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국제학박사학위논문

Making the Cold War Their Own

Inter-Korean Relations, 1971-1976

한반도 냉전의 내재화:

남북한 관계 1971-1976

2015 년 8 월

서울대학교 대학원

국제대학원 국제학과

채 리 아

Making the Cold War Their Own: Inter-Korean Relations, 1971-1976

한반도 냉전의 내재화: 남북한 관계 1971-1976

지도교수 박 태 군

이 논문을 국제학박사 학위논문으로 제출함

2015년 7월

서울대학교 국제대학원 국제학과

채 리 아

채리아의 국제학박사 학위논문을 인준함

2015년 7월

위 원 장

이 근

부위원장

신 성 호

위 원

신 종 대

위 원

홍 석 릉

위 원

박 태 군



THESIS ACCEPTANCE CERTIFICATE

The undersigned, appointed by

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Presented by **Ria Chae**

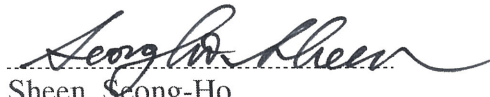
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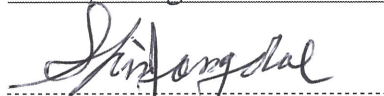
Lee, Geun

Vice Chair



Sheen, Seong-Ho

Committee Member




Shin, Jongdae

Committee Member



Hong, Seuk-Ryule

Committee Member



Park, Tae-Gyun

Date: July 2015

ABSTRACT

The main goals of this dissertation are to find the origins of the Cold War between North and South Korea and to explain the reasons why the Cold War on the Korean Peninsula did not finish with the end of the global Cold War in the early 1990s.

The dissertation focuses on the period of the 1970s, which was the time of the first peaceful negotiations between the two Koreas but also the time of one of the worst security crises since the Korean War. Using declassified diplomatic and policy documents from the archives of South Korea, the United States, and countries of the former socialist bloc; press reports; memoirs of witnesses; and oral history records; the dissertation reconstructs the events of the early to mid-1970s as a dynamic interaction between the two Korean governments, the United States, and China. The analysis demonstrates that fundamental changes took place in the inter-Korean relationship during the period of 1971 to 1976. Through this transformation, the Cold War on the Korean Peninsula became qualitatively different: it was internalized by the two regimes and thereby obtained a life of its own.

The global Cold War was centered on the conflict between two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. The defining features of that conflict included political, economic, and propaganda rivalry; ideological conflict; absence of a direct military conflict but an arms race in conventional and nuclear weapons; continuous communication; and alternating periods of increased

hostility and relaxation of tensions.

Through the period from liberation to the late 1960s, Korea was firmly embedded in the global Cold War system. Nevertheless, the behavior of the two Koreas during that period was different from the pattern of the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union. An ideological conflict and propaganda rivalry existed but the political, economic, and diplomatic rivalry did not appear—and even that only in incipient forms and indirectly—until the 1960s. There was no communication between the two Koreas, nor was there room for a *détente*. While implementing their projects of nation-building and policies of containment in Korea before and after the Korean War, the great powers also had to make constant efforts to keep the Korean conflict “cold” by curbing their respective protégés from opening hostilities against each other. In other words, until the late 1960s, the Cold War in Korea was imposed and instigated by the great powers.

In contrast, during the period of 1971 to 1976, the relationship between the two Koreas acquired the characteristics of the Cold War between the superpowers. Seoul and Pyongyang *de facto* recognized each other’s existence and established contact for the first time. At the same time, the two engaged in a direct, economic, and political competition without being incited to do so by their patrons. The competition for diplomatic recognition, and propaganda rivalry between South and North Korea—particularly at the United Nations—reached a scale not seen in any other period and the inter-Korean arms race also surpassed in its intensity any other time since Korean War. The Axe Murders incident brought the two Korean regimes to the brink of an all-out war but the two opted out of a head-

on collision. Through this process, the Cold War was institutionalized in Korea, as reflected in the continuous cycles of short rapprochement and long confrontation repeated thereafter. That is the reason why the Cold War on the Korean Peninsula was able to persist despite the end of the Cold War between the great powers.

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Keywords: Cold War, Inter-Korean Relations, Internalization, Détente, 1970s

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NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

1. This dissertation uses the Revised Romanization system for all Korean words and names of institutions and places, except for the cases where other spellings have been widely accepted such as Pyongyang and Panmunjom.
2. Names of Korean people, including scholars, are rendered the way those people themselves do or did. If that spelling is different from the Revised Romanization system, the name is spelled again according to the Revised Romanization system in square brackets following the first mentioning in the text and bibliography. The rule does not apply for well-known figures such as Kim Il Sung and Park Chung Hee.
3. In all Korean, Chinese, and Japanese names, the family name precedes the personal name.

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

1. UNENDING COLD WAR ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA

The global Cold War came to an end in the early 1990s with the collapse of the Soviet Union. The “Iron Curtain” separating Western and Eastern Europe started to lift in 1989, when the removal of Hungary’s border fence opened a hole through which thousands of Germans fled to West Germany and Austria. Simultaneously with the reunification of Germany in 1990, many democratic movements formed in other countries in Eastern Europe. The defeat of communist parties in elections, mass protests and uprisings throughout the region unseated entrenched communist leaders. Inside the Soviet Union, its component republics were breaking away by declaring independence one after another, and in December 1991, the Soviet Union was officially dissolved. In the following years, many Eastern European states completely restructured their political and economic systems along liberal capitalist lines, whereas others created hybrid systems. In any case, the states were rapidly integrated with the European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and currently form a single European market. In short, few legacies of the Cold War remain in the European region.

In contrast, vestiges of the Cold War run deep in East Asia even today. The alliance structure forged upon the two Cold War axes of China-Russia-North

Korea on one hand and the United States (US)-Japan-South Korea on the other has not changed. The Taiwan question remains unresolved. But the area most often portrayed as the last bastion of the Cold War—not only in the region but in the entire world—is the Korean Peninsula. The relationship between two parts of the divided country cannot be described as progressing toward either reunification or peaceful coexistence. Antagonism prevails and the uneasy peace in Korea still hinges on the Armistice Agreement signed over sixty years ago to enforce ceasefire in the Korean War (1950-1953). Attempts to improve the relationship—either bilateral, through South Korea’s “Sunshine Policy” in 1998-2007, for example, or multilateral, such as the four-party talks of the late 1990s—have not brought any tangible results. Exchanges are minimal and confined to the economic sphere; the ideological conflict has grown even wider. The recent competition between Seoul and Pyongyang in launching an artificial satellite is reminiscent of the Cold War competition in space exploration between the US and the Soviet Union. Certainly, there is continuous communication between Seoul and Pyongyang: two summits of the leaders of the North and the South took place in 2000 and 2007; several conferences have been held for senior officials of the two countries; there are also mechanisms for communication between military officials.¹ Nevertheless, almost every round of political negotiations is followed

¹ Those include the Military Armistice Commission (MAC) and the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission (NNSC), both established in 1953 for the purpose of enforcing the Armistice Agreement. However, neither of the two bodies has been operating since 1994. (For a discussion of loopholes in the Armistice Agreement and problems in the

by an escalation of military tensions and renewed hostilities—such as multiple clashes between North and South Korean navies in the West Sea in the 1990s and 2000s and North Korea’s torpedoing a South Korean military vessel and firing artillery shells on a South Korean island in 2010, to which South Korea responded by shelling North Korean gun positions.² Joint military exercises by American and South Korean forces are each time met by Pyongyang with threats of turning Seoul into a “sea of fire” but proceed regardless. An arms race continues, with South Korea steadily building up its military capabilities and North Korea’s programs of nuclear weapon and missile development attracting much concern and media attention around the globe. In other words, the relationship between North and South Korea still maintains the Cold War pattern.

What are the origins of this relationship? Why did the Cold War on the Korean Peninsula not finish with the end of the global Cold War? What explains the continuous, Cold War-style fluctuations between peaceful talks and spikes of hostility in inter-Korean relations? These are the questions addressed in the present dissertation. Answers are commonly sought in the Korean War, an identity-forming event that is central to the way the Korean people and Korean states define

operation of MAC and NNSC, see Park Tae Gyun, “The Korean Armistice System and the Origins of the Cheonan and Yeonpyeong Incidents,” *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies* 24/1 (June 2011), 115-136.

² For a discussion of connections between those incidents and the Cold War, see Kim Nan, “Korea on the Brink: Reading the Yongp’yong Shelling and Its Aftermath,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 70/2 (May 2011): 337-356.

themselves. This study, however, focuses on the period of the early to mid-1970s—the time when, within less than five years, the relationship between North and South Korea plummeted from the most amiable to one of the most hostile in the history of the divided country. The decade started with the first peaceful negotiations since the Korean War armistice of 1953. On 4 July 1972, Pyongyang and Seoul simultaneously announced the Joint Declaration that formulated the principles for unification. Exchanges of delegations of high-ranking officials and Red Cross personnel raised hopes among Koreans on both sides of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) that the North and the South were on the path toward reunification and that the family members separated by the division and Korean War would soon be able to see each other again. Such hopes were short-lived, however. The relationship between the two Koreas rapidly deteriorated; military tensions resumed; and troops were relocated closer to the border. Both Seoul and Pyongyang returned to ideological propaganda and accused the other side of aggressive intentions. The murders of two American officers in the Joint Security Area in 1976 (Panmunjom Axe Murders) brought the two Koreas to the brink of all-out war.

The main hypothesis of this dissertation is that the type of relationship that exists between North and South Korea today is closer to the format developed during the 1970s than it is to the relationship of the earlier period, including the time of the Korean War. A profound transformation, which signified the emergence of a new relationship, took place in inter-Korean relations during the Détente era.

In line with this hypothesis, the following sub-questions are suggested:

- How did the Cold War on the Korean Peninsula change with the beginning of the Sino-American rapprochement and the inter-Korean dialogue?
- Since South Korea's economy achieved rapid growth during the 1960s–1970s and sparked economic competition between the two regimes, what was the impact of this development on the Cold War in Korea?
- How did the weakening of US control over South Korea and the expansion of South Korea's autonomy affect the Cold War on the Korean Peninsula?
- How shall we interpret the cut-throat competition of the 1970s between North and South Korea at the United Nations (UN)?
- If Pyongyang desired withdrawal of American forces from the Korean Peninsula, why did it allow the Panmunjom Axe Murders to occur?
- When the two Koreas came very close to a full-scale collision in the aftermath of the Panmunjom Axe Murders, what prevented a further escalation and all-out war? What was the difference with the situation in 1949-1950?

Following the Panmunjom Axe Murders, the cycle of brief rapprochement – long confrontation in the relationship between North and South Korea has been continuously repeating. The 1970s therefore constitute an important turning point, the examination of which can shed light on the dynamics of inter-Korean relations in general. Furthermore, studying the issues and patterns

that were formed during the 1970s may lead to discovering the roots of the current problems and thereby enhance our understanding of the problems faced by the two Koreas today. As will be argued and demonstrated in the following chapters, the Cold War on the Korean Peninsula in the 1970s was qualitatively different from that in the preceding period. The transformation that occurred in the inter-Korean relations in 1971–1976 constitutes the basis—i.e., the origin—of the Cold War in Korea, which continues to this day.

In addition, several other important issues are discussed in this study. One of them is the reasons why an opportunity provided by the worldwide atmosphere of *détente* did not materialize into a thaw on the Korean Peninsula. As mentioned above, reconciliation between the two Koreas, as reflected in the inter-Korean dialogue of 1971–1973, quickly gave way to renewed tensions which reached a climax in the 1976 security crisis. But the subsequent segment of this chapter will demonstrate that the majority of existing studies analyze in depth only the beginning of the 1970s. As a result, they can explain why the two Koreas engaged in negotiations but, with a few exceptions, cannot provide a satisfactory answer as to why the dialogue ceased and the hostilities resumed. The present dissertation attempts to fill in this gap by closely investigating the changes in the policies and strategies of the two Korean regimes at the end and in the aftermath of the inter-Korean talks.

Secondly, the behavior of the North Korean regime—whether in the last century or today—is often said to be irrational and unpredictable. This study shows that many moves taken by both Seoul and Pyongyang during the period in

scrutiny may seem contradictory. Park Chung Hee, for example, initiated high-level talks with North Korea, even though he had no intention of meeting Kim Il Sung.³ The South Korean administration was indifferent when Kim Il Sung reiterated that North Korea would continue to fight to bring about the South Korean revolution in 1971,⁴ but a similar statement by the North Korean leader in 1975⁵ yielded a very sensitive reaction, including the decision to raise South Korea's military budget twofold, despite the fact that the actual number of clashes between the North and South had substantially decreased during the period of the inter-Korean dialogue. To cite some examples of inconsistency in Pyongyang's behavior, North Koreans continuously called for the Korean problem to be resolved by the efforts of the Koreans themselves, while putting the Korean question on the agenda of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly and insisting that South Korea be excluded from renegotiation of the 1953 Armistice Agreement. Pyongyang claimed that it was a peace-loving nation and the US troops were not needed to maintain peace on the Korean Peninsula but the

³ The statement made by Park Chung Hee to his aide, Kim Seong-jin, cited in Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 26.

⁴ Kim Il Sung, "The Revolutionary Peoples of Asia Will Win in Their Common Struggle Against US Imperialism," *Kim Il Sung Works* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1986), Vol. 26, 192.

⁵ In a speech on 19 April 1975, Kim Il Sung stated that if a revolution broke out in South Korea, the North would not stand by idle but would energetically support the South Koreans (*Rodong sinmun*, 19 April 1975, 3).

Panmunjom Axe Murders committed by North Korean soldiers vividly demonstrated to the world how aggressive North Korea could be. This study pays close attention to the developments in and surrounding the Korean Peninsula in order to find the reasons for and logic behind this seemingly contradictory behavior of the two Korean regimes.

When Seoul and Pyongyang first came to the negotiating table in 1971, the US and the People's Republic of China (PRC) had just begun the historic rapprochement which ultimately led to the normalization of relations between the two great powers and restructuring of the post-World War II system of international relations in Asia. In this light, the Korean case can also offer an example of the impact of the détente between the US and PRC on their allies and thus contribute to the historiography of the Cold War in East Asia in general.

It is worth noting that two other divided nations achieved major breakthroughs in their unification processes during the first half of the 1970s. North Vietnam used the end of American involvement in the Vietnam War as an opportunity to conquer South Vietnam and reunify the country by force in 1975. West Germany reached several milestones—such as the Basic Treaty (1972) and joint entry in the United Nations (1973)—in its relations with the East German counterpart through Ostpolitik, the policy of engagement with Eastern European countries. The developments laid the foundation for the German unification in 1990. In this regard, the dynamics in the Korean Peninsula during the early to mid-1970s provide an important case study to compare with the examples of Vietnam and Germany.

2. THE 1970S OF THE KOREAN PENINSULA IN SCHOLARSHIP

Most of research on the topic of the Korean Peninsula in the 1970s deals with developments in South Korea, such as the Yushin reforms, democratization movement, and changes in the economic structure. The topic of inter-Korean relations and foreign policies of the two Koreas at that time has rarely become an object of academic inquiry. One reason for this scarcity is the lack of primary source material. Declassification of American and South Korean diplomatic documents is an ongoing process, whereas the North Korean and Chinese sources are unavailable. Nevertheless, interest in the topic is rising as evidenced in the growing number of related publications in recent years.

Works relevant to the discussion of inter-Korean relations in the 1970s can largely be divided into four groups: (1) studies of transformations in the Park Chung Hee regime, (2) research on the foreign relations of the two Koreas in the 1970s, (3) studies of inter-Korean dialogue, and (4) research on the security tensions that examines specific incidents between the North and the South. Many studies in the first group establish a connection between the formation of the Yushin system and the increased autonomy of the Park Chung regime after the Nixon Doctrine.⁶ The second group mostly deals with particular aspects of

⁶ See for example, Park Tae Gyun [Bak Tae-gyun], “Segyesa-jeok bopyeongseong-gwa

foreign relations of South and North Korea, such as South Korean-American relations,⁷ South Korean-Japanese relations,⁸ North Korean-Chinese relations,⁹

teuksuseong-ui cheungmyeon-eseo bon Yusin cheje” [Yushin system as seen from the perspective of universality and uniqueness in world history], *Yeoksa-wa hyeonsil* 88 (June 2013): 19-33; Hong Seuk-ryule [Hong Seok-ryul], “Nikseun dokteurin-gwa Bak Jeong-hui Yusin cheje” [Nixon Doctrine and Park Chung Hee’s Yushin system], *Naeil-eul yeoneun yeoksa* 26 (December 2006): 71-82; Hong Seuk-ryule, “Yusin cheje-wa Han-Mi gwangye” [The Yushin system and Korean-American Relations], *Yeoksa-wa hyeonsil* 88 (June 2013): 35-67; Kim Hyung-A, *Korea’s Development under Park Chung Hee: Rapid Industrialization, 1961-79* (New York: Routledge, 2004); and Gregg Brazinksy, *Nation Building in South Korea: Koreans, Americans, and the Making of a Democracy* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 2007), Ch. 5-8, 127-250.

⁷ Representative studies on South Korea’s relations with the US in the 1970s include Hong Seok-ryul, “Yusin cheje wa Han-Mi gwangye” [The Yushin system and Korea-US relations], *Yeoksa wa hyeonsil* 88(2013): 35–67; Shin Jongdae, “Yusin cheje chulbeom-gwa Han-Mi gwangye” [Establishment of the Yushin system and the Korean-American relations], in *Bak Jeong-hui sidae Han-Mi gwangye* [Korea-United States relations during the Park Chung Hee era], ed. the Academy of Korean Studies (Seoul: Baeksan seodang, 2009), 243–298; and Park Tae Gyun, “Beteunam jeonjaeng-gwa Beteunam-e pabyeonghan Asia gukkadeul-ui jeongchijeok byeonhwa” [The Vietnam War and political transition in participating Asian countries], *Hangukhak yeongu* 29 (2013): 588–622.

⁸ See for example, Victor D. Cha, *Alignment despite Antagonism: The US-Korea-Japan Security Triangle* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999).

⁹ See for example, Choi Myeong-hae, *Jungguk-Bukhan dongmaeng gwangye* [China-North Korea alliance relationship] (Seoul: Oreum, 2009), 303–330; and Yafeng Xia and Zhihua Shen, “China’s Last Ally: Beijing’s Policy toward North Korea during the U.S.-China Rapprochement, 1970–1975,” *Diplomatic History* 38:5 (2014): 1083–1113.

South Korea's vision of Southeast Asia,¹⁰ and North Korea's policies toward the 3rd world.¹¹ The third type of research examines the course of the dialogue between the two Korean regimes, their motivations, and the reasons for the rupture of the government-level talks in 1973.¹² The fourth group of related studies investigates incidents that increased tensions between the two Koreas in the 1970s. Such studies are usually conducted by military historians and center on two events—the Panmunjom Axe Murders Incident of 1976 and the incursions of

¹⁰ See for example the following articles by Park Tae Gyun: “Bak Jeong-hui-ui Dongasia insik-gwa Asia-Taepyeongyang gongdong sahoe gusang” [Park Chung Hee's perception of East Asia and his plan for Asian Pacific community], *Yeoksa bipyeong* 76 (2006): 119–147; and “Bak Jeong-hui jeongbu sigi Hanguk judo-ui Dongasia jiyek jipdan anjeonbojang cheje gusang-gwa jwajeol” [Planning and failure of Park Chung Hee administration's project for East Asian regional collective security system under the leadership of South Korea], *Segye jeonchi* 16 (2012), 11-40.

¹¹ Especially noteworthy on this topic is Charles K. Armstrong's monumental study of North Korea's foreign policies during the Cold War era: *Tyranny of the Weak: North Korea and the World, 1950–1992* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013). Chapters 4 and 5 (137–207) of the book discuss North Korea's policies to the Third World from the 1960s through the 1970s.

¹² See for example, Bernd Schaefer, “Overconfidence Shattered: North Korean Unification Policy, 1971–1975,” North Korea International Documentation Project Working Paper #2 (Washington, D.C.: Wilson Center, 2010), http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/NKIDP_Working_Paper_2_North_Korea_n_Unification_Policy_web.pdf (accessed 10 December 2014); and especially Kim Ji-hyeong, *Detangteu-wa Nam-Buk gwangye* [Détente and North-South relations] (Seoul: Seonin, 2008).

North Korean vessels in the West Sea in the mid-1970s.¹³

Overall, few of the existing studies examine inter-Korean relations in the 1970s per se. Most of them limit their focus to specific incidents, particular actor (or actors), or certain aspects of foreign relations, such as a bilateral relationship between the US and South Korea or between North Korea and China. In addition, the majority of these studies do not go beyond the period of the early 1970s. Consequently, they cannot fully capture the dynamics of the inter-Korean relations from the inter-Korean dialogue to the confrontation of 1976. Furthermore, the degree to which the diplomatic and security strategies as well as the legitimacy and security interests of the two Korean regimes converged during this period has not received sufficient attention.

There are, however, several welcome exceptions to this tendency. As in this dissertation, the studies reviewed below discuss the transformation in the relations between North and South Korea from the early to mid-1970s.

The most comprehensive research on inter-Korean relations in the context of Sino-American rapprochement has been conducted by Hong Seuk-ryule.

¹³ Representative studies of the two incidents include Michishita Narushige, *North Korea's Diplomatic Campaigns: 1966–2008* (New York: Routledge, 2010); Hong Seuk-ryule, “1976-yeon Panmunjeom dokki salhae sageon-gwa Hanbando wigi” [Ax murder in the Joint Security Area, Panmunjom, and the military crisis of the Korean Peninsula in 1976], *Jeongsin munhwa yeongu* 28-4 (2005): 271–299; and James Munhang Lee, *Panmunjom, Korea* (Baltimore: American Literary Press, 2004).

His *Bundan-ui hiseuteri*¹⁴ describes the period from the security crisis of 1968 to the Panmunjom Axe Murders of 1976 as the first of the cycles of confrontation–reconciliation in the relations between North and South Korea. Using newly declassified American and South Korean documents as well as diplomatic cables of Eastern European embassies in Pyongyang, Hong examines the reaction in South and North Korea to the beginning of rapprochement between the US and PRC, the course of the inter-Korean talks, the consolidation of systems in the two parts of the peninsula, and the diplomatic competition between them. The study is particularly valuable in bringing to light the early efforts of South and North Korea to establish contact with the countries of the opposite camp. Hong’s focus, however, is on South Korean-American relations and on the first half of the cycle. In another work,¹⁵ the scholar points out that by pursuing the détente, the great powers did not intend to overcome the Cold War system to establish a new world order but rather sought to recognize each other’s sphere of influence and confirm the status quo. It is in this context that the two Koreas in the 1970s internalized the division, consolidated their regimes, and engaged in the fierce competition of the systems.

¹⁴ Hong Seuk-ryule, *Bundan-ui hiseuteri* [Hysterics of division] (Paju: Changbi, 2012).

¹⁵ “1970-nyeondae cho Nam-Buk daehwa-ui jonghapjeok bunseok—Nam-Buk gwangye-wa Mi-Jung gwanggye, Nam-Bukhan naebu jeongchi-ui gyochajeom-eseo [A comprehensive analysis of North-South Korea talks in the early 1970s: on the crossing of the U.S.-PRC relations, inter-Korean relations, and internal politics in two Koreas],” *Ihwa sahak yeongu* 40(2010): 289-330.

(Mis)perceptions and (mis)calculations of the regime in Pyongyang are analyzed in great detail in Bernd Schaefer's work entitled "Overconfidence Shattered: North Korean Unification Policy, 1971-1975."¹⁶ The study is based on Eastern European diplomatic documents from the vast collection of the North Korea International Documentation Project of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. According to the scholar, in the early 1970s, North Korea held its last best chance to unify the peninsula under its auspices in the wake of Sino-American rapprochement via the bridge of inter-Korean dialogue, shortly before the growing economic gap between the two Koreas widened to the insurmountable advantage of the South. Schaefer argues that the "overconfident drive" of Pyongyang toward peaceful unification and socialist reorientation of a Korean peninsula under Kim Il Sung fueled the international competition between the two Koreas during the period in scrutiny and upset the prospects for improvement in the bilateral relationship.

Roughly one-quarter of Don Oberdorfer's book *The Two Koreas: A*

¹⁶ North Korea International Documentation Project Working Paper #2 (Washington, D.C.: Wilson Center, 2010), http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/NKIDP_Working_Paper_2_North_Korea_n_Unification_Policy_web.pdf (accessed 10 December 2014). For a discussion of misperceptions and miscalculations of the Korean War, see Park Tae Gyun, "Hanguk jeonjaeng balbal 60-nyeon, sahoegwahak-eseo immunhak-euro [A proposal of new perspectives on the Korean War in 60 years after the outbreak of the Korean War]," *Yeoksa-wa hyeonsil* 78 (December 2010): 451-468.

Contemporary History is devoted to the events in the Korean Peninsula during the 1970s—the inter-Korean talks, Yushin Reforms, abduction of Kim Dae-jung, South Korea’s nuclear weapons program, Panmunjom Axe Murders, etc. The author skillfully blends his personal experiences as a journalist stationed in Korea at that time with an interpretation of the events based on extensive archival research he performed in the later years. He positions the security crisis of 1976 in the context of rising military tensions after the communist victories in Indochina. Oberdorfer points out that, prior to the crisis, the US made several threats of nuclear attack on North Korea and staged the large-scale Team Spirit maneuvers in response to South Korea’s concerns, which were caused by the fall of Saigon.

In two chapters of his book published in 1996,¹⁷ Barry K. Gills described the period of the 1970s as the time when North Korea, utilizing favorable international environment, challenged South Korea’s exclusive claim to legitimacy. The scholar made the best use of diplomatic documents available at that time to identify a strong link between the policies of North Korea and South Korea toward the Third World on one hand and the discussion of the Korean question at the UN on the other. However, recently declassified documents put under question some factual information in Gills’ work and his assessment of the roles of China and the US in that process.

¹⁷ Barry K. Gills, *Korea versus Korea: A Case of Contested Legitimacy* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), Chapters 6 and 7, 98–189.

Shin Wook Hee¹⁸ inquires into the reasons why inter-Korean relations, despite the promising start of a peaceful dialogue, reached a stalemate by the mid-1970s. The scholar puts the main responsibility for the failure of the Korean détente on the changes in North Korea's intentions. However, through an analysis of the perceptions, policies, and strategic postures of South Korea and the US, he demonstrates that the conflict of opinions and limited cooperation between Seoul and Washington were also an important factor stalling progress in inter-Korean relations. Shin's inquiry, therefore, focuses on interactions between the US and South Korea, rather than on the dynamics between the two Korean regimes.

Woo Seongji¹⁹ approaches the same question through the prism of the evolutionary expectancy theory which predicts de-escalation of rivalry when external shocks change the expectations of decision-makers. By applying the theory to the Korean case, the scholar shows that although several shocks—such as the Sino-American rapprochement, reorientation of a rival's policy, and shift in competitive abilities—did take place in the 1970s, none of them were significant enough to change expectations of the leaders in North and South Korea, thereby making the period of reconciliation short-lived.

¹⁸ Shin Wook Hee [Sin Uk-hui], "Gihoe-eseo gyochak sangtae-ro" [From opportunity to stalemate], *Hanguk jeongchi oegyong nonchong* 26-2 (2005): 253–285.

¹⁹ Woo Seongji [U Seung-ji], "Jinhwa gidae iron-gwa Detanteu sigi Nam-Buk hwahae-ui ihae" [The evolutionary expectancy theory and understanding of reconciliation between North and South Korea during the Détente period], *Gukjejeonchinonchong* 48-2 (2008): 107-124.

In “Korea’s Great Divergence: North and South Korea between 1972 and 1987,” Gregg Brazinsky²⁰ demonstrates that the advent of the détente between the US and China posed similar challenges to the political rulers in Seoul and Pyongyang and that the two regimes had similar instincts in how to adapt to those challenges. However, according to the scholar, the differences in the actual policies and systems produced differing results leading to the divergence of fortunes between North and South Korea thereafter.

The present dissertation draws inspiration from these studies. In particular, it builds upon the existing argument that the two Koreas internalized the division during the period of the late 1960s–early 1970s²¹ and seeks to extend it by asserting that, along with the division, the two Koreas internalized the Cold War. The last point is what differentiates this work from the existing studies. I look

²⁰ In *The Cold War in East Asia: 1945–1991*, ed. Tsuyoshi Hasegawa (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2011), 241–264.

²¹ This argument was strengthened and refined by Hong Seuk-ryule in *Bundan-ui hiseuteri*. In earlier versions, it appears, for example, in Kim Hak-joon (*The Unification Policy of South and North Korea: A Comparative Study* (Seoul: Seoul National University Press, 1977), 193). The scholar contended that the fact that the two Korean sides “had made their respective territories more or less self-sufficient by the end of the 1960s” implies that “the division of Korea was being in effect ossified.” The same term, “ossification of the division” is used to describe the situation in Korea at the turn of the 1970s in the survey of Korean unification policies that starts Kim Se-jin, ed., *Korean Unification: Source Materials with an Introduction* (Seoul: Research Center for Peace and Unification, 1976), 62.

at the Korean Peninsula from the angle of the global Cold War with the purpose of discovering common patterns in the behavior of South and North Korea and analyzing and comparing those patterns with the Cold War interactions of the great powers and other countries.

3. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The present dissertation adopts a historical approach. An overview of the development of inter-Korean relations from liberation in 1945 until the late 1960s is followed by a detailed reconstruction of events on and in connection to the Korean Peninsula in the period of 1971 to 1976.

The relationship between North and South Korea is seen as a dynamic interaction affected by each other's moves, transformations in the external environment, and the regimes' relations with great powers. Changes in policies of the great powers had a profound influence on the two Koreas throughout the Cold War. Moreover, the Korean regimes did not simply react to the moves of the great powers but also strove to exploit those moves to their own advantage or, in some cases, sought to reverse the great power policies. For these reasons, the dissertation uses a multi-party framework. For the period until the late 1960s, the main actors include the US, the Soviet Union, the two Koreas, and, to a lesser extent, China. In the main part of the dissertation, which discusses the period of the early to mid-1970s, China takes the place of the Soviet Union as the main non-

Korean actor on the communist side. This is due to the fact that by that time the PRC emerged as a major regional player and its position and influence on the Korean affairs were further enhanced through the process of the rapprochement with the US. Within this four-party framework, equal importance is given to the two Koreas and to the policies and behavior of the two great powers in connection to the Korean Peninsula.

It is important to note that the primary level of analysis in the dissertation is the level of the actors' governments. Although I clarify the names of agencies and persons in the descriptions of perceptions and events, the governments are treated as unitary actors unless conflicts within them are known to have affected the course of the events. The character of the South and North Korean regimes and their relations with the respective societies are also taken into consideration as an important intervening variable in the regimes' choices. A close investigation of domestic events, however, is conducted only where it is necessary to avoid distortion of facts.

For the period prior to the 1970s and the relatively better studied period of the early 1970s, the analysis largely relies on the existing literature, whereas the events of 1973-1976 are reconstructed based on original research. The primary material of the latter part is documents collected from archives in the US and South Korea. These include: (1) collections of Eastern European and Chinese diplomatic cables of the North Korea International Documentation Project at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars located in Washington, D.C.; (2) documents from the South Korean Presidential Archives and Archive of the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and (3) documents of the State Department, CIA, and National Security Council preserved in the National Archives in College Park, Maryland; documents of the Nixon, Ford, and Carter Presidential Libraries; and (4) documents of the online archive of the United Nations. Along with Congressional reports and records of Congress committees' hearings (of the US), all these materials provide factual information and comprise an invaluable source of data on the conversations of leaders and perceptions of the South Korean and American officials as well as of Eastern European diplomats stationed in the 1970s in Pyongyang, Beijing, and the US.

North Korean periodicals, such as *Rodong Sinmun*, *Kulloja*, *Minju Choson*, and *the Pyongyang Times*, as well as collections of works by Kim Il Sung are extensively used to examine the position of the regime in Pyongyang. These are the best available data, given that North Korean governmental papers are inaccessible. Collections of North Korea's official government statements, newspaper articles and reports of the South Korean, American, and Chinese press are also utilized when necessary.

Another important source of data is the memoirs of South Korean and American government officials and American and Korean oral history records. They are particularly useful in revealing the perceptions of decision-makers. Lastly, Don Oberdorfer's work²² was helpful both as a firsthand account of a

²² Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*.

journalist stationed in Korea in the 1970s and as a reference to diplomatic documents that Oberdorfer studied when writing his book.

This dissertation proceeds in the following manner. The next chapter examines the pattern of the Cold War on the Korean Peninsula from liberation in 1945 until the late 1960s against the set of basic characteristics in the Cold War behavior of the superpowers. I emphasize that the division was an artificial creation of the US and the Soviet Union and that the Korean War can be seen as a proxy war between the two superpowers. The American and Soviet nation-building projects in Korea are observed along with the great powers' role in economic and political development of the two Koreas after the Korean War. This is done to demonstrate how Korea was embedded into the global Cold War system. Nevertheless, I argue that the behavior of the two Koreas during that period was far from the pattern of the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union.

Chapter 3 opens with background information on changes in grand strategies and Korea-related policies of the US and China in the late 1960s–early 1970s. I demonstrate that, despite the differences in the policies that the two great powers pursued toward their Korean allies, neither the US nor China expected or desired the Korean issue to become an obstacle to the process of Sino-American rapprochement. I then shift attention to the perceptions of threats and opportunities by North and South Korean regimes. The analysis shows that the sense of threat was more acute on the side of South Korea and that the initiative in raising the Korean issue in Sino-American negotiations and at the UN was on the side of China and North Korea. Nevertheless, Seoul and Pyongyang were similar in their

approach to the changing circumstances—both wanted to open a bilateral dialogue, made efforts to consolidate the regimes, and strove to get backing for their foreign policies from the respective patrons. In fact, all four actors desired inter-Korean dialogue but for different reasons. The chapter finishes with a description of the efforts of North and South Korea to obtain support for their position from the great powers and international community—the endeavor that sparked an intensive diplomatic competition between the two Koreas.

The main focus of Chapter 4 is on the political, economic, and propaganda competition between the two Koreas as expressed in the rupture of the inter-Korean talks, the first debates on the Korean question at the UN General Assembly, and the attempts of North and South Korea to establish diplomatic relations with the countries of the opposite bloc. I highlight the years of 1973 and 1974 as the time of major transformations in the strategies of the four actors. Seoul pursued a breakthrough through the June 23 Statement, where it suggested dual entry of the two Koreas into the UN. Pyongyang decided to suspend dialogue with the South, which the North Koreans considered counterproductive. At the same time, North Korea realized the importance of dealing directly with the US and concentrated on opening bilateral negotiations with Washington. The US ignored North Korea's overtures and concentrated on devising a plan that would allow continuation of the Armistice Agreement irrespective of UN decisions on the Korean question. The position of Beijing on the presence of US troops in Korea was revealed, and the Chinese leadership started treating the issues of Taiwan and Korea separately.

Chapter 5 analyzes the development of the security and legitimacy dilemmas between North and South Korea in the two-year period of 1975 and 1976. It starts with a discussion of Kim Il Sung's visit to Beijing in April 1975. Here I challenge the conventional view that the main objective of the North Korean leader was to solicit China's help for his plan to replicate in the Korean Peninsula the capture of Saigon and other communist successes in Indochina of early 1975. I argue that the move was designed as a breakthrough in North Korea's relations with China and, although it brought Beijing to Pyongyang's side, it also worsened the security dilemma between the two Koreas. The discussion proceeds to the diplomatic front where North Korea made significant gains in 1975. I emphasize the sense of urgency on both the US-South Korea and North Korea sides with regard to the debate of the Korean issue at the UN General Assembly of 1976. By investigating the diplomatic campaigns of North Korea, the US, and South Korea in 1976, I show that the Panmunjom Axe Murders occurred against the backdrop of these heightened diplomatic and military tensions. The response operation Paul Bunyan conducted by the US in cooperation with South Korea represented the climax of the 1976 crisis as, during the operation, the situation in the Korean Peninsula came to the brink of a full-scale war. The last part of the chapter discusses the process of de-escalation of the crisis.

Chapter 6 brings together, into one pattern, the features of behavior of North and South Korea discovered in the previous three chapters. I point to the intensity of the diplomatic, economic, and propaganda competition and arms race between the two Koreas in the early to mid-1970s and the coordination and

interrelatedness between the security and legitimacy agendas of the two regimes. The term “diplomatic war” is suggested to refer to the latter phenomenon. Moreover, some parallels are revealed between the behavior of the two Koreas during the 1970s and that of the superpowers during the Cold War in general. From this perspective, the 1970s in the Korean Peninsula can be seen as a miniature Cold War, intensified and compressed in time and scale and fought by the two Koreas in imitation of the great powers. Through this process, the two Korean regimes internalized the Cold War. The remaining part of the chapter adopts a comparative perspective in an attempt to find the reasons why the internalization of the Cold War on the Korean Peninsula took place during the 1970s. The reasons for the failure of the Korean détente are discussed in connection with the preceding analysis.

4. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

The framework outlined above entails several limitations that need to be pointed out before proceeding to the main part of the dissertation.

This dissertation focuses on the inter-governmental interaction between the two Koreas in the period of the early to mid-1970s within a four-party framework. The analysis is thus limited to discussing the perceptions, behavior, and interactions of South Korea, North Korea, the US, and China. The roles of the Soviet Union and Japan during that period are given relatively less attention.

Secondly, the main level of analysis of the dissertation is the governments of South and North Korea. The character of the South and North Korean regimes and their relations with the respective societies are also analyzed as an important intervening variable explaining the regimes' choices. Close investigation of domestic events, however, is conducted only where it is considered necessary to avoid distortion of facts. Thus, the thesis does not provide a comprehensive representation of domestic actors and their actions below the level of a government.

Thirdly, foreign and domestic policies of a regime can be explained from multiple perspectives which give priorities to different sets of factors. For example, North Korea's active diplomacy in the 1970s toward Western countries and the Third World can be explained with economic imperatives.²³ Similarly, some studies emphasize the economic considerations behind Park Chung Hee's drive to authoritarianism in the late 1960s–early 1970s.²⁴ In this dissertation, the economic aspects of South and North Korea foreign policies receive relatively less attention because—as demonstrated in Chapters 4 and 5—the economic interests played a secondary role to the security and legitimacy interests of the two regimes in their interactions with each other and the outside world, including the great

²³ See for example, *Tyranny of the Weak*, Ch. 5, 168-207.

²⁴ See for example, Kang Min, “Gwallyojeok gwonwijuui-ui Hangukjeok saengseong” [Formation of bureaucratic authoritarianism in Korea], *Hanguk jeongchihak hoebo* 17 (1983): 341-362.

powers.

In terms of the data used, the biggest limitation of this work is that North Korean governmental documents are unavailable. As mentioned above, I attempted to discern the perceptions and intentions of the North Korean regime based on official statements, North Korean press, and writings of Kim Il Sung—all of which are full of propaganda. The reports of foreign embassies in Pyongyang to their home countries provided another source of information. Access to Chinese documents related to North Korea is also restricted. Moreover, I do not speak Chinese, so to analyze Beijing's behavior I had to rely on articles on the subject written in English and Korean as well as on reviews of Chinese press regularly prepared by the US Department of State, American diplomatic documents, and cables of Eastern European diplomats.

5. USAGE OF TERMS

Below are several key concepts that are used throughout this dissertation. As these terms often differ in meaning in academic scholarship, their application in this dissertation is clarified through the following discussion of the definitions.

Cold War

The expression “cold war” has a long history going back to the 14th century, when

Prince Juan Manuel, the regent of Castile and Leon, applied it to the struggle between the Spanish Christians and the Moors. The prince meant that, unlike “hot,” or formally declared, wars, the “cold war” began without a declaration of war and ended without a peace treaty.²⁵

At the end of World War II, English writer George Orwell used cold war, as a general term, in his essay “You and the Atomic Bomb.”²⁶ Believing that an atomic bomb is “fantastically expensive” and that “its manufacture demands an enormous industrial effort,” Orwell observed that the invention of this weapon would intensify the trends toward having only few states capable of waging war on a grand scale and toward the re-imposition of slavery. He predicted,

So we have before us the prospect of two or three monstrous super-states, each possessed of a weapon by which millions of people can be wiped out in a few seconds, dividing the world between them.

Orwell suggested that the surviving great nations might make a tacit agreement never to use the atomic bomb against one another and only use it, or the threat of it, against people who are unable to retaliate.

The atomic bomb may complete the process by robbing the exploited classes and peoples of all power

²⁵ Thomas Parrish, *The Cold War Encyclopedia* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1996), 68-69.

²⁶ Published on 19 October 1945 in the British newspaper *Tribune*.

to revolt, and at the same time putting the possessors of the bomb on a basis of military equality. Unable to conquer one another, they are likely to continue ruling the world between them.

In the polarized yet stable world of the new epoch, a great nation would be “unconquerable” and “in a permanent state of ‘cold war’ with its neighbors.”

The term “cold war” was first used to describe specifically the geopolitical confrontation between the US and the USSR in a speech written in April 1947 by American journalist Herbert Bayard Swope for Bernard Baruch, a financier and advisor to Democratic presidents.²⁷ The speech proclaimed, “Let us not be deceived: we are today in the midst of a cold war.”²⁸

For a long time, studies of the Cold War have concentrated on the relationship between the superpowers—the US and the Soviet Union—as well as the confrontation, especially in Europe, of their respective blocs. The discussion has also evolved from orthodox and revisionist views—which focused on laying responsibility for the Cold War on one or the other superpower (the Soviet Union or the US, respectively)—to an emphasis on systemic (balance of power in a bipolar international system); political, economic, and cultural (global trends as well as contrast in the internal characteristics of the US and the Soviet Union); perceptual (mutual distrust and fear of the counterpart’s expansionist ambitions);

²⁷ Parrish, *op. cit.*, 68-69.

²⁸ Quoted in *New York Times* (17 April 1947).

and personality (role of individual leaders such as Truman, Nixon, and Stalin) factors in the conflict.²⁹

There is also a rising interest in the Cold War in regions other than Europe. This interest is based on the recognition that the possibility of expansion and overt conflict in the European theater throughout the Cold War was low, whereas the great power competition for spheres of influence and “hot” episodes of the Cold War took place primarily on the periphery of the system. The advent of the Cold War *international* history in general and a growing number of studies examining the Cold War in Asia in particular provided an important impetus and inspiration for this dissertation. Some of such studies draw on the world system theory and suggest reinterpretation of the Cold War in terms of the North-South division.³⁰

²⁹ Odd Arne Westad, “Introduction: Reviewing the Cold War,” in *Reviewing the Cold War: Approaches, Interpretations, Theory*, ed. Odd Arne Westad (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 3-5. For an example of synthesis of three factors—balance of power, political culture, and perceptions—see Joseph L. Noguee and John Spanier, *Peace Impossible—War Unlikely: The Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union* (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1988). A comprehensive list of various causes of the Cold War can be found in James R. Arnold and Roberta Wiener, ed., *Cold War: The Essential Reference Guide* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2012), xiii-xxi. An entire volume of Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, ed., *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Vol. I, Origins* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), which comprises articles by an international team of scholars, is devoted to exploring different causes of the Cold War.

