisis worsened by the mid-1990s though, markets reopened daily and official control over trade items was relaxed to some extent. From this time, markets became an essential element in North Korean society, functioning as an alternative source of income and food for many families.

It was North Korean women who engaged in peddling and trade in the marketplace order to buy food for their families, as men shied away from these kinds of activities as they were often looked down upon.⁵⁷ Women living mostly in the northeastern regions of the DPRK saw China as their best strategy for survival.⁵⁸ Control on freedom of movement was loosened, to some extent, as large numbers of people attempted to escape from the DPRK and others sought to obtain supplies from China to trade. As more North Koreans travelled back and forth to China, they saw for themselves the relative prosperity of their neighbour and received information about the Republic of Korea (ROK), which was vastly different from the official propaganda.⁵⁹ In this context, the North Korean leadership made numerous efforts to rein in the markets and constrain freedom of movement within the country and across the border. These measures met with various levels of resistance. It is estimated that informal economic activities reached 78 per cent of total income for North Korean households a decade after the famine of the mid-1990s.⁶⁰

There were also unforeseen consequences for North Korean women who left their homes to participate in the unofficial economy as cases of violence against them increased both in the home and by government officials in marketplaces. Women were often forced to submit to North Korean officials who asked for sexual intercourse in exchange for permission to continue their economic activities.⁶¹ This also occurred for women who travelled in the DPRK and across the border to China to obtain items to sell. Women not only faced abuse by North Korean officials but by ordinary men on public transport and in the marketplaces. The North Korean government does not acknowledge that women are exposed to these kinds of violent acts and has not made any public comment concerning the need to monitor and

⁵⁶ Sanghee Bang, *The Battered Wheel of the Revolution: Briefing Report on the Situation of Violence against North Korean Women*, NKHR Briefing Report No. 6 (Seoul: Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights, 2011), p. 42.

⁵⁷ Muico, *An Absence of Choice*, p. 2.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ UNHRC, "Report of the detailed", para. 615, p. 186.

⁶⁰ Lankov, *The Real North Korea*, pp. 82–90.

⁶¹ Ibid.

reprimand those who commit such crimes against women.⁶² Violence against North Korean women, in many forms, will be discussed in detail in chapter 7 in the context of reports to the CEDAW Committee.

Challenging Gender Roles in North Korean Families

Although many North Korean women became financially independent because of their activities in the marketplace or by trade, they did not deny the authority of the patriarchal head of the family and continued to respect the superiority and authority of their husbands or fathers.⁶³ Also, while the financial provider in the family unit was challenged because of the food crisis, women continued to be primarily responsible for raising children.⁶⁴ Customary practices continued to exist in North Korean homes, although some men tried to support their wives in childrearing responsibilities and the collection of food.⁶⁵

During the food crisis, North Korean official rhetoric continued to emphasise women's place within the home as wives and mothers. As part of their perceived responsibilities, women were to take care of their own or their husband's parents and as a revolutionary comrade to actively assist and support their husbands in revolutionary projects.⁶⁶ This role as a dutiful wife and caring mother is taught to young girls in the school and family environments. However, these teachings perpetuate the cultural assumption that women are not independent beings but rather subordinate to the patriarchal head of the family. From the fourth grade girls are taught a separate subject, "Training for Women" on the role of women within the home. This subject covers topics such as cooking, sewing and menstruation.⁶⁷ Information about birth control methods, sexual hygiene, and sexually transmissible diseases, however, is not provided. The absence of appropriate sex education led many North Koreans to have misperceptions about contraception methods.⁶⁸ As North

⁶² United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), "Consideration of reports submitted by States Parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women", *Initial Report of States Parties: Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, CEDAW/C/PRK/1 (Beijing: thirty-third session, 5 to 22 July 2005), (distributed 11 September 2002), para. 105, p. 16.

⁶³ Kang, "The Patriarchal State", p. 66.

⁶⁴ Amnesty International, *Starved of Rights*, p. 18.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Kang, "The Patriarchal State", p. 66.

⁶⁷ Joanna Hosaniak, *Flowers, Guns and Women on Bikes: Briefing Report on the Situation of Women's Rights in the DPRK*, NKHR Briefing Report No. 4 (Seoul: Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights, 2009), p. 39.

⁶⁸ Bang, *The Battered Wheel*, p. 29.

Korean women and men are not exposed to different contraception measures, women tended to rely on abortions if they had an unwanted pregnancy.⁶⁹

North Korean women reported to the Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights (NKHR) that before the food crisis care for infants and children was well organised by state organisations and available to all people but this changed during the instability of the 1990s.⁷⁰ As a result, women began relying on their in-laws or their older children to take care of younger children while they went out to look for work. Mothers who worked in the markets or traded on the borders often kept their daughters out of school to take over their domestic work.⁷¹ Helping in the house, and attending to a family business or farm affected both boys and girls but girls mostly did household chores such as baby-sitting or attending to the house garden. It is evident that women and girls have continued to be exposed to various types of stereotyping and customary cultural practices in the family and North Korean society.

During the 1990s, incidences of family breakdown and divorce increased as family members separated in search for food or ways to earn money.⁷² Women who travelled for their livelihood returned to their home just once or twice a month, consequently weakening family ties, sometimes leading to divorce.⁷³ Before the food crisis, obtaining a divorce was difficult as the North Korean government tried to keep families together. In the early years of the DPRK with the growing influence of the Korean Democratic Women's Union (KDWU, Women's Union) in the 1960s, women were only encouraged to divorce their husbands in the case of an ideological difference or if the husband was accused of a political crime.⁷⁴ During the food crisis though, it became easier for ordinary people to bribe judges with cigarettes or alcohol to obtain divorce papers.⁷⁵ Many women resorted to illegal means such as bribery to escape their situation, as there were no other appropriate legal channels for women to turn to for help.⁷⁶ Judges usually grant divorce when a woman alleges continuous domestic violence or a husband's alcoholism.⁷⁷ The North Korean government has also practised breaking up families by forcing couples to divorce because of one family member's undesirable

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ T. Kumar, "China's Repatriation of North Korean Refugees", *Congressional-Executive Commission on China* (Amnesty International, USA, 5 March 2012), p. 6.

⁷² Kyungja Jung and Bronwen Dalton, "Rhetoric Versus Reality for the Women of North Korea: Mothers of the Revolution", *Asian Studies*, 46 (5) (2006), p. 755.

⁷³ Good Friends, *Human Rights in North Korea*, p. 43.

⁷⁴ Hosaniak, *Flowers, Guns and Women*, p. 36.

⁷⁵ Bang, *The Battered Wheel*, p. 28.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Hosaniak, *Flowers, Guns and Women*, p. 37

background.⁷⁸ If either husband or wife commits a political crime and is sentenced to prison, then their partner has no choice but to divorce him or her, otherwise they are forced to join their family in prison.⁷⁹ When an individual is sentenced to a political prison camp, families generally accompany them because they are believed to be guilty by association.⁸⁰ This practice is utilised extensively against the so-called “hostile class”.

Since the food crisis, women have indicated to NGOs that domestic violence, including verbal and physical abuse has increased significantly.⁸¹ There is a general perception, though, that domestic violence is not a crime and that the government should not intervene in private family matters.⁸² For those who witness domestic violence or are victims and want to report the incident to the police, they reported to NKHR that the police completely disregard them and send them back home.⁸³ With women working in markets and trade activities, their economic situation improved, allowing some to flee from violent situations.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided background to the food crisis in the DPRK during the 1990s by examining the information collected and provided by NGOs working in the country. During this time, the food crisis affected the roles of North Korean men and women in the home and society. The most notable change was the challenge to customary practices in the family unit, as women became the primary providers. Many women were forced to carry out survival strategies such as trade activities along the border with China to save themselves and their families.⁸⁴ In a situation where the PDS collapsed and men were not able to provide financially for their families, women also became active players in local markets in the DPRK. This created new opportunities for them as well as new challenges for those who sought to protect gendered roles.⁸⁵ The new role that women played gave them at the very least some economic power but even though these women improved their economic situation,

⁷⁸ DLA Piper LLP & Committee for Human Rights in North Korea (HRNK), *Failure to Protect: a call for the UN Security Council to act in North Korea* (Washington: DLA Piper LLP, 2008), p. 43; Robert Collins, *Marked for Life: Songun. North Korea's Social Classification System* (Washington, DC: Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2012), p. 97

⁷⁹ Good Friends, *Human Right in North Korea*, p. 51.

⁸⁰ David Hawk, *The Hidden Gulag: The Lives and Voices of 'Those Who are Sent to the Mountains'* , (2nd ed.), (Washington, D.C.: United States Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2012), pp. 27, 29.

⁸¹ Hosaniak, *Flowers, Guns and Women*, p. 19; Bang, *The Battered Wheel*, pp. 10, 21, 23.

⁸² Bang, *The Battered Wheel*, p. 18.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁸⁴ Kang, “The Patriarchal State”, p. 65.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

it is likely that many remained subordinate to that of the household head as patriarchal values remained embedded in North Korean society. Although gender stereotypes have been challenged, it has also added to women's burdens, as they are now in many cases primary financial providers.

In the following chapter, I return to the theme of how the North Korean government presents itself to the international community in an analysis of a brief period when the DPRK engaged with the CEDAW Committee between 2001 and 2005. These reports reveal for the first time issues not previously discussed by the North Korean government with the world. In particular, the reports focused on discrimination against women in all forms, verbal and physical, and in all parts of society from family life to employment, as well as addressing women's access to education, health and employment. The reports also provide examples of customary discrimination practices in the DPRK that the government acknowledges need to be addressed. Close examination of the DPRK's reporting, however, reveals the extent to which gendered stereotypes still underpin the government's views of the roles of men and women, even while it promotes a commitment to achieving gender equality to the international community.

7. North Korea and the CEDAW Committee (2001–2005)

Women should not only be given equal political and economic rights with men but also be attentively cared for as they shoulder [the] heavy maternal burden [sic].

Kim Il Sung, 9 May 1946.¹

Introduction

As discussed above, due to the food crisis of the 1990s, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, North Korea) opened up to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to ensure food aid reached North Koreans in need. This communication with the outside world exposed the DPRK to the international community and its negative views of the regime and the human rights of its citizens. Pressure from the world grew from the 1990s for the North Korean government to follow the United Nations (UN) human rights instruments it had acceded to and to sign on to the other human rights treaties and conventions. From 2000 to 2005, the relationship between the North Korean government and the UN developed positively and communication flowed. During this time, state reports were submitted by the DPRK on four of the key conventions to which the country is a party: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) in 2000, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) in 2002, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 2002 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 2003.² This shows a degree of conformity by the DPRK to treaty obligations never seen before or since.³

¹ Speech made by Kim Il Sung at the First Democratic Women's Union of North Korea conference held on 9 May 1946. The Women's Union was one of the first political organisation to be founded in the DPRK (1945). The union concerns itself with matters of marriage, family planning, and family life and was initially founded as part of a mobilisation campaign for women to enter the manufacturing and light industry sectors. United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), "Consideration of reports submitted by States Parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women", *Initial Report of States Parties: Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, CEDAW/C/PRK/1, (Beijing: thirty-third session, 5 to 22 July 2005), (distributed 11 September 2002), para. 70, p. 11.

² United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC), *Second periodic Report of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on its implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, CCPR/C/PRK/2000/2 (distributed 4 May 2000); United Nations Economic and Social Council (UNESCO),

In this chapter, I focus on the DPRK's communication regarding CEDAW. The DPRK acceded to CEDAW in 2001 and over a four-year period from 2001 to 2005 there was an exchange of reports between the North Korean government and the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (hereafter "CEDAW Committee"). In the reports, the government maintains that discrimination against women in all forms, verbal and physical, was abolished after the revolutionary struggle against Japan (1910–1945) and with the promulgation of the Law on Equality of the Sexes in 1946. In this chapter, I argue that a close examination of the DPRK's reporting reveals the extent to which gendered stereotypes still underpin the government's views of the roles of men and women, even while it promotes its commitment to gender equality to the international community.

The DPRK's reporting to the CEDAW Committee is important as it demonstrates how the North Korean government presents itself to the world, and how it negotiates the gap between official views of gender equality and the actual conditions in the DPRK. Reports exchanged between the DPRK and the CEDAW Committee are one of the few official sources available for gaining some indication of the stance of the North Korean government on women's rights and include the few-recorded cases where the government acknowledges gender discrimination in the country. In response to the DPRK the CEDAW Committee requested additional information, to which the North Korean government responded.⁴ The correspondence between the CEDAW Committee and the DPRK provides the primary sources for this chapter. I also refer to shadow reports by two NGOs: the Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights (NKHR) and Good Friends: Centre for Peace, Human Rights and Refugees (Good Friends).⁵

"Implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights", *Second periodic reports submitted by States parties under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant: Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, E/1990/6/Add.35, (submitted 9 April 2002), (distributed 15 May 2002); CEDAW, *Initial Report*; United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), "Consideration of Reports submitted by states parties under Article 44 of the Convention", *Second periodic reports of States parties due in 1997: Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, CRC/C/65/Add.24 (16 May 2003), (distributed 5 November 2003).

³ Geir Helgesen and Hatla Thelle, *Dialogue with North Korea? Preconditions for Talking Human Rights With a Hermit Kingdom* (Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies Press, 2013), p. 46.

⁴ United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), "List of issues and questions with regard to the consideration of periodic reports: Democratic People's Republic of Korea", *Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, CEDAW/PSWG/2005/II/CRP.1/Add. 3 (Beijing: Thirty-third session, 5 to 22 July 2005), (distributed 9 February 2005); United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), "Responses to the list of issues and questions for consideration of the initial report," *Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, CEDAW/PSWG/2005/II/CRP.2/Add.3 (Beijing: Thirty-third session, 5 to 22 July 2005), (distributed 15 April 2005).

⁵ Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights (NKHR), *Class and Gender Discrimination in North Korea, Alternative Report* (Seoul: Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights, 2005); Good Friends: Centre for Peace, Human Rights and Refugees, *Alternative NGO Report on the Convention on the Elimination*

The DPRK and the CEDAW Committee

In February 2001, the North Korean government agreed to the guidelines and procedures outlined in CEDAW (see Appendix 1). The North Korean government continued communication with the CEDAW Committee until 2005. There are several possible reasons for the limited relationship between the DPRK and CEDAW Committee, although they are not discussed in the reports. These reasons may include the censorship of information by the government, travel restrictions placed on officials, or the lack of state funds to send representatives to meetings. The interruption in the communication with the CEDAW Committee could also be because of the position of the DPRK in the world. In January 2002, the then United States (US) President George W. Bush (1946–) described the DPRK, Iran and Iraq as the “Axis of Evil”. The Bush administration initiated an overtly hostile and accusatory policy toward each of these countries after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 (“9/11”), alleging that they were involved in illicit activities relating to nuclear weapons.⁶ Undeterred by lack of evidence and the failure to find a nuclear weapons program (or any weapons of mass destruction) in Iraq, the Bush administration remained relentlessly focused on the nuclear weapons ambitions of the DPRK and Iran, all the while ignoring or minimising non-confrontational diplomatic efforts.⁷ As noted above, in 2002 the then leader Kim Jong Il admitted that the North Korean government had in the past abducted Japanese citizens, a continuing source of tension between Japan and the DPRK.⁸ In 2003, the diplomatic hostility of the Bush administration towards the DPRK resulted in the North Korean government withdrawing from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).⁹ This was the impetus for the Six-Party talks held between the DPRK, South Korea, China, the United States, Russia, and Japan, which aimed to find a peaceful resolution to the security concerns in the region, particularly in regards to North Korea’s nuclear weapons program. Little progress was made

of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. First Periodic Report of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (Seoul: Good Friends: Centre for Peace, Human Rights and Refugees, 2005).

⁶ Anthony DiFilippo, “US Policy and the Nuclear Weapons Ambitions of the ‘Axis of Evil’ Countries”, *International Security*, 28 (1) (2006), p. 101.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Gavan McCormack and Wada, Haruki, “The Strange Record of 15 Years of Japan-North Korea Negotiations”, *The Asia Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, (2005), available at <http://www.japanfocus.org/-Wada-Haruki/1894/article.html> (accessed 3 June 2015).

⁹ The NPT was open for signatures in 1968, entered into force in 1970 and extended indefinitely on 11 May 1995. The DPRK acceded to the treaty in 1985.

until the fifth round of talks (9–11 November 2005), when the DPRK agreed to shut down its nuclear facilities in exchange for fuel aid.¹⁰

The North Korean government has offered no reason as to why communication stalled with the CEDAW Committee and the Committee has not explained the absence of correspondence with the DPRK since 2005. However, the CEDAW Committee continues to request further information from the DPRK regarding gender equality. The Committee has also requested that the North Korean government sign the Optional Protocol to CEDAW but to date the country has neither signed nor ratified the Optional Protocol (see Appendix 2).¹¹

The DPRK's Coordination Committee of the Implementation of CEDAW

On 10 September 2001, the DPRK formed the National Coordination Committee of the Implementation of CEDAW. The Committee is composed of representatives from the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly (Presidium of SPA), the Cabinet, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Central Court and Central Public Prosecutor's Office, as well as other state organs.¹² In total, there are seventeen members on the National Coordination Committee.¹³ Initially, the North Korean government believed that the implementation of the Convention should be carried out by women, and at first included only two men in the membership of the Committee. Later the government is said to have realised that the elimination of discrimination against women also depends on the attitudes of men and decided that both women and men must carry out the implementation of CEDAW.¹⁴ By 2003, eight men had been elected members of the Committee.

The duties of the National Coordination Committee include the administration and implementation of CEDAW, the drafting of reports and the examination of how the requirements of the Convention are embodied in state legislation.¹⁵ Among the Committee's most important tasks was the preparation of the initial report to the CEDAW Committee. The

¹⁰ Charles Scanlon, "The end of a long confrontation?", *British Broadcasting Corporation* (13 February 2007), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/6357853.stm> (accessed 3 July 2014).

¹¹ CEDAW, "List of issues", para. 33, p. 5; United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), "Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women," *Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly*, A/RES/54/4 (Fifty-fourth session, 6 October 1999, agenda item 109), (distributed 15 October 1999).

¹² CEDAW, *Initial Report*, para. 4, p. 3.

¹³ United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), "Summary Record of the 699th meeting", *Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, CEDAW/C/SR.699 (Thirty-third session, 5 to 22 July 2005), (New York: 18 July 2005 at 10 am), (distributed 9 September 2005), para. 12, p. 3.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, para. 18, p. 4.

National Coordination Committee is said to have collected data from government bodies and NGOs concerned with the various sectors of the country. The drafters of the report included officials from the judicial, legislative, and administrative bodies of the North Korean government.¹⁶ The leader of the country and trusted members of the Workers Party of Korea (WPK) typically revise any information released to the international community.¹⁷ Therefore, the draft report was submitted first to the government bodies for their review, and then to the Presidium of Supreme People's Assembly, at which time women deputies are said to have offered their views. The Presidium represents the Supreme People's Assembly (SPA) when the SPA was not in session.¹⁸ The National Coordination Committee also works to examine how the requirements of CEDAW are embodied in state legislation. The Committee established a system for the supervision of the implementation of the Convention by coordinating with the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Labour and other government organs concerned with the rights of women. The North Korean government suggests in the report to the CEDAW Committee that officials in the sectors of law, education, and public health improved their views towards women because of the Convention.¹⁹

The National Coordination Committee participated in a study tour on CEDAW to the Philippines in February 2002. The Committee stated that it was necessary for officials to have more opportunities for international training.²⁰ To address critical gaps in data collection and knowledge, the UN organises study tours for countries with new human rights protection systems to learn from those with more advanced systems.

The DPRK Reports to the CEDAW Committee

An initial report for consideration to the CEDAW Committee was submitted by the DPRK on 11 September 2002.²¹ The report was in accordance with the CEDAW Guidelines Regarding the Form and Content of the Initial Reports of States Parties (Article 18).²² Under this Article, state parties submit to the UN Secretary-General a report on the legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures which they have adopted to give effect to the provisions of

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Daniel Byman and Jennifer Lind, "Pyongyang's Survival Strategy: Tools of Authoritarian Control in North Korea", *International Security*, 35 (1) (2010), pp. 48, 50.

¹⁸ CEDAW, "699th meeting", para.18, p. 4.

¹⁹ CEDAW, "Responses", resp. 5, pp. 4, 5.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ CEDAW, "Responses".

²² The CEDAW Guidelines were adopted in February 1995 at the fourteenth session and revised later in January 1997 at the sixteenth session. CEDAW, *Initial Report*, para. 2, p. 3.

CEDAW.²³ Progress made by state parties is reported within one year after the Convention's entry into force and thereafter every four years or when the Committee requests. To date the DPRK has submitted an initial report in 2002 but not the required follow-up reports in 2006, 2010, and 2014. The DPRK's initial report was divided into two parts. Part One, titled *General Survey*, provided an overview of the political structure of the DPRK, the legal framework whereby human rights are protected and the inclusion of human rights conventions in domestic legislation. Part Two, titled *Substantive Provisions*, provided an overview of efforts made to eliminate discrimination against women, the development and advancement of women, and the rights of women to access education, employment, and health care in North Korea. When preparing the report, the North Korean government claims to have discovered that the basic requirements of the Convention had already been fulfilled in a number of sectors of the country.²⁴

On 9 February 2005, the CEDAW Committee issued the North Korean government with a list of questions with regards to its initial report.²⁵ The 33 questions were organised according to the Articles of the Convention. The Committee was concerned with several issues in the DPRK's report, including direct and indirect discrimination against North Korean women, and recommended that awareness campaigns be carried out on the meaning and scope of indirect discrimination – aimed at legislators, the judiciary and the legal profession.²⁶ Questions on the lives of women from rural and urban areas and violence against women were also raised. Two months after the CEDAW Committee issued a list of questions, the DPRK replied on 15 April 2005.²⁷ The responses focused on conditions that might affect women differently from men, as well as challenges specific to gender equality. Information was provided on poverty and the famine, as they were said to have been causes for conditions of existing inequality and further discrimination against women. A number of questions were not answered, but the DPRK made some crucial admissions that had not previously been acknowledged, as discussed below.

Three years after the DPRK submitted its initial report to the CEDAW Committee, two meetings were held between North Korean representatives and the Committee on 18 July

²³ United Nations Committee to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), *Full Text of the Convention in English*, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm#article17> (accessed 3 July 2014).

²⁴ CEDAW, "699th meeting", para. 2, p. 2.

²⁵ CEDAW, "List of issues".

²⁶ United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), *Analysis of the Situation of Children and Women in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea* (Thailand: Keen Publishing Co Ltd, 2006), p. 27.

²⁷ CEDAW, "Responses", resp. 1, p. 1.

2005.²⁸ These meetings were held in two sessions at 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. The North Korean delegation included: Ho O Bom, Pak Kum Bok, Pak Tok Hun,²⁹ Hong Ji Sun, and Han Chae Sun.³⁰ While three men and two women represented the DPRK, a male delegate, Ho O Bom, answered the majority of questions. There were twenty-one members representing the CEDAW Committee, with a total of twenty females and one male participating. At the first meeting, the 699th, issues discussed included discrimination against women in the home, domestic violence, and food allocation through the Public Distribution System (PDS).³¹ At the 700th meeting, issues raised by the CEDAW Committee included women's representation in the North Korean government, the education of female children, and the allocation of women to certain occupations.³²

On 22 July 2005, the CEDAW Committee released a report of concluding comments for the North Korean government to consider.³³ The recommendations and conclusions of the Committee were based on the DPRK's initial report and the meetings held with North Korean officials at the UN Headquarters in 2005. Concerns and recommendations of the CEDAW Committee include the withdrawal of reservations to the Convention, the revision of the Law of Sex Equality to include provisions of CEDAW, and the lack of effective remedies for female complainants whose rights have been violated.

Non-Governmental Organisation Shadow Reports

In response to the DPRK's initial report to the CEDAW Committee, two South Korean NGOs submitted shadow reports. The UN invites NGOs to follow the work of the CEDAW Committee, which includes participation at the pre-session working groups to provide country-specific information on state parties whose reports are being considered.³⁴ This ensures that the CEDAW Committee is well informed about the country submitting the

²⁸ CEDAW, "699th meeting"; United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), "Summary Record of the 700th meeting", *Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, CEDAW/C/SR.700 (Thirty-third session, 5 to 22 July 2005), (New York: 18 July 2005 at 3pm), (distributed 9 September 2005).

²⁹ Pak Tok Hun is the DPRK's current Deputy Ambassador to the UN.

³⁰ Han Chae Sun is the DPRK's Bureau Chief of the Research Institute, Ministry of Public Health.

³¹ CEDAW, "699th meeting".

³² CEDAW, "700th meeting".

³³ United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), *Concluding Comments: Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, CEDAW/C/PRK/CO/1 (Thirty-third session, 5 to 22 July 2005), (distributed 22 July 2005).

³⁴ United Nations (UN), "NGO Information Note", *Division for the Advancement of Women* (New York: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2009), [http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/NGO_Information_note_CEDAW .pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/NGO_Information_note_CEDAW.pdf) (accessed 3 July 2014).

periodic reports. NGOs submit their reports to the Committee prior to or at the session. NGOs submitting shadow reports or other country-specific information prepare a list of issues and questions for the reporting country. The Committee then sets aside time at each of the working sessions, usually at the beginning of the first and second week of the session, to enable representatives of NGOs to provide information.

The two NGO reports submitted to the UN outline concerns about the status of women in and outside the DPRK. In June 2005, Good Friends submitted a shadow report with concerns regarding food shortages in the mid-1990s and the impact on women.³⁵ Their report mentions the trafficking and prostitution of women, their right to access healthcare, and the situation of North Korean women in China. In July of the same year, NKHR submitted a shadow report to the CEDAW Committee.³⁶ Concerns raised by NKHR include discrimination against women in society and the home based on gender, violence against women in North Korean society and the sexual exploitation and trafficking of women.

Below I discuss the communication between the DPRK and the CEDAW Committee, as well as the shadow reports and what they reveal about official North Korean attitudes to gender equality. The discussion is organised according to the themes which arise in this series of communications.

The DPRK's Reservations to CEDAW

The CEDAW Committee permits ratification of the Convention subject to reservations made by governments.³⁷ Reservations are made if governments see the Convention as not being compatible with national law, tradition, religion, or culture. The DPRK has entered two reservations regarding Article 2 (f) and Article 9 (2) of CEDAW.

The North Korean government states that since the promulgation of the Law on Equality of the Sex in 1946, equal rights for women have been provided for in all spheres of economic, social, cultural, and political life, including the right to free marriage and divorce.³⁸ However, the law includes a difference in the minimum age for marriage, which is

³⁵ Good Friends, *Alternative NGO Report*.

³⁶ NKHR, *Class and Gender*.

³⁷ United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), "Declarations, reservations, objections and notifications of withdrawal of reservations relating to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women", *Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, CEDAW/SP/2006/2 (New York: Fourteenth Meeting, 23 June 2006), (distributed 10 April 2006), p. 11.

³⁸ CEDAW, *Initial Report*, para. 74, p. 35.

17 years for females and 18 years for males so the government made a reservation to Article 2 (f) of CEDAW, which states:

State Parties are to take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs, and practices, which constitute discrimination against women.³⁹

The North Korean government has also made a reservation on Article 9 (2) of CEDAW, which states, “State Parties shall grant women equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children”.⁴⁰ The North Korean Citizenship Law (1995) stipulates:

DPRK citizenship will be granted to a child born between North Korean citizens, a child born between a North Korean citizen residing in the DPRK and a foreign citizen or a stateless person, a child born between stateless persons residing in the DPRK and a child born in the DPRK but whose parents are unidentified (Article 5).⁴¹

Further, the law provides that the citizenship of a child under the age of 14 born between a North Korean citizen residing in a foreign country and a foreign citizen is determined in accordance with the express intention of the parents (Article 7).⁴² The Citizenship Law does not give preference or differentiate between father and mother over their opinion of the nationality of the child.

