

# Gone but Not Dead, Sprouting but Not Yet Blossoming: *Transitions in the System of Division, 1980-1997*

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## Abstract

*This article reviews inter-Korean relations in the period from 1980 to 1997 during which Chun Doo-hwan, Roh Tae-woo, and Kim Young-sam led their respective governments. Détente became more prevalent around the division system on the Korean peninsula with various actors' choices intersecting with one another. At the peninsular level, the South and the North agreed on a new set of definitions for mutual recognition—albeit with limitations—in the 1991 South-North Basic Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-Aggression, and Exchanges and Cooperation, which created the so-called the S-N Basic Agreement “regime.” However, the regime broke down soon after, making the Korean peninsula problem an international issue. In 1994, the United States and DPRK made a breakthrough in the Geneva Agreed Framework, despite which the division system developed minor fissures but remained intact. This failure shows that, despite changes in the international system surrounding the Korean peninsula, the division system will be extremely difficult to overcome unless each actor realizes a change of the mindset that is supplemented by a strong resolve to act on it.*

**Keywords:** inter-Korean relations, division system, South-North Basic Agreement, Geneva Agreed Framework, post-Cold War, 1987 Democratic Revolution, Seoul Olympic Games

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### A Problématique: The Year 1989

The year 1989 was a special year in the history of North-South relations, marked by unapproved visits of several prominent South Korean nationals to North Korea. The water pipe broke loose when Hwang Suk-young, the renowned novelist and spokesperson of the Korean People's Artist Federation, made a surprise visit to the North on March 20. Hwang was followed five days later by Chung Kyung-mo, Yoo Won-ho, and Reverend Moon Ik-Hwan, a dissident and advisor to the National Alliance of Democratic Organizations. Representing the National Association of College Students for Democracy, Lim Soo-kyung arrived in North Korea on June 30 and was joined by Catholic priest Moon Kyu-hyun on July 25. The Republic of Korea's National Security Act (NSA) defines such actions as an "escape" to the DPRK, "an area controlled by an anti-state organization." The travels were arranged by official invitation from relevant North Korean organizations: Hwang from General Federation of the Union of Literature and the Arts of Korea, Rev. Moon from Committee for Peaceful National Reunification, and Lim from the Korean Students' Committee, respectively. However, the NSA regards such visits as constituting a crime punishable by the maximum penalty of death. Finally, on June 27, lawmaker Suh Kyung-won of the opposition party (Party for Peace and Democracy) was arrested for his secret visit to the North in August 1988.

What emerged from the illegal visits to North Korea is the so-called "internal security politics" (*gongan jeongguk*) that sought an opportunity to root out "the pro-left communist forces" in South Korea. Conservatives within the Roh Tae-woo government who used the Cold War as a frame of reference were behind the internal security politics. All attempts by South Korea's civil society to contact North Korea were soon after ruled out as illegal. Meanwhile, inter-governmental dialogue continued to take place. When Lim Soo-kyung entered the Rungrado May Day Stadium to attend the opening ceremony of the 13th Annual World Student Celebration, Presidential policy advisor Park Chul Un was watching her from the platform,

seated in the same row as President Kim Il Sung and Secretary Kim Jong Il. Despite or perhaps because of the disputes over internal security politics and competing proposals on peace and reunification of the Korean peninsula, the South and North held a series of “official talks” including preliminary meetings for high-level talks, sports talks, and red-cross talks, as well as preparatory contacts for the inter-Korean parliamentarians’ conference. If we can reduce the actors in the South-North relationship to merely the South and the North, we can define the inter-Korean relations of 1989 to be a game of actors on three different layers. Dialogues coexisted at “secret,” “official,” and “illegal” levels. What draws our attention is the separation of South Korea’s state and civil society caused by democratic movements and democratization in South Korea. As a result, inter-Korean relations became multifaceted. On top of official and unofficial relationships, South Korea’s civil society came into contact with the North Korean state, although unlike the former relationships the latter was declared illegal by South Korean law and also according to domestic power relationships in the political sphere.

The South and North displayed an asymmetric relationship in terms of actors involved, which in turn could have incurred South-South conflict in political and civil societies and thus activated North Korea’s united front strategy in South Korea. In other words, democratic movements and the subsequent democratization led to the structuralization of “linkage politics” in the South, where South Korea’s “domestic level” and the system of division interact with each other. The year 1989 was the first year of the post-Cold War era. The Berlin Wall fell in November, and the Cold War came to an end at the Malta Summit in December. The post-Cold War era was triggered by a collapse in the balance of power, following an implosion in the socialist countries. The impact reached both Koreas which had previously been outposts of the Cold War. The South and the North had to revise their logic for alliances, previously based on the concept of enemies and threat. The revision was asymmetric. North Korea’s sensitivity towards enemies and threat heightened, as alliances with the USSR and China weakened. Immediately, the

North faced politico-economic isolation and a crisis. On the other hand, the South seized the opportunity to set the tone and direction for restructuring of alliance relationship. The post-Cold War era found a collapse in the balance of power between the South and the North. While the international system evolved into the U.S. unipolar system, the inter-Korean relations were impacted by differently functioning relationships from a web of complex bilateral and multilateral relations among ROK, DPRK, the United States, China, Russia, and Japan. In particular, post-Cold War period showed an early impact on the inter-Korean relations, in that the bilateral relationships were reshaped between U.S.-China, ROK-U.S., and DPRK-China. Another impact was that new relationships were constructed between ROK-USSR, ROK-China, and U.S.-DPRK. From a different angle, one could explain that the international level that previously imposed structural constraints on the inter-Korean relations was weakened. This, in turn, allowed the system of division on the Korean peninsula to acquire "relative autonomy" from the international system, while the division system had effects on the international and domestic systems. The division system subsequently transitioned to one based upon a new historical structure.

Democratization and the end of the Cold War came concurrently. A coincidence as it may be, what those events did on the Korean peninsula was to destroy the "Cold War stability" of the division system. The new path for the system, however, was not preordained. There could have been a competition between path-dependent and path-shaping options of the actors concerned. Nevertheless, structural realignment in the international system boosted the autonomy of the actors concerned. It also enabled a rise of opportunity on the Korean peninsula to replace the Cold War historical structure with a new one, by the choice of the actors at domestic and international levels. In other words, a web of interactions by multiple actors initiated a tectonic change in the division system. As various conceptions of the future of the system competed against each other, the current of dissolution coexisted with the current of continuation.

This article will review the period from 1980 to 1997 during

which Chun Doo-hwan, Roh Tae-woo, and Kim Young-sam led their respective administrations. Détente became more prevalent around the division system on the Korean peninsula with various actors' choices intersecting with one another. At the peninsular level, the South and the North agreed on a new set of definitions for mutual recognition—albeit with limitations—in the 1991 South-North Basic Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-Aggression, and Exchanges and Cooperation, which created the so-called the S-N Basic Agreement “regime.” However, the regime broke down soon after, making the Korean peninsula problem an international issue. In 1994, the United States and DPRK made a breakthrough in the Geneva Agreed Framework. Still, neither the S-N Basic Agreement, nor the Agreed Framework, resulted in dissolution and overcoming the division system. Mindful of the domestic, peninsular, and international levels that influence inter-Korean relations, this paper will attempt to describe the history of inter-Korean relations with a focus on a process that begins with the détente of the division system, builds with S-N Basic Agreement, and ultimately leads to the Geneva Accords. Towards the end, I will use my historical description to present implications for theorizing the inter-Korean relations, although my proposal may go against a conventional wisdom that a good theory enables writing of a good history.

### **Second Wave of Détente, 1980-1987**

Looking into the history of inter-Korean relations during the Cold War period, one may agree that the international system on the Korean peninsula best fit into the neorealist international relations theory. Neither common government nor joint authority existed, as ROK and DPRK engaged in an arms race to secure the balance of power on the peninsular level. The international system also shared the attributes of the division system. In an effort to preserve their own identities, South and North Korea (re)produced a unique relationship by repeating hostility in practice but asserting discourses of reunification in

the realm of *Sollen*. The presence of the South functioned as a justifying mechanism for the North and vice versa. To put it another way, hostility and interdependence coexisted on the peninsular level.<sup>1</sup>

At the international level, the new Cold War system of 1980s was composed both of traditional power politics and *détente*. When the Soviet army invaded Afghanistan in 1979, the United States cut off all economic and cultural exchanges with the USSR and boycotted the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games. The Reagan administration (1981-1989) identified the USSR as an “evil empire.” The normalization of diplomatic relations with another socialist giant, China, was an attempt by the United States to keep the USSR in check. The United States sought to forge an anti-Soviet front and exercise its preponderance of power by resorting to armament expansion such as the Strategic Defense Initiative for addressing of the Soviet threat and appeasement policy towards China for counter-balancing purposes. A turning point came in September 1982, when China no longer felt threatened by the USSR and switched to the independent line of diplomacy at the 12th Congress of Chinese Communist Party. China’s position was consciously anti-hegemonic in pursuing “equidistant diplomacy” with the United States and the USSR. Moving away from the wishful thinking of the United States, the new Cold War was soon transformed into a U.S.-China-USSR tripartite relationship (Kang 1985). Gorbachev seized power in 1985, advocating political and economic reform agenda. Thus, a *détente* was initiated between the United States and USSR.

