

The History of Conceptual Bifurcation of ‘Peace’ in the Two Koreas

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Introduction

At the end of World War II, Korea was finally liberated from the afflictions of Japanese colonial rule. But as the international stage was reconfigured into the new Cold War system led by the United States and the Soviet Union, conflicts at the international level and among domestic sociopolitical groups drove Korea into another war. This war was global in scale and left Korea divided in half, a crippled actor. Today, after nearly 70 years, the symptoms of the Cold War cannot be found anywhere else on the planet except the Korean Peninsula; North and South Korea remain hostile towards one another, trapped in the current arrangement by the Armistice Agreement. The problem of ‘Korean peace’ remains unsolved.

To solve this problem, one must first examine the history of conceptual bifurcation of “peace” on the Peninsula throughout the Cold War era, and then pursue a synchronization of the concept between the two parties. The modern concept of peace was not smoothly imported from the West in the mid-nineteenth century. During the colonial era, the concept morphed through different variations influenced by the ideologies of nationalism, socialism, and colonialism (Ha 2009). Furthermore, under the Cold War polarity that lasted half a century, completely different concepts of peace have taken deep root on either side of the division, making peace on the Peninsula even harder to attain.

Throughout roughly four phases—the Korean War (1950s), national modernization (1960s), the *détente* and the July 4 Joint Statement (1970s), and the post-Cold War era and the High-Level Talks (1990s)—the history of conceptual bifurcation of “peace” in North and South Korea is set under the frame of “division” and “reunification,” building upon three concepts: reunification through war, reunification through revolution, and peaceful reunification. This paper will use primary sources to illuminate how the three reunification concepts have been intertwined for half a century to create a bifurcation in Korean concepts of “peace”.

The Korean War and the Concept of Peace

Newly liberated Korea had to pioneer a new life under the overwhelming influence of the international Cold War system. The United States and the Soviet Union emerged as the main actors of the postwar international order. In

August 1945, they seized control of Korea—instead of Japan, the defeated party—and established a military administration upon its feeble domestic structure. However, the relationship between the two victors quickly deteriorated, and by 1947 the Cold War had officially begun. In the European terrain, as each pursued their own national interest, distrust was prevalent, and the US adopted an economic containment policy against Soviet expansion. In East Asia, the US assessed the strategic significance of Korea as relatively low, withdrew US forces from Korea in June 1949, and began to construct a new regional architecture focused on Japan.

Against this background, sociopolitical groups in South and North Korea embarked on their first steps toward the construction of a modern nation-state. But the country was divided before they could achieve this delayed task, leaving them with three options of reunification through war, reunification through revolution, and peaceful reunification.

After separate governments were established in the North and the South in 1948, North Korea chose reunification through war as its primary principle, complemented by reunification through revolution with peaceful reunification as the facade. With this stance in mind, Kim Il Sung visited Moscow to meet Stalin in March 1949. Pak Ho Yong, Hong Myung Hwi, and Bek Nam Un accompanied him. According to sources revealed after the Cold War, their first meeting on March 5 discussed comprehensive issues regarding the prospects of the two countries. In the second meeting on March 7, Kim Il Sung said:

Comrade Stalin, we believe that the situation makes it necessary and possible to liberate the whole country through military means. The reactionary forces of the South will never agree on a peaceful reunification and will perpetuate the division of the country until they feel themselves strong enough to attack the North.

Now is the best opportunity for us to take the initiative into our own hands. Our armed forces are stronger, and in addition we have the support of a powerful guerilla movement in the South. The population of the South, which despises the pro-American regime, will certainly help us as well.

Stalin replied:

You should not advance to the South. First of all, the Korean People's Army does not have an overwhelming superiority over the troops of the South. Numerically, as I understand, you are even behind them. Second, in the South there are still American troops, which will interfere in the event of hostilities. Third, one should not forget that there is an agreement in effect between the USSR and the United States on the 38th parallel. If the agreement is broken by our side, it is more of a reason to believe that the Americans will interfere (Torkunov 2000, 31).

The Democratic Front for the Unification of the Fatherland (DFRF) formed in June 1949 and campaigned for a North Korean-style peaceful reunification while launching a peace offensive. But internally Kim Il Sung repeatedly asked for Soviet support for reunification through war, only to be notified that the Politburo passed a decision to bar North Korea from attacking the South. The order from the All-Union Communist Party stated that North Korea was “not prepared for this war either politically or militarily,” and that since the US was expected to interfere

if the war was prolonged, rather than planning for war, the North should enhance its readiness as follows:

... it should be admitted that unification of Korea demands concentration of maximum forces for, first of all, expansion of the guerilla movement, creation of liberated areas and preparation for a national armed uprising in South Korea with the purpose of toppling the reactionary regime and for a successful solution to the task of the unification of all Korea, and, secondly, further and decisive strengthening of the People's Army of Korea (Torkunov 2000, 41-42).

While working to overturn Soviet opposition to war, Kim Il Sung once again appealed for consent to attack to Shtykov, the USSR Ambassador, at the send-off party for the Chinese Ambassador to Pyongyang on January 19, 1950. Now that the international situation was changing—with Mao Zedong's victory in the Chinese mainland, the Soviets' successful nuclear test, and shifts in the US's Asia policy—on January 30, Stalin allowed Kim to come to Moscow for further consultation on aid for a reunification war. As a result, Kim visited Moscow in April 1950 and met with Stalin three times to discuss Stalin's three-stage plan. First, North Korea was to concentrate its troops near the 38th parallel. Second, the highest bodies of power in North Korea would make a new proposal for peaceful reunification. Third, when the South rejected the proposal, the North would counterattack. Stalin emphasized that the USSR could not directly participate and urged North Korea to obtain China's help. In response, Kim Il Sung and Pak Hon Yong argued that the war would end swiftly so that the US would not be able to interfere, and that the partisan guerilla forces and 200,000 members of the Worker's Party of South Korea would play active roles in leading mass uprisings (Torkunov 2000, 52-53).

