

NORTH KOREA: IDEOLOGY, WAR, AND VIOLENCE

Coreia do Norte: Ideologia, Guerra e Violência

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Introduction

The Korean peninsula has been an important regional and global conflict zone since the 20th century. The division between the North and South, namely between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (henceforth referred to as DPRK or North Korea) and the Republic of Korea (ROK or South Korea), is with no doubt one main cause for destabilization in East Asia. Political developments in the peninsula have affected not only the region, but also the world as a whole. For instance, the Korean War ended up determining the course of the Cold War — serving as a parameter for the confrontation between the superpowers elsewhere — and the conditions for the use of nuclear weapons (Brites, 2011). Conversely, world events have also had influence over the developments in the region: The political trajectory of ROK and DPRK have oscillated according to the flow of political developments in the international system, from distension between the Soviet Union and the United States to the unipolarity of the 1990s (Melchionna, 2011; Brites, 2011).

Therefore, Brites (2011) affirms that any change in the *status quo* would most likely also alter not only the regional, but also the global balance of power as to its polarity and polarization, especially due to strong polarization of involved actors, such as the People's Republic of China, Japan, Russia, and the United States. In addition to that, as Brites (2011) mentioned in the construction of possible scenarios that the

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continuance of the division may engender the emergence of new identities either in the South or in the North, which could render a Korean reunification socially almost impossible or pointless.² The Korean nation has been characterised by socio-cultural unity, but the fratricide war and the maintenance of the division have seriously shaken the Koreans' identity (Magno, Pitt & Brites, 2011).

DPRK is deemed to be one of the most strongly ideologised contemporary states, where indoctrination is a part of the daily lives of every citizen, and, since ideology is a very important mechanism for waging war and also a vital aspect which determines identity (see e.g. Noesgaard et al, 2009; Larsen et al, 1995), this paper intends to analyse North Korean ideologies concerning war and violence. Thus, first we are going to review how ideologies are linked with organised violence. Siniša Malešević's theory about the ideologisation of violence in modern times will be reviewed as well as Carl Schmitt's concept of the political and his later update concerning partisanship.

Following this review of theoretical approaches, there will be an analysis of the North Korean ideologies proper, focused on *Songun* (military-first) and on its counterpart the *Ch'ongdae* (the gun philosophy) and what they stipulate with reference to violence and war. *Juche*, the other official North Korean ideology, will not be coped with, because it seems that *Songun* has replaced it as the main state ideology despite the official discourse (Kwon, 2003).³ *Songun* is the ideology of Kim Jong-Il's regime, while *Juche* is more identified with Kim Il-Sung's (Gause, 2011). Even though the choice of *Songun* and *Ch'ongdae* takes into account the pre-eminence that both give to prescriptions concerning war and violence, this paper does not intend to cover all North Korean ideologies and doctrines nor is it the intention to say that these two are the only relevant ones when it comes to the subject.

²Polls show that the majority of young South Koreans (18 to 35 years old) sees DPRK as a distinct country with different culture and identity and, hence, the issue of reunification should be secondary in ROK's political agenda (Brites, 2011).

³*Juche*, on its most basic terms, means "self-reliance"; politically it prescribes economic, political and military independence (Lee, 2003). The concept has undergone several transformations since its inception and now it persists only minimally in the daily lives of the North Korean people (Kim, 2006). However, as Kim (2006) points out, it remains as a (sometimes vague) political guideline for the regime.

Thus, the paper is divided into two sections. The first one reviews the theoretical approaches of Schmitt and Malešević regarding ideology and war, starting with the former. The second is dedicated to descriptions of *Songun* and *Ch'ongdae* and the analysis itself. A brief conclusion will, then, follow these two sections to examine the findings.