Under the new Cold War of the 1980s, the Korean peninsula underwent major political developments that strongly influenced inter-Korean relations. In the South, Park Chung-hee government collapsed in 1979 and the new military group seized power through the coup d’état of December 12. After making a bloodbath out of the Gwangju uprising in May 1980, Chun Doo-hwan established a government in September through the Revitalizing Reform Constitution (a.k.a. Yusin Constitution). The military strongman further managed

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1. For more on neorealist theory, see Waltz (1979). For the theory of division system, see Paik (1994, 2006).

to amend the constitution for a seven-year single-term presidency in 1981, and Chun was sworn into office to lead the 5th Republic. Meanwhile, Pyongyang held the 6th Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea in October 1980 to "officially" name Kim Jong Il his father's successor. At this meeting, Kim Il Sung made a proposal that separated peace and reunification on the Korean peninsula. Kim Il Sung made a bilateral peace treaty proposal to the United States and the Democratic Federal Republic<sup>2</sup> of Koryo proposal (the DFRK proposal) as a reunification formula to the South (Kim I. 1987, 322-339). From then onwards, Kim pursued peace only with Washington and reunification only with Seoul. To the North, a state of peace meant that the KOR-U.S. alliance was completely dissolved and the Armistice Agreement was replaced by a peace treaty.

As was the case in early 1970s, the Sino-U.S. détente in the 1980s provided preconditions for ice-thawing on the Korean peninsula, but the path to détente was different from that of the 1970s. Pyongyang hailed China's approach towards the United States in the early 1970s, regarding it a victory for China and white flag hoisted by the United States. Thus, North Korea's perception at the time was that the new Sino-U.S. relations provided a window of opportunity for improvement in the U.S.-DPRK relations. However, the early 1980s was a totally different situation for North Korea. It is highly possible that Pyongyang conceived the Sino-U.S. détente to be a compromising deal, where China would accept the U.S. military presence in South Korea in return for termination of the U.S.-Taiwan Mutual Defense Treaty. Therefore, the Sino-U.S. détente of the early 1980s gave the North a chilling sense of isolation (Choi M. 2009, 321-330).

The 1980s was a decade of proposals and counterproposals thrown at each other. Competition was fierce, and two incidents

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2. *Yeonbang gonghwaguk* (federal republic) had been translated into "confederal republic" in English in North Korean literatures until 1990s. It seems that this is not an intentional mistranslation but an unintended mistake. North Korea has translated *yeonbang gonghwaguk* into federal republic in English since the 2000s. See Pyongyang University of Foreign Studies (2002).

helped build up momentum; the first was the designation of Seoul as the host city of the 1988 Summer Olympics. South Korea's bid was submitted by the Park Chung-hee government in September 1979, and the objective at the time was to achieve national unity, facilitate exchanges with the socialist bloc, and "secure an upper hand vis-à-vis North Korea." These ideas were challenged within the government after Chun Doo-hwan seized power. Nevertheless, the South Korean government expressed a strong resolve to win the bid, desperate to erase its image as a dictatorship. When IOC finally selected Seoul as the official venue for the Games of the XXIII Olympiad in September 1981,<sup>3</sup> it was an important moment for regime competition that expanded into areas outside the traditional political and military domains. Pyongyang decided to host the 13th World Festival of Youth and Student held in 1989, in an attempt to undercut Seoul. Despite the competition, the South still needed cooperation from socialist countries at large, including North Korea, in order to make sure that the games were not crippled by boycotts, as was the case in the Moscow Olympic Games. Also, North Korea had to come to the negotiation table to try and ensure that the South would not host the 1988 Olympic Games alone. The second factor was that the Chun government was facing a political crisis from the emergence of military dictatorship and ensuing resistance from the civil society. Seoul's crisis also provided a turning point for Pyongyang's policy toward South Korea. There was acquiescence as well as tacit support from the United States with regards to the new military group's coup d'état and its subsequent violent repression of the Gwangju uprising. As a result, a tide of anti-Americanism rose in South Korean civil society, including the 1982 arson incident of U.S.I.A.'s Busan office. This was a new situation for North Korea, and it responded by taking the

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3. For example, North Korea said that "the heroic Gwangju Uprising posed a momentum for the South Korean people's anti-fascist democratization struggle to transform into an anti-American independence struggle" (Jeon et al. 1987, 730). As seen in the *Rodong sinmun* editorial dated July 4, 1982, North Korea gave the same explanation to South Korea's anti-American demonstrations of the early and mid-1982.

offensive against the South with the “Proposal of Founding the Democratic Federal Republic of Koryo.”

The disputes surrounding resumption of inter-Korean talks in the early 1980s were largely about the North’s federalist approach and the South’s functionalist approach. North Korea’s “DFRK Proposal” calls for the North and the South to “recognize and tolerate each other’s ideas and social systems” and to establish “a government in which the two sides are represented on an equal footing,”<sup>4</sup> “under which they exercise regional autonomy with equal rights and duties,” in the form of a unified federal state with “one nation and two autonomies.” North Korea’s proposal was supplemented by a “Ten-Point Political Programme.”<sup>5</sup> In January 1982, the Chun Doo-hwan

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4. It puts forward policy for adherence to independence (*jajuseong*), effectuation of democracy and promotion of great national unity, effectuation of economic cooperation to ensure the development of an independent national economy, realization of north-south exchange and cooperation in the spheres of science, culture and education, reopening of transportation and communication links, systematic promotion of welfare for the entire people including working masses, formation of a combined national army, defending the national rights and interests of all overseas Koreans, coordination of the foreign activities of the two regional governments in a unified manner, and pursuance of a peaceful foreign policy (see Kong 1989, 31-95).
  5. “Provisional Agreement on Basic Relations between South and North Korea” proposal calls for the two sides to: (1) base their relations on the principle of equality and reciprocity; (2) seek peaceful resolution to all problems; (3) commit to non-interference in internal affairs; (4) maintain the existing regime of armistice while working out measures to end the arms race; (5) progressively open their societies to each other through various forms of exchange and cooperation; (6) respect each other’s bilateral and multilateral treaties and agreements concluded with third countries; and (7) establish a resident liaison mission in Seoul and Pyongyang. “Proposal for Twenty Pilot Projects” include connecting and opening of a highway between Seoul and Pyongyang, realization of reunion of separated families, designating and opening of the homeland of Mt. Seorak and south of Mt. Geumgang as a joint tourist zone, facilitation of free trade between the South and the North, allowing of free listening to each other’s regular radio programs, creation of joint fisheries zones, social and cultural exchanges, undertaking of joint research on national history, joint development and utilization of natural resources, conducting of a joint academic survey to study the ecological system inside the Demilitarized Zone, complete removal of military facilities from within the Demilitarized Zone. Sixty Years of Yearning for Reunification Publication Committee (2005, 97-98).

government announced its unification proposal, the “Formula for National Reconciliation and Democratic Unification,” which was composed of three parts: First, the South and the North will organize a “Consultative Conference for National Reunification (CCNR)” and make the drafted constitution into law through referendums. Second, the two sides will conclude a “Provisional Agreement on Basic Relations between South and North Korea.” Third, the South and the North will hold a face-to-face meeting between the top leaders. In February, Seoul followed up with a proposal for 20 pilot projects, which contains economic, social, and cultural exchanges as major elements and military cooperation as a supplementary measure (Kim I. 1987, 345).

Use of words such as “referendum” and “equal participation by the South and the North” clearly shows that there is a distinction between reunification policies of the two sides. On the other hand, the two found common ground in pursuit of economic, social, and cultural exchanges. However, South and North Korea had fundamental and irreconcilable differences regarding the path for overcoming the division between the two nations. As the ensuing debate indicates, the North had a clear intention of setting military issues, including the KOR-U.S. alliance as the main agenda, while the South placed stronger emphasis on functional exchange and cooperation. Subsequently, the division system became increasingly linked to the bilateral and trilateral relations among ROK, DPRK, and the United States in the mid- and late 1980s.