³⁰ See for example, Yangwen Zheng, Hong Liu, and Michael Szonyi, ed., *The Cold War in Asia: The Battle for Hearts and Minds* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010) and

Others focus on the diversity of shapes the Cold War took in different places.³¹ Their findings imply that we can speak of the Cold War in the plural rather than in the singular. In either case, the meaning of the “cold war” in these recent narratives is, ironically, closer to the one suggested by George Orwell in the 1940s.³²

The transformation in the target area of the research led to changes in the basic definition of the Cold War from denoting the “open yet restricted rivalry that developed after World War II between the US and the Soviet Union”³³ to “the political, ideological, strategic, and military conflict between the Western Allies—led by the United States—and the communist countries—led by the Soviet

especially Chapter 1 of the volume, “What Cold War in Asia? An Interpretive Essay” by Immanuel Wallerstein. See also, Henry Heller, *The Cold War and the New Imperialism: A Global History, 1945-2005* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2006).

³¹ See for example, Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); and Hasegawa, *The Cold War in East Asia*.

³² Hong Seuk-ryule, “Naengjeonsa-wa Hanbando bundansa [History of the Cold War and the national division on the Korean Peninsula] (paper presented at the Inaugural Conference of the Korean Association of Cold War Studies “Cold War Studies and Korea: Critical Perspectives and New Visions,” 13-14 February, 2015).

³³ *The New Encyclopedia Britannica in 30 volumes. Macropedia. Ready Reference and Index* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1979), Vol. II, 1049, Main entry: “Cold War.”

Union”³⁴ and to the “domination of international politics” by a conflict between the US and the Soviet Union.³⁵

The latter part of this dissertation compares the relationship between North and South Korea to the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union. Therefore, it is important to enumerate the defining features in the Cold War interactions of the two superpowers. Despite the differences in the vision of causes of the superpower confrontation, the findings of historians and political scientists yield a common pattern in the behavior of the US and the Soviet Union, the main characteristics of which are as follows.³⁶

³⁴ Parrish, *op. cit.*, 68.

³⁵ R.J. Barry Jones, ed., *Routledge Encyclopedia of International Political Economy* (London; New York: Routledge, 2001), Vol. 1, Main entry: “Cold War,” 237.

³⁶ The suggested set of characteristics integrates findings of several leading historians and political scientists with contents of the articles in representative reference books. It is based on the following sources: “Overview of the Cold War” in Arnold, *Cold War: The Essential Reference Guide*, ix-xii; Jones, *Routledge Encyclopedia of International Political Economy*, Vol. 1, Main entry: “Cold War,” 237-40; John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin Group, 2005); Heller, *The Cold War and the New Imperialism*; Robert S. Litwak and Samuel F. Wells, Jr., ed., *Superpower Competition and Security in the Third World* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1988); Westad, *The Global Cold War*; Leffler and Westad, *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, Vol.I; *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 9, 756-769, Main entry: “International Relations;” Lori Lyn Bogle, ed., *The Cold War. Vol. 2, National Security Policy Planning from Truman to Reagan and from Stalin to Gorbachev* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Noguee and Spanier, *Peace Impossible—War Unlikely*; and

(1) Political, economic, and propaganda rivalry

As is widely known, the two great powers did not simply compete economically and politically. They also incessantly strove to expand their spheres of influence and establish their own political and economic order in those spheres while seeking to isolate the other side. In the competition to gain geopolitical advantages, the two great powers provided military and economic aid to various governments and rebel groups. The US often supported regimes with questionable democratic credentials while the Soviet Union was ready to help any regime that declared itself socialist. As the Soviet Union consolidated its grip on the Eurasian continent in the late 1940s and the 1950s, the US constructed a global system of military bases, political alliances, and economic recovery projects meant to contain communism and project the US power worldwide. The Soviet Union, following the rearmament of West Germany and its inclusion into NATO, responded with the formation of the Warsaw Pact (1955). With the stabilization of inter-bloc relations in Europe and the development of power projection capabilities of the two great powers, the Third World emerged as the principal arena of the rivalry and remained as such until the mid-1980s.

(2) Ideological conflict

Ideological conviction reinforced the rival material interest and inflamed the struggle between the Soviet Union and the US. Both superpowers had a sense of

Westad, *Reviewing the Cold War*.

their own unique destiny: the Soviet Union in projecting communism, the socialist economy, and the principle of equality, and the US in building the liberal political and economic system, expanding capitalism, and promoting principles of individual liberty and nationhood throughout the world. The Soviets set forth a “two camp” theory: the conflict between the peace-loving and progressive camp, led by the Soviet Union, and that of reaction and imperialism, led by the US. In the West, there were perceptions that the expansionism of the Soviet Union was a threat to Western civilization from Eastern barbarians.

(3) No direct military conflict but an arms race in both conventional and nuclear weapons

The two great powers never confronted each other on the battlefield. However, they fought each other by proxy, sometimes directly intervening in a local conflict (the Korean War, Vietnam War, and war in Afghanistan, for example) and came close to a direct confrontation during a number of international crises. Put in the words of Raymond Aron, “Peace impossible—war unlikely.”³⁷ The avoidance of a direct confrontation rested on the fear of a nuclear holocaust. The Soviets’ acquisition of an atomic bomb in 1949 and launch of Sputnik in 1957 meant that the two superpowers could annihilate each other with nuclear weapons. While the technological advances consequent on the arms race resulted in the acquisition of an enormous capacity for destruction by both sides, some of these advances led to greater stability in the relationship—which Winston Churchill described as a

³⁷ Raymond Aron, *Le Grand Schisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), 26.

“balance of terror.”³⁸ The realization of each other’s destructive capabilities led to the two powers’ efforts to limit the development of nuclear weapons during the second half of the Cold War. However, the arms race proceeded in the conventional weapon field. The nuclear war was henceforth “bad” but wars of national liberation in peripheral areas—which were fought with conventional weapons—remained good.

(4) Continuous communication

Despite the persisting rivalry, the Soviet Union and the US retained contact with each other and conducted negotiations. The importance of direct and immediate communication between the leaders of the two superpowers was brought to the attention of both the Soviets and Americans by the Cuban missile crisis. In the wake of the crisis, in 1963, Moscow and Washington established a “hot line” teletypewriter link. The two great powers continued negotiations on mutual arms reductions and exchanged communications on other pending issues even and especially at the times of heightened tensions.

(5) Unevenness of the conflict

During the Cold War, spikes of extreme hostility between the great powers alternated with periods of relaxation in tensions, such as Khrushchev’s attempts at “co-existence,” the Cuban missile crisis, détente of the 1970s, and renewed

³⁸ Winston Churchill, speech to the House of Commons, 1 March 1955, cited in Lorna Arnold, *Britain and the H-bomb* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 65.

confrontation of the 1980s. While the underlying causes of the conflict remained largely constant, the circumstances in which the rivalry was played out were always changing as technology, politics, economy, and culture are never static.

Détente

In the field of international relations and diplomacy, the term “détente” refers to the relaxation of tensions between two or more hostile powers. The term has been in use since the late 19th century, when détente was seen as the first stage in improvement of relations between states.³⁹ Détente usually implied informal or formal contacts between statesmen and diplomats of rival countries with the objective of gaining preliminary agreement on ways to resolve outstanding grievances. A prime example can be found in the successful détente that took place between Britain and France during 1898–1904.⁴⁰ Since then the term has been widely applied to easing of strained tensions between countries in conflict during different historical periods.⁴¹ During the Cold War, with its alternating freezes and

³⁹ The August 17, 1908 article of the *London Times* contains the first recorded example of the use in English of the French noun détente (a “relaxing”) to describe a diplomatic situation (Parrish, *The Cold War Encyclopedia*, 81).

⁴⁰ William H. McNeill et al., ed., *Berkshire Encyclopedia of World History* (Great Barrington, MA: Berkshire Publishing Group, 2010), 757.

⁴¹ Jones, *Routledge Encyclopedia of International Political Economy*, Vol. 1, Main entry: “Détente,” 441.

thaws, various situations of détente arose, but the term is especially associated with the 1970s, the era of negotiations between Washington and Moscow concerning arms control treaties (SALT I and II, the Basic Principle Agreement, etc.), commercial relations, and political cooperation.⁴² In Asia, the 1970s was also the time of the Sino-American rapprochement and consequent opening of diplomatic relations between several US allies (Japan, Thailand, and the Philippines, for example) and countries of the communist bloc.⁴³ In this dissertation, the term “détente” is used in its broader meaning of “reduced tensions between countries in conflict,” so it can refer to the situation in the Korean Peninsula where the early 1970s marked the first talks between officials from Seoul and Pyongyang.

Détente, by definition, is a temporary condition. If successful, it can lead to further rapprochement, or improved relations, and may culminate in an entente, or understanding, and even an alliance as with the aforementioned example of the détente between Britain and France who, by 1914, became allies.⁴⁴ Scholars agree that the 1970s détente between the US and the Soviet Union ended or failed in the

⁴² Parrish, *op. cit.*, 81; and Robert D. Schulzinger, “Détente in the Nixon-Ford years, 1969-1976,” in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Volume II, Crises and Détente*, ed. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 373-394.

⁴³ On diverse facets of the détente worldwide in the 1970s, see Leffler and Westad, *op. cit.*, Vol. II.

⁴⁴ McNeill, *Berkshire Encyclopedia of World History*, 757.

second half of the 1970s.⁴⁵ In the case of the two Koreas, as is demonstrated in this dissertation, the détente was even shorter and gave way to increased confrontation by the mid-1970s.

The Korean Question and the Korean Problem/Korean Issue

The “Korean question” is a common term used to refer to an agenda item in the UN. Until 1965, it appeared in the UN documents⁴⁶ under the titles “The Question of Korea” or “The Korean Question.” From the second half of the 1960s, the agenda item has been more often named as “Questions pertaining to Korea” or “Questions Relating to Korea.” The Korean question (formally the “Problem of the Independence of Korea”) was first brought before the UN General Assembly in September 1947 by the US. Over the years, the UN deliberations of the Korean question have involved a variety of contentious issues such as the problem of inviting South and North Korean representatives to the debate of the UN General Assembly, the question of Korea’s UN membership, approaches to peace and unification of the Korean Peninsula, violations and maintenance of the Korean Armistice Agreement, and activities of UN-related bodies (UNCURK, UN Command, etc.). A series of new issues have arisen in recent years, such as the

⁴⁵ See for example, Noguee and Spanier, *Peace Impossible—War Unlikely*, 272; and Schulzinger, *op. cit.*, 373-394.

⁴⁶ Such as Yearbooks of the United Nations.

nuclear weapons development issues and human rights abuses in North Korea.⁴⁷

The “Korean problem” and the “Korean issue” refer to the central issue in South and North Korea’s conflict: the problem of peace and unification.⁴⁸ In this dissertation, the terms are used interchangeably in relation to the policies of the great powers and the two Koreas concerned with the arrangements for the Korean Peninsula.

Internalization

According to *Collins English Dictionary*,⁴⁹ the verb “internalize” means “to make internal, especially to incorporate within oneself values, attitudes, etc. through learning or socialization.” It is in this meaning that the word “internalization” is used in the present dissertation. The meaning is different from “indigenization” (“Koreanization”) or “localization” in that it does not entail transformation to adapt the original form to local conditions. Rather, the original features remain unchanged.

⁴⁷ Park Chi Young, *Korea and the United Nations* (The Hague, the Netherlands: Kluwer Law International, 2000), 5-11.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, xvi.

⁴⁹ *Collins English Dictionary—Complete and Unabridged*, 10th Edition, Harper Collins Publishers, 2015.

CHAPTER II. THE COLD WAR ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA PRIOR TO THE 1970S

INTRODUCTION

The Cold War is defined as the political, ideological, strategic, and military conflict between the two blocs—the Western bloc led by the US and the communist countries led by the Soviet Union. Thus, at the core of the Cold War lay a conflict between the two superpowers, the US and the Soviet Union. As was discussed in the introductory chapter of this dissertation, the defining features of that conflict included: political, economic, and propaganda rivalry; ideological conflict; absence of a direct military conflict but an arms race in conventional and nuclear weapons; continuous communication; and unevenness of the conflict with alternating periods of extreme hostility and relaxation of tensions. Since the systems of the two superpowers were ideologically incompatible and both were expansionist, conflict between them was inevitable, but it never developed into a direct collision because both parties realized that such a collision could lead to annihilation of one or both. As parts of efforts toward co-existence with each other, the two retained contact and conducted negotiations but also incessantly competed to incorporate more countries into their camps. In order to control the states within the respective blocs, the US and the Soviet Union established patron-client relations with the member countries and legitimized such relations through the

dichotomy of ideological confrontation with the other bloc. The countries of the bloc embraced this binary structure and often adopted some of the characteristics of the behavior of the superpowers, but the structure overall remained imposed and the confrontation instigated from the outside, by the US and the Soviet Union.

This chapter examines the patterns of interactions between the two Koreas from the division of the peninsula until the end of the 1960s with the purpose of evaluating to what extent the North and South Korean regimes incorporated the Cold War into their behavior during that period.

1. A HOT WAR IN THE COLD WAR

The Cold War set on the Korean Peninsula in the second half of the 1940s. Hardly any other region in the world during that time can serve as a better textbook example of the transformation toward the Cold War in the relationship between the US and the Soviet Union.

US President Franklin Roosevelt's vision for the post-World War II international order was based on the global interests of the US as the strongest power emerging from the war. . The liberal democratic order he aspired to build would rest on granting independence to colonial territories after a period of tutelage by the great powers, pursuing economic openness (by increasing access to markets, removing protectionism and lowering tariffs), and managing the

political-economic order jointly with leading industrial democracies bound together by rules and institutional mechanisms.⁵⁰ But to turn that vision into reality, the US needed the cooperation of its wartime allies, particularly the Soviet Union.

The Soviet leader, Joseph Stalin, also realized the importance of cooperating with the US for his country, which was devastated by World War II. In early 1945, he agreed to the American plan for a four-party (the US, UK, China, and the Soviet Union) trusteeship over Korea. In August, as both the American and Soviet armies were moving forward in Northeast Asia fighting Japanese imperial forces, Stalin accepted the US proposal to divide Korea into two occupational zones along the 38th parallel as suggested by General Order No. 1 for the Surrender of Japan (17 August 1945). According to the proposal, the Soviet Union would be authorized to receive the Japanese surrender north of the 38th parallel and US troops would receive it south of the line.⁵¹ The administration of

⁵⁰ G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order After Major Wars* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), Ch. 6 “The Settlement of 1945,” 163-205; and G. John Ikenberry, “Myth of Post-Cold War Chaos,” *Foreign Affairs* 75/3 (May/June 1996): 79-87.

⁵¹ By doing so, Stalin likely hoped to improve Soviet chances of sharing in the occupation and military government of Japan (Jeong Yong-uk, “Gwangbok-gwa Mi-So-ui bunhal jeomnyeong” [Liberation and divided occupation by the United States and the Soviet Union] in Vol. 52 “Daehan-mionguk-ui seongnip” [Establishment of the Republic of Korea] of *Sinpyeon Hanguksa* [A new history of Korea], ed. National Institute of Korean History (Gwacheon: Guksa-pyeongchan-wiwonhoe, 2002), 24-25).

civil affairs was intended as temporary, until the surrender was completed, and to be “the responsibility of the respective commanders of the two zones in Korea.”⁵² Therefore, the division of the Korean Peninsula was the decision of the great powers although it was not initially intended to bring about a long-term division of the country, let alone spawn a rivalry between the two parts.

Nevertheless, as Soviet and American forces were taking over the respective halves of the peninsula, the occupational authorities were implementing policies conducive to bringing to power the forces that were friendly to them. American officials deemed Korea ripe for the spread of communism and treated as communist many of the indigenous organizations that Koreans created in the erroneous belief that their country had gained independence. To contain the left, the occupational authorities refused to recognize any Korean political groupings while seeking to empower the rightists who would ally with the US. The United States Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK) was established as a temporary administration on 12 September 1945, four days after the arrival in Seoul of the American commander, General John R. Hodge.⁵³ It retained much of the colonial power structure, created national defense forces mostly of former Japanese army soldiers, and buttressed the police to suppress political opposition

⁵² Reports by the State-War-Navy Coordinating Sub-committee for the Far East, SWNCC 79/1 and SWNCC 101/4 (October 1945), *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, 1945, Vol. VI, 1093-1103; and “Draft Memorandum to the Joint Chiefs of Staff” (22 August 1945), *FRUS*, 1945, Vol. VI, 1037-1039.

⁵³ SWNCC 176 Series, *FRUS*, 1945, Vol. VI, 1037-1045.

and all those who disliked American policies.

In the northern part of Korea, the Soviets upheld and sometimes created the people's committees, eliminated colonial collaborators from important positions, and worked with a coalition of communists and nationalists. The Red Army formally transformed authority from the disarmed Japanese to the Provisional People's Political Committee of South Pyeongan Province and placed it under the supervision of the occupational commander, General Ivan M. Chistyakov. The Soviets legitimized similar committees in other provinces and made sure they were not dominated by right-wing nationalists by installing in the committees a considerable number of Korean communists. The Soviet Civil Administration was established on 3 October 1945 and functioned as a kind of parallel government for North Korea until the creation of the Interim People's Committee in February 1946. In November 1945, the Five-Province Administration was created of the provisional political committees. Although the administration was led by Koreans and the committees were formally in charge of all administrative powers in each province, they were actually controlled by the political office of the occupational authorities and Soviet political advisers. The Soviet occupation forces thus played a key role in reforming the political system and constructing institutions in the northern part of Korea but the impetus for radicalization and revolution in the north came from Korean communists themselves, such as Kim Il Sung for whom the Soviets organized a welcoming

ceremony in October 1945, after returned to Korea from the Soviet Far East.⁵⁴

The Moscow conference of December 1945 became the last instance of the two superpowers cooperating and reaching a consensus on Korea. The foreign ministers of the US and the Soviet Union agreed to establish a Soviet-American Joint Commission composed of occupational authorities from the northern and southern halves of the Korean Peninsula. The commission was to consult with Korean parties and social organizations in order to assist the formation and operation of a provisional Korean government under trusteeship of the four powers for a period of up to five years, after which Korea was to become a single, independent state.⁵⁵

The reaction of Koreans to the Moscow agreement exposed a deep divide both within and between different political groups and on both sides of the demarcation line. If in the first few months after the liberation the Korean leaders were willing and attempted to work together, by the end of 1946, that eagerness largely waned and gave way to enmity and bitter rivalry which translated into

⁵⁴ Charles K. Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution, 1945-1950* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), 52-54 and 64-70; and Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, Vol. I, "Liberation and the Emergence of Separate Regimes, 1945-1947" (Seoul: Yuksabipyungsa, 2002), Ch. 11, "The North Wind," 382-427.

⁵⁵ "Report of the Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United States of America and the United Kingdom," Moscow Meeting of Council of Foreign Ministers, 27 December 1945, Library of Congress Collection "United States Treaties," Multilateral Treaties, Vol. 3 (1931-1945).

mutual accusation and violence. Radical rightists, such as Kim Gu (the former president of the Korean Provisional Government located in Shanghai prior to the liberation), were extremely antagonistic toward the conservative rightist group, the Korean Democratic Party, whose leader Song Jin-u was murdered after expressing views in support of the trusteeship system.⁵⁶ Communists were split into the international and domestic groups.⁵⁷ Disagreements also developed between the three main groups—the communists led by Kim Il Sung, Christians headed by Cho Man-sik, and the Cheondogyo—in the northern part.⁵⁸ Some moderates, most prominently, Yeo Un-hyeong, tirelessly strove to build a coalition between the left and right ends of the spectrum but in the following months the conflicts aggravated further, and the assassination of Yeo in 1947 buried the last hopes for reconciliation, cooperation, and building Korea as a single country through a joint effort.

In the calculations of the superpowers, too, the objective of establishing an independent Korean state faded further away as the rift between them grew

⁵⁶ Park Myeong-rim, *Hanguk jeonjaeng-ui balbal-gwa giwon* [The Korean War: the outbreak and its origins] (Paju: Nanam, 1996), Ch. 3, 135-167; and Park Tae Gyun, *Hanguk jeonjaeng* [The Korean War] (Seoul: Chaek-gwa hamkke, 2005), 38-51.

⁵⁷ Kim Nam-sik, *Namnodang yeongu* [Study of the Southern Labor Party] (Seoul: Dolbegae, 1984), Ch. 1-3, 13-61.

⁵⁸ Kim Sung-bo [Kim Seong-bo], *Bukhanui yeoksa 1—geongukgwa inminminjujuuii gyeonghum 1945~1960* [History of North Korea Vol. I: the experiences of nation founding and people's democracy 1945-1960] (Seoul: Yuksabipyungsa, 2011), 62-70.

deeper.⁵⁹ At the time when George F. Kennan was suggesting a strategy of containing the Soviet Union through the “Long Telegram,” the Soviets were refusing cooperation on creating international institutions (such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank) and kept their forces in Iran (despite an early agreement to withdraw), and the civil war ravaged in China with a new strength; the two superpowers started to support the creation of separate, temporary administrations of their liking in Korea.

According to Charles K. Armstrong, the creation of a separate state in North Korea was “all but officially declared” by 1947.⁶⁰ In February 1946, the Soviet occupation authorities oversaw the establishment of a provisional northern administration under the North Korean Interim People’s Committee headed by Kim Il Sung. Non-leftist nationalists, including the most prominent Christian leader Cho Man-sik, were removed from power. The land reform was conducted in March; confiscation of land from landlords without compensation, along with purges and the repression of Christians, sparked a population exodus southward but it also helped the North Korean communist party get a powerful support base among the poor peasant majority of the population. The Interim People’s Committee also initiated regulations on labor and legalized equality between the sexes—the reforms targeting, respectively, workers and women. Several large-scale social organizations were created for the youth. Major industrial enterprises

⁵⁹ Park Tae Gyun, *op. cit.*, Ch. 2, 82-111.

⁶⁰ Armstrong, *op. cit.*, 215.

were nationalized and came under central control with management patterned along Soviet lines. The backbone of the political system, the Workers' Party of North Korea, was formed in August 1946. The groundwork for creating a northern army was laid in the fall of 1946. Soviet Koreans took the leading role in cultural organs—party publications and the press.⁶¹ The Soviet Union started providing to North Korea massive amount of economic aid sending industrial machinery, plant equipment, raw materials, and fuel to rejuvenate economy in the northern half of the peninsula.⁶²

The USAMGIK confronted not only the leftists but also the rightists who challenged its legitimacy. Even though the official US policy was still premised on working out a compromise with the Soviets, the Americans set up in February 1946 a Representative Democratic Council (RDC), which was highly critical of the Moscow Agreement and trusteeship. The council was composed primarily of rightists, and Rhee Syngman, who worked closely with the American authorities, was made the leader of the council. The Soviet-American Joint Commission met several times in spring 1946 through the fall of 1947 but failed to come to an agreement.

Rhee Syngman and Kim Il Sung, each on their side of the 38th parallel, were skillfully using the occupational authorities to tighten their grip on power

⁶¹ Ibid., 66-106; Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, Vol. I, Ch. 11, "The North Wind," 382-427.

⁶² Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution*, 153.

with the ambition of becoming the leader of an independent Korea. By the middle of 1946, both started to favor the creation of a separate regime in their half of the peninsula to become the base for a unified country under their rule. Rhee argued that unless communism in Korea was destroyed, “the inevitable civil war and bloodshed among the Koreans would follow.” In his words, the biggest difficulty lay in the fact that he had “no free hand” in dealing with the communists. He believed that a southern regime under his leadership would be able to put communists “completely under control.”⁶³ The USAMGIK was alarmed by Rhee’s calls for a police action and briefly tried to negotiate with the moderates and other rightists in an effort to limit Rhee’s power but in the fall of 1946, against the backdrop of a peasant rebellion in Daegu that spread across the southern provinces, the American military government held elections for an interim assembly, and the political right headed by Rhee emerged victorious.

Kim Il Sung maneuvered politically to isolate and defeat his rivals and allied with the Soviet faction of Koreans. Assisted by the Soviet Civil Administration and the Soviet side of the Joint Commission, he used the communist cadres and press to indoctrinate the population and the police to

⁶³ Letter from Rhee Syngman to Preston Goodfellow, 19 June 1946, Guksa Pyeonchan Wiwonhoe [National Institute of Korean History], ed., *Daehanminguksa jaryojip* [Republic of Korea history sourcebook], Vol. 28, “I Seung-man gwangye seohan jaryojip, 1 (1944-1948)” [A collection of Rhee Syngman’s letters, 1 (1944-1948)] (Gwacheon: National Institute of Korean History, 1996), 85-86.

enforce state policy.⁶⁴ As mentioned earlier, he headed the Interim People's Committee and the communist party which carried out the revolutionary reforms of the North Korean society. The reforms were presented as part of the ten-point platform of the Fatherland Restoration Society, which Kim allegedly drew up in 1936.⁶⁵

Any prospect for cooperation between the superpowers disappeared in 1947. Disagreements over the future of Germany and the concern of the US over the expansion of communism in Southern Europe and the Middle East led to the announcement of the Truman Doctrine, which pledged economic and military aid to Greece and Turkey and support to all "free peoples" in their struggle against "totalitarian regimes," i.e. the Soviet influence.⁶⁶ To consolidate the pro-Western governments in Europe, the US moved to incorporate West Germany into the plans for European rehabilitation and initiated a large-scale program of providing American aid to European countries, the Marshall Plan. The Soviet Union prevented the states in Eastern Europe from participating in the Marshall Plan and offered to them an alternative economic rehabilitation program.

⁶⁴ Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, Vol. II, "The Roaring of the Cataract" (Gwacheon: Yuksabipyungsa, 2002), Ch. 9 "The Northern System," 291-324.

⁶⁵ Armstrong, *op. cit.*, 228.

⁶⁶ President Truman's Message to Congress, 12 March 1947, Document 171, 80th Congress, 1st Session, Records of the United States House of Representatives, Record Group 233, National Archives.

In Asia, based on the perception of communist prevalence in China, the US decided to put Japan on the “Reverse Course.” As West Germany after recovery was to become an industrial center of Europe, Japan with a rebuilt economy was seen as the core for integration of a non-communist East Asia. Similarly, in Korea, the US revised its policy to accelerating the establishment of a pro-Western government in the southern half of the peninsula and supporting its survival with economic and military aid until it had a viable economy. The same person who wrote Truman’s address to the Congress (Truman Doctrine) and designed the Marshall Plan, Undersecretary of State Dean Acheson formulated a detailed three-year plan for providing aid and other forms of assistance to Korea in the spring of 1947.⁶⁷

In September 1947, as the meetings of the Soviet-American Joint Commission were in deadlock, the US decided to refer the Korean issue to the United Nations. This move freed American hands to openly commit to the South Korean regime while still appearing to be searching for a solution to the Korean problem within an international framework. The first national election, announced by General Hodge and overseen by the UN Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK), was carried out only in the south of the peninsula in May 1948 to establish the constitutional assembly. The Republic of Korea (ROK) was formally founded on 15 August 1948. The elections were boycotted by the leftists, moderates, and even some rightists. During and in the aftermath of the elections,

⁶⁷ Cumings, *op. cit.*, Ch. 2 “Containment and Internationalism,” 35-78.

communist uprisings—some supported by the North and some independent—broke out in the southern regions of the country, the largest ones hitting Jeju Island, Yeosu, and Suncheon. The brutal suppression of the rebellions was organized and directed by USAMGIK and later the Provisional Military Advisory Group and carried out by Korean army and police.⁶⁸

Although by that time the Soviet presence in the North was smaller than the American presence in the South and dwarfed in comparison to that in Soviet satellites in Eastern Europe, the Soviets also went on with nation-building in the northern half of the peninsula. Some two thousand Koreans who received short-term technical training in the Soviet Union in 1946-1947 along with Soviet managers and engineers were running major North Korean industries by the end of 1947. Soviet-Korean joint-stock companies, initially headed by Soviet citizens but then transferred to Korean leadership, were established to operate the transportation and oil industries.⁶⁹ The Korean People's Army was inaugurated in February 1948. The Soviet-backed police organized a security apparatus with secret networks that penetrated down to the smallest administrative unit and tightly monitored and controlled the population.

The elections to the Supreme People's Assembly were held in late August, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) came into being on 9 September 1948. The communist parties of the north and the south were

⁶⁸ Ibid., Ch. 7 "The Resistance to the Southern System," 237-67.

⁶⁹ Armstrong, *op. cit.*, 152-155.

merged into the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) in the summer of 1949. Moreover, Pyongyang was providing supplies to the guerilla movement in the south and sent agents to infiltrate the southern police forces and foment disorder.⁷⁰ Several times in 1949, Kim asked the Soviet Union for support of a North Korean offensive on the South, but Soviet leaders considered his plan unrealistic.

Rhee also adopted a more aggressive policy seeking to absorb the northern half of the peninsula into his regime through a military campaign. From early 1947, he requested American support and weapons for an attack on North Korea, but the US refused to back him: Washington wanted to contain communism, not to fight it on a battlefield. Instead, the US supplied South Korea with large-scale economic and military aid and offered other types of assistance to help maintain internal security and the stability of the pro-Western regime.

Therefore, the development of the situation in the Korean Peninsula in the second half of the 1940s reflected the transformation of the relationship between the US and the Soviet Union from a wartime alliance to overt competition for spheres of influence. While the two superpowers were willing to cooperate and sought a consensus solution on Korea at the end of World War II, by the late 1940s, they favored and went on with the creation of two separate, antithetical regimes on the Korean Peninsula—the pro-Soviet, communist one in the North and the pro-American, capitalist one in the South. Already by that time, simultaneously with the nation-building in their respective halves of Korea, the Americans and

⁷⁰ Cumings, *op. cit.*, Ch. 8 “The Guerrilla Conflict,” 268-90.

Soviets had to restrain the zeal of Korean leaders to reunify the country by force. And shortly after the withdrawal of the occupational forces of the great powers,⁷¹ the animosity between North and South Korea evolved into a war.

The responsibility for the Korean War has been vigorously contested and debated in scholarship.⁷² Although some studies point to the pivotal role of Kim Il Sung in deciding to launch a full-scale attack on 25 June 1950 and it is true that Koreans were not simple pawns of great power intrigues,⁷³ there is no doubt that

⁷¹ The Soviet army left North Korea in December 1948; the US troops completed the withdrawal from the South by late June 1949.

⁷² Representative studies on the Korean War include: Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War* in two volumes; Park Myeong-rim, *Hanguk jeonjaeng-ui balbal-gwa giwon* in two volumes; Rosemary Foot, *The Wrong War: American Policy and the Dimensions of the Korean Conflict, 1950-1953* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985); Steven Hugh Lee, *The Korean War* (Edinburgh: Pearson Education Limited, 2001); Park Tae Gyun, *Hanguk jeonjaeng*; Kim Nam-sik, *Namnodang yeongu*; William Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); Sergei Goncharov, John W. Lewis and Xue Litai, *Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao, and the Korean War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993); Jian Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); and Kathryn Weathersby, "Stalin, Mao, and the End of the Korean War," in Odd Arne Westad ed., *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945-1963* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1998).

⁷³ Bruce Cumings, for example, argues that Koreans were "prime historical actors" "shaping American and Soviet power to their ends": Kim and Rhee each hoped to provoke a counter-offensive from the other side in order for his own great power patron

the Korean War can be seen as a proxy war, fought at the behest of the superpowers by their South and North Korean allies. Both Kim and Rhee realized that they would need the material and moral support of their patrons to prevail in an offensive and neither would likely have initiated a war independent of superpower assistance. The Korean War acquired an international character from the very beginning. In the spring of 1950, Premier Joseph Stalin finally decided to give a go-ahead to Kim's pleas to unify the country through an armed attack, contingent on Mao Zedong's approval. The Soviet leader then dispatched to North Korea a new military team (which had greater combat experience than its predecessor) and had Soviet officials formulate an offensive strategy based on Soviet military concepts. Soviet advisers drafted the North Korean plan of attack. Furthermore, the Soviet Union provided North Korea with planes, heavy artillery, and tanks, which, along with sixty thousand Korean soldiers returning from China, gave Kim clear military superiority over South Korea.⁷⁴ Mao's consent followed. Recently discovered diplomatic documents reveal that the Soviet leader may have given Kim the permission for the invasion not because Kim reassured him that the South

to enter into the conflict and unify the peninsula. (Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005), 186).

⁷⁴ Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History*, 31. Correspondence between Kim, Stalin, and Terentii F. Shtykov (the first Soviet ambassador to the DPRK) regarding preparation for the attack can be found in Anatoliy V. Torkunov, *Hanguk jeonjaengui jinsilgwa susukkekki* [The truths and the mysteries of the Korean War], trans. Gu Jong-Seo (Seoul: Editor Publishing Co., 2003), 133-140.

could be overwhelmed before the US would come to its rescue but precisely because Stalin wanted the US to become involved and entangled in a limited conflict in Asia.⁷⁵

Also in the spring of 1950, the same events that may have buttressed Stalin's confidence—the successful test of the first Soviet atomic bomb, the victory of communists in the Chinese civil war, the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, and the conclusion of a Soviet-Chinese alliance treaty in February 1950—prompted American officials to produce NSC-68,⁷⁶ a milestone document that envisaged an extensive program of militarization of the Western alliance against the Soviet threat. NSC-68 was formally approved in the wake of the North Korean invasion and provided the basis for a rapid buildup of the US army and military-industrial complex during the Korean War as well as for the US military involvement in conflicts in the developing world. Dean Acheson,

⁷⁵ Particularly important among such documents is Letter from Filippov (Stalin) to Soviet Ambassador in Prague, conveying message to CSSR [Czechoslovak Socialist Republic] leader Klement Gottwald, 27 August 1950, Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI), fond 558, opis 11, delo 62, listy 71-72. Published in: Andrei Ledovskii, "Stalin, Mao Tsedun, i Koreiskaia voina 1950-1953 godov" [Stalin, Mao Zedong, and the Korean War of 1950-1953], *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia*, No. 5 (September-October 2005), 79-113.

⁷⁶ National Security Council 68, "United States Objectives and Programs for National Security" (primary author: Paul H. Nitze), 7 April 1950, Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, President's Secretary's Files, Truman Papers, Collection "Ideological Foundations of the Cold War."

believing that the invasion of South Korea was orchestrated by the Soviet Union, commented that the Soviet move was an “absolute godsend” and that the Korean War “came along and saved America” because it provided the rationale for Washington to move ahead with the rearmament plans. President Harry Truman decided to send troops to Korea as soon as he learned of the North Korean attack. When ordering the use of US troops, he did so with the events leading to World War II in mind, and he contended that a policy of “appeasing” the Soviet-backed North Koreans would lead to another world war.⁷⁷

Seeking to obtain an international mandate for the defense of South Korea, the American officials swiftly brought the Korean conflict to the attention of the UN Security Council. This was done not so much to defeat Korean communism per se as to provide tangible support for American foreign policies designed to contain Soviet influence around the world and to get the public in Western Europe and North America to support an expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).⁷⁸ In the absence of the Soviet Union (who was boycotting the meetings of the Security Council at that time), the council, within less than two weeks since the beginning of the hostilities, passed a series of

⁷⁷ Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, V. II, Ch. 19 “The War for Containment,” 625-665; and Park Tae Gyun, *An Ally and Empire: Two Myths of South Korea-United States Relations, 1945-1980* (Seongnam: The Academy of Korean Studies Press), 93-106.

⁷⁸ Steven Hugh Lee, *The Korean War*, 3.

resolutions⁷⁹ that called upon UN members to furnish troops and other forms of assistance to South Korea to repel the North Korean attack and authorized the Unified Command under the US-designated commander to use the UN flag in the course of operations against North Korean forces. In response, twenty nations sent combat troops and provided medical and other types of support for the US-led (and largely US-financed) action in Korea. What was left of South Korean troops by early July was also placed under the US operational command of the UN command.⁸⁰ Without the US and UN support, North Korea would likely have prevailed over the South in a short period of time and the war would have ended in 1950.

Another phase of escalation began when the US commanders decided to move beyond the 38th parallel with an offensive on the North Korean territory. South Koreans, although supportive of the plan, were not consulted but simply informed about it, with all decision-making concentrated in the hands of Washington and its Western allies.

The Soviet leaders, fearing that the Korean conflict would develop into another world war, were careful to ensure that Soviet troops did not directly

⁷⁹ UN Security Council Resolutions 1501 (25 June 1950), 1511 (27 June 1950), and 1588 (7 July 1950).

⁸⁰ The Operational Control over the South Korean army was retained by the UN Command after signing of the armistice in 1953 and until 1978, when it was taken over by the Combined Forces Command. The Wartime Operational Control of the Korean troops remains in the hands of the Combined Forces Command to this day.

participate in the offensive operations. However, Soviet officers performed the role of consultants in the headquarters of the Korean People's Army (KPA) and other major military departments. Stalin also dispatched General Matvei V. Zakharov to Korea to advise Kim Il-sung during the offensive around the Busan perimeter and the defense of Seoul. The Soviets were training North Korean soldiers and Chinese pilots in Manchuria, provided material aid, equipment and, after the UN troops crossed the partition line, the Soviets formed a fighter air corps (composed of three divisions) in Manchuria to provide air cover over North Korean territory.⁸¹

As the UN forces were quickly moving forward through North Korea, Stalin urged Mao to intervene. The leadership of the PRC was divided on the issue but, considering the danger of having to confront the US on two fronts (in the case the US took over North Korea) and the support the Chinese Communist Party had received from Koreans during the civil war, Mao agreed and, in late October 1950, the Chinese People's Volunteer Army entered into the Korean war.⁸² Following Stalin's directive, in early December, the Chinese People's Volunteers received command over North Korean troops and formed the China-DPRK Combined Forces Command.⁸³ The Chinese then led a counteroffensive on the South,

⁸¹ Voенно-istoricheskaya Biblioteka [Military History] series, *Voina v Koree, 1950-1953* [War in Korea, 1950-1953] (Saint-Petersburg, Russia: Poligon, 2003), Ch. 1-4, 29-155.

⁸² Park Tae Gyun, *Hanguk jeonjaeng*, 220-222.

⁸³ Park Yeong-sil, *Jungguk inmin jiwongun-gwa Buk-Jung gwangye* [Chinese People's Volunteer Army and Chinese-North Korean Relations] (Seoul: Seonin, 2012), Ch. 5,

crossing the 38th parallel and retaking Seoul. After China's intervention, Rhee Syngman attempted to get the US to back a further escalation of the war, but Washington did not believe it was in its global containment interests to back a second conventional offensive to unify the country. Instead, General MacArthur put forth a plan of using atomic bombs against targets in North Korea and China. The general devised the plan despite the opposition of US allies and, again, without consultation with South Koreans. Thus, from the end of 1950, the Korean War truly became a proxy war the course of the Korean War was essentially determined by the US on one side and the PRC with the Soviet Union's backing on the other.

Neither did Koreans have much say in the armistice negotiations. By late spring 1951, Washington and Beijing recognized and accepted a military stalemate on the Korean battlefield. Moscow made it clear that it was prepared to negotiate a military armistice, and in July 1951, Chinese and Americans sat at the bargaining table in Kaesong. During the negotiations, the Soviet Union maintained a guiding hand in the formulation of the overall position of the communist side, whereas China was responsible for the details of the agreement and for "coordinating" the policy with North Koreans. Even during the armistice talks, Stalin intended to teach Americans a lesson that "pinning their hopes on the atom bomb and air power...Americans are not capable of waging a large-scale war." He (and Mao) believed that dragging the negotiations on would be advantageous to the Soviet

111-164.

Union and China, while North Koreans just needed “patience and a lot of endurance.”⁸⁴ The Soviet leadership softened their position only after Stalin died in March 1953.

On the UN side, the most important consideration for the US was the opinions of Congress and Western public, as reflected, for example, in Washington’s change of its stance on prisoners of war from forced to voluntarily repatriation⁸⁵ and its pressure on allies and third parties to revise resolutions, which they proposed on Korea, in accordance with US interests.⁸⁶ In short, the Korean armistice came about as a result of exchanges between Washington and Moscow, and the final agreement was largely a product of the US. Very few times did the Americans discuss the bargaining terms with South Koreans. Rhee

⁸⁴ James Hershberg ed., Cold War International History Bulletin “The Cold War in Asia” (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1995-96), 12-13.

⁸⁵ The latter, which had no previous precedent in modern history, was designed to demonstrate the superiority of the western liberal system. (Park Tae Gyun, *op. cit.*, 255-269.

⁸⁶ There was one more, final escalation of the war, in order to push the Chinese and North Koreans to sign the armistice agreement. In the wake of Stalin’s death in the spring of 1953, the US threatened the communist side with nuclear war if the armistice terms suggested by the UN side were not met. For an analysis of negotiation strategies and lines of command during the armistice talks, see Kim Bo Young [Kim Bo-yeong], “Hanguk jeonjaeng hyujeon hoedam hyeopsang jeollyak-gwa jihwi chegye” [Negotiation strategies and chains of command at the armistice talks during the Korean War], *Sahak yeongu* 90 (June 2008): 337-374.

Syngman was strongly opposed to another negotiated division of Korea, believing that the UN should continue the war until the country was unified under South Korea. The Rhee government tried (though unsuccessfully) to sabotage the signing of the armistice agreement and refused to be a party to it when the agreement was finally concluded on 27 July 1953.⁸⁷

The armistice was intended as a temporary solution designed to “insure a complete cessation of hostilities and of all acts of armed force in Korea until a final peaceful settlement is achieved” and its terms and conditions were “purely military in character.”⁸⁸ Article IV of the agreement called for holding within three months after the agreement is signed “a political conference of a higher level of both sides...to settle through negotiation the questions of the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Korea, the peaceful settlement of the Korean question, etc.” Such a conference took place with a significant delay, in April–July 1954, and failed to produce any solution to the Korean question. The negotiations were hindered by the uncooperative stances of both North and South Korean representatives, but the larger problem lay in the fact that the Geneva Conference was set to tackle not only Korea but also the issue of Indochina, so the participating great powers approached the two problems in tandem and formulated their

⁸⁷ Park Tae Gyun, “What Happened Sixty Years Ago?: ROK-US Deep Distrust between President Rhee and Eisenhower,” *Journal of International and Area Studies* 21/1 (June 2014): 37-53.

⁸⁸ Park Tae Gyun, “The Korean Armistice System,” 115-136.

bargaining positions accordingly. The US felt that concessions on Korea would encourage the communists to believe that negotiated settlement might be possible for Vietnam (where Washington intended to completely defeat the communist revolution militarily). The UK and France were weighing the options based on how the decisions on Korea might affect their chances in Indochina and colonial territories elsewhere, whereas the communist powers, the Soviet Union and PRC, believed they had the upper hand in view of the situation in Vietnam.⁸⁹ Thus, the Korean question once again fell victim to the great power game of Cold War binary division of the world into spheres of influence. The armistice agreement was to stay in place keeping an uneasy cease-fire on the Korean Peninsula.⁹⁰

To sum up, the division of Korea and outbreak of the Korean War derived from a complex interplay of exogenous and endogenous forces. Whereas the demarcation line was drawn by the US and the policies of both the US and the Soviet Union were crucial in the emergence of the two Korean regimes, one cannot deny the importance of internal conflicts among Korean interest groups in the

⁸⁹ Steven Hugh Lee, *op. cit.*, 113-117.

⁹⁰ The Korean armistice system provides a sound mechanism for preventing the resumption of hostilities by monitoring, investigating, and settling through negotiations the instances of violation of the armistice. It has contributed to the maintenance of peace, however uncertain, on the Korean Peninsula to this day. Nevertheless, it cannot guarantee permanent peace due to several defects, invalidation of some parts of the agreement, and, most importantly, due to the lack of a final settlement. For a comprehensive discussion of the armistice agreement see Park Tae Gyun, *op. cit.*, 115-136.

political division of the Peninsula and of Kim Il Sung in starting an invasion of the South. Nevertheless, the course of the Korean War and armistice negotiations were ultimately decided by the US and the Soviet Union and neither North nor South Koreans were able to exercise control over the situation. To the two Koreas, the Korean War was not a cold war but a hot war that was halted by an armistice.

