



Universidade do Minho
Escola de Economia e Gestão

Sofia Ribeiro de Lemos

**The Democratic People's Republic of Korea
as a Rogue State: Comparing the Strategic
Narratives of the United States of America
and the European Union**



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Professora Doutora Laura Cristina Ferreira-Pereira

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À minha família, em especial à minha tia Isabel,

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The Democratic People's Republic of Korea as a Rogue State: Comparing the Strategic Narratives of the United States of America and the European Union

Abstract

Throughout history, political actors have always tried to use communication tools to further their convictions. Strategic narratives connect the past, the present, and the future in a time sequence so as to construct a shared meaning of international events. In this sense, political actors seek to use narratives strategically in order to shape the perceptions and behaviour of their internal and external audiences.

The main purpose of the present dissertation is to understand how social constructions constrain the behaviour of the political actors. Based on the work of Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle, it seeks to analyse the perception of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) as a rogue state. The United States of America (US) and the European Union (EU) were selected as case studies, and their strategic narratives were analysed to understand how this representation of the DPRK influenced and constrained these actors' relations with the country. The analysis was conducted using process tracing and the comparative method to trace the development of these actors' strategic narratives during the period between 2001 and 2018. This study concludes that the US and the EU's motivations shaped their strategic narratives, which, in turn, greatly impacted how these two actors' engaged with the DPRK: the US focused mainly on the nuclear issue and on the geopolitical situation on the Korean Peninsula, while the EU sought to relieve the humanitarian crisis on the country and to encourage the regime to abandon its nuclear ambitions mostly through diplomatic means.

Keywords: Democratic People's Republic of Korea; European Union; Rogue State; Strategic Narratives; United States of America.

**A República Popular Democrática da Coreia como um Estado Pária (*Rogue State*):
Uma análise comparada das Narrativas Estratégicas dos Estados Unidos da América e
da União Europeia**

Resumo

Ao longo da história, os atores políticos procuraram sempre utilizar os meios de comunicação de forma a promoverem as suas convicções. As narrativas estratégicas interligam o passado, o presente, e o futuro, numa sequência temporal, de forma a construir um significado compartilhado sobre os eventos internacionais. Desta forma, os atores políticos procuram utilizar as narrativas de forma estratégica para influenciar as perceções e o comportamento das suas audiências internas e externas.

O principal objetivo da presente dissertação é compreender de que forma as construções sociais condicionam o comportamento dos atores políticos. Seguindo o estudo de Miskimmon, O’Loughlin, e Roselle, procurou-se analisar a perceção da República Popular Democrática da Coreia (RPDC) como um Estado pária. Foram selecionados os Estados Unidos da América (EUA) e a União Europeia (UE) como casos de estudo, sendo as suas narrativas estratégicas analisadas para compreender de que modo esta representação da RPDC influenciou e condicionou as relações destes atores com o país em questão. A análise foi conduzida recorrendo a *process tracing* e ao método comparativo para delinear o desenvolvimento das narrativas estratégicas destes atores durante o período entre 2001 e 2018. Este estudo conclui que as motivações dos EUA e da UE moldaram as suas narrativas estratégicas, que por sua vez tiveram um grande impacto na forma como estes atores se relacionam com a RPDC: os EUA focaram-se principalmente na questão nuclear e na situação geopolítica da península Coreana, enquanto que a UE procurou aliviar a crise humanitária no país e encorajar o regime a abandonar as suas ambições nucleares maioritariamente através de medidas diplomáticas.

Palavras-chave: Estado Pária; Estados Unidos da América; Narrativas Estratégicas; República Popular Democrática da Coreia; União Europeia.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
CTBT	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty
CVID	Complete, Verifiable, Irreversible Dismantlement
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
ESDP	European Security and Defense Policy
ESS	European Security Strategy
EU	European Union
EUGS	European Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy
HR/VP	High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICBM	Intercontinental Ballistic Missile
KEDO	Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NPT	Non-Proliferation Treaty
NSS	National Security Strategy
PRC	People's Republic of China
ROK	Republic of Korea
SPs	Strategic Partnerships
SST	State Sponsor of Terrorism

UNCHR	United Nations Commission on Human Rights
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UN	United Nations
US	United States of America
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

Introduction

Thematic Justification and Delimitation

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States of America (US) and the European Union (EU) have strived to mark their presence in the international community. That is not to say that they did not have any influence on the development of the international affairs prior to the end of the twentieth century, but with the dissolution of the Eastern bloc their efforts became more notorious. The EU, in particular, sought to develop its own means of autonomous defence which led to the beginning of the process which would culminate on the adoption of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) in the Maastricht Treaty of 1992. This policy, in addition to the creation of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) later in the decade, would contribute to the Union's external image as a capable and self-sustainable security actor in the international arena. This process was a result of the Union's adaptation to the newly security environment after roughly fifty years under the US' nuclear umbrella.

In fact, the Cold War is a vivid example of the importance that perceptions and ideas have on the formulation of expectations about how the political actors should and should not behave. The division of the international community between the states under the American influence and under the Soviet influence highlights the crucial role of normative conceptions. In this case, both blocs established their moral conceptions of *good* and *evil*, which created expectations about how their enemies would behave and, consequently on how their people should behave.

The dichotomy present during this period is important in the sense that both actors sought to establish their own vision of the social reality, based on their ideologies and on their politico-economic systems, to "construct a shared meaning of the past, present, and future of international politics to shape the behaviour of domestic and international actors" (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle 2013, 2). It is through this storytelling process, and more concretely through the use of strategic narratives, that political actors "frame their own character and that of others, by selecting and highlighting some facets of their history or actions in order to promote a particular interpretation and evaluation of their character" (Ibid, 5). These narratives served each

country's purpose of affirming its superiority over the other and encouraged their citizens to adopt these notions by supporting their country on the fight for what was considered *right* – being that the liberation of the people either under the socialist threat or under the capitalist threat.

However, and despite the increasingly polarization of the international community, there was an organisation of states that stood independent from the Western and Eastern blocs of influence. The Non-Aligned Movement brought together the states that opposed the international order in force which, in their view, was the main cause of the existing inequality and injustice that divided the world into North and South and East and West. This third option that emerged against the increasing division of the international community illustrates the possibility of questioning the dominant narratives in force and the importance of acting according to our own principles and interests.

If narratives are, thus, as central to the construction of the political actors' identity and, consequently, to the definition of the interest which motivate their behaviour, it becomes clear that in order to understand how the international events develop one ought to pay attention to the strategic narratives crafted by the political actors. Moreover, is it because strategic narratives create expectations on how the political actors ought to behave or, in other words, due to their constricting power over the behaviour of the political actors, that one must consider them crucial analytical tools to comprehend the developments of the international system.

The Cold War period exemplified how governments sought to make use of the communication tools to further their own convictions and to legitimise their behaviour. Nevertheless, this practice still remains visible in today's society, namely after the quick development of the information and communication technologies that have elevated the act of communicating to an entire new level. In fact, the spread of the internet and of the social media platforms have allowed a sharing of information rather immediately and unrestrictedly. These tools have eased the projection of the political actors' strategic narratives and created an opportunity for them to be able to interact with both national and international audiences to a larger scale.

Against this background, the main purpose of the present investigation is, thus, to question the strategic narratives that depict certain states as rogue. More concretely, we seek to understand the reasons that determined that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) has become one of the most urgent threats to the security of the international community.

In spite of the authoritative nature of the regime being a previous concern to the international community, it only was after the 9/11 terrorist attacks that the DPRK became a more prominent threat. As a consequence of this event, the US and the EU reflected upon their conceptions of threat to adapt their security strategies to the increasingly more complex international environment, where dangers such as terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) became the central focus. In fact, the DPRK began to receive more attention from the international community after Kim Jong Il indicated his intentions of exiting the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and of developing its own nuclear and ballistic programmes. As a result of the growing concern with these new threats, President George W. Bush, stated in his State of the Union Address in 2002 that,

States like these [North Korea, Iran, Iraq], and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States. In any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic¹.

After this speech, the DPRK officially withdrew from the NPT, which was a very significant indicator that the country was, indeed, ready to start developing nuclear weapons. Faced with this possibility, the international community, and in particular the Peoples' Republic of China (PRC), Japan, Russia, the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the US, promoted multilateral talks with the DPRK to encourage the country to give up their nuclear ambitions. As such, from 2003 until 2009 the Six-Party Talks served as an on and off means for negotiating with the DPRK with the ultimate goal of bringing the country back into the NPT. However, despite the conjunct efforts of the international community, the DPRK continued to pursue the development of its nuclear and ballistic

¹ See United States of America. The President of the United States of America George W. Bush, 2002a, "President Delivers State of the Union Address", January 29, 2002.

programmes, having in 2006 conducted its first nuclear test, with a second test following after the abandonment of the Talks in 2009.

In addition to the pressure deriving from the Six-Party Talks, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) demonstrated, as well, its concern for the situation on the Korean Peninsula. In the aftermath of the DPRK's first nuclear test, it established a Sanctions Committee (Resolution 1718) to "oversee the relevant sanctions measures relating to the DPRK"². The EU has strictly followed the Committee's resolutions ever since its creation, and by 2009 it began to adopt autonomous measures to increase the pressure on the DPRK. However, it is interesting to note that despite this strong positioning, the EU seemed to separate its humanitarian concerns from the political situation, as it maintained its food security programmes towards the DPRK. This behaviour is opposed to the one of the US, which has "implicitly or explicitly linked humanitarian concerns and geostrategic interests in its aid provision" (Jang and Suh 2017, 743).

By the end of 2011, the demise of King Jong Il brought his son, Kim Jong Un, to the country's leadership. In spite of the international expectations that the regime would not withstand a second succession, the new leader seemed to defy the normative conceptions of the international community differently from his father. His focus on the development of the DPRK as a nuclear power quickly began to disrupt the power balance of the peninsula which escalated the tension in the region. In fact, during his first year in power, Kim Jong Un disregarded the warnings of the US and went ahead with a satellite launch, which compromised the Leap Day Agreement between the two countries. In the following years, despite the strong sanctioning and condemnation from the international community, it was possible to observe the quick development of the DPRK's nuclear and ballistic programmes. With at least five nuclear tests and several missiles launched, by 2017 the DPRK has proved to be able to reach not only its closest countries, such as ROK and Japan, but also the US.

Even though the nuclear tests and the missile launches ensured that the DPRK had made it into the headlines of the majority of the information outlets, after the election

² See United Nations Security Council, n.d. "Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006)".

of Donald Trump as President of the US the situation became even more critical. Namely, the exchanges of threatening remarks between Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un throughout 2017 left the international community on the edge and extremely concerned with the possibility of a brink of war. In the same year, Moon Jae In was elected ROK's President after the impeachment of Park Geun Hye. His desire to engage with the DPRK and to re-establish the inter-Korean relations opposed the containment approach that characterised the previous ten years of South Korean policies. Indeed, the approach of using sanctions as a tool to bring the DPRK into the negotiation table positioned the ROK in accordance with the EU's and the US' strategies, which sought the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula. This created an opening to the establishment of constructive inter-Korean dialogue, which resulted on the participation of a joint women's ice hockey team under the unified Korea's flag during the XXIII Olympic Winter Games that took place in PyeongChang in February 2018. Notwithstanding the setbacks between the US and the DPRK, after this event the DPRK began to show a few improvements on its behaviour and on its willingness to hold serious talks to achieve the denuclearisation of the peninsula. These efforts culminated on the US-DPRK Summit, in Singapore in June 2018, which was the first meeting ever between the leaders of the US and of the DPRK. Moreover, the signing of a joint statement hinted to the possibility of the development of peaceful relations and to the prospect of the denuclearisation of the peninsula.

It seems, thus, clear that the conception of the DPRK as a rogue state has influenced the international community's perception, and consequential behaviour, towards this country in the past two decades. If identity conceptions such as rogue state or rising power are as crucial to the development of the international relations as in the case of the DPRK, one must, then, pay attention to the strategic narratives that determine the identities of the actors in the international system in order to understand their behaviours. Furthermore, because strategic narratives are crafted from the available discourses, which are historically produced, it is important to analyse the development of the narratives so as to understand their impacts on the social reality. These time and space limitations explain why certain strategic narratives are more easily accepted into some regions than in others. In fact, the US' strategic narrative that

determined that the DPRK posed a threat to the international security was also differently received by the several audiences of the international community.

Because of this, and taking the historical context that linked the US and the EU, the present dissertation seeks to analyse the relations that both actors have developed with the DPRK after it was considered a rogue state. As such, by considering the strategic narratives of both actors, which determine the identity of the political actors and constrain their behaviour, we will reach a better understanding of the motivations behind the US' and the EU's seemingly similar behaviour towards the Korean Peninsula. Despite both the US and the EU having stated their intent of peacefully reaching the denuclearisation of the peninsula, there were some relevant differences in their acting: on the one hand, the US has mainly focused on preventing the development of the DPRK's nuclear ambitions through the use of sanctions, ceasing its food aid programme during the more critical events such as the DPRK's first nuclear test; on the other hand, and even though the EU has followed the US regarding the need to implement a strong sanctioning regime surrounding the DPRK, the Union did not suppress its development assistance to the North Korean people, having, however, reduced its food aid which was provided only after natural disasters such as floods.

The study will, then, follow Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle's work that revolves around the importance of strategic narratives and their influential and constraining power over the political actors. The period of analysis will start with the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001, after which President George W. Bush placed the DPRK in the so-called Axis of Evil. This event was selected due to the impetus that it had on the deteriorating of the US-DPRK relations, which resulted on a change from the less conflicting pattern of engagement that was visible during the President Clinton's Administration. The following troublesome relation between the DPRK and the international community will be analysed until June 2018, when the historical US-DPRK Summit occurred. In the case of the EU, it will be necessary to make reference to events that have occurred in the 1990s, which are fundamental to contextualise the development of the Union's identity as well as the beginning of its relation with the DPRK. As such, the research question that will guide the investigation is: *How do the United States of America and the European Union's strategic narratives represent the*

Democratic People's Republic of Korea in their strategic documents, and what implications do these representations have on the behaviour of the two actors?

The focus on the strategic narratives of the two selected actors will allow us to understand if the notion of rogue state has had any influence on the US' and on the EU's behaviour vis-à-vis the DPRK. In order to fully understand the complex dynamics between the US-EU relation and these two actors' relations with the DPRK, we will attempt to respond to the following secondary questions: *Do the US and the EU's representations of the DPRK diverge or converge? And how do the representations of the DPRK influence each of the actors' external policies and behaviours vis-à-vis the DPRK?* These two questions will guide the comparative part of the investigation, where we seek to understand whether the US and the EU share the same perceptions of the DPRK. It might seem conceivable that the US and the EU ended up sharing the same perceptions about the DPRK, especially taking into account their historical relation during the Cold War period. In other words, we will seek to understand if the EU does act in accordance to the US' decisions regarding the DPRK, for instance through the imposition of sanctions, due to their shared past when their conceptions of threat were similar.

State of the Art and Added Value

In the past few years, international relations scholars have begun to pay attention to strategic narratives and in particular to the role these have in influencing policy-making and the behaviour of the political actors (Martin 2007; ÓTuathail 2002; Roselle 2006). Prior to this, however, one ought to reflect on the importance of the emergence of a constructivist branch of research in the field of international relations, which shifted the focus of the analysis to the role of norms and ideas. The conception that identities are constructed through interaction and that it is through their repetition that they become social facts is greatly explored by authors such as John Ruggie and Alexander Wendt.

In international relations, the concept of strategic narratives became more prominent with the work of Lawrence Freedman, who affirms that narratives are "compelling story lines which can explain events convincingly (...) designed or nurtured with the intention of structuring the responses of others to developing events"

(Freedman 2006, 22). These are strategic due to the sheer fact that they “do not arise spontaneously but are deliberately constructed or reinforced out of the ideas and thought that are already current” (Ibid, 22). This conception is important in the sense that it points to the fact that for every political actor who crafts and makes use of a strategic narrative there are intentions and motivations which are not neutral. It is, then, crucial that the story these actors are telling becomes appealing so that the audiences can identify with it and incorporate it in their own lives.

Marie Slaughter mentions the example of the US as a state whose “national strategic narrative must be a story that all Americans can understand and identify with” (Slaughter 2011, 4). Moreover, the author suggests that the US should make a shift on its national strategic narrative so that it focuses more on its soft power capabilities as opposed to the previous concern with its own exceptionalism and universalism (Ibid, 4). The idea that the political actors should consider different means to influence other nations besides the usual military power was a conception also present in the EU. The debate over the identity of the Union has been present since its creation, regaining traction with the development of the ESDP and the Union’s growing presence as an international actor. In between the talks of whether the EU should strive to become a military or a civilian power, Ian Manners introduces the idea of a normative power Europe shifting the focus to the Union’s “ability to shape conceptions of ‘normal’” (Manners 2002, 239). In this regard, Kaldor, Martin, and Selchow suggest that the Union should craft a strategic narrative on human security to legitimise its policies and increase its coherence, effectiveness, and visibility in the international arena (Kaldor, Martin and Selchow 2007, 287).

Ronald Krebs explores this idea that narratives are crafted by specific actors with interests and motivations that emerged from a particular context. As he affirms, “international developments are a key ground for legitimation, but that those events do not speak for themselves; much of the politics of national security revolves around a competition over their meaning” (Krebs 2015, 2). It is, thus, through the use of narratives that the political actors seek to construct shared meanings of the international events and of the social reality. Krebs uses the example of the US to determine when and how

do certain national security narratives become dominant, and why do they collapse once they had already become established.

To analyse how narratives become established it is vital to understand how norms diffuse and get accepted into local communities. Olivier Schmitt affirms that the effectiveness and impact of a strategic narrative is connected to the degree to which it is able to resonate with local political myths. Moreover, the author underlines that the impact of narratives “is structurally constrained by the multiplicity of myths available” (Schmitt 2018, 506) and points to the fact that when a strategic narrative and a political myth fit together, “local politicians get additional rhetoric resources to promote their preferred policies (...) thus simultaneously contributing to updating the local political myth and advancing an external actor’s worldview” (Ibid, 488). This can lead to the development of the strategic narrative in ways that its original crafter had not initially conceived.

Nevertheless, it is Alister Miskimmon, Ben O’Loughlin, and Laura Roselle (2013) who have greatly contributed to the understanding of strategic narratives with a more comprehensive theoretical framework of analysis. These authors followed the previous works on the importance of concepts such as norms, ideas, discourses, identities, and narratives in the field of international relations, and incorporated them with the role of communication. Namely, taking the conception that communication is not neutral, nor does it take place in a vacuum, these authors sought to explain how the political actors use narratives strategically to influence the behaviour and perceptions of others (Miskimmon, O’Loughlin, and Roselle 2013, 21). One must, then, pay attention to the structure of strategic narratives and to its communicative process, attending to their formation, projection, and reception, concepts that will be further explored on Chapter One of the present dissertation. These authors have also further identified a framework based on a spectrum of how persuasion is theorised in international relations, from thin to thick approaches (Ibid, 12-18). This allows the researcher to adjust their approach to their methodological choices and research questions.

Regarding the relations of both the US and the EU vis-à-vis the DPRK, the existing literature focuses mainly on security issues, yet these are not examined through the lenses of strategic narratives. The works concerning the US-DPRK relations are usually

linked to the nuclear issue, with one group of authors analysing the efficacy of the sanctions adopted by the US and the international community (Habib 2016; H. Kim 2014; Taylor 2009), and another group which debates about the degree of engagement of the US on the Korean Peninsula (Anderson 2017; Cha and Kang 2018; Hymans 2008; Sigal 2008). The literature about the EU-DPRK is much more limited than that featuring the US-DPRK relations. Besides the works which focus, as well, on the nuclear issue and on the role of the Union on the Korean Peninsula (Alexandrova 2019; Berkofsky 2003; Esteban 2019), a few authors focus on the Union's concern with the human rights situation in the DPRK (Hilpert 2016; Jang and Suh 2017; Ko 2008; Lee 2005; Pardo 2017).

There is, however, a deficit of studies that analyse the relations of these two actors with the DPRK in the light of the construction of perceptions. At the same time, there is a lack of comparative studies that assesses the behaviour of both the US and the EU vis-à-vis the Korean Peninsula. This dissertation seeks to fill in this gap, adding to Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle's work on strategic narratives by providing two separate case studies where the communicative process of each actors' narratives will be analysed. Moreover, the present work will compare the two actors' behaviour on the Korean Peninsula facing the conception of a dangerous DPRK, which will contribute to a better understanding of how strategic narratives influence and constrain the political actors.

Methodology

It is important at this point to refer to one's ontological and epistemological position. As Wendt advocates, this is crucial

because human beings do not have direct, unmediated access to the world. All observation is theory-laden, dependent on background ideas (...) about what kinds of things there are and how they are structured. We depend on these ontological assumptions particularly when the objects of our inquiry are not observable, as in IR (Wendt 1999, 370).

Moreover, the early acknowledgement of the investigator's positions towards its subject eases the selection of the most adequate methodology which "permits greater parsimony and provides orientation in selecting hypotheses and bringing the research into focus" (Morlino 2018, 48).

Ontology is concerned with the science of being (George 2012, 24; Hay 2002, 61; Marsh and Furlong 2002, 18; Widder 2010, 988), that is, “what one considers to be the fundamental elements of the world” (George 2012, 24). One of the main concerns is related to what exists, namely, with what constitutes reality (Hay 2006, 80). Epistemology is the theory of knowledge (Hay 2002, 62; Marsh and Furlong 2002, 19) and is mainly concerned with finding answers to the questions of “how we produce and acquire knowledge” (George 2012, 24). The investigator’s epistemological position is influenced by ontological premises, which in the present case follows the reasoning that the world and the political reality are not separate or independent from our knowledge (Choi 2010, 709). As such, and positioning ourselves as anti-foundationalists, it is not possible to “have pure experiences [since] our concepts and propositions cannot refer to the world in splendid isolation” (Bevir 2010a, 53). Instead, the world is socially constructed since it is our prior knowledge and experiences that, together in clusters, construct concepts and meanings (Ibid, 54), making it impossible to separate actors from the “context of normative meaning which shapes who they are and the possibilities available to them” (Fierke 2013, 190).

The interpretivist approach shares at its core at least two assumptions that follow this reasoning: firstly, that there is an emphasis on *understanding* the *meanings* that shape human behaviour as opposed to only *explaining* them (Bevir and Rhodes 2002, 131; Bryman 2012, 28; Marsh and Furlong 2002, 20); and secondly, that human action cannot be separated from the social meanings in which it is embedded because these “meanings within cultural discourses and complex systems of signification are coextensive with practices” (N. Choi 2010, 709) or, as Bryman states,

social reality has a meaning for human beings and therefore human action is meaningful— that is, it has a meaning for them and they act on the basis of the meanings that they attribute to their acts and to the acts of others (Bryman 2012, 30).

Therefore, in order to truly understand social phenomena, we must consider the “intersubjective dimension of socially constitutive meanings” (N. Choi 2010, 709). If actors do, in fact, behave on the basis of the meanings they attribute to social phenomena, we can, thus, entail that they act upon their beliefs and preferences (Bevir and Rhodes 2002, 132). Through the narration of events, we emphasize the relationship

between beliefs and meanings with actions, making it possible, then, to explain social phenomena (Bevir and Rhodes 2002, 134; N. Choi 2010, 709). Hence, the study of a phenomena by the lens of strategic narratives will bring about a deeper understanding of the social reality in which the political actors are inserted.

In this line of thought, we will follow the thick position of the spectrum of persuasion of Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle, the reflexive approach, that poses that "all actors are born into and produced through discourse" (O'Loughlin, Miskimmon, and Roselle 2017, 43). Political actors then craft strategic narratives from this "discursive material to give sense to contemporary events" (Ibid, 42) by organising said events into a chronological order where the past, the present and the future become intertwined and tell a story.

In order to understand *how* social constructions constrain the behaviour and the relations between international actors, and namely, how the perceptions of the DPRK as a rogue state have influenced the relation of this country with the US and the EU, we will rely on qualitative methods as our prime method of analysis. Namely, we will resort to a comparative analysis of two case studies, where the discourses of each actor will be analysed and further compared. The choice of the comparative method was based on the notion that through comparison it is possible to increase our awareness of different political realities, and to get a better understanding of the social phenomena (Morlino 2018, 20). A case study allows the researcher to focus its analysis on the conditions under which certain outcomes occur, as well as in the mechanisms through which the events develop (George and Bennett 2005, 31). However, through the selection of two case studies we will analyse the motivations behind each actor's behaviour, which will result in a "greater awareness and a deeper understanding of social reality in different national contexts" (Bryman 2012, 72).

It is, thus, important to select the cases that are most relevant to the study. For the present investigation the case studies selected were the United States of America and the European Union. This is because, as we have previously mentioned, after the end of the Cold War and in the face of a more complex international environment, both the US and the EU have adopted common concerns with values and principles such as freedom, democracy, the promotion of human rights. At the same time, after the 9/11

terrorist attacks, both actors forged similar conceptions of threats such as terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional conflicts, state failure, and organised crime, as stated in their strategic documents (Council of the European Union 2003; United States of America 2002), while providing different resolutions to tackle them. The differences at the core of each actor created nuances on the development of their strategic narratives and, consequently, on their behaviour.

This background enabled the both the US and the EU to strengthen their position in the international arena, and, more concretely, on the Korean Peninsula. The role of the US on the Korean Peninsula is clearly linked with its part in the division of the peninsula in 1945, which contributed to the development of both the DPRK's and the ROK's identities. The military presence of the US in the ROK has been crucial to maintain the status quo and the balance of power on the peninsula. Regarding the EU, its growing role in the international arena, especially in the field of security, and its establishment of strategic partnerships with relevant actors around the globe are the main reasons that make it a suitable case study. For instance, by establishing official relations with the DPRK and by elevating its relation with the ROK to a strategic partnership, the EU marked its position on the Korean Peninsula.

It is also important to underline that the role of the ROK and of the PRC will not be forgotten. In fact, the relation of these countries with both the US and the EU in regards to the DPRK will be taken into consideration at critical junctures, namely, during the analysis of the Six-Party Talks, where the PRC has been a key actor, and during the escalation of the tensions in 2017, when President Moon Jae In had a distinctive role in preventing a military conflict. Hence, the present investigation seeks, precisely, to better understand the motivations that make the US and the EU behave differently in certain situations and to get a better grasp on the effects of the normative conceptions in force.

The analysis will, in addition, be conducted through process tracing. This complementary method consists of "the examination of intermediate steps in a process to make inferences about hypotheses on how that process took place and whether and how it generated the outcome of interest" (Bennett and Checkel 2015, 6). As such, this "intensive analysis of the developments of a sequence of events" (Levy 2008, 6) will be used to trace the actors' identities and discourses through time, in order to get a better

understanding of the “leader’s perceptions, judgements, preferences, internal decision-making environment, and choices” (Ibid, 11). This will allow us to understand how certain ideas influence the behaviours of the political actors. The basic structure of strategic narratives connects past, present, and future in sequences that bestow meaning to social events through causal transformations. Hence, it makes sense to use process tracing to closely analyse the evolution of strategic narratives and their impacts on the behaviour of the actors. Furthermore, the study of social practices, and more concretely of how discourses become strategic narratives, is vital to the understanding of social reality as the “generative power of practices stems from the meaningful context within they are enacted, which instructs actors about what is going on” (Pouliot 2015, 242). The agents of the international system act upon the subjective and intersubjective concepts that give meaning to their reality, such as intentions, beliefs, norms, identities (Ibid, 241) and it is through the close examining of these that one can comprehend certain international events, as those being considered in the present dissertation.

We will rely on both primary and secondary sources to increase our awareness of the social environment of each case study. The main primary sources include, on the one hand, the US’ *National Security Strategy* (NSS) of 2002, 2006, 2010, 2015 and 2017; and on the other hand, the EU’s *European Security Strategy* (ESS) of 2003, the *Report on the Implementation of the Security Strategy* of 2008, and the *Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy* (EUGS) of 2016. Alongside these primary sources, documents produced by the European Commission and the European Parliament will also be taken into consideration, such as Reports of the CFSP, Council Conclusion, Joint Statements, as well as documents regarding the DPRK (for instance the EC – DPRK Country Strategy Paper of 2001-2004). Furthermore, we will analyse speeches from key players such as the Presidents of the US (i.e. George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and lastly, Donald Trump) and from Special Envoys of the EU (i.e. the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy [HR/VP]). The secondary sources consist mostly of books, book chapters, scientific articles, and newspaper articles that will further contribute to the analysis.

Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is composed of four chapters, besides the Introduction and the Conclusion. Chapter One, has as its main purpose to establish and explain the main concepts before we take on the concrete analysis of the case studies. Thus, in this chapter we outline what a narrative is, and when it becomes strategic and we relate these concepts with the important role of communication under the light of the constructivist theory of international relations. Chapter Two focuses on the development of the US' strategic narrative, by analysing the presidencies of George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and lastly, Donald Trump. Chapter Three addresses the development of the strategic narrative of the EU in its efforts to become an international security actor throughout several events that played a role on the establishment of this identity. Among these stand out the adoption of the European Security Strategy in 2003, and the development of the European Global Strategy after the appointment of Federica Mogherini as HR/VP in 2014. Both chapters seek to trace how each actor's ambitions and motivations have influenced their behaviour vis-à-vis the DPRK, a country considered a threat to the international security. There was an effort to structure each chapter symmetrically, according to the key events within each case study, in order to make it easier to compare the commonalities and divergences on the acting of both actors.

The comparative analysis of both case studies is carried out on Chapter Four where we consider the normative and historical contexts of each actor to assess the differences in their acting on the Korean Peninsula. By analysing the social realities of both the US and the EU it becomes clear that the divergences on their behaviour towards the DPRK are a result of each actor's historical contexts. It is from these contexts that stem the discourses which are used by the political actors to craft strategic narratives that will determine and constrict their identities and consequential behaviour. As such, the 9/11 terrorist attacks are a key event that considerably marks how the US and the EU perceive their social reality, forcing these actors to adapt their identities and behaviour to the new security environment with threats like terrorism and the proliferation of WMD.

It is then concluded that the strategic narrative on the War on Terror, forged by the US' President George W. Bush, became a foundation of the country's foreign policy

after 2001. The conceptions of *good* and *evil* that are present in his narrative establish a limit on the engagement with rogue states such as the DPRK. Hence, after this country exits the NPT its relation with the US becomes visibly dependent on the political developments that are in accordance with the US' goal of a non-nuclear DPRK. The US' emphasis on its military strength and responsibility in the international system indicate its distrust on the DPRK as a reliable partner. This discouraged the US to invest in serious negotiations with the country, maintaining, however, its position towards a strong sanctioning regime that should be endorsed by the international community.

In the case of the EU, the pattern of engagement is limited by other concerns, specifically by the Union's perception of its own identity and the role it plays in the international community. Due to its previous efforts to become an independent international security actor, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks the Union begins to consider the aforementioned threats as its main security concern. Nevertheless, the Union's conception of the world is not as strictly divided the US', as it does not share the notion that the DPRK is a rogue state. Its backing of the UNSC sanctions in addition to the adoption of autonomous measures towards the DPRK derive from the Union's stance regarding its values and principles, like supporting the multilateral system and ensuring the protection of human rights. Hence, the EU's endorsement of a strong sanctions regime relates to the international community's conjunct effort to bring the DPRK into the negotiations table. Since the conception of evil is not present in the EU as it is in the US, the Union's behaviour towards the DPRK was not as constrained, allowing the EU to continue to provide food aid and development assistance to the country.

1. Why do Strategic Narratives Matter?

In international relations there are different approaches to the study of the social reality and its events. Considering the notion that the world is socially constructed, one ought to pay attention to how human beings interpret their relationships and their surroundings, or, in other words, their reality. This is important because if we assume that there is no such thing as a real objective world independent from our perceptions, we need to take into consideration the intersubjective meanings that are inherent to the social phenomena that constitute social reality.

As such, it is our belief that in order to study a given social reality we need a relatively flexible approach. Communication takes on a crucial role in the significance of one's surroundings since actors construct shared meanings of the world through the interaction with each other. Hence, communication not only allows discourses and narratives to emerge, but also sustains the "collective frames of perceptions, called social representations" (Meyer 2001, 21) that actors incorporate in their own social identities. These discourses and narratives are, then, what makes the world meaningful for human beings.

That is the reason why, in the present investigation, we have taken narratives, namely strategic narratives, as our primary theoretical lenses for the analysis of the international events being considered. We must, then, first begin by explaining what narratives are, as well as, determine their importance to the present study, and that is precisely the aim of this chapter.

1.1 Discourses or Narratives?

Narratives are crucial to the development of an actor's identity and, thus, to how it perceives the world. However, narratives cannot be crafted whenever the political actors desire as they need to take into consideration the intersubjective nature of discourse, that is, the shared understandings and expectations that national and international audiences have, for instance, of a state's history and reputation (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle 2013, 8). This process is challenging in the sense that even though political actors might want to forge a new narrative, they could end

up being “constrained by domestic political concerns, events on the ground, and competing narratives projected in a rapidly transforming and much more complex communication ecology” (Roselle 2017, 58).

It is also important to note that, despite discourses being the “raw materials of communication (...) that actors plot into narratives” (Miskimmon, O’Loughlin, and Roselle 2013, 7), there are three additional concepts that need to be considered in order to better understand them: power, history, and ideology. This is so because a discourse is “structured by dominance”, it is “historically produced and interpreted, that is, situated in time and space”, and the “dominance structures are legitimated by ideologies of powerful groups” (Wodak 2001, 3). This explains why different discourses emerge, and specifically, these are the reasons why dominant discourses stabilize conventions and become naturalized or seen as common-sense, while others that oppose them are seen as “resistance” (Ibidem). As such, discourses are not fixed. They are sustained and reinforced through repetition in the same way that identities depend on interaction. Divergent discourses about the representation of the social reality arise because “differently positioned social actors ‘see’ and represent social life in different ways” (Fairclough 2001, 123). In this way, discourses establish relations of power, which in themselves will always create room for contestation. As such, and since the political actors craft strategic narratives from discourses, what this means is that inevitably there will always be space for challenging the dominant narratives or discourses established (Miskimmon, O’Loughlin, and Roselle 2013, 16-17).

1.2 What are Narratives and When Do They Become Strategic?

As Miskimmon, O’Loughlin, and Roselle state,

Narratives stitch events together into a past, a present, and possible future (...) [they] set out actors and their characters, create expectations about the roles they might play, give meaning to the context and setting, and organize events into a plot while sidelining or silencing other ways of seeing events (Miskimmon, O’Loughlin, and Roselle 2013, 176).