Theoretical Approaches

Malešević: ideology and war

Malešević's interpretation of organized violence in modern times states that the Modern Age is characterized by an inherent discrepancy between the normative sphere, where human life is most valued (through ideologies) and violence abhorred, and the everyday practice, where killing happens at an unprecedented rate (Malešević, 2010). For him, Modernity's combination of systematic mass extermination and the moral importance of human life arises from the organization of societies and the proliferation of modern ideologies (Malešević, 2010).⁴

In order to explain this dissonance, Malešević (2010) notes that organized violent actions require processes of collective mobilization and social mechanisms of justification. Ideologies — defined by him as “a universal social process through which individual and collective agents articulate their beliefs, values, ideas and actions” in order to articulate “blueprints for the transformation of the existing reality” (Malešević, 2010: 130, 82) — fill this gap, working as powerful mobilisers and legitimisers of social action. Modernity provided a key ideological transformation: State authority was no longer based on divine grounds, but rather through abstract values such as justice, equality, liberty and others (Malešević, 2010). Therefore, it created an environment leaning to an intensive proliferation of ideologies fighting for the hearts and minds of citizens (Malešević, 2010).

⁴Concerning the modern bureaucratization of societies, Malešević (2010) states that Modernity allows for a more potent organizational means for violence with structural rationalization of the entire society, while violence is externalized and becomes a rational means to achieve an end.

Within this context, Malešević (2010) develops the concept of “centrifugal (mass-scale) ideologisation”, which means a significantly wider proliferation of ideological discourses with strong popular resonance radiating from the centre of a particular social organization such as the state. These ideological discourses justify waging war against others. Warfare is, then, underpinned by an uncompromising conflict of values which states that war has to be won at any cost regardless of the number of casualties (Malešević, 2010). These ideologies, as a by-product of Modernity, aim at a better society (more just and rational), and, therefore, any opposition to them may be interpreted as irrational, deliberately unjust or even evil — and with evil there can be no compromise (Malešević, 2010). And, as he puts it himself: “Violence feeds off ideological doctrines that are capable of reconciling inclusion with exclusion, fairness with discrimination, equity with bigotry, and universalist humanist ethical principles with the mass slaughter of other human beings” (Malešević, 2010: 83).

Malešević presents historical examples of centrifugal ideologisation for the purposes of war-making. According to him, European states used the ideas of Social Darwinism to mobilize and justify colonialism, for instance the French (and Portuguese) *mission civilisatrice* (Malešević, 2010). In addition to that, he also quotes the two World Wars, which were also heavily conditioned by ideological struggles, besides geopolitical considerations. During the first, an ideological image of a unified nation was created to fight the adversaries and mobilize populations.⁵ As for the second, states mobilized their entire societies for war and presented uncompromising ideological projects — such as fascism, liberal democracy and state socialism — in a struggle for the preservation of humanity (Malešević, 2010). Yet, both were the bloodiest armed conflict to happen in human history, despite the ideologies’ deep commitment to human life.

⁵Image is a subjective knowledge about an object, how one thinks about it (Boulding, 1956). It can be different from objective information, but it is still important because behaviour depends on the image (Boulding, 1956). As Lee (2012) puts it, if the majority of the population of a country shares the same image of another one, their perception becomes a political reality, regardless of objectivity. Thus, ideology provides images for political action.

Malešević (2010) argues that this reconciliation — the view that all human beings are of equal moral worth, and that their life is precious, with warfare and mass exterminations — emerges through the denial of humanity to the enemy. This dehumanisation of the enemy serves the purpose of delegitimising their actions and to allocate them among beings of less worth than those of the human race (Malešević, 2010). This view is also shared by Schmitt (2004), who argues that this happens because broad abstract concepts such as justice, progress and humanity are potent ideological devices that allow for one side of the conflict to dehumanise the enemy:

They have to consider the other side as entirely criminal and inhuman, as totally worthless. Otherwise they are themselves criminal and inhuman. The logic of value and its obverse, worthlessness, unfolds its annihilating consequence, compelling ever new, ever deeper discriminations, criminalizations, and devaluations to the point of annihilating all of unworthy life (Schmitt, 2004: 67).

In other words, “[t]he adversary is thus no longer called an enemy but a disturber of peace and is thereby designated to be an outlaw of humanity” (Schmitt, 2007: 79).

