

Revisiting the Functionalist Approach to Korean Unification: The Role of International Organizations and NGOs*

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It is often said that the functionalist approach has failed in explaining inter-Korean relations and the road to Korean unification. It has thus been regarded by many scholars and policymakers as an invalid theory in proposing any good foreign or North Korea policy. This is mostly because the Sunshine Policy, or South Korea's engagement policy toward North Korea under the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun governments, had been based on the functionalist approach to regional integration. However, this paper argues that we can still find validity of the functionalist approach's towards the Korean peninsula by paying attention to the roles of international organizations (IOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Most scholars and government officials in Korea have been interested in spillover effects between the economy and politics when they deal with functionalist approaches. However, they have not paid sufficient attention to other significant logical paths that the theory has also produced. In particular, the functionalist approach emphasizes the role of non-state actors and the institutionalization of cooperation as well as spillover effects. Nonetheless, their roles have tended to be ignored when it is applied in researches on Korean unification. This is mostly because the Korean peninsula is surrounded by the four great powers, i.e., the U.S., China, Japan and Russia. This kind of state-centric approach toward North Korea policy and Korean unification has dominated both the academic and the policy debates. In this vein, this paper highlights the importance of the role of non-state actors such as IOs and NGOs, thereby bringing the functionalist approach back to the discussion geared towards creating a road toward the Korean unification.

Keywords: functionalism, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, institution, Korean unification

1. INTRODUCTION

Many pundits in South Korea say that the functionalist approach has failed in explaining inter-Korean relations and Korean unification (Im and Choi, 2011). It is thus regarded by many scholars and policymakers as an invalid theory in proposing any foreign policy to Korea's neighbors or the policy to North Korea. This is mostly because the Sunshine Policy - South Korea's engagement policy toward North Korea under the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun governments- had been based on the functionalist approach to regional integration (Moon, 2012).

As a theory, functionalism emphasizes the importance of interaction between economy and politics. The essence of functionalism is the spillover effect of integration. This means that cooperation and integration in the economic area is likely to produce cooperation and integration in other areas because of the interdependency between those two areas. In short, economic integration will eventually lead to political integration. Once the process of

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integration begins, it has a strong tendency to spread out, although it can be a gradual process.

South Korea's engagement policy toward North Korea had originated from the Kim Dae-jung government's Sunshine Policy and had been succeeded by the Roh Moo-hyun government's Peace and Prosperity Policy. The engagement policy was intended to produce peace and stability on the Korean peninsula and change the behavior of the North Korean regime by improving the inter-Korean relations and thereafter finally achieving Korean unification. Whatever the purpose of the engagement policy was, it was a North Korea policy based on the functionalist approach. In this vein, it was somewhat inevitable that criticism on the engagement policy in Korea would move onwards to criticize the functionalist approach.

The engagement policy toward North Korea had clearly sought to produce a spillover effect in inter-Korean relations. It was aimed at spreading cooperation in the economic, social, and cultural areas to the political and military areas, thereby promoting North Korea's domestic reform and opening up to the international society. So, it is a functionalist approach that developed cooperation from one area to another in a gradual and phased manner. In fact, the engagement policy did produce some positive effects of improving inter-Korean relations and persuading North Korea to cooperate in a reciprocal way. It was also true that it contributed somewhat to the reconciliation and stability on the Korean peninsula by improving North Korea's perception on both South Korea and the international society (Moon, 2012). For example, the inter-Korean relations since the first summit meeting between the two Koreas in 2000, particularly during the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun governments, were observed to be vastly different from those of the previous years.

2. THE FUNCTIONALIST APPROACH ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA: THE REALITY AND THE MISUNDERSTANDING

The engagement policy presupposes that North Korea will respond to South Korea and the international society in a reciprocal way. However, the problem was that North Korea did not always respond to South Korea's engagement in a conciliatory way. It was most likely due to the North's domestic political-induced problems such as serious power struggles among the cabinet, the party and the military. If North Korea did not respond in good faith, it was inevitable that inter-Korean relations become unstable and that the engagement policy lose support from the South Korean people (Hwang, 2015). Moreover, the functionalist approach had much difficulty in dealing with the North Korean negotiation tactics. It was relatively easy to agree on economic and social cooperation issues, which were relatively less sensitive in North Korea, but it was almost impossible to arrive at an agreement on political and military issues that are essential to the North Korean regime security. In this regard, South Korea's effort to produce a spillover effect on the Korean Peninsula was not so successful.