As such, narratives allow human beings to organise seemingly unconnected experiences “and impart meaning to themselves and their world” (Krebs 2015, 2). They are a representation of sequences of events which political actors use as a

communicative tool to “attempt to give determined meaning to past, present, and future in order to achieve [their] political objectives” (Miskimmon, O’Loughlin, and Roselle 2013, 5). For that purpose, they use “history, analogies, metaphors, symbols, and images” (Ibid, 7) to craft them.

The structure of narratives implicitly denotes a sense of temporality and specially one of causal transformation, where the past, the present, and the future are connected to help actors make sense of reality. Through existent discourses, actors rearrange selected events into a chronological sequence in order to create a relatable plot. That is the reason why narratives tend to highlight an initial situation (past), usually more prosperous than the present one, and relate it to an incident that has disrupted the past order (present), finishing it off with possible resolutions (future) that would restore the situation to its previous prosperous condition (Ibid, 5).

There are also other elements that characterise narratives and distinguish them from discourses: they require an agent (a character or an actor); an act (a conflict or an action); a scene (a setting where the action takes place); agency (instruments employed); and finally, a purpose (the agents’ motives and goals that caused the action) (Krebs 2015, 12; Miskimmon, O’Loughlin, and Roselle 2017, 7). This structure, which includes actors as one of its fundamental components, allows us to get a better understanding of how political actors develop their “understandings of self and other (identity) and of what self and other want (interest)” (Krebs 2015, 10). In fact, the communication of narratives helps actors to reconstruct their identities throughout time, because they are born within these structures of meaning that shape their conceptions of reality, and, in turn, their behaviour as well.

Nevertheless, identities remain “an inherently social definition of the actor grounded in the theories which actors collectively hold about themselves and one another and which constitute the structure of the social world” (Wendt 1992, 398). Through interaction, these social constructions become stable concepts of self and other, which will endure for as long as actors, collectively, accept them. The same logic is applied to narratives to the extent that narratives are collective construction that do not exist independently of the actors’ agency (Archetti 2017, 221). They are only valid for as long as the political actors still identify with the version of past, present and future

that they portray; once an actor no longer interprets the world on those terms the existing narratives tend to disappear, giving way to new ones (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle 2013, 103).

It is because narratives hold this much power over the audiences that political actors seek to use them strategically so as to, on the one hand, push their own political agendas and, on the other hand, shape the behaviour of other actors (Ibid, 32). After all, dominant narratives “establish the common-sense givens of debate, set the boundaries of the legitimate [and] limit what political actors inside and outside the halls of power can publicly justify” (Krebs 2015, 3).

According to Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle, if we take a closer look to the international system, we will be able to distinguish between three types of strategic narratives: system, identity, and issue narratives (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle 2017, 8). System narratives describe the international system in terms of who the important players are, what characterises them and how the system works. They set out expectations about the actors' behaviour – for instance, great powers, rising powers and rogue states are expected to act in different ways (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle 2013, 177). Identity narratives describe the story of the political actors, their beliefs and goals (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle 2017, 8). This is a process that is constantly being negotiated and contested, as we have seen, through interaction. Lastly, issue narratives describe the need to adopt certain policies and set the context for the political actors by describing a problem and a solution to fix it (Ibidem). Examples of this type of narrative are those related to the need to fight the threat of climate change.

In the present investigation, we will focus on these three types of strategic narratives to explore how the selected actors, i.e. the US and the EU, behave towards the DPRK.

1.3 The Role of Communication

Besides analysing the conception of what constitutes a narrative, it is crucial to attend to the way that actors choose to communicate narratives to their audiences.

Following the framework provided by Miskimmon, O’Loughlin, and Roselle, one must observe the communicative process of narratives, or in other words, their formation, projection and reception (Miskimmon, O’Loughlin, and Roselle 2013, 8). This process should be analysed if one wishes to understand what a narrative is. The formation of narratives is related, as we have already explained, to the existing discourses; actors can only craft strategic narratives from the discourses available in their historical context, as they need to be agreed upon collectively. Narratives are projected through speeches and actions, specially through the existing media. This process of communication is crucial as it opens up spaces for the contestation and challenging of the projected narratives, with only the most stable and consistent narratives becoming the ones that are established as the ‘truth’. How actors make sense of the narratives and choose to interact with its information is what is analysed in the last step: their reception. This could be considered the most complex part to analyse since it relates to the different ways that the actors perceive information, either by getting directly into contact with it themselves, or through the interaction with other actors.

In today’s world, in particular, this process should be analysed alongside the existing media, namely the internet and all its features like the social media, as opposed to only taking into account television broadcasts and newspapers. These new communication technologies allow actors to form direct and indirect relationships that contribute to the development of their personal and collective identity (Archetti 2017, 222). Through them, actors can also interact with the given information and, depending on its availability, even create their own perceptions regarding diverse issues. It is not a simple matter of just reading one newspaper headline anymore. It has evolved into a more complex environment where the actors are faced with different realities than merely their own. Hence, seeing that it is mostly through these forms of communication that narratives reach their audiences, we cannot ignore them as they are spaces from which narratives can also originate.

As Miskimmon, O’Loughlin, and Roselle put it:

Actor’s understandings of the international system, hierarchy, authority, sovereignty, and historical trajectories are generated through communication about these matters. That

communication is made possible and shaped in important ways by the information infrastructure of the time (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle 2013, 149-150).

By information infrastructure, the authors mean the structures that allow the storage of a society's information (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle 2013, 150), which is crucial to the political actors. That is so because they grant the actors the possibility to attempt to spread their norms through the projection of strategic narratives, as well as also enabling them to adjust their policies according to the analysis of the interpretations of their chosen audiences.

The media revolution, most notably the latest developments in terms of mobile phones and the internet, has facilitated instant communication and the sharing of information. People use virtual spaces, such as social media and fora, to communicate with others and discuss issues that relate to themselves or to the community in which they are inserted.

As Robinson points out:

Within democratic states, the media are supposed to facilitate full and open debate on important issues. The term used to refer to this role is the public sphere. Within this sphere, news media, including television news, newspapers, and other news formats such as current affairs programming, should help to educate, inform, and facilitate debate. In doing do, a societal consensus can be reached which can then influence government policy. News media are also expected to perform a *watchdog* function, scrutinizing and holding account the government and also *representing* the opinions of the public (Robinson 2012, 172)³.

The employment of these channels of communication allows us to come face to face with different realities and interpretations that might differ from our own's, which, in turn, ends up shaping each person's ideas about the world, as well as their perceptions regarding their place in the world. Thus, because the populations are using these spaces with more regularity, the latter might be considered extensions of a country (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle 2013, 152). After all, they are becoming places where one can see the embodiment of a nations' values through the analysis of the audiences' discourses. As a result, we should consider them relevant because they

³ Italics in the original.

become suitable, as well, for the emergence, projection and reception of strategic narratives.

Yet, it should be considered that these spaces are not neutral; they are monitored by companies through software that allows them to analyse our communications and classify us into groups and subgroups according to the different roles we play in society (Ibid, 155). This is linked to the capitalist context we live in, that enables firms to monitor the ideas and interests of the audiences in order to produce new content to optimize interactions (Ibid, 154-155). Due to this fact, communication in virtual spaces usually ends up being influenced by the political actors' agendas. These actors work together with the media so as to study the behaviour and interests of the different audiences and learn how to better diffuse their norms and narratives. Hence, some channels of information are more predisposed to reflect the views of the political elites with the aim of manipulating the populations' opinions (Robinson 2012, 182).

This is more noticeable when we consider the different ways through which an audience relates to certain events. On the one hand, some people will blindly believe that an event unfolded in the way it was described on a newspaper or on a television program. On the other hand, there are, as well, people that will search for additional information in different newspapers and television programs, or even discuss the issue online, perhaps even with people from other countries, in order to compare the availability of information and, only then, will they create their own opinions on the subject.

We can, then, conclude that through different communication channels several narratives and ideas are constantly engaging with each other, sometimes even ending up overlapping or being redefined according to the different contexts within which they are inserted.

The growing importance given to the digitalized media requires an adaptation from both politicians and the audiences on how to better engage with the information that is being presented. The reactions of the audiences can now, perhaps more than ever, impact policies and even elections, since this new digital era allows quicker reactions and mobilization of people. This too calls for a greater attention to how

narratives should be formulated since new challenges might arise according to how they impact the receiving audiences. Distinguished actors such as journalists and political personalities must too be considered among the communication arena, since they usually hold a position with a following that allows them to support or to reinterpret a narrative (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle 2013, 157), even if they are not fully conscious of what they are doing.

1.4 The Importance of Norms and Ideas to the Analysis of Strategic Narratives

As it has been explained so far, a narrative is a means through which actors construct their identity. In this view, we understand that an actor shapes not only its own identity, but also the social reality upon which he exists and acts. This statement entails that actors are not static – they are dynamic in the sense that they evolve as they interact with other actors, that are themselves shaped by their own cultural, political and social circumstances (Fierke 2013, 191). These social relationships that actors develop through time help them reconstruct their identities as well as shared meanings of social reality. Thus, we can conclude that “we make the social world by acting on certain beliefs and meanings, but also that we make the very beliefs and meanings on which we act” upon (Bevir 2010b, 1285).

With this reasoning and given the choice of selecting a theory of international relations that best suits these assumptions, there is no doubt that constructivism would be the most adequate. That is because this theory focuses on the central role of social constructions. If our actions reflect our “beliefs, concepts, languages (...) and discourses that themselves are [also] social constructs” (Bevir 2010a, 54) then, by analysing them we can understand the behaviour of political actors (N. Choi 2010, 710).

We will, then, be using constructivist premises to complement the analysis of how strategic narratives influence the actors' behaviours in the international system. After all, narratives are intrinsically linked with the actors' behaviour since they set out “who the actors are, what characterizes them, what attributes they possess, what actions they take, and what motivates them (...) within an environment or context that affects them

even as they often affect the environment” (Miskimmon, O’Loughlin, and Roselle 2013, 32).

Despite the divisions among the constructivist authors, the majority upholds certain tenets on which we will be focusing as well. The first one, as already mentioned, is that normative structures are as important as material ones regarding the structures that shape the actors’ behaviour (Reus-smith 2005, 196). Material structures in itself cannot explain social phenomena; they must acquire meaning “through the structure of shared knowledge in which they are embedded” (Wendt 1995, 73). Repetition is what sustains discourses, hence, they become meaningful when reproduced through practices (Miskimmon, O’Loughlin, and Roselle 2013, 16).

This is related to the next tenet, in which constructivists “argue that understanding how non-material structures condition actors’ identities is important because identities inform interests and, in turn, actions” (Reus-smith 2005, 197). In fact, understanding how identities are constructed is essential to understanding the behaviour of the political actors since they are related to the development of its interests. As Wendt claims “identities are the basis of interests” (Wendt 1992, 398) and as such one cannot ignore the decisive role identities play in the actors’ decision making. As such, identities are constructed through the interaction with others. He further describes that “interaction rewards actors for holding certain ideas about each other and discourages them from holding others. If repeated long enough, these “reciprocal typifications” will create relatively stable concepts of self and other regarding the issue at stake in the interaction” (ibid, 405). Thus, through continual interaction actors construct their conceptions of the other’s identity.

That is the reason why “the higher the level of shared identity between the self and the other, the less threatening the other will appear (...) [which] will alter behaviour by increasing the willingness of the individual to cooperate with the other” (Rousseau and Retamero 2007, 749-750). As such, interaction and communication become crucial to the analysis of the international relations for they are the means through which the actors convey their strategic narratives, which, in turn, establish their identities and constrain their behaviour according to the different environments and contexts in which they are inserted.

The last tenet asserts that “agents and structures are mutually constituted” (Reus-smith 2005, 197). This denotes that despite the constraining nature of structures on the actors’ identities, these would not exist but for the continual practices of actors. In other words, normative and ideational structures become binding because actors ascribe them meaning and decide to act according to them. Therefore, and since they cannot exist independently from one another, they are mutually constituted. Narratives also function in line with this logic.

As it was already mentioned, narrativity is crucial to political actors and as such it is less likely that it would completely disappear. That is not to say, however, that narratives will remain established even when they begin to differ from the actors’ conceptions of the world. Once they are no longer accepted inside the context within which they were originally crafted, a more suitable narrative will emerge and fill in the gap. For a specific narrative to be able to influence an actor’s behaviour it must be seen as a credible and identifiable interpretation of the events of the international system, otherwise, it will disappear (Miskimmon, O’Loughlin, and Roselle 2013, 103). Moreover, considering that narratives are an instrument of power, it is only logical that political actors try to forge strong narratives that would give them the legitimacy to act and that, at the same time, would prevail over the existing counternarratives (Miskimmon, O’Loughlin, and Roselle 2017, 1).

1.5 Final Considerations

The purpose of the present chapter was to explain and interconnect the core concepts that are going to be used to analyse the two chosen case studies in order to answer the research question at the basis of this investigation. As such, we will take on the study of strategic narratives as a means of analysing international events, namely, to understand how the conceptions and identities that political actors construct through the interaction with each other influence their behaviour. The two case studies selected were the US and the EU, and we will compare the representations that these two actors have forged of the DPRK to try to understand the consequences that social representations have on the interaction between these political actors.

We will, then, consider the strategic narratives that both the US and the EU have crafted after 2001, and analyse their behaviour focusing on the central role that narrativity has on the formation of the actors' identities and, consequently, on the way they react to external situations. For that, it is important to take into consideration the entire communicative process that makes narratives become strategic. This also means paying attention to the role that discourses and their consistent communication have on the formation and projection of said narratives. That is because this is the path through which political actors seek to establish their identities and its boundaries, which are constantly being challenged and reconstructed by other actors. As a result, by closely considering these interactions, one can learn how and with what purpose do the political actors try to influence each other's behaviours (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle 2013, 16).

In this context, the power of strategic narratives makes them crucial to the actors who seek to reach their political goals. After all, if narratives are crafted out of discourses, and the actors' actions are a result of their perceptions and beliefs, then, by establishing a narrative the political actors can persuade others into accepting their vision of the world as the most truthful, pushing forward their own political agendas. In other words, if we analyse the actors' beliefs we can understand their behaviour and that is why we will take on the study of strategic narratives, and in particular the ones established in the US and in the EU, to determine how they influence their relations with the DPRK, a state that has been challenging dominant conceptions of what is right and wrong.

2. The Strategic Narratives of the United States of America vis-à-vis the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Ever since the Cold War the US has been crucial for the stability and security of the international community. Since the beginning of the new century it has developed close connections with several international players as well as established alliances and partnerships with key actors. This vast network of relations has allowed the US, either directly or indirectly, to spread its values and perceptions of the international events, or, in other words, its strategic narrative. As such, one can better understand why the US has placed so much emphasis on cooperative action, as it is a way for the country to extend its influence and strengthen its power.

The DPRK has been, since its creation, an important security issue both for the international community and for the US. The discussion regarding how the US should engage with the DPRK is, as well, a product of the Cold War period. However, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the power politics of the Korean Peninsula were challenged. The US has continued to consider the DPRK a threat to global security, namely after the confirmation, in October 2002, that this actor was developing its own nuclear programme in secrecy, which was followed by its withdrawal from the NPT, in October 2003.

In the present chapter, we will explore the US' strategic narratives, focusing on the representations of the DPRK in the American strategic documents, more specifically in its national security strategies.

2.1 The Axis of Evil: George W. Bush and the War on Terror

The terrorist attacks of September 11 2001 marked a turning point in the US' foreign policy. In their aftermath, President George W. Bush crafted a narrative that became of tremendous importance to the international system in the following years. In fact, if one pays close attention, his campaign of the war against terrorism, or the War on Terror, is nothing less than a system narrative.

It was mentioned in Chapter One that system narratives lay down “who are the important actors in the world, what characteristics they have, and what role they play” (Miskimmon, O’Loughlin, and Roselle 2013, 177). As such, they construct and constrain the political actors’ behaviours. These narratives influence significantly how great powers and rogue states behave simply because they create expectations about how they ought to act. If we analyse President George W. Bush’s speeches and the NSS that were written after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, it is possible to see these discourses taking the shape of a narrative.

During his State of the Union Address, in January 2002, the President clearly stated its perception of the US as a great power, which entailed certain responsibilities such as freeing the world of rogues states, the likes of the DPRK. This idea was clear on statements such as “history has called America and our allies to action, and it is both our responsibility and our privilege to fight freedom’s fight”⁴, as well as, “we have a great opportunity during this time of war to *lead the world* toward the values that will bring lasting peace”⁵. President George W. Bush presented the US as being the suited state to the role of leadership in freedom’s fight, and as the defender of rights such as liberty and justice which are “right and true and unchanging for all people everywhere”⁶. This was because, in his words, the American people “have known freedom’s price”⁷ and as a consequence were “called to a unique role in human events”⁸.

This speech also brought about another notion that ended up being crucial to the President’s narrative: the dichotomy of good versus evil. These conceptions were emphasised by the President, especially when he mentioned that “I know we can overcome evil with greater good”⁹ and that “evil is real, and it must be opposed”¹⁰. As a consequence, the President deliberately characterised the US’ enemies as actors with morally reprehensible traits and with an unfounded hatred for the US (Rigstad 2009, 380).

⁴ See United States of America. The President of the United States of America George W. Bush, 2002a, “President Delivers State of the Union Address”, January 29, 2002.

⁵ See *ibid*, italics added.

⁶ See *ibid*.

⁷ See *ibid*.

⁸ See *ibid*.

⁹ See *ibid*.

¹⁰ See *ibid*.

The President also declared that the US wanted to prevent both terrorists and states that sponsored terrorism from attaining chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons. Furthermore, the DPRK, Iran, and Iraq were considered “an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world”¹¹. The DPRK was even further described as a “regime arming with missiles and weapons of mass destruction, while starving its citizens”¹². This description entailed that President George W. Bush considered the DPRK a state with an evil leader, which posed a serious threat to the world.

In February 2002, President George W. Bush met with the ROK’s President Kim Dae-Jung at a press conference where he further explained why he considered the DPRK a security issue. Again, he reiterated the importance of values, such as freedom, and the role and responsibility of the US to solve the Korean issue when he stated that: “I’m troubled by a regime that tolerates starvation. I worry about a regime that is closed and not transparent. I’m deeply concerned about the people of North Korea. And I believe that it is important for those of us who love freedom to stand strong for freedom and make it clear the benefits of freedom”¹³. He also indicated that: “I will not change my opinion on the man, on Kim Jong Il until he frees his people and accepts genuine proposals from countries such as South Korea and the United States to dialogue; until he proves the world that he’s got a good heart, that he cares about the people that live in his country. (...) obviously, my comments about evil was toward a regime, toward a government – not toward the North Korean people”¹⁴.

It was important to note that the root of evil was not in the population of the DPRK but in its leaders. This meant that there was an obstacle to an end – in this case, the freedom of the people, that will only be attained by regime change. This was the reason why the President emphasized¹⁵ that the US would continue to provide food aid to the DPRK, notwithstanding the developments of the political situation¹⁶.

¹¹ See *ibid.*

¹² See *ibid.*

¹³ See United States of America. The President of the United States of America George W. Bush, 2002b, “President Bush & President Kim Dae-Jung Meet in Seoul”, February 20, 2002.

¹⁴ See *ibid.*

¹⁵ See *ibid.*, “I also want to remind the world that our nation provides more food to the North Korean people than any nation in the world. We are averaging nearly 300 000 tons of food a year”.

¹⁶ See *ibid.*, “dialogue or no dialogue, we will continue to send food to the North Korean people”.

2.1.1 What is considered a Rogue State?

In the present investigation we are analysing strategic narratives and their constraints on the behaviour of the political actors. As such, a narrative on rogue states entails a causal transformation in the sense that in the present time a state is considered rogue because X and Y reasons, and, through a change in said reasons the situation will alter so that in the future the state is no longer considered rogue (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle 2013, 40).

What these types of narratives bring to the international system is the notion that a state is dangerous because it exhibits behaviours that are not consistent with the international norms, like developing WMD. However, this is not the sole factor that determines whether a state is rogue. The 2002 NSS indicated a few more aspects that must be taken into account for the classification of a state as rogue: it uses brutality against its people; defies the international law; intends to acquire WMD and to use them as leverage against other nations; sponsors terrorism; rejects human values; and "hate the United States and everything for which it stands" (United States of America 2002, 14). This final point was crucial for the personification of a state as a rogue, due to the hatred it personally exhibited towards what the US, as in a sense of jealousy (Rigstad 2009, 382-383).

Therefore, and in conjunction with President George W. Bush's speech, one gets the idea that the US considered the DPRK a rogue state, not only because of its nuclear ambitions, but also because it did not respect human rights nor values, such as freedom and liberty. Consequently, since the US emphasised its role as a promotor and defender of said values, that might had been the reason why it considered that these states were against everything the country stood for, and why they presented a threat to the US' prosperity and security. This highlighted the US as a state with righteous concerns and "uniquely morally virtuous in character" (Ibid, 380). This idea of moral opposition was complemented by the President's use of the word 'Axis' to define the group of rogue states. This meant that these states formed "a united front in a global standoff against the US unlike other [states] (...) whose military and nuclear ambitions are perceived as less threatening to American interests" (Ibidem).

It is, nonetheless, worth mentioning that the US did not treat all rogue states equally. Despite its usual response being one of containment and deterrence (Henriksen 2012, 27), the US adapted its policies according to each state and to the level of threat it posed in its region¹⁷. Regarding the DPRK, the harm that this country could do to its neighbouring nations was a factor that weighted in on every decision regarding the Korean Peninsula. In fact, a military resolution to the nuclear issue would most likely end-up with a high number of casualties for both sides. In geographic terms, Seoul is very close to Pyongyang (circa 200 kilometres) making the ROK's capital city very easily accessed, even by regular missiles. Kang estimated that a war would result in 3 million casualties, including 52 000 American troops (Kang 2018b, 55). In addition, if there was a war that led to the collapse of the DPRK, there would be as well consequences to the PRC, either in the form of a massive flow of north Korean refugees, or in the possibility of sharing its border with a reunified Korea under the umbrella of the US (Anderson 2017, 635). Moreover, a war with the DPRK would most likely include other actors, such as Russia and Japan, and disrupt the power relations in the region (Kang 2018b, 56).

Yet, a pacific solution to put an end to the Korean problem would probably still disrupt these relations. If the US were to accept one of the DPRK's oldest revindications of reducing its military presence in the ROK, this might create an opening for both the DPRK and the PRC to increase its influence in the ROK and in Japan (Anderson 2017, 635). This could put the ROK in the middle of a dispute between the two states, which would force it to choose between a growing partner, both in economic and security matters, or a long-time security ally (C. Lee 2005, 256, 264). However, this situation is unlikely to happen due to the US' interest in maintaining its presence in the region.

There were, nevertheless, two disputed perspectives amongst the US Administrations and the scholars, which could be divided between the doves and the hawks. The doves argued that the DPRK strongly wished to develop its nuclear and ballistic programmes because it felt "threatened militarily, isolated politically and ailing economically" (Anderson 2017, 622). As such, they claimed that "carrots are more worthwhile than sticks, and emphasizes the responsibility that the world's most

¹⁷ The President mentioned this notion when he stated that "Different threats require different strategies". See United States of America. The President of the United States of America George W. Bush, 2003, "President Delivers State of the Union Address", January 28, 2003.

powerful nation has in resolving crisis through negotiation” (Cha and Kang 2018, 5). The hawks had a different position and considered that the DPRK’s leadership attempted to “blackmail and extort concessions from the United States through threats and brinkmanship (...) [and as such] the United States should not engage in dialogue with North Korea under any conditions” (Ibidem).

2.1.2 The DPRK’s Nuclear Revelations

By defining the DPRK as a rogue state, President George W. Bush determined that Kim Jong Il’s leadership was the obstacle that needed to be removed for peace to be achieved on the Korean Peninsula.

During 2002 and until the beginning of 2003, the tensions between the two countries began to rise. After James Kelly, the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, returned from the US-DPRK talks of October 2002, he claimed that the DPRK had admitted to having been developing a secret nuclear weapons programme, which was against the 1994 Agreed Framework. Even though the DPRK denied the veracity of the accusations, a series of incidents from both parties led the DPRK to announce, in January 2003, its exit from the NPT, which was followed by a restart of its missile testing (Cha and Kang 2018, 132-133; Henriksen 2012, 117-119).

Analysing this situation through the lenses of strategic narratives, it became clear that the Administration did not trust Kim Jong Il, and even though the President claimed that the US would support the North Korean people independently of the political situation, this was not the case. After the so-called October revelations there was a halt in the energy assistance, and throughout the entire Administration the amount of food aid became significantly lesser than that provided by the previous Administration (Jang and Suh 2017, 738; Savage 2005, 73). According to Jang and Suh, such behaviour led the DPRK to become more self-sufficient and less confident in international cooperation, which, in addition to the tighten deterrence and sanctions that it experienced in the subsequent years, increased its security concerns and worsened its human rights situation (Jang and Suh 2017, 743).

In his 2003 State of the Union Address, President George W. Bush stated that the biggest threat that the US faced were “outlaw regimes that seek and possess nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons (...) for blackmail, terror, and mass murder”¹⁸. The DPRK continued to be amongst the rogue states, being described as an “oppressive regime [that] rules a people living in fear and starvation”¹⁹. Despite this description being in the manner of the President’s past speeches and remarks, there was an addition that made it clear how the US perceived the developments that led to the DPRK’s withdrawal from the NTP. When President George W. Bush stated that “we now know that that regime was deceiving the world, and developing those [nuclear] weapons all along. And today the North Korean regime is using its nuclear programme to incite fear and seek concessions”²⁰, he indicated his alignment with a hawkish position of engagement with the DPRK. The next steps would, then, “show the North Korean government that nuclear weapons will bring only isolation, economic stagnation, and continued hardship”²¹.

Hence, it seems by now evident that the US developed certain expectations regarding the DPRK by identifying this country as a rogue state in need of regime change (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 384). These expectations were reinforced by the strategic narrative of the War on Terror, where the concepts of good and evil played a central role. Yet, the binary conception of the international events ended up intensifying the US’ dilemma on how to address the DPRK, an irrational state that threatened global security (Bleiker 2003, 732). The strategic narrative had, in the same way, reinforced the US’ identity as a great power with major responsibilities. Like so, President George W. Bush mentioned that: “Once again, we are called to defend the safety of our people, and the hopes of all mankind. And we accept this responsibility”²². Moreover, he emphasised the US’ responsibility when stating that “the course of this nation does not depend on the decisions of others”²³ which implied that if necessary, the US would act unilaterally. This notion was supported by the President’s conception of the US as a “strong nation,

¹⁸ See *ibid.*

¹⁹ See *ibid.*

²⁰ See *ibid.*

²¹ See *ibid.*

²² See *ibid.*

²³ See *ibid.*

and honorable in the use of our strength. We exercise power without conquest, and we sacrifice for the liberty of *strangers*”²⁴.

It seemed, then, that the US’ values and principles were crucial to its strategic narrative, as they legitimised the country’s behaviour towards the DPRK. When President George W. Bush mentioned the US’ sacrifices for the liberty of strangers, he intentionally strengthened his strategic narrative by separating the US’ behaviour from that of the DPRK. As such, the US was considered the most suitable state to lead the free world because of its selfless actions in prole of international peace, as opposed to the DPRK, a country that was only interested in inflicting damage and pain to both the global community and its own people.

2.1.3 A change in the American Approach?

With hopes of pressuring the DPRK into changing its regime through a reinforced approach of isolation and containment, the US began to favour a multilateral strategy (Henriksen 2012, 121; Matray 2013, 161; Moon and Bae 2005, 43-44; Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 397). Therefore, President George W. Bush called upon other countries to “stand up to their responsibilities, along with the United States, to convince Kim Jong Il that the development of a nuclear arsenal is not in his nation’s interests”²⁵. This resulted in the creation of measures such as the Proliferation Security Initiative, a multinational response to stop trade related to the proliferation of WMD and its components²⁶. The goal was to prevent the DPRK from transferring its WMD technology to other rogue states and possible terrorists, as well as to prevent it from gaining money through illicit transactions (Savage 2005, 73). The Initiative suffered, however, due to the non-participation of the PRC, Russia, and the ROK over fears of the negative consequences that would arise in case of the collapse of the DPRK (Matray 2013, 161).

The Six-Party Talks emerged after the PRC urged for multilateral discussions to ease the tensions on the Korean Peninsula. As the name indicates, these were

²⁴ See *ibid*, italics added.

²⁵ See United States of America. Department of State Archive, 2003, “President Bush Urges Multilateral Effort on North Korea”, March 6, 2003.

²⁶ For more detailed information see <https://www.psi-online.info/psi-info-en/-/2075520>

multilateral negotiations between the PRC, Japan, Russia, the ROK, the US, and the DPRK (Liang 2018). The first-round began in 2003, in Beijing, but ended without results (Moon and Bae 2005, 44) as the DPRK asked for a “declaration of non-hostile intent, mutual respect, and non-interference in its internal affairs” (Matray 2013, 162), an offer that the US rejected stating that it would only negotiate with the DPRK after the country began to dismantle its nuclear programme.

Nevertheless, a second-round of Talks took place in February of the following year. By this time, the DPRK had already officially withdrawal from the NPT (in October 2003), which might had been a factor for the softening of the US’ position. At the prospects of the DPRK’s return to the NTP, the US asked unilaterally for the complete, verifiable, irreversible dismantlement (CVID), which the DPRK promptly refused (Ibid, 164). Being 2004 a year of US elections, President George W. Bush abandoned the request and agreed to another round of Talks. These took place in June and, again, ended up with no agreement between the parties involved.

After his re-election, President George W. Bush declared his intentions of fighting the expansion of an “empire of oppression, in which a tiny group of brutal, self-appointed rulers control evert aspect of every life”²⁷, as a part of the US’ “ultimate goal of ending tyranny”²⁸. This indicated the level of commitment and responsibility that the US had taken on the global arena. In addition, the President mentioned that these dangerous regimes continued to sponsor terror “but no longer without attention and without consequence”²⁹, which leads us to believe that his strategic narrative was evolving and entering a new stage. In fact, by identifying itself as the freedom’s fighter, the US indicated that what stood in the way of their ideal world were the rogue states, like the DPRK, who sought chaos and destruction. As such, the representation of this country remained fairly stable, and even static, in the eyes of the US, who year after year characterized it as a country ruled by a ruthless leader, that starved their population and sought merely to acquire WMD to gain power. Faced with this, the US considered that the DPRK deserved to suffer the consequences of disrespecting the international

²⁷ See United States of America. The President of the United States of America George W. Bush, 2005, “State of the Union Address”, February 2, 2005.

²⁸ See *ibid.*

²⁹ See *ibid.*

laws, both in terms of armament and human rights. Consequently, the only way forward was to ensure the CVID of the DPRK's nuclear programme, if necessary, through regime change (J. Choi 2013, 103).

As a response to being considered a tyranny, the DPRK formally stated that it possessed nuclear weapons and affirmed that it would not be attending any future Six-Party Talks (Matray 2013, 166; Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 403). Nevertheless, after the US indicated its willingness to officially recognizing the DPRK as a sovereign state, ensuring Kim Jong Il that the US would not led an invasion to the country³⁰, the DPRK agreed to be present in the forth-round of Talks that took place in July and in September 2005.

In spite of these developments, it became clear that the Talks would no longer be able to stop the DPRK from becoming a nuclear state. This situation deeply concerned the PRC and the ROK, who together strived to reach an agreement that would appease both the US and the DPRK, in hopes that they would discuss concrete measures to halt the DPRK's nuclear developments (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 403-404). President Roh Moo Hyun's efforts to maintain the peace on the Korean Peninsula were a result of his alignment with the ROK's previous President Kim Dae Jung's Sunshine Policy, that sought constructive engagement with the DPRK. For instance, a positive development on the inter-Korean relations was an agreement where both countries established their commitment to stop the propaganda against each other in order to avoid the rising of tensions at the Demilitarised Zone (Matray 2013, 165).

The September Joint Statement, an agreement between the Six-Party Talks members, was reached in September 2005 after the US compromised on its demands. The countries agreed to "take coordinated steps to implement the aforementioned consensus in a *phased manner* in line with the principle of «commitment for commitment, action for action»"³¹. In turn, the DPRK committed itself to abandon its nuclear programme and existing weapons as well as to return to the NPT. This agreement indicated a slightly different positioning from the US as it clearly stated that

³⁰ See Embassy of the Republic of Korea in the United States of America, 2005, "Six-Party Talks to Resume this Month", June 10, 2005.

³¹ See United States of America. Department of State Archive, 2005, "Joint Statement of the Fourth Round of the Six-Party Talks", September 19, 2005. Italics added.

it had no intentions of invading the DPRK. Moreover, the agreement to a phased manner of denuclearisation was opposed to the previous unilateral demands for the CVID of the nuclear programme.

However, the progress was hindered as tensions began to rise again after the US imposed new sanctions to the Banco Delta Asia, in Macao, for managing an account with North Korean money that was considered to be obtained through illicit methods (Ibid, 166). This undermined all the work that had resulted in the September Joint Agreement and obstacles for further negotiations began to pile up as the US, once more, asked for the CVID of the nuclear programme. Oberdorfer and Carlin have observed that this development shattered the agreement, and that the “talks were completely off track for fifteen months, and inter-Korean relations fell on the path from which (...) they have still not recovered” (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 410).

2.1.4 The DPRK’s First Nuclear Test

By 2006, the US’ goal of ending tyranny in the world³² was reinforced by the new NSS, released in March. The DPRK appeared in first place on the list of nations considered tyrannies, being referred as a threat to the US’ “immediate security interests” due to its pursue of WMD (United States of America 2006, 3). This was followed by a warning that “tyrannies fell one by one” as “history reveals the arc of the tyrant’s fate” (Ibid, 4).

In comparison to the 2002 NSS, the DPRK has gained additional attention as a threat that continued to defy the international community by violating its international obligations. The US considered the country a challenge due to its “bleak record of duplicity and bad-faith negotiations”, in addition to its threatening policies towards its own people and the ROK (Ibid, 21). As a result, it was clearly indicated that the US and the remaining members of the Six-Party Talks would continue to pressure the DPRK into giving up its nuclear ambitions (Ibid, 21).

³² See United States of America. The President of the United States of America George W. Bush, 2006, “State of the Union Address by the President”, January 31, 2006.

Despite this positioning from the US being seemingly contradictory to the one at the time of the signing of the September Joint Statement, our analysis has made it clear that the US was following its own narrative. As President George W. Bush considered that rogue states could not be rewarded for their bad behaviour, he followed a strict approach that would supposedly force them to change. As such, the President considered that by pressuring the DPRK both unilaterally and multilaterally he would be able to steer the county onto a different path of action.

This idea was present in the 2006 NSS in the section where the US looked back on its successes since the release of the 2002 NSS: “we have achieved extraordinary coordination among historic rivals in *pressing* the DPRK to abandon its nuclear program”³³ (United States of America 2006, 35). Given the choice to select between these moments of pressure and those of coordinated constructive dialogue, the Administration undoubtedly mentioned the approach that better suited its strategic narrative.