Finally, in the specific context of the modern nation-state, Malešević (2010) states that these social orders are able to enforce their coercive power anywhere in its territory and ideologically mobilize and legitimize this power. States have an internally shared perception among their societies that their nation is morally and ideologically right whose actions are universally justifiable (Malešević, 2010). However, during wartime the actions of their entire societies are governed by a single purpose, which is dictated by an ideology, opening the path to mobilization and justification (Malešević, 2010).

In sum, Malešević sees modern ideologies as tools for justification and mobilisation for warfare. Because they consider themselves rational and aim at a better society, they leave space open for interpretations that any opposition to them is irrational and backwards. Despite cherishing human life and dignity, discourses are developed by ideologies to justify killings, saying that those that are killed are “lesser humans”, whose life is of lesser worth. They provide an image in which the enemy is less human. In Modernity, ideologies emanate from the centre of social organisations

and have strong popular acceptance, causing what he names “centrifugal ideologisation” — opening the path for widespread mobilisation and legitimisation of war —, and this is the reason why it is the bloodiest epoch of human history.

Carl Schmitt: war within the political

In his “The Concept of the Political” Schmitt (2007) aims to define the distinct features of the political, considering that it does not equate with statehood, and in this attempt he develops a theory that may be applied to sociological studies of war and organized violence. For him, the unique characteristic of political actions and motives is that they can be reduced to a friend and enemy distinction. It is the utmost degree of unity or dissociation of human groupings, which determines whether conflict is possible in extreme cases. This friend-enemy distinction does not have to draw upon other distinctions, such as moral or economic ones, and only actual participants of a determined group can correctly determine it.

Joas (2003) notices that this ultimate distinction does not mean that all politics is struggle, but that the underlining delimitation from others and the possibility of a conflict with them is central to the constitution of a political entity. Therefore, this possibility of war is inherent to the political sphere, even though awareness of it may be lost (Schmitt, 2007). Being ever present, it determines human action and thinking, creating, thus, political behaviour. War may not be desirable, ideal, common, or normal, but it has to remain a possibility to political groupings for as long as the concept of enmity remains valid (Schmitt, 2007; Joas, 2003).

Therefore, in Schmitt’s view, the friend-enemy distinction refers to the real chance of physical killing, whilst war is the existential negation of the enemy — the extreme consequence of enmity. Political entities are by its very nature the decisive ones regarding the friend-enemy distinctions, and the state’s authority rests upon its political character, i.e. sovereignty consists exclusively in an ultimate ability to make decisions whether (and when) to wage war and about the state of emergency (Schmitt, 2007; Joas, 2003). Schmitt (2007) adds that killing and war cannot be politically justified if there are no threats to the existence of political entity itself, but that once it does the political

association pushes all other societal realms and groupings (e.g. religion, economics) to a second rank.

Consequently, any organized political group or entity contains within itself the possibility of war. The possibility of (organized) violence is in the essence of political human groupings. Therefore, war is intrinsically connected to the political life of the society. It is the result of the organization of humans into political entities. There can be no politics without a friend-enemy distinction, i.e. without the possibility of physical violence.

Schmitt further developed his concept of the political through “The theory of the partisan”, in which he dealt with the emergence of irregular fighters (guerrilla, terrorism) since the 19th century. Whereas in general war remains essentially contained, for the partisan it means a total war where the fight will last until the annihilation of the enemy, e.g. civil or colonial war (Schmitt, 2004). The partisan has an intense political character, since he or she is constantly dealing with the friend-enemy distinction in its extremes while fighting on a political front. In the common concept of the political, the enemy is invisible (up to a point) and the political struggle constructs a recognisable image of it (Žižek, 2002)⁶, but for the partisan, this image has already been provided and is very clear from the beginning, making it all the more extreme/fundamentalist.

Drawing from Lenin’s writings the idea that revolutionary war is the only true war, since it originates from absolute enmity, Schmitt (2004) tells that partisanship knows no containment when it comes to violence. Precisely because the enemy is absolute, there is no chance of an intermediate peace (Schmitt, 2004). Deriving from Mao Zedong’s ideas — who, according to him perfected the notion of partisanship —, Schmitt (2004) further states that partisanship is essentially characterized by this absolute real enmity, especially connected to the soil in dispute (anti-colonial and civil wars, for instance). In such conditions, only victory matters, similar to Clausewitz’s

⁶See footnote 4.

idea of absolute war — the extreme kind of war in which escalation of hostilities would be limitless⁷ — (Schmitt, 2004; Clausewitz, 1832; Echevarria, 2007).

