

# Korean Unification Issue in the Context of East Asia

Chong-Ki Choi

## I. Introduction

The division of Korea was a product of the Allied victory in World War II. Immediately, under two separate systems of tutelage, North and South Korea were constructed as different states, and different societies. From the outset, neither side was prepared to abide by any formula that threatened to lead to domination by the other. Thus, the Communists were unwilling to rest their future on universal, free elections supervised by the United Nations, due to the disparity of population between two Koreas and their adamant opposition to the application of liberal electoral procedures in the North. The South was unprepared to accept any approach involving an assembly or conference of the South and the North with equal representation based upon political parties, mass organizations, and

individuals of "all social strata," knowing of the multiple opportunities for Communist manipulation in such a plan.<sup>(1)</sup>

The existence of two rival regimes in Korea was the direct result of the antagonism between the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. When the Russian and American occupation forces withdrew, the two mutually antagonistic Korean governments were left, facing each other across the 38th parallel.<sup>(2)</sup>

The North Korean communist regime decided to capitalize on this military vacuum, which had developed in South Korea and fulfill its ambition of communist unification through military means. On June 25, 1950, North Korean troops invaded the Republic of Korea. The United Nations not only helped the Republic of Korea to meet the resultant crisis but also made great contributions to solidifying the foundations of the Republic.<sup>(3)</sup>

---

\* The writer is presently a professor of international relations at the Graduate School of Public Administration, Seoul National University. This paper was prepared for delivery at the international conference on Korea in East Asia, sponsored by the Asia and the World Forum, Taipei, Taiwan, December 3-4, 1976.

- (1) Robert A. Scalapino, "The Two Koreas Dialogue or Conflict?" in William J. Barnds, ed., *The Two Koreas in East Asian Affairs*, New York: New York Univ. Press, 1976, p. 61. Chong-Ki Choi, "The Korean Question in the United Nations," *Verfassung und Recht in Ubersee* (A Quarterly on Law and Modernization), Hambourg, 8. Jahrgang, 3/4 Quartal 1975, pp. 395-406.
- (2) Rosalyn Higgins, *United Nations Peacekeeping 1946-1967*, 2, Asia, London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970, p. 159.
- (3) Security Council rescued Korea from emergence with the following resolutions: The Requestment of the Cessation of Hostilities in Korea(S/1501) on June 25, 1950; The Creation and Operation of the Unified Command(S/1588) on July 7, 1950; The Relief and Support of the Civilian People of Korea(S/1655) on July 31, 1950. Fernand van Langenhove, *La Crise du System de Securite Collective des Nations Unie, 1946-1957*, La Haye: Martinus Nijhoff, 1958, p.76.

The reckless military venture of North Korean communist has certainly made the tragic national division more acutely felt in the minds of all Koreans. The two sides of Korea have become more estranged than ever from one another due to the bitter animosities which developed during the war.<sup>(4)</sup>

The bloody Korean War came to a halt on 27, 1953 with the signing of an armistice agreement between the United Nations Command (UNC) on one side, and the North Korea and Communist Chinese forces on the other. Armed hostilities were now over and an unstable peace set in their place in the name of the armistice. The only difference that existed after the conflict was the replacement of the 38th parallel by the 155-mile long military demarcation line.

The Korean issue has become very complex because unification is not the primary question pending between both Koreas that is of primary importance but instead the political attitudes of the four powers. However, having the complex interests of these powers bound by either political ideology or the pragmatic policies, the tense atmosphere in Korea will persist in and further culminate the threat of war in these regions, to considering the Pyongyang regime's intention actively engage in provocative action in order to instigate the anti-status quo.

In the context of security, it is important to keep in mind that Korea went through a full-scale armed conflict by an unprovoked and unwarranted aggression by North Korea. This bitter experience alone was sufficient to sow mutual distrust, creating a highly unstable state of affairs in the Korean peninsula. Since the Panmunjom armistice agreement, North-South relations have been characterized by a quasi-state of war with occasional border clashes and heightening of tensions along the Demilitarized Zone(DMZ),

aggravated by North Korea's armed provocations, espionage infiltrations and activities and attempts to implement guerrilla type subversions in clear violation of the Armistice Agreement of 1953.

This paper will illustrate the reunification policies of North and South Korea, including the new tensions on the Korean peninsula, the security policy of the Republic of Korea and Korea in East Asia.