It will also be noteworthy to mention that Pyongyang displayed an ambivalent attitude toward the South Korean government. First, North Korea’s Central Committee of the Democratic Front for National Reunification proposed for convening of a “National Unification Facilitative Conference” to be “attended by pan-national delegates from the North and South political parties and social organizations and overseas compatriots” while excluding “Chun Doo-hwan puppet gangsters” from the delegation (Kong 1989, 100). Anti-American sentiments within the South’s civil society could be interpreted as a pro-North Korean stance. Thus, it is plausible that Pyongyang believed in

a united front that could emerge to challenge the South Korean government. As a result, Pyongyang felt more confident refusing to recognize the Chun Doo-hwan government as a legitimate party to reunification dialogue.

Second, North Korea proposed for DPRK-ROK-U.S. talks via China in October 1982, to guarantee peace on the peninsula as a prerequisite for national reunification. In January 1984, the North held a joint meeting of the Central People's Committee and the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly with the topic of "Regarding New Measures to Be Taken for Peaceful Resolution of the Korean issue." Afterwards, Pyongyang officially notified Washington and Seoul of its intention to open tripartite talks to explore a "U.S.-DPRK Peace Treaty" and "North-South Declaration of Non-Aggression." In a letter to the South Korean government, the North recognized not only the United States and DPRK as direct parties but also the "Seoul authorities, which is the other party directly related to tension," and added that "Seoul may participate with equal rights." Previously in July 1979, the KOR-U.S. Summit proposed DPRK-ROK-U.S. talks, which the North declined. The logic for refusal was that peace is an issue to be discussed with the United States, while reunification should be discussed with the South. Just one year ago, North Korea was unwilling to recognize the South authorities. Such a shift in policy toward the South requires a more thorough explanation.

North Korea has an official explanation to offer (Kong 1989, 106-118). Pyongyang asserted that the tripartite talks were a means to remove the ROK-U.S. military threat incurred by joint military exercises such as Team Spirit, eliminate the threat of war on the Korean peninsula, and create favorable terms for peaceful reunification. The North also added that the tripartite format had previously been proposed by the United States and ROK, and thus regarded its proposal to be acceptable to the two countries. In other words, the tripartite talks proposal could be construed as a "concession" on the part of North Korea. In particular, Pyongyang's proposal for the "North-South Declaration of Non-Aggression" is a change of wording from the "South-North Agreement on Non-Aggression," proposed by Presi-

dent Park Chung-hee in 1974. But this explanation does not give enough reason as to why Pyongyang suddenly came to recognize the South Korean authorities sometime between the end of 1982 and early 1983.

If the official explanation is not compelling enough, we may have to consider two more aspects. One is an external variable for North Korea. If we draw our attention to the fact that the proposal was made through China, we can assume that Sino-DPRK and Sino-U.S. relations influenced a policy shift in North Korea. The other option is to have a consequentialist explanation, by which there can be an attempt to discern Pyongyang's true intentions by following the unfolding of inter-Korean relations afterwards. In other words, we can do a reverse calculation by tracking down the events that occurred after the proposal came out. The tripartite talks structure is composed of two smaller processes, U.S.-DPRK and South-North talks. Therefore, we can use North Korea's ulterior intentions that have shown through the U.S.-DPRK and South-North relations as litmus papers for testing of North Korea's truthfulness in its intentions to pursue the tripartite talks.

It seems that the tripartite talks proposal resulted from interactions between Sino-DPRK relations and variables at the international level. Since the mid-1970s, North Korea has pushed for bilateral talks with the U.S via third countries such as Pakistan, Gabong, and Yugoslavia. As was mentioned above, however, the United States countered with a bilateral talks proposal within the tripartite process, this time bringing ROK into the picture. Around this time, China and the United States normalized relations, bringing China more directly into the debate. China weighed actual economic progress in Sino-ROK relations before formulating its Korean peninsula policy. What China wanted more than anything else was a stable management for the divided peninsula. China found itself redefining its role not as a pro-North patron but as a "mediator" and held a series of unofficial talks with DPRK in April 1981, April 1982, and (perhaps) August 1983 where it could have proposed three- or four-party talks. In September 1983, Deng Xiaoping met with U.S. Secretary of State C. Weinberger and expressed willingness to make arrangements for a

tripartite process. The United States ended up delivering a diplomatic letter to North Korea via China, a statement that included a phrase for tripartite talks (Choi M. 2009, 321-374).<sup>6</sup> China's initial preference was a four-party process where the North and the South played leading roles and the U.S. and China supporting roles, respectively. However, given the reluctance of North Korea, China backed off and opted instead for DPRK-ROK-U.S. talks to be held in "Beijing," which could be interpreted as three and half-party talks, if it was held in "Beijing." Although the North was opposed to the de facto recognition of the South as a direct party, it had to agree to China's mediation, or, to put it more bluntly, control. China in turn compensated North Korea with economic and military rewards and provided rhetoric of support for Pyongyang's reunification policy. Finally on October 9, the North sent a proposal letter to the Chinese government for the tripartite talks through its Beijing Embassy. The letter was delivered to the U.S. government against the backdrop of the Aung San terror incident on October 13.<sup>7</sup> Pyongyang sent a repeat of the proposal on December 3, and another one again in January 1984, when China's Premier Zhao Ziyang visited the United States and right before the Supreme People's Assembly was to be in session.

But the talks never materialized. The South released a statement calling for a direct inter-Korean dialogue on January 11, 1984. Two statements were issued from the U.S. State Department, first under the spokesperson's name on January 11, and then under the secre-

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6. See also Izumi Hajime's article in Kang (1985).

7. A former high-ranking diplomat slammed the terrorist attack as unpardonable atrocities but raised questions to why Myanmar was selected by President Chun Doo-hwan in the first place. "The precise reason for President Chun to include Burma as his visit destination yet to be disclosed. He had a strong adventurous attitude, as displayed in his African tour mixed with a larger-than-life heroism that may have driven him to believe that he can convert the pro-left Burma to a ROK-friendly nation. The end result was a violent collusion in diplomacy" (Lee S. K. 2009, 204-205). On November 4, 1983, the Burmese government declared the Aung San Terror Incident as an act of DPRK, before cutting off diplomatic relations with the North. Pyongyang released a Foreign Ministry statement and denied any relevance to the incident.

tary's name on January 12. In these statements, the United States expressed its preference for a direct dialogue between the South and the North, although it would also prefer a four-party process that includes China if neighboring states are to be included.<sup>8</sup> Korea and the United States seem to have believed that the tripartite format would effectively engage DPRK with the United States for peace talks and with Korea for reunification, respectively. Although it is a signatory nation to the 1953 Armistice Agreement, China had already pulled its troops out of North Korea and was not directly responsible for the then crisis on the Korean peninsula. Thus, North Korea asserted that China has no reason to participate in the talks, at least officially. The North went so far as to say that the four-party proposal was "absolutely absurd" (Kong 1989, 116-117).<sup>9</sup>

Despite the rejection of the tripartite talks proposal and the Aung San terror incident, inter-Korean talks resumed. Pyongyang invited Seoul to the negotiation table to establish a unified team in the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles. The South accepted, and the North-South Korean Sport Talks began in April 1984. Meanwhile, the Inter-Korean Red Cross talks resumed in September 1984, following North Korea's provision of aid to the South Korean flood victims. At the 8th round of inter-Korean Red Cross Talks held in May 1985, the two sides agreed on exchange visits by separated families and exchange performances by art troupes. The meeting of separated families in September was the first-ever exchange visit since national division. The two sides held inter-Korean economic talks starting from November 1984, and preliminary and preparatory contacts for the inter-Korean parliamentarians' conference starting from July 1985, respectively. In other words, official talks were in full swing.

Another noteworthy incident of this time is a series of secret preparatory talks held at the governmental level to realize an inter-

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8. For the full texts, see Shim (2001, 384-392).

9. Tension was in the air between China and DPRK over tripartite talks. As China wanted to recognize ROK as a de-facto direct party to the process, it is conceivable that North Korea was disgruntled. Kim Il Sung returned to the equidistant diplomacy by visiting the USSR for the first time in 23 years in May 1984.