Chin Kim suggests that the promulgation of the Citizenship Law in 1995 was political rather than being designed to protect the rights of either parent living abroad or a child born abroad to parents of differing citizenship.⁴³ The reservation was made to CEDAW in accordance with the North Korea’s Nationality Law (1963), which ensures the child the freedom to visit the DPRK freely (Article 3) and have the political and legal protection of the DPRK irrespective of their residence (Article 2).⁴⁴ The Articles of the Nationality Law contain political implications and are designed to provide a rational basis for the North

³⁹ CEDAW, “Declarations, reservations, objections and notifications”, p. 11.

⁴⁰ CEDAW, *Full Text*.

⁴¹ CEDAW, *Initial Report*, para, 123, pp. 18, 19.

⁴² *Ibid.*, para. 129, p. 19.

⁴³ Chin Kim, “North Korean Nationality Law”, *International Lawyer*, 6 (2) (1972), p. 323.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 324.

Korean government to extend control over Koreans living abroad, especially those residing in Japan.⁴⁵

The CEDAW Committee requested further explanation as to why the North Korean government entered the two reservations and whether there has been any consideration of amending state legislation in order to withdraw these reservations.⁴⁶ The North Korean government responded that a reservation was made on Article 2 (f) of CEDAW because Article 9 of the Family Law provides that the minimum marriage age is 17 for girls and 18 for boys as discussed above. The DPRK claims that nobody considers this age difference discriminatory against women so a reservation was entered provisionally until due legislative amendments are enacted to avoid any misunderstanding of the age difference in current legislation.⁴⁷ The government states that a reservation was made to Article 9 (2) because of a concern that a child born to a foreign citizen and a North Korean citizen may have double nationality if parents differ in their opinion. The National Coordination Committee is said to have discussed the reservations while preparing the initial report and decided to recommend amendments to related laws and legislation bodies.⁴⁸ To date these reservations have not been withdrawn by the DPRK and the laws have not been amended.

In its concluding comments the CEDAW Committee states that, while appreciating the North Korean government's willingness to amend national legislation and consider lifting the reservations, the Committee considers that the reservations made are contrary to the objective and purpose of CEDAW.⁴⁹ The Committee urges the DPRK to accelerate its efforts towards the withdrawal of the reservations in a concrete timeframe.⁵⁰

Customary Discrimination in North Korean Society

The North Korean government understands that discrimination against women can be based on whether one is married or not; can occur in political, economic, social, civil, public and private life; when someone consents to or is tolerant of inequality either on purpose or by negligence; and the different treatment of men and women, which includes distinction, exclusion, restriction, ignorance, impairing and violence.⁵¹ In comparison, Article 1 of CEDAW states that the term "discrimination against women" means:

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ CEDAW, "List of issues", qt. 2, p. 1.

⁴⁷ CEDAW, "Responses", resp. 1, p. 1.

⁴⁸ Ibid., resp. 2, p. 2.

⁴⁹ CEDAW, *Concluding Comments*, para. 15, p. 3.

⁵⁰ Ibid., para. 16, p. 3.

⁵¹ CEDAW, *Initial Report*, para. 68, p.10.

any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.⁵²

In the initial report to the CEDAW Committee, the DPRK stated that following the liberation of Korea from Japanese colonial rule in 1945, the North Korean interim government “thoroughly carried out the democratic reforms to free people from all forms of imperialist and feudalistic yoke and fetters”.⁵³ As part of the reform process:

[p]olitical, economic, traditional and customary bases of discrimination against women have fundamentally been eliminated and the overall institutional, administrative, organisational and educational measures adopted to prevent its occurrence or continuance.⁵⁴

The DPRK continues that the Constitution, laws, regulations, and rules:

comprehensively and concretely provide for the rights and freedom that citizens ought to be endowed with and enjoy in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil and all other fields.⁵⁵

The DPRK states that “the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or the stereotyped roles of men and women have nearly been eliminated” so “discrimination based on the outmoded customs is no longer a big issue of social concern”.⁵⁶ Then again, the North Korean government admits that customary discrimination exists in society and households.

⁵² CEDAW, *Full Text*.

⁵³ CEDAW, *Initial Report*, para.100, pp. 15, 16.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, para. 67, p. 10.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, para. 100, pp.15, 16.

Calling a man the outer householder and a woman the inner householder in a family, a man becoming the head of a family, the community employing mostly females in the jobs like restaurant reception, switchboard operation, typing and the like, regarding a hard or big work as a man's job and an easy or sundry task as a woman's job etc.⁵⁷

The term "inner householder" references Korean women's roles in the past when they lived within the inner walls of the home and were not allowed outside to participate in society. In comparison, Korean men were allowed to move freely from the home to outside the building, therefore they were referred to as the "outer householder". The North Korean government claims to have tried to change this view by enhancing "the consciousness of respecting women among the new generations and to thoroughly prevent the discriminatory conception and happening occasionally witnessed among the old generation".⁵⁸ The DPRK says that it encourages the active education of the population in the idea of respecting and caring for girls and women through mass media, such as the magazine *Chosŏn Yŏsŏng* (Korean Women).

The North Korean government explains that discriminatory action against women is a "matter not only of prejudice and custom but also [because] of the national situation of economic development".⁵⁹ Therefore, to overcome these discriminatory practices in society the country aimed to overcome the economic and technical backwardness of old Korean society. It was in this setting that the government established the Three Revolutions at the Fifth Congress of the WPK in November 1970 (as discussed in chapter 5). The government stated in the initial report to the CEDAW Committee that when the Three Revolutions are fulfilled and technical advancement realised then discrimination caused by customary stereotyping of gender roles will be eliminated.⁶⁰ In the initial report, the DPRK stated that a great deal of harsh and heavy labour has been abolished and the Three Revolutions successfully achieved,⁶¹ suggesting that the burden that women carry within the home has also largely been eliminated. In reality, North Korean women continue to be burdened with

⁵⁷ Ibid., para. 101, p. 16.

⁵⁸ Ibid., para. 104, p. 16.

⁵⁹ Ibid., para. 102, p. 16.

⁶⁰ Ibid., para. 103, p. 16.

⁶¹ Ibid.

caring for children and the home, which is demonstrated in the gendered language employed by the government.

Based on Articles 1 and 2 of CEDAW, the Committee requested the DPRK to provide further information on measures undertaken to combat gender discrimination based on the perceived notion of women as inferior and men superior.⁶² In response, the DPRK states that through the reform process after the liberation of Korea in 1945, the social, economic and legal basis of the “outmoded concept” of women as inferior has “nearly been eliminated”.⁶³ The government is said to have actively unfolded educational activities against the idea of women’s inferiority and taken “the steps of preferential treatment of women by law and policy”.⁶⁴ The North Korean response listed various legal measures taken through the Constitution and laws which provide provisions for gender equality.⁶⁵ The North Korean government also, however, refers to occasions where men and women are treated differently because of the role of women in reproduction and childrearing. It is because of this role that the DPRK provides women with “special protection” in the 1998 DPRK Constitution:

guaranteeing maternity leave before and after childbirth, reducing working hours for mothers with many children, and expanding the network of maternity hospitals, nurseries and kindergartens (Article 77).⁶⁶

Answering gender equality with the preferential treatment of women in state laws does not address the customary attitudes of some North Korean people. It could be said that gender equality in the DPRK therefore, has largely been unsolved, as the government has not addressed the cultural construction of gender entrenched in North Korean society.

In 2005, during the meetings in New York the North Korean delegate Hong Ji Sun explained historical attitudes to gender in Korea.

The inferiority of women was a concept deeply rooted in the culture of the DPRK, which had been a feudalist society for 2000 years and

⁶² CEDAW, “List of issues”, qt. 9, p. 2.

Article 1 of CEDAW outlines the definition of “discrimination against women” and Article 2 states policy measures governments should pursue through their state Constitutions and other appropriate legislations.

⁶³ CEDAW, *Initial Report*, para.100, pp.15, 16.

⁶⁴ CEDAW, “Responses”, resp. 8, p. 6.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, resp. 1, p. 1.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

had been subjected to Japanese colonial rule. Under the old regime, boys and girls could not sit together once they turned seven years of age.⁶⁷

The North Korean official reiterates that soon after the independence of Korea from Japan in 1945 the North Korean interim government promulgated the Law on Equality of the Sexes in 1946 with the aim of eliminating all forms of discrimination against women.⁶⁸ In other words, the government assigns discrimination against women to the colonial period and the liberation of women to a newly-established socialist North Korea. However, Hong Ji Sun states that the Law on Equality of the Sexes is not fully implemented or recognised as some men have continued to be regarded as responsible for affairs outside the house, with women assigned to chores within the household.⁶⁹

The CEDAW Committee notes with concern the persistence of gendered assumptions and attitudes in respect to the roles and responsibilities of women and men, which are primarily discriminatory against women and influences all areas of their lives.⁷⁰ It notes the perception of women as caregivers and homemakers and their assignment to areas such as education and employment on the basis of spheres suitable to their “characteristics”. The Committee is concerned that such expectations of North Korean women have serious consequences, preventing them from accessing rights and entitlements on an equal basis with men and creating a dependency on male family members for housing, food entitlements, and other services.⁷¹

Gender Roles in North Korean Families

In the DPRK’s initial report, it did not mention the stereotyping of gender roles within family homes. We know from academic research and reporting by NGOs, however, that the promise to ease the domestic burdens of women through the Three Revolutions failed to materialise for many.⁷² Modern conveniences such as clean running water in homes, refrigerators and washing machines failed to materialise or remained the property of a privileged few. As

⁶⁷ CEDAW, “699th meeting”, para. 46, p. 8.

⁶⁸ Ibid.; Jin Woong Kang, “The Patriarchal State and Women’s Status in Socialist North Korea”, *Graduate Journal of Asia-Pacific Studies*, 6 (2) (2008), p. 58.

⁶⁹ CEDAW, “699th meeting”, para. 46, p. 8.

⁷⁰ CEDAW, *Concluding Comments*, para. 35, p. 5.

⁷¹ Ibid., para. 36, p. 5.

⁷² Kyungja Jung and Bronwen Dalton, “Rhetoric Versus Reality for the Women of North Korea: Mothers of the Revolution”, *Asian Survey*, 46 (5) (2006), p. 753.

discussed in chapter 6 above, gendered roles remained until the mid-1990s when the differentiated roles of men and women in the home were challenged because of the food crisis. With the end of the state food rationing system men's capacity to provide economic support deteriorated, and many North Korean women had to become primary financial providers to their families in place of their husbands.⁷³ However, this did not mean that the strict gendered roles in the home were significantly undermined. According to Jung and Dalton, the sharing of housework between husband and wife continued to be uncommon.⁷⁴ Further, most women continued to respect the superiority and authority of their husbands and their lives were still shaped by their husbands' social position and status.⁷⁵ Since the food crisis, reductions in state welfare, provisions, and facilities resulted in even higher demands on women to provide additional support such as healthcare and education to their families.⁷⁶

Due to the lack of information offered by the DPRK in its initial report and based on Article 5 of CEDAW, the Committee requested further information on measures undertaken by the government to combat the stereotyping of women's roles in the home.⁷⁷ In response, the North Korean government acknowledged that women assumed more of the family burden due to the customary roles of household chores assigned to them.⁷⁸ From the 1970s, though, the government claims to have addressed this issue by defining the emancipation of women from household chores as part of the task of the Three Revolutions, as explained above. The DPRK claims that women in both urban and rural areas now use modern facilities and electrical kitchen appliances to alleviate their duties in the home.⁷⁹ However, the North Korean government acknowledges that due to the economic difficulties within the country "both women and men are hampered from enjoying their legal rights to the full".⁸⁰ Evidence suggests that since the mid-1990s basic shortages in food and fuel, and the breakdown of the water supply systems have disproportionately influenced the workload of women and girls.⁸¹ The capacity for women to take advantage of measures designed and legislated to protect them is frequently superseded by the need to survive. For example, the extensive piped water

⁷³ Kang, "The Patriarchal State", p. 65.

⁷⁴ Jung and Dalton, "Mothers of the Revolution", p. 753.

⁷⁵ Jin Woong Kang, "The 'Domestic Revolution' Policy and Traditional Confucianism in North Korean State Formation: A Socio-cultural Perspective", *Harvard Asia Quarterly*, 10 (2) (2006), p. 66.

⁷⁶ Kyung Ae Park, "Economic crisis, women's changing economic roles, and their implications for women's status in North Korea", *The Pacific Review*, 24 (2) (2011), p. 161.

⁷⁷ CEDAW, "List of issues", qt. 9, p. 2.

⁷⁸ CEDAW, "Responses", resp. 4, p. 4.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), *Analysis of the Situation of Children and Women in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea* (Pyongyang: United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund DPRK, 2003), pp. 46, 47.

supply systems put in place during the early 1980s are in ailing condition due to low levels of state investment, the shortage of electricity, and the destruction caused by natural disasters. The United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) reports that according to the 2008 DPRK Census, 22 per cent of the population spends time fetching water from sources other than piped water in their homes.⁸² UNICEF found that of the population that collect water there is a clear gendered inequality involved, as only 32 per cent of those responsible for this activity are men compared to 68 per cent women.⁸³ While the North Korean government claims that the burdens that women carry have lessened because of the Three Revolutions, UNICEF claims that the number of women in comparison to men forced to walk to alternative water supplies is higher.⁸⁴

At the meetings between the DPRK and CEDAW Committee in 2005, Ho O Bom states that "[the government has] established a plan of action to root out outmoded customs, attitudes and stereotypes that discriminated against women, but such attitudes were deep-seated and the process would take a long time".⁸⁵ It is said that public organisations and institutions work to educate people and overcome gender stereotypes. Hong Ji Sun states that men and women of the new generation have attitudes very different from the older generation, who still hold stereotypical views. The North Korean delegation states that the division of labour in the home has changed in recent years, due to the increased awareness of CEDAW.⁸⁶ The delegation continues that husbands are now equipped with the knowledge of the Convention and are doing some cooking and other household chores such as taking care of children so women have been freed from the home to participate in society.⁸⁷ The DPRK, however, offers no evidence in its initial report or during the meetings in New York on the attitudinal changes of the younger generation or how men access information about CEDAW. Even though there have been changes in the North Korean legal system the actual effects of these amendments in society are less obvious. Many have argued that changes that have occurred in society and family life are rather a result of the government's mismanagement of its economic policies combined with natural disasters. This created a situation where people, and typically women, have been forced to find alternative ways of supporting their family's survival.

⁸² United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), *UNICEF Fact sheet on the DPRK*, (2011), http://www.unicef.org/dprk/DPRK_Factsheet_UNICEF_102011.pdf (accessed 3 July 2014), p. 1.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ UNICEF, *Analysis of the Situation*, (2003), pp. 46, 47.

⁸⁵ CEDAW, "699th meeting", para. 36, p. 7.

⁸⁶ Ibid., para. 46, p. 8.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

The CEDAW Committee notes with concern the persistence of stereotyped assumptions and attitudes in respect to the roles and responsibilities of North Korean women and men.⁸⁸ The Committee is concerned that such expectations of women have serious consequences, preventing them from accessing rights and entitlements on an equal basis with men as well as creating dependency on male family members.⁸⁹ The Committee urges the DPRK to increase its efforts to address stereotypical attitudes about the roles and responsibilities of women and men, including the hidden patterns that perpetuate direct and indirect discrimination against women and girls in all areas of their lives.⁹⁰

Marriage and Family Breakdown

The DPRK's initial report states that marriage is "entered into on the basis of true love, free choice, and full consent".⁹¹ Marriage that is entered into against the will of either male or female, by money, coercion, allurements, and outdated customs is strictly forbidden. Article 11 of the Family Law states that marriage is legal after registration at a registry office and is not recognised if it is not registered.⁹²

A marriage that is not based on the free consent of the parties, a marriage under the minimum age for marriage (18 years for males and 17 years for females), a marriage with a person who already has a registered husband or wife, and a marriage between blood relatives ... is null and void (Article 13).⁹³

Although the legal age of marriage is 17 years for women and 18 years for men, the average age for women to marry is 24 to 26 years and for men 26 to 28 years.⁹⁴ The government has conducted a campaign to persuade people that early marriage is not good for women's health.⁹⁵ Jung and Dalton suggest that later marriage may be a result of work and military service obligations.⁹⁶ Articles 15 and 19 of the Family Law state that a husband and wife are

⁸⁸ CEDAW, *Concluding Comments*, para. 35, p. 5.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid., para. 36, p. 6

⁹¹ CEDAW, *Initial Report*, para. 235, p. 34.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid., para. 237, pp. 34, 35.

⁹⁴ UNICEF, *Children and Women*, (2006), p. 47.

⁹⁵ CEDAW, "700th meeting", para. 12, pp. 3, 4.

⁹⁶ Jung and Dalton, "Mothers of the Revolution", p. 754

duty-bound to ensure their family is harmonious, cheerful, and supported by their partner should he or she lose the ability to work.⁹⁷

The DPRK's initial report in 2002 states that the average annual number of divorces is about 2,000 cases.⁹⁸ The government states that the comparatively small number of divorces in the DPRK is not due to any legislation that makes divorce difficult but because, since the "olden times, it has been a traditional national custom peculiar to the Korean people for a married couple to live together until they die".⁹⁹ Article 21 of the Family Law (1990) states that divorce may be granted if a marriage cannot be continued because one party has been found guilty of gross infidelity and mistrust or for some other reason.¹⁰⁰ Further, Article 5 of the Law on the Equality of the Sexes states that women have the equal right to submit to the courts an application for a divorce.¹⁰¹ The government does not permit a married couple to live apart or with another partner without a legal divorce.

At the dissolution of the marriage, there is no special consideration except for the interest of children involved. Article 22 of the Family Law states that the custody of children is "decided according to mutual agreement between the two parties, in consideration of the interests of the children".¹⁰² When no mutual agreement can be reached, the custody of the children is decided by the court. If the child is less than three years of age then the child is "brought up by the mother, unless there is a compelling reason for this not to happen".¹⁰³ This assumes though, that women are the primary carers of children rather than the responsibility of both parents. If a person is not the primary carer of the child, then this person pays the other parent the expenses for raising the child until the child reaches working age. The amount payable to the carer is fixed by the court and is usually within the range of 10 to 30 per cent of the monthly income of the contributor, and according to the number of children.¹⁰⁴ The Family Law also states that during divorce proceedings property owned before the marriage or property that was given to a person by inheritance is owned by that individual (Article 39).¹⁰⁵ Family property bought during the marriage is divided among the parties

⁹⁷ CEDAW, *Initial Report*, para. 239, p. 35.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, para. 240, p. 35.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, para. 74, p. 11.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, para. 242, p. 35

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, para. 247, p. 36.

through mutual agreement. If the couple cannot reach an agreement on the division of property, the matter is settled by the court.¹⁰⁶

The CEDAW Committee acknowledges that while divorce is not a favoured option, it is sometimes necessary. It requested further information on the rights of divorced North Korean women to the custody of children and to a share of marital property.¹⁰⁷ The Committee expresses concern that if a woman could only take the amount of property that she brought to the marriage, then many women would have serious difficulties after the divorce if they did not have a job. Concerns are also raised on whether food rations are distributed according to the job held by a person as this might mean that an unemployed divorced woman would not receive food rations.¹⁰⁸ Finally, information is requested on whether the number of divorces in the DPRK is rising or declining since the mid-1990s.¹⁰⁹

In response, the DPRK states that the people's power organ that supervises law enforcement conducted a comprehensive analysis of court judgments in divorce cases and found that nearly all of the judgments contained the sharing of property between couples.¹¹⁰ The government maintains that women are not given less than a man simply because of gender.¹¹¹ The principle is that the property individually owned by each spouse before marriage goes back to the owner, while the property acquired during a marriage should be disposed of by agreement. If a party asks for the division of property by law, the court intervenes.¹¹² The DPRK maintains that no woman receives less property than a man simply because she is a female. In fact, a woman with children is given more property in the view of her support of children. However, this enforces the gender stereotyping of women to the role of carer of children. The North Korean government also maintains that the distribution of food supplies is to all households, including divorced women.¹¹³

Ho O Bom, a North Korean delegate sent to meetings in New York in 2005, states that both men and women can apply equally for a divorce and that the rate of divorce is going down after a rise in the mid-1990s.¹¹⁴ However, scholarly research suggests that as women were frequently absent due to trade or business and the number of dual earner couples

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ CEDAW, "List of issues", qt. 30, p. 5 and qt. 31, p. 5.

¹⁰⁸ CEDAW, "700th meeting", para. 30, p. 6

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., para. 31, p. 6.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ CEDAW, "Responses", resp. 30, p. 20.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ CEDAW, "List of issues", para. 35, p.7.

¹¹⁴ CEDAW, "700th meeting", para. 31, p. 6.

increased, it caused disharmony in marriages and family breakdowns,¹¹⁵ ultimately leading to the number of divorce cases increasing.¹¹⁶ It is within the DPRK's unstable economic environment and the challenge to gendered roles that North Korean courts encouraged couples to have counselling sessions before divorce proceedings, ensuring couples are kept together when possible. The DPRK wishes to "protect the basic social unit, which is the family".¹¹⁷ Keeping families together, however, could be detrimental to the welfare of women and particularly for those who are victims of domestic violence. It also indicates that a person's wish to determine their own life in the DPRK is less important than the government's desire for family unity. Divorce from spouses branded "reactionaries" or "bad elements" is granted comparatively easily to either gender and, in fact, is strongly encouraged by the state.¹¹⁸ The protection of the family unit by the state has prolonged the stereotyping of men and women to gendered roles within the home. Kang argues that the family group and its culture are "an important mechanism of social control and regime maintenance".¹¹⁹ In the case of the DPRK, this is particularly true since the mid-1990s when the North Korean government passed the economic burden of supporting individuals to family groups (Family Law, Articles 35 and 36).

The CEDAW Committee expressed concern about the practice of encouraging conciliation among spouses who apply for divorce, with the aim of protecting the family unit, which could be detrimental to women who are victims of domestic violence and other forms of abuse.¹²⁰ The Committee recommends that the DPRK conduct a comprehensive analysis of divorce cases and encourage judges to review the utilisation of conciliation to ensure that the rights of women are duly protected.¹²¹ The Committee recommends gender-sensitive training for legislators, the judiciary, and public officials. It also recommends the establishment of counselling services for victims of domestic violence and the implementation of awareness-raising campaigns and public education programmes.

Childrearing Responsibilities

The DPRK's initial report states that parents have equal rights and responsibilities relating to their children. Articles 27 and 28 of the Family Law state that both parents "have the same

¹¹⁵ Kang, "The Patriarchal State", p. 65; Jung and Dalton, "Mothers of the Revolution", p. 755.

¹¹⁶ The Institute of Korean Women Society, *The Life and Dream of North Korean Women* (Seoul: The Institute of Korean Women Society, 2001).

¹¹⁷ CEDAW, "700th meeting", para. 35, p. 7.

¹¹⁸ Jung and Dalton, "Mothers of the Revolution", p. 754.

¹¹⁹ Kang, "The 'Domestic Revolution' Policy", p. 38.

¹²⁰ CEDAW, *Concluding Comments*, para. 39, p. 6.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, para. 40, p. 6.

obligation to educate and care for the health and growth of their children” and failure to do so is a punishable criminal act (Criminal Law, 1987, Article 136).¹²² The North Korean government maintains that it is a social and moral custom to respect the opinions of husband and wife, and rationally combine the requirements of the family and society in deciding the number and spacing of children.¹²³ It is said that the healthcare system counsels women on the number and spacing of births and dispenses contraceptives free of charge.¹²⁴ The title of “Maternal Heroine” though, has been assigned to women by the government to promote the idea of women’s roles as mothers and increase the birth rate. More than 60 per cent of women use contraceptives, mainly the intrauterine device, while contraceptive use among men is rare. It is expected to change as the government, in close cooperation with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and other international organisations, distributes condoms to men.¹²⁵ The size of North Korean families tends to be small, with most households consisting of between four and five people.¹²⁶ Since the immense hardship associated with the food crisis of the 1990s, family size has been affected and many women prefer to have only one child.¹²⁷ NKHR, however, states that, according to the testimonies of North Korean refugees, the government limits the number of children a family has or encourages mothers to give birth to more children according to the government’s political, social, and economic situation.¹²⁸

Preference for sons is a cultural trait common to both North and South Korea.¹²⁹ Sons are desired more than daughters because of cultural attributes including patrilineal kinship relations, relying on sons to carry on the family name, responsibility to live with and care for elderly parents and perform key religious ceremonies.¹³⁰ Until the early 1980s, a wife’s inability to bear a son gave a husband grounds for divorce in the DPRK. The North Korean government acknowledges in the initial report that “on rare occasions, grandparents demand childbirth until they have a grandson”.¹³¹ This means that women are sometimes compelled to give birth until a male child is born indicating that the preference for boys continues.¹³² This

¹²² CEDAW, *Initial Report*, para. 241, p. 35.

¹²³ CEDAW, *Initial Report*, para. 245, pp. 35, 36.

¹²⁴ CEDAW, “699th meeting”, para. 50, p. 8.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ Jung and Dalton, “Mothers of the Revolution”, p. 754.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ NKHR, *Class and Gender*, p. 12.

¹²⁹ Jung and Dalton, “Mothers of the Revolution”, p. 754

¹³⁰ Daniel Goodkind, “Do Parents Prefer Sons in North Korea?”, *Studies in Family Planning*, 30 (3) (1999), p. 212.

¹³¹ CEDAW, *Initial Report*, para. 245, pp. 35, 36.

¹³² NKHR, *Class and Gender*, p. 14.

means that there is fundamental discrimination against females in North Korean society, which begins from birth.

In accordance with Articles 15 and 16 of CEDAW, the Committee requested further information on measures taken by the North Korean government to change the attitude of preference for a son.¹³³ In response, the DPRK states that the attitude of son preference is based on the “outdated and unreasonable notion of family inheritance or clan prosperity” and that some older people still have this attitude.¹³⁴ The government maintains, though, that the new generation does not follow this attitude and that many people prefer daughters. The government does not feel it necessary to adopt special measures to alter the attitude of son preference which, it claims, has somehow been resolved.¹³⁵ The CEDAW Committee does not offer any recommendations to the DPRK on how to address discrimination against female children. However, as discussed above, Articles 15 and 16 of CEDAW outline state responsibilities to eliminate discrimination against women within families and marriages. As the DPRK is party to this Convention it has a responsibility to fulfil these provisions.

Domestic Violence

There is no mention of domestic violence against women in the DPRK’s initial report to the CEDAW Committee. The NKHR shadow report states though, that violence against North Korean women in the home is rooted in the patriarchal family structure and the principle of women’s subservience to men.¹³⁶ The deeply-rooted cultural concept of men being superior to women has been strengthened by the North Korean government and has allowed for further degradation of women’s status. Therefore, the common abuse of power by men is not viewed as a social problem. Due to the economic hardships and instability of the mid-1990s, domestic violence against women has been aggravated. NKHR states that husbands often punish their wives for failing to provide food.¹³⁷ In addition, as growing frustration and alcoholism rates increase among men it has resulted in widespread domestic violence. NKHR believes that future economic hardships and instability of the DPRK will only aggravate the problem of domestic violence against women further if not addressed by the government.

¹³³ CEDAW, “List of issues”, qt. 32, p. 5.

¹³⁴ CEDAW, “Responses”, resp. 32, pp. 20, 21.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ NKHR, *Class and Gender*, p. 60.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

The CEDAW Committee presumes that such violence occurs in the DPRK, as domestic violence against women is a worldwide phenomenon.¹³⁸ The Committee states that as the North Korean delegation had described the characteristics of women as being gentle and caring, it implied that men's characteristics were opposite and if this is the case when couples disagreed it could lead to acts of violence.¹³⁹ Therefore, the Committee asked whether the family courts that administered the Family Law were specialised in the area of domestic violence and whether the law had any provisions on domestic violence. If the law did not include provisions to protect women against domestic violence, the Committee urged the North Korean government to consider amending state laws.¹⁴⁰ The CEDAW Committee requested further information regarding the measures taken by the DPRK in accordance with Article 5 of the Convention to prevent and combat violence against women.