Kim Il Sung finally obtained consent as well as a specific operation plan from the Soviets to launch a liberation war on the condition that the US would not be drawn in to participate. Late at night on May 13, Kim and Pak met Mao Zedong, informed him of the three-stage plan they had concocted with Stalin, and asked for assistance. However, Kim Il Sung's liberation war posed several problems for Mao. One was the concern over China's continued stature as the leading socialist country in Asia if the People's Republic of China (PRC) did not take part in North Korea's liberation of the Korean Peninsula. Another was the possibility that a war on the Peninsula would further complicate unification with Taiwan for the PRC if the US entered the war before the PRC took action on Taiwan.

In this section, we shall analyze South Korea's response to "peace" as upheld by North Korea. After coming back to Korea in October 1945, Syngman Rhee did not publicly make any anti-Soviet statements for about six months. He did make a statement that was both pro-American and pro-Soviet, saying that since the US and the USSR were both liberating forces that helped Korea, Korea need not be hostile to either country. It was only after the rupture of the first US-Soviet Joint Commission that Rhee manifested his pro-American, anti-Soviet stance. After the Truman Doctrine, Rhee's return to Seoul in 1947—he had been staying in the US for four months since late 1946—resembled that of a triumphant general. The US, which had at first tried to exclude radicals like Rhee and Lyuh Woon-hyung until 1946, now opted to try to contain the Soviets, and Rhee was their only option. As a result, he became the head of the independent South Korean government in 1948.

After North Korea captured Seoul in the Korean War, they took documents left behind in Rhee's office and

published them as a collection.¹ The main argument put forth by this collection is that the South invaded the North to start a war, as evidenced by an excerpt from Rhee's letter in September 1949 to Robert T. Oliver, his political advisor: "I feel strongly that now is the most psychological moment when we should take an aggressive measure and join our loyal communist army in the north to clean up the rest of them in Pyongyang (Robert 1978, 250-252)."

However, the context provided by Rhee's other correspondence with Oliver tells a totally different story. In a letter dated October 22, Rhee said: "Our army of 100,000 men is not equipped and armed as it should be. We do not have enough ammunition to defend ourselves if the Northern Communist Army should decide to come down in an all-out invasion, as they are threatening to do. I do not wish to appear dissatisfied and rumbling; but our situation is almost desperate (Robert 1978, 258-259)." Rhee's assessment was correct; by this time, Kim Il Sung was indeed busy carrying out the tasks listed by Stalin to prepare for war. Rhee himself, just like Kim, was also thinking that reunification would not be achieved peacefully but would require force, and that he would and must march toward Pyongyang if he had the capacity. Nevertheless, South Korea did not even have the ammunition needed to fight for five days. After all, Rhee's insistence on invading the North was "blackmail diplomacy" directed at the United States, South Korea's threat to take undesirable action unless the US gave them what they needed. Rhee's plan was one of intention and not capability. Unlike Rhee, Kim succeeded in persuading Stalin of the necessity to invade in March 1949, eliminated the obstacles that Stalin mentioned within a year, and initiated the Korea War on June 25, 1950.

After the Korean War was halted with a truce, Nam Il, Minister of Foreign Affairs of North Korea, made a six-point proposal to ensure peaceful conditions on the Peninsula at the last session of the Geneva Conference on Korea in June 1954. The proposal laid out the following steps: first, to recommend that foreign states withdraw their armed forces from the territory of Korea; second, to reduce the troop strength of the DPRK and the ROK to under 100,000 men each; third, to form a commission between the DPRK and the ROK to create the conditions for the gradual elimination of the state of war; fourth, to recognize the existence of military treaties with other states as incompatible with the peaceful unification of Korea; fifth, to form an all-Korean committee to establish and develop economic and cultural relations between North and South Korea; and sixth, for participant states of the Geneva Conference to ensure the peaceful development of Korea and create the conditions facilitating the peaceful unification of Korea into a united, independent, and democratic state (KINU 2007, 278-280).

This peace proposal put forth by North Korea in 1954 was repeatedly brought up during the 1960s without any real fundamental changes, and remains the prototype today for a North Korean-style peace agreement. In the first session of the Third Supreme People's Assembly in October 1962, Kim Il Sung announced the Proposal for North-South Peace Agreement under the Premise of the Withdrawal of US Forces, which was unchanged in essence (KINU 2007, 270-271).

¹ DPRK. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 1950. Documents and Materials Exposing the Instigators of the Civil War in Korea: Documents from the Archives of the Rhee Syngman government. Pyongyang: Foreign Language Press; DPRK. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 1950/1960. Facts Tell. Pyongyang: FLPH.

National Modernization and the Concept of Peace

The Cold War international order became firmly established with the Korean War and went through a major transformation in the 1960s. Among the capitalist allies of the United States, European nations and Japan rapidly completed postwar reconstruction and reemerged as the main actors on the world stage. And despite opposition from other nuclear powers, France joined their ranks. Among the socialist allies, the PRC went into conflicts with the Soviet Union and developed their own nuclear weapons. The US and the Soviets led modern warfare in which they avoided full-scale nuclear war but actively interfered in various international conflicts including civil wars, as exemplified by the Cuban Missile Crisis. Meanwhile, as Europe and Japan rapidly caught up with the US economically, the US was unable to maintain its monopolistic status of the early postwar era and its share of global GDP dropped from 50% to 30% in the 1960s.

In spite of domestic and international difficulties, North Korea quickly finished postwar reconstruction under the Three-Year Plan for Economic Revival (1954-1956) and the First Five-Year Plan for Economic Development (1957-1961). In the 1960s, the Soviets and the Chinese withdrew their support for reunification through war. In the meantime, South Korea remained politically unstable, and was enduring greater difficulty recovering from the war than North Korea.

