

Mahatma Gandhi's *Swadeshi* and Kim Il-sung's *Juche* Ideas in the Era of Globalization: A Comparative Analysis

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The advent of imperialism in the modern period triggered a wave of self-reliance movements in colonized countries. In India, Mahatma Gandhi promoted the idea of *Swadeshi* to boycott foreign-made products and supported the growth of indigenous industries in order to gain national independence. In North Korea, Kim Il-sung made the *Juche* idea a guiding philosophy of the state for autonomous economic development and make the country self-reliant. Although the ideas of *Swadeshi* and *Juche* share several similarities, there are also major differences between these two views on self-reliance. Ironically, the overemphasis on self-reliance in the realm of economic development in both India and North Korea led to poverty and backwardness in these two nations. However, compared to North Korea, India adopted economic liberalization measures in the post-Cold War period, but the Indian Government still aims for achieving self-reliance. Therefore, this article is an effort to compare and explain the ideas of *Swadeshi* and *Juche* in the era of globalization and argues that the North Korean regime may have to implement some serious economic reforms for the survival of the country in the coming times.

Keywords: Mahatma Gandhi, Kim Il-sung, Swadeshi, Juche, globalization

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Introduction

Economic subordination and dependence on others are often regarded as a path to exploitation and political enslavement. In the modern period, a large number of nations came under imperialist control and colonial exploitation due to their economic dependence on imperialist powers. In the post-World War II period, “neo-colonialism” became a popular concept to explain the continued economic backwardness and poverty in less developed countries of the world.¹ On the other hand, it is argued that economic self-reliance makes a nation independent and assertive in international relations. As a result, a large number of newly independent countries in the post-World War II period adopted the “import substitution industrialization” strategy to overcome economic dependence on the imperialist powers and become self-reliant. The goal to become self-reliant became a powerful ideology of “Third World” countries during the Cold War period and most of them joined the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) to stay away from the ideological rivalry between the two power blocs led by the Soviet Union and the United States.² After the end of the Cold War and dissolution of the Soviet Union, economic globalization increased interdependence in the world. However, globalization has also increased income disparities and joblessness even in developed countries. As a result, the idea of self-reliance is again getting prominence and could be observed in the recent anti-globalization measures of the erstwhile Donald Trump administration in the United States and “Brexit” of the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, the relevance of the idea of self-reliance in the contemporary era of economic globalization and interdependence remains a debatable issue.

In India, the legacy of the self-reliance movement or *Swadeshi* which emerged during the British colonial period continued in the post-

1 Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (New York, NY: International Publishers, 1966).

2 Christos A. Frangonikolopoulos, “The Policy and Evolution of Non - Alignment: Past and Future,” *Paradigms* 9, no. 1, Summer (1995): 62-85.

independence years. Notably, Mahatma Gandhi's idea of *Swadeshi* for self-reliance still has a strong impact on the political leadership and policy making authorities in the country. Nitin Pai has correctly argued: "Swadeshi had never really gone away."³ In the post-independence period, India adopted a range of policies for autonomous economic development and protected Indian industries from foreign competition. On the other hand, in the Korean Peninsula the self-reliance movement also emerged as a powerful anti-imperialist movement to overthrow Japanese colonial rule (1910-1945). Later, Kim Il-sung in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (hereafter North Korea) promoted the *Juche* idea of self-reliance and it became the state philosophy for autonomous economic development.⁴ Ironically, the overemphasis on self-reliance in the realm of economic development in both India and North Korea led to poverty and backwardness in these two nations. The emphasis on *Swadeshi* has been vehemently criticized in India for ruining the economy by protecting incompetent industrialists.⁵ In the North Korean case, a single-minded pursuit of *Juche* also paradoxically led to more economic dependence of Pyongyang on the foreign countries rather than promoting self-reliance.⁶

However, after the end of the Cold War, India implemented economic liberalization measures and has been inviting foreign investors. In this regard, India has adopted a pragmatic policy by opening up its erstwhile closed economy but has also been striving to reduce dependence on the import of goods from foreign nations. More recently, the Narendra Modi Government in India has launched the "*Atmanirbhar Bharat*" campaign to reduce dependence on foreign-made products but is also encouraging

3 Nitin Pai, "A Brief Economic History of Swadeshi," *Indian Public Policy Review* 2, no. 4 (2021): 50.

4 Aidan Foster-Carter, "North Korea: Development and Self-Reliance: A Critical Appraisal," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 9, no. 1 (1977): 45-55.