Korean summit.<sup>10</sup> Special Advisor to the National Security Planning (NSP) Park Chul Un and Deputy Director of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea Han Si-hae headed their respective government delegations for a "secret dialogue." North Korea's special envoy, the Secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea Huh Dam visited South Korea in September, reciprocated by the Chief of National Security Planning Chang Se-dong the following month. Exchange visits by separated families and art performances can be regarded as a result of the secret talks, according to Park Chul Un's memoirs. While these official dialogues were going on, secret talks were operating behind closed doors. It is said that this secret project was given the code name "Plan 88" from which we may surmise that the South wanted to assure successful hosting of the 1988 Summer Olympics. Kim Il Sung explored the possibilities of joint-hosting and the formation of a unified team, and made an official remark on these issues in December 1985.

In the January 1st New Year Address of 1986, Pyongyang made an explicit and affirmative appraisal of the official dialogue, hailing it a new development occurring for the first time in 40 years since the division of the Korean peninsula. The North went on to add two conditions for furthering the dialogue: One was that the parties should not engage in military exercises against each other, and the other was to hold tripartite talks. Pyongyang repeated its previous proposal that tripartite process is necessary to resolve fundamental issues pertaining to peaceful reunification of the Korean peninsula. ROK-U.S. Team Spirit Exercise continued despite this assertion, and the North withdrew from all official meetings as of January 20. Team Spirit Exercise, the annual joint military exercise founded in 1976, was regarded by Pyongyang as a "nuclear war exercise aimed at invading North

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10. The secret talks were held 42 times until December 1991. In preparing for the secret dialogue, Seoul decided to "delay informing the United States for the time being and notify the United States when practical progress is achieved with the North." This testimony requires verification. With regards to the secret inter-Korean talks, see Park C. (2005). Although Park's memoir is cited in my paper, I am unable to verify truthfulness of Park's recollections.

Korea.” According to Park Chul Un’s memoir, Seoul’s intention was to continue the exercise at least until the Olympics so as to deter a possible provocation from the North.

Official dialogues became stalled, but secret talks have not ceased. In 1986, Park Chul Un met Han Si-hae on February 3 and again on February 12, agreeing to hotline installation on March 20. There was one exception to the halting of inter-Korean official dialogues. Using IOC as a go-between, the two sides continued to hold sport talks. The most contentious issues at the four rounds of sports talk, lasting until July 1987, were the joint-hosting of the Olympics and the composition of a unified team. The sport talks failed and came to an unsuccessful end, with the North announcing its intention to boycott the Seoul Games in January 1988. Although it is not clear when exactly North Korea decided to bid, Pyongyang was selected as the host city for the 1989 Summer Festival at the Organizing Committee meeting of the World Festival of Youth and Student, held in February 1987.<sup>11</sup>

### **Emergence and Collapse of the S-N Basic Agreement Regime**

The June Democratic Revolution of 1987 was a watershed moment for South Korea, when civil society was rediscovered as autonomous sphere from state power. The revolution also created unintended but inevitable consequence, which was the spreading of political and economic liberalism in Korean society. On the other hand, the June uprising of 1987 is a democratic revolution that occurred before dissolution of the Cold War regime, when the Cold War division system was in still active despite some fallout here and there. The 1987 Revolution came to an end when a balance of power was established between the authoritarian Cold War industrialists and democratic social forces, but such change was sufficient enough to create a cataclysmic change in the Cold War division system. As a result, South

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11. Korean Central News Agency (1990, 130).

Korea's ruling class was realigned after June 1987. It meant that a new group emerged from the ruling class, and it could as well be the group which would make a positive contribution to overcoming the division system.

The South and the North ended the 1986 recess in November 1988, after Seoul accepted Pyongyang's proposal for high-level political and military talks. During this period of intermission before inter-Korean dialogue resumed, the two sides continuously invited each other to the table without ever saying yes to the counterpart's proposal. Proposal after proposal was made for high-level political talks, high-level military talks, and talks between prime ministers. In particular, there were an increasing number of military proposals of significant scale from North Korea. ROK and the United States did not respond to these offers. On June 9, 1986, Minister of the People's Armed Forces, O Jin U, proposed tripartite military authority talks with the Commander-In-Chief of the United Nations Command and South Korea's Defense Minister. North Korea's proposal on "Establishing a Nuclear Free Zone on the Korean Peninsula" came out on June 23.<sup>12</sup> This proposal was a way of saying that the U.S.-provided nuclear umbrella should be lifted from ROK. In September, North Korea announced that it would deploy 150,000 troops on a peaceful construction mission. On July 13, 1987, North Korea once again announced a denuclearized peace zone proposal, and referred to itself as a "nuclear-free" NPT member state. On July 23, Pyongyang put forth a proposal on "Realizing a Disarmament at Large-scale," which differed from the previous package-deal proposal in that it called for a phased-out approach.<sup>13</sup> The USFK was also the target of

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12. North Korea's Nuclear Free Zone (NFZ) proposed to set the Korean peninsula as a zone that does not allow testing, producing, storing, and importing of nuclear weapons and ban transport of foreign nuclear arsenals from passing through the territorial land, air and sea of South and North Korea. In other words, the NFZ policy differs from a denuclearization policy which pertains only to a state without nuclear presence.
  13. Major contents are as follows: First, the South and the North will reduce its military troops during the period which will begin in 1988 and end in 1991. The troops will be reduced in three stages and the two sides will each maintain less than

“the phased-out withdrawal.” On December 14, North Korea announced that it would cut the number of Korea People’s Army by 100,000.

North Korea’s disarmament measures and proposal were connected to the dissolution of the Cold War system at the global level. The United States and USSR concluded the 1987 Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) by agreeing to withdraw mid- and short-range missiles and nuclear warheads from Europe. The Cold War was brought to an end at the Malta Conference in December 1989, and Sino-Soviet relations normalized after Gorbachev’s visit to China in May 1989. Economic problems were the other reason that North Korea pursued disarmament, stating that “reduced military capability will significantly relieve North and South Korea of financial burdens, which can be used instead as economic and agricultural investments” (Kong 1989, 139). Despite unilateral disarmament for economic turnaround, North Korea’s third seven-year plan (1987-1993) ended in failure.

Under the circumstance that Seoul and Pyongyang maintained contact points for secret dialogue without official talks, Korea’s civil society started to be an active agent in the cataclysmic changes reverberated in the Korean peninsula’s division system since the 1987 Revolution. The most important development during this period was a declaration made by the National Council of Churches in Korea (KNCC) in February 1988. Known as the “Korean Churches’ Declaration for National Unification and Peace,” the KNCC reaffirmed the July 4th North-South Joint Communiqué’s principles of reunification

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100,000-strong forces from 1992 onwards. Second, phased withdrawal of the USFK will take place. When South and North Korea reach their 100,000 target, the United States will remove its entire military presence including nuclear warheads and close down its military bases in the South. Third, Seoul, Pyongyang and Washington will notify their respective arms reduction measures to each other and also proclaim to the world. Fourth, the South and the North will create Peace Zone out of the Demilitarized Zone, so as to avoid military clash during the arms reduction period. A Neutral Nations Supervisory Troops will be stationed in the Peace Zone. Fifth, a multilateral arms reduction talks will be held in Geneva to discuss the above issues, in March 1988 (see *Rodong sinmun*, July 14, 1987).

of 1972, including autonomy, peace, and national cohesion, as well as presenting new principles, saying that “unification should not only realize common good and interest of the people and the state but also guarantee freedom and dignity of human beings in the best possible way.” The declaration was supplemented by a five-point recommendation to the South and North Korean governments, including healing hurtful memories incurred by national division, peoples’ participation to overcome the division, national unity beyond differences in thoughts, ideologies and systems, tension-reducing and peace-facilitating measures, and realization of national autonomy. The KNCC Declaration also presented military recommendations, which was a pioneering step at the time. KNCC’s recommendations for the military include a Peace Treaty replacing the Armistice Agreement, withdrawal of the USKF, dismantling of the United Nations Command, arms reduction, removal of nuclear arsenal from the Korean peninsula. The declaration triggered a heated debate on the division system between conservatives and progressives in South Korea, and is also thought to have contributed to the formulation of the July 7th Declaration by the Roh Tae-woo government in the same year (Lee M. 2001, 397-414).