## II. Korean Unification and the Era of Talks

It signifies the existence of two entirely different political systems in two parts of a divided Korea, free democracy in the Republic of Korea and communist proletarian dictatorship in North Korea. They respectively represent extremely antagonistic ideologies, with entirely different historical views and value systems. Political reunification of a divided Korea, therefore, will be possible only when a choice between the two systems is made possible. Under these circumstances, choice between the two systems is an impossibility.

The Republic of Korean government, in the past, has traditionally endorsed the reunification formula which called for a free all-Korean election held under the United Nations supervision where representation would be in direct proportion of Korea. However, their reunification formula was unacceptable to the North Korean communists, who saw no chance of winning such an election.

In his commemorative address mark in the 25th anniversary of the country's liberation from Japanese rule on August 15, 1970, President Park Chung Hee explicitly proposed some joint effort through which the two sides could institutionalize peace on the peninsula. President Park

(4) Chong-Ki Choi, "Unification and Security on Korean Peninsula," *Asia Quarterly* (Belgium), No. 2, 1976, p. 109.

called for "peaceful competition in good faith" between the two systems in Korea, and suggested that he was going to initiate a dialogue with North Korea by declaring that he would take "drastic measures" to remove manmade barriers between the two sides of Korea, if the North Korean communists "drop their scheme to communize the southern half of the country by force and stop military provocations."<sup>(5)</sup> Although Park's proposal was rejected by Pyongyang.<sup>(6)</sup> In the spring of 1971, the North Korean Foreign Minister, Ho Nam, presented an eight-point program<sup>(7)</sup> for such discussions which was essentially a reiteration of Premier Kim Il Sung's proposals to the Fifth Korean Workers' Party Congress in November 1970.

The North Koreans were subsequently to emphasize the fact that this proposal did contain one new item representing a change in their position. By stipulating that a political conference should involve all parties, they were no longer refusing to negotiate with President Park Chung Hee or the Democratic Republican Party, the governing party of South Korea. This friendly move was rather quickly reciprocated by the South. On August 12, 1971, the ROK National Red Cross proposed to the North Korean Red Cross Society that direct negotiations be held to search for ways to reunite separate families. Two days later North Korea accepted it.<sup>(8)</sup>

Both Red Cross societies entered a new era of inter-Korean relations when the humanitarian talks began in the fall of 1971. The proposed method to mitigate conditions of this long disunion was to be accomplished by instituting a family reunion program, to be set by the mutual consent of the two rival governments. After nearly a year of negotiations between the representatives from the Red Cross societies in Seoul and Pyongyang, both sides agreed to discuss the substantive issues of the proposal. The Red Cross talks were held alternately in Pyongyang and Seoul on seven occasions. The results of these talks brought no concrete rewards except to reinforce the mutual conviction that obstacles to unification were insurmountable and the differing interests irreconcilable.

From the beginning of the dialogue, Pyongyang stressed a "political revolutionary" approach to the solution of the Korean question, whereas Seoul advocated a gradual step-by-step approach, favoring non-political issues such as humanitarian matters, and gradually negotiating later more difficult political issues on the basis of mutual trust and a non-hostile relationship. The North Korean side proposed that free travel of relatives and friends separate from each other be included in the discussion, and also provided that free correspondence between separated family members, relatives and friends be considered in

(5) *The Korea Times*, August 16, 1970.

(6) *Rodon; Shinmun* (The Workers' News), Pyongyang, August 22, 1970.

(7) *Rodon; Shinmun*, August 7, 1971. (1) All United States forces should withdraw from South Korea (2) the armed forces of both North and South should be reduced to 100,000 men each, or less; (3) all treaties and agreements between the two Korean governments and foreign countries should be abolished to conduct general elections in the North and South; (4) guarantees of total political freedom should be granted to all political parties, public organizations and individuals; (5) a confederation of North and South Korea should be established as a transitional step toward unification; (6) trade and economic cooperation and intercourse should be promoted, together with exchanges in other fields; and (7) a political conference between North and South Korea attended by all political parties and public organizations should be held to negotiate the above proposals.

(8) *The Pyongyang Times*, August 21, 1971.

the talks.<sup>(9)</sup> Pyongyang, however, has insisted that "free visits" not only between separated families but also separated relatives and friends be allowed,<sup>(10)</sup> and that dispersed families should be given free transit between South and North Korea even before family members can be confirmed alive and their location determined.<sup>(11)</sup>

The ROK National Red Cross has argued that it is not reasonable for separated families to travel between the South and North with no restrictions before their family members have been identified and located.<sup>(12)</sup> Seoul could not accept the principle of unrestricted "free visits," travel and communication between South and North Korea for a variety of reasons. First, unrestricted free travel and communication could give North Korean agents opportunities to disturb political-economic stability and possibility to overthrow the South Korean government. Second, North Korea has organized well-trained subversive organizations, the majority of whose members originally came from the South and are currently involved in underground activities there. Thus, unrestricted free travel and communication would not reveal the agents of these organizations and, furthermore, would facilitate their clandestine activities to overthrow the South's government.<sup>(13)</sup>

Pyongyang was insisting upon a series of dramatic military and political actions at the outset and Seoul was proposing a step-by-step approach commencing with immediate issues relating to humanitarian matters, moving toward more complex economic and social policies, and ending with issues in the political realm, after a network of relations had been established.