As a result, a political human grouping or entity of a partisan character would not only contain in itself the possibility of war, but it would be aware of it and handle it in its extremes. The members of such a grouping or entity would be immersed in the idea of conflict and organized violence. The likelihood of war would be very real, because enmity would also be absolute. There could be no agreement or partial peace, particularly when the partisanship of the entity or grouping in question is associated with a territory or soil.

North Korean Ideologies and War

***Songun*, the military-first ideology**

Songun, or the military-first politics, first came to the spotlight in the 1990s during the transitional period after the death of Kim Il-Sung. There are many divergences as to when it started, especially because the regime's official narrative of facts has changed in the past two decades. Notwithstanding that, at first *Songun* was a political formula, which hinted at the *modus operandi* of Kim Jong-Il's rule, but at the onset of the 21st century its ideas were elevated to the status of ideology (Miyeong, 2009).

Songun is an ideology in development that served as a new political strategy for the regime's survival (Kwon, 2003; Eberstadt, 2004). According to the North Korean perception, it was the ideological weakness of former communist countries — especially the armed forces depoliticisation — and their poor military capacities that led them to demise. North Korea deemed itself as the vanguard against American imperial power during the Cold War. As a consequence, when it ended, Pyongyang felt it was left alone in a unipolar world order ruled by the U.S. (Kwon & Chung, 2012). Therefore, *Songun* means to distinguish the DPRK from the Soviet Union (USSR) and other communist countries, the same way that *Juche*, the state ideology before *Songun*,

⁷Clausewitz's concept is, however, only theoretical, because the idea of absolute war in reality is inconceivable and illogical (Clausewitz, 1832).

was used to differentiate the country from the USSR and China during the Cold War (Kwon & Chung, 2012).

The theory of *Songun* states that the army is the pillar of revolution and its main driving force. Moreover, according to it, the socialist revolution is strongly based on correct thoughts and ideological dispositions. Consequently, there is a moral imperative to maintain it, which stands above economic welfare and growth. Hence, *Songun* prioritizes the power of ideology over production forces, contradicting the principles of Marxism and historical materialism, which were considered outdated by Kim Jong-Il, because the 21st century has many different conditions in comparison to the time of their creation (Miyeong, 2009; Kwon & Chung, 2012).

The main objective of *Songun* is the maintenance of the revolution, which can be primarily understood as the struggle against imperialist forces instead of fighting capitalism. The main imperialist forces trying to prevent the Korean independence are the Japanese and the Americans in the North Korean view. Drawing from that, Byman & Lind (2010) affirm that xenophobia against Americans and Japanese alike, plus those “contaminated by association” — i.e. South Koreans —, justifies *Songun*, because the official North Korean propaganda denigrates and dehumanizes U.S. and Japanese citizens and soldiers. Kang (2012) corroborates that anti-Americanism is pivotal for the ideology of *Songun* and adds that this sentiment has been used as a mechanism for social integration around the ideology.

In fact, Kim Jong-Il (2000) declared that the Korean People’s Army (KPA) equals the party (Workers’ Party), the state and the people. Effectively, this means that *Songun* asks of the North Korean people to embrace and become the army, because it is the only way that they can safeguard their independence. *Rodong Sinmun*⁸ (2013) also states that the army-people unity is paramount for the conflict against imperialist forces and that the people should love their soldiers as their dearest ones and help them in any way possible. Moreover, the people “depend on strong revolutionary armed forces because revolution requires confrontations of power between revolutionaries and

⁸ *Rodong Sinmun* is the newspaper of the Workers’ Party of Korea and is considered a source of official positions and views on several subjects.

counter-revolutionaries” (Miyeong, 2009: 187). The society ought to learn from the KPA’s soldiers and emulate their revolutionary spirit and fighting style. Koh (2010) argues that *Songun*, then, elevates the military both as a function and as an organization: An enabler of the revolutionary struggle — defending the country from imperialists —, whose internal values of loyalty, revolutionary spirit, cohesiveness and *esprit de corps* should be copied by the society towards the maintenance of the revolution. The entire country has to be armed with ideas and willing to die to defend the country and the supreme leader (Koh, 2010).