Accordingly, North Korea began to emphasize reunification through revolution over reunification through war. Kim Il Sung called for reunification through strengthening the three revolutionary capabilities in February 1964. In a speech at the Ali Arham Social Science Academy of Indonesia in April of 1965, he again stated that reunification of the nation depends on the three revolutionary capabilities, and elaborated: first, construct socialism in the northern part of the Republic to bolster our revolutionary spirit politically, economically, and militarily; second, awaken the people of South Korea politically in order to strengthen their revolutionary capabilities; and third, solidify the union between the Korean people and the international revolutionary capabilities.²

On the other hand, in the South, President Park Chung-hee stated in his New Year's Message at the National Assembly in 1966:

Our supreme task is national reunification. Let's pool all of our energy and wisdom into the modernization project, thus spurring our efforts to build a self-sufficient economy. If the modernization of our country is a prerequisite to the achievement of national reunification, and if economic independence is a prerequisite to modernization, economic independence is naturally the first stage of our efforts for national reunification.³

The Park Chung-hee administration established “first construction, next reunification” as the fundamental principle of reunification and laid out a three-stage plan for national modernization. The first stage was the First Five-

² Kim, Il Sung. 1964. “Joguktongirui Guchejeong Bangdoe Daehayeo(Regarding the Concrete Unification of the entire Peninsula)”. 8th Session of the 4th quarter meeting of the Chosun Rodongdang; Kim, Il Sung. 1965. “Choguk tongilui Kuchaejeok Pangdoe Daehayeo, Choseoninminminjujuuigonghwagugeseoui SahoejuuI geonseolgwa Namchoseon Hyeongmyeonge Daehayeo(On the Revolutionizing of Nam Chosun and Building of a Socialist Society in the DPRK).” Speech given at the Ali Arham Social Science Academy of Indonesia.

³ Park, Chung-hee. 1970. “Daetongnyeong Gukoeyeondugyoseo, President's New Year Address at the National Assembly.” in *Major Speeches by President Park Chung-hee*, compiled by Bum Shik Shin, 316-333. Seoul: Hollym Corporation.

Year Plan to secure a foundation for industrialization, which would finish in 1966; the second stage was the Second Five-Year Plan to achieve industrialization, which would end by 1971; and the third stage was the Third Five-Year Plan to realize mass production and mass consumption by the late 1970s. In this plan, the motherland was going to be modernized within twenty years after his coup d'état on May 16, 1961.⁴ In his inaugural address in July 1967, Park Chung-hee stated:

In the absence of economic construction, poverty could never be driven off, unemployment, a hotbed of injustice and corruption, will continue to persist, and victory over communism and resultant liberation of our brethren in the North and reunification will become almost impossible.⁵

And in a presidential statement released on the sixteenth anniversary of the Korean War:

The time we take a more proactive approach toward reunification will be in the late 1970s, when we expect ourselves to have solidified economic self-reliance that is the national base for reunification, and to have accumulated sufficient capabilities for democracy, so that we can seize initiative in every aspect. For that day, we must be industrious, thrifty, and saving, and devote all our energy to production, exportation, and construction. That will eventually lead to our road to victory over communism and road to reunification.⁶

South Korea's approach of "first construction, next reunification" and the North's strategy of "strengthen the three revolutionary capabilities" competed against one another. But in 1968, the inter-Korean relationship sharply deteriorated owing to a series of incidents including the Blue House Raid (January 21), the USS Pueblo Incident (January 23), and the Uljin-Samcheok Landing (October 23). After this, the South Korean government switched to a strategy of "parallel advancement of defense and construction":

Our nation's soldiers must strive even more to upgrade our armed forces; our 2,500,000 homeland reserve forces, to protect your own region, your hometown, your workplace; and the people of our nation, for ongoing national modernization, economic development and territory construction, as a harmonious whole. National security on the one hand, and economic construction on the other; autonomous defense on the one hand, and economic self-reliance on the other. This is our supreme task and supreme goal today. This is our only road to victory over communism, and ultimately, to national reunification.⁷

The South Korean government assessed that North Korea would complete its war preparations by the early 1970s, overthrow the Republic of Korea from within and without, and achieve communist reunification and socialist lib-

⁴ Park, Chung-hee. "1967nyeon Sinnyeon Yeondugyoseo Gijahoegyoon." Press Conference for 1967 New Year's Address.

⁵ Park, Chung-hee. 1970. "Park Chung-heeui Je6dae Daetongnyeong Chwiimsa, President Park Chung-hee's 6th Inaugural Speech." in *Major Speeches by Korea's Park Chung-hee*, compiled by Bum Shik Shin, 141-145. Seoul: Hollym Corporation.

⁶ Park, Chung-hee. 1966. "6.25 Je16junyeone Jeueumhan Damhwamun(National Address on the 16th Anniversary of the Korean War)."

⁷ Park, Chung-hee. 1969. "Commemoration Speech on the 21st Armed Forces Day."

eration. To the South's understanding, the failed Blue House Raid on January 21, 1968 was one such effort to infiltrate South Korea with spies, armed agents, and guerillas, thus reinforcing the underground communist network, creating social turmoil in the South, and provoking popular revolts, which would have been instigated and buttressed by underground activities in the South and, if needed, direct invasion from the North.⁸

In a commemoration speech given on the 21st ROK Armed Forces Day (1969), Park Chung-hee laid out his position as follows:

Although it is true that the current state of international affairs indicates a reduction of tensions, this is merely a temporary phenomenon that appears as the so-called Great Powers pursue their own national interests. That is, it has little relevance to our circumstances in Korea.

Meanwhile, we must not forget that the puppet regime in the North has not given up its ambition to invade the South, and that they are hatching various plots by taking advantage of such international upheavals. Recently they have started a spurious peace propaganda, by which we must not be deceived... Today, I would like to clarify the peaceful mission of our armed forces and our earnest yearning for peace, and thereby reveal how nonsensical and full of fallacy this peace propaganda from the North is.