In response, Ho O Bom states that the government is aware of the existence of domestic violence, and research on the issue is ongoing.¹⁴¹ He continues by stating that “[h]usbands sometimes treated their wives roughly when they were drunk” but he did not know of any case where “domestic disputes had ended in the murder of a spouse”.¹⁴² The government does acknowledge, though, that when domestic violence occurs between couples it generally leads to divorce.¹⁴³ In fact, some women who sought a divorce raised the issue of abuse by their husbands.¹⁴⁴ In the DPRK, domestic violence cases are brought before the court and dealt with as a crime under Articles 151 and 154 of the Criminal Law. When dealing with these cases, it is said that these judges are trained to consider and rely on international human rights instruments, including CEDAW. However, the North Korean delegate Ho O Bom states that in his experience:

[m]ost of the complaints brought [to the courts] by women did not relate to gender based discrimination, but rather to the quality of services offered by certain providers and to the excessive bureaucracy of State organs.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁸ CEDAW, “699th meeting”, para. 10, p. 3.

¹³⁹ CEDAW, “700th meeting”, para. 16, p. 4.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., para. 42, p. 7; CEDAW, “List of issues”, para. 9, pp. 2, 3.

¹⁴¹ CEDAW, “699th meeting”, para. 49, p. 8.

¹⁴² Ibid., para. 33, p. 6; Ibid., para. 51, p. 8.

¹⁴³ Ibid., para. 49, p. 8.

¹⁴⁴ CEDAW, “Responses”, resp. 6, p. 5.

¹⁴⁵ CEDAW, “699th meeting”, para. 36, pp. 6, 7.

Husbands who are found guilty of domestic violence before the courts are supposedly educated by the power organs concerned and in grave cases punished by the socialist law-abiding life guidance committee established in each power organ.¹⁴⁶ To discourage men further from mistreating their wives, the North Korean government established educational programmes conducted by the Korean Democratic Women's Union.¹⁴⁷ It is unclear, though, who attends these educational programmes, and if they are compulsory for men who are known by authorities to be perpetrators of domestic violence.

The DPRK reports that in most domestic violence cases, women do not wish to discuss their private matters in public so many cases are not reported to authorities.¹⁴⁸ The North Korean delegate Han Chae Sun states that the DPRK's National Coordination Committee was very willing to pay greater attention to the question of domestic violence in order to ensure that women were not just "keeping quiet about it".¹⁴⁹ The delegate Ho O Bom states that the number of incidents of domestic violence has decreased in recent years and he does "not believe that the phenomenon pose[s] a threat to the society".¹⁵⁰ Alternatively, NKHR reports that female refugees admit that violence in the home is common, but women do not ask for help because of social constraints and simple lack of institutional assistance.¹⁵¹ Male defectors have admitted to NGOs that in South Korea if they had been reported for domestic violence they would have been approached by the police, while in the DPRK men feel safe because women do not report incidents and arrests for violent behaviour are unlikely.¹⁵²

The CEDAW Committee expressed concern that the North Korean government is not aware of the extent of domestic violence against women and that, as a result, there was a lack of specific legislation to deal with all forms of violence.¹⁵³ The government at this stage had not instituted prevention and protection measures for victims of violence. The Committee urges the DPRK to find ways to make visible the existence of domestic violence, for example by training health workers to identify signs of abuse. It also recommends that the North Korean government adopts specific legislation on domestic violence to ensure that violence against females constitutes a criminal offence, that victims of violence have access to immediate means of redress and protection and that perpetrators are prosecuted and

¹⁴⁶ CEDAW, "Responses", resp. 9, p. 7.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ CEDAW, "699th meeting", para. 49, p. 80.

¹⁴⁹ CEDAW, "700th meeting", para. 19, p. 5.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ NKHR, *Class and Gender*, p. 20.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ CEDAW, *Concluding Comments*, para. 37, p. 6.

punished.¹⁵⁴ The Committee requests the government to conduct research on the incidence, causes, and consequences of all forms of violence against women and to include the results in its next report.¹⁵⁵ To date the DPRK has not submitted a second report and therefore has not provided updated statistical information on violence against women.

Sexual Violence against North Korean Women

The DPRK's initial report made no mention of marital rape, rape or the murder of North Korean women. In accordance with Article 6 of CEDAW, the CEDAW Committee requested further information on whether the North Korean government had any information on sexual violence against women. In particular, the CEDAW Committee wanted to know further information on the number of rape cases brought before the court, and the number of men convicted of committing sexual crimes against women, including spousal rape and homicide and whether any man has had sex with an underage female.¹⁵⁶ In response, the North Korean government states that the sexual abuse of women in the form of rape has occurred on rare occasions and if it occurs, the case is dealt with under Article 153 of the Criminal Law.¹⁵⁷ The DPRK denies that any man has had sexual intercourse with a girl under the age of 15 or obliged a woman who is his subordinate to have sexual intercourse.¹⁵⁸ The government states that it became aware of marital rape by studying CEDAW.¹⁵⁹ Previously the government had never discussed marital rape but now the DPRK's National Coordination Committee for the Implementation of CEDAW and different governmental departments were considering the issue of rape within marriage.

When questioned about statistical information regarding rape cases, the DPRK provided the following information on the number of rape cases, rape and murder cases, and rape and burglary cases in the years 2003 and 2004 (see Table 7.1).¹⁶⁰ It is unclear whether the information represents women who were married and were violated or all women who were violated in North Korean society.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., para. 38, p. 6.

¹⁵⁶ CEDAW, "699th meeting", para. 42, p. 7.

¹⁵⁷ CEDAW, "Responses", resp. 12, p. 8.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., resp. 12, p. 9.

¹⁵⁹ CEDAW, "699th meeting", para. 49, p. 8.

¹⁶⁰ CEDAW, "Responses", resp. 12, pp. 8, 9.

Table 7.1 Statistics of Rape Cases (2003–2004)

Year	2003	2004
Crime		
Rape	2	1
Rape and Murder	2	2
Rape and Burglary	4	3

Source: United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), “Responses to the list of issues and questions for consideration of the initial report”, resp. 12, pp. 8, 9.

It is evident from the Table 7.1 that the reported number of cases of rape, rape and murder, and rape and burglary in the DPRK in the years 2003 and 2004 is extremely low. NKHR states however, that rape and sexual assault of women is common in North Korean society, detention centres and political prison camps.¹⁶¹ This table suggests that the North Korean government is in denial of sexual violence against women. The data provided by the state could be seen as an attempt to deliberately hide cases of sexual abuse against women or could reflect the fact that women do not have an avenue to report incidents. Due to the cultural value placed on women’s purity or chastity, most North Korean women who have been victims of sexual assault and harassment are reluctant to report the incident to the authorities.¹⁶² Up until this point, the DPRK had not promulgated legislative avenues for victims of sexual or violent abuse to receive assistance by counselling services or legal advice. However, where women have achieved some financial independence, it may be easier to leave abusive husbands.¹⁶³

The CEDAW Committee did not submit recommendations to the DPRK on how to addresses the rape or murder of women. However, as discussed above, Article 6 of CEDAW outlines state parties’ responsibilities to eliminate the sexual exploitation of women. As the DPRK is party to this convention, it has a responsibility to fulfil these provisions.

¹⁶¹ NKHR, *Class and Gender*, p. 21.

¹⁶² Jung and Dalton, “Mothers of the Revolution”, p. 756.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

Women in the Labour Force

In the DPRK's initial report, the government states that the key to promoting women's rights is to bring women into the labour force. The government's target to increase female labour participation began as early as 1958, although actual codification of major standards came about with the enactment of the Labour Law in 1978.¹⁶⁴ Article 31 of the Labour Law stipulates, "[t]he State shall provide all conditions for women to take part in social labour". In the North Korean legal system women are also guaranteed the right to employment opportunity, the right to free choice of profession, the right to equal pay and the right to safe working conditions as discussed above in chapter 3. While the government states that "[w]omen are free in the choice of employment in conformity with their technology, knowledge, aptitude and wish", it also states that it allocates female graduates to jobs.¹⁶⁵ This statement indicates a contradiction in the wording and actions of the state because if a person has the freedom to choose his or her occupation then there would be no need for the government to allocate anyone to an occupation.

The working age of men and women in the DPRK is 16 to 55 years and if a person older than 55 years wishes to work, they can do so.¹⁶⁶ Workers devote eight hours a day to their jobs, eight hours to study (of the *Juche* idea) and eight hours to rest and sleep.¹⁶⁷ By 1998, women accounted for 48.4 per cent of the labour force.¹⁶⁸ By the early 1990s, though, women, especially those married to high-income earners, tended to quit their jobs after marriage or were the first to be laid off due to the stagnant economy.¹⁶⁹ As more married women became full-time housewives, a clearly gendered view of the role of women was emphasised by the government.¹⁷⁰ The state emphasised the role of women as mothers and passed the responsibility of caring financially for the family to the family members themselves. The state was no longer capable of supporting all North Koreans with the collapse of the PDS and the redistribution of sources to certain areas in society such as the military and loyal followers.

¹⁶⁴ CEDAW, *Initial Report*, para. 154, p. 22; UNICEF, *Children and Women*, (2003), p. 18.

¹⁶⁵ CEDAW, *Initial Report*, para. 158, pp. 22, 23.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, para. 157, p. 22.

¹⁶⁷ Jung and Dalton, "Mothers of the Revolution", p. 751.

¹⁶⁸ UNICEF, *Children and Women*, (2003), p. 46.

¹⁶⁹ Kyung Ae Park, "Women and Revolution in North Korea", *Pacific Affairs*, 65 (4) (1992–1993), p. 541.

¹⁷⁰ Jung and Dalton, "Mothers of the Revolution", p. 750.

The North Korean government is said to have provided social infrastructure to facilitate the entry of women into the labour force.¹⁷¹ Article 31 of the Labour Law and the Law on Nursing and Upbringing of Children (1976) provides for local government bodies, enterprises and social cooperative organisations to develop nurseries, kindergartens, children's wards, and public service facilities for the convenience of working women.¹⁷² Article 77 of the 1998 Constitution also provides for the government to establish rice-cooking houses, food processing factories, morning and evening shops and other public welfare facilities in the residential districts.¹⁷³ In addition to these legal measures, the government has also stressed the technological development of time-saving domestic appliances to ease the domestic burden of women. All of these facilities, along with kindergartens and nurseries, were built under the assumption that women are the primary caregivers and therefore need to be freed from household chores so they could join the public labour force. The North Korean government claims that women and men receive equal remuneration in respect of work of equal value.¹⁷⁴ Article 7 of the DPRK Constitution states that citizens "work according to their abilities and are paid in accordance with the quantity and quality of their work". Salaries in the DPRK are supposedly determined under the principle of compensation for the physical and mental consumption of labour and in consideration of various facts including the worker's technical skill, labour intensity, and work conditions.¹⁷⁵

With reference to Article 11 of CEDAW, the Committee requested an explanation on the process by which the North Korean government "allocates" female graduates to the employment sector.¹⁷⁶ As women are traditionally employed in health care, education and the commercial and light industrial sectors, the Committee requested the DPRK to provide detailed information, disaggregated by gender, regarding the salaries of employees working in various sectors and the wage gap between genders.¹⁷⁷

In response, the DPRK states that the allocation of work is decided by the labour administration organ, institution, enterprise or organisation concerned in view of an individual's wishes.¹⁷⁸ It is up to one's own mind whether to accept the decision and a person may lodge a complaint with the people's power organ, the institution or enterprise concerned,

¹⁷¹ CEDAW, *Initial Report*, para. 154, p. 22.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, para. 173, p. 25.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, para. 159, p. 23.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, para. 161, p. 23.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, para. 158, p. 22; CEDAW, "List of issues", qt. 18, p. 4.

¹⁷⁷ CEDAW, "List of issues", qt. 19, p. 4.

¹⁷⁸ CEDAW, "Responses", resp. 18, pp. 12, 13.

if a decision on employment is unacceptable.¹⁷⁹ When the institution, enterprise, or occupation of their choice has no vacancy, people temporarily work in other places until a place is available. The DPRK provided the following statistical information about the gender segregation of several sectors in the years 2003 and 2004 (see Table 7.2).

Table 7.2 Employment Sectors and Gender Segregation (2003–2004)

Employment Sector	Gender	2003	2004
Industry	Male	1,965	1,979
	Female	2,146	2,206
Agriculture	Male	1,644	1,701
	Female	1,672	1,687
Construction and Geological Survey	Male	340	352
	Female	105	107
Transport and Telecommunication	Male	274	296
	Female	111	117
Commerce and Procurement	Male	152	159
	Female	363	371
Education, Culture, and Health	Male	347	355
	Female	514	527
Land Management and City Administration	Male	153	161
	Female	107	112

(Unit: 1,000)

Source: United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), “Responses to the list of issues and questions for consideration of the initial report”, resp. 20, p. 4.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

The data provided in Table 7.2 suggests that the ratio of men to women in most employment sectors changed only slightly from 2003 and 2004. The table, however, demonstrates the feminisation of some sectors, such as healthcare, culture, and education, which tend to be paid lower than other sectors considered heavy industries, which are mostly occupied by men.¹⁸⁰ In the DPRK, salaries depend on occupational classification, rating, technical skill, functions, and work conditions. The DPRK reports:

The principle in paying salary is to recover the physical and mental energy consumed in the work and ensure the life of a person, and this principle is not altered if the worker is a woman.¹⁸¹

Therefore, if a person works in an occupation considered “hard labour” where more energy is required they would receive a higher salary than those in the so-called “light industries”. Further, a person who performs technical or intellectual work receives a higher salary than those performing simple labour. In 2001, the minimum monthly salary was 2,200 NKwon (3.20 AUD/ 2.45 USD), the average salary 5,000 NKwon (7.25 AUD/ 5.55 USD), and the highest salary level 8,000 NKwon (11.60 AUD/ 8.90 USD).¹⁸² The government claims that the minimum salary is enough to procure staples, subsidised food and daily necessities, as well as saving 800 to 900 won.¹⁸³ Table 7.2 suggests however, that a gender hierarchy within occupations exists in the DPRK as men occupy positions which are perceived as higher skilled (and thus more lucrative) positions than women do.¹⁸⁴ Eun-young Shin states, however, that it is debatable whether the gendered division of labour is necessarily a disadvantage to women as the government transferred men from the light industries to heavy industries in order to provide jobs for women.¹⁸⁵ Shin suggests that this can be viewed as a special consideration to protect women rather than to discriminate against them.¹⁸⁶ The government states that it has taken measures to encourage more women into sectors in which they are underrepresented.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁰ Park, “Women and Revolution”, p. 540.

¹⁸¹ CEDAW, “Responses”, resp. 18, pp. 12, 13.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Eun-young Shin, “Ideology and Gender Equality: Women’s Policies of North Korea and China”, *East Asian Review*, 13 (3) (2001), pp. 93, 94.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 93.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ CEDAW, “Responses”, resp. 17, pp. 11, 12.

In the meetings held in New York between the DPRK and CEDAW in 2005, Ho O Bom states that the National Coordination Committee for the Implementation of CEDAW has developed a 10-year plan for the advancement of women, with the primary objective “to promote women’s participation in the country’s economic and social life”.¹⁸⁸ He acknowledges that women account for 80 per cent of the total number of employees in the education and public health sectors, while representing less than 20 per cent of the workers in certain other sectors. Ho O Bom’s colleague, Hong Ji Sun states that it “is true that women tended to go into fields of medicine, commerce and light industry and were similarly heavily represented in administration posts relating to those areas”.¹⁸⁹ She explains that women’s “presence in the caring professions seemed to be related to the nature of women”. This statement suggests that attitudes towards roles performed by men and women in North Korean society have not changed significantly, as certain occupations are seen to be better suited to women because of their “nurturing” characteristics. Han Chae Sun describes the process of allocating graduates to jobs. First teachers explain what job opportunities are available to graduates and then communicate each graduate’s choice to the labour administration department of municipal and district people’s committees, which discuss the graduate’s choice with the respective enterprises.¹⁹⁰ After that, the committees meet the graduates and jobs are allocated. There is no system for advertising jobs in the DPRK so notification of job opportunities is made through schools and people’s committees.

The CEDAW Committee was concerned that there are many instances of indirect and hidden discrimination against women in the employment sector and that the prevailing perception is that the public and social spheres are “men’s spheres”.¹⁹¹ The Committee urges the DPRK to recognise and analyse the persistence of indirect and hidden discrimination as an obstacle to the implementation of CEDAW, including measures to identify where discrimination occurs, to raise awareness and to be proactive in its elimination.¹⁹²

The Trafficking of North Korean Women

The North Korean government claims in its initial report to the CEDAW Committee that the “traffic in women and prostitution [of women] are regarded as the most shameful crime” and

¹⁸⁸ CEDAW, “699th meeting”, para. 35, p. 6.

¹⁸⁹ CEDAW, “700th meeting”, para. 4, p. 2.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., para. 14, p. 4.

¹⁹¹ CEDAW, *Concluding Comments*, para. 27, p. 4.

¹⁹² Ibid., para. 28, p. 4.

that there has been no reported case for many years.¹⁹³ The government instead points to the colonial period when women were forced into prostitution and states, “[t]here used to be the systems of licensed or unlicensed prostitution, *Kisaeng*, and traffic in women in the days of the Japanese colonial rule”.¹⁹⁴ According to the DPRK, the Japanese imperial army forced 200,000 Korean women into prostitution as so-called “comfort women”.¹⁹⁵ Historians estimate however, that between 100,000 and 200,000 women were enslaved in this system.¹⁹⁶ While many of the women who were forced into sexual slavery were young Korean women, there were also women of several other nationalities.¹⁹⁷ Women were recruited in many ways. Some women were promised work in factories or military hospitals and some women were kidnapped. Immediately after the liberation of Korea from Japanese colonial rule in 1945, the North Korean interim government promulgated strict legal prohibition against the prostitution and trafficking of women.¹⁹⁸

The DPRK states that as a precautionary measure to prevent the sexual violation of North Korean women, the government promulgated the Criminal Law and Criminal Procedures Act in 1974, revised in 1987 and 1992 respectively.¹⁹⁹ Article 152 of the Criminal Law states:

A man who rapes a woman by using violence or threat or by taking advantage of her when she is helpless, or a man who has sexual intercourse with a girl under the age of 15 shall be punished gravely.

The Article does not explain in detail, though, what the punishment of the perpetrator would be if a woman or girl is sexually violated. The Law continues, “[a] man who obliges a woman who is his subordinate officially or by duty to have sexual intercourse with him shall be punished” (Criminal Law, Article 154). Again, the Article does not specify the punishment of the perpetrator. Articles 151 and 152 of the Criminal Law address the punishment of a perpetrator by stating:

¹⁹³ CEDAW, *Initial Report*, para. 105, p. 16.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, para. 105, p. 16.

¹⁹⁵ CEDAW, *699th meeting*, para.16, p. 4.

¹⁹⁶ Jeongwon Choi, “The Vanished Bloom: The Story of Korean Comfort Women”, *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention*, 2 (7) (2013), p. 26.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ CEDAW, *Initial Report*, para. 105, p. 16.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, para. 106, p. 16.

[a] person who illegally as well as discriminatively restricts the liberty of a woman, or insults or impairs the honour of a woman is committed to a reform institution for up to two years.²⁰⁰

However, the law does not explain in detail the punishment of perpetrators in each different form of abuse against women and domestic violence is unaddressed.

Due to the difficult living conditions in the DPRK in the 1990s, many people were pushed to cross the border to China. Good Friends states that “a majority of [North Korean] women who crossed the national border to China said that their decision was based on the severe economic difficulty in the DPRK”.²⁰¹ Though some North Korean women chose to cross the border to marry Chinese men, other women were forced into marriages through trafficking.²⁰² An important factor stimulating the trafficking of North Korean women is the gender imbalance in China caused by the state’s one-child policy and parents’ general preference for male offspring. The gender gap in rural areas of China has grown because of the continued economic boom and modernisation of cities, which sees more and more Chinese women leave the countryside in search of employment in the better-paid urban industrial sectors.²⁰³ As a result, the North Korean bride market and the placement of women into the Chinese sex industry have grown over the years. NKHR states that the trafficking of women continues to flourish in China as North Korean women choose to go to China for survival reasons.²⁰⁴

Since the food crisis in the mid-1990s, women have turned to prostitution in desperate circumstances to secure money for food for their families.²⁰⁵ Good Friends states that according to the countless testimonies it has collected from North Koreans, prostitution has grown drastically after the food shortage.²⁰⁶ Prostitution in the DPRK though, is different from other societies, as it is not conducted in the public sphere. It is instead prevalent, for instance, as a bribe to officials or police officers for favours or it is employed solely as a survival strategy.²⁰⁷ Since the food crisis, prostitution in the DPRK has become “not only

²⁰⁰ Ibid., para. 82, p. 13.

²⁰¹ Good Friends, *Alternative NGO Report*, p. 8

²⁰² Ibid., p. 7.

²⁰³ Park, “Economic crisis”, p. 168.

²⁰⁴ NKHR, *Class and Gender*, p. 26.

²⁰⁵ Jung and Dalton, “Mothers of the Revolution”, p. 756.

²⁰⁶ Good Friends, *Alternative NGO Report*, p. 7.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

more pervasive, but also more widely accepted by the general public as a survival strategy”.²⁰⁸

The CEDAW Committee noted the concerns of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women who reported on the trafficking of North Korean women and girls to China as brides or prostitutes.²⁰⁹ In accordance with Article 6 of CEDAW, the Committee requested the DPRK to indicate what legal and programmatic measures are in place to identify, prevent and combat the trafficking of women.²¹⁰ The Committee also urged the government to indicate whether any cases of trafficking had been brought before the courts under Article 153 or 154 of the Criminal Law.²¹¹

In response, the North Korean government maintains, “there has not been any report of trafficking in women or prostitution”.²¹² Therefore, the DPRK asserts that there has been no need for amendments to the Criminal Law to include provision for the punishment of trafficking in women and prostitution. The North Korean legal system has considered some proposals to include these provisions in the Criminal Law for preventive effect. The government states, “it is unlikely that [North Korean] women and girls are sold to China as prostitutes or brides, some went over to China in the northern areas for the needs of life or trade”.²¹³ It is said that these women then came back to the DPRK with the things they had procured in China. The government is said not to have punished them as their “deeds were related to the current economic difficulties”.²¹⁴ The DPRK reports that recently there have been reports of “disorderly crossing over the borderline under the pretext of economic difficulty”.²¹⁵ It is in this circumstance that the immigration office strengthened its legal requirements and concluded bilateral agreements with the neighbouring countries to control illegal immigration. The DPRK did not indicate what countries it discussed control of illegal immigration with but one could assume that it was China because of the issues outlined above.

²⁰⁸ Park, “Economic crisis”, p. 169.

²⁰⁹ United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR), “Integration of the Human Rights of Women and Gender Perspective”, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, submitted in accordance with Commission on Human Rights resolution 2002/52*, E/CN.4/2003/75/Add.1 (Fifty-ninth session, Item 12 (a) of the provisional agenda, 27 February 2003), para. 966, p. 180; CEDAW, “List of issues”, para. 11, p. 3.

²¹⁰ Article 6 of the CEDAW Convention stipulates, “States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women”.

²¹¹ CEDAW, “List of issues”, para. 12, p. 3.

²¹² CEDAW, “Responses”, resp. 11, p. 8.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

During the meetings in New York in 2005, Ho O Bom stated that the government had looked into the situation of women crossing the border into China and found that women mostly crossed in search of food.²¹⁶ However, as many of them bypassed the proper legal formalities for leaving or re-entering the country, both the DPRK and China had intensified monitoring by their border guards. The delegation did not address the increase in numbers of women entering prostitution as a survival tactic. It instead referred to the colonial period and stated that gender equality was never achieved before the North Korean government came to power because the Japanese Imperial Army had “forced 200,000 Korean women into prostitution as ‘comfort women’ for the military, on threat of death if they refused”.²¹⁷

The CEDAW Committee is concerned that North Korean women may become vulnerable to trafficking and other forms of exploitation, such as prostitution.²¹⁸ It calls on the DPRK to train law enforcement officials, migration officials and border police on the causes, consequences and incidence of trafficking and other forms of exploitation so as to enable them to render support to women who might be at risk of becoming victims of trafficking or commercial sexual exploitation.²¹⁹ It also recommends that the government conduct a nationwide awareness campaign on the risks and consequences of trafficking of women and girls. The Committee urges the government to intensify its efforts to deal with this phenomenon through increased international, regional, and bilateral cooperation.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the gap between how the North Korean government promotes gender equality to the international community and the actual conditions within the DPRK have been considered through the communication between the state and the CEDAW Committee. In the DPRK’s initial report to the CEDAW Committee the North Korean government emphasised the efforts of the state in eliminating all forms of discrimination against women by stressing the importance of preferential treatment of women in state laws and policy. Referring to “preferential” treatment of women, though, exposes the gendered lens of the government. Often the language employed in the laws assigned women to stereotypical feminine roles. For example, measures taken by the government to “protect” women within families and society actually reinforced stereotyping of men and women to certain roles in families, and forced

²¹⁶ CEDAW, “699th meeting”, para. 55, p. 9.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ CEDAW, *Concluding Comment*, para. 41, p. 7.

²¹⁹ Ibid., para. 42, p. 7.

women to adapt themselves to the role of mother and carer. Therefore, the realities faced by many women fall short of the ideals outlined in the state laws and policies.

Further, laws and policies designed to emancipate North Korean women have not been amended to incorporate modern problems, such as women who are victims of domestic violence and trafficking. The government explained that these issues are not of great social concern or have not occurred since the occupation of Korea by Japan. Instead, the gendered view of the North Korean government is to assume that women perform the majority of household chores and to address this through the promulgation of laws to help lessen their burdens. These laws, however, only confirm the government's perception that women are the primary carers of children and responsible for cleaning and cooking for their families. Further, once women left the home to work in the national reconstruction project they were assigned by the government to work deemed suitable for them to perform. These jobs were typically paid less than those monopolised by men because women were deemed more physically and mentally suitable for light work. Therefore, in the DPRK's communication with the CEDAW Committee official state rhetoric has presented to the international community a positive image of life for North Korean women.

In the next chapter, I examine communication between the DPRK and the UN from 2006 to 2011 and focus on the government's deployment of historical issues such as the sexual enslavement of Korean women by Japan when answering questions regarding gender equality. The North Korean government asserts that in order to overcome customary discrimination within the country issues of past crimes against Korean women, including the issue of so-called "comfort women", need to be addressed and completely resolved. The government has taken the position that the sexual exploitation of Korean women was fundamentally tied to the colonial occupation of the country and was thus a historical rather than contemporary issue. The North Korean government denies that sexual violations against women continued to occur after the liberation of the country. Along with the DPRK's continued communication with the UN, there was international pressure for the North Korean government to amend existing state laws and establish new laws to include provisions for the greater protection of women's rights. In 2010, the state adopted the Women's Rights Act, which was the first law to directly address the rights of women since the promulgation of the Law on Equality of the Sexes in 1946. For the first time, provisions addressed issues such as domestic violence, female infanticide and the protection of pregnant women who face execution. In the following chapter, I consider the years from 2006 to 2011, including the

Women's Rights Act and the DPRK's communication with the UN. The year 2011 also marked the end of the rule of Kim Jong Il.

8. North Korea and the United Nations (2006–2011)

The Japanese confined each girl in a cell of about two square metres. My room was No. 8. I had to 'serve' 20 Japanese soldiers on a daily average, and more on Sundays. The Japanese beat, even stabbed, 'comfort girls' if the latter cried with pain.

Ri Kyong Saeng, 1992.¹

Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, North Korea) and the Committee to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination against Women (hereafter "CEDAW Committee") held their last meeting in New York in July 2005.² This was the last time that the North Korean government and the CEDAW Committee directly communicated about the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). After 2005, the North Korean government continued to communicate with the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA, General Assembly) and other United Nations (UN) bodies. In its communications, the DPRK often addressed concerns raised by the UN and the CEDAW Committee relating to the status of North Korean women.³ These concerns involved the continued stereotyping of women in the home and in the labour force, and women's access to food, health care, and education. At every possible opportunity, the

¹ Testimony of former North Korean "comfort woman", Ri Kyong Saeng, recorded in 1992, aged 76 years at the time. Testimony published in Jong Hyong Ri, *Japan's War Crimes, Past and Present* (Pyongyang: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1999), p. 153.