Despite this logic of the army being at the forefront of revolutionary struggle, Fendler (2009) contends that *Songun* is not aggressive, but rather protective, serving for domestic political purposes. Zerpa (2011) agrees with this opinion and further claims that *Songun* is an instrument for defence and peace: dissuasion from external interference and assurance of an independent development. The ideology states that the KPA is the nation’s ideological vanguard and that it should be central in all realms of the North Korean citizens’ lives, and these prescriptions actually have advanced very concrete political objectives of Kim Jong-Il (Kim, 2006). The political system underwent several changes, including constitutional ones, after the death of Kim Il-Sung, to increase the role of the armed forces in politics. For instance, the main political position of the country is now a military rank, which oversees the political bodies.⁹ By the time of the implementation of these changes, Kim Jong-Il’s objective was a rupture with the past, trying to detach the army from the economic crisis which happened in the mid-1990s and to guarantee the loyalty of the armed forces to his government.

***Ch’ongdae*, the gun philosophy**

In spite of the attempt to differentiate Kim Jong-Il’s government from his father’s, the regime still needed to create a sense of continuity, because the succession legitimacy basis is linked to the perpetuation of an ideological line stemming from his father (Armstrong, 2003). Hence, the idea that *Songun* was actually a creation from Kim

⁹Nevertheless, this does not mean that the party lost importance in the everyday lives of North Korean citizens nor in the government, neither that the military dominates it (Kim, 2006).

Il-Sung or, in other words, a tradition in the family, started appearing on the media and the arts. There was an alteration in the official narratives of Kim Il-Sung's family to adapt *Songun* within *Juche* and the North Korean history as a whole. Stories of how Kim Il-Sung received two guns as a gift from his father and how he gave his son, Kim Jong-Il, his own pistol became more recurring. The justification for those gestures is that “When you fight with an enemy who happens to have a knife in his hand, you need a knife yourself to fight and win the duel” and that “armed struggle was the supreme form of struggle for national independence” (Kwon & Chung, 2012: 83). Consequently, it generated a connection between Il-Sung's and Jong-Il's governments through ideas: The father recognized the importance of the gun for the revolution and the son implemented his father's ideas through *Songun*. Therefore, the notion that guns are the “closest friends of a revolutionary” upholds this family-rooted political heritage and delivers the premises and meanings of *Songun*, bridging old and new forms of partisan politics in DPRK (Kwon & Chung, 2012).

However, this new narrative gave rise to a new philosophy which helps sustain the *Songun* ideology: *Ch'ongdae*, or the “gun philosophy”.¹⁰ It advocates that the “revolution is pioneered, advanced, and completed depending on the gun” (O, 2003: 4 *apud* Miyeong, 2009: 193). According to the editorial of *Rodong Sinmun* on January 1st, 2000, “[t]o attach great importance to arms is a strategic line that should always be held fast to as long as imperialism remains and the revolution goes on”. War potential would be the first requirement for the society to carry on the revolution and the gun is the most effective means of violence for the ideological rearmament of the population, according to the philosophy (Miyeong, 2009).

Moreover, *Ch'ongdae* asserts that the individuals are responsible for their own moral-ideological purity, discipline and perfection, including of the body (O, 2003; Kwon & Chung, 2012). In this sense, Kang (2012) affirms that it in effect gives rise to an organic integration of the person's body and the nation. Through discipline and obedience by the people, the regime is able to exert its power over them, similar to

¹⁰*Ch'ongdae* is also known as the “barrel-of-a-gun philosophy”, “gun-valuing philosophy”, or “philosophy of the firearms”. Sometimes it is also referred to as a doctrine.

