

# From the Asian Value Debate to Cosmopolitanism: An Active Interpretation of the Political Thoughts of Kim Dae-jung\*

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## Abstract

*This paper explores the significance and consequences of a rare combination of a cosmopolitan vision with an Asian identity found in the political thoughts of Kim Dae-jung, the late President of the Republic of Korea (1998-2003). The paper first clarifies: 1) the meaning of cosmopolitanism as a key concept of the paper; 2) the strategy of the reconstruction of Kim's political thoughts; 3) the Asian value debate between President Kim and Prime Minister Lee Kwan Yew of Singapore; and 4) Kim's reconstruction of Confucianism based on his idea of universal globalism. The cosmopolitan reading of the Asian value debate neither rejects nor defends Asian values as they exist but embraces these within the framework of respecting diversities and differences. Consequently, the binary opposition between East and West as well as between relativism and universalism is superseded while the Asian identity is maintained as a condition for cosmopolitan identity. Based on these discussions, the paper draws attention to the substantive field of reconciliation policy between North and South Korea, notes how Kim attempted to overcome the West-centered globalism while keeping alive Asian identity in his progressive journey from the Asian value debate through universal globalism to cosmopolitanism.*

**Keywords:** cosmopolitanism, universal globalism, global democracy, Asian value debate, reinventing Confucianism, sunshine policy, hegemonic globalism

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\* The original draft of the paper was presented at the Kim Dae-jung Presidential Library and Museum, Seoul on August 16, 2010.

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## What is Cosmopolitanism?

This paper requires careful attention to three concepts. The first is “global democracy” that Kim Dae-jung advocated when he wrote an article on Asian values in *Foreign Affairs* in 1994, which criticized Lee Kuan Yew. Being “global” signifies the spread of democracy throughout the world as well as implies a more profound transformation toward coexistence with the ecosystem. Second, Kim elaborated on the concept of “universal globalism” as his overall philosophical outlook as well as policy orientation in his contribution to the *Korea Times* in November 5, 1998. Kim’s intention to put the adjective “universal” before the term “globalism” distinguished his position from “hegemonic” globalism. The last key concept regards “cosmopolitanism” as a rapidly emerging topic today, particularly in Europe (Beck 1994; Delanty 2005; Pichler 2009; Rumford 2006). To my knowledge, Kim never defined his position as cosmopolitan; however, I argue that he expressed a cosmopolitan vision when he talked about universal globalism (albeit with no clear concept for it). The lack of this concept has given rise to misunderstandings on why Kim initiated the Asian value debate.

An interesting case in point is Habermas’ critique of “hegemonic liberalism.” Hegemonic liberalism assumes that formally independent states “would operate under the protection of a peace-securing superpower and obey the imperatives of a completely liberalized global market” (Habermas 2006a, 184). Habermas argues that this assumption is empirically misleading as well as normatively ill-grounded since the decision can be impartial and justified only when it is based on discursive procedures that “are inclusive (all affected parties can participate) and compel the participants to adopt each other’s perspectives (a fair assessment of all affected interests is possible).” Hegemonic liberalism is problematic because the unilateral undertaking by appeal to the presumptively universal values of one’s own political culture must remain fundamentally biased” (Habermas 2006a, 185), falling short of fully understanding and respecting diversities and differences involved. Applying sanctions before launching

reciprocal dialogue to those who fail to comply with these presumptive “universal” values cannot be justified. It is in this historical context that the cosmopolitan emphasis on diversity as well as justice has attracted much attention (Appiah 2006; Baban 2006; Beitz 2005; Kurasawa 2007; Mendieta 2009). In addition, it is why Habermas’ theory of communication (particularly his theory of discourse ethics), popular sovereignty, and world government provide a far-reaching cosmopolitan vision with universal orientation (Habermas 1990, 1996).

The meaning of cosmopolitanism has to do with the problem of how to cohabitate with the radical others whose actions and value presuppositions are very difficult to understand. The situation may differ depending on how differences and diversities are perceived. In the case of “friends,” who show remarkable differences, it may still be possible to live together with tolerance and respect; however, in the case of “enemies,” it is tempting to apply power and sanctions based on a global standard. There is a tendency to emphasize diversity on the surface, but in reality advocate the “universal” values that originated from the West as principles behind the global integration.

Debate over cosmopolitanism has increased drastically during the last several years (Beck 2006; Calhoun 2007; Held 2010; Nowicka and Rovisco 2009). Cosmopolitan change can be explored at various levels. First, “cosmopolitization,” as a new concept,<sup>1</sup> refers to the objective process of structural transformation. The rapidly increasing “chains of interlocking political decisions and outcomes among states and their citizens tend to alter the nature and dynamics of territorially defined governance systems” (Beck and Grande 2010, 417). Cosmopolitization in this sense can be confirmed today at all levels of politics, market economy, civil society, and culture. Beck thus speaks of “cosmopolitan imperative” for all nations and societies to adjust to this changing reality.