In theory, such a problem comes mainly from the logic that the functionalist approach draws on the pluralist approach that regards a nation and a national interest as diverse, not unitary (Haas, 1961). It is thus difficult to apply the functional approach to North Korea which is not a pluralist nation. As the European road to regional integration has shown clearly, the concept of national interest is interpreted in various ways, depending on 'who' defines it: for example, the government, civil society, interest group, transnational organization, or an individual. In this case, interests of the government do not always match with those of the non-governmental actors, so the integration process might not go with what

the government wanted. There could be a spillover effect even if the government did not want it. However, the fact that North Korea has not been developed to the extent that pluralism is imbedded into the domestic politics would not allow the functionalist approach to find its maneuvering space in North Korea.

If the functionalist approach is to be successful in the North Korean case, the nature of the regime should be changed fundamentally, but it is difficult to expect that such change in North Korea under Kim Jong-un. Given the North Korean leaders' concern for regime security, they are less likely to accept any change in domestic politics that could threaten the regime survival. In this sense, the functionalist approach can be said to be a 'non-starter' in North Korea. This is the main reason, many experts say, why the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun governments were not very successful in producing any changes in the North Korean regime despite the 10 year-long continuation of engagement policy. It is also the main reason why the functionalist approach has been criticized to be invalid and inapplicable on the Korean peninsula.

However, this paper argues that it is necessary to revisit the validity of the functionalist approach on the Korean peninsula by paying more attention to the roles of international organizations (IOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Most scholars and governmental officials in Korea have been so far interested in the spillover effect between the economy and politics when they deal with the functionalist approach. However, they have not paid much attention to other various logical paths that the approach produces. In particular, the functionalist approach includes the roles of non-state actors and the institutionalization of cooperation as well as the spillover effect. Since the Korean peninsula is surrounded by the four great powers, i.e., U.S., China, Japan and Russia, the state-centric approach toward North Korea policy and unification has dominated both academic and policy debates (Hwang, 2014). In this vein, this paper highlights the importance of the roles of non-state actors such as IOs and NGOs so that the functionalist approach will be brought back to discussion on the road toward the Korean unification.

3. FUNCTIONALISM OF IOS AND NGOS

3.1 The Role of Non-State Actors

The main argument of functionalism is the spillover effect, which means economic cooperation will be spilled over to other areas like political rapprochement, which means the spread of cooperation and integration from the economic area to other areas; but, it is not everything of functionalism (Haas, 1958). Another important aspect of functionalism is the role of non-state actors such as IOs and NGOs. While realism posits that the state is the unitary and single important actor in international relations, functionalism includes diverse actors such as IOs, political parties, NGOs, and individuals as well as the state when it comes to cooperation and integration in international relations. Functionalism views the world from the pluralist perspective, which posits that a government policy reflects what diverse domestic and international actors want. Even if a government does not support the integration, many domestic and international actors may see the integration favorable to their own interests and give pressure on the government policy. Furthermore, a state cannot resolve all the problems and demands by itself, which makes the role of non-state actors more important in dealing with the functional tasks. In particular, international organizations

are important actors that perform transnational activities to respond to international issues and facilitate cooperation among nations (Mitrany, 1975).

According to David Mitrany and Ernst Haas, most important actors in the European integration process were domestic interest groups and transnational organizations that benefited from integration, not the individual states that realism and inter-governmentalism emphasized (Mitrany, 1966; Haas, 1958). Once these non-state actors get much benefit from integration, they demand more integration for greater benefit even if the government does not want to. They even try to persuade the reluctant government to keep moving forward to the integration when the process is in deadlock.

A decision-making process often moves from the domestic interest groups to the transnational organizations. As the role of transnational organizations grows, the integration can be expanded and deepened. If the transnational organizations deal with more issues, it is natural that they possess more power and influence, so the integration procedure can be further accelerated. Because transnational organizations are not much influenced by the governments, they can play the role of an integration facilitator. It is thus significant to create several transnational organizations in the first phase of integration, which makes the spillover effect much easier. Many transnational organizations may compete for integration for their own sake, and the integration procedure is ascended (Haas, 1958). The early creation of European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and its spread to other regional organization show this procedure very well.