Other groups from South Korea’s civil society that increasingly made their voices heard were student activist groups. Since the mid-1980s, anti-American and pro-DPRK sentiments began to strengthen among student activists, to whom the only way to realize their slogan, “No War, No Nuclear, and Yankee Go Home” was to reunite South and North Korea. Students began demanding a “South-North Students’ Meeting” in March 1988, to which North Korea’s Student Council of Kim Il Sung University expressed their willingness to participate. Meanwhile, civil society organizations demanded that the South Korean government accepted joint-hosting of the Olympic Games and organized a meeting for students from the two nations. However, the South Korean authorities disapproved the scheduled working-level meeting for the students’ meeting. The Roh Tae-woo government insisted on a single-window approach that enabled the only government to contact the North. Notwithstanding, the South

Korean civil society became increasingly aware that they needed a refusal exercise towards this approach (Paik 2007, 372).

Following democratization, there was a surge in reunification movements within civil society. The July 7th Declaration of 1988, or the Declaration for National Self-Reliance, Unification, and Prosperity, was the South Korean government's response to this rising tide. The July 7th Declaration sought peaceful coexistence of the ROK and DPRK, and its major contents included provisions for free travel between the two nations, exchange visits for separated families, recognition of inter-Korean trade as domestic trade, balanced growth of the national economy, cooperative diplomacy, and required the approval of the United States, China, Russia, and Japan on South and North Korean issues. The declaration presented a basic framework for a liberal North Korean policy of seeking peace by peaceful means. The July 7th Declaration reflected a strengthening of post-Cold War conservatives within South Korea's ruling class as an after-effect of democratization. Unlike their predecessors, the post-Cold War conservatives attempted to engage and embrace the North.<sup>14</sup> This position was partially driven by economic interest in that new opportuni-

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14. South Korea's engagement policy toward North Korea (*daebuk hwahae hyeomnyeok jeongchaek*) began to take shape in 1998 after Kim Dae-jung government was inaugurated, but its origins date back to the establishment of the Roh Tae-woo government in 1988. Embracement Policy (*pojong jeongchaek*) is another name for the engagement policy. Engagement policy is defined as the attempt to influence the political behavior of a target state through the comprehensive establishment and the enhancement of contacts with that state across multiple issue areas. Seoul's engagement policy toward North Korea fits into the general definition of an engagement policy, but if engagement is to be continuously implemented under the unique condition of national division, engagement needs to reach beyond engagement and to aim at "embracement policy," which is an attempt to achieve concession from the other party. This is why engagement is translated into *gwanyeo* in Korean. For example, reciprocity is a major component of the engagement policy and can be applied more broadly in Korea, in terms of asymmetry, inequality, and insimultaneity. Even if one is in support of the North Korea engagement policy, one can easily become opposed to such broad application and thus criticize South Korea's aid to the North as "all-carrots, no-stick policy" (*peoju-gi*). Therefore, there exists a divide of pro-engagement and pro-embracement groups within the North Korean engagement policy supporters.

ties were identified for market penetration into North Korea, as well as other socialist economies. The July 7th Declaration also functioned as an inducement for socialist countries to participate in the Seoul Olympic Games only a few weeks away.

In October 1988, President Roh Tae-woo delivered a speech at the UN General Assembly. Under the title “A Path to Open Reconciliation and Reunification on the Korean Peninsula,” President Roh called for a Six-Party North-East Peace Council attended by ROK, DPRK, the United States, Japan, China, and the USSR. Also proposed were the establishment of a Peace City in the demilitarized zone, and replacement of the armistice treaty by a peace treaty on the Korean peninsula. President Roh’s announcement of “The Korean National Community Unification Formula” in September 1989 identified a confederation path for coexistence and coprosperity leading to a full integration. “The Inter-Korea Exchange and Cooperation Act” and the “Inter-Korean Cooperation Fund Act” were legal-financial mechanisms that make more specific of the presented path. These proposals were delivered to the North through a secret channel.<sup>15</sup> As Park Chul Un recalls, there was serious concern for forward-looking proposal of the Roh government, from the “American-obsessed and ultra-conservative group.”

Meanwhile, Pyongyang was “deeply concerned” that 1988 was going to be “the most tension-driven and complicated time.” The 1988 New Year Address expressed North Korea’s concerns for absorption.<sup>16</sup> After mentioning reconciliation and solidarity of the South and the North, Pyongyang asserted that “reunification is not an issue of the other gulping you down or being eaten up alive. Neither is it an issue of one party overwhelming the other to seize upper hand.” As was the case in the tripartite talks proposal, Pyongyang demanded a South-North Non-Aggression Declaration, the U.S. removal of nuclear weapons deployed in the ROK, and a U.S.-DPRK peace treaty. Moreover, the North wanted the cessation of Team Spirit Exercises, joint-

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15. *Rodong sinmun*, September 14, 1989.

16. *Rodong sinmun*, January 1, 1988.

hoisting of the 1988 Olympic Games, multilateral arms reduction talks, and end of slanderous rhetoric. To resolve these problems, North Korea asserted that a “North-South joint meeting” attended by authorities, representatives of political parties and social organizations, and leaders of all sectors. The North deemed the “KNCC Declaration” of February 1988 as a demand to “withdraw the U.S. troops and nuclear warheads, and guarantee peace.” However, the July 7th Declaration was criticized by the North as an attempt to “perpetuate the national division.”<sup>17</sup> In the 1989 New Year address, Pyongyang made positive appraisal of the reunification movement in South Korea’s civil society and called for an inter-Korean political consultative body. Leaders of South Korea’s Democratic Justice Party, Party for Peace and Democracy, Democratic Unionist Party, and New Democratic Justice Party, along with Cardinal Stephen Kim Souhwan, Reverend Moon Il-hwan, and political dissident Paik Ki-wan were invited to Pyongyang. Rev. Moon responded to the invitation in March 25, 1989. His visit provided a turning point in North Korea’s reunification proposals as they began shifting toward peaceful co-existence.

Rev. Moon Ik-hwan released a statement upon his arrival in Pyongyang, saying that he was “firmly convinced that what South Korea has been aspiring to promote, whether they be human rights or democratization issues, could not be ultimately achieved without reunification of the South and the North.” He ended his statement with a quote from deceased dissident leader Jang Joon-ha: “All types of reunification are virtuous.” Rev. Moon met with Kim Il Sung and discussed the “provisional cross-recognition” issue before announcing the “Joint Statement of Moon Ik-hwan and the Committee for Peaceful National Reunification” on April 2, 1989. Provision IV of this statement stipulates a reunification under a federation system with a peaceful coexistence principle, while Provision VI makes it clear that “inter-Korean exchange and progressive reunification under a federation system asserted by Rev. Moon Ik-hwan is not an inclina-

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17. *Rodong sinmun*, July 11, 1988.

tion for two Koreas,” respectively. The two provisions are said to be the origins of a “federation of lower stage,” which the North came to propose in 1991 (Moon 1999, 337; Jang 2002, 387-388). This joint statement engraves “coexistence” as a principle and “progressiveness” as a methodology for reunification, respectively. Although the statement was produced from an “illegal dialogue,” it is evaluated to be a historically important agreement that came from civil society participation from the South.<sup>18</sup> Pyongyang criticized the “Korean National Community Unification Formula” as an attempt for unification by absorption, as it specified reunification under one country and one system. Instead, the North envisioned a loose form of federation, a formula where power is symmetrically allocated. Under this “one country, two systems” matrix, the two respective governments would coexist for a significant amount of time and a national unification organization would be founded by representatives from two sides in equal numbers. At the discourse level, Pyongyang was opposed to a “two Korea policy,” but in actuality the North was gearing towards a federal state system under which local governments coexist for a substantive amount of time.

In the aftermath of Reverend Moon’s visit to North Korea in 1989, the so-called “internal security politics” began to gain force in the South. The cold-war conservatives within the ruling class seized the opportunity to suppress South Korea’s civil society’s efforts to contact the North Korea. To these conservatives, the policy of reconciliation and cooperation meant that there should be a single window for all communication with the North, monopolized by the South Korean government. The single window approach also gave them justifying grounds for expanding internal security politics. Cold war “conservatives” continued to lead the internal security politics debate

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18. South Korea’s reunification activist, Lee Seung-hwan, believes that Rev. Moon succeeded in “persuading” President Kim Il Sung, whose previous position was that a provisional cross-approval can be a Two Koreas policy. Ultimately, this persuasion led a policy switch, as evidenced by North Korea’s accession to the UN (Lee S. 2009).