Foucault's idea of the diffusion of modern power through disciplinary control of individual bodies (Kang, 2012; e.g. Foucault, 1991). Furthermore, it speaks to the individuals within the community about their role in *Songun* and the centrality of the army, or “the place of individuals in a societal unity constituted in the image of an army” (Kwon & Chung, 2012: 88). Consequently, individuals ought to see themselves as guns for the revolution, culminating in “an absolute moral unity between the army and the people, as well as a practical and spiritual unity between the person and the gun” (Kwon & Chung, 2012: 88-89). Only when this happens and the revolution succeeds there will be true peace, i.e. peace comes through *Ch'ongdae*.

Kwon & Chung (2012) tell of two different types of *Ch'ongdae*: the exemplary and the popular. On the one hand, the first consists of the heritage of armed revolutionary struggle against colonial (Japan) and post-colonial (the U.S.) imperialism. The popular *Ch'ongdae*, on the other hand, denotes the entirety of the social forces in North Korea, which are united in the task of defending the exemplary *Ch'ongdae* with their own lives, including through both nuclear capabilities and collective human efforts. The authors further explain that the first protects the whole nation, while the latter exists to defend the integrity of the first: They support one another. In the end, *Ch'ongdae* regards the revolutionary violence as the apex of a truly meaningful political life (Kwon & Chung, 2012) — either in the exemplary form, celebrating the wars against Japan and the U.S., or in the popular one, where the greatest task of a person is (to be willing to sacrifice him- or herself) to protect the regime —.

Furthermore, Kwon & Chung (2012) distinguish two kinds of war in *Ch'ongdae*, namely the revolutionary and the counter-revolutionary ones. This division categorizes violence morally into two realms: the progressive, just, and revolutionary; and the counter-revolutionary, unjustified, reactionary (Kwon & Chung, 2012). The revolutionary violence is popular, while the other is unpopular. Hence, violence is justified only in the case when it is perpetrated by popular masses in the service of revolution and political self-determination: All other instances of violence and war are abhorred (Kwon & Chung, 2012). *Ch'ongdae*, in this context, is a token of the permanent importance of the means of this justified force, referring to all resources

necessary for it, be they animate or inanimate (Kwon & Chung, 2012). Moreover, the authors also note that violence is not only physical or mechanical, but — very importantly — it can be moral and ideological as well.

Analysis

North Korea is a heavily ideologised state, where indoctrination is a part of the daily lives of every citizen. The country is almost a perfect example of the centrifugal ideologisation mentioned by Malešević since there is a proliferation of an ideological discourse (*Songun* and *Ch'ongdae*, among others) radiating from the state. As such, elements found in the theoretical approaches of Schmitt and Malešević can be found in the North Korean ideologies of *Songun* and *Ch'ongdae*.

Schmitt stated that the unique feature of the political is the constant possibility of war and violence due to the friend-enemy distinction. Furthermore, in partisan entities and groupings war is not only a remote possibility of which its members are unaware, but it is ever present in the everyday lives. This occurs because partisanship deals with absolute enmity and the extremes of the distinction. In this sense, it seems clear that the North Korean state is a partisan one, because it is constantly dealing with the possibility of war and handling it in its extremes. *Songun* and *Ch'ongdae* facilitate that the North Korean citizens become immersed in the idea and possibility of an armed conflict.

Concerning the friend-enemy distinction of the partisan state, *Ch'ongdae* makes it clear that violence and war are only justified when they are revolutionary and *Songun* distinguishes towards whom such violence should be directed: imperialist forces, namely Japan and the United States. As Kang (2012), Byman & Lind (2010) highlighted, anti-Americanism and xenophobia against Japan and the U.S. are a part of *Songun*. Therefore, from the beginning the image of the enemy is very clear: Both countries are absolute real enemies of North Korea. This condition can also be applied to other countries which are “contaminated by association” with the former. In other words, South Korea could also be seen as an absolute real enemy through the lenses of *Songun* and *Ch'ongdae*.