Crucial for this paper is the reflexive orientation of cosmopoli-

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1. This term began to be used in the articles published in *British Journal of Sociology* 61.3 (2010). Before this, an expression such as “cosmopolitanization” was used.

tanism. The reflexive awareness of individual cultural tradition means the possibility of transformation of cultural identity. It presupposes an open-minded attitude towards local as well as foreign cultures. At stake is the shared capability of learning about others from their points of view rather than from one's own familiar viewpoint. It is why cosmopolitanism can be well linked to reflexive modernization and second modernity (Han and Shim 2010). Cosmopolitanism not only embraces diversities but also aspires to dialogically framed justice and cooperation without coercion (Archbugi 2003; Beitz 2005; Mendieta 2009).

Cosmopolitan orientation can be defined by radical openness and inclusiveness upon which diversities can coexist. It is not limited to human relationships and can be extended to relations between humans and nature. Kim Dae-jung was explicit in this regard. He argued that cosmopolitanism is ill-grounded if it is based on an anthropocentric assumption. It is why he wanted to use the term "global" rather than "cosmopolitan" since "global" alludes to the earth as the environmental condition for human existence. For him, cosmopolitan imagination can exhibit its full significance when it is guided by an eco-friendly perspective. In an interview with *Cheolhak-gwa hyeonsil* (Philosophy and Reality) in 1993, he compared Western and Eastern cultures as follows:

Today's industrial society has committed wrongdoings to the nature because of narrow-minded interpretation of the Bible. For the message that God created the world and told human beings to "manage" the nature, human beings understood that they were allowed to destroy and exploit nature. However, when God told us to "manage" nature, it meant "we should take care of nature and use it in a way that we can live well together." Only when we interpret the Bible in this way, everything that God created could display its worth and essence, and God's love could be realized in a universal way. Let this exhibit their desert as trees while birds do it as birds. In that regard, we have a lot to learn from the Buddhist idea of *manyu bulseong* 萬有佛性 meaning that Buddha is embedded in all creatures (Kim 1993, 96).

According to Kim, Asian cultures have a great potential to contribute to ecological justice as a new front for humanity. Climate change is a good example. Leaders around the world and experts in various fields convened to review international conventions, prepared policy guidelines, and announced the results of the projects examining the causes of climate change as well as the effects of policy measures on it, analyzed the efficiency of policy measures, and explored the requirements of future projects. Kim actively joined international cooperation efforts on climate change and the protection of the global environment; however, he was also interested in the cultural force that supported the realization of a green society. Ecological problems require effective policy measures from the top as well as fundamental bottom-up eco-friendly initiatives. For this reason, Kim highly evaluated Asia's cultural potential. Compared to the Western tradition of rationalism that considers nature as a target to exploit based on scientific technology, Eastern cultures provide far greater sensitivity to a coexistence with nature. How to transform the hierarchical and hegemonic relationships embedded in social structures and global politics to a new paradigm of coexistence with diversities is a key problem that we confront today.

The attempts by Beck (1992, 1999, 2000b, 2005, 2006, 2009) and his associates (Beck and Sznaider 2006; Beck and Grande 2010; Grande 2006; Delanty 2006; Held 2010; Turner 2006) to initiate a cosmopolitan turn in social science is meaningful in this regard. Beck and Grande (2010, 419), for instance, have attempted to radicalize cosmopolitanism with the concept of the internalization of the other. Internalization means that the other is no longer external to but becomes a part of self with no external viewpoint imposed to the other. Instead, participants take the methodological principle of reciprocally understanding each other. Beck argues that cosmopolitanism, "connects individuals, groups and societies in new ways, thereby changing the very position and function of self and the other" (Beck and Grande 2010, 419). Reciprocal understanding calls for an active, deliberative and reflexive opening of individuals and groups to other ideas and preferences.

Delanty (2009, 75-88) goes further to define cosmopolitanism more systematically in terms of four capacities for “immanent transcendence.” The first transcendence is self-discovery mediated by encountering with the other. Self is seen not as fixed, but rather transformable as a social and cultural construction. Second, cosmopolitan imagination moves further to see the other from the value and perspective they hold and accommodate the other as a dialogic partner. The third level of transcendence occurs when viewing the other does not end with simple learning from the other but transforms one’s own culture and standpoint. This may be done through open and inclusive multicultural dialogue. Fourth, cosmopolitan orientation entails the capacity for transcending differences and diversities toward “a shared or common culture” (Delanty 2009, 87). As one moves from the first to the fourth dimension of transcendence, he argues that “cosmopolitan capacities can become progressively stronger.” This can be confirmed in what Delanty (2009, 54) called a moral and cultural cosmopolitanism as well as political cosmopolitanism.

### **Strategy of Reconstruction**

Based on this concept of cosmopolitanism, I would like to reconstruct Kim Dae-jung’s political thought.<sup>2</sup> First, I will reinterpret disputes over Asian values from the perspective of symptomatic reading.<sup>3</sup> A conventional interpretation is that Lee Kuan Yew advocated Asian values against the West while Kim developed an argument from a West-friendly perspective,<sup>4</sup> but Kim showed his own reading of Asian

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2. Diverse aspects of Kim’s cosmopolitan imagination and policy orientation can be seen in the books that the author has edited and are expected to come out soon (Han 2011b, 2012).