5 T A Mathias, "Swadeshi, a New Name for an Old Reality," *Management and Labour Studies* 24, no. 1 January (1999): 27-36.

6 Erik van Ree, "The Limits of Juche: North Korea's Dependence on Soviet industrial Aid, 1953-76," *The Journal of Communist Studies* 5, no. 1 (1989): 50-73.

overseas businesses to invest and “Make in India.” However, the “Kim dynasty”⁷ regime in North Korea did not accept globalization measures in the post-Cold War period and continues to follow the *Juche* idea with regards to economic development. It seems that the current North Korean leader Kim Jong-un also wants to carry forward the policies of his predecessors.⁸ In fact, the economic development strategy of the Kim Jong-un regime has further isolated North Korea, causing the population to face severe economic hardships. It is worth noting that both India and North Korea were comrades in the Non-Aligned Movement and were close to the erstwhile Soviet Union during the Cold War, but in 2023 India is hosting the G-20 nations whereas North Korea has emerged as an international pariah. On the issue of Mahatma Gandhi’s view on *Swadeshi* and Kim Il-sung’s idea of *Juche*, there is a significantly large volume of literature available.⁹ However, there is a lack of literature comparing these two ideas and discussing their relevance in the contemporary era of globalization. Therefore, this article is an effort to explain the similarities and differences between Gandhi’s idea of *Swadeshi* and the *Juche* idea of Kim Il-sung in the era of globalization and argues that North Korea would have to adopt some serious economic reform measures in the coming times for its survival.

7 North Korea has been following a hereditary transfer of power since its establishment in September 1948. The current leadership in North Korea under Kim Jong-un belongs to the third generation of the Kim dynasty.

8 Yong Soo Park, “Policies and Ideologies of the Kim Jong-un Regime in North Korea: Theoretical Implications,” *Asian Studies Review* 38, no. 1 (2014): 1-14.

9 J.I. (Hans) Bakker, “The Gandhian Approach to Swadeshi or Appropriate Technology: A Conceptualization in Terms of Basic Needs and Equity,” *Journal of Agricultural Ethics* 3 (1990): 50-88; Sergei O. Kurbanov, “North Korea’s *juche* ideology: indigenous communism or traditional thought?” *Critical Asian Studies* 51, no. 2 (2019): 296-305.

Self-Reliance Movement: From the Era of Colonization to Globalization

The breakthrough in modern science and technology and beginning of the Industrial Revolution also triggered exploration for new territories for raw materials, cheap labor, investment of surplus capital and markets for industrial goods produced in Europe. The imperial powers used their advancements in technology, weapon systems and capitalism to subordinate and colonize the new territories across the world. The massive exploitation of the human and natural resources in the colonized countries led to an awareness among the native people of these countries of their technological backwardness and economic dependence on imperialist powers. Marxist scholars like Vladimir Ilyich Lenin regarded “imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism.”¹⁰ Therefore, in order to overcome colonial exploitation, the colonized people of the world began to promote their indigenous industries and reduce economic dependence on the imperialist powers. Later, the post-World War II period witnessed the growth of neo-colonialism. In this new form of imperialism, the direct political control of the colonies was no longer needed. But the domination of the imperialist powers was maintained through the economic control of their former colonies. The continued “underdevelopment” in the Latin American and African countries became an issue of scholarly debate during the Cold War period. The “development of underdevelopment” in the poor “satellite” countries was regarded as due to their continued economic dependency on the developed or the “metropolitan” nations.¹¹ As a solution to overcome economic backwardness, poor countries were recommended to adopt an import substitution industrialization strategy to become self-reliant. The goal of self-reliance became a popular policy for newly independent countries. Along with it, South-South cooperation

10 V I Lenin, *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, Reprinted, 1937).

11 Andre Gunder Frank, “The Development of Underdevelopment” in *Promise of Development: Theories of Change in Latin America*, eds. Peter F. Klarén and Thomas J. Bossert (New York, NY and Oxon, OX: Routledge, 2018), 111-123.

for greater economic partnership among the developing nations became a strategy to reduce their dependence on the rich countries of the Global North.