In a point similarly raised by Schmitt and Malešević, there can be no agreement with the absolute enemy or with those that oppose the state ideology. This seems to be the case presented by *Songun* and *Ch'ongdae*. In the form of state propaganda U.S. and Japanese citizens are dehumanised — as predicted by Malešević and Schmitt —, and it makes the case of war easier to be legitimised in the country for they are seen as human of less worth than the North Koreans: unworthy criminals and/or beasts.

Malešević also raised the point that ideologies serve as for both mobilisation and legitimisation. It is noticeable that *Ch'ongdae* and *Songun* also serve these purposes. The first stipulates preparation for war and readiness to die for the country (and for the ideology) as moral imperatives of the citizens. It also states that the individuals ought to discipline themselves in order to become more “morally-ideologically pure” and fit (for the army) so as to fully develop the country’s war potential. On its turn, *Songun* instructs the citizens to emulate the KPA in their lives, that they have to become the army to protect the country — alluding to the telluric aspect in partisanship raised by Schmitt — and the revolution. In accordance to Malešević’s theoretical approach, the North Korean state has used both *Songun* and *Ch'ongdae* as legitimisers and mobilisers of/for war. Likewise, Kang (2012) describes the North Korean societal system as a military war system in which all people are partisans militarily and mentally prepared to cope with war and where society and the military is integrated into one.

In sum, *Ch'ongdae* and *Songun* present all elements raised by the theoretical approaches of Schmitt and Malešević. They deal with the possibility of war and identify absolute real enemies of the North Korean state, i.e. Japan and the U.S. plus those associated with them. Both ideologies also constantly mobilise and legitimise violence against these enemies, even if just for defensive purposes. Similar to what Kang (2012) affirms, their continuous reminder of war is a social mechanism to create mass armies and to defend the country against the imperialist threat of the United States and Japan (and their associates). By dehumanising them and for being absolute enemies, there can

be no peace between DPRK and them, according to the theoretical approaches of Schmitt and Malešević.

Conclusion

In the review of the theoretical approaches of Schmitt and Malešević, it became noticeable that both authors share similar views concerning ideology, war and violence. Schmitt affirms that all things political have the same unique characteristic of the friend-enemy distinction. Political human groupings and entities always have within themselves the possibility of war and violence against their enemies. Physical violence is intrinsic to politics as such, even if inconspicuous. On Schmitt's update to include partisanship to his concept of the political, he included situations in which ideologies play a greater role. Partisan entities and their members deal with the friend-enemy distinction in its extremes and are aware of the possibility of war, because they deal with absolute real enmity. It is precisely because of that that there can be no compromising stances: There can be no agreement with the absolute enemy.

Malešević presents a similar case on his quest as to why Modernity is the most violent age of human history. Besides bureaucratisation, he sees ideologies and the process of centrifugal ideologisation as an important factor for that. He argues that modern ideologies serve as legitimisers and mobilisers of warfare, because they are able to combine appreciation of human life with war and killing. The possibility of violence is intrinsic to them, since any opposition may be considered irrational and evil and, therefore, should be extirpated. This is the main point of convergence of Malešević and Schmitt, for both see how modern ideologies, based on broad values, can justify war and violence.

All of the features mentioned in the theoretical approaches of the authors found correspondence in the North Korean case. *Songun* and *Ch'ongdae* deal with enmity in extremes and are aware of the possibility of war. Even if just for defensive purposes, they call for revolutionary violence (any other kind of violence would be morally wrong) against colonialist and imperialist forces, i.e. the United States and Japan, exemplifying the telluric character of partisanship mentioned by Schmitt. *Songun* and

Ch'ongdae both serve the purpose of constant mobilisation and legitimisation of war in North Korea; the latter especially handles with the preparedness for war through “moral-ideological purity” and bodily perfection. This way the country is always ready for war. Moreover, as both Schmitt’s and Malešević’s approaches would predict concerning extreme ideologisation, these North Korean ideologies do not seem to be open for compromise, exactly because they deal with absolute enmity and dehumanize their enemies.