² United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), "Summary Record of the 699th meeting", *Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, CEDAW/C/SR.699 (Thirty-third session, 5 to 22 July 2005), (New York: 18 July 2005 at 10 am) (distributed 9 September 2005); United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), "Summary Record of the 700th meeting", *Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, CEDAW/C/SR.700 (Thirty-third session, 5 to 22 July 2005), (New York: 18 July 2005 at 3pm) (distributed 9 September 2005).

³ "Statement by the Delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on Item 56 'Advancement of Women'", *Permanent Mission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the United Nations* (New York: Third Committee of the 63rd session of the United Nations General Assembly, 14 October 2008); "Statement by Mr. Pak Tok Hun on Agenda item 28 'Advancement of Women'", *Permanent Mission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the United Nations* (New York: Third Committee of the 65th session of the United Nations General Assembly, 14 September 2010).

UN, as well as the international community, emphasised the importance of improving the situation for women in the DPRK.

In this chapter, I examine communications between the DPRK and UN from 2006 to 2011, including the DPRK's deployment of the historical issue of the sexual enslavement of Korean women by the Japanese Imperial Army when discussing gender equality. Specifically, I refer to two North Korean press releases issued in response to items discussed during UN General Assemblies in 2008 and 2010. In 2008, the DPRK participated in the 63rd session of the UNGA and issued a press release in response to Item 56 "Advancement of Women".⁴ The press release addressed the issue of achieving gender equality and the elimination of customary discrimination within the DPRK. The government asserted that in order to overcome customary discrimination issues of past crimes against Korean women, including the issue of so-called "comfort women", needed to be addressed and completely resolved. Then, in 2010, a North Korean delegation, including the Ambassador Deputy Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of the DPRK to the UN, Pak Tok Hun, participated in the 65th session of the UNGA and issued a press release in response to Agenda item 28 "Advancement of Women". The press release outlined the DPRK's concerns about achieving gender equality within the country and the issue of "comfort women".⁵

During these years, there was pressure from the international community for the North Korean government to amend existing state laws and establish new laws to include provisions for the greater protection of women's rights. Between 2006 and 2010, two pieces of legislation that stand out were the amended state Constitution in 2009 and the Women's Rights Act in 2010. In this chapter, I specifically examine provisions that address the issues of gender stereotyping, violence against women and the trafficking of North Korean women. This information will be compared to the findings of the non-governmental organisations (NGO), Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights (NKHR), and the Korea Institute for National Unification (KINU).⁶ The information collected by these organisations includes testimonies of North Korean refugees which offer an alternative look at North Korean society in recent years. In this chapter, I argue that despite international pressure for the North Korean government to address the rights of women in its dealings with the UN and through amended laws and policies, the DPRK has still not addressed the stereotyping of women to

⁴ "Statement by the Delegation".

⁵ "Statement by Mr. Pak Tok Hun".

⁶ Joanna Hosaniak, *Status of Women's Rights in the Context of Socio-Economic Changes in the DPRK*, NKHR Briefing Report No.7 (Seoul: Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights, 2013); Korea Institute of National Unification (KINU), *White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea, 2012* (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, 2012).

gendered positions in society. This is evident in the DPRK's deflection of the contemporary issue of the trafficking of Korean women to the historical issue of the sexual enslavement of Korean women by Japan as will be discussed further below.

I begin by outlining the relationship of the DPRK and the UN between 2006 and 2011 to ensure the reader has an understanding of North Korea's relations with the world during this period.

The DPRK and the United Nations (2006–2011)

Since the DPRK's and CEDAW Committee's last meetings in New York in 2005, the North Korean government has continued to correspond with the UNGA, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHCR)⁷ and other UN bodies, such as the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)⁸ and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).⁹ At times relations between the DPRK and UN have been strained, usually because of actions taken by the North Korean government. This can be seen on 9 October 2006, when the North Korean government authorised a nuclear weapons test in Sangpyong-ri, about 15 km from the coastal city of Kimchaek and about 50 km west of Musadan-ri, DPRK. In spite of this, the UN kept communication channels open to ensure that the DPRK continued to interact with the

⁷ United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), "Human Rights Council – Universal Periodic Review", *United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights*, (7 December 2009), <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/Highlights7December2009pm.aspx> (accessed 4 July 2014).

⁸ The DPRK acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in September 1990 without any reservations. On 10 December 2007, the DPRK submitted a combined third and fourth periodic report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child ("CRC Committee") concerning the implementation of the CRC within the DPRK. The report had been due months earlier on 20 October 2007 and covered a six-year period from 2001 to 2007. United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), "Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties under Article 44 of the Convention", *The combined third and fourth reports of States parties due in 2007, Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, CRC/C/PRK/4 (submitted 10 December 2007), (distributed 15 January 2008); United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), *Written replies by the government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the List of Issues (CRC/C/PRK/Q/4) prepared by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in connection with the consideration of the third and fourth periodic reports of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, CRC/C/PRK/Q/4/Add.1 (Fiftieth session, 12-13 January 2009), (distributed 22 December 2008).

⁹ United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), "Human Rights Situations that Require the Council's Attention", *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea: Vitit Muntarbhorn*, 15 February 2008, A/HRC/7/20 (Human Rights Council, seventh session, 3 to 28 March 2008, Agenda item 4); United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), "Implementation of General Assembly Resolution 60/251 of 15 March 2006 Entitled 'Human Rights Council'", *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea: Vitit Muntarbhorn*, 7 February 2007, A/HRC/4/15 (Human Rights Council, fourth session, 12 to 30 March 2007, Item 2 of the provisional agenda); United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), "Situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea", *Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly*, 28 February 2008, A/RES/62/167 (Sixty-second session, 18 December 2007, Agenda item 70 (c)); United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), "Situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea", *Report of the Secretary-General*, 26 August 2008, A/63/332 (Sixty-third session, 16 September 2008, Item 67 (c) of the provisional agenda).

international community, build upon already established relationships, and not isolate itself further from the world.

The DPRK was not always forthcoming with information, however, and did not submit several periodic reports to the various UN bodies. Specifically, North Korea did not submit the following reports: the third periodic report of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) due January 2004, the second and third periodic reports of CEDAW due March 2006 and March 2010, and the third periodic report of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) due June 2008. The DPRK has always been a key topic of discussion in the UNGA and other UN bodies though, and at every opportunity, the UN has questioned the DPRK on the human rights of the North Korean people. Below I examine several issues that occurred between the DPRK and the UN between 2006 and 2011.

The United Nation Security Council Resolution 1718 (2006)

Five days after the DPRK's nuclear weapons test on 14 October 2006, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC, Security Council) issued Resolution 1718 in response.¹⁰ This resolution provided context for the decision by the Security Council to impose sanctions. The resolution cited the DPRK's violation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and the country's subsequent withdrawal from the Treaty on 10 January 2003,¹¹ the DPRK's refusal to participate in another round of the Six-Party Talks and its failure to address other security and humanitarian concerns raised by the international community.¹² UN bodies also took further action on human rights issues through resolutions of the UN General Assembly, and reports from the UN Secretary-General and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the DPRK.¹³ North Korean funds that were controlled or owned directly or indirectly

¹⁰ United Nations Security Council (UNSC), "Resolution 1718 (2006)", *Resolution adopted by the Security Council, S/RES/1718(2006)*, (5551st meeting, 14 October 2006).

¹¹ The DPRK ratified the NPT on 12 December 1985, but gave notice of withdrawal 10 January 2003 following US allegations that it had started an illegal enriched uranium weapons program. Withdrawal from the Treaty came into full effect on 10 April 2003 making North Korea the first state ever to withdraw from the NPT.

¹² UNSC, "Resolution 1718 (2006)", para. 14, p. 5. Responding to the UN Security Council's allegations, the DPRK declared on the 14 April 2009, that it would not attend the Six Party Talks, and resumed its nuclear enrichment program.

¹³ Sanctions imposed by the Security Council prohibited countries from exporting military goods and supplies, as well as banning the export of luxury goods to the DPRK. United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), "Situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea", *Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly*, 1 March 2007, A/RES/61/174 (Sixty-first session, 19 December 2006, Agenda item 67(c)); UNGA, "Situation of human rights", A/RES/62/167; UNGA, "Situation of human rights", A/63/332; UNGA, "Implementation of General Assembly Resolution 60/251"; United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), "Situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea", *Note by the Secretary-General*, 15

by a person or entity engaged in the nuclear weapons program were frozen and travel bans applied to persons tied to the program.¹⁴ The Security Council determined that other UN member states were empowered to inspect cargo to and from the DPRK to enforce the ban on trafficking in chemical, biological and nuclear weapons.¹⁵ The Security Council made clear that these sanctions did not include stopping or withholding humanitarian aid to the North Korean people.¹⁶

In response to the UN Security Council Resolution 1718, the DPRK was uncooperative. A UN press release regarding the resolution quoted a North Korean representative, Pak Gil Yon, as stating that the DPRK government “totally rejected” the resolution, saying that it was “gangster-like” of the Security Council to adopt such a coercive resolution against the country, while neglecting the nuclear threat posed by the USA against the DPRK.¹⁷ The statement continued that the Security Council had completely lost its impartiality and was applying double standards.¹⁸ Although the DPRK had conducted a nuclear test, “due to American provocation”, the North Korean delegate stated that “it still remained unchanged in its will to denuclearise the Korean peninsula through dialogue and negotiation, as that had been President Kim Il Sung’s last instruction”.¹⁹ The delegate stated that the DPRK had clarified more than once that:

[i]t would have no need for even a single nuclear weapon as long as the [USA] dropped its hostile policies towards the country and as long as confidence was built between the two countries.²⁰

Instead, the USA is said to have “manipulated the Security Council” into adopting a resolution putting pressure on Pyongyang.²¹ Two months after the DPRK tested nuclear

August 2007, A/62/264, (Sixty-second session, 18 September 2007, Item 72 (c) of the provisional agenda); UNGA, “Human Rights Situations that Require the Council’s Attention”.

¹⁴ UNGA, “Situation of human rights”, A/RES/61/174, para. 8(d) and 8(e), p. 3.

¹⁵ Ibid., para. 8(f), p. 3.

¹⁶ Ibid., para. 9(a), pp. 3, 4.

¹⁷ United Nations Security Council (UNSC), *Security Council Condemns Nuclear Test by Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 1718 (2006)*, SC/8853 (New York: Department of Public Information, News and Media Division, Oct. 14, 2006).

¹⁸ Ibid. The DPRK was disappointed that the Security Council was not concerned when the US threatened to launch nuclear pre-emptive attacks, reinforced its armed forces and conducted large-scale military exercises near the Korean peninsula. The North Korean delegation said that, on 9 October, the DPRK had successfully conducted underground nuclear tests as a way of bolstering the country’s self-defence. UN: SC, *Security Council Condemns Nuclear Test*.

¹⁹ UNSC, *Security Council Condemns Nuclear Test*.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

weapons and the UNGA instituted Resolution 1718, the General Assembly approved two subsequent resolutions. As part of these resolutions, reports were commissioned by the UN Secretary-General and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the DPRK. The two resolutions and four reports of the Secretary-General and the Special Rapporteur are discussed below.

The United Nations General Assembly Resolutions 61/174 and 62/167 (2006–2007)

Concerning the human rights situation in the DPRK, the UNGA approved Resolution 61/174 and 62/167 in December 2006 and December 2007 respectively.²² The resolutions covered concerns similar to those outlined previously by the General Assembly, but added concerns regarding “the violations of economic, social, and cultural rights, which have led to severe malnutrition and hardship for the population in the [DPRK]”.²³ The UNGA urged the North Korean government to end the “systematic, widespread, and grave violations of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights in the [DPRK]”.²⁴ Specifically the resolutions requested the DPRK to consider the:

[c]ontinuing violation of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women, in particular the trafficking of women for the purpose of prostitution or forced marriage and the subjection of women to human smuggling, forced abortions, gender-based discrimination and violence.²⁵

The General Assembly suggested that, when addressing these human rights violations, the DPRK should “tackle the root causes leading to refugee outflows and criminalise those who exploit refugees by human smuggling, trafficking and extortion, while not criminalising the victim”.²⁶ This was particularly significant for North Korean women, as the North Korean government had not addressed the trafficking of young girls and women to China in the CEDAW report in 2002 or any state legislation up until this point. The UNGA also requested that the DPRK extend access and cooperation to the Special Rapporteur on the situation of

²² UNGA, “Situation of human rights”, A/RES/61/174; UN: GA, “Situation of human rights”, A/RES/62/167.

²³ UNGA, “Situation of human rights”, A/RES/61/174, para. 1(b)(vi), p. 2.

²⁴ UNGA, “Situation of human rights”, A/RES/62/167, para. 1(b), p. 2.

²⁵ Ibid., para. 1(b)(vi), p. 3.

²⁶ Ibid., para. 4(b), p. 4.

human rights in North Korea, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and other UN agencies and humanitarian actors.²⁷

In Resolution 61/174, the General Assembly continued to examine the situation of human rights in the DPRK at its 63rd session, which was to take place in September 2008. It also requested the UN Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive report on the situation in the DPRK and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in North Korea to continue to report the findings and recommendations.²⁸ This was the first time the Secretary-General was requested to report to the UNGA about the human rights situation in the DPRK.

By September 2007, the UN Secretary-General had finished the report, outlining the UN's history in dealing with the DPRK's human rights issues.²⁹ The report identified the conditions that led to the General Assembly Resolution 62/167, including the DPRK's failure to cooperate with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and with the Special Rapporteur.³⁰ The report also summarised the work and findings of various UN bodies on the status of human rights in the DPRK.³¹ Based on the information in the report, the Secretary-General noted that little progress had been made in implementing any of the international treaties or resolutions of the UNGA, the UN Commission on Human Rights or other UN bodies.³² The UN Secretary-General urged the North Korean government to "safeguard fundamental rights and freedoms and show visible signs of domestic legal reform so as to fulfil its treaty obligations and comply with international standards".³³ At the time, the DPRK had not submitted its second periodic report concerning the implementation of CEDAW, which was due by March 2006.³⁴ While information provided by the DPRK was sometimes limited, the Secretary-General requested that the Commission on Human Rights continue its efforts to engage in constructive dialogue with the country, as well as the international community continuing to support the DPRK through humanitarian efforts.³⁵ The North Korean government was urged by the Secretary-General "to sustain cooperation with United Nations agencies and other humanitarian actors".³⁶

²⁷ Ibid., para. 4(c)(d)(e), p. 4.

²⁸ Ibid., para. 5, p. 4.

²⁹ UNGA, "Situation of human rights", A/63/332.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Agencies include: the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the FAO, the WFP, the UNICEF, the UN Development Programme, and the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

³² UNGA, "Situation of human rights", A/63/332, para. 4, p. 4.

³³ UNGA, "Implementation of General Assembly Resolution 60/251", summary, p. 2.

³⁴ Ibid., para. 10, p. 6.

³⁵ Ibid., para. 58, p. 17; Ibid., para. 55, p. 16.

³⁶ Ibid., para. 55, p. 16.

The United Nations Special Rapporteur Reports (2007–2008)

From February 2007 to February 2008, the then Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in North Korea, Vitit Muntarbhorn (Thai representative), issued three reports on human rights concerns in the DPRK.³⁷ The first report, issued in February 2007, outlined the DPRK's refusal to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur and highlighted the ongoing human rights violations in the country, including food shortages and malnutrition, a lack of basic freedoms, the mistreatment of prisoners and the exploitation of refugees.³⁸ The report also discussed the responsibility of the North Korean government to protect its population and the obligation of the international community to take collective action should the country fail to fulfil its obligations to protect its people. The Special Rapporteur concluded by calling for the DPRK to abide by its international human rights obligations, facilitate humanitarian aid, improve food security, reform its prison system and improve the treatment of refugees.³⁹

Six months later, in August 2007, the UN Secretary-General presented the Special Rapporteur's second report to the UNGA.⁴⁰ While the DPRK continued to refuse to provide the Special Rapporteur access to the country, the report noted that there were some improvements in North Korea's relationship with the international community, in particular the progress made through recent six-round Six-Party Talks (19 March–22 March, 18 July–20 July 2007).⁴¹ Despite the appearance of some improvement, the Special Rapporteur reported that many of the same problems and human rights abuses highlighted in the first report of February 2007 continued in the DPRK. The North Korean government was urged to “protect the rights of women, children and other groups, particularly by addressing their vulnerable positions and ending discrimination”.⁴² This was particularly important, as the DPRK had not addressed the elimination of discrimination against women and girls since its reporting to CEDAW in 2005. The Special Rapporteur also reiterated the previous recommendations for the DPRK to cooperate with the UN and for the international community to continue to provide food aid and put pressure on the North Korean government because of human rights violations.

³⁷ UNGA, “Implementation of General Assembly Resolution 60/251; UNGA, “Situation of human rights”, A/62/264; UNGA, “Human Rights Situations”, A/HRC/7/20.

³⁸ UNGA, “Implementation of General Assembly Resolution 60/25”, summary, p. 2.

³⁹ Ibid., para. 71, pp. 22, 23; Ibid., para. 72, p. 23.

⁴⁰ UNGA, “Situation of human rights”, A/62/264.

⁴¹ Ibid., para. 4, pp. 4.

⁴² Ibid., para. 71(f), p. 23.

In February 2008, the Special Rapporteur issued the third report to the UNGA.⁴³ The report noted that there had been some progress made since the fifth-round (third phase) of the Six-Party Talks in February 2007, when the North Korean government agreed to disable its controversial nuclear plant.⁴⁴ This was advanced by the participation of the DPRK in the second session of the sixth round of the Six-Party Talks held in Beijing from 27 to 30 September 2007. The participants at the meeting reached agreement on the “Second-Phase Actions for the Implementation of the Joint Statement” of 19 September 2005.⁴⁵ The goal of the joint statement was the verifiable denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner. North and South Korea participated in the second inter-Korean Summit held in Pyongyang from 2 to 4 October 2007.⁴⁶ At the meeting, representatives of both parties agreed to adopt and sign the Declaration on the Advancement of North–South Korean Relations, Peace and Prosperity, aimed to strengthen cooperation between North and South Korea and replace the Armistice, which ended the Korean War (1950–1953), with a permanent peace treaty.⁴⁷

The Special Rapporteur’s report stated that, given that the human rights situation in the DPRK “remains grave on several fronts, it is essential to press for concrete actions to address the various challenges set out in this report”.⁴⁸ Therefore, both the North Korean government and the international community were urged to “address the impunity factor, which has enabled such [human rights] violations to exist and persist over many years”.⁴⁹ In this situation, the Special Rapporteur requested the DPRK to take the “softer entry point to deal with the misdeeds of local officials” and make them accountable at the national level.⁵⁰ The Special Rapporteur cautioned that care should be exercised to assess such actions against international standards and the rule of law in the DPRK.⁵¹ However, given the non-independent nature of the judiciary within the country, it was difficult to ensure that “justice is done and seen to be done”.⁵² The international community was urged to continue to

⁴³ UNGA, “Human Rights Situations that Require the Council’s Attention”, A/HRC/7/20.

⁴⁴ UNGA, “Situation of human rights”, A/62/264, para. 4, p. 4.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ There have been two Inter-Korean Summit meetings held between the two Korean leaders, the first was in 2000 and the second in 2007. The agenda of the summits have included the ending of the Korean War, the deployment of troops at the DMZ, the development of nuclear weapons by the DPRK and human rights issues in the DPRK.

⁴⁷ “Korean leaders issue peace call”, *BBC News*, 4 October 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7027236.stm> (accessed 21 November 2014).

⁴⁸ UNGA, “Human Rights Situations”, A/HRC/7/20, para. 81, p. 23.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, para. 43, p. 14.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, para. 44, p. 14.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

advocate for accountability for human rights violations in the DPRK, whether in terms of state responsibility or individual accountability. The Special Rapporteur noted that the international community had advocated to apply the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine to the situation in the DPRK (see Appendix 9).⁵³ To conclude, the Special Rapporteur stated, “The question remains whether the issue of violations in the [DPRK] will be taken up at some stage at the pinnacle of the system, within the totality of the United Nations framework”.⁵⁴ A few months after the UN expressed concern for the human rights of the North Korean people, the North Korean government reported to the CRC Committee on the status of children in January 2008, even though the report had been due the month before in December 2007.⁵⁵

The DPRK and the 63rd United Nations General Assembly (2008)

On 16 September 2008, two days before the 63rd session of the UNGA, the North Korean delegation to the UN issued a press release in response to Item 56 “Advancement of Women”.⁵⁶ Item 56 entails discussions about the advancement of women in society, the implementation and outcomes of the Fourth World Conference on Women (September 1995, Beijing, China) and of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly (June 2000). The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing marked a significant turning point for the global agenda for gender equality. Participants discussed how women’s lives had changed over the decade after the United Nations Decade for Women (1975–1985) and the steps taken to keep issues of concern to women high on the international agenda.⁵⁷ The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action were adopted unanimously by 189 countries at the conference. The Platform advocated for women’s empowerment and is considered the key global policy document on gender equality. The governments which attended the 23rd special session of the UNGA (June 2000) reaffirmed their commitment to the goals and objectives

⁵³ Ibid., para. 46, p. 14. The R2P is a principle born from a desire to protect the world’s most vulnerable communities and populations from international crimes such as genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. See DLA Piper LLP and Committee for Human Rights in North Korea (HRNK), *Failure to Protect: a call for the UN Security Council to act in North Korea* (Washington: DLA Piper LLP, 2008); Christian Solidarity Worldwide, *North Korea: A Case to Answer, A Call to Act* (Surry: Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 2007).

⁵⁴ UNGA, “Human Rights Situations”, A/HRC/7/20, para. 45, p. 14.

⁵⁵ CRC, “Consideration of Reports”, CRC/C/PRK/4.

⁵⁶ “Statement by the Delegation”.

⁵⁷ United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), *Agenda of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly*, A/63/251, Second plenary meeting, 19 September 2008, distributed 19 September 2008, p. 5; United Nations Women, *World Conferences on Women*, (2011–2014), <http://www.unwomen.org/co/how-we-work/intergovernmental-support/world-conferences-onwomen#sthash.k8QJuBdl.dpuf> (accessed 23 July 2014).

contained in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995.⁵⁸

In 2008, the North Korean press release stated that the DPRK had constantly reinforced legal and practical measures for women to realise gender equality, by upholding “man-centred [sic] *Juche* ideas, as its guiding principles”.⁵⁹ The DPRK also paid tribute to the Law on Equality of the Sexes (1946), stating that women were guaranteed the same rights as men to participate in all areas of social life – political, economic and cultural. So much so, that today woman are said to fully exercise rights on equal footing with men. The North Korean government maintains that it has continuously taken legal and practical measures for gender equality and the advancement of women in conformity with the evolving development of North Korean society.⁶⁰ The DPRK states that it has “faithfully honour[ed]” its obligations to both the CEDAW and CRC Conventions.

The Government of the DPRK stands unshakable in implementing its policies to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and realise gender equality, upholding man-centred *Juche* ideas, as its guiding principles.⁶¹

To achieve gender equality it is claimed that the DPRK has taken measures to improve and enhance the function and role of the North Korean National Coordination Committee for CEDAW and CRC.⁶² Both Coordination Committees continue to contribute to the protection and promotion of women and girls’ rights in the DPRK and as a result, females exercise their rights to the full in all spheres of state and social life.⁶³

⁵⁸ United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), *Further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, A/RES/S-23/3, twenty-third special session, Agenda item 10, 10 June 2000, (distributed 16 November 2000).

⁵⁹ “Statement by the Delegation”. p. 2. Kim Il Sung is said to have progressively developed *Juche* into a nationalist ideology, resting on three pillars of political sovereignty, an independent economy and military self-defence. Patricia Goedde, ‘Law ‘Of Our Own Style’: The Evolution and Challenges of the North Korean Legal System’, *Fordham International Law Journal*, 27 (4) (2003), p. 1268.

⁶⁰ “Mr. Pak Tok Hun”, p. 1.

⁶¹ “Statement by the Delegation”, p. 2.

⁶² The National Coordination Committees of CEDAW and the CRC are composed of representatives from the Presidium of the Supreme People’s Assembly, the Cabinet, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Central Court and Central Public Prosecutor’s Office. The duties of the Committees include the administration and implementation of the UN Conventions, the drafting of reports and the examination of how the requirements of the Convention are embodied in state legislation.

⁶³ “Mr. Pak Tok Hun”, p. 2.

Below, I discuss the growing tensions between the DPRK and the northeast Asian region due to the attempted satellite launch by the North Korean government in 2006. This will set out clearly the context in which the state communicated with the world. Although the DPRK's relationships in the region were strained, the UNSC and other UN bodies continued to communicate with the state during 2009 to ensure the country did not isolate itself any further from the international community.

The DPRK and the United Nations Security Council (2009)

On 5 April 2009, the North Korean government announced the launch of a satellite, despite international pressure not to do so. The UNSC condemned the DPRK's actions even though the satellite launch was a failure, landing in the Pacific Ocean. Seven days after the launch on 13 April 2009 at the 6106th meeting of the UNSC, the Council considered the item entitled "Non-proliferation/Democratic People's Republic of Korea".⁶⁴ At the meeting, the President of the Security Council made the following statement.

The Security Council bears in mind the importance of maintaining peace and stability on the Korean peninsula and in northeast Asia as a whole. The Security Council condemns the 5 April 2009 (local time) launch by the [DPRK], which is in contravention of Security Council resolution 1718 (2006).⁶⁵

The UNSC urged the DPRK to comply fully with its obligations under Security Council Resolution 1718 (2006) and not conduct any further launches. The Council also advised the DPRK to return to the Six-Party Talks and called for an early resumption. All participants in the Talks were urged to intensify their efforts on the full implementation of the Joint Statement issued on 19 September 2005 by China, the DPRK, Japan, South Korea, the Russian Federation (Russia) and the United States of America (USA).⁶⁶ The Joint Statement aimed to achieve the verifiable denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner and to maintain peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and in northeast Asia.

⁶⁴ United Nations Security Council (UNSC), *Statement by the President of the Security Council*, 13 April 2009, S/PRST/2009/7 (New York: sixty-fourth year, 6106th meeting, 13 April 2009), (distributed 13 April 2009); "Non-proliferation/Democratic People's Republic of Korea", *Initial proceedings*, Repertoire 15th Supplement (2004 – 2007): Chapter VIII, (5551st meeting, resolution 1718 (2006), 14 October 2006), http://www.un.org/en/sc/repertoire/2004-2007/Chapter%208/Thematic/04-07_8_47C_Non-proliferation%20DPRK.pdf (accessed 4 July 2014).

⁶⁵ UNSC, *Statement by the President*.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

The UNSC also called upon all UN member states to comply fully with their obligations under resolution 1718 (2006), which entailed sanctions against the DPRK, as discussed above. The Security Council expressed its desire for a peaceful and diplomatic solution to the situation and welcomed efforts by Council members and member states to facilitate a peaceful and comprehensive solution through dialogue.⁶⁷

In response, the DPRK rejected the “unjust actions” taken by the UNSC, saying the Council’s vote to condemn the launching of the satellite and the tightening of sanctions was an “unbearable insult” to the North Korean people.⁶⁸ The DPRK expelled the UN nuclear inspectors from the country and ordered them to remove surveillance devices and other equipment from the Yongbyon nuclear plant. On 14 April 2009, the North Korean Foreign Ministry published a press release stating that the DPRK:

flatly reject[ed] the brigandish ‘presidential statement’ which the US and its followers finally released by abusing the UNSC to condemn the DPRK’s launch of satellite for peaceful purposes.⁶⁹

From this time the North Korean government stated that there would be “no need to hold Six-Party Talks” as the talks had now become a platform for infringing upon the sovereignty of the DPRK. Therefore, the North Korean government would “never participate in the talks any longer nor will it be bound to any agreement of the six-party talks”.⁷⁰ Finally, the government stated that it would “bolster its nuclear deterrent for self-defence”.⁷¹

While the DPRK’s relationships within the northeast Asian region were strained the North Korean government continued communication with the UN. This can be seen with the DPRK’s submission of a report to the Universal Periodic Review Committee (“UPR Committee”) in 2009.