3. Symptomatic reading suggested by Althusser and Balibar (1970) focuses not on the manifested meaning of an action, but on the silences, gaps, and contradictions that reveal the problematic nature of the action. Its methodology is analogous to a psychoanalytic approach of free association.

4. Considerable attention has been drawn to the debate between these two contrasting but equally attractive East Asian politicians (Riegel 2000). The typical interpre-

tradition and history. According to him, democratic ideas have developed independently of the West and within the cultural tradition and history of Asia along with their own genealogical traces. Based on this reading, he suggested an interculturally constructive dialogue with the West. I argue that Kim practically maintained a cosmopolitan reading of Asian values (but with no clear concept for it) and his position differed significantly from the conventional interpretation with the relativist implications that Lee had represented. Due to the lack of this explicit concept, Kim's position in the Asian value debate appeared somewhat ambiguous compared with that of Lee Kuan Yew. Second, I will look at the concept of universal globalism (Kim 1998c), which needs to be further developed. For instance, Kim emphasized multiple pathways toward universal values in world history. Above all, Kim's reinterpretation of Asian culture (Kim 1998b), particularly the Confucian norms of *chung* 忠 (loyalty) and *hyo* 孝 (filial piety), deserves special attention. Third, I will show the cosmopolitan aspects of Kim's engagement policy with North Korea.

### **Asian Values, Human Rights, and Democracy**

Is the emphasis on human rights only present in the West? One may argue that human rights can hardly be guaranteed in Asia, where the tradition of individualism is weak, or that human rights can blossom only in the West. This bias exhibits sentiments of Western superiority in the sphere of civil liberties. On the contrary, one can establish an opposite argument that the Western culture of individualism does not fit into Oriental societies; the Orient does not need to follow the Western concept of human rights (Lee 1994). This bias excludes the West and it is assumed that the West and the East confront each other when it comes to culture and fundamental aspects of people's lives. Lee Kuan Yew's idea of Asian values is built on this assumption (Han 2006).

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tation can be seen in Western journals of social science, for instance, *Journal of Democracy*, after this debate.

Lee's ideas reflect the confidence of Asian nations that originates from the unprecedented economic growth (Lee 1993). He argued that the reason for the success of Asia did not lie in Western principles of individualism, democracy, or human rights, but in Asia's unique social and cultural elements, such as Confucian "good government," solidarity among family members, educational enthusiasm, and contribution to community. By offering such examples, Lee has raised his voice that the West should learn from Asia (Lee 1998).

Lee's confidence implies challenges to the Western tendency to cultural imperialism. At the same time, his argument can become mixed with an attitude to downgrade the Asian potentiality (Han 1999a). Because his philosophy has turned out to approve dictatorship while oppressing (Western) democracy and human rights, it has given many people the perception that Asian values are authoritarian. As a result, this has strengthened the misrecognition that arguing for human rights and becoming a human rights activist require one to abandon Asian values and accept only the Western human rights framework.

Kim Dae-jung challenged this misrecognition and his attitude can be read in a passive or active manner. The typical interpretation welcomed by Westerners is that Kim has supported universal values that originated from the West. While Lee stressed the Asian manner or framework of pursuing democracy and human rights, Kim's perspective has been interpreted as advocating the Western universal values of human rights and democracy as applicable to and relevant for Asia. While their core arguments have been interpreted in this manner, this methodological focus may end in passive discussion if the Western concepts of human rights and democracy are taken for granted and whether these concepts find roots in Asian cultural tradition is questioned in simple ways (Han 2006). This is due to an assumption that only Western values are correct. This passive reading falls short of grasping innovative aspects of Kim's challenge to the West-centered globalism.

In contrast, an active interpretation is aimed at demonstrating how Asian cultures and traditions have internally and independently

developed elements of democracy and human rights. Based on active interpretation, Kim believes that Eastern notions of human rights can be asserted with confidence prior to accepting Western values as obvious truth. Although the East and the West have developed their own value systems and epistemologies based on significantly different assumptions, they can nevertheless arrive at a non-coercive overlapping consensus about basic norms of human rights and follow unique internal processes of development. Searching for such an overlapping consensus from an Asian perspective may add genuine contributions to enriching human rights (Taylor 1999).

Neither a crude dichotomy that the West supports human rights while the East oppresses them nor the claim that Western ideas and institutions cannot be adopted in Asian countries due to extreme differences in cultures and traditions is at stake. Kim went beyond passive interpretation to argue that there existed in the East rich cultural traditions of regarding human rights albeit differently from the West.<sup>5</sup> Kim's concept of global democracy includes ecological justice that implies that all creatures have the right to preserve themselves. Moreover, his challenge to the West-centered globalism did not prevent him from pursuing a dialogue with the West.