Although states were not replaced by IOs and NGOs in the European integration procedure as opposed to the functionalist prediction, such non-state actors have played a critical role in driving the integration. Theoretically, such a functionalist emphasis on non-state actors is connected to the argument for interdependence by liberal theory of international relations (Keohane and Nye, 1977).

3.2 The Importance of International Institutions

Functionalism argues that international organizations reflect nations' collective interests, and these are created in a gradual manner. This can be seen in the Mitrany's adage, "form follows function" (Mitrany, 1966). It means that cooperation is possible when it focuses on function, so cooperation can be achieved more effectively by collective action than an individual state. In this sense, an international organization plays a role of the institution that deepens cooperation, and the European integration follows the ways of functionalist institutionalization (Heywood, 2011: Ch. 20).

European integration had started in the economic institutionalization of placing the coal and steel under the joint control. The cooperation and integration in the economic sphere was expected to be most likely because it can be rather easily internationalized free from a nation's pressure. Once international institution was created in the economic area, it was used to control economic affairs and quickly spread to other areas, thereby becoming the center of transnational governance (Milward, 1992: 11). As explained above, nations had much difficulty in dealing with the complex technical and non-political issues, and they sought to have some international cooperation to respond to those challenges in a more effective way. Although international organization was created for a functional task in the first place, it moved beyond the nation state and led to the international interdependence, which stands for the rise of international institutions and global governance (Carlsnaes et al., 2002: 257). In this sense, international organization plays the role of an international

institution that reduces the transaction and information costs and provides with norms, rules, principles and decision-making procedures (Keohane, 1984).

It is how functionalism explains the ways of spreading international cooperation in terms of international institutions. It means that the creation of international institution is significant in functionalism, and that the institutional framework and institutionalization encourage the spread of cooperation (Milward, 1992: 12; Hodges, 1978: 237-256). In particular, Mitrany proposed that the active roles of experts in international organization are important in dealing with these challenges and that cooperation among nations is possible in the process. He predicted that such a spread would produce a network for international cooperation and integrate many nations' interests collectively, which can be said to be a main picture of international institutionalization (Mitrany, 1966: 14).

3.3 Interaction between High Politics and Low Politics

Although the spillover effect in low politics such as economic and social areas has been criticized, it is still an important factor. While the effect in political and military areas is weaker than expected, it is hard to deny that cooperation and integration in the economic area itself is meaningful. Ernst B. Haas also argued supportively for the neo-functionalism that the economy and politics interact to each other rather than the one-way spillover effect takes place from the economy to the politics (Haas, 1964). A functional cooperation in economic area produces transnational actors who push for political integration in order to result in more economic cooperation. Although it was true that the spillover effect was not realized enough, except for the case of European integration, it was not that the effect did not exist at all (Heywood, 2011: Ch. 20). In this sense, the integration in functionalism starts in low politics like the economic area, and it was why the European integration started in the joint control of coal and steel after World War II. In the European case, the economic integration spread to the political one, which in turn strengthened the economic cooperation and integration.

The international organizations act as an intermediary in the interaction between low politics and high politics. According to John McCormick, international organizations play a critical role in policy making and implementation in spillover effect and the interaction (McCormick, 1999: 14). International organizations in a specific area strongly encourage the effect and spread it to the other areas in which other international organizations perform in the same way (Haas, 1961).

3.4 The Need for Developing Transnational Agenda of Mutual Concern

In order to see the spillover effect of the integration, it is necessary to develop the agenda of mutual concern in the areas of low politics in the first phase of cooperation. The reason why the joint control of coal and steel was important was not only because it was in low politics, but also because the issue was a transnational agenda in which the European nations shared the need for a joint control. Every nation hoped to have an access to the coal and steel after World War II, but it was not so easy for a single nation to make a good use of them. Because nations failed in performing the functional task efficiently in their territories, collective efforts to create an international organization had been made (Milward, 1992: 11). Neo-functionalism especially emphasizes the importance of the actors' constructive intervention in the procedure because the integration does not result directly from the

functional spillover (Haas, 1964). The ECSC can be seen as a result of intentional efforts to develop the transnational agenda of mutual concern. In this sense, the process of integration is not the result of a nation's unilateral support, but the product of mutual efforts to create shared areas of cooperation. The possibility of integration is increased only when the participants agree to the importance of the issue areas, the goals, and the procedures.