Recently the puppet regime in the North began to uphold the word 'peace.' In my view, they will continue this parading of 'peace' for a while. But I affirm that 'peace' according to North Korea is only a lie to conceal their aggressive ambitions, not truthful at all... First, we demand that the North give up their aggressive ambitions for communist reunification, as shown in their 'four lines of military policy' including the fortification of the entire territory and militarization of the entire people. Second, we demand that all military camps and 8,800 armed soldiers and their equipment deployed in the Demilitarized Zone be immediately removed. Third, the North must stop dispatching armed spies and disband the irregular special forces that have trained these spies. Fourth, return at once the KAL aircraft, its crew and passengers, and the fishermen and their boats that the North has illegally kidnapped. Fifth, do respond to the ongoing inter-Korean Red Cross Talks and accept the proposal by the ROK Red Cross. If the puppet regime in the North does not show any sincerity or reaction to these demands of ours, I assure you that no one will ever trust anything that they say.⁹

Détente and the July 4 Joint Statement¹⁰

The Cold War international order took another sharp turn in the 1970s. The United States, which had been the

⁸ Park, Chung-hee. 1973. "1973nyeondo Jeongung Chian Mit Yebigun Gwangyegwan Jungang Hoeui Yusi(Instructions regarding National Public Security and the Reserve Forces given at the 1973 Central Committee Meeting)."

⁹ Park, Chung-hee. 1969. "21hoe Gukgunui Nal Ginyeomsa(21st Armed Forces Day Anniversary Address)".

¹⁰ Ha, Young-Sun. 2015. "Bukhan 1972jinsil Chatgi (North Korea's Search for Truth in 1972)," in *1972 Hanbandowa Jubyeon 4gang 2014 (The Korean Peninsula Among Big Powers: 1972-2014)*, Young-Sun Ha ed., Seoul: East Asia Institute (in Korean).

world leader since 1945 with its overwhelming military and economic power, entered a relative decline. Mired in the Vietnam War since 1964, the US saw its share of global GDP shrink to less than 25%. The Nixon administration enforced its New Economic Policy to undertake a comprehensive remodeling of the economic world order that the US had built. On the other hand, as the US and the Soviet Union both gained second strike capability against one another according to the doctrine of mutually assured destruction (MAD), they reached the First Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT I) Agreement in 1971. After a quarter century spent deep in the Cold War, the two superpowers began to gradually ease tensions.

In East Asia, US-PRC rapprochement was signaled by the 42-hour secret meeting between Henry Kissinger and Zhou Enlai and the resultant Joint Communique released in February 1972. During the meetings, peace in Korea was discussed twice, briefly but interestingly. Kissinger's reply to Zhou's suggestion to withdraw US forces in South Korea during their first meeting is worthy of attention. US forces in Korea were in the process of withdrawal at that moment, and 60,000 men in 1970 had already been reduced to 40,000 men in 1972. Kissinger said if political relations in the Far East improved, the process of troop reduction would continue, leaving few or no US troops in South Korea. Considering that South Korea at the time was struggling in a life-and-death negotiation with the US over maintaining the presence of US forces in Korea, Kissinger's response on the issue was succinct but pointed.

The second meeting on July 10 included a relatively long discussion on the Korea problem. Zhou brought up North Korea's eight-point program for the peaceful unification of Korea,¹¹ which had been announced by North Korea's Foreign Minister Ho Dam in April 1971, and Kissinger expressed discomfort over the fact that the Chinese Prime Minister was in essence speaking for North Korea. As the document began with North Korea's assertion that reunification is only possible after evacuation of the "American imperialist invaders," Kissinger found the North's stance to be a denial of the status quo that overrode the US and PRC's concurrence regarding stability and peace on the Peninsula. That is, the US could not agree to reunification if it involved the overthrow of the South Korean regime. Consequently, the Joint Communique mentioned the Korea problem only briefly, stating that the Chinese firmly supported North Korea's eight-point program, and that the US would maintain its close ties and support of South Korea for the sake of peace on the Peninsula.

In the atmosphere of this large-scale détente, the two Koreas began new attempts to move beyond the twenty-year armistice and pursue a small-scale détente from August 1971. As a result of these efforts, they issued the July 4 Joint Statement based on the three principles of unification: independence, peace, and national unity. However, the mini-détente on the Peninsula did not last long, vanishing like a midsummer night's dream. In October, at the Co-Chair Talks for the Coordinating Committee that were organized to implement the Joint Statement, North and South Korea saw only differences in their views. The three subsequent Coordinating Committee meetings and Co-Chair Talks made no further progress. Finally, on August 28, 1973, North Korea made the announcement that practically abandoned the Joint Statement. The rest of this section will analyze North and South Korea's divergence on the concept of "peace" as evidenced through the development and abandonment of the July 4 Joint Statement.

¹¹ Ho, Dam. 1971. "Hyeongukjejeongsewa Jogugui Jajutongireul Chokjinsikilde Daehayeo (On the Current State of the Nation and the Push for Independent Unification of the Motherland)" (in Korean).

In the historic meeting with Lee Hu-rak, Director of the KCIA, on May 4, 1972, Kim Il Sung placed continual emphasis on the three principles of unification throughout the discussion. He said:

Our stance is to be against foreign reliance in the issue of reunification. Above all, this is the common ground that President Park and I have...Please deliver this message to President Park. We agree that we will promote reunification peacefully and independently, without military conflict and foreign intervention...That is why our people must come together...Why would people of same nation argue over who's right or wrong? If we are to reunify, we should start from a ground of solidarity.

Lee Hu-rak's response to this is noteworthy: "What you just mentioned is exactly the same as what President Park has in mind."¹² When Lee left Seoul for Pyongyang, he brought poison with him in case he was unable to return from the trip. In this moment when Lee said Park Chung-hee shared the same thoughts with Kim Il Sung, what they were actually thinking needs to be carefully reconstituted.