2. UNATTAINABLE DREAMS

A thaw in the Cold War between the great powers in the mid-1950s had little effect on the Korean Peninsula. Throughout the 1950s, Rhee Syngman never stopped calling to “march north.” In an address after the conclusion of the armistice agreement, he stated:

The war could have been won, but the United Nations deliberately decided against victory as its goal. [...] The epic of Korea is not yet concluded. Some of our allies would advise us to end the heroic struggle by meekly submitting to communist demands. This we cannot and shall not do. [...] It is our wish and determination to march north at the earliest possible time to save our North Korean brethren from the sure death they are facing today.⁹¹

⁹¹ Rhee Syngman’s address on the occasion of the 5th anniversary of ROK foundation,

Rhee opposed the Geneva Conference on the grounds that it would be a waste of time and when (reluctantly) dispatching a delegation to the conference, he expressed a hope that “if and when the Geneva Conference has failed, the United States and our friends in the Free World will join us in employing other means to drive the enemy from our land.”⁹² During and after the conference, he wrote to Americans that he considered the armistice null and void.⁹³ After the Geneva Conference, he mentioned to Americans that he considered the armistice null and void. The Rhee administration wanted to persuade the US to initiate a preventive war against China whose troops were stationed in North Korea. In a policy speech in July 1954, the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Byeon Yeong-tae declared:

To establish, as soon as possible, a fully united, free, democratic, and independent state by driving out the Chinese communist troops from our country and by crushing the North Korean puppet gang is the first and unshakable determination of our people and their earnest desire.⁹⁴

15 August 1953. (Peter V. Curl, *Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1953* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1954), 298-302. Cited in Kim Hak-joon, *The Unification Policy of South and North Korea*, 152.

⁹² *The New York Times*, 19 April 1954.

⁹³ Park Tae Gyun, “What Happened Sixty Years Ago,” 49.

⁹⁴ Speech delivered by Byeon Yeong-tae at the National Assembly on 14 July 1954.

Later in the same month, Rhee elaborated on the plan to attack China with a joint effort of the US, South Korea, and Taiwan.⁹⁵ The plan, as can be expected, was met by the Congress with a negative response. But upon his return to Korea, Rhee continuously made attempts to destabilize the implementation of the Armistice Agreement—for example, by requesting that the communist members of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Committee⁹⁶ be withdrawn and repatriated. The demands of the Rhee administration for the renunciation of the entire armistice agreement did not stop until the fall of the government in April 1960.⁹⁷

Although Rhee assured American diplomats that he would not attempt a unilateral offensive immediately, he kept trying to engage the US in his plans to reunify the peninsula by force. Concern that South Korean troops may unilaterally attack North Korea and commit the US to come to South Korea's aid made the US

Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), *Daily Report*, 16 July 1954, North Korea, FFF 1. Cited in Kim Hak-joon, *op. cit.*, 152.

⁹⁵ *The New York Times*, 29 July 1954.

⁹⁶ One of the bodies established to ensure implementation of the armistice in accordance with the Armistice Agreement, the Neutral Nations Supervisory Committee had the functions of supervising, observing, inspecting, and investigating the rotation of military personnel and replacement of weapons in Korea since reinforcement of military personnel and introduction of reinforced weapons in Korea were prohibited by Articles 13c and 13d of the agreement.

⁹⁷ Park Tae Gyun, *op. cit.*, 51.

Senate add to the US-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty a written understanding that “neither party is obligated [...] to come to the aid of the other except in case of an external armed attack against such party; nor shall anything in the present Treaty be construed as requiring the United States to give assistance to Korea except in the event of an armed attack against territory which has been recognized by the United States as lawfully brought under the administrative control of the Republic of Korea.”⁹⁸ The understanding part was prepared separately, even though the treaty had already contained an article (Article 3) stipulating that an *attack on* either of the parties would be a threat to both, in which case each party would act to meet the common threat. Moreover, as a precondition to negotiating the mutual defense treaty, Seoul had agreed to allow the American-led UN Command to retain operational control of ROK forces. The provisions of the Mutual Defense Treaty and the Operational Control in the hands of the UN Command guaranteed that the augmented South Korean military would not be used by Rhee in an attempt to “recover” the northern territories. Therefore, the US-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty performed two functions: defending South Korea from North Korean aggression and precluding Seoul from opening hostilities against Pyongyang. To prevent South Korean vessels from venturing into North Korea’s territorial waters, the UN Command designated the Northern Limit Line (NLL) in the West and East Seas of Korea in the 1950s. From the late 1950s through the mid-1960s, Washington

⁹⁸ *American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955: Basic Documents* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957), Vol. I, 897-898.

pursued a policy of downsizing South Korean troops.⁹⁹

The US introduction of nuclear weapons into Korea in 1958 can be interpreted in a similar vein. On one hand, the move restored the military balance with North Korea, to whom the Soviet Union made several arms transfers in violation of the armistice. On the other hand, since nuclear bombs are a deterrent rather than an offensive weapon and their maintenance was fully controlled by the UN Command and depended on American supplies and logistics, they turned South Korea's military posture into a defensive one and made it redundant to make significant efforts to modernize and maintain a massive South Korean army, thereby forestalling the beginning of the arms race between the two Koreas, at least on Seoul's side.

In the second half of the 1950s, oppositional leader Cho Bong-am made an attempt to challenge Rhee's policy of "unification by force."¹⁰⁰ Cho ran for presidency in 1956 campaigning on a platform of peaceful unification through

⁹⁹ This policy line was taken against the backdrops of withdrawal of Chinese troops from North Korea in 1958 (which made unnecessary to maintain a massive army in the South), introduction of nuclear weapons into South Korea in the same year, and the necessity to reduce defense expenses. (Park Tae Gyun, *1956-1964-nyeon Hanguk gyeongje gaebal gyehoek-ui seongnip gwaajeong* [Formation of economic development plans in Korea, 1956-1964], PhD diss., Seoul National University, 2000, 101-102.)

¹⁰⁰ For a comprehensive analysis of Cho Bong-am's life, political activities, and ideology from the colonial period till his death in 1959 as well as his lasting legacies, see Park Tae Gyun, *Jo Bong-am yeongu* [A study of Cho Bong-am] (Seoul: Chanjak-gwa bipyeongsa, 1995).

elections to be carried out in both parts of the peninsula under supervision of the UN. His proposal had a wide appeal to the South Korean public winning him about 30 percent of votes in the election—a surprisingly large number for an independent candidate.¹⁰¹ The Rhee administration considered Cho and his Progressive Party (Jinbodang; established after the presidential election, in November 1956) as a serious threat to the regime and prosecuted him on fabricated charges of espionage and subversion. The party was dissolved in 1958 and its leader executed the following year.¹⁰² Contrary to the regime’s accusations, Cho was not an agent of North Korea,¹⁰³ but his movement for peaceful unification attracted attention of the North Korean leaders¹⁰⁴ and could have become a stepping stone toward an inter-Korean dialogue had the regime not done away with him and the Progressive Party. Given that Cho was charged with being sympathetic with North Korea, the incident demonstrates that the South Korean regime was not yet ready for such a dialogue.

It is worth noting that the Eisenhower administration, despite its customary interference when breach of democratic procedures took place in the countries of high strategic value, such as South Korea, did not make any public

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 243-249.

¹⁰² Ibid., 318-351.

¹⁰³ Cho was cleared of the charges in 2011, 52 years after his execution (*Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 21 January 2011).

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 362-374.

statement on the case of Cho and the Progressive Party. That is most likely because the Americans placed the highest priority on stability of a non-communist regime in Korea and, in their eyes, the rapid advance of the Progressive Party in the prevailing atmosphere of political and economic discontent could have led to a surge of socialist forces, social unrest, and weakening of the anti-communist ideology.¹⁰⁵

According to a report filed by the then ambassador of the US in Korea, Walter C. Dowling, the rise of the Progressive Party was not as much due to the personal popularity of Cho Bong-am as due to the disillusionment and disappointment of Korean masses with capitalism and liberalism.¹⁰⁶ The Rhee regime, while emphasizing the need for the immediate unification of the country, tended to relegate the post-war economic rehabilitation problem to a secondary position. He did not regard the South Korean economy as self-sustainable and insisted that, “Unless the industrial North and the agricultural South are unified, Korea can never prosper and attain self-sufficiency.”¹⁰⁷ Rhee strongly opposed economic planning and rejected proposals for a planned economic development without so much as a glance, remarking that “a five-year plan is Stalin’s way of

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 374-389.

¹⁰⁶ Park Tae Gyun, *Wonhyeong-gwa byeonyong: Hanguk gyeongje gaebal gyehoek-ui giwon* [Archetype and metamorphosis: the origins of Korea’s economic development plans] (Seoul: Seoul National University Press, 2007), 248.

¹⁰⁷ FBIS, *Daily Report*, 11 June 1959, South Korea, KKK 1-3. Cited in Kim Hak-joon, *The Unification Policy of South and North Korea*, 171.

thinking.”¹⁰⁸

As a result of such policies, the South Korean economy was in dire conditions throughout the 1950s. It was the US that prevented South Korean economy from collapse and built the country’s institutions at that time. The American aid constituted 10-23 percent of the GNP and the Korean economy relied on the aid to the extent that American officials called it an “aid economy.” In the largest segment of government spending—expenditures on national defense—the proportion of aid reached 40 percent. An American Economic Adviser was in control of the account with the money earned by selling aid goods. During the negotiations of the Mutual Defense Treaty, Washington also promised to support maintenance expenses for Korean troops.¹⁰⁹ Concerned about international opinion of Rhee’s authoritarian ruling methods, Washington exercised considerable pressure on the South Korean government to stabilize the economy and political situation in the late 1950s. At the same time, the US civilian assistance, for example, helped establish a Western-style education system, improve the media, and train new bureaucrats. American efforts also transformed into a powerful force the political groups that aspired and had skills to undertake economic reforms.¹¹⁰ Ironically, it was the reduction in US aid in the late 1950s

¹⁰⁸ Park Tae Gyun, *op. cit.*, 42.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 37 and 41.

¹¹⁰ A comprehensive study of US nation-building effort in South Korea has been conducted by Gregg Brazinsky (*Nation Building in South Korea*).

and change in the US policy from provision of grants to a system of loans that brought a profound sense of crisis in Korean society and helped create a consensus among the Korean officials, politicians, and economists on the necessity of planned economic development.¹¹¹ In short, Washington's policies were the driving force of South Korea's reconstruction and nation-building at that time.

Unlike South Korea, the North embraced the Geneva Conference, insisting publicly that the Soviet Union was now taking the lead in searching for negotiated settlements to international and Asian problems. While the Soviet Union was thereby representing North Korea's interests outside, Pyongyang concentrated on political consolidation and economic reconstruction. In order to build up the local power base, the Kim Il Sung regime expanded membership in the Workers' Party. Striving to remove political opposition, in the mid-1950s Kim purged the remaining leaders of the former South Korean communist party, i.e. the core of the domestic communist faction, and then members of Soviet Korean and Chinese returnee factions who criticized his policies. The political struggle between Kim and his opponents culminated in the so-called August Incident which unleashed within the Workers' party after the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956.¹¹² The critics of Kim were expelled

¹¹¹ Park Tae Gyun, *op. cit.*, 39-42.

¹¹² Representative studies of the August Incident in English include Nam Koon Woo, *The North Korean Leadership, 1945-1965: A Study of Factionalism and Political Consolidation* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1974); Robert A. Scalapino and Lee Chong-sik, *Communism in Korea: The Movement* (Berkeley: University of

from the North Korean party and appealed for help of the Soviets and the Chinese. They were reinstated in the party due to the involvement of Moscow and Beijing but later purged again unless went in exile to the Soviet Union or PRC. Although the North Korean leader eventually succeeded in eliminating the foreign-supported factions, the incident testifies to how expansive the influence of the communist patrons was in North Korea and how much it limited the regime's room for independent decision-making.

In the economic aspect, just days after the Armistice Agreement was signed, the Workers' Party adopted a six-month economic plan (for general preparations and adjustments), which was followed by a three-year plan (1954–1956, “for the rehabilitation and development of the People's Economy in order to restore it to the prewar level”) and a five-year plan (1957–1961, “for overall industrial development of the nation in order to enable our country develop into a rich, strong, democratic, and independent state”). Collectivization of peasants was

California Press, 1972); Lim Un, *The Founding of a Dynasty in North Korea* (Tokyo: Kiyu-sha, 1982); Andrei Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung: The Formation of North Korea 1945-1960* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002) and *Crisis in North Korea: The Failure of De-Stalinization, 1956* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005); Balazs Szalontai, “‘You Have No Political Line of Your Own’: Kim Il Sung and the Soviets, 1953-1964,” *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* 14/15 (Washington: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2004); and James F. Person, “‘We Need Help from Outside’: The North Korean Opposition Movement of 1956” (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, August 2006), Cold War International History Project, Working Paper #52.

completed by 1958. The Cheollima (“Flying Horse”) movement was initiated following the example of the Great Leap Forward movement in China.¹¹³ Thanks to these efforts, North Korea was able to quickly recover its economy and achieve an impressive annual growth of 20 percent in the period from 1954 to 1960. According to North Korean data, by the last year of the three-year plan in 1956, the production of capital goods had increased four times and the production of consumer goods 2.1 times compared to 1953. During the five-year plan, in the period between 1957 and 1960, the total amount of industrial production rose 3.5 times with an annual average increase of 36.6 percent. National income grew 2.1 times.¹¹⁴

Soviet and Chinese assistance was instrumental in carrying out the economic development plans. In September 1953, Moscow agreed to provide \$250 million to Pyongyang over the period of two years and to cut North Korea’s debt by half. It gave the North another \$120 million in 1956, along with an exemption from repayment of loans.¹¹⁵ A similar, four-year agreement—for the amount of \$320 million and forgoing the entire payment of debt by North Korea from the beginning of the Korean War until the end of 1953—was concluded

¹¹³ For an analysis of North Korea’s industrialization policy and collectivization efforts in the 1950s, see Lee Jong-seok, “Joseon Nodongdang yeongu: jidosasang-gwa gujobyeonhwa-reul jungsim-euro” [A study of Korean Workers’ Party: focusing on guiding thought and systemic changes] (Seoul: Yuksabipyeongsa, 1995), 261-266.

¹¹⁴ Park Tae Gyun, *op. cit.*, 36-37.

¹¹⁵ Kim Sung-Bo, *Bukhanui yeoksa 1*, 179.

between Pyongyang and Beijing in November.¹¹⁶ Some assistance for economic development was furnished by Eastern European countries as coordinated by Moscow. The aid from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe amounted to 36.1 percent of North Korea's state budget in 1954, and to 24 percent of the country's total budget in 1954-1956.¹¹⁷

It does not mean, however, that North Korea had internalized the division and given up the goal of reunification. Behind the focus on political consolidation and economic reconstruction lay the objective of building an adequate "socialistic revolutionary base" that could overwhelm the "puppet" government in the South. This explains why North Korea's economic plans gave top priority to heavy industry at the expense of light industry and agriculture. By developing heavy industry first, Kim Il Sung was emulating the model of the Soviet Union and believed that, "If the South Korean people see with their own eyes the superiority of our socialist system, it is clear that they would raise their hands in favor of us, not Rhee Syngman."¹¹⁸ However, if he had had in mind a competition with the South to demonstrate the advantages of rising living standards under his rule, it would be logical to have first developed the consumer industry and agriculture.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Choi Myeong-hae, *Jungguk-Bukhan dongmaeng gwangye*, 92.

¹¹⁷ Lee Sin Cheol, *Bukhan minjokjuui undong yeongu* [A study of North Korean nationalist movement] (Seoul: Yuksabipyungsa, 2008), 316.

¹¹⁸ Kim Il Sung, *Kim Il Sung Seonjip* [Selected Works of Kim Il Sung] (Pyongyang: Joseon Rodongdang Chulpansa, 1960), Vol. V, 338-39.

¹¹⁹ In fact, there were serious conflicts of opinions within the North Korean leadership

In other words, Kim's emphasis was on postponing reunification for a short time, until the North Korean regime gained enough strength and the circumstances were favorable to communizing the whole country. The following quote from Kim's official biography illustrates the point.

[Kim Il Sung] considered that the prime duty of the Korean revolution was still to overthrow the US imperialist aggressive forces and its allies, the landlords, the comprador capitalists, the pro-Japanese and pro-US groups, the national traitors in South Korea, to liberate the South Korean people from their imperialist and feudalistic fetters, and thereby achieve national unification and complete national independence. To fulfill this revolutionary duty, he held, first the revolutionary base of the northern half, strategic base of the Korean revolution must be further strengthened politically, economically, and militarily, and to this end overall socialist revolution and socialist construction should be stepped up.¹²⁰

in regards to prioritizing the heavy industry over agriculture and production of consumer goods. These conflicts, along with other issues, were at the core of the 1956 incident when Kim purged many members of Soviet Korean and Chinese returnee factions. For an analysis of the incident, its background and consequences, see James F. Person, "'We Need Help from Outside'."

¹²⁰ Baik Bong, *Kim Il Sung Biography* (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1969), Vol. II, p. 423. Cited in Kim Hak-joon, *op. cit.*, 150-1.

Through the 1950s, Pyongyang made several appeals for peaceful reunification. The proposals included initiating economic and cultural exchanges, holding a joint conference of representatives of the North and South in Seoul or Pyongyang to discuss national unification (October 1954) and organizing an international conference of the powers concerned for the solution of the Korean question (April 1956). These were mere variations of North Korea's proposals during the Geneva Conference, psychological tools rather than genuine attempts to improve inter-Korean relations. By portraying itself as preparing for talks on unification, the regime intended to achieve the goals for mobilizing the domestic population, laying the groundwork among the South Korean public, and obtaining more assistance for economic development from the socialist camp. The North Korean leadership realized that as long as the "American imperialists" were present in the South, the chances for reunification were remote. For that reason, Pyongyang also suggested concluding a non-aggression pact between North and South Korea with a simultaneous reduction of armed forces on both sides (March 1955) and withdrawal of all foreign troops from Korea and mutual contraction of troops to 100,000 men on each side (September 1957 and February 1958). All of the proposals were rejected by the South Korean authorities. At the same time, Pyongyang was sending agents and tried to reconstruct in the underground the South Korean Workers' Party.¹²¹

In sum, after the Korean War and until the end of the 1950s, South Korea

¹²¹ Kim Hak-joon, *op. cit.*, 166.

maintained its posture of unifying the divided country by marching north at the risk of opening hostilities. North Korea, in contrast, deferred the immediate reunification and focused all its efforts on post-war reconstruction. But the goal of the regime remained the same—reunification in the near future, once Pyongyang gained enough strength. This type of confrontation between the two Koreas was very different from the pattern of the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union. The North and South were now deeply imbedded in the Cold War system, but the competition between them was imposed and fueled by the great powers.

3. CLASHES UNDER THE ARMISTICE SYSTEM

If in the 1950s South Korea was calling to march north and North Korea was preparing a “solid base” to “export revolution” to the South, those roles somewhat reversed in the 1960s. The two watershed events in this change were the April Revolution of 1960, which overthrew the Rhee regime, and the military coup of May 1961, which brought to power Park Chung Hee. Both came as a surprise to the North Korean regime.

When the April Revolution broke out, the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party adopted the “Appeal to the South Korean People,” which called upon the citizens of South Korea “to force the US imperialist aggressor army out.” Pyongyang emphasized that North Koreans were extending “full support and encouragement to the South Korean people” and proposed a joint conference of

all political parties and social organizations from the North and South to discuss the creation of a unified government.¹²² On 14 August 1960, Kim Il Sung put forth a “provisionary federation proposal,” where he reaffirmed North Korea’s position in support of reunification through North-South general elections and suggested that, if the South Korean authorities could not agree to North-South elections “for fear of the whole of South Korea being dominated by communism,” a Confederation of North and South Korea could be instituted as a provisional measure for the purpose of “coordinating the economic and cultural developments of North and South Korea as a unit, while retaining, for the time being, the present political systems and maintaining the independent activities of the two governments.”¹²³ However, the newly established Chang Myon government flatly rejected the proposal, saying that it was a propaganda tool that merely repeated Pyongyang’s previous proposals under another label and aimed at prolonging the North Korean regime and igniting political, economic, and social disturbances in the South.¹²⁴ North Korea’s overtures sparked enthusiastic debates on unification, which had been severely restricted during the Rhee regime, and activated a

¹²² Ibid., 175.

¹²³ “Kim Il Sung’s Proposal for Economic Cooperation and Confederation as Provisional Steps to Unification, August 14, 1960,” in Kim Se-jin, *Korean Unification: Source Materials with an Introduction*, 252-254.

¹²⁴ “Foreign Minister Yil Hyung Chyung’s Statement Rejected the ‘Confederation’ Proposal, August 17, 1960,” in Kim Se-jin, *op. cit.*, 254-255.

movement for unification in South Korean civil society,¹²⁵ but the attitude of the Chang Myon government remained unchanged, and in a year, Park Chung Hee took power through a military coup.

In Pyongyang's eyes, the democratic opening of South Korea was a chance for reunification, which was lost due to absence of an adequate communist party in South Korea. Thus, during the 1960s, North Korea focused on building a strong underground communist party in the South in an attempt to "awaken" the South Korean populace. In February 1963, for example, the head of the WPK Department on South Korean Affairs, Yi Hyo-sun, declared that because there was no revolutionary party in the South, the next task was to create one.¹²⁶ When the Revolutionary Party for Unification (*Tongil-hyeokmyeong-dang*) was discovered by the South Korean CIA in 1968, it was revealed that the party was established in late 1965 under the guidance and with the financial assistance of the WPK. Set up for the purpose of carrying out a revolution, the party had a solid organizational structure with over 150 members. The party members were able to penetrate into

¹²⁵ For an analysis of discussion on reunification that took place in South Korea during the Chang Myon government, see Hong Seuk-ryule, "Reunification Issues and Civil Society in South Korea: The Debates and Social Movement for Reunification during the April Revolution Period, 1960-1961," *Journal of Asian Studies* 61-4 (November 2002): 1237-1257.

¹²⁶ Balazs Szalontai, *Kim Il Sung in the Khrushchev Era: Soviet-DPRK Relations and the Roots of North Korean Despotism, 1953-1964* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2005), 194-98.

several youth organizations and student clubs where they performed propaganda activities and instigated anti-government and anti-American protests.

In terms of military strategy, in the mid-1960s North Korea adopted a policy of “simultaneous development of national defense and economy” (*gukbang-gyeongje byeongjin noseon*)—a misnomer because in reality it meant an emphasis on increasing the regime’s military capability, especially in comparison to the 1950s. The change came about against the background of several factors. On one hand, Pyongyang interpreted the ousting of the Rhee regime as a sign that atmosphere in the South was ripe for a communist revolution. On the other hand, the North Korean leadership was apprehensive of the advent of a military regime in South Korea, the fact that Park Chung Hee received the backing of the US, and the emergence of tripartite cooperation between the South Korea, the US, and Japan through normalization of diplomatic relations between Seoul and Tokyo. The groundwork for the policy of simultaneous development of defense and economy was laid at a meeting of the WPK Central Committee in December 1962, and from 1963, the regime pursued the “four military lines” (*4-dae gunsa noseon*), which included cultivation of military cadres, modernization of the army, militarization of the population, and fortification of the country.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ Lee Jong-seok, *Bukhan-ui yeoksa 2—Juche sasanggwa yuil chegye* [History of North Korea, Vol. II: Juche ideology and monolithic system] (Seoul: Yuksabipyungsa, 2011), 52. For a thorough analysis of North Korea’s reaction to Park Chung Hee’s coup, see Shin Jongdae, “5.16 kudeta-e daehan Bukhan-ui insik-gwa daeeung: Namhan-ui jeongchi byeondong-gwa Bukhan-ui gunгнаe jeongchi” [North Korea’s perception and

Furthermore, Vietnam emerged as a major factor in the 1960s. The North Korean leadership drew inspiration from the guerilla war of the Vietnamese communists, whose tactics they viewed as particularly relevant to Korea since US nuclear weapons in South Korea would thwart any large-scale offensive of the North's regular troops. Out of these considerations, Pyongyang opted for an offensive strategy that did not carry the risk of US nuclear retaliation: low-intensity irregular warfare, implemented by the special forces of the KPA.¹²⁸ In addition, the North Koreans tried to capitalize on the US preoccupation with Vietnam when intensifying that warfare in the second half of the 1960s.¹²⁹ The examples of such efforts included an assassination attempt on Park Chung Hee in the Blue House raid and the dispatch of some 120 commandos to Samcheok and Uljin areas (both in 1968).

The PRC and the Soviet Union exercised some restraining influence on North Korea, although their ability to do so was limited as the period coincided with the deepening of the Sino-Soviet split. Nevertheless, soon after Park Chung Hee's military coup, both Moscow and Beijing concluded treaties of friendship, cooperation, and mutual assistance with Pyongyang. To the two communist great

response to the May 16 coup d'état in South Korea: political transformations in South Korea and North Korean domestic politics], *Jeongsin munhwa yeongu* 33-1 (March 2010): 81-104.

¹²⁸ Balazs Szalontai, "In the Shadow of Vietnam: A New Look at North Korea's Military Strategy, 1962-1970," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 14/4 (Fall 2012), 127.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 138-149.

powers, the treaty performed several functions including counterbalancing each other and strengthening the alliance with the North Korean ally in the context of the renewal of the US-Japan security treaty and the American invasion in the Bay of Pigs.¹³⁰ It is noteworthy, however, that the treaties had a provision that resembled the US-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty. Article 1 of the Soviet-North Korean treaty and Article 2 of the Sino-North Korean treaty stated that if either party came under attack by any state or coalition of states, the other party would extend to it military and other types of assistance by all means at its disposal. The case when a party initiated an attack was excluded.

The North Korean leadership at that time was well aware that a major offensive on the South could not be successfully implemented unless the communist great powers gave the DRPK at least a modicum of political, military, and economic assistance. It is likely that Pyongyang's desire to gain such assistance and support was behind the seizure of the American reconnaissance vessel Pueblo in early 1968, which allegedly broke into North Korea's territorial waters, thereby proving that the US had aggressive attentions against Pyongyang.¹³¹

The policies prioritizing militarization had a heavy toll on North Korea's economy. In 1961–1967, North Korea implemented a seven-year economic plan

¹³⁰ Lee Chae-jin, *China and Korea: Dynamic Relations* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1996), 59.

¹³¹ Szalontai, *op. cit.*, 156-161.

but, unlike the previous plans, this one could not meet its targets. Worse, the North Korean economy started to show signs of degradation: the country experienced food, housing, and power shortages; industrial and agricultural production slowed down; the antiquated equipment and outdated approaches delayed construction and development; and several major industrial and social projects were cancelled altogether. As a result, the Workers' Party had to extend the seven-year plan to ten years in 1966.¹³²

In contrast, South Korea's economy took off during the same period of time. Park Chung Hee, in order to obtain legitimacy for the illegally established regime, put forth the goal of attaining economic growth as the main objective of his regime. He enacted profound reforms of the administrative system, set up a supra-government agency, the Economic Planning Board, specifically for the purpose of devising and implementing economy development plans, and appointed expert economists and technocrats as advisers to the board.

However, the first plan, which the Park regime attempted to carry out from 1962, met with failure. It was only after the South Korean government prepared a revised plan in coordination and consultation with the US that the latter provided resources and the plan was put into practice. Under US pressure, the

¹³² Mitchell B. Lerner, "'Mostly Propaganda in Nature': Kim Il Sung, the Juche Ideology, and the Second Korean War" (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, December 2010), North Korea International Documentation Project, Working Paper #3, 29-31.

“Complementary Plan” of 1964, although maintaining some of the features of the original plan, reoriented the direction of Korea’s economic development from an emphasis on heavy industry and import-substitution by mobilizing the domestic capital to prioritizing light industry and export-led growth based on foreign capital. In addition, the US orchestrated the normalization of South Korea’s relations with Japan, whose investment and technological assistance played an important role in realizing Korean economic plans.

Thus, changes in Washington’s strategy toward the Rostow-inspired policy of supporting economic development in decolonized nations in Asia—such as South Korea and Taiwan—American assistance, and the open market were critical to the beginning of economic development in South Korea.¹³³ Without those factors, South Korea’s economy would hardly have taken off. Washington’s ambition was to make South Korea into a show-window of economic success for the purpose of psychological containment vis-à-vis the country’s counterpart in the North. The US, for example, criticized Park’s Economic Planning Board for setting the growth rate in the draft of an economic development plan in 1962 at an unrealistic 7.1 percent, but at the same time, the Kennedy administration made it clear that the principal economic task for the South Korean government was to

¹³³ For a comprehensive analysis of the process of devising and implementing economic development planning in South Korea and the US role in that process, see Park Tae Gyun, *1956-1964-nyeon Hanguk gyeongje gaebal gyehoek-ui seongnip gwajeong*; and Park Tae Gyun, *Wonhyeong-gwa byeonyong*.

achieve a growth rate higher than that of North Korea.¹³⁴ Therefore, Washington not only determined the course of South Korea's economic development but also instigated economic competition with the North.

The Park Chung Hee regime was able to procure a large volume of financial resources needed for the economic development by dispatching troops to the Vietnam War. Seoul suggested sending Korean troops to the war in 1961 and the Johnson Administration, campaigning for "more flags" in Vietnam, accepted Seoul's proposal in 1964. The number of Korean soldiers fighting in Vietnam steadily increased, at Washington's request, throughout the second half of the 1960s until 1971, so did the size of Korean engineer units. Participation in the war provided South Korea with an opportunity to secure US assistance and the consequent economic boom strengthened the domestic support for the regime.¹³⁵

Given that North Korea also sent a number of pilots to support the operations of North Vietnam¹³⁶ and provided Hanoi with substantial quantities of

¹³⁴ Park Tae Gyun, *1956-1964-nyeon Hanguk gyeongje gaebal gyehoek-ui seongnip gwajeong*, 101.

¹³⁵ Park Tae Gyun, "Beteunam jeonjaeng-gwa Beteunam-e pabyeonghan Asia gukkadeul-ui jeongchiyeok byeonhwa," 588-622; and Park Tae Gyun, "Beteunam jeonjaeng sigi Han-Mi gwangye-ui byeonhwa" [Changes in Korean-American relations during the Vietnam War], *Gunsa* 89 (December 2013): 331-361.

¹³⁶ The number is estimated at about a dozen aircraft and 90 North Korean pilots serving in Vietnam in 1967-1969. (Merle Pribbenow, "North Korean Pilots in the Skies over Vietnam," North Korea International Documentation Project, E-Dossier #2 (Washington,

material assistance, one can wonder whether the participation of Seoul and Pyongyang in the Vietnam War can be seen as a proxy war of the two Koreas. An analysis of the motivations of the Korean leaders, however, yields a negative answer. Kim Il Sung's decision to involve stemmed from several considerations that changed over time but the most likely and consistent one was a desire to divert Washington's attention and resources from South Korea to Vietnam.¹³⁷ By dispatching South Korean troops to Vietnam, Park Chung Hee, on his part, was looking for strengthening alliance with the US and reaping economic benefits.¹³⁸ And although this strategy helped build the basis for a greater economic autonomy of the regime, it also testified to the lack of Seoul's autonomy in its external policies. The participation of the two Koreas in the Vietnam War was therefore rather coincidental and not aimed at competing with each other or confronting the counterpart militarily in a third country.

In terms of the unification strategy, the Park Chung Hee regime abandoned the idea of immediate unification in favor of internal development—political consolidation and economic growth—similarly to what the North Korean leadership did in the 1950s after the Korean War. The coup forces put as one of

D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, November 2011.)

¹³⁷ Szalontai, *op. cit.*, 122-166.

¹³⁸ Park Tae Gyun, "Beteunam jeonjaeng-gwa Beteunam-e pabyeonghan Asia gukkadeul-ui jeongchijeok byeonhwa," 588-622; and Park Tae Gyun, "Beteunam jeonjaeng sigi Han-Mi gwangye-ui byeonhwa," 331-361.

the six “revolutionary pledges” an item which read, “National unification [...] will be accomplished by fostering national strength sufficiently great enough to prevail over the North Korean communist forces.”¹³⁹ In 1962, Park Chung Hee himself reiterated the theme:

One sure way to ultimate unification is to place our political, economic, social and cultural systems on a sound basis. This is absolutely necessary in order to create a nation with new property. It is essential to have strong political stability, a new social order, and the determined concentration of our power in the field of economic improvement in order to win ultimate victory against Communism.¹⁴⁰

In fact, the regime outlawed any discussion on unification, labeling as communist anyone who attempted to raise the question of improving relations with North Korea. When in September 1961 Pyongyang dispatched to Seoul a secret emissary, Deputy Trade Minister Hwang Tae-seong, to establish a direct channel of clandestine communication with Park Chung Hee (whom Hwang personally knew), the regime arrested, tried, and sentenced Hwang to death, accusing him of being a North Korean spy.

¹³⁹ Park Chung Hee, *The Country, the Revolution, and I* (Seoul: Hollym Corporation, 1962), 60.

¹⁴⁰ Park Chung Hee, *Our Nation's Path: ideology of Social Reconstruction* (Seoul: Dong-A Publishing Co., 1962), 2-3.

Thus, in the 1960s, unification became a more immediate task for Pyongyang, so the regime focused on opening a guerilla war and cultivating an underground communist movement in the South. In contrast, Seoul deferred unification until it built a viable economy to approach the issue from a position of strength. Therefore, the pattern of economic and political strategies of the two Korean regimes was still very different from the economic and political rivalry of the US and the Soviet Union.

In the 1960s, some transformations took place in the diplomatic arena. North Korea started to expand its diplomacy toward the Third World nations, whereas South Korea sought to play a more active diplomatic role in the Asia-Pacific area. In the case of the latter, in the second half of the 1960s, the Park regime made efforts to broaden the network of its foreign relations, particularly with Southeast Asia. In 1966, Park personally participated in the Manila Summit, which converged leaders of Asian countries who dispatched troops to the Vietnam War. In the same year, the inaugural meeting of the Asia Pacific Council (ASPAC) was held in Seoul.¹⁴¹ The US actively supported the organization of the ASPAC forum in Korea and prompted American allies in Asia to attend it. At the meeting, Park Chung Hee outlined his idea of building an Asia-Pacific regional collective security system: it would cover both Northeast and Southeast Asia, be based on

¹⁴¹ The ASPAC was established as a forum for cooperation among Asian states on cultural and economic issues. Its members included anti-communist nations of Asia and the Pacific—Australia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, South Korea, South Vietnam, Taiwan, and Thailand. The organization disintegrated in 1972.

US commitment in the region, and South Korea would acquire a leading position in it. In the background of this aspiration were the confidence South Korea gained through participation in the Vietnam War and normalization of diplomatic relations with Japan.¹⁴²

As for North Korea, the regime had been cultivating ties with the Third World since the late 1950s. In the initial stages, Pyongyang mostly focused on developing bilateral trade and military exchanges, but during the 1960s, it sought to expand the relations to the political sphere. Kim Il Sung tried to present his country as a model of self-reliant development and anti-imperialist independence for the Third World countries and himself as a leader of the nonaligned World.¹⁴³ Since many Third World nations had only recently achieved independence from Western colonial rule, most of them at that time were preoccupied with the issues of self-determination and political independence. North Korea's advocacy of anti-colonialism and national liberation resonated with their aspirations. In fact, North Korea in the 1960s could have appeared a model of post-colonial nation-building, having constructed an impressive industrial economy and "repelled" the Americans in the Korean War.¹⁴⁴ Some of the principles of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)—respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations, refraining from acts or threats of aggression or the use of force against the

¹⁴² Park Tae Gyun, "Bak Jeong-hui jeongbu sigi," 19-26.

¹⁴³ Armstrong, *Tyranny of the Weak*, 145 and 179.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 143.

territorial integrity or political independence of any country, and abstention from intervention in the internal affairs of another country—seemed to be critical for Korea, as Pyongyang tried to create an impression that South Korea was occupied and colonized by the US.

North Korea's political overtures toward the nonaligned World started to bear some fruit when the Korean problem was first mentioned at a nonaligned forum—albeit indirectly—in the discussion of “problems of divided nations” at the 2nd Summit Conference in Cairo in 1964.¹⁴⁵ By the end of the decade, the Korean issue became so prominent in the debates that the 3rd Summit Conference in 1970 in Lusaka included in its declaration the statement that “The presence of foreign forces in Korea is posing a threat to national independence and to international peace and security.”¹⁴⁶

NAM forums acted as an important ground for preparing for debates at the UN where the influence of the Third World countries was rapidly increasing. Until the 1960s, the US and capitalist bloc had enjoyed the support of the majority of member states at the UN. But decolonization during the 1950s led to the emergence of a large number of new nations in Asia and Africa. Their admission into the UN altered the relevance of power in the UN, making international politics

¹⁴⁵ Pak Chi Young, *Korea and the United Nations*, 49.

¹⁴⁶ Paragraph 6 of the *Lusaka Declaration on Peace, Independence, Development, Cooperation and Democratization of International Relations*.

a game of number rather than power.¹⁴⁷ The ratio of the nonaligned Third World countries in the UN increased from 23 percent in 1961¹⁴⁸ to 46 percent in 1970.¹⁴⁹ Not only did the composition of the organization change but also the nature of the issues the UN had to deal with. Although the Third World states were not committed ideologically to either the US or the Soviet Union, they mostly pursued anti-Western policies and therefore often shared a position with the communist side. At the General Assembly, the Third World nations were most active in the discussion of social and economic problems and tended to vote on resolution drafts as one bloc.

The growing support for North Korea in the Third World became culpable at the UN General Assembly from the early 1960s. Prior to that time, draft resolutions favorable to North Korea had been submitted for the deliberation of the General Assembly but never voted on. The Assembly routinely approved the reports of the UN Commission on the Unification and Rehabilitation of Korea (UNCURK), which were automatically placed on the provisional agenda of the General Assembly every year.¹⁵⁰ Pyongyang was denied access to the Assembly's debates and only the South Korean representative was invited, since the UN, having been prevented from supervising the first election in the northern part of

¹⁴⁷ Pak Chi Young, *op. cit.*, 46.

¹⁴⁸ 1961 was the year the Non-Aligned Movement was established as organization.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 52.

¹⁵⁰ Under General Assembly Resolution 811 (A/RES/811(IX)), adopted in 1954.

the Korean Peninsula in 1948, recognized the Republic of Korea as the sole, legitimate government on the Korean Peninsula. But in 1961, the Indonesian representative to the UN General Assembly suggested an amendment to the usual, US-sponsored proposal for inviting a South Korean observer to the deliberation on the Korean question. The Indonesian amendment stated that North Korea be included in the invitation. Forced to respond to Indonesia's proposal, the US suggested that the UN extend an invitation to North Korea, provided that the latter accepted the competence and authority of the UN to take action on the Korean question.¹⁵¹ Despite the opposition of the Soviet Union and other communist countries, this sub-amendment, dubbed the "Stevenson Amendment" after the name of the American chief delegate to the UN, Adlai Stevenson, was adopted. However, Pyongyang refused to accept any conditional invitation to participate in discussions of the UN General Assembly.

In 1966, the UN General Assembly voted for the first time on a draft resolution that represented interests of North Korea other than the question of extending to Pyongyang an invitation to participate in the Assembly discussions.¹⁵² This resolution, sponsored by the Soviet Union, was rejected, but

¹⁵¹ UN A/C. 1/L. 273.

¹⁵² By the operative part of the text, the Assembly would decide to withdraw "American and all other foreign military personnel deployed in South Korea under the title of United Nations Forces or in any other disguise," to dissolve UNCURK, and to stop discussions of the Korean question in the UN. (*Yearbook of the United Nations, 1966* (New York: Office of Public Information, United Nations, 1968), 141-142.)

the very fact that it reached the voting stage of the Assembly was a sign of support for North Korea by the Third World nations that acted as co-sponsors of the draft resolution and helped place it for voting. In general, as the number of Third World members in the UN increased, the number of voices speaking in favor of North Korea also rose. In contrast, support for South Korea was decreasing as its image, along with that of its patron, the US, was damaged due to the nations' involvement in the Vietnam War.¹⁵³ Along with the communist group, Third World countries (mostly from Africa and the Middle East) co-sponsored pro-North Korea draft resolutions, similar to the ones of 1966, also in 1967 through 1970.¹⁵⁴

Therefore, the conditions for inter-Korean rivalry in the diplomatic sphere, and especially at the UN, were created through the 1960s. However, no direct competition took place yet. The debates of the UN General Assembly were limited to the questions of inviting the North and South Korean representatives and adoption of the annual reports of the UNCURK. Not the two Koreas but the

¹⁵³ For the voting trends of Third World countries on the Korean question at the UN General Assembly during the period of 1960 to 1975, see Pak Chi Young, *Korea and the United Nations*, 20 and 52-58.

¹⁵⁴ *Yearbook of the United Nations, 1967* (New York: Office of Public Information, United Nations, 1969), 140-150; *Yearbook of the United Nations, 1968, Vol. 22* (New York: Office of Public Information, United Nations, 1971), 173-185; *Yearbook of the United Nations, 1969, Vol. 23* (New York: Office of Public Information, United Nations, 1972), 159-165; and *Yearbook of the United Nations, 1970, Vol. 24* (New York: Office of Public Information, United Nations, 1972), 200-201. The draft resolutions again reached the voting stage of the General Assembly but none of them were adopted.

US on one side and the Soviet Union on the other represented the interests of the two Koreas, sponsored the resolutions, and led the discussions.

In the light of the developments discussed above, the 1960s can be seen as a transitional period where several elements of the Cold War pattern of relations between the superpowers appeared, although in a limited form, in the behavior of North and South Korea. Some economic rivalry emerged but mostly on the South Korean side, and it was fueled by the US. Both Korean regimes started to expand their diplomatic relations, and the conditions for rivalry at the UN arose but, again, this competition was confined to voting on UNCURK reports and the question of the invitation of Korean delegates. In addition, the UN competition was indirect and led by the US and the Soviet Union who sponsored Korea-related resolutions. Military confrontation between the two Koreas took the shape of North Korea-sponsored guerilla warfare that was suppressed by South Korea. No communication was established between Seoul and Pyongyang, with the former boldly rejecting the latter's overtures for bilateral talks.¹⁵⁵ The inter-Korean relationship was consistently confrontational without any fluctuations—except, perhaps, for the changes from bad to worse.

¹⁵⁵ According to Russian researchers, however, 15 meetings of secret talks between North Korean military officers and agents of South Korean intelligence services were conducted in the Haeju area (North Korea) at Seoul's initiative in fall 1961 through summer 1962. (See for example, German Kim, "Nam-Buk daehwa-ui seomak" [A prelude to North-South Korea dialogue], *Kore Ilbo* (newspaper of Kazakhstan Republic): http://www.koreilbo.com/ru/1736-_.html (accessed 16 June 2015).