Also in the Korean peninsula, the functionalist approach can be effective when two Koreas agree on mutual efforts of what and how they can cooperate with each other rather than implementing South Korea's unilateral policy of engagement. It is important for both Koreas and other neighboring powers to join the effort of developing the agenda that can benefit all of them. For example, international agenda such as the Greater Tumen Initiative (GTI), Chinese and Russian participation in developing the Rason Development Project (RDP), the International City Project in the mouth of Tumen River, Northeast Asian cooperation in gas pipeline can be considered to be the agenda of mutual concern among the neighboring countries around the Korean peninsula.

3.5 Domestic Politics Matters

The integration that functionalism refers to is international in nature, but a nation's decision of cooperation and integration is a part of foreign policy decision-making procedures and needs for a consideration of domestic politics. If we want to explain a nation's foreign policy, it is necessary to examine the internal factors and the procedures that influence its external behaviors (McCormick, 2012). Several variables such as government politics, regime types, leadership, public opinions, and so on can be considered.

While domestic politics cannot be included in the realist premise that a state is a unitary and rational actor, functionalism acknowledges the importance of the domestic context because it accepts the pluralist approach in which diverse actors can affect the policy (Haas, 1961: 377-378). Domestic actors have varied goals and preferences and do not behave in the same way. Thus, functionalism explains that integration is a collective action that reflects the interests that each actor seeks to pursue. In this sense, functionalism posits that international cooperation is achieved as an unintended outcome of pursuing individual interests rather than it is promoted as a goal in itself. The integration is achieved not because leaders seek to pursue it as an ideal goal, but because domestic politics leads to favorable conditions for integration when they pursue their own interests. Although leaders seek to increase their own interests, they make use of international cooperation and institutions as a means of achieving their interests. Functionalism explains the domestic mechanism in which the competition for gaining more interests can result in the cooperation and integration. In this sense, IOs and NGOs play a critical role in defining the interests regarding integration.

3.6 Neutralizing the Influence of Great Powers

Functionalism explains that international institutions do not reflect great powers' interests. In particular, international organizations have their own freedom and autonomy and include many nations' common interests. International organizations are used as a platform in which actors can discuss diverse agenda and resolve the conflicts. In this process, international organizations play the role of balancing against great powers' interests and influences. For example, weaker nations can form a coalition in the United Nations and show their voice that an individual nation can't. The ASEAN, Southeast Asian collective efforts for regional

cooperation and integration, can also balance against the U.S. and Chinese influences in regional politics that the single nation cannot, because it reflects their collective voices. International organizations can give strong influence when norms, principles, rules, and decision-making procedures are formed. Weaker nations can also participate in international organizations and become an important architect of global governance.

Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye find the source of power in the asymmetric interdependence, in which a less dependent actor can use its position to influence the more dependent others (Keohane and Nye, 1977). In this interdependent relationship, they pay more attention to the concepts of sensitivity and vulnerability. Sensitivity means “the speed and magnitude with which a change in one country is felt in another.” Vulnerability refers to “the relative availability and costliness of alternative policy frameworks, when it becomes necessary to adapt to external changes.” According to functionalism, such an asymmetric interdependence appears in international organizations that play the role as a neutral judge and arbitrator rather than reflecting power politics that realism explains (Heywood, 2014: 436-437). In this sense, it is not entirely fair to criticize functionalism that it does not recognize the importance of power in the process of integration. Haas, in particular, argued that the procedure in which actors pursue their interests has inseparable relations with power, thereby criticizing Mitrany’s relative ignorance of influence by power (Lingberg and Scheingold, 1971).