During the meeting with the Bulgarian Ambassador Nikolov on November 18, 1970, Kim Il Sung said, "The core of our position on unification of Korea is...solving the Korean issue through negotiations with the progressive government to be formed after the South Korean people take power in their own hands."¹³ In other words, he did not regard Park Chung-hee as his counterpart in negotiations for peaceful reunification. Other diplomatic documents from countries close to North Korea, such as Bulgaria and Romania, show that the North was willing to negotiate with Kim Dae-jung but not with Park Chung-hee. On June 10, 1971, Kim also told the Romanian Communist Party and government delegation to the DPRK that any conflict between North and South Korea would inevitably bring about intervention from the Soviet Union, China, Japan and the US, and therefore it was necessary to remain very discreet so as not to trigger a global war. He also explained that because all interested parties wanted to avoid war, North Korea was pursuing the eight-point program for reunification by revolutionary means rather than military means. After saying "Should Park Chung-hee be overthrown, we will be able to discuss the unification of our country with anyone who desires this," he stressed that "The evolution of the situation in South Korea depends on the struggle of democratic forces; on the [struggle of the] South Korean people."¹⁴

In a speech on August 6, 1971, Kim Il Sung declared that he would talk with any parties or organizations in the South including the Democratic Republican Party, the ruling party at the time.¹⁵ North Korea explained that this peace offensive was intended to enhance the revolutionary capabilities of both South Korea and the international community. Through arduous closed talks between Jeong Hong-jin (South) and Kim Deok-hyeon (North) from November 1971, in late March 1972 North and South Korea finally agreed to exchange visits between Lee Hu-rak (South) and Kim Yeong-ju (North). Thus, on May 4, Lee traveled to Pyongyang and met with Kim Il Sung

¹² Kim, Il Sung and Hu-rak Lee. 1972. "Conversation between Kim Il Sung and Lee Hu-rak." Wilson Center Digital Archive. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110780>

¹³ Kim, Il Sung and Misho Nikolov. 1970. "Record of Talks between Kim Il Sung and Bulgarian Ambassador to North Korea, Misho Nikolov." Wilson Center Digital Archive. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/165260>

¹⁴ Kim, Il Sung and Nicoale Ceausescu. 1971. "Minutes of Conversation on the Occasion of the Party and Government Delegation on behalf of the Romanian Socialist Republic to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea." Wilson Center Digital Archive. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112790>

¹⁵ Kim, Il Sung. 1971. "Namjoseonhyeongmyeongui Silhyeongwa Joguktongireul Wihan Pyeonghwagongse (Peace Offensive for the Practical Revolution of South Korea and Unification of the Motherland)" (in Korean).

twice, once in the early morning and once in the afternoon. At this meeting, Kim shook hands with Lee as a way of stressing the three principles of unification and strengthening South Korea's revolutionary capability, rather than from a stance of seeking a *détente* with Park Chung-hee. After Lee's visit, Pak Song-chol, Deputy Premier of North Korea, visited Seoul in late May;¹⁶ working groups from the North and South finalized the details in late June; and on July 4, the Joint Statement was issued.¹⁷

On July 17, Ri Man Sok, Deputy Foreign Minister of North Korea, explained to other socialist allies the details behind the Joint Statement and the regime's assessment that it contributed to the revolutionary capabilities of South Korea and the international community.¹⁸ But on September 12, in an interview with the *Mainichi Shimbun* of Japan, Kim Il Sung accused South Korea of failing to properly fulfill the three principles.¹⁹ This reflected a swift change of North Korea's view after the announcement of the Joint Statement, from one of cautious optimism to pessimism. On September 22, when the DPRK Economic Delegation visited Romania, Jeong Jun-taek, Deputy Minister of North Korea, explained the details behind the Joint Statement to President Nicolae Ceausescu. He defined the aim of the peace offensive as the elimination of Park Chung-hee's regime, the election of a new South Korean president from the opposition, the consolidation of revolutionary capability in the South, and, ultimately, the establishment of a unified democratic government under the North's leadership.²⁰

Between October 1972 and June 1973, the two Koreas held three Co-Chair Talks and three Coordinating Committee meetings, but the assertive North—which wanted to include a peace treaty and political negotiations—and more cautious South—which wanted to start with a subcommittee on society and culture—could not reach a compromise.²¹

Soon, Park Chung-hee made the June 23 Special Statement on Foreign Policy for Peace and Reunification, which included suggestions for the simultaneous admittance of North and South Korea to the United Nations and an open-door policy toward nations with different ideologies and political systems. In response, Kim Il Sung announced a Five-Point Program for National Reunification which comprised: 1) relaxation of military tensions between the North and the South; 2) collaboration and exchanges in multiple fields; 3) a summoning of the Grand National Conference; 4) the formation of a Confederal Republic of Koryo; and 5) admittance to the United Nations under one name. Thus, the anticipation for a small-scale *détente* on the Korean Peninsula dissolved, and the two Koreas gradually returned to their previous state of conflict.²²

¹⁶ Park, Chung-hee and Song-chol Pak. 1972. "Park, Chung-hee-Pak Song-chol Bususang Hoedam (Ministerial Conference between Park Chung-hee and Pak Song-chol)" (in Korean).

¹⁷ Kim, Il-sung and Hu-rak Lee. 1972. "7.4 Gongdongseongmyeong (July 4 Joint Statement)." National Archives of Korea. <http://www.archives.go.kr/next/search/listSubjectDescription.do?id=003345>

¹⁸ Merten, Erich and Man-seok Ri. 1972. "Note on Information from DPRK Deputy Foreign Minister, Comrade Ri Man-seok, on 17 July 1972 between 16:40 and 18:00 hours in the Foreign Ministry." Wilson Center Digital Archive. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113237>

¹⁹ Kim, Il-sung, Jun-taek Jeong and Nicoale Ceausescu. 1972. "Minutes of Conversation between Nicolae Ceausescu and the Economic Delegation from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea." Wilson Center Digital Archive. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114597>

²⁰ Jeong, Jun-taek. 1972. "Pyeonghwagongseui Mokpyowa Dangye Seolmyeong (Statement on the Goals and Steps of the Peace Offensive)."