It is worth noting that both Pyongyang and Seoul acquired some level of autonomy through the 1960s. In the case of North Korea, the regime's movement toward relative independence from outside influence started in the second half of the 1950s, when Kim Il Sung put forth the idea of *juche* in the context of the destalinization movement emanating from the Soviet and Chinese encroachment into the political decision-making of the regime. An important milestone was the departure of Chinese troops from North Korea in 1958. The regime's autonomy grew further during the Sino-Soviet split in the 1960s. In the case of South Korea, the Park Chung Hee regime was able to elevate its position in its alliance with the US and vis-à-vis the US-Japan alliance by dispatching troops to the Vietnam War.¹⁵⁶ Seoul would acquire more autonomy due to the Nixon Doctrine, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

To sum up, the division of Korea was an artificial creation of the United States and the Soviet Union that happened by American sleight of hand. Reflecting

¹⁵⁶ Having been in the position of only receiving assistance from the US until then, it was the first instance of South Korea being able to contribute something to the bilateral alliance. Park Tae Gyun ("Beteunam jeonjaeng sigi Han-Mi gwangye-ui byeonhwa," 336-340) aptly called the mid-1960s and especially the time of Vance visit to Korea a "honeymoon" in US-ROK relations. In regard to the elevation of status vis-à-vis Japan, South Korea dispatched to Vietnam the largest contingent among US allies, whereas Japan had to refrain from direct participation in the war. For a discussion of changes in the 1960s that allowed Seoul breathing space, see Park Tae Gyun, "Beteunam jeonjaeng-gwa beteunam-e pabyeonghan Asia gukkadeul-ui jeongchi-jeok byeonhwa," 588-622; and Park Tae Gyun, "Bak Jeong-hui jeongbu sigi," 21.

the decline in the wartime alliance between them and turn toward the Cold War, the two superpowers played a pivotal role in the establishment of the two antithetical regimes in the north and south of the Korean Peninsula and led the nation-building in their respective halves. The Korean War was an example of a proxy war between the US and the Soviet Union, and after it, due to the dependence of both Korean regimes on the great powers for survival and/or reconstruction, the two superpowers continued to put through their containment policies in the two Koreas. Thus, through the period of the second half of the 1940s to the 1960s, Korea was firmly embedded into the global Cold War system. Nevertheless, the behavior of the two Koreas during that period was far from the pattern of the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union. An ideological conflict and propaganda rivalry existed but the political, economic, and diplomatic rivalry did not appear—and even that only in incipient forms and indirectly—until the 1960s. There was no communication between the two Koreas nor was there room for a *détente*. Before and after the Korean War, the great powers had to make a constant effort to keep the Korean conflict “cold” by curbing their respective protégés from opening hostilities against each other. In short, until the late 1960s, the Cold War in Korea was imposed by the great powers.

CHAPTER III. TRANSFORMATIONS AT THE TURN OF THE 1970S

INTRODUCTION

Less than three years after North Korean commandoes tried to take Park Chung Hee's life in a raid on his residence, the Blue House, the South Korean president softened his usual antagonistic tone toward the regime in Pyongyang. In his speech for National Liberation Day in 1970, Park Chung Hee announced that if North Korea stopped its military provocations and renounced the policies of communizing the whole of Korea by force, and the UN verified North Korea's compliance with these conditions, he was "prepared to suggest epochal and realistic measures, with a view of removing, step by step, various artificial barriers existing between South and North." He also posed the question whether the North Korean regime was "interested in running for a bona fide competition in development, in construction, and in creativity."¹⁵⁷

Pyongyang dismissed the offer by calling Park's message "nonsense" and "nothing worthwhile."¹⁵⁸ But in the spring of the following year, the North

¹⁵⁷ "President Park Chung Hee's Call for Renunciation of Force by North Korea and for Peaceful Competition, August 15, 1970," in Kim Se-jin, *Korean Unification: Source Materials with an Introduction*, 303–304.

¹⁵⁸ "North Korean Reply to President Park's Statement of August 15, August 22, 1970,"

Korean foreign minister announced a peaceful unification program that formally proposed that “the representatives of political parties, public organizations and individual persons in North and South Korea sit together at Panmunjom or in a third country at any time to have a heart-to-heart consultation with each other.”¹⁵⁹ Nevertheless, just a day after the minister’s announcement, the Supreme People’s Assembly was still appealing to the populations of the two Koreas to join their forces and form an “anti-Park Chung Hee united front.”¹⁶⁰ Finally, in early August, the North Korean leadership made it clear that it considered the Park Chung Hee administration a potential partner for negotiations. At a mass rally in Pyongyang, Kim Il Sung stated, “We are ready to establish contact at any time with all political parties, including the Democratic Republican Party, and all social organizations and individual personages [sic] in South Korea.”¹⁶¹ In less than a week, the president of South Korean Red Cross made a proposal where he repeated Park Chung Hee’s call to dissolve the artificial wall between the North and the South and suggested holding talks with the North Korean Red Cross representatives regarding a campaign for the search of families dispersed by the Korean

in Kim Se-jin, *op. cit.*, 304-305.

¹⁵⁹ *Yearbook of the United Nations, 1971, Vol. 25* (New York: Office of Public Information United Nations, 1974), 162.

¹⁶⁰ “Appeal to the People and Various Organizations in South Korea Sent by the Supreme People’s Assembly, North Korea, April 13, 1971,” in Kim Se-jin, *op. cit.*, 315.

¹⁶¹ Kim Il Sung, “The Revolutionary Peoples of Asia Will Win in Their Common Struggle Against US Imperialism,” *Kim Il Sung Works*, Vol. 26, 192.

division.¹⁶²

The first meetings between the Red Cross organizations of the two countries took place in Panmunjom in late August 1971. However, the representatives of the Red Cross were, in fact, Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA) agents on the South side and party officials on the North. By May of the following year, senior officials of the two countries had exchanged secret visits—meeting with leaders from the opposite side and relaying assurances that their ultimate goal was reunification and independence from the great powers. In this spirit, on July 4, 1972, the two countries announced the Joint Declaration in which they agreed to three principles for reunification: that reunification should be achieved without reliance on outside force, that it should be peaceful, and that national unity should be sought first, transcending differences in ideologies and system.

It is worth noting that at the time when Park Chung Hee was suggesting a competition in good faith between the North and the South, the South Korean regime was deeply concerned about the implications of the Nixon Doctrine for the situation in the Korean Peninsula. Kim Il Sung's announcement of his readiness to establish contact with the South Korean government came shortly after President Nixon's Assistant for National Security Affairs Henry Kissinger took his first trip to Beijing and President Richard Nixon declared that, in an effort to

¹⁶² "Proposal by South Korean Red Cross for Campaign for Search of Dispersed Families, August 12, 1971," in Kim Se-jin, *op. cit.*, 316-317.

“open the door for more normal relations” between the US and China, he accepted an invitation of the PRC government to visit China.¹⁶³

What was the link between the Nixon Doctrine and Sino-American rapprochement on one hand and the beginning of inter-Korean dialogue on the other? How did the US and China view the Korean issue in the late 1960s–early 1970s? What were the motivations of Seoul and Pyongyang in entering into talks with each other? The following analysis of the positions of the four actors on the Korean question at the turn of the 1970s, discrepancies among their views, and reasons for the inter-Korean dialogue unveils the conflicts of interests that existed among them.

1. THE NIXON DOCTRINE, BEGINNING OF SINO-AMERICAN RAPPROCHEMENT, AND THE TWO KOREAS

When Richard Nixon assumed the office of the US president in 1969, the

¹⁶³ Richard Nixon, “Remarks to the Nation Announcing Acceptance of an Invitation to Visit the People’s Republic of China, July 15, 1971,” Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project* (Santa Barbara, CA: University of California, 1999), <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=3079> (accessed 28 February 2015).

American government was facing big challenges at home and abroad. Engagement in the Vietnam War and the nuclear arms race with the Soviet Union were putting severe burdens on American economy; there was no confidence that the US could win the Vietnam war, especially after the Tet Offensive of 1968; anti-war protests, often violent, were taking place daily around the country; and US foreign policies were raising concerns and criticism throughout the international community.

Nixon campaigned for “Peace with Honor” in relation to Vietnam during his run for presidency and stated in his inaugural address that “The greatest honor history can bestow is the title of peacemaker. This honor now beckons America.”¹⁶⁴ Once in the White House, he launched several initiatives to pursue arms race control with the Soviet Union and to shift the direction of American foreign policies. Nixon’s vision for US policy toward Asia was laid out at a press conference in Guam in July 1969. While recognizing that the greatest threat to peace in the future would be in the Pacific, he called for the Asian nations to assume primary responsibility for their internal security and military defense. Nixon reiterated that the US would keep its treaty commitments and provide a nuclear umbrella when its allies were threatened by a major power with nuclear weapons.¹⁶⁵ In effect, however, the new American policy meant the reduction of

¹⁶⁴ Richard Nixon, “Inaugural Address, January 20, 1969,” Peters and Woolley, *The American Presidency*

Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=1941> (accessed 20 February 2015).

¹⁶⁵ Richard Nixon, “Informal Remarks in Guam with Newsmen, July 25, 1969,” Peters and Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*,

US military involvement in Asia.

Nixon believed that changes in the world balance of power—the end of the monopoly and overwhelming superiority of the US in nuclear weapons due to the invention of new types of weapons, military buildup of the Soviet Union, and acquisition of thermonuclear weapons by China on the one hand, and the Sino-Soviet rivalry on the other—called for a new, more realistic approach in the American strategic posture. Based on the conclusions of a review of US strategic doctrine, Nixon adopted a new strategy that represented a significant modification of the doctrine of the 1960s. It rested, among others, on the premises that the non-communist world possessed 95 percent of the nuclear power and the US allies' manpower greatly exceeded that of the US; that the US nuclear capability served as a deterrent to a full-scale Soviet attack on NATO in Europe or a Chinese attack on American allies in Asia; and that prospects for a coordinated two-front attack on US allies were low because of the risk of nuclear war and the improbability of Sino-Soviet cooperation. Thus, the imperative that the US nuclear forces defend not only the US but US' allies as well remained, but the conventional posture was changed from the "2 1/2 war" principle (a three-month conventional forward defense of NATO, a defense of Korea or Southeast Asia against a full-scale Chinese attack, and a minor contingency—all simultaneously) to the "1 1/2 war" principle (a defense against a major communist attack in either Europe or Asia,

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2140> (accessed 28 February 2014).

and contending with a contingency elsewhere).¹⁶⁶ In the case of “non-Chinese threats in Asia,” the US role was reduced to assisting allies. Nixon emphasized,

We cannot expect US military forces to cope with the entire spectrum of threats facing allies...This is particularly true of subversion and guerrilla warfare, or “wars of national liberation.” Experience has shown that the best means of dealing with insurgencies is to preempt them through economic development and social reform and to control them with police, paramilitary and military action by the threatened government.¹⁶⁷

An attack by North Korea on the South fell in that category of “non-Chinese threats” and “wars of national liberation” where the US was to supplement local efforts unless there were an overt conventional attack, in which case the US would “weigh [its] interests, and...consider efforts of [its] allies, in determining [its] response.”¹⁶⁸ An inter-agency group undertook a series of planning-programming-budgeting and contingency planning studies on Korea in 1969 and

¹⁶⁶ Richard Nixon, “First Annual Report to the Congress on United States Foreign Policy for the 1970's, February 18, 1970,” Peters and Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2835> (accessed 28 February 2014).

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

early 1970¹⁶⁹ and, following the National Security Council's review of US policy and programs toward Korea, Nixon decided—through NSDM48—to reduce US military presence in Korea by 20,000 personnel by the end of FY 71. He directed that consultation be conducted with Park Chung Hee on the conditions that the US “will attempt to provide” military assistance to South Korea over FY 71–75 and increase its economic assistance, provided that South Korea assumed a larger defense burden through a military assistance program transfer or military sales program. The objective of the improvements of South Korean forces was “to develop ROK forces capable of deterring or conducting a defense against a conventional or unconventional attack by North Korea.” According to NSDM48, the Nixon Administration did not yet plan further withdrawals of substantial numbers of US personnel but considered them possible “when substantial ROK forces return from Vietnam or compensating improvements in ROK forces are well underway.” As for the remaining US troops in South Korea, they had to be repositioned in such a manner as “to reduce the US presence in the DMZ to the minimum.”¹⁷⁰

An underlying assumption of the Nixon Doctrine was that US allies in

¹⁶⁹ National Security Study Memoranda (NSSM) 27 (22 February 1969), 34 (21 March 1969), and 53 (26 April 1969), National Security Archive, Collection: Presidential Directives. The studies started at the end of the Johnson Administration following the Korean security crisis of 1968.

¹⁷⁰ National Security Decision Memorandum 48 “U.S. Programs in Korea,” 20 March 1970, National Security Archive, Collection: Presidential Directives.

Asia had achieved significant economic growth and were capable of shouldering the burden of their own defense. The Americans also noted a rise in nationalism and regional pride of peoples in Asia as well as the development of closer intra-regional cooperation. Nixon frequently cited South Korea's achievements, such as the two-fold increase in its gross national product within a decade and the highest annual growth rate in the world.¹⁷¹ It was Japan, however, that was hailed as an example of a great economic success and whose partnership was considered the "key to the success of the Nixon Doctrine in Asia."¹⁷² For this reason, the Americans informed Japan of the new policy first and put much effort into consultations with Tokyo. In contrast, in its relations with Seoul, Washington simply reiterated its commitment to the defense of the country and notified—rather than consulted with—the Park Chung Hee administration regarding troop reductions, despite earlier promises that no American troops would leave Korea unless agreed to by both Seoul and Washington. South Korean officials and Park personally tried to stop the reductions. Nevertheless, the US proceeded as planned and unilaterally withdrew nearly one-third (some 20,000) of the 64,000 US troops stationed on the Korean Peninsula in late 1970 and early 1971.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ See for example, Richard Nixon, "Informal Remarks in Guam with Newsmen," and Richard Nixon, "First Annual Report to the Congress."

¹⁷² Richard Nixon, "First Annual Report to the Congress."

¹⁷³ Kang Seong-cheol, *Juhan Migun* [US forces in Korea] (Seoul: Ilsongjeong, 1988), 205-206.

A major component of Nixon's strategy was improving relations with the PRC. In his view, this would expedite the end of the conflict in Vietnam and also help the US in its dealing with the Soviet Union. Using the growing Sino-Soviet split as an opportunity,¹⁷⁴ Nixon intended to make a move toward the Chinese in order to increase his leverage against the Soviets while maintaining relations with the Soviets as leverage against the Chinese. American diplomats, under Kissinger's orders, were seeking contact with the Chinese from the beginning of Nixon administration. Washington relaxed travel and trade restrictions applying to China and resumed formal talks with Beijing in Warsaw. After an exchange of messages in 1970–spring 1971, Kissinger secretly traveled to Beijing to make arrangements for Nixon's trip to China. The announcement, after Kissinger's return, that Nixon would visit the PRC the following year formally started the historic rapprochement between the US and communist China.

Nixon considered Taiwan and Vietnam as "irritants" in the way of his diplomatic initiative, so in preparation for his visit to China these issues were given careful consideration. In contrast, the Korean issue was not expected to be a problem in talks with the Chinese. In fact, when announcing the Nixon Doctrine and starting the rapprochement with China, the Nixon Administration did not have a detailed plan regarding the Korean issue, other than reducing US troops there

¹⁷⁴ The Sino-Soviet split reached its height in the border disputes of 1969 that brought the two nations close to full-scale war.

and encouraging South Korea's self-defense.¹⁷⁵ Yet, some ideas can be found in writings of the late 1960s–early 1970s by American experts on Asia. They reflect inspiration by the example of Germany—the Brandt cabinet's Ostpolitik that started in the late 1960s.

Morton Abramovitz, the Director of the State Department's Office of Korean Affairs, suggested a two-Korea policy patterned after the two-Germany policy. He wrote, "Hostility and enmity would be lessened with trade, movement of persons and international acceptance of the existing division of Korea." Abramovitz thought that a diplomatic process for this goal had to start a South Korean "Nordpolitik," by which he meant "a willingness to accept the North Korean state and begin a process of engaging the North Koreans in any and all forums."¹⁷⁶ It is worth noting that he envisioned a multi-party conference on the basis of the North-South dialogue:

The United States or Japan, or even better the ROK, could call for a Conference on North-East Asian Security, whose main focus would be on reducing tensions in Korea. [...] Such a conference would have to include the six main participants [the US, PRC,

¹⁷⁵ The NSDM 48 and budgeting and contingency planning studies mentioned above are the only accounts of decision-making regarding the US policy on Korea during the first half of the Nixon Administration.

¹⁷⁶ Morton Abramovitz, "Moving the Glacier: The Two Koreas and the Powers," *Adelphi Papers* #80 (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1971), 22.

USSR, Japan, South and North Korea] but other countries might also be invited; indeed the presence of other countries is probably necessary to reduce the possible abrasiveness of discussions among the six. Continuing the German analogy, such a proposal should be thought of as much like the proposed European Security Conference: it would put the seal on the division of Korea, but hopefully might also consider means of tidying up the situation such as by limiting arms supplies to the two sides. The important result of a conference, perhaps even the purpose of merely calling for one, would be to tie up the parties in a negotiating process and all the preceding diplomatic by-play.¹⁷⁷

At the time, no one thought that the two Germanies would reunify in 30 years, so to Americans, Germany was an example of bringing peace to one “hot point.” In other words, they believed that if South Korea pursued policies similar to those of West Germany, the chances for conflict between the two Korean regimes would significantly reduce. US diplomats shared these ideas with their counterparts in Seoul and urged them to engage in negotiations with North Korea.¹⁷⁸

As can be seen from the discussion above, the ideas of the US presupposed

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 24.

¹⁷⁸ Kim Jihyeong, *Detangteu-wa Nam-Buk gwangye*, 43-72.

the leading role of South Korea in the process of thawing tensions on the Korean Peninsula, so there was no reason for the US to bring up the Korean issue in its talks with China. It was China who first raised the Korean issue. Kissinger, in fact, sounded quite surprised when, during his visit to China, Premier Zhou Enlai unexpectedly started talking about Korea. Zhou reminded his American counterpart that China “withdrew our people voluntarily from Korea back in 1958” and demanded that US troops also be withdrawn from South Korea.¹⁷⁹ In reply, Kissinger said it was “quite conceivable” that “most, if not all,” American troops would be withdrawn from Korea by the end of Nixon’s second term if there were a positive development in the Sino-American relationship and the Indochina war ended.¹⁸⁰

Why did China bring up the Korean issue in its talks with the US? In a nutshell, North Korea was the only ally (except Albania) on whose support PRC could count in its détente with the US. Although no primary documents that would prove China’s intentions are available, findings of other scholars and China’s behavior reveal that Beijing wanted to give something to Pyongyang in order to strengthen bilateral ties, and that “something” was support for Pyongyang’s policy of having US troops removed from the Korean Peninsula.

There was an important parallel between the security interests of North

¹⁷⁹ “Memorandum of Conversation, Beijing, July 9, 1971,” *FRUS, 1969-1976*, Vol. XVII, China, 1969-1972, Doc. 139, p. 389.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 390.

Korea and China: China considered a complete removal of US troops and military facilities from Taiwan as well as the annulation of the US-Taiwan alliance treaty as the basic preconditions to improving Sino-American relations.¹⁸¹

The discussion in the next chapter of this dissertation will cast doubt as to how (un)genuine that support was but, at the initial stages, it was an attractive strategy from China's standpoint. That is because the US was in the process of reducing its military presence in Korea, so by persuading Pyongyang that the Sino-American détente could bring about the removal of US troops, Beijing would be able to obtain much needed North Korean support without much investment.

First, however, Beijing needed to recover its relations with Pyongyang, which were damaged in the second half of the 1960s by China's pressure to emulate the Cultural Revolution in North Korea and the Red Guards' campaign charging Kim Il Sung as a "fat revisionist." Relations between the two countries were restored on the occasion of China's National Day on 1 October 1969.

When the beginning of the Sino-American rapprochement was made public, Beijing went to great lengths to assure Pyongyang that it was an opportunity for North Korea. Premier Zhou Enlai visited Pyongyang shortly after Kissinger's secret visit to China in mid-July 1971 and informed the North Koreans about his conversations with the American envoy.¹⁸² Beijing also stated its

¹⁸¹ Choi Myeong-hae, *Jungguk-Bukhan dongmaeng gwangye*, 281.

¹⁸² Ibid., 285; and Xia and Shen, "China's Last Ally," 10-11.

support for North Korea's program of peaceful unification and for the abolition of UNCURK in the Shanghai Communique issued by the US and PRC at the end of President Nixon's visit to China in February 1972. To prevent the impression that North Korea had been left alone to fight US imperialism at the frontline of the Cold War in Northeast Asia, in late 1971 the Chinese approved new economic aid and signed the first agreement on military aid to North Korea in fifteen years.

In sum, neither of the two great powers expected or desired the Korean issue to become an obstacle to the process of Sino-American rapprochement. However, there was a difference in the policies that the two great powers pursued toward their allies. The US focused on reducing the South Korean regime's dependence on it, whereas China strove to strengthen the alliance relationship with North Korea because the latter was the only remaining ally to support Beijing in its endeavor toward the US.

2. VIEW FROM PYONGYANG: THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The fact that China, North Korea's major ally since the Korean War, entered into negotiations on normalizing relations with the US, the No. 1 enemy of North Korea, and did so without informing North Korea must have aroused feelings of shock and betrayal on the part of the North Korean leadership. But the

aforementioned efforts of Beijing to persuade its ally and demonstrate support for North Korea in its negotiations with the US paid off. After deliberations at the central committee of the Korean Workers' Party, in late July 1971 Pyongyang dispatched Vice Premier Kim Il to express North Korea's support for the new Chinese policy toward the US.¹⁸³ Kim Il Sung publicly portrayed the announcement of Nixon's plan to visit China as "the eventual failure of the hostile policy carried out by American imperialists toward China for 20 years [...] The U.S. imperialism has surrendered." President Nixon, according to Kim, would come to China "waving a white flag."¹⁸⁴ Kim reiterated this position in an interview with the *Yomiuri Shimbun* in January 1972 when he called Nixon's approaches to the PRC a "begging diplomacy."¹⁸⁵

The North Korean leadership hoped that China, from the position of strength, would advance North Korea's interests in bilateral talks with the US. The delegation headed by Kim Il requested that China relay to the Americans North Korea's 8-point program.¹⁸⁶ North Korean officials made several more secret and

¹⁸³ Choi Myeong-hae, *op. cit.*, 286-287.

¹⁸⁴ A statement made at a rally welcoming Prince Sihanouk on 6 August 1971, *Kim Il Seong jeojakjip* [Kim Il Sung works] (Pyongyang: Joseon Rodongdang Chulpansa, 1984), Vol. 26, 225.

¹⁸⁵ *Kim Il Seong jeojakjip*, Vol. 27, 48.

¹⁸⁶ Choi Myeong-hae, *op. cit.*, 286-287. The program included demands for the withdrawal of foreign forces and American weapons from Korea, prohibition of replacing them with the Japanese, dissolution of UNCURK and UN Command,

public visits to Beijing in the second half of 1971–early 1972 to prepare with their Chinese colleagues the section on the Korean Peninsula for the US-China talks.¹⁸⁷

The newly obtained support of China and initial reductions of US forces in South Korea played in North Korea's favor. It does not mean, however, that Pyongyang welcomed the new American policy. Kim Il Sung interpreted the Nixon Doctrine as a way for the US "to extricate themselves from their difficulties" by "making Asians fight Asians."¹⁸⁸ Kim Il Sung was particularly concerned about the effect of the new American policy on Japan and South Korea.

The claims of "peace" put forward by the US imperialists are nothing but a screen to mislead people. [...] The US imperialists...are inciting the South Korean puppet clique to continue with aggressive provocation against the northern half of the Republic. And the Japanese militarists, revived by US imperialism, are openly proclaiming their unrestrained intention of invading our country again.¹⁸⁹

cessation of US-ROK joint military exercises, and unconditional invitation of North Korea to the UN debates on the Korean question. (Kim Se-jin, *Korean Unification: Source Materials with an Introduction*, 315-316.)

¹⁸⁷ Xia and Shen, *op. cit.*, 14-15; and Choi Myeong-hae, *op. cit.*, 290-292.

¹⁸⁸ Kim Il Sung, "On the Present Political and Economic Policies of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Some International Problems. January 10, 1972," in Vol. 27 of *Kim Il Sung Works*, 41.

¹⁸⁹ Kim Il Sung, "New Year Address, January 1, 1972" in Vol. 27 of *Kim Il Sung Works*,

They [the South Korean rulers] are openly claiming that the question of reunification can only be discussed after 1973 when their “strength is built up” or even in the second half of the 1970s. Their motive is to bring the resuscitated Japanese militarists into South Korea in full force by then and bring about their foolish ambition of “reunification be prevailing over communism.”¹⁹⁰

In other words, the North Korean leadership feared that one security threat would be replaced with two others: the US, while removing troops, would encourage the revival of Japanese militarism and re-arm the South Korean regime, pitching it against the North.¹⁹¹ North Korea, therefore, could not idly wait for the US troops to leave but had to expedite the US troop withdrawal before those changes could take place.

In his New Year address in 1972, Kim Il Sung claimed that the plans of the US were endangering “peace in Asia and the rest of the world,” so North Korea

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¹⁹⁰ Kim Il Sung, “The Revolutionary Peoples of Asia Will Win in Their Common Struggle Against US Imperialism,” in Vol. 26 of *Kim Il Sung Works*, 192.

¹⁹¹ “Minutes of Conversation on the Occasion of the Party and Government Delegation on Behalf of the Romanian Socialist Republic to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea,” 10 June 1971, 43/1971, Archives of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, North Korea International Documentation Project, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (NKIDP).

“shall launch a powerful struggle against the US and Japanese imperialists and their stooges, in firm unity with the people of China, Indochina, Japan and other Asian countries.”¹⁹² The reference to cooperation with other countries reflects recognition by the North Korean leadership of another trend that was advantageous to the regime: the growing influence of Third World countries and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in the international arena and their empathy to North Korea’s struggles.

The effect of Third World support in placing pro-North Korean draft resolutions for voting of the UN General Assembly and having the Korean problem discussed at the NAM forums during the 1960s, as discussed in the previous chapter, gave Pyongyang hope that the diplomacy toward the Third World could help its position not only reach the debates of the UN General Assembly but also obtain votes in North Korea’s favor. North Korean leadership sensed the possibility of pushing North Korea’s demands through the UN and changed its stance toward the organization.

From the establishment of North Korea in 1948 until the late 1960s, the regime had been hostile to the UN and disregarded the organization as a tool of American imperialism due to the UN’s involvement in founding and building South Korea and in the Korean War. Pyongyang maintained that any UN decision on the Korean question adopted without North Korea’s participation was invalid

¹⁹² Kim Il Sung, “New Year Address, January 1, 1972,” 18.

and that the UN had no authority whatsoever to deal with the Korean problem.¹⁹³ When in 1961 the First Committee¹⁹⁴ decided to invite to the discussion of the Korean question North Korea along with the South, provided that the North first “unequivocally accepts the competence and authority of the United Nations,”¹⁹⁵ North Korea rejected this proposal for a conditional invitation.¹⁹⁶

In the late 1960s, however, against the backdrop of the growing support for North Korea’s position by Third World countries, Pyongyang started changing its policy toward the UN. In 1969, Pyongyang sent to the General Assembly a letter (dated 19 November 1969),¹⁹⁷ where it no longer expressed the view that

¹⁹³ In an official statement on 23 October 1962, for example, Kim Il Sung declared that the UN had no right to discuss the Korean question (*Yearbook of the United Nations, 1962* (New York: Office of Public Information, United Nations, 1964), 119). The same position was reiterated in multiple statements and memoranda sent by the North Korean government to the UN, such as the one from 24 November 1962 and statements of the North Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs dated 23 September 1963 and 24 September 1965 (*Yearbook of the United Nations, 1965* (New York: Office of Public Information, United Nations, 1967), 181.)

¹⁹⁴ At the sessions of the UN General Assembly, issues related to Korea were always discussed under the heading “The Question of Korea” or “Questions Pertaining to Korea” among “Questions Relating to Asia and the Far East” as part of deliberations of the First Committee which dealt with political and security matters.

¹⁹⁵ Resolution A/C.1/L.268

¹⁹⁶ *Yearbook of the United Nations, 1960* (New York: Office of Public Information, United Nations, 1961), 168-169.

¹⁹⁷ *Yearbook of the United Nations, 1969, Vol. 23*, 165.

the UN had “no ground or authority to meddle in the Korean question,”¹⁹⁸ which had been commonly contained in North Korea’s memoranda to the UN until then. From 1970, the pro-North Korean draft resolutions stopped demanding that “the UN refrain from any further discussion of the Korean question.”¹⁹⁹

The PRC’s entry into the UN also played an important role in Pyongyang’s departure from its previous policy toward the organization. Less than six months after Kissinger’s secret trip to Beijing, in fall 1971, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution recognizing the PRC as the only lawful representative of China, making it a permanent member of the Security Council, and expelling the Republic of China (ROC, Taiwan).²⁰⁰ The decision of the General Assembly came despite the facts that the UN had considered illegal the establishment of the PRC in 1949 and condemned the PRC as an aggressor for its involvement in the Korean War. Kim Il Sung welcomed China’s entry into the UN calling it “a great event in the international political arena” and “a great victory for the Chinese people.”²⁰¹

China’s acquisition of Taiwan’s seat at the UN had a number of significant implications for North Korea. Firstly, Pyongyang could expect China’s lobbying

¹⁹⁸ The memorandum and statement of North Korea from July – September 1968. (*Yearbook of the United Nations*, 1968, Vol. 22, 183.)

¹⁹⁹ This demand was included in pro-North Korean resolution drafts from 1965 to 1969.

²⁰⁰ A/RES/2758(XXVI).

²⁰¹ Kim Il Sung, “On the Present Political and Economic Policies,” 44.

on North Korea's behalf. Secondly, the development demonstrated the possibility of cutting a rival's ties with the UN and pushing it out of the UN scope.²⁰² In addition, the fact that the US did not oppose the move of the General Assembly confirmed that Washington no longer had unchallenged supremacy in the UN. It also testified to the general decline of the US. In his New Year address in 1972, Kim Il Sung said, "The days are gone when the US imperialists decided the internal affairs of other countries at their own whim; they have long been on the decline and they cannot escape their fate. The US imperialists are now in a serious political and economic crisis at home and stand in total international isolation."²⁰³ And, in direct reference to the UN, "The situation today is different from what it was in the 40s when the US imperialists could divide our country into north and south, abusing the name of the 'United Nations'."²⁰⁴ Later in the same year, the Soviet representative to the UN transmitted to the Secretary-General a letter (dated 2 August 1972) from the Foreign Minister of North Korea which, for the first time, expressed North Korea's support of UN discussions on Korea.²⁰⁵

²⁰² Park Jae-Young [Bak Jae-yeong], "Bukhan-ui dae-Yuen mit gukje gigu jeongchaek [North Korea's policies toward the UN and international organizations]," in *Bukhan wegyo jeongchaek* [The foreign policy of North Korea], ed. Yang Sung Chul [Yang Seong-cheol] and Kang Sung-Hack [Kang Seong-hak] (Seoul: Seoul Press, 1995), 284.

²⁰³ Kim Il Sung, "New Year Address, January 1, 1972," 14.

²⁰⁴ Kim Il Sung, "On the Present Political and Economic Policies," 38.

²⁰⁵ *Yearbook of the United Nations, 1972, Vol. 26* (New York: Office of Public Information, United Nations, 1975), 150-152.

The changed attitude toward the UN as well as North Korea's expectations from the organization can be seen in the following statement of Kim Il Sung from January 1972.

It is becoming difficult for the US imperialists to act as they please in the United Nations as in the past. This shows that the days when the US imperialists could commit crimes at will, abusing the UN flag, are over. [...] The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has always respected the UN Charter and has never violated it. It is the US imperialists themselves who have wantonly violated the UN Charter and defamed the name of the United Nations. Each time they resorted to policies of aggression and war, the US imperialists abused the UN flag. In particular, they committed aggression against Korea under the UN mask and thus left a most disgraceful blot on the history of the UN. To be faithful to its sacred Charter, I think, the United Nations must rectify its past errors in connection with the Korean question. The United Nations should revoke all 'resolutions' on the 'Korean question' fabricated illegally by the US imperialists in the world body. [...] The United Nations must take steps to bring about the withdrawal of the aggressive forces of US imperialism presently occupying South

Korea under the ‘UN’ authority.²⁰⁶

In short, North Korean leadership contended that the UN, under US pressure, had made “errors” on the Korean question in the past, but now, as the US was losing its influence, it was time for the UN to correct its past “errors.” The statement above makes it clear that the main “error” that the North Korean regime wanted the UN to correct was the resolution on deploying US troops to Korea under the UN flag.

The majority of US troops in the Korean Peninsula at that time were stationed under the UN flag. The regime believed that since the deployment of those troops was made through the UN, the organization could make a decision to withdraw them, which, in effect, would remove US troops from South Korea. In other words, Pyongyang’s plan was to have the UN General Assembly adopt a resolution that would recall US troops from Korea. Pyongyang wanted to avoid discussing the Korean issue at the Security Council where any decision could be vetoed by the US. Instead, North Korea sought adoption of related resolutions at the UN General Assembly, which can make recommendations for the maintenance of international peace and security in the case the Security Council is in deadlock.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ Kim Il Sung, “On the Present Political and Economic Policies,” 45-46.

²⁰⁷ This authority was passed to the General Assembly through the “Uniting for Peace Resolution” of November 1950, which was designed to deal with abuses of veto power in the Security Council. The resolution states that if the Security Council, because of

Diplomats from socialist countries who served in Pyongyang at that time were aware of North Korea's intentions. The Soviet ambassador to Pyongyang, for example, told a visitor from the East German embassy, "the Korean comrades increasingly believe that they can get effective support from the PR China and the Soviet Union and the other fraternal states" to obtain the withdrawal of US troops from South Korea via the UN.²⁰⁸

The aforementioned North Korean letter of 1972 (which stated North Korea's support of UN debates on Korea) demanded that the UN, first of all, take measures to annul the right of the US army "occupying Korea" to use the UN flag and withdraw the foreign troops from Korea.²⁰⁹ In fact, all of the official statements issued and transmitted to the UN by the North Korean government in the 1970s in connection to the discussion of the Korean question contained the request to withdraw foreign troops from the Korean Peninsula. All the draft resolutions submitted on North Korea's behalf since the country's admission to the UN as an observer in 1973 and until 1976 also included the request to remove

lack of unanimity of the permanent members, fails to exercise its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, the UN General Assembly shall consider the matter immediately with a view to making appropriate recommendations to UN members for collective measures. (Pak Chi Young, *Korea and the United Nations*, 109-110).

²⁰⁸ GDR Embassy in Pyongyang, 24 January 1974, cited in Armstrong, *Tyranny of the Weak*, 199-200.

²⁰⁹ *Yearbook of the United Nations*, 1972, Vol. 26, 150-152.

the US troops. Even in the cases when it was not stated first in the list of proposed decisions of the UN General Assembly, the No. 1 clause still stated the demand that implied the withdrawal of UN troops, such as the demand for the dissolution of the UN Command in Korea.

South Korea, however, had started taking measures to prevent the sudden appearance of Korea-related issues in UN deliberations since the late 1960s. In 1968, Seoul was able to shift the method of placing the Korean question on the agenda of the General Assembly from automatic placement to discretionary, in which it was up to the Secretary-General to decide whether the basis for the discussion, the annual report of UNCURK, would be put on the agenda of the First Committee. This means that any discussion of Korea-related issues at the General Assembly could be called off altogether in any given year by the decision of the Secretary-General.

Therefore, the initial objective of North Korea's policy toward the UN was to change the established mechanism of UN debates on the Korean question. Consequently, the issues of Pyongyang's participation in the discussions and the work of the UNCURK became the regime's primary targets. In the aforementioned letter of 1969 and other communications with the UN in 1970–1972, Pyongyang consistently requested that it participate without condition in the UN discussion of the Korean question. The issue of extending an invitation to North Korea was regularly included in the resolutions submitted on North Korea's behalf until 1973, when the country was eventually given access to the debates.

As for the UNCURK, North Korea called it a “tool of United States imperialism that had coerced the United Nations into annually discussing the Korean question on the basis of its fraudulent reports and adopting illegal resolutions.”²¹⁰ The UNCURK was established in October 1950 in place of the UN Commission on Korea (UNCOK)²¹¹ and was composed of the representatives of US- and South Korea-friendly countries.²¹² The basic premise and objective of the UNCURK—to represent the UN in bringing about the establishment of a unified government in Korea through UN-supervised elections—was incompatible with North Korea’s stance of unification by the Korean people themselves without any outside interference. The existence of the UNCURK provided many countries with a legal reason to not recognize North Korea since the UNCURK’s remit was based on UN resolutions that recognized only one legal government on the Korean Peninsula—that of South Korea.²¹³ The reports that the UNCURK submitted to the UN every year repeatedly stated that North Korea

²¹⁰ A statement of 15 October 1969, transmitted to the UN by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of North Korea (*Yearbook of the United Nations*, 1969, Vol. 23, 160).

²¹¹ Which replaced the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK) in December 1948 (UN General Assembly Resolution 195 (III), 12 December 1948).

²¹² Original members of UNCURK included Australia, Chile, Netherlands, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand, and Turkey. Chile and Pakistan left the commission in the early 1970s.

²¹³ Andrew C. Nahm and James E. Hoare, *Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Korea* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2004), 215.

denied the role of the UN in Korea.²¹⁴ They also listed incursions of North Korean agents in the South and other violations of the Armistice Agreement by North Korea and typically concluded that the tensions on the peninsula persisted and the possibility of a resumption of hostilities could not be excluded. The work of the UNCURK thereby provided ground for the continuous stationing of UN troops in South Korea. In its government statements, memoranda, and other letters sent to the UN in the late 1960s–early 1970s, Pyongyang emphasized that the UNCURK was illegally created, biased, and had to be dissolved.²¹⁵ Pyongyang’s supporters seconded Pyongyang’s argument at the UN and pointed out that the UNCURK had made no practical contribution to solution of the Korean problem but rather created obstacles to Korean unification—a domestic matter which should be solved by means of direct negotiations between the two parties in Korea. They argued that the commission was serving only the national interests of the US and violating UN principles of sovereignty and non-interference in the domestic affairs of states. They also sponsored draft resolutions that demanded the dissolution of the UNCURK.²¹⁶

Pyongyang’s reasons for opening a dialogue with Seoul deserve special attention here. The persuasion of Beijing played an important part. There must have also been an aspect of appeal to the domestic population and a rationale for

²¹⁴ See for example, *Yearbook of the United Nations, 1970, Vol. 24*, 201.

²¹⁵ See for example, *ibid.*, 202.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 201–207.

mobilizing it, especially as the North Korean leadership was dealing with a delicate issue of regime succession. But in light of the discussion above, Pyongyang's decision to engage in talks with Seoul was closely linked to Pyongyang's efforts to gain access to UN debates on the Korean question and have the UN remove US troops from the Korean Peninsula.

During the 1971 UNGA, which took place after inter-Korean dialogue started, the pro-North Korea group suggested that if contact between North and South Koreans were to be facilitated, discussion at the current session was essential and representatives of both North and South Korea should be invited to participate.²¹⁷ North Korea's supporters in the UN, including the newly admitted PRC, requested to put on the agenda of the General Assembly in 1972 the item entitled "Creation of favorable conditions to accelerate the independent and peaceful reunification of Korea." In explanation of this request, they noted "constructive developments" between North and South Korea—which had declared in the July 4 Joint Declaration their willingness to join efforts with a view of the reunification of Korea by peaceful means and without foreign intervention. The contents of the request suggested that the General Assembly study ways of creating favorable conditions to accelerate the solution of the Korean question. The proposed measures included a UN debate with the representatives of both parts of Korea and elimination of "the well-known obstacles to Korean unification such as the maintenance of foreign troops in Korea serving under the UN flag and

²¹⁷ *Yearbook of the United Nations, 1971, Vol. 25, 163.*

the existence and activities of an illegally created body [the UNCURK].” North Korean government sent, through the Soviet Union, a letter to the Secretary-General, which expressed the country’s support for the new agenda item.²¹⁸

Therefore, by entering into negotiations with the South, North Korea wanted to create an appearance of peace on the peninsula, which would undermine the rationale for the stationing of UN troops and thus facilitate their removal.²¹⁹

In other words, through the inter-Korean dialogue, North Korea was sending a message to the international community: “The two Koreas are moving toward reconciliation; there’s no need for the presence of US troops. Moreover, those troops are actually an *obstacle* to further progress.”

There was a danger, however, that North Korea’s talking with the South could appear, in the eyes of socialist countries, as if Pyongyang was relenting toward Seoul and giving up its struggle against the “American puppet.” There was

²¹⁸ *Yearbook of the United Nations*, 1972, Vol. 26, 150-151.

²¹⁹ “Minutes of Conversation on the Occasion of the Party and Government Delegation on Behalf of the Romanian Socialist Republic to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea,” Archives of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, 43/1971, 10 June 1971; “Minutes of the Conversation Taken on the Occasion of the Audience Granted by Comrade Nicolae Ceausescu to the Delegation of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea,” National Historical and Central Archives of Romania, Collection: Romanian Communist Party, Central Committee, Foreign Relations Department, Folder 23/1973, 8 March 1973; and Romanian Embassy in Pyongyang to the 2nd Direction, Relations, Matter 220, Folder 1515, No. 061.113, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania, 4 April 1973. NKIDP.

also a factor of rivalry with North Vietnam who was fighting against imperialism with arms in hands thereby attracting the attention of the socialist community whose support Pyongyang needed to succeed in its own strategy. To appeal to socialist countries, the North Korean leadership dispatched delegations of party officials who explained Pyongyang's new strategy to its allies. The North Koreans argued that the regime in Seoul was barely sustaining itself with the help of the US and Japan,²²⁰ while the leftist forces in the country were growing increasingly prominent.²²¹ The talks with South Korea, according to them, were aimed to "exert a revolutionary influence on the population in South Korea," "stimulate the leftist trends," "aggravate the internal contradictions which exist in the Seoul administration and military circles," and "isolate the puppet clique in South Korea even more, not only internally but also internationally."²²² Inter-Korean dialogue would therefore open a way to reach the broad masses of the South Korean population, further destabilize the regime, give rise to opposition forces, and awaken the population to demand unification and the withdrawal of US troops. In

²²⁰ GDR Embassy Pyongyang, Note on Information by DPRK Deputy Foreign Minister, Comrade Ri Man-seok, 20 July 1972, GDR Foreign Ministry Archive (FMA), PolA AA, MfAA, C951/76. NKIDP.

²²¹ Romanian Embassy Pyongyang to the 2nd Direction, Relations, 4 April 1973, Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives (RMFA), Matter 220, Folder 1515, No. 061.113. NKIDP.

²²² "Minutes of the Conversation Taken on the Occasion of the Audience Granted by Comrade Nicolae Ceausescu," 8 March 1973; and Romanian Embassy Pyongyang to the 2nd Direction, Relations, 4 April 1973. NKIDP.

light of internal dissent, Japan and the US would no longer be able to assist the South Korean regime, and this would “generate a situation in which, eventually, a democratic person rises to power in South Korea,” and pursues the reunification of Korea.²²³

In reality, too, the inter-Korean dialogue was seen in Pyongyang as a way for North Korean propaganda to reach the South Korean population. This can be evidenced in the requests of the North Korean delegates to the North-South talks that the Red Cross personnel—some 35,000 people—be dispatched to every *ri* or *dong*²²⁴ and granted freedom of all activities and inviolability of their person and articles they carry.²²⁵ Pyongyang also insisted that the definition of “relative” in a divided family include distant relatives so that more North Koreans could come to the South and spread propaganda.