(9) *Ibid*

(10) *The Pyongyang Times*, January 11, 1972.

(11) *The Korea Times*, January 11, 1972.

(12) *Ibid*

(13) *The Journal of Korean Affairs*, Vol. I, No. 4 (January, 1972), pp. 44-45.

(14) Scalapino, *op.cit.*, p. 65.

(15) *The New York Times*, July 5, 1972.

(16) Scalapino, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

The gap between these two approaches and the underlying differences in motive and perceptions that created the gap could scarcely have been greater.<sup>(14)</sup>

President Park secretly sent Director Lee Hu Rak to Pyongyang to hold a series of talks from May 2 to 5, 1972, with North Korea's Kim Il Sung and Director Kim Young Joo. Subsequently, on behalf of Director Kim, Second Vice Premier Pak Sung Chul secretly visited Seoul from May 29 to June 1, 1972, to have talks with President Park and Director Lee.

The Lee and Park secret visits resulted in the simultaneous announcement in Seoul and Pyongyang of the South-North Joint Communique of July 4, 1972. Both sides had reached an agreement on three principles of Korean unification: (1) "Unification shall be achieved through independent Korean efforts without being subject to external impositions or interference;" (2) "Unification shall be achieved through peaceful means, and not through the use of force against each other;" (3) "As a homogeneous people, a great national unity shall be sought first, transcending differences in ideas, ideologies and systems."<sup>(15)</sup>

Through this communique, each side appeared to make concessions. The South accepted the principle of unification "without outside interference," which seemed to suggest a willingness to see the United Nation (and the United States) uninvolved. The North agreed to unification by peaceful means which could be interpreted as a willingness to abandon all uses of force, including the training of guerrilla forces, in the North or South.<sup>(16)</sup>

The North Korean statement of August 28, 1973, carried the message that North Korea: (1) wanted unilaterally to cut off the dialogue; (2) wanted to have the dialogue kept closed for the time being until certain conditions of their own were met; and (3) wanted to force changes in the channel of the dialogue, including the reorganization of the Coordinating Committee, on their own terms.<sup>(17)</sup>

Why did the dialogue come to an end? ROK reasoning can be summarized as follows: first, North Korea's pursuit of "South Korean revolution through violent means" for an eventual Communist takeover of South Korea; second, the profound impact of South-North Korean dialogue on North Korean society. The ROK contends that North Korean leaders came to the conclusion that the dialogue was not necessarily going to create a favorable climate for revolution in South Korea, and that it did not produce a favorable impact on North Korean society. Furthermore, the North Korean leaders apparently had decided that the present cause of the dialogue did not confirm with the objectives of their unification policy and a fact might be a watershed for the unification policies of the South. Thus, the ROK concluded that the North Korea had decided to suspend the dialogue.<sup>(18)</sup>

On the other hand, North Korea explained its position on why the dialogue failed to make progress. According to official North Korean sources, the basic obstacles to the dialogue and reunification were as follows:

The United States keeps occupying South

Korea, interferes in the internal affairs of Korea, and obstructs overtly and covertly the dialogue between the Koreans, using its dominant position in South Korea.<sup>(19)</sup>

Thus, North Korea blamed the United States for "plotting to perpetuate the division of Korea and hamper her reunification."<sup>(20)</sup>

It seems evident that ROK and North Korea take incompatible approaches to the reunification issues. Both sides view reunification from perspectives which are diametrically opposed to each other.

North Korea takes a "political-military-revolutionary" approach to reunification that is viewed as liberation of the South Korean people from "American imperialism and feudal oppression and exploitation" while the ROK recognizing "power realities" in Korea, takes a gradual, functional and step-by-step approach to the reunification issue.

Up to late 1976, however, there has been virtually no forward movement with respect to the talks of either the Red Cross or the Coordinating Committee (SNCC). On the contrary, serious negotiations on both forms are currently in abeyance and, once again, violence in various forms has made its appearance.