The end of the Cold War ushered an era of the liberal international order that facilitated economic interdependence and globalization. This triumph of liberalism over communism was referred to by Francis Fukuyama as “the end of history.”¹² The introduction of new technologies in communication and transport has indeed made the world a “global village” in which the movement of people, capital, information and even diseases have become ultra-fast. The emergence of a global supply chain and globalization of production requires an opening up of national borders and has increased global interdependence. The spread of globalization has made the policy of autarky and economic nationalism questionable. It is also worth noting that globalization has lifted millions of people out of poverty in developing countries and has lowered the cost of production. Modern technologies have become more accessible and international travel has become cheaper. Several developing countries, such as China, India and the nations of Southeast Asia have immensely benefitted from globalization. On the other hand, countries which have remained cut-off from this phenomenon of globalization face isolation and remain poor.

However, globalization has also been devastating to some nations and people. It has increased income disparities and there has been a huge concentration of wealth.¹³ The rising “de-globalization” or “anti-globalization” sentiments have again brought the issue of autarky or “national self-sufficiency” into the academic debate.¹⁴ It is also argued that

12 Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1992).

13 Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press: Cambridge and London, 2014).

14 Eric Helleiner, “The Return of National Self-Sufficiency? Excavating Autarkic Thought in a De-Globalizing Era,” *International Studies Review* 23, no. 3, September (2021): 933-957.

economic nationalism is not incompatible with the doctrines of economic liberalism and globalization.¹⁵ The former Donald Trump administration in the United States made scathing attacks on the existing international free trade system which has led to the decline of the American economy. President Trump called for economic nationalism through his “Make America Great Again” campaign. There has also been an adverse impact on the environment due to globalization. The global spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 is indeed an outcome of the globalization process which paradoxically disrupted the global supply chain and had a huge impact on production. Under these circumstances the idea of national self-reliance is again getting traction and an anti-globalization sentiment has emerged in various countries. But globalization is now an irreversible process and dismantling the current global economic order would have a damaging impact across the world. Therefore, a pragmatic approach towards globalization and self-reliance is needed to create a more interdependent world which would generate prosperity and also protect the poorer countries from exploitation by the rich nations and their companies. In this article the framework of national self-reliance is applied to understand the evolution of economic policies of India and North Korea from a historical perspective.

Mahatma Gandhi and *Swadeshi* Movement in India

It is commonly accepted by historians in India that the *Swadeshi* movement became popular in the first decade of the 20th century, particularly with the partition of the Bengal province in 1905 by the British colonial government in the country. However, the practice of *Swadeshi* on a mass scale by the people of Bengal as a result of the partition of their province by the colonial regime remains a contested issue.¹⁶ It was only

15 Andreas Pickel, “Explaining, and explaining with, economic nationalism,” *Nations and Nationalism* 9, no. 1 (2003): 105-127.

16 A. K. Biswas, “Paradox of Anti-Partition Agitation and Swadeshi Movement in Bengal (1905)” *Social Scientist* 23, no. 4/6, April-June (1995): 38-57.

after the return of Mahatma Gandhi from South Africa in 1915 and his entry into India's freedom struggle that the idea of *Swadeshi* received a boost. Gandhi made *Swadeshi* a peoples' movement and urged the masses to weave clothes on their own. According to Ananta Kumar Giri, "For Gandhi, Swadeshi was not simply a matter of anti-colonial political agitation; it was a chosen vocation of a life of dignity and autonomy on the part of individuals and communities."¹⁷ The hand-spun clothes or *khadi* became a symbol of Gandhi's resolve to challenge the British-made clothes which had destroyed the once famous Indian-made cotton clothes and textile industries. The British policies had led to the deindustrialization of the Indian economy. As a result, the spinning wheel or *charkha* reached home to home and publicly making cotton threads became a non-violent way of protest against the British imperial policies in the Indian subcontinent. There were also incidents of mass burning of foreign-made clothes in India during the colonial period. Through his idea of *Swadeshi*, Gandhi not only aimed to attack the policies of the British colonial regime in India but also provided an alternative to the modern industrial technology that had enslaved the vast majority of the people of the world by a handful of industrialized Western nations.¹⁸ As a practitioner of *Swadeshi*, Gandhi himself adopted *khadi* attire and "non-verbally" communicated to the masses to wear indigenously produced clothes.¹⁹ Unlike the growth of nationalism in the European countries where linguistic factors and the spread of literacy played a vital role in binding communities, the *Swadeshi* movement made use of visual signs and symbols, such as clothing, posters, exhibitions, shows, etc. to bring people together across the Indian subcontinent.²⁰ As a result, *Swadeshi* capitalism began flourishing in

17 Ananta Kumar Giri, "Rethinking the Politics and Ethics of Consumption: Dialogues with the Swadeshi Movements and Gandhi," *Journal of Human Values* 10, no. 1 (2004): 45.