The DPRK and the Universal Periodic Review (2009)

Before the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process in August 2009, the DPRK submitted a report to the UPR Committee outlining from its own perspective the human rights situation in

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Democratic People’s Republic of Korea Foreign Ministry, “Presidential Statement”, *Korea News Service (KNS)*, 14 April 2009, <http://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/world/2009/nk-statement.pdf> (accessed 4 July 2014).

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

the DPRK.⁷² On 7 December 2009, the DPRK underwent the UPR, a process that involves a review of the human rights records of all 193 UN member states once every four years.⁷³ The DPRK was a country of special interest to the UPR Committee because of several reports submitted to the UN by NGOs concerning human rights violations such as torture, forced labour camps, public execution, and violence against children and women.

During the three-hour review process, the working group noted a number of positive achievements of the DPRK, which included the decision to participate in the UPR, the policy of providing eleven-years of compulsory and free education, and universal medical care. They also acknowledged the North Korean government's concerted efforts aimed at building a progressive and prosperous nation by the year 2012.⁷⁴ Issues and questions raised by the working group concerned reports of "grave and systematic violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms" in the DPRK.⁷⁵ For example, concerns were raised about the control mechanisms which ensured inhumane conditions for detainees held in prisons and in particular camps holding political prisoners, the need for independent monitoring systems to ensure victims' rights were protected, and questions about whether there were plans by the government to effectively implement obligations under the international human rights treaties to which the DPRK had acceded.⁷⁶

At the review, thirteen North Korean representatives participated. The delegation consisted of representatives from the Department of Legislation of the Supreme People's Assembly, the Legal Bureau of the Central Court, the Ministry of Public Health, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁷⁷ The North Korean delegate Ri Tcheul, Ambassador and permanent representative of the DPRK to the UN in Geneva, spoke on behalf of the delegation. He stated that the "review of the human rights situation of the [DPRK] was taking place under circumstances different from others" as North Korea had been singled out for

⁷² United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), "National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 15(A) of the Annex to Human Rights Council Resolution 5/1", *Human Rights Council: Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review*, A/HRC/WG.6/6/PRK/1 (Geneva: Sixth session, 30 November–11 December 2009), (distributed 27 August 2009).

⁷³ Jana McNulty, "North Korea defiant amid harsh UN criticism", *UN Watch: Monitoring the United Nations, Promoting Human Rights*, 9 December 2009, <http://blog.unwatch.org/index.php/2009/12/09/north-korea-defiant-amid-harsh-un-criticism/#more-524> (accessed 4 July 2014). Member States to take to the floor during the UPR discussion include: Brazil, Japan, South Korea, Cuba, USA, Belgium, Pakistan, France, Nicaragua, United Kingdom, Mexico, China, Indonesia, Norway, Slovenia, Qatar, Netherlands, Chile, Italy, India, Philippines, Nigeria, and Hungary. Observer States include: Algeria, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Belarus, Turkey, Malaysia, Syria, Thailand, Australia, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Libya, Iran, Vietnam, Zimbabwe, Israel, Yemen, Austria, Germany, Canada, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Sweden, Ireland, Poland, New Zealand, Palestine, Spain, Lithuania, Greece, and Switzerland.

⁷⁴ UNHRC, "Human Rights Council – Universal Periodic Review".

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ McNulty, "North Korea defiant".

discussion every year. The delegate believed that the purpose and motivations of the UNHCR and the UNGA were irrelevant to genuine human rights concerns. Therefore, the DPRK neither recognised nor accepted the resolutions of these two bodies, categorically rejecting what they called the “extreme manifestation of politicisation, selectivity, and double standards” in the area of human rights.⁷⁸ The DPRK, however, had come to this session of the UPR as it valued the review mechanism, which was impartial to all UN member states.

The North Korean delegate Ri Tcheul stated that some of the comments and recommendations by the members present were made out of “misunderstanding of the reality of the country, or based on misinformation”.⁷⁹ The delegate denied the existence of public executions and prison labour camps.

The conditions of prisoners are provided by the living standards of common people...To the issue of public execution, I must tell you that executing people in public is not our principle.⁸⁰

Further, the delegate commented on violence against children and women.

In my country, children and women are accorded all sorts of special protection. Children are valued as the kings of the country, and women are valued as the flowers of the country.⁸¹

Instead of addressing the customary discrimination practices in society, the North Korean delegate confirmed the government’s gendered view that women and children need “special protection”. Further, the language employed by the delegate only further promotes gendered difference between children as they are referred to as “kings”, a position held by males and usually associated with power and strength, while women are referred to as “flowers”, an object associated with delicacy and fragility, qualities stereotypically associated with females. Such gendered language naturalises the gendered roles accorded to men and women in society. Although positive progress was made between the DPRK and the UN with the submission of a report to the UPR Committee, actions taken by the North Korean government over the subsequent year stood to further threaten its international standing.

⁷⁸ UNCHR, “Human Rights Council – Universal Periodic Review”.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ McNulty, “North Korea defiant”.

⁸¹ Ibid.

The DPRK and the United Nations Security Council (2010)

From 2010, tensions grew between North and South Korea, until finally the DPRK authorised an attack on a ROK naval ship in March 2010. Three months later on 9 July 2010, at the 6355th meeting of the UNSC the hostilities between North and South Korea were discussed amongst the delegation. The President of the Security Council stated that a letter was received on 4 June 2010 from the permanent representative of the ROK and from the permanent representative of the DPRK on 8 June 2010.⁸² The Security Council noted the responses from parties, including the DPRK, which had stated that it had nothing to do with the incident.⁸³ The Joint Civilian-Military Investigation Group led by the ROK with the participation of five nations (Australia, Sweden, Canada, the United Kingdom and the USA), concluded that the DPRK was responsible for sinking the South Korean navy ship, the *Cheonan*. The UNSC deplored the North Korean sinking of the ROK naval ship, which had resulted in the loss of forty-six lives.⁸⁴ The Security Council called for “appropriate and peaceful measures to be taken against those responsible for the incident” in accordance with the United Nations Charter and all other relevant provisions of international law.⁸⁵

On 23 November 2010, the DPRK fired upon the South Korean islands of Yeongpyeong in the Yellow Sea. The attack resulted in the deaths of two South Korean marines and two civilians, and the wounding of fifteen marines and at least three civilians.⁸⁶ South Korean forces retaliated by firing at least eighty shells in the direction of the DPRK. At the same time hostilities increased with neighbouring countries but the North Korean government continued to communicate with the UN on the status of women within the country.

⁸² United Nations Security Council (UNSC), “Investigation result on the sinking of Republic of Korea ship *Cheonan*”, *Letter dated 4 June 2010 from the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council*, S/2010/281 (Republic of Korea, 4 June 2010); United Nations Security Council (UNSC), “Answer by the Spokesman of the Foreign Ministry of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to the question put by the Korean Central News Agency on 4 June regarding the United States and its followers’ attempt to refer the case of the sinking of the warship *Cheonan* to the Security Council, linking it with the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea”, *Letter dated 8 June 2010 from the Permanent Representative of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council*, S/2010/294 (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, 8 June 2010).

⁸³ UNSC, “Investigation result”, p. 1.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ UNSC, *Statement by the President of the Security Council*, p. 1.

⁸⁶ Deok-hyun Kim, “S. Korea to toughen rules of engagement against N. Korean attack”, *Yonhap News Agency*, 24 November 2010, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2010/11/24/86/0301000000AEN20101124012200315F.HTML> (accessed 4 July 2014).

The DPRK and the 65th United Nations General Assembly (2010)

In September 2010, the North Korean delegation, including the Ambassador Deputy Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of the DPRK to the UN, Pak Tok Hun, participated in the 65th session of the UNGA. In response to Agenda Item 28 “Advancement of Women”, the North Korean Ambassador issued a press statement outlining the DPRK’s commitment to gender equality.⁸⁷ Agenda Item 28 outlined the elimination of all forms of violence against women, the trafficking of women and girls, and the United Nations Development Fund for Women.⁸⁸ In the press release, Pak confirms that the DPRK is committed to eliminating all forms of discrimination against women and faithfully fulfils its obligations to CEDAW. The North Korean delegate points to the promulgation of the Law on Equality of the Sexes in 1946 as steps taken by the DPRK to provide the legal basis for women to enjoy the same rights with men, free from all sorts of social inequality and discrimination.⁸⁹ The DPRK acknowledges that elimination of discrimination and violence against women are major agenda items of the UN and other international forums. However, the global effort for elimination of discrimination against women and for advancement of women including assurance of gender equality still faces many difficulties and challenges.⁹⁰ Pak states that the North Korean government has continuously taken legal and practical measures to ensure gender equality and the advancement of women. As a result, North Korean women today are said to exercise their rights to the full in all spheres of state and social life.⁹¹

In the following section, I discuss North Korea’s claim that gender equality in the DPRK will only be successful once the Japanese government acknowledges its past crimes against Korean women.

The DPRK on Military Sexual Slavery

The enforced military sexual slavery of Korean women by the Japanese military in wartime has always been of concern to the North Korean government and at every possible opportunity the DPRK has raised the issue with the UN. For instance, several years after the

⁸⁷ “Statement by the Delegation”, p. 2.

⁸⁸ The United Nations Development Fund for Women was established in December 1976, originally as the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women (1976–1985) in the International Women’s Year (1975). In January 2011, the UN Development Fund for Women was merged into UN Women, with the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues, and Division for the Advancement of Women.

⁸⁹ “Mr. Pak Tok Hun”, p. 2.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 1.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 2.

DPRK reported to CEDAW, it attended the 63rd session in 2008 and the 65th session in 2010 of the UN General Assemblies. At these Assemblies, respective North Korean delegations raised the issue of the forced sexual enslavement of Korean women by the Japanese Imperial Army and Navy during the occupation of Korea.

At the 63rd UNGA, the North Korean press release stated that in spite of the intensified efforts of the international community to protect and promote women's rights through the elimination of discrimination, many difficulties and challenges have persisted in the DPRK.⁹² In order to overcome these "deep-rooted difficulties and challenges and achieve the advancement of [North Korean] women", the delegation asserted that the "issues of the past crimes [against women] behind the black curtain should be completely resolved".⁹³ This statement refers to the Japanese colonial period in Korean history (1910–1945). The DPRK asserted that without recognition of enforced sexual slavery of Korean women in wartime by the Japanese military, the ongoing gross violations of women's rights will never be eliminated on the Korean peninsula.

The 2008 North Korean press release states that the Japanese government drafted 200,000 Korean women into the so-called "comfort women" system, which is a crime against humanity and yet to be settled once and for all.⁹⁴ The North Korean press release at the 65th UNGA, however, states the figure of "comfort women" slightly differently as it acknowledges that the estimated number of 200,000 women included both Korean women and women of other nationalities. The press release strongly advocates for Japan to acknowledge its legal responsibility for all past crimes such as the forcible drafting of 8.4 million Koreans as workers and the massacre of one million Koreans, and make a sincere apology and compensation to its victims.⁹⁵ Other historians, such as Jeongwon Choi, estimate that there were around 200,000 women of different nationalities forced into the military prostitution/military sexual slavery system across Asia.⁹⁶ The later press release continues that the Japanese army "inflicted unimaginable and immeasurable sufferings and damages on

⁹² "Statement by the Delegation", p. 2.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Jeongwon Choi, "The Vanished Bloom: The Story of Korean Comfort Women", *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention*, 2 (7) (2013), p. 26.

⁹⁵ "Mr. Pak Tok Hun", p. 2.

⁹⁶ Choi, "The Vanished Bloom", p. 26. Chunghee Sarah Soh states, however, that there is "no way to determine precisely how many women were forced to serve in this way but estimates range from 70,000 to 200,000 [women], about 80% of whom were Korean". Chunghee Sarah Soh, "The Korean 'comfort women': Movement for Redress", *Asian Survey*, 36 (12) (1996), pp. 1226, 1227.

hundreds of thousands of women from Korea and *other several Asian countries*” [emphasis added].⁹⁷

The North Korean government claims in the 2008 press release that all victims of forced prostitution during the colonial period have been rehabilitated.⁹⁸ The possibility that all North Korean women that were forced into sexual slavery have been rehabilitated is unlikely. Many women of other nationalities who were also subjected to the same forced prostitution practices by the Japanese military during World War II (1939–1945) continue to live with the memories of “violence containing not only the physical pain but also the emotional trauma of the social shame”.⁹⁹ These women live with low self-esteem due to the loss of their virginity, being unable to have conventional families because of childlessness and chronic pain associated with past physical injuries and sexual abuses endured during their enslavement.

The North Korean delegation at the 63rd session of the UNGA stated that Japanese authorities not only deny state responsibility for their crime but also refuse to make a sincere apology and monetary compensation to victims. The DPRK urged Japan, “to face up to the attitudes of other countries that are making sincere apology and reparation of their past crimes even today when half a century has passed since the end of the 2nd World War [sic]”.¹⁰⁰ The press release continues that the 1996 UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Radhika Commaraswamy, defined “comfort women” as “military sexual slavery” and as a crime.¹⁰¹ The Special Rapporteur had recommended that the Japanese government accept legal responsibility, make an official apology and compensation for the victims immediately, reflect the truth of the history in the educational curricula and punish the criminals.¹⁰² The North Korean press release asserted that this recommendation has not been implemented until now, “due to intentional and stubborn objection on the part of the Japanese government”.¹⁰³ The 2010 North Korean delegation reminded Japan, “[e]ven the

⁹⁷ “Mr. Pak Tok Hun”, p. 2.

⁹⁸ “Statement by the Delegation”, p. 2.

⁹⁹ Choi, “The Vanished Bloom”, p. 27.

¹⁰⁰ “Mr. Pak Tok Hun”, p. 2.

¹⁰¹ Ibid; United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR), “Report on the mission to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, the Republic of Korea and Japan on the issue of military sexual slavery in wartime”, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence Against women, its causes and consequences, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, in accordance with Commission on Human Rights resolution 1994/45, E/CN.4/1996/53/Add.1* (4 January 1996), para.11, p. 5.

¹⁰² UNCHR, “Report on the mission to the DPRK”, para. 136, p. 131; para. 137, pp. 136, 137.

¹⁰³ “Mr. Pak Tok Hun”, p. 2.

Parliaments of some western countries adopted resolutions demanding repentance and apology for the crimes related to ‘comfort women’.¹⁰⁴

The 2010 North Korean press release of the 65th UNGA stated that the Japanese army recruited young Korean women because it was in line with a policy of “obliterating the Korean nation”.¹⁰⁵ By “obliterating the Korean nation”, Pak Tok Hun is referring to the assimilation program carried out by the Japanese government in colonial Korea. In 1937, during the occupation of the Korean peninsula, Japan began an active assimilation program, which included the “Pledge of the Imperial Subjects”, hoisting the Japanese national flag, worshipping the Japanese emperor and attendance at Shinto ceremonies.¹⁰⁶ Other policies required Koreans to change their names to Japanese names. The Japanese government also established the legal grounds for mobilising Koreans for war and in 1939 began to enforce the systematic mobilisation of both Korean men and women for the war effort.¹⁰⁷ Koreans were sent to Japan and many parts, where their descendants live to this day.¹⁰⁸ The 2010 delegation stated, “Japan should settle its crimes committed against mankind above anything else before “clamouring about ‘peace’ and ‘human rights’” on the Korean peninsula.¹⁰⁹ The North Korean government, in its commentary on human rights issues, brings up this unresolved historical issue in order to delegitimise any criticisms waged by the Japanese government. As noted above, there is ongoing tension between Japan and the DPRK on the issue of the abduction of Japanese citizens by the North Korean government.

Until 2010, the DPRK claimed that most issues to do with gender equality had been resolved by the Law on the Equality of the Sexes in 1946, as discussed in detail above. There were, however, some amendments to the North Korean legal system in the 2000s. Next, I outline North Korean laws updated and promulgated between 2006 and 2010, focusing on the amended 2009 DPRK Constitution and the provisions of the Women’s Rights Act of 2010.

¹⁰⁴ “Statement by the Delegation”, p. 3. Activists in several countries (such as the USA, Canada and Australia) have petitioned their own local or national governments to put pressure on the Japanese government for apology and redress. See Anna Song, “The Task of an Activist: ‘Imagined Communities’ and the ‘Comfort Women’ Campaigns in Australia” *Asian Studies Review*, 37 (3) (2013), pp. 381–395.

¹⁰⁵ “Mr. Pak Tok Hun”, p. 2.

¹⁰⁶ Soh, “The Korean ‘comfort women’”, p. 1228.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ For further information on North Koreans in Japan see Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Exodus to North Korea: Shadows from Japan's Cold War* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007); Sonia Ryang, *North Koreans In Japan: Language, Ideology, And Identity* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1997).

¹⁰⁹ “Mr. Pak Tok Hun”, p. 2.

North Korean Laws (2006–2010)

From 2006 to 2010, under intense international pressure, the North Korean government reviewed the state legal system to include new legislation and amend existing laws. In the book, *Creator of Happiness*, the North Korean historian Seong-gil Oh states:

[t]here is no other place like North Korea, a nation that continuously establishes laws and provides social services for women. North Korea is just like a utopia for women as the nation assumes a great role in the upbringing of children and household chores that allows women to devote their abilities fully to the workplace and society.¹¹⁰

Laws amended and promulgated since 2006 include the state Constitution in 2009 and the Women's Rights Act in 2010. Below I consider the importance of some provisions included in these laws, which were not previously recognised by the DPRK when communicating with the UN or the CEDAW Committee. I also draw attention to the gendered language that the DPRK has continued to employ in its legal system.

The DPRK Constitution (2009)

The North Korean government adopted the revised state Constitution in April 2009. The amended Constitution continued to emphasise and affirm the mobilisation of female workers by protecting the rights of working mothers.¹¹¹ To ensure women could leave the home Article 77 guarantees facilities such as “expanding the network of maternity hospitals, nurseries, and kindergartens, and by implementing other measures”. The rights of women in marriage are “protected” in Article 78 of the Constitution, stipulating that marriage and family “shall be protected by the state. The state shall take deep interest in consolidating the family, the basic unit of social life”. The Constitution, though, does not outline why marriage and family are awarded special protection. According to Jin Woong Kang, family units in North Korea are “an important mechanism of social control and regime maintenance”.¹¹² The consolidation of the family unit was particularly important for the North Korean government from the mid-1990s, as the state passed the economic burden of supporting individuals to

¹¹⁰ Seong-gil Oh, *Creator of Happiness* (Pyongyang: Pyongyang Press, 2006), p. 240.

¹¹¹ Eun-young Shin, “Ideology and Gender Equality: Women's Policies of North Korea and China”, *East Asian Review*, 13 (3) (2001), p. 99.

¹¹² Jin Woong Kang, “The Patriarchal State and Women's Status in Socialist North Korea”, *Graduate Journal of Asia-Pacific Studies*, 6 (2) (2008), p. 38.

family groups (Family Law, 1990, Article 35 and Article 36). By passing the responsibility of financial and food security to the family unit, the state tried to ensure the stability of the country under the leadership of the Kim family.¹¹³

The Women's Rights Act (2010)

Several years after the DPRK submitted its initial report to the CEDAW Committee in 2001, the North Korean government promulgated the Women's Rights Act on 22 December 2010 (see Appendix 8).¹¹⁴ The Act reflected some of the concerns expressed in the concluding observations of the CEDAW Committee in 2005.¹¹⁵ The inclusion of the Act suggests that the DPRK has responded to the international attention by the UN, who have focused on its poor human rights record towards women.¹¹⁶ While the Act reiterates women's equal right to marriage and divorce (Article 44 and Article 42 respectively), and the rights of working mothers (Article 26 and Article 37) it also attempts to address the need to stop discrimination against women in other forms such as the prevention of violence (Article 46).

Under the Women's Rights Act the North Korean government, "shall establish a basic plan to guarantee women's rights and execute it [the Act]" (Article 4). Article 4 continues that women's rights are to be "achieved through the Municipal People's Committees establishing detailed plans on a yearly basis according to the state's basic plan to guarantee women's rights". The responsibility of the Municipal People's Committees is to guarantee women's rights as an important assignment and take measures to ensure the rights of women in the area of jurisdiction (Article 6). The NKHR report highlights unexplained issues with this Article. Firstly, Article 6 fails to mention in detail which governmental departments would establish the initial basic plan, what areas of women's rights would be covered in the plan, whether there would be any framework for monitoring the implementation of the plan, and finally what timeframe should be given for the implementation of the plan.¹¹⁷ Therefore, the Act should be interpreted as a starting point.

¹¹³ See chapter 3 and 6 for further explanation on the food crisis and changes to the North Korean legal system.

¹¹⁴ On the same day the DPRK promulgated the Children's Rights Act (*adongui gwonli beob*), emphasising a policy that values children as well as a guarantees their rights on a preferential basis.

¹¹⁵ United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), *Concluding Comments: Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, CEDAW/C/PRK/CO/1 (Thirty-third session, 5 to 22 July 2005), (distributed 22 July 2005).

¹¹⁶ KINU, *White Paper*, 2012, p. 429.

¹¹⁷ Joanna Hosaniak, *Flowers, Guns and Women on Bikes: Briefing Report on the Situation of Women's Rights in the DPRK*, NKHR Briefing Report No. 4 (Seoul: Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights, 2009), p. 50.

Article 8 of the Women's Rights Act states that it is the responsibility of legal institutions to enforce "legal control in order to prevent women's rights from being violated by any act of crime or violation of law". Any item related to women's rights which is not regulated by this law is to be governed by relevant laws and any international convention to which the DPRK is party (Article 10) and this would include CEDAW. Crimes against North Korean women that are not covered by provisions of the Act, however, include marital rape, workplace harassment, and stereotyping of women to gendered roles. Theoretically, because the Act does not cover these issues specifically, CEDAW should be taken into consideration.

To ensure the North Korean community is aware of their responsibilities under the Women's Rights Act the Korean Democratic Women's Union (KDWU, Women's Union) is authorised to promote the protection of women's rights. The KDWU duties include the support and strengthening of the government's ideology through the education of people and the organisation of public works and events.¹¹⁸ Article 53 of the Women's Rights Act states that the Women's Union is to "organise and execute enterprises of various forms and methods to raise social awareness on women's rights and to raise the status of women". However, if the Women's Union is a mouthpiece for the government then it leaves no avenue for women to complain or advocate for change in North Korean society.

Gendered Roles in North Korean Families

In the Women's Rights Act the language employed by the North Korean government towards the role of men and women has not changed significantly, as the government continues to stress the importance of women's roles in the home. This can be seen in Article 3 of the Act, which stipulates, "women play an important role in the welfare of the family and the development of the society".¹¹⁹ NKHR states that the wording of this Article implies that the role of women is first within the family and then in society,¹²⁰ suggesting that the language employed by the North Korean government towards gender equality has not changed since its accession to CEDAW in 2001. The fact that it is the "Women's Rights Act" rather than, say, the "Gender Equality Act" reveals that the North Korean government still does not question men's roles in society or the home.

The rights of women in marriage (Article 44) and divorce (Article 42) have continued to be protected under the Women's Rights Act. The DPRK addresses violence in families for

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 25.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Hosaniak, *Status of Women's Rights*, p. 50.

the first time in Article 46 of the Women's Rights Act, which stipulates that there "must not be any form of domestic violence against women in the family". Although the Article attempts to act as a preventive measure against domestic violence, it does not criminalise domestic violence or provide any legal protection for victims against spousal violence.¹²¹ The inclusion of this provision in state law is a step forward in the North Korea's legal system, as previous laws did not address violence within homes. Instead, violence in the home was seen as a private matter.¹²² The Korean Institute for National Unification reports that many defectors have testified in recent years that incidents of domestic violence are widespread in the DPRK.¹²³ It is difficult to clarify the number of cases of domestic violence though, as the North Korean government has not provided statistical data to the UN in its reporting. When domestic violence cases are reported to the Municipal People's Committees, institutions, corporate associations, and organisations, it is usually not investigated because it is considered a "family matter".¹²⁴ However, if the case is investigated authorities usually issue a personal warning to the perpetrator, who is required to write a letter of self-criticism.¹²⁵ On rare occasions, husbands who have physically abused their wives have been arrested and sent to labour-training camps as punishment.¹²⁶

Article 49 of the Women's Rights Act stipulates that "a woman has equal rights and responsibility to protect underage children with her husband". The Article continues by stating that if the husband is deceased, has lost legal capabilities to protect the children, or for any other unavoidable reasons cannot be guardian of the children, the woman has the sole right and responsibility to protect the children. This Article places the responsibility of protecting and raising children on women and does not mention what responsibility men have within the family if the roles are reversed and the woman is incapable of caring for a child. In previous state laws such as the Family Law (Article 27 and 28), both parents had the same obligation to educate and care for the health and growth of children.

The Women's Rights Act maintains that women "have the right to give or not give birth to children" (Article 50). Article 50 continues, however, that "[n]ationally it is encouraged by the state that women give birth to and raise many children". Although the state encouraged North Korean women to have multiple children this was an unrealistic expectation. Since the food crisis in the mid-1990s, most women struggle to find food for

¹²¹ Ibid., pp. 64, 65.

¹²² KINU, *White Paper*, 2012, p. 418.

¹²³ Ibid. p. 417.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 418.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

their existing family members without adding further mouths to feed. For most women, their work in the home has increased tremendously since the food crisis, due to the state's inability to deliver on its promise of socialising housework and childrearing.¹²⁷ Just as food security was unstable, childrearing facilities promised by the state no longer operated to their full potential. In this context, the government saw North Korean women as being primarily responsible for carrying the burden of family chores and rearing of children. This meant that women who no longer worked in the official economy took on the responsibility of caring for their children all day, a responsibility once belonging to the state.

In the DPRK's initial report to the CEDAW Committee, there was reference to the older generation still preferring male children over female.¹²⁸ To address the CEDAW Committee's concern about son preference the North Korean government explicitly mentions this issue in the Women's Rights Act. Article 38 of the Act prohibits female infanticide by stipulating that it is "prohibited to kill a newborn infant because she is a female and to mistreat or show contempt for women who give birth to a female child or are pregnant, ill, disabled or old". Provisions in the Article also address discrimination against other marginal groups such as those who are ill, disabled or old.¹²⁹ This is the first time the North Korean government has addressed female infanticide in any state law and is a positive step. On the other hand, it highlights that gender discrimination continues to exist in the DPRK and that the state needs to legislate against gender discrimination and violence.

Gendered Roles in the North Korean Labour Force

In the DPRK, labour within the official economy is the responsibility of all people, because it is not seen as an individual benefit but is based on the collectivist principle to benefit everyone.¹³⁰ Therefore, the right to work is not a right but a duty to respond to the mobilisation of labour, and the North Korean government has long promoted the participation of women.¹³¹ The Women's Rights Act states that women have equal rights with men in the labour force and that Municipal People's Committees and relevant organs are to guarantee the equal rights of women to take part in labour (Article 26). Article 37 states that to ensure women are able to leave the home relevant institutions, corporate associations, and organisations should establish day-care centres, kindergartens and other facilities. This idea,

¹²⁷ Park, "Economic crisis", p. 167.

¹²⁸ CEDAW, *Initial Report*, para. 245, pp. 35, 36.

¹²⁹ The DPRK signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 3 July 2013.

¹³⁰ Hosaniak, *Status of Women's Rights*, p. 379.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 400.

however, rests on the belief that women are primarily responsible for the care of their children. For women who do not have access to these facilities because they work in the unofficial economy this is an added responsibility. Further, it is evident that the government's thinking on women's roles has changed little since the promulgation of the Law on Equality of the Sexes or the state's accession to CEDAW in 2001.

It has been a long-held practice for the North Korean government to assign women between the ages of 16 and 55 years to specific positions in the labour force. Therefore, discrimination against women in the workplace has emerged in the forms of differentiated pay scales and the type of work women are assigned to. Article 28 of the Women's Rights Act highlights this view by stating:

Institutions, corporate associations and organisations, except for those professions or departments that are not appropriate for women, are not allowed to not take in women or restrict them for reasons such as gender, marriage, pregnancy, and childbirth.