As a consequence of the US’ pressure, the tensions on the Korean Peninsula continued to increase. In July 2006, the DPRK conducted a series of short-range and long-range missile tests, which were followed by its first nuclear test, in October. These led to the imposition of new sanctions not only from the UNSC, upon pressure from the US (Henriksen 2012, 127; Matray 2013, 167) and Japan (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 415), but also from countries such as the ROK and Australia (Arms Control Association 2019).

The nuclear test demonstrated that the US’ approach was not being as successful as it was deemed. Nevertheless, it brought the chance to break the deadlock of the negotiations between the US and the DPRK (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 417). By December, during the second session of the fifth-round of Six-Party Talks, it was agreed that the US would address the issue of the Macao Bank and seek new incentives to offer to the DPRK (Matray 2013, 167). The appeasement of the US’ demands created space for the development of the US-DPRK relations, albeit the existing wariness of each other.

³³ Italics added.

In February 2007, the session of the Six-Party Talks led to a new agreement, where the members committed themselves to implement the 2005 Joint Statement through coordinated actions, in a phased manner. Correspondingly, the DPRK agreed to the dismantlement of its nuclear facilities, as the US declared that it would remove the DPRK from its list of states sponsors of terrorism (SST) on the timeframe of sixty-days³⁴. The DPRK was also to receive economic, energy and humanitarian assistance, namely, an initial shipment of 50 000 tons of heavy fuel oil during this period³⁵. There was, however, no real progress after the agreement (Henriksen 2012, 132), and the sixth-round of the Six-Party Talks, in March, brought, again, little advancement to the denuclearization plan.

Yet, in July, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) confirmed that the DPRK had shut down its nuclear facilities (International Atomic Energy Association 2007), as it was agreed on the Denuclearization Action Plan. This clear step to implement the agreement resulted in the DPRK receiving the promised 50 000 tons of fuel oil. In the same month, there was a new session of Talks, but no schedule for further denuclearization was approved.

In October 2007, there were two important events that took place: a second inter-Korean Summit and a new agreement between the Six-Party Talks members. The North-South Summit resulted in a Joint Statement with important measures for the improvement of the relations between the two countries. The Six-Party Talks session concluded with an agreement where the DPRK committed itself to provide a list of the nuclear facilities that were to be disabled by the end of the year, and where the US reaffirmed its commitment to remove the DPRK from its list of SST³⁶. Verification issues stalled, once more, the progress of the agreement, which, in addition to the US' suspicions that the DPRK was lying about having halted its enriched uranium programme, resulted in an escalation of the tensions (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 428).

³⁴ See United States of America. Department of State Archive, 2007a, "North Korea – Denuclearization Action Plan", February 13, 2007.

³⁵ See *ibid.*

³⁶ See United States of America. Department of State Archive, 2007b, "Six Parties October 3, 2007 Agreement on "Second-Phase Actions for the Implementation of the Joint Statement"", October 3, 2007.

The year of 2008 brought about not only the last year of President George W. Bush's Administration, but also a new President to the ROK. Lee Myung Bak, unlike Kim Dae-Jung and Roh Moo Hyun, took on a more cautious and defensive approach toward the DPRK (Snyder 2009, 85), demanding "real steps toward nuclear disarmament as a condition for receiving further assistance from the ROK" (Matray 2013, 168). By the beginning of its term, President Lee Myung Bak mentioned that he had no intention to move forward with the October agreement (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 441) which illustrated its different positioning regarding the two previous Administrations.

It was only in June that the DPRK submitted the report that described its nuclear activities. President George W. Bush, in return, announced to the American Congress his intention of removing the DPRK's designation as a SST. Yet, as he added that he would only move forward with the removal after the establishment of a "strong verification regime"³⁷, the DPRK halted the shutdown of its nuclear facilities and asked the IAEA to remove its surveillance measures from the Yongbyon nuclear plant, revoking their access to the location (International Atomic Energy Association n.d). Nevertheless, by October, and nearing the end of President George W. Bush's Administration, a deal was settled on a system of verification of denuclearization. Therefore, the US officially removed the designation of SST³⁸ which the DPRK had had since 1988.

2.1.5 A Review of President George W. Bush's Strategic Narrative

President George W. Bush's strategic narrative on the War on Terror could be separated into three narratives. Firstly, there was a system narrative that depicted the US as a great power and the DPRK as a rogue state, creating expectations that constrained these two actors' behaviour. This had major impacts on how the US engaged with the DPRK, encouraging its sense of distrust on the country as a viable negotiations partner. As a result, despite its efforts, the DPRK was not able to go beyond these expectations that determined that its existence was a threat to the US.

³⁷ Quoted in Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 429.

³⁸ See United States of America. Department of State Archive, 2008, "US-DPRK Agreement on Denuclearization Verification Measures", October 11, 2008.

Secondly, the establishment of the US as a great power fuelled its identity narrative. The 9/11 terrorist attacks were a crucial event to the development of the US' identity as the suitable leader of the free nations to eradicate terrorism. In fact, this event was used as a catalyst to legitimise the US' self-imposed responsibility to defend "the hopes of all mankind"³⁹, a concern that was based on the US' belief in its unparalleled military strength and influence. This notion resulted in the binary conception of the US as a force for good and the DPRK as a country with an evil leadership that needed to be taken down.

Thirdly, the establishment of a fight for universal values, such as freedom and democracy, indicates the existence of an issue narrative. The War on Terror clearly described terrorism as the main conflict, rogue states and terrorists as its key players, and the fight for the "values that will bring lasting peace"⁴⁰ as the only course of action to resolve the issue.

These three narratives seemed to be congruent with each other and with the US' behaviour towards the DPRK during the period of analysis. However, there was a clear change from the first presidency of George W. Bush to his second, as he understood that it was unlikely that the US unilaterally would be able to pressure the DPRK into denuclearization. Even though this idea was already present in the 2002 NSS, where it was mentioned the need to work with other actors to promote stability on the peninsula (United States of America 2002, 26-27), the 2006 NSS emphasised that "regional cooperation offers the best hope for a peaceful, diplomatic resolution of this problem" (United States of America 2006, 21). As such, the Six-Party Talks allowed central actors in the East Asian region to come together and negotiate the denuclearisation process with the DPRK. Nevertheless, and even though these meetings were supposed to diffuse the influential power of the US in order to make the DPRK comply with its claims, this did not happen. Moreover, the internal divergences within the US Administration constrained the course of the Talks, as "any description of meetings with the North as "negotiations" set off frenzied denials" (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 398).

³⁹ See United States of America. The President of the United States of America George W. Bush, 2003, "President Delivers State of the Union Address", January 28, 2003.

⁴⁰ See United States of America. The President of the United States of America George W. Bush, 2002a, "President Delivers State of the Union Address", January 29, 2002.

During his second term, President George W. Bush did also come closer to an hawkish approach. In his last couple of years, the delays from the DPRK to meet its side of the agreements created a sense of urgency and frustration in the US. This made it clear that even though the US did not always do what it had pledged to within the set timeframe, due to the strong influence of its strategic narrative it blamed the setbacks solely on the DPRK. The representation of the DPRK remained fairly unchanged during the presidency of George W. Bush, making it possible to visualise the impacts of the US' strategic narrative on its behaviour towards the country: even as the US embraced softer engagement policies, it kept on pressuring the DPRK through the imposition of sanctions, not only unilaterally but also at a multilateral level. The expectations of the country as a rogue state did, thus, greatly define the US' behaviour towards the DPRK, but the security dilemma on the Korean Peninsula prevented the US from acting preemptively in the region.

Regarding the US' strategic narrative, we can argue that it was successfully formulated, projected and received, at least in the first years of its development. It is beyond the scope of this work to discuss whether or not it was successful in terms of achieving its goals policy wise, but within its limits it resulted in the setting of a new set of threats after the end of the Cold War, with the US at the centre of the action leading the international community, once again, in the fight with an evil entity – namely the terrorists and tyrants that endangered the people's freedom. The establishment of President George W. Bush's strategic narrative was the result of a series of daily practices, both in written and spoken texts, that “continuously reproduced and reinforced the core interpretations and narratives of the war on terror, giving it a concrete external ‘reality’ and a sense of legitimacy for the public” (Jackson 2011, 394). Yet, in regards to the DPRK, there was also the argument that the US' policies failed because they were not able to force the regime to abandon its nuclear ambitions. Furthermore, the hawkish approach of pressure through measures like sanctions might had been the reason that led the country to look for illicit options to keep its economy afloat (Matray 2013, 170).

We cannot, as well, affirm that this strategic narrative was completely well received by all the audiences. It is true that there are scholars that agreed with the views

presented by President George W. Bush, such as the DPRK not truly wanting to give up on its idea of becoming a nuclear state (Henriksen 2012), but there were also scholars that blamed the Bush doctrine for the developments in the US-DPRK relationship (Matray 2013; Moon and Bae 2005). Even though the US and the ROK shared concerns regarding a nuclear DPRK, there was an anti-American feeling in the ROK, by the end of 2002 (Cha and Kang 2018, 10), which reflected, as well, the division between the two countries in terms of how to act. The election of President Roh Moo Hyun, in 2002, reinforced this idea, as he was a candidate that favoured the ROK's autonomous decision making from the US (Snyder 2009, 85). Furthermore, the election reflected the displeasure of the South Korean people and the way they perceived the US' strategic narrative that enforced the isolation and containment of the DRPK (Kang 2018c, 122; Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 386). Nevertheless, despite the focus on multilateral approaches such as the Six-Party Talks, tensions continued to rise and, as a result, Lee Myung Bak was elected, which hinted that the US' strategic narrative had become more accepted and well-received by the ROK's population.

2.2 The US' Strategic Narrative under President Barack Obama: A New Approach in Sight?

President Barack Obama took office at a time when the negotiations with the DPRK had been strained for years. By the beginning of its term, the Six-Party Talks were no longer a viable option, and the DPRK was set on continuing to develop its nuclear programme.

During his inaugural speech, in January 2009, President Barack Obama mentioned that "those who cling to power through corruption and deceit and the silencing of dissent, know that you are on the wrong side of history, but that we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist"⁴¹. This statement differentiated President Barack Obama from President George W. Bush, as it expressed his willingness to engage with the US' enemies in a cooperative way. The nomination of Stephen Bosworth as a special envoy to the DPRK indicated the President's interest in establishing high-level bilateral

⁴¹ See United States of America. The President of the United States of America Barack Obama, 2009a, "President Barack Obama's Inaugural Address", January 20, 2009.

negotiations with the country which, in addition to the Six-Party Talks, would hopefully accelerate the denuclearisation of the DPRK (Cha 2009, 121). This was an indicator of good faith that contrasted with President George W. Bush refusal to set up high-level talks with the DPRK.

Albeit this positive approach, President Barack Obama's position was quickly put to the test. Barely two months after the President took office, the DPRK announced its intention of launching a satellite in April. Despite the international pressure not to do so, particularly from the US, the EU, and the PRC, the country went forward with the launch. President Barack Obama stated that "North Korea broke the rules once again by testing a rocket that could be used for long range missiles (...) Rules must be binding. Violations must be punished. Words must mean something. The world must stand together to prevent the spread of these weapons"⁴². Here we can see the President's position of "no tolerance for rule-breaking" (Chubb 2017, 324). This statement brought about a hostile reaction from the DPRK, that affirmed that it would restore the Yongbyon nuclear facility, that it would no-longer take part in the Six-Party Talks (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 432) and that it would not be bound by any of the previous agreements (Arms Control Association 2019). As a response, the US appealed to the United Nations (UN) to unanimously support the UNSC Resolution 1874, in order to tighten the sanctions and strengthen vigilance in the DPRK's proliferation activities (Council of Foreign Relations 2010, 7).

The DPRK's second nuclear test, in May 2009, raised doubts about President Barack Obama's positive stance vis-à-vis the county. Faced with this situation, the President stated that the DPRK's nuclear and ballistic programmes "pose a great threat to the peace of the world and I strongly condemn their reckless action (...) they are a blatant violation of international law, and they contradict North Korea's own prior commitments"⁴³. Through this statement we get a glimpse of the President's perception of the DPRK as a country that, through its reckless behaviour, chose to continue on a path of isolation. Moreover, its lack of commitment to the previous agreements

⁴² See United States of America. The President of the United States of America Barack Obama, 2009b, "Remarks By President Barack Obama in Prague As Delivered", April 5, 2009.

⁴³ See United States of America. The President of the United States of America Barack Obama, 2009c, "Remarks by the President on North Korea", May 25, 2009.

demonstrated that it was neither a trustworthy partner, nor deserving of the international community's efforts to provide the country with economic and humanitarian assistance.

2.2.1 The 2010 National Security Strategy

As already mentioned, President Barack Obama's main response to the escalation of the events was to keep on pressuring the DPRK through sanctions deriving from both the UNSC and the Six-Party Talks members. In his address to the nation of 2010, the President emphasised the importance of two concepts which were crucial, as well, to the previous Administration: terrorism and the proliferation of WMD as a threat to the international community. Furthermore, he specifically considered nuclear weapons the greatest threat to the US, and urged the international community to work co-ordinately to prevent their proliferation⁴⁴. These conjunct efforts ensured that the DPRK, and the nations that violated the international law, faced the consequences of its behaviour, being the reason "why North Korea now faces increased isolation, and stronger sanctions"⁴⁵.

Looking at the 2010 NSS, the first of President Barack Obama's Administration, it became clear that WMD were of great importance to the US. These weapons were included as part of the top national security priorities, and reinforced the idea that the US needed to take its responsibilities seriously in order to renew its leadership for the long term (United States of America 2010, 4).

Following the lines of President George W. Bush's strategic narrative, in this document the US was still presented at the centre of the action, linking the security of the American people with that of the international system to legitimise the US' involvement in external affairs. This was clearly stated by President Barack Obama in the section called "Renewing American Leadership – Building at Home, Shaping Abroad" where he stated that "our approach begins with a commitment to build a stronger foundation for American leadership, because what takes place within our borders will

⁴⁴ See United States of America. The President of the United States of America Barack Obama, 2010, "Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address", January 27, 2010.

⁴⁵ See *ibid.*

determine our strength and influence beyond them” (Ibid, 2). This notion, that emerged in the sequence of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, could be considered a continuation of President George W. Bush’s strategic narrative, with a focus on national security not only through internal, but also through external measures. In this line of thought, WMD were mentioned as a reminder of the US’ efforts to pursue a non-proliferation agenda that held accountable countries that disrespected the international law, such as the DPRK (Ibid, 4). In his speech in Prague, in April 2009, we began to see the importance that the President gives to the non-proliferation of WMD, as he stated his commitment to “seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons”⁴⁶ through the strengthening of the NPT. The DPRK was mentioned as an example of why it was crucial to toughen international cooperation to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

The 2010 NSS also called for the renewal of the US’ image. The need to readjust the US’ image in the international system to the new political environment indicated the US’ intention of seeking its previously lost role as the leader of the free nations. This had been referenced since President Barack Obama’s inaugural address, in 2009, when he stated that “in reaffirming the greatness of our nation we understand that greatness is never a given. It must be earned (...) [and] starting today, we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin again the work of remaking America”⁴⁷. In order to do so, there was, then, the need to rebalance the country’s priorities, and to renew the foundation of its strength and influence (Ibid, 9). In this way, the US’ leadership role was reinforced by the notion that the country was stronger when leading by example, as opposed to through the imposition of its ideals (Ibid, 10). This indicated that the US considered that acting by example would separate it from the “nations and individuals that deny or suppress human rights” (Ibidem), which, consequently, would give it the “credibility to stand up to tyranny” (Ibidem).

The emphasis on the US’ power by example extended to its relations with the rogue states. Therefore, when dealing strictly with the DPRK, the US was “not trying to single out nations” (Ibid, 23) in a fight for superiority, being, instead, following its

⁴⁶ See United States of America. The President of the United States of America Barack Obama, 2009b, “Remarks By President Barack Obama in Prague As Delivered”, April 5, 2009.

⁴⁷ See United States of America. The President of the United States of America Barack Obama, 2009a, “President Barack Obama’s Inaugural Address”, January 20, 2009.

responsibility of ensuring that the non-proliferation regime succeeded (Ibidem). Consequently, the DPRK was faced with a choice: if it “eliminates its nuclear weapons program (...) they will be able to proceed on a path to greater political and economic integration with the international community. If they ignore their international obligations, we will pursue multiple means to increase their isolation and bring them into compliance with international non-proliferation norms” (Ibid, 23-24). The strengthening of the US’ identity was, thus, what constrained its behaviour in the international system. Namely, the US’ role of “global leadership in terms of international legal norms ended up functioning as the ‘rules’ that determined how the United States would talk about, and act upon, North Korea” (Chubb 2017, 325).

The notion that the US deserved its role of leadership was also present in the previous Administration’s NSS. It was conceived as a way to steer the US’ internal audiences and to create a shared meaning of the importance of the US in the international arena. The establishment of the US’ role of leadership would enable the country to project and legitimise, through its strategic narrative, its idea of the international order (Miskimmon and O’Loughlin 2017, 278). The strategic narrative where the 2010 NSS was embedded organized events into a causal sequence, identified and characterized the protagonists, all whilst setting the scene for the audiences (Krebs 2015, 38). In this sense, the 2010 NSS was designed to transmit President Barack Obama’s perspective on the resolution of the threats and issues that the US faced in 2010, as well as to reinforce the positioning of the country in the international system.

The election of the ROK’s President, Lee Myung Bak, also brought positive developments to the establishment of the US’ strategic narrative. After President Barack Obama took office, Lee Myung Bak stated that “President-elect Obama is calling for new changes in the United States. His vision looks just like that of my South Korean government”⁴⁸. This was a sign that the US-ROK relation could improve from its past issues, which was crucial to the establishment of a strong position towards the DPRK. This concern was stated by the US’ President, as he indicated his intent to modernize the US-ROK security relations so that they “reflected the principle of equal partnership

⁴⁸ See Embassy of the Republic of Korea in the United States of America, 2008, “President Lee Says He Shares Common Vision with U.S. President-elect Obama”, November 5, 2008.

(...) [and] ensure a sustainable foundation for the US military presence there” (United States of America 2010, 42).

The closer alignment of the US with the ROK was mirrored by the gap in the inter-Korean relations. For instance, around November 2009, a ROK naval vessel attacked a DPRK patrol boat that had crossed into the South’s border. As a result, in March 2010, the Cheonan, a ROK’s ship, was attacked and sank, leading to the demise of forty-six people. Despite the ROK’s suspicions of the attack coming from the DPRK, the country denied any association with the event, ignoring the evidence that indicated that it had been a North Korean torpedo what sank the boat (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 445). By May, after the ROK and the UN⁴⁹ officially accused the DPRK of sinking the Cheonan, the channels of trade and communication in the peninsula were severed. In October, there was an exchange of artillery fire (Council of Foreign Relations 2016, 13) and, in November, the DPRK shelled a South Korean island, which caused military and civilian casualties (Council of Foreign Relations 2016, 13; Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 452). It was only in January 2011 that the relations between the two countries began to slightly improve, as the DPRK called for the reopening of the communication lines.

2.2.2 The US’ Strategic Patience Approach and Kim Jong Il’s Demise

By 2011 Kim Jong Il’s health was getting worse and there were talks about who would be the successor to the leadership of the country. Despite the internal preparations for that event, there was the idea that the DPRK would not resist another succession, similarly to 1994, the year when Kim Il Sung passed away (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 445). This idea that the DPRK would eventually collapse if not only due to external pressure, but also due to internal factors, such as the death of its leader, has been present since its establishment as a sovereign country (Cha and Kang 2018, 189-190). It was, however, reinforced since Kim Jong Il started to show signs of a deteriorating health condition (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 445). As a result, the US considered a ‘waiting’ strategy the most adequate to deal with the DPRK’s blows, as the notion that the country would slowly, but surely, collapse became even stronger.

⁴⁹ For more detailed information see <https://www.un.org/press/en/2010/sc9975.doc.htm>

Nevertheless, despite the expectations of the international community, the situation developed differently. After Kim Jong Il passed away, in December 2011, his son Kim Jong Un took his place as leader of the DPRK, and the regime still stands until today⁵⁰. The new leader wished to continue Kim Jong Il's desire to improve the US-DPRK relations, that after almost one year of negotiations were on the verge of reaching an agreement (Ibid, 454). However, after Kim Jong Il's death the final meeting was postponed to February 2012, which resulted in what became known as the Leap Day Agreement. Here, the US affirmed that, despite its concerns regarding the DPRK's behaviour, the agreement "reflects, if limited, progress in addressing"⁵¹ some of the Administration's fears regarding the DPRK's commitment to denuclearize. Yet, the US' concerns were quickly confirmed as in March the DPRK announced its plan to launch a satellite into orbit, which the US claimed to be a "direct violation of its international obligations [and] is highly provocative"⁵². The DPRK, in its turn, did not seem affected by this statement, as it claimed to its right to develop a space programme (Ibid, 455).

Kim Jong Un seemed to be trying to differentiate himself from his father. Instead of respecting the Leap Day Agreement and using it as a bargaining chip for international aid, he was determined to establish the DPRK as a nuclear power (J. Choi 2013, 106-107). As a matter of fact, a few days before the April's launch, Kim Jong Un invited members of the international press to visit the new launch facility and control centre. Even though this choice might had been considered odd, it was an indicator that Kim Jong Un was trying to normalize the DPRK's behaviour. Moreover, despite the failure of the launch, the situation was reported to the North Korean people which hinted to the possibility that the new leader might had been trying to move into a path of more openness and transparency (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 455). Nonetheless, the US considered that the launch was against the UNSC sanctions, being further "evidence that negotiations with North Korea are doomed to fail" (Chubb 2017, 326). As a result, the Leap Day Agreement was no longer valid.

⁵⁰ At the time of writing of the present work (2019) Kim Jong Un is still in power and the DPRK still exists as a country.

⁵¹ See United States of America. Department of State Archive, 2012a, "U.S.-DPRK Bilateral Discussions", February 29, 2012.

⁵² See United States of America. Department of State Archive, 2012b, "North Korean Announcement of Missile Launch", March 16, 2012.

In November 2012, President Barack Obama was re-elected, and in December Park Geun Hye was elected the ROK's President. A few days before the ROK's elections, the DPRK successfully launched a satellite into orbit (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 457). This was immediately condemned by the international community and resulted on the adoption of the UNSC Resolution 2087, in January 2013. Tensions began to escalate after the DPRK conducted its third nuclear test, in February, which led to the imposition of new sanctions and to a new Resolution (2094) from the UNSC. President Barack Obama mentioned that "the regime in North Korea must know they will only achieve security and prosperity by meeting their international obligations. Provocations of the sort we saw last night will only further isolate them, as we stand by our allies, strengthening our own missile defense and lead the world in taking firm action in response to these threats"⁵³. In this short and clear statement, we can see the President's strategic narrative that reiterated the key role of the US as it actively promoted the security of the international community.

However, the development of the events began to put a strain on President Barack Obama's strategic patience approach. J. Choi mentioned that the nuclear test was a "turning point for North Korea's nuclear ambitions [as] Kim Jong Un demonstrated a clear and strong will that North Korea will essentially never give up its nuclear weapons program" (J. Choi 2013, 107). Faced with this situation, the US continued to reach out to its allies and partners to strengthen deterrence with the DPRK, carefully avoiding decisions that would signal the recognition of the country as a nuclear state (Ibid, 115, 121).

2.2.3 The 2015 National Security Strategy

Throughout the years of 2014 and 2015, the DPRK continued to defy the international community by conducting several missile tests, most of which were successfully launched⁵⁴.

⁵³ See United States of America. The President of the United States of America Barack Obama, 2013a, "Remarks by the President in the State of the Union Address", February 12, 2013.

⁵⁴ For more detailed information see <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/north-korea-missile-tests-a-timeline/>

At the beginning of 2015, in the middle of President Barack Obama's second term in office, a second NSS was released. This document represented fundamentally a continuation of the 2010 NSS, as it mainly focused on the US' need to maintain its leadership role. There were, however, important differences that distinguished the two documents.

In the first one, the main purpose of the US' was to rebuild the foundation of its strength and influence by leading by example. In the 2015 NSS, this goal seemed to have been reached and, consequently, the US' focal point became the safeguarding of its national interests through a strong and sustainable leadership (United States of America 2015, 1). The maintenance of its leadership role was the premise that guided the document. This exemplified the evolution of the US' strategic narrative after President Barack Obama took office. In 2009, the President followed President George W. Bush's strategic narrative that determined that the US ought to lead the free nations against the threats to the international community's security. During his six years in office, President Barack Obama continuously projected and strived to act upon his strategic narrative, which normalised the conception of the US as a key indispensable actor in the international arena.

The characterisation of the US' role was also extended to an actor that should not only lead by example, but also with purpose, with strength, with all its instruments of power, and with capable partners (Ibid 2-4). Even though these ideas could also be found in the 2010 NSS, they brought about a long-term perspective of the US' leadership. This revealed that while President Barack Obama paid attention to the developments of the international events, he actively sought to maintain the US' role of leadership in the international community. These efforts were deeply connected to the US' interests as an international actor that actively sought to influence the trajectories of the historic transitions, to "seize the opportunities they create, and manage the risks they present" (Ibid 4).

The acknowledgement of the changing security landscape and shifts in power dynamics, corroborated the necessity for cooperative action amongst the different international actors. In the 2015 NSS, there was a separation of actors between states, with reference to the increasingly significant role of the G20, and sub- and non-state

actors, such as movements led by the civil society or transnational agents. The mention to these differences indicated a new vision beyond the War on Terror, which focused specifically on terrorism and in the Middle East (Ettinger 2017, 117). In the new NSS, in contrast, the US “eschews orienting our entire foreign policy around a single threat or region. It establishes instead a diversified and balanced set of priorities appropriate for the world’s leading global power with interests in every part of an increasingly interconnected world” (United States of America 2015, 5).

As a self-perceived responsible leader, the US would mobilize the international community to act upon the urgent challenges that were climate change and infectious diseases (Ibid, 7). The country would also be crucial in handling the high priority issue of preventing the proliferation of WMD. We see this dynamic when the US affirmed that,

American diplomacy and leadership, backed up by a strong military, remain essential to deterring future acts of inter-state aggression and provocation by reaffirming our security commitments to allies and partners, investing in their capabilities to withstand coercion, imposing costs on those who threaten their neighbors or violate fundamental international norms, and embedding our actions within wider regional strategies (United States of America 2015, 10).

The DPRK was, once more, considered an issue due to its provocative behaviour that escalated the tensions. Moreover, the US affirmed that its “commitment to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is rooted in the profound risks posed by North Korean weapons development and proliferation” (Ibid 11). Nevertheless, it was reiterated that “the United States has been and will remain a Pacific power (...) [and that the] American leadership will remain essential to shaping the region’s long-term trajectory to enhance stability and security (...) and ensure respect for universal rights and freedoms” (Ibid, 24).

Nonetheless, after the failure of the Leap Day Agreement, it became clear that the US did not know how to deal with the DPRK in a fruitful way. Because the country did not conform to the social logics that the US considered acceptable, the DPRK was perceived a risk, and a country with whom negotiations were considered futile (Chubb 2017, 26). And yet, the US still sought to arrange talks with the country, despite its failure on reaching a compromise between its foremost position of demanding

denuclearisation, and the DPRK's request for security guarantees in the form of a peace treaty (Ibid, 27). This contradictory behaviour resulted in the US' inability to reach the DPRK.

As the situation evolved, at the beginning of 2016, the US tried, once again, to reach the DPRK by loosening its restraints for dialogue. Nevertheless, Kim Jong Un dismissed the offer and conducted its fourth nuclear test. The UNSC immediately condemned the country's behaviour and issued Resolution 2270, which expanded the arms embargo and non-proliferation measures. President Park Geun Hye mentioned that this was "the strongest sanctions resolution on North Korea to date (...) [and] the fact that the U.N. Human Rights Council recently adopted a stronger North Korean human rights resolution by consensus and without a vote aptly illustrates the profound extent to which the international community is concerned about the state of human rights in North Korea"⁵⁵.

At this point, it was clearly visible that the US' approach was getting strained whereas the DPRK's regime showed no signs of collapsing, even exhibiting some economic growth, despite the international sanctions (Wertz 2018). Until the end of 2016, the DPRK conducted at least a dozen ballistic missile tests, most of which were unsuccessful. They served, however, as a warning to the international community, as they demonstrated the quick development of its nuclear and ballistic programmes. In fact, during the two previous years, the majority of the missiles were short-ranged, but in 2016 there were not only medium-range and intermediate-range, but also submarine-launched. This resulted in the escalation of the tensions in the region, namely after a mid-range missile landed in Japanese waters, in August.

In September of 2016, the US and the ROK's Presidents had a bilateral meeting where President Barack Obama stated that: "these launches are provocative. (...) Its nuclear and missile programs are a threat to not only the ROK, but to Japan, other allies in the region, partners in the region, and to the United States"⁵⁶. Furthermore, he said

⁵⁵ See United States of America. The President of the United States of America Barack Obama, 2016a, "Remarks by President Obama, President Park Geun Hye of the Republic of Korea, and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan After Trilateral Meeting", March 31, 2016.

⁵⁶ See United States of America. The President of the United States of America Barack Obama, 2016b, "Remarks by President Obama and President Park of the Republic of Korea After Bilateral Meeting", September 6, 2016.

that: “we are going to work together with the most recent U.N. sanctions that are already placing North Korea under the most intense sanction regime ever”⁵⁷.

Yet, a few days later, the DPRK conducted its fifth nuclear test which was strongly condemned by the international community. President Barack Obama responded to the North Korean provocation by clearly stating that: “the United States does not, and never will, accept North Korea as a nuclear state”⁵⁸, reinforcing the joint efforts of the international community that led to the adoption of the UNSC Resolution 2321, in November.

2.2.4 President Barack Obama’s Approach: A Third Stance?

President George W. Bush’s strategic narrative clearly indicated that engaging with rogue states would be equivalent to rewarding their bad behaviour. When we analysed the actions of the DPRK during the ten years of George W. Bush’s presidency, we can see that the evolution of the events was linear and somewhat sequential. The interactions between the two countries could be read almost like a conversation, in which the DPRK’s behaviour would drive the US to react, and so forth. As such, the behaviour of the DPRK could mostly be explained in relation to President George W. Bush’s remarks or to the actions of the ROK. Under President Barack Obama this pattern seemed to have changed, as there was no longer the strict binary conception of good and evil (Chubb 2017, 321), which resulted in an engagement with the states that were part of the Axis of Evil.

Regarding the DPRK, the US’ previous conception of rogue state was not as crucial to the development of the US-DPRK relation as was the notion of risk. According to Clapton and Hameiri, the determination of a state as ‘risky’ was deeply related to the “lack, or inadequate functioning, of liberal, or more specifically neoliberal, governing institutions” (Clapton and Hameiri 2012, 66). Faced with the increasingly unpredictable security environment after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the Western governments began to focus on the regions and states from where terrorism and the proliferation of WMD

⁵⁷ See *ibid.*

⁵⁸ See United States of America. The President of the United States of America Barack Obama, 2016c, “Statement by the President on North Korea’s Nuclear Test”, September 9, 2016.

could originate. As the link between the Western governments' security became more intertwined with the existence of undemocratic states, so grew the need to intervene in their domestic affairs. Consequently, this logic of risk management resulted in the emergence of new hierarchical structures of social interaction between the intervenor and the fragile state (Ibid, 61).

Through the interaction with the DPRK, the US developed an understanding of the country as a risk due to a few factors: its domestic policies, often undemocratic; the subjugation of the its population through repressive methods and propaganda; and, its nuclear capability, that was being developed outside of the international norms and regulations (Chubb 2017, 321). These reasons contributed to the US' understanding of its relation with the DPRK in terms of a hierarchy. As such, through the interaction with the country, the US developed its identity as a superordinate and the one of the DPRK as a subordinate, which was in agreement with the US' self-perceived role of a leader. However, because the DPRK refused to accept these conceptions, its behaviour was deemed as provocative, thus, legitimising the US' characterisation of the DPRK as a threat to the international community's security (Ibid, 322).

Despite President Barack Obama's willingness to engage with the DPRK when he first came into office, the DPRK's disrespect for the international norms quickly forced the US to rethink its approach towards the country. As such, the several events that took place between 2009 and 2016 led the US to consider the DPRK an unreliable partner, but a rational state (D. Kim 2015, 40). In other words, even though the US considered the DPRK a risk, it did not focus all of its strength on the resolution of the issue "because it has accumulated the understanding that North Korea is a rational actor and therefore its threat can be successfully deterred" (Ibid, 39). As a result, "despite continually listing North Korea as a high foreign policy priority and problem, the Obama administration has, for the most part, exhibited little energy or motivation to move forward with such a difficult negotiating partner and as turned its attention elsewhere" (Delury 2013, 149)⁵⁹. This realisation resulted in the development of the US' strategic patience approach, that favoured neither a dovish nor a hawkish positioning.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Chubb 2017, 324.

The conception of the DPRK as a rational actor explained why deterrence had worked on the Korean Peninsula for more than fifty years, as a new war would cause great damage to the entire region. As we have already seen, even when the DPRK did not possess nuclear weapons it could easily destroy Seoul, which prevented a pre-emptive attack from the US. If we take the DPRK as a rational actor with no desire of being destroyed, one can understand why President Barack Obama did not take it as an urgent threat to the US. Hence, the President decided on a relatively secure approach to deal with the country instead of a more proactive and quick way to deal with the issue.

These ideas became clearer as we analysed President Barack Obama's approach toward the DPRK. In fact, during his time in office, the President adopted a strategy that boiled down to wait for the DPRK to try and reach the international community and the US in a peaceful manner, instead of trying to engage in talks immediately after the country behaved in a provocative way (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2014, 434). Through this positioning, the Administration did successfully break the previous pattern of "provocation – crisis – negotiations – extraction of concession" that characterised most of the US-DPRK interactions (Liegl 2018, 368).

However, faced with the DPRK's behaviour, the US was put in a position where it did have to react punitively towards the country (Chubb 2017, 324). At the same time, it had to ensure its willingness to work on a peaceful resolution, even though there would be no certainties that a new agreement would solve the nuclear issue, as the previous ones had also failed (Council of Foreign Relations 2010, 9; D. Kim 2015, 40). The notion of risk contributed to the understanding of how the US perceived the DPRK, and it legitimised the US' conception that there was no room for trust in its relation with the DPRK since the country had in "its nature rejected the core liberal tenants of trust and cooperation that international institutions and laws are predicated on" (Chubb 2017, 325).