18 Kazuya Ishii, "The Socioeconomic Thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi: As an Origin of Alternative Development," *Review of Social Economy* 59, no. 3 (2001): 297-312.

19 Peter Gonsalves, *Clothing for Liberation: A Communication Analysis of Gandhi's Swadeshi Revolution* (New Delhi, California, London and Singapore: Sage Publications, 2010).

colonial India.²¹

Gandhi's emphasis on the indigenization of production was carried over in the post-independence period. Independent India pursued an import substitution industrialization strategy to protect the nascent indigenous industries from competition by the developed Western countries and multinational companies. The self-reliance in economic development became one of the priorities of the Government of India in the post-independence period. The major and strategic industries of the country were brought under state control. In fact, the first prime minister of independent India, Jawaharlal Nehru, regarded the huge public sector projects as the "temples of modern India." Although Nehru differed with Gandhi's model of economic development, he adopted a socialist path to attain self-reliance. In the realm of foreign affairs, India under Nehru pursued a non-alignment policy for autonomy in international relations. The emphasis on achieving economic self-reliance was akin to fulfilling the dreams of Indian freedom fighters who had laid their lives for the independence of the country. In 1960s, when India faced severe food shortages, the need to become self-reliant in food production led to the Green Revolution. Today, India has become an exporter of food products. Similarly, the denial of critical technologies to India, such as super computers, cryogenic rocket engines, etc. by advanced nations inspired Indian scientists to develop them indigenously. Now India has become an information technology (IT) giant and has been sending satellites into space and even to Mars and the Moon at a much cheaper cost. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in 2020, India emerged as one of the largest exporters of vaccines, and India is often regarded as the "pharmacy of the world." Therefore, the resolve of the Indian Government and private enterprises for the indigenization of production has made India self-reliant in a number of fields.

20 Lisa N. Trivedi, "Visually Mapping the 'Nation': Swadeshi Politics in Nationalist India, 1920-1930," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 62, no. 1, February (2003): 11-41.

21 Aashish Velkar, "Swadeshi Capitalism in Colonial Bombay," *The Historical Journal* 64, no. 4, September (2021): 1009-1034.

Kim Il-sung and *Juche* in North Korea

Similar to the Indian resistance against British rule, people in Korea also started the self-reliance movement for national liberation against the brutal Japanese colonial occupation. Interestingly, a prominent Korean freedom fighter, Cho Man-sik who emphasized non-violence and self-reliance is known as the “Gandhi of Korea.” After the liberation of the Korean Peninsula from Japanese imperialism and subsequent ideological division of the country into North and South Korea, self-reliance became the official policy of North Korea. Barry Gills writes,

*Juche socialism came into existence on the basis of national division after 1945. It was justified on the basis that building socialism in the North [Korea] first would lead eventually to reunification. Juche socialism would demonstrate its inherent superiority over capitalism, while awaiting a revolution to develop amongst the workers and peasants of the South [Korea].*²²

Quite similar to the Indian concept of *Swadeshi*, *Juche* was used by the North Korean regime as a guiding philosophy for national reconstruction. In 1955, Kim Il-sung propounded the idea of *Juche* for building an independent and sovereign country which would not be dominated by any external power.²³ In the realm of economic development, self-reliance became a national goal in North Korea. Korean history is a testimony to the fact that this nation was trampled upon by powerful countries while the Korean Peninsula itself was sarcastically referred to as “a shrimp surrounded by whales.” Therefore, the idea of self-reliance was supposedly a pragmatic strategy by the North Korean regime for building

22 Barry Gills, “North Korea and the crisis of socialism: The historical ironies of national division,” *Third World Quarterly* 13, no. 1 (1992): 107.