4. SEARCHING FOR THE ROLES OF IOS AND NGOS ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA

4.1 The Functionalist Approach to the Korean Peninsula

As explained above, functionalism produces many theoretical arguments by emphasizing the importance of non-state actors such as IOs and NGOs in addition to the spillover effect. It is thus necessary to consider the diverse theoretical paths to cooperation and integration on the Korean peninsula that functionalism provides. According to Haas, three conditions should be satisfied for the functional integration to be successful in general (Haas, 1961: 377-378). First, nations that participate in regional integration should have the pluralist social system. Second, they should have high level of economic development. Third, they should share the pattern of ideology. Given these conditions, it appears to be very difficult to achieve the integration procedure in other regions than Europe. However, Haas admits that other regions may have their own indigenous conditions that can facilitate the integration. If these factors function well, the integration may be also facilitated in other regions.

If the functionalist approach can produce cooperation and integration successfully on the Korean peninsula, several indigenous conditions should be satisfied like other regions. First, there should be a spillover effect of cooperation among issue areas. In this sense, most IOs and NGOs begin with economic or humanitarian activities in the first stage. Second, the participating nations should share the need for cooperation. Third, various non-state actors such as individual, interest group, bureaucracy, civil society, and so on can pursue their independent interests which are different from those of the government, so they can be encouraged to push forward to lead the integration. Finally, international institutions should be developed in the issue areas in which the participating actors are concerned. Such conditions have not been resolved enough on the Korean peninsula, but it is not a mission impossible. The Korean unification is similar to the regional integration in that two different

systems in political, economic, and social areas intend to be integrated (Choi, 2004: 278-282). Furthermore, if the Korean unification is pursued in the process of Northeast Asian regional integration including the neighboring great powers such as the U.S., China, Japan, and Russia as well as the two Koreas, the possibility for building new agenda and cooperation will be enhanced.

In this sense, there should be further research on the roles of IOs and NGOs on the Korean peninsula that the previous functionalist approach has not paid much attention to. First of all, it is necessary to develop a shared identity for regional cooperation around the Korean peninsula. In this process, the participating actors should come up with new agenda that can lead to the common interests among the regional powers. Those agenda should be one that neighboring countries can also agree to in the legitimacy and the necessity. If a specific nation seeks to pursue a unilateral approach that others do not agree to, regional cooperation and the Korean unification are unlikely to succeed.

Second, those agenda should also be supported by diverse domestic actors. Only when these actors are assured that they can benefit from those agenda, they will participate in the process of cooperation. This is the way of combining the individual interests by domestic actors with collective interests of others for the sake of achieving integration. In this procedure, domestic and international support can be obtained. In the North Korean case, it is meaningful to hear from many IOs and NGOs that the local governments in North Korea are different in their interests and concerns from Pyongyang's central government.¹

Third, in order to facilitate integration among regional powers on the Korean peninsula, the institutionalization of cooperation is necessary. In an effort to build the agenda of mutual concerns and interests, international institutions should be created that include the norm, rules, principles and decision-making procedures in those issue areas. Once international institutions are created, they would make efforts to expand their roles and influences for integration even if those efforts are in conflict with national interests. The GTI (Greater Tumen Initiative), RDP (Rason Development Project), and the International City Project in the Tumen River are good candidates for international institutionalization on the Korean peninsula. Although it is not an international institution, many NGOs who have sought to build factories in North Korea that can produce the materials that they used to send from abroad, were relatively successful compared to other organizations who continued to bring the materials from abroad.² It was an effort to stabilize their activities in North Korea, which can be regarded as an institutionalization of activities.

Fourth, a spillover effect should be promoted from one issue area to another. There may be some interaction between low politics and high politics on the Korean peninsula, and it is necessary to think about how the spillover effect can be sustained and spread in a stable manner. IOs and NGOs can play the role of an intermediary that facilitates cooperation and integration in the process. The functionalist approach to the Korean peninsula is summarized in Table 1. Such an effort can be started in such areas as GTI, RDP, and international gas pipeline projects in which IOs and NGOs as well as the regional powers can play a critical role.

¹ This could be confirmed by our two authors' interviews with almost all IOs and NGOs. Interview with IO and NGO officials (Brussels, Belgium, May 2014 and New York and Los Angeles, California, May 2015).

² Interview with a Korean-American religious NGO that has built bread factories in North Korea (Los Angeles, California, May 2015).

Table 1. The Functionalist Approach to the Korean Peninsula

Developing agenda of mutual concern
Diverse actors' participation in cooperation and pursuit of interests
Creating international institutions
Seeking spillover effects to other areas
Pursuing Korean unification and regional integration.

