

The System of Division on the Korean Peninsula and Building a “Peace State”

Koo Kab-Woo

Abstract

This paper attempts to identify different phases of inter-Korean relations and explore the possibility of collective action for a new era. For the phrase “June 15 Era” to gain persuasive power, it should be justified through an examination of history. Also, if it is to be more than just a wishful metaphor but a signifier of qualitative change in inter-Korean relations, which used to be portrayed as one of hostile coexistence, a structural change must occur that allows the two sides to see each other as friends rather than enemies. This paper tentatively asserts that the “June 15 Era,” which was catalyzed by the transformed national identity of the North and South, has not yet reached the point where they can regard each other as friends. To prevent a return to hostility this paper argues for the building of a peace state that transcends the identity of modern states striving to enrich their nations and strengthen their militaries. Collective action on the part of both Koreas to become a “people-enriching and peace-loving” state, working to establish friendship and peace with neighboring countries as well as with each other, will be the driving force that brings about a fundamental change in their relations.

Keywords: Korean peninsula, system of division, inter-Korean relations, peace state, June 15 Era, cold war, national identity, reunification, peaceful coexistence, national identity, Cold War

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Research Problem: “The June 15 Era”?

For the first time since the division of the Korean peninsula, North and South Korea used the same term to depict their relationship: the “June 15 Era.” This term implies that since the North-South summit talks in 2000, relations between the two Koreas have entered a new phase that is distinct from the past. Like August 15 of 1945, June 15 of 2000 functions as part of Korean “calendar politics” that both Koreas celebrate and continue to (re)interpret. The anniversaries of the June 15 Summit and the August 15 Liberation Day continue to be commemorated despite the second nuclear crisis that was triggered in October 2002 when the United States raised suspicions over North Korea’s attempt to develop nuclear weapons using highly enriched uranium. Koreans in the north, south, and abroad established a “legal” body called the Joint National Committee for the Implementation of the June 15 Joint Declaration (hereafter the June 15 Committee) to celebrate this epochal event. Previously, the Pan-Korean Alliance for Reunification, which had been created in November 1990 to assume a similar function, was regarded as an illegitimate group in South Korea.

The creation of a legal civic organization encompassing Koreans in the north, south, and abroad at the level of civil society, accompanied by regular ministerial and economic talks at the government level, may indicate that inter-Korean relations have entered an “institutionalization” stage, sharing common interests. The South Korean Ministry of Unification uses the expression the “second June 15 Era” to signify the quantitative progress made in inter-Korean relations and the qualitative transformation into institutionalization, indicated by the joint statement adopted in the six-party talks on September 19, 2005 for a peaceful resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue and negotiations for building a peace regime on the peninsula. Civic groups in the South are holding active discussions on the “June 15 Era,” recognizing it as a new step and a historic experiment toward improving inter-Korean relations. Paik Nak-chung, editor of *Changjak-gwa bipyong* (The Quarterly Changbi) and chair of the South’s

side of the June 15 Committee, defines the June 15 Era as an “introduction to the reunification era” and calls it an imminent “first-step to reunification.” Some activists note that the reunification movement in South Korea has changed into a “national reintegration movement” based on the momentum created by the June 15 Joint Declaration in 2000.¹

Meanwhile, North Korea provides a more specific explanation and interpretation of the “June 15 Era.” Its official documents define it as an “era of independent unification.” More specifically, it is a “period of independent unification to realize the idea of by our nation itself,” and is “an era of national cooperation that will open a shortcut to great national unity,” and “the epoch of the reunification movement propelled by the great potency of military-first politics.” North Korea views the so-called “three forms of cooperation”—cooperation for national independence, cooperation for peace against war, and cooperation for reunification and patriotism—which were proposed in the joint editorial of the *Rodong sinmun* (Labor Daily), *Joseon inmingun* (Korean People’s Army), and *Cheongnyeon jeonwi* (Youth Vanguard) as fundamental guarantees for the implementation of the June 15 Joint Declaration. The first element, cooperation for national independence, calls for the mindset of “our nation first” and “objection against collaboration with outsiders.” The second, cooperation for peace against war, requires the establishment of a non-aggression treaty between North Korea and the United States and a complete withdrawal of U.S. forces from the South. Finally, cooperation for reunification and patriotism demands the abolishment of the South’s National Security Law and dissolution of the Grand National

1. Ministry of Unification (2005, 2006); and Paik (2005). On the views of the “national reintegration movement,” see Jeong Hyeon-gon (2006), Head of the Secretariat of the All-Nation Council of National Reconciliation and Cooperation partaking in the June 15 Committee. In Article 1, Clause 1 of the Common Regulations of the June 15 Committee, the committee is defined as “a standing coalition of political parties, religious groups, organizations, and individuals to achieve national reconciliation, solidarity, and reunification through implementation of the June 15 Joint Declaration.”

Party, the “vanguard of anti-reunification.”²

Subtle but important differences are found in public discussions on June 15 between the two Koreas. While the South focuses on a new level of exchange and cooperation, the North emphasizes national cooperation to dispel foreign forces and form an alliance among the supporters of June 15. The South seems to favor a “(neo)functionalist approach” to seek gradual political and economic integration through cooperation in non-political and non-military areas without making it clear who the main actors of the “June 15 Era” are. Meanwhile, the North appears to prefer a “united front approach” by distinguishing between national and foreign forces and between supporters and opponents of June 15, while clearly announcing who the main actors are. As such, the possibility of discord over from the “June 15 Era,” which is jointly touted by the two Koreas, cannot be ruled out. In particular, if the international political environment surrounding the peninsula is deteriorated, the “June 15 Era” will have to be put to a test. As recently as July 2006, the United States seemed to attempt a regime change in North Korea by raising such issues as human rights, illegal drug production, and counterfeiting, in addition to the nuclear issue. Advocates of the June 15 Era discourse argue that the North and the South must put pressure on the United States to stop pushing North Korea by further expanding inter-Korean exchange and cooperation.³ However, in reality it is doubtful whether they have the genuine “will” and “capacity” to resolve issues concerning the peninsula based on inter-Korean relations alone, despite explicit or implicit opposition of their neighbors, including the United States.

It would therefore be more appropriate to define the “June 15 Era” as a “historic experiment.”⁴ On the one hand, it marks the reunification era, which started with the two Koreas forming an agreement on the framework of reunification, finding similarities

2. Kang and Won (2005); Kang (2005); and Song (2002).

3. Paik (2006a, 2006b).

4. Yoo (2006).

between a confederation system proposed by the South and a low-level federation proposed by the North, and it can be viewed as signaling the inception of a new stage in the inter-Korean relationship. On the other hand, however, considering the divergent interpretations of the meaning of June 15 that exists between the two Koreas, clashes between progressives and conservatives and among progressives in the South as how to evaluate it, as well as which direction inter-Korean relations should take afterwards,⁵ it cannot be completely denied that the “June 15 Era,” as a discourse, merely reflects the “wishes” of political and social groups that are striving to build a new order on the peninsula. To gain “international approval” of the “June 15 Era” is a challenge they face in trying to construct a collective memory for the future through continued discourse, in view of the international nature of the peninsular issue.