Hence, concerning the case studied, it becomes important to assess whether the theoretical approaches and the ideologies match reality in North Korea. How does the society behave with regards to those ideologies and to the recurrent low-scale military confrontations with the South? In addition to that, anthropological studies seem also necessary to evaluate the impacts of *Songun* and *Ch'ongdae* on the North Korean citizens’ everyday lives. Moreover, it is specially necessary to further analyse whether these ideologies have indeed already developed a new identity for the North Korean people — which would make it more difficult for a reunification — or if it is still just a political tool with no deeper roots in the society.

If the North Korean ideologies have in fact created a new identity within the society, from the standpoint of the theories and the prescriptions of *Songun* and *Ch'ongdae*, a hindrance to reunification would seem to take shape, since they do not allow for compromising stances with the enemies, which include those states associated with Japan and the U.S., for instance South Korea itself. If there can be no peace with South Korea, in the long term this could mean the development of a new identity accustomed to a permanent and real possibility of war, which would obstruct reunification and maintain the *status quo* or worse, lead to a war very close to the Clausewitz’s ideal type of absolute war.

There are no doubts that the situation in the Korean peninsula is of utmost importance for world affairs, especially when it comes to its stability. The North Korean ideologies studied in this paper pose as possible sources of instability for they preach on war preparedness (even if just defensively). Alone, *Songun* and *Ch'ongdae* may lead to a dark path of war at any point in time. Therefore, further studies on their interplay with

other North Korean ideologies and the shared identity with South Korea are needed to see DPRK's real ideological predisposition to war. Additionally, special attention ought to be given to any change in the official discourse and possible transformations of the ideological doctrines with Kim Jong-Un's ascension to power and to how they change North Korea's stance towards war and violence.

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Resumo

Este artigo analisa as ideologias da Coreia do Norte em matéria de guerra e violência. Para isso, em primeiro lugar, há uma revisão teórica de como as ideologias estão relacionados com a violência organizada. A teoria de Siniša Malešević sobre a ideologização da violência na Modernidade é revisada, bem como o conceito de Carl Schmitts de política e sua atualização posterior sobre partidarismo. Após as abordagens teóricas, há uma análise das ideologias norte-coreanos adequadas, com foco em Songun (ideologia militar em primeiro lugar) em contrapartida a Ch'ongdae (a filosofia da arma) e o que elas estipulam com referência à violência e à guerra. Na conclusão, afirma que tanto Songun e Ch'ongdae lidam com inimizades nos extremos e estão conscientes da possibilidade de uma guerra envolvendo a Coréia do Norte. Mesmo que apenas para fins defensivos, eles pedem pela violência revolucionária. Eles também servem ao propósito de mobilização constante e legitimação da guerra no país: Desta forma, ele está sempre pronto para a guerra. Além disso, como ambas as abordagens teóricas de Schmitt e Malešević poderiam prever, estas ideologias norte-coreanos não parecem estar abertas para o comprometimento, exatamente porque eles lidam com inimizade absoluta e desumanizar seus inimigos.

Palavras-chave

Coreia do Norte; Sociologia da Guerra; Songun; Ch'ongdae.

Abstract

This article analyses North Korean ideologies concerning war and violence. For that, first there is a theoretical review of how ideologies are linked with organised violence. Siniša Malešević's theory about the ideologisation of violence in Modernity is reviewed as well as Carl Schmitt's concept of the political and his later update concerning partisanship. Following the theoretical approaches, there is an analysis of the North Korean ideologies proper, focused on Songun (military-first ideology) and on its counterpart the Ch'ongdae (the gun philosophy) and what they stipulate with reference to violence and war. In the conclusion, it states that both Songun and Ch'ongdae deal with enmity in extremes and are aware of the possibility of war involving North Korea. Even if just for defensive purposes, they call for revolutionary violence. They also serve the purpose of constant mobilisation and legitimisation of war in the country: This way it is always ready for war. Moreover, as both Schmitt's and Malešević's theoretical approaches would predict, these North Korean ideologies do not seem to be open for compromise, exactly because they deal with absolute enmity and dehumanize their enemies.

Keywords

North Korea; Sociology of War; Songun; Ch'ongdae

Artigo recebido dia 01 de agosto de 2013.

Aprovado em 20 de abril de 2014.