These considerations explained why the behaviour of the US was different during the presidencies of Barack Obama and George W. Bush. Even so, it is interesting to note that by the end of President Barack Obama's time in office, his perception of the DPRK ended up resembling President George W. Bush's, in the sense that the country was

considered not only a regional threat, but also a problem to the international community due to its hostile behaviour and refusal to abide by the international rules. Yet, despite considering the DPRK a threat to the international community, because of the security dilemma on the Korean Peninsula the US did not focus on bilateral negotiations with the country. Its strategy consisted, instead, in reinforcing the regional cohesion by strengthening its alliances with the ROK and Japan, in addition to Talks with the PRC and Russia in order to maintain the pressure and deterrence to isolate the DPRK (Council of Foreign Relations 2010, 9).

President Barack Obama's strategic narrative seemed, thus, to be a continuation of President George W. Bush's, although with a slightly less aggressive tone and rather adjusted to the complexities and issues of the international scene. This was because he was able to recognise that the strategic narrative on the War on Terror became normalised and institutionalised, and deeply connected to the US' identity (Jackson 2011, 401). As such, instead of contesting it, President Barack Obama picked up its core conceptions and adjusted them to craft a narrative that matched the international environment during his presidency. This was the reason why there was an emphasis on the necessity of a war against terrorism, on the US' right to act pre-emptively against its enemies, and on its duty to retake its leadership role in order to fight threats like the proliferation of WMD (Ibid, 402).

The President had, however, different conceptions on how he should fight the War on Terror. Even though he pledged to finish the war, he did not mean to end all counter-terrorism measures, but rather to fight the threat with different approaches (McCrisken 2014, 17). This became notorious when he stated that "as we take the fight to al Qaeda, we are responsibly leaving Iraq to its people. As a candidate, I promised that I would end this war, and that is what I am doing as President"⁶⁰. This decision to withdraw the American troops from Iraq and the priority given to issues such as climate change and global health (Ettinger 2017, 118) demonstrated the President's efforts to readjust the US' behaviour.

⁶⁰ See United States of America. The President of the United States of America Barack Obama, 2010, "Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address", January 27, 2010.

The DPRK was another example of an issue where President Barack Obama did not completely follow President George W. Bush's strategic narrative. In fact, the language used to describe the DPRK indicated the President's more deliberate position towards the country and its willingness to rebuild the US-DPRK relations without the bias entailed by the conception of a rogue state. Consequently, when referencing the DPRK there was no direct mention of the country as a rogue state, being instead its violations of the international norms what established the country as a risk. This was closely related to the President's focus on the US' soft power and on the "international norms, laws, regimes and institutions" (Chubb 2017, 323). The latter were used to legitimise the US' belief that its commitment to the East Asian countries would bring "greater prosperity, stability and security to the region" (Kolmaš and Kolmašová 2019, 65).

Hence, the President focused on the development of his system and identity narrative in order to bring attention to the crucial and indispensable role of the US in the international community. This idea was reinforced by an issue narrative that was used to encourage the international community to support the US' efforts in promoting a non-proliferation regime strong enough to contain the DPRK and to maintain the status quo on the Korean Peninsula.

Regarding the reception of President Barack Obama's strategic narrative, the alliance with the ROK was of crucial importance as its alignment with the US' strategic narrative would increase the likelihood of it becoming institutionalised. Fortunately, President Park Geun Hye was in agreement with the US' conceptions of the international system and of the DPRK, which resulted on the strengthening of the US-ROK relations and of the US' position on the Korean Peninsula. Indeed, in 2013, President Obama stated that "the United States and the Republic of Korea are as united as ever. And faced with new international sanctions, North Korea is more isolated than ever (...) Our two nations are prepared to engage with North Korea diplomatically and, over time, build trust"⁶¹. In the same Joint Statement, President Park Geun Hye mentioned that "the President and I noted that it is important that we continue to strengthen our deterrence against North Korea's nuclear and conventional weapons threat (...) We also shared the

⁶¹ See United States of America. The President of the United States of America Barack Obama, 2013b, "Remarks by President Obama and President Park of South Korea in a Joint Press Conference", May 7, 2013.

view that realizing *President Obama's vision* of a world without nuclear weapons should start on the Korean Peninsula"⁶².

2.3 The Strategic Narrative of President Donald Trump: "America First"

The election of Donald Trump as President of the US, in November 2016, brought new ideas regarding the international order to the White House. The President quickly demonstrated how his style of governing would differ from the two previous Presidents, namely through the use of Twitter, where he started to post his forthright and sometimes even blunt opinions.

In his inaugural address, the President indicated that his central focus revolved around restoring the US' role in the international community and bringing back its promise to the American people⁶³. These goals were supported by his strategic narrative that emphasised the need to put "America First"⁶⁴. The President used NATO as an example of a situation where the US was put in an unfair position due to the unequal contributions of the member states to the alliance. This idea that other countries were taking advantage of the US with their unfair trade policies created tensions between the US and its allies (Kolmaš and Kolmašová 2019, 67). Nevertheless, despite the lack of confidence in President Donald Trump's capabilities, "the idea of a U.S.-led world order is still attractive to most" (Pew Research Center 2018).

President Donald Trump's position regarding emigration brought back a notion of evil that was reminiscent of President George W. Bush's. Right at the beginning of his presidency, the President signed an executive order, commonly known as the travel ban or muslim ban, that suspended the entrance of refugees and citizens of seven Muslim-majority countries in the US. As a result of the controversy that emerged from this policy, President Donald Trump mentioned that "everybody is arguing whether or not it is a BAN. Call it what you want, it is about keeping bad people (with bad intentions) out of country!" (Trump 2017b). The re-emergence of the old dichotomy between good and

⁶² See *ibid*, italics added.

⁶³ See United States of America. The President of the United States of America Donald Trump, 2017a, "The Inaugural Address", January 20, 2017.

⁶⁴ See *ibid*.

evil reinforced the identity constructs that had been present in the US' strategic narrative since the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Even though during his campaign, President Donald Trump did not focus on the DPRK as a priority issue, at the beginning of 2017, this situation changed. A few days before the end of President Barack Obama's term, Kim Jong Un announced his intention of testing an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), to which President Donald Trump responded by stating that "It won't happen!" (Trump 2017a). This marked the beginning of his strategy, that, despite the different language and tone, was a continuation of President Barack Obama's in the sense that the US refused to accept the DPRK as a nuclear power (Cha and Kang 2018, 194). In fact, this was clearly mentioned by the US Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, at the UNSC, as he claimed that "we have said this before and it bears repeating: the policy of strategic patience is over. Additional patience will only mean acceptance of a nuclear North Korea"⁶⁵. Additionally, Rex Tillerson stated that the international community had been dealing with the DPRK in a reactive manner whilst the country showed no signs of repentance over the successive violations of the international laws, nor had it tried to change its conduct⁶⁶.

The maximum pressure strategy began, thus, by pressuring the PRC into cooperating in the implementation of the sanctions, as President Donald Trump considered that the DPRK had "been "playing" the United States for years [and] China has done little to help!" (Trump 2017c). The President saw this country as a key piece for the resolution of the nuclear issue and even mentioned that the US-China economic relations would be better "if they solve the North Korean problem" (Trump 2017d).

President Donald Trump's bold statements demonstrated his intentions of dealing with the DPRK in a more proactive and decisive manner. For that, the President sought to encourage the PRC to enforce the existing UNSC's Resolutions, which would strengthen the US' position regarding the DPRK. In addition to this, President Donald Trump's strategy consisted also on the "hardening of Washington's bargaining position on the maximum demand for a complete North Korean denuclearization as the

⁶⁵ See United States of America. Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson, 2017a, "Remarks at the United Nations Security Council Ministerial Session on D.P.R.K.", April 28, 2017.

⁶⁶ See *ibid.*

precondition for the resumption of negotiations; and in the build-up of a military threat posture, including the articulation of explicit threats against Pyongyang” (Liegl 2018, 368). However, as we have already seen, these approaches were similar to the strategy of President Barack Obama, and as such they did not represent a big shift on the US’ policy vis-à-vis the DPRK.

In spite of the continued pressure from the international community, the DPRK did not change his behaviour, and during the first half of 2017 it conducted at least one missile test per month. Sometimes these tests could be traced back as a response to the US’ actions or to the US-ROK Joint activities, a behaviour similar to the one of the DPRK during President George W. Bush’s Administration. An example of this behaviour was the launching of ballistic missiles, in early March 2017, that fell into Japan’s exclusive economic zone (EEZ), to which Kim Jong Un indicated to be a response to the US-ROK annual drills (BBC News 2017a). Regardless of this behaviour being or not a response to the US, the fact was that during President Donald Trump’s first year in office the DPRK launched twice more missiles than during President Barack Obama’s (Cha and Kang 2018, 207).

When faced with the question of how President Donald Trump’s Administration differed from the previous one, Vice President Mike Pence claimed that:

the era of strategic patience is over. President Trump has made it clear that the patience of the United States and our allies in this region has run out, and we want to see change. We want to see North Korea abandon its reckless path of the development of nuclear weapons. And also its continual use of and testing of ballistic missiles is unacceptable. That clarity we hope will be received in North Korea, and that they will understand that the United States of America, the people of South Korea, our allies across the region are resolved to achieve our objectives through peaceable means or ultimately by whatever means are necessary to protect the interests, the security of the people of South Korea and to bring stability to the region⁶⁷.

This statement clearly indicated the US’ intentions of pressuring the DPRK into changing its behaviour. Moreover, by reiterating that the strategic patience was over, the Administration sought to actively differentiate itself from the previous

⁶⁷ See United States of America. Vice President Mike Pence, 2017, “Remarks to the Troops by the Vice President with Q&A, Demilitarized Zone, South Korea”, April 17, 2017.

Administration. However, despite the pressure from the US, Kim Jong Un continued to test the international community. Nevertheless, President Donald Trump's strategy began to show some results, namely on the improvement of the US-PRC relations, as the President mentioned that the DPRK's behaviour "disrespected the wishes of China & its highly respected President" (Trump 2017e) and acknowledged that "China is trying hard" (Trump 2017f).

After the impeachment of President Park Geun Hye, new elections were held in the ROK, in May 2017, and Moon Jae In became President. After almost one decade of policies that aimed to contain and pressure the DPRK, the new President focused on a strategy of engagement with the country. However, due to the quick development of the DPRK's nuclear and ballistic programmes, President Moon Jae In highlighted his goal of strengthening the US-ROK alliance, which, in addition to the international community's joint efforts to pressure the country, was aimed at the complete denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula.

2.3.1 The DPRK's Nuclear and Ballistic Developments

On the US' Independence Day, in July 2017, the DPRK tested its first ICBM, the Hwasong-14. Even though the missile was a clear threat to the US, as it indicated that the DPRK could now reach the US' territory⁶⁸, President Donald Trump responded to the event by questioning "does this guy have anything better to do with his life? Hard to believe that South Korea" (Trump 2017g) "and Japan will put up with this much longer. Perhaps China will put a heavy move on North Korea and end this nonsense once and for all!" (Trump 2017h). Through this statement, the President expressed the idea that he considered that the PRC's individual efforts would halt the DPRK's nuclear developments. However, his expectations quickly faltered as he claimed that "trade between China and North Korea grew almost 40% in the first quarter. So much for China working with us – but we had to give it a try!" (Trump 2017i).

⁶⁸ Namely Alaska and Hawaii. For more detailed information see Michael Elleman (2018) in <https://www.38north.org/2018/11/melleman112918/>

By the end of the same month, the DPRK launched its second ICBM, that landed in the Japanese EEZ. This was followed by Kim Jong Un's threat to the US that "if the Yankees brandish the nuclear stick on this land again despite our repeated warnings, we will clearly teach them manners with the nuclear strategic force" (Johnson and Yoshida 2017).

On the 8th of August, President Donald Trump stated that "North Korea best not make any more threats to the United States. (...) [Kim Jong Un] has been very threatening beyond a normal state. And, as I said, they will be met with fire, fury, and, frankly, power, the likes of which this world has never seen before"⁶⁹. A few hours later, Kim Jong Un announced his plan to launch missiles towards the waters of the US' Pacific territory of Guam, disregarding the President's warnings as a "load of nonsense" (Borger 2017).

The threatening remarks continued as President Donald Trump stated that "My first order as President was to renovate and modernize our nuclear arsenal. It is now far stronger and more powerful than ever before" (Trump 2017j), "Hopefully we will never have to use this power, but there will never be a time that we are not the most powerful nation in the world" (Trump 2017k). This last statement reinforced the President's strategic narrative, that, similarly to the two previous Administrations, put the US at the centre of the international system. Furthermore, he added that "Military solutions are now fully in place, locked and loaded, should North Korea act unwisely. Hopefully Kim Jong Un will find another path" (Trump 2017l).

Nevertheless, this was not the case, as by the end of the month there was another missile launch, that this time went over the Japanese island of Hokkaido. As a response to this event, President Donald Trump stated that "the world has received North Korea's latest message loud and clear: this regime has signalled its contempt for its neighbors, for all members of the United Nations, and for minimum standards of acceptable international behaviour (...) All options are on the table"⁷⁰. The insistence on the idea that *all* options were available, including military force, had been constantly reiterated

⁶⁹ See United States of America. The President of the United States of America Donald Trump, 2017b, "Remarks by President Trump Before a Briefing on Opioid Crisis", August 8, 2017.

⁷⁰ See United States of America. The President of the United States of America Donald Trump, 2017c, "Statement by President Donald J. Trump on North Korea", August 29, 2017.

by the President in a clear and unambiguous language, for instance in statements such as “the U.S. has been talking to North Korea, and paying them extortion money, for 25 years. Talking is not the answer!” (Trump 2017m). The phrasing of the aid assistance provided by the US as “extortion money” indicated hints of an hawkish approach.

By September the tensions reached a critical point. Not even a week after the launches of the 28th of August, the DPRK conducted its sixth nuclear test, the most powerful and largest to this date. Faced with this, President Donald Trump stated that:

North Korea has conducted a major Nuclear Test. Their words and actions continue to be very hostile and dangerous to the United States (Trump 2017n).

North Korea is a rogue nation which as become a great threat and embarrassment to China, which is trying to help but with little success (Trump 2017o).

South Korea is finding, as I have told them, that their talk of appeasement with North Korea will not work, they only understand one thing! (Trump 2017p).

The United States is considering, in addition to other options, stopping all trade with any country doing business with North Korea (Trump 2017q).

The several tweets that the President posted emphasised the notion that had been present since the beginning of President George W. Bush’s presidency: that the DPRK was a rogue state that posed a great threat to the US’ security and that, as such, could not be trusted. Despite the tone down of this rhetoric during President Barack Obama’s Administration, these notions came back stronger and clearer after President Donald Trump’s election. Moreover, these were used to legitimise the idea that diplomacy and talks were not a viable path to deal with the DPRK, even though, as we have been concluding, these approaches were not used to its full potential by any of the US’ Administrations.

Following the nuclear test, a new UNSC Resolution (2375) was adopted. A few days later, the DPRK launched a second missile that in less than a month overflew Hokkaido. This was problematic not only to the Japanese government and its people, but also to the US as the distance that the DPRK could now reach included the territory of Guam, which had been threatened a few weeks prior. President Moon Jae In was also concerned with these developments, and as a result he affirmed that dialogue with Kim

Jong Un was “impossible in a situation like this” (Ji 2017). This positioning differed from the President’s optimistic attitude in July, when even after the first ICBM launch he hoped that the DPRK would participate in the PyeongChang Winter Olympics, in February 2018, under the flag of the unified Korea⁷¹.

During his speech at the 72nd United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), President Donald Trump claimed that:

if the righteous many do not confront the wicked few, then evil will triumph. (...) No one has shown more contempt for other nations and for the wellbeing of their own people than the depraved regime in North Korea. It is responsible for the starvation deaths of millions of North Koreans, and for the imprisonment, torture, killing, and oppression of countless more. We were all witness to the regime’s deadly abuse (...) North Korea’s reckless pursuit of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles threatens the entire world with unthinkable loss of human life. It is an outrage that some nations would not only trade with such a regime, but would arm, supply, and financially support a country that imperils the world with nuclear conflict. (...) The United States has great strength and patience, but if it is forced to defend itself or its allies, we will have no choice but to totally destroy North Korea. Rocket Man is on a suicide mission for himself and his regime. The United States is ready, willing and able, but hopefully this will not be necessary.⁷²

In this speech, the President reinforced his vision of a united international community in the fight against threats such as the DPRK. Hence, by fostering cooperation under the UN, the US would also be strengthening its commitment to its founding principles, which would legitimate its strategic narrative and, in turn, its behaviour. Furthermore, it was clear that the US remained the central piece in the President’s system narrative, as he described the country as a role model due to the fact that “In America, we do not seek to impose our way of life on anyone, but rather to let it shine as an example for everyone to watch”⁷³. In addition, the President affirmed that “America does more than speak for the values expressed in the United Nations Charter. (...) It is an eternal credit to the American character that even after we and our allies emerged victorious from the bloodiest war in history, we did not seek territorial

⁷¹ For more detailed information see <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-olympics-pyeongchang-northkorea-idUSKBN1A90UZ>

⁷² See United States of America. The President of the United States of America Donald Trump, 2017d, “Remarks by President Trump to the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly”, September 19, 2017.

⁷³ See *ibid.*

expansion, or attempt to oppose and impose our way of life on others”⁷⁴. This statement resulted from the projection of the US’ identity narrative, which emphasised the distinct character of the country and its prominent role in the fight for the greater good and for the protection of the international community.

Upon the trilateral meeting with the presidents of Japan and of the ROK, President Donald Trump imposed new measures to isolate the DPRK, and urged all nations not only to enforce the UNSC Resolutions, but also to implement measures of their own⁷⁵. As such, the US and the EU worked together to assist third countries to implement the UNSC Resolutions. The President also cheered the PRC’s efforts to contribute to the common goal of increasing economic and diplomatic pressure on the DPRK, and declared that as a result of these collective efforts “Kim Jong Un of North Korea, who is obviously a madman who doesn’t mind starving or killing his people, will be tested like never before!” (Trump 2017r).

President Donald Trump’s speech at the UNGA led to an unprecedented direct response from Kim Jong Un, where he criticised “the mentally deranged behaviour of the U.S. president” who was “surely a rogue and a gangster fond of playing with fire, rather than a politician”. He then proceeded to warn the US to “exercise prudence in selecting words and to be considerate of whom he speaks to when making a speech in front of the world” (Snyder 2017). The continuous exchange of insulting remarks indicated that the conflict between the US-DPRK had moved into a personal sphere. This was a problem because since both leaders were fighting for their honour, and in extension that of their country, there was little likelihood that any of them would pull back, which could have resulted in an escalation of the tensions beyond their control (ibid).

An event that almost brought the two countries into a war was the exchange of hostile remarks between Ri Yong Ho, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the DPRK, and President Donald Trump. At the UNGA, the minister criticised the US’ President behaviour, stating that “he has tried to turn the UN arena into a gangsters’ nest where

⁷⁴ See *ibid*.

⁷⁵ See United States of America. The President of the United States of America Donald Trump, 2017e, “Remarks by President Trump, President Moon of the Republic of Korea, and Prime Minister Abe of Japan Before Trilateral Meeting”, September 21, 2017.

money is respected and bloodshed is the order of the day”⁷⁶. In addition, he called the President a “mentally deranged person full of megalomania and complacency”, whose threats and schemes were “what constitute the gravest threat to the international peace and security today”⁷⁷.

However, the most dangerous statement was that “none other than Trump himself is on a suicide mission (...) [and] Trump might not have been aware what is uttered from his mouth but we will make sure that he bears consequences far beyond his words”⁷⁸. As a response, President Donald Trump stated that “Just heard Foreign Minister of North Korea speak at U.N. If he echoes thoughts of Little Rocket Man, they won’t be around much longer!” (Trump 2017s). The DPRK’S minister took this statement as a declaration of war, and claimed that the DPRK had “every right to take counter-measures (...) [and] the question of who won’t be around much longer will be answered then” (BBC News 2017b). To this, Press Secretary Sarah Sanders stated that “we’ve not declared war on North Korea. And frankly, the suggestion of that is absurd (...) we continue to seek the peaceful denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula”⁷⁹. Rex Tillerson emphasised, as well, the peaceful resolution of the tensions as he affirmed that the “peaceful pressure campaign is going to cause the leadership in North Korea to want to engage (...) in the right conversation”⁸⁰.

By November 2017, President Donald Trump went on a tour to several East Asian countries, starting with Japan and the ROK. This trip was a symbol of the strengthening of the US-ROK relations, as no US President had visited the ROK in the past 25 years. In fact, President Donald Trump mentioned that one of the core goals of the trip was to “unite the world against the nuclear menace posed by the North Korean regime, a threat that has increased steadily through many administrations and now requires urgent action”⁸¹. Moreover, the President stated that: “we have made historic strides in reasserting American leadership, restoring American security, and reawakening

⁷⁶ See United Nations. General Assembly, 2017, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea Ri Yong Ho. Statement at the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly, September 23, 2017, page 1.

⁷⁷ See *ibid*, page 1.

⁷⁸ See *ibid*, page 2.

⁷⁹ See United States of America. Press Secretary Sarah Sanders, 2017, “Press Briefing by Press Secretary Sarah Sanders”, September 25, 2017.

⁸⁰ See United States of America. Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson, 2017b, “Remarks at the United Nations Security Council Ministerial Session on D.P.R.K.”, September 30, 2017.

⁸¹ See United States of America. The President of the United States of America Donald Trump, 2017h, “Remarks by President Trump on His Trip to Asia”, November 15, 2017.

American confidence (...) and we have laid out a pathway toward peace and security in our world where sovereign nations can thrive, flourish, and prosper side-by-side (...) this vision – this dream – is only possible if America is strong, proud, and free”⁸². Overall, this tour was a means for President Donald Trump to project his strategic narrative that depicted the US in its leadership role against the threats to the international community’s security, and as a promoter of peaceful relations in the Indo-Pacific region.

From the beginning of his presidency, President Donald Trump assertively established his own vision of the US’ role in the world. In the NSS of 2017, launched in December, the President claimed that “America is leading again on the world stage (...) [and] we have also continued to make clear that the United States will no longer tolerate economic aggression and unfair trading practices” (United States of America 2017, foreword, 1). This was closely related to the US’ identity narrative, that pictured the country in a position of power over its economic and security interests, barely a year after the election of President Donald Trump. For instance, the President’s previous remarks about the PRC’ and the ROK’ positions in the resolution of the nuclear issue developed into relatively good diplomatic relations after these countries sided with the US. This indicated that the President focused on following his “own beliefs and practical accomplishments, rather than on normative legitimacy or international acceptance” as a means of legitimising his strategy (Kolmaš and Kolmašová 2019, 68). Furthermore, the President criticised President Barack Obama’s strategy of engagement with the US’ enemies with the purpose of turning “them into benign (...) and trustworthy actors” (United States of America 2017, 3), affirming that “for the most part, this premise turned out to be false” (Ibidem).

However, even though President Donald Trump focused on differentiating his strategy from the previous Administration, his strategic narrative ended up following some core elements that had been present since President George W. Bush’s Administration. As such, the President’s system narrative had the same key conceptions of an international order divided into the forces of good, “who value human dignity and freedom and those who oppress individuals and enforce uniformity” (Ibidem). In this representation, the US’ founding principles were considered “a lasting force for good in

⁸² See *ibid.*

the world" (Ibid, 1) and the country's commitment to them was deemed as inspirational, making the US "a beacon of liberty and opportunity to the world" (Ibid, 41). This identity narrative legitimised the President's notion that "the whole world is lifted by America's renewal and the reemergence of American leadership" (Ibid, foreword, II), in a world full of threats such as rogue states, terrorism, and rival powers.

These threats were, then, separated into three areas: the "revisionist powers of China and Russia, the rogue states of Iran and North Korea, and transnational threat organizations" (Ibid, 25). The revisionist powers were described as those who sought to compete with the US' power by "attempting to erode American security and prosperity" (Ibid, 2), and by shaping a "world antithetical to U.S. values and interests" (Ibid, 25).

Apart from these states, there was a group of rogue regimes defined as the "scourge of the world (...) that violate all principles of free and civilized states" (Ibid, 26). The DPRK was included in this group and was described as a state "ruled by a ruthless dictatorship without regard for human dignity" (Ibidem), and "determined to destabilize regions, threaten Americans and (...) brutalize their own people" (Ibid, 2). Furthermore, the brutality of the regime was mentioned throughout the document in order to emphasise the urgent threat that its nuclear and ballistic programmes posed to the US' interests and security. This was plainly stated when it was mentioned that the DPRK sought "the capability to kill millions of Americans with nuclear weapons" (Ibid, 7). The emotional charge of these representations of the international system, with the stark contrast between the US and the DPRK, reinforced President Donald Trump's strategic narrative and legitimised the US' behaviour. The notion that the DPRK was developing its nuclear and ballistic programmes with the purpose of deliberately hurting the US' civilians was an example of how the political actors use strategic narrative to persuade and influence their audiences.

Therefore, the Administration outlined the defence of the US and of the international community from the DPRK as a priority. This was urgent as "the longer we ignore threats from countries determined to proliferate and develop weapons of mass destruction, the worse such threats become, and fewer defensive options we have" (Ibid, 26). In an effort to further isolate the DPRK, President Donald Trump re-listed the country as a SST. As a response, the DPRK tested for the third time an ICBM, which could

now reach any part of the US' mainland. By the end of the year, the UNSC unanimously adopted a new Resolution (2397) to impose new sanctions on the DPRK's nuclear and ballistic programmes.

2.3.2 The PyeongChang Olympics and the June Summit: The End of Maximum Pressure?

During his New Year speech, Kim Jong Un indicated his wish to improve the inter-Korean relations by offering to send a delegation to the ROK to discuss the DPRK's participation in the upcoming Winter Olympics. However, taking in consideration the events of the previous year, some questions were raised regarding the leader's desire to engage with the ROK: was it because, as Kim Jong Un affirmed, the country now had "a powerful nuclear deterrent" (Korea Central News Agency 2018a) which could prevent an invasion from the US? Or because the international sanctions were starting to take a toll on the country's economy, like Cha and Kang affirmed (Cha and Kang 2018, 207)? President Donald Trump seemed to agree with Cha and Kang, as he stated that "sanctions and "other" pressures are beginning to have a big impact on North Korea. (...) Rocket man now wants to talk to South Korea for the first time" (Trump 2018a).

After the ROK and the DPRK decided to participate in the Olympic Games with a joint women's ice hockey team under a Korean Unification flag, there was a wave of protests by South Korean citizens, who were against the idea of a joint team (Gearin 2018). Nevertheless, President Moon Jae In's positive response to the opportunity marked a shift in the ROK's hard stance vis-à-vis the DPRK, that was visible throughout 2017. This influenced the US-ROK position towards the DPRK, resulting in the postpone of the annual US-ROK joint military exercises as a measure to "de-conflict the Olympics"⁸³ and ensure the security of the event.

President Donald Trump highlighted that the positive developments between the two Koreas were a direct result of his strategy, and demonstrated his satisfaction by stating that "does anybody really believe that talks and dialogue would be going on

⁸³ See United States of America. The President of the United States of America Donald Trump, 2018a, "Readout of President Donald J. Trump's Call with President Moon Jae-In of the Republic of Korea", January 4, 2018.

between North and South Korea right now if I wasn't firm, strong and willing to commit our total "might" against the North. Fools, but talks are a good thing!" (Trump 2018b). Hence, when Kim Jong Un suggested to arrange Talks between the DPRK and the US, President Donald Trump agreed, emphasising, however, the need to maintain the maximum pressure policy "until an agreement is reached" (Trump 2018c). In an effort to demonstrate his commitment to the Talks, Kim Jong Un pledged not to conduct any nuclear or missile tests, and accepted that "the routine joint military exercises between the Republic of Korea and the United States must continue"⁸⁴.

As a part of the negotiations to schedule the first ever meeting between an incumbent US President and a North Korean leader, the US sent CIA's President, and future Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, to meet with Kim Jong Un. The PRC, Japan, and the ROK were also working with the US in order to ensure the success of the US-DPRK Summit, to which President Donald Trump affirmed to be "the first time in many years, [that] a serious effort is being made by all parties concerned" (Trump 2018d).

By the end of April, there was an Inter-Korean Summit at Panmunjeom, which made Kim Jong Un the first leader of the DPRK to had entered the ROK's territory since the Korean War. The Panmunjeom agreement stated the two countries commitment to "actively cooperate to establish a permanent and solid peace regime on the Korean Peninsula" (Arms Control Association 2018). Vice President Mike Pence stated that "the fact that North Korea has come to the table without the United States making any concessions speaks to the strength of President Trump's leadership and is a clear sign that the intense pressure of sanctions is working. The Korean peace agreement is a step towards denuclearization (...) but it is just one step. Any talks, promises, and assurances from North Korea will be met with reservation, vigilance, and verification"⁸⁵.

By May, upon the release of the three US citizens that were detained in the DPRK, President Trump affirmed that

we're starting off on a new footing. This is a wonderful thing that he [Kim Jong Un] released the folks early. That was a big thing. Very important to me. And I really think we have a very

⁸⁴ See Republic of Korea. National Security Advisor Chung Eui Yong, 2018, "Remarks by Republic of Korea National Security Advisor Chung Eui-Yong". March 8, 2018.

⁸⁵ See United States of America. Vice President Mike Pence, 2018, "Statement from Vice President Mike Pence on the Inter-Korean Summit", April 27, 2018.

good chance of doing something very meaningful (...) I really thinks he wants to do something. I think he did this because (...) he wants to do something and bring that country into the real world⁸⁶.

With this statement one might wonder if the US had, indeed, began to change its representation of the DPRK. However, despite the President mentioning that the US-DPRK relations were starting from a clean slate, Vice President Mike Pence's statement indicated that the previous bias was still present, as exemplified by the emphasis on maintaining the maximum pressure policy.

The situation quickly turned, in mid-May, when the DPRK cancelled the inter-Korean Talks after the National Security Advisor John Bolton suggested that the US should follow the "so-called Libya mode of nuclear abandonment (...) «of abandoning nuclear weapons first, compensating afterwards»" (Korea Central News Agency 2018b). The first vice-minister of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK mentioned that

this is not an expression of intention to address the issue through dialogue. It is essentially a manifestation of awfully sinister move to impose on our dignified state the destiny of Libya or Iraq which had been collapsed due to yielding the whole of their countries to big powers. (...) We have already stated our intention of denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and made clear on several occasions that precondition for denuclearization is to put an end to anti-DPRK hostile policy and nuclear threats and blackmail of the United States (Korea Central News Agency 2018b).

In spite of this, the preparations for the Summit continued and the DPRK proceeded to close its major nuclear testing site, inviting several international journalists to witness the demolition. Nevertheless, the hostile remarks of Kim Jong Un led President Donald Trump to cancel the Summit "based on the tremendous anger and open hostility displayed in your [Kim Jong Un] most recent statement"⁸⁷. In the letter he wrote to Kim Jong Un, President Donald Trump acknowledged the leader's patience and efforts in the negotiations, thus, appeasing the tensions. As the preparations for the Summit continued, the ROK and the DPRK kept on developing their relation, meeting

⁸⁶ See United States of America. The President of the United States of America Donald Trump, 2018b, "Remarks by President Trump at Arrival of Americans Detained in North Korea", May 10, 2018.

⁸⁷ See United States of America. The President of the United States of America Donald Trump, 2018c, "Letter to Chairman Kim Jong Un", May 24, 2018.

both on the 26th of May and on the 1st of June to accelerate the implementation of the Panmunjeom declaration.

As such, on the 12th of June, the US and the DPRK leaders signed a Joint Statement as a commitment to improve the US-DPRK relations. The DPRK reaffirmed its commitment to the denuclearisation of the peninsula, and agreed to the repatriation of the prisoners of war and servicemen missing in action during the Vietnam War back to the US⁸⁸. In line with his previously stated intentions of rebuilding the US-DPRK relations, President Donald Trump reaffirmed that “we’re prepared to start a new history and we’re ready to write a new chapter between our nations (...) the past does not have to define the future. Yesterday’s conflict does not have to be tomorrow’s war. And as history has proven over and over again, adversaries can indeed become friends”⁸⁹.

However, even after this historic meeting there were doubts about whether the US and the DPRK truly wished to reconstruct their perceptions of each other, as their behaviour until this point continued to indicate the lack of trust between the two leaders. After the Winter Olympics, President Donald Trump began to emphasise that “only time will tell”⁹⁰ how the US-DPRK relation would develop, which seemed to indicate that his strategic narrative still maintained the representation of the DPRK as a rogue and unpredictable state.

When faced with backlash after the Summit, President Donald Trump stated that “If President Obama (who got nowhere with North Korea and would have had to go to war with many millions of people being killed) had gotten along with North Korea and made the initial steps toward a deal that I have, Fake News would have named him a national hero” (Trump 2018e). Hence, the evolution of the US-DPRK relation was used by the Administration as an example to elevate its achievements in order to legitimise its strategic narrative and behaviour.

⁸⁸ See United States of America. The President of the United States of America Donald Trump, 2018d, “Joint Statement of President Donald J. Trump of the United States of America and Chairman Kim Jong Un of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea at the Singapore Summit”, June 12, 2018.

⁸⁹ See United States of America. The President of the United States of America Donald Trump, 2018e, “Press Conference by President Trump”, June 12, 2018.

⁹⁰ For more detailed information see <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/999986971660423170>, <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/988040227167064064>, and <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/989816772713906177>

2.3.3 President Donald Trump's Strategic Narrative: How different from the two previous Administrations?

During President Donald Trump's Administration, the US' stance regarding the DPRK could be considered, at best, ambiguous. On the one hand, there were members of the Administration, such as Sarah Sanders and Rex Tillerson, indicating that the US remained open to engage in talks with the DPRK. On the other hand, however, the President's tweets and remarks called this possibility into question. As a matter of fact, during the peak of the tensions the President stated that "I told Rex Tillerson, our wonderful Secretary of State, that he is wasting his time trying to negotiate with Little Rocket Man" (Trump 2017t) "Save your energy Rex, we'll do what has to be done!" (Trump 2017u).

Nevertheless, by analysing the situation through the lenses of strategic narratives, it became clear that the main ideas present in President Donald Trump's strategic narrative were a continuation of the ones of the past Administrations. Even though Rex Tillerson affirmed that the US' strategy towards the DPRK did not involve regime change, claiming that that would only further Kim Jong Un's security concerns⁹¹, the US still refused to accept the DPRK as a nuclear state. Moreover, the US' continuous pressure for the CVID as the only solution for the resolution of the nuclear issue indicated that its representation of the DPRK as a threatening rogue state had little to no shifts ever since the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

The notion that the DPRK was only seeking engagement with the US as a part of a scheme to get concessions had been present since President George W. Bush's Administration. President Donald Trump used this notion, as well, to legitimise his maximum pressure policy, claiming that "Presidents and their administrations have been talking to North Korea for 25 years, agreements made and massive amounts of money paid" (Trump 2017v) "hasn't worked, agreements violated before the ink was dry, making fools of the U.S. negotiators. Sorry, but only one think will work!" (Trump 2017w).