(Park C. 2005, 68), although the government continued to make North Korea proposals. Despite these developments, however, all exchanges and cooperation efforts, including the Mt. Geumgang tourism project envisioned by Chairman Chung Ju-yung of the Hyundai Business Group, were derailed. Because of democratization and collapse of the Cold War regime, some of the cold-war conservatives took on softer stances and helped to create the foundation for a more liberal North Korea policy. Still, cold-war conservatives were vehemently opposed to the government embracing the civil society. It was certainly not the right time for post cold-war conservatives to form an alliance with the liberalist opposition party to take the initiative of lobbying for the North Korea policy of reconciliation and cooperation. The latter group found secret dialogue led by the former group hard to accept, and did not want to be connected to the civil society's reunification group because of the internal security politics.

Despite the fact that South Korea's political situation was under internal security politics, inter-Korean official talks resumed after the 1988 Olympics. The talks went into recess in mid-1989, but resumed again in late 1989, followed by many more talks in various sectors. In February 1989, the two sides held a preparatory meeting for high-level talks and a preliminary contact meeting for inter-Korean parliamentary talks. Sports officials also met to explore a unified team to represent the South and the North in the 1990 Beijing Asian Games. Working-level officials had a separate meeting to discuss the second-round homecoming visit of separated families and art troupe performances.

During this period, the U.S.S.R. and Eastern European countries went through system transformation. One of the two parties that sustained the Cold War system came collapsed fully as a result of the increasing activity and power of civil societies of these socialist countries. The Supreme People's Assembly of DPRK responded to the South's liberal policy with a 5-point program in May 1990<sup>19</sup> by

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19. "Bring the Advantage of Our Socialism into Full Play," *Rodong sinmun*, May 25, 1991.

proposing: A North-South Declaration of Non-Aggression and DPRK-U.S. Peace Agreement; free-exchange and full access to the people; cooperative diplomacy; South-North dialogue at the pan-national level; and formation of a pan-national united front. Given the political situation and power relationship in the post-Cold War era, North Korea opted for “regime protection.” The proposed pan-national united front was a display of North Korea’s resolve to form a common front with pro-unification social groups in the Korean peninsula. As a result of these efforts, certain groups within South Korea’s civil society, the North Korean authority, and overseas Koreans reached an agreement to form a united front, the “Pan-Korean Alliance for Reunification.” This organization was later declared illegal by the ROK government.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, international variables that impacted inter-Korean relations began to change shape, including new developments in U.S.-DPRK, ROK-U.S., and DPRK-Japan relations. In December 1988, the United States started to contact North Korea in Beijing. The U.S. State Department put together the “East Asia Strategy Initiative” (EASI) in April 1990, in compliance with the 1989 Nunn-Warner Amendment. The initiative revised the parts of the ROK-U.S. alliance for the partial withdrawal of the USFK in three phases. The Roh Tae-woo government said that it would agree to a reduction in U.S. troops, provided that North Korea’s military threat was extinguished. In October 1991, Seoul and Washington agreed to an all-out withdrawal of all tactical nuclear weapons deployed by the USFK. Meanwhile, Pyongyang entered into diplomatic normalization talks with Japan in January 1991. The improved U.S.-DPRK relationship, restructuring of ROK-U.S. alliance, and the beginning of DPRK-Japan normalization talks all played a positive role in improving inter-Korean relationships.

In 1991, the division system saw a migration from the 1953 armistice regime to the S-N basic agreement regime for peaceful coexistence. Seoul and Pyongyang held five rounds of high-level talks from September 1990 that lasted until December 1991, the month that the S-N basic agreement was concluded. Two issues were the

bone of contention. First, the North wanted “One Korea” but the South wanted to “recognize the realities of national division and start improving relations thereof.” Second, the North wanted to give priority to “politico-military affairs” while the South wanted “exchange and cooperation” first (Lim 2008, 182).

The first issue was directly related to the UN membership application. At the time, the South had expressed its wish to join the UN without North Korea if there was no consent for joint accession. The North remained committed to the “5-Point Policy for National Reunification” of 1973, which calls for a single membership accession. However, the USSR and China informed the DPRK of their unwillingness to exercise veto power for South Korea’s accession without the North. A decisive blow came from Premier Li Peng, who notified the North of China’s intention during his visit in May 1991. This led to Pyongyang’s statement on May 27, 1991 that “the DPRK government chooses to join the UN to overcome a difficult but temporary situation that was created by the Southern authority.”<sup>20</sup> With this statement, Pyongyang submitted its application form to the UN before Seoul did. Although it was insisted to be merely a measure against a temporary situation, it was a withdrawal from their earlier position. The South sent its application on August 5. In September 1991, the South and the North jointly obtained UN membership.

To resolve the second issue, a parallel approach should be pursued to promote exchange and cooperation and to deal with military tensions at the same time. However, the North continued to assert that a peace treaty would only be pursued with the United States and a non-aggression declaration only with the South, respectively. The so-called S-N Basic Agreement Regime is the result of the “South-North Basic Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-Aggression, and Exchanges and Cooperation (S-N Basic Agreement)” of December 13, 1991. The formulation of the S-N Basic Agreement was possible because there was a mix of dialogues at the official, secret, and illegal levels. Park Chul Un insisted that the secret dialogue was based on

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20. *Rodong sinmun*, May 29, 1991.

the principles of self-determination and direct-parties and provided a foundation for the S-N Basic Agreement (Park C. 2005, 77). The agreement was similar both in content and style to the “Korean Churches’ Declaration for National Unification and Peace” by the National Council of Churches in Korea (KNCC) in February 1988.

The S-N Basic Agreement defines South-North relations “not as relations between two countries but as a special relationship formulated provisionally in pursuit of reunification.” Such a definition was devised to carefully avoid a debate on whether the inter-Korean relationship pertains to a single or two different state(s). The agreement is composed of a preamble, which describes the special relationship, four chapters, and 25 articles. The chapters include: I) Reconciliation, II) Non-Aggression, III) Exchanges and Cooperation, and IV) Amendment and Effectuation. The basic agreement set up a foundation for a new type of regime aiming at coexistence within the division system framework. Seoul and Pyongyang reached a consensus that mutual benefits would be brought by resolution of political and military conflicts, exchange and cooperation, and establishment of a systematic mechanism to govern inter-Korean relations. Right after the “S-N Basic Agreement” was signed, the Roh Tae-woo government announced that, “right now, there is not a single nuclear warhead in our country.” On December 31, the two sides concluded “the South-North Joint Declaration on Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.” North Korea announced its plans for the “Rajin-Sonbong Free Trade Zone” in December 1991 and entered into a Safeguards Agreement with IAEA in January 1992. In the same month, South Korea’s Defense Ministry officially suspended the Team Spirit exercise, which has been a contentious issue at the basic agreement negotiations. By removing these stumbling blocks, prime ministers from the two sides effectuated the S-N Basic Agreement in Pyongyang in February 1992. The agreement went through review at the joint meeting of the Central People’s Committee and the Standing Committee of the Supreme People’s Assembly before being ratified by President Kim Il Sung. As for South Korea, the approval did not involve ratification by the National Assembly but came from President Roh Tae-woo directly.

The ROK-DPRK-U.S. relationship in the post-Cold War era seemed to be on a smooth track.

However, the South-North Basic Agreement failed before establishing a new division system. The process that led to this failure helps us identify the archetype structure that influences inter-Korean relations in the post-Cold War, post-democratization period. The post-Cold War environment enabled the United States and DPRK, to make contact, further creating a new tripartite relationship of ROK, DPRK, and the United States. Improvement in U.S.-DPRK relationship had a positive impact on inter-Korean relations, while strengthening of KOR-U.S. alliance had a negative influence. A heightened South-South conflict had a negative impact on inter-Korean relations. The "S-N Basic Agreement" broke down for the several reasons (Koo 2008, 416-417). First, Pyongyang and Washington had a rift over the nuclear issue. After conducting six nuclear audits in North Korea from 1992 to 1993, IAEA demanded yet another special audit of the North. U.S.-DPRK and Japan-DPRK relations were not improved. The agreement with the United States over conducting a nuclear audit in South Korea was not implemented. The U.S.-DPRK conflict during this time is known as the first North Korea Nuclear Crisis.

How did the first nuclear crisis incur a collapse of the "Basic Agreement"? Two factors are the likely causes. First was a change in policy from Washington. The 23th KOR-U.S. Security Consultative Meeting (SCM) expressed concerns for North Korea's nuclear arms development in November 1991, before cancelling the USFK troop reduction plan. The 24th Security Consultative Meeting held on October 8, 1992 announced that the 1993 Team Spirit exercise would be resumed. This policy shift was the decisive cause that froze inter-Korean talks (Lim 2008, 298). As a second factor, Seoul had neither the intention nor the capability to curtail the policy shift in the United States. The United States' policy shift and South Korea's consent were countered by the so-called brinkmanship diplomacy from North Korea. In a world where the "S-N Basic Agreement" and strengthening of KOR-U.S. alliance coexist, the ultimate policy objective against North Korea was bound to become unification by absorption.