The exception made in the Article to "professions or departments that are not appropriate for women" shows that the North Korean government still deems some occupations unsuitable for women. This perceived unsuitability is based on assumptions about the physical and mental capabilities of women. This results in men being assigned to important and higher paying jobs, while women are assigned to relatively less important and lower paying jobs,¹³² in the light industry such as agriculture, communications, health and education.¹³³

The Women's Rights Act states that workplaces must pay full attention to the protection of female workers by providing safety and hygiene facilities in accordance with women's physical attributes; and that women cannot be assigned to work that is not appropriate (Article 29). The Act does not elaborate on what occupations are considered "not appropriate" but Article 30 states that the "supervising organ for labour administration determines which fields and professions are prohibited for women". Institutions, corporate associations, and organisations must not make women work in prohibited fields or professions, and cannot make a woman work at night if she is pregnant or has an infant (Article 30). The concept of work as "not appropriate" for women reveals the government's assumption that women are naturally suited to certain occupations in line with feminine

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 401.

qualities. This does not give women the right to choose their own profession or employment but confirms the stereotyping of women in gendered roles.

Article 31 of the Women's Rights Act states that the working hours for a woman with three or more children are reduced to six hours a day, and her living expenses paid by the government. The Article implies however, that a woman's primary place is as a mother within the home caring for children, perpetuating gender stereotypes. Article 33 of the Women's Rights Act stipulates:

[the] [s]tate provides women workers with maternity leave of 60 days before childbirth and 90 days after, regardless of the length of service and in addition to regular and complementary holidays. Women cannot be made to work during maternity leave.

Further, workplaces are not to dismiss female workers for reasons such as marriage, pregnancy, maternity leave, and breastfeeding (Article 34). The NKHR reports that while the Article protects women against unfair dismissal, it does not address other types of potential workplace discrimination based on harassment because of one's gender.¹³⁴ Women during the periods before and after childbirth are provided for in the Act but there are no provisions to protect women in other times during their working lives or for women who have no children. In addition, the Women's Rights Act only protects women if they continue to work in the official state labour force so if a woman leaves their official state employment after marriage or due to workplace instability then she is not protected by the Act. While North Korean men continue to go to their official workplaces distribution of food coupons and wages are provided irregularly or not at all. Some men who are able to pay a financial bribe to cover their absence at work pursue activities in the unofficial economy, such as petty crime or transporting goods.¹³⁵

In recent years, the North Korean government has not tightened restrictions on women's economic activities in the unofficial market economy. Previously government regulation of the unofficial economy restricted the operation of markets to women younger than 55 years old. However, the state has shifted the responsibility of securing food and money for families to women regardless of age. This has had both positive and negative implications for women and their families. For example, women have become financially

¹³⁴ Hosaniak, *Status of Women's Rights*, p. 60.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

independent but also have been punished for crossing the border to China to trade goods and have been exposed to prostitution, trafficking, and sexual abuse.¹³⁶

Sexual Assault, Prostitution and Trafficking of North Korean Women

Due to the difficult living conditions in the DPRK since the 1990s, there have been reports of increased cases of sexual assault against North Korean women, increased numbers of women turning to prostitution as a means of survival and the trafficking of women to China. KINU reports that the sexual assault of women has become widespread as women have assumed the role of financial providers in the family and left their homes to work in the unofficial economy. Compared to the past, sexual assault to gain Party membership or promotion in the workplace has declined while assault cases in public places have increased.¹³⁷ More specifically, individuals such as security agents at the market, safety conductors on the train, and soldiers have demanded sex from women who committed minor violations. There are also reported cases of sexual assault inside guard-post detention facilities.¹³⁸ It is not clear how many North Korean women have experienced sexual assault as the North Korean government has not provided statistical data to the international community, the UN or other UN bodies such as CEDAW but NGOs have collected numerous testimonies of victims. The Women's Rights Act includes no protection measures against the sexual assault of women. In communication between the North Korean government and UN, as discussed above, the government still argues that sexual violation against women is something that occurred in the past.

Since the food crisis, women have turned to prostitution as a means of survival.¹³⁹ The North Korean government has addressed this practice in the Women's Rights Act. Article 40 of the Act states that anyone who engages in prostitution or anyone who organises, promotes, or coerces someone into prostitution will be punished in accordance with the law. The Women's Rights Act elaborates on Article 7 of the Law on Equality of the Sexes, which only briefly addressed prostitution and relegated it to the colonial period.¹⁴⁰ NGOs point out, however, that prostitution in the DPRK has not only become more pervasive, but also more

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 14.

¹³⁷ KINU, *White Paper*, 2012, p. 396.

¹³⁸ Good Friends: Centre for Peace, Human Rights and Refugees, "North Korea Today", no. 417 (24 August 2011), <http://goodfriendsusa.blogspot.com.au/2011/09/north-korea-daily-no-417-august-24-2011.html> (accessed 1 December 2014).

¹³⁹ KINU, *White Paper*, 2012, p. 420.

¹⁴⁰ For further information see chapter 3.

widely accepted by society as a survival strategy.¹⁴¹ Some women enter the commercial sex trade as a means of earning for their basic survival and those organising the trade usually receive protection from collaborating North Korean Security Agents.¹⁴² KINU states there have also been reports of cases of under-aged prostitution and parents coercing daughters into prostitution for economic reasons.¹⁴³ If caught engaging in prostitution, male customers are usually released by bribing officials, but the woman is punished.¹⁴⁴

There has also been an increased number of women trafficked to China and into the sex industry or to marry Chinese men.¹⁴⁵ Family breakdown contributed to an increase in trafficking of teenage girls whose parents could no longer fulfil their parental responsibilities.¹⁴⁶ For the first time since the Law on Equality of the Sexes, the North Korean government addressed the trafficking of women in state law. Article 37 of the Women's Rights Act stipulates that it is prohibited "to illegally restrict the liberty of women, damage the body of women by violent and non-violent means, and search the body of women". Further, no one may kidnap, trade, rape or gang rape women (Article 39). Therefore, relevant organs are to establish plans to prevent kidnapping, trafficking, rape and gang rape of women, and punish anyone who has committed such acts, in accordance with the law (Article 39). This Article builds upon Article 7 of the Law on Equality of the Sexes, which only briefly states that the prostitution is prohibited.¹⁴⁷ However, the Women's Rights Act does not clearly outline the punishment of the perpetrator or the prevention plans to ensure these practices do not continue.

Conclusion

Since the promulgation of the Law on Equality of the Sexes in 1946, North Korean rhetoric has argued that the role of women was to turn to productive work in society to help build an independent socialist country. In its correspondence with the UN and CEDAW Committee, the North Korean government emphasised its efforts to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women by taking a two-pronged approach. The government stressed the importance of "protecting" women in state laws and policy and attributed gender discrimination and the trafficking of women to the historical timeframe of the occupation of Korea by Japan. In the

¹⁴¹ KINU, *White Paper*, 2012, p. 420.

¹⁴² Park, "Economic crisis", p. 169.

¹⁴³ KINU, *White Paper*, 2012, p. 420.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 405.

¹⁴⁵ Hosaniak, *Status of Women's Rights*, p. 7.

¹⁴⁶ Park, "Economic crisis", p. 170.

¹⁴⁷ For further information see Chapter 3.

international climate of the first decade of the twenty-first century, the North Korean government continued its criticism of the Japanese government for these historical wrongs, deflecting attention from the contemporary tensions between Japan and the DPRK. Press releases addressed to the UN General Assembly in 2008 and 2010 raised this issue. In the context of increasing criticism of human rights abuses in the DPRK and the dire situation of women who crossed the border into China, some modifications were made in the 2009 DPRK Constitution, and the Women's Rights Act was passed in 2010. Due to international pressure both the Constitution and the Act went beyond existing North Korean laws, mentioning for the first time issues such as domestic violence and prostitution. However, the government's gendered language and the stereotyping of men and women to certain roles continued to be employed by the state in these laws. Therefore, although these laws can be seen as a step forward for addressing gender equality in the DPRK, they also expose the fact that not much has changed in North Korean society since 1946 and the promulgation of the Law on Equality of the Sexes. Twelve months after the North Korean delegation participated in the 65th session of the UNGA in September 2010, the then leader of the DPRK, Kim Jong Il passed away in December 2011. Within the same month of Kim Jong Il's death leadership of the DPRK passed to his son Kim Jong Un (1983–).

9. Conclusions

*Due to the profound interest of our Party, our women, as
proud masters of the country along with men, are now
making an active contribution to the revolutionary
struggle and constructive work.*
Kim Il Sung, (date unknown).¹

In this thesis I have explored the use of gendered rhetoric in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK, North Korea) communications with the outside world, focusing on the periods of rule by Kim Il Sung (1912–1994; ruler from 1946 to 1994) and Kim Jong Il (1941–2011; leader from 1994 to 2011). I have focused mainly on the period from 1964 to 2011, analysing the English-language magazine, *Women of Korea*, from 1964 to 1992; the DPRK's communications with the Committee to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination against Women (hereafter "CEDAW Committee") between 2000 and 2005; and the DPRK's communications with the United Nations (UN) between 2006 and 2011. In order to contextualise these texts, it has also been necessary to survey the North Korean legal system and laws and policies on gender issues from 1946 to 2010. Further context has been provided by non-governmental organisations' (NGOs') reports from the 1990s to the present, which provide a different picture of life and of gender relations in the DPRK. My main methodology has been critical discourse analysis. That is, I have been interested not so much in the factual claims made by the North Korean government, but rather the gendered assumptions revealed in the rhetoric of the DPRK, whether in official English-language propaganda magazines, or in communications with the CEDAW Committee and other organs of the UN.

Scholarly works to date have offered surveys of different aspects of North Korean society, the North Korean legal system, and the representation of North Korean women in the media. This thesis contributes to the field of gender and International Relations (IR) by answering the question of how the North Korean government has presented to the international community its goal of achieving gender equality and how it employs positive

¹ "A Farmhand's Daughter Becomes a Proud Scientist", *Women of Korea*, 3 (103) (1984), p. 4.

portraits of relations among North Korean men, women and children to demonstrate its success in realising many of these goals. I have chosen to focus on these issues in the DPRK's reporting to the UN, CEDAW Committee and in English-language magazines as they have been sources not yet examined in depth by other scholars. These sources offer a greater understanding of the North Korean government's assumptions about gender equality and gender relations, as well as providing the few admissions by the North Korean government of the existence of gender discrimination in society and the family. The primary aim of the North Korean government has been to present a positive picture of gender equality and gender relations. Gender has played a vital role in the DPRK's communications with the outside world, whether in promoting the success of the socialist answer to the "woman question", or whether criticising other countries for their mistreatment of women.

Over the years, the North Korean government has maintained that it has taken practical legal measures so that all North Koreans regardless of gender can realise their rights. The government, though, often interpreted this as meaning specific measures for women to ensure they were able to leave their homes to join the labour force. North Korean laws such as the Law on Equality of the Sexes (1946), the Law on the Nursing and Upbringing of Children (1976) and the Women's Rights Act (2010) promote the idea of gender equality but also define women as mothers who are responsible for the home. North Korean policies socialised childcare and housework to ensure more women were able to join the labour force but were also based on the assumption that these activities within the home were not equally shared between both genders.² It could be said that often the rights of North Korean women have been held back to assure a harmonious society and a stable family and work units.³ Despite the rhetoric of commitment to gender equality, notions of gendered roles persist in the DPRK,⁴ as assumptions by North Korean government about appropriate gender roles and what is considered masculine or feminine all inform the practices of North Korean men and women.

The wording of North Korean laws, as well as the DPRK's rhetoric in its reporting to the UN and in English-language magazines, restrict men and women to gendered roles in and outside the home. In no North Korean law and policy or government rhetoric is it mentioned

² United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), *Analysis of the Situation of Children and Women in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea* (Pyongyang: United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund DPRK, 2003), p. 21.

³ Maxine Molyneux, "Mobilization Without Emancipation? Women's Interest, State, and Revolution", in Richard Fagen, C.D. Deere, and J.L. Coraggio (eds), *Transition and Development: Problems with Third World Socialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1986), p. 299.

⁴ Jin Woong Kang, "The 'Domestic Revolution' Policy and Traditional Confucianism in North Korean State Formation: A Socio-cultural Perspective", *Harvard Asia Quarterly*, 10 (2) (2006), p. 40.

that North Korean men should perform duties in the home equal to that of women or even to ease the burden that women carry. The North Korean government claimed that once women had left the home to work outside the home they had achieved liberation from the shackles of a feudal society and colonial aggressors, but did not address the roles of men.⁵ The visual images and texts published in the magazine *Women of Korea* represent the government's constructed view of masculinity and femininity from the 1960s to the early 1990s. This is particularly evident in the clothing styles assigned by the government to North Korean men and women – men clothed in modern suits and women in the traditional feminine *hanbok*.

In *Women of Korea*, North Korean women are represented as revolutionary heroines and as ordinary women as part of the “Hidden Hero” campaign. Since the initial publication of the magazine the Kim family have been represented in the visual images and stories. Three prominent Kim family members appear in most issues of the magazine, Kim Il Sung, as father of Korea, his mother Kang Ban Sok, as the “Mother of Korea” and his first wife, Kim Jong Suk, as a loyal and devoted wife to her husband and the revolutionary cause. The depictions of the revolutionary Kim family present an idealised story of the liberation of the nation from Japanese colonial rule. Both Kim women are presented as revolutionary heroines who support the revolutionary cause by cooking, sewing, looking after children and being loyal to their husbands, while Kim Il Sung is presented as a father figure and patriarch of the Kim family and the entire Korean nation. In these representations of the Kims there is an unequal relationship that is not challenged by the government between the masculine characteristics of Kim Il Sung as a strong and dominant figure and the two Kim women who display appropriately feminine characteristics. This occurs even though Kim Jong Suk takes up arms to defend the revolutionary cause as she is predominantly represented as performing domestic chores on the battlefield rather than standing equal to her husband. In the DPRK, these representations of the revolutionary Kim family provide models for ordinary people to emulate, while also reinforcing the primacy and legitimacy of the Kim dynasty. In an international context, these representations promote the legitimacy of the North Korean regime and the idea that gender equality has been achieved by women leaving the home to participate in society.

The visual images and text published in *Women of Korea* also reveal that once women left their home to join the labour force the North Korean government assigned them to occupations deemed suitable based on their gender. Typically women were allocated to

⁵ Ibid., p. 59.

positions in the so-called “light industries” by the government, which was composed of occupations predominantly in the food and textile sectors, or in education, nursing, and service industries. Although the North Korean government promised women the same work privileges, wages, and social security as men by law, in practice women were not paid comparable wages for essentially comparable work and they were not equally promoted.⁶ Further, cultural and patriarchal restrictions placed on North Korean women were not eliminated simply by joining the workforce. Instead women’s responsibilities increased as they were expected to continue to perform their work in the home with their work in society. Through the representations of ordinary women the North Korean government continued to emphasise the importance of women’s work in the home combined with their contribution to the labour force and nation building.

In *Women of Korea*, the visual representations of the revolutionary heroines and of ordinary women as part of the “Hidden Hero” campaign also reveal that the ideal clothing styles of North Korean men and women are clearly gendered. While there is an emphasis on femininity in everything worn by women,⁷ men are no longer portrayed wearing ethnic Korean clothing and instead are seen in Western-style suits or military uniforms. In the visual images revolutionary heroines and ordinary North Korean women are mostly represented wearing ethnic Korean clothing (*hanbok*), composed of the *chima* (jacket) and *jeogori* (skirt) or simple and modern clothing that retains distinctive feminine traits, consisting of dresses or blouses and skirts. Unlike other socialist states which glorified masculine clothing for revolutionary women, fashion in the DPRK has instead expressed feminine clothing for these heroines, seemingly contradicting the revolutionary spirit often associated with masculinity.⁸

In the 1990s, the superficial rhetoric of the government on achieving gender equality was challenged by the economic crisis and food shortages.⁹ The most notable change that occurred from this time was the challenge to customary practices within the family unit, which resulted in North Korean women becoming the primary providers for their families. Many North Korean women were forced to implement survival strategies to save themselves and their families, such as trade activities along the Chinese border.¹⁰ In a situation where the state’s Public Distribution System collapsed and North Korean men were not able to provide financial support to their families, women became active players in local markets, trade

⁶ Suk-Young Kim, *Illusive Utopia: Theatre, Film and Everyday Performance in North Korea* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2010), p. 209.

⁷ Kang, “The Patriarchal State”, p. 62.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 10–13.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

activities and as scavengers of food and medical supplies. Although gender stereotypes were challenged within the family unit and women became somewhat economically independent, it also added to the responsibilities of women, who were already expected to perform the majority of household chores.

Since the 1990s, the North Korean government has communicated with the international community, the UN and various UN bodies such as the CEDAW Committee, due mostly to food shortages and the need for international humanitarian aid. Between 2001 and 2005 the government engaged with the CEDAW Committee about achieving gender equality in the DPRK. The reports exchanged between the North Korean government and the CEDAW Committee revealed for the first time issues about gender relations within the country that had not previously been discussed with the international community. The reports focused on discrimination against North Korean women in all forms, verbal and physical, and in all parts of society from family life to the labour force. The North Korean government also addressed women's access to education, health and employment in its reporting. Examining the DPRK's reporting, however, reveals the extent to which gendered stereotypes still underpin the government's view of the roles of men and women, even while it promotes a commitment to achieving gender equality to the international community. In North Korea's reporting women are represented as mothers who are capable of performing domestic duties while contributing to the social reconstruction of the country. While the government has assumed that many North Korean women perform the majority of household chores, it has addressed this issue through the promulgation of laws to help lessen their burdens within the home. The government's rhetoric in its reporting to the CEDAW Committee confirms its perception that women are the primary carers of children and responsible for cleaning and cooking, while men do not carry this burden. Further, once women left the home to work in the labour force they were assigned by the government to certain jobs in the so-called "light industries", which were typically paid less than those monopolised by men. The North Korean government repeatedly stated in its reporting to the CEDAW Committee that it supported the principle of women's rights but many aspects of gender equality have not adequately been addressed by the DPRK.

Although the DPRK communicated with the CEDAW Committee for the last time in July 2005, the North Korean government did continue to correspond with the United Nations General Assembly and other UN bodies about achieving gender equality. In its communications, the UN often raised concerns with the DPRK about the status of North Korean women in society, and access by women to education, healthcare and employment.

The UN also raised issues such as domestic violence, prostitution and the trafficking of North Korean women to China. At every possible opportunity, the UN and the international community emphasised the importance of improving the situation of North Korean women. Since 2005, the North Korean government has emphasised in its correspondence with the UN its efforts to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women by taking a two-pronged approach. First, the government has stressed the importance of gender-specific treatment of women in North Korean laws and policy and secondly, the government has answered the question of women's rights by assigning gender discrimination and the trafficking of women to the historical timeframe of the occupation of Korea by Japan from 1910 to 1945. In its emphasis on the Law on the Equality of the Sexes in 1946, and its continued emphasis on colonial exploitation by the Japanese until 1945, the rhetoric of the DPRK has often seemed to be frozen in an early postcolonial and early Cold War framework.

In the DPRK's communication with the UN, it has taken the position that the current prospects of achieving gender equality within the country cannot be separated from the historical issue of the sexual exploitation of Korean women by Japan during the colonial period and wartime. North Korea states that if the Japanese government does not recognise its past crimes against Korean women, then gender equality cannot be fully achieved on the peninsula. The DPRK does not acknowledge or address the current situation for North Korean women, who are victims of modern forms of trafficking. Instead the North Korean government insists that the state's legal system has eliminated the trafficking of women within the country. As in so many other situations, the question of the exploitation of women has been mobilised by the DPRK in order to delegitimise the Japanese government at sensitive moments in international relations. It is clear that even though the DPRK has taken the initial step of agreeing to the guidelines set out in UN conventions, it does not mean that the North Korean government has always made sufficient legal changes to existing state laws to ensure the requirements of CEDAW are met. Any changes that have occurred to the roles of North Korean men and women since the mid-1990s and the DPRK's accession to CEDAW in 2001 have taken place independently of the state and the North Korean legal system. Rather, changes to gender roles are an effect of the ongoing socioeconomic transformation of the DPRK.

Finally, this thesis makes a significant contribution to the knowledge of gender studies in the DPRK by employing the theoretical framework of gender and IR when critically analysing North Korean sources. By employing literary and visual analysis when examining the magazine *Women of Korea* and the communication between the DPRK and the

CEDAW Committee, I have contributed to gender and IR by introducing critical discourse analysis into this field. As gender and IR is still a fairly new area in academic research the interdisciplinary focus employed in this thesis will contribute to the development of the field.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

PART I

Article 1. For the purposes of the present Convention, the term “discrimination against women” shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

Article 2. States Parties condemn discrimination against women in all its forms, agree to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women and, to this end, undertake:

To embody the principle of the equality of men and women in their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation if not yet incorporated therein and to ensure, through law and other appropriate means, the practical realisation of this principle;

To adopt appropriate legislative and other measures, including sanctions where appropriate, prohibiting all discrimination against women;

To establish legal protection of the rights of women on an equal basis with men and to ensure through competent national tribunals and other public institutions the effective protection of women against any act of discrimination;

To refrain from engaging in any act or practice of discrimination against women and to ensure that public authorities and institutions shall act in conformity with this obligation;

To take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organisation or enterprise;

To take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women;

To repeal all national penal provisions which constitute discrimination against women.

Article 3. States Parties shall take in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural fields, all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men.

Article 4. 1. Adoption by States Parties of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women shall not be considered discrimination as defined in the present Convention, but shall in no way entail as a consequence the maintenance of unequal or separate standards; these measures shall be discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved. 2. Adoption by States Parties of special measures, including those measure contained in the present Convention, aimed at protecting maternity shall not be considered discriminatory.

Article 5. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures:

To modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women;

To ensure that family education includes a proper understanding of maternity as a social function and the recognition of the common responsibility of men and women in the upbringing and development of their children, it being understood that the interest of the children is the primordial consideration in all cases.

Article 6. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women.

PART II

Article 7. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right:

To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies;

To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government;

To participate in non-governmental organisations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.

Article 8. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure to women, on equal terms with men and without any discrimination, the opportunity to represent their Governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organisations.

Article 9. 1. States Parties shall grant women equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain their nationality. They shall ensure in particular that neither marriage to an alien nor change of nationality by the husband during marriage shall automatically change the nationality of the wife, render her stateless or force upon her the nationality of the husband. 2. States Parties shall grant women equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children.

PART III

Article 10. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education and in particular to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:

The same conditions for career and vocational guidance, for access to studies and for the achievement of diplomas in educational establishments of all categories in rural as well as in urban areas; this equality shall be ensured in pre-school, general, technical, professional and higher technical education, as well as in all types of vocational training;

Access to the same curricula, the same examinations, teaching staff with qualifications of the same standard and school premises and equipment of the same quality;

The elimination of any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education by encouraging coeducation and other types of education which will help to achieve

this aim and, in particular, by the revision of textbooks and school programmes and the adaptation of teaching methods;

The same opportunities to benefit from scholarships and other study grants;

The same opportunities for access to programmes of continuing education, including adult and functional literacy programmes, particularly those aimed at reducing, at the earliest possible time, any gap in education existing between men and women;

The reduction of female student drop-out rates and the organisation of programmes for girls and women who have left school prematurely;

The same Opportunities to participate actively in sports and physical education;

Access to specific educational information to help to ensure the health and well-being of families, including information and advice on family planning.

Article 11. 1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular:

The right to work as an inalienable right of all human beings;

The right to the same employment opportunities, including the application of the same criteria for selection in matters of employment;

The right to free choice of profession and employment, the right to promotion, job security and all benefits and conditions of service and the right to receive vocational training and retraining, including apprenticeships, advanced vocational training and recurrent training;

The right to equal remuneration, including benefits, and to equal treatment in respect of work of equal value, as well as equality of treatment in the evaluation of the quality of work;

The right to social security, particularly in cases of retirement, unemployment, sickness, invalidity and old age and other incapacity to work, as well as the right to paid leave;

The right to protection of health and to safety in working conditions,
including the safeguarding of the function of reproduction.

2. In order to prevent discrimination against women on the grounds of marriage or maternity and to ensure their effective right to work, States Parties shall take appropriate measures:

To prohibit, subject to the imposition of sanctions, dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy or of maternity leave and discrimination in dismissals on the basis of marital status;

To introduce maternity leave with pay or with comparable social benefits without loss of former employment, seniority or social allowances;

To encourage the provision of the necessary supporting social services to enable parents to combine family obligations with work responsibilities and participation in public life, in particular through promoting the establishment and development of a network of child-care facilities;

To provide special protection to women during pregnancy in types of work proved to be harmful to them.

3. Protective legislation relating to matters covered in this Article shall be reviewed periodically in the light of scientific and technological knowledge and shall be revised, repealed or extended as necessary.

Article 12. 1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, access to health care services, including those related to family planning. 2. Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph I of this Article, States Parties shall ensure to women appropriate services in connection with pregnancy, confinement and the post-natal period, granting free services where necessary, as well as adequate nutrition during pregnancy and lactation.

Article 13. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in other areas of economic and social life in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular:

The right to family benefits;

The right to bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit;

The right to participate in recreational activities, sports and all aspects of cultural life.

Article 14. 1. States Parties shall take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles which rural women play in the economic survival of their families, including their work in the non-monetised sectors of the economy, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the application of the provisions of the present Convention to women in rural areas. 2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development and, in particular, shall ensure to such women the right:

To participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels;

To have access to adequate health care facilities, including information, counselling and services in family planning;

To benefit directly from social security programmes;

To obtain all types of training and education, formal and non-formal, including that relating to functional literacy, as well as, inter alia, the benefit of all community and extension services, in order to increase their technical proficiency;

To organise self-help groups and co-operatives in order to obtain equal access to economic opportunities through employment or self-employment;

To participate in all community activities;

To have access to agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities, appropriate technology and equal treatment in land and agrarian reform as well as in land resettlement schemes;

To enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communications.

PART IV

Article 15. 1. States Parties shall accord to women equality with men before the law. 2. States Parties shall accord to women, in civil matters, a legal capacity identical to that of men and the same opportunities to exercise that capacity. In particular, they shall give women equal

rights to conclude contracts and to administer property and shall treat them equally in all stages of procedure in courts and tribunals. 3. States Parties agree that all contracts and all other private instruments of any kind with a legal effect which is directed at restricting the legal capacity of women shall be deemed null and void. 4. States Parties shall accord to men and women the same rights with regard to the law relating to the movement of persons and the freedom to choose their residence and domicile.

Article 16. 1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations and in particular shall ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:

The same right to enter into marriage;

The same right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent;

The same rights and responsibilities during marriage and at its dissolution;

The same rights and responsibilities as parents, irrespective of their marital status, in matters relating to their children; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount;

The same rights to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to the information, education and means to enable them to exercise these rights;

The same rights and responsibilities with regard to guardianship, wardship, trusteeship and adoption of children, or similar institutions where these concepts exist in national legislation; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount;

The same personal rights as husband and wife, including the right to choose a family name, a profession and an occupation;

The same rights for both spouses in respect of the ownership, acquisition, management, administration, enjoyment and disposition of property, whether free of charge or for a valuable consideration.

2. The betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage and to make the registration of marriages in an official registry compulsory.