²²³ GDR Embassy Pyongyang, Note on Information from DPRK Deputy Foreign Minister, Comrade Ri Man-seok,” 20 July 1972; and Minutes of the Conversation Taken on the Occasion of the Audience Granted by Comrade Nicolae Ceausescu, 8 March 1973. NKIDP.

²²⁴ The smallest administrative unit.

²²⁵ The proposal was made by the North Korean side at the 6th Red Cross Meeting held in Seoul in May 1973 (Korean Unification, 329-330).

3. VIEW FROM SEOUL: FEARS AND SOLUTIONS

The only player completely threatened by these trends was South Korea. Park's relationship with the US had already been damaged in the process of the US handling of the 1968 security crisis. The US disengagement from the Vietnam War meant that Seoul lost an important leverage against Washington—South Korean troops fighting in Vietnam. Moreover, the US started withdrawing its troops from Korea without consultations with Seoul and was also on the path of rapprochement with the PRC, a belligerent in the Korean War and North Korea's patron. The South Korean public (and Pyongyang) learned about US plans to reduce troops in Korea from the reports about the testimony of US Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird, which was leaked by the American press in October 1969.²²⁶

Park Chung Hee hoped to make Washington reconsider its decision on the withdrawal of military forces or at least that it would help modernize the South Korean army. To this end, South Korean diplomats and agents of the KCIA in the US started developing networks with American politicians and lawmakers, to whom they offered financial contributions and asked to support South Korea's interests in return.²²⁷ This would culminate in the Koreagate scandal in late 1976.

²²⁶ “Reeodeu ‘Ju-Hangun cheolsu ganeung Wollam chamjeon daega hyeopjeong opda’” [Laird: Possibility of withdrawal of troops from Korea, no Agreement in return for [South Korean] participation in Vietnam War],” *Donga Ilbo*, 8 October 1969.

²²⁷ Subcommittee on International Organizations of the Committee on International

On the other hand, the reduction in US assistance also reduced Washington's leverage in its relations with South Korea. Thus, the Nixon Doctrine provided Seoul with breathing space in which the regime was able to formulate and implement policies with a greater autonomy.²²⁸

The Park Chung Hee regime was highly concerned about the growing international influence of the PRC and the increasing support for North Korea in the Third World and at the UN. In its policy toward the UN, South Korea focused on preventing discussions on the Korean question from taking place and on preventing North Korea from participation in the meetings of the General Assembly. Seoul emphasized that Pyongyang's attitude to the UN and its aggressive plans against the South remained unchanged. For example, in letters to the Secretary-General dated 1 and 11 October 1969, the foreign minister of South Korea transmitted, respectively, a statement and a memorandum about his government's position on the Korean question. The statement reaffirmed South Korea's continued unequivocal acceptance of the competence and authority of the United Nations, under the Charter, to take action on the Korean question and deplored the fact that North Korea continued to deny such competence and authority to the UN. The memorandum declared that Seoul's unification policy

Relations US House of Representatives, *Investigation of Korean-American Relations* (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, October 31, 1978).

²²⁸ Park Tae Gyun, "Beteunam jeonjaeng-gwa beteunam-e pabyeonghan Asia gukkadeul-eui jeongchi-jeok byeonhwa," 588-622.

fully conformed to the UN formula for holding free elections throughout Korea, under UN supervision, representation to be in proportion to the indigenous population. According to the memorandum, what the North Koreans really sought under the façade of peaceful unification without outside interference was unification by force. The document also expressed support for the maintenance of the UNCURK and of the UN forces in Korea. It stressed that their withdrawal, in the face of intensified military provocation, would encourage North Korea to commit renewed aggression against the South.²²⁹

Why did Park engage in a dialogue with the North? Firstly, the aforementioned US pressure played an important part. Also, Park saw an inter-Korean dialogue as a sort of leverage in negotiations with the US. He emphasized that South Korea needed US troops during the talks with the North and needed US help in modernizing South Korean troops so Seoul could approach the negotiation table from the position of strength.

Secondly, there was strong domestic pressure. Calls for making a breakthrough in the relationship with North Korea had continued since the April Revolution. One generation had passed since the Korean War but no progress had been made toward reunifying the divided families. Kim Dae-jung ran for presidency on a platform that advocated talks with the North, so Park needed to engage the North to boost his domestic popularity.

²²⁹ *Yearbook of the United Nations*, 1969, Vol. 23, 160.

Inter-Korean dialogue was also a way to earn time before South Korea could stand on its own against the North and, in the meantime, to keep an eye on Pyongyang's intentions. As Park once told his aide Kim Seong-jin, "As long as you can touch an opponent with at least one hand, you can tell whether he will attack."²³⁰ Even when the South Korean government was disappointed by the lack of progress in the North-South talks in 1973, Park Chung Hee insisted that "the dialogue between the North and South must be continued as part of the effort to deny North Korea the chance of resuming hostile acts against South Korea."²³¹

Finally, Park Chung Hee used the negotiations with the North, and therefore the necessity to prepare the country for the unification, as rationale for promulgating a series of emergency measures and adopting a new constitution in late 1972. The move, referred to as the Yushin (Revitalization) Reforms, allowed the South Korean leader to silence domestic opposition and essentially make himself president for life.

²³⁰ Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 25.

²³¹ American Embassy in Seoul, "Ambassador Green's Call on President Park," The National Archives, Central Foreign Policy Files Documenting the Period 7/1/1973-12/31/1978, Record Group 59: General Records of the Department of State, Document No. 1973SEOUL03371, 29 May 1973.

4. THE INTER-KOREAN DIALOGUE AND DIPLOMATIC COMPETITION

The discussion above has shown that the initiative in raising the Korean issue in Sino-American negotiations and at the UN was on the side of China and North Korea. Pyongyang, given the support it was receiving from China and the Third World, considered the situation favorable for having US troops withdrawn from the Korean Peninsula by the decision of the UN General Assembly. Seoul, on the other hand, strove to have the US troops remain in Korea.

Another important finding of the preceding analysis is that the four actors desired an inter-Korean dialogue but for different reasons. To the US and PRC, Korean reconciliation would ensure that the problem of Korea did not stand in the way of Sino-American rapprochement. Neither North nor South Korea, on their part, planned inter-Korean talks as a step toward reunification through dialogue. To the two Korean regimes, the dialogue, in addition to other strategic objectives, was a publicity stunt aimed at their domestic populations, allies, the US, and the international community at large.

In this light, the inter-Korean talks were closely linked to the UN debates on the Korean question. And it explains why the two Koreas, simultaneously with starting the dialogue, stepped up their efforts to obtain support for their positions from the great powers, countries in their own and opposite blocs, and the Third World. The efforts sparked an intensive diplomatic competition between the two

regimes.

North Korea started an aggressive drive to establish diplomatic relations with as many countries as it could, including those that already had diplomatic relations with South Korea. Pyongyang pronounced 1972 the “year of North Korea.”²³² While intensifying diplomacy with Third World countries,²³³ it was simultaneously reaching out to the capitalist countries in Europe that had strong left-wing parties (such as Finland and Portugal) or were neutral (Austria and Switzerland).²³⁴ The North Korean regime increased the number of formal and informal delegations it dispatched overseas and started inviting reporters and politicians from other countries, including those from Japan and the West, to visit North Korea.²³⁵ Pyongyang’s early (and unsuccessful) efforts to set up a direct contact with the US also date to 1971–1972.²³⁶

Similarly to the North, South Korea also tried to diversify its diplomatic relations, focusing on the countries of the hostile, i.e. Eastern, bloc, especially

²³² Kim Il Sung, “On the Present Political and Economic Policies,” 45.

²³³ Yi Gi-jong, “Bukhan ui dae-je-3 segye Bidongmaeng oegyo jeongchaek” [North Korea’s foreign policy to the Third World], *Gohwang joengchihak hoebo* 1 (1997), 200–202; and Armstrong, *Tyranny of the Weak*, 178–197.

²³⁴ Kim Tae-un, “Bukhan-ui dae-EU sugyo hyeonhwang-gwa geu baegyeong” [Status and background of North Korea’s diplomatic ties with the EU], *Jeongchi jeongbo yeongu* 4-1 (2001), 233.

²³⁵ Hong Seuk-ryule, *Bundan-ui hiseuteri*, 306-314.

²³⁶ *Loc. cit.*

Yugoslavia and the great powers—the Soviet Union and the PRC. To this end, Seoul gave up its version of the Hallstein Doctrine²³⁷ and lifted restrictions on foreign trade with communist countries other than North Korea and Cuba. Its first diplomatic contact with the Soviet Union was established in the spring of 1972, and it was able to start direct trade and exchange commerce and sport delegations with Yugoslavia in 1973. China, however, continued to ignore South Korea's approaches.²³⁸

Another emphasis was put on the relations with the Third World. The purpose was to gain as many votes for the South Korean position at the UN General Assembly as possible. In fact, in the South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs at that time the bureau in charge of UN affairs occupied the central position in the foreign policy-making process.²³⁹

At the same time as they tried to expand their own contacts with the

²³⁷ The Hallstein Doctrine was a key principle in the foreign policy of West Germany from 1955 to 1970. It prescribed that the country would not establish or maintain diplomatic relations with any state—except for the Soviet Union—that recognized East Germany. Until the early 1970s South Korea, too, had not sought diplomatic relations with those countries that had diplomatic relations with North Korea.

²³⁸ For accounts of South Korea's diplomacy with the Soviet Union, PRC, and Yugoslavia in the early 1970s, see Hong, *Bundan-ui hiseuteri*, 299-305; and Chung Jae Ho, *Between Ally and Partner: Korea-China Relations and the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 29-31.

²³⁹ Pak Chi Young, *Korea and the United Nations*, 15.

opposite camp, North and South Korea tried to discourage their camp—Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union for North Korea, and the US and Japan for South Korea—from establishing contact with the rival.

Overall, North Korea was leading in the diplomatic race against South Korea. In 1972 alone, North Korea gained diplomatic recognition from nine countries. Nine more recognized it in the first half of 1973, including three Western European countries. In contrast, Seoul established diplomatic relations with only one country in 1972 and none in the first six months of 1973.

CHAPTER IV. POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND PROPAGANDA RIVALRY, 1973 – 1974

INTRODUCTION

The dialogue between senior officials of North and South Korea came to an end in 1973 although lower-level talks continued, at a symbolic level, until 1975.²⁴⁰ On the other hand, in the spring of 1973, Pyongyang proposed a non-aggression treaty with Seoul and, in the early summer, Park Chung Hee suggested dual entry of the two Koreas into the UN.

Pyongyang, as discussed in the previous chapter, had been seeking participation in UN deliberations on Korea for a long time. It was not until 1973, however, that North Korea was able to obtain observer status at the UN, which allowed North Korean representatives to speak at the meetings of the General Assembly. Thus, in the fall of 1973, the UN, for the first time in the organization's history, started deliberation of the Korean question with the participation of delegates from both North and South Korea. Simultaneously with the beginning of the UN debates, the diplomatic, political, and economic rivalry between the two Korean states reached a new height.

²⁴⁰ Meetings of vice-chairmen of the North-South Coordinating Committee ceased in May 1975.

This chapter takes a close look at the events of 1973–1974 and reveals major changes in the policies of Pyongyang, Seoul, Beijing, and Washington—changes that signaled the development of fierce competition between the two Koreas, particularly in the diplomatic sphere.

1. PARK CHUNG HEE’S JUNE 23 ANNOUNCEMENT AND CHANGE IN THE DIRECTION OF SOUTH KOREA’S FOREIGN POLICY

On 23 June 1973, Park Chung Hee made a “Special Announcement on the Foreign Policy for Peace and Unification.” Addressing “fifty-million fellow countrymen”²⁴¹—the combined population figure of the two Koreas at that time—he declared the following policies “for attaining the goal of national unification in the face of internal and external realities.”

- (1) Continuation of efforts to achieve peaceful unification;
- (2) Maintenance of peace on the Korean Peninsula, non-aggression and non-interference in each other’s internal affairs;
- (3) Continuation of the inter-Korean dialogue;

²⁴¹ Hereafter the speech is quoted based on the English translation in Kim Se-jin, *Korean Unification: Source Materials with an Introduction*, 338–340.

- (4) Non-objection to North Korea's participation, along with South Korea, in international organizations;
- (5) Non-objection to South Korea's admittance into the UN together with North Korea and non-objection, even before the admittance into the UN, to inviting North Korea to the UN General Assembly's deliberation of the Korean question in which the representative of South Korea is invited to participate;
- (6) Opening the door "to all the nations of the world on the basis of the principles of reciprocity and equality" and urging the countries outside of the capitalist bloc to open their doors to South Korea; and
- (7) Further strengthening the relations with nations friendly to South Korea.

The June 23 Announcement is now commonly associated with the fourth and fifth policies on the list, i.e. the suggestion of participation of both Koreas in the UN and other international forums. However, it was not the first time that South Korean leadership proposed that both Koreas attend UN debates. In 1971, for example, Park Chung Hee stated that "if the North Korean regime recognized United Nations' competence, authority and objectives with respect to the Korean problem," his government "would not be opposed to the presence" of a North Korean representative at the UN deliberations on that question.²⁴² The statement of 1971 was in line with the US and South Korean policies toward the UN that

²⁴² *Yearbook of the United Nations, 1971, Vol. 25, 162.*

date back to the 1961 Stevenson proposal on the conditional invitation of Pyongyang, which was discussed in the previous chapter. What was new in the June 23 Announcement is that it did not contain any conditions for inviting Pyongyang to UN debates.

The idea of the two Koreas becoming members of the UN alongside each other goes back even earlier. Ironically, it was first proposed by the Soviet Union in the late 1950s.²⁴³ South Korean officials started considerations of the double entry into the UN in the early 1970s when North Korea's search for participation in UN debates became obvious. In his memoirs, Foreign Minister Kim Yong-sik mentioned that the dual UN entry was part of the "measures for establishing peaceful relations between the south and the north," on which his ministry had been working for a long time.²⁴⁴

The US also pressed Seoul to "adjust the inter-Korean dialogue and South Korea's foreign policy" to prepare the discussion of double entry to the UN, UNCURK, and UNC issues in the international arena.²⁴⁵

Until early 1973, however, the opinions in the South Korean

²⁴³ The Soviet Union suggested simultaneous admission of the two Koreas into the UN in 1957 and 1958. Both times, the UN rejected the proposal. The South Korean government at that time opposed the proposal in the line with its unilateral membership policy. (Pak Chi Young, *Korea and the United Nations*, 64.)

²⁴⁴ Cited in Hong Seuk-ryule, *op. cit.*, 328.

²⁴⁵ Kim Ji-hyeong, *Detangteu-wa Nam-Buk gwangye*, 255-256.

administration had been divided, with the Blue House inclined against the open proclamation of the search for the dual entry into the UN. In March 1972, for instance, the former chief of KCIA Kim Hyeong-uk told the US ambassador Philip Habib that the current chief of the agency, Lee Hu-rak, was in favor of the two Koreas policy and wanted Seoul to take an initiative in that direction, but President Park and Prime Minister Kim Jong-pil disagreed with him.²⁴⁶ Park Chung Hee himself said at a press conference in January 1972 that Korea's circumstances were very different from the situation in the divided Germany and that a simultaneous entry of North and South Korea into the UN would be disrespectful for the nation's desire for unification."²⁴⁷ During a meeting with Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Marshall Green in Washington, D.C., in April 1972, Park's special assistant Ham Byeong-chun said that "public recognition of two Koreas would be a fatal blow to the South Korean government."²⁴⁸

While being opposed to the dual admission to the UN, Park Chung Hee, however, realized it was inevitable. Soon after the July 4 Joint Declaration, he told Green, who was visiting Korea at that time, that the inter-Korean dialogue would

²⁴⁶ Hong Seuk-ryule, *op. cit.*, 330.

²⁴⁷ The statement, made on 11 January 1972, was designed to rebuff the November 1971 proposal of the oppositional leader Kim Dae-jung for simultaneous admission of the two Koreas into the UN. (*Ibid.*, 330.)

²⁴⁸ Memorandum of Conversation, 13 April 1972, Cited in Kim Ji-hyeong, *op. cit.*, 253.

lead to the simultaneous entry of the two Koreas into the UN and to the recognition of both Koreas. In Park's words, South Korea's intention was to postpone that moment in order to enhance the country's international position.²⁴⁹

In January 1973 of the following year, the South Korean Foreign Ministry was still issuing guidelines to its overseas offices to reply to questions related to the simultaneous entry of the two Koreas into the UN in the following manner:

South Korea does not desire the entry [of North Korea to the UN] before the reunification and the inter-Korean dialogue directed at reunification is under way. Therefore, the South Korean government is opposed [to the simultaneous entry to the UN], given that the historical background and actual circumstances [of Korea] are different from those in other divided countries and that the simultaneous entry inheres the danger of perpetuating the division of North and South Korea.²⁵⁰

But the situation changed when North Korea submitted an application for membership in the World Health Organization on 1 February 1973. Membership in a specialized UN agency would open to Pyongyang a way to apply for the status of permanent observer at the UN.²⁵¹ And with this status, North Korean

²⁴⁹ Hong Seuk-ryule, *op. cit.*, 330.

²⁵⁰ Cited in *ibid.*, 330-331.

²⁵¹ North Korea was following in the footsteps of East Germany. Seeking the UN

representatives would receive the right to speak at the UN General Assembly meetings, albeit without the right to vote.²⁵²

Alarmed by this development, the Park Chung Hee administration undertook a high-level review of its foreign policies. In late April–early May, a team led by Director of KCIA International Affairs Bureau Gwon Yeong-baek conducted research on the issue of North Korea’s potential admission to the WHO. In the final report, entitled “Measures Related to WHO,” they concluded that South Korea would not be able to deter North Korea’s joining international organizations and therefore it was desirable to declare in advance the non-opposition of South Korea. They also suggested that President Park make a related announcement where he would put forth the policies of the dual entry into the UN, exchanges with the socialist camp, and strengthening of relations with the allies.²⁵³

Despite the recommendation of the report, the head of KCIA, Lee Hu-rak

observer status, East Germany applied for WHO membership in 1971 and in May 1972 but was rejected. It then applied for membership in UNESCO and was admitted to the organization on November 24, 1972, thereby obtaining the status of observer at the UN.

²⁵² The status of permanent observer is based purely on practice and there are no provisions for it in the United Nations Charter. Generally, observers have the right to speak at the assembly sessions, vote on procedural matters, and sign resolutions but cannot sponsor resolutions or vote on resolutions of substantive matters. (Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations, *The PGA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly* (New York: Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations, 2011), 30).

²⁵³ Kim Ji-hyeong, *op. cit.*, 254.

believed that it would be possible to deter North Korea's bid for membership in WHO and, under his influence, the announcement of the policies was put off.²⁵⁴ Contrary to his expectations, Pyongyang was admitted to WHO on 17 May 1973 and immediately applied for the status of permanent observer at the UN. A week later, on May 25, South Korean Foreign Minister Kim Yong-sik handed an outline of South Korea's new foreign policies to Ambassador Habib. The announcement of the new policies at that time was scheduled for approximately July 10²⁵⁵ but, at the recommendation of the US, Park Chung Hee made it earlier, on June 23.²⁵⁶

Given that the policies had been considered by the South Korean administration for a certain period of time but did not get unanimous support and that the decision to announce them was conspicuously made after North Korea received UN observer status, the June 23 Announcement should be seen as a reactive measure. Prime Minister Kim Jong-pil admitted to it when, in reply to a question in the National Assembly on June 26, he said that the government "cannot

²⁵⁴ Due to his belief that North Korea's admission to WHO could be blocked, the June 23 Announcement was delayed from the originally planned mid-May to late June (Ibid., 255).

²⁵⁵ American Embassy in Seoul, "Foreign Policy Changes," The National Archives, Central Foreign Policy Files Documenting the Period 7/1/1973-12/31/1978, Record Group 59: General Records of the Department of State, Document No. 1973SEOUL03353, 25 May 1973.

²⁵⁶ Hong Seuk-ryule, *op. cit.*, 333-334.

but admit the reality.”²⁵⁷ Therefore, by going ahead with the policy of non-objection to Pyongyang’s participation in UN debates and its admission to the UN and other international forums, Seoul accepted the reality that Pyongyang’s entry to those venues was unavoidable.

Even though the measure was reactive, South Korea strove to turn it into an opportunity. By announcing the new policy direction, the regime sought to gain initiative in the inter-Korean dialogue, in the discussion of the Korean question at the UN, and in diplomacy to other countries in general. As discussed in the previous chapter, the North-South talks and UN deliberations of the Korean question were closely linked so that the party that appeared to lead the reconciliation efforts was expected to have a greater appeal at the UN General Assembly. Expansion of diplomatic relations meant that the country would be ahead of its counterpart in the diplomatic competition and increased its chances to win more votes in its favor at the General Assembly.

Until the June 23 Announcement, North Korea may have seemed in the eyes of the international community as the forerunner in the peace offensive: it had been constantly putting forth radical proposals presented as steps toward reunification. One major push came from Pyongyang in March 1973 when, at the 2nd Meeting of the South-North Coordinating Committee held in Pyongyang, North Korean representatives tabled a 5-point military proposal. The proposal included: (1) termination of the military buildup and arms race; (2) reduction of

²⁵⁷ Kim Ji-hyeong, *op. cit.*, 255, footnote 171.

North and South Korean armies to no more than 100,000 personnel on each side; (3) ban on introducing weapons and military equipment from the outside; (4) withdrawal of all foreign troops, including US forces, from the Korean Peninsula; and (5) a peace treaty between North and South Korea. It is worth noting that this was the North's first official proposal of a peace treaty with the South. The fact that the head of the North Korean delegation Park Seong-cheol broke the promise to keep the contents of negotiations secret and released the details of the North Korean proposal to the public makes it clear that Pyongyang intended to propagate the initiative rather than to negotiate it with its counterpart.²⁵⁸ At a Red Cross meeting in Seoul two months later, in May 1973, the North Korean delegation suggested exchanges of a large number of "Red Cross publicity personnel" that would be allowed to travel to every town and village of each other's territory.²⁵⁹

In the beginning of the Announcement on June 23, Park Chung Hee stated that due to the North's insistence on dealing with military and political problems as a package and to North Korea's "external activities [that] would practically perpetuate the division of the country," "a considerable length of time will be required before the results of the dialogue originally expected can be attained." This reference to the difficulties the South Korean side experienced in the bilateral talks, in a way, alluded to Seoul's dissatisfaction with the talks and recognition of North Korea's leading position in the dialogue.

²⁵⁸ Hong Seul-ryule, *op. cit.*, 341-343.

²⁵⁹ Kim Se-jin, *Korean Unification: Source Materials with an Introduction*, 329-330.

In this light, the announcement of new policies was designed to counterweigh Pyongyang's initiatives. That is why Seoul Korea was so keen to keep the contents of the new policies in secret until just before they were made public. When Kim Yong-sik was informing the American Ambassador of the forthcoming announcement, he stressed the South Korean government's "desire to maintain the secrecy of these proposals" and requested that the US "not discuss their content with any third party." South Koreans planned to inform allies other than the US and friendly powers about the announcement about 48 hours in advance and were particularly wary of discussing the new policies with the Japanese, fearing the latter would leak them to the Chinese or Soviets, in which case North Korea would be able to forestall the announcement.²⁶⁰

It was especially important for South Korea to put forth a new policy line in preparation of the 1973 UN General Assembly because, with North Korea having become a UN observer, it was impossible to prevent the discussion of the Korean question any further. In the previous two years, Seoul—with Washington's help—had managed to deter the debate. In 1972, for example, Kissinger had asked the Chinese to put off the discussion of the Korean question because of the presidential election in the US.²⁶¹ At that time, many UN members who voted in favor of postponing the discussion of the Korean question for a year did so at the request of the American and South Korean diplomats but on the "only this time

²⁶⁰ American Embassy in Seoul, "Foreign Policy Changes."

²⁶¹ Hong Seuk-ryule, *op. cit.*, 353.

basis,” so putting off the deliberation again in 1973 was seen as difficult.²⁶²

While preparing the foreign policy announcement, Foreign Minister Kim Yong-sik repeatedly mentioned to American diplomats that Seoul was “anxious to develop the best possible position in anticipation of the coming UN debate” and “wished to give the appearance of taking the initiative” in the discussion of the Korean question.²⁶³ On the same day he gave the working paper with the outline of the new policies to Ambassador Habib (May 25), the minister stated in the National Assembly that the Park Chung Hee administration was studying the attitudes of the Korean question in the UN General Assembly and that it was willing to take the initiative in placing the Korean question on the agenda if a majority wished so.²⁶⁴

In UN-related issues, South Koreans were closely watching the progress of another divided country, Germany, where two major milestones were reached

²⁶² The US Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR, part of the State Department), cited in *ibid.*, 448.

²⁶³ See for example, American Embassy in Seoul, “ROK Foreign Policy Changes,” The National Archives, Central Foreign Policy Files Documenting the Period 7/1/1973-12/31/1978, Record Group 59: General Records of the Department of State, Document No. 1973SEOUL03372, 29 May 1973; and American Embassy in Seoul, “Foreign Policy Changes.”

²⁶⁴ American Embassy in Seoul, “Foreign Minister Indicates Flexible Stand at UN,” The National Archives, Central Foreign Policy Files Documenting the Period 7/1/1973-12/31/1978, Record Group 59: General Records of the Department of State, Document No. 1973SEOUL03351, 25 May 1973.

in late 1972. On November 8, the two German governments initiated the Treaty on the Basis of Relations between the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and German Democratic Republic (GDR) and stated, in the related announcement, that the two countries “shall initiate measures to seek membership in the UN.” On November 9, France, the UK, the US, and the USSR issued a declaration that they were in agreement to support applications of FRG and GDR for membership in the UN.²⁶⁵ It is therefore plausible that the South Korean leadership assumed a similar arrangement among great powers could be made on Korea and was preparing for such a contingency.²⁶⁶ Soon after these changes took place in Germany, in late 1972 the South Korean Foreign Ministry started reconsidering its policies on the core UN organizations related to Korea, the UNCURK and UNC. It is worth noting that Park Chung Hee made the June 23 Announcement—with

²⁶⁵ Both Germanies were admitted as full members by the UN General Assembly on 18 September, 1973.

²⁶⁶ This concern may also explain why the South Koreans were so eager to consult with the US in the process of finalizing the policies and the text of the announcement. South Korean officials and President Park Chung Hee himself in conversations with American diplomats repeatedly emphasized the flexibility of Seoul’s position, solicited advice in wording and asked whether any points of the proposal went too far or not far enough. (See for example, American Embassy in Seoul, “Foreign Policy Changes,” American Embassy in Seoul, “Ambassador Green’s Call on President Park,” The National Archives, Central Foreign Policy Files Documenting the Period 7/1/1973-12/31/1978, Record Group 59: General Records of the Department of State, Document No. 1973SEOUL03371, 29 May 1973; and American Embassy in Seoul, “ROK Foreign Policy Changes.”

the aspiration of a dual entry to the UN very similar to that of Germany—just a day after the UN Security Council unanimously recommended that the two German states be admitted to membership in the UN.²⁶⁷

Finally, the new policies were designed for South Korea to take back from the North the initiative in expanding diplomatic relations around the globe. Park Chung Hee cited the “developments in the international situation—a new era of peaceful coexistence, based on the status quo, through the balance of power among the major powers” as one of the two reasons (along with the lack of progress in the inter-Korean dialogue) why South Korea needed a new direction in its foreign policy. Here, Park was referring to the worldwide atmosphere of the *détente*, which North Korea was taking advantage of in order to close the gap with South Korea in the number of countries with which it had diplomatic relations. He made this point clear in the conversation with Ambassador Marshall Green²⁶⁸ when admitting that, “efforts by his government to hold off North Korean international relations had succeeded for a time but changes in the situation internationally were such that this policy could no longer be pursued.”²⁶⁹

With the new policies, Seoul was not simply conforming to reality *ex post*. The regime attempted to transcend the situation by suggesting the formation of a new system of foreign relations that would incorporate both Koreas on Seoul’s

²⁶⁷ UN Security Council Resolution 335 of 22 June 1973.

²⁶⁸ Green visited Seoul in late May 1973 in the capacity of US Ambassador to Australia.

²⁶⁹ American Embassy in Seoul, “Ambassador Green’s Call on President Park.”

conditions. It was a system of cross-recognition. In the June 23 Announcement, it was vaguely suggested as an invitation to “those countries whose ideologies and social institutions are different from ours to open their doors likewise to us” and a promise to “further strengthen the ties of friendship between friendly nations and our country.” An explicit explanation of the suggested system can be found in the basic guidelines set up by the Foreign Ministry in late May.

In no case will the United States recognize North Korea, as long as the USSR, red China and other major communist countries do not recognize the Republic of Korea.

The United States will cooperate with the Republic of Korea to discourage Japan and other major friendly powers from recognizing North Korea, so long as USSR, red China and other major communist countries do not recognize the Republic of Korea.

United States contacts with North Korea would be considered only to the extent that the aforesaid communist countries have contacts with the Republic of Korea.

The United States will cooperate with the Republic of Korea to discourage the major friendly powers of Korea from expanding contact with North Korea, so long as the communist countries do not start and

expand contacts with the Republic of Korea.²⁷⁰

When Ambassador Habib pointed out that South Korea-friendly countries already had and were expanding contacts with the North, Foreign Minister Kim Yong-sik replied that the South Korean government hoped they would refrain from expanding contacts or recognizing North Korea under the conditions specified in the guidelines. Moreover, he expected the US to “discourage significant expansion of contacts” by the allies.²⁷¹

South Korea was trying to reach out to communist countries not only by declaring its open door policy but also by suggesting the dual admission to the UN. Park Chung Hee revealed this intention in a conversation with Ambassador Green. Park explained that the communists had always wanted simultaneous participation in the UN debate, but South Korea had opposed it. Since the new proposal called for what they wanted, the Soviet Union and China, according to Park, might favor the proposition and use their influence in its support.²⁷²

Seoul’s two biggest concerns in the process of formulating the new policy direction were the potential effect of the new policies on South Korea’s security and the question of recognizing North Korea as a state by the South. Regarding the first issue, Foreign Minister Kim Yong-sik shared with American diplomats

²⁷⁰ American Embassy in Seoul, “Foreign Policy Changes.”

²⁷¹ *Loc. cit.*

²⁷² American Embassy in Seoul, “Ambassador Green’s Call on President Park.”

that the basic objective of South Korea was not to weaken the country's security position.²⁷³ The question of UN troops stationed in Korea, the UN Command, and UNCURK were all closely related to South Korea's security, and until late 1972, the South Korean administration had held that all the UN organizations remain in force in Korea. However, it realized that Pyongyang's insistence on the withdrawal of US (UN) troops was the main barrier to progress in the North-South dialogue.²⁷⁴ And now, as it was devising new policies and preparing for an unavoidable discussion of the Korean question at the UN, Seoul pondered on whether it needed to change its position on the issues of the UN Command and UNCURK.

In a December 1972 report, the Department of International Alliances of the South Korean Foreign Ministry pointed out that the UNCURK was not fulfilling its original purposes and some members of the organization were discontent and leaving, so "it is possible to attempt changing the policies related to the organization's continuity, if the initiative comes from our country [South Korea]." In the case of the UN Command, it was recommended to make continuous efforts for its maintenance because the issue was related to the Armistice Agreement and other security issues. Still, it was anticipated that in the long term—when even the symbolic meaning of the organization would be lost as a result of progress in the inter-Korean dialogue and due to adjustments in the US-ROK relations such as the establishment of a common defense system and the

²⁷³ American Embassy in Seoul, "ROK Foreign Policy Changes."

²⁷⁴ American Embassy in Seoul, "Foreign Minister Indicates Flexible Stand at UN."

withdrawal of US troops from Korea—the necessity to consider disbanding the UN Command in Korea would arise.²⁷⁵

The outline of the policies in late May reflected the same position. They unequivocally stated the continuation of the UN Command: “The security of the Republic of Korea shall be firmly maintained and for this purpose the United Nations forces shall continue to be stationed in Korea.”²⁷⁶ It seems the South Korean officials had earlier indicated the issue was negotiable and when Ambassador Habib asked Minister Kim Yong-sik about it, Kim referred to the legitimacy and security reasons for the South Korean government to decide in favor of continuation of the UN Command. In Kim’s words, it would be “more convenient to maintain the UN hat” and the presence of UN troops was “absolutely necessary and not negotiable” from a security standpoint.²⁷⁷ As for the UNCURK, the guidelines stated, “The Korean government will not object to the suspension of functions of UNCURK,” and Kim mentioned the South Korean government did not exclude the possibility that it would call for the suspension of the organization in order to “give the appearance of taking the initiative” in the UN debate.²⁷⁸

However, neither the UN Command nor UNCURK appeared in the actual announcement of the policies. There was no need to discuss the unchanged

²⁷⁵ Cited in Hong, *op. cit.*, 332.

²⁷⁶ American Embassy in Seoul, “Foreign Policy Changes.”

²⁷⁷ *Loc. cit.*

²⁷⁸ *Loc. cit.*

position on the UN Command. Non-objection to disbanding the UNCURK was kept as a card and became an essential part of the draft of the South Korea-friendly resolution at the UN General Assembly that year.

In contrast, the issue of rejecting legal recognition of North Korea was referred to in both the outline of policies handed to the American ambassador and the June 23 Announcement. The latter finished with the clarification that taking the above-listed policies did “not signify our recognition of North Korea as a state.” Denial of recognition to North Korea was contradictory to the proposed policy of dual admission to the UN since the admission of the North would mean its recognition by the UN as a sovereign state.²⁷⁹ On the other hand, recognizing North Korea officially could be perceived by Koreans and the international community as putting off the achievement of the fundamental goal of South Korea as a state—national unification. In other words, it would challenge the legitimacy of the Park Chung Hee administration, and for that reason, Seoul decided to maintain its stance. The basic guidelines of late May stated,

There shall be no change in the national aspirations
and goal of the peaceful unification of the country.

²⁷⁹ Several South Korean politicians at that time pointed out to the contradiction between virtually recognizing North Korea by negotiating with it and refusing legal recognition. See, for example, a statement at the National Assembly by Assemblyman Gu Beom-mo who had earlier acted as adviser to South Korean delegation in the Red Cross talks. (American Embassy in Seoul, “Foreign Minister Indicates Flexible Stand at UN.”)

Accordingly, there shall be no recognition of North Korea as a state [by the South Korean government].²⁸⁰

Park Chung Hee explained that point in the conversation with Ambassador Green. He said that his government could not afford to disappoint the South Korean people regarding the prospects for unification.²⁸¹

An even bigger contradiction in the new policies was that Seoul, while denying recognition of the sovereignty of the North, may have hoped that the admission of South Korea into the UN would amount to international recognition of its own sovereignty, which, in turn, would make the US or UN troops' presence a domestic or bilateral US- or UN-South Korea issue, where Pyongyang had no right to interfere.

To summarize, the first half of 1973 marked a major shift in South Korea's foreign policy. The Park Chung Hee administration, while maintaining the ultimate objective of reunification, departed from unreserved isolation of North Korea to pursuing a two-Korea policy for an indefinite period. However, due to overriding legitimacy and security interests, Seoul's policy continued to incorporate as its core provisions the maintenance of the UN Command and denial of legal recognition of North Korea.

The preceding discussion of the objectives of the new policies and related

²⁸⁰ American Embassy in Seoul, "Foreign Policy Changes."

²⁸¹ American Embassy in Seoul, "Ambassador Green's Call on President Park."

concerns of the Park Chung Hee administration also demonstrated that Seoul did not intend to achieve a breakthrough in its relations with the North through the June 23 Announcement. Rather, similarly to the opening of inter-Korean dialogue, it was intended to appeal to other parties—great powers, the UN, and the international community at large.

Some South Korean officials believed that participation of North Korean representatives in UN discussions was a preparatory step toward North Korea's seeking of UN membership. When Ambassador Green asked Park Chung Hee about the anticipated reaction of Pyongyang to the new policies, Park replied that North Korea would ostensibly oppose dual membership, but he did not believe it was a "true expression of their [North Korea's] basic position." Park also said there was no reason for the North to object to South Korea's proposal, considering that Seoul was willing to go along with the deactivation of the UNCURK, simultaneous participation in the UN debate, and North Korean admission to UN organizations.²⁸² Similarly to Park, the KCIA team which studied measures to deal with North Korea's bid for WHO membership anticipated the negative reaction of Pyongyang to the June 23 Announcement. The team emphasized in its final report that the new policies should include the continuation of inter-Korean

²⁸² Park added he could imagine a situation where there would be general international sentiment for simultaneous admission to the UN which North Koreans would find hard to reject (American Embassy in Seoul, "Ambassador Green's Call on President Park"). Ironically, Park's expectation would become a reality in the early 1990s, when the two Koreas were finally admitted to the UN.

dialogue and efforts toward peaceful unification in order to prevent the North from accusing the South of “scheming to freeze the division.”²⁸³

The expectations of the South Koreans turned out both right and wrong. They were right in that Pyongyang would oppose the new policies, and they were wrong in believing that calls for maintaining the dialogue would prevent the North Koreans from doing so. They were also wrong in thinking that North Korea would immediately apply for full UN membership. Pyongyang appears not to have had such an intention. It vehemently protested the June 23 Announcement on the grounds that dual membership would eternalize the division.²⁸⁴ The regime also recognized that Seoul’s initiative could reduce support for North Korea’s position at the UN. Later on the same day, Kim made a counter proposal of instituting the North-South confederation and entering the UN under the single name of the Confederal Republic of Koryo.

²⁸³ Kim Ji-hyeong, *op. cit.*, 254.

²⁸⁴ “Minutes of the Conversation Taken on the Occasion of the Audience Granted by Comrade Nicolae Ceausescu.”

2. THE DEMISE OF THE INTER-KOREAN DIALOGUE AND THE TRANSFORMATION IN NORTH KOREA'S STRATEGY

On 28 August 1973, co-Chairman of the North-South Coordinating Committee Kim Yeong-ju announced North Korea's decision to suspend the dialogue. Although he emphasized that North Korea considered it "necessary to continue with the talks in the future," he made it clear that the talks would not continue until Seoul met Pyongyang's demands—respect for the principles of the July 4 Joint Declaration, retraction of the "two Koreas" line, end to the suppression of pro-unification activists, and change in the composition of the South Korean side of the North-South Coordinating Committee (removal of the co-Chairman Lee Hw-rak and participation of representatives from political parties and organizations that "truly aspire for the peaceful reunification").²⁸⁵ Kim's announcement thus meant a unilateral termination of the inter-Korean dialogue by North Korea.

Kim explained that Pyongyang decided to suspend the dialogue because of the "double-dealing tactics" of the authorities in Seoul. According to him, the South Koreans sought to "deceive the people with the veil of 'north-south dialogue' and create 'two Koreas' by freezing the national split." Kim cited several examples

²⁸⁵ Hereafter the speech is quoted based on the English translation in *The Pyongyang Times*, 28 August 1973.

but focused on two: the abduction of Kim Dae-jung by the KCIA and Park Chung Hee's announcement of new policies on June 23. He characterized the June 23 Announcement as the public proclamation of the two-Koreas line and proof that that South Korean authorities "put down the desire of the South Korean people for reunification" and "sought the perpetuation of the national split." He also pointed out that Seoul's new policies "completely overruled" the July 4 Joint Declaration and brought the inter-Korean dialogue to a deadlock. It is most likely that, from Pyongyang's viewpoint, Seoul's proposal of dual entry into the UN ran counter to the common desire of the two Koreas to achieve unification as early as possible and without external interference, which was stated in the Joint Declaration. In addition, North Korea realized that Park Chung Hee's June 23 Announcement was designed to gain initiative at the UN, and the regime was concerned that Park's proposal could reduce support for North Korea's position.

Regarding the abduction of Kim Dae-jung, the North Korean representative stated: "The case of the abduction of Kim Dae-jung... is a big-scale political plot to strangle the patriotic forces of South Korea demanding the democratization of society and national reunification and is part of the treacherous moves to perpetuate the split of the nation."²⁸⁶ Reference to the abduction of Kim Dae-jung being a major reason for breaking the talks was discarded by Seoul as

²⁸⁶ "The Statement of Kim Yong Ju on the North Korean Decision to Suspend the Dialogue, 28 August 1973," in Kim Se-jin, *Korean Unification: Source Materials with an Introduction*, 345–349.

merely a pretext. But North Korea's frustration with the incident testifies to the regime's admitting its failure to achieve one of the goals it had for the inter-Korean dialogue—using it as a means of propaganda toward the South Korean population. Pyongyang initially interpreted the Yushin Reforms as a sign of weakness in the South Korean regime which, in North Korea's view, was seeking to monopolize the right to conduct negotiations with the North in the face of rising competition with domestic oppositional forces.²⁸⁷ But by the end of the year, Pyongyang realized that through the new constitution and measures taken during martial law, Park actually succeeded in suppressing the opposition and preventing the politicians and other groups that disagreed with him from participation in the inter-Korean talks. Kim Dae-jung was highly regarded by Pyongyang as a champion of the pro-unification movement, so his abduction meant the removal of an important South Korean politician who could have helped the progress of the talks. Since it was revealed that the abduction was organized by the KCIA, and the chief of the KCIA, Lee Hu-rak, was also the South Korean co-chairman to the North-South Coordinating Committee, it is not surprising that the North demanded the

²⁸⁷ GDR Embassy in Pyongyang, "Note on Information by DPRK First Deputy Foreign Minister, Comrade Kim Jae-bong, for Ambassadors and Acting Ambassadors of Poland, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Mongolia, Hungary, and GDR on 19 October 1972 in the DPRK Foreign Ministry," PolA AA, MfAA, C 6855, 23 October 1972; and Shin Jongdae, "Yushin cheje surip-eul boneun Bukhan-gwa Miguk-ui sigak-gwa daeeung [US and North Korean perceptions and responses to the establishment of the *Yushin* system]," *The Journal of Asiatic Studies* 55-3 (2012): 183-216.

replacement of Lee.

Moreover, Yushin reforms gave the Park administration the prerogative to inform the South Korean public of the process in the inter-Korean dialogue. As a result, proposals of the North Korean delegates were used by the South in anti-communist propaganda and all attempts by the North Koreans to relay their message to the South Korean people were blocked. It is in this context that Kim Il Sung included in his June 23 Announcement the proposal to “convene a Great National Congress composed of representatives of people of all walks of life [...] and the representatives of political parties and social organizations in the North and South, and comprehensively discuss and solve the question of the country’s reunification at this Congress.”²⁸⁸ In fact, the proposal can be seen as a preparatory step to terminating inter-Korean dialogue in the shape it had at that time. In the same announcement, Kim stated, “we consider the dialogue between the North and South for national reunification should not be confined to the authorities of the North and South.”²⁸⁹ By implying that unification cannot be realized through dialogue between officials and suggesting a format different to that of the North-South Coordinating Committee, Pyongyang was preparing the ground to break off the talks with the regime in Seoul.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁸ “Text of Kim Il Sung’s Speech at Pyongyang Mass Meeting, June 23, 1973,” Kim Se-jin, *Korean Unification: Source Materials with an Introduction*, 343-344.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 343.

²⁹⁰ Park Jae-gyu, “North Korea’s Democratic Confederal Republic of Koryo: A

There were several other factors, too, that made North Korea consider inter-Korean dialogue no longer necessary or even counterproductive. While failing to give Pyongyang access to the broad masses of the South Korean population, the talks helped North Korea appeal to the Third World, Western nations, and the UN. In the period from July 1972 (after signing the July 4 Joint Declaration) to August 1973, North Korea established diplomatic relations with 17 nations.²⁹¹ Among those, 14 nations²⁹² had formal diplomatic relations with South Korea at the time they recognized the North. Five of the 17 were Western and the first among Western nations in the 1970s to establish relations with the regime in Pyongyang. The new diplomatic ties played an important role in North Korea's admission to the WHO and could help North Korea solicit more voices for its position during the discussion of the Korean issue at the UN.