⁹¹ See United States of America. Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson, 2017b, "Remarks at the United Nations Security Council Ministerial Session on D.P.R.K.", September 30, 2017.

The use of Twitter by President Donald Trump represented a new addition to the present analysis as it marked a distinction from the two previous Presidents, who restricted their remarks and opinions in order to consistently project their strategic narratives. In contrast, President Donald Trump seemed to make use of the new information infrastructures and their communicative spaces to project his strategic narrative, and in particular, to contest what he denominated as the 'Fake News Media', which in his view distorted the reality of the events in their news coverage with the purpose of undermining the Administration's achievements⁹². While official documents allow the political actors to develop their ideas in a controlled manner, social platforms, such as Twitter, reach millions of people on a daily basis, having tremendous influence on the peoples' perceptions of the world affairs.

The reception of President Donald Trump's strategic narrative in the ROK and Japan resulted in two distinct situations. On the one hand, and even though President Moon Jae In seemed to back up the US' position during the escalation of the tensions in 2017, in the eminence of an outbreak of a war the ROK's President emphasised that he did not support the use of force against the DPRK, which strained the US-ROK relations (Kang 2018a, 217). On the other hand, in Japan, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe indicated that he "consistently supports the position of President Trump when he says that all options are on the table"⁹³.

These differences highlighted the importance of the historical context of each actor in the reception of strategic narratives. The historical circumstances of the ROK and Japan influenced their relation with the DPRK, and despite both actors agreeing on the goal of the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula, they followed different strategies. President Moon Jae In, upon reflecting on the Korean War and on the role of the US-ROK alliance, stated that "the close coordination between Korea and the United States, and the overwhelming superiority of power that stems from the ROK-U.S. alliance, will eventually make North Korea cease its reckless provocations and make

⁹² For more detailed information see <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/947235015343202304> , <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/944700332881440769> and <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/940930017365778432>

⁹³ See United States of America. The President of the United States of America Donald Trump, 2017f, "Remarks by President Trump and Prime Minister Abe of Japan in Joint Press Conference", November 6, 2017.

North Korea come out to dialogue for denuclearization”⁹⁴. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, however, was a keen believer that the DPRK could not be trusted and, thus, “in order to make North Korea change their policy, Japan and U.S. must take leadership in closely collaborating with the international community so that we can enhance the pressure to the maximum level over North Korea through all possible means”⁹⁵.

It might be problematic to the US that its crucial allies had different visions on how to resolve the nuclear issue, which explained why President Donald Trump sought to strengthen the trilateral relations with the ROK and Japan.

2.4 The US’ Strategic Narratives vis-à-vis the DPRK

The present chapter sought to analyse the US’ strategic narratives in search of patterns that would explain the behaviour of this actor regarding the DPRK. It was, then, possible to distinguish a fairly stable narrative on the DPRK, that was developed throughout the three different Administrations from 2001 until 2018.

It is, however, important to understand the context that characterised the formation of said strategic narratives. In the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, President George W. Bush sought to reconstruct the identity of the US, an actor which was starting to lose importance in the face of rising actors and new threats. As such, the President crafted his strategic narrative where he outlined the US’ strategy to fight terrorism – the War on Terror. Here, the US would be the central key to restore the peace that was lost upon the terrorist attacks to the World Trade Center. The so-called Axis of Evil consisted of the rogue states of Iraq, Iran, and the DPRK, which posed a problem to the international order that the US wanted to achieve.

The alliances that the US built over the War on Terror contributed to the institutionalisation of its strategic narrative, which was quickly projected and received by the targeted audiences. Namely, by engaging the US’ domestic audiences on an emotional level, it was possible to determine the US as a responsible state, fit to lead

⁹⁴ See United States of America. The President of the United States of America Donald Trump, 2017g, “Remarks by President Trump and President Moon of the Republic of Korea at State Dinner | Seoul, Republic of Korea”, November 7, 2017.

⁹⁵ See United States of America. The President of the United States of America Donald Trump, 2017f, “Remarks by President Trump and Prime Minister Abe of Japan in Joint Press Conference”, November 6, 2017.

the international community in the fight against terrorism. The establishment of this strategic narrative created expectations over how the US should behave, which, in this case, indicated that the US ought to be involved in external conflicts due to the sense of responsibility that stemmed from the country's military strength, and economic and political influence.

Consequentially, the rogue states posed a threat to the international security because of their risky actions such as developing nuclear weapons. As such, it was crucial to rid these states of what constituted them as rogue – namely, the regimes and authoritarian leaders that took control over the powerless populations, that were manipulated in order for them to maintain power. The US, sought, then, to fight the evil in the world with the intent of bringing back the peaceful order, that had been corrupted by these actors.

As a result from these conceptions, it made sense that the US did not try to view the DPRK in a different light. In the 2002 NSS, the situation with the DPRK was considered an example of how the US tried to deal with the threat by mainly relying on its allies and partners in the region. Due to the geopolitical constraints, an invasion to the country through military means was not conceivable. This did not mean, however, that the US did not seek regime change. On the contrary, since the few interactions of the US with the DPRK were mostly influenced by the representation of the country as an unreliable and untrustworthy partner, even with diplomatic measures, such as the Six-Party Talks, most of the negotiations quickly reached a deadlock. Moreover, the confirmation that the DPRK was secretly developing its own nuclear and ballistic programmes reinforced the US' representation of the country and narrowed its path of action.

The reception of the strategic narrative might had been successful amongst the US' western partners, but in the East Asian countries such as the PRC and the ROK, this was not always the case. Even though both of these countries considered the nuclear advancements of the DPRK an issue, their strategies to resolve the situation consisted in diplomatic and peaceful measures, which differed from the US' approach. Japan, however, usually agreed with the US. These different positions highlight the importance of taking into consideration the historical perspectives of the countries in analysis.

President Barack Obama's approach to the nuclear issue was slightly different. The President's willingness to engage with the rogue states seemed to strike a new position in the White House, which was noticeable for instance in the language used to refer to these countries. The President's strategic narrative was carefully crafted in order to steer the domestic audiences and legitimise the Administration's policies. As such, there was an effort to readjust the image and identity of the US beyond the conceptions of the War on Terror and into a more globalised and interconnected world.

Nevertheless, as soon as the DPRK started to violate the international rules by launching missiles, President Barack Obama demonstrated his strong position by supporting the UNSC Resolutions and sanctions. During this Administration, the DPRK conducted four nuclear tests and several missile launches, disregarding each time the pressure from the international community. As a result, the President was faced with the same choice as President George W. Bush: either to military invade the country or to diplomatically ease the situation. However, the deteriorated health condition of Kim Jong Il hinted to the idea that the regime was bound to collapse, which led President Barack Obama to adopt a policy of strategic patience.

The behaviour of the DPRK upon the election of President Barack Obama forced the President to rely on the previous existing representations of the country. As a result, President Barack Obama's strategic narrative was deeply influenced by President George W. Bush's: both focused on the US' role and responsibility as the leader of the free nations; as a promotor of values such as liberty, freedom, and the prevention of the proliferation of WMD; and as an indispensable actor in the fight against terrorism.

Regarding President Donald Trump, the use of Twitter to project his strategic narrative was an important addition to the investigation. The emotional charge in his strategic narrative was crucial to the redefinition of the US' role in the international community. The US continued to be considered an indispensable actor in the international arena, but it was crucial to ensure that its allies and partners were not taking advantage of the country.

The dichotomy between good and evil, central to President George W. Bush's strategic narrative, was also a crucial to President Donald Trump's Administration. The

world was, then, divided with the US outlining the threats to the international security. The language used by the Administration also resembled President George W. Bush's, in the sense that the DPRK was, again, considered a rogue state.

Regarding the resolution of the nuclear issue, the President sought to differentiate his approach from that of President Barack Obama, by introducing a strategy of maximum pressure. Its aim was to isolate the DPRK and to prevent it from further develop its nuclear and ballistic programmes. However, despite the escalation of the tensions with the exchange of hostile remarks between President Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un, the DPRK was able to successfully launch an ICBM, which meant that it could possibly reach the US mainland in case of an attack.

Hence, similarly to President Barack Obama's approach, President Donald Trump relied mainly on international cooperation to deal with the DPRK. The use of Twitter was crucial to project and reinforce the President's strategic narrative, and the support of the ROK and Japan indicated a positive reception from these allies. The change in the DPRK's behaviour before the Winter Olympics was considered by President Donald Trump a direct result from his maximum pressure strategy, which was used to reinforce the legitimacy of his policies and to reiterate his strategic narrative. Even though the change might had been due to economic reasons, the fact was that the PyeongChang Olympics were an opportunity for the improvement of the inter-Korean relations. This, in turn, opened the door to the establishment of Talks between the US and the DPRK, which culminated in the first US-DPRK Summit in the history of the two countries.

Despite this improvement on the US-DPRK relations, President Donald Trump's strategic narrative still contained the same core elements of the previous strategic narratives: the US' sense of responsibility and its exceptionalism continued to make the country the most suitable to lead the international community in the fight against the rogue regimes such as the DPRK. Hence, the US ought to hold the country accountable for its disrespect of the international norms, and it would do so by uniting the international community. This explained why the US sought to strengthen its security bonds with the DPRK's neighbouring countries in the President's trip to Asia.

There was, however, a greater discussion and discontent in the media regarding President Donald Trump's strategy towards the DPRK than in the two previous Administrations. Namely, despite President Moon Jae In being in agreement with the majority of the US' policies, the President crossed the line at the use of military options to coerce the DPRK into changing its behaviour. This undermined the US' authority and influence over the DPRK.

Even though President Donald Trump claimed that diplomacy was not the path to resolve the nuclear issue, Robert Carlin questioned this idea that he considered to be the "myth of failure of diplomacy". As such, he wondered "how could it be said that diplomacy failed over the past 16 years when it was not really tried?" (Carlin 2017). After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, President George W. Bush crafted his strategic narrative, where the US was represented as a benevolent leader in the fight against evil, and the DPRK as a hostile and undemocratic state. The volatile and hostile behaviour of the DPRK after 2002 reinforced these conceptions and increased the US' distrust in the DPRK, much less with a nuclear arsenal. The failure of the Six-Party Talks also contributed to the establishment of these representations, and as a result, President Barack Obama's behaviour was limited. The outcome was, as Carlin stated, that "during the Obama administration, diplomacy was at best, crippled and episodic; during the Bush administration, it was a tortured, and sometimes bastard child" (Ibid).

3. The Strategic Narrative of the European Union vis-à-vis the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

The EU has been a growing actor in the international arena, namely in the domains of foreign policy and security. However, its nature differentiates the EU from other actors such as the US or the ROK for two reasons. The first one is that the EU is not a state, but rather a politico-economic organization that unites 28 European sovereign states⁹⁶. Its hybrid structure with both intergovernmental and supranational elements differentiates it from a single state's decision-making process (Miskimmon 2017, 102).

The second reason, which is related to the first, is the EU's distinctive normative basis that came from its "historical context, hybrid polity and political-legal constitution" (Manners 2002, 240). Its commitment to the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reinforced the Union's relation with its founding principles and values such as the respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human rights (European Union 2016a, article 2). And, as a result of the changing political environment of the end of the twentieth century, the EU's responsibilities in the promotion of peace and security were strengthened by the establishment of the CFSP, in 1992, and the development of the ESDP⁹⁷, as of 1999.

The creation of these policies was a step forward in the construction of the EU's identity as a prominent actor in the security domain. That is because, as a result of the consolidation of these two policies, the EU became a security provider and stopped being a mere consumer of security under the umbrella of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and of the US (Ferreira-Pereira 2013, 2). The launching of the ESS, in 2003, consolidated this process as it was the first document where the EU defined the common threats to the European security and the ways to prevent and fight them.

These developments put the EU in a privileged position to influence the events on the Korean Peninsula. As we will see below, the EU-DPRK relations developed rather quickly and over a short period of time. But why did the DPRK, a country that supposedly

⁹⁶ At the time of writing of the present work (2019) the United Kingdom is still a part of the European Union which adds the member states to a total of 28.

⁹⁷ After the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, in 2009, the ESDP was renamed Common Security and Defence Policy.

chose to isolate itself from the international community, accepted the engagement of the EU? One of the reasons might be that the DPRK considered that the EU had no strategic interests on the Korean Peninsula, due to its historical context. As opposed to Japan, with its colonial past, and to the US, who the DPRK still actively calls out on its imperialist interests, the EU never demonstrated any ambitions to establish a permanent presence on the peninsula (Alexandrova 2019, 43; Ko 2008, 47). Another reason was the role of mediator that the EU could bring to the table of diplomatic negotiations with the US, as well as its support for Kim Dae Jung's sunshine policy (Berkofsky 2003, 3). Lastly, the intentions of the EU to improve the economic and humanitarian conditions of the country, through measures such as providing training in trade and finance for North Korean workers so that they could better integrate the world economy (Alexandrova 2019, 43), as well as the amounts of humanitarian and food aid that the Union provided, were measures well received in the DPRK. But how did the relations between the two actors develop after the EU began to strengthen its strategic narrative?

3.1 The Construction of the EU's identity and the Establishment of its Foreign Policy towards the DPRK

Despite the security of EU during the Cold War being dependent on the NATO, in the 1990s this situation began to slightly change. The Treaty on the European Union (also known as the Maastricht Treaty) marked a great development towards an independent EU, as the Union sought to strengthen the coherence and effectiveness of its policies by creating a separate pillar for a Common Foreign and Security Policy. This policy was, nevertheless, in conformity with the "obligations of certain Member States under the North Atlantic Treaty and [would] be compatible with the common security and defence policy established within that framework" (Council of the European Communities 1992, article J.4-4). The subsequent creation of the CFSP's High Representative in the Amsterdam Treaty, signed in 1997, and the creation of the European Security and Defence Policy, in 1999, were measures that boosted the development of the EU's identity and of its external profile.

Miskimmon argued that the EU has relied on strategic narratives ever since its creation, in order to “build support within Europe for deeper integration and sought to forge influence internationally” (Miskimmon 2017, 85). The CFSP was an example of the Union’s efforts to bring the member states together to fight for their collective interests, and to project their united voice in the international arena. The EU’s strategic narrative had, then, two central characteristics: firstly, there was the conception of the EU as a force for good, which distinguish it from other actors due to its willingness to overcome its turbulent past through the “integration of states around a common set of goals” (Ibid, 88). Secondly, there was a focus on the EU’s normative basis that, according to Manners, contributed to establish the Union as a normative power (Manners 2002, 241).

Nevertheless, some of the aspects of the Union’s structure hindered its capacity to maintain and deploy a cohesive voice and a consistent narrative, something which resulted in different perceptions of the EU from the ones this actor tried to convey (Miskimmon 2017, 86, 88). Moreover, the previous existing national narratives of each member state ended up contesting and challenging the EU’s efforts to narrate a collective identity to strengthen the Union in the international community.

In the 1990s, the fall of the Soviet Union in conjunction with natural disasters caused a blow to the DPRK’s economy which led to a period of famine. As a result, the DPRK requested international assistance to tackle the humanitarian crisis in the country. The EU took this situation as an opportunity to develop a stronger connection with the DPRK, in an effort to establish itself as a promotor of its founding values. In 1994, the US and the DPRK signed the Agreed Framework, which would lead to the dismantlement of the DPRK’s nuclear programme. In the next year, the US, the ROK, and Japan founded the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), a measure that was supported by the EU, who later in 1997, joined the organisation, being represented by the European Atomic Energy Community (Alexandrova 2019, 39).

Even though it was only after 1995 that the EU began to engage with the DPRK, the development of the relations between these two actors was rather quick. By 2001, the EU had already established diplomatic relations with the country⁹⁸, and by 2002, it

⁹⁸ See European Union. European External Action Service, 20016a, “DPRK and the EU”.

was the DPRK's third largest trading partner (Alexandrova 2019, 42; Esteban 2019, 12). These developments indicated that the EU was, alongside with the ROK, a supporter of unconditional engagement with the DPRK. This type of engagement was a long-term strategy that not always resulted in short-term concessions, but through which the "engaging state may expect changes over time in the target state's public perception of the outside world" (Kim and Kang 2009, 5-6). Examples of such engagement were the humanitarian aid or the fostering of the economic relations, measures that could alter a state's policy objectives. These were used by the EU in hopes that the DPRK would react better towards incentives than towards the punitive measures of the US and Japan, who focused mainly on halting the development of the country's nuclear programme (Alexandrova 2019, 40).

This positioning of the EU vis-à-vis the DPRK indicated the type of actor that the Union wanted to become in the international arena. The active engagement with a country that willingly challenged the international order, highlighted the notion that the EU behaved according to its principles and values regardless of the existing external perceptions. Moreover, it was not the EU that pushed for the establishment of diplomatic ties with the DPRK, but rather it was a coordinated effort initiated by its member states (Ko 2008, 51-52), which demonstrated their predisposition to engage with the DPRK.

The EU's strategy seemed, also, to be in agreement with President Kim Dae Jung's vision of a rapprochement with the DPRK through engagement. This was stated in the DPRK Country Strategy Paper, where it was mentioned that:

the EU has adopted a more coordinated approach towards the Korean Peninsula in support of South Korean President Kim Dae Jung's policy of engagement and *building on previous EU policy orientations*⁹⁹. (...) In addition, while awaiting the new US Administration to define its policy (...) the European Council (...) decided to help maintain momentum in the search for peace, security and freedom on the Korean Peninsula (European Commission 2002, 7).

As such, the EU strengthened its role on the Korean Peninsula with an official visit to the DPRK, in May 2001, from the chairman of the European Council, Göran Persson, the High Representative of the Council, Javier Solana, and the European Commissioner

⁹⁹ Italics added.

for External Relations, Chris Patten, a delegation that “clearly exceeded the established practice of the CSFP of the EU” (Ljunggren 2003, 9). When faced with criticism from the US, the EU emphasised that “the visit (...) has been undertaken in close consultation with the U.S., South Korea and Japan (...) [and] it was consistent (...) with the EU’s evolving role in international affairs” (Berkofsky 2003, 19-20).

Despite the gap in the US/EU behaviour regarding the DPRK, namely after President George W. Bush came into office in 2001, the EU emphasised that it had no intentions of replacing the US in the denuclearisation Talks, seeking instead its own role as a promotor of peace on the Korean Peninsula. It was, however, due to the EU’s engagement strategy that the DPRK agreed to discuss its human rights issues (European Commission 2002, 7), namely after the EU indicated that its assistance to the country was conditional on the improvements regarding that situation (Ko 2008, 52). This culminated in two meetings where the UN human rights regime was discussed (Ljunggren 2003, 12-13), but after which the situation stalled (Ko 2008, 52).

3.1.1 The European Security Strategy of 2003

Even though the EU was on the path to establish its presence on the Korean Peninsula, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks the situation began to change. When President George W. Bush launched his campaign on the War on Terror, the EU was faced with the choice of either maintaining its engagement strategy towards the DPRK, or following the steps of its ally, who remained mainly in charge of the security of Europe.

Earlier that year, the European Commission launched its DPRK Country Strategy Paper (2001-2004) where it was confirmed the EU’s commitment to provide emergency aid “combined with long term development assistance programmes in order to enable North Korea to help itself” (European Commission 2002, 3). Moreover, in the same document it was mentioned that the increase in the assistance to the DPRK was in response to the country’s progress in “addressing the concerns of the EU and the international community as regards respect of human rights, non-proliferation and security issues, progress in inter-Korean reconciliation, economic structural reform and

social development” (Ibid, 5). In other words, the EU’s main goal was to assist the DPRK in fixing the structural causes that had led to the humanitarian crisis, instead of simply assisting the Korean population in the short-term. This approach promoted a sustainable development that would help reduce food insecurity and encourage agricultural development (Jang and Suh 2017, 735).

This document made it clear that the EU’s perception of the DPRK was of a “highly-centralized socialist state with an extremely dampened humanitarian record, afflicted by tremendously frail economy conditions in terms of investment and trade” (J. Lee 2005, 43). The potential of the EU as a crucial player in the diffusion of the tensions on the Korean Peninsula was also highlighted, namely through its actions “in the field of humanitarian and food assistance, its contributions to the KEDO project and by beginning a dialogue with Pyongyang” (European Commission 2002, 7).

After the October revelations of 2002, the EU adopted for the first time a non-proliferation strategy under the CSFP (Schmidt 2006, 5). This focused mainly on the EU’s commitment to multilateralism and to the existing norms, such as the NPT and the IAEA agreements. In order to strengthen its role in the international arena, the EU needed to acquire the means that would allow it to conduct autonomous operations. By December, the Berlin Plus Agreement allowed the EU to be able to use NATO’s resources, which resulted in a more autonomous EU and enhanced the cooperation between the two actors.

As the EU tried to construct its identity and role in the international community, Javier Solana launched the ESS, in 2003, where, for the first time, the objectives and principles that would guide the EU in the advancement of its security interests were clearly established. The EU’s strategic narrative became more noticeable through this document, where the system, identity, and issue narratives were used to establish a more cohesive EU.

As a result, the EU’s system narrative depicted the complex international environment with threats such as terrorism, the proliferation of WMD, regional conflicts, state failure, and organised crime (Council of the European Union 2003, 3-4). The international community would have to work together to fight these threats, and as

such, the EU reinforced its commitment to be a global player and indicated its readiness to “share the responsibility for global security and in building a better world” (Ibid 1). The security of the EU was, then, dependent on an effective multilateral system.

The EU’s identity narrative was strongly marked by its commitment to its founding principles, like the rule of law and democracy, which were crucial to the promotion of peace in Europe (Ibidem). Hence, the EU’s normative basis and its willingness to become a more active, more capable, and more coherent international actor, were key aspects that shaped the EU’s identity as a security promoter.

The issue narrative was in agreement with these notions, as it indicated that the EU needed to work with institutions such as the UN and NATO, to promote multilateralism and strengthen the international system (Ibid, 11-12). The emphasis on cooperation was closely related to the development of the EU’s capabilities. As it was explained in the ESS, “none of the new threats is purely military; nor can any be tackled by purely military means” (Ibid, 7). Hence, by developing the ESDP, the EU would be able to participate in collective operations that involved both military and civilian capabilities in the promotion of democracy, the rule of law, and the respect for human rights. This would also have implications in the EU-US relations, as it would allow the EU to develop a more “balanced partnership” with the US (Ibid, 13). Thus, by strengthening its role as an autonomous and capable security actor, the EU would reinforce the multilateral order it strived to promote.

The notion that the “increasing convergence of European interests (...) makes us a more credible and effective actor” (Ibid, 1) was also crucial to the EU’s strategic narrative. In fact, the ESS was launched during a period where the member states were divided regarding how to tackle the situation of the Iraq intervention, with states like the United Kingdom and Portugal wishing to back up the US-led intervention, while others such as Germany and France opposing it without an international mandate from the UN. The disagreement not only between the member states, but also with the EU’s closest security ally, undermined the EU’s cohesion. As such, the consensus over the common threats to the Union’s security marked an improvement on the Union’s internal divergences and on its external image. As a result, the ESS was also crucial in bringing the US and the EU closer, as the document was along the lines of the US’ NSS of 2002,

namely regarding the definition of the common threats to the international community's security. The emphasis on multilateralism reinforced the EU-US relations while at the same time differentiated the EU from the US' unilateral and pre-emptive policies.

Since the security of the EU was associated with the good functioning of the international order, regional conflicts such as the one on the Korean Peninsula were considered a key threat to the EU. This type of conflict not only posed a risk to the lives, fundamental freedoms and rights of the populations, but could also lead the states to seek WMD (Ibid, 4). This was the reason why "in an era of globalisation, distant threats may be as much a concern as those that are near at hand. Nuclear activities in North Korea, nuclear risks in South Asia, and proliferation in the Middle East are all of concern to Europe" (Ibid, 6).

Even though the DPRK was considered a threat to the security of the international community, it was not a priority to the EU's security agenda (J. Lee 2005, 47). The exclusion of this actor from the Six-Party Talks might have contributed to this situation, as it limited the EU's role on the Korean Peninsula. As such, the EU changed its strategy to one of critical engagement, adding coercive measures to its approach towards the country (Esteban 2019, 15). Furthermore, the EU took the opportunity to take on the leadership role in pressuring the DPRK to improve its human rights situation (Ibidem).

3.1.2 The EU's Role as a promotor of Human Rights in the DPRK after 2003

As part of its critical engagement strategy, after 2003 the EU suspended its economic assistance and reduced its humanitarian aid to the DPRK. This was requested by the DPRK after the EU signed a UNGA's Resolution that condemned the DPRK's human rights situation¹⁰⁰. Not only that, but it was France and Ireland who instigated international pressure movements to improve the human rights situation in the DPRK (Esteban 2019, 14; Ko 2008, 52). In fact, France was behind the first Resolution adopted by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR), which expressed deep

¹⁰⁰ See European Parliament, 2006, Note on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and its relations with the European Union, September 2006, page 13.

concern over the DPRK's human rights violations (Ko 2008, 52). Ireland too promoted a Resolution that was adopted by the UNCHR in the name of the EU, which warned the DPRK that the lack of progress in the situation would lead to the imposition of sanctions (ibid, 52-53). Even though the DPRK considered these actions a provocation, they were an example of the EU's efforts to promote its principles in its foreign policy, thus, seeking a coherent strategy.

In 2005, by the time of the fourth round of the Six-Party Talks, the European Parliament issued a Resolution advising that the EU ought to take part in the Talks. However, in the following year, after the DPRK conducted a ballistic missile test, the EU stated that the "member states had agreed that the EU, while ready to join if asked, should not push to be invited to join the security talks. On the other hand, the EU *must*¹⁰¹ be a part from the early stages in the negotiation process leading to reconstruction of the country should it be asked to contribute financially"¹⁰². Moreover, the EU suggested the creation of a new format of talks, the Ten-Party Talks, where the EU, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Malaysia, and Indonesia, together with the usual six countries, would take part in the discussions for the denuclearisation of the peninsula¹⁰³. Even though the DPRK refused the suggestion, this demonstrated that the EU was still interested in influencing the events on the Korean Peninsula.

Nevertheless, the EU was forced to significantly reduce its humanitarian and food aid due to the several measures that sanctioned the DRPK, and which hindered any efforts to manage aid programmes. By 2007, the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid department had no choice but to leave the DPRK regardless of the continuing humanitarian crisis (Alexandrova 2019, 45). The assistance provided by the EU under the KEDO did also decline after the October revelations of 2002 (Ko 2008, 54), and after the two-year suspension of the construction of the two light-water reactors, by the end of 2005, KEDO decided to shut down the project (Schmidt 2006, 7). It is worth remembering that KEDO was created with the goal of assisting the implementation of the 1994 Agreement through the construction of two light-water reactors. The

¹⁰¹ Italics added.

¹⁰² See European Parliament, 2006, Note on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and its relations with the European Union, September 2006, page 6.

¹⁰³ See ibid.

termination of the project was an indicator that the relations between the DPRK and the international community had, indeed, worsened.

One should note, however, that despite the decrease in the assistance provided, the EU still sought to be faithful to its principles, and as such it strived not to link the political situation of the peninsula to the humanitarian issues. Consequently, despite the escalation of the tensions on the Korean Peninsula, the EU continued to provide humanitarian and food aid, albeit in lesser quantities, being this the “only area in which the EU in Brussels took the lead prior to member states and encouraged them to provide aid to North Korea” (Ko 2008, 57). In fact, after the October revelations, there was a peak of assistance in 2004 which corresponded to the high food demands of the country (Schmidt 2006, 10; Jang and Suh 2017, 739).

Despite these events, the EU continued to “follow very closely and with great concern the developments on the Korean Peninsula, and notably the DPRK’s nuclear programme, which poses a serious threat to regional and global security” (Council of the European Union 2005a, 77). The stalemate of the Six-Party Talks and the escalation of the tensions after the re-election of President George W. Bush urged the EU to underline its disappointment with the development of the situation, and to reiterate that the Talks were the best instrument to resolve the nuclear issue. The EU stated, as well, its “preparedness to enhance its cooperation with the DPRK, provided that the DPRK fully complied with its international obligations” (Ibidem), and “urged the DPRK to rethink its decision and to return to the talks as soon as possible” (Ibid, 134).

The conjunct efforts of the PRC and of the ROK resulted in the signing of the September Agreement, in 2005. The EU welcomed this positive development and the “renewal of the DPRK’s commitment to abandon nuclear weapons and all existing nuclear programmes”¹⁰⁴, highlighting the efforts of the PRC and the cooperation and flexibility of the participants.

By 2006, and on the eminence of the DPRK’s missile tests in July, the EU launched a serious and urgent message stating that “in the view of the European Union such a

¹⁰⁴ See Council of the European Union, 2005b, Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on Six Party Talks, September 19, 2005.

missile test would be deeply regrettable. Such a provocative act would add considerable tensions to an already complex regional situation. It would breach the longstanding moratorium on long-range missile launches”¹⁰⁵. The language used in this message indicated the EU’s concern towards this issue.

In September, the EU held a Summit with the ROK, where, besides stating its desire to further the relation and partnership with the country, the EU offered to “share its own experience of integration in Europe and to actively continue to contribute to the peace and stability of the Korean Peninsula”¹⁰⁶. Moreover, “the EU reiterated its firm support for the Republic of Korea’s Policy for Peace and Prosperity (...) [and that] for its part, the EU remains committed to maintaining its engagement with the DPRK (...) and will continue to provide humanitarian assistance and food security to its population while needs exist”¹⁰⁷.

The EU’s commitment to the peace of the Korean Peninsula was not shaken by the DPRK’s first nuclear test, in October. Nevertheless, after this event, the EU began to adopt restrictive measures “as its default policy response to developments in North Korea’s nuclear and missile program” (Alexandrova 2019, 46). This was in line with the EU’s strategy to strengthen the multilateral order and prevent the proliferation of WMD, and as such the EU started to continuously support the decisions of the UNSC and the US’ autonomous measures.

The shift on the EU’s strategy towards the DPRK seemed, thus, to be a result of its efforts to consolidate its identity in the international arena, as opposed to a change of its perception of the DPRK. The European integration process was used as part of the EU’s strategic narrative, where the EU’s experience and knowledge were a distinctive trait that made the EU a key player on the resolution of the nuclear issue. However, faced with the US’ strong positioning towards the DPRK during President George W. Bush’s Administration, the EU sought to act according to its ally. As such, it halted its economic and technological support to the DPRK in order to avoid strengthening the regime (Ibid 52). The US’ previous preconceptions of the DRPK marked its relations with

¹⁰⁵ See Council of the European Union, 2006a, Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the possible test launch of a missile by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), June 21, 2006.

¹⁰⁶ See Council of the European Union, 2006b, EU-Republic of Korea Summit Helsinki 9 September 2006 Joint Statement, point 3.

¹⁰⁷ See *ibid*, point 8.

country, but the same could not be said about the EU. In fact, the EU continued to support the ROK's policy of engagement with the DPRK, not because it was trying to oppose its main security ally, but because it was trying to establish its own role as a promoter of peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula.

3.2 The Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy of 2003

Despite the EU's efforts to construct a strong European identity that would be reflected on its foreign policy, there remained some internal issues that influenced the EU's international performance. For a regular state it might be difficult to forge and project a cohesive and coherent strategic narrative that prevails over the existent counternarratives. The EU's structure makes the same task even more difficult, as the member states' own entrenched narratives and interests might not coincide with the ones of the EU.

An example of this is the notion that the EU's concern with the respect for human rights is linked with its strategic interests, namely through ESDP operations (Youngs 2004). There has been a gap between the EU's strategic narrative, that depicts it as a force for good, and its inconsistent behaviour when it comes to the advancement of human rights (Rise 2012, 91), which undermines the EU's credibility both in the eyes of its external and internal audiences. As such, the use of a strategic narrative that affirms that the EU's normative foundation makes it an unique actor, might be considered a "reflexive attempt at conscious identity creation in foreign policy" that is "directly inwardly as a means to strengthen the EU's sense of community" (Ibid, 91-92).

By the end of 2008, the EU launched another strategic document entitled the Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy, that came to complement the ESS. In this document, it was emphasised how much the EU's external image had changed since 2003, which resulted in its growing responsibilities as an international actor, in a more dangerous and complex international system. As such, the EU "remains an anchor of stability" (Council of the European Union 2008a, 1) and "already contributes to a more secure world" (Ibid, 2) with achievements in the

advancement of democracy, prosperity, crisis and conflict management, human security and human rights.

Nevertheless, despite the success of the ESDP, visible through the increase in the assistance requests, there were still aspects that had to be improved, namely regarding the projection of a more unified and strategic vision of foreign policy (Miskimmon 2017, 87). For that, the EU needed to be more effective “among ourselves, within our neighbourhood and around the world” (Council of the European Union 2008a, 9).

The threats mentioned in the ESS remained relevant, however, and the EU had “no room for complacency” as it must “ensure our security and meet the expectations of our citizens” (Ibid, 2). The sheer notion of expectations was related to the role that the EU sought as a reliable security provider (Ferreira-Pereira 2013, 2-3), and throughout this document the EU was more confident in its identity and international responsibilities, namely after being “recognised as an important contributor to a better world” (Council of the European Union 2008a, 2). Statements such as “Europe must lead a renewal of the multilateral order” and the EU must make clear that “respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of states and the peaceful settlement of disputes are not negotiable” (Ibidem) underlined the EU’s commitment to its values and principles.

The key threats became more complex and interconnected in the globalised world, as concerns such as cyberterrorism, piracy, climate change, and energy security arose. The proliferation of WMD was the first threat to be mentioned, whereas in the ESS it came in second place, after terrorism. This might had been a result of a change in the EU’s perception of risk, where the proliferation of WMD became more urgent after the nuclear developments of Iran and of the DPRK, who had “yet to gain the trust of the international community” (Ibid, 3). As a response to this threat, the EU continued to uphold preventive measures like working with the UN and other multilateral fora, by “acting as a key donor” (Ibidem), and working with regional organisations and third countries to enhance preventive capabilities.

This measures could be related to the EU’s behaviour towards the DPRK. In fact, the EU strived to reinforce the UNSC Resolutions, to work with the US and the ROK to

prevent the escalation of the tensions on the Korean Peninsula, and it continued to assist the country through humanitarian and food aid. A couple months before the launching of the Report, President George W. Bush removed the DPRK's designation as a SST. Even though the negotiations over the denuclearisation had stalled, the DPRK did not launch missile and ballistic tests until President Barack Obama came into office. The EU, however, did mention its concern over the “absence of a written agreement between the relevant parties” and called the DPRK to “uphold its commitment” on the establishment of a verification regime¹⁰⁸.