23 B. C. Koh, “North Korea and Its Quest for Autonomy,” *Pacific Affairs* 38, no. 3/4 (Autumn, 1965-Winter, 1965-1966): 294-306.

an autonomous and independent nation. Despite the devastating Korean War (1950-1953)²⁴, North Korea was able to recover quickly and rebuild its national economy within a few years. The fervor for attaining autonomy in regional and international affairs created a strong sense of national pride among the North Korean people. In the realm of foreign affairs North Korea also had a non-aligned policy.²⁵

It is argued that *Juche* is a people-centered philosophy. According to a North Korean source, "The *Juche* idea is based on the philosophical principle that the masses of the people are the masters and driving force of the revolution and construction."²⁶ The *Juche* philosophy played a pivotal role in generating intense nationalism and promotion of rapid economic development in North Korea. In fact, North Korea's economic development became a role-model for other socialist countries during the Cold War period. However, the overemphasis on *Juche* and reluctance of the North Korean regime to change with times led to the economic decline of the country. Despite North Korea's claims for building "an independent socialist economy," in essence the country became desperately dependent on the generosity of foreign countries.²⁷ Moreover, in practice it appears that *Juche* is more of a leader-centered philosophy where the agency of the

24 Soon after the liberation of the Korean Peninsula from Japanese colonial rule in 1945, it was divided by the Allied Powers along the 38th parallel. In 1948 two Korean states emerged which were ideologically antagonistic towards each other. In 1950 the North Korean army launched an invasion of South Korea to reunify the country which led to a protracted Korean War. In the Korean War, North Korea was supported by China and the Soviet Union, whereas South Korea was supported by the United States-led United Nations forces. The war ended with an armistice in 1953, but there was no peace agreement due to which the Korean War continues to this day and thousands of American troops remain stationed in South Korea.

25 R.R. Krishnan, "North Korea and the Non-Aligned Movement," *International Studies* 20 (1981): 299-313.

26 Han Su Yong, "Juche Idea," in *Understanding Korea: 3 Politics*, ed. Kim Ji Ho, trans. Kim Yong Nam and Ri Chung Hyon (Pyongyang, Korea: Foreign Languages Publishing House, Juche 105, 2016), 2.

27 Nicholas Eberstadt, "'Self-Reliance' and Economic Decline: North Korea's International Trade, 1970-1995," *Problems of Post-Communism* 46, no. 1 (1999): 12.

people has no value. Therefore, the *Juche* idea of Kim Il-sung has been criticized for several reasons. The North Korean regime under Kim Il-sung was wary of his opponents from within the country and outside which probably compelled him to devise the *Juche* idea to maintain its rule in the country.²⁸ The dynastic transfer of power in North Korea is also a testimony to the fact that the idea of *Juche* was meant for the sustenance and legitimization of the Kim dynasty rule.²⁹ Contrary to the arguments of *Juche* as a philosophy of autonomous development, it has actually turned North Korea into a paranoid, xenophobic and isolated country.³⁰ Nevertheless, with a series of nuclear and missile tests, North Korea has bolstered its military capabilities and has achieved success in developing nuclear weapons – a goal which is also closely associated with the North Korean regime’s *Juche* ideology.³¹

Gandhi’s and Kim’s Ideas of Self–Reliance: A Comparison

It is worth noting that there are significant similarities between the personalities of Mahatma Gandhi and Kim Il-sung. Both Gandhi and Kim came out of a long stay abroad and participated in the national liberation movement of their respective countries. Both believed that economic subordination leads to political subordination and both are regarded as fatherly figures in their respective countries. Gandhi and Kim have a large number of statues, and they are also represented in the bank notes of their respective countries. Notably, both continue to influence the political and

28 Jae-Jung Suh, “Introduction: Making Sense of North Korea: Institutionalizing *Juche* at the Nexus of Self and Other,” *Journal of Korean Studies* 12, no. 1, Fall (2007): 9.

29 Sung Chull Kim, “*Juche* Idea: Base of Regime Legitimation of North Korea in the Age of Decaying Socialism,” *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies* 1 (1992): 151-174.

30 Brian Myers, “Ideology as Smokescreen: North Korea’s *Juche* Thought,” *Acta Koreana* 11, no. 3 (2008): 161-182.

31 Edward Howell, “The *juche* H-bomb? North Korea, nuclear weapons and regime-state survival,” *International Affairs* 96, no. 4 (2020): 1051-1068.

economic ideas in their respective countries.