The basic question with regard to a peaceful change in the Korean peninsula is how South and North Korea can compromise incompatible values, ideologies, goals and social systems by adjusting conflicting approaches to the reunification issue.

---

(17) Cho, *Asia Quarterly*, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

(18) *South-North Dialogue in Korea: A Perspective of the Dialogue*, No. 003 (December, 1973), pp. 3-18.

(19) Memorandum of the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for the Independent Peaceful Reunification of Korea, 1973, pp. 37-46. Young C. Kim, "North Korean Reunification Policy: A Magnificent Obsession," *Journal of Korean Affairs*, Vol. III, No. 4 (January, 1975), pp. 15-24.

(20) Memorandum, *ibid.*, pp. 46.

### III. Big Powers and Korean Peninsula

The dramatic collapse of the South Vietnamese government in the spring of 1975 quickly focused the attention of Japan and the United States on the Korean peninsula and on the reaction of the two Korean governments to the events in Southeast Asia. The ROK was shocked by the unexpectedly rapid disintegration of the South Vietnamese armies and by the April 1975 visit of Kim Il Sung, President of the North Korea, to Peking.<sup>(21)</sup> South Korea's President Park Chung Hee said that he expected Pyongyang to attack South Korea within the next eighteen months.<sup>(22)</sup>

Even as Saigon was falling, the burly North Korean leader flew to Peking as the first step in a tour that has taken him to East European countries in an attempt to win international support for the unification of the Korean peninsula under his leadership. In Korea itself, Kim's soldiers have launched massive efforts to burrow their way to the South. In recent months, the United Nations Forces in Korea have discovered two elaborate tunnels running from North Korea into the southern half of the 2.5-mile wide DMZ (one of the tunnels was 6 ft. high and 6 ft. wide),<sup>(23)</sup> complete with electric lines and narrow gauge railways. Despite the fact that they have been caught in the act, North Korean troops are still digging along the DMZ and obvious signs that Kim has not abandoned his dream of sending at least some men and weapons toward Seoul.

Tensions between the two Koreas, which declined for several years in the early 1970s, had already begun to rise in 1974. In the wake of

Vietnam, their mutual hostility rose rapidly.

One of the central questions facing South Korea is whether or not the United States can be trusted. As noted earlier, the rising isolationist tides and the American acceptance of defeat in Indochina had profound repercussions in South Korea. Doubts concerning the validity of the American security guarantees were openly expressed. In an effort to counteract these doubts, American authorities reiterated their pledges in strong terms. Earlier opposition to the Korean commitment from liberal circles, moreover, weakened in the aftermath of the Indochina debacle, since a further erosion of Asian confidence in the United States was feared. Thus, present indications are that the American military forces now in South Korea, numbering about 40,000, will remain there for the near future, and the plan for modernizing the Korean armed forces will be continued, possibly accelerated.<sup>(24)</sup> President Park has asserted that when the modernization program is complete the Republic of Korea should be able to defend itself against any North Korean attack without the need for American forces if there were no Chinese or Soviet military interventions.<sup>(25)</sup>

Japanese and American interests are interwoven on many international issues in today's world, but in few cases are the complexities involved as striking as regards the Korean peninsula. The Japanese and American governments see their countries' interests and goals as broadly similar, but the views of each country and the nature of the roles they play grow out of differences in geography, history and general strategic posture.

(21) William J. Barnds, "The United States, Japan and the Korean Peninsula," *Pacific Community*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (October, 1976), p. 67. David Rees, "North Korea: Undermining the Truce," *Conflict Studies*, No. 69 (March, 1976), p. 1. IISS, *Strategic Survey 1975*, London, pp. 90-98.

(22) *Newsweek*, June 30, 1976, p. 6; *The Korea Times*, June 14, 1976.

(23) *Times*, June 30, 1975, p. 13.

(24) Scalapino, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

(25) *The New York Times*, August 21, 1975, pp. 1, 8.

One point of broad agreement among all segments of Japanese and American opinion is the importance of maintaining the peace on the Korean peninsula. The presence of U.S. troops in South Korea, the existence of the ROK-U.S. mutual security treaty, the presence of U.S. military bases in Japan, and North Korea's treaties with China and the Soviet Union make it clear to everyone that a war in Korea could draw in the major powers and endanger the peace in East Asia or even the world at large.<sup>(26)</sup>