3.2.1 The Lisbon Treaty and the Economic Crisis

The Lisbon Treaty, which would enter into force by the end of 2009, provided the framework for the strengthening of the EU. In order to increase the EU's ability to act co-ordinately, a new article was added under the section of the CFSP, which stated that “the Union shall have legal personality” (European Union 2007, article 46, 38). Even though the EU would still be dependent on the agreement of its member states, this development would provide it with a “status in international law which ought only to enhance its capacity to speak with a single voice” (Howorth 2013, 66).

It was also in this treaty that the “European Security and Defence Policy was formally codified as the Common Security and Defence Policy” (Ferreira-Pereira 2013, 4). The post of the High Representative of the CFSP was merged with that of the Vice-president of the European Commission, resulting in the creation of the position of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR/VP). This person would “represent the Union for matters relating to the common foreign and security policy (...) conduct dialogue with third parties on the Union's behalf and shall express the Union's position in international organisations and international conferences” (European Union 2007, 27, article 13a-2). This combination allowed a greater coherence and consistency on the coordination of the CFSP¹⁰⁹, and simplified the question of who would represent the EU in regards to foreign affairs¹¹⁰. In addition,

¹⁰⁸ See Council of the European Union, 2008b, Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the EU following the failure of the latest six-party talks on the resolution of the North Korean nuclear weapons issue, December 22, 2008.

¹⁰⁹ See European Union. European External Action Service, 2016d, “High Representative/Vice President”, June 14, 2016.

¹¹⁰ See for example Alexandrova 2019, page 49.

the European External Action Service was formally created to support the HR/VP in conducting the CFSP, and to manage the diplomatic relations and strategic partnerships (SPs) of the EU¹¹¹, which had a great impact on the external image of the Union.

Unfortunately, the global financial and economic crisis impacted Europe by the end of 2008, which resulted in cuts on the defence budgets of the member states in 2009 and 2010. This challenged the EU's strategic narrative and external image, especially when faced with other international actors, such as the US, who increased their defence spending. The crisis environment, with strong austerity measures in some European countries, fostered the development of narratives that reflected feelings of uncertainty, both towards the management of the crisis, and about the EU's role and responsibilities in the international community (Miskimmon 2017, 92). The disparities amongst the several member states fuelled the contestation of the EU's strategic narrative, which conveyed the EU's lack of unity and undermined its strategic narrative that highlighted the European model as an example to other regions.

After President Barack Obama came into office in January 2009, the DPRK announced its intention of launching a satellite, in April. The UNSC condemned the country's behaviour which, in conjunction with President Barack Obama's strong positioning regarding the consequences of violating the international rules, resulted in the DPRK exiting the Six-Party Talks and restoring its nuclear facility in Yongbyon. The EU expressed its "serious concern over the decision by the government" of the DPRK, stating that these actions "contravenes the UNSC Resolution 1718 and overall efforts by the international community to help secure peace and stability on a future nuclear-free Korean Peninsula through the process of the Six-Party Talks"¹¹². Once more, the EU strongly supported the multilateral order and the resolution of conflictual situations through peaceful measures.

When in May the DPRK conducted its second nuclear test, the EU immediately condemned the behaviour of the country, reiterating that the "test undermines the stability on the Korea peninsula and in the region and represents a threat to

¹¹¹ See European Union. n.d. "European External Action Service (EEAS)".

¹¹² See Council of the European Union, 2009a, Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on recent developments in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, April 17, 2009.

international peace and security”¹¹³. In addition to the usual efforts to persuade the DPRK to act according to the international law, the EU also stated that it “consults and cooperates closely with its international partners in responding to this act”¹¹⁴. This statement was different from the previous ones as it indicated the EU’s strong positioning through a more serious tone. Faced with the difficulties that resulted from the economic crisis and its consequences to the Union’s external image, the EU took this opportunity to set a strong position towards the DPRK in an effort to ‘revive’ its role as a key security actor.

This seemed to be the case as in July 2009 the EU not only adopted the UNSC Resolution 1874, but also “decided on autonomous measures within the scope of the UN Resolution, namely autonomous listing of items subject to export ban, autonomous listing of persons and entities subject to travel ban asset freeze, enhanced financial vigilance and reinforced cargo inspections”¹¹⁵. This was the first time that the EU added some measures to a UNSC Resolution regarding the DPRK. Furthermore, by the end of the year, the EU adopted its first autonomous measures banning goods and listing people and entities to be added to the travel ban for their support of the DPRK’s nuclear and ballistic programmes¹¹⁶.

The end of 2009 brought the appointment of Catherine Ashton as the first HR/VP after the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty. At the Review Conference of the NPT, for which she was invited, the HR/VR reinforced the importance of strengthening the non-proliferation regime in order to prevent the proliferation of WMD. She also emphasised the EU’s concern over the “major proliferation challenges” posed by the DPRK and Iran “who have both continued to violate their international obligations in clear defiance of the United Nations Security Council and the IAEA, despite the repeated and ambitious offers by the international community to discuss these issues, pursue comprehensive and fair negotiations and work for a diplomatic solution”¹¹⁷. The participation of the EU

¹¹³ See Council of the European Union, 2009b, Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the nuclear test conducted by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea on 25 May 2009.

¹¹⁴ See *ibid.*

¹¹⁵ See Council of the European Union, 2009c, Restrictive measures against the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea – EU Implementation of UNSCR 1874, July 27, 2009.

¹¹⁶ See Council of the European Union/European Council. n.d. “EU restrictive measures against North Korea”.

¹¹⁷ See European Union. High-Representative/Vice-President Catherine Ashton, 2010a, Speech by HR Catherine Ashton, at the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference, May 3, 2010.

on the conference indicated the growing role of this actor in the security arena, and hinted to the successful projection of its strategic narrative. However, the divergences that undermined the EU's unity still remained, and even after agreeing on a common goal the EU continued to have difficulties in conveying a cohesive message (Van Ham 2011, 22-23).

With the decisions regarding the EU's strategic interests now defined under the CSDP (European Union 2007, article 10B, 24), the development of the European SPs became even more important to the EU. These type of bilateral relations were different for being "both structured around and reinforced by a convergence of positions on how to tackle evolving common threats" (Ferreira-Pereira and Vieira 2016, 4). The SPs were initially mentioned in the ESS as the development of the relations with the US, Russia, Japan, the PRC, Canada, and India (Council of the European Union 2003, 13-14). In the Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy of 2008, this list expanded to Brazil and South Africa (Council of the European Union 2008a, 11).

One might wonder why establishing a SP with the ROK mattered, but regarding the subject of the present work the furthering of the EU-ROK relations must be taken into consideration as part of the EU's strategic interests on the Korea Peninsula. Moreover, the ROK was considered "extremely important for the EU, which sees it as a country with the political and economic clout to make a difference at the global and regional levels, to contribute to the resolution of international crisis and to address the key challenges of the 21st century"¹¹⁸.

Hence, after the EU-Republic of Korea Summit in October 2010 the relations between the two actors intensified with the establishment of a SP that would allow them both to "develop cooperation areas at the bilateral, regional and global levels" (European Union 2010b, article 1, 10). Both actors stressed that their cooperation ought to remain attached to their commitment to democracy, freedom, human rights, the rule of law, and on the promotion of peace, stability and prosperity (Ibid, article 3, 15). As a result, the cooperation on the non-proliferation of WMD and the protection of human rights connected the EU and the ROK on their approaches regarding the DPRK (Pardo

¹¹⁸ See European Union. European External Action Service, 2016b, "The Republic of Korea and the EU".

2017, 5). The President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, reiterated the “need to highlight over the gravity of the North Korean human rights situation and the problem of hunger and malnutrition of the people. This should be the first priority for the DPRK, not missiles and nuclear weapons”¹¹⁹. This bold statement, unlikely of the EU, indicated a change to a more severe posture towards the DPRK.

Throughout the year of 2010, the EU continued to closely observe the DPRK’s behaviour and to offer its support to the ROK, namely upon the two incidents that escalated the tensions on the peninsula. The first event, the sinking of the ROK’s ship, the Cheonan, in March, led the ROK to conduct an international investigation that concluded that the culprit for the sinking was the DPRK. Upon this, the HR/VP Catherine Ashton “strongly condemn this heinous and deeply irresponsible action (...) [and] in the face of this latest setback, I call on all countries concerned to step up efforts to promote lasting peace and security on the Korean Peninsula”¹²⁰. The second event, the shelling of an island in the ROK’s territory which caused military and civilian casualties, in November, brought an equally concerned response from the EU. The HR/VP stated that she strongly condemned the DPRK’s behaviour and called on “North Korean authorities to refrain from any action that risks further escalation and to fully respect the Korean Armistice Agreement”¹²¹.

Upon these two events, the EU and the ROK aligned with the UNSC in the condemnation of the DPRK’s behaviour. Furthermore, the EU reinforced the “importance of preventing further such attacks or hostilities against the ROK or in the region” and reiterated its “support for the Six-Party Talks as a viable framework for the peaceful and comprehensive solution of the North Korean nuclear issue”¹²². Nevertheless, the EU maintained its strategy of assisting the DPRK in humanitarian and food aid regardless of the political tensions stirred by these events (Jang and Suh 2017, 740).

¹¹⁹ See European Commission. 2012a, “Remarks by Herman Van Rompuy President of the European Council, following the 6th Republic of Korea-EU Summit”, March 28, 2012.

¹²⁰ See European Union. Security and Defence Core Documents, 2010, page 267.

¹²¹ See European Union. High-Representative/Vice-President Catherine Ashton, 2010b, “Statement by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton on North Korean attack on South Korean Island”, November 23, 2010.

¹²² See Council of the European Union, 2020, EU-Republic of Korea Summit, Joint Press Statement, October 6, 2010.

Despite the innovations of the Lisbon Treaty, the EU still had difficulties in making the member states agree with one another. Moreover, because the CSDP operations needed to be unanimously agreed upon, the scope of action of the EU was limited (Menon 2011, 82). In 2011, faced with the Libyan crisis, the EU's member states took the opportunity to launch a series of initiatives to revive the CSDP. This event also signaled a shift in the US' position and willingness to spend money on the EU's defence, which challenged the EU to take primary responsibility for a crisis management operation (Howorth 2013, 71-72). However, the internal disputes over budgetary costs and the divergences between the members states interests resulted in a situation where the "CSDP was not even considered a potential lead agency" (Ibid, 72) and it was NATO who coordinated the mission in Libya.

The Lisbon Treaty raised the expectations about the EU's role in the international community but the lack of agreement amongst its member states ended up, once more, damaging the EU's external image (Menon 2011, 87). This resulted in a loss of influence and leverage in the EU's political relations, which could be used by states such as the DPRK to continue to challenge the international norms and disrespect the EU's sanctions. Besides, if the EU did not remain strong and coherent in its position, it would not be able to project a strong narrative nor make an impact in regional conflicts as far as the Korean Peninsula.

The Libyan crisis would become a reminder that the EU was not capable of acting in situations geographically closer, which furthered the narratives that the EU was not a relevant international actor, much less in events farther from its periphery. Consequently, the EU strived to continue to strengthen the multilateral order and its relations with other states. The reinforcement of its cooperation with the ROK highlighted the EU's efforts to convey a coherent strategic narrative in times where its image had been shaken.

3.3 The Strengthening of the EU's Role as an International Security Actor: An Active Pressure Approach towards the DPRK

As the situation on the Korean Peninsula continued to escalate, the EU seemed to realise that its approaches were not enough to change the behaviour of the DPRK. As such, the EU began to gradually change its discourse, calling upon the country's recklessness and irresponsibility regarding not only its international commitments but also regarding its human rights situation.

After Kim Jong Un took the leadership of the DPRK, the changes on the EU's behaviour became more noticeable. In February 2012, the US and the DPRK signed the Leap Day Agreement, where the DPRK committed to shut down its Yongbyon nuclear facility and to stop the ballistic and nuclear tests in exchange for food aid. Nevertheless, in April the DPRK tried to launch a satellite into space, which violated the agreement and the international community's sanctions.

In October, the EU was awarded with the Nobel Peace Prize which was considered the

strongest possible recognition of the deep political motives behind our Union (...) [that] will continue to promote peace and security in the countries close to us and in the world at large. We are proud that the European Union is the world's largest provider of development assistance and humanitarian aid (...) This Nobel Peace Prize shows that in these difficult times the European Union remains an inspiration for leaders and citizens all over the world¹²³.

This event had great consequences on the EU's behaviour, as it legitimised its strategic narrative and reinforced its role as a promoter of peace and respect for human rights. As such, when Kim Jong Un stated that he would conduct another satellite launch by December, the EU considered this behaviour a "provocative act, jeopardizing diplomatic efforts in the pursuit of lasting peace and stability on the Korean peninsula (...) [and] it would merit a clear international response, in conjunction with the UN Security Council deliberations, including possible restrictive measures"¹²⁴.

¹²³ See European Commission, 2012b, Joint Statement of José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, and Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council on the Award of the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize to the EU. October 12, 2012.

¹²⁴ See Council of the European Union, 2012, Press Release 3209th Council meeting Foreign Affairs, December 10, 2012, page 18.

Despite the EU's warning, Kim Jong Un went ahead with the launch which was immediately condemned by the international community. The UNSC adopted Resolution 2087 in January, to which the DPRK responded by conducting its third nuclear test. This led the EU to adopt more autonomous sanctions towards the country, in addition to the ones from the UNSC. The HR/VP stated that the nuclear test was a "further blatant challenge to the global non-proliferation regime and an outright violation of the DPRK's international obligations not to produce or test nuclear weapons"¹²⁵. Moreover, the UNSC Resolution "further clarifies the international community's determination to take significant action in the event of a nuclear test, which would lead the DPRK towards further isolation. The EU remains seized of the matter and will work with key partners and the wider international community to build a firm and unified response aiming at demonstrating to the DPRK that there are consequences for its continued violations of UNSC Resolutions"¹²⁶. These statements fully demonstrated the EU's strong commitment to resolve the nuclear issue through multilateral efforts.

As a result from the strengthening of its role in the international community, and faced with the DPRK's behaviour, the EU decided to expand its critical engagement strategy to an approach of active pressure (Esteban 2019, 17). The EU began, then, to use mostly sanctions as a restrictive measure, while maintaining the communication channels open to constructive dialogue regarding the denuclearisation of the DPRK. Consequently, after 2013, the EU began to systematically strengthen its position towards the DPRK by expanding the UNSC Resolutions through the imposition of autonomous sanctions. This approach was similar to the one chosen by the ROK's new President, Park Geun Hye, which brought together "the positive aspects of the Sunshine Policy – especially economic cooperation – with support for international diplomatic and military pressure when the DPRK becomes uncooperative" (Pardo 2017, 4).

Catherine Ashton's remarks regarding the DPRK's leadership indicated the deterioration of the EU's perception of the country. As such, even though the DPRK remained "the most isolated country in the world and one of the most hostile to its

¹²⁵ See European Union. High-Representative/Vice-President Catherine Ashton, 2013a, Declaration by the High-Representative, Catherine Ashton, on behalf of the European Union on the nuclear test by the DPRK, February 12, 2013.

¹²⁶ See *ibid.*

neighbours” and “despite a third generation of leaders, some inconclusive attempts at economic reform and changed global context, there does not appear to be any positive change” regarding its issues on human rights¹²⁷. She added that,

While the people suffer, the regime squanders resources on a large military and on developing sophisticated offensive weapons. The Six Party Talks, which could offer the country a way out of isolation, remain stalled. Despite hopes for change under new leadership, North Korea remains determined to continue its long running programme to develop a ballistic nuclear weapon capability. (...) The International Community, working through the United Nations Security Council, has shown unprecedented unity in sending clear message to the DPRK: that it will not accept continued violations of the international non-proliferation regime. (...) We remain determined to take action in response to new provocations (...) Meanwhile, we have provided assistance to people in North Korea on purely humanitarian grounds (...) We will continue to assist the UN in its efforts to keep the international community united. This is the only way we can uphold the non-proliferation regime and support the people in North Korea¹²⁸.

This statement indicated clearly that the EU would not accept the DPRK’s behaviour. The mention that the change of leadership in the country could have resulted in a different attitude from the DPRK, indicated that the EU did not have the same bias as the US regarding the regime. The US considered the regime to be the problem that determined that the DPRK was a rogue state, which conditioned its behaviour towards the country. In the case of the EU, despite considering the DPRK a threat to the international community, the language used did not indicate any conceptions of an evil nature of the regime. Moreover, the mentions to the assistance and openness in rebuilding a relation with the DPRK, based on trust and on the commitment to the rule of the law, demonstrated the EU’s approach when faced with problematic states, which was in agreement with its strategic narrative. Thus, the EU’s position on the Korean Peninsula was legitimised by its role as a promoter of the rule of law and human rights, notions that were constantly emphasised in the EU’s strategic narrative.

During the remainder of 2013, the EU continued to stress the crucial role of cooperation in order to resolve the nuclear issue. In the Joint Statement of the EU-ROK,

¹²⁷ See European Union. High-Representative/Vice-President Catherine Ashton, 2013b, Remarks by the EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on nuclear threats and human rights on North Korea, March 13, 2013, page 1.

¹²⁸ See *ibid*, pages 1-2.

these actors agreed that the DPRK “cannot have the status of a nuclear-weapon State” and that the verifiable denuclearisation was crucial to the stability of the Korean Peninsula¹²⁹. The two actors also affirmed that in order for the inter-Korean relations to develop positively, trust needed to be fostered. As such, the EU supported the ROK’s Trust-building Process and emphasised the importance of its policy of critical engagement¹³⁰. The President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, congratulated President Park Geun Hye’s policies that had led to positive developments on the inter-Korean relations, and added that the “EU supports efforts to persuade DPRK to engage with the international community in a credible manner that will facilitate early progress towards the de-nuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula”¹³¹.

In 2014, the European Parliament issued a Resolution where it strongly condemned the DPRK’s “decade-long state repression exercised in a systematic manner by the present and past Supreme Leaders”¹³² and stated that these violations had been “taking place far too long under the observing eyes of the international community”¹³³. This document presented a more assertive EU, determined to make the DPRK accountable for its behaviour. This positioning could be seen in statements such as “the time has come for the international community to take concrete actions to end the perpetrators’ impunity” to which the EU demanded that the culprits for crimes against humanity in the DPRK should be presented before the International Criminal Court¹³⁴.

The EU’s insistence on pushing its agenda on the protection of human rights resulted in a collective effort with Japan¹³⁵, that led to the adoption of a Resolution by the UNGA, in December. In this Resolution, the UNGA encouraged the Human Rights Council in the DPRK to take “appropriate action to ensure accountability, including through consideration of referral of the situation (...) to the International Criminal Court and the consideration of the scope for effective targeted sanctions against those who appear to be most responsible for acts that the commission has said may constitute

¹²⁹ See Council of the European Union, 2013, European Union-Republic of Korea summit Joint Press Statement, November 8, 2013, point 18-19.

¹³⁰ See *ibid*, point 20.

¹³¹ See European Council, 2013, Press Remarks by President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy, following the seventh EU-Korea summit, November 8, 2013, page 2.

¹³² See European Parliament, 2014, European Parliament resolution of 17 April 2014 on the situation in North Korea (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea), point 2.

¹³³ See *ibid*, point 3.

¹³⁴ See *ibid*, point 4.

¹³⁵ For more detailed information see <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-102-2014-INIT/en/pdf>

crimes against humanity” (United Nations General Assembly 2015, point 8, 6). This marked the first time that there was a mention to taking the human rights situation in the DPRK to the International Criminal Court in a multilateral forum (Hilpert and Krumbein 2016, 70). It was also significant due the great number of countries that voted the Resolution, which indicated the increasing pressure of the international community in the DPRK, visible as well in the language used throughout the document (Ibidem).

During 2014 and 2015, the DPRK continuously conducted several missile tests. The quick development of its ballistic programme was a great concern to the international community and to the EU. However, the EU had to prioritise its focus on the regional issues that had been emerging. The conflict in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea in March 2014 were events of great concern to the EU which deeply worsened its relation with Russia.

Nevertheless, the strong positioning towards the DPRK continued, as the EU demanded the country to abandon its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes according to the CVID¹³⁶. The changes on the EU’s language when referring to the DPRK indicated the EU’s will to become a more prominent actor on the Korean Peninsula. Moreover, the concerns of the EU led this actor to raise awareness to the issues of the DPRK’s proliferation of WMD and violation of human rights in bilateral and multilateral fora, in order to pressure the country into changing its behaviour. Furthermore, the EU continued to adopt the UNSC’s Resolutions and to expand its autonomous sanctions, continuing, nonetheless, to show its availability to deepen the political discussions with the DPRK (Council of the European Union 2015, 91-92).

3.3.1 The Strategic Narrative in the Global Strategy

Even though the ESS conveyed important issues, the EU and the international environment had long since passed the geopolitical context of 2003. In the years after the launching of the Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy, there were several events that challenged the EU: the economic crisis, from which the EU was still trying to recover; the emergence of new types of actors, such as

¹³⁶ See European Commission, 2014, EU-US Summit – Joint Statement, March 26, 2014.

transnational agents and civil society, which gained more relevance in the international arena and shifted the power dynamics; and also regional conflicts which had tremendous humanitarian consequences. As a result, stability and unity were lacking in the EU.

Faced with the complexities of the international environment, as well as within the Union itself, Federica Mogherini suggested a period of strategic reflection if she was appointed HR/VP, and by the end of 2014, when her mandate began, this was exactly what she did. As such, from 2015 until 2016, it was decided that a more comprehensive and broader strategy was needed to unite the European member states and guide the EU's external action. The accomplishments of the previous years on the process of European integration, such as the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty, provided the EU with the tools to create a Global Strategy to tackle the problems that affect the day-to-day lives of the people of Europe. After all, issues like terrorism, energy insecurity, climate change, volatile flows of migration, and economic insecurity also had external causes that disturbed the Union and the decision-making of its member states (Tocci 2016, 462). This notion could be found at the very beginning of the EUGS, where one reads that "the purpose, even existence, of our Union is being questioned. Yet, our citizens and the world *need a strong European Union like never before*"¹³⁷ (European Union 2016b, 3).

This period of strategic reflection coincided with the peak of the migrant crisis that overload the EU. Even though the majority of the migrants were refugees seeking asylum in Europe, the great number of people entering the European countries illegally caused a burden on the member states' governments which resulted in inadequate responses to the degree of the humanitarian crisis. The poorly managed situation contributed even further to the deterioration of the EU's image, as it hinted to the lack of solidarity and of an effective coordination between the member states that sought to favour their national interests and security over the protection of human rights (Osso 2016, 5), principle that the EU proudly considered to be at the core of its action. There was also the lingering question of whether the United Kingdom would remain a member of the EU, a decision that would only be known after the June 2016 referendum. These

¹³⁷ Italics added.

challenges were depicted in the EU's system narrative, that characterised the complex international environment and underlined the necessity of a strong EU. As such, a strategy to unite the European member states would strengthen the EU's position as an international actor and ensure its security and stability in a time of "existential crisis, within and beyond the European Union" (European Union 2016b, 7).

The process that led to the forging of the new strategy involved the collective efforts of the member states and European institutions in conjunction with universities, students, think tanks, civil society organisations, the private sector, and third parties outside of Europe (Tocci 2016, 465). The strategy would enhance integration and identity building (Selchow 2016, 285), as it would play its part on the construction of the social reality where the EU was considered an important security actor. The definition of the threats and interests of the EU in this type of document allowed it to reconstruct its collective identity and, consequently, to redefine how it ought to behave when faced with threats to its security (Ibid, 286). The proper mention to the EU's efforts to better communicate with its citizens and partners (European Union 2016b, 23) also indicated its willingness to strengthen its internal cohesion. By clearly affirming its principles and aims, the EU was trying to fight disinformation and the counternarratives which constantly undermined its strategic narrative, especially during times of internal crisis and divergence amongst the member states.

Hence, the EUGS highlighted the role of the EU as a security provider and strengthened its strategic narrative. Furthermore, it was mentioned that the EU would be taking its responsibilities as security actor not only because of its interests, but also because the international community expected it to do so (Ibid, 3). This strongly reinforced the EU's identity narrative and its role as an indispensable security actor in the international arena, legitimising its engagement with different international actors. The EU's issue narrative, namely regarding its responsibility to uphold its values in the international system, was also crucial to its involvement on the international events, such as on the Korean Peninsula.

Once more, external expectations played a crucial role on the development of the EU's strategic narrative. Thus, as expectations constrained the behaviour of the political actors, the EU's desire to become a more prominent security actor was a result of the

development of its strategic narrative. In other words, the EU's behaviour was strongly influenced by the notion embedded on its strategic narrative that it was a reliable and capable international security actor. The establishment of strong relations and key partnerships with other states, both in terms of economic and political ties, were the means through which the EU projected its strategic narrative, thus, shaping its external image. This, in turn, restricted the EU into behaving according to its strategic narrative, since "consistently living up to our values will determine our external credibility and influence" (Ibid, 8).

In this sense, the EUGS encompassed a broader range of instruments of external action that did not limit the EU's actions to a specific area, but that allowed it to make use of both its soft and hard power in its foreign action. Hence, the EU would continue to strengthen the multilateral order and its SPs while, at the same time, it would develop the autonomy necessary to be a capable partner and to take its share of responsibilities. This was a crucial goal because "responsibility must be shared" (Ibidem) and for that to be achieved the EU needed to invest in an effective and consistent foreign policy, where the security and defence policies needed to be more responsive to the complexities of the international environment. The notion that responsible engagement could bring about positive changes, was deeply related to the EU's capacity to prevent conflict and to act responsively and responsibly during crises (Ibid, 17-18). The EU's approach towards the DPRK was consistent with the idea that responsible engagement could result in positive changes in the regime, namely in terms of human rights and the proliferation of WMD.

The reinforcement of cooperation, both amongst the European member states and with other international actors, would allow the EU to promote its aim of accomplishing "win-win solutions, and move beyond the illusion that international politics can be a zero-sum game" (Ibid, 4). As such, in its partnerships the EU used dialogue and support in order to enhance its capacity to tackle the common challenges. This behaviour was also seen in its approach towards the Korean Peninsula, as the EU closely discussed the several events and coordinated its efforts with those of its partners, the US, the ROK, and even Japan.

In addition, the EU affirmed its strategic interests in Asia by connecting the prosperity of Europe with Asian security, due to the significant portion of trade between the two regions (Ibid, 37). Hence, the EU sought to develop a more politically rounded approach and to make greater practical contributions to the security of Asia. This would be achieved by strengthening its security partnerships with Japan and with the ROK, for instance, by promoting the non-proliferation on the Korean Peninsula (Ibid, 38). As such, the EU would support the “universalisation, full implementation and enforcement of multilateral disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control treaties and regimes” (Ibid, 41) in the region.

The EU’s values and principles were, thus, once more, embedded in its strategic interests. The international order promoted by the EU was based on the values of peace and security, prosperity, democracy, and rule of law and on the principles of unity, engagement, responsibility, and partnership. These were consistent with the strategic narrative that the Union had been trying to convey since its creation. Adaptation to the new challenges and complexities of a more interconnected world was vital to the prevalence of the EU, but such changes had to be in line with its values and principles as a “matter of law (...) ethics and identity” (Ibid, 15). Nevertheless, it was pointed out that the EU did not “strive to export our model, but rather seek reciprocal inspiration from different regional experiences” (Ibid, 32). This explained why the EU-DPRK relations were able to develop so quickly: because the EU did not wish to impose its model of integration in other states, the DPRK considered it different from other international actors that pursued merely individual gains. Moreover, in addition to the EU’s commitment to the multilateral order, these characteristics enhanced its potential as a security actor that could take on the role of mediator, facilitating communication with other countries.

After the DPRK conducted its fourth and fifth nuclear tests, in 2016, it became imperative to the EU that the country was held accountable for disrespecting the international law. The HR/VP stated the urgency of the matter as she urged the DPRK to “reengage in a credible and meaningful dialogue”¹³⁸ with the international community.

¹³⁸ See European Union. High-Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini, 2016a, “Statement by the HR/VP Federica Mogherini on the alleged nuclear test in DPRK”, January 6, 2016.

When the DPRK announced that it would conduct a satellite launch, the EU affirmed that this behaviour would be “a further provocation in the wake of the illegal nuclear test (...) and yet another unacceptable threat to international peace and security in the region and beyond”¹³⁹. As a result, the EU continued to work with its partners in multilateral fora to “keep up the momentum for international accountability efforts”¹⁴⁰.

Upon the DPRK’s fifth nuclear test, the HR/VP reiterated that “the path that the DPRK has to follow is clear and there is *no* alternative: the DPRK *must* abide by its obligations and abandon all its nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner. I call on the DPRK (...) to cease this illegal and extremely dangerous behaviour”¹⁴¹. Moreover, the nuclear test was “a clear illustration for the need of universal CTBT ratification (...) [and] the effectiveness and reliable performance of the CTBT verification regime (...) facilitated the prompt reaction of the international community to the irresponsible act by the DPRK”¹⁴².

The resolution of the Korean issue through peaceful and constructive dialogue and respect for the international rules was in line with the EU’s strategic narrative. The EU’s initiative in bringing the issues of the DPRK to the UNGA indicated its efforts to act according to its strategic narrative, as an actor that promoted the respect of human rights and the multilateral order. In other words, by cooperating with other actors and acting according to the international laws, the EU was reinforcing the multilateral order so that it could assert itself as an important security actor. Its behaviour towards the DPRK legitimised its narrative and role as a promoter of stability and peace, which explained why the EU altered its position towards the DPRK and why it underlined the urgency in pressuring this country into changing its behaviour.

¹³⁹ See European Union. European External Action Service, 2016c, “Statement by the Spokesperson on the DPRK’s announcement of a ‘satellite’ launch”, February 4, 2016.

¹⁴⁰ See Council of the European Union, 2016, Council Conclusions on EU Priorities at the Human Rights Forum in 2016, February 15, 2016, point 6.

¹⁴¹ See European Union. High-Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini, 2016b, “Statement by the High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini on the nuclear test in the DPRK”, September 9, 2016. Italics added.

¹⁴² See European Union. High-Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini, 2016c, “Statement delivered on behalf of the European Union by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the Eight Ministerial Meeting in support of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)”, September 21.

3.3.2 The quick developments in the DPRK's Nuclear and Ballistic Programmes in 2017

The EUGS indicated how the EU would enhance its position as a promoter of peace and stability in Asia. In fact, a few months after the presentation of the strategy, there was an initiative that aimed at raising awareness to the critical situation on the Korean Peninsula, co-developed by the EU and the ROK. These two actors sponsored a seminar on the nuclear and ballistic missile dimensions of the DRPK, where the participants from Europe, North and East Asia, and the US shared their assessment of the nuclear crisis and their concerns over the regional and international stability¹⁴³. This demonstrated how the EU actively sought to promote dialogue and a peaceful resolution of the crisis besides adopting, as well, restrictive measures such as sanctions to pressure the country. Furthermore, the EU continued to act according to its strategic narrative, providing aid to the DPRK even in spite of the tensions¹⁴⁴.

After the election of President Donald Trump, in November 2016, the DPRK's nuclear and ballistic programmes reached new developments. The strong position of the US towards the DPRK resulted in a series of missile launches that were deemed as a provocation to the international order. Each time, the EU condemned the launches and stated its disapproval of the "provocative and unacceptable"¹⁴⁵ behaviour of the country, reinforcing the UNSC sanctions and imposing its own autonomous measures. At the same time, the Union continuously demonstrated its support for a "credible and meaningful dialogue with the international community"¹⁴⁶.

In May, President Moon Jae In took office and sent a special envoy to the EU to reinforce the strength of the EU-ROK SP¹⁴⁷. The change of leadership in the ROK would open a new chapter on the engagement policies with the DPRK. The strengthening of the alliances and partnerships of the ROK was a priority for the new President, who

¹⁴³ For more detailed information see <https://www.nonproliferation.eu/evenement/eu-republic-of-korea-non-proliferation-seminar-on-the-nuclear-and-ballistic-dimensions-of-the-dprk-crisis/>

¹⁴⁴ For more detailed information see https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/17594/eu-provides-eu-300000-support-flood-victims-dprk_en

¹⁴⁵ See European Union. European External Action Service, 2017a, "Statement by the Spokesperson on the launch of a ballistic missile by the DPRK", February 13, 2017.

¹⁴⁶ See *ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ See European Union. High-Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini, 2017a, "High Representative Federica Mogherini and Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, today welcomed to Brussels Professor Yoon Je Cho, the Special Envoy of President Moon Jae-in of the Republic of Korea", May 19, 2017.

shared the Union's vision of working together and "intensify the work that the European Union and Korea can do to solve the problem, trying to de-escalate the tensions, obviously continuing to implement the sanctions that the European Union has in place together with the rest of the international community, but also mainly trying to open a political channel for negotiations"¹⁴⁸.

The EU-ROK cooperation that had the goal of seeking a path for dialogue could be juxtaposed with the US' approach of no engagement with the DPRK. In fact, and even though the ROK strived to develop a closer relation with the US, it seemed as if President Moon Jae In resonated with the EU's strategic narrative, and its preferred means of peacefully resolving conflicts, more than with the US' build-up of military strength. In fact, both the EU and the ROK agreed that "any risk of military escalation in and around the Korean Peninsula should be avoided. This is priority number one in this moment"¹⁴⁹.

This situation demonstrated the EU's evolution as an international security actor. Barely a year after the presentation of the EUGS and, consequently, of the strengthening of the Union's position in the realm of security and defence, the "recognition of the role of the European Union on the global scene and also the specific competence and experience that the European Union has developed on the nuclear non-proliferation agenda"¹⁵⁰ was an "extremely important step"¹⁵¹.

As the DPRK continued to conduct missile tests, the EU indicated its concern at the IAEA Board of Governors. The DPRK's ongoing illegal nuclear and ballistic programmes and its decision of ceasing cooperation with the IAEA were of great concern to the EU, and the ballistic missile launches did only aggravate the situation¹⁵². The EU also reiterated that this behaviour was a "clear violation and flagrant disregard of the DPRK's obligations"¹⁵³ and a challenge to the Nuclear NPT and to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)¹⁵⁴. Consequently, the EU urged the DPRK, once more, to "cease this extremely dangerous behaviour"¹⁵⁵, to comply with the UNSC Resolutions, and to

¹⁴⁸ See *ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ See *ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ See *ibid.*

¹⁵¹ See *ibid.*

¹⁵² See European Union, 2017, Statement on the Occasion of the IAEA Board of Governors. 12-16 June 2017, points 2-3.

¹⁵³ See *ibid.*, point 3.

¹⁵⁴ See *ibid.*, point 5.