However, despite these similarities, there are stark differences in the ideas of Gandhi and Kim Il-sung on the issue of self-reliance (Table 1). Mahatma Gandhi never openly attacked the feudal system and private ownership of the vast tracts of agricultural land by the indigenous landlords which had been the root cause of poverty and economic stagnation in the rural areas of India. Instead, Gandhi suggested developing “mutual trust and understanding” between the landlords and peasants.³² While claiming himself a socialist, Gandhi opposed the use of violence in confiscating the property of landlords and capitalists.³³ Similarly, although Gandhi opposed the practice of “untouchability” and oppression of the lower castes in India, in several of his writings he justified the caste system.³⁴ On the other hand, Kim Il-sung uprooted the feudal system in North Korea through the land reform program and brought down the centuries’ old structures of social order in the country.³⁵ In the realm of economic development, Mahatma Gandhi argued in support of the production by the masses and opposed mass production. Therefore, in order to promote *Swadeshi*, Gandhi emphasized small-scale and labor-intensive industries. But Kim Il-sung’s *Juche* idea of self-reliance adopted building massive and heavy industries for rapid economic development. While Gandhi talked of decentralization in the economy, Kim Il-sung’s strategy of economic development was based on the model of centralization.

32 Abha Pandya, “Gandhi and Agrarian Classes,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 13, no. 26, July 1 (1978): 1077-1079.

33 Bimanbehari Majumdar, “Gandhi and Socialism,” *Indian Literature* 12, no. 3, September (1969): 11-12.

34 Nishikant Kolge, “Was Gandhi a ‘Champion of the Caste System’?: Reflections on His Practices,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 52, no. 13, April 1 (2017): 42-50.

35 Charles K. Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution, 1945-1950* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), 71-106.

<Table 1> Major differences between Mahatma Gandhi’s and Kim Il-sung’s views on self-reliance

Mahatma Gandhi’s Swadeshi	Kim Il-sung’s Juche
Employed non-violent means	Employed violent means
Preferred private ownership	Preferred public ownership
Engaged democratic methods	Engaged dictatorial methods
Liberal and idealist	Communist and realist
Supported small-scale industries	Supported large-scale industries
Decentralization of the economy	Centralization of the economy
Establishment of a <i>Ram Rajya</i> (Ideal state)	Establishment of a “socialist paradise”

Source: Compiled by the author

The *Swadeshi* movement in India was not to abolish capitalism *per se*, but sought to promote national capital. According to Manu Goswami, “Despite Gandhi’s later conceptually radical reformulation, swadeshi was a movement for the nationalization of capital, not its abolition.”³⁶ In the Gandhian perspective of self-reliance, private capital and property ownership need not be abolished by the state, but in North Korea, the communist ideology of the state eliminated all forms of the capitalist mode of production. Therefore, the method of achieving self-reliance fundamentally differed in the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi and Kim Il-sung. The Gandhian method of *Swadeshi* employed peaceful means to achieve the goal of self-reliance. However, Kim Il-sung often used violent methods to bring about socio-economic change. Nevertheless, since the end of the Cold War, India has largely curtailed the ideas of *Swadeshi* and has become more globalized. India’s socialist principles built under the leadership of former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru have also undergone massive transformation. The disinvestment of several state-owned public sector enterprises in India is testimony to the change in the policy of the Indian Government towards economic development. However, North Korea still strives to maintain its *Juche* philosophy, particularly with regards to its

³⁶ Manu Goswami, “From *Swadeshi* to *Swaraj*: Nation, Economy, Territory in Colonial South Asia, 1870 to 1907,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40, no. 4, October (1998): 628.

economic development and foreign affairs. While India has become an advocate for globalization, the North Korean regime fiercely maintains secrecy, and the country remains closed to the outside world.

Self-reliance in the Era of Globalization in India and North Korea

Despite changes in the national governments in the past seven decades after gaining independence from British colonial rule, the goal of achieving self-reliance can still be found in the election manifestoes of almost all major national political parties in India. However, the national political parties of all ideological shades in India have also been cautiously moving in favor of economic liberalization. India started adopting some economic liberalization measures since the 1980s and large-scale economic reforms were implemented in the post-Cold War period. However, even while liberalizing the economy, the Indian state remained interventionist and developed cordial relations with indigenous business groups.³⁷ Although the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which is currently the ruling party in India, had reservations regarding economic liberalization measures, in the recent decades it has also been supportive of globalization.³⁸ This is evident from the fact that soon after coming to power in May 2014, the BJP Government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi in India scrapped the Nehruvian-era Planning Commission, which was a symbol of India's socialist and command economic development model. For Modi, the Planning Commission was an obsolete institution in the era of market economy.³⁹