Kim's genuine contribution to the Asian value debate can be grasped well by a "symptomatic reading" (Althusser 1969, 174-175). Based on Freud's model of dream interpretation, this method explicitly formulates and analyzes key concepts hidden or implicit in discourses. A new idea of profound significance is contained practically in the discourse; however, the absence of clear-cut conceptualization permits a conventional reading of the debate. By explicitly formulating the implicit concept of cosmopolitan orientation, one can better understand Kim's position in the Asian value debate.

The cosmopolitan position neither defends Asian values (as Lee did by separating East and West to claim that Asian values fit Asia)

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5. Kim (2000, 2) argued that Mencius' notion of people's right to get rid of a savage ruler "preceded John Lock's idea of democracy by 2000 years." He also referred to Buddha who "declared that all living creatures are equal" and that "of everything above and below Heaven, the individual must be respected most."

nor rejects Asian values. Rather, it can be described as a universal standpoint according to which Asian values represent only a particularity. In contrast, the cosmopolitan approach redefines Asian values within the multiple pathways to modernity.<sup>6</sup> Asian values imply that an Asian country can ascend a specific trajectory of modern transformation that follow a local identity and genealogical traces of development to open up a dialogue with Western countries. Kim adopted this standpoint in the Asian value debate, which differed significantly from Lee's position of binary opposition.<sup>7</sup>

Kim acknowledged that the West first developed the modern institutions of human rights such as the legalization of human rights and the legislations to protect individuals from human rights violations. He also argued that the very conception of human dignity had been firmly rooted in every world religion. The conditions regarding human rights can improve when this cultural norm gives rise to social consciousness and action in support of human welfare and freedom (Han 2010b, 2011a). This is why Kim was always cautious with the tendency to utilize human rights for political purposes, having the view that external involvement alone can hardly improve human rights records internally. He argued that the best option of human rights policies is to take wise steps designed to help nurture the domestic conditions for human rights movements and consciousness rather than to rely on coercion and blockade because human rights cannot be produced from outside. It must be obtained by people through action and struggles. One example comes from the

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6. Habermas is well known for his sobering reflection on the relation between tradition and modernity. He gave public lectures at Seoul (1996) and Beijing (2001), with the advice that East Asia should be self-conscious of local traditions so that individual identity can go well along with modernity. The value of this advice was recently acknowledged by Islamic leaders (*Frankfurt Allgemeine*, February 10, 2011).

7. Cosmopolitan orientation encourages people to maintain their identities and open their eyes towards the world. If people with a variety of cultural traditions abandon their identities and join in a powerful culture of global empires, the result is nothing but the emergence of a hegemonic culture that differs from cosmopolitanism.

Helsinki Accords in 1975 that brought about changes in Eastern Europe. From the same perspective, Kim praised U.S. President Ronald Reagan, who opened diplomatic ties with the former Soviet Union, and President Richard Nixon who established diplomatic relations with China. He also supported the human rights movement in East Timor and Burma (Han 2011b, 2012).

Kim's cosmopolitan vision needs to be further explored and some examples may clarify it. For example, in April 4, 2008, German sociologist Ulrich Beck visited Kim and discussed issues related to the future of China. Kim drew attention to the developmental patterns within China; however, he expressed a cautiously optimistic view and was cognizant of skeptical views on whether China could democratize. He had observed that the Chinese government had expanded the process of social consultation during the last three decades. Kim expected that China would take gradual steps toward liberalization and democratization if the United States did not join hands with Japan to contain China militarily in an attempt to establish global hegemony and as a result the Chinese government could focus on its domestic administration. As to the counterarguments, he cited Chinese leaders' openness, apparent increase of the middle-income class as well as popular grass-roots protests, and the normative tradition of people-centered politics in China since Mencius. The future of China was uncertain; however, he implied that his suggested examples could motivate people to imagine a positive internal development.

Here, it is possible to find Kim's deliberative stance. He was not a hegemonic globalist demanding China to accept Western liberal values. He did not support those who emphasized preserving China's internal characteristics against the West. Rather, he reasoned that each country could independently reinvent traditions by opening up distinctive patterns of development, towards the universal values of human rights and democracy. While doing so, Kim stressed the values of mutual dialogue, understanding, solidarity, and cooperation, which are incompatible with a unilateral hegemonic worldview emphasis of every country.

On September 22, 2008, the author had a chance to talk with

Kim about Eastern and Western religions from the perspective of his idea of cosmopolitanism. He said that the Roman Empire was tolerant toward other religions insofar as they accepted the emperor as their God. However, Christian belief in the one and only God paved the way to Western universalism and made great contributions to human-centered epistemology and global development. However, tolerance toward other religions was significantly reduced since Emperor Constantine adopted Christianity as the state religion. Ironically, the monopolized perspective on God led to numerous religious wars. Instead of varieties, differences, and tolerance, the same worldview was imposed. As a faithful Catholic, Kim did not seem to be happy with the hegemonic consequences of Christian universalism. Instead, he evaluated that genuine tolerance and cosmopolitan sensitivity are rich in Asian cultures and that Buddhism is the most tolerant towards other religions.