¹⁵⁵ See *ibid.*, point 4.

reverse its decision “to pursue the ill-advised path of provocation and isolation in clear violation of the September 2005 Joint Statement of the Six-Party Talks”¹⁵⁶. Furthermore, not only should the DPRK change its behaviour, but all the UN member states should contribute to this goal by complying with the restrictive measures adopted by the UNSC and by adopting autonomous measures of their own, likewise the EU¹⁵⁷.

In July 2017, the DPRK launched two ICBMs, which demonstrated the quick development of its ballistic and nuclear programmes. The EU condemned the DPRK’s behaviour, reiterating that the launches undermined the global non-proliferation and disarmament regime, and called for the urgency of the universalisation of the CTBT¹⁵⁸. Moreover, the EU highlighted that its sanctions regime was “currently among the most restrictive in operation”¹⁵⁹, which not only demonstrated its commitment to the resolution of the nuclear issue, but also to the strengthening of the international regimes and multilateral order.

The EU’s critical engagement strategy was “not an end in itself but a means to promote the DPRK’s full compliance with the UNSC Resolutions”¹⁶⁰. This notion was crucial as the DPRK constantly accused other international actors, namely the US, of singling out the country due to ideological differences. The EU’s representation of the DPRK did not show signs of a bias regarding the regime’s ideological aspects, but rather seemed related to the DPRK’s violations of the international norms.

Nevertheless, the EU valued its partnerships and alliances, and considered that the security and stability of the international community was clearly linked to regional conflicts, in particular those that affected its partners. This made its strategic interests on the Korean Peninsula not only a result of its identity as an actor who promoted democracy and freedom, but also due to the danger that the DPRK’s programmes posed to the stability of its key East Asian partners, the ROK, Japan, not to mention the US. Not only that, but the EU also conveyed its position regarding the peaceful resolution of

¹⁵⁶ See *ibid*, point 6.

¹⁵⁷ See *ibid*, point 10.

¹⁵⁸ See European Union. European External Action Service, 2017b, “Council Conclusions on the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea”, July 18, 2017, point 2.

¹⁵⁹ See *ibid*, point 4.

¹⁶⁰ See *ibid*, point 6.

the nuclear issue in its talks with key regional and international players during an Association of Southeast Asian Nations Regional Forum¹⁶¹.

These diplomatic efforts were the reason why the EU sought to support the “leading role and call of the Republic of Korea to the DPRK to engage in a credible and meaningful dialogue, including through confidence building measures in order to defuse tension and to enable steps aimed at pursuing the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula and the full implementation of all relevant UN Security Council resolutions”¹⁶². After the DPRK launched for the first time “what is thought to be a ballistic weapon over Japan”¹⁶³, in August 2017, the EU quickly signalled its support to the Japanese government, and according to its strategy, reinforced that the DPRK “must comply without delay, fully and unconditionally, with its obligations under all relevant UN Security Council resolutions and refrain from any further provocative action that could increase regional and global tensions”¹⁶⁴.

However, even after the warnings and pressure from the US and the international community, the tensions on the peninsula showed no signs of settling down. By the beginning of September of that year, the DPRK conducted its sixth nuclear test and the EU quickly stated that this represented a “major provocation, a grave threat to regional and international security and a major challenge to the global non-proliferation regime”¹⁶⁵. Moreover, the EU reiterated that its “message is clear: the DPRK must abandon its nuclear, weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner and immediately cease all related activities”¹⁶⁶. This statement conveyed the EU’s firm position facing the nuclear issue, with an emphasis on a united and coordinated international response.

The quick development of the DPRK’s nuclear capability was a concern to the EU as it demonstrated that the country would be “getting dangerously close to possessing

¹⁶¹ See European Union. High-Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini, 2017b, “Statement by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini on the situation on the Korean Peninsula”, August 14, 2017.

¹⁶² “See European Union. European External Action Service, 2017b, “Council Conclusions on the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea”, July 18, 2017, point 5.

¹⁶³ See European Union. High-Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini, 2017c, “Statement by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini on the DPRK’s launch of a missile over Japan”, August 29, 2017, point 2.

¹⁶⁴ See *ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ See European Union. High-Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini, 2017d, “Statement by the High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini on the nuclear test carried out by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea”, September 3, 2017.

¹⁶⁶ See *ibid.*

an operational nuclear arsenal”¹⁶⁷. That would not only threaten international peace and security, but also disrupt the “strategic equilibrium in Asia, and beyond”¹⁶⁸. The effort of the EU to strengthen the international response was visible during the speech of the HR/VP at the European Parliament plenary session, where she appreciated the opportunity to “debate an issue that has not often been on the agenda of our work here in the European Parliament, but has been very much at the centre of our European Union work in diplomatic terms in the last years”¹⁶⁹.

The “unprecedented threat posed by North Korea”¹⁷⁰ pushed the international community to unite its efforts and led the EU to focus on its partners and strategic partners in the region, being the Union “among the few to mention”¹⁷¹ the relevant international organisations that “constitute the backbone of the non-proliferation regime globally”¹⁷². As part of its efforts to support the international order, the EU actively engaged with key players, such as the IAEA and the CTBT to demonstrate its willingness and readiness to seek “international unity and stronger diplomatic pressure on North Korea, also to avoid the risk of a military escalation”¹⁷³.

However, the EU acknowledged that “sanctions are not a goal in themselves, but an instrument to open the way for a political process to start – a way that today, unfortunately, is not working”¹⁷⁴. It was vital that the EU could reflect on the measures it employed and on the way these did or did not work, as its development as an international actor was also dependent upon its ability to adapt to the changing international environment. The EU’s active pressure strategy was an example of said adaptation to the growing threat that stemmed from the DPRK’s pursue of a nuclear arsenal. The insistence on restrictive measures was considered to be “always aimed at opening channels for credible, meaningful and fruitful dialogue”¹⁷⁵ that, in addition to

¹⁶⁷ See European Union. European External Action Service, 2017c, “Conference on Disarmament – EU Statement on the nuclear test carried out by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea”, September 5, 2017.

¹⁶⁸ See *ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ See European Union. High-Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini, 2017e, “Speech by Federica Mogherini at the European Parliament plenary session on the situation in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea”, September 12, 2017.

¹⁷⁰ See *ibid.*

¹⁷¹ See *ibid.*

¹⁷² See *ibid.*

¹⁷³ See *ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ See *ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ See *ibid.*

diplomatic and political means, would lead to a peaceful denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula.

The EU's conception of the world and the development and projection of its strategic narrative could, in fact, influence the international community in the sense that its solution to the nuclear issue could be replicated. The HR/VP stated that "we have said it loud in the European Union, from the very beginning, and I was glad to see that the UN Security Council has reaffirmed this in its discussions and in its deliberations (...) [but] there is no military way out of this crisis"¹⁷⁶. The EU's support to its partners was crucial, but the different positioning of the EU could clash with the US, namely after President Donald Trump consistently stated that a military option was on the table.

After the UNSC imposed new sanctions, the DPRK launched a missile that, once more, flew over Japan. This launch increased the tensions on the peninsula as it was a clear indicator of the development of the DPRK's nuclear programme, with a missile capable of reaching Guam, merely a month after Kim Jong Un threatened to launch one towards the American territory in the Pacific. The EU considered the situation an "outrageous provocation"¹⁷⁷ that threatened the international community, staying "consistent and united in its position"¹⁷⁸ and accelerating the imposition of new restrictive measures to maintain strong economic and diplomatic pressure in the DPRK.

In his speech at the UNGA, President Donald Trump indicated that the US' position was in accordance to the EU's, namely regarding the need to reinforce cooperation under the UN. As a result, the EU partnered with the US to ensure that third countries, mainly in Asia and in Africa, fully implemented the UNSC Resolutions. This marked the Union's maximum level of economic and diplomatic pressure in the DPRK, making it the "body that has the toughest sanctions regime of the world on DPRK"¹⁷⁹. The EU selected this approach due to its past experience that it could "open space for diplomatic negotiations"¹⁸⁰.

¹⁷⁶ See *ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ See European Union. High-Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini, 2017f, "Statement by the High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini on the launch of a ballistic missile over Japan by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea", September 15, 2017.

¹⁷⁸ See *ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ See European Union. High-Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini, 2017g, "Remarks by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the press conference following the Foreign Affairs Council", October 16, 2017.

¹⁸⁰ See *ibid.*

However, as referred in the previous chapter, the situation on the peninsula was reaching a critical point with President Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un exchanging hostile remarks, which brought the two countries closer to starting a war. Upon this situation, at the UNGA thematic discussion on regional disarmament and security, the EU addressed the nuclear issue and the threat it posed to the proliferation of WMD in the Middle East. The refusal to abide by the NPT and the CTBT made the DPRK a challenge to the legitimacy of the international non-proliferation regime that the Union promoted. As such, the EU reaffirmed that it condemned the DPRK's provocative behaviour and urged the country to comply to its international responsibilities¹⁸¹.

Regarding the human rights situation, the EU and Japan worked together, once more, to present at the UN a draft Resolution to push this "too often overlooked"¹⁸² issue into the multilateral talks. Despite the DPRK's willingness to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and to allow a visit of its Special Rapporteur, there was still a lack of improvements on several abuses and violations of the its people's freedom. Consequently, the EU reiterated its "sincere hope that the government of the DPRK will consider engaging more with the international community and take action on the issues highlighted in this resolution"¹⁸³.

Nevertheless, the regime went on the opposite direction and tested for the third time an ICBM, extending its range of attack to any part of the US mainland. The launching occurred after President Donald Trump reinstated the DPRK on the list of SST, designation that President George W. Bush had removed in 2008 over the developments of the Six-Party Talks. The EU quickly stated that the launch was a "further unacceptable violation of the DPRK's international obligations [representing a] further grave provocation, and a serious threat to international security"¹⁸⁴.

The EU's "unequivocal"¹⁸⁵ message towards the DPRK demonstrated its commitment to the projection of a strong and united EU that backed up a collective

¹⁸¹ See European Union. European External Action Service, 2017d, "UN General Assembly 72nd Session First Committee Thematic Discussion on Regional Disarmament and Security", October 23, 2017.

¹⁸² See European Union. European External Action Service, 2017e, "EU Statement – United Nations 3rd Committee: Introduction of draft resolution L.40 on the situation on human rights in the DPRK", November 14, 2017.

¹⁸³ See *ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ See European Union. European External Action Service, 2017f, "Statement by the Spokesperson on today's missile launch by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea", November 28, 2017.

¹⁸⁵ See *ibid.*

response from the international community. Indeed, the HR/VP “stressed the need for the international unity to deal with the grave provocations by the DPRK”¹⁸⁶ in her talks with the ROK’s Foreign Minister, Kang Kyung Wha. She also stated, at the EU Conference on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, that these had “become again one of the most urgent issues of our times [as] we have witnessed new nuclear tests and the threat of a nuclear attack is once again real”¹⁸⁷. The strong measures from the EU were a result of its belief that “there can be no military solution to any proliferation crisis, [as] only diplomacy can achieve our shared goal of a complete, verifiable, irreversible denuclearised Korean peninsula”¹⁸⁸.

Nonetheless, the EU’s efforts to project a cohesive and strong strategic narrative were visible in this complex period where the HR/VP affirmed that the EU had “become the global point of reference for all those who believe in non-proliferation and multilateralism, and all those who work to achieve them”¹⁸⁹. She further stated that “from the Middle East to Asia-Pacific, from conventional to nuclear weapons, the European Union is playing its part. We have become a credible, indispensable partner to all those who work for non-proliferation and disarmament, and we will remain a point of reference for multilateralism and for building a more cooperative global order”¹⁹⁰. These considerations were in accordance to the EU’s strategic narrative, where a strong multilateral order was necessary for it to be able to achieve its role as a key security actor. As such, the EU considered that the “unity of the international community is a very precious commodity in this difficult times, so every single day, we Europeans engage to preserve and enlarge” it¹⁹¹.

¹⁸⁶ See European Union. High-Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini, 2017h, “High Representative/Vice-president Federica Mogherini discusses situation in Korean peninsula with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea Kang Kyung-wha”, December 1, 2017.

¹⁸⁷ See European Union. High-Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini, 2017i, “Mogherini Video Message EU Conference Non-proliferation”, December 14, 2017, YouTube video, 0:09.

¹⁸⁸ See *ibid*, 2:45.

¹⁸⁹ See *ibid*, 0:33.

¹⁹⁰ See *ibid*, 3:47.

¹⁹¹ See *ibid*, 3:10.

3.3.3 The EU's Strategic Narrative towards the Rapprochement of the Two Koreas in 2018

In 2018, the DPRK seemed to have changed its behaviour. However, this did not mean that the international community reconstructed its representations of the country; on the contrary, in the previous chapter we concluded that the US maintained its perception of the DPRK as a rogue state. The EU, however, did not exhibit such a dichotomous conception of the DPRK, instead presenting the nuclear issue as a complex situation that needed to be dealt with urgency. As such, it was the DPRK's violations of the international law and of its people's rights what mostly concerned the EU. There seemed to be no indicator that the EU sought regime change in the DPRK, and even though it considered the country a danger to the international community safety, it had never explicitly characterised it as a rogue. As a result, the Union engaged with the country in hopes that through a consistent and coherent approach it could influence the DPRK's perceptions on why it was important to promote the multilateral order and values such as freedom and the protection of human rights.

When Kim Jong Un, during its new year speech, indicated an openness to establishing constructive talks with the ROK, the EU welcomed this step as an improvement of the tense situation on the peninsula. At the time of the first inter-Korean talks, in January, the HR/VP stated that the agreement over the participation of the DPRK in the Winter Olympics could be “conducive to fostering trust and deescalating tensions on the Korean Peninsula”¹⁹². Moreover, she mentioned that the EU hoped that the talks and “the envisaged further exchanges between the Republic of Korea and the DPRK will be a building block for peace and stability (...) and prepare the ground for the DPRK to engage in a broader, credible and meaningful dialogue”¹⁹³ that could lead to the goal of a CVID. The imposition of additional sanctions remained, however, crucial, as “urgent efforts are required by the DPRK to address the international concerns

¹⁹² See European Union. High-Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini, 2018a, “Statement by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini on today's high-level talks between the Republic of Korea and the DPRK”, January 9, 2018.

¹⁹³ See *ibid.*

regarding its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes and to comply with its international obligations”¹⁹⁴.

The participation of the two Koreas in the Winter Olympics with a joint female hockey team under a flag of the unified Korea represented an important step on the ease of the tensions. However, and despite these “encouraging steps”¹⁹⁵ on the reestablishment of the inter-Korean relations, as the HR/VP mentioned, “at a certain moment, the Olympic Games will end and the European Union is ready to continue its work”¹⁹⁶. This availability and readiness to assist with the de-escalation of the tensions demonstrated the EU’s efforts to be a consistent and coherent international actor that, together with its allies and partners, actively sought to “increase the level of work of the European Union to help finding a solution for the de-nuclearization of the Korean peninsula”¹⁹⁷.

In fact, after the Olympics, Kim Jong Un stated his willingness to start the negotiations on the denuclearisation and, as a result, an inter-Korean Summit was scheduled for April. Throughout the years, the EU had always mentioned that its main goal was to promote constructive dialogue that would lead to the peaceful denuclearisation of the peninsula. For this reason, upon the news of the establishment of the inter-Korean Summit, the EU communicated its hope that “the situation on the Korean Peninsula could turn from a potential catastrophe, into a demonstration of the power of multilateral diplomacy”¹⁹⁸. For this result to be achieved the unity of the international community would be decisive, and the EU had played its part to ensure this unity through the establishment of its critical engagement strategy, in addition to the conjunct work with third countries to help fully enforce the implementation of the UNSC’s Resolutions.

¹⁹⁴ See European Union. European External Action Service, 2018, “2018 Session of the Conference on Disarmament – EU Opening Statement”, January 23, 2018.

¹⁹⁵ See European Union. High-Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini, 2018b, “Remarks by HR/VP Mogherini upon arrival at the informal meeting of the Foreign Affairs Minister”, February 15, 2018.

¹⁹⁶ See *ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ See *ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ See European Union. High-Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini, 2018c, “Speech by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the European Parliament plenary session on peace prospects for the Korean Peninsula in the light of recent developments”, March 13, 2018.

The EU had also continuously supported the ROK's efforts and the "leadership and courage"¹⁹⁹ shown by President Moon Jae In and his Administration on the engagement with the DPRK. The close partnership between the EU and the ROK was a strong example of the means through which the Union projected its strategic narrative, and that which, in turn, affected how the EU could act in the international system. Since these two actors shared "the same interests and values on all major issues"²⁰⁰, in addition to sharing the "view that pressure through sanctions and dialogue leading to negotiations should go hand-in-hand"²⁰¹, when the EU showed itself available to help its partner deal with the nuclear issue, the opportunity rose for it to participate more effectively on a peaceful resolution. Hence, the talks between the EU and the ROK's Foreign Minister Kang Kyung Wha opened the path for a discussion on "how the European Union can continue to support their [the ROK's] work, to accompany these efforts as we have constantly done during these months in an even more effective manner"²⁰². This demonstrated that the EU reflected upon its behaviour and was able to recognise its own flaws in order to become a more consistent and reliable partner.

After the inter-Korean Summit in Panmunjeom, the HR/VP stated her content with the outcomes, affirming that President Moon Jae In and Kim Jong Un demonstrated that "peace is possible, against all the odds (...) [and that] dialogue and diplomacy are our strongest tools to create peaceful solutions to the most difficult problems"²⁰³. In addition, she mentioned her hopes that the US-DPRK Summit would bring, as well, positive developments to the nuclear issue and reaffirmed that the EU "today, as always, stands on the side of peace, on the side of de-nuclearisation, and for a prosperous future for all Koreans"²⁰⁴.

Dialogue and diplomacy had been the main tools upon which the EU mainly relied in its foreign policy. In an international system based on a multilateral order, the establishment and compliance with the international rules were what maintained said

¹⁹⁹ See *ibid.*

²⁰⁰ See European Union. High-Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini, 2018d, "Remarks by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the joint press point with Foreign Minister of the Republic of Korea", March 19, 2018.

²⁰¹ See *ibid.*

²⁰² See European Union. High-Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini, 2018c, "Speech by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the European Parliament plenary session on peace prospects for the Korean Peninsula in the light of recent developments", March 13, 2018.

²⁰³ See European Union. High-Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini, 2018e, "Statement by HR/VR Mogherini on the outcome of the inter-Korean Summit", April 28, 2018.

²⁰⁴ See *ibid.*

order. Consequently, that was the reason why the EU strived to reinforce the international rules and regimes, considering, for instance, its “duty to protect the global non-proliferation architecture”²⁰⁵. For that, it needed to make sure that not only the EU, but also the international community remained consistent and united in their approaches. Its support for international organisations was also related to these notions because they could “provide independent and reliable data – something that no single country could do alone”²⁰⁶. The EU’s principles and beliefs were, thus, what motivated the Union to act consistently and coherently, in order to successfully project its strategic narrative.

Through the use of its extended network of delegations and embassies, the EU sought to influence the behaviour of other states into complying with multilateral solutions to their common threats. The strengthening of the EU’s security cooperation in and with Asia was an example of a measure to reinforce the CSDP, and to reaffirm the EU’s role as a global security player. It was through these connections and ties that the EU projected its strategic narrative.

The strong positioning and optimism of the EU regarding its own identity and strategic narrative, which might at times result on a behaviour considered “naïve or idealistic”²⁰⁷ by other states, allowed it to have an impact on the international events. Moreover, it even led to the goal of the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula to become possible, “not easy – and the path will be fraught with obstacles – but possible”²⁰⁸. The HR/VP mentioned that,

this is thanks to those people who never stopped working for a goal that used to seem impossible. It always seems impossible, until it’s done. We need patience, and even stubbornness (..) We can help the two Koreas walk the path of meaningful negotiations towards denuclearisation. And we can achieve our goal to make the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty finally enter into force. We have a duty to hope, persevere and work harder to achieve together our common goal²⁰⁹.

²⁰⁵ See European Union. High-Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini, 2018f, “Message delivered on behalf of High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the high-level meeting on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty: “Towards a world without nuclear tests: fulfilling the promise”, May 22, 2018.

²⁰⁶ See *ibid.*

²⁰⁷ See *ibid.*

²⁰⁸ See *ibid.*

²⁰⁹ See *ibid.*

This statement reinforced the notion that the EU was, indeed, able to strengthen its strategic narrative with the adoption of the EUGS. The mentions to the EU's duty indicated its perception of its role as an international security actor capable to bring positive changes to the international events, such as the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula. In fact, due to its past experience with the Iran nuclear deal, in addition to the strong principles upon which the EU based its actions, the EU was capacitated with the necessary tools to achieve the role it sought. The HR/VP further underlined that "war does not belong to our DNA or vocabulary. We have had enough of different wars in our history: that is over. The European Union is a peace project"²¹⁰, which highlighted the EU's position as a promoter of peace and stability.

The US-DPRK Summit in Singapore, in June, reaffirmed the EU's "strong conviction that diplomacy is the only way forward towards lasting peace on the Korean peninsula"²¹¹. Hence, the EU demonstrated its availability to support the Summit's outcomes to ensure the long-lasting peace and stability of the peninsula. However, when the progress between the US and the DPRK seemed to stall, the HR/VP stated that "the denuclearisation of the Peninsula is not a bilateral issue between the US and the DPRK. South Korea in particular, but also Japan, China, Russia, as well as the EU and the United Nations (UN) also have an important role to play"²¹². Moreover, she added that "the pressure on the DPRK regime to change its course has been building for a number of years now, thanks to the unified action of the international community and the United Nations Security Council in particular"²¹³, which in conjunction with President Moon Jae In's efforts could lead the situation to a different outcome than during the previous talks. As such, the EU maintained its restrictive measures towards the DPRK and continued to insist on the CVID before lifting its sanctions, decision that was in agreement with the US' positioning towards the country.

²¹⁰ See European Union. High-Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini, 2018g, "Remarks by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the joint press point with Wang Yi, State Councillor and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China following the EU-China Strategic Dialogue", June 1, 2018.

²¹¹ See European Union. High-Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini, 2018h, "Statement by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini on the outcome of the summit between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea", June 12, 2018.

²¹² See European Union. High-Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini, 2018i, "EU offers Koreans guidance on a pathway to peace", August 14, 2018.

²¹³ See *ibid.*

3.4 The EU's Strategic Narratives vis-à-vis the DPRK

Throughout the present chapter, there has been an attempt to analyse the behaviour of the EU so as to identify its strategic narrative and its consequences on the relation of this actor with the DPRK. Even though it was already established that the EU was not a common international actor, but rather a union of states, the analysis had to be conducted differently than in other case studies. As a result, this investigation made use not only of the EU's strategic documents in terms of its foreign policy, but also of other documents released by the Union's different institutions, in addition to speeches by the HR/VP.

The EU-DPRK relation was, thus, taken as an example of how the Union sought to use its foreign policy to construct and consolidate its identity and external image as an international security actor. Due to its commitment to the promotion of values and principles such as freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, respect for human dignity and for human rights, the EU found on the Korean Peninsula an opportunity to become more influential in the international events. Consequently, it began to assist the DPRK with humanitarian, food and economic aid, in cooperation with the ROK.

The EU's goal of promoting a sustainable development policy so that the DPRK would become self-sufficient in the resolution of its internal issues, highlighted its core normative basis and reinforced the perception of the Union as a force for good. That was because this long-term strategy would not result in short-term concessions, which indicated that the EU was more concerned with the well-being of the North Korean people than with the geopolitical impasses that fuelled the tensions between the DPRK and the international community. This engagement policy was consistent with the EU's strategic narrative where the EU was represented as an actor that prioritised the above-mentioned principles and values over the political instability deriving from conflicting situations.

However, after the terrorist attacks of September 2001 in the US, the EU's approach had to change. Even though the Union continued to engage with the DPRK, having, for instance, established diplomatic relations with the country, after the October revelations of 2002 the EU changed its strategy to one of critical engagement. The

confirmation that the DPRK was developing its own nuclear and ballistic programmes and, thus, violating the international law, and its subsequently exiting from the NPT were events of great concern for the EU. In fact, these put a strain on the human rights situation in the DPRK, which was the EU's main focus in its relation with the country. This was visible in the amounts of humanitarian and food aid that the EU provided throughout the years to the North Korean people, even during the political crises.

The launching of the ESS, in 2003, indicated a convergence of the EU's member states' interests, which would make the EU's behaviour more effective, whilst giving it credibility as a security actor. Not only that, but the strategy also brought the US and the EU closer as it determined similar common threats and shared goals between the two allies. However, despite the threats of the proliferation of WMD and of regional conflicts being important key issues for the EU, and which connected it to the crisis on the Korea Peninsula, the EU ended up not being a part of the Six-Party Talks. Nevertheless, the EU's constant support for its partners and allies, and its commitment to peaceful resolutions to international conflicts were what maintained the EU's link to the nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula.

The close relation that the EU established with the ROK, which evolved into a SP by 2010, could be considered a means through which the EU projected and reinforced its strategic narrative. This became clearer as the EU continued to develop a more consistent and cohesive identity as a security actor, namely with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty that codified formally the Common Security and Defence Policy and appointed a High Representative for the Union's Foreign Affairs and Security Policy that would be also Vice-President of the European Commission. This was extremely important as it gave the Union a single person to speak on its behalf on security and defence issues.

Nevertheless, the EU was not able to fully establish itself in the role it sought due to several issues that undermined its strategic narrative and its projection, both to its internal and external audiences. The economic crisis of 2008, for instance, resulted in a clash of national narratives with the Union's narrative and increased the divergences between the member states. The several critics to the Union's poor capacity to deal with both the economic and internal crises tainted the EU's external image. In turn, the Union

sought to strengthen its cohesion, which was noticeable in its efforts to impose a firm position regarding the DPRK. Namely, after the DPRK's second nuclear test, the EU began to adopt additional autonomous measures together with the UNSC Resolutions to pressure the country into returning to the NPT and halting the development of its nuclear and ballistic programmes.

After Kim Jong Un's first year as the leader of the country, it became clear that the DPRK would not change its behaviour nor abide by the international laws. As a result, the EU intensified its approach to one of active pressure, thus, strengthening its critical engagement by adopting punitive measures to restrict the DPRK's access to the materials required to the development of its programmes and, at the same time, hardening its position regarding the human rights violations by raising awareness to the situation, for instance, by referring it to the International Criminal Court. Despite the visible political disengagement between the two actors, with examples such as Spain, which expelled the North Korean ambassador, and Portugal, which fully suspended its diplomatic relations with the country (Esteban 2019, 17), the EU continued to demonstrate its availability to assist its international partners and to find a peaceful resolution to the nuclear issue.

The shift to a stronger position was also clear due to the language the EU used when referring to the DPRK. There was a sense of urgency and strictness, specifically when mentioning the human rights violations and the country's refusal to abide by the international laws and to uphold its responsibilities. This change of tone indicated the reinforcement of the Union's role as a security actor, that wished to actively contribute to the conflicting situation on the Korean Peninsula. In fact, this was related to the EU's efforts to project a more cohesive and credible narrative in order to legitimise its behaviour.

The evolution of the EU's identity from the launching of the ESS until the presentation of the EUGS demonstrated the developments of its strategic narrative to a reliable actor who strived to promote its values and principles by sustaining a multilateral order where cooperation was the key to deal with the existing threats. As such, the EU sought not only to encourage unity between its member states, but also between the international community. This was because the Union could only take a

more prominent role as a security provider if the multilateral order that upheld the Union's values and principles functioned properly.

The DPRK's relation with the EU provided an example of this evolution: even though the EU had developed its own approach with the DPRK, which differentiated it from other actors namely regarding humanitarian assistance, this behaviour was deeply connected with the Union's identity as an actor who upholds democracy, liberty, the rule of law, and the protection of human rights. This foundation was what constricted the Union's behaviour and the reason why this actor hardened its position towards the DPRK.

The change in its approach from active engagement to critical engagement, until it reached the stage of active pressure, clearly indicated the EU's efforts to reconstruct and project a cohesive and strong strategic narrative that represented the evolution of the EU, not only in terms of its project of European integration, but mainly to highlight how far this actor had come as an international security actor. The reception of its narrative had also accompanied this process of reconstruction throughout the years: the several missions and operations under the CSDP highly influenced the international community's perception of the EU as a security actor. However, the different events which caused disturbances and raised conflicting visions to clash between the European member states, for instance during the economic crisis and the refugee crisis, hinted to the fact that the Union was not as united as it tried to convey. Nevertheless, the invitation of the EU's HR/VP to speak at key events, such as NPT Review Conference, could be taken as an example of the successful projection of the EU's strategic narrative. In other words, the recognition of EU as a growing security actor with credible ability to influence the course of events suggested that the Union had not only been able to successfully construct and project its strategic narrative, but had also been consistently behaving in accordance to it, which, in turn, legitimised its narrative.

4. Comparing the Strategic Narratives of the United States of America and the European Union vis-à-vis the Democratic People's Republic of Korea: Similarities and differences

In the two previous chapters it was conducted an individual analysis of the strategic narratives of the US and of the EU, focusing on their representations of the DPRK. The DPRK was taken as an example due to its relevance to the international community, namely after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the US. The present investigation used strategic narratives as a tool of analysis, in conjunction with process tracing, to study the behaviour of both the US and the EU in order to identify whether these two actors shared the same representations of the DPRK. As such, these two actors were selected to analyse how the conception of a rogue state conditioned the engagement of the international community with the DPRK.

The US and the EU were chosen as the two case studies due to their increasingly important role in the international community after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The security bond shared by these two actors was also taken into consideration. We can try to pinpoint the development of their relation to the period following the end of the second World War, when the US adopted the Marshall plan with the aim of assisting the European countries to reconstruct their economies after the conflict. This bond was strengthened during the Cold War, as the majority of the European countries were under the nuclear umbrella of the US in the framework of NATO.

With the end of the Cold War and the turning of the century, the international order began to quickly alter and the threats that arose were more complex due to the increasingly interconnected nature of the international relations. Nevertheless, during this period, the EU began its process of establishing itself as an independent international security actor. Hence, the analysis of the two case studies was conducted separately, in order to understand if the EU was, indeed, able to establish itself as an international security actor, or if it continued to be deeply influenced by the US' decisions in terms of security and defence.

Thus, as social constructions, and in particular, narratives, are strongly connected with the discourses that constitute them, it is crucial to understand the context where

these are produced. Narratives are forged from the “concepts, opinions, attitudes, evaluations, images and explanations which result from daily life and are sustained by communication” (Meyer 2001, 21). Furthermore, Ruth Wodak affirmed that “every discourse is historically produced and interpreted, that is, situated in time and space” (Ibid, 3). Hence, it is logical that we take the national contexts of the US and of the EU into consideration when analysing their strategic narratives.

After President George W. Bush launched its strategic narrative on the War on Terror, the US’ vision of the international events became characterised by a division between good and evil. These notions marked the American foreign policy in the subsequent years, as the President was able to establish his conceptions of who the enemies of freedom were. The DPRK was included in the Axis of Evil or, in other words, on the list of rogue states whose regimes were considered a threat to the security of the international community. These regimes did not only abuse their power and exerted control over their populations, usually by violating their basic human rights, but their military ambitions were also considered a direct stand against the US. The dichotomy between the exceptionalism and moralism of the US versus these deceiving regimes, who sought nuclear weapons for “blackmail, terror, and mass murder”²¹⁴, was at the core of the US’ strategic narrative, which did highly influence its behaviour towards the DPRK.

Regarding the EU, it might be argued that the conceptions at the basis of its strategic narrative did not fall into the same division as in the US. In fact, we ought to take into consideration that the strategic narrative of the EU differed from the US’, mainly because, during this period, the Union sought to establish itself as an international actor with autonomous capabilities in the security field. As such, even though the dichotomy presented by the US’ strategic narrative did not exist in the EU’s strategic narrative, the EU’s vision of the world order was still correspondent with that of the US. For instance, both actors shared the same conception that transnational terrorism, the proliferation of WMD, and regional conflicts posed a direct threat to the security of the international community.

²¹⁴ See United States of America. The President of the United States of America George W. Bush, 2003, “President Delivers State of the Union Address”, January 28, 2003.

The US' strategic narrative was very specific due to the use of strong language to describe the DPRK, in an effort to emphasise the division between the forces of good and the forces of evil. This division would give credibility to the US' strategic narrative and legitimise its behaviour towards the country. The EU, despite sharing the same conceptions of threats, differed from the US in terms of the language used in its characterisation of the DPRK. In fact, the Union considered the DPRK a risk both because of its human rights violations, and because of its nuclear and ballistic programmes. Nonetheless, the EU never mentioned that it considered the DPRK a rogue state, at least with the same level of transparency and clarity than that of the US. Even the Union's definition of failed states was not equivalent to the one of rogue states. Moreover, it was even mentioned that the new threats were "more diverse, less visible and less predictable" (Council of the European Union 2003, 3), which entailed to the complexity of the international system. In this sense, the US/EU conceptions of the world were completely different – the first actor analysed the events unveiling through a dichotomous framework, while the second actor considered the several factors that had contributed to their outbreak.

Nevertheless, after October 2002, when it was revealed that the DPRK was developing its nuclear and ballistics programmes, the EU did change its approach of engagement to a firmer stance. In this regard, the EU and the US behaved similarly as a result of their shared notion that the DPRK's nuclear ambitions were a threat to the functioning of the international order. As such, in their strategic narratives, both actors mentioned their responsibility towards promoting a multilateral order where cooperation was the key to achieve peace and stability. Their values and principles, namely freedom, democracy, and the protection of human rights were used to fuel said responsibility.

Nonetheless, there was a crucial difference that had a great impact on their behaviour. On the one side, the US emphasised the role of its strength and military capabilities by stating that, if necessary, it would act alone and pre-emptively (United States of America 2002, 6). On the other side, the EU clearly stated that "none of the new threats are purely military; nor can any be tackled by purely military means" (Council of the European Union 2003, 7), hence, focusing on international cooperation

through intelligence-sharing, and on the enforcement of the rule of law to prevent conflicts from emerging.

These different approaches were a result of the historical contexts of both actors. The Cold War restricted the behaviour of the US and of the European countries, making the US focus on strengthening its military force, which resulted on a reconstruction of its identity around its military power. The end of the Cold War marked a new beginning for the US as it tried to establish its superiority and leadership skills against the new security issues. As for the EU, the strategic narrative after the 9/11 terrorist attacks was clearly an effort to highlight the past joint commitment to create a project that would unite the European countries around the values of democracy, freedom, the rule of law, and the promotion of human rights. The CFSP and the ESDP were vivid examples of said commitment, as they indicated the Union's efforts to become a relevant international security actor. It was these two very contrasting identities, embedded in the strategic narratives of the two actors, what led them to act similarly regarding the DPRK, as they both considered the country a threat to the international community.