4.2 The Role of IOs and NGOs on the Korean Peninsula

In this section, this paper examines the possibility of the roles played by IOs and NGOs on the Korean peninsula. If the process of Korean unification can be divided into two separate stages: the first one is for laying the foundation and the second one is for the integration process of the two Koreas after unification (Hwang, 2014: 68-69). In these two stages, there are many issue areas that IOs and NGOs can contribute to, which include the areas of human rights, refugees, environmental agenda, and economic development. The non-state actors such as IOs and NGOs are likely to be more favorable to the unification process than the regional powers that might have conflicting interests on the Korean peninsula. Of course, the neighboring great powers cannot be ignored in the path toward unification because they will continue to have strong influence on the region. Because those powers have the conflict of interests over Korean unification, it is necessary to balance against and neutralize the influences of those powers by utilizing the roles of IOs and NGOs.

Then, what kinds of positive effects can IOs and NGOs produce in the process of unification? In fact, IOs and NGOs have established diverse experiences in the non-traditional issues of economic development, human rights, refugees, and environmental agenda as well as the traditional issues of political, diplomatic, military and economic agenda (Kim and Moon, 2014). For example, IOs and NGOs are very good at forming international public opinion by having a quick access to the media and networks. Furthermore, they have emphasized the importance of international norms and universal values as opposed to the great powers that are interested in their national interests. This will help us to create a favorable environment to the Korean unification and prevent any nations from behaving in the wrong direction. North Korea would also be less concerned about the roles of IOs and NGOs than other neighboring powers because they must prefer the intermediary role (of IOs and NGOs) to the direct intervention (by the regional powers) during the time of crisis. Most IOs and NGOs have been long involved in diverse projects on North Korea, and they can contribute a lot to the Korean unification.³

4.3 The Stage for Laying the Foundation for Unification

The process of laying the unification foundation eventually intends to produce a sustainable peace on the Korean peninsula in the long term by achieving the stable relations

³ As compared with the diplomats at the Embassies stationed in Pyongyang, IO and NGO officers have more and freer access to other country sides than Pyongyang and its suburban areas. This means they know the areas in need, whether it is strategic or humanitarian. Interview with UNDP officers in charge of North Korea (New York, May 21, 2015).

between the two Koreas, although it includes the military deterrence and balance of power in the short term. Thus, the process focuses on the issues of international development cooperation, human rights, environment, refugees and humanitarian aid as well as the diplomatic and military aspects. The IOs and NGOs can play critical roles in these issue areas.

Most of all, the political and military agendas are strongly influenced by the surrounding powers, but the active roles by the United Nations and other NGOs involved in arms control and peace movements, once the peace process is activated on the Korean peninsula. Because the North Korean government is very sensitive to the political and military issues, non-state actors also have huge difficulty in continuing the North Korea-related activities. However, since they see North Korea as not so different from other rogue regimes, they expect that they can play a positive role in the Korean peace process.⁴ Although the conflict prevention and conflict resolution are very difficult to agree on between the two competing parties, South and North Korea can be mutually beneficial if they have more neutral actors playing the mediating role.

On the other hand, the IOs and NGOs may have important roles in the North Korean contingencies. In such a worst-case scenario, it may be inevitable for the international society to intervene in North Korea, not only to restore the domestic political order but also to secure North Korea's nuclear weapons and facilities (Bennett, 2013). In this sense, South Korea should be prepared for a plan to control the North Korean nuclear program to prevent proliferation of nuclear materials and/or weapons. According to the 5029 plan prepared by the ROK-US Combined Forces Command to deal with the situation of the North Korean contingencies, an intervention by the U.S. and South Korea would be made in one way or another, but the detailed plans for intervention has not been released to the public (Steinberg and O'Hanlon, 2014: 124). In such a situation, however, it is necessary to have trust-building among the neighboring powers in advance because they can be reluctant in accepting the Korean unification that may harm their strategic interests (Hwang, 2014).