Meanwhile, the United States has staunchly defended the right of the ROK to receive international recognition, including representation in the United Nations, while signaling that it was prepared to recognize the North Koreans on a reciprocal basis. In the fall of 1975, the United States vetoed the admission of North and South Vietnam to the U.N. membership because various Communist and Third World nations would not consider the admission of South Korea.<sup>(27)</sup> On September 22, 1975, Secretary of State Kissinger followed up this proposal by urging that a conference be convened involving the parties to the armistice (North and South Korea, China and the United States) "to discuss ways to preserve the armistice agreement."<sup>(28)</sup>

None of the recent American positions and proposals have been acceptable to North Korea. Attacking "the plot of American imperialists and Japanese militarists" to establish two Koreas, Kim Il Sung, as indicated earlier, has resolutely refused to accept membership in the United Nations except under the rubric of Confederation of Koryo and has insisted that Pyongyang's supporter stand firm on this matter. Meanwhile, by means of a letter from the North Korean

Supreme People's Assembly to the Congress of the United States and various speeches by Kim and others, North Korea has attempted to establish direct contact with Washington, ignoring Seoul.<sup>(29)</sup> Pyongyang has demanded that the United States end the armistice not via a multilateral agreement, but by means of a peace treaty with it. This has been flatly rejected by the United States, cognizant of the deep opposition of Seoul to any such move.

In essence, the contemporary American position on the Korean problem, like that of Japan, begins with the acceptance of two Koreas. It seeks means of obtaining reciprocal recognition of the ROK and North Korea, both through diplomatic relations and in the United Nations. It does not preclude eventual peaceful reunification, or in a more immediate time framework, progress in the South-North dialogue. But it would like to see some type of multilateral agreement that include both Russia and China, aimed at safeguarding the peace.<sup>(30)</sup>

Unification, which would create a nation of over fifty million energetic and talented people, could hardly come about peacefully in the near future. Nor is it likely that a unified Korea could be a non-communist (even if neutral) nation on the Austrian pattern. The Soviet Union and China would be unwilling to accept the demise of a communist state, especially one located on their borders. This does not mean that Japan and the United States are satisfied with the *status quo* in view of the tensions and dangers of war. They, along with South Korea, would prefer to see the two Koreas move toward a two-Germany type situation. There are also indications that the Soviet Union would prefer to see events in such

(26) Brundage, "The United States, Japan and the Korean Peninsula," p. 74.

(27) Scalapino, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

(28) *The New York Times*, September 23, 1973, p. 16.

(29) *Journal of Korean Affairs*, July, 1973, pp. 56-57.

(30) Scalapino, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

a manner.<sup>(31)</sup> However, North Korea remains adamantly opposed, as does China, and Moscow is unwilling to take actions which risk pushing Pyongyang closer to Peking. Thus all three communist states have turned down offers by the United States and Japan to recognize the North Korea if China and Soviet Union would reciprocate by recognizing the ROK.<sup>(32)</sup>

Both Japan and the United States have important economic interests in South Korea. The United States has provided about \$12 billion in aid since the Korean War almost equally divided between military and economic assistance. It has private investments of over \$130,000,000. Total U.S.-Korean trade amounted to \$3.2 billion in 1975. South Korea is America's fifteenth largest trading partner, and the United States is the ROK's second largest trading partner. Total Korea-Japan trade amounted to \$3.6 billion in 1975. Japan was the ROK's largest trading partner, and the ROK was Japan's eighth largest trading partner. In addition, Japan had private investments of over \$350,000,000 and has provided Seoul with public loans of nearly \$700,000,000 and commercial loans of over \$800,000,000 since 1965.<sup>(33)</sup>

While Japan and the United States are often economic competitors in South Korea, the main troubles that have arisen out of their economic activities have been bilateral problems between each country and the ROK. The U.S. import restrictions have slowed down the rise of South Korean exports to the American market. Nearly 60 per cent of South Korea's trade was with Japan and the United States in 1975, compared to 72 per cent in 1970. South Korea's ambitious economic development plan will require foreign loans for

many years, and Japan and the United States will remain key sources of funds.<sup>(34)</sup>

Korean-Japanese economic relations will continue to be of vital importance to both countries, and especially to South Korea. The North, as we shall note, also hopes to partake of Japanese technology and capital on a larger scale in the future.