However, the differences on the means of action to deal with the new threats could undermine the EU's role in the international community. The Iraq War could be considered an example of a situation where the European member states' divergences put in jeopardy the EU's cohesion and ability to speak with one voice. Moreover, this event strained the EU's alliance with the US. As a result, it could be argued that the EU took the US strategic narrative as an opportunity to strengthen its own identity and to construct a more autonomous foreign policy strategy. As such, its strategic narrative depicted the EU as a reliable and credible international actor, that supported the multilateral order and its allies, taking its commitments and responsibilities seriously.

Despite the two actors' different motivations and means of acting, both the US and the EU wished to be relevant actors in the security arena and to promote their values and principles. These core notions were present even with the changes in the US' presidency, and also during the furthering of the EU's identity process. In fact, despite not being involved in the Six-Party Talks, the EU continued to support the US and the multilateral efforts to peacefully make the DPRK give up its nuclear ambitions. This support was even more apparent after the DPRK's first nuclear test, when the Union

began to endorse the UNSC Resolutions, in addition to adopting autonomous measures of its own.

Nevertheless, the different motivations that guided these actors were vital to differentiate their behaviour. These were the reason why the EU continued to provide development assistance to the DPRK and to work together with Non-governmental organisations to avoid the escalation of the humanitarian crisis in the country. This behaviour exemplified the EU's efforts to strengthen its strategic narrative and to be a coherent security actor that provided assistance according to its values and principles, independently of the political situation. This is not to say that the EU endorsed the DPRK's nuclear programme. In fact, the EU restricted its engagement with the country to ensure that it would be solely aimed at relieving the humanitarian crisis. Thus, its strategy was mainly meant to assist the DPRK establish a sustainable development policy that would bring long-term results, in opposition to the US' approach of engaging the country to gain short-term concessions, namely regarding the nuclear and ballistic programmes. The EU's type of engagement legitimised its strategic narrative and its image as a promoter of values such as the respect for human rights.

The strong projection of the US' strategic narrative remained visible even after President Barack Obama took office. One might even affirm that the convergence of the EU's strategic interests with those of the US was an indication of President George W. Bush's success in establishing his strategic narrative. After all, the key set of threats and the conception of what was right and wrong were deeply affected by the US' narrative on the War on Terror. Taking the DPRK's example, even with the advancement of the Six-Party Talks and the consequential removal of its designation as a SST, the US' conception of the country as evil still remained. Furthermore, because President George W. Bush's conception regarding the DPRK was so deeply established in the international community, it was difficult for President Barack Obama to escape this bias. Even though, at first, the President demonstrated his willingness to alleviate the tensions between the US and the DPRK, his strong sense of responsibility and respect for the international laws and order, quickly forced the President to condemn the DPRK's behaviour.

Nevertheless, President Barack Obama was able to break with the register of the War on Terror in terms of characterising the DPRK a rogue state, and his representation

of the DPRK became connected with the notion of risk. In other words, the DPRK's repressive policies, the subjugation of its population using repressive means, and the development of its nuclear capability while ignoring the international norms and regimes, were the reasons that led the Administration to consider the country a threat. All of these factors were similar to the definition of rogue states provided by the previous Administration, but there was no clear reference to the country as being a rogue.

President Barack Obama did, then, maintain the conception that the DPRK was an unreliable partner with whom negotiating was futile. However, he also considered the DPRK a rational actor, and as such, this allowed him to offer the country the choice of dropping its nuclear programme and to "proceed on a path to greater political and economic integration with the international community. [Or] if they ignore their international obligations, we will pursue multiple means to increase their isolation and bring them into compliance with the international non-proliferation norms" (United States 2010, 23-24).

The hints to the poor health condition of Kim Jong Il further reinforced President Barack Obama's strategic patience approach. This strategy could be explained by the turbulent period, during which President Barack Obama was in office. Namely, during his Administration, the President focused on dealing with the economic crisis that took over the west, and on finishing the loose ends of the War on Terror in the Middle East. In the light of the constrictions posed by strategic narratives to the behaviour of the political actors, one might affirm that the US' behaviour towards the DPRK undermined its role in the international system. Nonetheless, the geopolitical situation on the Korean Peninsula explained why the US had no other option than to seek a different approach to deal with the DPRK's nuclear developments. In line with its system and identity narratives, the US sought to support the international community's efforts to, through multilateral means, condemn the DPRK's behaviour. Hence, the US highlighted its role in the stability and security of the Korean Peninsula by supporting its allies in the region, and by promoting constructive talks to ensure the peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue.

At the same time, the EU's characterisation of the DPRK had also remained fairly consistent throughout the development of its strategic narrative. In fact, after the Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy of 2008, and the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, the Union sought to establish its role in the international arena by being cohesive and consistent, for instance, in its approach towards the DPRK. Furthermore, even despite the events that challenged its strategic narrative, such as the economic crisis, the EU sought to demonstrate its firm position towards the DPRK by strengthening the multilateral order. Thus, the Union continuously implemented the UNSC Resolutions, in addition to its own autonomous measures, which strengthened, as well, its relation with its partners and allies. The stepping up of its partnership with the ROK to a SP, indicated that the two actors shared the same conceptions regarding the promotion of values such as freedom, equality, the rule of law, and the protection and respect for human rights. As such, the SPs could be considered a means through which the EU projected its strategic narrative, as they reinforced the EU's ideas and depicted the EU as a reliable security actor, capable of influencing the international events.

By 2013, the Union's efforts became more noticeable. During President Barack Obama's last year in office, the US maintained its strategic patience approach. The EU, however, took this opportunity to strengthen its position towards the DPRK by implementing its strategy of active pressure. This strategy was a reinforcement of the EU's critical engagement approach, and indicated a firmer position regarding the DPRK's violations of the international rules. Hence, the EU began to systematically adopt autonomous sanctions related to the nuclear and ballistic programmes. It was also during this period that the EU, together with Japan, strived to raise awareness to the concerning human rights situation in the DPRK, bringing this issue to the UNGA and to the International Criminal Court.

The language used by the EU to refer to the DPRK was also an indicator of its change of policy, as it denoted a greater sense of strictness and urgency when mentioning the DPRK's violations of the UNSC Resolutions. Apart from the clear support for the multilateral order, the EU continued to support the ROK's approach. This relation was crucial to the reinforcement of the EU's strategic narrative and to establish its role

on the Korean Peninsula. As such, when President Park Geun Hye mentioned that she shared the Union's vision that strengthening the multilateral order was vital to the resolution of the nuclear issue, she was indirectly strengthening the EU's strategic narrative. This was because by reproducing the EU's ideas and conceptions about the international order there would be a greater chance of them becoming dominant, which, in turn, would generate expectations regarding the EU's role as an international security actor.

The EU's representation of the DPRK had, thus, remained considerably stable throughout the several events that marked its relation with the country. Nevertheless, the EU's strategic narrative was several times challenged by its member states' national narratives. For instance, after 2013, international issues such as the Ukrainian crisis and the Migrants crisis did deeply affect the EU's internal and external image. Parallel to the economic crisis and to the NATO-led Libyan intervention, these events proved that the EU's unity and cohesion was not as strong as it tried to convey. For this reason, when Federica Mogherini took the position of HR/VP by 2015, a period of strategic reflection began so as to review the Union's conduct until the moment. In other words, because of the several issues that tainted the EU's external image, the Union was faced with a choice of either remaining incapable of taking the role it sought, or to implement changes so as to be the reliable, coherent, strong, united, and capable security actor that it had been describing in its strategic narrative.

As a result, the EUGS was presented in 2016, by the end of President Barack Obama's second term in office. Here, the EU's strategic narrative indicated the development of its role as a security actor. Its system narrative characterised the growingly interconnected international community, where threats such as terrorism, violent conflicts, economic volatility, and energy insecurity had a great impact on the EU's security. In order to strengthen the unity of the international community, the EU sought to reinforce the multilateral order, thus, striving to become a more independent, reliable, and capable actor. Its identity narrative, that framed the EU as an indispensable actor, was supported by the international community's expectations regarding its behaviour. These expectations demonstrated how the EU's strategic narrative had been successfully influencing the international community's conceptions about the EU. For

instance, the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the EU, in 2012, indicated that the international community acknowledged the EU's efforts to become a key actor in the promotion of human rights.

The EU's behaviour towards the DPRK after 2013 highlighted its attempts to act responsibly when faced with a situation that posed a threat to the international community. As such, by following the UNSC's Resolutions and by adopting its own autonomous measures, the EU sought to influence the DPRK's regime into accepting that constructive dialogue would be the only path to ensure the peace and stability of the Korean Peninsula. In fact, the EU's behaviour towards the DPRK was, from the start, based on this actor's intentions of positively influencing the situation in the country, namely regarding the human rights crisis. Furthermore, the Union emphasised that it did not wish to "export our model, but rather seek reciprocal inspiration from different regional experiences" (European Union 2016b, 32), which inspired trust in the EU-DPRK relation.

The same cannot be said about the US-DPRK relation. After President George W. Bush clearly stated that he wished to "end tyranny"²¹⁵ and oppressive regimes such as the DPRK, the US-DPRK relation fell into a conflictual pattern. The President's notion that "freedom cannot be imposed; it must be chosen" (United States of America 2006, 5) was also supported by President Barack Obama, as he considered that the US did not wish to impose the American values and way of living on other nations through the use of force (United States of America 2010, 5). Nonetheless, this identity strategy that defined the US as a benevolent force for good, was in disagreement with the country's behaviour. This gap was noticeable in the US' relation with the DPRK and in its willingness, or lack of it, to fulfil the DPRK's request for a security assurance that the US would not overthrow its regime if it chose to abandon its nuclear programme. This was one of the main reasons why the negotiations between the two countries usually ended up in a stalemate. The EU's insistence on a win-win solution to the nuclear issue did also contrast with the US' position that favoured unilateral pre-emptive action.

²¹⁵ See for instance See United States of America. The President of the United States of America George W. Bush, 2005, "State of the Union Address", February 2, 2005; and See United States of America. The President of the United States of America George W. Bush, 2006, "State of the Union Address by the President", January 31, 2006.

The election of President Donald Trump brought back the core elements of President George W. Bush's strategic narrative, namely the dichotomy between good and evil, the emphasis on the US' military capabilities, and the prioritising of the US' strategic interests. These characterised the President's system narrative, where the DPRK was considered as a rogue state that threatened the security and stability of the US by developing WMD and refusing to abide by the international law. The language used to characterise the DPRK and its nuclear ambitions was clearly chosen to emphasise the disparate differences between this country and the US. Consequently, the US' identity as a promoter of values such as freedom and the respect for human rights was used to legitimise the country's actions and leadership role in the fight against the DPRK and the other issues that threatened the international security.

As a result, and opposing President Barack Obama's approach of strategic patience, where the US did not take an active role on the resolution of the nuclear issue, with President Donald Trump the US-DPRK relation entered a phase where hostile remarks and threats became the norm. Despite the US' new position regarding the international community, the President's maximum pressure strategy towards the DPRK required the conjunct effort of the international community. As a result, the US worked together with the EU to ensure that third countries would implement the UNSC's Resolutions, which would strengthen not only the US-EU bilateral relation, but also the multilateral order. Moreover, both actors worked in conjunction with the ROK, where President Moon Jae In agreed with the US' strategy of maintaining pressure on the DPRK but drew the line at the use of military force in the country, in agreement with the EU's strategy.

The EU and the ROK's emphasis on a diplomatic resolution of the nuclear issue was crucial to the easing of the tensions on the Korean Peninsula during President Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un's exchanges of hostile remarks. In fact, during this period where the tensions quickly escalated, the EU demonstrated its concern with the stability of the region, which was noticeable in its use of a strict language regarding the DPRK's provocative behaviour²¹⁶. In addition, the permanent communication with the ROK,

²¹⁶ See for instance European Union. European External Action Service, 2017a, "Statement by the Spokesperson on the launch of a ballistic missile by the DPRK", February 13, 2017; and European Union. High-Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini,

either in the periods following the DPRK's missile launches or simply to coordinate the two actors' efforts, indicated the recognition of the increasingly important role of the EU on the Korean Peninsula. This was a direct result of the EU's efforts to strengthen its strategic narrative through the establishment of SPs. It became clear that the EU's behaviour did, in fact, create expectations on how it ought to act as a security actor. Moreover, its participation in the enforcement of the UNSC Resolutions, in addition to autonomous measures, had highly contributed to the international efforts to make the DPRK quit the development of its nuclear and ballistic programmes. The HR/VP did, indeed, highlight the EU's role on the Korean Peninsula as the international actor with the toughest sanctions regime pressuring the DPRK²¹⁷.

The US' choice to put the DPRK back on the list of SST was a result of its hardened position towards the DPRK. This behaviour was in line with the President's notion that "the longer we ignore threats from countries determined to proliferate and develop weapons of mass destruction, the worse such threats become, and fewer defensive options we have (United States of America 2017, 26). This sense of urgency, also present in the EU, demonstrated the proximity between the two actors and was illustrated in their shared efforts to tackle this common threat to the international community's stability.

The PyeongChang Winter Olympics seemed to bring an opportunity for the DPRK to change its behaviour. However, even with the rapprochement of the two Koreas, the US' and EU's representations of the DPRK remained the same. Despite President Donald Trump mentioning that the two countries would begin their relation from a clear slate and without the previous existing bias, the US' weary behaviour towards the country, even after the historical US-DPRK Summit, was a vivid example that the US maintained its conceptions regarding the DPRK.

Regarding the EU, this actor gladly welcomed the improvement of the US-DPRK and of the ROK-DPRK relations, reaffirming its belief that dialogue and cooperation were the key means to resolve conflicting situations. Moreover, the US-DPRK Summit

2017e, "Speech by Federica Mogherini at the European Parliament plenary session on the situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea", September 12, 2017.

²¹⁷ See European Union. High-Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini, 2017g, "Remarks by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the press conference following the Foreign Affairs Council", October 16, 2017.

reinforced the EU's convictions that diplomacy was the right approach to bring an end to the conflict on the Korean Peninsula, which strengthened its strategic narrative. In addition, the EU mentioned its goals of making the CTBT enter into force and of assisting on the denuclearisation process of the Korean Peninsula, stating that this was part of the Union's duty. This implied that the EU had, indeed, taken its role in the security arena more seriously and that the projection of its strategic narrative did influence the international community's conceptions of the Union as a relevant security actor.

The development of the US and of the EU's strategic narratives was heavily influenced by the historical contexts of these two actors, which ended up differentiating their representations of the DPRK. Nonetheless, the behaviour of these two actors towards the DPRK could be considered similar since both the US and the EU upheld values and principles such as democracy, freedom, the rule of law, multilateralism, and the promotion of human rights and dignity. These shared values helped define similar conceptions of what threatened the stability and security of the international community. As such, the proliferation of WMD, regional conflicts, and terrorism were all challenges that could result from the DPRK's nuclear ambitions, which made this actor an important issue for both the US' and the EU's strategic interests. Consequently, these actors worked together to halt the development of the DPRK's nuclear and ballistic programmes, albeit their different approaches to resolve the issue.

Conclusion

In an increasingly interconnected world, where countries and people are becoming more aware of the issues happening in far off places, it is crucial to understand the role that communication has in the day-to-day life of the populations. Considering that discourses, and namely the prevalent ones, shape not only the people's behaviour, but also their constructions of their social reality, it becomes clear that there is a power relation which is intrinsically linked with the establishment of these discourses as representing the 'truth'. If language can, indeed, influence the international events and redirect the actors towards certain conceptions, this might force us to question our own beliefs and the systems which uphold them.

In this line of thought, and because each actor's reality is extremely subjective and dependent on the political, historical and social context in which he is inserted, it becomes crucial to consider these factors as aspects that impact the establishment of a discourse and of a narrative. In other words, for a political actor to be able to successfully establish his strategic narrative he must take into consideration the social reality and the contexts in which his audience is inserted. This is important because it makes the narrative more appealing to the targeted audience's identity, which will enhance the likelihood of it being accepted as the norm. However, this is not the only factor to affect the validity of a narrative. It is also critical that the political actors behave in accordance to it since, after all, narratives are tools used to legitimise the actors' choices and to help them reach their goals.

The present dissertation was based upon the assumption that strategic narratives play an important role on the (re)construction of social reality and on the development of the political actors' identities. As such, and because the actors carefully craft their strategic narratives so to as to reach their objectives, we sought to question the conception that certain states, like the DPRK, were rogue. The research question that guided this investigation aimed at analysing the strategic narratives of the US and of the EU in order to determine their representations of the DPRK. This would allow a better understanding of how these constructions influenced the two actors' behaviour vis-à-vis the Korean Peninsula. The main purpose was, thus, to follow the emergence and development of these actors' strategic narratives, analysing, at the same time, their

impact on each of the actor's relation with the DPRK. Subsequently, the strategic narratives of the two actors were compared so as to determine patterns of similarity and of difference in the US and the EU' behaviour towards the DPRK. Therefore, the prime object of the analysis were the strategic security documents of both the US and the EU, in addition to relevant speeches and interviews from key personalities, selected due to their important role in the construction of the narratives.

Firstly, before the analysis of the case studies it was important to explain and understand what constitutes a narrative and when does it become strategic. Chapter One tackled these questions by defining the concept of narratives through the lens of constructivism. As this chapter has demonstrated, narratives tell a story by organising selected events into a temporal sequence, which, in turn, conveys them meaning. In other words, narratives connect events into a plot, at the centre of which we find the characters or agents that act upon and are influenced by the narrative. The temporal sequencing is crucial in the sense that it characterises not only the actors' identities, but also the situations. This is because the temporal aspect of narratives establishes an initial order, highlights the problem(s) that disturbed it, and offers solutions to bring the previous stability back. In this way, actors use strategic narratives to reach their political goals by contributing to the construction of the shared meanings that constitute the social reality.

Therefore, the political actors focus on the existing available discourses to craft strategic narratives that convey meaning to a past, present, and future, which will enable them to influence their targeted audiences. The availability of the discourses is vital as the political actors work around the existing discourses in their particular social, economic, and political realities to construct their strategic narratives. As narratives produce actors with shared identities, norms, and common-sense ideas which, in turn, create assumptions and expectations about others, it is vital that the political actors take into consideration the different realities and contexts of certain regions. This highlights how difficult it might be for the political actors to establish their narratives in an arena where these are constantly clashing and being contested by other narratives. Hence, it is crucial that the actors behave coherently and consistently according to their strategic narratives, so that they can become accepted and reproduced through practices which

will sustain them and give them meaning. Without the actors' continual practices, strategic narratives will not be ascribed any meaning and, as a result, will lose their value and disappear to give way to other narratives that are more appealing to the audiences.

On Chapter Two and Three, the strategic narratives of the US and of the EU were, respectively, analysed. By tracing the development of their strategic narratives and of the discourses from which these emerged, it was possible to distinguish some similarities and some differences between the US and the EU's behaviour towards the DPRK.

As showed in Chapter Two, the US adopted a strategic narrative that created a division in the international community between those who fight alongside the forces of evil and those of the forces of good. After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, President George W. Bush crafted his strategic narrative on the War on Terror. This event led the US to reflect upon its reality and to put new threats such as transnational terrorism as a priority of its foreign policy. Moreover, it created an opportunity for the US to take on the leadership role to conduct the international community in the fight to contain and eliminate this threat. This role was supported by the US' conceptions about its unique and unparalleled military strength and its influence over the international events. This belief in the American exceptionalism was founded on the universal values that the US promoted, such as liberty and freedom, which motivated its sense of responsibility and its will to expand them into the endangered people who suffered at the hands of evil leaders – such as was the case of the DPRK.

The conception of DPRK's regime as a threat not only to its people, but also to the international community was established after President George W. Bush included the country in the Axis of Evil. From this moment onwards the US sought to influence the DPRK's regime into abandoning its nuclear ambitions. The interactions between the two countries did mostly reinforce the US' belief that the DPRK was not a trustworthy nor a reliable partner. As such, and even though President George W. Bush tried to resolve the issue through the Six-Party Talks, it was evident that the US' representations of the DPRK remained unchanging, which explained why the US did not focus on constructive dialogue and diplomacy to resolve the nuclear issue.

The strategic narratives constructed under the Administrations of both President Barack Obama and President Donald Trump could be considered a follow-up of President George W. Bush's strategic narrative because, even though there were some adjustments, the main focal points still prevailed. Notably, during President Barack Obama's Administration the behaviour of the US towards the DPRK demonstrated a lack of trust in the regime. The President's approach of strategic patience indicated that, despite the language and tone used to describe the country not being as harsh as in the previous Administration, the DPRK was still considered and treated as a rogue state. Furthermore, the US considered that the regime was bound to fall apart as a result of the international pressure and of the internal changes that the demise of Kim Jong Il would bring to the country. The US' role of leadership continued to be considered indispensable to the security and stability of the international community and the threats determined by President George W. Bush, like terrorism and the proliferation of WMD, remained a priority to the US. Nevertheless, new issues such as climate change, reinforced the need for a strong multilateral order and for the conjunct action of the international community, which would be conducted by the US.

President Donald Trump further strengthened the previous binary division between good and evil, which was not as clearly present during President Barack Obama's Administration. In fact, the President restated the DPRK as a SST, and his maximum pressure approach sought to bring the international community together to pressure the DPRK into halting the development of its nuclear and ballistic programmes. This was an example of the US' efforts to take on the leadership role in the promotion of security and stability in the international system. The support of the ROK, of Japan and of the EU for this approach demonstrated how the US' strategic narrative had, to a certain degree, been able to influence the international community into complying with the US' decisions.

Chapter Three followed the EU's struggles to determine itself as an international security actor. As such, the strategic narrative of the EU mainly focused on its efforts to convey a cohesive and consistent narrative to enhance the European integration process. This, in turn, would contribute to promote an image of the EU as a reliable and capable international security actor. The development of the Union's CFSP and of the

CSDP reinforced the view that the EU had an increasingly important role as a promoter of peace and stability not only inside its borders, but also in other regions.

The EU distinguished itself from the other international actors due to the historical context that had led the European countries to develop a mechanism to maintain peace in Europe. As a result, the European project was created to protect the European people from wars and to promote the values and principles of freedom, democracy, equality, respect for human rights and dignity, the rule of law, and multilateralism. These values and principles, upon which the EU was built, legitimised the notion that the EU had the responsibility to promote security and stability in the international community. As such, the Union's commitment to its values and principles had greatly influenced the development of its strategic narratives. Consequently, by acting according to its strategic narratives the EU sought to assert itself as a relevant international security actor. For instance, the establishment of SPs with key actors in the international arena highlighted the EU's efforts to promote the multilateral order.

In spite of the several events that challenged the EU's strategic narrative, the EU-DPRK relation could be taken as an example of the Union's attempts to behave according to its values and principles. In fact, the EU's different normative basis distinguished this actor and allowed for a rather quick development of its relation with the DPRK. Moreover, even though the EU considered the DPRK's nuclear ambitions a threat to the security of the international community, the Union continued to follow its strategic narrative and to engage with the country. Namely, the EU sought to assist the DPRK in overcoming its humanitarian crisis and to give the country the tools so that it could become autonomous in dealing with this type of situations.

The comparison between the two case studies on Chapter Four shed some light on some considerations that at first glance might have indicated that the US and the EU shared the same conceptions over how to deal with the DPRK. Despite the fact that these two actors considered that terrorism, the proliferation of WMD, and regional conflicts posed a threat to the security of the international system, there were some core differences which distinguished their strategic narratives.

Firstly, the EU's representation of the DPRK was not the same as the US'. This could be easily explained due to the fact that the EU did not have the same level of involvement in the events that led to the creation of the DPRK and of the ROK, as did the US. Nevertheless, the bond that the EU and the US shared during the Cold War period could have led the European countries, and subsequently the EU, to share the same constructions as the US regarding the threat that the DPRK posed to the international community, especially if the country acquired WMD.

However, the analysis undertaken in the present work has showed that due to the historical complexities that surrounded the development of the strategic narratives of these two actors, the reasons that motivated them to behave similarly towards the DPRK were not completely explained by this simplistic reading of the international events. On the contrary, it was necessary to take into account both actors' own contexts and realities so as to understand that even though the US and the EU agreed that the DPRK ought to give up its nuclear and ballistic programmes, their motivations were deeply connected to their identities and to their normative basis.

For instance, the use of sanctions had different purposes for the two actors: on the one hand, the US used this measure to isolate the DPRK and to force a change in its behaviour; on the other hand, the EU continuously underlined that the use of sanctions was not an end in itself, but rather a tool to urge the DPRK to engage in a constructive dialogue with the international community regarding the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula. Thus, even though both the US and the EU seemed to behave in a similar way, it became clear that the motivations that shaped each actor's strategic narratives were different. The US sought to strengthen its leadership role by urging the international community to come together and to impose a sanctions regime to effectively restrict the DPRK's movements. At the same time, the EU sought to determine itself as a reliable security actor by imposing the "toughest sanctions regime of the world on the DPRK"²¹⁸, while remaining true to its principles and values not only by affirming that sanctions should be used in addition to dialogue, but also by making sure that they were only directed towards the nuclear and ballistic programmes.

²¹⁸ See European Union. High-Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini, 2017g, "Remarks by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the press conference following the Foreign Affairs Council", October 16, 2017.

The research question of the present dissertation sought to determine how the US and the EU represented the DPRK. As a result from the analysis, it was possible to determine that the EU's representation of the DPRK differentiated from that of the US. In fact, its definition of state failure was related to the collapse of state institutions which could propitiate organised crime and terrorism. As such, there was no reference to the authoritarian character that was present in the US' definition of rogue state. Despite the change in the EU's approach towards the DPRK after the launch of the US' War on Terror strategic narrative, this did not seem to be related to a change in the EU's representation of the DPRK to the likes of the US' description of the country's regime as evil.

The US' focus on the evil nature of the DPRK was used to legitimise its behaviour towards the country. Moreover, the US' self-imposed responsibility to eliminate evil from the world was based upon its experiences and identity, which led the US to behave rigidly towards those states who did not share its conceptions of right and wrong. Hence, the US' leadership role in the fight against terrorism and the proliferation of WMD was not restricted geographically, and one could even argue that its behaviour was not motivated by its normative basis "but by a desire to secure the primacy of the USA and its values, a goal embedded in the logic of post-Cold War triumphalism" (Berenskoetter 2005, 75).

The EU's notion of responsibility did also originate from its own experiences and identity. Namely, the process of European integration gifted the EU with the needed tools and knowledge to actively assist with the resolution of conflicts. This past experience fuelled the EU's ambition to become an international security actor and motivated its sense of responsibility towards the international community. As a result, the promotion of its values and principles was a means through which the EU sought to determine its place in the international arena. That was the reason why the EU consistently promoted an effective multilateral order. After all, the EU could not establish itself in an order that disregarded freedom, democracy, the rule of law, and the respect for human rights. The adoption of the UNSC Resolutions regarding the DPRK were, thus, an example of the EU's efforts to reinforce the international cooperation under the non-proliferation regime.

Moreover, the US and the EU did not share the same conceptions over how to face the threats to the stability of the international system. The EU emphasised the use of a mix of soft and hard power instruments, which was opposed to the US' choice of purely military means to tackle the threats. This was, once more, connected to these actors' strategic narratives, where the EU focused on conflict prevention and the US on its military capabilities. As such, the US considered the use of military solutions its right of self-defence, while the EU mentioned that this approach was a tool to "help deal with regional conflicts and to put failed states back on their feet" (Council of the European Union 2003, 6).

This concern over the internal situation of other states was what differentiated the US from the EU, namely in their relations with the DPRK. Furthermore, the US and the EU's different representations of the DPRK were the reason why these actors developed two opposing paths of engagement. The EU's focus on a development-oriented approach in order to promote agricultural developments and reduce food insecurity in the DPRK contrasted with the US' focus on providing energy assistance to the country with the goal of bringing the DPRK to the negotiation table. Nevertheless, the main difference between these two actors was that during the periods of greatest hostility, namely when the DPRK backed away from the denuclearisation negotiations, the US halted its assistance whilst the EU merely reduced the volume of its assistance. This demonstrated that the US was more concerned with the geopolitical situation while the EU focused on responding to the humanitarian concerns of the country, behaviours which were consistent with these actors' strategic narratives.

Nonetheless, the negotiations regarding the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula have not been concluded to date. After the PyeongChang Winter Olympics, it seemed that a new pathway for diplomacy was being traced and that the efforts of President Moon Jae In would bring a new era to the inter-Korean relations. However, as we have concluded from the investigation, the strategic narrative of the US remained fairly static from 2001 until 2018, which resulted in an apprehensive attitude towards the DPRK. This has had tremendous consequences in the US-DPRK and in the US-ROK relations, and has even hindered the progress of the inter-Korean relations during 2019. In fact, after the deadlock in the US-DPRK negotiations in 2019, by the beginning of 2020,

President Moon Jae In called for the need to improve inter-Korean cooperation, taking tourism as an example of how the two countries could move their relations forward. However, after the US indicated that the ROK should consult with the US regarding its plans to engage with the DPRK, the tensions between the two countries began to rise. The ROK emphasised that “our policy with regard to North Korea comes under our sovereignty (...) [and that] such comments, like interference in domestic affairs, are not helpful to the alliance relationship” (Yonhap News Agency 2020).

The US’ strategic narratives have, thus, not only constrained its behaviour towards the DPRK, but also strained its relations with its allies. President Donald Trump’s policy of maximum pressure ended up limiting the US’ negotiations with the DPRK, as well as its negotiations with Iran. After the US left the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or Iran nuclear deal, in 2018, and following the killing of the Iranian commander Qassem Soleimani in January 2020, Iran announced that it would halt its commitments to the deal. As the tensions between the US and Iran continued to escalate, the EU reiterated the importance of the Iran nuclear deal as a means to promote security and stability in the region²¹⁹. Thus, during this recent crisis the EU has been acting according to its strategic narrative, promoting cooperation and dialogue as means to achieve a regional solution to de-escalate the tensions. The US strategy, however, will most likely increase the DPRK’s security concerns, making it more difficult for the country to accept the CVID.

The present work had also showed that the use of strategic narratives as a tool of analysis of social reality brings about a different light to the existing methods of analysis. This was a relatively recent concept in the study of international politics, that emerged in 2006 with the work of Lawrence Freedman. Furthermore, it was only in 2013 that Miskimmon, O’Loughlin, and Roselle provided a more cohesive theoretical framework to analyse the impact of communication in issues of international relations such as order and power. Because of the central position that strategic narratives have on the construction of social reality and on the development of the actors’ identities, political actors seek to use them strategically. By understanding that they are a means for the

²¹⁹ See European Union. High-Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell, 2020, “Iran/Iraq: Speech at the European Parliament plenary debate on the situation in Iran and Iraq following recent escalations”, January 14, 2020.

political actors to reach their strategic goals it becomes easier to analyse the international events and the relations of power that dominate the international arena.

On a final note, it is important to continue to question the dominant or mainstream ideas that constitute the social reality. Namely, one might even ask who determines certain norms and ideas as valid. Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle pose this as one of the main areas for future research by asking whether it would be possible to share narratives so that countries would agree on a "common world" (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle 2017, 318). Therefore, in the future, the elaboration of more comparative studies could shed light on the relations between the political actors. For instance, it might be interesting to analyse if it is truly possible for two or more countries to put their collective interests above their national-interests. In the present investigation it became clear that both the US and the EU ended-up favouring their self-interests instead of their collective ones. As we have seen, both actors wanted to promote the multilateral order so as to establish their own interests.

The role of media and its impact in international events is, as well, an area for future research related to strategic narratives. More concretely, how is it that the internet and social media influence the formulation, projection, and reception of strategic narratives? These cyberspaces create an opportunity for the audiences to engage with different narratives and even to contest them. It is worth mentioning that the changes in the algorithms of most social media platforms had also been influencing the reach of strategic narratives. Namely, these algorithms limit the circulation of plural narratives by restricting the engagement of the audiences with content that they had previously 'liked' or positively engaged with. This situation makes it increasingly harder for people to reach ideas that differ from their own, which might lead to the radicalization of the audiences to the extent that an individual might enter a politically active community without truly realising the intensions of its members. The algorithm, then, makes it extremely harder for the individual to exit the community, as it only points him in the direction of groups with similar content. This also affects how the existing political and economic structures maintain the dominance of the elites over which some issues are focused on in favour of others.

Strategic narratives have, thus, a crucial role on social media, and it is important to understand how the audiences engage with them and how they might influence the development of events themselves: President Donald Trump's tweets might be taken as an example of how social media contributed to the escalation of the tensions between the US and the DPRK. In this sense, there is also a need for studies that analyse comprehensively how audiences react to the strategic narratives they engage with, and how the different actors narrate the same events. Does the existence of a plurality of narratives make any difference on how the audiences interpret social reality? Or will it give way to a greater contestation and participation of the people in questioning the elites and their established narratives?

Appendix

Table 1. Official documents of the US, 2002-2018

Date	Name of the Document
2002	The National Security Strategy of the United States of America
2005	Joint Statement of the Fourth Round of Six-Party Talks
2006	The National Security Strategy of the United States of America
2007	North Korea – Denuclearization Action Plan
2007	Six Parties October 3, 2007 Agreement on “Second-Phase Actions for the Implementation of the Joint Statement”
2008	US-DPRK Agreement on Denuclearization Verification Measures
2010	National Security Strategy
2012	U.S.-DPRK Bilateral Discussions
2015	National Security Strategy
2017	National Security Strategy
2018	Joint Statement of President Donald J. Trump of the United States of America and Chairman Kim Jong Un of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea at the Singapore Summit

Table 2. Official documents of the EU, 1992-2018

Date	Name of the Document
1992	Treaty on the European Union
2002	The EC – Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) Country Strategy Paper 2001-2004
2003	A Secure Europe in a Better World: European Security Strategy
2005	I/A Item Note 8412/04 PESC 245 FIN 191 PE 88
2006	EU-Republic of Korea Summit: Helsinki 9 September 2006 Joint Statement
2007	Treaty of Lisbon Amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty Establishing the European Community
2008	Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy: Providing Security in a Changing World
2009	Restrictive measures against the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea – EU implementation of UNSCR 1874 (2009)
2010	Framework Agreement Between The European Union And Its Member States, On The One Part, And The Republic of Korea, On The Other Part
2010	Security and Defence Core Documents
2012	Press Release 3209 th Council meeting Foreign Affairs
2013	European Union-Republic of Korea summit Joint Press Statement
2014	EU-US Summit – Joint Statement
2014	European Parliament resolution of 17 April 2014 on the situation in North Korea (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea)
2015	Draft Annual Report from the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to the European Parliament. Main aspects and basic choices of the CFSP
2016	Council Conclusions on EU Priorities at the Human Rights Fora in 2016
2016	Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union
2016	Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union
2017	Council Conclusions on the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea

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