37 Atul Kohli, "Politics of Economic Growth in India, 1980-2005: Part I: The 1980s," *Economic and Political Weekly* 41, no. 13, April 1 (2006): 1251-1259; Atul Kohli, "Politics of Economic Growth in India, 1980-2005: Part II: The 1990s and Beyond," *Economic and Political Weekly* 41, no. 14, April 8 (2006): 1361-1370.

38 Salim Lakha, "From Swadeshi to Globalisation: The Bharatiya Janata Party's Shifting Economic Agenda," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 25, no. 3 (2002): 83-103.

39 Sanjay Ruparelia, "'Minimum Government, Maximum Governance': The

The Indian Government under Modi promoted itself as business-friendly and committed towards economic reform measures. However, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, BJP leader and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi called upon his countrymen to be “Vocal for Local” and launched the *Atmanirbhar Bharat* campaign to promote “localism” and make India self-reliant.⁴⁰ Despite pursuing the strategy of economic liberalization, Modi has not abandoned the goal of building a self-reliant India. This is largely due to the fact that India still suffers from huge trade deficits and remains one of the biggest importers of military hardware in the world. Prime Minister Modi’s concern has been with regards to the huge imbalance in India’s foreign trade. Therefore, the policy like “Make in India” was initiated by the Indian Government under Modi to reduce India’s dependence on the import of foreign-made goods and attract more foreign investment in the manufacturing sector. Moreover, in 2019 New Delhi pulled out of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) due to fears of cheap foreign products flooding the Indian market and destroying local businesses.⁴¹ India has also been facing huge deficits in its external trade with East Asian countries which compelled the Modi Government to pursue economic nationalist policies, such as reviewing free trade agreements and staying out of the RCEP.⁴²

Unlike India, North Korea did not pursue large-scale economic liberalization measures after the end of the Cold War. Predictions were

Restructuring of Power in Modi’s India,” *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 38, no. 4 (2015): 763.

40 Shafiullah Anis and Juliana A. French, “COVID-19 and India’s Flirtation with Localism,” in *COVID-19 and the Evolving Business Environment in Asia: The Hidden Impact on the Economy, Business and Society*, eds. Andrei O.J. Kwok, Motoki Watabe, Sharon G.M. Koh (Singapore: Springer, 2022), 53-76.

41 Raj Verma, “The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership and India: a test case of Narendra Modi’s statesmanship,” *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 74, no. 5 (2020): 479-485.

42 Priya Chacko, “A New Quest for Self-Reliance: East Asia and Indian Economic Nationalism,” *The Journal of Indian and Asian Studies* 2, no. 2, July (2021): 1-24.

made about the eventual collapse of the North Korean regime due to the “economic decline and international isolation” of the country after the death of Kim Il-sung in July 1994.⁴³ However, contrary to the expectations that the *Juche* ideology would be “diluted” in the post-Cold War period⁴⁴, the North Korean regime has continued to follow the self-reliance measures. As a result, North Korea remains one of the most isolated and poorest countries in the world and is heavily dependent on foreign aid. Also, due to the several economic sanctions imposed on North Korea for its nuclear weapons and missile development program, the country is facing severe economic challenges.

For its part, the Kim dynasty regime has been highly paranoid with the outside world and severely controls the inflow of information into the country. Despite the rhetoric and expectations, the Kim Jong-un regime did not adopt free market policies after coming to power in 2011. According to Yong Soo Park, “In sum, all of the militant rhetoric and gestures exhibited by the Kim Jong-un regime since the death of Kim Jong-il strongly suggest its firm resolve to continue to uphold old policies and ideologies rather than abandon them.”⁴⁵ Notably, instead of becoming self-reliant, North Korea has become hugely dependent on China for food, fuel and several other basic necessities. In 2018, more than 95 percent of North Korea’s import was from China.⁴⁶ In recent years, Kim Jong-un has been focussing on the *Byungjin* policy of making the country self-reliant in military and economic affairs. However, in the realm of economic development, North Korea has severely lagged behind its neighbouring countries. Paradoxically, the North Korean economy has now become much smaller than South Korea. North Korea’s failure to change with the times and adopt economic reform

43 Richard L. Grant, “Juche’s Last Gasp,” *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 6, no. 2 (1994): 131-144.