This paper attempts to identify different phases of inter-Korean relations by examining the history and theories of the relationship and to explore the possibility of a collective action to launch a new age. For the “June 15 Era” to gain persuasive power as a phrase marking a new age, it should be justified through an examination of history. In order that it may be defined as more than just a wishful metaphor but a phrase that signifies a qualitative change in inter-Korean relations, which used to be portrayed as one of hostile coexistence, there should exist a “structural change” that allows the two sides to see each other as friends rather than as enemies, accompanied by a “collective action” that drives the change. This paper makes the tentative assessment that the “June 15 Era,” which took

5. The clash among progressives is often represented as a debate between Paik Nak-chung and Choi Jang-Jip. The two scholars’ views differ on the issue of how to cope with of neoliberalism and decline of democracy, which has occurred in Korea since democratization. Paik attempts to associate the emerging phenomena with the system of division on the peninsula, whereas Choi emphasizes the need for democracy to progress in the South as a prerequisite to overcoming the system of division. This debate reminds us of the confrontational structure which existed between the national liberationist line and the people’s democracy line among progressive activists in Korea during the 1980s. See Paik (2006c); and Choi (2005).

place because of the transformed national identity of the North and the South, has not yet reached the point where they can regard each other as friends. It argues that the two Koreas must be transformed into a “peace state” to prevent their relations from regressing back into hostility. In seeking to build a peace state, they must transcend the identity of modern states striving to enrich their nations and strengthen their militaries. In my view, collective action on the part of both Koreas to attain the sufficiency of the Korean people and the identity of a peace state, i.e., a “people-enriching and peace-loving” state working to establish friendship and peace with neighboring countries as well as with each other, will be the driving force bringing about a fundamental change in their relations.

History of the Structure of Korean Division and Division System Theory

A (Neo)Realist Explanation

Recently, the South Korean Ministry of Unification and civilian researchers co-published a book on the history of South-North relations, titled *Haneul gil ttang gil bada gil yeoreo tongil-ro* (Open All Paths to Unification, by Air, Land, and Sea), in memory of the 60th anniversary of liberation and division, in which the trajectory of inter-Korean relations is divided into three periods: 1) the consolidation of the division period (1945-1953); 2) the Cold War period (1954-1987); and 3) the post-Cold War period (1988-present).⁶ The characterization of these time periods is based on changes in the international system, that is, the formation and dissolution of the Cold War regime created by two great, opposing powers, the United States and the Soviet Union. From this perspective, the structure of the international system and the two players assume the role of independent variables, while North and South Korea become dependent variables. Hence, the range

6. The Publication Committee for 60 Years of Work for Unification (2005).

of choices that can be made by two Koreas and inter-Korean relations are restricted by the international system.

As revealed in the above-mentioned book, the periodization and theorization of inter-Korean relations is dominated by two approaches: one that begins with external factors and then moves to internal ones and another that emphasized the structure over the actors. These approaches gain support from the argument that the division of the Korean peninsula was structured by external factors or as part of a strategy of the United States and the Soviet Union to occupy it along the 38th parallel, rather than by the left-right conflicts within the peninsula. Although the Korean War broke out due to the collision of the South’s plan to unify the country by invading the North and the North’s intention of becoming a “power base of democracy,” the transformation of the initial civil war into an international one (with the intervention of the United States, the United Nations, the Soviet Union, and China) and the subsequent division finalized by the armistice treaty provided the impetus to solidify what would become a Cold War system.⁷ It has been accepted as an orthodox interpretation that the division began immediately after liberation in 1945 and its structure was fixed through the Korean War. Most theories seeking to explain inter-Korean relations focused on the process by which the international structure of the Cold War system was “reproduced” on the Korean Peninsula.

Studies of international relations in the United States, which are represented by (neo)realism, try to explain the structure of the Cold War regime as a state of power equilibrium relying on the “military power” of two main players, the United States and the Soviet Union, in an intrinsically anarchic international world without an overarching government.⁸ In the international system that the “structure

7. Shim (2005); and for the process that turned the Korean War from a civil to an international war, see Wada (1999).

8. Waltz (1997). In this international system, differences in the domestic structure of the United States and the Soviet Union, that is, their national character, are not a factor. Both countries show symmetrical behavior in maintaining or maximizing their national interests. According to this perspective, the national character of the

selects,” the range of choices available to an actor, a nation, is very limited. Seeking military security and political independence, North and South Korea probably had no alternative other than to “get on the bandwagon” with the United States and the Soviet Union. In a bipolar system during the Cold War, which left no room for maneuvering outside the attention of the two great powers, and moreover, on the Korean peninsula, where the hot war between the two Koreas, in place of the United States and the Soviet Union, had been waged, it could be that South and North Korea had to choose to form “alliances” with the United States and the Soviet Union and China, respectively, for their own security and independence. The two Koreas probably could have considered an approach to confront the Cold War system and collaborated to dismantle the confrontational structure and build a unified country, but it was not what they could choose to do. Approach that emphasized the international structure rejects that such a choice was even possible.

From the realist perspective of international relations, which explains the Cold War regime as a confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union, inter-Korean relations may be defined as those of “two nations” in a state of hostility, thus creating a peninsular version of the Cold War system. Just as the United States and Soviet Union in the Cold War system invented the concept of a “security state,” where security is the foremost national interest,⁹ more precisely speaking, the Korean cold war system was produced because the two adopted this concept of the security state from 1950. Assuming an anarchic international world in which self-help is the behavioral code of nations, a security state defines security as surviving external threats, which are largely unavoidable under anarchy, and justifies the practices of restricting democracy domestically for the sake of national security. North Korea created an extreme form of this security state, becoming a “guerrilla state” wherein people virtu-

two Koreas is not an important variable in explaining the Cold War system on the peninsula.

9. Der Derian (1993).

ally worship the Commander-in-Chief, or the Great Leader.¹⁰ In addition, both Koreas were “developmental states” that sought government-led growth, giving priority to heavy industry and maximizing input factors. While the South took the path of export-oriented growth with foreign aid, the North chose import substitution and industrialization without foreign capital. The former did not reject a market economy, and the latter attempted to get rid of market economic elements through in-kind dynamics and the introduction of bureaucratic coordination mechanisms.¹¹

If the peninsular cold war system can be dubbed the “1953 system,” since that was the year when the armistice treaty was signed, this 1953 system may be defined as one in which the South’s security-development state, dependent upon the South Korea-U.S.-Japan alliance, and the North’s guerrilla-development state, dependent upon the North Korea-China-Soviet Union alliance, were engaged in an arms race, which reinforced hostilities. The hostility between the two did not flare into an all-out war, probably because of the nuclear deterrence posed by the United States and the Soviet Union. The danger of mutual destruction from the use of nuclear arms made them choose coexistence, albeit a hostile one, over all-out war which could have caused the “demise” of both. Within the framework of hostile coexistence, the two could maintain their security state identities and legitimize the domestically repressive regimes under the pretext of external threats.

Some may object to positing the “1953 system” as the relations of two sovereign states, because, under the 1953 system based on an armistice treaty, the North and South were imperfect as nation-states in three aspects, i.e., territorial autonomy, monopolization of the use of physical force, and overall legitimacy as independent political entities.¹² For instance, the United States took over wartime operational control of South Korean troops in accordance with the Agreed Minutes

10. Wada (2002, 121-131).

11. Jun (1981); and Lee J. (2004).

12. Kim and Cho (2003, 67-70).

Relating to Continued Cooperation in Economic and Military Matters. It was a measure to prevent the South from invading the North. But from the (neo)realist standpoint, sovereignty is nothing but “organized hypocrisy.”¹³ In a world dominated by the politics of the great powers, other nations do not enjoy sovereignty to the degree that is compatible with the ideal-type modern state. Even powerful nations cannot be seen as modern sovereign states insofar as they do not respect the sovereignty of others.