Kim advocated a cosmopolitan globalism but parted from the hegemonic tendency to impose only one world perspective. He was not a relativist either as long as he believed that the fundamental assumption of human dignity lied in the roots of every world relation. He certainly had a perspective of universalism. However, the idea of human dignity can be put into practice in many different ways. Therefore, it is important to understand the diversities involved in this process and to cooperate towards the common goal of enhancing human rights. Of crucial significance for him was to open communication embracing diversity and hybridity rather than merging into a single flag to dominate the world.

Human rights policies under the Kim administration need to be reevaluated. He made efforts to prevent all types of human rights infringements, emphasizing that all citizens (as members of human rights community) should be able to enjoy their rights on an equal footing. Accordingly, while in office, he focused his policies on the enhancement of rights for the socially underprivileged including workers, women, the physically disabled, and the urban poor. In particular, the National Human Rights Commission of Korea (NHRCK) was formed through a great number of public debates and consulta-

tions (NHRCK 2011). Indeed, the NHRCK was not an imported organization from the West; as a unique national body, it expressed concerns and tensions over the issue whether NHRCK, as a state institution, could effectively and legitimately watch, monitor, and regulate human rights violations by other state apparatus like the police, the army, and prisons.<sup>8</sup> Imbued with Asian cultures and critical mind, the creation of this institution has therefore attracted significant attention from the international community.

### **Universal Globalism and the Reinterpretation of Confucianism**

Universal globalism is the most abstract concept that Kim (1998c) suggested as his overall philosophical framework. He placed universal globalism above all kinds of globalism that fall short of universal validity, such as global empires in the past based on wars, colonial rule, plunder, and destruction. Therefore, universal globalism appears at the end of the long history of globalism. The most typical globalism during the agricultural (or nomadic) era includes the Assyrian Civilization, the Macedonian Civilization, the Roman Civilization, the Genghis Khan Civilization, and the Mongolian Civilization, all of which were based on military conquest and trade. During the Mercantilist era, countries including Spain, the Netherlands, England, China, and India led the globalization trend. The ensuing globalism of the industrialization era was deeply tainted by imperialism and colonialism that reflected the direct conflict between strong and weak nations.

Universal globalism indicates that such values as human rights, democracy, and a market economy are spread throughout the world. Kim often described the market economy and democracy as the two

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8. One of the best recent examples can be found in the report by NHRCK on the investigation over candlelight vigils issued on October 27, 2008. In this report, the NHRCK recommended the Minister of Public Administration and Security to give "a warning to the Commissioner General of the Korea National Policy Agency regarding some acts of excessive violent suppression by the police in the process of suppressing candlelight demonstrations" and thereby causing human rights violations.

wings beneath universal globalism. In a contribution to the *Korea Times*, he said, “In the twenty-first century, the age of ethnocentric nationalism that has existed for more than 200 years will be transformed to an era of universal globalism.” The history of the past 200 years has demonstrated the catastrophic capacity for self-destruction by humans along with the epochal development of scientific technologies. Two World Wars, crimes against humanity, and environmental destruction occurred. However, Kim believed it inevitable for universal globalism to emerge as a new global paradigm because democratic institutions and a market economy had spread throughout the world along with a revolution in information technology and cultural exchanges that fostered universal values. Immersing himself in such a massive historical transformation, he declared himself a “universal globalist.” Seen from the Asian cultural context in which the influence of nationalism is still significant, such declaration of self-identity is rare and may be possible only with far-reaching insight and conviction.

One may misunderstand Kim because the term “universal globalism” can indicate that Asia’s identity is less respected. One may ask, “Isn’t it true that Kim sees the world by taking the Western values as reliable references?” In a letter to the *Korea Times*, Kim sorted out liberty, human rights, justice, peace, and efficiency as five key components of universal globalism. He said, “I believe that universal globalism can become fundamental principles of transforming the world only when these values take root in the market economy of the world as norms of ‘competition’ as they do in the global civil societies as norms of ‘coexistence.’” He did not forget Asia and added, “In particular, Confucianism and Buddhism in Asia have nurtured invaluable heritages as the respect for humanity, the spirit of benevolence, and moral norms” that “will help further enhance liberty and human rights substantially as they have been based on democratic foundation.”

The Asian identity present in his cosmopolitan view can be best shown by Kim’s reinterpretation of Confucianism. This particular intervention reveals that although he advocated universal values, he

rejected the assumption that these values could bloom only in the West. He did not think that every country followed the same trajectories with the West to develop universal values; instead, he emphasized diversity and cultural identity. On March 18, 1998, while in office, Kim invited Confucian scholars to a luncheon at the Blue House and discussed issues on the Confucian norms of *chung* (loyalty) and *hyo* (filial piety). It was a very rare and surprising occasion for a progressive President to show interest in Confucianism, considering that many Korean youth regarded Confucianism as old-fashioned and particularly its norms of *chung* and *hyo* as incompatible with modern values of democracy and human rights. In addition, he prepared a detailed script in advance for the meeting and submitted a revised version to the May issue of the monthly *Shin Dong-A* afterwards to make his position publicly known (Kim 1998b).