Above all, the United States and China have some pluses and minuses of Korean unification. The pluses for the United States include: 1) expansion of liberal values to the whole Korean peninsula; 2) removal of a challenge for the global NPT regime; and 3) reset of U.S.-China relationship, while the minuses include 1) weakened rationale for U.S. military presence on the Korean peninsula; 2) weakened ROK-U.S. alliance due to closer ROK-China relations; and 3) revitalized multilateral institutionalization of Northeast Asia. The pluses for China include: 1) elimination of economic and military burden for North Korea; 2) no more danger of military clashes on the Korean peninsula; and 3) increased Chinese leadership in the economic integration process of Northeast Asia, while the minuses include: 1) lost presence of North Korea as a buffer between China and the United States; 2) continued ROK- U.S. alliance relationship; and 3) emergence of unified Korea powerful in projecting democratic values onto the Chinese heartland (Kim, 2015).

Military intervention in the Northern area should be done in a very cautious way. Although North Korea has been criticized harshly as a rogue nation that has violated international norms and human rights, it would be still a very difficult task to intervene militarily in North Korea which has been treated as a sovereign state since she joined the United Nations in 1991. Although South Korea may confront some dilemma in accepting the

⁴ Interview with the Chief Operating Officer, International Crisis Group (Brussels, Belgium, May 2014).

contingency situation because the South Korean Constitution does not recognize North Korea as an independent nation but regards it as an unrecovered northern territory of the Republic of Korea after the liberation from the Japanese colonialism in 1945. Even in the case of North Korean contingencies, however, the international society may have some difficulty in denying North Korea's sovereignty and may not accept a comprehensive military intervention. In such an urgent situation threatening the nuclear security and safety, however, most members of the international society may accept military intervention for the sake of preventing nuclear disaster, but it is still necessary to get the legitimacy from international society, mostly from the United Nations Security Council. The South Korean government should have a plan of how to obtain the international legitimacy in advance, and many IOs and NGOs that are concerned about the North Korean nuclear programs and domestic situations may contribute to these efforts. In particular, influential non-state actors supporting Korean unification may be encouraged to call international attention to the inevitability of Korean unification.

In the economic and socio-cultural areas, many UN agencies such as UNDP and UNESCO can contribute their experiences and resources for the success of many projects. Some European organizations such as EuropeAid (DEVCO) of European Commission has made efforts for North Korea's capacity building in these areas. They say that North Korea's local governments have been relatively cooperative and supportive with IOs and NGOs because they are the beneficiaries.⁵ They say the South Korean government's projects like the internationalization of Kaesong Industrial Complex or the 'Vision Korea' project would be much difficult without the support from IOs and NGOs because the capacity building process takes long in North Korea. Regarding humanitarian aid in the North Korean refugees and famine, IOs such as WFP, UNICEF, FAO and NGOs like ICRC, Oxfam, and MSF are expected to play a significant role (Moon, 2012). In particular, humanitarian aids to North Korea have been decreasing due to North Korea's reluctance to cooperate for the monitoring of those aids (Haggard and Noland, 2007) and recent UN sanctions on North Korea's nuclear and long-range missile tests, but the IOs and NGOs can be relatively free from those pressures. In fact, many NGOs involved in the North Korean humanitarian aid say that their activities have not been much troubled by the North Korean government after UN sanctions. They even witness that North Korea's local government officials have not been much different in cooperating with their activities.⁶ On the other hand, the South Korean government has been pursuing the 'Green Détente' project for building an environmental community between the two Koreas, and the role of UNEP would be essential for those efforts in the DMZ.⁷

4.4 The Stage for Integration after Unification

The integration process after unification may face different aspects. First, the unification process will not be over even after the unified Korea has emerged. There may still be some periods of instability inside the Northern part of the unified Korea. Under these

⁵ Interview with the program manager on DPRK, EuropeAid (DEVCO), European Commission, (Brussels, Belgium, May 2014).

⁶ Interview with one Korean-American religious NGO that has long involved in the North Korean humanitarian aid activity since 1996 (Los Angeles, California, May 2015).