Criticism and an Alternative

If the conventional (neo)realist explanation for the cold war system on the peninsula is irrefutable, the future of the peninsula will depend upon a balance of power between the North and the South in alliance with the great powers, or as a unified country attained by one absorbing the other based on the overwhelming superiority of one of the two powers. However, history is not as simple as (neo)realism expects. The sudden disintegration of the Cold War regime gives us a way to understand the peninsular cold war system and inter-Korean relations from a new perspective. First, the Soviet Union, one pole of the Cold War system, collapsed with its military power left almost intact.¹⁴ This shows that military power is not a determinant of the critical course of events in international relations. Second, as the history of the Cold War became known to the public, it has been revealed that countries that were previously defined as sub-players under the Cold War system actually had a certain degree of autonomy. As one Cold War historian points out, they could not possibly have prevented U.S.-Soviet domination, but they still had the choice of whether to cooperate with or resist them.¹⁵ Third, if the Cold War system was not one defined by a U.S.-Soviet military power balance but of U.S. supremacy, and if the sub-players had a certain degree of autonomy despite the Cold War

13. Krasner (1999).

14. Gaddis (1997).

15. Gaddis (1997).

structure. It cannot be said that the Cold War system and the division of the peninsula could be maintained only with a military equilibrium between the two Koreas.

Efforts to rewrite the history of the Cold War attend to “ideas” rather than physical force such as military power. Power diversification, or power imbalance rather than power balance, is a more accurate description of the reality under the Cold War system. Despite this, however, the Cold War regime was viewed as a balance of power,¹⁶ which was mainly due to the (neo)realist approach. The Cold War system was dismantled not from military defeat or economic failure but from the collapse of legitimacy—ideological, moral, and cultural capacities. According to this view, the first year of the disintegration of the Cold War system was not 1991, the year the Soviet Union collapsed, but 1989 when Gorbachev called for “New Thinking” in Soviet foreign relations and security policy.¹⁷ Gorbachev attempted a transformation of thinking based on the notions that security cannot be sought unilaterally due to the security dilemma, which is caused by a competitive increase of military expenditure, and thus it warrants mutual security, and that power-based foreign policy is not a fair means to solve international conflicts. The driving force of the transformation of thinking was the concept of “civil society” that was rediscovered in the Soviet Union. During the early 1970s, capitalist and socialist countries in Europe derived the idea of mutual security and cooperative security from the working out of the Helsinki Process and regarded economic cooperation and human rights as constituents of security.¹⁸ This resulted in the emergence of

16. World system theory expounds on why the Cold War system was maintained despite the power imbalance and explains that it was a strategy devised by the United States. World system theorists argue that there was actually a large power gap between the United States and the Soviet Union, and that due to the gap, the Cold War was a system of implicit acquiescence and enclosure between the two. The Cold War structure was a strategic device chosen by the United States to establish global hegemony coexisting with the Soviet Union. Yoo (2006, 277-278).

17. Gaddis (1997); Wendt (1999); and Herman (1996).

18. Koo (2001).

citizens' movements with a call for the expansion of human rights in the Soviet Union and the socialist countries in Eastern Europe. It was ultimately this factor that produced a revolutionary change in Soviet diplomatic and security policy.¹⁹

If we accept the reinterpretation of Cold War history, it is inevitable that the theory that tries to define inter-Korean relations as being based only on a military power balance between two hostile countries must be revised. First, the power imbalance and power diversification found in the Cold War system are also found in the peninsular version of the system. According to a study that estimated the "total accumulated amount of national defense expenditure," taking account of depreciation instead of merely comparing simple figures or firing power scores,²⁰ South Korea had a superior position over North Korea till the early 1960s, then fell behind the North from the second half of the 1960s to the early 1970s, with the difference being not that great.²¹ The gap was filled by U.S. forces in the South.

19. Therefore, if North Korea, which maintains a classic socialist system, and China, which has not yet given up socialism, have learned a lesson from the Helsinki Process, it may be difficult for them to accept a Northeast Asian version of it. U.S. organizations which have raised the human rights issue in North Korea claim that a Northeast Asian version of the Helsinki Process should be pushed forth within the framework of the six-party talks in order to dismantle the Kim Jong Il regime. This shows that conceptions on how to build multilateral security cooperation in Northeast Asia that will not cause a threat to the North Korean regime have become the core agenda of consideration in order to attain peace in the peninsula and Northeast Asia in a non-violent manner.

20. Hamm (1998).

21. When the armistice treaty was signed in 1953, South Korea had roughly 590,000 forces and North Korea, 270,000. The North made efforts to overturn its inferior status (increasing to 410,000-420,000 in 1955) and particularly, strengthened the air force with military aid from China and the Soviet Union. In the meantime, the South increased its ground forces. In 1956, however, the North announced it would reduce its forces by 80,000 soldiers to compensate for the labor shortage in the private sector. While the South was reinforcing its deterrent power against the North based on its alliance with the United States, the North did not increase military expenditures in response. This seems to be due to several factors, including internal crisis, conflicts with the Soviet Union, and cleavages among the socialists. When the military coup occurred in the South in May 1961, the North signed a military

From the late 1980s, the peninsula has been engaged in an "asymmetrical arms race" with the South's increase in war-fighting capability and the North's augmentation of deterrence capability (development and deployment of non-conventional weapons of mass destruction). Thus, it can be said that an asymmetrical military power balance exists in inter-Korean relations, consisting of the South's superior war operations capacity and the North's superior deterrent force. But the South Korean government did not and does not admit its superiority in the military power balance. If the South continues to boost military expenditures to compensate for any deficient military power despite its actual superiority, it is because either the South Korean government has difficulty measuring its military capacity, or it is intentionally trying to maintain the Cold War system and security state on the peninsula, as the United States did with the Soviet Union by exaggerating the extent of Soviet military power to prolong the Cold War system.

Secondly, ideas played an active role in the peninsular Cold War system as can be inferred from the strategies and policies of both Koreas. As long as they view each other as an enemy, the peninsular Cold War system will hold out, regardless of change in the international structure. To state it in reverse, as witnessed in the disintegration of the Cold War system, the peninsular Cold War system can be dismantled if the two Koreas discard their relationship to each other as enemies and adopt one of coexistence. In this respect, the June 15 Joint Declaration in 2000 signified an identity transformation, which was comparable to Gorbachev's new thinking. The two Koreas are

alliance treaty with the Soviet Union and China, which guaranteed their automatic intervention in times of emergency, similar to the South Korea-U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty of 1953. However, as Soviet aid declined due to strained relations, North Korea began a program of independent national defense, as urged by the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea. Similarly, South Korea took the course of self-dependent national defense, faced with a decrease in the flow of aid from the United States per the Nixon Doctrine and criticism of the Yusin regime in the U.S. Congress. "Yulgok Project" is a South Korean example of independent national defense. For more details, see Hamm (1998); and Kim Y. (2004).

using the same term, “June 15 Era,” due to a mutual identity change, even without any change in their military structures.