PART V

Article 17. 1. For the purpose of considering the progress made in the implementation of the present Convention, there shall be established a Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (hereinafter referred to as the Committee) consisting, at the time of entry into force of the Convention, of eighteen and, after ratification of or accession to the Convention by the thirty-fifth State Party, of twenty-three experts of high moral standing and competence in the field covered by the Convention. The experts shall be elected by States Parties from among their nationals and shall serve in their personal capacity, consideration being given to equitable geographical distribution and to the representation of the different forms of civilisation as well as the principal legal systems. 2. The members of the Committee shall be elected by secret ballot from a list of persons nominated by States Parties. Each State Party may nominate one person from among its own nationals. 3. The initial election shall be held six months after the date of the entry into force of the present Convention. At least three months before the date of each election the Secretary-General of the United Nations shall address a letter to the States Parties inviting them to submit their nominations within two months. The Secretary-General shall prepare a list in alphabetical order of all persons thus nominated, indicating the States Parties which have nominated them, and shall submit it to the States Parties. 4. Elections of the members of the Committee shall be held at a meeting of States Parties convened by the Secretary-General at United Nations Headquarters. At that meeting, for which two thirds of the States Parties shall constitute a quorum, the persons elected to the Committee shall be those nominees who obtain the largest number of votes and an absolute majority of the votes of the representatives of States Parties present and voting. 5. The members of the Committee shall be elected for a term of four years. However, the terms of nine of the members elected at the first election shall expire at the end of two years; immediately after the first election the names of these nine members shall be chosen by lot by the Chairman of the Committee. 6. The election of the five additional members of the Committee shall be held in accordance with the provisions of paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 of this Article, following the thirty-fifth ratification or accession. The terms of two of the additional members elected on this occasion shall expire at the end of two years, the names of these two members having been chosen by lot by the Chairman of the Committee. 7. For the filling of casual vacancies, the State Party whose expert has ceased to function as a member of the Committee shall appoint another expert from among its nationals, subject to the approval of the Committee. 8. The members of the Committee shall, with the approval of the General Assembly, receive emoluments from United Nations resources on such terms and conditions as the Assembly may decide, having regard to the

importance of the Committee's responsibilities. 9. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall provide the necessary staff and facilities for the effective performance of the functions of the Committee under the present Convention.

Article 18. 1. States Parties undertake to submit to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, for consideration by the Committee, a report on the legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures which they have adopted to give effect to the provisions of the present Convention and on the progress made in this respect:

Within one year after the entry into force for the State concerned;

Thereafter at least every four years and further whenever the Committee so requests.

2. Reports may indicate factors and difficulties affecting the degree of fulfilment of obligations under the present Convention.

Article 19. 1. The Committee shall adopt its own rules of procedure. 2. The Committee shall elect its officers for a term of two years.

Article 20. 1. The Committee shall normally meet for a period of not more than two weeks annually in order to consider the reports submitted in accordance with Article 18 of the present Convention. 2. The meetings of the Committee shall normally be held at United Nations Headquarters or at any other convenient place as determined by the Committee.

Article 21. 1. The Committee shall, through the Economic and Social Council, report annually to the General Assembly of the United Nations on its activities and may make suggestions and general recommendations based on the examination of reports and information received from the States Parties. Such suggestions and general recommendations shall be included in the report of the Committee together with comments, if any, from States Parties. 2. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall transmit the reports of the Committee to the Commission on the Status of Women for its information.

Article 22. The specialised agencies shall be entitled to be represented at the consideration of the implementation of such provisions of the present Convention as fall within the scope of their activities. The Committee may invite the specialised agencies to submit reports on the implementation of the Convention in areas falling within the scope of their activities.

PART VI

Article 23. Nothing in the present Convention shall affect any provisions that are more conducive to the achievement of equality between men and women which may be contained:

In the legislation of a State Party; or

In any other international convention, treaty or agreement in force for that State.

Article 24. States Parties undertake to adopt all necessary measures at the national level aimed at achieving the full realisation of the rights recognised in the present Convention.

Article 25. 1. The present Convention shall be open for signature by all States. 2. The Secretary-General of the United Nations is designated as the depositary of the present Convention. 3. The present Convention is subject to ratification. Instruments of ratification shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations. 4. The present Convention shall be open to accession by all States. Accession shall be effected by the deposit of an instrument of accession with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Article 26. 1. A request for the revision of the present Convention may be made at any time by any State Party by means of a notification in writing addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. 2. The General Assembly of the United Nations shall decide upon the steps, if any, to be taken in respect of such a request.

Article 27. 1. The present Convention shall enter into force on the thirtieth day after the date of deposit with the Secretary-General of the United Nations of the twentieth instrument of ratification or accession. 2. For each State ratifying the present Convention or acceding to it after the deposit of the twentieth instrument of ratification or accession, the Convention shall enter into force on the thirtieth day after the date of the deposit of its own instrument of ratification or accession.

Article 28. 1. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall receive and circulate to all States the text of reservations made by States at the time of ratification or accession. 2. A reservation incompatible with the object and purpose of the present Convention shall not be permitted. 3. Reservations may be withdrawn at any time by notification to this effect addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who shall then inform all States thereof. Such notification shall take effect on the date on which it is received.

Article 29. 1. Any dispute between two or more States Parties concerning the interpretation or application of the present Convention which is not settled by negotiation shall, at the request of one of them, be submitted to arbitration. If within six months from the date of the request for arbitration the parties are unable to agree on the organisation of the arbitration, any one of those parties may refer the dispute to the International Court of Justice by request in conformity with the Statute of the Court. 2. Each State Party may at the time of signature or ratification of the present Convention or accession thereto declare that it does not consider itself bound by paragraph 1 of this Article. The other States Parties shall not be bound by that

paragraph with respect to any State Party which has made such a reservation. 3. Any State Party which has made a reservation in accordance with paragraph 2 of this Article may at any time withdraw that reservation by notification to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Article 30. The present Convention, the Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish texts of which are equally authentic, shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.¹

¹ United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), *Full Text of the Convention in English*, (2009), <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm#Article17> (accessed 3 July 2014).

Appendix 2. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Article 1. A State Party to the present Protocol (“State Party”) recognises the competence of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (“the Committee”) to receive and consider communications submitted in accordance with Article 2.

Article 2. Communications may be submitted by or on behalf of individuals or groups of individuals, under the jurisdiction of a State Party, claiming to be victims of a violation of any of the rights set forth in the Convention by that State Party. Where a communication is submitted on behalf of individuals or groups of individuals, this shall be with their consent unless the author can justify acting on their behalf without such consent.

Article 3. Communications shall be in writing and shall not be anonymous. No communication shall be received by the Committee if it concerns a State Party to the Convention that is not a party to the present Protocol.

Article 4. 1. The Committee shall not consider a communication unless it has ascertained that all available domestic remedies have been exhausted unless the application of such remedies is unreasonably prolonged or unlikely to bring effective relief. 2. The Committee shall declare a communication inadmissible where:

The same matter has already been examined by the Committee or has been or is being examined under another procedure of international investigation or settlement;

It is incompatible with the provisions of the Convention;

It is manifestly ill-founded or not sufficiently substantiated;

It is an abuse of the right to submit a communication;

The facts that are the subject of the communication occurred prior to the entry into force of the present Protocol for the State Party concerned unless those facts continued after that date.

Article 5. 1. At any time after the receipt of a communication and before a determination on the merits has been reached, the Committee may transmit to the State Party concerned for its urgent consideration a request that the State Party take such interim measures as may be

necessary to avoid possible irreparable damage to the victim or victims of the alleged violation. 2. Where the Committee exercises its discretion under paragraph 1 of the present Article, this does not imply a determination on admissibility or on the merits of the communication.

Article 6. 1. Unless the Committee considers a communication inadmissible without reference to the State Party concerned, and provided that the individual or individuals consent to the disclosure of their identity to that State Party, the Committee shall bring any communication submitted to it under the present Protocol confidentially to the attention of the State Party concerned. 2. Within six months, the receiving State Party shall submit to the Committee written explanations or statements clarifying the matter and the remedy, if any, that may have been provided by that State Party.

Article 7. 1. The Committee shall consider communications received under the present Protocol in the light of all information made available to it by or on behalf of individuals or groups of individuals and by the State Party concerned, provided that this information is transmitted to the parties concerned. 2. The Committee shall hold closed meetings when examining communications under the present Protocol. 3. After examining a communication, the Committee shall 4. The State Party shall give due consideration to the views of the Committee, together with its recommendations, if any, and shall submit to the Committee, within six months, a written response, including information on any action taken in the light of the views and recommendations of the Committee. 4. The Committee may invite the State Party to submit further information about any measures the State Party has taken in response to its views or recommendations, if any, including as deemed appropriate by the Committee, in the State Party's subsequent reports under Article 18 of the Convention.

Article 8. 1. If the Committee receives reliable information indicating grave or systematic violations by a State Party of rights set forth in the Convention, the Committee shall invite that State Party to cooperate in the examination of the information and to this end to submit observations with regard to the information concerned. 2. Taking into account any observations that may have been submitted by the State Party concerned as well as any other reliable information available to it, the Committee may designate one or more of its members to conduct an inquiry and to report urgently to the Committee. Where warranted and with the consent of the State Party, the inquiry may include a visit to its territory. 3. After examining

the findings of such an inquiry, the Committee shall transmit these findings to the State Party concerned together with any comments and recommendations. 4. The State Party concerned shall, within six months of receiving the findings, comments and recommendations transmitted by the Committee, submit its observations to the Committee. 5. Such an inquiry shall be conducted confidentially and the cooperation of the State Party shall be sought at all stages of the proceedings.

Article 9. 1. The Committee may invite the State Party concerned to include in its report under Article 18 of the Convention details of any measures taken in response to an inquiry conducted under Article 8 of the present Protocol. 2. The Committee may, if necessary, after the end of the period of six months referred to in Article 8.4, invite the State Party concerned to inform it of the measures taken in response to such an inquiry.

Article 10. 1. Each State Party may, at the time of signature or ratification of the present Protocol or accession thereto, declare that it does not recognise the competence of the Committee provided for in Articles 8 and 9.2. Any State Party having made a declaration in accordance with paragraph 1 of the present Article may, at any time, withdraw this declaration by notification to the Secretary-General.

Article 11. A State Party shall take all appropriate steps to ensure that individuals under its jurisdiction are not subjected to ill treatment or intimidation as a consequence of communicating with the Committee pursuant to the present Protocol.

Article 12. The Committee shall include in its annual report under Article 21 of the Convention a summary of its activities under the present Protocol.

Article 13. Each State Party undertakes to make widely known and to give publicity to the Convention and the present Protocol and to facilitate access to information about the views and recommendations of the Committee, in particular, on matters involving that State Party.

Article 14. The Committee shall develop its own rules of procedure to be followed when exercising the functions conferred on it by the present Protocol.

Article 15. 1. The present Protocol shall be open for signature by any State that has signed, ratified or acceded to the Convention. 2. The present Protocol shall be subject to ratification by any State that has ratified or acceded to the Convention. Instruments of ratification shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations. 3. The present Protocol shall be open to accession by any State that has ratified or acceded to the Convention. 4. Accession shall be effected by the deposit of an instrument of accession with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Article 16. 1. The present Protocol shall enter into force three months after the date of the deposit with the Secretary-General of the United Nations of the tenth instrument of ratification or accession shall enter into force three months after the date of the deposit of its own instrument of ratification or accession.

Article 17. No reservations to the present Protocol shall be permitted.

Article 18. 1. Any State Party may propose an amendment to the present Protocol and file it with the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The Secretary-General shall thereupon communicate any proposed amendments to the States Parties with a request that they notify her or him whether they favour a conference of States Parties for the purpose of considering and voting on the proposal. In the event that at least one third of the States Parties favour such a conference, the Secretary-General shall convene the conference under the auspices of the United Nations. Any amendment adopted by a majority of the States Parties present and voting at the conference shall be submitted to the General Assembly of the United Nations for approval. 2. Amendments shall come into force when they have been approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations and accepted by a two-thirds majority of the States Parties to the present Protocol in accordance with their respective constitutional processes. 3. When amendments come into force, they shall be binding on those States Parties that have accepted them, other States Parties still being bound by the provisions of the present Protocol and any earlier amendments that they have accepted.

Article 19. 1. Any State Party may denounce the present Protocol at any time by written notification addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Denunciation shall take effect six months after the date of receipt of the notification by the Secretary-General. 2. Denunciation shall be without prejudice to the continued application of the provisions of the

present Protocol to any communication submitted under Article 2 or any inquiry initiated under Article 8 before the effective date of denunciation.

Article 20. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall inform all States of:

Signatures, ratifications and accessions under the present Protocol;

The date of entry into force of the present Protocol and of any amendment under Article 18;

Any denunciation under Article 19.

1. The present Protocol, of which the Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish texts are equally authentic, shall be deposited in the archives of the United Nations. 2. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall transmit certified copies of the present Protocol to all States referred to in Article 25 of the Convention.²

² United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), “Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,” *Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly*, A/RES/54/4 (Fifty-fourth session, 6 October 1999, agenda item 109), (distributed 15 October 1999).

Appendix 3. Ten-Point Programme of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland (1936)

To mobilise the entire Korean nation and realise a broad-based anti-Japanese united front in order to overthrow the piratical Japanese imperialist rule and establish a genuine people's government in Korea.

To defeat Japan and overthrow its puppet state "Manchukuo" by the Koreans resident in Manchuria through a close alliance between the Korean and Chinese peoples, and to effect full autonomy for the Korean people residing in Chinese territory.

To disarm the Japanese armed forces, gendarmes, police and their agents and organise a revolutionary army truly fighting for the independence of Korea.

To confiscate all enterprises, railways, banks, shipping, farms and irrigation systems owned by Japan and Japanese and all property and estates owned by pro-Japanese traitors, so as to raise funds for the independence movement and use part of these funds for the relief of the poor.

To cancel all loans made to people by Japan and its agents and abolish all taxes and monopoly systems; to improve the living conditions of the masses and promote the smooth development of national industries, agriculture and commerce.

To win the freedom of speech, the press, assembly and association, oppose terrorist rule and the fostering of feudal ideas by the Japanese imperialists, and to release all political prisoners.

To abolish the caste system, which divides the *yangban* (nobles) and the common people, and other inequalities; to ensure equality based on humanity irrespective of sex, nationality or religion; to improve the social position of women and respect their personalities.

To abolish slave labour and slavish education; to oppose forced military service and military training of young people; to educate people in our national language, and to enforce free compulsory education.

To enforce an eight-hour day, improve working conditions and raise wages; to formulate labour laws; to enforce state insurance laws for the workers, and to extend state relief to the unemployed.

To form a close alliance with nations and states which treat the Koreans as equals and to maintain comradely relations of friendship with states and nations which express goodwill and maintain neutrality towards our national-liberation movement.³

³ Kim Il Sung, *Ten-Point Programme of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland*, (5 May 1936), (United Kingdom: the Association or the Study of Songun Politics, 2009), http://www.uk-songun.com/index.php?p=1_303_THE-TEN-POINT-PROGRAMME-OF-THE-ASSOCIATION-FOR-THE-RESTORATION-OF-THE-FATHERLAND (accessed 10 November 2014); Baik Bong, *Kim Il Sung: Biography Volume 1: From Birth to Triumphant Return to Homeland* (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1969), pp. 282, 283.

Appendix 4. Declaration of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland (1936)

Compatriots, brothers and sisters at home and abroad,

It is already 26 years since the 20 million Korean people with a long history of five thousand years were robbed of their dear homeland by the enemy, the Japanese imperialists. Under the colonial oppression of Japanese imperialism, our compatriots lead the miserable life of a ruined nation, worse than that of animals, undergoing all manner of hardships and privations and dripping with sweat and blood. No longer able to endure the Japanese imperialist tyranny, large numbers of our fellow countrymen were compelled to leave their beloved home villages and wander about in quest of a livelihood. Even in strange lands, all alone, they are subjected to every form of humiliation and contempt and are being trampled underfoot and slaughtered everywhere they go.

Our nation is, indeed, in an unheard-of wretched plight. Which road should our people take now, deprived of their homeland and weighed down with a terrible misfortune? For our nation, there is no alternative but to fight against the Japanese imperialist marauders. This is the only way to usher in the dawn of national liberation.

That explains why tens of thousands of Korean youths burning with love for their country joined the Korean People's Revolutionary Army and are fighting bravely against the Japanese imperialists with arms in hand. Now, in all parts of the country the struggles of workers, peasants, youth and students against Japanese imperialist colonial rule are taking place one after another.

In the past, too, the ardent patriotism of our nation was displayed fully.

A great many people took part in the Righteous Volunteers' Army Movement and fought bloody battles for several years against Japanese imperialism's occupation of Korea, and at the time of the March First Movement, the whole nation rose in an anti-Japanese uprising in every nook and corner of the land.⁴ As a result, the spirit of our nation, ingenious and valorous, was demonstrated to the whole world. This fact proves that the Korean nation with its earnest desire for independence and sovereignty and a passionate fighting spirit will certainly accomplish the cause of national liberation.

⁴ After the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, and until 1933, large volunteer armies waged war against the Japanese and Manchukuo forces over much of Northeast China. In the DPRK, those Koreans who volunteered are known as the Righteous Volunteers' Army Movement. While the March First Movement was launched by the Korean people on 1 March 1919 in the Korean capital, Seoul. This movement is discussed in chapter 2.

However, the aim of national independence and liberation was not achieved, though in the past many patriots had fought courageously, falling and dying. The principal cause is that all movements for the country's liberation were not conducted according to a unified political programme and a correct line of struggle, and that an unsupported fight was fought without achieving the solid unity and cohesion of the anti-Japanese patriotic forces. Not only that. An allied front against the common enemy, the Japanese imperialists, was not built up in close contact with countries and nations opposed to Japan. This is also a major reason for failing to win the final victory.

We put forward the main political programme and the struggle tasks to fulfil the sacred duty for the liberation of the country on the basis of the bitter lessons and experience of the past. In accordance with this programme, we are setting up the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland as a general leading body for uniting as one all the anti-Japanese forces at home and abroad and ensuring a unified leadership for them, and are adopting its Ten-Point Programme.

On the basis of the main content of the Ten-Point Programme of the Association of the Restoration of the Fatherland, we declare to all our compatriots at home and abroad as follows:

The whole Korean nation will fight in unity against the enemy, the Japanese imperialist aggressors, irrespective of class, sex, social status, party affiliation, age and religious belief, so as to win back the country and establish a genuine people's government in Korea.

We 20 million Korean people are leading the life of a homeless race, condemned to indescribable national oppression and ill-treatment and cruel exploitation under the colonial rule of predatory Japanese imperialism. The Korean nation's liberation is the supreme task facing all Koreans.

If all 20 million of us, united in a body, join the anti-Japanese national liberation front, those with money contributing money, those with food donating food and those with skill and knowledge devoting their skill and knowledge, whether men or women, young or old, regardless of all distinctions, the Japanese imperialists will be destroyed and our national liberation and independence will be achieved.

Koreans living in Manchuria will strive to overthrow the aggressive machines of Japanese imperialism and its puppet state "Manchukuo" through a close alliance with the Chinese people, and to bring about genuine national autonomy for the Koreans in Chinese territory.

The national autonomy of the Koreans in Manchuria we assert has nothing in common with the “autonomy in Jiandao” advertised by the predatory Japanese imperialist aggressors and their agents to hoodwink and alienate the Korean and Chinese nations from each other. All Koreans in Manchuria will achieve genuine national autonomy for the Korean residents in Manchuria by resolutely opposing the deceptive enemy-vaunted “autonomy in Jiandao” and overthrowing the Japanese Manchurian rule in close alliance with the anti-Japanese masses in China.

For the liberation of the fatherland, we will expand and strengthen the revolutionary armed ranks. The Japanese imperialists and their agents are villainous aggressors and hangmen armed to the teeth. We must counter the armed foes with arms.

We can topple the accursed system of colonial rule and achieve the independence of Korea only when we further strengthen the Korean People’s Revolutionary Army and form various armed units with the revolutionary masses everywhere to defeat the Japanese imperialist aggressive army by fighting bloody battles against the enemy.⁵

In order to build a wealthy and mighty independent and sovereign state, we will carry out economic and cultural policies that are genuinely popular and democratic.

We will unconditionally confiscate factories, mines, landed estates, shops, banks and all other property owned by the predatory Japanese imperialist aggressors and treacherous pro-Japanese agents, promote the steady development of national industry, agriculture and commerce, ensure our people freedom of speech, press, assembly and association and equality of the individual, abolish the system of slave education and introduce an eight-hour day for the workers.

In order to facilitate the cause of national liberation, we will receive special donations and other forms of active assistance from capitalists with national conscience and from conscientious patriots and personages.

We will form a common front against the enemy, the Japanese imperialist aggressors, in close alliance with states and nations, which express goodwill and maintain neutrality towards the Korean national liberation movement.

We should crush the robber-like Japanese imperialist aggressors in close alliance with China and other countries hostile to Japanese imperialism and with the people oppressed by Japanese imperialist colonial rule.

⁵ The Korean People’s Revolutionary Army was founded on 25 April 1932, as part of the anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle. The army later developed into the Korean People’s Army on 8 February 1948.

We must regard as friends the countries and nations, which sympathise with the Korean national liberation movement and approach it with good faith and treat as enemies those who help the Japanese imperialist marauders and oppose the Korean nation.

Compatriots, brothers and sisters, who love their country and nation and want to cast off the yoke of bestial slavery and lead a worthwhile and hopeful existence as human beings.

We sincerely hope that you will immediately form organisations of the Association of the Restoration of the Fatherland in the factories, mines, railway service establishments, schools, newspaper offices, army barracks, shops and elsewhere in the urban and rural areas and will wage a vigorous struggle to win back the country through the concerted action of the whole nation under the banner of the Ten-Point Programme of the Association of the Restoration of the Fatherland.

The cause of our people fighting in firm unity for the country's liberation is invincible.

Let us all fight for the complete independence of the country and the freedom and liberation of the nation!

Long live the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland!⁶

⁶ Kim Il Sung, *Declaration of the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland*, (5 May 1936), (United Kingdom: the Association or the Study of Songun Politics, 2009), http://www.uk-songun.com/index.php?p=1_412_THE-INAUGURAL-DECLARATION-OF-THE-ASSOCIATION-FOR-THE-RESTORATION-OF-THE-FATHERLAND (accessed 10 November 2014).

Appendix 5. “On Eliminating Dogmatism and Formalism and Establishing *Juche* in Ideological Work”

Today I want to address a few remarks to you on the shortcomings in our Party’s ideological work and on how to eliminate them in the future. As you learned at yesterday’s session, there have been serious ideological errors on the literary front. It is obvious, then, that our propaganda work also cannot have been faultless. It is to be regretted that it suffers in many respects from dogmatism and formalism.

The principal shortcomings in ideological work are the failure to delve deeply into all matters and the lack of *Juche*. It may not be correct to say *Juche* is lacking, but, in fact, it has not yet been firmly established. This is a serious matter. We must thoroughly rectify this shortcoming. Unless this problem is solved, we cannot hope for good results in ideological work.

Why does our ideological work suffer from dogmatism and formalism? Why do our propaganda and agitation workers only embellish the facade and fail to go deeply into matters, and why do they merely copy and memorise things foreign, instead of working creatively? This offers us food for serious reflection.

What is *Juche* in our Party’s ideological work? What are we doing? We are not engaged in any other country’s revolution, but solely in the Korean revolution. This, the Korean revolution, determines the essence of *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 entirely for the purpose of correctly carrying out our own revolution.

By saying that the ideological work of our Party is lacking in *Juche*, I do not mean, of course, that we have not made the revolution and that our revolutionary work was undertaken by outsiders. Nonetheless, *Juche* has not been firmly established in ideological work, and this leads to dogmatic and formalistic errors and does much harm to our revolutionary cause.

To make revolution in Korea we must know Korean history and geography as well as the customs of the Korean people. Only then is it possible to educate our people in a way that suits them and to inspire in them an ardent love for their native place and their motherland.

It is of paramount importance to study and widely publicise among the working people the history of our country and of our people’s struggle. ... Only when we educate our

people in the history of their own struggle and its traditions can we stimulate their national pride and rouse the broad masses to revolutionary struggle. Yet, many of our functionaries are ignorant of our country's history and so do not strive to discover, inherit and carry forward our fine traditions. Unless this is corrected, it will lead, in the long run, to the negation of Korean history.

Once I visited a People's Army rest home, where there was a picture of the Siberian steppe on the wall. Russians probably like that landscape. But we Korean people like the beautiful scenery of our own country. There are beautiful mountains such as Kumgang and Myohyang in our country. There are clear streams, the blue sea with its rolling waves, and fields with their ripening crops. If we are to inspire in our People's Army men a love for their native place and their country, we must display more pictures of our own landscapes. ... I noticed in a primary school that all the portraits on the walls were of foreigners, such as Mayakovsky and Pushkin, but there were none of Koreans. If children are educated in this way, how can they be expected to have national pride? ...

We should study our own things in earnest and get to know them well...

It is important in our work to grasp revolutionary truth, Marxist-Leninist truth, and apply it correctly to our actual conditions. There should be no set rule that we must follow the Soviet pattern. Some advocate the Soviet way and others the Chinese, but is it not high time to work out our own? The point is that we should not mechanically copy the forms and methods of the Soviet Union, but should learn from its experience in struggle and from the truth of Marxism-Leninism. So, while learning from the experience of the Soviet Union, we must put stress not on the form but on the essence of its experience. ...

Merely copying the forms used by others instead of learning the truth of Marxism-Leninism does us no good, only harm. In both revolutionary struggle and construction, we should firmly adhere to Marxist-Leninist principles, applying them in a creative way to suit the specific conditions and national characteristics of our country. If we mechanically apply foreign experience, disregarding the history of our country and the traditions of our people and without taking account of our own realities and our people's political level, we will commit dogmatic errors and do much harm to the revolutionary cause. This is not fidelity to Marxism-Leninism nor to internationalism. It runs counter to them...⁷

⁷ Kim Il Sung, "On Eliminating Dogmatism and Formalism and Establishing *Juche* in Ideological Work" (Speech Party Propagandists and Agitators, 28 December 1955), in Kim Il Sung, *Selected Works* 9 (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1982), pp. 395–408.

Appendix 6. “Ten Principles for a Monolithic Ideological System”

Preamble 1. “1: Struggle with all your life to paint the entire society the single colour of the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung’s revolutionary thought. It is considered the highest doctrine of our party to paint the entire society the single colour of the Great Leader’s revolutionary thought, and a higher level of task is to construct our party’s unitary ideology system.

The implementation of a unitary ideology system must be constantly strengthened in connection with the principles.

Strengthen the Party of the glorious Leader Kim Il Sung, for the Great Leader Kim Il Sung who founded our Party.

Fight with devotion to protect and create a solid foundation of the authoritarian rules of a proletariat and socialist system established by the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung.

Dedicate everything to fighting to maintain the great revolutionary value of Juche Ideology, for unification of our motherland and the revolutionary victory of the whole country, for our nation’s socialism and the accomplishment of communism.

Fight till the end for the victory of Juche Ideology all over the entire world.

Preamble 2. Respect and revere highly and with loyalty the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung. Highly revering the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung is the noblest duty of the revolutionary warriors who are endlessly loyal to the great leader. Within this lies the glory of our nation and the eternal happiness of our people.

The Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung is a genius of the revolution, the sun of the people and a legendary hero whom we must respect unendingly, revere eternally and come to with the greatest happiness and glory.

Even in a short life, live only for the Great Leader, devote our youth and life for him and keep loyal minds toward the Great Leader even under unfavourable circumstances.

Believe firmly in the way pointed to by our Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung, entrust our fate to the Great Leader and devote our bodies and spirits for the revolutionary fight driven by the Great Leader, carrying with us always, the strong belief that there is nothing impossible if we are under the leadership of the Great Leader.

Preamble 3. Make absolute the authority of the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung. Affirming the absolute nature of the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung's authority is the supreme demand of our revolutionary task and the revolutionary volition of our party and people.

Have a firm position and perspective that no one else has the knowledge required, only the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung.

Protect through the political thought and defend 'till the end of life the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung.

Propagate inside and outside the greatness of our Dear Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung.

Protect the Great Leader from attacks and criticism of every possible revisionism and enemy and defend the power and authority of our Dear Leader Kim Il Sung.

Regard as an emergency situation and pursue unyielding the fight against even the smallest challenge that could damage the authority and power of the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung.

Respectfully worship our beloved Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung's sculptures, plaster casts, bronze statues, badges with portraits, art developed by the Great Leader, board with Great Leader's instructions, basic mottos of the Party.