²¹ "Tongilwon Nambukjojeolwiwonhoe 1-3Cha hoedam (Unification Ministry South-North Coordinating Committee Meetings 1-3)." 1972, October – 1973, June.

²² Park, Chung-hee. 1973. "Hanguk 6.23 Seonon (South Korea 6.23 Declaration)"; Kim, Il-Sung. 1973. "Bukhan 5daebangchim (North Korea Five-point Program)."

On August 28, 1973, North Korea strongly criticized the KCIA for its abduction of Kim Dae-jung from Tokyo, called for the reorganization of the Coordinating Committee, and declared a suspension of North-South dialogues. Since the July 4 Joint Statement and other peace offensives had not yielded the desired results of strengthening revolutionary capabilities at the international level (in spite of the partial withdrawal of US forces from South Korea) and in South Korea (such as the domestic and international isolation of the Park regime), the North Korean government shut down its two-year peace offensive and returned to its strategy of reunification through revolution.

While Park Chung-hee was pursuing a three-fold survival strategy that included an improved relationship with North Korea, Kim Il Sung sought reunification through a strengthening of the three revolutionary capabilities. Although the two Koreas shook hands, they did so with totally different perspectives and inner hostility towards one another. As a result, the handshake did not lead to a hug but rather regressed to a state of confrontation.

South Korea in the early 1970s had declared that it would discontinue confrontation with North Korea and seek peaceful coexistence through dialogue, exchange, and collaboration, as a part of its three-fold survival strategy. This led to Park Chung-hee's declaration of a Plan for Peaceful Reunification during his National Liberation Day speech given on August 15, 1970, a proposal for inter-Korean Red Cross Talks on August 12, 1971, and the July 4 Joint Statement in 1972.

Nevertheless, on July 20 in the same year, Park expressed his reservations regarding the Joint Statement in a commencement speech delivered to Korea National Defense University:

The purpose of the recently issued Joint Statement was to forestall any more war on the Korean Peninsula, and its significance lies in the fact that both the South and North promised not to engage in any more armed provocations. Until then, it had been obvious, not only to us but also to the world, that the communists in the North had been following the so-called 'four lines of military policy' and had already finished their war preparations...In this regard, it is nothing but a relief that the communists in the North finally responded to our continued encouragement and promised to end their belligerence and violence in front of all 50 million Korean people. However, the Joint Statement is only a promise and a positive starting point. True peace has not yet arrived on our Peninsula with this Statement. Hereafter, whether the meaning and value of this Statement can survive entirely depends on the sincerity of the communists in the North...What we have to be firmly cautious about in their propaganda is the schemes based on the ideology of the so-called 'people's revolution.' The communists may revise their policy tactically, but they will never withdraw their ideology fundamentally.²³

His evaluation of the Joint Statement was even more pessimistic when he spoke to the National Central Assembly of Public Security and Reserve Forces in January, 1973:

No one can predict at this point how South-North dialogue will unfold and what kind of results it will bring.

²³ Park, Chung-hee. 1972. "Kukbangdaehakwon Choleopsik Chuksa(Commencement Speech at Korea National Defense University)" (in Korean).

We cannot trust them because they are communists and the perpetrators of the immense offense that was the Korean War. They are counterplotting against the South-North dialogues and the July 4 Joint Statement. It is their goal and scheme to increase the number of members of the public who are saying ‘Discard the reserve forces,’ ‘Scrap the Anti-communist law,’ or ‘Reduce the armed forces,’ just as they insist, in order to divide our national opinion and cause social turmoil. Now is the moment when we begin our actual contestation with the communists of the North. Thus far, it has been easier for our anti-communist project because movement was blocked by the Military Demarcation Line and sharp tensions. But now the door is open, and contestation has become trickier for we should compete while interacting, sitting down and talking. Therefore, wiser judgment by the citizens is required on what the government is doing. We have always been faithful to our promises to them, engaging in dialogues, not going to war, pursuing peaceful reunification, and not slandering or defaming them. But the communists are disparaging us in disguise as the so-called Unification Revolutionary Party...I emphasize once again: our fight against communism is even more difficult than before now that there is open dialogue, and this is the time when we must invest all our energy to strengthen our defenses, reinforce anti-communism, spur our economic development, and cultivate our national power.²⁴

After a few months, in the June 23 Special Statement on Foreign Policy for Peace and Reunification where he proposed simultaneous admittance to the United Nations and an open-door policy toward communist nations, he added:

In my declaration on August 15, 1970, I called for a relaxation of tensions between South and North Korea in order to alleviate the sufferings of our compatriots arising from the division and to build a foundation for peaceful reunification. On August 12 of the following year, we proposed inter-Korean Red Cross Talks. On July 4 last year, we issued the Joint Statement. Dialogue between the South and the North has thus started, yet to this day, the achievements of the past two years since the Joint Statement have fallen far short of our expectations. We have argued that the most productive way to proceed with dialogue is to remove the barriers between us by resolving easier and more workable problems first and replacing distrust with trust through practical results, and that this is also a shortcut to reunification. But the North insists on a lump-sum settlement of military and political issues that can jeopardize the security of the Republic of Korea while leaving the distrust as it is. Also, while participating in dialogues with us for reunification, the North has committed many actions that practically perpetuate our division. Given this state of inter-Korean relations, we expect many more obstacles and days to go until the inter-Korean dialogues bear the fruit we anticipated. Moreover, we are concerned that, if the current state persists, distrust might only be worsened and tensions heightened.²⁵

In the 1974 New Year’s press conference, Park directly criticized the North Korean view of peace. First, he stressed the problem of trust:

²⁴ Park, Chung-hee, 1973. “1973nyeondo Jeongung Chian Mit Yebigun Gwangyegwan Jungang Hoeui Yusi (Instructions regarding National Public Security and the Reserve Forces given at the 1973 Central Committee Meeting)” (in Korean).