Third, as revealed in the rewritten histories of the Cold War, sub-players of the international system seem to have a broader range of autonomy than (neo)realists assume they do. Indeed, there are some specific cases of autonomy confirmed in North-South relations. (Neo)Realists would not have predicted that North Korea would form a military alliance with the Soviet Union and China eight years after South Korea did with the United States. Although the North-South Joint Communiqué of July 4, 1972 and the North-South Basic Agreement of 1991—two important turning points employed in this paper for defining the periodization of inter-Korean relations—may be understood as the outcomes of a relaxation or change in the international structure,²² it would have been impossible unless North and South Korea autonomously chose to do so. The Cold War system on the peninsula may be defined not as a replica of the international Cold War system but as a system of division unique to the peninsula. Indeed, elements that are unique to the peninsula do exist, such that the opposite of division is reunification; this point is described succinctly in the North-South Basic Agreement, which states that inter-Korean relations are defined “not as relations between two countries but as special relations constituted temporarily in the process of working towards reunification.”

Fourth, the players in the peninsular Cold War system are not confined to the North and South Korean states. If a state is defined as a nation in its entirety, namely, “national-territorial wholeness,” which is the (neo)realist view, then civil society, the driving force of the collapse of the Cold War system, is invisible. It is difficult to explain the emergence of the term, the June 15 Era, without taking into account the civil society that struggled ceaselessly to dismantle the peninsular Cold War system through the reunification and peace movements. However, civil society exists only in the South. Prob-

22. For empirical research on the Cold War structure and autonomy of South and North Korea, see Park K. et al. (2003).

bly, the presence of civil society is the “greatest” difference among all things that distinguishes South Korea from North Korea. This asymmetry is the core factor that has determined the variant tracks trodden by the two nations after division.

The “division system theory” is a theory that views inter-Korean relations as not only ones between two states, in separate alliances with different great powers, but also as special ones. It gives attention not only to the influence of the international system and the domestic systems of North and South Korea but also to the effect of the system of division on the international and domestic arenas. It argues that positive progress in inter-Korean relations can lead to the reform of the U.S.-centered global system and the domestic systems of North and South Korea. With the aim of explaining the spontaneous occurrence of “hostile confrontation” and “mutual dependence” in North-South relations, this theory characterizes the division ideology of the South Korean ruling class as anti-communist and its North Korean counterpart as Kim Il Sungist. The theory argues that each side acclaims national reunification, but in actuality, it serves to maintain the vested interests of the ruling classes. Under the system of division, masses in the North and South share common interests with regard to the agenda of overcoming the division. Ultimately, the movement to overcome the division should start with democratization and reform of their own societies, instead of being hung up on unrealistic goals such as driving out foreign forces or reforming South Korean society.

The division system theory has a symmetrical view of the asymmetric North and South Korean societies. As pointed out previously, civil society, absent in the North, functioned in the South as the origin of the movement to overcome the system of division. It is a limitation of the theory. It is also criticized for viewing North-South relations as a stability-reproducing system. If inter-Korean relations are seen as special relations, then division is a national problem. This problem is, in nature, related to the instability caused by the power confrontation between South Korea, North Korea, and the United States. In this sense, terms such as “system” and “structure” are avoided for their deterministic tone, and a different term, “divided

order,” is often used instead.²³ In my view, a more serious problem with the division system theory is that it has no built-in theoretical tool to explain the historical form and transitional process of the system. If it is equipped with a morphology, it can explain the reproduction and development of inter-Korean relations, which neither the (neo)realist approach nor “special relations theory” can. To construct a morphology, it should acknowledge that the system and structure have a time factor, which is also overlooked by (neo)realists. If it understands order—a specific configuration of various elements constituting reality—as a “historical structure,” as critical international relations theory suggests, it can encompass all the elements composing the historical structure, such as “physical capabilities,” “ideas,” and “institutions” as a whole.²⁴ In short, the division system theory can construct a morphology by introducing the notion of historical structure.

Examining the structure of the system of division in a historical context, physical capabilities, which is often expressed as military power, has been unbalanced and has never declined to a level where a threat was no longer posed to either side. If the system of division has changed in spite of that, it is due to changing ideas so that the importance of physical capabilities declines although both sides do not share common institutions. The change of ideas is associated with the change of identities, which distinguish between the self and others. The possibility of historical structure change depends on whether the two Koreas consider each other enemies, competitors, or friends. The constructivist approach to international relations points out some key variables that can help create a collective identity transcending that of enemies, such as “interdependence,” “common destiny,” “homogeneity,” and “self-restraint.”²⁵ The first three are driving forces of structural change in international relations and the for-

23. For special relations theory, see Doh (2001); and Jang Seok (2002). For the theory of divided order, see Park M. (1997).

24. Cox and Sinclair (1996, 91-101).

25. Wendt (1999, chap. 7).

mation of collective identity. The last, self-restraint, is not a driving force, but it contributes to eliminating the fear that one might absorb the other, which is a fundamental barrier to the formation of a collective identity. Since hostile coexistence persists on the peninsula, self-restraint can function as a signal of explicit objection to unification through absorption. As long as self-restraint—a principle that can be understood as two parties being able to respect each other’s differences—does not develop into an absolutization of these differences, a security community established through self-restraint will promote an active operation of the other three variables, mutual dependence, common destiny, and homogeneity. It is the “practice” of actors that puts into operation the four variables that are the driving forces of structural change and the rallying points for the formation of collective identity; furthermore, this practice is the driving force to change the historical structure, i.e., transformation of the system of division.

Under the 1953 system, North and South Korea identified each other as enemies, despite their national homogeneity. Although the North-South Joint Communiqué of July 4, 1972, acknowledged their great national unity, both sides used it to reinforce their authoritarian regimes. With the dissolution of the Cold War, the two Koreas had an opportunity to make an autonomous choice, and the Basic Agreement of 1991 was the result. The Basic Agreement provided the momentum to establish a new collective identity, containing the institutionalization of measures such as mutual dependence via exchange and cooperation, the recovery of national homogeneity, and self-restraint through military expenditures and arms reduction. However, the North feared that it might be absorbed into the South if the Basic Agreement were put into action. One of the reasons for the collapse of the 1991 system soon after its creation was that conflicts persisted over the nuclear issue between North Korea and the United States and between different sectors of South Korean society while there was no trust built from interaction between the South and the North.

The 2000 system created by the June 15 Joint Declaration is still in progress. Although the second nuclear crisis occurred in October 2002, and the six-party talks convened for its resolution has repeated-

ly undergone challenges with implicit North-South conflicts and explicit conflicts within the South regarding the interpretation of the June 15 Joint Declaration, the 2000 system is still working to establish common institutions, including regular sessions of ministerial talks. As of 2006, about 3,000 South Koreans reside in the North on any given day. Mutual dependence between the two Koreas is increasing as demonstrated by the Gaeseong Industrial Complex, Mt. Geumgangsan tourism, and humanitarian aid flows from South to North.