Paradoxically, however, the debate at the UN General Assembly was not taking place because Seoul was using the inter-Korean talks as the reason to

Critique," in *Korean Reunification: New Perspectives and Approaches*, ed. Kwak Tae-hwan, Kim Changhan, and Kim Hong Nack (Seoul: Kyungnam University, Institute for Far Eastern Studies, 1984), 75.

²⁹¹ Uganda, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Pakistan, Madagascar, Zaire (Democratic Republic of Congo), Togo, Dahomey (Benin), Gambia, Mauritius, Sweden, Iran, Finland, Norway, Malaysia, Denmark, and Iceland.

²⁹² Uganda, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Madagascar (broke ties with SK), Zaire, Togo, Dahomey, Gambia, Mauritius, Sweden, Iran, Norway, Malaysia, and Denmark. Noteworthy, Madagascar severed diplomatic relations with South Korea just before establishing relations with North Korea.

postpone the UN discussion of the Korean issue. In 1971, the UN deliberations were put off until the following session of the Assembly, “in view of the unprecedented significance of the talks” that had begun between the two Red Cross Societies in Korea.²⁹³ In 1972, South Korea-friendly members of the UN spoke in support of the deferral for another year, “The probability of an acrimonious debate on Korea at the Assembly’s 1972 session should be avoided in view of the delicate negotiations under way [between North and South Korea].”²⁹⁴ As a result, the General Committee again decided to postpone the discussion of the Korean question. From the North Korean perspective, the rupture of inter-Korean dialogue therefore removed an obstacle to the debate on the Korean question at the UN.

Contrary to Pyongyang’s expectations, the North-South talks also did not expedite the withdrawal of US troops from South Korea. Throughout the dialogue with Seoul, the North Koreans put forth proposals that were intended to achieve the removal of US forces from Korea. Presented as “measures to eliminate military confrontation and ease tension between the North and South,” the proposals called for the withdrawal of all foreign troops from the Korean Peninsula and the cessation of the introduction of weapons from abroad. As the South Koreans kept responding by suggesting exchanges in economic and socio-cultural spheres first, prior to the discussion of political and military issues, Pyongyang accused the

²⁹³ *Yearbook of the United Nations, 1971, Vol. 25, 163.*

²⁹⁴ *Yearbook of the United Nations, 1972, Vol. 26, 151.*

South of violating the 4 July Joint Declaration. Seoul, in the view of Pyongyang, did not abide by the principle of the declaration that “reunification shall be achieved independently without reliance on external forces and free from their interference.” North Koreans insisted that there had been ample discussions on the meaning and implication of the principle during the negotiating stage and the South Korean side, represented by Lee Hu Rak, had concurred completely and pledged to honor the principle with explicit reference to the exclusion of “external forces.” After signing the agreement, however, Seoul betrayed it by continuously having UN troops stationed in the country and claiming that the UN (US) forces in South Korea were not external forces within the meaning of the North-South agreement.²⁹⁵ In his June 23 speech, as the first condition to improve relations between the North and South, Kim Il Sung again suggested eliminating military confrontation, with a specific reference to the presence of US troops in Korea. He said, “It is unnatural to advocate the peaceful reunification and hold a dialogue with a dagger in one’s bosom. Unless the dagger is taken out and laid down, it is impossible to create an atmosphere of mutual trust.”²⁹⁶

²⁹⁵ Koh Byung Chul, “The Korean Impasse—The View from Pyongyang,” in *Korean Reunification: New Perspectives and Approaches*, ed. Kwak Tae-hwan, Kim Chonghan, and Kim Hong Nack (Seoul: Kyungnam University Institute for Far Eastern Studies, 1984), 56-57.

²⁹⁶ “Text of Kim Il Sung’s Speech at Pyongyang Mass Meeting, 23 June 1973,” 340–345.

In contrast, US forces were rapidly leaving Vietnam. In early 1973, Washington signed the Paris Peace Accords that ended American involvement in the Vietnam War. On one hand, the accords indicated that the Nixon Administration was proceeding with its policy of reducing US troop presence in Asia. Shortly after the Paris Peace Accords were signed, Kim Il Sung said to foreign diplomatic corps that abolishing the presence of US troops in South Korea was an immediate premise for the development of détente from Southeast Asia to the entire Far East.²⁹⁷ On the other hand, the North Korean regime was concerned that negotiations over Vietnam drew international attention away from the Korean Peninsula and that, since the US lost its ground in Vietnam, it would try to “take hold on South Korea for ever as a major stronghold to save its colonial ruling system which is going into total bankruptcy in Asia.”²⁹⁸

Another lesson could be learned from the course of negotiations over the Paris Peace Accords. They included considerable concessions to North Vietnam, whereas the South Vietnamese Nguyen Van Thieu government was not informed of the secret talks between Kissinger and the North Vietnamese leader Le Duc Tho, which led to the final settlement. Moreover, Thieu was pressed by Washington to sign the Accords. Hanoi’s achievement demonstrated to Pyongyang that a compromise with the US could be achieved behind the back of

²⁹⁷ Romanian Embassy Beijing to Ad Interim Director Lucian Petrescu, 13 February 1973, RMFA, Matter 220, No. 059.139.

²⁹⁸ “Text of Kim Il Sung’s Speech at Pyongyang Mass Meeting, June 23, 1973,” 342.

a US ally. The negotiations over Vietnam probably also convinced the North Korean leadership of the feasibility of signing a bilateral peace treaty with the US, which they would first propose in 1974.

Against these backdrops, in the spring of 1973, North Korean delegates to the inter-Korean talks made a military proposal for the removal of US troops and the reduction in forces of both Koreas as a premise for a peace treaty with South Korea.²⁹⁹ (Previously—for example, in a January 1972 conversation with Japanese journalists—Kim Il Sung had spoken of the removal of US troops *after* a peace treaty with the South was signed.)³⁰⁰

In late August 1973, US Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger stated in a press interview that, for the following year to a year and a half, the US planned to keep the number of its troops in South Korea at the current level of 40,000.³⁰¹ This statement served as yet another piece of evidence showing the inefficiency of the inter-Korean dialogue to Pyongyang. Kim Yeong Ju's announcement of the unilateral suspension of talks with South Korea came just two days after Schlesinger's remark.

As the preceding discussion demonstrates, North Korea decided to terminate the inter-Korean dialogue in view of the changing international situation

²⁹⁹ Gukto Tongilwon [Board of National Unification], *Nam-Buk daehwa saryojip* [Sourcebook of North-South dialogue] (Seoul: Gukto Tongilwon, 1987), Vol. 7, 611.

³⁰⁰ Hong Seuk-ryule, *Bundan-ui hiseuteri*, 342.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 349.

(such as the conclusion of negotiations over Vietnam) and due to the regime's own advances in the diplomatic arena as opposed to the perceived unproductivity of the dialogue, especially in regard to the withdrawal of US troops from South Korea. In this light, the June 23 Announcement of Park Chung Hee and abduction of Kim Dae-jung became "the last straws" that facilitated the announcement of ceasing the inter-Korean talks.

The aforementioned developments signaled a major shift in North Korea's policy—away from negotiations with the South and towards focusing on the UN and opening bilateral negotiations with the US. Hence the timing of suspending the talks—shortly before the beginning of the 1973 UN General Assembly and a day after the US announcement of no further troop reductions. The rest of the section, however, will show that in neither direction was Pyongyang able to reap positive results in the short term.

North Korea made extensive preparations for the debate on the Korean question at the 1973 UN General Assembly. As mentioned earlier, in the spring of 1973, North Korea achieved the status of observer at the UN by joining the World Health Organization and established an observer mission, so it could take part in the sessions of the General Assembly. Shortly before the beginning of the 1973 session, North Korea suspended inter-Korean talks, therefore the rationale for postponing the debate further due to the negotiations between the two Koreas disappeared.

At its first debate at the UN General Assembly, North Korea planned to focus on the issues of removing foreign troops from South Korea and dissolving the UNCURK. With regard to the former, the fact that Pyongyang proposed a peace treaty with South Korea could act as proof that there was no threat of southward aggression, thus South Korea did not need foreign troops to defend itself. The pro-North Korea draft of the UN resolution was signed by 35 states as opposed to 27 co-sponsors of the pro-South Korea draft resolution. The North Korean delegation to the UN was also armed with a resolution of the NAM. The 4th Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries (held in Algiers from 5 to 9 September 1973) adopted a resolution regarding the question of Korea, which called for the withdrawal of all foreign troops from South Korea and for the dissolution of the UNCURK. The text of the resolution was transmitted to the Secretary-General by Algeria, before the voting of the General Assembly,³⁰² and it was mentioned during the deliberations several times to support North Korea's position.

South Korea, on its part, had in the draft resolution a provision expressing a "hope" that the Security Council would in due course consider "those aspects of the Korean question that fell within its responsibility."³⁰³ The provision was

³⁰² The NAM resolution was transmitted to the Secretary-General on November 22, whereas voting on the Korean Question took place on November 28.

³⁰³ *Yearbook of the United Nations, 1973, Vol. 27* (New York: Office of Public Information, United Nations, 1976), 156.

designed to move the issue of stationing of UN troops from consideration of the UN General Assembly to a matter to be discussed by the UN Security Council, where a decision could be vetoed by the US.³⁰⁴ In addition, the draft resolution submitted on South Korea's behalf contained a provision on the dissolution of the UNCURK. As discussed earlier, the US and South Korea knew it would be hard to prevent the Assembly from terminating the UNCURK and coordinated their moves so that, by suggesting the termination, it appeared as if the initiative came from the South Korean side. Consequently, the UNCURK inserted in its own report the recommendation that it be dissolved because its presence in Korea "was no longer required."³⁰⁵ In other words, Pyongyang demanded what had already been agreed upon.

Given the similarity of the provisions on the UNCURK in the draft resolutions and thanks to Kissinger's behind-the-scenes negotiations,³⁰⁶ several UN members (in particular, Sweden) suggested looking for a common point³⁰⁷ and the Netherlands and Algeria played the role of mediators in reaching a compromise.³⁰⁸ As a result, the First Committee of the General Assembly decided

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 154.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 152.

³⁰⁶ Pak Chi Young, *Korea and the United Nations*, 19.

³⁰⁷ *Yearbook of the United Nations*, 1973, Vol. 27, 156.

³⁰⁸ Koh Byung Chul, "North Korea's Policy toward the United Nations," in *The United Nations and Keeping Peace in Northeast Asia*, ed. Kwak Tae-hwan, Kim Chonghan, and Kim Hong Nack (Seoul: The Institute for Peace Studies Korea University, 1995), 50.

that instead of putting the draft resolutions to vote, it would simply adopt a consensus statement. The text of the consensus announced the Assembly's decision to dissolve the UNCURK and repeated the principles on reunification of the July 4 Joint Declaration.³⁰⁹ The statement urged North and South Korea "to continue their dialogue and widen their many-sided exchanges and cooperation [...] so as to expedite the independent peaceful reunification of the country."³¹⁰ Pyongyang must have been dissatisfied with the adoption of a consensus in lieu of a resolution. Nevertheless, the representative of North Korea made a statement that the consensus demonstrated the fact that there was no basis for foreign troops to continue to be stationed in South Korea under the UN flag.³¹¹

The pro-North Korea draft in 1973 included a new issue that would become the main target for North Korea's diplomacy toward the UN in the next stage; that is, the dissolution of the UN Command with the view of having UN/US troops withdraw from South Korea. During the 28th session of the General Assembly (on 15 November), the North Korean government sent to the Assembly a memorandum which emphasized that the UN Security Council's decision to adopt a resolution on armed intervention in Korea in the name of the UN in 1950

³⁰⁹ *Yearbook of the United Nations, 1973, Vol. 27, 156-158.*

³¹⁰ "Consensus Statement on the Question of Korea of the First Committee (U.N.), 28 November 1973," in Kim Se-jin, *Korean Unification: Source Materials with an Introduction*, 356.

³¹¹ *Yearbook of the United Nations, 1973, Vol. 27, 157.*

was forced by the US and was in contravention of the UN Charter.³¹² North Korea, of course, had in mind the resolutions of 1950 that provided for the establishment and operations of the UN Command. The regime realized that the dissolution of the UN Command would mean the elimination of a principal party to the Armistice Agreement, so the issue necessitated adjustment of the Armistice Agreement. In Pyongyang's view the Armistice was to be replaced by a peace treaty between North Korea and the US. Thus, conclusion of a North Korea-US peace treaty would serve four purposes. Firstly, the peace treaty between the actual remaining parties to the armistice would bring the Korean War to an end. China was excluded from the peace treaty to replace the armistice because the 1953 Armistice Agreement was signed by the commander of the People's Volunteers who withdrew from Korea in 1958. South Korea was not a signatory to the Armistice Agreement. Accordingly, the peace treaty would make the UN Command and stationing of UN troops in Korea unnecessary. Thirdly, a peace treaty with the US would further reduce the rationale for stationing US troops in South Korea. The three purposes were closely inter-related and ultimately aimed at having foreign troops leave the Korean Peninsula. Lastly, Washington's acceptance of North Korea as a negotiation partner in the course of discussing the treaty would be a major diplomatic victory for North Korea.

Pyongyang's intentions can be read in the pro-North Korea draft resolution of 1974 and the regime's correspondence to the UN. The preamble of the draft

³¹² Ibid., 153.

resolution (signed by 40 states vs. the 28-power pro-South Korea proposal) stated that the consensus adopted in the previous year could not be implemented because the continued presence of foreign troops in South Korea “constituted a serious obstacle in the way of promoting a dialogue between the North and the South...and turning the armistice in Korea into a durable peace.” The operative part of the text suggested that the parties concerned take steps to resolve the questions related to the troop withdrawal³¹³—thereby alluding to the US, to whom the Supreme People’s Assembly proposed a peace treaty in March 1974. The related letter that the North Korean leadership sent to the UN Secretary-General stated:

The Government of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea [...] considered it necessary to propose to the United States, whose troops occupied South Korea, the conclusion of a peace agreement which would, among other things, provide for the early withdrawal of all foreign troops in South Korea under the flag of the United Nations.³¹⁴

Parallel with the UN discussions of the Korean question in 1973–1974, Pyongyang strove to open bilateral negotiations with the US. Pyongyang’s first attempts to establish contact with the US date earlier. In February 1972, for

³¹³ *Yearbook of the United Nations, 1974, Vol. 28* (New York: Office of Public Information, United Nations, 1976), 175.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 173-174.

example, North Korean Foreign Minister Heo Dam visited Beijing and asked Zhou Enlai to discuss with Secretary Kissinger the possibility of opening contacts between the US and North Korea. According to Chinese sources, this question was raised in Zhou's conversation with Kissinger, but the American counterpart replied that the US did not yet consider having direct contact with the North.³¹⁵ Also, at the time of making the 5-point proposal in spring 1973, the Supreme People's Assembly sent to countries around the world letters publicizing the proposal. The letter to the US Congress was composed separately and included requests to withdraw troops and dissolve the UNCURK. However, it was not until August 1973—shortly before the suspension of the inter-Korean dialogue by North Korea and the beginning of the UN General Assembly—that Pyongyang started pursuing direct negotiations with the US more aggressively. On August 21, a diplomat from the North Korean embassy in China made a phone call to the US Liaison Office in Beijing and requested a meeting. The North Korean diplomats were granted an audience which the US diplomats assessed as probing the US attitude toward diplomatic contacts with North Korea. Nevertheless, Washington made it clear that no channel could be opened with North Korea until a similar channel developed between the PRC and South Korea.³¹⁶

At that point, the North Korean leadership decided to employ brinkmanship tactics that they believed would question the durability of the

³¹⁵ Hong Seuk-ryule, *Bundan-ui hiseuteri*, 351-353.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 296-298.

armistice system and bring Washington to the negotiation table. In late 1973, twenty years after the Korean War armistice, North Korea made a claim on the waters surrounding five South Korean islands in the West Sea, located close to the border between the two Koreas. At a meeting of the Military Armistice Commission on December 1, 1973, North Korean representatives requested that any vessels heading for the islands acquire North Korea's permission. Simultaneously, Pyongyang dispatched a navy patrol to support its claim.³¹⁷ The sea border between the two Koreas was not defined in the armistice agreement and the border that North Korea had observed until then (the Northern Limit Line, or NLL) was unilaterally determined by US military commanders in the 1950s. Pyongyang's claim in late 1973 was intended to point to the problems in the existing armistice system, demonstrate that the agreement was obsolete and had to be replaced with a new one, and therefore strengthen North Korea's position ahead of the anticipated negotiations with the US. Washington, however, ignored North Korean claims and asked Beijing to exercise restraining influence on Pyongyang.³¹⁸ South Korea approached the issue by reinforcing its naval

³¹⁷ American Embassy in Seoul, "Developments Along Northern Limit Line," The National Archives, Central Foreign Policy Files Documenting the Period 7/1/1973-12/31/1976, Record Group 59: General Records of the Department of State, Document No. 1973SEOUL08060, 1 December 1973.

³¹⁸ National Security Council, "The Korean Situation and the China Element," 3 December 1973 in *After Détente: The Korean Peninsula, 1973–1976 (Document Reader)*, eds. Christian F. Ostermann and James F. Person (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2012), 122-125.

presence in the area.

As mentioned earlier, in March 1974, North Korea put forth a proposal for a peace treaty with the US. After discussing the details of the proposal at the Supreme People's Assembly, on March 25, Pyongyang released an official statement and composed a letter with the peace treaty proposal to the US Congress. However, Washington clearly recognized Pyongyang's agenda and did not respond to the North Korean proposal. Moreover, it refused to accept the letter containing the proposal. Throughout 1974, North Korean diplomats tried to deliver the letter to Congress and the White House through various channels but none of these attempts were successful.

During the Assembly deliberations, the representative of North Korea attempted to push Washington by claiming that the US intention to keep its troops in South Korea for aggression was "clearly shown" by the fact that the US had given no answer to the North Korean proposal concerning the conclusion of a peace agreement.³¹⁹ Still, the US did not respond to North Korea's overtures.

The draft resolution, submitted on South Korea's behalf in 1974, called again for the resumption of inter-Korean dialogue and for the Security Council to take the UN Command issue into consideration. Regarding the armistice agreement, the text emphasized that the agreement remained "indispensable to the maintenance of peace and security in the area." The pro-South Korea resolution

³¹⁹ *Yearbook of the United Nations, 1974, Vol. 28, 176.*

was adopted and pro-North Korea resolution rejected but just by one vote (48 in favor to 48 against, with 38 abstentions)—an indicator of strong support for Pyongyang's position. The North Korean representative stated after the voting that the discussion in the Committee had proved to be a political victory for his government and declared that North Korea would fight to the end for the withdrawal of foreign troops from the South.³²⁰

The transformation in North Korea's policy, which took place in 1973–1974, can be summarized as follows. As a result of changes in the international environment, North Korea's diplomatic advances, and perceived unproductivity of the inter-Korean dialogue, Pyongyang decided to suspend talks with South Korea and switched its attention to the discussion of the Korean question at the UN and with the US, with a focus on the withdrawal of foreign troops from the Korean Peninsula. Conclusion of a bilateral peace treaty with the US constituted the linchpin of the new policy as the treaty, in North Korea's view, could replace the Armistice Agreement, thereby making the UNC and stationing of UN/US troops in Korea unnecessary. In addition, by negotiating and signing a treaty with the superpower of the opposite bloc and the patron of South Korea without the latter's participation, Pyongyang intended to gain superiority over its rival in diplomatic recognition and legitimacy. The US, however, knew of North Korea's agenda and ignored all Pyongyang's offers of bilateral negotiations. This consistent rejection of contact may have pushed North Korea to conduct the

³²⁰ Ibid., 178.

military provocations and employ diplomatic maneuvers that contributed to building up tensions in the Korean Peninsula and led to the security crisis of the mid-1970s.

3. THE US SEARCH FOR ALTERNATIVES AND CHINA'S ABOUT-FACE

North Korea's offensive at the UN, focused on the withdrawal of foreign troops from Korea, as well as the new "two Koreas" direction of South Korea's foreign policy necessitated a revision of US policy toward the Korean Peninsula.

Already in May 1973, Ambassador Habib, after receiving an outline of the prospective policies of the Park Chung Hee administration, sent a cable to Washington urging a major review of American policy to Korea.³²¹ He pointed out that, "Considering the rigidity of the past ROK policy and the effort and investment expended to maintain the diplomatic isolation of the DPRK, the new policy [...] is a significant major departure. It was not easily reached." The ambassador believed that the US had to give the South Korean policy initiative

³²¹ American Embassy in Seoul, "ROK Foreign Policy Change," The National Archives, Central Foreign Policy Files Documenting the Period 7/1/1973-12/31/1978, Record Group 59: General Records of the Department of State, Document No. 1973SEOUL03438, 30 May 1973.

“fullest support” but the US also had to “assess carefully [...] whether we must consider more extensive contingency planning.” Habib recognized that the “two Koreas” policy and any dual admission to the UN would “bring to an end the privileged position of the ROK internationally and in the UN.” The ambassador was especially concerned about the UNC issue. He wrote,

If North Korea is admitted as UN member, it is doubtful we can long maintain the UNC [UN Command], despite its Security Council origin. [...] Logical Consequence of admitting two Koreas to UN implies end of UNC which was created in opposition to North Korea. [...] Whether or not North Korea is admitted to membership, question of what to do with UNC remains. [...] Further, the Armistice Agreement, Military Armistice Commission, UNC base rights in Japan and U.S. Operational Control of ROK forces are linked to the existence of the UNC. These [are] present thorny problems which we must address. [I] believe, we must begin seriously to consider future of UNC and possible contingency options.³²²

Habib concluded the telegram by saying that he recognized “that the [State] Department and Washington agencies cannot immediately address all of issues definitively” but requested the “fullest possible guidance” so that he would be “in

³²² *Loc. cit.*

a position to respond promptly and substantively.” In reply, the State Department told Habib that the UN Command would not be disbanded without security guarantees and therefore was a separate matter that could be considered later. In other words, the State Department wanted to deal with the UNCURK, the UN Command, and other issues separately, one after another.³²³

The ambassador’s cable aptly summarized the dilemmas faced by the US in its policy toward Korea. In general, the 1970s were a difficult time for the US at the UN as, due to the change in its composition, the UN General Assembly adopted decisions that ran counter to US interests and often openly opposed US policies. These included, for example, the issues of the Israeli-Arab conflict and questions concerning the representation of certain governments, such as China or Cambodia, at the UN. The question of Korea’s representation was particularly sensitive for the US because the US played a critical role in establishing and defending the Republic of Korea as a state through the UN. Since Washington was not able to reach a compromise over Korea with Moscow, it referred the Korean issue to the UN in 1947 and had the Republic of Korea founded through UN-supervised elections. Thereby the Republic of Korea obtained legitimacy with the international organization intended to play the role of the “world government.” Similarly, the US sought to legitimize the defense of South Korea through the UN during the Korean War. The facts that before and after the Korean War the situation in Korea was observed and regularly reported to the UN by the UN

³²³ Hong Seuk-ryule, *Bundan-ui hiseuteri*, 332-333.

commissions—the UN Commission on Korea (UNCOK), UN Korean Reconstruction Agency (UNKRA), and UNCURK—and that the UN Command took charge of the defense of South Korea also added legitimacy both to the existence of South Korea and to the presence of US troops there. It was therefore natural for the US to resist changes in the issues related to the representation of South Korea at the UN. However, the Americans realized that the situation had changed and, in the words of Ambassador Habib, “it may be that our mutual [US and South Korea] interest is in quietly recognizing reality and bringing to an end the direct UN responsibility for Korean reunification problem.”³²⁴ Nevertheless, Washington did not want to appear as if it were yielding to the tide of changes at the UN and the pressure of North Korea and its supporters. It is in this context that the dissolution of the UNCURK was seen by the Americans as a “bargaining chip” that “has only minor value by itself as a bargaining counter, but it has obvious value as part of a larger negotiating package.”³²⁵

Another closely related dilemma that the US faced had to do with the stationing of US troops in South Korea. Even within the American administration, the opinions were divided on whether to proceed with the reductions of US troops in Korea. In addition, the US had to deal with two types of outside pressure: South Korea strove to prevent the withdrawal or any further reduction in US troops, whereas North Korea, supported by a large number of UN members, was

³²⁴ American Embassy in Seoul, “ROK Foreign Policy Change.”

³²⁵ *Loc. cit.*

campaigning for the complete removal of all foreign forces from Korea. The Americans understood the desire of the South Korean government to freeze the US policy, especially given the deteriorating situation in Vietnam after the US withdrawal. They informed Seoul that they had no present intention to withdraw and reiterated that they would consult with South Koreans before any change.³²⁶ However, those assurances were made only for the subsequent year and the US made it clear it wanted to “avoid any misunderstanding by ROK that it has veto or control over US force levels or movements.”³²⁷

Most worrisome to the US was the UN trend. Habib wrote, “Decisions regarding UNC depend in part on continuing estimates of [UN General Assembly’s] attitudes and votes. Even though this is a matter for decision by the Security Council, we do not want a UNGA resolution opposing continuation of the UNC.”³²⁸ In other words, Washington contended it was for it to decide whether it withdrew its forces from Korea or not, and it did not want its decision to look as if the US were bending under any kind of pressure. But in reality, it could not help but adjust its policy to meet the UN trend.

³²⁶ American Embassy in Seoul, “Foreign Minister Indicates Flexible Stand at UN,” The National Archives, Central Foreign Policy Files Documenting the Period 7/1/1973-12/31/1978, Record Group 59: General Records of the Department of State, Document No. 1973SEOUL03351, 25 May 1973.

³²⁷ American Embassy in Seoul, “ROK Foreign Policy Change.”

³²⁸ *Loc. cit.*

The UNCURK card worked at the UN General Assembly in 1973. However, North Korea, as it was anticipated, raised there the issue of dissolution of the UN Command and tried to put under question the continuing validity of the Armistice through provocations along the NLL. In preparation of the General Assembly in 1974, the US, therefore, had to approach the complex problem of the UN Command and related questions. In December 1973, Nixon directed that “a study be made of potential US/Korean diplomatic initiatives regarding security arrangements on the Korean Peninsula.”³²⁹ The results of the study were formulated in the National Security Decision Memorandum (NSDM) 251, which was signed by Kissinger on 29 March 1974. The memorandum contained a four-part “negotiating package” where the US would seek:

- (1) Substitution of US and ROK military commanders for the Commander-in-Chief of the UN Command as the UN side’s signatory to the Armistice Agreement;
- (2) Tacit acceptance by the communist side of a continued US force presence in South Korea, in return for a “Shanghai-type communique” committing the US to reduce and ultimately withdraw its forces as the security situation in the Korean Peninsula stabilizes;
- (3) A non-aggression pact between the two Koreas; and

³²⁹ National Security Study Memorandum 190, “Diplomatic Initiatives in Korea,” National Security Council, 31 December 1973.

- (4) UN Security Council endorsement of the package of substitute security arrangements.

Any other changes in the Armistice Agreement were to be avoided. The memorandum also underscored that there should be no substantial changes in the level or missions of US troops during the period of transition to the new security arrangements.³³⁰ In essence, through NSDM251 the US devised a way to disband the UN Command while continuing, at least in a short term, to station US troops in Korea and retaining the Armistice Agreement.

With the new policy, the US intended to resolve two types of pending problems. Firstly, it would untie the issue of the presence of US troops in South Korea from the question of UN Command maintenance. This would allow the US to use the UN Command as a bargaining chip in negotiations with China and at the UN. But before starting the movement to dissolve the UN Command at the UN, Washington waited for reciprocal measures on the communist, especially Chinese, side. Secondly, implementation of the plan would somewhat reduce the damage to the legitimacy of the armistice system since the UN side would not be simply replaced by the US and South Korea, but China would have to accept and the UN Security Council endorse the new security arrangements.

Washington considered it particularly important to involve China in resolving the Korean issue. For one thing, North Korea could hardly offer in return

³³⁰ National Security Decision Memorandum 251, "Diplomatic Initiatives in Korea," National Security Council, 29 March 1974.

anything of interest to the US. In contrast, the US and China had a wide range of issues pertaining to which they sought a give-and-take solution. Negotiating the Korean question with China would also prevent the issue from becoming an obstacle in the course of Sino-American rapprochement. Moreover, China would act as a guarantor in implementing the agreement. For these reasons, the Americans constantly demonstrated to their Chinese counterparts the willingness to cooperate on the Korean issue while refusing to make contact with North Korea. In addition, engaging China was in line with the policy of cross-recognition. The following year (in 1975), the idea of China's involvement would take a more concrete form of a US proposal for a four-party conference on Korea.

On the other hand, NSDM251 reflected the continuity of the US policy of disengaging from Northeast Asia and encouraging its allies to take more responsibility for their own security. The memorandum envisioned a two-track negotiating strategy, with the Seoul-Pyongyang track being primary. South and North Korean representatives were to become the principal members of the Military Armistice Commission (MAC), and a non-aggression treaty between the two Koreas was included as part of the negotiating package. In retrospect, the unwillingness of South and North Korea to settle the issues through bilateral talks became one of the reasons the ideas laid out in NSDM251 failed to be implemented. Another reason was the unaccommodating posture that China took on the US proposal.

On surface, China was supportive of North Korea's initiatives. In the spring of 1973, for example, when the Supreme People's Assembly put forth the

five-point military proposal, a Renmin ribao editorial promptly endorsed the policy. Two months later, the Renmin ribao editorial marking the June 25 outbreak of the Korean War unequivocally endorsed Kim Il Sung's June 23 proposal on Korean unification. In March 1974, a Renmin Ribao commentary also argued in favor of Pyongyang's proposal for a peace agreement between North Korea and the US.³³¹

However, China's support fell short of any substantial assistance to North Korea's diplomatic moves. As mentioned earlier, Beijing agreed to deter the debate on the Korean question at the UN in 1971 and 1972. For instance, in October 1972 the American administration asked China to postpone the discussion for a year because of the US presidential election, and Beijing agreed. During the 1972 sessions of the General Assembly, representatives of socialist countries and South Korean journalists received the impression that the Chinese delegates had no intention of lobbying the assembly members on behalf of North Korea.³³² China wanted to accommodate US requests to prevent the Korean issue from becoming a source of conflicts with the US and, in return, the US yielded on other issues of interest to China. At the following General Assembly, in late 1973, cooperation between the US and China led to the adoption of the consensus

³³¹ Ilpyong J. Kim, "The People's Republic of China and Korean Reunification," in *Korean Reunification: New Perspectives and Approaches*, ed. Kwak Tae-hwan, Kim Chonghan, and Kim Hong Nack (Seoul: Kyungnam University Institute for Far Eastern Studies, 1984), 177.

³³² Hong Seul-ryule, *op. cit.*, 353-354.

statement cited above. This decision was the result of an understanding between Kissinger and Zhou Enlai that reflected the PRC's efforts to avoid political confrontation with the US. Kissinger insisted on a compromise solution because the US did not want to take any action affecting the position of American troops in South Korea. Romanian diplomats speculated that, in return for China's favor, the US may have committed to press the South Korean government so that the latter adopted a more flexible position in negotiations with North Korea or made other concessions with respect to other issues of interest to China, such as discussing a compromise arrangement on the issue of Cambodian representation in the UN.³³³

Not only at the UN, but also in its Third World diplomacy and attempts to reach to the US through diplomatic channels, North Korea did not receive from China the amount of support South Korea did from the US. As mentioned earlier, in February 1973, North Korean Foreign Minister Heo Dam asked Zhou Enlai to explore the possibility of bilateral negotiations between the US and North Korea during Kissinger's visit to China. Beijing later informed the North Koreans that the Americans did not yet consider this a possibility. However, according to the minutes of the conversation between Kissinger and Zhou recorded by the

³³³ Telegram from New York to Bucharest, "Concerning the UN Debate Around the Korean Issue," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania, Matter 220, Folder 1514, Vol. II, No. 052312, 26 November 1973. NKIDP.

American side, the Chinese counterpart did not raise the issue at all.³³⁴ China's reluctance to promote direct exchanges between Pyongyang and Washington may be interpreted as a desire to retain control over North Korea's communications with the US, so that Beijing could use it as a diplomatic card in its relations with both Pyongyang and Washington. It is also possible to argue that, from the beginning of Sino-American rapprochement, China did not intend to provide active support to North Korea except for the minimum required to keep the Pyongyang ally on its side.

However, the overall lack of substantial support from China for North Korea's initiatives can also serve as an indicator that transformations were taking place in Beijing's position on the Korean question. Until the early 1970s, China had been linking the Korean issue with the problem of Taiwan and anticipated that the withdrawal of US troops from South Korea would be followed by the removal of US troops from Taiwan. The Chinese also expected the abolition of the US-Taiwan alliance treaty.³³⁵ Observing the US and South Korea's efforts to keep their alliance treaty and maintain US troops in Korea, Beijing started to separate the issues of Korea and Taiwan.

Moreover, there is evidence that China changed its stance on the presence of US forces on the Korean Peninsula. In mid-1973, rumors spread among the diplomatic corps in Beijing that the PRC, fearing the expansion of

³³⁴ Hong Seuk-ryule, *op. cit.*, 351–353.

³³⁵ Choi Myeong-hae, *Jungguk-Bukhan dongmaeng gwangye*, 281.

Soviet influence in the Far East, in reality did not desire the withdrawal of US troops from the Korean Peninsula. In a conversation with a member of a Romanian mission in New York in late July 1973, for example, a Chinese diplomat “implied that the PRC does not regard favorably, quite the contrary, is even worried by the possible withdrawal of US troops from South Korea.” He mentioned that a “vacuum” created by the withdrawal would likely be filled by the Soviet Union and expressed his “puzzlement” regarding the “refusal of the DPRK to accept a US military presence in South Korea after the two states had been welcomed into the UN.”³³⁶

Furthermore, it is plausible that the Chinese leadership was alarmed by the policy of two Koreas that South Korea and the US started to pursue at that time. Since such a policy involved issues sensitive to China such as sovereignty, legitimacy, and cross-recognition, Beijing needed time to assess its potential effect.

In sum, the challenging situation at the UN put South Korea and the US on the same page in terms of their policies toward North Korea and the Korean question at the UN. This was in contrast to the lack of cooperation between North Korea and China. Beijing did not assist the diplomatic moves of Pyongyang, and Pyongyang learned that it did not have Beijing’s support on the critical issue of the presence of US troops in Korea. One additional objective in the provocations in the West Sea of late 1973 may have been Pyongyang’s desire to spur China’s

³³⁶ Telegram from New York to Bucharest, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania, Matter 220, Folder 1515, Vol. I. No. 091.722, 31 July 1973.

involvement, as the waters in question are very close to China and were frequented by Chinese fishermen.³³⁷ But the move did not affect the course of Sino-American talks mainly because the following year saw stagnation in the negotiations between the US and China due to the illnesses of both Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai and the succession crisis in Beijing, as well as the resignation of President Nixon after the Watergate scandal.

³³⁷ Hong Seuk-ryule, *op. cit.*, 359–360.

CHAPTER V. SECURITY AND DIPLOMATIC CRISIS, 1975-1976

INTRODUCTION

In 1975-1976, military tensions in the Korean Peninsula reached their highest point of the 1970s. During his visit to Beijing in April 1975, Kim Il Sung made a militantly-toned speech that raised fears in Seoul that the North was preparing for a southward invasion. The South Korean regime reacted by increasing its defense budget twofold and making other arrangements to boost its security. In August 1976, North Korean soldiers brutally killed two American officers in Panmunjom, an area designated for peaceful negotiations between the parties. In response to the killings, Washington conducted the massive-scale Operation Paul Bunyan and, in coordination with Seoul, drew up contingency plans that did not exclude the nuclear option.

Both the Beijing trip and Panmunjom incident may seem as contradictory to North Korea's efforts to create an image of a peace-maker. Diplomatic tensions between Seoul and Pyongyang also peaked during that period. South Korea, with the assistance of the US, and North Korea engaged in a cutthroat competition to swing votes at the UN General Assembly in support of their own position at the expense of the opponent. But in September 1976, the diplomatic and military tensions suddenly plunged, and the competition was halted.

This chapter aims at finding the reasons for and explaining the resolution of the diplomatic and security crisis of the mid-1970s. It investigates the course of the events, intentions and strategies of the four players, and their roles in the crisis.

1. KIM IL SUNG’S VISIT TO BEIJING IN APRIL 1975: INTENTIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

In early 1975, three Indochinese states—Cambodia, Vietnam, and Laos—fell to communist rule. The capture of Phnom Penh and Saigon by communist forces in April 1975 sent shock waves throughout East Asia. Park Chung Hee speculated that Kim Il Sung might use the situation to attempt an invasion of the South. His prediction seemed to be turning into reality when Kim Il Sung suddenly traveled to Beijing in the middle of April. Particularly ominous sounding—in the eyes of South Korea—was Kim’s speech at the banquet on the day of his arrival, during which he mentioned that, in a war with South Korea, “we will only lose the military demarcation line but gain the reunification of the fatherland.”³³⁸

³³⁸ Kim Il Sung, “Jo-Jung du nara inmindeul-ui jeontujeok dangyeol-eun Asea-eseo jegukjuui chimnyak seryeok-ui myeolmang-eul chokjin sikineun gangnyeokhan yoin-euro doenda” [Militant solidarity of the Korean and Chinese people is a major factor in facilitating the destruction of the imperialist invading forces in Asia], *Rodong sinmun* (19 April 1975), 3.

Diplomats of socialist countries who were stationed in North Korea and China at that time believed that Kim Il Sung was inspired by communist victories in Indochina and planned to replicate this success in the Korean Peninsula, so he traveled to Beijing to solicit China's help in this endeavor.³³⁹ Several existing studies also support this view.³⁴⁰ However, some details and circumstances of the visit cast doubt on this type of interpretation. These include the facts that Kim Il Sung traveled to China in such an open way as a public state visit and that only half of his delegation were military officials with the other half being economists. In addition, no special preparations for a North Korean attack on South Korea were detected at that time.

The North Korean leadership assessed the implications of communist victories in Indochina in a similar way as they did regarding the signing of the Paris Peace Accords. While considering the events an important victory, Pyongyang was concerned that American failures elsewhere would make Washington clinch more to South Korea. In Kim Il Sung's words, "The US imperialists kicked out of Indochina are seeking to keep South Korea as a stronghold for Asian aggression and intensifying their aggressive maneuvers in

³³⁹ The diplomats made such a conclusion largely based on a comparative analysis of Kim Il Sung's speeches at the opening banquet and the ceremony at the end of the visit.

³⁴⁰ With the exception of very few Chinese experts, scholars do not have access to Chinese documents on the visit.

Korea.”³⁴¹

Although Kim indeed asked the Chinese leaders for support in “revolutionizing” the South (and was rejected),³⁴² the visit most likely was intended as a breakthrough in North Korea’s diplomacy toward Beijing.³⁴³ Kim demonstrated to the Chinese counterparts his readiness to seek a military solution to the Korean question if China kept paying lip service instead of providing actual support to North Korea. And by doing so, Kim was able to obtain Chinese help in contacting the US and supporting North Korea’s agenda at the UN. After his visit, Chinese leaders finally started referring the US to direct negotiations with North Korea and actively lobbying UN members on North Korea’s behalf. (During the visit, Kim also procured much needed loans and economic assistance that allowed him to temporarily put off the crisis in the balance of payments).³⁴⁴

³⁴¹ “Clear Manifestation of Firm International Solidarity with Korean People’s Just Cause,” *Pyongyang Times*, 16 August 1975 (No. 33), 4. “Aggressive maneuvers” here refers mostly to the joint US-ROK military exercises that were stepped up after the communist victories in Indochina.

³⁴² Xia and Shen, “China’s Last Ally,” 27; Kim Hak-jun, *Bukhan 50-nyeonsa* [Fifty years of North Korean history] (Seoul: Dong-a Publishing, 1995), 315.

³⁴³ Choi Myeonghae, *Jungguk-Bukhan dongmaeng gwangye*, 312-313.

³⁴⁴ GDR Embassy in Pyongyang, “Note Concerning a Conversation Between Ambassador Comrade Everhartz with the Head of Department II in the DPRK Foreign Ministry, Comrade Choe Sang-muk, on 7 May 1975 about the Visit by Comrade Kim Il Sung to the PR China,” PolA, MfAA, C 6857, 12 May 1975. NKIDP.

The South Korean regime and media closely followed the events in Indochina and Kim Il Sung's visit to Beijing. Park used the atmosphere of anxiety, further fueled by a discovery of North Korean infiltration tunnels under the Demilitarized Zone, to call for national unity and crackdown on the democratization movement at home. He issued two emergency measures which enabled him to use the military against demonstrators and to prosecute and execute leaders of the opposition. His administration doubled the military budget for the following year and passed laws through the National Assembly that introduced a new defense tax and created a paramilitary corps of the entire adult male population. Park's diplomatic office conveyed to American officials the regime's doubts about the strength of the US commitment to Korea, whereas Korean newspapers demanded that the US prove its determination with action.

At about the same time, Washington learned of Seoul's efforts to build its own nuclear weapons. The US could not allow the continuation of such a program, and it tried to ensure Seoul of its commitment through repeated private and public statements of American officials and diplomats that the US would not hesitate to launch a nuclear attack on North Korea if necessary.³⁴⁵ These statements were the first instance of the US openly confirming the presence of nuclear weapons in South Korea. In June 1975, Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger stated, "It

³⁴⁵ Donga Ilbo ed., *Cheoljeo haebu ju-Han Migun* [Dissecting US forces in Korea] (Seoul: Donga Ilbosa, 1990), 310; and Hong Seuk-ryule, "1976-nyeon Panmunjeom dokki salhae sageon," 281.

is, I believe, known, that we have deployed nuclear weapons in Europe and Korea along with our forces, and that those nuclear weapons are available as options for the president.” About the reasoning for making this disclosure in the case of Korea he explained that it was done “to have an impact on North Korean calculations.”³⁴⁶ To demonstrate the American resolve, the first series of the Team Spirit exercises were planned for 1976.

Unable to match the increases in military expenditures and improvements in military technology made by the Park Administration, Kim Il Sung continued augmenting and moving his forces closer to the DMZ.

It is noteworthy that domestic events in the two Koreas played an important part in the radicalization of the decisions of North and South Korean leaders in early 1975. Kim Jong Il was selected as the successor to Kim Il Sung in late 1973. In the following year, he started to exercise informal control over the military and engaged in the Southern strategy-making of the Korean Workers’ Party. A reshuffling of the cadres and then a series of purges of the North Korean military and party officials ensued. For its part, the Park Chung Hee regime faced a surge in the anti-Yushin movement: politicians in the opposition, religious leaders, and students joined forces and took to the streets demanding the revocation of the Yushin Constitution. On the personal level, Park’s wife, Yuk

³⁴⁶ Selig S. Harrison, *Korean Endgame: A Strategy for Reunification and U.S. Disengagement* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), 199.

Young-soo, who arguably had had a calming effect on Park's impulsiveness,³⁴⁷ was assassinated in August 1974.³⁴⁸

The resulting situation was a typical security dilemma: The actions by a state intended to heighten its security led another state to respond with similar measures, therefore actually decreasing security and producing increased military tensions.