44 Barry Gills, “North Korea and the crisis of socialism,” p. 129.

45 Yong Soo Park, “Policies and Ideologies of the Kim Jong-un Regime in North Korea,” p. 11.

46 “North Korea,” *The Observatory of Economic Complexity*, accessed August 10, 2020, <https://oec.world/en/profile/country/prk>.

measures has been detrimental to the economic development of the country. As a result, the North Korean people have been suffering due to the policies of their government. The recent spread of COVID-19 highlighted the vulnerabilities of the North Korean people in the milieu of poor health infrastructure and isolation of their country in the international community.⁴⁷

Nevertheless, the strategy of self-reliance has also become important in the contemporary times of world-wide pandemic and disruptions in the global supply chain. Rising economic nationalism, massive unemployment and the anti-globalization movement in several countries of the world has again brought the issue of self-reliance into the academic discussion. The recent economic crisis in Sri Lanka has opened the debate regarding dependency on foreign aid. Earlier, the pulling out of Britain from the European Union and the rise of Donald Trump were signs of anti-globalization sentiments in the West. Interestingly, in recent years, the leadership in both India and North Korea have invoked the idea of self-reliance. In the wake of the economic crisis triggered by COVID-19, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been devising neo-mercantilist policies. Similarly, in North Korea the Kim Jong-un regime has also pushed for *Juche* to overcome the severe economic crisis caused due to the international sanctions and COVID-19.⁴⁸ However, while Modi's model of self-reliance is not opposed to economic liberalization, the Kim Jong-un regime has still been averse to the Chinese or Vietnamese kind of opening up of the economy and continues to follow autarkic policies. Compared to India, the Kim Jong-un regime in North Korea remains a "non-reformer" with regards to economic development.⁴⁹

47 Dong Jin Kim and Andrew Ikhyun Kim, "Global health diplomacy and North Korea in the COVID-19 era," *International Affairs* 98, no. 3 (2022): 915-932.

48 "North Korea's Kim pushes self-reliance amid 'worst difficulties,'" *Al Jazeera/Reuters* (March 29, 2022), accessed July 29, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2022/3/29/north-koreas-kim-pushes-self-reliance-amid-worst-difficulties>.

49 Robert E. Kelly, "In Defense of North Korea Sanctions," *Korea Observer* 53, no. 2, Summer (2022): 258-259.

Conclusion

The massive exploitation of nature, environmental pollution, corporate greed, unemployment and economic disparities has made it pertinent for rethinking the present development paradigm. But the rolling back of globalization would also certainly not be a pragmatic strategy as it may reverse the successes gained in the post-Cold War period of economic interdependence. Therefore, a controlled economic measure which would ensure global free trade but would also protect the interests of the poor is needed. As such, the idea of self-reliance should not be regarded as obsolete in the era of globalization. Gandhi's idea of *Swadeshi* still resonates in the economic policies of India. However, the Gandhian idea of self-reliance has been mixed with economic liberalization and globalization in India. This strategy of the Government of India is reflected in the recent "Make in India" and "*Atmanirbhar Bharat*" campaign. While the "Make in India" project seeks to attract foreign investors and develop India into a manufacturing hub, *Atmanirbhar Bharat* aims to reduce India's import dependence. Similarly, North Koreans under the leadership of Kim Il-sung were able to overcome the devastations caused by the Korean War and rebuild their country due to extreme nationalism and *Juche* ideology. Although both *Swadeshi* and *Juche* promote the values of self-reliance to avoid dependence on other nations, there are significant differences between these two ideas as have been discussed in this article. Whereas India has opened up its erstwhile closed economy in the post-Cold War period, North Korea has still been averse to any major economic liberalization measures. Moreover, North Korea remains obsessed with "dynastic politics" and its regime has largely ignored the welfare of the people. Therefore, the response of North Korea towards globalization has remained significantly different to that of India. The demolition of the inter-Korean liaison office in Gaesong by the Kim dynasty in 2020 was indeed a move which manifests the North Korean regime's negative attitude towards economic liberalization and opposition to increased interdependence with South Korea. However, in the future, North Korea may have to adopt some serious economic reforms for its survival.

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