The South and North's changing perceptions of each other under the 2000 system is associated with changes to the state form on both sides and therewith changes to national identities, which, in turn, reflect, in a condensed form, change in the world order and accumulation system. Experiencing serious economic crises and famine in the mid 1990s, North Korea might have tried to develop nuclear weapons and long-range missiles to maintain security at a minimum cost, banging out such catchphrases as "military-first politics" and "a strong, prosperous nation." Its state form can be said to have changed from that of a guerilla-developmental state to a "failed" standing-army state.²⁶ That is mainly due to instability in security caused by its weakening alliance with China and Russia in the 1990s and intensified tension with the United States. The shift from a guerilla force to a standing-army state may not be a fundamental change in state identity, but the failure of the state was enough of a threat to its survival. North Korea agreed to the 2000 system "proposed" by South Korea, probably because it wanted to overcome internal state collapse using South Korean aid, which could be justified as a formation of a collective identity in the name of the "nation." However, it did not actually cease to be a standing-army state. Despite the ongoing 2000 system, it does not pursue a self-restraint policy, in which South Korea is not regarded as a threat. In terms of identity, the imbalance between its identity as a standing-army one and a failed state is a destabilizing

26. On the standing army state, see Wada (2002).

factor in the 2000 system.

When North Korea became a failed state, the final response of the South Korean Kim Young-sam government was to absorb the North. It was an attempt to form a collective identity without self-restraint. It may also have been an expression of confidence that it could absorb the North based on its superior military and economic power. However, the South Korean absorption policy lost force with the economic crisis of 1997, which was caused by the attack of foreign financial capital and the internal contradictions of the development state. The June 15 Joint Declaration of 2000 was partly a policy version of the normative goal for inter-Korean relations conceived by political and social forces represented by President Kim Dae-jung, but it was also the result of the growing perception in the South that inter-Korean hostility had to be reduced to encourage economic growth. That is, it was an attempt to remove the "North Korea factor," which endangered the stability of the South Korean market needed to implement a neoliberalist growth strategy. Following the economic crisis and the inauguration of the Kim Dae-jung administration, the South Korean developmental state shifted into a "market economy state," wherein market determined everything. Meanwhile, the rearrangement of the security state lagged behind the transformation of the development state. This was because the United States' global strategy—which can be summarized as "intervention and expansion," or "intervention and war"—was affirmed in the second half of the 1990s after the disintegration of the Cold War system.²⁷ In response to the change in the United States' global strategy, South Korea-U.S. alliance, a key element of the South Korean security state, began to be restructured. Just as North Korea's standing-army state

27. Beginning in 1996, the Clinton government declared the "end of the post-Cold War" and began specifying the strategies of "intervention and expansion." New "rogue states" replaced the Soviet Union and revolution in military affairs was rationalized in the name of preventive defense. It is no exaggeration to say that the *Quadrennial Defense Review* released in May 1997 and September 2001 defined the United States' global strategy after the Cold War as "intervention and war" at the global level. See Lee H. (2000); and Yi (2003).

identity conflicted with that of a failed state, it is highly likely that South Korea's market economy state and security state came into conflict with each other regarding its relationship with the North. Paradoxically, while South Korea's neoliberalist inclination creates a friendly environment for North Korea, its security state, faced with restructuring, is very likely to fashion a hostile stance towards it.

If inter-Korean relations can be broken down into different periods based on the identity of the actors and the historical structure that come to bear on their practice, it can be said to have evolved from the 1953 system to the 1991 system, then to the 2000 system. The 1991 system emerged from the collapse of the international structure that sustained the 1953 system, but it did not accompany a change in the players' identities and practices comparable to the 2000 system. The shift from the 1953 to the 2000 system occurred while the identity of both Koreas was changing from enemy to friend. We need, however, to be mindful of the fact that a shared ethnic identity could also create the contradictory and simplistic binary of "friend" of "enemy." When focus is given to internal conflict within a nation, which can be symbolized by war, the image of an enemy is produced as the object of absorption. When division by a foreign power is emphasized and "cooperation as a nation" is valued, the image of a friend is created. When it is acknowledged as a state, it can be identified as either friend or enemy, which is the case in general international relations.²⁸ Also, identity has a "normative orientation." Today the North and South are moving in a direction where each recognizes the other's state identity, as shown in their simultaneous entry into the United Nations after the disintegration of the Cold War regime. This trend may be defined as a peaceful coexistence. But it is also true that neither is free from the characteristics of a system of division, in which they can neither give up nor abandon reunification as the ultimate goal.

Figure 1 shows how the different periods of North-North relations can be positioned in terms of their changing identity and the

28. Koo (2004).

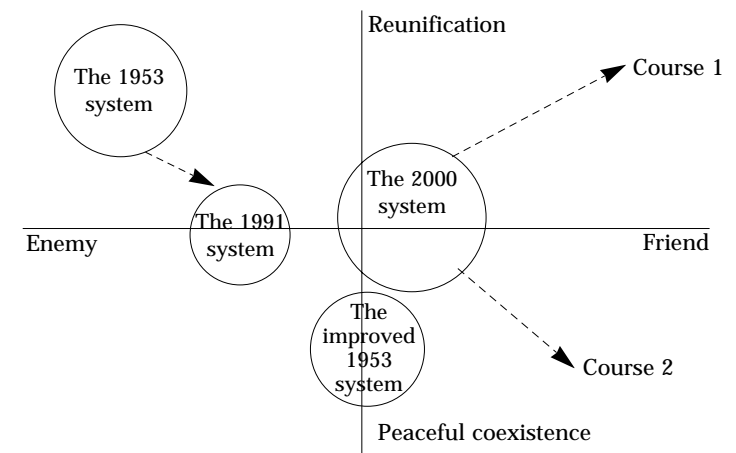


Figure 1. Different Periods of the System of Division and Normative Orientations

normative direction of that identity.

The 1953 system called for reunification while maintaining an enemy status, whereas the 1991 system proposed peaceful coexistence with a gradual decline in hostilities. The 2000 system comes closer to achieving an identity as friends, but still lies at the crossroads of reunification and peaceful coexistence. Course 1 moves towards achieving peaceful reunification as friends, and course 2 aims at peaceful coexistence as friends. A "North-South confederation," which does not deny each other's statehoods, may be included on the path to course 2. If the self-restraint policy, under which each respects the other's differences, is posited for the formation of a collective identity, it may be seen as a course proceeding from course 2 (seeking reunification while recognizing each other's statehood) to course 1. Although this is an abstract possibility, another direction would be to strengthen each side's state identity and seek peaceful coexistence as competitors, which is the median line between friends and enemies. This will happen if inter-Korean relations continue to progress in this direction (course 2) and then retreat from being

friends to becoming competitors. We can call it the “improved 1953 system.”²⁹

Overcoming the System of Division and Creating a “Peace State”

Despite the emergence of the 2000 system, South and North Korea continue to be security states. Although interdependence between the two Koreas and social and cultural exchanges for reunification are increasing, as demonstrated by the Gaeseong Industrial Complex, Mt. Geumgangsan tourism, and military talks, the starting point of self-restraint, a shift towards “mutual security” and “cooperative security” that transcends absolute national security has not yet taken place. Their identities as security states seem to remain unchanged. North Korea, in an extreme form of the security state, maintains a standing army state and is still in conflict with the United States, which itself shifted to a “war state” after September 11. In the *Quadrennial Defense Review* and *National Security Strategy* released in 2006, the United States announced that it had entered a “long-term war” and would pursue “transformational diplomacy” to attempt a regime change in despotic countries, including North Korea. One example of this diplomacy is financial sanctions against North Korea. The U.S.-centered unipolar international structure and the state form of both Koreas are obstacles to moving beyond a system of division.