²⁵ Park, Chung-hee. 1973. “Hanguk 6.23 Seonon (South Korea 6.23 Declaration)”; Kim, Il-Sung. 1973. “Bukhan 5daebangchim (North Korea Five-point Program).”

The term ‘peace agreement’ as insisted on by the North sounds so nice at first—it literally says ‘peace.’ But the question is whether they are sincere...If we look at the content, it says we drive out the US forces, reduce the troops to less than 100,000, never import any more weaponry, and hence scrap the armistice. But this means in a nutshell they will incapacitate the South’s defenses, invade again when the time is ripe, and achieve a communist reunification. Even a child knows that.

Second, he pointed out the difference in their concepts of peace:

When we say ‘peace,’ it means giving up war entirely, never invading each other, and never engaging in military confrontation; the communists talk of ‘peace’ when they temporarily need it, to earn time, to appease others, or to achieve a certain aim.

Third, he emphasized the will for peace:

Peace is not something that can be ensured by signing a paper for some agreement or treaty. The key is whether the parties have the genuine will to uphold peace, if they are truly determined not to have war. If they have this will, war won’t happen again even without any agreement. Therefore, we ask in return: how faithful have the North’s communists been to the Armistice Agreement? As far as we know, in the past twenty years, the northern communists have violated the Armistice Agreement 13,000 times.

Lastly, he proposed an inter-Korean mutual non-aggression pact:

My proposal for a non-aggression pact can be outlined in several main points. First, South and North Korea shall promise in front of the world that neither of us will launch an armed invasion against the other. Second, we shall not interfere with each other’s internal politics. Third, regardless of the circumstances, the current armistice agreement shall remain in effect. As long as the non-aggression pact includes these points, and as long as we faithfully abide by it, war on the Korean Peninsula will be prevented. I believe peace will continue then. But without the sincerity and the will to fulfill them, even ten or twenty agreements will be of no use.²⁶

During this press conference, Park said that “peace” according to North Korea boiled down to incapacitating South Korea’s defenses, invading the South again when the time is ripe, and achieving a communist reunification. Then, when Lee Hu-rak visited Pyongyang and shook hands with Kim Il Sung, what Kim said about independence, peace, and national unity was *not* “the same as what President Park had in mind.” But Lee said so because, as USFK was preparing to withdraw, South Korea was mapping out a three-fold survival strategy: first, now that it was impossible to rely solely on the US for national defense, pursue a northward policy and improve relationships

²⁶ Park, Chung-hee. 1974. “1974nyeon Yeondu Gijahoegyeon(1974 New Year’s Press Conference)” (in Korean). <http://www.ehistory.go.kr/page/view/movie.jsp?srcgbn=KV&mediaid=2472&mediadtl=9370&gbn=DT>

with the Soviets and the PRC, former enemy states; second, alleviate tensions between South and North Korea to earn time; third, domestically, establish the Yushin system in order to compete with the North's *Suryong* (Leader) system. South Korea's full acceptance of North Korea's proposal of the three principles might at first seem like submission to the North. But, facing the imminent risk of the complete withdrawal of US forces, it was an unavoidable choice that the South made in order to achieve a Peninsular *détente*.

Yet, the ultimate reason that the July 4 Joint Statement was abandoned within a year and the two Koreas headed for even sharper confrontation lies in their different dreams of "peace" in the same bed of "*détente*."

The Post-Cold War Era and the Concept of Peace²⁷

After the *détente* and the New Cold War, the Cold War international system began to show signs of dissolution with the rise of Gorbachev in 1985. The year 1989 saw the fall of the Berlin Wall, the very symbol of the Cold War in Europe. On Christmas Day of 1991, the Soviet Union was officially dissolved. The wave of the demise of the Cold War reached East Asia as well, and South Korea established diplomatic relations with Russia and the People's Republic of China. But even then, the wall between South and North Korea that had withstood the brief thaw of the *détente* did not easily crumble.

South and North Korea first launched High-Level Talks in 1989, and issued the Inter-Korean Basic Agreement and the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in 1991. But like the July 4 Joint Statement, these agreements disintegrated and both parties returned to square one with the first North Korean nuclear crisis in 1993. As the two parties began to explicitly discuss peace in Korea, the process revealed the conceptual divergence as to what peace meant between the two Koreas—how large the gap is and how difficult it is to bridge.

North Korea's concept of peace was most concisely and clearly shown when Prime Minister Yon Hyong-muk summarized their peace doctrine during the High-Level Talks. "Our idea is that we must make solving the problem of national peace the highest priority—adopt a non-aggression pact between the North and the South to secure peace, sign a peace agreement between the US and North Korea, substantially reduce armaments in the North and the South, and withdraw nuclear weapons and the US forces from the South."²⁸ North Korea suggested a general peace proposal in November 1988, and refined this into the more specific Arms Reduction Program for Peace on the Korean Peninsula on May 31, 1991. The main points were as follows:

1. For trust-building between the North and the South, limit military drills and exercises, turn the Military Demarcation Line and the Demilitarized Zone into a zone of peace, and take safety measures to prevent

²⁷ Ha, Young Sun. 2000. "Hanbandoui Pyeonghwa Guseong (The Structure of Peace on the Korean Peninsula)," in *Bundaneul Neomeo Tongireul Hyanghae (Beyond Division, Towards Reunification)*, Young-chul Baek ed., Seoul: Konkuk University Press. 931-949.