Such a conversation with the Confucian leaders was deliberately aimed at modernizing the cultural foundation for national development through the reinvention of tradition.<sup>9</sup> Many of his cultural policies were designed to foster a forward-looking identity. He was convinced that the era was gone when one could justify Confucianism for the sake of tradition. Instead, he saw it necessary to reconstruct the normative potentials of Confucianism from a contemporary point of view. This was necessary for the revitalization of Confucianism as well as for the creation of a solid foundation for democracy.

In the past, *chung*, a core tenet of Confucianism, was authoritatively defined as oriented towards kings or the state; however, Kim reconstructed it with the focus on people as the root of popular sovereignty. The object of loyalty is no longer kings or the state, but the people whose will and welfare democracy are expected to serve.<sup>10</sup>

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9. The significance of this reinvention was well grasped by Riegel (2000) in his comparison between Lee Kuan Yew and Kim Dae-jung.

10. The implication of this reinvention is profound. When people take universal values, it does not mean that they become dependent on the West. Instead, one can become a cosmopolitan globalist while retaining and renewing normative cultural traditions. Kim advocated a cosmopolitan globalism while maintaining an Asian identity.

With this shift of focus, he explained to public officials that they could express the Confucian norm of loyalty by preventing the abuse of power, reports about irregularities, and enhancement of the quality of services to people; Confucianism could be revitalized in support of democracy. A dialogue with the West about the cultural foundations of democracy could be pursued by modernizing Confucianism instead of abandoning Confucianism and adopting Western universal values (Tu 1996).

Kim sorted out the enabling factors for the Korean path to universal values from Korean history such as participatory cultural traditions, developmental policies, and the popular desire for self-determination. The best configuration of these factors he found was the April 19 Revolution of 1960 (Han 1990) and the Gwangju Democratization Movement of 1980 (Han 1999b). The April 19 Revolution created the foundations for democracy and the Gwangju Democratization Movement became a significant instigator for human rights and other popular movements for true democratization during the 1980s.<sup>11</sup> Kim (1987a) argued that these events declared to the world the existence of the universal values of democracy and human rights in Korea (Han 2012, chs. 9 and 10). This pathway was distinctive from the West as well as from other Asian countries.

Kim placed particular emphasis on the relationship between universal values and the policies for information and knowledge society. When he took office in 1998, he had to deal with the aftermath of the 1997 Asian financial crisis that stemmed from lack of liquidity in the region. His decision was to overcome the crisis by establishing an advanced IT industry that reaped success by establishing ultra-high speed information networks throughout Korea and thereby gaining strong social support. The majority of Koreans quickly became “netizens” (Anglicized word combining “net” and “citizens”) apt at online communication. This communication development has brought about

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11. The author has drawn attention to the social conditions and consequences of the April 19 Revolution as well as the aspects of human rights that are incarnate in the Gwangju Democratization Movement (Han 1990, 1999b, 2010b).

revolutionary changes in civil society. The monopoly on information quickly disappeared, and the sociopolitical landscape began to rapidly change and owed much to the emergence of young netizens who rejected powerful taboos and stereotypes (Han 2000). Korea has proved that no element could be as effective in promoting universal values as a change in the mode of communication.

Another example is related to welfare policy. While in office, Kim enacted legislation that enabled the poor to claim the right to “basic human living standards” and transform backward welfare institutions related to unemployment, industrial accidents, health, and pensions to a nationally comprehensive system of social security. In addition, he adopted “productive” welfare policies designed to provide those willing to work with retraining programs for human development. The past perception that “employment means welfare” was powerful; however, Kim decisively broke away from this legacy and achieved substantial progress in institutionalizing a modern welfare state. Universal values in this case mean the enhancement of justice and fairness for human happiness and welfare.

On the keynote speech for International Conference on Democracy, Market Economy, and Development on February 26, 1999, Kim (1999) declared his policy commitment as follows:

In order to adapt to universal globalism, Korea will follow the principles of democracy so that ideas and information could be exchanged with no restrictions. With the commitment to the market economy, I will do my best to let all areas of the economy compete and cooperate with the world, because a genuine market economy guarantees all participants equal opportunities and fair life. Above all, I will increase cultural exchanges to enhance understanding and friendship among various peoples on the earth. Korea will also cooperate with all the countries to remove wars, poverty, and drugs, and to preserve the environment. We all should protect the only earth with our life and let all human beings live in a safe, peaceful, and happy way by cooperating with one another to realize universal globalism.

## **Cosmopolitan Aspect of the North-South Reconciliation Policy**

This author also argues that Kim's Sunshine Policy can be interpreted from the perspective of cosmopolitanism. A question naturally arises: "where is the limit of diversities and tolerance that cosmopolitanism admits?" How can we live together with enemies who heavily rely on violence and thus are irreconcilable for us? This problem can be tested in detail by observing the case of North Korea.