As can be found in the development of the historical structure, which has reproduced the system of division, a changed perception of the actors and concrete action based on this change are necessary to undermine structural limitations. Unfortunately, however, neither

29. Paik Nak-chung, the principal advocate of the division system theory, states that people who reject even a loose form of federation for the South and North and dream of a “reformed system of division” are daydreamers who have no idea what is going on in the world. “With neoliberalism and neomilitarism prevailing in today’s world, a divided Korea will have to remain a danger zone studded with missile and nuclear crises, and in the end it is highly likely to be struck with not just a crisis, but a disaster of enormous scale.” Paik (2006d).

Koreas have been able to lower their military capacity, even under the 2000 system, seeming only to repeat Cold War-style behaviors. The security policy of the Roh Moo-hyun administration is, in summary, based on cooperation with the United States, mediated by the military alliance between the two, as well as independent national defense. The administration’s defense reform measure, named the 2020 Reform Plan for Advanced Core Military National Defense in the 21st Century, specifies as its primary goal the building of an efficient national defense system by overall improvements to the way it is conducted. Its goal of rearranging the general focus of the South Korean army from quantity to quality deserves commendation. However, the planned annual 11 percent or more defense budget increase may cause a security dilemma in Northeast Asia, one that will include the Korean peninsula, similar to what happened during the Cold War era.

In February 2005, North Korea announced its possession of nuclear weapons. Many people interpreted this as a ploy to increase its bargaining leverage over the United States. But in view of its circumstances, including grave economic crises, virtual dissolution of its alliance with Russia, and much weakened solidarity with China, the North’s nuclear capability appears to be in keeping with its style of “independent defense,” i.e., seeking security at a low cost. Its missile test in July 2006 may be understood in the same context. The missile test launch forced the South to ask which side it was really on.

As long as the two Koreas repeat the security discourse of the Cold War era, the 2000 system cannot evolve. As portrayed in Figure 2, the June 15 discourse does not preclude the possibility of regarding each other as enemies. A shift in security discourse and practice is necessary for the June 15 discourse to move in the direction of course 1 or course 2. What is needed is self-restraint based on a changed conception of one another. Regression back into the South’s plan of unification by invading the North or the North’s theory of a power base of democracy will pave the way to mutual destruction. But the possibility of continued division which viewing each other as enemies or competitors cannot be ruled out. Therefore, an explo-

ration into ways to enable a security discourse should be an essential component of any efforts to overcome the system of division. It would be difficult for the North to choose something similar to Gorbachev's New Thinking, considering its unfavorable position in various power relations. North Korea must be well aware of the fact that Gorbachev's New Thinking was ultimately responsible for the collapse of the Soviet Union.³⁰ Thus, an environment must be created in which the North is not afraid of mutual security and cooperative security with the South. This means that both Koreas must be able to reform national defense based on "reasonable sufficiency" without causing the other side to feel vulnerable.

Supposing that the expansion of mutual dependence and ethnic

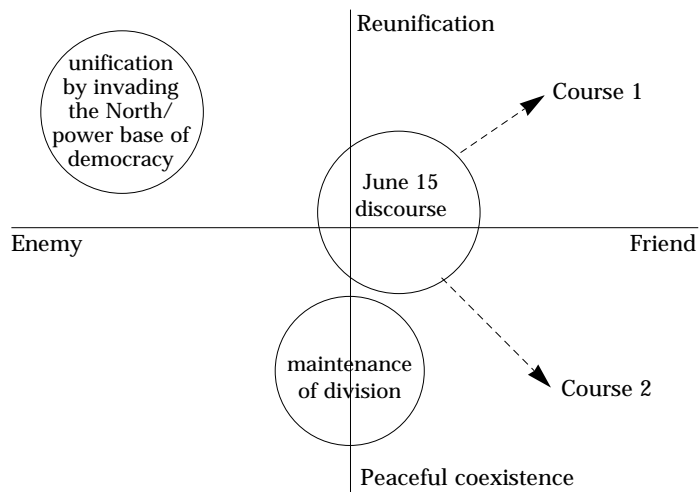


Figure 2. Evolution of the June 15 Discourse

30. This paper attempts to apply the reinterpretation of the disintegration of the Cold War system to how to overcome the system of division. A mechanical application would be the emergence of civil society in the North. This possibility cannot be excluded, and it is also necessary to overcome the system of division. In this case, the issue becomes one of how to achieve that goal without having a catastrophe or a great explosion.

similarity of the two Koreas affects the formation of a collective identity, which would form the basis of mutual security through economic, social, and cultural exchanges under the 2000 system, what is absent is a shared sense of common destiny and the necessity for self-restraint on the part of the North and South. Under the 2000 system, they have agreed that exchange and cooperation is beneficial to both. Exchange and cooperation in non-military areas may result in a change of security discourse on both sides, but there is no guarantee that the (neo)functionalist assumption of a spill-over effect will be realized.³¹ Military cooperation between the two Koreas is at a negligible level in the 2000 system. Agreements to reduce military expenditures and the production of arms, which are needed to sustain their changed identity, have not been made. Self-restraint on the part of the two Koreas may be achieved through three possible channels of détente.³² First, the two sides can learn to observe rules through interaction. Second, they can practice self-restraint by changing domestic policies. Third, one side can downgrade the threat to the other unilaterally, in a self-binding manner.

The 2000 system is testing the first channel. But the second and third channels need to be explored to overcome the repetition of ups and downs in North-South relations, just as with economic cycles; for example, the North's missile test launch produced a bad period in inter-Korean relations. It would be meaningful to pursue the third method while transforming conflict and controversy within the South, moving from regarding the North as an enemy to deciding what should be done or how the North should be viewed.³³ Because

31. The German case is generally viewed as a (neo)functionalist approach, but we must understand the fact that exchange and cooperation between East and West Germany occurred simultaneously with the Helsinki Process and European integration, which was a cause for the shift of security discourse.

32. Wendt (1999, chap. 7).

33. Roughly three kinds of views seem to exist in the South toward the North. The first one tries to export liberal democracy and capitalist market economy to the North and negates the North Korean regime completely. The second respects the North Korean regime. Finally, some think that North and South Koreas can pursue a "third way."

the South currently wields superior power in many areas, a shift in thinking in the South Korean government and civil society, and concrete practice based on this shift, is the most important factor towards ensuring that the 2000 system will see the end of division. Whether the South Korean government makes a policy shift taking the course of 1 or 2 in figure 1 will depend upon the North's response. If the South Korean government continues to follow a Cold War course of action, the system of division cannot be overcome. Thus, changing the nature of South Korean state identity becomes the key to moving beyond a system of division, and civil society will be behind that change.

The South Korean state and civil society seem to have about three paths to choose from to overcome the system of division. The first is to overcome the division by consolidating the South Korea-U.S. alliance. Taking this course, the North would be absorbed into the Korea-U.S. alliance. The second is to move beyond the structural limitations "by our nation itself" or by the joint efforts of two Koreas. Clause 2 of the June 15 Joint Declaration leaves all means open for the reunification of the peninsula. To take this course, a change in thinking and practice is needed such that the North does not feel threatened by the South. The third path is to overcome the division based on a regional, Northeast Asian perspective, especially considering that peninsular issues are, by nature, international issues. This approach connects the peace regime on the peninsula to multilateral security cooperation in Northeast Asia, as shown in the September 19 Joint Statement of the fourth-round of six-party talks. This may also be a solution to the South Korean controversy regarding whether to choose self-reliance or alliance.