On the question of security, while ROK authorities wanted a solid reaffirmation of the vital importance of South Korea to Japan, the September 1975 communique rested with the assertion that cooperative relations between the two countries contributed greatly to the peace and stability of East Asia. Tokyo favors a two-Korea policy at this point. It sees no prospects for the peaceful reunification of the Korean peninsula, now or in the foreseeable future. The security of the ROK is regarded as of vital concern to Japan for economic, political and military reasons. The present Japanese government has made substantial efforts to improve its political relations with Seoul and has continued the program of economic assistance, along with giving encouragement to the massive investment and trade program conducted by the private sector. It has also made clear this desire that the American military commitment to South Korea continues for the present and that the closer consultations take place on this matter. It regards the presence of the military forces of the United States in the South as an indispensable part of a balance of power at present, and has signified its intention to allow the use of Japanese bases to support South Korea in the event of any North Korean attack.<sup>(35)</sup>

In its initial formation, North Korea was overwhelmingly the product of the Soviet Union, its

(31) *Peking Review*, No. 38 (September 19, 1975), p. 29.

(32) Barnds, "The United States, Japan and the Korean Peninsula," p. 75.

(33) *Ibid.*, p. 78.

(34) *Ibid.*, p. 79.

(35) Scalapino, *op. cit.*, p. 95.



now political and economic order betokening an intensive Soviet tutelage.<sup>(36)</sup> Equidistance even when posited as a foreign policy goal by a given country can rarely if ever be translated into reality. North Korea's relations with Russia and China prove to be no exception. From Kim's domestic pronouncements and those of other North Korean leaders, it is clear that North Korea is not on the same ideological wavelength as the Soviet Union, in this respect being much closer to Mao.<sup>(37)</sup> From Soviet sources, moreover, we know that general relations have been sufficiently bad to bring cultural exchanges virtually to a halt. Nor have individual Russians been loathe to criticize privately the politics and economies of North Korea. The cult of Kim in particular has been a target.<sup>(38)</sup>

Kim's activities during 1975 reflect the complex, uncertain nature of relations between Pyongyang and Moscow. Immediately after the Indochina collapse, Kim went to Peking and from there to Eastern Europe and North Africa, visiting Rumania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria as well as Algeria and Mauritania. This trip was designed to cap North Korea's drive to affiliate itself with the Third World, drive that was to realize its greatest success when the North Korea was admitted to the Conference of Non-Aligned Nations as a full-fledged member at the Lima meeting shortly thereafter. But the trip also seemed designed to put maximum pressure upon the U.S.S.R. for full support, even though Moscow was not on the itinerary. A Soviet visit has long been on Kim's agenda, and it may take place shortly but the very fact that it have been postponed is highly

significant.<sup>(39)</sup>

Since 1969, Peking and Pyongyang have effected a much closer relation than has prevailed between the North Koreans and the Russians. On September 9, 1975, taking the occasion of the twenty-seventh anniversary of the founding of the North Korea, the Peking *People's Daily*, the official party journal of the Chinese Communists, ran an editorial entitled "Wishing the Korean People Still Greater Victories."<sup>(40)</sup>

The concern of the Chinese regarding the Korean issues is completely understandable. For both security and political reasons, they have a major stake in the outcome. North Korea fronts on one of China's most important industrial regions, the vital Northeast. In case of conflict with Soviet Union, the role of Korea could be of critical importance.

Kim Il Sung is not only a Korean nationalist and one used to have his own way at home, he is also a shrewd politician very conscious of the importance both of building a broad international front on his behalf and of seeking some degree of balance in his relations with the two Communist giants on his frontiers.

Nonetheless, current relations between the North Korea and the China on the one hand and U.S.S.R. on the other are decidedly tilted in favor of the Chinese—another example of the difficulty involved in achieving and maintaining a truly equidistant position.<sup>(41)</sup> In general terms, each of the two Korea is forced to accept an asymmetrical relation with the four great power—seven with its allies within that group—and one fraught with uncertainties.

(36) Gregory Handerson *et al.*, *Divided Nations in a Divided World*, New York: David McKay Co., 1974, pp. 43-90. Joungwoun A. Kim, *Divided Korea: Politics of Development 1945-1972*, Cambridge: East Asian Research Center, Harvard University, 1975, pp. 86-114.

(37) Salapino, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

(38) *Ibid.*, p. 101.

(39) *Ibid.*, p. 102.

(40) *Peking Review*, September 12, 1975.

South Korea's diplomatic problems were not only with its two major supporters. Seoul's efforts to establish relations with Peking and Moscow were unsuccessful just as Pyongyang was unable to induce Japan or the United States to recognize it. However, North Korea's attempt to break out of its diplomatic isolation was proving increasingly successful with other countries. By November of 1976 it had diplomatic relations with over 88 countries compared to 93 for South Korea. Kim Il Sung may see himself close to his long-cherished goal of getting U.S. troops out of South Korea.