Second, there was a lack of mutual confidence and common interest in South and North Korea. Inter-Korean relations were merely a subordinate variable to Washington's Korean peninsula policy. "The S-N Basic Agreement" was not quite the bill of rights, based on the spirit of reconciliation and cooperation.

Third, one has to consider the domestic political domain of South and North Korea. The Roh Tae-woo government failed to get endorsement from the conservatives at large. The year 1992 was an election year, and the Cold War conservatives attempted to use South-South conflicts in their favor to win the presidential seat. The conservatives even faked a presidential order to sabotage high-level talks in September 1992. Pro-unification activist groups in civil society did not recognize the legitimacy of the Roh government, while the government reciprocated by regarding the unification movement as an illegal activity. With such a feeble structure, it was not possible for the Roh government to formulate a policy that could foster domestic and international conditions allowing them to implement the "S-N Basic Agreement," or pursue realignment of KOR-U.S. alliance and diplomatic normalization of U.S.-DPRK and Japan-DPRK. From Pyongyang's perspective, Seoul's establishment of diplomatic ties with the Soviet Union (1990) and China (1992) was a traitorous act that created deeper sense of isolation for North Korea. Despite being a signatory party to the "S-N Basic Agreement," prospects for normalizing relations with Japan and the United States seemed bleak for North Korea. Pyongyang began to make policy choices that placed more priority on the United States rather than inter-Korean relations.

### **1994 Agreed Framework and S-N Relations**

Kim Young-sam was sworn into office against the backdrop of the 1st North Korea Nuclear Crisis in 1993. In his inauguration address, he said that no ally is better than Korean nation, thus heralding a forthcoming "independent" North Korean diplomacy (Kim Y. 2001, 36-44). He also reflected on the previous Roh government's experience,

and emphasized the need for a national consensus for reunification. It was likely at this point that Kim Young-sam government was going to choose a liberal coexistence policy rather than an absorption policy based on preponderance of power. Slandering and defaming broadcasts from the North to the South had been stopped for a while. The initial conditions for policy-making, however, were not favorable. Conservative hawks were in control of the U.S. administration at the time. Just before the inauguration in January 1993, South Korea announced its annual Team Spirit exercise plans. North Korea immediately said that it would not return to the inter-Korean talks. The United States wanted to use the Team Spirit exercises as leverage against the DPRK, while Kim Young-sam government wanted to purge Hana Military Group without creating friction with the greater military structure. As stated above, resumption of the Team Spirit exercise equated to a collapse of the S-N Basic Agreement. In March 1993, North Korea released an order from Supreme Commander Kim Jong Il under the title "On Declaring a Quasi-War State to the Whole Nation, People, and Military" (Kim Jong Il 1998). Soon after, North Korea pulled out of the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in March 1993 and adopted "10-Point Programme of the Great Unity of the Whole Nation for the Reunification of the Country" in April 1993.<sup>21</sup> This program once again emphasized the establishment of a federal state. Also expressed were North Korea's concerns about unification by absorption, and an exploration of means of coexistence for the South and the North and demanded a de facto dissolution of KORUS alliance, including withdrawal of the USFK.

The year 1993 was also a difficult year in North Korea, with economic hardships and shortages in energy and food. The 3rd Seven-Year Plan (1987-1993) executed at the demise of the Cold War ended up as a failure. From 1990 onwards, North Korea posted negative growth in its economy. By 1993, North Korea's trade volume shrank to US\$2.64 billion, nearly half its volume for 1987 (US\$4.15 billion). Pyongyang started revising its legal system for market opening in

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21. *Rodong sinmun*, April 8, 1993.

1992. The 3rd session of the 9th Supreme People's Assembly of DPRK, held in April 1992, amended the Socialist Constitution to include special provisions that guarantee legitimate rights and interests of foreign investors in and encourage equity and contractual joint-ventures. Special laws were enacted in 1993 to protect foreign investments, including the Taxation for Foreign-Invested Companies' and Foreign Nationals' Income Act, Foreign Exchange Act, Free Economic Trade Zone Act, Land Lease Act, and Foreign-Invested Bank Act. In December 1993, the 21st Plenary Session for the 6th WKP Central Committee set a three-year buffer period to undo the failures of the 3rd Seven Year Plan, and adopted the so-called Revolutionary Economic Strategy. With highest priority placed on agriculture, light industries, and trade, the strategy marked a turning point for North Korea's economic policy from a self-reliant national economy based on exclusive trade with socialist economies. Moreover, the 7th meeting of the 9th Supreme People's Assembly adopted a resolution on "Successful Implementation of the Buffer Period Tasks in Building the Socialist Economy" in April 1994.<sup>22</sup> It was a policy choice made in reflection of North Korea's economic crisis. Among the three top priorities, trade necessitated improved relations with capitalist countries. North Korea embarked on another "Arduous March" from 1993-1994, named for the period in the 1930s when Kim Il Sung's anti-Japanese revolutionary army escaped the Japanese army.

In April 1993, North Korea proposed to the United States a dialogue for establishing a new peace guarantee. A special envoy exchange proposed resumption of inter-Korean talks to the South. President Kim Young-sam stopped the improving cycle of U.S.-DPRK and S-N relations, going so far as saying that he would not shake hands with nuclear states in June of 1993, at a time when U.S.-DPRK high-level talks were about to conclude a joint agreement for peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue. A package deal was pursued by the United States and deterred by the Kim Young-sam administration. South Korea and the United States collided again over the North

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22. *Rodong sinmun*, December 19, 1993; January 1, 1993; April 8, 1994.

Korea nuclear issue at 1993 KOR-U.S. Summit held in November. President Kim Young-sam regarded this meeting to be extremely important in that South Korea was able to clearly display its leadership as a direct party to inter-Korean issues (Kim Y. 2001, 214-215). While Seoul's response may be evidence that South Korea's voice has increased in bilateral relations with the United States in the post-Cold War democratized era, it was a grave strategic error. In March 1994, North and South Korea met at the working level for a special envoy exchange. A North Korean delegate warned that Seoul may turn into "a sea of fire" and all talks were immediately frozen. In the 1994 New Year address, Kim Il Sung said, "South Korea's so-called civilian regime is by no means civilian, being no different from the previous military authoritarian regimes," and that "our patience is wearing thin on the hopeless 'regime' in the South."<sup>23</sup>

In the end, the South Korean government's choice led to Washington resorting to coercive diplomacy by means of international sanctions. This, combined with deployment of the Patriot missile system in South Korea, developed into a serious Korean peninsula crisis that nearly led to war in June 1994. This issue was resolved only after a private diplomat, former President Jimmy Carter, visited North Korea. Carter discussed the inter-Korean summit issue with Kim Il Sung with the knowledge and consent of President Kim Young-sam.

However, sudden death of Kim Il Sung in July of 1994 made all attempts to realize the inter-Korean summit futile. Afterwards, the South was mired in a heated debate on a call of condolence to the funeral, which shows that internal politics factor in South Korea is one of the main causes that create antagonism in inter-Korean relations. In his 1994 National Liberation Day celebration remarks, President Kim Young-sam unveiled the "Unification Formula for the Korean National Community" and made clear his intention to unify the nation by absorption, proclaiming the governing ideology and system of unified Korea to be liberal democracy. With regards to the Geneva Accords or the October 1994 agreement on exchange of nuclear facili-

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23. *Rodong sinmun*, January 1, 1994.

ties for light water nuclear reactor (LWR) and U.S.-DPRK normalization of diplomacy,<sup>24</sup> Kim Young-sam government opposed, saying that a compromise with North Korea would only prolong the survival of the regime. About this time, Kim Jong Il published an article called “Socialism Is a Science,” wherein North Korea is described to be in a crisis of survival, and began the so-called Military-First Politics (*seongun jeongchi*) in January of 1995. One year later, North Korea officially used the expression “Arduous March” in the joint new year editorial.<sup>25</sup>

In February of 1996, North Korea proposed negotiation for a new peace guarantee system to the United States, the gist of which is to conclude a tentative agreement to replace the Armistice Agreement with a peace treaty.<sup>26</sup> Pyongyang asserted that a U.S.-DPRK tentative agreement would, on top of a S-N Non-Aggression Treaty, set preconditions for peace and federation-based reunification. To counter this proposal, South Korea and the United States proposed a four-party process. President Kim Young-sam stated that South and North Korea should take the lead in promulgating a peace regime on the Korean peninsula. South-North relations were chilled once again, however, following the North Korean Submarine Infiltration Incident of September 1996. The South and the North did not meet at all in 1996, although there were some U.S.-DPRK talks. As a follow-up to the Agreed Framework, the Kim Young-sam government took proactive measures to facilitate inter-Korean economic cooperation in November 1994 and suddenly reverted to an aggressive stance in 1996 by calling off all economic exchanges and imposing sanctions. Expectations were high for a regime collapse among South Korea’s policy-makers. The Kim Young-sam government demanded an apology, saying that South Korea will reconsider the provisions of LWR, which is

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24. North Korea started its “military-first” (*seongun*) policy when the Geneva Accords was about to be reached. The United States thought that the Agreed Framework will result in a natural death of its counterpart, North Korea. Neither the U.S. nor DPRK trusted each other (see Lee J. 2005, 91-92).