However, the South Korean government appears to be repeating the practices of the Cold War system and reinforcing its alliance with the United States. Behind the attempt to improve its relations with the North based on its alliance with the United States lies the South Korea's interpretation of China as a threat. This may have been assessed as the most appropriate strategic stance, in view of a future security threat that may be posed by China and future economic risks

from a possible implosion of the Chinese economy.³⁴ Take the examples of the South Korean government's agreement on the strategic flexibility of U.S. forces in the South and the hasty pursuit of a free trade agreement (FTA) with the United States. While such government actions do not abandon the 2000 system, the status quo of the system will persist if the view towards the North does not change. Another policy choice that will hamper the evolution of the 2000 system is the maintenance and reinforcement of the 1997 system—which was established by choosing a neo-liberalist development strategy after the economic crisis in 1997—and to incorporate the 2000 system into the 1997 system. If the South is to export a neo-liberalist economy, like the 1997 system, in planning the future of the North Korean economy, efforts to overcome the division would only aggravate it further. Furthermore, despite the fact that South Korea's 1997 system was a driving force in the change of thinking towards the North, if the 1997 system increases social bipolarization, disadvantaged groups may oppose further improvement in South-North relations, saying that it would only mean a transfer of social wealth to the North.

The progressive civil society of South Korea is engaged in a debate over the second and third courses. Concerns over the possible incorporation of the 2000 system into the 1997 system are expressed periodically. The 2000 system was established by each side recognizing each other's statehood. This means the dissolution of the 2000 system has two potential paths: a strengthening of statehood, or an overcoming of the division on the road to reunification. The path to reunification by strengthening statehood can also be contemplated. Differentiation between the unification and peace movement groups has occurred in this process. While the former wants to resolve the peninsular issue through national cooperation, the latter maintains that the South should seek peaceful coexistence without evading sensitive issues such as human rights conditions in the North. Put in extreme terms, this is a choice between reunification and peace. This

34. Despite what one reviewer of this paper points out, I do not deny the real threat and risk posed by China. I only argue that it is necessary to build a peace state in order to eliminate the anticipated threat and risk posed by that country.

is where courses 1 and 2 diverge in figure 2. This position has been criticized for failing to understand that reunification should be a process of dismantling the system of domination on the peninsula through exchange, cooperation, and regime transformation.³⁵ In view of the South-North and international relations surrounding the peninsula, it does not sound plausible that issues concerning the peninsula such as the nuclear crisis can be resolved based only on North-South relations.

In this paper, I would like to propose an alternative without an a priori presupposition of peace or reunification in regards to the evolution of the 2000 system, which is to build a “peace state” in both Koreas and other parts of Northeast Asia. The construction of a peace state based on the dynamics of South Korean civil society—one that seeks to enrich people and embrace peace rather than enriching the state and strengthening the army—may be the most important influence on the future state form of North Korea, as was demonstrated in the creation of the 2000 system. As there is potential for a dangerous arms race in Northeast Asia, changing South Korea’s state identity can stimulate a similar change in other nations and offer an opportunity to promote political and economic cooperation in the region. The building of a peace state, the South Korean equivalent of New Thinking, will require a South Korean civil society movement that goes beyond inter-Korean relations and encompasses the universality of both Northeast Asian and world history.³⁶

35. Yoo (2006, 288).

36. Building a peace state starts from what is unique to the Korean peninsula, but it also must be in step with universal world history as the practice of building peace states is widely underway today. Some simple examples may be the establishment of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the International Criminal Court thanks to the ethical diplomacy of middle powers and global civil society. Also, the creation of a supranational political system such as the European Union enables us to imagine a federation of peace states, in which supranational democracy can be practiced. The increase in peace-seeking nations and the wave of peace movements are witnessed to the extent that the current world is characterized as a confrontation between peace and war states. Another paper will be required to address in detail the forms and contents of those practices.

Insofar as state violence is legitimized, “peace state” is a contradictory term. When we are reminded of the claim of the early modern period that “war made states and states made war,” the concept of a peace state is a fallacy. The reason why such terms as “war state” and “security state” are used instead of “peace state” probably lies in the ontological limitations a peace state can have as a state. The term can be used if we agree that violence is necessary to realize peace, but it seems that we do not need to conceptualize a peace state that rejects the idea of achieving peace through peaceful means. In this case, existing terms such as “modern state” or “nation-state” can be used, instead of “peace state.” Peace and state need to be redefined and “peace state” chosen as a theoretical concept. The concept of a peace state refers to a new political system wherein peace is pursued through peaceful means rather than state violence and repressive state apparatus.

The “peace state” is a controversial and dynamic concept that contains in it the intent to fundamentally change the modern state by overturning modern beliefs regarding the interior and exterior features of states. If it is confined to an explicit concept, the boundaries of the political imagination are set. Imprisoning a concept within its own definitions must be avoided, as the future remains uncertain. That is why conceptual flexibility is called for. For progressive social movements that work to create a collective memory for the future based on the imagination of the past, flexibility is indispensable. Here, I present the basic principles for composing a peace state, being faithful to its definition.

First, a peace state is a “state,” thus it has the fundamental features of a modern state, which are territorial autonomy, monopolization of the use of physical force, and overall legitimacy as an independent political entity. However, it is distinguished from the modern state in the sense that it minimizes the physical means of force by fair methods. Nonetheless, so long as violent, repressive state apparatuses are present, it has not yet reached the final stage of a peace state. Thus, in reality, a peace state can only exist as a “process.” When the concept of a peace state is applied to South Korea, some

may refute it by saying that unilateral arms reduction can endanger its security. Two rebuttals to such criticism can be made in view of inter-Korean relations. One is that, insofar as a peace state is a state, it is not entirely cleared of arms and retains a minimum defense capability. The other is that, historically, unilateral arms reduction actually led to mutual arms curtailment in the South-North relations, as occurred when the South reduced its ground force in response to the North's arms reduction in the second half of the 1950s.³⁷

Second, a peace state pursues both peace-based and ethical diplomacy. A peace state as an ethical state may be criticized for slighting national interests. However, peace and security will be attained by harmonizing national interests with the norms of international society, where no state can seek absolute security by sole reliance on its own power. Mutual security and cooperative security are products of that awareness. To realize mutual security and cooperative security on the peninsula is to construct a peace regime upon it. Mediated by mutual and cooperative security, this awareness should expand to recognize human beings as the object of security. That is the notion of "human security." When the object of security is the nation-state, repressive state apparatuses such as the National Security Law are legitimized. The peace state ultimately intends to replace security discourse with a peace discourse. We must consider both civil society and the government as actors in peace diplomacy and ethical diplomacy. War-deterrent power in a peace state is equal to the peace-seeking capacity of civil society. Civil society in all Northeast Asian countries and their solidarity for peace will be a key support base for peace on the peninsula.

Third, a peace state is grounded on an accumulative system that actively pursues peace by removing structural violence in political and economic arenas. The neo-liberal system of accumulation is presently producing great economic inequalities. The imbalance between social polarization and excessive capital in South Korean society poses a threat to democracy, and a crisis of democracy in the

37. Hamm (1998, 245).

South can endanger the peace process on the peninsula.³⁸ As mentioned previously, the incorporation of the 2000 system into the 1997 system will likely deepen economic inequality at the peninsular level. Sustainable development coupled with the peace process should be the physical basis of the peace state. If development assistance for North Korea is aimed at both sustainable growth and the peace process, it will help to overcome the system of division, which will, in turn, contribute to the transformation of South Korean society.