Respectfully manage and thoroughly protect the records and sites of revolutionary struggle and the revolutionary history of our Beloved Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung and the Party's Unitary Ideology stronghold Museum of the Revolutionary Activities of Comrade Kim Il Sung and the Research Institute of Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung's Revolutionary Thought.

Preamble 4. Accept the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung's revolutionary thought as your belief and take the Great Leader's instructions as your creed. Accepting the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung's thought as one's own belief and taking his instructions as one's creed is the most crucial element requested for one to become an endlessly loyal Juche communist warrior. It is also a precondition for the victory of our revolutionary struggle and its construction.

Our Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung's revolutionary thought and Juche ideology must be realised through our united belief and must be experienced in the flesh and bones of every person.

Our Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung's instructions must be adopted through a steadfast belief and firm principles in regards to all enterprises and in each person's life.

Unconditionally accept, treat as a non-negotiable condition, and decide everything based upon our Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung's instructions and in every act think only about the greatness of our Leader.

Systematically and fully master the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung's laborious works, guidelines and his splendid revolutionary history.

Participate without absence in more than 2 hours of study groups, lectures and collective studies devoted to revolutionary ideas of Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung, ensure discipline for these studies and make these studies a habitual part of daily life, at the same time struggling with any contradictions or neglect towards ensuring such studies are always completed.

The system of delivering the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung's guidelines must be thoroughly studied, and the Leader's instructions and Party goals have to be communicated exactly and without misinterpretations or usage of one's own words, and in a timely manner.

Use considerably the guidelines of the Leader when preparing reports, discussions, lectures or printed materials and eliminate any words or writing that is contrary to his instructions.

There must be a strict distinction between the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung's guidelines and individual party executives instructions and it must be investigated if individual official's instructions are matching the Leader's ones. In the situation where there is but a slight difference, we must see it as a problem and fight against it. We must not deliver or collectively discuss the individual cadre's statements as "conclusions" and "instructions".

Struggle with provocative calumnies directed against our Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung's guidelines and Party policy or with anti-Party activities.

Fight with all one's will against anti-Party and anti-revolutionary thinking trends that have its origin in capitalistic ideas, feudal Confucian ideas, revisionism, dogmatism, toadyism and are contrary to the revolutionary thought of the Great Leader Kim Il Sung. Hold on to the purity of revolutionary thought and Juche ideas of the Great Leader.

Preamble 5. Observe absolutely the principle of unconditional execution in carrying out the instructions of the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung. Unconditionally executing the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung's instructions is the basic requisite for proving loyalty towards the Great Leader, and the ultimate condition for the victory of our revolutionary struggle and its establishment.

Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung's instructions must be viewed as a legal and supreme order and unconditionally realised without excuses or trivial reasons, but with endless loyalty and sacrifice.

Regard as a holy duty and supreme glory reducing the concerns of our Beloved Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung and fight for it with complete dedication. To realise the guidelines of Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung, bring creative ideas and if the Great Leader presents his conclusion on some issue it must be accurately executed according to the centralism principle.

Once the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung's instructions and Party policy is accepted, it must be collectively discussed, the right policy implemented, a suitable concrete plan established and with creation of organised political work, pursue it in a Speed Battle Campaign.

For the execution of the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung's instructions the registrar must be made, implementation of them must be standardised, taught to others and implemented without ceasing.

Fight against those who accept our Beloved Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung's instructions only in letter and sabotage the implementation of these instructions, show irresponsible or an incorrect attitude and oppose unhealthy situations that have its root in formalism, self-protectionism and neglect.

Preamble 6. Rally the unity of ideological intellect and revolutionary solidarity around the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung. The steel-like unity of the party is the source of the party's invincible power, and a firm assurance of the victory of our revolution.

Defend the unity of ideological intellect around the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung and consolidate it more ever more firmly.

At all localities and all guard posts, strengthen the solidarity of the ideological intellect of the columns through revolutionary struggle based on loyalty to the Great Leader.

As a rule, evaluate and treat all people using the degree of loyalty to the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung as the yardstick and struggle against livelihoods that are at odds with the sole ideological system of the Party regardless of one's position and distinctions.

Strictly oppose any situation of having illusions about or idolising or advocating through flattery individual officials and eradicate the problem of giving gifts to each other.

Resolutely struggle in opposition to anti-Party elements such as factionalism, regionalism, and nepotism that could destroy the uniform solidarity of the Party and never waver at the slightest hint of such menace to completely overcome it.

Preamble 7. Learn from the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung and master communist dignity, the methods of achieving revolutionary tasks, and the people's work styles. Learning the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung's communist dignity, the methods of achieving revolutionary tasks, and the people's work styles are the divine duties of all members of the party and workers, and the prerequisite for fulfilling the honorary fate of revolutionary warriors.

Possess a high disposition to the Party, the working class, and the people that puts the interests of the Party, the working class, and the people first, and sacrifice everything for them.

Fight on tenaciously with uncompromising combative spirit, firm revolutionary principle, indomitable revolutionary spirit, and faith in certain victory against the enemy class.

Handle all works frugally and boldly with responsibility and overcome the barriers by assuming the attitude of a revolutionary master and highly exercising the revolutionary spirit of self-reliance.

Oppose senility and stagnation, indolence and slackening and remain awash with a flourishing fighting spirit and passion to always work militantly, and reject passivity and conservative tendencies and embark in all undertakings boldly and grandly.

Solidly establish revolutionary perspective from a group point of view, thoroughly carry through the Cheongsan-ri spirit and Cheongsan-ri method, and penetrate deep into the crowd to teach them and study from them and live together with them.

Exhibit highly the revolutionary character of setting an example for others and always take the lead in doing difficult and hard work.

Always be humble and unceremonious in undertakings and in life.

Thoroughly reject old methods such as bureaucracy, subjectivism, formalism, and dogmatism.

Preamble 8. Preserve dearly the political life the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung has bestowed upon you, and repay loyally with high political awareness and skill for the Great Leader's boundless political trust and considerations. It is our highest honour to have

bestowed upon us political life by the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung and repaying his trust loyally can lead to a bright future for our political life.

Consider political life as the first life, never bend one's political beliefs and revolutionary integrity. Learn to throw away like bits of straw, one's physical life for political life.

Value the revolutionary organisation, subordinate personal interests to organisational interests, and conspicuously display the collective spirit.

Consciously participate in organisational life to standardise and normalise the undertakings and said life.

Faithfully execute organisational decisions and mandate notification.

Actively participate in two-days and weekly organisational life summing up to self-actualise the Great Leader's teachings and Party policy and to sum up one's undertakings and life on a high politico-ideological level, to embark in an ideological struggle by the method of criticism and continuously train and reconstruct oneself through the ideological struggle.

Engage in the execution of the revolutionary task, faithfully participate in labour and bring near completion of the revolution through a revolutionary practice process.

Display high political fervour and elevate the level of political theory and technical administration to handsomely execute the revolutionary mission to repay the Leader's great political trust and care of granting the most precious political life.

Preamble 9. Establish a strong organisational discipline so that the entire Party, the entire people, and the entire military will operate uniformly under the sole leadership of the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung. Establishing a strong organisational discipline is the essential requirement to strengthen the party's collective ideology, leadership, and its combat power. It is also a firm assurance for the victory of our revolutionary struggle and its establishment.

Execute the revolution and associated construction with the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung's revolutionary ideology as the sole guiding principle and thoroughly establish the Great Leader's sole leadership system that makes the entire Party, country and military move in unison according to the teachings and orders of the Great Leader.

Establish a strong revolutionary order and rules that organise and advance all undertakings according to the Leader's sole leadership system and handle policy questions solely through the teachings of the Great Leader and the conclusion of the Party.

Firmly secure the Party's leadership on revolutionary struggle and all construction undertakings in all parts and units and the state economic apparatus. Labor group workers

ought to organise and advance all undertaking according to the Party and under the Party's lead.

Accurately execute the decisions and orders of the Party and State to carry through the teachings of the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung; struggle robustly against the situation of wrongly interpreting or altering said decisions and orders, and strictly abide by the law and rules of the State.

Do not allow any non-organisational phenomena such as individual cadre officials arbitrarily summoning an organised meeting of the lower-level Party, state apparatus or labour groups or arbitrarily reaching a "conclusion" in the meeting or bringing out an organisation for social movement without organisational approval.

Oppose and actively struggle against all kinds of behaviours by individual cadre, which go against the principles such as the individual abuse of power or authority.

Evaluate and position the cadre using the loyalty to the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung as the basic yardstick, robustly struggle against and thoroughly apply the order and Party rules established by the Leader's undertakings on handling problems with favouritism and acquaintance of relatives, friends, region, school and teachers and individual leaders arbitrarily firing or hiring each other.

Oppose and sharply struggle against the situation of leaking Party, State and military secrets.

Timely report to the Party organisation the non-organisational and disorderly situations that violate the Party's unitary ideological system and sole leadership constitution whether it is big or small.

Preamble 10. The great revolutionary accomplishments pioneered by the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung must be succeeded and perfected by hereditary succession until the end. The firm establishment of the sole leadership system is the crucial assurance for the preservation and development of the Great leader's revolutionary accomplishments, while achieving the final victory of the revolution.

Firmly establish the sole ideological system over the Party and whole society and firmly establish the central Party's sole leadership constitution under the lead of the Great Leader to succeed and brightly complete the revolutionary accomplishments cultivated by the Great Leader.

Adhere to and forever succeed and develop the glorious revolutionary tradition accomplished by the Great Leader KIM Il Sung during the anti-Japanese revolutionary

struggle period and oppose and resolutely struggle against even the smallest expression of anti-Party activities that try to defame or obliterate the revolutionary tradition.

Do not connive towards the slightest phenomenon or element that depart from the Party's sole leadership system, to the contrary, struggle against it.

Make all of your family as well as yourself look up to the Great Leader and fulfil loyal duty to him and remain endlessly faithful to the Party's sole leadership.

Secure the authority of the Party through all means and defend the Party with your life.

All Party members and workers may become like the Great Leader KIM Il Sung by firmly establishing the Party's unitary ideology system and must complete the revolutionary accomplishment to the end, following the path pointed by the Great Leader.⁸

⁸ Joanna Hosaniak, Kyung Eun Ha, and Markus Simpson Bell (translated), *Ten Great Principles of the Establishment of the Unitary Ideology System* (Seoul: Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights, 2012).

Appendix 7. The Twenty-Point Platform (1946)

To completely liquidate all survivals of Japanese imperialist rule in the political and economic life of Korea,

To wage an implacable struggle against reactionary and anti-democratic elements at home and strictly ban the activities of fascist, anti-democratic political parties, organisations and individuals,

To grant the entire people freedom of speech, the press, assembly and religion. To provide freedom for the activities of democratic political parties, trade unions, peasants' unions and other democratic public organisations,

To ensure that the entire Korean people have the right and duty to form people's committees, the administrative organs responsible for all local affairs, through universal , direct and equal suffrage by secret ballot,

To grant equal rights to all citizens in political and economic life, irrespective of sex, religion and property status,

To guarantee inviolability of person and residence and protect by law the property of citizens and their private possessions,

To abolish all laws and judicial organs which were in operation in the years of Japanese imperialists rule, the after effects of which the people are still suffering, elect the people's judicial organs on democratic principles and grant the citizens equal legal rights,

To develop industry, agriculture, transport and trade for enhancement of the people's welfare,

To nationalise big enterprises, transport services, banks, mines and forests,

To allow and encourage free activity in private handicrafts and trade,

To confiscate the land belonging to Japanese nationalist, the Japanese government, traitors and landlords who have continuously rented out their land, abolish the tenant system and distribute free all the confiscated land among peasants making it their property. To confiscate without compensation all irrigation facilities and bring them under state control,

To fix market prices of daily necessities and combat speculators and usurers,

To institute uniform, equitable taxation and introduce a progressive income-tax system,

To introduce an eight-hour working day and fix minimum wages for factory and office workers. To prohibit employment of children under 13 and institute a six-hour working day for children 13 to 16,

To institute a life insurance scheme for factory and office workers and introduce an insurance system for workers and enterprisers,

To introduce universal compulsory education and widely expand the network of primary, middle and specialised schools and colleges maintained at state expense. To reform public education in line with democratic state system,

To actively develop national culture, science and arts and build more theatres, libraries, radio broadcasting stations and cinema theatres,

To set up special schools on a wide scale for training personnel to work in government organs and in all fields of the national economy,

To encourage scientists and artist in their work and give them assistance, and

To increase the number of state-run hospitals, wipe out epidemics and give free medical services to the poor.⁹

⁹ Baik Bong, *Kim Il Sung: Biography Volume 1: From Birth to Triumphant Return to Homeland* (Beirut, Dar Al-Talia, 1973), pp. 107, 108.

Appendix 8. The Women's Rights Act (2010)

Article 1. (The Mission of Women's Rights Act) Women's Rights Act of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea serves to firmly guarantee the rights of women in all fields of social life and heighten the position and role of women.

Article 2. (The Principle of Gender Equality) It is a consistent policy of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to guarantee gender equality. State shall strictly prohibit all forms of discrimination against women.

Article 3. (Social Awareness of Women) Women play an important role in the welfare of the family and the development of the society. State shall raise awareness of women and firmly guarantee their rights in all parts of the society.

Article 4. (Plan to Guarantee Women's Rights) State shall establish a basic plan to guarantee women's rights and execute it. Municipal People's Committees shall establish detailed plans on yearly basis according to the state's basic plan to guarantee women's rights and execute it with precision.

Article 5. (The Responsibility of Institution, Corporate Association and Organisation to Guarantee Women's Rights) It is mandatory for institutions, corporate associations and organisations to guarantee women's rights. Institutions, corporate associations, and organisations shall firmly guarantee women's rights in accordance with this act.

Article 6. (The Responsibility of All Municipal People's Committees to Guarantee Women's Rights) The guarantee of women's rights is an important responsibility of each Municipal People's Committee. Each Municipal People's Committee shall designate the guarantee of women's rights as an important assignment and take measures to ensure the rights of women in the area of jurisdiction.

Article 7. (The Responsibility of Labor Organisations to Guarantee Women's Rights) Women's Coalition is an organisation of women for guaranteeing the rights of women. The Central Committee of the Democratic Women's Coalition of Korea and each Women's Coalition organisation shall responsibly endeavour to guarantee women's rights in accordance with this law and the Charter of Women's Coalition. Workers' organisations including the General Coalition of Vocations, the Agricultural Workers' Coalition and Youth Alliance shall establish plans to guarantee the rights of the women in their organisations in accordance with this law.

Article 8. (The Responsibility of Legal Institutions to Guarantee Women's Rights) Legal institutions shall strictly enforce legal control in order to prevent women's rights from being violated by any act of crime or violation of law.

Article 9. (International Exchange and Cooperation) State shall promote exchange and cooperation with other countries and international institutions in the field of women's rights.

Article 10. (The Extent and the Application of the Law) This law regulates matters, which arise from guaranteeing women's rights. Any item related to women's rights, which is not regulated by this law, shall be governed by relevant law. Concerning women's rights, an international treaty to which State is a party shall have the same force as this law.

Chapter 2 Social and Political Rights

Article 11. (The Basic Demands of Social and Political Rights) Women have the equal rights with men in the field of social and political life. No one may restrict or violate the woman's social and political rights and status.

Article 12. (Suffrage and Eligibility) Women have the equal rights with men to vote and to be elected. State shall actively encourage women to participate in social and political activities, and increase the proportion of female representatives in each People's Assembly.

Article 13. (The Right to Acquire, Change and Retain Nationality) Women have the equal rights with men to acquire, change and retain nationality. The nationality of a woman shall not be changed by marriage or divorce in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Article 14. (The Right to Work in State Organs) Women have the right to work in all State Organs. State Organs shall actively take in female workers and guarantee appropriately their conditions of work and livelihood.

Article 15. (Appointment of Female Officers) Institutions, corporate associations and organisations shall systematically train and appoint female officers. There must be no discriminations against women in the screening, training and appointment of officers.

Article 16. (Protection in the Legal Sphere) Legal institutions shall respect the personality of the women and firmly guarantee their rights and interests when handling cases concerning women.

Article 17. (The Processing of Claims and Petitions) Women have the right to make claims or submit petitions. Institutions, corporate associations and organisations shall responsibly look into any claims or petitions submitted by women and process it within due date. There shall be no failure to receive any claim or petition submitted by women, nor shall such claims or petitions be neglected.

Chapter 3 Educational, Cultural and Medical Rights

Article 18. (The Basic Demands of Women's Rights in Educational, Cultural and Medical Sphere) Women have the equal rights with men in educational, cultural and medical sphere. In the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, women's rights to education, culture and medical aid shall be firmly guaranteed by the proper State policy for women.

Article 19. (Gender Equality in School Admissions, Advancement and Placement after Graduation) Organs supervising education and Municipal People's Committees shall firmly guarantee women's rights to equally enter or advance to each school and to receive equal placement after graduation. In case of recruitments by universities or vocational schools, there must be no exclusion or limitation of women in recruitment on grounds of gender, except in departments of specialised majors.

Article 20. (Promotion and Protection of Female Students' Body and Health) Educational organs shall provide education that accommodates the physical attributes of female students and facility for females, and protect and promote the health of female students.

Article 21. (Parents' Responsibility Concerning Compulsory Education) Parents or guardians shall perform their responsibility to ensure female children who reach school age receive education in accordance with Secondary General Compulsory Education System. Except for cases in which the relevant Municipal People's Committee's approval has been obtained due to illness or other necessary reasons, all female children who reach school age must enter school.

Article 22. (Vocational Technique Education) Each Municipal People's Committee and relevant organs shall provide adequate conditions for women to receive vocational technique education in accordance with the actual circumstances of the province.

Article 23. (The Right to Cultural Life) Women have the equal rights with men to enjoy cultural life. Institutions, corporate associations and organisations shall provide what is necessary for women to equally participate in science, technology, literature, arts and athletics.

Article 24. (The Right to Receive Medical Care) Women have the equal rights with men to receive medical care. Medical institutions shall be furnished with professional medical facility for women, protect the health of women and ensure that women are given access to medical care without experiencing inconveniences. Relevant institutions, corporate associations and organisations shall give priority to women's access to medical care.

Article 25. (Educational, Cultural and Medical Rights of Women in Rural Areas) Municipal People's Committees and relevant organs shall provide necessary facilities and conditions for

women in rural area to receive equal education and medical treatment with women in urban areas and lead cultural life.

Chapter 4 Labour Rights

Article 26. (The Basic Demands of Women's Rights in Labour) Women have the equal rights with men in labour.

Article 27. (Guarantee of Labour Conditions) Municipal People's Committees and relevant organs shall provide all conditions for women to actively participate in social labour. Relevant institutions, corporate associations and organisations shall run properly day care centres, kindergartens and other facilities so that working women may participate in labour without concern.

Article 28. (Prohibition of Discrimination in Labour Assignment) Institutions, corporate associations and organisations, except for those professions or departments that are not appropriate for women, are not allowed to not take in women or restrict them for reasons such as gender, marriage, pregnancy and childbirth. It is prohibited to take in female persons who have not yet reached the legal age for labour.

Article 29. (Protections in Labour for Women Workers) Institutions, corporate associations and organisations must pay full attention to the protection of women workers. Prescribed labour safety facilities and labour hygiene facilities shall be provided for women, and labour safety must be ensured in accordance with women's physical attributes. Women cannot be assigned to work that is not appropriate for women. Women are given special protection during the periods before and after childbirth and during the breastfeeding period.

Article 30. (Fields and Professions Prohibited for Women) The supervising organ for labour administration shall determine which fields and professions must be prohibited for women and enforce it. Institutions, corporate associations and organisations must not make women work in prohibited fields or professions, nor make a women worker who is pregnant or has an infant work at night.

Article 31. (Gender Equality in Wage) Institutions, corporate associations and organisations must pay women the same wage as men for the same labour. The working hours a day for a women worker with three or more children is six, and her living expenses shall be paid for.

Article 32. (Gender Equality in Technical Qualifications and Grade Certificates) When carrying out qualifications or giving certifications for technique, relevant institutions, corporate associations and organisations must not discriminate women on grounds of sex.

Article 33. (Guarantee of Maternity Leave) State provides women workers with maternity leave of 60 days before childbirth and 90 days after, regardless of the length of service and in addition to regular and complementary holidays. Women cannot be made to work during maternity leave.

Article 34. (Prohibition of Unjust Dismissal) Except for when the worker demands to do so, institutions, corporate associations and organisations must not dismiss a women worker from her workplace for reasons such as marriage, pregnancy, maternity leave and breastfeeding period.

Article 35. (Application of Social Insurance System) Each Municipal Peoples' Committee and relevant organs must thoroughly carry out Social Insurance System for women and stabilise the livelihood of women who has temporarily lost the ability to work due to reasons such as illness or injury and ensure adequate medical care for them.

Chapter 5 Personal and Property Rights

Article 36. (The Basic Demands of Women's Rights of Person and Property) Women have equal personal and property rights with men. No one may violate women's rights of person and property.

Article 37. (The Inviolability of Person) Women have the inviolable right of person. It is prohibited to illegally restrict the liberty of women, damage the body of women by violent and non-violent means, and search the body of women.

Article 38. (The Inviolability of Health and Life) Women have the inviolable right of health and life. It is prohibited to kill a newborn infant because she is a female and to mistreat or show contempt for women who give birth to a female child or are pregnant, ill, disabled or old. The execution of criminal punishment is suspended for pregnant women from three months before childbirth to seven months after childbirth.

Article 39. (Prohibition of Kidnapping and Trafficking) No one may kidnap, trade, rape, or gang-rape women. Relevant organs shall thoroughly establish plans to prevent kidnapping, trafficking, rape and gang-rape of women, and punish strictly anyone who has committed such act, in accordance with the law.

Article 40. (Prohibition of Prostitution) Anyone who engages in prostitution shall be punished in accordance with the law. Anyone who organises, promotes or coerces prostitution shall also be punished in accordance with the law.

Article 41. (Respect for the Personality and Honour of Women) Women have the rights of personality and honour. Institutions, corporate associations, organisations and citizens must respect the personality and honour of women.

Article 42. (Property Rights of Women within the Family) A married woman has the joint ownership of family property with her husband. A woman may possess, use and dispose of family property equally with her husband regardless of her income. When she divorces her husband, a woman may claim her individual property rights.

Article 43. (Gender Equality in Inheritance) Women have equal rights in inheritance with men. When the order of inheritance is the same, women must not be discriminated on grounds of sex.

Chapter 6 Marital and Household Rights

Article 44. (The Basic Demands of Women's Rights in Marriage and Family) Women have equal rights in marriage and family with men. Marriage and family are under State's protection.

Article 45. (The Freedom of Marriage of Women) Women have the freedom of marriage. Women's freedom of marriage may not be violated or be interfered with.

Article 46. (Prohibition of Domestic Violence) There must not be any form of domestic violence against women in the family. Municipal People's Committees, institutions, corporate associations and organisations shall adequately educate residents and employees against domestic violence so that domestic violence does not appear in the district or at the homes of the citizens under their supervision.

Article 47. (Suspension of Filing for Divorce) When there is an issue of divorce between the married couple, the male may not file a divorce if the wife is pregnant or has given birth within a year. The foregoing does not prejudice a woman's right to file a divorce against her husband.

Article 48. (Division of Property in Divorce) When a married couple divorces, the question of dividing the house and family property shall be decided by the agreement between the two parties. When agreement is not reached, the presiding court shall decide the matter based on the specific circumstances of both parties and the principle of protecting the interests of the children and the woman.

Article 49. (Right and Responsibility Regarding Underage Children) A woman has equal right and responsibility to protect underage children with her husband. When the husband has

deceased, lost his legal capabilities, or for other inevitable reasons cannot be the guardian of the underage children, the woman has the right and responsibility to protect the children.

Article 50. (The Freedom of Childbirth) Women have the right to give or not give birth to children. Nationally, it is encouraged that women give birth to and raise many children. A physician shall be designated to a woman who gives birth to and raises triplets or more, and her child, and special benefits and considerations such as good residence, medicine, grocery and household goods supplied free of charge shall be given.

Article 51. (Protection of Pregnant Women) When women give childbirth, the relevant medical institution shall provide safe and effective medicine and technology and responsibly ensure the health of women. Medical institutions and relevant institutions, corporate associations and organisations shall show deep concern for the protection of pregnant women and take good care of the mother and the child.

Chapter 7 Supervision of the Protection of Women's Rights

Article 52. (Supervision of the Protection of Women's Rights) The supervision of the protection of women's rights shall be executed under the uniform direction of the cabinet by the relevant central organs and Municipal People's Committees. Relevant central organs and Municipal People's Committees shall rightly establish the supervision system for the protection of women's rights and give adequate supervision and have control.

Article 53. (The Responsibility of Women's Organisations) The Central Committee of the Democratic Women's Coalition of Korea and each Women's Coalition organisation shall organise and execute enterprises of various forms and methods to raise social awareness on women's rights and to raise the status of women.

Article 54. (Monitoring of the Protection of Women's Rights) The monitoring of the protection of women's rights shall be carried out by the relevant central organs, Municipal People's Committees and monitoring organs. The relevant central organs, Municipal People's Committees and monitoring organs shall strictly monitor the situation regarding the protection of women's rights.

Article 55. (Administrative or Criminal Liabilities) Administrative or criminal liabilities shall be imposed according to each situation on individual citizens and responsible workers of institutions, corporate associations and organisations that have hindered the protection of women's rights by violating this law.¹⁰

¹⁰ Joanna Hosaniak, *Status of Women's Rights in the Context of Socio-Economic Changes in the DPRK*, NKHR Briefing Report No.7 (Seoul: Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights (NKHR), 2013).

Appendix 9. Responsibility to Protect (R2P)

Pillar One: The protection responsibilities of the State

Pillar one is the enduring responsibility of the State to protect its populations, whether nationals or not, from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, and from their incitement. The latter, I would underscore, is critical to effective and timely prevention strategies. The declaration by the Heads of State and Government in paragraph 138 of the Summit Outcome that “we accept that responsibility and will act in accordance with it” is the bedrock of the responsibility to protect. That responsibility, they affirmed, lies first and foremost with the State. The responsibility derives both from the nature of State sovereignty and from the pre-existing and continuing legal obligations of States, not just from the relatively recent enunciation and acceptance of the responsibility to protect;

Pillar Two: International assistance and capacity-building

Pillar two is the commitment of the international community to assist States in meeting those obligations. It seeks to draw on the cooperation of Member States, regional and subregional arrangements, civil society and the private sector, as well as on the institutional strengths and comparative advantages of the United Nations system. Too often ignored by pundits and policymakers alike, pillar two is critical to forging a policy, procedure and practice that can be consistently applied and widely supported. Prevention, building on pillars one and two, is a key ingredient for a successful strategy for the responsibility to protect;

Pillar Three: Timely and decisive response

Pillar three is the responsibility of Member States to respond collectively in a timely and decisive manner when a State is manifestly failing to provide such protection. Though widely

discussed, pillar three is generally understood too narrowly. As demonstrated by the successful bilateral, regional and global efforts to avoid further bloodshed in early 2008 following the disputed election in Kenya, if the international community acts early enough, the choice need not be a stark one between doing nothing or using force. A reasoned, calibrated and timely response could involve any of the broad range of tools available to the United Nations and its partners. These would include pacific measures under Chapter VI of the Charter, coercive ones under Chapter VII and/or collaboration with regional and subregional arrangements under Chapter VIII. The process of determining the best course of action, as well as of implementing it, must fully respect the provisions, principles and purposes of the Charter. In accordance with the Charter, measures under Chapter VII must be authorised by the Security Council. The General Assembly may exercise a range of related functions under Articles 10 to 14, as well as under the “Uniting for peace” process set out in its resolution 377 (V). Chapters VI and VIII specify a wide range of pacific measures that have traditionally been carried out either by intergovernmental organs or by the Secretary-General. Either way, the key to success lies in an early and flexible response, tailored to the specific needs of each situation.¹¹

¹¹ United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), “Implementing the responsibility to protect”, *Report of the Secretary-General*, A/63/677, (Sixty-third session, Agenda items 44 and 107) (distributed 12 January 2009), paragraph 11, pp. 8, 9.