²⁸ Huh, Moon-Young, et al. 2007. "Choseonbandoui Pyeonghwarul uihan Gunchuk (Arms Reduction for the Peace on the Korean Peninsula)" in *Hanbandopyeonghwacheje: Jaryowa Haeje (Peace Regime on the Korean Peninsula: Documents and Analysis)* (in Korean). Korea Institute for National Unification.

- accidental collisions and their amplification.
2. An arms reduction program shall be executed in three phases, within three to four years after the agreement is reached. In the first phase, both the North and the South will reduce their troops down to 300,000 men; in the second phase, to 200,000 men; and by the end of the third phase, both will maintain troops at a level below 100,000 men. Military equipment shall be reduced or discarded in accordance with troop reduction. Both parties shall cease any qualitative renewal of the remaining equipment. Both parties shall mutually report upon and inspect the progress of troop and equipment reduction.
 3. For the evacuation of foreign armed forces, make the Korean Peninsula a denuclearized zone. Both parties shall make joint efforts to withdraw nuclear weapons deployed in the South and any foreign troops stationed on the Peninsula. Neither party shall produce or purchase nuclear weapons, and shall prohibit access, entry, or customs clearance in the Peninsula to any foreign aircraft or naval vessel carrying nuclear weapons.
 4. Take measures for peacekeeping after the arms reduction. Surveillance forces from neutral nations may be deployed at the Military Demarcation Line and in the Demilitarized Zone. The North and the South shall organize and operate a joint council held responsible by Chief of Staff-level officers to deal with military disputes between the two parties. The two parties shall adopt a non-aggression pact through negotiations and agree to a comprehensive arms reduction.

In response to the North's proposal, the South put forward the Three-Stage Arms Control Program as a measure to mitigate military contestation between the two countries. The program comprises: 1) construction of political trust, including mutual recognition of political systems and exchange and collaboration in multiple fields; 2) construction of military trust, including visits and exchanges among military personnel, mutual disclosure and exchange of military information, advanced notice in cases of movement, maneuver of, or interaction with troops over a certain number, measures to prevent accidental collisions or their amplification, and demilitarization of the DMZ; and 3) arms reduction for both South and North Korea.

During the Third Inter-Korean Prime Minister Talks, the South clarified its stance on the non-aggression pact, which the North had emphasized as the first step for the mitigation of any military contestation. First, prior to the mitigation of military and political contestation and exchange and collaboration in other fields, the Inter-Korean Basic Agreement must be adopted as the foundation. Second, the non-aggression mentioned in Article 6 of the Inter-Korean Basic Agreement must be ensured by—in addition to the avoidance of military means and peaceful settlement of conflicts—a firm guarantee of a genuine will to practice non-aggression, revision of the revolutionary line of policy, and the construction of practical military trust.

To compare the measures to alleviate military contestation proposed by North and South Korea, the South emphasizes the construction of political trust, which the North does not include, as a necessary condition for arms control. As for the measures to construct military trust, some of the clauses, such as the demilitarization of the DMZ or creation of a hotline between high-ranking military officers on each side, were proposed by both sides. Overall, however, the South's proposal is focused on enhancing transparency surrounding military capability and intentions, while the North stresses limiting military drills and exercises.

In terms of arms reduction, the South proposes the conversion of the offensive force structure into a defensive one and an unbalanced arms reduction centered on weaponry, while the North prefers a balanced reduction centered on the scale of troops and the suspension of qualitative renewal of equipment. Both sides agree upon on-site inspections in principle. Lastly, regarding the non-aggression pact, the North argues that the pact is a first step toward the complete withdrawal of USFK, whereas the South is looking for a practical means to preclude another surprise attack from the North.

The arms reduction proposals by North and South Korea have some commonalities but are structurally in conflict, with discrepancies arising from their totally different approaches to “peace” in Korea. On the one hand, South Korea has pointed out that a relaxation of military tensions on the Peninsula is practically impossible as long as the North, based on the lasting ideology of the national liberation and people’s democratic revolution formed in the 1960s, 1) urges withdrawal of the USFK, 2) denies the legitimacy of the South Korean regime and seeks to instigate communist revolutions in the South, and 3) still displays the potential for a surprise attack. On the other hand, North Korea argues that the main obstacles to the relaxation of military tensions are large-scale military exercises such as Team Spirit as well as the presence of US forces and tactical nuclear weapons deployed in the South, which must be removed first and foremost to achieve the peaceful reunification of Korea.

Since the global thawing of the Cold War, North and South Korea have also had opportunities to discuss peace in the Korean Peninsula. Yet North Korea was undergoing its worst crisis in terms of the three revolutionary capabilities, and it pursued its own three-fold survival strategy and signed the Inter-Korean Basic Agreement and the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in 1991, only to end up causing the first North Korean nuclear crisis in 1993. Meanwhile, South Korea, which had pursued its own three-fold survival strategy against the reduction of US troops in the 1970s, could now actively push to strengthen the “three peace capabilities.”

Conclusion

Modern concepts of “peace” in South and North Korea have developed in a bifurcated fashion throughout four phases: the Korean War (1950s), national modernization (1960s), the *détente* (1970s), and the post-Cold War era (1990s). Within the divided Peninsula, the concept of “peace” has been intricately entwined with the three options of reunification through war, reunification through revolution, and peaceful reunification, and has over time come to have totally different meanings in the North and the South. In the 1950s, each country pursued peace and reunification through the Korean War; in the 1960s, the North’s reunification through revolution by strengthening the three revolutionary capabilities competed against the South’s “first construction, next reunification” and later “parallel advancement of security and construction;” during the *détente*, they superficially concurred on peace in the July 4 Joint Statement, but had different meanings of “peace” in mind; in the post-Cold War era, they once again discussed the problem of peace in Korea, but their division over the meaning of the concept, along with the division of the nation, has not been easily overcome.

Therefore, to achieve a true resolution to the Korean peace problem in the 21st century, sociopolitical forces

inside and outside the Korean Peninsula must exert coevolutionary efforts to develop and practice a new, shared concept of “peace.”■

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