Choosing actors in this process is important to realize the ideal of a peace state, and is also a process of social consensus. Considering the political and economic foundation of a peace state, peace and welfare must be integrated to establish a historical bloc of peace and progressive forces.³⁹ The two agenda of trying to reduce the North-South economic gap and overcome social polarization in the South must be closely connected. Here lies the reason why development aid for the North in conjunction with the peace process is proposed as a major task among many for the making of a peace state. If the South as a peace state changes its understanding of the statehood of the North, the 2000 system will evolve as a vector of courses 1 and 2 in Figure 1, and the historic experiment will enhance our imagination regarding reunification of the peninsula.

Conclusion: From June 15 Discourse to a Peace State

Hyegang Choe Han-gi, a 19th century scholar from the Joseon dynasty, pictured a new world by combining East Asian tradition and Western modernity. Although he had a rather naive view of Western imperialist domination, it can be argued that his idea of realizing great unity and love for peace in a unified world looks very similar to the making of a peace state, which is presented in this paper as a solution to overcoming the system of division on the peninsula. Choe

38. Suh (2006, 229).

39. Suh (2006, 230).

wanted to add to the Five Ethical Virtues, which were once regarded as the ultimate human virtues, the virtue that “peace rests with the people,” which may be an “ethical thematization of a virtue that world citizens must have.”⁴⁰ But Choe’s philosophy did not lead to the formation of a historical bloc, and the Joseon dynasty fell to colonialism. Of course, the current situation is different from that of the late nineteenth century, but it is as tumultuous now as it was then. It is time to plan a new future for the peninsula, and diverse interests are competing over the plans. We stand at a crossroads and have to make a choice.

June 15 discourse contains one possible choice, and it is encouraging that the term is used in both Koreas. However, in my view, the June 15 discourse is ultimately limited. This limitation arises mainly from the (neo)functionalist assumption of the peace process. South-North economic exchange and cooperation alone cannot relieve the confrontational structure that exists between the two. Unless they both change the security discourse, evolution of the 2000 system will not take place. Two preconditions must be met to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue through cooperation. One is that the two sides must give up the arms race. As long as the South is increasing its arms, the nuclear issue cannot be solved through cooperation. If the South is transformed into a peace state, and the North is, too, via interaction between the two, then the nuclear issue might be resolved eventually. The other is that the international community must approve of the peace (reunification) process of the peninsula. Such approval may be attained if a peaceful (reunified) peninsula is not perceived as a threat to neighboring countries. The June 15 discourse does not include the security and economic concerns of Korea’s neighbors regarding a unified peninsula. This highlights the importance of the Northeast Asian regional standpoint for the resolution of issues concerning the peninsula.

The shift from the June 15 discourse to the peace state discourse is also needed to resolve conflicts in South Korean society. Peace

40. Park H. (2003).

state discourse may be a good answer to the conflict among progressives. The reproduction of the 2000 system shows that inter-Korean relations have reached a point where even conservatives cannot oppose reconciliation and cooperation. Attention is paid to conflicts among progressives for the sake of the evolution of the 2000 system. The conflicts revolve around two axes; one is reunification vs. peace, and the other is the phases involved in overcoming the system of division. The division between reunification and peace seekers is due to contradictions in the 2000 system itself. The 2000 system can be reproduced if the two sides—both Koreas—recognize each other’s statehood. Thus, both reunification and peace can be open alternatives for the evolution of the 2000 system. Unfortunately, however, a fundamental change in security discourse does not seem feasible at this point among the reunification movement groups, who are leading the June 15 discourse. They still rely on the old-fashioned nationalist notion of building a rich country and a strong army. Such a policy can downgrade the quality of life of people living on the peninsula and function as a barrier to gaining international approval of the peace (reunification) process on the peninsula.

Conflict over which steps to take to overcome the system of division can be summarized, albeit in overly simplified terms, as a confrontation between the stance that democratization cannot be achieved without overcoming the division and the stance that high quality democratization is a prerequisite to peace. This looks like a reproduction of the debate in the South Korean progressive social movement and social science community during the 1980s, which was divided between the national liberation group arguing for “reunification first, reform later,” and the people’s democracy group, which favored “reform first, reunification later.” Peace state discourse may offer an opportunity to move beyond the various divergent ideas and efforts to overcome the system of division, as it argues that quality democratization can occur if it is linked with security discourse and fundamental policy change. Also, various sectors of progressives must ally themselves to form a historical bloc to overcome the system of division. Measures to resolve conflicts in the June 15 Commit-

tee should be openly explored. Peace state discourse offers a common ground for the alliance of progressives.

Finally, I would like to discuss the relevance of current peace state discourse, which seeks to build a people-enriching and peace-loving state on the peninsula, by applying the discourse to a specific case—the redesigning of the Gaeseong Industrial Complex based on peace state discourse. The Gaeseong Industrial Complex is a symbol of reconciliation and cooperation between the South and the North. Its construction provided an opportunity to reduce tension between the two sides. Though it exists on a small scale, several North Korean army battalions were repositioned to the rear to build the complex. However, many limitations still exist. First, South Korean progressives have never taken issue with Gaeseong, the old capital of the Goryeo dynasty, being the site of the construction. Maybe this is because the grand cause of reconciliation and cooperation was deemed more important than the cultural heritage of the city. Secondly, South Korean progressives should have been the first to raise the issue of the working conditions of the complex. The labor movement groups that led democratization in the South in the 1980s should have asked whether the monthly wage of \$57.5 was appropriate and how the wages are distributed to North Korean workers. Thirdly, the name “Gaeseong Industrial Complex” is too narrowly defined to fully signify the future of the peninsula. The complex born of a combination of South Korean capital and advanced technology and North Korea’s cheap labor is not stable enough to enhance reconciliation and cooperation between the two. From the North Korean standpoint, the complex confirms its inferior status vis-à-vis South Korea. So, what if a “Gaeseong Peace City” were built as a high-tech space for reconciliation and cooperation between the two Koreas? On a final note, I would like to point out that South Korean nationalists on both the right and left believe the recent expansion of economic cooperation between North Korea and China functions as a barrier to South-North economic cooperation, and this criticism does not seem to address the fact that the peace (reunification) process of the peninsula needs international approval. The international community must

approve it if true national cooperation between the two Koreas is to be achieved. A forward-looking alternative, such as found in a “Gaeseong Peace City,” which would entail the cooperation of various nations and the contemplation of a Northeast Asian community, may be a proactive approach to creating a peaceful peninsula.

The discourse of a peace state identifies the economic disparity between the North and South as a threat to peace on the peninsula. Development assistance for the North is unavoidable from the viewpoint of peace diplomacy and ethical diplomacy. A model of sustainable development needs to be created, in which not only capital but also diverse civil society groups participate and march along with the peace process. The building of a social consensus regarding the form and content of development assistance for the North is critical for the transformation of the neo-liberalist, accumulative system in the South as well. For a people-enriching and peace-loving peninsula, the peace state discourse warrants serious review as an alternative to the goal of overcoming the system of division.

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