#### IV. Security Problems in the Korean Peninsula

Most serious of all is the fact that more than one million heavily armed, well-trained troops are arrayed on both sides of the DMZ: 595,000 in the South and 495,000 in the North.<sup>(42)</sup> On the northern side six to eight divisions crowd the border and there are as many positioned not far behind. A score of hardened artillery sites and hundreds of other gun positions dot the craggy hillsides. In their midst, the North Koreans have deployed Soviet-built SA-2 SAM's along with modern Frog 5 and Frog 7 SSM's. Although the North Koreans can boast of superior (578 against 235 South Korean combat aircrafts), U.S. planes, including the three squadrons of F-4 Phantom fighters already in the South, could easily offset this advantage.<sup>(43)</sup>

The North Korean forces, combined with huge Soviet air and naval installations in Vladivostok, just 40 miles from the border, with perhaps 1.5 million Soviet and Chinese troops facing at the

Manchurian border and with a lethal U.S. nuclear arsenal on Okinawa, put the Korean peninsula at the center of what may well be the most intensively militarized region in the world. The very existence of these enormous armed forces, in conjunction with the profound antagonism generated by three decades of division, increases the danger that any misstep could lead to war.<sup>(44)</sup> This trend in Korea is in sharp contrast with the general trend toward the relaxation of tensions between the East and the West.

Some 30,697 violations of the Armistice Agreement have been committed by the North.<sup>(45)</sup> Recently, August 18, 1976, DMZ in Panmunjom the North Koreans suddenly swarmed over the Americans and South Koreans assaulting them with metal pikes, axes and ax handles. When the attack was over, two American officers were dead of massive head injuries and stab wounds; four other Americans and five South Koreans were wounded. North Korea announced that five of its soldiers were wounded in the fracas. Despite numerous deaths elsewhere in the DMZ, the killing were the first ever at the village of Panmunjom, where negotiators met for two nerve-racking years to work out the Korean cease-fire.<sup>(46)</sup>

The North Korea's strategy and its evolution is a telling testimony concerning her supposed desire for "peaceful unification of our fatherland." North Korean tactics were:

- (1) an attempt to build an underground movement in the South;
- (2) the institutionalization of commando type operations throughout South Korea; and
- (3) the devising of means to carry out a Vietnam type operation based upon political

(41) Scalapino, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

(42) *The Military Balance 1976-1977*, London: IISS, 1976, p. 57.

(43) *Newsweek* June 30, 1975, p. 7.

(44) *Times*, June 30, p. 14.

(45) *Summary of Violations*, UNC, October 9, 1976.

(46) *Times*, August 30, 1976, pp. 4-5; *Newsweek*, August 30, 1976, pp. 5-6.

considerations and preparations.<sup>(47)</sup>

Kim Il Sung has always emphasized that "the people in the northern half, being of the same nation have the obligation and responsibility to support and actively encourage the South Korean people in their revolutionary struggle."<sup>(48)</sup> North Korea has never changed its strategic objective of "communizing South Korea" and "their demand is designed to bring about a military vacuum in the ROK." Therefore, the security policy of South Korea is based on the defense of the fatherland from North Korea's aggression. Institutionalization of peace in Korea thus has become the primary objective that the ROK desires to achieve through the dialogues with North Korea.

If the power balance between the North and the South Korean peninsula should change then the North would be likely to initiate a full-scale attack on the South immediately. For more than two decades the United Nations Command or American troops in Korea have been an instrument for the preservation of the national security of the Republic of Korea. The presence of American troops in Korea is the cornerstone of national security for the South, because its function is to deter North Korean invasion.

North Korea has never changed its strategic objective of communizing South Korea, and that their demand to remove the UNC is designed to bring about a military vacuum in the Republic of Korea.

The extraordinary tensions in present days Korea have their immediate cause in Kim Il Sung's claims there exists an international campaign to dissolve the UNC in Korea. The United Nations Command has existed since 1950, and dissolution now would result in the inevitable

breakdown of the 1953 armistice agreement. There would no longer be an international presence in Korea to see that the truce is enforced. There are no indications from Pyongyang that an alternative armistice agreement in Korea is contemplated. If a second Korean War were to break out, it could result in even greater casualties than the first, which costed three or four million killed or missing in a population of under 30 million. Kim Il Sung's programme of tunnelling underneath the DMZ is a menacing indication of his ambition to rule the South.<sup>(49)</sup>

This is one of the most sensitive areas in the world, for Peking, Tokyo and Vladivostok all lie within 1,000 miles of Seoul. As we noted, Korea has been the scene of three major wars since the late nineteenth century. The net result of these interacting factors is that today Korea is one of the most heavily armed zones on the globe certainly much more so than in 1950.