2. DIPLOMATIC COMPETITION OF 1975

The stakes were raised not only in the military but also on the diplomatic front. The capture of Saigon and other communist victories in Indochina facilitated a breakthrough in North Korea's diplomacy in Southeast Asia. Pyongyang had been relatively isolated in the region, especially from ASEAN, but in the wake of those events, even moderate or US-friendly regimes (such as Thailand, Myanmar, and Singapore³⁴⁹) established diplomatic relations with North Korea. The North

³⁴⁷ Chun In Kwon [Jeon In-gwon], *Bak Jeong-hui pyeongjeon* [Critical biography of Park Chung Hee] (Seoul: Ihaksa, 2006), 117.

³⁴⁸ She was accidentally killed as a result of an attempt on Park Chung Hee's life by Mun Segwang, a Japanese-born Korean associated with the pro-North Korea Association of Korean Residents in Japan.

³⁴⁹ The three countries established diplomatic relations with North Korea on 8 May, 16 May, and 8 November 1975, respectively.

Koreans also benefitted from a revolutionary wave in Africa and Southern Europe. The revolutions brought to power the radical forces that Pyongyang had been supporting, so the number of regimes that recognized North Korea was rapidly increasing.³⁵⁰ On the tide of these developments, North Korea was able to become a full member of the NAM in August 1975, whereas South Korea's bid for the membership was rejected.

Pyongyang intended to exploit the situation at the 1975 UN General Assembly. The regime realized that the US was trying to avoid pressure to withdraw American troops by separating the issues of the troop presence and the UN Command. The regime was concerned that a simple "change of helmets" would allow the US troops to stay in Korea indefinitely³⁵¹ and tried to expose the "US scheme" to the international community. A North Korean reporter in January 1975 wrote,

They [the US] hold that their troops stationed in South Korea are not 'UN forces' and they stay there by the 'ROK-US Mutual Defense Treaty.' Under this preposterous pretext they refuse to withdraw their aggressor troops wearing the helmets of the 'UN forces.' In the past they jabbered more than once that

³⁵⁰ Barry K. Gills, *Korea versus Korea: A Case of Contested Legitimacy* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 116.

³⁵¹ "US Imperialists' Sophistry for Aggression," *Pyongyang Times*, 1 March 1975 (No.9), 4

they would not withdraw without the resolution of the UN because their troops stationed in South Korea were the ‘UN forces.’³⁵²

Thus, the purpose of the North Korean campaign was to have the international community condemn the stationing of foreign troops in Korea under any pretext—whether as UN troops or based on the US-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty. The North Korean press of the time routinely published articles that emphasized the importance of achieving this goal. Below is an excerpt from one such article.

The US imperialist occupation of south Korea is [...] the constant source of the intensified tension and increased danger of war in this country [...] The most urgent problem that must be solved in the settlement of the question of our country’s unification is to take ‘UN forces’ helmets off US occupation troops in south Korea and force them to withdraw completely.³⁵³

Pyongyang demanded that the UN “deal a proper blow at the US schemes.”³⁵⁴

In June–July, North Korea organized the “month of the anti-US joint

³⁵² “US Imperialist Aggressor Troop Withdrawal Must Precede Korea’s Reunification,” *Pyongyang Times*, 25 January 1975 (No. 4), 6.

³⁵³ *Loc. cit.*

³⁵⁴ “US Imperialists’ Nasty Scheme to Justify the Occupation of South Korea,” *Pyongyang Times*, 20 September 1975 (No. 38), 4.

struggle for withdrawal of the US imperialist aggressor troops from South Korea” and the “month of solidarity with the Korean people” in socialist states, non-aligned countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and several capitalist countries. Throughout that month, functions and other programs were held, and appeals, statements, editorials, and articles were published in the host countries in support of North Korea.³⁵⁵

Pyongyang also went on with the idea of replacing the Armistice Agreement with a peace treaty between the US and North Korea. In August, the regime submitted on its behalf a draft resolution signed by 43 countries. According to the draft, the General Assembly would call upon “the real parties to the Armistice Agreement” to replace the armistice with a peace agreement “in the context of dissolution of the UN Command and the withdrawal of all the foreign troops stationed in South Korea under the flag of the United Nations.” In his speeches during the Assembly session, the representative of North Korea also emphasized that the UN Command had to be dissolved and all foreign troops withdrawn “before anything else,” i.e., before the armistice is replaced.³⁵⁶ North Korea’s appeal to the assembly was supported by the program adopted by a NAM Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (which was held in Lima in August

³⁵⁵ “Clear Manifestation of Firm International Solidarity with Korean People’s Just Cause,” *Pyongyang Times*, 16 August 1975 (No. 33), 4.

³⁵⁶ *Yearbook of the United Nations, 1975, Vol. 29* (New York: Office of Public Information, United Nations, 1978), 199.

1975 and admitted North Korea as a NAM member). The North Korean representative used the NAM card when in his speech he associated the struggle of the Korean people with the struggle of the peoples of the world against imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, and racism.³⁵⁷

Alarmed by the narrow victory of the South Korean side in the previous, 28th General Assembly, the upbeat mood of the North Korean leadership in the light of communist victories in Indochina, and the sensitive reaction of Seoul to those events; the US administration tried to forestall North Korea's advances in 1975. It was highly likely that the General Assembly in the forthcoming session would adopt a resolution urging the dismantling of the UN Command. Washington thought the dissolution of the UN Command was inevitable but, as discussed earlier, desired to use it as a bargaining chip in negotiations with China.³⁵⁸ Beijing, however, was not responding to Washington's attempts to negotiate according to the plan formulated in NSDM251. To take initiative on the UN Command and pre-empt a perception that it was yielding on the issue, in June 1975, the US made a formal, public proposal to terminate the UN Command by 1 January 1976, provided China and North Korea agreed to continue the armistice agreement. Two related letters were sent to the Security Council and General Assembly.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁷ *Loc. cit.*

³⁵⁸ Xia and Shen, "China's Last Ally," 24-25.

³⁵⁹ On June 27 and September 22, respectively. (*Yearbook of the United Nations, 1975, Vol. 29, 193-4.*

While putting forth the negotiating package through the UN, Washington was moving its troops from the UN umbrella to the status of troops stationed under the US-South Korea Mutual Defense Treaty. Reorganization of the UN Command, US Forces in Korea Command, and the Command of the 8th US Army into the US-ROK Combined Forces Command already started in September 1974. By January 1976, only around 300 non-Korean troops remained subordinate to the UNC, including Military Armistice Commission Secretariat staff.³⁶⁰ The US also undertook measures to reduce manifestations of the UN Command—for example, the UN flag was removed from many military installations in Korea.³⁶¹

Simultaneously, American diplomats and military officials publically downplayed the importance of the UN Command. They stressed that US troops in the country were a matter falling within the sovereignty of South Korea and not concerned with the UN. Representative of such statements was one made by US Ambassador to the UN Daniel P. Moynihan in late 1975. He said that the bulk of US troops on the Peninsula were “pursuant to the United States-Republic of Korea Mutual Defense Treaty of 1954 and at the invitation of the Government of the Republic of Korea... [US troops in Korea] are not under the United Nations flag and are not a matter of United Nations business.”³⁶²

³⁶⁰ Koh Byung-chul, “The Battle without Victors: The Korean Question in the 30th Session of the UN General Assembly,” *Journal of Korean Affairs* V-1(1976), 54.

³⁶¹ *Yearbook of the United Nations, 1975, Vol. 29*, 193-194.

³⁶² United Nations, A/C. 1/PV.2065, 23 October 1975, cited in Koh Byung-chul, *op. cit.*,

South Korea, on its part, tried to use the momentum to apply for membership in the UN along with the applications of North and South Vietnam in July–September 1975. But the UN Security Council decided not to place South Korea’s application on the agenda.³⁶³

In contrast, Pyongyang managed to gather considerable support for its cause. When the Assembly opened, North Korea’s allies and supporters almost succeeded in keeping the South Korea-friendly draft resolution off the agenda. The motion to include it on the agenda was approved by the Steering Committee of the General Assembly by a one-vote margin (9 to 8, with 7 abstentions).³⁶⁴ The notorious result of the voting in the 29th General Assembly was the adoption of both the pro-North Korea and pro-South Korea resolutions, even though the two were contradictory in their contents. The pro-North Korean resolution (UN General Assembly Resolution 3390 B) urged the immediate dissolution of the UN Command and withdrawal of all foreign troops stationed in South Korea under the flag of the UN; whereas the pro-South Korean resolution (UN General Assembly

54.

³⁶³ South Korea made the application twice, in July and September (Official Records of the Security Council, S/11783 and S/11828). Both times the application failed to reach even the consideration stage as Soviet Union, China, and several other countries voted against placing it on the agenda. (Official Records of the UN Security Council, S/PV 1834, 6 August 1975 and S/PV 1842, 26 September 1975).

³⁶⁴ Koh Byung-chul, “North Korea’s Policy toward the United Nations,” 51.

Resolution 3390 A) stated that the UN Command could be dissolved only after the arrangements for maintaining the Armistice Agreement had been made.

This was the first time a North Korea-friendly resolution was adopted by the UN General Assembly and Pyongyang claimed a victory. In its reports of the results of the UN voting, North Korean press omitted the fact that the pro-South Korea resolution passed as well. The North Korean leadership was inspired by these successes and determined to push for implementation of the resolution during the following General Assembly in 1976. On the other hand, the regime also realized that the 1976 UN General Assembly would probably be its last chance to promote the withdrawal of US troops from the Korean Peninsula through the UN, given the ongoing changes in the structure and status of US forces in South Korea.

Washington, on the other hand, was frustrated with the outcome of the General Assembly. In general, the 1975 General Assembly was the climax of US confrontation with the UN, as reflected, among other facts, in the adoption of the Zionism Is Racism resolution.³⁶⁵ The US changed its ambassador to the UN³⁶⁶

³⁶⁵ The resolution (3379) passed by a vote of 72 (Arab and Islamic majority countries supported by the Soviet bloc and many non-aligned countries) to 35, despite rigorous diplomatic efforts of the US and Israel to forestall the adoption.

³⁶⁶ Daniel Patrick Moynihan was appointed by President Ford as the US ambassador to the UN (including rotation as President of the UN Security Council) in June 1975 but left in after just half a year, in his own words, before he was fired. Before his appointment, Moynihan was highly critical of the UN for the anti-American orientation

and was determined to restore its authority in the organization. Thus, justifying US actions and presence in Korea through the adoption of a South Korea-friendly resolution in the following year became an important objective of the US policy toward the UN. Needless to say, Seoul perceived the results of the 1975 voting as it being on the edge of losing its legitimacy with the UN and a major defeat in its competition with Pyongyang. In short, both the North Korean and US-South Korean sides considered the 1976 General Assembly as providing critical momentum for advancing their positions.

of many new UN members and asserted that the American spokesmen should become “feared in international forums” for the “truths” they might tell. During his tenure at the UN, Moynihan took a bald anti-communist stance and his abrasiveness arguably reduced the chances of US- and its allies’-friendly resolutions to pass. His actions were in discord with Kissinger’s détente-driven approach. Shortly after his resignation, Moynihan published a book where he called the UN “a dangerous place.” (Lawrence S. Finkelstein, “The United States and the United Nations: Proper Prudence or a New Failure of Nerve?” in *The United Nations and Keeping Peace in Northeast Asia*, ed. Kang Sung-Hack (Seoul: The Institute for Peace Studies, Korea University, 1995), 103-104; and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *A Dangerous Place* (Boston: Atlantic-Little, Brown, 1978).)

3. DIPLOMATIC CAMPAIGNS OF 1976: NORTH KOREA VS. SOUTH KOREA AND THE US

In order to push for the immediate implementation of the North Korea-friendly resolution before the US and South Korea arranged the “change of helmets” and the issue of the presence of foreign troops in South Korea became a matter outside of UN authority, from late 1975, North Korea began a sophisticated diplomatic campaign designed to portray US forces in South Korea as the main source of tensions on the peninsula and an obstacle to Korean reunification and peace in Asia as a whole. In October 1975, the North Korean representative transmitted to the Secretary-General a memorandum of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which claimed that “war preparations” were being “stepped up in South Korea by the United States imperialists at a time when the world’s people were raising even higher their voices demanding that [...] a durable peace be ensured [in Korea].” The actions of the US, the statement continued, demonstrated the “insincerity of their talk about peace in Korea.”³⁶⁷ Pyongyang had routinely made accusations that the US perpetuated armed provocations against North Korea, but this was the first time that the entire letter to the UN was written on this issue.

In an interview on 28 March 1976, Kim Il Sung revealed that North Korea planned to “stir up world opinion more vigorously” by “publicizing US criminal

³⁶⁷ *Yearbook of the United Nations, 1975, Vol. 29, 198.*

barbarities” and South Korean political repression. Kim declared that his objective was to “make the Korean question the focal point of attention both in Asian and in world affairs.”³⁶⁸ Earlier, on March 4, the Standing Committee of the Supreme People’s Assembly sent a “Letter to the Parliaments and Governments of All Countries of the World,” which stated that the US had created “a grave situation in which a war may break out at any moment” by threatening to “conquer the whole of Korea through a five-day war,” committing “adventurous war provocations” against North Korea, accumulating a weapons arsenal, and placing troops near the military demarcation line on “round-the-clock combat readiness.” The letter explained that after the US suffered a defeat in Indochina, it was trying to “attain its aim of aggression on the whole of Korea.”³⁶⁹ Thus, Pyongyang was accusing the US of attempting to trigger war on the Korean Peninsula.

In mid-April, North Korean diplomats delivered through the US office at the UN a note from North Korea’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Department of State. The note reiterated North Korea’s readiness to hold talks with the US Department of State and warned that if the pro-North Korea resolution adopted at the UN in the previous year failed to be implemented, “the Government of the U.S.

³⁶⁸ Kim Il Sung, “Ilbon jeongchi iron japji ‘Sekkai’ pyeonjip gukjang gwa han damhwa” [Conversation with the editor of the Japanese political theory magazine ‘Sekkai’], in Vol. 31 of *Kim Il Sung jeojakjip*, 62.

³⁶⁹ Supreme People’s Assembly, “Letter to the Parliaments and Governments of All Countries of the World,” *Pyongyang Times* (13 March 1976), 1.

of America should be held responsible for all consequences arising therefrom.”³⁷⁰ The message was left unanswered, and on August 5, Pyongyang issued a strongly worded government statement “in connection with the fact that the U.S. imperialists and the South Korean puppet clique, who have been stepping up preparations for war to invade the northern half of the DPRK, have now finished war preparations and are going over to the adventurous machination to directly ignite the fuse of war.”³⁷¹ Notably, this was only the third government statement ever issued by North Korea regarding the situation on the Korean Peninsula.³⁷² At a related briefing with foreign diplomats, the North Korean deputy foreign minister asked to relay the request of the North Korean government that “peace-loving countries’ governments and peoples follow extremely closely the dangerous schemes of the United States [meant] to trigger a war in Korea and decisively condemn them.”³⁷³

³⁷⁰ US Mission UN, “North Korean Note to Department of State,” The National Archives, Central Foreign Policy Files Documenting the Period 7/1/1973-12/31/1976, Record Group 59: General Records of the Department of State, Document No. 1976USUNN01683, 21 April 1976.

³⁷¹ “DPRK Denounces U.S., ROK ‘War Preparation’ Maneuvers,” Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) Daily Report, Asia and Pacific, North Korea, FBIS-APA-76-153, 6 August 1976.

³⁷² Hong Seuk-ryule, “1976-nyeon Panmunjeom dokki salhae sageon,” 282.

³⁷³ Telegram from Pyongyang to Bucharest, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania, Matter 220, No. 067.190, 6 August 1976. NKIDP.

The military tensions in the Korean Peninsula were further intensified in June by Team Spirit 76, a series of large-scale joint war exercises by South Korean and American forces and featuring nuclear-capable F-111 fighter-bombers. Staged by Washington in an effort to demonstrate American commitment and alleviate the fears of South Korea and other American allies in Asia, these maneuvers looked, in Pyongyang's eyes, like a rehearsal of an invasion from the South. But they also served as a piece of evidence for North Korea in support of its claims. On numerous occasions during meetings with foreign diplomats, North Korean officials noted the US was introducing new weapons into South Korea and conducting provocative military exercises—Team Spirit.³⁷⁴

Overall, between January and August 1976, Kim Il Sung sent 147 missions to 82 countries and invited and received in Pyongyang a total of 182 foreign delegations from 69 countries.³⁷⁵ During each encounter with the foreign delegates, North Koreans stressed the necessity to remove US troops from the Korean Peninsula. In mid-June, North Korea sponsored an “international press conference” in Brussels intended to expose—along with political repression in South Korea—the “aggressive designs” of the US toward Pyongyang.³⁷⁶

After acquiring UN observer status, Pyongyang was able to join a large

³⁷⁴ The first series of these joint US-ROK military maneuvers took place in June 1976.

³⁷⁵ Michishita Narushige, *North Korea's Military-Diplomatic Campaigns*, 83.

³⁷⁶ “An International Press Conference on Korean Question Held in Brussels,” *Pyongyang Times* (19 July 1976), 6.

number of UN bodies, and throughout 1976, North Korean officials obstinately raised the issue of the UN forces presence in the Korean Peninsula at the meetings and conferences of those organizations, even though the latter hardly had anything to do with UN troops. An incident that occurred during the 4th session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in May 1976 is one representative example. Both North and South Korean delegations attended the session. During the opening session on May 10, the head of the South Korean delegation, Vice Foreign Minister Yoon Ha-jung [Yun Ha-jeong], made an address first, in which he described the economic achievements of his country. When the head of the North Korean delegation, Finance Minister Kim Kyong Yon [Kim Gyeong-yeon], took his turn, he referred to the pro-North Korea resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly in the previous year and talked about the necessity of terminating the UN Command and withdrawing foreign forces from Korea. During a morning session of the conference two days later, the South Korean vice minister made a statement where he accused the North Korean delegate of misrepresenting the situation by failing to mention the adopted South Korea-friendly resolution. The two officials then took turns several times to criticize each other's position. A PRC delegate spoke in support of the North. The exchanges finished only when the session participants adopted a resolution to postpone further discussions, submitted by Yugoslavia.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁷ “Nam-Bukhan daepyo seoljeon” (A verbal battle between delegates of South and North Korea), *The Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 13 May 1976.

On 16 August 1976, Algeria, on behalf of North Korea, submitted the draft of a resolution co-sponsored by 31 nations to the UN Secretariat. The draft resolution submitted on North Korea's behalf on August 10 also demanded an end to the increasing danger of a new war in Korea and reaffirmed the provisions of the previous year: the dissolution of the UN Command, withdrawal of foreign troops, and replacement of the armistice with a peace agreement.

Obtaining support at the 5th Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit, held in Colombo on August 16–19, was an important step in North Korea's preparations for the discussion of the Korean issue at the UN General Assembly. It was the first conference of the non-aligned nations since the fall of Saigon and the first North Korea was attending as a full member. The North Korean delegation submitted a draft resolution that again stated that the tensions on the Korean Peninsula were little short of war and demanded the immediate withdrawal of US troops. Although many relatively moderate member nations expressed reservations concerning the North Korean position,³⁷⁸ the summit adopted a declaration that reflected the main points raised by the North Koreans.

South Korea, with US support, was not lagging behind in the cutthroat diplomatic competition with North Korea. Seoul launched its own propaganda campaign accusing North Korea of aggressive intentions. The South Korean government dispatched numerous delegations to countries around the world to

³⁷⁸ 24 of the NAM member-states attending the conference filed letters taking exception to the resolution on Korea.

explain its position and offered to the host countries economic, military, and other forms of assistance in the hope that the assistance would affect the country's vote at the General Assembly. In addition, Seoul and Washington made several statements to suggest convening a four-party (South and North Korea, the US, and China) conference on Korea, outside of the UN.

In contrast to North Korea, however, the South acted mostly through diplomatic channels with its every move carefully coordinated with the US. The level of coordination between South Korea and the US in this process has often been underestimated in existing studies. The allies discussed and planned the diplomatic campaign in early 1976. South Korean diplomats contacted the governments of the countries that previously voted for the pro-South resolution to confirm that Seoul could expect the same votes in the fall. Diplomats in the countries that abstained during the UN vote were ordered to approach the governments of the host countries to test the possibility of changing their votes to supporting South Korea. If such a possibility was detected, a delegation of government officials from Seoul would visit the country and try to lobby the host government with promises of future cooperation.

Moreover, Washington collected and shared similar information with its South Korean counterpart. Starting in July, the State Department exchanged an average of 20 telegrams³⁷⁹ per day with its embassies worldwide regarding the

³⁷⁹ The calculations are based on the number of telegrams that have been declassified and are available to researchers at the National Archives of the US.

Korean issue at the UN. Groups of diplomats from the countries that supported South Korea and were expected to sign the draft of the friendly resolution—such as the United Kingdom, Japan, Australia, and Canada—were organized in many countries around the world. Referred to as “core groups,” they held regular meetings that were usually attended by American diplomats and the South Korean ambassador in the host country. The participants discussed the progress in lobbying the host government and planned other possible approaches. One typical example of the activities of a core group can be found in the case of Tunisia. The chairman of the Tunis Core Group, the Belgian ambassador, called a meeting on July 29 to coordinate the actions to be taken before the Tunisian Foreign Minister Habib Chatty departed for the Non-Aligned Movement summit in Colombo. According to the follow-up telegram, the participants “concluded that talk at this stage of how GOT [Government of Tunisia] should vote at UNGA [UN General Assembly] would be both premature and counterproductive.” Further, “After some discussion participants agreed Chairman’s effort should be directed to convincing Chatty that he should play a moderating role in Colombo.” The US ambassador planned to ask for an appointment with the Tunisian foreign minister “as soon as [he] knew the Belgian had been given an appointment,” and to have Korea high on his agenda.³⁸⁰

³⁸⁰ American Embassy Tunis, “Multilateral Affairs: Tunis Core Group Meeting,” The National Archives, Central Foreign Policy Files Documenting the Period 7/1/1973-12/31/1976, Record Group 59: General Records of the Department of State, Document No. 1976TUNIS05384, 2 August 1976.

The number of telegrams exchanged between Washington and American embassies around the world on the Korean issue increased to almost a hundred per day during the Non-Aligned Conference in late August and immediately after the Panmunjom incident as Washington and Seoul attempted to assess the effect of the two events and the chances of a friendly resolution at the UN.

4. PANMUNJOM AXE MURDERS, CLIMAX OF THE CRISIS, AND RETREAT

The Panmunjom Axe Murders occurred in this atmosphere of heightened military and diplomatic tensions, a day before the end of the Colombo Summit on 18 August 1976.³⁸¹ A group of five South Korean workers (Korea Service Corps),

³⁸¹ The description of the incident is based on the following sources: House of Representatives, *Hearing before the Subcommittees on International Political and Military Affairs and on International Organizations of the Committee on International Relations: Deaths of American Military Personnel in the Korean Demilitarized Zone*, House of Representatives Ninety-Fourth Congress, Second Session, 1 September 1976 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976); James Munhang Lee, *Panmunjom, Korea*; Letter Dated 19 August 1976 from the Acting Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations Addressed to the President of the Security Council, United Nations Security Council, s/12181 (20 August 1976); and Wayne A. Kirkbride, *DMZ: A Story of the Panmunjom Axe Murder* (Elizabeth, New Jersey and Seoul: Hollym International Corp., 1980).

escorted by two American officers (Captain Arthur Bonifas and First Lieutenant Mark Thomas Barrett) and one ROK officer (Captain Kim) and seven UN security guards, went into the JSA to trim a poplar tree which was hindering the view between two UN forces observation posts. Following JSA regulations, none of the workers were armed whereas the security guards carried pistols allowed for self-protection. As the service corps was working on the tree, a group of two North Korean officers and about nine enlisted men arrived in a truck and inquired to the UNC party about the work in progress. Upon receiving the response “pruning the tree,” the head of the North Korean team, First Lieutenant Pak Chol [Park Cheol] said: “good,” but stayed to observe the work. After about 10 minutes he requested that the service corps halt the work as he believed that they were going to fell the tree and not just trim it. When the American officer ignored his command, Pak sent for reinforcement, and shortly after that, about twenty additional North Korean guards arrived at the scene in a vehicle. Pak shouted “Jugyeo! [Kill],” and the team immediately attacked the American officers. North Korean soldiers used the axes which were left by the workers under the tree as well as clubs and beat the two American officers to death. Several South Korean workers and UNC guards were also severely injured and retreated. The entire attack lasted roughly 80 seconds to 2 minutes—too short for the US Quick Reaction Force located 600 meters away to arrive before the fight ended and the North Koreans regrouped on their side of the lines.

In addition to the timing of the incident—at the height of North Korea’s political and diplomatic campaigns described in detail earlier—several aspects of

the way the event unfolded serve as evidence that it was premeditated. Firstly, the Joint Security Area where the incident occurred was the most attractive target for a provocation. As pointed out by Michishita,³⁸² by 1976 improved defense in the DMZ made it difficult for North Korean infiltrators to penetrate the UNC defense lines. Two of the Korean People's Army (KPA) guard posts were located near the poplar tree and additional North Korean forces were stationed outside the JSA in the area from which the KPA had quick access to the site. The visibility and specific nature of the JSA also made it easier to generate wide publicity compared to an incident in the DMZ.

Secondly, it is hard to imagine that an attack of such ferocity could occur without being ordered from a high level. After an incident in 1967 when the North Korean military accidentally sank a South Korean escort boat, Kim Il Sung issued an order which directed that "in the future nobody can open fire on a target without [his] approval."³⁸³ If it were an accident resulting from the tension between the security guards in the JSA, there would have been more such instances but only one accident had occurred in the area prior to the axe murders: an American officer was attacked by a North Korean news reporter in 1975.³⁸⁴ Generally, the number

³⁸² Michishita, *North Korea's Military-Diplomatic Campaigns*, 84.

³⁸³ "Telegram from Pyongyang to Bucharest, No.76.075, TOP SECRET, March 1, 1967," 1 March 1967, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Archive of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Obtained and translated by Eliza Gheorghe. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116689> (accessed 10 June 2015).

³⁸⁴ Major Henderson incident, 30 June 1975.

of incidents between the KPA and UN-ROK Army in 1976 was comparatively small.³⁸⁵

The attack targeted only American officers: they were singled out from the beginning of the fight, isolated from their main party, and set upon by numerically superior North Korean forces, whereas the South Korean officer and UN Command security guards were able to escape. The speed of the arrival of the North Korean reinforcement, their number, and the fact that they immediately engaged with the UN Command officers and security guards imply that a large group of North Korean soldiers were waiting on standby close to the place of the incident. According to a CIA analysis, North Korea issued a strip alert too soon after the incident for the event to be unexpected.³⁸⁶ Also, during the MAC meetings where the DPRK and UNC representatives stated their positions and discussed the incident, the North Korean side ignored US demands to punish the soldiers who attacked the American officers.³⁸⁷ Kim Il Sung argued that “we have no reason to sanction our comrades since they just acted as good patriots.”³⁸⁸

³⁸⁵ 1974—10, 1975—16, and 1976—2. Incidents defined as exchanges of fire, data of Defense Intelligence Agency.

³⁸⁶ “Minutes of a Washington Special Actions Group Meeting,” 19 August 1976, in *After Détente: The Korean Peninsula, 1973-1976* (Document Reader), eds. Christian F. Ostermann and James F. Person, North Korea International Documentation Project (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2012), 680-691.

³⁸⁷ James Munhang Lee, *op. cit.*, 107-108.

³⁸⁸ “Report on a Stay of a GDR Military Delegation in the DPRK in October 1976,”

Furthermore, First Lieutenant Pak Chol was later conferred a military order.³⁸⁹

A large bulk of the existing studies assert that the murders were an accident. Two major arguments against the planned provocation theory are that the timing of the attack could not be determined by the North Koreans (since the decision to prune the tree was made by the UN Command) and that the KPA guards used the axes that were left on the scene by the South Korean service corps.³⁹⁰ However, it was easy to expect that Korean workers and American officers would come to prune that particular tree because they had tried to fell it earlier, on August 6, but the work was aborted by the North Korean guards' request that the UN Command obtain permission from the North Korean side first.

Moreover, the axes were not the main weapon of the provocation as there were five South Korean workers and hence no more than five axes for a party of approximately 30 North Korean soldiers. The reports filed by UN Command state that the North Koreans used the blunt edges of the axes against the American officers, but most of the injuries were incurred with the clubs that the KPA soldiers carried with them. In addition, according to the information of the US Defense Department, the North Korean jeep, in which the reinforcement arrived, had axe handles inside it.³⁹¹

October 1976.

³⁸⁹ Michishita, *op. cit.*, 87.

³⁹⁰ See for example, *loc. cit.* and James Munhang Lee, *op. cit.*, 109.

³⁹¹ House of Representatives, *Deaths of American Military Personnel in the Korean*

By ordering an attack on the American officers in the JSA, a highly visible area in close proximity to a UN Command platoon, Pyongyang must have expected to generate an overreaction of the US military and development of a US retaliation effort into a limited attack involving an asymmetrical, dominating power of US troops and weapons. North Korea had warned the US several times prior to the incident and by making it look like the US side attacked and the North Korean soldiers were acting in self-defense, Pyongyang intended to acquire, ahead of the UN General Assembly, hard evidence of the dangers of the US presence in Korea. The incident could also provide another indication of the need to replace the armistice agreement with a more durable arrangement.

North Korean commanders did not anticipate that the entire incident would be recorded on video and photo cameras. As revealed at the 2011 Critical Oral History Conference, having video and photo devices installed and recording the UN Command guards performing a minor task such as pruning a tree was not a routine procedure at that time but a personal precaution measure taken by Captain Bonifas. The American officer brought a cameraman to the JSA, placed him in the guard post which allowed a good observation of the poplar tree, and instructed him to take pictures of the mission.³⁹²

The Panmunjom incident became a diplomatic fiasco for North Korea. The

Demilitarized Zone, 13.

³⁹² NKIDP 2011 Critical Oral History Conference; and Minutes of a Washington Special Actions Group Meeting, 19 August 1976, 1.

video footage of the murder of two American officers in the Joint Security Area clearly showed who initiated the attack, and the US soon made it available to mass media around the world. The North Korean delegation to the Non-Aligned Conference in Colombo tried to present the incident in its favor but its aggressive stance turned away many supporters among the non-aligned countries. The incident severely damaged international support for North Korea's cause at the UN. Moreover, the US and South Korea demonstrated cooperation and a resolute approach to North Korea's provocations by carrying out Operation Paul Bunyan. The operation took place three days after the incident and was aimed at restoring US authority in the Joint Security Area by removing the tree, which had become the source of the dispute between the American and North Korean soldiers, under the protection of thousands-strong ground and air forces.

Operation Paul Bunyan represented the climax in the security crisis of the mid-1970s. Had North Korean soldiers responded with more than one shot, the situation would have developed into a full-scale war. Kim Il Sung, however, decided to issue a statement of regret about the Panmunjom Murders. The NAM was splitting into factions whereas South Korea's diplomacy was getting positive results, so North Korea could not expect uniform support of the NAM in the future. The Combined Forces Command was to take over some functions of the UN Command, so it was no longer meaningful for Pyongyang to seek withdrawal of US troops through the UN. In September, North Korean leadership reassessed its chances for having the pro-North Korean resolution pass at the UN General Assembly and arranged the withdrawal of the draft from the debate. The

momentum was lost and North Korea stopped its efforts to achieve the withdrawal of US troops from Korea through the UN.

South Korea also had its draft resolution withdrawn, so no discussion of the Korean question took place at the 30th session of the Assembly. Neither Seoul nor Washington were interested in continuing the competition with North Korea at the UN. The US decided to stop pursuing its plan of establishing peace in Korea through cross-recognition. The security and diplomatic crisis of the mid-1970s came to an end.

In 1978, the US and South Korea established the Combined Forces Command, which took over some of the functions of the UN Command and absorbed the majority of US troops stationed in Korea. The arrangement left only a few dozen personnel under the aegis of the UN Command which continues its operations to this day.

Thereafter, North Korea continued diplomatic exchanges with the Third World and Western countries to some extent, but such efforts were geared solely to the North Korean domestic public. Pyongyang also made several proposals to Washington regarding the revision of the Armistice Agreement but the US discarded them as unacceptable. South Korea did not seek any discussion of the Korean question at the UN General Assembly until the historic summit of Kim Dae-jung and Kim Jong Il in 2000.

In the competition between the South and the North, South Korea emerged as the victor. Several reasons, both within and outside of North Korea's control,

accounted for the failure of the regime's policy. North Korean leadership overestimated its ability to influence great power politics. After all, many decisions of the General Assembly, such as postponing the debate and adopting a consensus agreement in lieu of a resolution, were coordinated behind the scenes by the US and China. As mentioned above, neither of the two great powers wanted the Korean question to hinder the progress of the Sino-American rapprochement, and neither viewed the Korean problem separately from other agenda, which complicated their calculations. Pyongyang's raising of tensions in the mid-1970s played in the hands of those in Washington who supported the continuous stationing of American troops in South Korea—exactly the opposite of what North Korea hoped to achieve with that move. The tactic also turned away many of the non-aligned countries whose overall support was crucial for North Korea in the UN. The apt measures taken by the US and South Korea as well as the increasingly successful diplomacy of South Korea toward the Third World further reduced Pyongyang's chances to attain its goal.

Nevertheless, the North Korean leadership did achieve some of its targets. It was able to take part in the UN deliberations on the Korean question, had one pro-North Korea resolution adopted and the UNCURK dissolved. Most importantly, the new arrangement for the status of US forces in Korea lacked legitimacy compared to the status of UN troops.

CHAPTER VI. INTERNALIZATION OF THE COLD WAR ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA

1. THE KOREAN DÉTENTE AND THE UN

The period of 1973-1975 was the first (and only) time for the UN to discuss the Korean question with active participation of representatives of both Koreas, despite the fact that the organization had been entrusted with the resolution of the Korean question since the late 1940s. As mentioned in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, the US brought the Korean question (formally the “Problem of the Independence of Korea”) before the UN General Assembly in September 1947, after failing to reach a compromise on Korea with the Soviet Union. This was done in the context of Secretary of State Dean Acheson’s containment strategy for Korea, which envisaged the creation of an anti-communist government with a viable economy in the South of the Korean Peninsula.³⁹³ The Soviet Union regarded the American move as a breach of the Moscow Accords. Despite the

³⁹³ By referring the Korean question to the UN, the State Department intended to convince the Congress to commit funds to the southern regime to sanction the establishment of a separate southern government while still appearing to search for a solution to the division of the country (Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, Vol. II, 65-68).

Soviet-backed opposition at the UN, the General Assembly passed a resolution in November 1947 that set up the United National Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK), whose initial function was to observe elections in both the northern and southern parts of Korea. When the communists prevented the members of the UNTCOK from operating in the north in early 1948, the UN changed the mandate of the commission to oversee elections only in the south. The establishment of the Republic of Korea in August 1948 through the UN-observed elections and the December 1948 UN resolution declaring the ROK as the lawful government in control of that part of Korea that UNTCOK had access to marked the beginning of the UN commitment to South Korea. To Seoul, the events not only established the regime's legitimacy with the international community, but due to the exclusive nature of South Korea's ties with the UN, they also gave the regime an advantage in legitimacy over its counterpart in the north.

As a step to further enhance its political legitimacy, independence, and security,³⁹⁴ South Korea applied for UN membership in January 1949. North Korea—in a reactive manner—did so, too, but both applications were rejected.³⁹⁵

³⁹⁴ Article 2(4) of the UN Charter stipulates: “All Members should refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.”

³⁹⁵ The same pattern—South Korea's application for UN membership followed by North Korea's request of the country's admission to the UN, and both requests eventually declined—was repeated in December 1951 – January 1952. Yet another attempt, prior to

The following month, South Korea joined the WHO and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and thereby received UN observer status and an invitation to attend the sessions of the UN General Assembly,³⁹⁶ whereas North Korea, as discussed above, was not able to become an observer until 1973. Therefore, only the government in Seoul had representation at the UN from the late 1940s through the early 1970s.

When the Korean War broke out in June 1950, the UN Security Council determined that North Korea's attack was a breach of peace and called for the immediate cessation of North Korea's hostilities and withdrawal of its forces to the 38th parallel (UN S/1501, 25 June 1950). The Security Council first called upon all UN members for assistance in the execution of the resolution, then recommended that all UN members furnish assistance to South Korea to repel the attack (UN S/1511, 27 June 1950), and finally authorized the Unified Command under the US-designated commander to use the UN flag in the course of operations against North Korean forces (UN S/1588, 7 July 1950).³⁹⁷ In October 1950, the

the 1970s, by South Korea to acquire UN membership was made in April 1961 by the Chang Myeon government (Official Records of the UN Security Council, S/4806, 16 May 1961). In addition, other countries—Taiwan, France, Japan, the UK, and the US submitted draft resolutions for South Korea's UN membership several times in 1955-1958. (Pak Chi Young, *Korea and the United Nations*, 64-67).

³⁹⁶ South Korea established its UN observer mission in New York in November 1951. (Pak Chi Young, *op. cit.*, 69).

³⁹⁷ Regarding the controversies surrounding the legality of those decisions of the UN

UN General Assembly adopted a resolution (376(V)) which provided the legal basis for UN forces to cross the 38th parallel. The Armistice Agreement of 27 July 1953 was signed between the UN on one side and North Korea and the Chinese People's Volunteer Army on the other. In effect, then, North Korea fought the war against the UN.

Following the recommendation stipulated in the Armistice Agreement to hold a political conference for the purpose of peaceful settlement of the Korean question, the Korean question was discussed outside of the UN at the Geneva Conference in 1954. No agreement could be reached, and from late 1954, the UN (upon receiving the report of UN members who had participated in the Korean War under the UN Command and attended the Geneva Conference) began to deal with the Korean question once again. Only South Korea was invited to participate in the debate of the 1954 UN General Assembly, whereas the Soviet proposal to invite North Korea and China was rejected. By Resolution 811 (IX; of 11 December 1954), the General Assembly reaffirmed that the objectives of the UN remained “the achievement by peaceful means of a unified, independent and democratic Korea” and requested the Secretary-General to place the Korean item on the provisional agenda of the following session. Thus the basic format of the UN discussions of the Korean question was established: every year from 1954 and until the early 1970s, the Secretary-General put the report of the UNCURK on the agenda of the General Assembly; the First Committee invited only the

Security Council, see *ibid.*, 76-82.

representatives of South Korea; and, after deliberation, the UN adopted resolutions that reaffirmed the aforementioned objectives in Korea. The resolutions urged that efforts be made to achieve those objectives and requested that the UNCURK continue its work. Despite several attempts by the nations friendly to North Korea to challenge that pattern in the 1960s, the UN, from North Korea's point of view, remained a tool manipulated by the US and biased in favor of South Korea.

In this light, the change in the composition of the UN through the 1960s and the consequent reduction in US influence on the organization made the 1970s a golden opportunity for North Korea to discuss the Korean problem at the UN. Since the UN was finally "neutral" and "representative," both Koreas could now engage in the discussion and seek resolution of the Korean question through the organization. However, the UN failed to offer any substantial solution to the Korean question. Even worse, the competition for support at the UN was an important factor in raising tensions between the two Koreas, which burst out in the 1976 crisis. What accounted for this failure?

Neither the North nor the South approached the UN as a place to resolve the Korean question. Pyongyang never really recognized UN authority in dealing with the Korean question. Just as before, the North Koreans in the 1970s insisted on domestication (i.e., Koreanization) of the Korean problem. They took the Korean issue to the UN in the early 1970s mainly for the purpose of facilitating the removal of UN/US troops. Pyongyang strove to exploit the influence of the UN General Assembly in order have US forces removed and the armistice replaced with a peace treaty between the US and North Korea. In addition, North

Korea intended to turn the tables on the South. The support that Pyongyang garnered, in its eyes, proved the righteousness of the regime's position and enhanced the regime's legitimacy. After achieving those purposes, the North Korean leadership wanted the UN to terminate outside involvement—including the UN's own involvement—in the Korean issue.

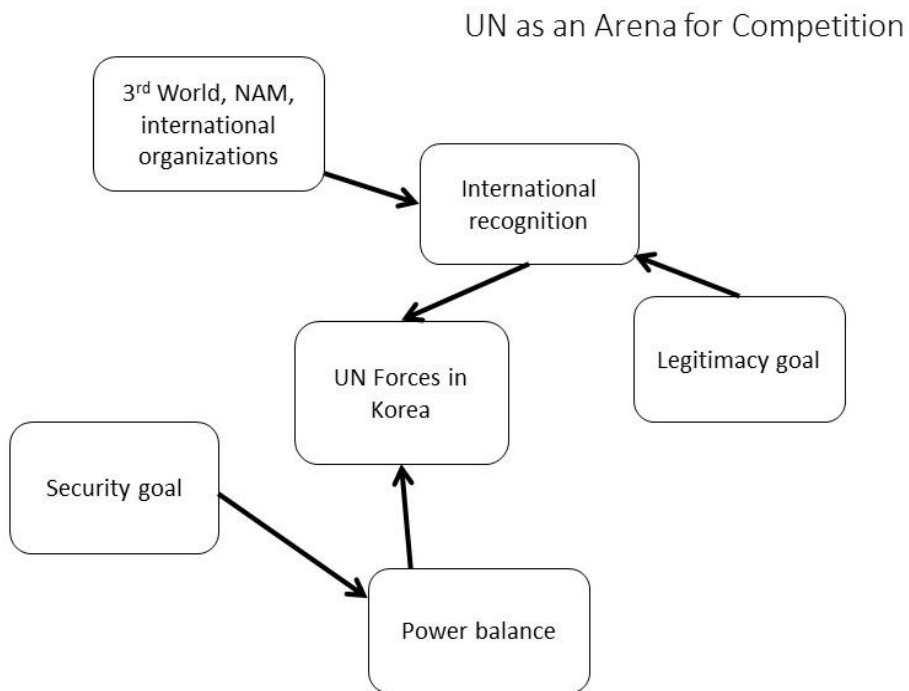
Faced with the strong backing of the North by UN members, South Korea, on its part, changed its attitude to the UN in the 1970s. It still preferred the internationalization of the Korean problem but not through the UN, as it had done before. For example, speaking in 1974 about his vision of the Korean unification process, Park Chung Hee mentioned that free general elections should be held throughout the Korean Peninsula under fair election management and supervision but dropped the usual line that the supervision should be conducted by the UN.³⁹⁸ In 1975 and 1976, Seoul took an active stance in support of the multiparty framework suggested by the US to discuss the Korean armistice outside of the UN. In other words, South Korea no longer desired the UN intervention in the Korean question. Seoul was aware it would be better off if the General Assembly stopped debates on Korea altogether while the Korea-related (and South Korea-friendly) organizations of the UN continued their operations. Due to the challenges raised by the North, however, this goal was unattainable and Seoul continued

³⁹⁸ “Three Basic Principles for Peaceful Reunification Pronounced by President Park Chung Hee, 15 August 1974,” in Kim Se-jin, *Korean Unification: Source Materials with an Introduction*, 370–373.

participating in UN discussions in order to save face and preserve the regime's legitimacy with the organization. (One such attempt was the June 23 proposal of the double entry of the two Koreas into the UN.) Seoul also intended to maintain its security through the UN—if not with the UN banner over US forces in Korea, then as a UN-recognized state, an incursion on whose sovereignty would be a violation of the UN Charter.