It is relatively easy (up to a certain level) to shed light on the cosmopolitan aspects of Kim's leadership. For instance, at the end of the 1960s, Kim declared that in order to ease tensions on the Korean peninsula, it was desirable for the four concerned countries (the United States, Soviet Union, Japan, and China) to jointly recognize North Korea and South Korea so that the two countries could simultaneously become members of the United Nations. The Cold War mentality of the time considered this inclusive attitude to be a challenge to the authority of the South Korean government and the military regime immediately denounced it as communist. Kim's idea was a vivid demonstration of a cosmopolitan vision and the two Koreas joined the UN on September 18, 1991.

The way of promoting the Sunshine Policy was also cosmopolitan. He did not unilaterally follow his conviction but constantly solicited efforts to gain understanding and cooperation from the international community. In an address delivered in March 2000 at the Free University of Berlin, Kim promised to provide unconditional economic assistance to North Korea, urging North Korea to join in the historic task of reconciliation. Following the North's acceptance of Kim's proposal, Kim participated in the first Inter-Korean Summit of June of 2000 that initiated the subsequent inter-Korean programs of cooperation while also establishing an effective framework for international support of the Sunshine Policy.

Despite the benefits of the Sunshine Policy, a problem emerged because it was revealed that North Korea had clandestinely continued a nuclear enrichment program. Nuclear weapons equipped North Korea is unacceptable to countries surrounding the Korean Peninsula

and is fundamentally contrary to U.S. nuclear non-proliferation policies; consequently, the Sunshine Policy is subject to political debate in that it has not successfully kept the North from developing nuclear weapons. The attacks on the Sunshine Policy come from both South Korea and the international community that regards nuclear nonproliferation as a top security issue. This issue is not intended to evaluate the Sunshine Policy as such but to test the sustainability of cosmopolitanism. The evaluation of the Sunshine Policy will eventually depend on many future factors, and the role of China cannot be overestimated since China's influence makes North Korea different from former East European countries. For this reason, it may be premature to issue a historical verdict of the Sunshine Policy either from a pro or con perspective. However, it seems possible to explore where cosmopolitanism may lead to when one acts as a cosmopolitan in a methodologically consistent way.

Cosmopolitanism advocates the rights of all individuals, including prisoners of war; however, what if they are not simply prisoners of war but hostile enemies, who threaten lives of our people? To what extent should we embrace, in the name of tolerance, a terrorist state that has increased efforts to develop nuclear weapons, which could threaten the peace and stability of Northeast Asia? How can cosmopolitanism help to resolve this dilemma? While the question may sound complex, the answer is surprisingly simple. Kim always emphasized the role of communication from a cosmopolitan perspective. He displayed a rich humanity-oriented sensitivity in which listening to enemies (although they may be a part of the "axis of evil") and nonjudgmentally understanding them from their point of view are a matter of methodological necessity. Of utmost importance for a cosmopolitan is not the behavioral aspect of hostility but its communicative intent. Insofar as an action does not simply express total distrust, hatred, antagonism, violence, and destruction, but carries the intention to communicate through reciprocal recognition, the first thing to do is to create room for communication before applying sanctions. I believe that Kim had been methodologically consistent on this point. Kim understood the abnormal behaviors by North

Korea as the desire to be internationally recognized (particularly by the United States). North Korea had previously demanded direct talks with the United States, and, above all, the North wanted its identity to be recognized and respected by the United States. Kim tried to persuade the U.S. leaders to believe in his observation that:

North Korea recognizes the United States as the most powerful military country in the world and is afraid of it. Therefore, it wants to establish diplomatic ties with the United States to secure its regime and develop its economy with support from the United States. However, North Korea is a country with very high national pride, so it won't surrender with unconditional white flag. Therefore, problems can be resolved only when a party respects the other party's dignity and each party exchanges what is necessary for each other in terms of package deal. As they put this deal into practice, they can build up trust as much.

The core of this attitude is reciprocity; no matter how deviant an action may look, one should not be deterred and endeavor to find room for communication. Enemy actions can be seen as expressions of hatred or violence as well as an act of communication; therefore, it is necessary to start a dialogue to search for common ground. This was the core meaning of cosmopolitanism found in Kim and the Sunshine Policy.

Many argue that harsh measures should be taken against rogue states that breach universal principles agreed on by the international community. Some even say that economic pressure on North Korea, a naval blockade, or even military operations should be implemented. One may justify such aggressive actions in the name of universalism; however, Kim did not agree with this, based on some historical observations. Kim noted that the biggest interest of Pyongyang was to ensure the security of its regime. It was easily predictable that Pyongyang would increase nuclear weapon development (a trump card for the regime) if the United States strengthened its containment policy through military means. It was highly likely that the United States would use such outcomes in favor of its global military strate-

gy, particularly to restrain the power of China. However, Kim was convinced that corrective actions against North Korea would result in limited effects if China did not agree with such actions. In addition, such actions may only worsen their hatred toward the enemy, given that North Koreans have been accustomed to poverty and external pressure on the North. North Korea's further isolation from the international community will increase its dependence on China and would work against South Korea's national interests. North Korea's isolation ironically negates the leverage and impact of intervention of the international community. Confrontation and containment may end up wasting time and efforts in the middle of geopolitical stalemate, rather than resolving pending issues. This is exactly what has happened since 2007.<sup>12</sup>