25. Kim C. (2000). *Rodong sinmun*, November 11, 1994; January 1, 1996.

26. *Rodong sinmun*, February 23, 1996.

part of the agreement reached at the Geneva Accords. It was not this adamant posture that made North Korea apologize. Rather, it was wriggled out by pressure exerted from the United States. In the end, the United States managed to extract consent that a four-party process was necessary in order to assure peace on the Korean peninsula from South Korea. However, the process did not proceed any further because of North Korea's demand to set the USFK withdrawal and U.S.-DPRK treaty as priority issues in the negotiations.

While the initial conditions may have been negative, the Kim Young-sam government was in better position than any other previous Korean government to pursue a North Korea policy free from U.S. influence. However, the Kim government's policy and discourse were inconsistent with each other. Kim Young-sam government's had the potential for many positive programs, including repatriation of long-term unconverted prisoners and starting humanitarian aid to North Korea (June 1995), but there was in fact a complete void in S-N dialogue.<sup>27</sup> To discuss and resolve contentious issues, the South and the North needed the U.S. presence as a mediator. Policy failures of the Kim government indicate that the division system cannot change just because the international system surrounding the Korean peninsula changed. The change can only be realized when there is change in the mindset of the actors and strong resolve for implementation. North Korean Policy is like any other foreign policy, in that it is an extension of domestic politics. Kim Young-sam government's policy failures stem from its inherent limitations in that it was implemented through a political alliance of authoritarian conservatives and moderate liberals (Choi W. 2000).

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27. The 1995 flood led Pyongyang to cry out for international aid, which Seoul responded with food aid. However, the South Korean government's position turned sour after the North forcibly hoisted the North Korean flag on a South Korean vessel that was unloading rice in North Korea's Cheongjin port, on June 29, 1995. On the other hand, the flood damage in the North enabled jumpstart of assistance activities in South Korea's civil society, which evolved from an illegal interlocutor in the 1980s to a legitimate actor after 1995.

## Conclusion

“The Opening Ceremony of the 13th World Festival of Youth and Student was truly remarkable; incomparable to the Opening Ceremony of the Seoul Olympic Games. . . . The festival exceeded last year’s Seoul Olympics in the number of countries and participants,” according to North Korea’s “1990 Chosun Central Yearbook,” which described the Pyongyang Youth Festival as “a paramount achievement in the history of the world youth movement,” with quotes from media coverage by Germany’s *Deutsche Zeitung* and Japan’s *Mainichi Shimbun*. Pyongyang had to bid for the World Festival of Youth and Students just to earn these comments, despite an impending economic crisis. The North’s intention in doing so was to take the upper hand or at least strike a balance in its competition with the South. However, while Seoul’s Olympic Games could be promoted for commercial purposes, Pyongyang’s system did not allow for the World Festival to be commercialized in any way. Thus, the 1989 Festival was bound to have a detrimental effect on the North Korean economy. North Korea’s “Arduous March” in the mid-1990s was incurred partly because of external factors like the collapse of the Eastern bloc, but more importantly because of Pyongyang’s policy failure.

During the early and mid-1980s, the inter-Korean was pursued against a backdrop of Sino-U.S. and Sino-Soviet détente. Moreover, South Korea’s hosting of the Summer Olympic Games was a major challenge for dialogue between South and North Korea. The South needed inter-Korean dialogue in order to assure an undisturbed hosting of the games. Meanwhile, the North opted for a policy line that separated peace from the unification agenda in the midst of a global détente mood. The North demanded a dialogue with the United States, while recognizing the South Korean government as the legitimate authority. A convergence in the interests of the South and North kicked off new inter-Korean talks in two different modes of secret and official formats. The division system of the Korean peninsula in the early and mid-1980s also took a path towards a détente. However, official talks stalled after the Team Spirit exercise made

KORUS Alliance and peace issue emerge once again as a fundamental challenge for the Korean peninsula. North Korea asserted that peace cannot be achieved while KORUS alliance is kept intact before they withdrew from the official talks in January 1986. However, the South-North channel for secret talks managed to survive. Meanwhile, talks for joint-hosting of the 1988 Summer Olympics continued until breaking down in 1987. Pyongyang's reaction to Seoul's standalone hosting of the Olympic Games was the World Festival of Youth and Students.

A détente in the Korean peninsula during the early and mid-1980s was possible only after South and North Korea redefined their identities from enemies to competitors. Variables at the international level, including Sino-U.S. détente and North-South competition over the 1988 Summer Olympics increased the relative autonomy of the division system. However, the remnants of the 1953 Armistice Regime made it impossible for the division system to be reduced to only the inter-Korean relationship. After North Korea separated peace and reunification, the unrealized improvements in the U.S.-DPRK and the South-North relations came to constitute the division system. As long as the KORUS Alliance remains a constant, it seems implausible that South-North dialogue will realign and overcome the division system. A historical structure has three factors in it—ideas, material capabilities, and institutions—according to critical theory. Change of ideas was achieved but material capabilities, at the core of which lies military ones, remained the same, as arms reduction and control was demanded by the North but refused by the South. The secret talks can be said to be an institutionalization of a new format for inter-Korean relations.

After the 1988 Olympic Games came to a close, official talks resumed and new variables emerged. Democratization and the end of the Cold War presented actors on the Korean peninsula with an opportunity to shape a new historical structure for the division system. At the same time South Korea's civil society emerged as another actor in the equation, engaging in "an illegal dialogue" with North Korea in order to overcome the division system. Meanwhile, a new

U.S.-DPRK relationship began to evolve. By choice, Seoul and Pyongyang entered into the 1991 South-North Basic Agreement, under which the two sides agreed to interdependence through exchanges and cooperation, recovering homogeneity, exercise of self-restraint, and institutionalization of arms reduction and control. The South-North Basic Agreement was a forward-looking document and could have provided momentum for the two sides to formulate a new collective identity. However, the North was undergoing a severe crisis. Pyongyang was scared that implementation of the basic agreement could result in unification by South Korea's absorption of North Korea. The so-called North Korean nuclear issue should be set against the backdrop of ongoing changes in ideas and widening imbalance in material capabilities of the South and the North. There were seeds of conflict in the U.S.-DPRK relations ready to sprout any time, unless a broad agenda on "the Korean Peninsula Nuclear Issue" that includes the U.S.-provided nuclear umbrella to South Korea by the KORUS Alliance arrangement was put on the negotiation table. Moreover, the so-called South-South Conflict, the after-effects of democratization in the South, emerged as a new component in the Korean peninsula's division system.

After the S-N Basic Agreement Regime began to fail, the division system entered into a phase of multiple conflicts, with trouble in both the U.S.-DPRK and inter-Korean relations. The nuclear issue pushed the Korean peninsula very close to a war. The United States and DPRK avoided major conflict through the Geneva Agreed Framework. However, the Kim Young-sam government derailed positive U.S.-DPRK and inter-Korean developments. A failed forecast that North Korea would soon collapse contributed to this error. Discussions for Korean peninsula issues were mediated by the United States. This failure shows that, despite changes in the international system surrounding the Korean peninsula, the division system will be extremely difficult to overcome unless each actor realizes a change of the mindset that is supplemented by a strong resolve to act on it. South Korea's political and civil societies began to play larger roles in restructuring the division system since the democratic revolution. In

these societies, there was a fierce struggle over the system of division between Cold War conservatives, liberals, and progressives. The struggle became one of the major variables that determine the future of the division system.

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