The UN thus emerged as the main arena for the contest of strength between the two Koreas. In terms of the intensity of this rivalry, the indivisibility of the goals of the two Korean regimes and the combination of means that they used, the fierce competition between the two Korean regimes in the mid-1970s can be called a “diplomatic war.” Firstly, the legitimacy and security goals of the two Korean regimes were closely interrelated. Diplomatic recognition and membership in international organizations not only increased a regime's legitimacy in the global arena but also could help the regime gain support for its position on the issue of UN troop presence on the Korean Peninsula. The collision of the security and legitimacy interests of the two Korean regimes at the UN is schematically presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The UN as an Arena of Competition between the Two Koreas in the Early to Mid-1970s



The second aspect is the usage of both diplomatic and military means (or threats to use them) to achieve the desired goals. Moreover, each of the regimes often coordinated its military moves with their diplomatic efforts. Finally, the concept of diplomatic war captures well the intensity of the competition. As examined in the previous chapters, during the mid-1970s, draft resolutions were submitted on behalf of each of the two Koreas, and the two regimes engaged in an

unprecedented competition to have their draft resolutions adopted by the General Assembly. Between 1970 and 1975, North Korea established diplomatic relations with 68 countries and South Korea with 15. The two countries joined a large number of international organizations, sent numerous delegations overseas, invited and received foreign leaders, and provided economic assistance to countries of the Third World—all at a scale unsurpassed in any other period until the end of the Cold War. Seeking a stronger presence at the United Nations (UN), in the four years since North Korea became a member of the World Health Organization (WHO) and established an observer mission at the UN in 1973, the country joined multiple specialized agencies under the UN auspices and other entities associated with the organization. Despite the severe opposition of the North Korea-friendly members of UN entities, South Korea strove to increase its participation in various forums of the UN.

While usage of militaristic vocabulary, such as “war” or “battle,” in diplomacy is common for Pyongyang, it is noteworthy that the South Koreans, too, described the diplomatic competition with North Korea as “war.” A document of the South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for instance, stated in July 1973, that “in order to be ready for, literally, an unfolding *war between North and South Korea in the diplomatic aspect* [emphasis added], we have to prepare measures that will allow us to always hold a superior diplomatic position over North Korea.”³⁹⁹ Heated exchanges of criticism between North and South Korean

³⁹⁹ “Daetongnyeong-gakha ui 6-23 ‘pyeonghwa-tongil-oegyo-seoneon’ e ttareun jeban

delegates at international forums were referred to in South Korean press as “verbal battles” (*seoljeon*).⁴⁰⁰

The two Koreas were fighting like gladiators; the US and China were forced to get involved in the competition, too; and other UN members became the audience and judges. This assignment of roles infers another reason why the UN was unable to offer a solution to the Korean question in the 1970s and probably will not be able to do so in the future in the unlikely scenario that the two Koreas request its involvement. The organization does not operate like a government since it does not represent the interests of its members as one entity. The UN has established important principles for the co-existence of nations—such as non-aggression and respect for sovereignty—and at times takes a unified action. But the members would not use their resources for matters that do not bring them immediate advantages, with the interests of most nations being limited to their own region. Thus, Third World countries provided support for North or South Korea during the discussions of the Korean question at the UN in the 1970s in order to obtain diplomatic gains for themselves and not because they desired

daechaek mit jochi-sahang e gwanhan jochim” (The Guidelines Regarding Several Measures and Steps in Connection to the June 23 Presidential ‘Announcement on the Foreign Policy for Peace and Unification’), 5 July 1973, 726.11, 1973-1974, 6051, Documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, cited in Hong Seuk-ryule, *Bundan-ui hiseuteri*, 329.

⁴⁰⁰ See for example, “Nam-Bukhan daepyo seoljeon” [A verbal battle between delegates of South and North Korea], *The Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 13 May 1976.

Korean reunification. It is likely that North Korean leadership recognized this state of affairs, given that their decision to withdraw from the competition at the UN in September 1976 coincided with the transfer of leadership in the NAM (whose support at the UN was critical for Pyongyang) from radical to moderate states.

In sum, in the 1970s the UN, for the first time since the Korean War, started to exercise actual power in the Korean question but it only exposed the organization's inability to deal with the problem. A major consequence of the competition between the two Koreas in the 1970s was the departure of the Korean problem from the consideration of the General Assembly. It was not until 1991 that the Assembly adopted a Korea-related resolution (albeit without discussion and voting)⁴⁰¹ and no discussion of Korean reunification has taken place at the UN since then.⁴⁰²

⁴⁰¹ By Resolution 46/1 in 1991, the General Assembly decided to admit the two Koreas to membership in the UN.

⁴⁰² Since the 1990s, the Korea-related discussions at the UN have focused on the issues of human rights in North Korea and the regime's development of missiles and nuclear weapons.

2. RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE FAILURE OF THE KOREAN DÉTENTE

As the discussion in the previous chapter has shown, the direct cause of the security crisis of 1976 was North Korea's aggressive behavior aimed at having US troops withdrawn. Pyongyang initially envisioned several scenarios for achieving this goal: (1) voluntary withdrawal of US forces by a US initiative; (2) withdrawal in response to a request by the South Korean leadership (or joint request by the two Koreas) following an agreement reached in inter-Korean dialogue; (3) withdrawal compelled by the South Korean people; (4) withdrawal as a result of bilateral negotiations between the US and North Korea; and (5) forced withdrawal under pressure from the international community through a decision of the UN General Assembly.⁴⁰³ The discussion in the previous chapters showed that by the mid-1970s, North Korea had exhausted all possibilities except for the last two. Thus, the regime was desperate to bring the US to the negotiating table and garner UN support to the point of intentionally putting the US in the situation where its forces could be seen as a source of tension on the Korean Peninsula. As emphasized earlier, Pyongyang also considered it important to receive diplomatic recognition from Washington in order to gain superiority over Seoul in terms of

⁴⁰³ Similar scenarios for North Korea's policy regarding the US troops in the 1980s were suggested by Koh Byung-cheol, "The Korean Impasse," 57.

legitimacy. It was Pyongyang who brought the issue of US forces presence to the UN, and Pyongyang's desire to portray the US as a source of tension in Korea and to bring Washington to the negotiating table directly triggered the security crisis.

However, the overall transformation of inter-Korean relations in the 1970s from a peaceful bilateral dialogue to the security crisis developed through a gradual escalation of tensions and was the consequence of policies pursued by *both* Korean regimes. Neither Pyongyang nor Seoul sought to accommodate each other and establish a better relationship through inter-Korean talks. South Korea also had an interest in overplaying tensions on the Korean Peninsula and exaggerating the North Korean threat to get support for its position. It would not be an overstatement to say that in all spheres—at the UN, in relations with the great powers and other countries as well as in inter-Korean relations—the period of the early to mid-1970s represented a security and legitimacy contest between the two Koreas. At the heart of the contest was the issue of the presence of US troops under the UN flag on the Korean Peninsula. The removal of American troops would have improved the security environment of the North Korean regime while reducing the security of South Korea. Both Seoul and Pyongyang linked the rationale for the presence or withdrawal of US troops to UN support for their own regime, i.e. legitimacy. In addition, each of the two Koreas strove to enhance its legitimacy at the expense of the other by having the patron of the opposite side and other countries of the opposite bloc recognize the regime while also persuading its own patron and allies to deny recognition to the opponent. Furthermore, the two regimes engaged in a military competition and accused the

other side of harboring intentions for an invasion. It is due to these antagonistic policies that the Korean détente failed.

Why did Pyongyang and Seoul pursue tension-prompting policies rather than use the atmosphere of the détente between the great powers to accommodate each other and improve their bilateral relationship? An explanation for this behavior can be found in comparison to the case of another divided country—Germany.

Firstly, the détente between the great powers in Asia took a different form from that in Europe and was perceived by Asian nations differently. The Cold War system in Europe was significantly more stabilized than in Asia. The US decision not to interfere in the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian Revolution in 1956 signaled recognition by the US of the Soviet sphere of influence, and it was met by the tacit acquiescence by the Soviet Union of the US sphere of influence in Western Europe. Thus, the potential for a military conflict in Europe was low. In contrast, Asia was a theater of some hot conflicts of the Cold War—the Korean War in the 1950s and the Vietnam War ongoing at that time.

The Sino-American rapprochement created a sense of insecurity and fear of abandonment among Asian allies of both the US and China. The reduction of US troops in Asia as a result of the Nixon Doctrine heightened the perception of a security crisis among American allies, and they attempted some kind of détente with the countries of the opposite bloc. While Japan, Thailand, and the Philippines, for example, succeeded in improving relations with China and/or the Soviet Union,

South Korea's endeavors in this direction were limited and met with failure. The biggest difference between those three nations and Korea is that the latter is a divided nation located at the front line of the Cold War and with an experience of a hot conflict of the Cold War on its territory. The perception of threat in a divided country at the front line of the Cold War in Europe—Western Germany—was lower in comparison to South Korea due to the primacy of US security interests in Europe and the existence of the NATO collective security system (in contrast to the hub-and-spoke structure of the US alliances in Asia). In addition, the *détente* between the US and the Soviet Union in Europe did not involve troop reduction, which would give an advantage to the opponent, as in the case of North Korea and the reduction of US troops on the Korean Peninsula.

Another important difference lies in the approach of the great powers to the Korean issue versus the German case. Brandt's *Ostpolitik* in the late 1960s–1970s met with support from both the Soviet Union and the US. In fact, the very first agreement signed by West Germany with a socialist state at that time was that with the Soviet Union.⁴⁰⁴ Moreover, the first step in the *détente* between the great powers in Europe was the signing of an agreement on Berlin. This is in sharp contrast with the situation in Korea. As discussed in the third chapter of this dissertation, neither the US nor China had a clearly defined strategy toward the

⁴⁰⁴ In the Moscow Treaty of 12 August 1970, the Soviet Union and West Germany expressed their desire for normalization of relations between European states, renounced the use of force, and recognized the post-World War II borders including that between the two German states.

Korean issue at the beginning of their rapprochement. While East Germany had one patron—the Soviet Union—North Korea had two, and those two were at the height of an antagonistic relationship. Even worse, North Korea's relationship with one of the patrons—the Soviet Union—was strained, as evidenced in Moscow's denial of audience to Kim Il Sung during his tour of Europe and Africa in spring 1975. Seoul's perception of Washington's reliability was also damaged by the Nixon Doctrine, the example of Vietnam, and the way Washington treated the Park Chung Hee administration during the unilateral implementation of troop reduction.

Thus, the development of the Korean problem in the 1970s can be interpreted as resistance of the two Koreas against the great powers' efforts to leave the resolution of the Korean issue to Koreans. There was a difference in the desired level and length of involvement. In the eyes of Seoul, the US had to maintain direct responsibility for South Korea's security indefinitely. North Korea did not want Chinese presence in the country, but it considered Chinese support crucial for promoting the regime's position—hence its attempts to blackmail Beijing when the latter's assistance was waning. After the US troops were withdrawn, Pyongyang intended to resolve the issue of Korean unification without outside influence, including that of China. Despite these differences, the two Koreas shared a common desire to prevent their patrons from shelving the Korean issue. And their patrons, albeit reluctantly, re-engaged. As the discussion in previous chapters demonstrate, US involvement in South Korea's competition with the North changed from minimal support in the early 1970s to active support

in 1973–1974 and to taking an equal role with South Korea in promoting the latter's (and its own) interests in the international arena. By the mid-1970s, China also started providing actual assistance to North Korea's diplomatic endeavors.

Moreover, the US and China directly contributed to the development of military competition and tensions between the two Koreas. China delivered military aid to North Korea to improve bilateral relations, while the US, in order to alleviate Seoul's anxiety after the Paris Peace Accords, replaced the existing, defensive war plan for Korea with the offensive OPLAN5027 and, in accordance with the plan, dispatched artillery and other Korean troops closer to the DMZ. The Team Spirit exercises, through which the US intended to demonstrate its continuous commitment to South Korea's security after the fall of Saigon, looked, in the eyes of North Korea, as a rehearsal for an attack on its territory.

It is questionable, however, whether those transformations in the policies of the US and China took place as a result of the Koreans' efforts or due to changes in outside circumstances. For example, Washington's decision to play a leading role in South Korea's diplomatic campaign at the UN came about in the aftermath of shock over the communization of Indochina and a series of failures at the UN General Assembly. The difficulties China had in the course of Sino-American rapprochement, its tensions with North Vietnam, and problems with the Soviet Union were some of the factors the Chinese leaders had to keep in mind when re-engaging in the Korean issue. After all, the Korean problem was but one of the elements in the calculations of the grand strategies of the great powers.

Secondly, the German détente took place in the situation of the economic superiority of West Germany, which gave the Brandt administration confidence in dealing with East Germany, which was struggling with a severe economic crisis. In contrast, the two Korean states were equal in economic strength in the 1970s (Table 1).

Table 1. Comparison of GNP and per capita GNP of North and South Korea in 1960–1980

	GNP, mil. current \$		GNP per capita, \$	
	North	South	North	South
1960	1,848	2,119	172	85
1961	2,135	2,263	192	88
1962	2,264	2,366	198	89
1963	2,422	2,718	209	100
1964	2,596	2,876	215	103
1965	2,778	3,006	224	105
1966	2,819	3,671	220	125
1967	3,284	4,274	248	142
1968	3,647	5,226	266	169
1969	3,696	6,625	261	210
1970	4,428	8,105	303	252
1971	5,134	9,456	345	288
1972	5,892	10,630	384	318
1973	6,926	13,450	440	395
1974	8,167	18,700	506	512
1975	9,703	20,790	589	590
1976	10,550	28,550	628	797
1977	11,530	36,630	675	1,008
1978	13,210	50,010	760	1,353
1979	14,840	62,370	839	1,662
1980	16,680	61,070	927	1,605

Source: Hamm Taik-young, *Arming the Two Koreas: State, Capital and*

Military Power (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 127 and 131.

In addition, the South Korean leadership raised the defense budget twofold twice, in 1975 and 1976, to catch up with and surpass that of the North. In other words, the détente between the two Koreas started in a situation of relative economic and military balance and, given how short the period of that balance was, it can be hypothesized that the military and economic parity was a contributing factor in compelling the two regimes to compete rather than reconcile.

Finally, had the character of the regimes been different, it is likely that they would have pursued different strategies. Unlike the Brandt administration, South Korea had a legitimacy issue even at home since the Park Chung Hee regime was established through a military coup. The lack of legitimacy led Park to postpone the consideration of unification and put all efforts into economic development (under the slogan, “economy first, unification later”). For the same reason, the South Korean regime was very sensitive to gaining recognition from the outside and perceived the prospect of losing its exclusive tie with the UN and the US as a legitimacy crisis. It is this external threat to legitimacy that, coupled with the domestic political and economic challenges to his regime, urged Park to take the path toward the Yushin reforms and dictatorship.

North Korea, on its part, was experiencing a crisis in its own *juche*-based

legitimacy. As pointed out by Lerner,⁴⁰⁵ a likely reason for North Korea's aggressive behavior toward the South in the late 1960s was the fact that the principle of *juche* was working neither in the regime's diplomatic relations nor in the domestic economy. Moreover, the issue of leadership succession arose as an urgent problem, especially after the Lin Biao incident of 1971. The period of the détente for North Korea, therefore, coincided with the time of deciding on who would succeed Kim Il Sung and the beginning of the transition. Needless to say, both North and South Korea were military regimes,⁴⁰⁶ with the vision of the situation and perception of available policy choices very different from those of the stable liberal democracy of West Germany.

Yet another possible parallel is that with Vietnam. From the beginning of the rapprochement with China, the US aimed at withdrawal from Vietnam and discussed it with its Chinese counterparts. Thus, the end of the Vietnam War was agreed upon by the great powers. Although the period prior to and shortly after the Paris Peace Agreements can be seen as a détente between North and South Vietnam, it was even more superficial than the Korean one, as neither Saigon nor Hanoi desired or took steps toward accommodation. From the North Vietnamese

⁴⁰⁵ Mitchell B. Lerner, "A Dangerous Miscalculation: New Evidence from Communist-Bloc Archives about North Korea and the Crises of 1968," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 6-1 (2004): 3-21.

⁴⁰⁶ Wada Haruki argues that the late 1960s - 1970s was the period of transformation of North Korea to a guerrilla state. (Wada Haruki, *Kim Nichisei to Manshû kônichi sensô* [Kim Il Sung and the anti-Japanese war in Manchuria] (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1992)).

point of view, the Nguyen Van Thieu regime was illegitimate and could not become a negotiation partner. The existence of the National Liberation Front (NLF) in South Vietnam and the abandonment of Thieu by Washington, whose support had been crucial in the establishment and survival of the Thieu regime, created a situation where North Vietnam was eventually able to conquer the South and reunify the country. In this light, the pro-active diplomacy and tension-prompting tactics of the Park Chung Hee regime in the 1970s are likely to have saved South Korea from communization. However, as the previous discussion demonstrated, it is doubtful that North Korea would have attempted an invasion, and the absence of agreement on Korea among the great powers is another factor differentiating the Korean case from that of Vietnam.

The following table summarizes the characteristics of the environment in which the détente took place in Korea, Germany, and Vietnam, along with the characters of the regimes.

Table 2. Characteristics of the Détente of the 1970s in Korea, Germany, and Vietnam

	Great power consensus	Experience of war with the counterpart	Economic and military balance	Legitimacy of one/both regimes	Regimes' character	Result of the détente
Korea	No	Yes	Yes	Low	Military authoritarian	Failure
Germany	Yes	No	No	High	Democratic / authoritarian	Success
Vietnam	Yes	Yes	No	Low	Military authoritarian	Failure

3. A COLD WAR OF THEIR OWN

The behavior of the two Korean regimes during the period in scrutiny yields the same pattern as that of the superpowers during the Cold War in the second half of the 20th century. All of the features of the Cold War interaction between the US and the Soviet Union can be observed in the interaction between North and South Korea in 1971–1976. Firstly, the two Koreas engaged in a fierce political, economic, and propaganda rivalry. The competition proceeded both within and

beyond the national boundaries. In the international arena, Seoul and Pyongyang strove to consolidate and expand their spheres of influence while seeking to isolate the other side. They made efforts to strengthen ties with the countries of their own blocs through economic cooperation and diplomatic channels. Similarly to the US and the Soviet Union, the two Koreas provided economic (and, in the case of North Korea, military) assistance to the Third World in order to obtain diplomatic recognition and support. Despite the fact that both of the regimes were authoritarian, they promoted themselves around the globe as models for democratic and capitalist or socialist development. While the Kim Il Sung leadership was putting forth the ideas of national liberation (*minjok haebang*), the Park Chung Hee regime propagated the idea of national prosperity (*minjok jungheung*).

Secondly, the period under scrutiny is marked by an arms race between the two regimes as reflected in rapid increases in defense expenditures (Table 3), the relocation of troops, and programs of development and modernization of weapons.

Table 3. Comparison of Military Budgets, Military Burdens as Ratios of GNP, and Force Sizes of North and South Korea in 1960-1980

	Military budget, mil. \$		Own burden, % of GNP		Armed forces, thous. people	
	North	South	North	South	North	South
1960	166	148	8.99	3.13	338	630
1961	162	126	7.58	0.11	338	600
1962	181	136	8.01	1.58	338	602
1963	200	114	8.27	1.13	310	627
1964	304	102	11.7	1.41	352	600
1965	343	112	12.4	1.34	353	604
1966	387	144	13.7	1.41	368	571.6
1967	513	167	15.6	1.75	368	612
1968	672	212	18.4	2.66	384	620
1969	681	269	18.4	3.20	384.5	620
1970	742	299	16.8	3.01	413	645
1971	975	374	19.0	3.62	401	634.25
1972	616-924	442	10.5-13.1	3.99	402.5	634.75
1973	631-946	461	9.10-10.9	3.37	470	633.5
1974	787-1180	697	9.63-13.0	3.92	467	625
1975	956- 1,434	914	9.85-13.0	4.40	467	625
1976	1,067- 1,600	1,454	10.1-14.4	5.09	495	595
1977	1,103- 1,654	1,962	9.57-14.4	5.36	500	635
1978	1,260-	2,644	9.54-14.3	5.32	512	642

	1,891					
1979	1,385- 2,078	3,036	9.33-14.0	4.88	632-672	619
1980	1,495- 2,242	3,705	8.86-13.3	6.07	678	600.6

Sources: The data for military budgets and burdens are from Hamm Taik-young, *Arming the Two Koreas: State, Capital and Military Power* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 93, 100, and 133. The sizes of armed forces are based on annual reports of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1960-1980).

As can be seen in the table above, both regimes increased their defense budgets through the 1970s, with South Korea raising the defense expenditure twofold in 1975 and twofold again in 1976. Park Chung Hee's fear of abandonment was consistently growing due to US actions during the 1968 security crisis, the Nixon Doctrine and Sino-American rapprochement, Paris Peace Accords, and communist victories in Indochina. Rather than increasing the size of its armed forces, the regime focused on modernizing its military and the development and acquisition of weapons. Implementation of the Heavy and Chemical Industrialization Plan built the basis for cultivating domestic military technology. North Korea, on its part, continued the Four Military Lines (*4 dae gun noseon jeongchaek*) and augmented the size of its military forces. The regime also produced and purchased weapons. In addition, from late 1972, Pyongyang started extensive digging of tunnels leading to South Korean territory under the

Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). The wartime purpose of the tunnels was to infiltrate light infantry and special forces to participate in a lightning attack; in peacetime the tunnels were intended to facilitate the infiltration of North Korean agents.⁴⁰⁷

As the arms race proceeded, the military might and destructive capacities of South and North Korea grew, but the two did not engage in a military conflict. There were occasional incidents in the DMZ and along the NLL in the West and East Seas, but no significant military clashes took place. The two Koreas came very close to an all-out war in the wake of the Panmunjom Murders, during the Operation Paul Bunyan. However, neither attempted nor desired to escalate the situation to an actual war. Seoul and Pyongyang, realizing each other's power and the potentially detrimental consequences of waging war in the Korean Peninsula, avoided direct confrontation. Similarly to the "balance of terror" between the superpowers, this realization brought relative stability to inter-Korean relations.

While some indications of the diplomatic, political, economic, and military rivalry between the two Koreas can be found in the earlier periods, the 1970s is truly different from the 1950s after the Korean War and the 1960s in the intensity of the competition and the leading role that the two regimes took, as opposed to confrontation fueled by conflict between the great powers.

On the other hand, a truly new feature that emerged in the 1970s—and another important similarity with the superpower behavior during the Cold War—

⁴⁰⁷ Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 57.

is the communication between Pyongyang and Seoul. With the Nixon Doctrine allowing some breathing space for South Korea, the Park Chung Hee regime obtained more autonomy in its diplomacy and initiated contact with the North. Pyongyang, too, changed its previous stance and accepted Park Chung Hee and his administration as a partner for negotiations. Thus, in the early 1970s, North and South Korea de facto recognized each other's existence, set up a line of communication, and established the precedent of discussing pending issues at the negotiating table.

In short, during the 1970s, the behavior of the two Koreas adopted features of the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union. Pyongyang and Seoul established a communication link while building up their militaries as a deterrent and embarking on a cut-throat competition in diplomatic, economic, ideological, and other spheres. In August 1976, the two even experienced their version of the Cuban missile crisis. Their own Cold War was in the making. Thus, the period of the 1970s in the Korean Peninsula can be seen as a miniature Cold War, intensified and compressed in time and scale and fought by the two Koreas in imitation of the great powers. It was a period of internalizing the Cold War, during which South and North Korea consolidated their systems and took the torch from the great powers to lead the confrontation in the Korean Peninsula. In other words, the Cold War in Korea obtained a life of its own: it was no longer a proxy war of the great powers but an independent Cold War of the two Koreas. Although Seoul and Pyongyang still needed and strove for support of their patrons, the two came to play the leading roles. They did not need the US, Soviet Union, or China

to instigate the confrontation, and that is the reason why the Cold War system on the Korean Peninsula did not cease in existence with the end of the Cold War between the great powers. The relationship between the two Koreas follows the groove into which it fell in the 1970s. The cycle continues, spikes of extreme hostility alternating with periods of relaxation of tensions. Although the crises never develop into a full-scale invasion, the attempts at a *détente* also fail—another similarity with the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union.

In light of the discussion above, the course of inter-Korean relations can be redefined as a period of “hot conflict” (the Korean War) and proxy Cold War (the second half of the 1950s and 1960s), followed by a period of internalization of the Cold War (the early to mid-1970s) and the independent Cold War which continues even now.

CHAPTER VII. CONCLUSION

1. SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

This dissertation examined the development of the Cold War on the Korean Peninsula from the liberation of Korea from Japanese colonial rule in 1945 until the 1970s. The behavior of the two Korean regimes was scrutinized against the set of basic features of the Cold War as displayed in the behavior of the superpowers—the US and the Soviet Union. Those features include: (1) the political, economic, and propaganda rivalry, (2) ideological conflict, (3) arms race without a direct military conflict, (4) continuous communication, and (5) unevenness of the conflict.

The time in scrutiny was divided into three periods: before and after the late 1960s. It was demonstrated that, during the earlier period, the Cold War in Korea was imposed by the superpowers—the US and the Soviet Union—who divided the country, created state institutions, and assisted nation-building in their respective halves of the peninsula in accordance with the goals of expanding their spheres of influence and incorporating newly established states in their respective blocs.

Although the strategies of the US and the Soviet Union were designed to contain the spread of each other's influence rather than to openly confront each

other, the inherent antithesis between the two Korean regimes quickly escalated into a full-scale armed conflict, the Korean War, into which the superpowers felt compelled to engage either directly or indirectly. The involvement of the US, which sent the largest number of armed forces to Korea, initiated the UN effort to defend South Korea and commanded the UN troops; the involvement of the Soviet Union, which may have had an interest in inciting Pyongyang's invasion, provided supplies and military assistance to the North, and encouraged China's participation in the Korean War; the fact that a few months into the war neither North nor South Korea had operational control over their own armies and that their desires had little bearing on the decisions of the great powers to cross the demarcation line; the way the armistice negotiations were conducted by the great powers in line with their global grand strategies and without consideration of the opinions of Koreans—all these factors point to the pivotal role of the superpowers in the Korean War and serve as evidence that the Korean conflict of 1950-1953 had a strong character as a proxy war of the US and the Soviet Union.

The assistance of the great powers was crucial for the post-war reconstruction and continuation of nation-building in the two Koreas. But even though the Korean Peninsula was now firmly embedded in the global system of the Cold War, it does not mean that the chances for another all-out war in Korea were minimal. In fact, throughout the 1950s, the US made strenuous efforts to prevent the regime in Seoul from marching north, whereas Pyongyang only temporarily postponed communizing the South in order to first build an adequate revolutionary base.

In the second half of the 1960s, North Korea launched a guerrilla war on South Korea, which could have escalated into a larger-scale invasion had the regime had the backing of its communist patrons. Meanwhile, South Korea concentrated on economic development, hailed as preparatory efforts for reunifying the country. Some elements of the contest of strength in economic, military, and diplomatic spheres were palpable towards the second half of the 1960s, and for this reason, the period can be seen as a transitional stage. Nevertheless, the competition was in its incipient forms, indirect, instigated by the great powers, and not as much “for the sake of competing” with the counterpart Cold War-style as provisional policies designed to maintain each regime’s legitimacy and prepare for reunification.

The main part of the dissertation investigated the development of inter-Korean relations in the period of 1971 to 1976 within the framework of interactions among four actors: North and South Korea, the US, and China. First, the background behind the establishment of a communication link between Seoul and Pyongyang was revealed. At the beginning of the Sino-American rapprochement, both great powers considered the Korean problem a minor issue and did not expect or desire it to become an obstacle to the process of normalizing relations between Beijing and Washington. The US and China favored and encouraged an opening of bilateral talks between Seoul and Pyongyang as a way to reduce tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

The two Korean regimes, on their part, interpreted the Sino-American détente as a critical stage where they needed to strengthen their positions and step

to the forefront of the events in order to prevent the great powers from distancing themselves from the Korean issue. The fear of abandonment, desire to consolidate ties with the patron, and pressure from the great powers thereby brought the two Koreas to the negotiating table in 1971. In addition, Pyongyang, given the support it was receiving from China and the Third World, considered the situation favorable for having the US troops withdrawn from the Korean Peninsula by the decision of the UN General Assembly, so the regime intended to use the dialogue as proof that North Korea had no plan of invading the South and that the presence of UN forces was, therefore, unnecessary. Seoul also pursued its own publicity goal through the inter-Korean dialogue: the regime utilized the North-South talks as a pretext to deter the deliberation of the Korean issue at the UN.

Simultaneously with the beginning of the inter-Korean dialogue, the diplomatic, political, and economic competition between the two Koreas started in earnest. The efforts of North and South Korea to obtain support for their position from the great powers and international community sparked a fierce competition between Pyongyang and Seoul in the diplomatic sphere. Reflecting this intensified rivalry, several important transformations occurred in the strategies of the four actors in 1973–1974. The Park Chung Hee administration, while maintaining the ultimate objective of reunification, departed from unreserved isolation of North Korea to pursuing a two-Korea policy for an indefinite period. The regime also put much effort into establishing contact and gaining recognition with countries of the communist bloc. Pyongyang decided to suspend the talks with South Korea and switched its attention to the discussion of the Korean question at the UN and

with the US, with the focus on the withdrawal of foreign troops from the Korean Peninsula. The conclusion of a bilateral peace treaty with the US constituted the linchpin of the new policy as the treaty, in North Korea's view, could replace the Armistice Agreement, thereby making the UNC and stationing of UN/US troops in Korea unnecessary. Moreover, becoming a negotiating partner of the US was an important goal in itself as it would raise the regime's legitimacy at home and abroad.

By suggesting the UN Command dissolution package as laid out in NSDM251, the US intended to separate the issues of the UN Command and presence of US forces in Korea while also inducing China's involvement into dealing with the Korean question. China, on its part, changed its stance from supporting Pyongyang's demand of US troop withdrawal to accommodating the continuous presence of US troops in Korea. As a result of these transformations, the cooperation between the US and South Korea strengthened whereas China-North Korea relations experienced a rupture.

It is likely that the desire to re-gain China's support compelled Kim Il Sung to travel to Beijing in April 1975 with a plan of invasion of the South. Although this move brought China to North Korea's side, it also worsened the security dilemma between the two Koreas. The analysis above demonstrated that the 1970s were also a period of accelerated arms race on the Korean Peninsula, which was led by Seoul and Pyongyang but to which the great powers contributed as well. Paradoxically, security tensions at that time benefitted both the South and the North since they demonstrated the need for continuous stationing of foreign

troops in Korea on the one hand and the need for their withdrawal on the other.

Security, diplomatic, and political tensions built up through the campaigns directed at discussing the Korean question at the UN General Assembly in the mid-1970s. They eventually burst out in the Panmunjom Axe Murders, in the aftermath of which the two Koreas came to an edge of an all-out war. Both sides, however, opted for de-escalation and took moves that diffused the tensions thereby bringing the diplomatic and security crisis to an end.

We thus observed in the behavior of the two Korean regimes during the period of 1971–1976 the formation and intensification of features that characterized the Cold War interaction between the superpowers: establishment and maintenance of contact; diplomatic, political, economic, and propaganda rivalry; and avoidance of a direct military conflict while pursuing an arms race. In the early 1970s, North and South Korea de facto recognized each other's existence and established contact while embarking on a diplomatic, political, economic, and propaganda competition and arms race that, by the middle of the 1970s, reached a scale unsurpassed by any other preceding period.

The emergence and development in North and South Korea of these features of the Cold War between the superpowers constituted the qualitative difference in the interaction of Pyongyang and Seoul as compared to their behavior in the earlier periods. The two Koreas no longer needed the great powers either to instigate rivalry or to curb the Korean leaders from starting a large-scale military conflict. The two Korean regimes now had their own channel of communication,

launched their own contest of strength in multiple areas and, when the rivalry came close to triggering a full-scale war, they decided to step back to avoid it. The last point, in particular, exhibits a major difference with the situation in 1949-1950 which developed into the Korean War.

The period of 1971-1976 was thus the time of internalization of the Cold War by Koreans, i.e. the birth of a Cold War of their own. Of course, Pyongyang and Seoul still needed the support of and alliance relationship with their patrons but through the process of internalization, the Cold War in Korea became, to a certain extent, detached from the global Cold War. The cycles of reconciliation followed by confrontation, escalation to crisis, de-escalation, and a new round of reconciliation would thereafter continue to this day. It is this relative autonomy of the Cold War on the Korean Peninsula that explains why the Cold War between the two Koreas did not have to finish simultaneously with the end of the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union.

Prior to the 1970s, the features of the Cold War between the superpowers were either absent or in nascent stages in the behavior of Seoul and Pyongyang. This dissertation examined the reasons for the emergence and intensification of those features in Korea during the 1970s in connection to the changes in the great powers' strategies and in comparison of the circumstances of the time on the Korean Peninsula with those in other divided countries, Germany and Vietnam, as well as several other cases in Asia.

It was revealed that the Sino-American rapprochement exponentially

increased the policy-making autonomy of the two Korean regimes while also providing Seoul and Pyongyang with leverage in dealing with their patrons. Partial withdrawal of US troops resulting from the Nixon Doctrine was perceived as a security threat by the South Korean regime but as an opportunity to reduce the security threat by the North Koreans. At the same time, the facts that the Cold War system was not stabilized in Asia as much as it was in Europe and that neither the US nor the PRC had a concrete plan for handling the Korean question (unlike the plans of the US and the Soviet Union for Germany) aroused a feeling of anxiety and fear of abandonment on the part of the two Korean regimes. These threats and opportunities, along with the historical experience of fighting each other, fueled the rivalry between Seoul and Pyongyang. In addition, the economic and military parity achieved by the two Koreas in the first half of the 1970s, the characters of the two Korean regimes and their legitimacy issues prevented them from seeking a genuine improvement of relations with each other.

Regarding the reasons for the failure of the Korean détente, the analysis confirmed the existing argument of the responsibility of North Korea. The discussion demonstrated that the direct cause of the security crisis of 1976 was Pyongyang's aggressive behavior aimed at having the US troops withdrawn by putting the US in the situation where its forces could be seen as a source of tension on the Korean Peninsula. However, the overall transformation of inter-Korean relations in the 1970s from a peaceful bilateral dialogue to the security crisis developed through the gradual escalation of tensions and was the consequence of policies pursued by *both* Korean regimes. Moreover, some responsibility can be

placed on the great powers whose policies fanned the rivalry between the two Koreas and contributed to the Korean arms race.

2. IMPLICATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The main finding of this dissertation is that 1971–1976 was the period in which internalization of the Cold War took place on the Korean Peninsula. Having obtained a life of its own through this process, the Cold War in Korea has persisted to this day, long after the Cold War between the great powers came to an end. That is, the patterns and issues that formed or received a new light during the 1970s still exist and continue to play a central role in the current dynamics of inter-Korean relations. Among today's issues originating in the 1970s, one can find the problems of the termination of the UN Command, conclusion of a peace treaty between the US and North Korea, a four-party framework, and usage of US troop presence and US-South Korea joint exercises as leverage in negotiations with North Korea. The issues and patterns that rose to prominence during that period include the withdrawal of US troops, abolition/replacement of the armistice agreement, and crises-prompted negotiations. All of them re-emerged many times since the 1970s and remain unresolved.

The issue of dismantling the UN Command, for example, was raised at

the deliberations of the Security Council in the early 1990s and, similarly to the 1970s, it was North Korea's initiative. In a speech to the General Assembly in October 1993, North Korea's vice foreign minister urged the Assembly to disband the UN Command, referring to the pro-North Korea resolution adopted in 1975 (Resolution 3390 B (XXX)) and saying that the time for its implementation had come.⁴⁰⁸ The question of the UN Command was also discussed between the US and South Korea in connection to the transfer of Operational Control after the turn of the century, and it is still debated these days.⁴⁰⁹

As for replacing the Armistice Agreement with a peace treaty, in early 1984, North Korea again made a proposal for a peace treaty with the US. At that time, the regime suggested discussing the issue at tripartite talks between Pyongyang, Washington, and Seoul. Similar proposals were put forth several times since then as well. Although North Korea's approach has changed from seeking a solution through the framework of the UN to working through bilateral or other multilateral forums, the position of the regime remains the same from the 1970s to this day: it insists on concluding a peace treaty with the US so that the latter removes its troops from the southern half of the peninsula.

⁴⁰⁸ *Rodong sinmun*, 8 October 1993, 6. Cited in Koh Byung Chul, "North Korea's Policy toward the United Nations," 52.

⁴⁰⁹ Lee Myeong-cheol, Eom Tae-am, and Park Won-gon, *Anbo sanghwan byeonhwa-ga Yuensa yeokhal-e michineun yeonghyang bunseok* [An analysis of the influence of transformations in security environment on the role of the UN Command] (Seoul: Hanguk Gukbang Yeonguwon, 2009), 19-21 and 57-61.

In addition, the process of inter-Korean competition in the early to mid-1970s redefined the structure of relations surrounding the Korean problem. Prior to the 1970s, the structure had been built upon the axes of the Soviet Union-US, US-South Korea, and China-North Korea- Soviet Union. The UN also formally bore responsibility for resolving the Korean issue. However, during the 1970s, the Korean issue departed from the UN while a new frame of South Korea-US-China-North Korea was created with the potential for interactions across the ideological camps. This potential was later exploited by South Korea during the Roh Tae-woo regime in the late 1980s and provided the basis for the regime's "Nordpolitik." The breakthrough North Korea achieved in its relations with capitalist countries in the 1970s built the foundation for the network of diplomatic relations the country has in the West today.

The findings above allow us to speculate on what can bring the Cold War in Korea to an end. If we extend the logic of the Cold War between the superpowers to the Korean Peninsula, the Cold War there must finish with the collapse of one of the two regimes, the other one emerging victorious, as happened when the Soviet Union disintegrated in the early 1990s. The collapse of the socialist bloc indeed dealt a heavy blow to North Korea and led to a severe crisis of the regime in the second half of the 1990s. Despite all the predictions, however, the regime survived and the succession and several crises since then hardly weakened it further.

Another scenario for the Cold War in Korea is to end when the reasons that caused its internalization in the first place disappear. Some of the features of

the Cold War pattern found in the 1970s—such as economic competition—have faded in the following decades, whereas others—such as the arms race—accelerated. Some of the reasons that accounted for internalization of the Cold War in Korea have also disappeared. It is therefore a task for future research to discern what accounts for those trends and whether the same reasons that caused internalization have fed the continuation of the Cold War on the Korean Peninsula.

Finally, it is possible to presume that the issues and patterns formed in the process of internalization of the Cold War in the 1970s and plaguing inter-Korean relations to this day have to be resolved first for the two Koreas to move forward. This would mean replacement of an armistice agreement with a peace treaty, conclusion of a peace treaty between the US and North Korea, resolution of sea border issues, termination of the arms race, abstention from brinksmanship tactics in negotiations, and many more. Revealing how and why these issues held ground after the 1970s and until now may help suggest the solutions. And that is yet another direction the research should be conducted in the future.

It is my hope that this dissertation becomes a springboard for further research in the directions suggested above. In addition, this study can be supplemented with investigation of the aspects that could not be examined in depth due to the limitations in the level of analysis and data pool. A thorough investigation of the domestic politics in the two Koreas is necessary to understand better the regimes' perception of the situation and their choices of strategies. Discussion of the policies of the Soviet Union and Japan toward the Korean Peninsula in the period of the 1970s will contribute to creating a more

comprehensive picture of the development of the Cold War in Korea during that time. Within the present framework, our understanding of the dynamics of the Korean question during the 1970s can be enhanced with insights of scholars who speak the Chinese language and have access to Chinese diplomatic documents and governmental papers.

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ABSTRACT IN KOREAN

한반도 냉전의 내재화: 남북한 관계 1971-1976

채리아

국제대학원 국제학과

서울대학교 대학원

이 논문의 주된 목표는 한반도 냉전의 기원을 찾아 이를 강대국 간 냉전이 끝난 후에도 한반도에서 냉전이 지속되는 이유와 연관지어 설명하는 것이다. 이 논문은 1970년대에 초점을 맞추는데, 이는 남북한 간 첫 평화회담이 개최된 시기이지만 동시에 한국전쟁 이래 최악의 안보위기를 겪은 시기이기도 하다.

이 논문에서는 비밀해제된 미국, 남한, 그리고 구 사회주의 국가들의 정책문서와 외교문서, 언론 보도, 회고록, 구술 역사 기록들을 자료로 사용하여 1970년대 초중반의 사건들을 남북한 정부, 미국, 중국 사이의 역동적 상호관계로 재구성한다. 그에 따라 남북한간 관계에서 1971년~76년 사이에 근본적인 변화가 있었음을 보여준다. 이 변화를 통하여 한반도의 냉전은 질적으로 달라진다. 즉 냉전이 두 체제에 의해 내재화되어 자체의 생명력을 획득하는 것이다.

고유명사로서 냉전은 미국이 주도한 자본주의 진영과 소련이 주도한 사회주의 진영의 대립을 가리킨다. 그 중심에 두 초강대국인 미국과 소련의 대립이 있다. 냉전적 대립을 규정하는 특징들은 다음과 같다. 즉, 1) 이데올로기적 갈등을 동반하는 정치적, 경제적, 선전적 경쟁 2) 직접적 무력 충돌이 없거나 국지적

수준으로 제한되는 군사력 경쟁 3) 계속적인 의사소통 4) 관계의 개선과 악화를 오가는, 진폭이 있는 갈등 등이 그 주요 특징들이다.

해방 이후 60년대에 이르기까지 한반도는 세계적 냉전 체제에 깊숙이 포섭되었다. 그러나 이 기간 동안 남북한의 행동은 미국과 소련 간 냉전의 행동 패턴과는 매우 달랐다. 이데올로기적 갈등과 선전적 경쟁관계는 존재했으나 정치, 경제, 외교적 경쟁관계는 1960년대에 이르기까지 출현하지 않았으며 1960년대에도 초기적이고 간접적인 형태로만 나타났다. 남북한 사이에 직접적인 의사소통도 없었고 대타트를 위한 공간도 존재하지 않았다. 강대국들이 한국전쟁을 전후하여 한반도의 양측에서 국가수립과정과 대외정책을 주도하면서 오히려 남북한의 공개적 적대행위와 무력통일 의도를 억제하는 역할을 했다는 면에서, 1960년대까지의 한반도는 강대국이 부과하고 조장한 냉전 상태로 이해할 수 있다.

반면에 1971~76년에는 남북한 관계에서 미소간 냉전의 전형적인 특징들이 나타난다. 이 시기에 남북한이 사실상 서로를 인정하고 최초의 공식적 상호접촉을 하였다. 동시에 남북한은 후원자 격의 강대국들의 지령에 의하지 않고 직접적인 경제적, 정치적 경쟁에 돌입하였다. 또한 외교적 승인과 유엔에서의 한국 문제 논의를 둘러싸고 다른 어느 시기에서도 찾아볼 수 없는 규모로 외교적, 선전적 경합을 벌였으며, 한국전쟁 이래 유례없던 수준의 군비 경쟁에 돌입하였다. 도끼만행사건은 남북한 두 체제를 거의 전면전 발발의 직전까지 몰아갔지만 양측은 최악의 사태를 피해 나갔다.

따라서 한반도의 1970년대는 남북한 두 체제가 강대국들을 모방하여 투쟁한, 시공간적으로 압축된 냉전의 축소판으로 이해할 수 있다. 이 과정을 통하여 한국의 두 체제들은 냉전을 내재화하였고, 짧은 화해와 긴 대립이라는 사이클은 아직도 지속되고 있다. 강대국들 사이의 냉전이 끝난 후에도 오늘날까지 존속

되는 한반도 냉전 체제의 기원을 여기에서 발견할 수 있다.

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주요어: 냉전, 남북한 관계, 내재화, 테탕트, 1970년대