Before he died on August 18, 2009, Kim made his last foreign trip to China to lecture at Beijing University in early May of 2009. He emphasized that the mounting tension on the Korean peninsula could be resolved only when the concerned six parties (especially the United States and North Korea) would come back to the Joint Statement of September 2005,<sup>13</sup> the common basis of communication, while restraining from the use of either hegemonic or resistant power. At the age of 85 with deteriorating health conditions, he went to China with the belief that only China was in the position to effectively initiate the reopening of the six-party talks based on a previous consen-

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12. Charles L. Pritchard (2011) who co-chaired the Council on Foreign Relations Independent Task Force Report in 2010, "U.S. Policy towards the Korean Peninsula," wrote: "North Korea has expressed its willingness to return to talks but insists that the agenda should be refocused on the 'root cause' of the nuclear problem—U.S. hostility towards Pyongyang." Given this continued stalemate, unless the United States redefines its policy, "there is little potential that our security concerns will be resolved and every chance that North Korea will drift toward de facto nuclear weapons state status."

13. The agreed terms were read as following: "North Korea abandons its nuclear arsenal completely and the United States normalizes its relationship with North Korea. All parties concerned begin the consultation process and build a peace regime on the Korean peninsula. North Korea should be provided with food and fuel aid. The action for action should govern all matters concerned" (*Korea Times*, May 6, 2009).

sus. Kim did everything that he could do in a short stay for three days and vividly demonstrated how consistent and enthusiastic he was in practicing the cosmopolitan principle of coercion-free and reciprocal communication.

The cosmopolitan aspect of Kim's leadership can also be explored with regard to the question of the East Asian community. Most of the concerned discourses have excluded any consideration of North Korea; however, it is very unrealistic to do so. Such discussions do not make any sense if North Korean issues (the detonator of serious disputes and conflicts in East Asia) are not properly dealt with. In this context, Kim's reconciliation policy with North Korea touches upon an indispensable condition for constructing an East Asian community. He was looking forward to a future when South Korea's capital and technologies would be combined with North Korea's labor force to promote economic growth in North Korea as well as in Manchuria and Siberia. He also predicted an era of a new Iron Silk Road when the transcontinental railroad would be connected from Busan at the southern end of South Korea to Sinuiju at the northern end of North Korea and onto Europe to transport products, labor, and culture. The reconciliation policy was not simply for the sake of the Korean peninsula, but should be viewed as a gateway to establish a new culture for the entire continent. He stretched his cosmopolitan imagination into linking the Korean peninsula to the future of a flourishing East Asian community.

## **Conclusion**

Nelson Mandela, the former President of South Africa, is an example of what Max Weber defined as political leadership in terms of ethics (conviction) and responsibility. The combination of these tends to produce high synergies especially when a political leader makes significant sacrifices to create historical progress in a consistently responsible manner. Kim Dae-jung is no less an example.

From the middle of the 1960s, Kim actively advocated ideas of

peace and reconciliation with North Korea despite the personal risk in a time when the obstacles of the Cold War polarized the Korean peninsula. Consequently, he suffered all kinds of atrocities: kidnapping, imprisonment, house arrest, exile in overseas countries, and court martial. He barely escaped five life-threatening attempts in his life, including one incident where he was nearly killed on a boat in the East Sea of Korea in 1973 after he had been kidnapped in Tokyo, Japan by the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA). Despite these obstacles, he did not yield to or compromise with the military regime. A recent publication of his biography in 2010 has rendered his contributions to peace on the Korean peninsula accessible. His vision of the Korean peninsula anticipates a joint construction of railroads connected from Busan (the second largest city and harbor in South Korea) to North Korea, Manchuria, Siberia, and finally onto the Europe-Russian continent to form a new future Silk Road of culture.

This paper has clarified the cosmopolitan aspects of Kim's political thought along with the evolution of his ideas in the Asian value debate, through universal globalism to cosmopolitanism. Some may view that Kim's position in the Asian value debate was somewhat ambiguous compared with that of Lee; however, this paper utilized a symptomatic reading to show that a cosmopolitan sensitivity was present in Kim's discourses (but with no explicit concept for it). This cosmopolitan orientation can illuminate the salient characteristics of Kim's political concepts. The paper has drawn keen attention to Kim's position in the Asian values debate, which was distinguished from Lee's relativist standpoint and opened up a constructive dialogue with the West while retaining an Asian identity. This paper has also explored the cosmopolitan significance of Kim's accomplishments, such as reconstruction of Confucianism, the policies towards the IT revolution and knowledge-based society, social welfare, and human rights, and the Sunshine Policy towards North Korea.

Kim Dae-jung can be seen as a rare Asian political leader who profoundly revived Asia's identity while articulating a cosmopolitan vision in the era of globalization. Many have lost the cosmopolitan insight to advocate Asia's identity, while some have joined hands

with globalism while abandoning Asia's identity. What has distinguished him from other Asian political leaders is his ability to combine these two streams within his leadership and his conscious effort to distance himself from hegemonic globalism.

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