An important theme in the present crisis is Kim Il Sung's comparison between Korea and Vietnam, a profoundly mistaken analogy. There is no local revolutionary movement in South Korea as there undoubtedly was in South Vietnam. The so called "United Revolutionary Party" created by Kim in the South is a small underground group with no independent following. Its clandestine radio station is in North Korea.<sup>(50)</sup>

## V. Conclusion

The importance of Korea to the American national interest, involving as it does complex historical, strategic and political questions. American policies toward Korea are of vital consequence to Japan, and hence to relations between Japan and the United States. Beyond this, more-

(47) Selig S. Harrison, "One Korea," *Foreign Policy*, Winter, 1974, p. 42.

(48) Kim Il Sung's report to the Fifth Congress of the Korean Worker's Party, Pyongyang, Korean Central News Agency, November 3, 1970. Joungwon, A. Kim, "Pyongyang's Search for Legitimacy," *Problems of Communism*, January-April, 1971, p. 38.

(49) Rees, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

(50) *Ibid.*

over, they are closely related to the broader issue of whether the United States intends to remain a major power in Asia, an important part of a general political-strategic equilibrium in this part of the world. Japan strongly favors of two Korea policy, but the timing and nature of its actions in this regard hinge to a very considerable extent upon the trends within Japanese politics in the years immediately ahead. The Soviet Union also has some reason to be satisfied with the *status quo*, and Peking, on the other hand, now appears committed to a policy of one Korea soon, if we may capsule Kim Il Sung's program.<sup>(51)</sup>

The problems of security and unification on the Korean peninsula represent two sides of the same dilemma. Neither actor is willing to risk unification at the sacrifice of its own socio-political or economic system, while at the same time the wide gulf between the two systems suggests that it will be impossible to integrate them into a common framework. The two parties will thus pursue policies which they believe will best protect their own interests even if such a course contributes little to the real dialogue of unification.

A sudden and complete U.S. pullout could cause many problems. In a recent study, Ralph N. Clough of the Brookings Institution wrote: "Total withdrawal would increase the risk that Kim Il Sung would feel emboldened to attack South Korea, would reduce the willingness and ability of China and the U.S.S.R. to restrain him, would undermine the confidence of South Koreans and would cause the Japanese to question the firmness of the U.S. commitment to Japan."<sup>(52)</sup>

Non-Communist Asian countries expressed the hope that their relations with the United States

under the new leadership of Jimmy Carter would be strengthened. "The American presence in South Korea is important not only to the security of Japan but also to all other non-Communist countries in Asia and Pacific," declared the *Bangkok Post* in an editorial on November 3, 1976.<sup>(53)</sup>

Any unilateral withdrawal of American forces from South Korea without a similar gesture by the North would cause instability in the area, but noted that the Democratic Party platform had also called for consultation with Japan and South Korea before any such move.

Japanese Prime Minister Takeo Miki, November 7, 1976, said that the new Carter administration of America might not act to arbitrarily cause a drastic change in the Korean peninsula though it might follow the cause of reducing American troops in South Korea,<sup>(54)</sup> and also Takashi Maruyama, Vice Director of Japanese Self-Defense Agency said that Japan should overhaul her present defense plan if U.S. President-elect Jimmy Carter pulls the American forces out of South Korea.<sup>(55)</sup>

We believe, however, in U.S. Asian policy under Mr. Carter's leadership, the importance of the U.S. presence in Korea needs no repetition. Its significance is not confined to Korea, for and as long as security and stability in the peninsula is essential to the maintenance of peace and stability in East Asia. A symbol of deterrence to aggression from the North, the relatively small number of U.S. troops in Korea are pillars of defense for the kind of peaceful and stable world, Mr. Carter must be visualizing.

The unification policy calls for the institutionalization of an interim process in which the

---

(51) Scalapino, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

(52) *Newsweek*, August 30, 1976, p. 9.

(53) Singapore (Reuter), *Korea Herald*, November 5, 1976.

(54) Tokyo (AFP), *Korea Herald*, November 9, 1976.

(55) *Korea Herald*, November 10, 1976.

two sides of Korea vastly different systems in the two sides of Korea could experiment accommodations and assimilations between themselves through the implementation of a series of confidence-building measures to provide eventual

realization of peaceful unification. Thus, South Korea sees that dialogue as an instrument to usher in that interim process in the thorny relations between the two sides of Korea.<sup>(56)</sup>

---

(56) Choi, *Asia Quarterly*, *op. cit.*, p. 118. *South-North Dialogue in Korea*, No. 005(July, 1974), p. 33.