⁷ See the webpage of South Korea's Ministry of Unification, <http://www.unikorea.go.kr/>

circumstances, great powers may be tempted to intervene in the North Korean contingencies right after unification.⁸ Since military intervention by one great power may cause another intervention, South Korea is likely to make every effort to avoid the great powers' intervention in North Korea and to lead the integration process. In this sense, many NGOs have emphasized the role of the North Korean refugees residing in South Korea because they can bridge the gap between the two Koreas. Of course, most refugees are not successfully settled in South Korea, but they can play a critical role in building the civil society in the northern part of a unified Korea. In addition, it is not the government but the NGOs that can have an access to the North Korean people and develop the town-hall meetings.⁹ On the other hand, the military security-related IOs such as UNSC and IAEA can play a critical role in recovering peace and stability. The UNSC would be very important in implanting democracy in North Korea, and the IAEA has had much experience in dealing with the North Korean nuclear weapons programs. In this sense, the South Korean government should explore a plan of how to make use of IOs and NGOs in such North Korean contingencies. In particular, the UNSC can be used to secure the international legitimacy in dealing with the unstable situation inside North Korea, as seen in the cases of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Second, South Korea should pay attention to the role of economic IOs to develop the North Korean economy after the unification. If the economic gap between the two Koreas gets wider, it may destabilize the unification and integration process itself. The South Korean government should thus focus on investing in the North Korean infrastructure. The Eastern European experience of economic transition can be a good reference for the North Korean case. World Bank, IMF, UNDP, and OECD have long been involved in such economic development programs, so it is necessary to plan how to utilize those IOs for rebuilding the North Korean economy (Kim and Moon, 2014: 160-164).

Third, if two different nations are unified into one, the integration of laws and institutions should be made. The difference of legal systems between the two Koreas may bring a serious social disorder. Because there are few, if any, cases of legal integration, it is necessary to design a proper plan in advance. In fact, direct application of the South Korean legal system to North Korea may not be appropriate right after unification in light of a stark difference of those two systems. Some in the South may argue that the South Korean legal system should be applied directly because the South Korean Constitution does not recognize North Korea as an independent nation but regards the northern part of the Korean peninsula as an unrecovered area of the Republic of Korea after the liberation from the Japanese colonialism in 1945. In this situation, it is better to provide some international organizations, mostly UN related agencies, with the temporary authority to recover the stability inside North Korea.

Fourth, even though the political unification may not be enough, the social and cultural integration should be promoted so that the unification process may not run into the opposite direction. We have seen many cases of separatist movements in Scotland, Canada, Spain, and so on. There is no guarantee that the North Korean people may not be involved in separatist movements provoked by social and cultural discriminations. The two Koreas have been divided for more than 70 years after World War II, which made the social and cultural differences much bigger. In such fragile situations, many IOs and NGOs have tried efforts to

⁸ This situation after unification may be different from the contingencies caused by the collapse of the North Korean regime, but has similar aspects of instability. Stares and Wit (2009); Bennett (2013).

⁹ Interview with a NGO official who has focused on the North Korean refugee-related activities (Los Angeles, California, May 2015).

revitalize the social integration (Kim et al., 2011). The education for civic culture and democracy is very important for social stability of a unified Korea. For example, UN Democracy Fund that provides the opportunity for the education of democracy and civil society in Iraq and Afghanistan may be applied to the North Korean case. The UNESCO also provides the opportunity for cultural activities and exchanges, which can also be useful for restore the cultural homogeneity of Korea.

5. CONCLUSION

Although this paper argues that the functionalist approach is valid in constructing the road toward Korean unification and emphasizes the role of IOs and NGOs, it is hard to deny that states still remain important actors. However, it is necessary to recognize that there is a serious limitation to the state-centric approach. The functionalist approach can still be effective because IOs and NGOs are diverse and play intermediary roles in dealing with the problems arising from the unification process. Because non-state actors do not have serious conflict of interests over the Korean peninsula, they are more likely to be favorable to Korean unification and integration as compared to the neighboring powers. Furthermore, IOs and NGOs give a higher credit to international norms, and they can neutralize, to a certain degree, the great powers' interventions going beyond the international norm. Of course, it is neither realistic nor desirable to heavily rely on IOs and NGOs. The South Korean government itself should be creative enough to lead the unification process, but the role of IOs and NGOs would be very useful and helpful to accelerate the unification and integration process on the Korean peninsula. It would be more realistic to say those IOs and NGOs can play a supplementary role to the core dynamics among the great powers. This research was not aimed at examining the role of specific IOs and NGOs in detail. Instead, it has revisited the validity of the functionalist approach on the Korean peninsula. As long as we remain focused on IOs and NGOs, the functionalist approach appears to be still valid.

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